

THE POSITION OF ALOCHTHONOUS GROUPS IN SLOVENIA AND IN THE CITY OF MARIBOR

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1. Overview and Basic Data

Slovenia is a country of slightly less than two million inhabitants bordering Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Italy. From 1918 to 1991 it was part of former Yugoslavia; it was economically the strongest region of the Yugoslavia. During the period it formed an administrative whole, in contrast to other “historical” lands within the state, which were often partitioned. Slovenia was one of the country’s most ethnically homogenous regions, though it was never totally homogenous. Between World War I and II, there was a small influx of immigrants from other parts of Yugoslavia coming more for political-administrative reasons than economic ones. From 1918 to 1941 what we now call Slovenia, i.e., the Slovenian part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, did not encompass the Slovenian littoral. Thus there was no Italian minority in Slovenia. The littoral region was liberated during and after World War II. During the period 1918 to 1941 there was a German-speaking minority in Slovenia. It and a small Hungarian minority practically ceased to exist after being banished at the close of World War II and leaving with the German forces.

During the period of “Tito’s Yugoslavia” (1945–1991), Slovenia was a member state of the Yugoslav federation, styled as a “People’s Republic,” and later as a “Socialist Republic.” Slovenia’s population increased because a large number of people from the other parts of the country moved to Slovenia and took up residence and due to the acquisition of the littoral area, which added a small Italian minority. Initially, the influx was due to the establishment of federal administration over Slovenia. Later, no administrative barriers prevented itinerant workers from residing in Slovenia to take advantage of Slovenia’s status as the most prosperous Yugoslav republic with a per capita income eight times higher than that of the Kosovo, which was the least economically developed region.

Slovenia declared independence on June 25, 1991, but this did not bring about immediate emancipation. The process required an extended period during which the complexities of disuniting from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) were carefully solved.

In 1991 the population of Slovenia—amounting to 1,965,986—was more homogenous than any other former Yugoslav republic. Nevertheless, it was home to two autochthonous, i.e., indigenous, minorities: Italians and Hungarians, in addition to Roma. Alochthonous, i.e., nonindigenous, minorities had come after 1945. Some of these were state employees, but most were itinerant workers with the heads of families employed in manual work. The composition of non-Slovenians in Slovenia according to the 1991 census was as follows:

Table 1. Non-Slovenians in Slovenia

Group	Number	% of Slovenia
Italians	3,064	0.16
Hungarians	8,503	0.43
Roma	2,293	0.12
Albanians	3,629	0.18
Austrians	199	0.01
Montenegrins	4,369	0.22
Croats	54,212	2.76
Macedonians	4,432	0.22
Muslims	26,842	1.36
Germans	546	0.03
Serbs	47,911	2.44
Undeclared	9,011	0.46
Ethnic Yugoslavs	12,307	0.63
TOTAL	177,318	9.02

According to the 1991 census, ethnic non-Slovenians constituted 11.45% of the population, including some other groups who had less than 100 members. Thus Slovenia cannot be described as ethnically homogenous, as is sometimes done. Croats and Serbs are the most numerous ethnic groups, followed by Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims).

It should be noted that the census's classifications and conditions were conducted within the SFRY framework current at the time. This had a number of ramifications. First, one could declare that he/she was an ethnic Yugoslav. Also, one could declare to have no affiliation with any ethnic group. Furthermore, it was more favorable to be affiliated with certain ethnicities than others. For example, declaring oneself Roma was unfavorable due to their stigmatization. Non-Slovenians may have declared themselves as Slovenians. The number of Albanians in the cited census figures is low, probably due to the fact that they did not legally reside in Slovenia. As far as the census was concerned, they should have only been counted in Kosovo and Macedonia. Also, there were socially desirable advantages to becoming Slovenian.

Historically, Germans formed an ethnic group in Slovenia. In fact, until World War I they were politically privileged and in some regions the economically strongest group. The 1910 census counted 106,000 persons who were "domestically German speaking." They left Slovenia after World War I, and particularly after World War II. Their exodus was most certainly carried out under pressure and was linked to ethnic Germans' collective support for the Nazis as well as their association with Germany's occupation regime. The number of Germans in Slovenia today is very small.

Nevertheless, the issue of a German or Austrian minority is not completely irrelevant (see section 3 of this chapter). There are claims that their actual number is larger than the one found in the census, due to pressure during the census. The Austrian government

expressed its willingness to help in resolving the issue and has not, thus far, created any conflict about it.

Roma are a specific group known throughout Europe. Traditionally, they were a nomadic people; today, they still live in a form of isolation from the rest of society. Even though official Slovenian documents still label them as nomadic (*Informacija o položaju Romov v RS, Poročevalec*, No. 18, 1995), it appears that they have ceased their nomadic lifestyle and are predominantly settled, though in substandard housing conditions. In contrast to the cited census data, official assessments speak of a larger number, of some 6,500 to 7,000 autochthonous Roma inhabitants in Slovenia. They are concentrated in the Trans-Mura and in the Lower Carniola regions. The group in Trans-Mura are somewhat better situated. In addition to the autochthonous Roma, a number left the other former SFRY republics and resettled in Slovenia during the 1980s, sustaining themselves through petty illicit trafficking. They live primarily in towns and many do not have their legal citizenship in order.

Roma are definitely on the margin of Slovenian society, insufficiently integrated and in need of special attention. Due to their marginalism, they are rarely employed, their children do not attend school to the extent that they could, they have a certain dependency on state welfare programs, they are in poor health and their life expectancy is lower than the Slovenian average. Section 3 describes the actions which have been taken to assist them.

For centuries in Slovenia, Italians and Hungarians have lived in areas close to the respective borders of their home countries. The littoral region is Italian. The Trans-Mura region is Hungarian. Their social position has basically remained the same in comparison to the ethnic Slovenian population.

In this section we have dealt only with autochthonous groups and presented a general overview of the alochthonous ones, highlighting certain general statistical data as well as problems with its interpretation. The other groups will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

2. Slovenian Independence

The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, adopted on December 23, 1991, and drafted after independence, contains special provisions for the protection of the Italian and Hungarian autochthonous ethnic minorities. Article 64 calls them “national communities” and specifically details their rights. The protection of their rights is effective regardless of their number. Their total populations are minute, especially in comparison to alochthonous minorities. In the regions autochthonous minorities have historically populated, they have special rights and protection. The implementation of rights is financially supported by the state and organized through minorities’ own “self-governing communities,” (to be explained below in greater detail) as they are styled in the constitutional parlance. Italians and Hungarians also have seats guaranteed to them in the national Parliament, each receiving one representative to be elected by direct ballot by those affiliated with the national groups. Laws pertaining to the rights and duties of the groups cannot be changed without the consent of their two members of Parliament (Constitution of Republic of Slovenia, Article 64, paragraph 5). The two members have all the rights of parliamentary deputies, though it has been voiced that they should be more restricted.

Besides the two minorities, the constitution additionally speaks of the protection of Roma, calling them a “community.” Article 65, which deals with their position, does not grant them the same entitlements as it does Italians and Hungarians, but it summarily stipulates that the protection of the Roma will be regulated by a legal statute. Such an all-encompassing protection statute has yet to be adopted, but certain provisions can be found in other legislation.

In addition to the autochthonous groups, there are—as indicated in the above statistical data—alochthonous ones, which are basically granted the right to nondiscrimination (Constitution of Republic of Slovenia, Article 14). The definition, content and coverage of nondiscrimination is not elaborated, but is rather dependent on the general state of democracy, economics and social welfare.

2.1. *Alochthonous groups*

In discussing alochthonous minorities, the following should be kept in mind: the former SFRY allowed dual citizenship, i.e., citizenship in republics and automatic, federal SFRY citizenship. The citizens of all republics had equal rights throughout the SFRY. Thus ethnic non-Slovenians in Slovenia enjoyed equal rights while it was part of the SFRY. When Slovenia was jockeying for independence, it invited non-Slovenians to opt for Slovenian citizenship at the Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia in the Letter of Good Intent, made public on December 6, 1990. The Letter of Good Intent also ensured “the right of all members of other SFRY republics residing in Slovenia to free cultural expression and the right to use their native language” (see section 3). The Citizenship Act of 1991 stipulated in Article 40 that Slovenian residents and citizens of other SFRY republics could petition for Slovenian citizenship within a six-month time frame and acquire it without further conditions. The provision did not stipulate that those acquiring Slovenian citizenship should renounce citizenship to the republic to which they previously belonged. Of the approximately 220,000 persons who were entitled to apply, some 174,228 did so. 170,990 of the requests were immediately granted by the administrative authorities (Komac 1999, 9). As there were no agreements with other post-Yugoslav states as to citizenship, these persons retained citizenship to the republic to which they belonged under SFRY law, thus leaving them with dual citizenship.

Some 30,000 citizens of former SFRY republics did not apply for Slovenian citizenship within the time frame, but some of them did so later. Those who were denied citizenship in 1991 were ineligible due to reasons of security and public order. Such persons included recently convicted criminals and some officers of the Yugoslav armed forces. Regarding the status of the latter group, it became a contested issue as to whether being an employed, commissioned or noncommissioned armed forces officer was, in itself, a threat to security or whether this should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Administrative bodies originally attempted to apply the former position, but yielded to the latter due to the activities and publically stated opinions of nongovernmental organizations.

Granting convenient access to citizenship to such a large number of ethnic non-Slovenians at an early stage was a strategic step toward the integration of this significant portion of the Slovenian population, currently accounting for 8% of the total. After

Slovenian independence they attained a position which brought them into equal standing with Slovenian citizens, enabling them to be employed, attain property, take part in the political process, etc. Opting for this solution was largely a product of the exceptionally liberate climate in Slovenia in the late 1980s. Slovenians claimed their republic was “the most liberal” among the socialist states. The political establishment was aware from the outset that resolving the issue would make the international recognition of an independent Slovenia easier. As it happened, Slovenian recognition was rather swift and included membership in regional and global organizations. Later, when economic conditions ceased to be favorable, particularly when large-scale unemployment saturated the country, public opinion on the measure ceased to be supportive. The prevailing attitude became one in which the easy and early granting of citizenship to ethnic non-Slovenians was regarded as too liberal. For example, in a 1993 Slovenian public opinion poll 45.2% of the respondents considered it admissible for Slovenia to revoke the citizenship grant (N. Toš (ed.) 1999, 254). This stance was supported for a time by certain political parties (e.g., the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia). The extent of the adverse attitude toward non-Slovenians is exemplified by another finding from a survey by the same researchers. A year later, in 1994, the majority of respondents (53.6%) agreed that “the number of criminal offences is rising due to immigrants” (op. cit., 418). But by this time, the majority of ethnic non-Slovenians had attained Slovenian passports, most were employed, a small portion were becoming rich and generally they were much better off than they would have been had they returned to their native republics. Those who did return to their native republics were mostly military officers and their families—and not many of them. There are no definite figures, but the estimated number of returnees, including the families of military officers, was not large. (Slovenia provides retirement allowances to former Yugoslav armed forces officers who resided in Slovenia, regardless of their republic of origin.) Also, the number of inhabitants from the other former republics attempting to enter Slovenia was increasing. They included refugees from war-torn areas as well as others.

By granting citizenship so liberally, Slovenia averted major interethnic problems and expedited international recognition. This was officially considered to be a sufficient measure in solving the problems of non-Slovenians. Indeed, the resolution of their citizenship problems definitively led to their full integration and a high level of assimilation. One reason for the ease with which they integrated was the wars in their homelands, which brought ruin to economies and infrastructure. Due to this fact, immigrants from these areas more willing to integrate and assimilate.

Slovenia could have opted for the recognition of these alochthonous groups as ethnic minorities, setting them on a par with Italians and Hungarians. At the time a few voices were requesting such a solution. On the political stage it was not an issue. In academic circles, however, Zdravko Mlinar underscored the numerical disproportion between the autochthonous minorities, who had been granted special rights, and the alochthonous minorities left without such rights. He stressed that there no real reason to separate the alochthonous and autochthonous groups. (Mlinar 1994, 80–82). The issue has not been settled in a clear way in international law, not even under the framework convention adopted by the Council of Europe in 1993, which stops short of stating whether alochthonous minorities should be considered minorities in the same way as autochthonous ones.

The other major problems regarding ethnic non-Slovenians in Slovenia pertain to minorities from the former SFRY republics (the problems pertaining to the position of Italians and Hungarians, and particularly of Germans, could be worked out only with foreign intervention). The following are a number of outstanding problems concerning the position of allochthonous, ethnic non-Slovenians:

1. *Slovenian residents, citizens of other SFRY republics, who did not apply for citizenship or were denied citizenship in 1991.*

The size of this group is not exactly known, but it has been estimated at between 20,000 and 30,000 (cf. Yearly Reports of the Guardian of Human Rights (in Slovenian), 1995–1998, particularly 1997).

This group found itself in an extremely disadvantaged position after February 26, 1992, when the Citizenship Act was put into effect. They were deleted from the register of inhabitants of Slovenia, as there was allegedly no legal grounds for them to remain there. The Act on Aliens categorized them as “illegal aliens,” regardless of whether they previously had residential status in Slovenia. They found themselves in a position that was dramatically inferior to “true” foreigners who had residence permits prior to Slovenian independence and who continued to extend their temporary residence permit or use their permanent one.

This deletion was considered as a legislative mandate that was put into effect, but not as a legal act. Therefore, no individual administrative act was issued, and deleted persons could not have their cases redressed or appeal to be reinstated. They became persons without a legally regulated status. Many did in fact reside in Slovenia and there were a few instances of their documents (drivers’ licences, identity cards, etc.) being confiscated and destroyed by the police. Some lost their jobs but not their retirement allowances.

This situation was emphatically declared to be unacceptable by nongovernmental organizations such as the Helsinki Monitor of Slovenia and by the Guardian of Human Rights of the Republic of Slovenia, an ombudsman organization. The latter used yearly reports (1996–98) and direct action to initiate change in the regulations. Since the situation was damaging to families, the organization invoked international regulations on the protection of the family. They also brought up regulations concerning humanitarian issues, etc. The media eventually paid attention to the issue.

Persons without regulated status could attain a residence permit only with great difficulty, after proving that they had financial resources and housing and that they had not committed criminal acts and, therefore, were not a threat to law, order and security.

The situation has recently been remedied. According to the new Act on Aliens (1999), they are entitled to receive permanent residence permits without undue administrative procedure.

2. *Officers of the former Yugoslav Army and their families.*

Though not all of these persons found themselves in a difficult position, many did. They had a variety of problems.

Firstly, some military officers were denied citizenship, some had difficulty in receiving residence permits and others did not apply for citizenship at all. Former military officers living in Slovenia without Slovenian citizenship were unable to privatize their flats. In addition, they were rarely able to find steady employment.

Secondly, a large group of military officers and civilians employed by the Army, by following as well as breaking SFRY military rules, attained flats and dwelling rights during the moratorium period from July 7 to October 7, 1991.¹ During the moratorium, a number of military-owned flats were vacated by officers leaving Slovenia, and numerous officers and other persons attained documents that entitled them to use the flats. Some flats were even occupied without any permit at all. Slovenian authorities regarded all these transactions as illegal on the premise that Slovenia was sovereign at the time and that the Yugoslav military authorities were not entitled to dispose of the flats. Slovenian legislation later declared all SFRY military-owned flats as Slovenian state property to be operated by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Slovenia.

Judicial proceedings were initiated to evict the occupants of the flats and many judicial proceedings concluded with orders for eviction. A few evictions were carried out, but, in 1995, the Prime Minister of Slovenia, J. Drnovšek, demanded a temporary cessation of the evictions due to the public appeals of nongovernmental organizations. A government commission studied the matter and divided the flats into three groups. Depending on the legal conditions, one group of flats was to have its occupants evicted, another was to be privatized and remain in the occupants' possession and the other was to be leased to the current occupants. Nevertheless, nongovernmental organizations such as the Helsinki Monitor, regarding the commission's actions as harassment, took a stance against them as well as all of the proceedings against former SFRY officers. The issue has also been addressed by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. However, it hasn't been fully settled as judicial proceedings are continuing.

2.2. *Autochthonous Groups*

Though small in number, Italians and Hungarians, as the two autochthonous, national groups, were granted a special, constitutionally stipulated and legally implemented position for which no significant problems have arisen. The protection of these two minorities was not a new idea that was instituted during the emancipation process. Rather, it is a continuation of policies and arrangements elaborated during the socialist regime and adapted to pluralistic political conditions. The system of protection is basically a domestic instrument, an outgrowth of the Slovenian Constitution and, by and large, not imposed by international agreements and foreign pressure, though it is definitely in line with the established standards and endeavors of institutions like the Council of Europe.

The system of protection of the two minorities derives from the idea of positive discrimination for the sake of preserving and safeguarding minority groups. The protection is limited to the areas regarded as nationally mixed areas, where the two groups traditionally, autochthonously live. The protection is based on the following parameters:

¹ This was the period defined by the so-called Brioni Agreement (made between the Republic of Slovenia and Yugoslav authorities and appraised by the European Economic Community as a measure that would guarantee the resolution of the conflict in Slovenia). Slovenian authorities agreed not to undertake further steps in the independence process.

- *Linguistic rights* take on a number of forms. In mixed areas, state agencies, including judicial branches, must operate bilingually and make it possible for minority members to use their mother tongue. Documents are also issued bilingually. These include individual administrative acts and judicial judgments. In accordance with legal provisions, identity cards, passports, drivers' licenses, birth, death and marriage certificates are issued bilingually. Also, public signs are bilingual. This goes for toponyms, as well as for other official and business signs.
- *Educational rights* pertain to the minorities' opportunities for public schooling in their mother tongue. The law provides for such schooling as well as public financing in mixed areas for kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools. There is a basic difference in how this is implemented for each group. Institutions offering education in Hungarian at the above educational levels in the Trans-Mura region are bilingual, attended by both Slovenian and Hungarian children. However, all educational institutions operating in the littoral for ethnic Italian children are monolingual, teaching and administrating only in Italian. The disparity can probably be explained by the difference in political leverage of the two groups. Furthermore, though designed for Italian minority children, the institutions on the littoral are attended by some Slovenian children as well, which reflects the importance of learning Italian due to the influence of Italy. In all cases in mixed areas, children are required to learn both languages. It should be noted that textbooks and curricula are Slovenian, but in minority schools they are supplemented with units pertaining to Hungarian and Italian history, geography and culture. In advanced education, minorities may receive native-language instruction at two Slovenian universities, in Ljubljana and Maribor, in bilingual teacher training. This includes the training of kindergarten teachers.
- *The right to be informed in one's native language* has led to state-subsidized electronic media operating in the two languages. There is press in both Italian and Hungarian, though difficulties have arisen concerning this. In the former SFRY, the seat of the Italian Union, with members from both Slovenia and Croatia, was based in Rijeka—where their daily *La voce del popolo* as well as other Italian-language offerings were published. These institutions are still in operation, but due to small number of Italians in Slovenia and to the proliferation of press from Italy, the importance of these publications has been waning.
- *The right to use minorities' national symbols* includes the right to display flags of their state of origin.
- *Positive discrimination in legislation at the state and local level* means that each of the minorities is represented by a special deputy in Parliament (*Državni zbor*). Minority members vote as members of the general constituency. The same type of representation exists at the local level as well. It is even valid in Dobrovnik, a small municipality where Hungarians form a majority. Thus they are represented in the local council as a majority by general ballot and are allotted an additional council

member due to their status. In some municipalities, statutes allow two minority representatives. Dual voting has been a matter of constitutional litigation, but the Constitutional Court of Slovenia upheld the constitutional right (*Official Gazette*, No. 46, 1992 and No. 20, 1998).

- *The national minorities have their own autonomous governing bodies*, which are institutions of public law. The main task of these so-called “self-governing national communities” is to act as a link between the national minorities and the state. These bodies formulate minority policies regarding the implementation of minority rights. They are also entitled to unhindered communication with their mother country.

Roma have received special attention. They are protected, according to the provisions of Article 65 of the Constitution. The provisions anticipate that legislation will implement the protection. Thus far, no sweeping law addressing Roma problems has been passed. There are provisions in certain laws regulating specific issues. Interestingly, a provision of the Act on Local Government mandates that Roma are to have a special representative in all local councils of regions where they live autochthonously. Numerous local communities have not added this provision to their statutes. Only Murska Sobota, a town in the Mura, has arranged for a special Roma representative (*Poročilo o uresničevanju programa ukrepov za pomoč Romom v RS v l. 1999, 12*). This is indicative of the public's general disinclination to improve the position of Roma and to integrate them into society. Their housing remains very problematic and inadequate. To this end, the Ministry for the Environment and Housing would like to channel budgetary support to fund their housing in areas where they live autochthonously (*Poročilo 1999, 14*).

Steps were undertaken to improve the education of Roma children. Language is problematic. The few Roma children that enter kindergarten and elementary school speak only Romany while receiving instruction only in Slovenian. Naturally, this and similar conditions hamper their success and motivation and the advancement of their schooling. Reports speak of certain progress being made on the problem of language, though attempts to recruit educators from the Roma population has been fruitless so far.

Employment is another major problem for Roma. According to certain incomplete data, only 13% of Roma families live from income earned through employment in the workforce (*Informacija, Poročevalec 1995, 58*). There have been attempts to launch employment programs and schemes for Roma. Their lack of success thus far has been, in part, due to the lack of cooperation of local authorities (*Poročilo 1999, 5*). As to welfare, Roma seem to benefit significantly from government assistance programs with the number of persons receiving this type of support remaining steady at 1,300 (*Poročilo 1999, 6*).

While some headway has also been made with special Roma health protection, there has been more advancement in the field of culture, where special, Roma-oriented, bilingual broadcasts are aired by Radio Murska Sobota and Radio Novo Mesto. All these developments were the outcome of a 1995 Slovenian government decision, which grew out of interest in improving the Roma's social position. Official assessments of the measures' results state that they are unsatisfactory because of “insufficient harmonization between state agencies and due to the fact that the acceptance of the responsibility for the

implementation of the program is a joint task of all state agencies. . . . Cooperation between state agencies and municipalities is often too technical. . . ." (*Poročilo* 1999, 13). Between the lines of this bureaucratic parlance, one may discern the entrenched Roma way of life, immune to stimulus for change. Its difficulties are exacerbated by racist attitudes and impediments to transforming and improving Roma communities.

There have been media reports on rather numerous, unsettled matters and disputes regarding Roma living conditions. Some have focused particularly on the Lower Carniola region where Roma want to improve their living conditions and integrate with the majority population, but a lack of economic resources as well as available lots—plus unwillingness on the part of the Slovenian population to accept Roma—are still major obstacles in the process (see *Delo* 1999).

3. Ethnic Associations in Maribor

Maribor is the second largest city in Slovenia, with some 170,000 inhabitants. Traditionally, it was a manufacturing town. Its economy suffered at the beginning of the political changes. In the late 1990s the economy began to recover, though the unemployment rate was still high, at more than 10%. The city is home to an important hospital, a university and well-known theaters. Maribor had a large number of ethnic non-Slovenians during socialism, who, for the most part, have remained there.

Ethnic cultural associations in Maribor represent all but one of the city's major ethnic groups. Most ethnic associations have been founded in the last decade following Slovenian independence. We will consider only associations operating in Maribor, regardless of whether they function independently or are a branch of another organization. We will not consider religiously oriented groups.

A nongovernmental association, the Union of Cultural Societies of Maribor, coordinates the activities of all nonprofit cultural organizations and stimulates their activities. The association is linked to the State Fund for the Nonprofessional Arts and Culture. The mission of the Union of Cultural Societies is twofold. The first objective, managing cultural activities, is carried out by extending assistance to individual ethnic groups. It offers information and contacts in matters of registration and launching activities. Secondly, it strives toward multiculturalism by linking the activities of the numerous ethnic groups' societies. "Dance Draws People Together," the annual folkdancing festival, is a good illustration of its activities. The cultural societies of the ethnic groups in Maribor take part in this festival along with Slovenian cultural societies.

A notable unit of the Ministry of Culture is the Office of the Cultural Activity of the Italian and Hungarian Minorities, the Roma Community and Other Minority Ethnic Communities. The official title of this institution intentionally differentiates the groups in a way that reflects their constitutional definitions. At the same time the office treats all these groups equally when it comes to cofinancing their programs and projects. The secretary of the office, Suzana Čurin, considers the good practice in their work to be their direct communication with each organization as they strive to negotiate a financially feasible solution. In particular, she underscores "the positive concept of minority protection" in its dealings. This idea originates from state measures and endeavors. It

entails that each group be enabled to achieve a quality program, as opposed to a “negative concept,” whereby the state would simply finance proposed programs.

The office distributes funds to the three constitutionally differing groups: a) the Italian and Hungarian ethnic minority, b) the Roma community and c) other minority ethnic groups. A few of the many kinds of cofinanced areas are libraries, specific cultural activities, publishing, performances, cultural contacts with countries of affiliation and the preservation of language. In 1999 the office’s budget amounted to 105,465,044 Slovenian Tolars (SIT), or 105,000 DEM. The breakdown of the distribution between the three categories of ethnic organizations was: a) 90,207,394 SIT, b) 9,281,650 SIT and c) 5,976,000 SIT.

The programs and projects proposed for 2000 have significantly higher budgets. Due to consolidation, other minority ethnic groups currently receive a greater variety of drafted projects and programs. The basic direction of the Ministry of Culture continues to be the support of nonpolitical cultural programs under the principle of parity of all cultures.

Individual societies in Maribor which have minority status include:

- In 1991 an association for the protection of ethnic Germans, “The International Society Freedom Bridge” was founded in Maribor, but it has no connection with the Union of Cultural Societies. It is not a major organization and its activities are few and mostly concerned with occasional attempts to gain for the German minority the same status as Italians and Hungarians, which is defined in Article 4 of the statutes. Among concrete results, the president of the society mentions the introduction of the German language in liturgical services of the Evangelist Church in Maribor.
- Cultural Society “Sarajevo,” based in Maribor, is currently being established (as of autumn 1999). Membership has not yet been established. This society aims to bring together Slovenian residents of Bosnian origin. It is envisaged as a cultural society promoting the multiculturalism, religious tolerance and multietnicity of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the cultural sphere. The first activity to be launched is an art exhibition.
- The Macedonian Cultural Society “Biljana” started up in 1993. It is based in Maribor and is an affiliate of the Community of Macedonian Societies of Slovenia, which has its seat in Ljubljana, where there are five additional affiliates. Though it has over 200 members, it does not have its own premises but is expecting to acquire them soon. Its headquarters is presently at the address of its secretary.

The society is involved in a wide variety of activities. Since 1993 it has offered supplementary, afternoon instruction in the Macedonian language on the premises of a Maribor elementary school. Some 20 elementary school pupils currently attend the classes. Slovenia and Macedonia have made an agreement regarding the conduct of this instruction in Slovenia. It is fully financed by the Ministry of Education and Athletics.

A major sphere of activity is the folklore group, which meets weekly at the Maribor Union of Cultural Activities. The folklore group has had numerous performances in Slovenia and abroad, occasionally performing with other such ethnic groups. They hold performances on Macedonian state and church holidays.

The society is also involved in athletics and chess. There are competitions with other Macedonian groups and groups of other nationalities.

Members of the society mutually assist each other particularly through the Macedonian embassy in Slovenia in the area of Slovenian citizenship and the like. Members do not have major financial problems, as they are all employed and lead settled lives. For the 1999 war in the Balkans and the catastrophe in Kosovo, the society members organized a humanitarian drive for refugees who fled to Macedonia. The society collected enough food and garments to fill three trucks.

The organization cultivates contact with Slovenian society through sporting and folklore events. Their contact with Slovenian authorities is primarily established through the abovementioned union and the Ministry of Culture. Over the last two years the society has received financial assistance from the ministry (80,000 SIT and 450,000 SIT respectively). In 1998 the society received some assistance from Macedonia as well. Financial support also comes from donors and sponsors.

We asked representatives of each group to assess the attitude of the Maribor general public towards their ethnic group on a scale of 5 to 1 where 5 was excellent and 1 was poor. The president of the Macedonian organization responded that they are received very warmly everywhere.

As to future plans, the representatives of the society mention attempts to establish unity with other Macedonian societies (there is a splinter group in Maribor) and the expansion of activities, particularly in athletics.

The Serbian Cultural Society was founded at the end of 1998. Its headquarters is at the Serbian Orthodox Church in Maribor. It has no affiliates, but is itself affiliated with the Union of Cultural Organizations of Maribor. Membership is rising and currently there are some 140 members.

The activities of the society are focused primarily on the preservation of national identity. Church services are held at the Serbian Orthodox Church in Maribor. On St. Vitus' Day the group meets with other Serbian cultural societies in Slovenia. There is an active folklore group with 35 members, literary events are held and a newsletter is issued. In 1999 an exhibition called "Our Cultural Treasures" was organized. There are attempts to preserve the Serbian cultural heritage in other ways as well, in order to protect the Serbian ethnic identity, as "they do not want too much assimilation" in the words of the current society president.

The president of the society rates contact with the Slovenian public as good and gives the same evaluation on contact with the Union of Cultural Societies, the Fund for Amateur Activities and the Serbian Cultural Community in Ljubljana.

The society has no contact with Slovenian authorities, but they have received funds from the Union of Cultural Organizations and they also receive some funding from sponsors.

The president believes the public views his group in a relatively positive light, giving this area a good, 3–4 rating. He mentioned that recent war events had an adverse impact.

They have made plans for numerous activities. They hope to offer supplementary instruction in the Serbian language, and by these means they would like to attract youth to contribute to the established activities in Maribor. They hope to attract members who would be interested in singing, dancing, playing musical instruments and, in general, anyone interested in preserving their cultural heritage.

The Society "Romano pralipe" brings together people of the Roma ethnic group in Maribor and has acted as an independent organization since 1997 (Maribor Roma are alochthonous, as they have recently arrived from Kosovo). It is affiliated with the Union of Romany of Slovenia. It has some 170 members. Its activities are varied: they are active in the musical field, have their own folklore group, a drama section (performing in the Roma language) and they are also active in athletics, particularly football.

In addition to these activities, toward the objective of preserving cultural identity, the society promotes mutual assistance among its members. To this end, it communicates with Slovenian authorities regarding citizenship, residence permits and the like. Members of the society are also active in providing economic assistance to elementary school age children. According to the society's president some 10% of them are in a position that is economically unstable to the extent that it could effect their schooling. In general, numerous Roma are in need of economic assistance. The society turns to the Red Cross for help. The preservation of cultural identity and mutual economic support are objectives of equal importance.

According to information given by the society's president, they have contact with high authorities: the President of the Republic, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Athletics and the mayor of Maribor. The president of the society assessed the public perception of his ethnic community without using the numerical system. He did stress, though, that things made a steep turn to the better after the establishment of the society.

The society has wide ranging plans, including instruction of the Roma language. An issue at hand is the possibility of a textbook, as there is currently only a Romany-Slovenian dictionary. Also, plans have been made for the publication of a newsletter. Roma have expressed a wish that the Ministry of Education and Athletics make exceptions enabling them to receive teacher training for kindergarten and other levels by enrolling into the Faculty of Pedagogics on an affirmative action basis.

The Cultural Educational Society "Bashkimi" has brought together ethnic Albanians as of 1998. Until its independent establishment this association was run by the Democratic Union of Kosovo, which has a branch in Maribor.

The society's headquarters is in Maribor, but as to membership the president could give no exact figure. He estimated it was in the hundreds and was primarily male, but mentioned that they do not regularly attend the meetings.

The primary reason for its existence, stressed by the president, is meeting in order to communicate in their native language. The society is involved in varied activities such as concerts, lectures, seminars, celebrations on national holidays, the preservation of cultural and historical heritage, etc.

The society is very active in the mutual support of its members. They collected donations for Kosovo refugees, visited refugee centres in Slovenia where refugees were accommodated, attempted to mediate in problems with the management of the centers and collected monetary donations for the schooling of children in Kosovo.

The president mentioned the society had difficulties in achieving planned tasks because of the heterogeneity of the membership as to education, social background

and to the poor attendance of weekly meetings, which also led to difficulty in achieving consensus.

The president mentioned Albanians had contact with the Slovenian public, as they do not live in an isolated manner. The acceptance of the Albanian population by the public was rated a 3 or 4. As to contact with official institutions, he mentioned the Union.

The society receives no financial support from the Slovenian state, but there is a readiness on the part of the Union of Cultural Organizations to assist the society in drafting its programs. The society's financial resources mainly come from membership fees and voluntary contributions.

A future goal is the organization of supplementary instruction in Albanian, though there are barriers to its implementation. Pupils are dispersed, parents are poorly organized and the question of financing is unresolved. However, these difficulties are not insurmountable as evidenced by the fact that Albanian instruction in Ljubljana is already underway.

Established in 1990, The Croatian Cultural Society is the oldest active ethnic association in Maribor. The Society has office space in Maribor. It is affiliated with the Union of Croats in Slovenia. Presently, there are some 150 members, though in past years its membership was as high as 400, which may be indicative of a downturn in the society's activities.

The society is active in theater, music and visual arts and organizes lectures on national history. It is active in sports and social meetings as well, particularly on state and religious holidays.

The main objective of the society is the preservation of ethnic identity, though the society was also rather active in providing humanitarian assistance during the war in Croatia and in its aftermath.

Contact with state authorities were described by the president as irregular, though their programs are cofinanced by the Ministry of Culture in the amount of 505,000 SIT. Other financing comes from membership fees and voluntary contributions.

On the question of the public's acceptance of the Croats, the president declined to give an evaluation, stating that the matter was of a situational nature. She did mention, though, that Slovenians are sensitive, and even intolerant, when they hear Croatian being spoken. There was an attempt to organize instruction of the Croatian language in Maribor; insufficient interest made the project unsuccessful. Its failure was partially due to the close proximity of Croatia. The relatively large number of Croats in Maribor have many opportunities to speak their language among themselves in public and at home.

As to the society's plans, the president wished to keep them at their current level, while endeavoring to attract new members, especially among youth.

In summary, it can be stated that all major ethnic groups from the former Yugoslavia have established cultural societies in Maribor. Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) are an exception, but they are in the process of establishing a society which they intend to be a multiethnic cultural association, certainly with a view toward an integrated Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In addition to the ethnic groups of the former Yugoslavia, there is the Roma association; there are signs of their integration into Maribor.

Our talks with association representatives produced certain indications as to the position of the ethnic groups. The Serb association has organized itself poorly considering their number and educational background. The Balkan wars possibly might have stimulated Serbs to organize themselves, but they could have been afraid to do so, though the president stressed that there were no problems in 1998. The Croatian representative rather freely criticized Slovenians, possibly more than the others. The Macedonians seem to be rather content, which is certainly to be linked to healthy political relations and the early drafting of an agreement on cultural cooperation. The Albanians seem to have organizational problems due to differing political orientations and a president who is separated from the rank and file because of his high intellectual level. The Roma association seems to be productive as it involves itself in the slow but definite integration of Roma into Slovenian society.

The lack of a Bosniak association, the relative decline of activity on the part of the Croatians and the relative belatedness in the establishment of the Serbian may have a common denominator: these ethnic groups are more prone to integrate into the Slovenian public to the point of assimilation.

4. Conclusion

Ethnic minority problems in Slovenia are nothing like those in the other former Yugoslav republics. In this respect, Slovenia managed to keep itself out of the "Yugoslav kettle." Nevertheless, Slovenia is a multiethnic society and, as such, it has problems. The majority of these problems have been dealt with by granting citizenship to the citizens of the former SFRY republics residing in Slovenia in 1991. Today, this can be considered as a wise decision. This, plus unfavorable and adverse developments during the past decade in all the former Yugoslav republics, pushed those who were granted citizenship towards full integration. Probably, ethnic Albanians have been the most immune to this process. Macedonians seem to be the most active in the preservation of their culture.

The initiatives of the ethnic groups to promote the preservation of their identity are modest but discernably present. All the ethnic groups are supported to a certain degree by the Slovenian state and other authorities.

In the 1990s the problems of the former SFRY officers and those remaining without Slovenian citizenship were due to flaws in the government. The allegations put forth by nongovernmental organizations (primarily the Helsinki Monitor) that the implementation of governmental policy contained elements of systematic harassment seem to be valid. However, these problems also seem to have attained a kind of resolution that is satisfactory to these groups, although it cannot be said that the officers were not exposed to mistreatment. The work of the Helsinki Monitor has been significant and productive in the protection of the former military officers as well as other groups in a disadvantaged position since Slovenian independence.

Good will toward the disadvantaged can especially be found in Maribor, despite the prevalence of xenophobia among Slovenians resulting from demographics, history, local

conditions and the wars in the Balkans. The Union of Cultural Organizations of Maribor may be unique in Slovenia. The efforts of its president contributed to its development, but it certainly benefited greatly from the country's relatively favorable atmosphere.

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