

## THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS SLOVENE MINORITIES: RE-INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN BORDER REGIONS

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**Abstract:** Most of the indigenous ethnic minorities in contemporary Europe still have to fight for their existence because the level of lawful protection does not cover all the aspects of protection. All the states do not implement their own laws that protect the minorities in their territories. They also do not adjust their administrative and territorial reforms to meet the needs and the interests of ethnic minorities. In general, special rights of indigenous ethnic minorities are not respected as they should be in accordance with the signed treaties and the laws passed by the parliaments in the European Union. This is a continuation of the policies towards minorities that began after World War I. These policies did not change after World War II or after the EU expanded. In this paper the author deals with the situations of Slovene indigenous minorities in Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia.

**Key-words:** indigenous minorities, minority rights, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Croatia

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### INTRODUCTION

The situation of Slovenes in neighboring countries of Slovenia represents a classic example of the treatment of indigenous/autochthonous ethnic/national minorities. They are one of the many autochthonous ethnic/national minorities that came into being due to changes in the state borders during the establishment of nation states, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, but also in earlier periods. In these processes state borders were frequently drawn through ethnically mixed areas, and in some cases they also have divided areas settled by people of a single ethnic identity.

Those who were drawing borders had to take into account the interests of the military winners in the conflicts and sometimes, also, the physical geography of the areas in question. Even where attempts were made to redraw boundaries according to ethnic divisions after World War I, some dissatisfied minorities remained. As a result of these factors, no European state that existed in the 19th and 20th centuries, or still exists today, was ethnically homogeneous. Most incorporated into their nation-states parts of the areas inhabited by at least one group in a neighboring country. Some of them, e.g., Russia, Serbia

(especially in Vojvodina), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Spain, etc., are predominantly multinational.

Sections of populations that live on certain territories outside their mother country (by which we mean the country where most of the members of a certain group live), and nations without their own states are called ethnic minorities (or national in the terminology of Central and East European languages; in German: *Nationale Minderheiten*).

As the term itself implies, the minorities have certain common features: (1) their size is smaller than the number of the majority ethno-nation of which they are citizens; (2) they differ from the majority population of the state by ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and sometimes religious characteristics; (3) they try to retain characteristics that represent the identity of the group and/or their culture, tradition, religion or language; and (4) they maintain long-term and strong relations with their mother country (Heckmann, 1992, 62; Pan, Pfeil, 2000, 263–275).

Some geographers, historians, and sociologists consider the minorities living in their areas of settlement (ethnic territory) since the period before the industrial revolution and subsequent changes of political borders to be autochthonous or indigenous ethnic/national minorities. These differ from so-called allochthonous minorities or immigrant groups, new minorities resulting from migrations after the industrial revolution (Stergar, 2006, 112–120). Some such groups are also termed diasporas; this term, used since ancient times to describe the scattering of Jews, has taken on new meaning in relation to more recent migrations of other groups, especially in its use by modern-day social scientists to describe contemporary migrant groups, their relationship with their areas of settlement and their homelands.

Autochthonous/indigenous ethnic/national minorities in the modern era are, in most cases, the result of changes of political borders; some of them are also the result of older migration movements from the period before the industrial revolution. Exact autochthony, i.e. the development of a certain ethnic group in a certain area, where this group of people created or co-created the cultural landscape, is an important standard for classification of minorities (Harris, Klemenčič, 2009, XI-XXI; Heckmann, 1992, 62; Koter, 1993, 123–138, Pan, Pfeil, 2000; Zupancič, 1999, 29–43; Veiter, 1970). These minorities can be classified in different groups, according to their attachment to the areas where they are settled and the political status of those areas:

- Minorities that are separated from the mother country by state frontiers and that, before border changes, formed part of majority nations of the wider and larger state (e.g., Russians in Baltic States, Austrian Germans in South Tyrol, Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia, etc.);
- Minorities that are separated from the mother country by state frontiers and did not have their own state before border changes took place; after their nation achieved statehood, they remained a minority in a neighboring country, e.g., Slovenes in Italy, Austria, and Hungary, as described in this paper;
- Minorities whose areas of settlement are territorially separated from their mother country as a consequence of migrations in the pre-industrial era, e.g., Ruthenians in Vojvodina in today's Serbia, Croats of Burgenland in Austria, or Germans in Eastern Europe;
- Minority nations that do not have their own states, and whose regions of settlement cross borders between two or more states (Basques in France and Spain; Ruthenians in Ukraine, Romania, Poland, and Slovakia, etc.);

- Minority nations, that do not have their own state, but live in one specific area within one state (e.g. Galicians in Spain, Bretons in France, etc.);
- Ethnic groups that are remnants of previously larger and more widely spread people, e.g.. Siberian indigenous peoples (Harris, Klemenčič, 2009, XII).

The main difference between indigenous or traditional or old minorities and allochthonous or new minorities is that the indigenous minorities usually make their demands on the basis of their belonging to a particular territory of settlement and cultural landscape and they usually demand rights from the state, e.g., the right to bilingual or monolingual education in their mother tongue, the right to bilingual topographical signs, and the right to use their native language in transactions with administrative authorities and with the judicial system. Such rights can be prescribed in international treaties, bilateral treaties, and special treaties or by internal legislatures of the state.

Most EU-states have also ratified the European Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The European Convention on Human Rights, though not specifically directed towards minorities, has also been seen as protection against injustices. Still, indigenous rights are not always recognized, and, in the case of the Slovene minority discussed below, the provisions of the above-mentioned conventions are far from being fully implemented. Nevertheless, the very existence of European conventions and other instruments for the protection of minority rights indicates a substantial shift away from thinking such as Franco's policy of 'hispanicising' the Basque Country by promoting immigration from other parts of the state in the mid-20th century or Mussolini's 'italianization' of South Tyrol.

In this paper the situation of Slovene minorities in countries bordering on Slovenia is discussed. Slovenes today live as an indigenous population in their ethnic territories, which in addition to the Republic of Slovenia, comprise the neighboring frontier regions in Italy (in Friuli-Venetia Giulia), Austria (in southern Carinthia and some areas in Styria), Hungary (in Porabje in southwestern Vas county), and in some small regions on Slovene-Croatian border.

The censuses of population according to different types of ethnic affiliation (mother tongue, language of communication, etc.) in Central and Southeastern Europe do not provide the correct numbers for the size of ethnic minorities. There were always pressures on minority members not to identify themselves as such in the census, especially in Slovenia's bordering countries. This is why I am going to make only approximations of the size of the Slovene communities in neighboring countries. Today, ca. 40,000–45,000 Slovenes live in Austrian Carinthia (Klemenčič, M., Klemenčič, V., 2010, 205–226) and ca. 1,000 Slovenes in southern Styria. In Italy, ca. 90,000 ethnic Slovenes live in the Provinces of Udine [Provincia di Udine/Videmska pokrajina], Gorizia [Provincia di Gorizia/Goriška pokrajina] and Trieste [Provincia di Trieste/Tržaška pokrajina] (Bufon, 1992, 68). In Hungary, ca. 1,600 ethnic Slovenes live in Slovensko Porabje, in Hungarian Szlovénvidék or Rábavidék (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2001, 270–271). In Croatia, there are some smaller and geographically separated regions in northern Istria (Rupa, Šapjane, and other smaller hamlets in the region), in Prezid in the north of Gorski Kotar and in the region of Štrigova in Medjimurje, which are home to ca. 600 Slovenes, who were never organized as an ethnic minority. There are ca. 30.000 ethnic Slovenes living in Croatia; most of these are scattered throughout the state and live in Zagreb, Rijeka, Pula,

Split, Karlovac, etc., having emigrated from the Slovene ethnic territories since the end of the 19th century (Josipovič, Kržišnik Bukić, 2010, 46–66).



**Figure 1.** The Map of the Indigenous Slovenian National Minority in Neighboring Countries and Indigenous National Minorities in Slovenia

This situation is the result of a very long historical process. The last changes in this situation occurred in 1991, when Slovenia became an independent state, and in 2004 when it became part of the European Union (Klemenčič, 2005; Klemenčič, 2008).

Although all Slovene minorities in neighboring countries have one or another form of protection, it is not possible to generalize on their minority protection because each of the states deals with its Slovene minority in its own way and there are also different levels of international recognition and thus also obligations of the states in which minorities live towards them.

### **SLOVENES IN AUSTRIA**

Historically the region of today's Carinthia in Austria was the object of desire of Austrian Germans and Slovenes, and it was also an area where different interests clashed. Many times in history, there were attempts to misuse majority positions, even with violence, especially during World War II, when Nazis ruled in Carinthia (1938–1945). Therefore, after World War II, Yugoslavia demanded the territory of southern Carinthia for itself. Fearful of those demands, Austrian authorities offered concessions to Carinthian Slovenes. On 3 October 1945, the Temporary Carinthian Provincial Government issued a decree mandating the new formation of bilingual Slovene-German schools in sixty-two bilingual mixed communes (Kärntner Nachrichten, 11.11.1945, 2). This did the trick and in 1949 the four powers (France, Soviet Union, Great Britain, and

United States) guaranteed Austria that its pre-1938 borders would not change. Austria, however, had to agree that it would protect its indigenous minorities. In the State Treaty for the Re-establishment of an Independent and Democratic Austria, known also as the Austrian State Treaty (AST) of 1955 (BGBl. 1955, 725–745) Austria's Slovene and Croatian minorities are entitled to special protections as defined in Article 7 of this Treaty:

1. *Austrian nationals of the Slovene and Croat minorities in Carinthia, Burgenland and Styria shall enjoy the same rights on equal terms as all other Austrian nationals, including the right to their own organizations, meetings and press in their own language.*
2. *They are entitled to elementary instruction in the Slovene or Croat language and to a proportional number of their own secondary schools; in this connection school curricula shall be reviewed and a section of the Inspectorate of Education shall be established for Slovene and Croat schools.*
3. *In the administrative and judicial districts of Carinthia, Burgenland and Styria, where there are Slovenes, Croats or mixed populations, the Slovene or Croat language shall be accepted as an official language in addition to German. In such districts topographical terminology and inscriptions shall be in the Slovene or Croat language as well as in German.*
4. *Austrian nationals of the Slovene and Croat minorities in Carinthia, Burgenland and Styria shall participate in the cultural, administrative and judicial systems in these territories on equal terms with other Austrian nationals.*
5. *The activity of organizations whose aim is to deprive the Croat or Slovene population of their minority character or rights shall be prohibited (BGBl. 1955, 727).*

It is important to mention here that Article 7 does not mention any “large numbers” or “significant percentage” of minority population in one administrative unit as a precondition for recognition of the minority's existence and minority rights (Matscher, 2005). Thus Austrian minority protection laws dealing with bilingual education, usage of minority languages before the courts and other official authorities, and bilingual “topographic” signs should have been valid for all settlements in “... *the administrative and judicial districts of Carinthia ... and Styria, where there are Slovene ... or mixed populations ...*” The so-called territorial principle should be used (Klemenčič, M., Klemenčič, V., 2010: 74–83).

In spite of that, the Austrian authorities all the time after 1955 preconditioned the validity of minority protection on a certain “percentage” of minority members in an administrative unit. Also they manipulated as they carried out the census of population as far as the language of communication. The census-takers retained the praxis of the Nazi census of 1939 and differentiated among German, Slovene, and “Windisch” languages and used all possible combinations among these categories. With this statistical operation which had nothing to do with scholarly criteria, the Austrian authorities divided Slovene speakers in Carinthia who spoke the very same Carinthian dialect of the Slovene language into two linguistic/ethnic categories, “Windisch” and “Slovenes”. Because of this and other pressures on the members of Slovene minorities not to identify as Slovene speakers, the censuses after World War II remained part of a general plan for slow Germanization or for systematic “statistical liquidation” of ethnic minorities in Austria. On the basis of these

manipulations, more than half of the territory of settlement of Carinthian Slovenes as defined in the Decree on bilingual education of 1945 was left out of minority protection laws. The leadership of Carinthian Slovenes constantly protested against this usage of census data (Klemenčič, M., Klemenčič, V., 2010: 105–130).

The period after 1955 was marked by the activities of anti-Slovene German-nationalistic organizations as far as (un)fulfillment of the AST obligations is concerned. Austria made it possible for the nationalistic organizations—which would have had to be forbidden in accordance with Paragraph 5 of Article 7 of AST—to cooperate with the state (political parties, law-making bodies) and on the level of the Carinthian “Land” to thwart the treaty when questions have been raised about the use of the Slovene language in contacts with the authorities and in education and in the use of bilingual signage in cities and villages (Stergar, 1976).

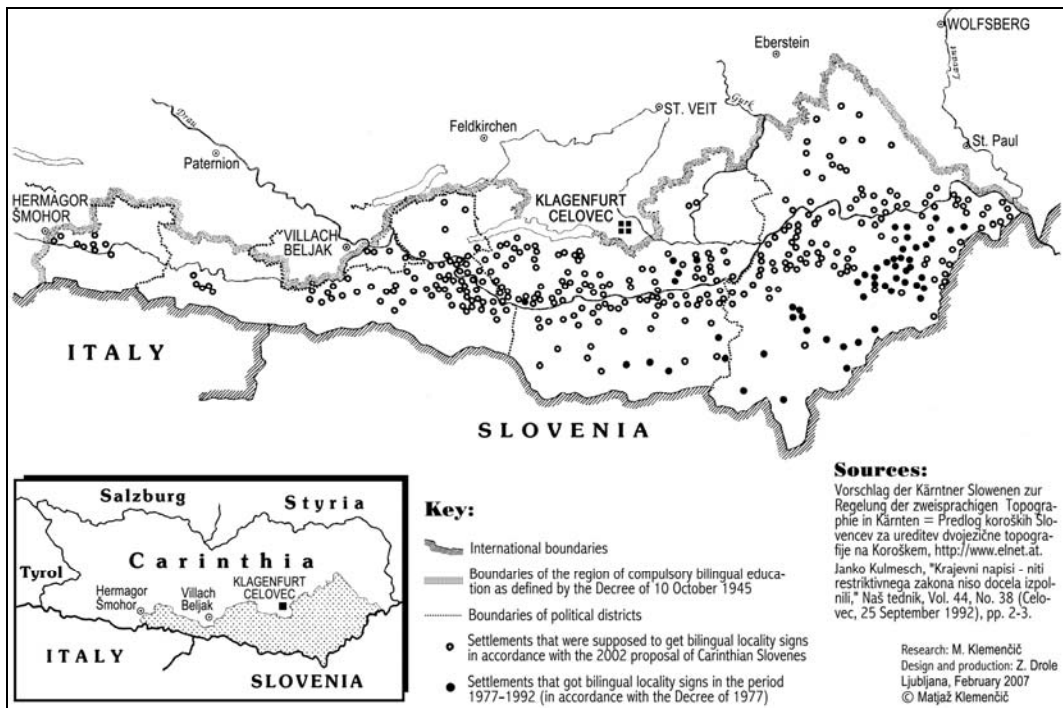
After World War II these organizations were dictating some solutions in Carinthia; many of their ideas were then used by political parties in Carinthia and later, through them, by Austrian political parties, the Austrian government, and the Austrian parliament. All the attempts “to solve the situation of the Slovene minority” have provided very good opportunities for politicians to collect popular votes in political elections and are therefore (mis)used by Austrian political parties in their political campaigns. So, Austrian governments did not succeed in providing minority protection laws that would be in accordance with Article 7 of AST.

Bilingual localities signs are important, as they represent a visible sign of the existence of a minority and as such a symbol of the historical presence of the minority in a certain territory. They also mean that the majority population recognizes the minority as an equal partner in creating the culture of a certain region (Jordan, 2004). Therefore it is understandable that the leadership of Carinthian Slovenes is so vehemently fighting for the just solution of this difference.

The two attempts to solve the problem in 1955 (an attempt to install a sign-post in the commune of Moos bei Bleiburg/Blato pri Pliberku) and an attempt to put into effect the law on bilingual topographic signs of 1972 both failed. An attempt by Carinthian Governor Hans Sima and Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky to install 205 bilingual localities signs ended with a “war against bilingual localities signs” (*Ortstafelsturm*). A few days after the installation of the first fifty bilingual localities signs, German nationalists destroyed all of them (Stergar, 2003). The Decree of 1977, on the basis of which bilingual topographic signs would have been posted in 91 of the 800 settlements of bilingual southern Carinthia, was only partially fulfilled.

As of 2000, ca. 70 bilingual signs were erected. Due to the fact that the Decree conditioned the erection of bilingual signs on a minority population of 25 percent, many Carinthian Slovenes complained to the Constitutional Court. On the basis of one of those complaints, the Austrian Constitutional Court in December 2001 decreed 25 percent of minority population as unconstitutional and suggested “ca. 10 percent” of Slovene population “in the longer period of time” as an obligatory condition to erect bilingual locality signs (VfGH, 2001). It became clear that a new solution would have to be found. On the basis of the decision of the Austrian Constitutional Court, the Carinthian Slovene leadership proposed erection of bilingual signs in 394 settlements in southern Carinthia.

The Austrian government attempted to negotiate a solution with representatives of the Slovene minority, the provincial Carinthian government, Carinthian German nationalistic organizations, and representatives of local authorities in southern Carinthia. These attempts of 2006 and 2007 did not end in a solution of bilingual “topographical terminology and inscriptions” in southern Carinthia. Both proposals, one by Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel (Austrian People’s Party) and the other one by Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer (Austrian Socialist Party), offered many fewer bilingual inscriptions (141 and 162, respectively). Neither government proposal was accepted, although the minority representatives, under pressure from Austrian politicians, consented to Gusenbauer’s because of additional demands from the anti-Slovene-oriented Carinthian governor, Jörg Haider. He demanded also the signatures of the leaders of the Carinthian Slovenes pledging that they would not have any additional demands in regard to fulfillment of Article 7 of AST, etc. (Klemenčič, 2007: 190–193, 199–202).

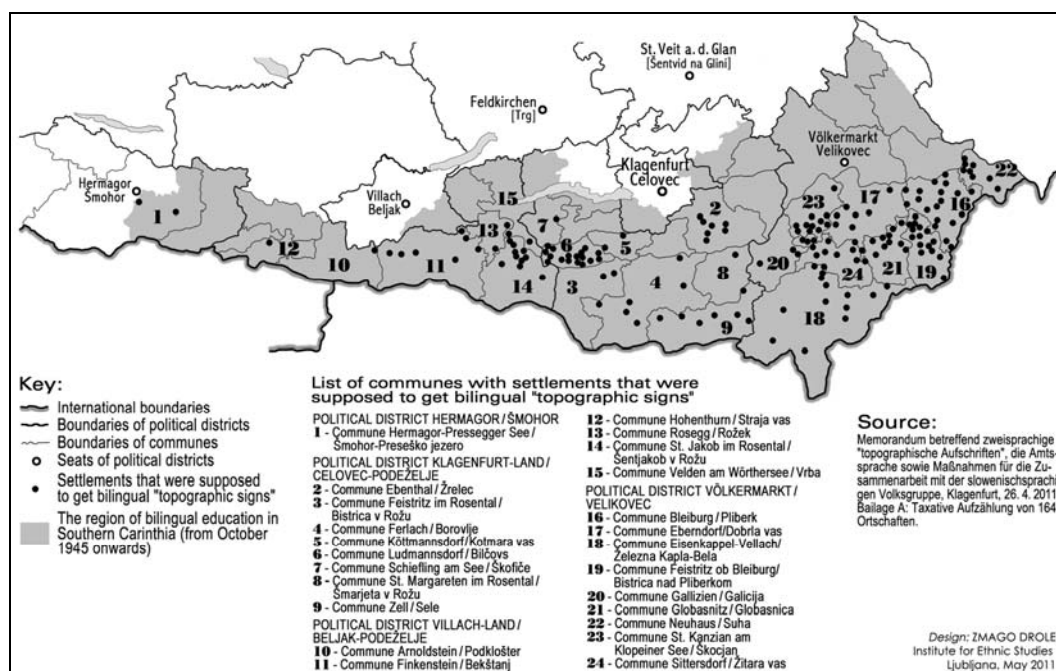


**Figure 2.** The Map of the Proposal of Carinthian Slovenes in 2002 for the Placement of Bilingual Localities Signs in Southern Carinthia (on the Basis of the Decree of the Austrian Constitutional Court, No. G 213/01, V 62, 63/01-18)

After ten years of discussions and attempts to solve the problem by the Austrian authorities, the Carinthian Slovenes were forced to sign off on a “compromise” solution that provides for bilingual inscriptions for only 165 instead of ca. 800 settlements in southern Carinthia that should receive them. This solution also empowers the mayors to provide additional villages or townships where the bilingual signs could be erected. The agreement provides for a minimum of 17.5 percent of Slovene population instead of the 10 percent that the Constitutional Court suggested as a precondition for a bilingual locality

sign to be erected. If the suggestion of the Constitutional Court were followed, there would be almost 400 localities with bilingual signs.

The solution of the problem is still not in sight. Bilingual topography means not only bilingual locality signs but also other topographic signs, e.g., bilingual names of rivers, mountains, streets, official buildings, etc. In some villages in southern Carinthia the local authorities are already putting them up and there is hope that in the future the prejudice of most German Carinthians might also change.



**Figure 3.** The Map of the Settlements in Southern Carinthia That Were Supposed to Get Bilingual "Topographic Signs" in Accordance with the Memorandum of April 26, 2011

In spite of all the above-mentioned problems, the Slovene minority in Carinthia remains very well organized in cultural and sports groups. Its members are also economically quite strong. Most Carinthian Slovenes are involved in one of their three political/civil society organizations: *Narodni svet koroških Slovencev/Rat der Kärntner Slowenen* [National Council of Carinthian Slovenes], *Zveza slovenskih organizacij/Zentralverband slowenischer Organisationen* [Union of Slovene Organizations] and *Skupnost koroških Slovencev/Gemeinschaft der Kärntner Slowenen und Sloweninnen* [Association of Carinthian Slovenes]. They also have their own political party *Enotna lista/Einheitsliste*, which is quite successful in municipal and city council elections.

Carinthian Slovenes already serve as a bridge between Slovenia and Austria in economic cooperation. Through them and with their help many new mutual cooperation projects were developed when Slovenia was a candidate country to the EU accession. After Slovenia became a full member, the participation of Carinthian Slovenes in economic cooperation between Slovenia and Austria expanded; and not only that, Carinthian Slovenes actively cooperated with Western Balkan candidate countries as well (Jesih, 2007: 74–125).



### **SLOVENES IN ITALY**

The Slovene minority in Italy is well organized and involved in economic, cultural, sports, and political life. Slovenes belong to *Slovenska kulturno gospodarska zveza/Unione Culturale Economica Slovena* [Slovene Cultural and Economic Association], a civil society organization. Ethnic Slovenes participate in all political parties; they have elected their own member to the Italian Senate or to the Lower House of the Italian Parliament since the 1980s. Right-wing Slovenes in Italy are organized also in a political party, *Slovenska skupnost/Unione Slovena* [Slovene Society], which participates mainly in community, provincial, and regional elections. They are quite successful also on the local (communes) and regional (provinces and autonomous region Friuli-Venezia Giulia) fronts.

The legal rights of the Slovene minority in Italy (and the Italian minority in Slovenia and Croatia) after World War II were regulated by the 1947 Paris Treaty of Peace with Italy (UN, 1947), and by the Special Statute that was an annex to the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of Italy, The United Kingdom, The United States and Yugoslavia with Regard to the Free Territory of Trieste* (UN, 1954, 100–118). The Special Statute ceased to be valid after implementation of the Treaty between the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Italy, the so-called Treaty of Osimo. This treaty also determined, in Article 8, that Italy and Yugoslavia

*“... shall preserve the validity of internal measures which were adopted during the implementation of the Statute mentioned, and shall, with the framework of its internal legislation, guarantee to the members of the concerned minorities the same level of protection as was provided by the Special Statute which is hereby terminated”* (UN, 1954, 110).

In spite of the fact that the Special Statute was repealed, it remained valid as far as minority rights for both ethnic minorities in neighboring states (Ur.l. SFRJ-MP, 1977).

This provision of Article 8 of the Treaty of Osimo was, throughout the period after it was signed, the subject of different interpretations and also a source of trouble in relations between two neighbors. The Slovenes of Italy, with the help of their protectors, Yugoslavia and, after 1991, the Republic of Slovenia, tried to convince Italy to give them general legal protection. There were many drafts of a protection law, which remained stalled in the bureaucratic process. Therefore, the question of protection of minority rights of Slovenes in Italy (and equalization of rights of Italian minorities in Croatia and Slovenia in Istria) remained after Slovenia's independence one of the most important unfulfilled articles of the Osimo Treaty (Delo, 10.11.1995, 7).

The law on protection of linguistic minorities was passed by the Italian parliament in November 1999 (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1999), and the law on protection of the Slovene linguistic minority in Friuli-Venetia Giulia/Furlanija-Juljska krajina was passed in February 2001 (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 2001). Many questions remained, however. The law itself is questionable on many issues, and many solutions raise questions for the future. In spite of all this, the law represents significant progress in relations between the Slovene minority in Italy and the Italian state and is, after the Memorandum of London, the most important step forward (Brezigar, 2001).

The most significant issue remaining is the implementation of the law, because its implementation would be a precondition for its appraisal. And it was precisely the implementation of the law that became a problem at the very beginning. A special committee (*comitato istituzionale paritetico/paritetni odbor*), comprising representatives of the minority, local authorities, and the Italian state<sup>1</sup> was chosen to oversee the implementation of the law. After it issued a first catalogue of communes in which the law should be implemented and sent it to the Italian government of Silvio Berlusconi in 2003, the government rejected the catalogue. The Italian government sent this catalogue to the State Council, which then ordered the special committee to check whether members of the Slovene minority existed in particular communes. The State Council mentioned, in particular, Muggia/Milje, Trieste/Trst, Gorizia/Gorica, and Cividale del Friuli/Čedad.<sup>2</sup> In reality this was a demand for the counting of Slovenes, which the law on minority protection had not foreseen.

After the Italian Ministry for Regions also let the special committee know that it would not agree to the catalogue, the special committee sent the government in Rome additional explanations about minority protection implementation in the cities of Muggia/Milje, Trieste/Trst, Gorizia/Gorica, and Cividale del Friuli/Čedad. The Berlusconi government again rejected the catalogue because, according to the government, the “suggestion for the commune of Trieste to be included would contradict the suggestion of city councillors [of Trieste] ...” As for Gorizia/Gorica, Muggia/Milje, and Cividale del Friuli/Čedad, the government stated that in those communes “the traditional presence of a Slovene minority was not verified.”

This situation was resolved after the 2006 election, when Romano Prodi became prime minister and replaced the right-wing Berlusconi government. In June 2007, the special committee again confirmed the catalogue of 32 communes in which the law on protection of the Slovene minority would be implemented; and in August 2007, the catalogue was confirmed by the Italian government. In September the catalogue was signed by the president of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano. After six-and-a-half years, the territory on which the Slovene minority in Italy would be protected was confirmed in law, in accordance with state law no. 38 from 2001 (Primorski dnevnik, 04.08.2007, 1, 3).

In the second half of September, representatives of the special committee met representatives of communes in the territory and discussed the question of visible bilingualism, i.e., installation of bilingual topographic signs. Representatives of 23 communes at once accepted bilingual signage (Primorski dnevnik, 25.09.2007, 1–3). In other communes, bilingual signage would not be used, because their administrations had not yet given their consent, or had not yet discussed the issue.

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<sup>1</sup> One-half of the members of the special committee (*comitato istituzionale paritetico/paritetni odbor*) are ethnic Slovenes, while the other half are ethnic Italians. Ethnic Slovene members are nominated by three different bodies: (1) three members are elected by elected representatives of Slovenes in the region of Friuli-Venetia Giulia/Furlanija-Juljska krajina, in provinces and communes; (2) two are elected by the regional parliament of Friuli-Venetia Giulia/Furlanija-Juljska krajina; (3) four members are nominated by the regional government of Friuli-Venetia Giulia/Furlanija-Juljska krajina, and one by the Italian government.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from the Italian Government, Department of Regional Affairs (Dipartimento Affari regionali) to the Special committee No. DAR/2432/86/13.3.5.17.1, 23 March 2006. The author thanks Bojan Brezigar for providing this information.



**Figure 4.** The Map of the Area of Validity of the Law on Protection of the Slovene Linguistic Minority in Italy

The communes of Tarvisio/Trbiž and Malborghetto/Naborjet are quadrilingual, i.e., they are inhabited by Italians, Friulians, Slovenes, and Germans, and therefore their administrations wanted them to be also officially quadrilingual. A representative of Monfalcone/Tržič commune declared that his commune was ready to give Slovenes within its borders full individual rights, but for now it would not erect bilingual topographic signs (Primorski dnevnik, 16.09.2007, 1, 3). Also, there would be no bilingual topographic signs for the city of Trieste/Trst itself, while the satellite settlements around would erect such signs. Representatives of the commune of Gorizia/Gorica declared that all settlements in the commune of Gorizia/Gorica would get the bilingual topographic signs except for one part of the city of Gorizia/Gorica where there would for now be no visual bilingualism (Primorski dnevnik, 16.09.2007, 1; Primorski dnevnik, 16.09.2007, 3). It is interesting to note that the mayor of commune Resia/Rezija declared that the Resian dialect was not one of the Slovene dialects. According to him it was Slavic.

After discussions with the representatives of most of the concerned communes, the special committee made a decision to erect the bilingual place name signs and other bilingual topographic and other signs in 23 communes. Only one member who is a representative of the middle-right wing Berlusconi's party voted against it. The special committee sent the proposal to the Regional Council of Friuli-Venetia Giulia, which discussed the proposal on 27 September 2007 (Primorski dnevnik, 27.09.2007, 1–3). In general, everyone hoped that the Regional Council would pass the regional law on protection of the Slovene minority on the same day. That did not happen because of discussion provoked by some inhabitants of the Resia/Rezija Valley, who claimed that the Resian dialect was not a Slovene Dialect and argued that the Resians were "Italians of Slavic descent." In the end, the Regional Council included in its law mention of the Resian dialect and dialects of the inhabitants of the Natisone/Nadiža Valley, Torre/Ter Valley, and Val di Canale/Kanalska dolina/Kanaltal. After many hours of discussion on Resia/Rezija, the deputies, due to lack of time, postponed the final discussion (Primorski dnevnik, 18.09.2007, 1, 3). After hours and hours of discussions, the Regional Council of Friuli-Venetia Giulia finally passed the law for protection of the Slovene minority on 23 October (Bullettino ufficiale, 2007). The law received support not only from the representatives of the government parties of the left-middle of the political spectrum but also from the right-middle wing Lega Nord [Northern League], who supported this law because they were interested in passing a regional law on protection of Friulians (Delo, 24.10.2007, 2).

The Slovene minority in Italy is even stronger than the Slovene minority in Carinthia, as far as economic strength of its members is concerned. The members were really active in economic cooperation already by the end of the 1960s, when various agreements were signed between Italy and Yugoslavia on small issues of cross-border economic cooperation. In accordance with these agreements, they were able to export goods to Yugoslavia. Yugoslavs would not have been able to import these goods without the existence of those agreements. Of course, most of this cooperation benefited Slovenes on both sides of the border. Cooperation continued also after 1991, when Slovenia became an independent state. For example it benefited Slovene farmers from Slovenia, especially in Goriška brda, where they could import seeds for the wineries with the help of Slovene farmers in Italy, which otherwise they would not be able to do. Of course, cooperation expanded still more after Slovenia became a full member of the EU.

## SLOVENES IN HUNGARY

During the “Cold War”, the situation of the Slovene national minority living in an underdeveloped part of Hungary behind the “Iron Curtain” was much worse than that of the Slovenes in Italy and Austria.



**Figure 5.** The Map of the Number and Percentage of Slovenes in Slovensko Porabje in 2000

The situation of the Slovene minority started to improve with the gradual liberalization in Hungary in the 1980s. The Hungarian government began to modify its stance toward ethnic minorities. Article 68 of the Hungarian Constitution of 1989 states:

*“National and ethnic minorities that live in the Republic of Hungary are state-building factors. The Republic of Hungary protects its national and ethnic minorities. It guarantees their participation in public life, nourishing of their own culture, mother tongue, education in the mother tongue and the usage of names in the mother tongue. The laws of the Republic of Hungary also guarantee representation of national and ethnic minorities”* [at the local and national level] (Constitution of the Republic of Hungary, 1989, 47-48).

This had a positive impact on the lives of Slovenes in Hungary, leading to material assistance from the state budget, endeavors to establish good relations with neighboring states, adoption of the “Law on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities”, etc. In the 1990s, a bilateral agreement on the protection of national minorities also was signed between Slovenia and Hungary, to the benefit of both Slovenes in Hungary and Hungarians in Slovenia (Munda-Hirnök, 1999).

Slovenes of Porabje organized into a civil society organization, *Zveza Slovencev na Madžarskem/Magyarországi Szlovének Szövetsége* [Federation of Slovenes of Hungary], which includes societies on a local level important for

Slovene identity and a political organization, *Državna slovenska manjšinska samouparva/Országos Szlovén Önkormányzat* [State Slovene Minority Self-Management]. There are eight cultural societies and groups of Slovenes in Porabje (Munda-Hirnök, 1994).

Despite recent positive developments on the global level, the Slovene ethnic community in Hungary faces numerous everyday problems. Many of them are the results of decades of isolation behind the Iron Curtain, in a special zone where the movement of population was strictly curtailed. The whole region is economically, socially, and demographically underprivileged. On the other hand, these circumstances are exactly what contributed to the preservation of the population's ethnic characteristics, particularly language. But assimilation and language loss have rapidly increased. The marginal situation and economic underdevelopment of Slovene Porabje has caused, in comparison with other regions in Hungary, typical negative changes, such as an aging of population and emigration, resulting in a drop in the number of ethnic Slovenes. Even the road that would connect the villages in which the Slovene minority live has not been built yet, although it was promised many times in the last decade, including on the occasions of recent meetings between Slovene and Hungarian presidents and prime ministers. Even the entry of Slovenia and Hungary into the EU did not contribute to improving the situation of both Slovenes in Hungary and Hungarians in Slovenia.

A new situation developed after the parliamentary election of 2010, in which the ultra-conservative FIDESZ party got 68 percent of the popular vote. This meant more than two thirds of the seats in the parliament. This majority enabled the FIDESZ party the possibility to change the Constitution. In the draft of the new Constitution it was written, among other things, that, on the one hand, members of ethnic minorities in Hungary are part of the Hungarian nation; on the other hand, it gave to all members of indigenous Hungarian ethnic minorities in neighboring countries the right to dual citizenship. This proposition as far as ethnic minorities in Hungary was later abandoned. In the new Constitution that was passed by the Hungarian parliament at the end of April 2011 and was put in force on January 1, 2012, the Preamble states that "nationalities living with us [in Hungary] form part of the Hungarian political community and are constituent parts of the State." In article 29 of the part of the Constitution entitled "Freedom and Responsibility" it is written:

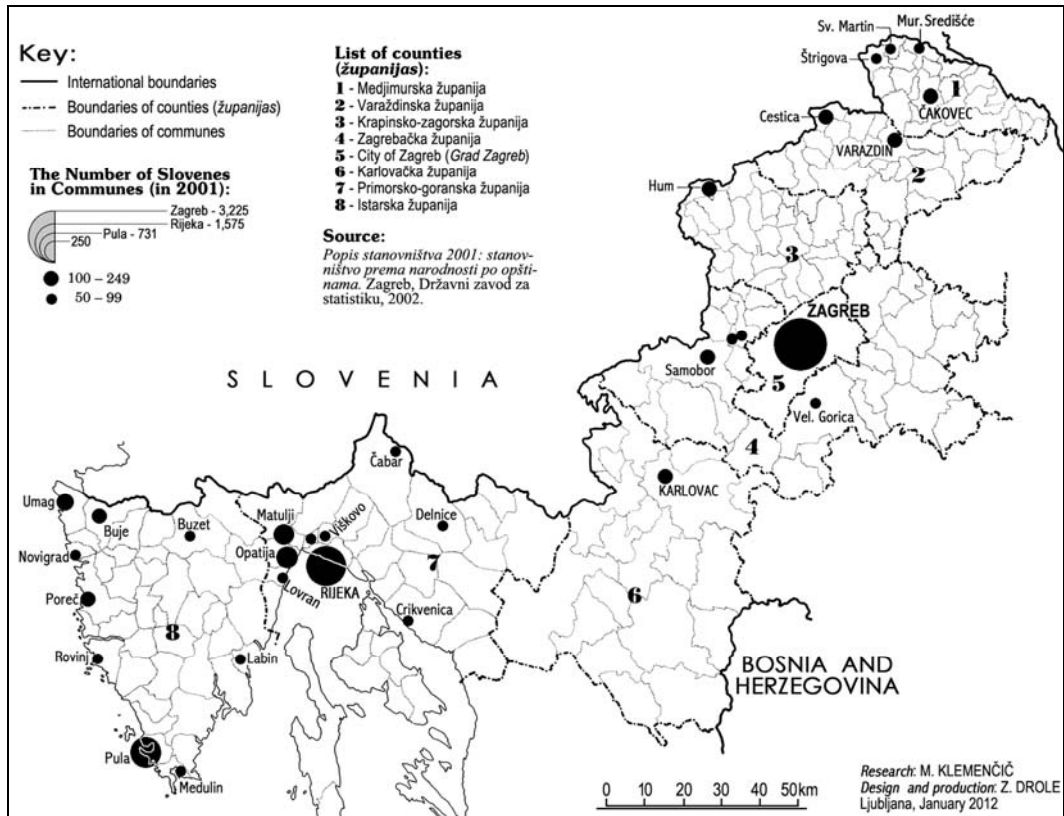
1. Nationalities living in Hungary shall be constituent parts of the State. Every Hungarian citizen belonging to any nationality shall have the right to freely express and preserve his or her identity. Nationalities living in Hungary shall have the right to use their native languages and to the individual and collective use of names in their own languages, to promote their own cultures, and to be educated in their native languages;
2. Nationalities living in Hungary shall have the right to establish local and national self-governments;
3. The detailed rules for the rights of nationalities living in Hungary and the rules for the elections of their local and national self-governments shall be defined by a cardinal Act (The Fundamental Law of Hungary, 2011).

Although the recognized ethnic minorities in Hungary expected to get the seats in the Hungarian parliament for each minority automatically, this is not

the case; as members of minorities have to vote for their representative in the parliament in political elections and their representative would have to receive 10,000 or more votes to be elected.

### SLOVENES IN CROATIA

Within Croatia the situation is quite complicated as the Slovenes live as both an indigenous minority in border regions and as immigrants in towns inside Croatia. Croatia's legal praxis does not differ between immigrants and so-called traditional/autochthonous minorities. In Croatia the major, most important, and most numerous minority is, of course, the Serbian minority. The Croatian state recognizes 27 minorities.



**Figure 6.** The Map of the Number of Slovenes in Communes along the Slovene-Croatian Border in Croatia in 2001

Slovenes in Croatia were recognized as a minority in the Constitution of Croatia of 1990, although they started to develop as a minority with their own institutions, etc., when Slovenia and Croatia became independent states in 1991. The situation remained unchanged until 1997 when Slovenes (and Bosniaks) were deleted as formally recognized minorities from the new Croatian Constitution in 1997. This move was politically motivated and it lowered the level of already achieved minority rights and is therefore considered a diminution from the generally recognized standards on minority rights, which are not supposed to be lowered. In spite of that, Croatia started to change its minority protection laws in

2000; it did not recognize Slovenes as an ethnic minority until the constitutional changes of 2010. Now the members of the Slovene minority enjoy at least formally the same rights as other recognized minorities, especially on the local (communes) level and regional level (Josipovič, Kržišnik Bukič, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

The status of the Slovene minority differs from country to country. One can say that although the law on global protection of the Slovene minority in Italy of 2001 is not completely implemented yet, the best situation is for the Slovenes of Italy. Slovenes in Austria, even in accordance with the draft of the new law that is in preparation, will not enjoy the protection that they are entitled to under Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty. The attitude of Austrian authorities towards Slovenes in Austria is best shown in the story of bilingual locality signs. Slovenes in Hungary are worst off because of their poor economic situation and also because of the attitude of the Hungarian government towards minorities, as is evidenced in their new Constitution. Slovenes in Croatia formally enjoy the status of a minority, but it does not help them too much in implementation of their rights.

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