

9TH INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CONFERENCE ON LOCAL SAFETY AND SECURITY



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SECURITY ASPECTS OF VILLAGE GUARDS, WATCH GROUPS AND OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNITY – BASED SECURITY INITIATIVES

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Introduction

- Security related aspects and the line between legitimate self-organisation and vigilantism
 - Resident collaboration and participation can be legitimate
- Problem→ groups beginning to take on the state's responsibilities
- Slovenian examples after 2018
- Comparison with Germany

Theoretical and conceptual framework

- SLC→ is based on cooperation between residents, the police and other local actors
- Self-organised security = voluntary efforts to protect the community and property
- Village guards ≠ militia style watch groups ≠ patrols
- Vigilantism = informal monitoring and action without formal authority
- Distinction between cooperation with the police and the arbitrary assumption of authority!



Security aspects

- Security aspect: groups can enhance security, or they themselves can become a security risk
- Socio-political aspects: particularly evident in groups associated with migration and a sense of vulnerability
- Positive aspects:
 - Greater sense of security
 - Greater cohesion
 - Preventive function
- Negative aspects:
 - Arbitrariness
 - Stigmatization
 - Distrust in institutions
 - Risk of escalation



Self-organisation for safety in Slovenia

- Not emphasized → emergence of radical groups
- The Štajerska militia → most prominent example
- Village guards in Ivančna Gorica
- Other groups: rhetoric of self-defense, border protection and community defense



Legal framework in Slovenia

- Security is primarily the responsibility of the state
- Self-organisation is NOT prohibited
- Legislative response→ amendments to the Protection of Public Order Act (ZJRM-1) and the State Border Control Act (ZNDM-2)
- More effective persecution of uniformed and outwardly paramilitary groups

Article 11.a

(Use of Disguise Clothing, Uniforms, or Other Clothing Resembling Uniforms)

(1) Any person who wears disguise clothing, a uniform, or clothing resembling the uniform of an official or military personnel, and who, through their behavior, conduct, movements, and presence in a specific public or private place, or through the use of equipment or accessories, gives the impression of performing the duties of official or military personnel, shall be punished with a fine of between 500 and 1,000 euros.

Article 4

(State Border Control and Prohibited Conduct)

(1) The police are responsible for state border control.

(2) Any conduct by an individual or a group of at least two persons that, for the purpose of state border control, is carried out in a manner identical or similar to the performance of police duties in the exercise of state border control, or that obstructs the police in the exercise of state border control, is prohibited.

(3) It is also prohibited for any legal entity or individual to engage in conduct that constitutes incitement to the acts described in the preceding paragraph, the organization of such acts, or any other conduct that facilitates the acts described in the preceding paragraph.

Example from abroad: Germany

- The rise of Bürgerwehren (citizen militias)
- Linked to migration, uncertainty and distrust of the state
- Not uniform groups: some monitor, others actively patrol
- No specific legislation
 - Prohibition on wearing uniforms for political purposes, using protective gear at public gatherings, and usurping public functions
- Broader European phenomenon



Comparative analysis: Slovenia and Germany

- Reasons for the formation of these groups:
 - Feelings of being threatened
 - Migrations
 - Distrust of the state
- Difference: in the legal and institutional response
 - Slo: specific legislative changes
 - Ger: restrictions on wearing uniforms and using protective gear at public gatherings



Conclusion

- Self-organisation for security purpose is not necessarily negative
- Legitimate→ the aspect that is based on cooperation, prevention and respect for the rule of law
- Problematic→ when groups begin to act as security forces
- The line between what is and is not permissible is often blurred
- Community safety is strengthened by:
 - Trust
 - Cooperation
 - Legal predictability

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
