



COREPOL

Conflict Resolution, Mediation and
Restorative Justice and the Policing of
Ethnic Minorities in Germany, Austria and Hungary

ROMA, POLICE AND SECURITY PROBLEMS IN SLOVENIA – FROM CONFLICT RELATIONSHIP TO PROBLEM SOLVING

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Roma in Slovenia

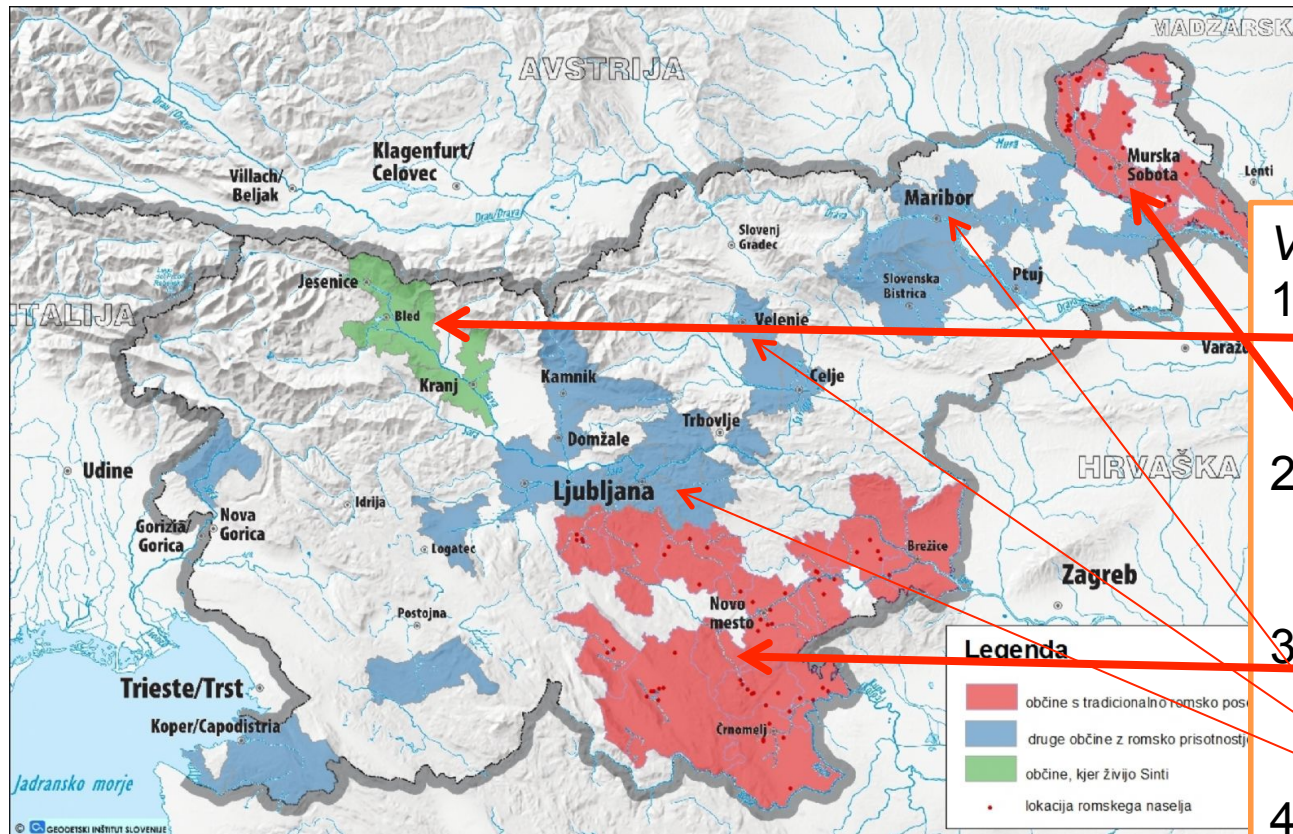
- Experts believe that the true population numbers are between 7000 to 12,000 people which is less than 1% of the total population.
- Roma primarily live in one of the 130 settlements in the country, one-third of which are illegal by virtue of resting on private or municipal land.
 - According to Stropnik (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.
- Four different Roma languages and four different religions
- 98 % unemployment



Vs.



Roma in Slovenia



Variations:

1. Sints, (Kranj , Jesenice, north of country)
2. Roma of Prekmurje (Murska sobota, Hungarian options)
3. Roma from Dolenjska region (Novo Mesto)
4. Ex Kosovo Roma (Velenje, Ljubljana, Maribor)

Legal status of Roma in Slovenia

1. In Slovenia, the Roma community is a minority community recognized by the Constitution.
 - Roma does not have the status of a national minority, but **is a minority community specially mentioned in the Constitution** and granted special protection by the law.
2. The constitutional provision was realized by the adoption of the Roma Community in the Republic of Slovenia Act (2007).
 - Slovenia is committed to ensure **special rights of the Roma community** in the fields of education, culture, employment, territorial management and environmental protection, health and social care, information and co-decision in public matters that concern members of the Roma community.
3. Slovenia is among those European countries that include Roma in the management of public affairs at the local level.
 - In the twenty municipalities where they have been present throughout history, members of the Roma community enjoy, in addition to the general right to vote granted by the Constitution to all Slovenian citizens, Roma have a special right to **elect a representative** to the municipal council.



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

Roma and police in Slovenia

- Police are often on the frontlines of conflicts between Roma and non-Roma and are certainly the first responders in any crimes involving Roma inhabitants as victim, perpetrators, or witnesses.
- The community policing as the dominant form of policing in Slovenia requires that the police must consult with community members, be responsive to their needs, work collectively to solve problems, increase transparency, be accountable for their actions and decisions, and mobilize the public cooperate with the police.
- For officers deployed in the field in the Slovenian context, training must confront the need to effectively deliver on these expectations in the context of often contentious local issues involving the ethnical Roma and the Slovenian majority.



Police training goals on Roma issues

- The program involves the coming together of police with local and national Roma leaders, all aiming to address the public safety and policing needs of the Roma minority in the country.
- 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.
- The police in turn educate the Roma about their rights and responsibilities in a democratic national context, including what to expect from police in terms of safety, security, and the nature of criminal investigations.

Gathering information in the field



Learning the basics of Roma language



Training and dialogue



Dialog on a field



Informing of the Roma community about their rights and duties



Police training in numbers

- From 2003 to 2013, 1950 police officers went through the training programmes (25%)
- An average of Roma community members per training was 3
- There were also NGO's e.g. Amnesty international, local community representatives present at trainings

First Roma policewoman working as police instructor at the Police academy

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHIPm4Rxr0k>





Evaluation of the training for police and Roma representatives

- Strobl, Banutai, Duque and Haberfeld (JJCCJ, USA & FCJS, UM, SLO) evaluated this program in 2013.

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.
- As one police director explained, working with police–Roma relations 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.