



POLICING THE ROMA COMMUNITIES IN SLOVENIA - ELEMENTS FOR A EUROPEAN MODEL?

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Policing multicultural communities

- The Roma population, Europe's largest minority, is a target of persecution from each and every power in history and even in the present times, not only in countries that lack democratic tradition, but also in countries which consider themselves cradles of democracy.



<http://www.irr.org.uk/>

Policing Roma communities in post-socialist countries

- The Roma in post-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe face particular exclusion, given the rise of nationalism since the early 1990s.
- As Pogány points out, post-Socialist Central and Eastern European countries have defined themselves through ethnic and nationalist terms, which often exclude minorities.



<http://www.presseurop.eu/en/content/article/28071-jobbiks-anti-roma-crusade>



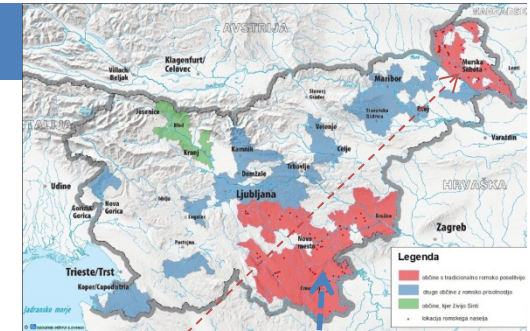
<http://greenreview.blogspot.de/2011/03/neo-nazis-assume-police-powers-in.html>

Policing Roma communities in post-socialist countries

- Far from a mere problem of rhetorical acceptance, Roma have increasingly become targets of skinhead attacks, mob attacks and arson.
- The end of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe also meant an end to welfare benefits such as housing and health care, which had been distributed automatically to every citizen.
- As such, the newly gained freedom ironically marginalized the Roma further than before.

Roma in Slovenia

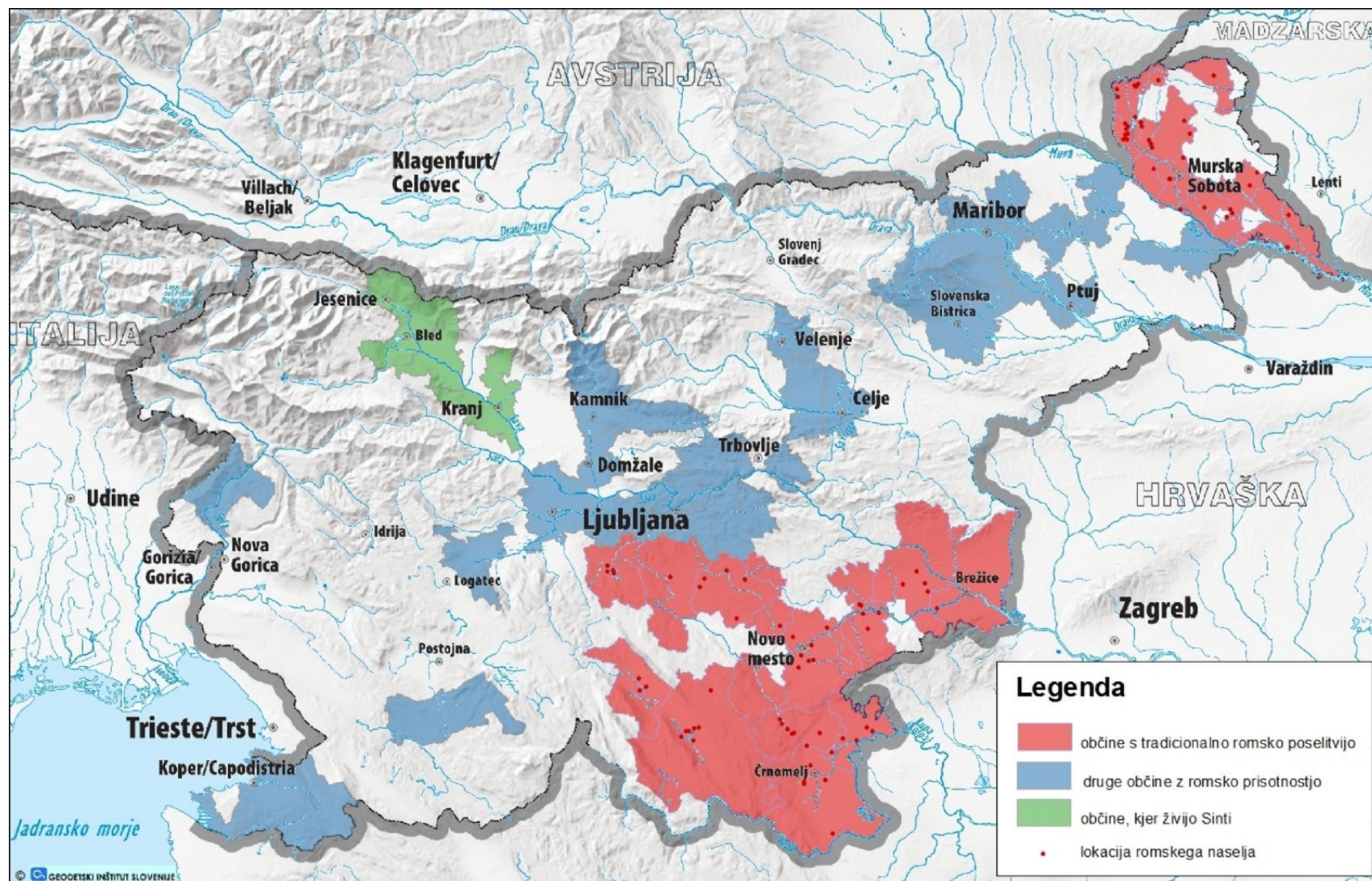
- Experts believe that the true population numbers are between 7000 to 12,000 people which is less than 1% of the total population.
- Roma primarily live in one of the 130 settlements in the country, one-third of which are illegal by virtue of resting on private or municipal land.
- According to Stropnik (2011), at the time of land reform, many local Slovenes did not view the Roma as deserving of legal settlements because of their reputation for criminal behavior.



Vs.



Roma in Slovenia



Izdelal: Geodetski inštitut Slovenije

Security issues regarding Roma population

- a) Issues within the Roma settlements
 - e.g. poor infrastructure, unregulated ownership
- b) Issues between Roma population and the local community
 - e.g. noise disturbance complaints
- c) Intra-ethnic rivalry
 - e.g. conflicts between rival Roma families

Training for police and for Roma representatives in Slovenia

- The joint-training program was envisioned by police leaders after a 2003 incident near Murska Sobota.
- In the Roma village of Pušča, a riot erupted between Roma, but police managed to calm down the dispute.
- However, the content of the dispute continued and intensified afterwards leading to another riot between Roma in 2005 which unfortunately took the lives of two victims.

Training for police and for Roma representatives in Slovenia



- Policy Academy began with the project Policing in a multiethnic community, an intensive training program for police officers.
- During 2-day-long training sessions, the police trainers reinforce prior entry-level training about human rights and multiculturalism and then bring in Roma leaders to teach police basic conversational Romani and Roma customs.

Training for police and for Roma representatives

- One of the follow-up steps of the above training courses was
 - an introductory course in the Roma language (40 lessons) and
 - a project to inform inhabitants of certain Roma settlements about legislative provisions concerning typical offences in certain areas and thus non-criminal incidents, causing discomfort to the neighboring population.
- To date, more than 1700 police officers have participated in the joint training in nearly all the regions of Slovenia.
- Approximately 14 training programs of approximately 20 police officer participants are administered each year.





Evaluation of the training for police and Roma representatives

- Strobl, Banutai, Duque and Haberfeld evaluated this program in 2013.
- Evaluation shows the promise of such joint partnerships for other European countries struggling to provide safety, security, and justice for its Roma populations.
- Researchers find that the training program has unexpected benefits that transcend policing and may create opportunities for relationship-building in a more general sense between the police, Roma, and non-Roma in the community.

Evaluation of the training for police and Roma representatives



http://www.siol.net/novice/lokalne_novice/dolenjska_in_posavje/2010/09/romski_otroci_med_policisti.aspx

- ***Roma perspective on police:***

- a) Roma believe the program fostered progress in reducing community tension
- b) One Roma informant explained that he had for the first time ever felt morally comfortable with helping the police apprehend a violent member of his community because he believed that the police could now be trusted to handle him fairly and according to the law.
- c) Notably, three Roma leaders explained that of all governmental agencies and officials, the police were the most fair and respectful in dealing with them

Evaluation of the training for police and Roma representatives

- Overall, although some specific skills such as language, communication techniques, and cultural sensitivity were imparted to police through the training, the biggest boon to policing that the training offered was **the relationship-building** between the police and the Roma community.
- Examples have emerged that some Roma leaders who participated in the program have engaged **in mediation-like activity with the police** in order to respond to a variety of community tensions, from disputes over housing to intra-ethnic rivalry.

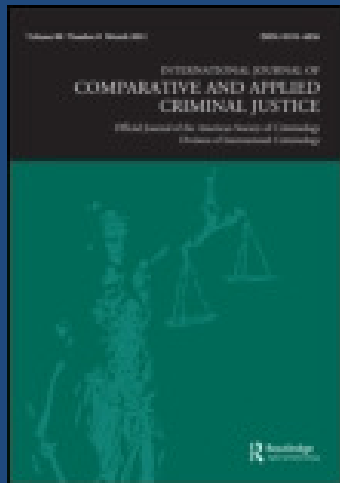


Conclusion

- The police training program, though unable to solve all problems, makes a significant dent in the prejudice and injustice in a local and daily routine way.
- It directly acknowledges that the Roma communities have a right to live in the country and be a part of the political and social life of their local municipalities.

Conclusion

- As one police director explained, working with police–Roma relations also has meant convincing the non-Roma local people to see the Roma as part of their municipalities, to break down some of the stereotypes that lead to the tensions and conflicts to which the police are called to respond.
- In this way, the police–Roma joint-training program is a small-scale version of the multi-ethnic democratic project in Slovenia and one that promises well for the small, but ambitious country.



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Thank you

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