

WORLD ECONOMIC CRISIS

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During the world economic crisis, millions of people in Central Europe lost their jobs. At that time, few Central European countries had health insurance, unemployment benefit or old-age pension schemes. Large numbers of unemployed people left the cities to return to the villages they came from, and took over the jobs that the Roma had been doing there. Many Roma were soon starving, and the local authorities had to pay for poor relief. Tensions rose, and many communities simply wanted to get rid of those poor and hungry people.

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Did you know

... that local councils had a duty to house and feed their poorest inhabitants and pay their doctors' and hospital bills?

... that during the 1920s and 1930s, child mortality among the Roma rose to more than 50%? In other words, more than half of all Roma children died before their second birthday.

For you to do

Talk about social groups that are dependent on support provided by the rest of society. Consider why such support is often called into question.

The photo

Inhabitants of the Roma settlement at Oberwart in Austria. Police photograph taken in the 1930s to illustrate the work of the police. Burgenland Regional Archives, Eisenstadt, Austria.