
HOW THE 'GERMANS' ARE CHANGING THE LARGEST ROMA ENCLAVE IN EUROPE

- 09.04.2018

Deutsche Welle (8 April 2018)

The thousands of Roma from Bulgaria's Stolipinovo enclave who commute to Germany to earn an income are referred to as "the Germans." During the summer they return to Bulgaria and are slowly changing the area.

"There was good work to be had in Germany last year: Demolition work done by hand, not with explosives. As soon as a participating Turkish construction company had a job opening they placed a call to Stolipinovo. And one of our guys was on the road the next morning," says Gulce, from the Roma enclave of Stolipinovo in the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv. Most of her relatives and a number of her neighbors are already in Germany.

"They all do pretty well, they have work and apartments. A few families were on welfare but they have work now." Most of Stolipinovo's Romani travel to Dortmund or Cologne, says Gulce. Stolipinovo, Europe's largest Roma enclave, was started as a "Roma village" near Plovdiv in the late nineteenth century. Meanwhile, Plovdiv has grown and Stolipinovo is in the heart of it.

The enclave saw a population explosion in the early 1990s, after a leading politician promised free electricity for inhabitants during an election campaign. As a result, Roma from across Bulgaria flooded into Stolipinovo. Today, it is hard to say just how many people are here. It is estimated that somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000 Roma live in Stolipinovo.

The enclave is a typical example of improvised housing. Kiosks and shanties pop up all over the place on a daily basis without blueprints or building permits. Local administrators regularly have them torn down but a week later they are back. Two years ago, a dozen illegal buildings were torn down in response to complaints lodged by neighbors. The unusual thing was that those complaints came from other Roma who earned good money in Dortmund and lived in nice houses on the same street. One refers to those neighbors as "the Germans."

Kaynak/Source: