

DEJAN VALENTINCIC

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN
ADAPTING MINORITY AND DIASPORA POLICIES
TO 21ST CENTURY REALITY:
THE CASE OF THE SLOVENIANS

Abstract: The paper examines and offers a reflection on how global trends change minority and diaspora communities. After presenting the current situation, the author suggests some approaches on how to adapt minority and diaspora policies to contemporary reality. The author offers some theoretical analysis as well as findings from his practical experience in the field. The paper examines Slovenian communities abroad as a case study, but its conclusions and suggestions can be applied to other countries facing similar issues.

Countries tend to give special attention to their compatriots living outside their borders. Usually, countries that have large minority or diaspora communities due to historical reasons do not diminish or neglect their ethnic ties beyond state borders. The issue is a part of their national narratives, often as a cultural value or as an opportunity for the mother country (kin-state). The question of optimal policies towards minorities and diasporas is always an open matter. As society changes, so do ethnic communities. In a rapidly changing world, the question of how to adapt approaches towards minority and diaspora issues to current realities is paramount. Focusing on the case of Slovenians, this article aims to illustrate how global changes influence ethnic communities and how mother countries should adapt.

Slovenia gained its independence in 1991 after the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Slovenian ethnic territory stretches beyond Slovenia's borders. Autochthonous Slovenian minorities exist in all four neighbouring countries – Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. Throughout history, Slovenian ethnic territory has experienced significant emigration. Slovenia is a country of two million people, but there are one-and-a-half million ethnic Slovenians living abroad. The country's democratization led to a shift in its minority and diaspora policies. Division of the population along ideological lines was replaced by an inclusive, pluralist, and democratic approach. This new approach,

however, is not immune to challenges. Today the country is struggling with questions of how to address decreasing interest in participation in ethnic organizations, increasingly dispersed settlement, a rise in the percentage of mixed marriages, increasingly fluid and complex identities, and contemporary emigration from Slovenia, which differs in significant ways from emigration in the past.

While each community or nationality's challenges are in some ways unique to itself, they can also offer insights into general trends and good practices. The same solutions can be applied to different countries' policies. That's why the case of the Slovenians might offer important lessons for foreign countries, politicians, civil servants, and academics who are grappling with the questions of modern minority and diaspora issues. The goal of the article is to examine the Slovenians as a case study and to offer some generalized suggestions. This study consists of the author's theoretical analysis as well as observations from his practical experience at the Republic of Slovenia's Governmental Office for Slovenians Abroad, where he served as state secretary between March 2020 and June 2022, and, prior to that, as an advisor to two ministers between March 2018 and March 2020.

Using the case of the Slovenians as an example, this article aims to answer the following two questions. What are the primary changes that minority and diaspora communities are undergoing nowadays? What changes in policy are needed to successfully address the contemporary issues of minorities and diasporas?

First, the paper presents a short history of autochthonous Slovenian national minorities in the neighbouring countries and offers some insights into the contemporary situation of those communities. Next, it focuses on the history of emigration from Slovenian ethnic territory and provides a short comparison of the similarities and differences between different Slovenian diaspora communities today. The following section is dedicated to the legal aspects of Slovenia's kin-state relationship with Slovenians abroad. After that, it discusses changes in Slovenian minority and diaspora communities as a result of broader global changes. Lastly, the author presents a set of suggestions on how to adapt policies to handle ethnic communities abroad.

This paper's method consists of three parts. First, it uses existing literature to present the history and current state of Slovenian ethnic communities abroad. Following that, it employs legal research methodology to examine Slovenian laws on minorities and the diaspora. This is followed by an analysis of contemporary changes in these ethnic communities based on publicly-available information as well as the author's personal experience in visiting those communities, doing fieldwork, and discussing with members of those communities. The approach of this article is innovative in the sense that, instead of beginning with a theoretical section followed by an application of the theory, it first presents field experience and then explains more general concepts that can also be applied to other contexts.

History and present situation of Slovenian minorities in the neighbouring countries

Autochthonous Slovenian national minorities can be found in all four of Slovenia's neighbouring countries: Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Croatia. Each one was separated from its mother nation in a different historical period and the conditions for each one's development throughout history have been different as well. Consequently, their situation today varies greatly between individual countries and within different areas of individual countries. The manner in which the minorities have organized themselves differs completely as well.

The first regions to be administratively separated from the mother nation were the valleys of Natisone, Torre, and Resia, which were annexed by Italy in 1866.¹ A year later, the Habsburg Monarchy reorganized itself into the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. Most Slovenian ethnic territory was placed under Austrian authority, with the exception of the regions of Prekmurje and Raba, which were placed under Hungarian authority. Raba has never been administratively united with the Slovenian ethnic territory since that point.² After the First World War, Gailtal in South Carinthia and the Slovenian-inhabited areas of the South Styria region were automatically placed under Austrian authority. It was left to the plebiscite to decide under which country's authority the Rosenthal and the Jauntal in South Carinthia would be placed. The majority of eligible voters voted for Austria and the border, which remains today, was drawn accordingly.³ After the First World War, a quarter of Slovenian ethnic territory came under Italian authority. After the Second World War, the better part of the territory populated by Slovenians was placed under Yugoslavian authority, while the provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, and Val Canale, along with the rest of the province of Udine (the aforementioned valleys of Natisone, Torre, and Resia), remained a part of Italy.⁴ There had been no mention of a Slovenian minority in Croatia until after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991 because Slovenians were one of its constituent nations. Autochthonous Slovenians live in Gorski Kotar, northern Istria, Međimurje, the Sotla Valley, the Kolpa Valley, and in numerous cities (Zagreb, Rijeka, Varaždin, Poreč, Umag, Buje, Čakovac, Split, etc.) and are today recognized as a national minority.⁵

1 Milica Kacin Wohinz and Jože Pirjevec, *Zgodovina Slovencev v Italiji* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2000), 17.

2 Franc Zwitter, *O slovenskem narodnem vprašanju* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1990), 484-488.

3 Matjaž Klemenčič and Vladimir Klemenčič, *Prizadevanja koroških Slovencev za narodnostni obstoj po drugi svetovni vojni* (Klagenfurt/Celovec & Ljubljana/Wien, 2006/07), 29-30.

4 Sandi Volk, "Slovinci v Italiji od mirovne pogodbe do Londonskega sporazuma" in *Na oni strani meje*, ed. Gorazd Bajc (Koper: Univerza na Primorskem, ZRC Koper, and Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko, 2004), 125-133.

5 Vera Kržišnik-Bukić, *Slovinci v Hrvaški* (Ljubljana, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja, 1995) and Dejan Valentincič, "Slovenski jezik na Hrvaškem med zamejstvom in izseljenstvom: pravni vidik" in *Slovenski jezik in njegovi sosede*, ed. Matej Šekli and Lidija Rezončnik (Ljubljana: Zveza društev Slavistično društvo Slovenije, 2019), 153-164.

Today these four minorities face a variety of challenges. Some of these are the same for all four and others are very different. Without a doubt, the status of Slovenian minorities in all four neighbouring countries is substantially lower than the status that Slovenia provides for its two autochthonous national communities, the Hungarians and Italians.⁶

Due to the policies of the Free Territory of Trieste between 1947 and 1954, Slovenians there have maintained the highest level of rights up to the present day. Slovenians in the Gorizia region, on the other hand, did not have the same level of protection, though they did receive the right to Slovenian language schools and to Slovenian-language court proceedings. Slovenians in the Udine region, who were already the most assimilated, were not recognized as a minority at all until the adoption of two laws in 1999 and 2001. Because of the lack of minority schools, they were not able to raise young members of the community to be self-confident in their native language and identity.

We cannot overlook the fact that the political and economic power of the minority is weakening, participation in national structures is decreasing, and strong nationally-conscious cores are retreating to bilingualism. On the other hand, however, Slovenian associations are still very much alive in the territory and attract many members, more and more young people are studying in Slovenia and marrying across the border, and other valuable new initiatives are appearing. They are still fighting for guaranteed or at least facilitated political representation in the national parliament in Rome, equal status for Slovenian-language schools, and rectification of all the injustices from the fascist area.⁷

The Austrian State Treaty of 1955 guaranteed the protection of the Slovenian minority in both Carinthia and Styria. In Carinthia, where the minority organized itself and constantly fought for their rights, the protection was partially enforced. In Styria, however, the provisions of the treaty were not applied and until the end of the 1980s, to be Slovene was merely an intimate matter of the individual and family. The result is that even today only one association operates and the level of rights is still much lower, to the point of being almost non-existent. The cultural activity of the Carinthian Slovenes is impressive. Over a

6 The protection system of the Hungarian and Italian national communities in Slovenia covers all residents of the ethnically mixed territory and not only members of the national communities, e.g. mandatory bilingual personal documents for members of both the minority and the majority population, compulsory learning of the language of the minority for members of the majority nation, compulsory use of national symbols of national communities, bilingual operations of administrative and judicial bodies as well as public and private offices and institutions, and bilingual toponymy and public notices. Both national communities are also guaranteed political representation at both the local and national level and members of both minorities have double voting rights. Regulations affecting the Hungarian and Italian national communities cannot be adopted without the consent of the representatives of the communities.

7 See for example Dejan Valentinčič, "Medsebojna odvisnost pravnih zaščit in organiziranosti slovenskih manjšin v sosednjih štirih državah," *Dignitas: revija za človekove pravice*, n. 55/56 (2012), 88-124.

hundred cultural societies, choirs, and theatre groups operate there. The result of this array of cultural opportunities – many of which are open to children – is that young people build close ties to the cultural, athletic, economic, and humanitarian life of the national community. In recent years, the attitude of the majority German-speaking population towards the Slovenian-speaking minority has become significantly less hostile. Nevertheless, Austria still has not fulfilled its obligations regarding minority rights laid out in the Austrian State Treaty. Of the roughly 800 bilingual road signs that should exist, there are only 183. The language rights were further restricted by a 2011 law that gave some of additional bilingual signs. In Styria, the minority is situated much better culturally than politically.⁸

The Slovenian communities in Hungary and Croatia were characterized by the fact that until the fall of the Iron Curtain and the democratization of these countries, they did not have recognized special rights and could not organize freely. In Hungary today, the government gives minorities many opportunities to improve their situation. But at this stage, the Slovenian minority is already so assimilated that it is very difficult to reverse the trend. There are almost no young families with children that still speak the Slovenian language at home and bilingual schools have had little success in teaching the language. Raba is still underdeveloped in economic terms and thus many people from the region seek better-paid jobs on the Austrian side of the border, making German a more economically valuable language than Slovenian. In recent years, the Hungarian and Slovenian governments have collaborated on various projects aimed at the economic improvement of the Raba region and the part of Slovenia inhabited by the Hungarian national community.⁹

The Slovenian national minority in Croatia is unique in many respects. It is primarily active in the cultural sphere and its political involvement is only just awakening. The minority rights granted in legislation such as minority schools, official language status, and councils on local and national levels have not yet been realized. The minority itself is not very ambitious and one of its core problems is its demographic structure. The majority of community members are older and the youth are in most cases not interested in their minority identity nor in becoming active in ethnic and cultural associations. Many young people opt to study in Slovenia, but they usually remain there after studies as Slovenia is more economically developed than Croatia.¹⁰

8 “73 krajev nima napisov,” Volksgruppen, June 7, 2022, <https://volksgruppen.orf.at/slovensci/stories/3163702/>; downloaded October 22, 2022.

9 Valentincič, *Medsebojna odvisnost pravnih zaščit in organiziranosti slovenskih manjšin v sosednjih državah*, 88-124.

10 Valentincič, *Slovenski jezik na Hrvaškem med zamejstvom in izseljenstvom: pravni vidik*, 153-164.

History of Slovenian diaspora communities and emigration from Slovenian ethnic territory

There were three major waves of emigration from Slovenian ethnic territory. The first took place from the 1880s up until World War I. At that time, the reasons for emigration were mostly economic.¹¹ Slovenians immigrated primarily to the USA but also to South America, Western Europe, and Egypt. The second wave took place between the world wars. Most migrants during this period were also motivated by economic factors, but there was also a high rate of political refugees, especially from the parts of Slovenian ethnic territory that were subsumed by Italy – which would soon turn to fascism – and, to a lesser extent, the parts that became part of Austria. Many of the migrants to South America (a greater source of immigration than Western Europe or Egypt) settled in Argentina. The third wave started immediately after the conclusion of World War II. Refugees continued to flee the communist regime for the subsequent three decades, motivated by both the political and economic situation. In the beginning, migrants primarily flowed to the USA, Canada, Australia, Argentina, and to a lesser degree other South American countries. Later, many immigrated to Western European countries, especially Germany. During both Yugoslavia's periods, Slovenians were constantly moving also to other parts of the country.¹² (Drnovšek 1991, pp. 205-208 and Valentinčič 2013, pp. 327-328).

Although emigration in small numbers has occurred throughout the years since independence, it acquired completely new dimensions following 2008 and especially 2012. The most probable explanation is that emigration has been facilitated by the entry of Slovenia (an EU member state since 2004) to the Schengen Area on 21 December 2007. In 2009, the number of emigrants decreased. It gradually increased over the next two years, but did not reach the 2008 figure. Emigration jumped sharply again in 2012. In Slovenia, it was the peak of the effects of the global economic crisis, characterized by high unemployment, foreign indebtedness, the freezing of employment and promotions in the public sector, and cuts in public spending, among other things. It arrived in combination with a negative political climate and general social atmosphere. Slovenia was shaken by the so-called "All-Slovenian Uprisings." Negative stories dominated media coverage. It drove many, especially the young, to seek opportunities for their careers and lives abroad.¹³

11 There were also some cases of young men escaping from the military draft.

12 Marjan Drnovšek, *Pot slovenskih izseljencev na tuje* (Ljubljana: Mladika, 1991), 205-208 and Dejan Valentinčič, "Slovenija in rojaki izven meja matične domovine" in *Evropska Slovenija – prispevki za nov nacionalni program*, ed. Matej Avbelj et al (Ljubljana: Nova revija & Inštitut Karantanija, 2013), 327-328.

13 Dejan Valentinčič, "Sodobno izseljevanje iz Slovenije (2004-2017) in etnično povezovanje 'novoizseljencev'" in *Raziskovanje slovenskega izseljenstva: vidiki, pristopi, vsebine*, ed. Janja Žitnik-Serafin and Aleksej Kalc (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2017), 172-191.

Between 2012 and 2018, 8,000 to 10,000 Slovenian citizens emigrated each year. The record year was 2017, during which 9,871 Slovenian citizens left the country. In 2018 and 2019 the number decreased to 6,595 and 6,598 respectively. Additionally, roughly the same number of non-citizen who temporary worked in Slovenia moved back to their home countries or to the north to more developed EU member states such as Germany, Austria, and Sweden.¹⁴

Taking into account that Slovenia has roughly 20,000 births per year, that means that half of new-born generation has emigrated every year.¹⁵ The amount of young people emigrating every year outnumbers the population enlisted in the entire Slovenian army. Because of such numbers, some are already suggesting that there is a fourth major wave of emigration: the “youth exodus.”

The realities of Slovenian communities abroad are so different from each other that it is very difficult to make any generalizations. Slovenians living within Europe have always been able to visit home more often than those living outside Europe and thus it was easier for them and their children to keep strong connections with their country of origin. The biggest proportion of Slovenian emigrates and specially their descendants that have continued to participate actively in Slovenian societies such as Slovenian Catholic missions and Slovenian cultural associations is in Germany.^{16/17}

The Slovenian post-WWII community in Argentina is regarded as exemplary in the maintenance of Slovenian identity and language. Important components of its success are the fact that entire families immigrated together, the percentage of ethnically mixed marriages was and is still low, and skilled intellectuals made up a large portion of the immigrants and played a key role in organizing the community.¹⁸ One example of this intellectual prowess is the fact that seventy-four separate newspapers have been issued in a community that has consisted of just 7,000 people. In 1957, thirty of them circulated simultaneously. The community operates several Slovenian National Homes. The Catholic Church and its clergy also play an extremely important role.

In all Slovenian communities in the Anglo-Saxon countries (the USA, Canada, and Australia), the Slovenian language is disappearing very quickly. In the autochthonous

14 “V 2019 se je iz Slovenije vsak teden odselilo povprečno 127 slovenskih in 163 tujih državljanov,” Republike Slovenije Statistični Urad, July 17, 2020, <https://www.stat.si/StatWeb/News/Index/8929>; downloaded October 24, 2022.

15 “V 2018 se je iz Slovenije vsak teden odselilo povprečno 126 slovenskih in 133 tujih državljanov,” Republike Slovenije Statistični Urad, July 7, 2019, <https://www.stat.si/StatWeb/news/Index/8217>; downloaded October 24, 2022.

16 They are welcomed as guests in German churches as they do not have their own.

17 Valentinčič, *Slovenija in rojaki izven meja matične domovine*, 327-328

18 Zvone Žigon, “Slovenska politična emigracija v Argentini” in *Slovensko izseljenstvo*, ed. Milica Trebše Štolfa and Matjaž Klemenčič (Ljubljana: Slovenska izseljenska matica, 2001), 249-257.

Slovenian minorities in Slovenia's neighbouring countries, to be Slovenian is to speak the language. This is not the case in the diaspora communities. Of all ethnic characteristics, the language is the most difficult to preserve. Even after losing the language, the members of these communities often preserve Slovenian traditions, music, and food¹⁹ and remain very proud of their Slovenian identity, often having excellent knowledge of Slovenia's history, ethnography, and, in some cases, modern politics. In all of these countries, Slovenians have their own churches and are organized in Slovenian societies and National Homes.²⁰

Legal aspect of Slovenia's relation towards its compatriots abroad

In its highest legal act, the Constitution, Slovenia has committed itself to devoting special attention to its national minorities in neighbouring countries as well as to Slovenian emigrants and workers abroad. The issue's great importance to the country is demonstrated by the fact that it appears in Article 5 of the Constitution, making it one of the general provisions. Article 5 Paragraph 1 of the Constitution states: "In its own territory, the state shall protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall protect and guarantee the rights of the autochthonous Italian and Hungarian national communities. It shall maintain concern for autochthonous Slovenian national minorities in neighbouring countries and for Slovenian emigrants and workers abroad and shall foster their contacts with the homeland. It shall provide for the preservation of the natural wealth and cultural heritage and create opportunities for the harmonious development of society and culture in Slovenia."²¹

Article 5 imposes positive obligations on the state. In other words, it is not sufficient that the state merely passively refrain from committing infringements, but it must also perform certain minimal actions.²² According to Boštjan M. Župančič, the positive obligations of the state towards Slovenian minorities in neighbouring countries are only constitutionally valid if the Constitutional Court establishes a doctrine on a specific issue based on a particular case. Article 5 Paragraph 2 of the Constitution states: "Slovenians not holding Slovenian citizenship may enjoy special rights and privileges in Slovenia. The nature and extent of such rights and privileges shall be regulated by law."²³ This provision of the

19 We can even say that food is the most powerful ethnic identifier.

20 See for example Rado Genorio, *Slovenci v Kanadi* (Ljubljana, Inštitut za geografijo, 1989) and Breda Čebulj-Sajko, *Razpotja izseljencev: Razdvojena identiteta avstralskih Slovencev* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2000).

21 "Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia," *Official Gazette*, n. 33 (1991).

22 Boštjan M. Župančič, "Komentar 5. člena" in *Komentar ustave RS*, ed. Lovro Šturm (Kranj: Fakulteta za podiplomske državne in evropske študije, 2002), 112.

23 "Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia."

Constitution is targeted at both Slovenians living in neighbouring countries as well as at emigrants and workers elsewhere.

The inclusion of “Slovenians not holding Slovenian citizenship” is significant, as it shows that the Constitution implies that being Slovenian is not equivalent to having Slovenian citizenship. While Western legal systems (especially in Latin Europe) equate the notion of nationality with citizenship, the Slovenian Constitution allows for the possibility of an individual not holding Slovenian citizenship to be considered Slovenian. Constitutionally, the term “non-Slovenian” must be understood in light of this reality.²⁴

The Constitution provided the creation of a special law that would regulate the issue of Slovenians abroad. Sufficient political will for the adoption of the law, however, was lacking until 2006.²⁵ This issue had been unregulated until the promulgation of the new law. Institutions and organizations of Slovenians abroad as well as institutions and organizations within Slovenia dealing with Slovenians abroad embraced the law as it represented a major step forward on the issue. Some of these organizations noted the fact that the same law would now regulate relations with both autochthonous Slovenians in neighbouring countries and Slovenians in other parts of the world. The circumstances surrounding these two groups are similar in some respects and quite different in others. Despite welcoming the adoption of the law, certain representatives of Slovenian organizations in neighbouring countries expressed concerns. SLOMAK²⁶ prepared its own proposal for the law, which, in their view, was not sufficiently taken into account. They expressed disappointment at the fact that the law did not adequately consider their interests and expectations. Nevertheless, the introduction of the law was of great symbolic significance. Its most important aspect was undoubtedly the fact that Slovenians living outside Slovenia had finally become included in the Slovenian legislative system.

The act is divided into ten parts. The preliminary provisions define the regulations and status of Slovenians outside Slovenia. It regulates relations between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians living abroad and sets out the responsibilities of the governmental bodies of the Republic of Slovenia in this field. Moreover, it regulates the status of Slovenians without Slovenian citizenship and the repatriation of Slovenian emigrants and workers abroad (Article 1). The act applies to the Slovenians outside the country who hold Slovenian citizenship, those who have status as a Slovenian but no Slovenian citizenship, and those who have neither Slovenian citizenship nor status (Article 3). Slovenians outside

24 Zupančič, *Komentar 5. člena*, 116.

25 “Act regulating relations between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians abroad,” *Official Gazette*, n. 43 (2006).

26 SLOMAK stands for the Coordination of Slovenian Minorities which unifies the so-called umbrella organizations of Slovenian minorities from all four neighbouring countries. De facto it is not active anymore and now only exists on paper.

Slovenia (and particularly the minorities in neighbouring countries) are defined as an equal part of a single Slovenian nation, sharing this single cultural space with Slovenians living in the homeland. Concern for Slovenians abroad should represent an integral and essential part of Slovenian foreign policy.²⁷

The most important change introduced by the act is the fact that the government's Office for Slovenians Abroad is no longer headed by a state secretary within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but rather by a special minister without portfolio (Article 14). This offers many advantages. A minister has greater political power, which can be exercised over other state officials on matters concerning minorities. In the minister's participation in the proceedings of government, he or she has a significant influence on the decision-making process. Additionally, the minister, despite not having considerable powers in foreign affairs, garners greater respect abroad and can shape government approaches to minority rights through other ministries, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The modification of the Office has also granted the minister more powers, particularly in allocating funds for projects requested by organizations and institutions in neighbouring countries and elsewhere abroad. Two special permanent items in the regular annual budget of Slovenia assure financial resources for the Office. The Decree on the Granting of Financial Support for the Maintenance and Development of the Slovenian Identity Outside the Republic of Slovenia established the office's resource allocation procedure (Articles 46 and 47). It is worth pointing out that minority organizations expressed some concerns about the changes in the implementation of financial assistance. Prior to the adoption of the act, the financial assistance for associations, organizations, and institutions was allocated by umbrella organizations. Now the government itself makes these decisions, basing them on its own analyses, assessments, and strategies. Some expressed concerns about the possibility of manipulation, fearing the government would financially support only those recipients who are closer to their interests and political orientation.²⁸ However, there are also counter-arguments. The Office, for example, could be more neutral than it was previously, resulting in resource allocations based fairly on activity and performance, not other more compromised metrics. Moreover, if associations receive the funds directly from Slovenia, the links between these associations and the homeland will be strengthened.

Other concerns about the funding were raised during the creation of the law. One SLOMAK member, Marjan Pipp from Austria, said that the change did not go far enough, arguing that it was ineffective since it continued to fund outdated doubled

27 "Act regulating relations between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians abroad."

28 Božo Marinac, "Slovenci na tujem: Povezovalni faktor narodne zavesti, ne notranjepolitično breme" in *Pre-misliti manjšino*, ed. Gorazd Bajc (Koper: ZRS, 2008), 268.

minority institutions that are remnants of Cold War ideological divisions. This problem does not exist only among Slovenians in Austria but also among those in Italy. Mr. Pipp believes that addressing the problem with financial assistance should be Slovenia's role since the minorities alone will not be able to resolve it. He wonders: "What are the possibilities for a national community, organized on the level of private law, with associations that have the same legal status as the Bee-keepers' Association or the Association of Slovenian Dairymen? With funds being allocated to our minority communities, the Republic of Slovenia maintains this duality, which is unnecessary and ineffective not only for the minority but also in terms of regulating mutual relations. And the act that is currently discussed is not very encouraging as it maintains this method of funding."²⁹

In addition to the allocation of funds, the office has the duties of informing and advising Slovenians outside Slovenia, formulating and implementing state policy, and coordinating the work of all ministries in this field (Article 15). Moreover, it defines the tasks and responsibilities of the National Assembly Commission for Relations with Slovenians Abroad. This body already existed previously, but obtained new tasks and responsibilities after the adoption of the law. The Commission is a working body of the National Assembly, responsible for the policy of Slovenia on Slovenians abroad (Article 16). It has often been proposed that the Commission should be transformed into a committee and, more precisely, into the central working body of the National Assembly. This has not yet been carried out.³⁰

The act also focuses on culture, preservation of the Slovenian language and Slovenian-language education, science, higher education, sports, and economic and regional cooperation. Article 30 of the act stipulates that the national public institution handling radio and television is obliged to inform Slovenians in neighbouring countries and the homeland on issues facing Slovenians abroad.

As regards science and higher education, the act provides more favourable conditions for Slovenians outside their homeland to enter higher education, as defined by an act regulating the field of higher education. Additionally, Slovenian students outside Slovenia can obtain special scholarships (Article 34). The act also provides financial assistance for Slovenian research institutes operating in neighbouring countries. Concerning sports, the Act ensures that umbrella sports organizations, Slovenian sports clubs, and individuals abroad can respond to requests from government ministries. It also encourages links between sports organizations in Slovenia and abroad through joint sports meetings, seminars, and assistance in organizing major sports events (Articles 38 and 39).

29 Marinac, *Slovinci na tujem: Povezovalni faktor narodne zavesti, ne notranjepolitično breme*, 265, 266.

30 "Act regulating relations between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians abroad."

The Act also prioritizes economic and regional cooperation, given that economically powerful minorities have a much better chance for self-preservation. Such economic cooperation can also provide many benefits to the home country.

In 2010, four years after taking effect, the Act Regulating Relations Between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians Abroad was amended for the first time. The act adopted in 2006 established the Council for Slovenians in Neighbouring Countries as a consultative body but did not determine its mandate. The amendments to the act stipulate that the mandate shall run for five years and expire with the appointment of a new Council. An individual can be appointed to the Council multiple times. A new indent of the act refers to the Council's rules of procedure regarding the reasons for the early dismissal of a member of the Council (Article 20). The act also states that the Ministry of Culture shall exercise control over the two areas that fall under the responsibilities of the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia and RTV Slovenia (Slovenian national radio and television) (Article 30a). Additionally, the act introduces some changes regarding the promotion of athletes and sporting organizations in neighbouring countries. There are also some amendments dealing with financing. Previously, the Office could issue a decision only for the current year. Now it can enter agreements with applicants for financial assistance that are valid for multiple years (Article 53). One substantive issue was hidden in the midst of these mostly technical changes. The original text of the act had a provision that teachers in the diaspora who are at least seventy years old and have taught the Slovenian language as volunteers for at least fifteen years receive permanent recognition allowances. In 2010 additional requirements were introduced that stipulated that, in order to receive these allowances, the volunteers must also be repatriated Slovenians from areas of major crisis. This was quite a controversial change, but it received little public attention.³¹

Changes in contemporary Slovenian minority and diaspora communities

Many countries that have large historical diasporas, including Slovenia, are facing the emigration also today. The members of this new diaspora, however, are very different than those in historical emigration waves. Contemporary emigrants usually know the language of the country where they move, for example, especially if this is an English-speaking country. The majority of modern emigrants are more qualified and engage in more intellectual or at least more qualified work. It is no longer common for fellow

31 *Official Gazette*, n. 76 (2010).

Slovenians to help each other acquire jobs in the same companies in their country of immigration. All of these differences make modern emigration a more individual affair. Consequently, there are more “mixed” (interethnic) marriages between migrants than in the past. Modern information technologies make it possible to stay in touch with family and friends back home on a daily basis. Because of this, emigrants miss their loved ones and their home country less and are thus less interested in participating in ethnic societies. The possibilities for greater connectedness that come from modern transportation produce the same effect. Today’s migrants are often called the “Ryanair generation” because of the affordability of flights back home. This also leads them to feel less connected to their ethnic community in their country of immigration. Because of these looser ties to their compatriots, they lack a strong sense of responsibility towards their ethnic community. They feel little sense of duty, for example, towards the property and real estate that their ethnic community owns. On social media it is common to see these emigrants organizing gatherings in parks or other public facilities, even though members of the traditional diaspora have offered them their National Homes, church halls, and so on. To use these facilities, however, would mean taking responsibility for the real estate (paying for utilities like electricity and water, locking and unlocking the building, making repairs, etc.), which they do not want to do. Another important difference is that members of the traditional diaspora usually spent every weekend and most of their free time in these ethnic facilities. Today’s emigrants are generally interested in meeting only occasionally, usually just a couple of times a year.³²

All of these realities point to the fact that modern society is individualized. In fact, individualization is characterized as the most important feature of globalization or as one of its key processes³³ and has been described as “the most important megatrend.”³⁴ Nikolai Genov defines it as the growing autonomy of individuals³⁵ and points to the ‘empowerment’ of individuals as one of its key dimensions.³⁶ Matthew Adams and Will Atkinson write that an individual is placed in a situation where he can – and indeed

32 See also Dejan Valentinčič, “Brain circulation and return migration in Slovenia before and during the Covid-19 pandemic” in *Research and Innovation Forum 2021: Managing Continuity, Innovation, and Change in the Post-Covid World: Technology, Politics and Society*, ed. Anna Visvizi, Orlando Troisi and Kawther Saeedi (Cham: Springer, 2021), 549-566.

33 Elena Danilova, Individualization under Precarious Conditions in *Global Trends and Regional Development*, ed. Nikolai Genov (New York: Routledge, 2012), 137.

34 NIC, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Washington DC: National Intelligence Council, 2012).

35 Nikolai Genov, *Global Trends and Regional Development* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

36 Nikolai Genov, Challenges of individualization, *International Social Science Journal*, no. 64 (2015), 209-2010.

must – plan, organize, lead, and control his life path.³⁷ Anthony Giddens believes that after individualization we are no longer what we are, but what we make of ourselves.³⁸

Adopting diaspora policies for modern emigrants actually means also adaptations of those policies for the descendants of the traditional diaspora at the same time. Traditional emigrant communities are influenced by global trends as well. The weakening of identities and the widening range of possible leisure activities and interests provide clear evidence of individualization. In addition to individualization, another very prevalent societal shift is increasing mobility. A clear example of this trend can be found in the largest Slovenian diaspora city, Cleveland, Ohio in the USA. It is estimated that up to 80,000 descendants of Slovenian immigrants live in Cleveland and its surroundings. The youth group that still attracts most young Slovenian Americans is the folk dancing group Kres. Around 150 young people are active in the group today. In 2018 the group celebrated its sixty-fifth anniversary. To prepare for the celebration, they gathered pictures from throughout the group's history. They discovered that among those former Kres members currently aged thirty-five to fifty (the generation of the parents of today's dancers), only one-quarter of them still live in the Cleveland area. The rest are scattered in other cities and states across the United States.³⁹ The situation is similar in many other American cities with a Slovenian diaspora as well as in Canada, Australia, Argentina, and various European countries.

In modern mobile societies, people move around as individuals. For those in the Slovenian diaspora, there is little reason to move intentionally to a city where a Slovenian community exists and thus it is rarely sought out. People's interests and hobbies are becoming more and more differentiated. Identities are becoming less unified and more complex. People find friends on the grounds of common interests, not ethnic heritage.

Zygmund Bauman wrote in 1999 that we live in a "liquid modernity."⁴⁰ The description of these new realities listed above makes very clear that when it comes to the diaspora it is

37 Matthew Adams, "Hybridizing habitus and reflexivity: Towards an understanding of contemporary identity," *Sociology*, no. 40/3 (2006): 511-528 and Will Atkinson, *Class, individualization, and late modernity: In search of the reflexive worker* (Basingstone: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

38 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

39 The usual life path is as follows: young people stay active in Slovenian initiatives until the end of high school. After that, they move to a university in another state. There they meet a partner from a third state. After they graduate, they look for the best jobs offers for both of them all across the USA. After some years there, they may find better jobs elsewhere and move to another state again. They still feel their ethnic heritage, but do not live anywhere near ethnic organizations. When they come to visit their relatives in their hometowns (Cleveland, for example) they may go to a Slovenian church, dance, concert, meeting with their childhood friends, etc. This usually takes place just once or twice a year, but they still find it important to maintain their identity individually and to keep relations with their kin-state.

40 Zygmund Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

necessary to consider the fluid, individualized nature of modern society. Everything is changing very quickly and constantly and nothing is solid anymore. Is it still a liquid society or are we already living in a gas society?

Very similar trends are apparent within minority communities as well. As time passes, the identity of members of minority communities becomes more and more complex, a natural result of the environment that surrounds them (school, media, peers with whom they spend time and share common interests and activities, etc.). Given the nature of the modern way of life, many people seeking professional success do not have the time or interest to be active in ethnic associations. For these organizations, even more problematic than the question of membership is that of leadership. Many boards of Slovenian organizations abroad are realizing that they may be the last generation willing to make the required commitments of time and effort to organize minority events and activities. Even if the next generation is still interested in attending events, finding volunteers might prove to be the biggest challenge.⁴¹

Additionally, the proportion of mixed marriages is increasing in most ethnic communities and many people are moving out of the traditional areas of minority settlement where the collective rights of the minority are protected. Outside of these areas, the conditions for the maintenance of national identity are different: no minority schools, no official bilingualism, few cultural associations, little funding available for minority activities, concentration in big cities where the dynamics of everyday life are very different, and so on.

The territories of Slovenian ethnic settlement (bilingual areas) in Italy, Croatia, Austria, and Hungary are all areas experiencing emigration. Many people, however, also move to capitals and economically more developed cities within the same country, such as Udine, Milan, Turin, and Rome in Italy; Zagreb, Osijek, Split, and Dubrovnik in Croatia; Vienna, Graz, and Salzburg in Austria; and Budapest and Szombathely in Hungary. In all of these countries, a significant proportion of the Slovenian population from the traditional ethnic territories lives in these cities and in some cases the numbers are roughly the same as of those living in the traditional ethnic territory. This raises some important questions about the populations in these cities. What is their legal status? Should they also be granted minority rights? How are they organized? How can their assimilation be prevented? Similarly challenging dilemmas are posed by the impact of immigration into traditional ethnic areas and the consequent decline in the proportion of the members of ethnic minorities.

Individualization, the diversity of lifestyles and interests, and the empowerment of individuals are at the same time producing another regressive trend. Many people who either

41 But another opinion is that people who organize events and activities like this are people who need to be creative and need an audience. There will always be people of this kind who will need a forum to express themselves and the problem is vice-versa. As the communities face decreasing involvement, they will become “generals without the army.”

already lost their ancestors' ethnic identity or never even received it in the first place are now searching for their roots and rediscovering their identity, heritage, and ethnic traditions.⁴² Our previous research⁴³ shows that the motives of these individuals are very different. What they all have in common, though, is a great enthusiasm for their newly-discovered identity and a sense of happiness that comes from it. That said, in most cases these are not people who were previously unhappy or unsuccessful as they are mostly individuals who are very successful in their professional and social spheres. It seems that after achieving economic success, they felt that something was missing in their lives. They often explain their desire to explore their roots by saying "I want to know who I am," or something to this effect. Building their own new identity radically changed their lives in many cases. They often become the most active in ethnic organizations and are willing to put a lot of their time and effort into it. (That said, some are interested in simply discovering their identity on their own and have no desire to join the organizations.) Their relationship towards Slovenia reveals a similar level of interest and engagement. They generally want to visit it regularly, seek ways to establish permanent contacts there, help the country, and to collaborate professionally. While ethnic identity is a collective phenomenon, individuals within a community today have more and more opportunities to shape their own identity and choose which parts of community life they will be involved in. This is especially true for these members of the diaspora who are entering the community as outsiders, they are completely autonomous. They themselves choose their place in the community.

The process of individualization is often associated with "decreasing the relevance of traditional social structures,"⁴⁴ "de-traditionalization,"⁴⁵ and "freeing the individual from traditional culture."⁴⁶ Elena Danilova explains that individualization occurs as a result of the retreat of traditional structures such as the state, class, nuclear family, ethnic groups, and nationalities. It is understood as a trend of emancipation, as individuals are freed from traditional bonds and discover new social spaces that open up their autonomy.⁴⁷ For those interested in minority communities, what is especially interesting is the reverse phenomenon: individualization bringing about a *return* to roots and tradition.

42 In national narratives, this concept is known within the Jewish nation by the term "Wandering Jew."

43 Dejan Valentinčič, "Vračanje potomcev slovenskih izseljencev v ZDA in Kanadi k slovenski identiteti v kontekstu globalnega trenda individualizacije," *Dve domovini/Two homelands*, n. 44 (2016): 153-166.

44 Ulrich Beck, "Jenseits von Stand und Klasse? Soziale Ungleichheiten, gesellschaftliche Individualisierungsprozesse und die Entstehung neuer sozialer Formationen und Identitäten" in *Soziale Ungleichheiten*, ed. Reinhard Kreckel (Göttingen: Otto Schwartz & Co), 35-74.

45 Atkinson, *Class, individualization, and late modernity: In search of the reflexive worker*.

46 Genov, *Challenges of individualization*, 2009-2010.

47 Danilova, *Individualization under Precarious Conditions*, 137.

How to address these challenges: theoretical analysis and practical experience

Taking into account this new reality, it is clear that if a country wants to have tight connections with the members of its diaspora or minorities, it is no longer enough to only address ethnic organizations. It is crucial to find ways to stay in contact and collaboration with individuals who still feel connected to their home country but are not particularly interested in being active in ethnic organizations.

If we examine Slovenian legal provisions, measures, and policies towards Slovenian minorities and diasporas abroad, we see that almost all of them are focused on collective activities.⁴⁸ Slovenia is not an exception here. This is the approach of basically all countries with communities abroad. It is easier to address collectives than individuals and this approach worked well in the past. Nevertheless, in the present day it is in need of an upgrade. Following the interests and motivations of those individuals offers the best possibility for success.

NGOs

Sometimes civil initiatives can be more productive than governmental policies. Two Slovenian NGOs that connect modern emigrants from Slovenia offer a fitting example. The American Slovenian Education Foundation ASEF⁴⁹ is currently gathering fifty-five Slovenian professors who teach at universities around the world and had already established some connections among themselves of their own accord. ASEF offers scholarships for Slovenia's best students to spend ten weeks at these professors' departments in some of the best universities, observing how they function and bringing that knowledge back to Slovenia. Each professor who joins ASEF accepts a student from Slovenia to receive this training for free. Besides bringing new knowledge to Slovenia, the idea is also that professors who are regularly in contact with students from Slovenia are more likely to keep contact with their mother country, maintain their Slovenian identity, and collaborate with Slovenia professionally. When possible, students from Slovenia stay with Slovenian families while living abroad and are included in the local diaspora community with the goal

48 Even though the act regulating this is titled Act Regulating Relations between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians Abroad and the governmental office is named "Office for Slovenians Abroad," they are actually not focusing on individuals, but communities.

49 ASEF, asef.net; downloaded October 25, 2022.

invigorating the motivation and energy of these communities. ASEF also offers a program in which students and young professionals of Slovenian origin living in the diaspora are able to stay in Slovenia for ten weeks and work in a Slovenian environment. This program resembles the “heritage trip” programs found in many other countries, such as Hungary, Israel, Armenia, and North Macedonia, but with one important difference: the focus is not only on getting to know the culture, history, and language, but also to work in Slovenia and develop professional ties. It is believed that individuals with such an experience are more likely to be interested in keeping their Slovenian identity.⁵⁰

Another important NGO that connects modern emigrants is VTIS, The Association of Slovenians Educated Abroad.⁵¹ In addition to maintaining contact and exchanging experiences, which is still very important today, many companies in Slovenia use VTIS as a network when seeking professionals to employ.

While both receive substantial financial support from the Slovenian government, these civic initiatives are much more efficient than governmental projects.

Virtual communities

Important advances for the work of both initiatives are made possible by the unlimited possibilities of the web. The majority of their activities take place online. Modern communication platforms and social media make it possible to create effective virtual communities. It enhances the ability of countries to reach out to their diaspora communities, allowing them to more easily communicate over existing platforms, create new ones for specific purposes, use data analytics to create bases of contacts, and research trends.

Rheingold defines virtual communities as a social aggregate that develops when a sufficient number of people use an online platform to carry out discussions for an extended period of time and engage in truly human interactions with the purpose of creating a network of relationships.⁵² The internet is not just the means of transferring information,

50 To give a concrete example: one ASEF fellow from the USA was studying tourism and marketing. She came to Slovenia for ten weeks to work in a tourist agency. Her professional interest was always tourism and the tourist agency’s interest was that she would help them promote Slovenia as a tourist destination with potential American tourists. Ten weeks later when her fellowship was over, she returned to the USA, where this Slovenian tourist agency employed her. She now works in the USA for them, promoting Slovenia. It is expected that through this experience, she will be more motivated to keep her Slovenian identity, will be coming to Slovenia more regularly, and will pass her heritage onto her children too.

51 VTIS, www.drustvovtis.si; downloaded: October 25, 2022.

52 Howard Rheingold, *Virtual Reality: The Revolutionary Techonology of Computer-Generated Articial Worlds – and How It Promises to Transform Society* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

but can also be a symbol of future-oriented development where the minority language can assert its position.⁵³ Elkinns claims that virtual ethnic communities are not any less real than in-person ethnic communities because they have just as much potential to become a significant part of the ethnic identity of those who participate in them.⁵⁴ Medvešek thinks that the internet can contribute to the formation of one's ethnic identity since it makes it easier for individuals and communities to connect with people who share common interests.⁵⁵ Warschauer and De Florio-Hansen, on the other hand, argue that the internet, in comparison with other mass media, is less likely to facilitate the creation of an individual's ethnic identity, and serves rather as a tool to better understand the increasingly complex dynamics of ethnic identity in the modern world.⁵⁶ Elkins believes that virtual ethnic communities give the existing in-person ethnic communities an opportunity to strengthen and refresh themselves and allow them to maintain their identity and activities, a challenge that would otherwise be much more difficult if their presence were limited to small enclaves in the middle of other societies.⁵⁷ Virtual ethnic communities give individuals an opportunity for new ways of connecting with each other.⁵⁸ The internet promotes communication, which is essential for the future of ethnic communities.⁵⁹ It also helps those who are separated from their ethnic community to maintain their ethnic identity.⁶⁰

Return migration

Another pressing modern challenge is how to promote return migration. The experiences of successful countries in this field show that creating a special office or centre to welcome return migrants is vital. The work of assisting and giving information about how to deal with bureaucratic issues before the return and once emigrants return is even more important than special programs inviting and bringing them back home in the first place.

53 Mojca Medvešek, "Ugotavljanje podobe slovenske skupnosti, ki živi na območju Furlanije Julijske krajine na svetovnem spletu," *Razprave in gradivo*, no. 60 (2009), 6-38.

54 David Elkins, "Globalization, Telecommunication, and Virtual Ethnic Communities," *International Political Science Review*, year 18, no. 2 (1997), 139-152.

55 Medvešek, *Ugotavljanje podobe slovenske skupnosti, ki živi na območju Furlanije Julijske krajine na svetovnem spletu*, 12.

56 Marco Warschauer and Inez De Florio-Hansen, "Multilingualism, identity, and the Internet" in *Multiple identity and multilingualism*, ed. Inez De Florio-Hansen (Tubingen: Stauffenburg, 2003), 155-179.

57 Elkins, *Globalization, Telecommunication, and Virtual Ethnic Communities*, 148.

58 Sanja Čikić, "Povezovanje Slovencev po svetu s pomočjo interneta: vzpostavljanje virtualnih etničnih skupnosti," *Dve domovini/Two homelands*, no. 16 (2002), 85.

59 Medvešek, *Ugotavljanje podobe slovenske skupnosti, ki živi na območju Furlanije Julijske krajine na svetovnem spletu*, 12.

60 Čikić, *Povezovanje Slovencev po svetu s pomočjo interneta: vzpostavljanje virtualnih etničnih skupnosti*, 81.

The internet era, especially given the Covid-19 experience, had enabled remote work.⁶¹ Some live as digital nomads, residing in their mother country and working abroad, while others pursue a hybrid option, living part-time in one country and part-time in another. These “hybrids” must overcome many bureaucratic obstacles to make their lifestyle feasible. In Slovenia, such obstacles include residency status, health insurance, tax residency, and double taxation. Despite the fluidity of modern society, these bureaucratic processes rest on the assumption of a static society. This makes it difficult to obtain or to renounce these statuses and declaring mixed status can be cumbersome or impossible.

There are several measures taken by other countries that Slovenia has taken into consideration but has not yet implemented. In Italy and Austria, for instance, highly educated returnees receive considerable “tax holidays,” partial tax forgiveness lasting for a set period of time after their return. Since Slovenia is known for having highly regressive taxes, that kind of relief might be an effective motivator for potential returnees. Ireland, Armenia, Romania, and Bulgaria have systems of “welcome offices” for potential returnees. People who live abroad for some time are often confused about the administrative system in their homeland. The ability to access all the required information in one place and to work with someone who can offer assistance with these procedures can greatly help encourage potential returnees to come home. Slovenia has begun to introduce this within the framework of the already-existing Governmental Office for Slovenians Abroad.

In 2019, using their annual funding dedicated to research projects, the Slovenian Research Agency founded a new project called the Aleš Debeljak Scheme.⁶² It ensures that twelve posts are reserved each year for Slovenian researchers working abroad who are willing to return and offers them the opportunity to apply for projects under certain privileged conditions. There is no requirement, for example, to be fully employed in Slovenia and they can work up to 60% of their hours abroad. This scheme follows examples set in countries like Israel, Italy, and Greece, among others.

In 2020 the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports decided to include the return migration of academics in the implementation of the Covid-related EU recovery plan. The ministry is now introducing a program whereby every Slovenian researcher who applied for a European Research Council (ERC) grant, whether in Slovenia or at any foreign institution, and submitted a project that was rated as excellent but was nonetheless passed over due to extreme competition can receive financing through the Slovenian Research Agency so long as the research is conducted at a Slovenian university. Furthermore, every Slovenian citizen who successfully concluded an ERC grant at a foreign university can get

61 See also Valentinčič, “Brain circulation and return migration in Slovenia before and during the Covid-19 pandemic,” 549-566.

62 Named after a deceased professor of the University of Ljubljana.

their funding extended for one year from the Slovenian Research Agency so long as the research is conducted at a Slovenian university. This program was introduced following the example of the Czech Republic.

From communities to individuals, from individuals to communities

As illustrated, these new approaches, ideas, and policies are focused on individuals, including those who are not interested in participating in Slovenian ethnic structures abroad, but are still motivated to keep their Slovenian identity and ties with their mother country. The modern reality is that ethnic structures are less attractive to younger generations. Nevertheless, some attempts have been made in this realm. The Youth Council of Slovenia offers training for leaders of youth associations in Slovenia. The Governmental Office for Slovenians Abroad funded a project in which these leadership trainers visited Slovenian clubs abroad to offer training for young involved Slovenians. Lately, there has been significant focus on business cooperation. A variety of Slovenian business associations and clubs abroad have been launched. One proposal suggests that Slovenian clubs and National Homes abroad that are facing declining membership could offer their spaces for start-ups run by young Slovenians from these communities who would receive support from Slovenian government.

These measures have been designed while keeping in mind the fact that only a minority within a minority community is interested in culture. Still, there are plans how to revive also this field. The Governmental Office for Slovenians Abroad holds a yearly competition with monetary prizes for the best bachelor, master's and doctoral theses on topics related to the Slovenian minority and diaspora. Also, through cooperation between the Governmental Office for Slovenian Abroad and the Slovenian National Archives, Slovenia offers support and training for active members of Slovenian diaspora and minority associations on how to maintain, edit, and store archives in their association. Unfortunately, many archives have been lost because those responsible did not cherish them or did not know how to preserve them. The hope is that both of these initiatives will inspire youth to dedicate work and study to their local Slovenian heritage.

Regarding autochthonous Slovenian national minorities in the neighbouring countries, there are bilateral efforts aimed at improving the status and rights of Slovenians that have moved outside of traditional settlement areas and into big cities. The fact that they are not covered by traditional minority protection should be changed to reflect the realities of modern mobile society.

Conclusion

Slovenian minorities in the neighbouring countries were separated from their mother nation over the course of several historical periods and the conditions for their development throughout history have differed. Their situations today, therefore, vary greatly between countries and within different areas of the same country. There are major variations between them in terms of population size, degree of national consciousness, legal protection, extent of assimilation, and level of self-organization. These differences are a consequence of past and current political environments, the legal protections the communities received, the possibility of contact between the minority and Slovenia in the past, the tolerance of the majority population towards the minority, and the ideological and political divisions within the minority.

There are substantial differences between the Slovenian diaspora communities as well. Their diverse situations are the result of differences in the historical eras during which their ancestors emigrated, the receiving country's attitude towards the preservation of their ethnic identity, the possibility of contact with Slovenia, and Slovenia's attitudes towards them, both before and after its independence. Slovenian emigrants today have very different characteristics from members of the past waves of emigration.

Slovenia must approach its communities abroad with great sensitivity, as each one has very different needs and wishes.

The central global megatrends that influence ethnic communities today are individualization, increased mobility, increasingly flexible and complex identities, and highly varied lifestyles. Descendants of traditional communities are resembling modern emigrants more and more. Thus, when a country adjusts its diaspora policies to address modern emigrants, it is in fact also responding to new realities in the traditional diaspora. Of course, working with traditional diaspora organizations is still important and, for many members of the diaspora and minorities, this is the way that they stay connected to the mother country. Many descendants of previous emigration waves, on the other hand, feel ethnic belonging to their ancestors' country of origin despite leading individualized lives. The only way to benefit from such individuals is to find more direct ways of reaching them.

One of the main objectives of this article was to offer a set of possible policies and measures to successfully address ethnic communities in a changed global context. The suggestions are based on the interests of the mother countries and the minority and diaspora community members themselves and the opportunities that the internet offers. Slovenia is not a unique case regarding questions in addressing contemporary minorities and diasporas. Many countries face similar challenges.