

## Oral History Kosovo

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**Narrator:** In the third year, because I had four years in high school, I was at the general gymnasium, I started working in the third year.

**Interviewer:** Where did you work?

**Narrator:** I worked as a saleswoman at Grand Store, I noticed my mother at that time didn't get paid enough at Amortizatorë. My grandfather's pension was very low, I don't know how much it was at that time, 40 euros, or 30, I don't know. As I told you, my father worked in the private sector, in a *qebaptore*<sup>1</sup> but didn't, they would delay his salary for a month, two. So, he never had a set date when he got the salary. He always took it in a disorderly way, we never knew when they would give it to him. And I noticed, I noticed it wasn't enough for my mother, even though she never said it isn't enough or "I don't have money," but there are some things you can see.

And I wanted to and I said, "I want to work." She said, "Finish school first, then you can work." I said, "I will finish school and work." And I started working and going to school. So, I went to school from 8:00 until 13:00, at 13:00 I left school, at one thirty I left for work and worked from 14:00 to 22:00 at night. And it was a very tiring period, very. Sometimes it happened when I went home I sat down to eat and until my mother made my food, I fell asleep, sitting on the couch. She said, "Woke up, do you want to eat?" I said, "I don't want food." I would just fall asleep, I couldn't because I was too tired.

Then, when I also needed to learn, even though I worked, I never stopped learning. I always had good grades, I always found the time to learn when I had an exam or something, it would happen that I woke up at 5:00 in the morning, I woke up and studied from 05:00 to 07:00. Then I got ready for 8:00, you know to be at school. My school wasn't very far, a ten-minute walk. So, that time was very tiring, my immunity weakened, and the tiredness, and I got psoriasis, a skin condition. The doctor told me it formed from the stress, from the tiredness, the moment you get it, it appears from the age of 18 to the age of 25.

And I was at that age that I got tired a lot and from the age of 17, 16-17 years old, I got psoriasis. In the beginning, I didn't even know what it was, I just noticed my skin was getting red. Then my mother said,

“You have to go to the doctor, you have to go to the doctor,” I said, “When I have the day off.” You know, because I was also working and I couldn’t wait to have a day off, I didn’t want to go to the doctor. I found the time, I started using creams and so, they said, “It doesn’t go away, you just have to take care of it.” But, that time was very tiring, especially the last two years, I had to work and go to school. University...

**Interviewer:** Tell me, explain it...

**Narrator:** Yes?

**Interviewer:** What kind of a job was it?

**Narrator:** The job, the job, I worked as a saleswoman, I had to, we were open from 08:00 to 22:00, how many hours, around eight hours, right? We stayed on foot for eight hours, we weren’t allowed to sit and we were obligated to wear high heels. They didn’t allow you to go in flats, they didn’t even let you in. So I took the heels at school, so when I got there, I would take off my sneakers and wear the heels. It was hard, because first from 8:00 the tiredness from school, then work for eight hours, it was too much, my body and feet hurt.

When I think about it today, I wonder how I could do it, maybe because I was young, you know. When I think about it today, I think I wouldn’t be able to stay like that even for two hours. We weren’t allowed to sit even for a minute. Even when we ate, when we had a break, we made food there, we had a kitchen. When we went to eat, we had to eat in a rush, we finished lunch in ten minutes. If the boss came and found you eating, he might have yelled, “Why are you eating all day long?” Even if we had just started eating. It was a lot of pressure, nonstop...

**Interviewer:** The pay?

**Narrator:** The pay was very low, very low, they gave us around 200 euros and they didn’t give it to us on time, they delayed for five, six, ten days. Even if you asked for it, you know, you said, “I need it for something.” They said, “I don’t have it. Wait.” You know, it was very problematic in the private sector. Maybe now it’s a little better, but at that time, back then, it was very hard to work in the private sector, because they...

**Interviewer:** Did you have an employment contract?

**Narrator:** No, no, we didn’t have contracts. We didn’t have a contract, they paid us in cash, however they could. You had the salary, sometimes they gave 100, then 50, then 20, you know, however, it was convenient for them. It wasn’t just me, it was the same for all the workers. The issue was, for example, there were students who were in university, they had to pay the rent.

For example, it happened, I had a friend, she said, "You haven't paid me yet," he said, "Find them because I don't care, I will fire you. You will get paid on this date. She was asking once, "Give me the money because I need it," you know, they said, "We don't have it." It was always the employees' fault for asking for their money. The contracts were impossible, no one dared mention them. Maybe most of the employees didn't even know you had to have a contract because it wasn't applied anywhere.