

# THE STORIES: VUKASIN



First name: **VUKASIN**

Last name: **NEDELJKOVIC**

Age: **41**

Country of origin: **SERBIA**

Living in **Ireland** since: **2006**

## SHORT SUMMARY

Vukasin is married with children and arrived in Ireland in 2006 from Belgrade, Serbia seeking refugee status. When he arrived he was housed in a direct provision center. He found it very difficult at the beginning to cope with the environment. His strategy for coping grew from his creative background in the Arts he has a BA in photography from his studies in Belgrade. He started to take photographs and conducted video interviews of other Asylum seekers and his surroundings. This creative process helped him cope with “incarceration and confinement” which in this author’s opinion is a damning indictment of the Irish government’s treatment of Asylum seekers. After a number of years Vukasin eventually got his papers and permission to stay in Ireland and he did an MA in IADT and continued to document these centers and continued to work on the visual representation of asylum and direct provision in Ireland. He is currently working on his Phd in DIT in Dublin the basis of which is his life in pictures documenting direct provision centers and their inhabitants throughout Ireland. For further reading and information please go to Asylum Archive.

## “... MY RADIO INTERVIEW BROADCAST LIVE ACROSS SERBIA”

### VUKASIN’S STORY CONFLICT AND ESCAPE FROM BELGRADE

Vukasin was a student in Belgrade at the height of the Balkans war in the period between 1991 and 1999. Serbia was part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia which broke up in 1992. Serbia was dominated by Slobodan Milosevic as President of Serbia. Milosevic was ruthless in removing any opposition to his ruling Serbian party and gained direct control of the military and security forces in 1997.

At this time Vukasin was active against Milosevic and was targeted by security forces in Belgrade, incarcerated and was tortured. The main event which brought about his arrest was the result of a radio interview he gave which was broadcast across Serbia condemning Milosevic and his politics in 1996. As a result of his treatment at the hands of the security forces Vukasin was traumatised and has suffered from ‘post traumatic stress disorder’ (PTSD) which is widely diagnosed in people who survive war over a sustained period of time such as the Yugoslavian war which lasted 10 years. After his release from captivity Vukasin on advice from family and friends fled Belgrade living in various locations and eventually arrived in Ireland in 2006 seeking Asylum and Irish citizenship.

**Everybody who is in the system should be allowed to stay.**

### STRUGGLING IN THE NEW SOCIETY

In addition to Vukasin’s coping strategy visually documenting his surroundings living in the direct provision center in Ireland between 2007 and 2009,

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Vukasin was always looking to education as a way of making a better life for himself and eventually his family. When he received his papers he began and completed an MA in Visual Arts Practice in the Institute of Art, Design & Technology, (IADT). Vukasin is currently working on his PhD in DIT in Aungier Street, Dublin. He has a young family and finds it very difficult to work, care and study all at the same time. He is also financially challenged as he is funding his own study after initial 'SUSI' funding for the first two years was stopped because he is earning too much which he disputes. He will now try and apply to the IRC for funding for the next two years. We touch on the topic of Ireland's contribution or response to the refugee crisis engulfing Europe and how little such a relatively wealthy country as Ireland is doing to help the situation. Vukasin has all the statistics ready and when I ask what more should we be doing to help the struggle refugees are experiencing he responds: *"I think that Ireland is really in a position where, those 4,500 thousand people who are in the system should be allowed to stay without any, any, eh, further delays or consequences. I wouldn't call it an amnesty... but I think everybody who is in the system already should be allowed to stay and then we can close direct provision centres and open a new chapter. Sit down together, at the table, and say what is the best way to proceed forward with the new people coming in?. But the problem is the people are not coming in... at all. Very few anyway".* He has a theory as to why this is the case... *"I think the message has been sent to homes to those countries where people are seeking asylum, where people are from, is very, very negative about Ireland. You know, so Ireland did succeed in that. So if I have a friend who asks me 'I would like to come to Ireland to seek asylum' say from a war torn country I would say maybe choose different country to seek refugee status than Ireland. So that message has been sent to Africa, to Middle East, to Syria, and to problem countries – so that is kind of problematic. Then we have the weather, you know people are not really used to this type of weather*

*either. And geographically it's very hard to reach Ireland because it's an Island, you know. So, em, eh,... It is sad to think that less and less people are coming in this country because I think Ireland can benefit more from the multiculturalism".* I mention that I am not proud to be Irish in respect of this topic and apologise for a flippant remark that we can't change in the Irish weather but should certainly change our attitude and conflicts surrounding refugees and grant all 'legitimate' direct provision people Irish citizenship as a matter of urgency.

## BELONGING AND GIVING BACK TO SOCIETY

Vukasin is married and settled in Ireland and has a very strong sense of belonging despite his recent study difficulties. To help him overcome this he thinks of all the help and support he has received to date and mentions IADT very favourably in this regard: *"I have had really amazing support, facebook for example, so social media has really played a major part in asylum archive his main project work. So the help I get from academics, visual artists, activists... Is tremendous. And so we can share that support... and support from my family, my wife and the children and from my supervisors. And so, yeah I get good support, not financial support, not as much as I would like so. It's moral support and encouragement to keep going."* On next steps? *"Well perhaps if I can complete my PhD, and I defend it successfully at the viva, I can write a book or perhaps a book can be published out of the thesis. So that's something I can give back to society. And I am also thinking of applying to get funding for a post doc – to maybe focus on similar issues but outside of Ireland. And then to do comparative analysis perhaps. Because I believe will we find very close similarities, you know, in the way people are who are so marginalised and vulnerable, are treated, across the board, really. This he feels would inform other governments and policy makers and benefit society."*

I get a lot of moral support to get going.