

# SURVEY

What do you think of Africans living in Slovenia?



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*Title:*

**SURVEY**

**What do you think of Africans living in Slovenia?**

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SLOGA – Slovenian NGDO Platform for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid

Povšetova 37, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

t: +386 1 434 44 02

f: +386 1 434 44 02

e: [info@sloga-platform.org](mailto:info@sloga-platform.org)

s: [www.sloga-platform.org](http://www.sloga-platform.org)

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## Participants demographic

The survey was prepared and executed by the members and volunteers of the Association of Nigerians in Slovenia. It was posted online and was open to the public for a period of one month. During this period, 390 individuals answered some or all of the 29 questions. An average participant was a female from Osrednja Slovenija with finished secondary school between 21 and 30 years of age. More detailed demographics are demonstrated in Charts 1 to 4.

In total, 70 % of all respondents were female and 29 % were male, 1 % did not answer the question. The majority, in total 55% of the participants, were between the ages of 21 and 30 years old, 8% were under 20 and only 1% were over 60 years old. The percentage of the other age groups varied between 3% and 23% as seen in chart 2. In Chart 3 we can observe that a majority of the participants, 49 % have finished secondary school, and only 3% have obtained a doctorate degree. An overwhelming majority of the participants were from Osrednja Slovenija, 45%, followed by Primorska and Štajerska with 13%, Gorenjska 12%, Notranjska 7%, Dolenjska 6%, Prekmurska 2 % and Koroška 1%, as seen in chart 4. 1% of the participants did not answer the question.

chart 1: Sex

■ no answer ■ Male ■ Female

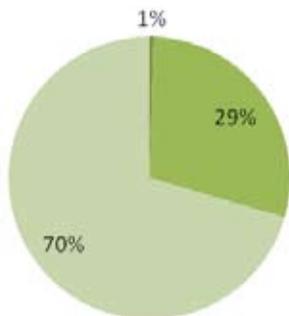


chart 2: Age

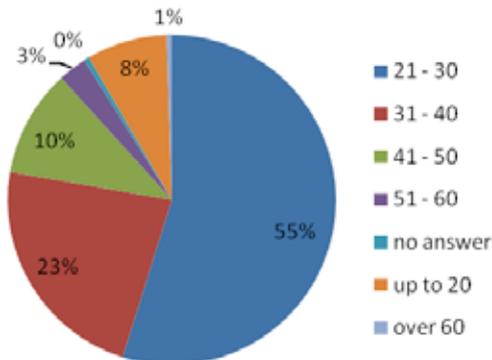


chart 3: **Finished education**

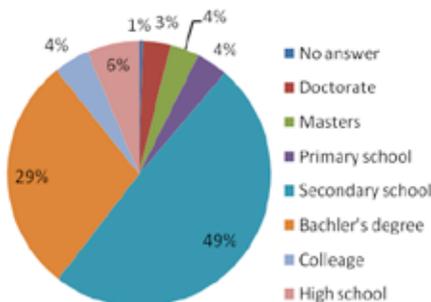
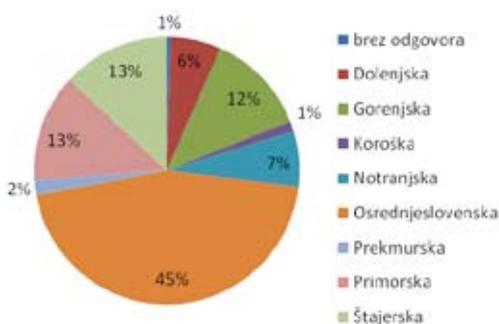


chart 4: **Region**

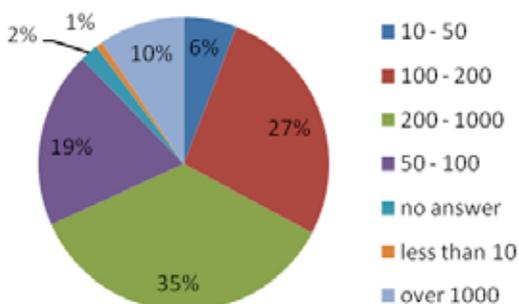


## The noticed presence of Africans in Slovenia

Although the number of foreigners in Slovenia has been steadily increasing over the past 3 years (EUROSTAT, September 2009), very little is known about the number of Africans living in Slovenia. In the survey we asked the participants to estimate the number of Africans living in Slovenia. Surprisingly, the largest number of participants answered that there are between 200 and 1000 Africans living in Slovenia. Altogether only 7% believe there are less than 50 Africans living in Slovenia, 27% estimated that their number is between 100 and 200, while 19% opted for the answer 50 to 100. The given results are seen in chart 5.

The results suggest that Africans are more and more noticed among the Slovenian society.

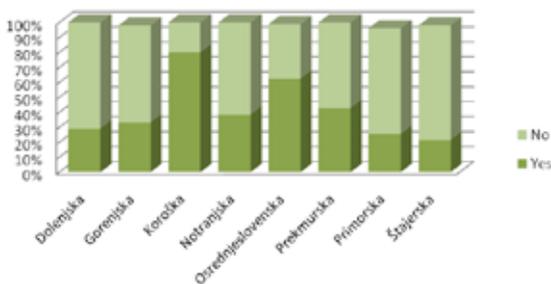
chart 5: **How many Africans do you think live in Slovenia?**



By asking the participants if they know any African in their region we tried to find out if Africans are present and noticed only in the capital of Slovenia and its surroundings. The percentage of participants from most regions that do know an African in their area vary from 22 % to 43%. The two regions that stand out within the results are Koroška and Osrednjeslovenska. A closer look at the results however, shows clearly that the low number of participants from the Koroška region account for the high percentage. Therefore, we can conclude that the result for the Koroška region should be disregarded due to the small number of participants.

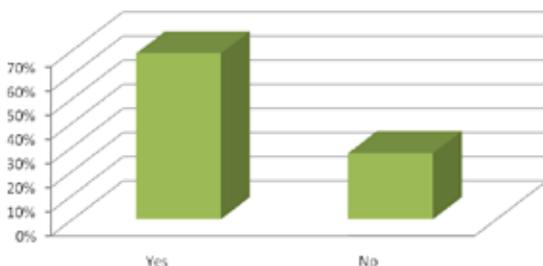
However, another region that stands out with a high percentage of individuals that do know an African in their area is Osrednjesloveska, with 63%. This, however, was actually an expected result, because Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, is located in it. A closer examination of the answers it could be suggested that the majority of the participants come from Osrednjeslovenska, so the result definitely reflects the real picture of presence of Africans in Slovenia.

chart 6: **Do you know any African in your region?**



Furthermore, the answers to the question, »Have you ever had a personal contact with an African in Slovenia?«, confirms that in fact the presence of Africans in the Slovenian society is well noticed and recognized. As we can clearly see in chart 7, almost 70% of the survey participants have had some sort of personal contact with an African in Slovenia. This answers could also suggest that Africans are integrating into the society, but more on integration will be said later.

chart 7: **Have you ever had a personal contact with an African in Slovenia?**



## Stereotypes of Africans among Slovenian society

Throughout history and up until the present, societies have been filled with different stereotypes and prejudice. One would think that in the modern world where so much information about different cultures, histories and ways of knowing the world is available, people would be better informed and stereotyping would decrease. But yet this is not the case.

Just by looking into an everyday life of the indigenous Slovenians, we can see, that stereotypes are present everywhere. For example, people like to say that people in Gorenjska are cheap, in Dolenjska they are lazy, in Štajerska they drink a lot, etc. People use stereotypes to understand even common everyday life experiences. It is not unusual for example, to hear people suggest that a certain gender or a Kranj or Celje license plate, can make a person a bad driver.

As a foreigner, one must struggle that much harder to be recognized for their abilities and achievements rather than just simply their place of origin. Furthermore, in Slovenia, a society that is quite homogenous (from Slovenia or surrounding Balkan nations), it is certainly difficult for those whose skin colour marks them as different, because they stand out of the crowd.

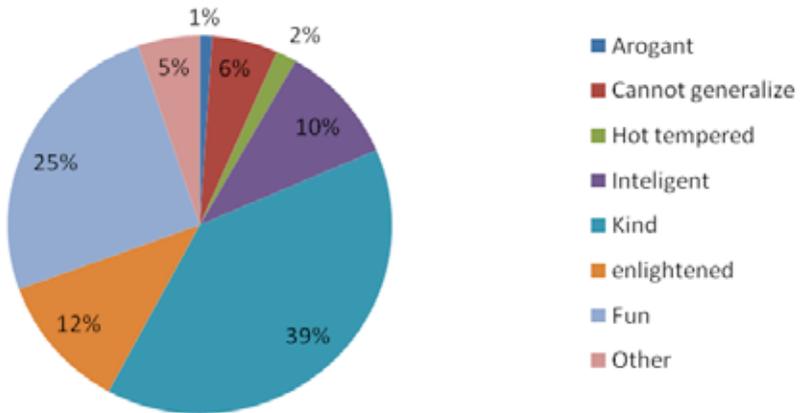
Oluwasegun Akinola, a Nigerian living in the United States of America, one of the most diverse countries in the world, explains in his article the difficulties he, as an African, faced when arriving to foreign land (Akinola, 2008). Having grown up in Lagos, the largest city in Nigeria and home to millions of inhabitants, he was well acquainted with its affluent residential areas, growing business districts, amusement parks, beaches, tourist resorts and so on. Given this, he was shocked by the ignorance of the Americans who asked him questions, such as: »Do you walk around naked in Africa?«; »Do you live in huts at Africa?«; even »Do you ride elephants in Africa?«; or »Have you ever chased a cheetah before?« Questions which more than anything showed the extremely impoverished nature of the American education system.

Regardless, in order to dispell these stereotypes we must first confront them. They must be defined and discussed, and as a society we must deepen our commitment to educating ourselves. All should be sincere and admit that in every society it is possible to find good people and bad people, but everyone deserves a chance or should have the right to be seen as who they really are in order to develop their true potential.

The survey posed many questions that were developed in order to get at some of the most common stereotypes of Africans in Slovenia. This was of course done with the knowledge that the most damaging stereotypes about Africans are those that people are reluctant to speak honestly about. According to the answers the most visible characteristics of Africans in Slovenia is kind (39%), followed by fun (25%) and enlightened (12%). Only 6% of participants answered that they cannot generalize. An option was given to the participants to suggest other characters. Altogether 5% of the participants wrote the following to be the most visible; cool, suspicious, nor-

mal, open, cautious, frightened, calm, confident, communicative, seductive, flexible, willing to participate, curious, peaceful, intrusive, always late, reserved, rhythmically gifted, and confused.

chart 8: **What do you think is the most seen character of Africans in Slovenia?**

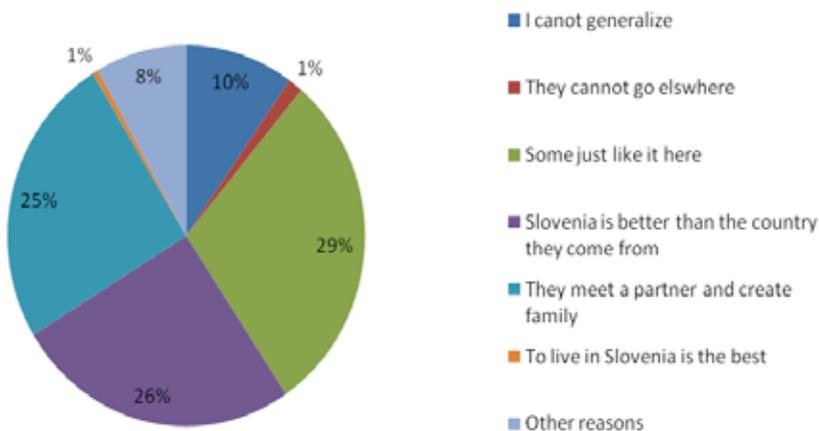


Within the context of this survey, it is possible to say that many of the adjectives chosen are 'positive'. However, we must be careful not to forget that none of these adjectives were 'hardworking', 'industrious', 'clever', 'capable' or other characteristics of people that we generally want to work for us or to work for. These characteristics fit more closely with those of entertainers.

But one of the most troubling stereotypes of Africans and their background is that they come to Europe because of hardship in their country of origin. Unfortunately, 'Africa in hardship' is perhaps the most common picture of Africa available in Western media. They show the economic, political, environmental and social problems that Africa is facing, without paying hardly any attention to other things that are happening on the continent and within its various and diverse nations. It is very rare to see the well developed part of Africa.

In this survey, participants were asked why they think Africans decide to live in Slovenia. The results are shown in Chart 9. Again, surprisingly, only 10% said, they cannot generalize. 29% of participants believe they just simply like it here, up to 26% believe that Slovenia is better than African countries, and 25% think, an African decides to live in Slovenia because they meet a partner and create a family.

chart 9: **Why do you think, an Africa decides to live in Slovenia?**



From charts 8 and 9 it is possible to suggest that these participants were willing to answer on a topic they likely had very little knowledge about, given the small numbers of Africans in Slovenia, and the dearth of responsible media coverage. Given that such a small number answered that they can not generalise (6 and 10%) we would suggest that their answers are likely heavily influenced by stereotypes gathered through Western culture production on African. Regardless, there is clearly much work to be done with regard to fighting stereotypes and prejudice. A society can only consider itself just when it is knowledgeable enough to give every individual a chance to develop their true potential and truly integrate into the society.

According to the synthesis report and comment paper of Multi-regional Operational Programme to Combat Discrimination for the PROGRESS programme of the European commission for employment, social affairs and equal opportunities, the third sector and NGOs have a big role to play in action on the mentioned issues, for they are more flexible and have more information and cooperation from the groups affected. That is why relatively a lot of funding from EU and it's member's governments is going to NGOs, so that discrimination and prejudice in the society are replaced by integration and equal opportunities for all.

## Living in unity or xenophobia?

The purpose of this survey was not only to find out how well Africans are integrated into Slovene society, but also, among others, to find out, how indigenous Slovenians feel about interacting and living with Africans when it comes to everyday activities. We asked a series of questions intended to put the participants in an everyday situation where they might meet an African and asked them if African involvement would bother them.

Although the vast majority of the participants seem not to have any prejudice when it comes to interacting with Africans, nevertheless some individuals for example don't care if someone from the extended family marries an African but they would be bothered if someone from close family members would do so.

We can see in Chart 10 that 88% of the participants answered no to the question »Would it bother you if someone from your extended family would marry an African?« while only 1% answered yes and 11% don't care. Further in Chart 11 we can see that 86% of the participants answered 'no' to the question »Would it bother you if someone from your close family would marry an African?«, 5% answered 'yes' and 9% answered that they don't care. Although the difference is not a big one we can see that some wouldn't mind having an African as a distant relative but would mind to have an African within close family members.

chart 10: **Would it bother you if someone from your extended family would marry an African?**

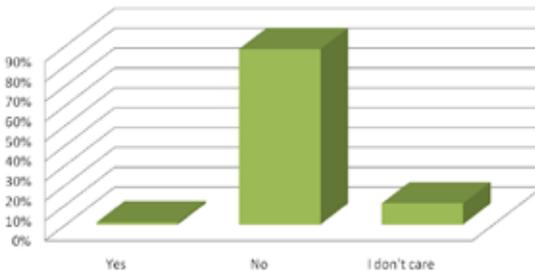
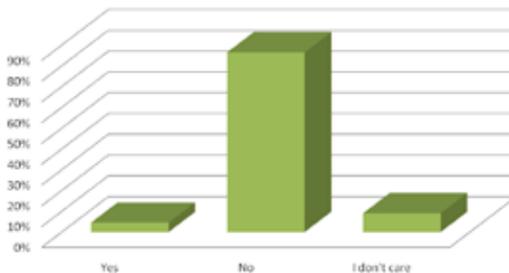


chart 11: **Would it bother you if someone from your close family would marry an African?**



In the survey the participants were also asked the following questions »Would you allow an African to educate your child?«, »Would you allow your children to play with African children?«, and »Would you allow an African to babysit your child?«. The answers were also surprisingly positive, because the vast majority answered 'no', and only a small percentage answered 'yes' or that they don't care. The results, as seen in charts 12, 13 and 14, suggest that most of the the participants in this survey are open enough to welcome an African into their private lives. But every day we can hear from Africans living in Slovenia that they do face a lot of difficulties while trying to be accepted into the families of their partners.

We have also heard of stories and difficulties of Africans while trying to find employment or trying to rent an apartment. Given these complaints, the participants were also asked if they would like being employed by an African, if they would employ an African and if they would rent out their property to an African. Results to these questions are seen in Charts 15, 16, and 17. In comparison to the answers presented in Charts 12, 13, and 14, there is a slightly smaller percentage that answered 'yes' but a bigger percentage said that they don't care. These responses suggest that some members of Slovene society are open enough to accept Africans not only in their personal, but also in professional or business aspects of life.

chart 12: **Would you allow an African to babysit your child?**

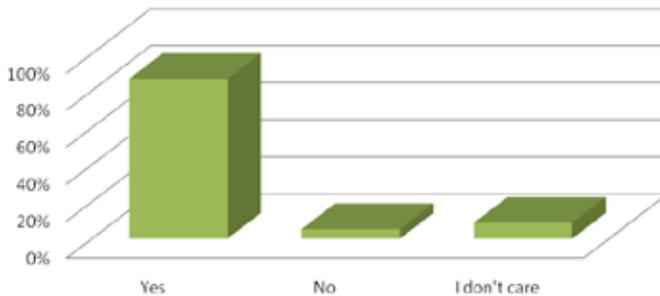


chart 13: **Would you allow an African to educate your child?**

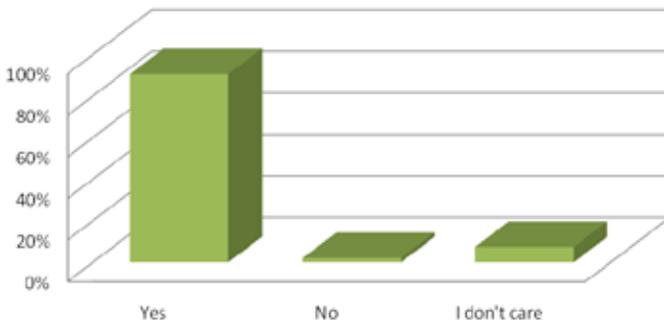


chart 14: **Would you allow your children to play with African children?**

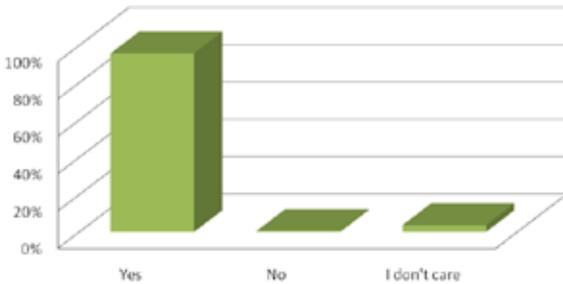


chart 15: **Would you like being employed by an African?**

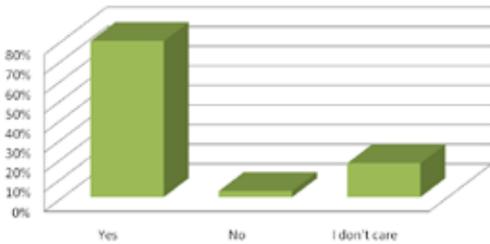


chart 16: **Would you employ an African?**

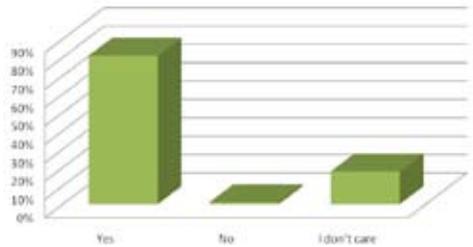
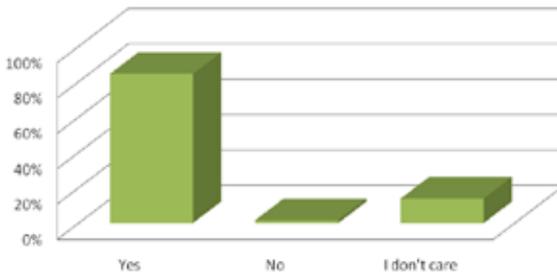


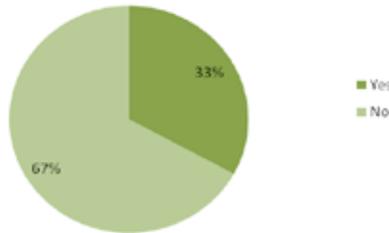
chart 17: **Would you rent out property to an African?**



Most would agree that for any successful integration to take place, both Slovenians and Africans must fulfill a particular role. There has to be balanced cooperation between both sides in order to achieve full integration and interaction of both worlds if truly we want to strive towards a multi-cultural society.

Therefore the participants were asked to answer if they think Africans should do more to integrate themselves into Slovenian society. Up to 33% answered with a confirmative answer, and 67% believe that Africans do not need to do more in this area. The results are shown in Chart 18.

chart 18: **Do you think Africans should do more about integration into the Slovenian society?**



The participants were also given an option to specify what they believe could or should be done by Africans in order to boost the progress of integration. As seen in Chart 19: 28% believe that more social, cultural and sports events are needed; 15% would like to see Africans doing more with regard to informing and educating Slovenian society; 8% believe Africans should be more present in the media; 7% think learning the Slovenian language is the key to successful integration; 7% believe Slovenian society should do more; 2% would like to see more business cooperation between Slovenians and Africans; and the remaining participants of the survey didn't give any concrete suggestion or they just didn't know what to suggest. The results suggest that there is a lot to be done, especially in terms of organizing more social, cultural and sporting events. Further, there is clearly an even more urgent need for discussions and educational programs to stimulate the process of integration of Africans in Slovenia. Out of all participants of the survey, 93% said they would like to know more about Africans and only 7% said that they don't wish to know more about them, as seen in table 1.

chart 19: **What should/could Africans do to improve their integration?**

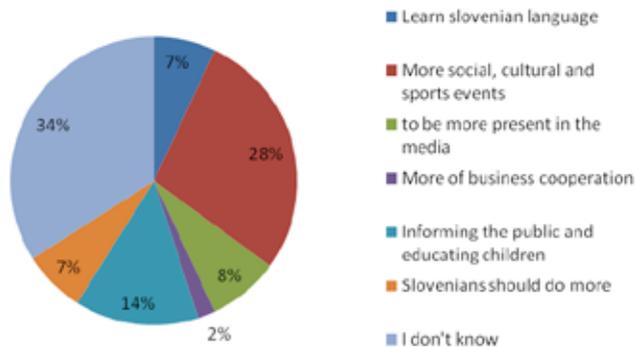


table 1: **Would you like to know more about Africans?**

YES	93 %
NO	7 %

## Your thoughts about an African when he passes by

It is a generally acknowledged fact that since Slovenia has become a full member state of the EU and Schengen it is becoming a more diverse and multi-cultural society, so it shouldn't surprise us anymore to see more and more individuals with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

In the survey every participant was asked to give an open answer on what goes through their minds when they see an African walking on the streets of Slovenia. Out of all answers, up to 33% answered that they do not think anything special, and the remaining shared their thoughts with us. Some of the most interesting statements are listed below and certainly they offer much material for stimulating debate in future.

- »I don't think anything. But I do look at him, because he's dark-skinned and different attracts and interests us. Unfortunately it is often understood as negative. But I do try not to stare too much.«
- »How very few they are in Slovenia.«
- »Basically I don't bother myself with it too much. I don't find it strange, wrong or disturbing. I don't pay attention to these things.«
- »What goes through your mind when you see a Slovenian on the streets of Slovenia?«
- »That I live in a modern society where color of the skin or religion is no more important. When I see an African on the street I get a good feeling. «
- »When I see a dark-skinned person (not necessary an African) I still pay more attention to him/her than to others – I notice the difference. Sometimes I do watch them, but I try that isn't obvious (since it's not polite to stare at people, especially because they have a different skin color). Well, lately it has become a more common thing to see a dark-skinned person on Slovenian streets, so I'm getting used to it (and I don't find it so special anymore).«
- »Europe for white, Africa for black.«
- » How does he/she feel, when most look at him/her as something odd...«
- »I think of Africa and its beauties, wonderful people and children, music, ethnic traditions/dances, suffering, colonialism, slavery, desert, sickness.«
- »I always look, because I'm not used to it, and then I try to hide it and behave normally, so the person scared, and then I feel guilty. Otherwise I find it good and I welcome the fact that we have a diverse society with people from all over the world. I find it great for a multicultural, reach, tolerant environment. So, I'm always thrilled to see an African or any other foreigner.«

- »I don't think anything. I simply pass and the story ends there. I don't belong to any neo-Nazi or patriotic organization but I am a proud white Slovenian, and it's working fine for me so I am proud of it. I like a view of white people on my street, in my city and my country. It literally fucks me up (pardon my French), that a dark-skinned person can publicly broadcast their pride for their color of their skin, roots and all that black power shit and at the same time all white people sympathize with them. But when a white person shows their pride of their skin color they are immediately tagged as a Nazi, racist and non-tolerant with an excuse that dark-skinned people have been suppressed for so long and because of that they have the right to publicly show their pride for their skin color. All those Martin Luther Kings and company are pure bullshit. They were repressed, it passed, now they are free – deal with it. One way or the other I know you will mock my writings and mark it as childish, but for a minute forget about everything and read this: I am a Slovene, I like it in Slovenia, I love Slovenians and white people and I don't need black people to decorate Slovenia. I am not interested in their culture, history, their music talents nor other arts. Eat this and get it into your heads. I hope you will understand the point of my writing.«
- »So Slovenians are not so closed that others come to live here! I think this is a proof that the Earth is a small planet, where it is beautiful, that we are not divided amongst ourselves but we allow a rainbow. But firstly I think how brave he is to go from his birthplace and settled somewhere else.«
- »That maybe Slovenians will have a multicultural way of thinking once.«
- »I have to say that I still look at them. I admit it's because the color of their skin. But probably people in some places in Africa, where the population is mostly black, they look at a white man, so I don't think this is a big deal.«
- »These are rhetorical questions. In Slovenia there is so much of fascism, nationalism and xenophobia that it is horrible. I (and people like me) would like to live in a society where each diversity is encouraged, understood and heard. There is nothing special to see an African on the street. In Yugoslavia, they used to come here to study because of the political connections. Today the world is global!!!«
- »Slovenia needs multiculturalism, because otherwise it's just fenced in its gardens. A lot of foreigners – that's what makes us reach, we get new experiences, we can learn something from them. When they walk on the streets I monitor their movement, for they walk so naturally.«
- » Hm... What a nice skin color ... Which country is he/she from? ... How come he/she is here in Slovenia? ... What type of job does he/she have? Since I never see any in a job where they deal with customers.«
- »Look, nigger:}«

## Conclusion

Overall, the results of the survey were quite positively surprising. Analysis of this survey seems to suggest that there are certainly segments of Slovenian society who are open enough to accept and embrace African people.

It is safe to say that more events and activities are needed where Slovenian citizens can learn more about Africa and African people. Even though there was not a representative selection in this survey, on average few Slovenians had come in contact with Africans in their regions and communities. Given this, and given the lack of quality media coverage, there is an obvious need for increased interaction and better educational opportunities. Hopefully more activities as mentioned would help to destroy stereotypes among Slovenian society and provide spaces in which Africans can advance themselves and become a more active and contributing members of Slovenian society.

## Sources and literature

Answers of participants of survey, What do you think of Africans living in Slovenia?, executed by Association of Nigerians in Slovenia, June 2009

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/13726/> Council of foreign relations  
30. 11. 2009

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/main\\_tables](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/population/data/main_tables) European commission, Eurostat 30. 11. 2009

An experience of a Nigerian living in USA

<http://readthisorelse.wordpress.com/2008/12/03/stereotypes-of-africa/>  
03. 12. 2009

Peer review <http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu/> 08. 12. 2009

Progress programme <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en> 08. 12. 2009

The Nigerian Association of Slovenia is a non-governmental and non-profit organization that has been operating since 2005. It was created with the main aim of promoting intercultural dialogue between Slovenians and Nigerians and in general Africans living in Slovenia. This association seeks to assist and promote the overall integration of Nigerians into Slovenian society, good understanding between Nigerians, and greater tolerance towards minorities. It further participates in humanitarian and development activities, encourages the promotion of Nigerian culture, and promotes peace and unity through sports. The Nigerian Association hopes to provide opportunities through which peoples from a diverse backgrounds can participate, develop skills, and learn through cultural and educational activities.

In June 2009 the association prepared and carried out an online survey entitled 'What do you think of Africans living in Slovenia?' The survey primarily sought to begin a conversation about what Slovenians think about the presence of Africans within their society, start to think about what stereotypes of Africans might exist, and further to discuss whether or not the Slovene public believes that Africans are making enough effort to integrate themselves. The resulting answers can be seen as a good starting point for further reflection, discussion, and activities that are aimed at the better integration of Africans into Slovenian society.

