

BEGGING IN SWISS CITIES BETTELN IN SCHWEIZER STÄDTEN

**DR. ZSOLT TEMESVARY, PHD
(ZSOLT.TEMESVARY@FHNW.CH)**

FACHHOCHSCHULE NORDWESTSCHWEIZ

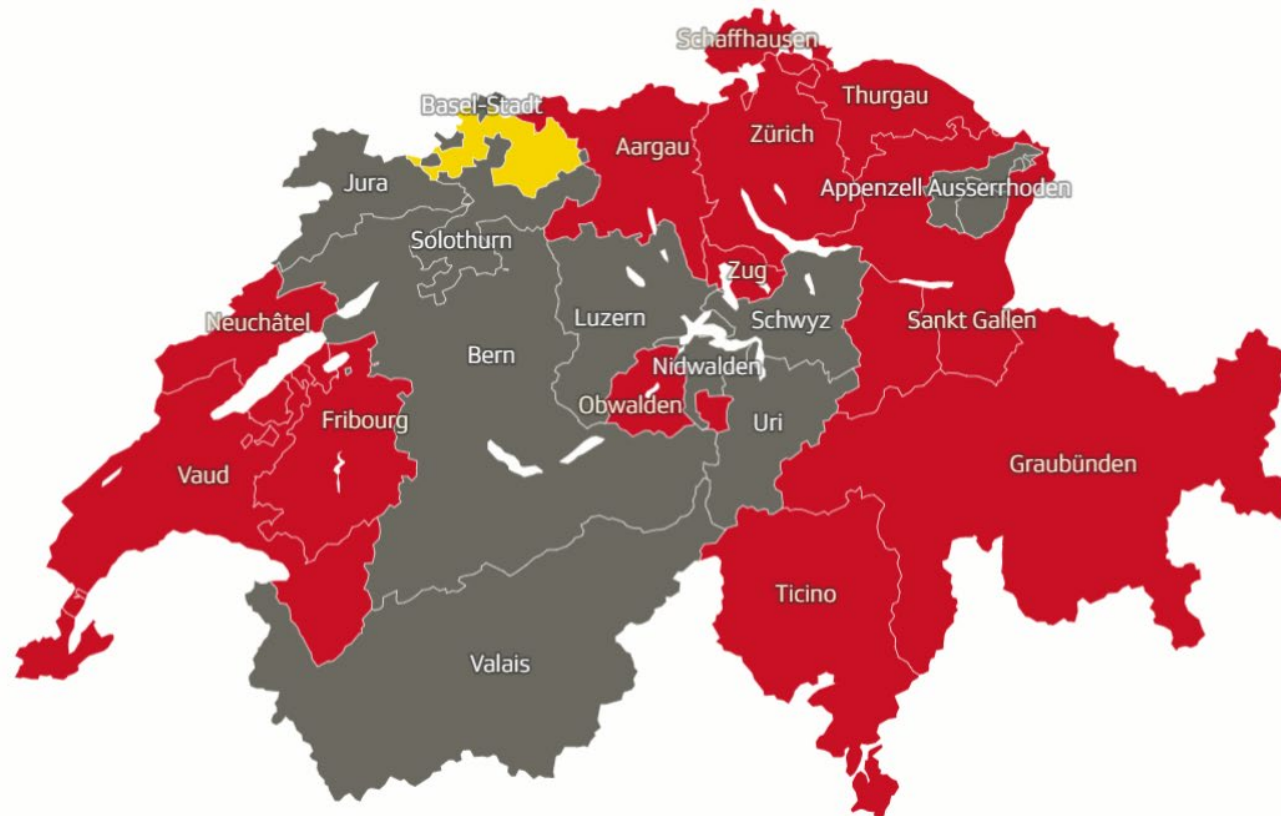
**INSTITUT SOZIALPLANUNG, ORGANISATIONALER
WANDEL UND STADTENTWICKLUNG**



Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz
Hochschule für Soziale Arbeit

14 der 26 Kantone verbieten derzeit das Betteln auf ihrem gesamten Gebiet.

■ Betteln bewilligungspflichtig ■ Betteln verboten ■ kein kantonales Verbot*



Source: SRF 2020

FOCUS ON BASEL – WHAT WE SEE NOW

- After a liberal begging policy new restrictions since 09/2021
- At around 100 beggars are in the city at the same time (Police BS)
- As beggars considered also street performers, street musicians, etc.
- The vast majority of beggars arrived from Romania
- Combination of begging and street homelessness
- After the reductive effects of restrictions beggars re-emerged and adapted themselves to the new conditions
- Services need information on the target group: lack of language skills, diverging cultural patterns, mistrust and fear of welfare tourism

FHNW INITIATED AN ELECTIVE SUBJECT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT BEGGARS

- Who owns the place? Homelessness and Social Work
- With the involvement of 15 BA social work students
- Between 09/2020 and 01/2021
- Field observations and visits at homelessness institutions
- Interviews with beggars, experts and the “people of the street”
- Language barriers, extreme cold and severe mistrust
- Hotspots in BS: Clara, SBB+De-Wette-Park, Wettsteinplatz, Bruderholz

BEGGING IN HOME COUNTRIES

- Only a few of them were beggars in home countries
- Extreme poverty and severe social exclusion in CEE countries
- Rural regions and “Roma villages” are extraordinarily affected
- Poverty migration in CEE towards big cities and regional centers
- Poverty migration to abroad: western cities in focus
- First large Roma poverty migration to Canada in the early 2000’s
- The Roma are particularly mobile for historical reasons

WANDERING BEGGARS ACROSS EUROPE

- Long-lasting problem in EU big cities
- New challenges for the «older» EU welfare states
- Vienna is the «gate to the West»
- Traveling by train, FlixBus, minivans, etc.
- Fluid migration – centre of living remains in home countries
- Functional usage of cities – earning money and supporting the family
- Wandering alone or with families (particularly the Roma)

THE ROMA

- Wandering CEE Roma vs. Roma travelers vs. local Roma communities
- Traditional coping strategy and extreme poverty and social exclusion
- Wandering in larger groups and/or as whole families
- Strategy: being unseen, maximizing profit and then disappearing
- Beggars are not equal with Roma families arriving from Romania
- Field studies from Paris and Brussels: the Roma are less vulnerable

CRIMINAL GANGS FROM EASTERN EUROPE?

- No evidence on criminality not in CH nor in other countries
- Organization within the family and not as “bands”
- Urban myths and legends on “beggar kings” and “begging mafia”
- Small criminal activities like pickpocketing and littering
- Criminal background in home countries for “poverty crimes”

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

- Provide protection and emotional support
- Family hierarchy and dynamic
- Family as the primary source of exploitation and oppression
- Families are rooted in given geographical regions and are rivals
- The role of children: «Euro-orphans» vs. the traveling poor
- Begging with children as a strategy
- Intergenerational homelessness and the «begging lifestyle»
- Intersectionality: gender and ethnicity

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

- Caring and protecting
- Working in the “front line”
- Handling the money (travelling and transferring)
- Relationship to social agencies & representing the family
- Multiple vulnerabilities (cultural, medical, social, etc.)
- Roma culture vs. street homelessness
- Mixing begging with other activities (e.g., sex work, temporary jobs)

BEGGING STRATEGIES

- Begging with children
- Begging with dogs
- Begging in costumes
- Street music
- Street performance & street art (pantomime, blowing bubbles)
- Walking beggars and opportunists
- Sitting beggars with tables and pictures

SOCIAL POLICY MEASURES

- Begging as a human right vs. measures against «welfare tourism»
- Order-based measures through the police
- Neglecting the problem: EU tourists and not needy people
- Limited access to social services
- Creative services at the NGOs
- Helping in the home countries, but how?
- «Overheated» political debates instead of professional discussions

WHAT CAN BE DONE IN CH?

- Begging ban vs. full liberalization
- Improving street work in begging hotspots
- Making low-threshold homelessness facilities really low-threshold
- Interventions in home countries through financial sources (early development)
- Sensibilising Swiss people toward the beggars
- Fighting forced migration, forced begging and human trafficking
- Supporting research projects to know more about the problem
- Evidence-based decision making at political level

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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