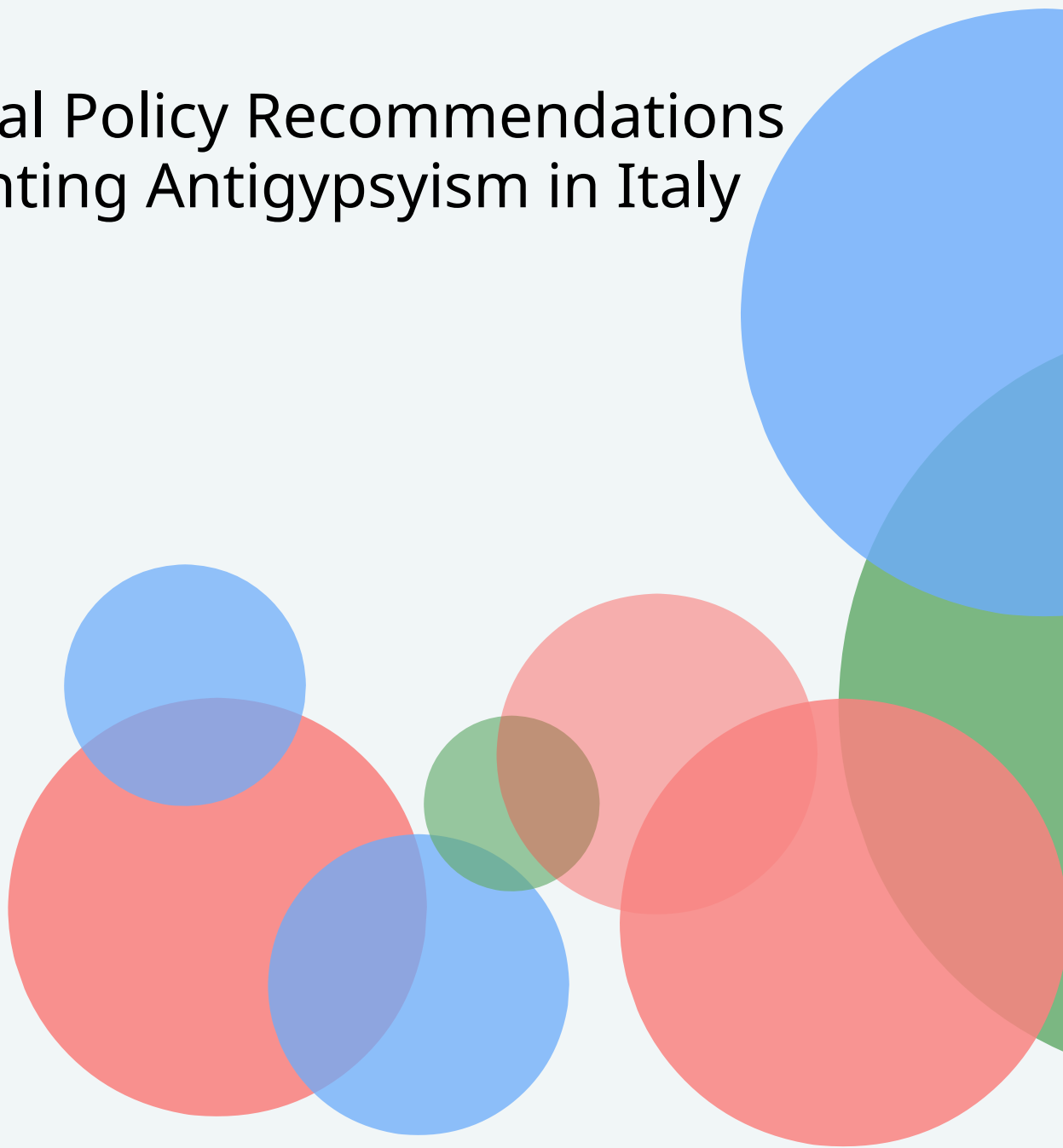

National Recommendation

National Policy Recommendations on Fighting Antigypsyism in Italy



Romni APS

2025



JEKHIPE
RECLAIMING OUR PAST, REBUILDING OUR FUTURE:
NEW APPROACHES TO FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

The JEKHIPE Project

Reclaiming Our Past, Rebuilding Our Future: New Approaches to Fighting Antigypsyism (JEKHIPE) is a CERV-funded project aimed at improving the lives of Roma by addressing systemic and institutional antigypsyism, promoting transitional justice, fostering knowledge-building and awareness, and strengthening Roma identity and participation.

It is a follow-up to an earlier CERV project called 'CHACHIPEN', officially titled 'Paving the way for a Truth and Reconciliation Process to address antigypsyism in Europe. Remembrance, Recognition, Justice and Trust-Building'. Concluded in 2023, CHACHIPEN introduced an innovative transitional justice-based approach to raising awareness of systemic injustice and ongoing antigypsyism in policymaking, while advocating for a comprehensive truth and reconciliation strategy.

JEKHIPE focuses on multiple levels of policy-making, including research, monitoring, advocacy, networking, alliances building, awareness raising, capacity building, and empowerment. It aims to engage with national and European institutions, academia, politicians, justice mechanisms, state authorities, civil society, and Roma communities themselves to challenge the status quo on approaching Roma issues, particularly antigypsyism, and propose mechanisms for increased accountability by national governments.



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Executive Summary

Antigypsyism in Italy is a deeply entrenched and institutionally embedded form of racism, with roots in centuries of persecution. From the expulsions of the 15th century to fascist-era confinement and deportations, Roma and Sinti communities have faced persistent marginalization. Post-war policies continued this legacy through segregated schooling and the creation of state-run “nomad camps.” More recently, the so-called “*Nomad Emergency*” (2007–2011) enabled mass evictions and discriminatory practices such as fingerprinting of Roma children—measures later declared illegal, but whose effects continue to shape policy and public attitudes. Despite these histories, Roma and Sinti remain unrecognized as a national minority, while Italy’s equality body lacks the independence and resources to address systemic racism.

Today, antigypsyism persists in multiple forms. Roma communities face structural exclusion in education, housing, and political participation, while state institutions often frame Roma issues as matters of public order rather than human rights. The absence of truth-telling and remembrance mechanisms perpetuates historical amnesia, with the Porrajmos - the Roma Holocaust - excluded from school curricula and public commemorations. Roma women, in particular, endure intersectional discrimination, frequently concealing their identity to avoid stigma. At the same time, policies such as the National Roma Strategy (2021–2030) remain weakly enforced and poorly participatory. Roma-led organisations are fragmented, chronically underfunded and not at all present in mainstream public – third sector dialogues on topics of major concern, such as education, housing or health. Yet, they have promoted important initiatives on the historical memory of Roma suffering and contribution during the Second World War and continue to play a crucial role in advocating for justice and reform.

To dismantle systemic antigypsyism and advance equality, the following measures are urgent:

- **Recognize Roma and Sinti as a national minority** or grant them specific cultural status, aligning with constitutional and European citizenship frameworks.
- **Establish a National Office Against Antigypsyism**, transforming UNAR into a politically and financially independent institution.
- **Rebuild the UNAR–ISTAT Working Group on Roma Data** to enable evidence-based policy-making.

These structural reforms must be pursued in the transitional justice approach, revolving around the following actions:

- **Reform anti-discrimination legislation to explicitly include antigypsyism.**

- **Create truth-telling mechanisms** to document past and present injustices.
- **Institutionalize Porrajmos education in national curricula**, embedding Roma history into Italy's collective memory.

To this end, the empowerment of Roma and Sinti civil society is essential. Italy should:

- **Establish structural funding for Roma-led organizations**, focusing on building future generations of leaders.
- **Promote digital and media literacy for Roma youth and women.**
- **Create a National Roma Youth and Women's Leadership Academy.**

Finally, as an immediate priority, Italy must **dismantle segregated camps and prevent forced evictions**, ending one of the most visible legacies of antigypsyism.

This report calls for truth, recognition, and structural change. By embedding memory into education, strengthening institutions, and enabling Roma leadership, Italy can begin to repair historic injustices and create the conditions for full and equal participation in a democratic society rooted in dignity and inclusion.

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1. National Context and the Role of Jekhipe

1.1 Structural Nature of Antigypsyism in Italy

Antigypsyism in Italy is a deep-rooted, historically developed, and structurally embedded form of racism.¹ It is not limited to isolated incidents of discrimination or hate, but rather functions as a systemic mode of exclusion that impacts Roma and Sinti communities across legal, institutional, cultural, and spatial domains. The state continues to refer to these populations as *nomadi* (“nomads”), a label that persists in policy documents and public discourse despite the fact that the vast majority of Roma and Sinti in Italy are sedentary. This constructed narrative has been used to justify the creation and maintenance of segregated camps, the denial of minority status, and the restriction of citizenship rights.

The structural mechanisms of antigypsyism are evident in spatial segregation through institutionalized “nomad camps,” disparities in education and employment, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Public institutions have historically regarded Roma issues as a matter of public order rather than social equity or rights. As a result, Roma affairs have been assigned to law enforcement agencies rather than cultural or social inclusion ministries. Furthermore, antigypsyism is normalized in media, legal systems, and everyday interactions, contributing to persistent stigma, underreporting of hate crimes, and general public indifference.

1.2 Historical and Current Manifestations

The roots of antigypsyism in Italy can be traced to at least the 15th century. By 1601, the Duchy of Savoy had already banned Roma from its territory. In 1859, the Kingdom of Sardinia penalized “vagabonds,” a category used to criminalize Roma lifestyles. This early criminalization was formalized under the fascist regime (1922–1943), when Roma were subject to surveillance, confinement, and deportation. Between 1938 and 1943, over 1,100 Roma and Sinti were persecuted through internment, property confiscation, forced relocations, and marginalization. Camps like Boiano (Molise), Tossicia (Abruzzo), and Gonars (Friuli Venezia Giulia) were used to detain entire Roma families. Deportations to Nazi concentration camps also occurred, especially from Venezia Giulia and Trentino-Alto Adige.²

¹ Scholarly literature on the phenomenon builds on the foundational work of the anthropologist Leonardo Piasere. See Piasere, L. (2012). *Scenari dell'antiziganismo. Tra Europa e Italia, tra antropologia e politica*. Florence: SEID; and Piasere, L. (2015). *L'antiziganismo*. Macerata: Quodlibet Studio.

² Fully documented historical overview in Trevisan, P. (2024). *La persecuzione dei rom e dei sinti nell'Italia fascista. Storia, etnografia e memorie*. Roma: Viella.

After World War II, this historical persecution was never officially acknowledged by the Italian state. Roma and Sinti were excluded from post-war transitional justice and remembrance frameworks. In the 1960s and 1970s, “special classes” were introduced in schools to segregate Roma children and deprive them of standard curricula. By the 1990s, regional policies led to the institutionalization of “nomad camps” across Italy. These camps—often located on the outskirts of cities—offered substandard living conditions and were characterized by surveillance, stigma, and restricted access to public services.

The most intense period of modern antigypsyist policy came with the declaration of the “Nomad Emergency” in May 2008.³ In response to the growing presence of Roma—particularly Romanian citizens following EU enlargement—Prime Ministerial Decrees declared a State of Emergency in Lazio, Campania, and Lombardy. This allowed authorities to carry out mass evictions, fingerprint children, and demolish informal settlements. In 2011, Italy’s highest administrative court (Council of State) declared the emergency illegal, citing lack of evidence and violation of constitutional rights. The Supreme Court upheld this ruling in 2013.

Despite these judicial interventions, antigypsyism persists today.⁴ Hate speech—especially during election cycles—targets Roma communities with stereotypes of criminality and parasitism. According to UNAR’s 2023 annual report, 8.5% of documented hate speech cases referenced Roma, Sinti, or Camminanti. Roma are also underrepresented in public institutions, excluded from national civil society forums (like the Third Sector Forum), and invisible in national data systems.

The lack of official recognition of Roma as a national minority under Law 482/1999 continues to limit their rights to cultural preservation, education, and institutional support. Furthermore, bodies tasked with monitoring discrimination—such as UNAR—lack the full autonomy, authority, and budgetary support necessary to hold public institutions accountable or ensure systemic reform.

1.3 Key Gaps in Policy, Enforcement, and Recognition

- **Legal status:** Roma and Sinti are not recognized as a national minority, excluding them from linguistic and cultural protections guaranteed to other groups under Law 482/1999.

³ Triggering civil society and institutional reactions, see: Senato della Repubblica. (2011). *Rapporto conclusivo dell’indagine sulla condizione di rom, Sinti e Caminanti in Italia*. Commissione straordinaria per la tutela e la promozione dei diritti umani. and Commissione Jo Cox sull’intolleranza, la xenofobia, il razzismo e i fenomeni d’odio. (2017). *Relazione finale*. Camera dei deputati, Roma.

⁴ ECRI - European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. (2024). *ECRI Report on Italy. Sixth Monitoring Cycle*. Council of Europe.

- **Institutional fragility:** UNAR, while formally responsible for implementing the National Roma Strategy (2021–2030), lacks operational independence and adequate funding.
- **Policy enforcement:** Although national strategies exist, monitoring and implementation mechanisms are weak. Regional and municipal authorities retain substantial discretion and often fail to comply with national guidelines.
- **Data and accountability:** There is no disaggregated, comprehensive data on Roma experiences with education, housing, or health. Racial profiling by law enforcement remains undocumented.
- **Remembrance and justice:** There is still no national public recognition of Roma and Sinti as victims of fascism. The Porrajmos is marginal in school curricula and public commemorations.

1.4 How JEKHIPE Helps Fill These Gaps

JEKHIPE (2023–2025)⁵ contributes meaningfully to addressing these structural deficiencies through a Roma-led, justice-centered, and historically conscious approach. Coordinated in Italy by Romni APS, the project directly responds to the democratic failure to recognize antigypsyism by:

- **Promoting transitional justice mechanisms:** JEKHIPE introduces remembrance, truth-telling, recognition, and redress as key components of Roma inclusion. It draws from models such as CHACHIPEN and the UN High Commissioner’s 2025 recommendations on transitional justice.
- **Centering Roma knowledge and voices:** Through interviews, focus groups, and surveys, the project platforms Roma experiences and narratives—especially those of women—as primary sources of knowledge.
- **Bridging stakeholders:** The project facilitates dialogue between civil society, public officials, legal experts, academics, and Roma organizations, helping build alliances for institutional reform.
- **Commemorative and educational work:** JEKHIPE supports initiatives to include the Porrajmos in Holocaust remembrance activities, advocate for memorial sites (e.g., Agnone), and promote the teaching of Roma history in schools.

1.5 The Role of Civil Society and Transitional Justice

Civil society has played a central role in pushing for Roma rights in Italy, often compensating for state inaction. Organizations such as Romni APS and the Roma Women Network Italy (RoWNI) have been particularly effective in highlighting the intersection of gender and antigypsyism, documenting lived experiences, and advocating for rights-based frameworks. These groups operate at the margins of formal power but exert significant influence through mobilization, advocacy, and knowledge production.

Transitional justice provides a long-overdue framework for addressing the historical and institutional roots of antigypsyism. Unlike previous inclusion strategies that treated Roma as a social problem to be “managed,” transitional justice centers dignity, agency, and reparation. It demands institutional reform, collective memory, and inclusive citizenship.

⁵ Fonović, K., Sein, R.S and Jovanović, S. (2025) *Institutional Weaknesses and Relational Voids: Historically Rooted Structural Barriers in Countering Antigypsyism in Italy. JEKHIPE Project National Report – Italy*. CEPS, (forthcoming).

The current political climate in Italy—marked by securitization and rising xenophobia—poses serious risks. However, the ongoing alignment between EU frameworks (e.g., 2021 Council Recommendation on Roma Equality) and grassroots efforts offers a strategic opportunity. JEKHIPE, in this context, is not just a research project but a call for structural transformation.

2. Policy Analysis

2.1 Existing Policies and Their Limitations

Italy has adopted several policy instruments and legislative frameworks addressing Roma and Sinti inclusion, yet these have consistently fallen short in addressing the structural and institutional nature of antigypsyism.

2.2 National Roma Strategies

Italy's National Roma and Sinti Equality, Inclusion and Participation Strategy 2021–2030, developed by UNAR (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali), reflects the latest institutional attempt to align with the EU's Roma Strategic Framework. It follows the earlier Strategy 2012–2020, which, despite being a landmark at the time, was undermined by weak governance and non-binding mechanisms. The current strategy outlines six key areas: education, employment, health, housing, cultural promotion, and combating antigypsyism. Axis 3.1, focused on "Antigypsyism. Prevention, Contrast and Removal", is notable for being the first to frame antigypsyism as a systemic problem. However, both strategies share the same structural limitations:

- Lack of legal force: These are policy frameworks rather than enforceable laws. They cannot sanction public institutions that fail to comply.
- Minimal funding: Resources are limited mainly to awareness-raising campaigns and minor civil society initiatives.
- No institutional accountability: Monitoring mechanisms remain fragmented or non-existent.
- Failure to engage Roma communities meaningfully: Roma are still underrepresented in key decision-making processes related to the Strategy.

2.3 Anti-Discrimination Law

Legislative Decree No. 215/2003 transposes the EU Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) into Italian law. It created UNAR as the national equality body. While formally mandated to combat discrimination based on race and ethnic origin, its practical effectiveness is limited by its status as an administrative office under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Unlike equality bodies in other EU countries, it lacks full independence, is vulnerable to political interference, and has insufficient resources to carry out proactive investigations or impose sanctions.

2.4 Hate Speech and Hate Crime Laws

Italy's hate crime legislation includes Law 654/1975 and its 1993 amendment, as well as Article 604-bis of the Penal Code (formerly part of the "Mancino Law"). These provisions criminalize incitement to racial hatred and hate speech. However, antigypsyist speech—particularly when perpetuated by local politicians or media—rarely leads to investigation or prosecution. A 2023 report by Associazione 21 Luglio and ECRI noted that antigypsyist rhetoric increases notably during election campaigns and is often tolerated or even echoed by public officials.

2.5 Legal Status of Roma and Sinti

Roma and Sinti are still not recognized as a national minority under Law 482/1999 on linguistic-historical minorities. Multiple proposals have been submitted:

- In 2013, Senate Bill S.770 proposed "Regulations for the Protection and Equal Opportunities of the Roma and Sinti Minority".
- In 2015, a draft law sought to amend Law 482/1999 to include Roma.
- In 2016, another proposal aimed to recognize the Romani language. None of these reached parliamentary debate. Without minority status, Roma and Sinti lack access to cultural protections, media representation, and public funding mechanisms available to other minorities.

2.6 Implementation Trends

The “Nomad Emergency” (2007–2011)

Declared in May 2008 by the Berlusconi government, the “Emergenza Nomadi” was a turning point in the institutionalization of antigypsyism. It enabled authorities in Lombardy, Lazio, and Campania to bypass ordinary protections and carry out mass evictions, fingerprinting of Roma children, and construction of large mono-ethnic “camps”. This state of emergency was declared unconstitutional by the Council of State in 2011 and confirmed by the Court of Cassation in 2013. Despite this, its legacy persists in urban policy.

Regional and Local Initiatives

There have been some promising local efforts, such as school mediation in Rome, job placement programs in Bolzano, and housing support in Milan. However, these remain fragmented and largely unsystematic. Their sustainability depends on political will at the municipal level, making them vulnerable to shifts in local governance.

Roma Participation in Governance

Despite the establishment of the National Roma Platform and the Roma Community Forum (2017), Roma representation in formal policymaking remains weak. Roma CSOs are not structurally funded, and participation is often symbolic. Access to the UNAR Registry of Associations offers visibility but little power to influence mainstream political or policy agendas.

2.7 Gaps in Accountability

Weak Institutional Independence

UNAR’s lack of autonomy is a structural barrier. It is administratively part of the government and cannot independently investigate institutional racism. Its main role has been coordinating national strategies, conducting studies, and organizing Roma Week events, but not enforcing equality laws.

No Specialized Hate Crime Enforcement

There is no dedicated body within the Ministry of Interior or judiciary to track, prosecute, or analyze antigypsyist hate crimes. Law enforcement agencies lack anti-bias training, and police profiling of Roma remains underreported and unmonitored.

Absence of Roma-Specific Data

Reliable disaggregated data on Roma in housing, health, education, and employment is scarce. The National Statistical Office (ISTAT) does not consistently include ethnicity-based indicators, and Roma often go uncounted due to statelessness or informal

housing status. Roma Civil Monitor (2023) notes that this data vacuum enables state actors to ignore the real scale of exclusion.

2.8 Unaddressed Antigypsyism

Roma Women and Intersectional Discrimination

Roma women, particularly those of migrant origin, face compounded discrimination across gender, ethnicity, and legal status. The JEKHIPE interviews with 15 Roma women in Terni (2024) revealed that many conceal their identity for fear of violence or loss of employment. Medical staff, employers, and even public officials often display overt prejudice, forcing women to “pass” as non-Roma to avoid discrimination.

Media and Educational Bias

Cultural antigypsyism is pervasive in public discourse. TV crime reports often conflate criminality with Roma identity, while school textbooks reproduce stereotypes. In one example from 2023, a university law textbook referred to the “gypsy subculture” as encouraging criminal behavior—an egregious form of institutional racism corrected only after UNAR intervention.

Public Memory and the Porrajmos

Despite emerging research since the 1980s on fascist-era Roma persecution⁶—including in camps such as Boiano, Tossicia, Gonars, and Agnone—this history remains absent from school curricula. Italy has never formally recognized Roma and Sinti as Holocaust victims. The Porrajmos is not commemorated in national Holocaust events, nor taught systematically in schools.

2.9 Insights from Research and JEKHIPE Contributions

The JEKHIPE project (2023–2025), led in Italy by Romni APS, has made significant strides in documenting and analyzing antigypsyism through a transitional justice lens. Key findings include:

- **Daily Racism and Exclusion:** Survey respondents and focus group participants consistently reported experiences of institutional neglect, racist assumptions, and invisibility in mainstream social movements—even within progressive

⁶ Bravi, L., & Bassoli, M. (2013). *Il Porrajmos in Italia. La persecuzione di Rom e Sinti durante il fascismo*. Bologna: Odoya. Rizzin, E. (Ed.). (2021). *Attraversare Auschwitz. Storie di rom e sinti: identità, memorie, antiziganismo*. Roma: Gangemi.

sectors. One respondent stated: “Even the anti-racist groups do not want us there. We are still considered ‘too different.’”

- **Historical Memory as a Tool:** Participants emphasized the transformative potential of remembrance. Including Roma history in national narratives was seen as essential for shifting public perceptions and restoring dignity.
- **Youth and Women’s Leadership:** Roma youth and women’s voices, long silenced, are emerging as critical agents of change. The focus group in Rome (November 2024) underscored the importance of building leadership capacity and intergenerational dialogue.

3. Conclusion: From Strategy to Structural Reform

Italy's current legal and policy framework is not equipped to tackle the systemic nature of antigypsyism. While the 2021–2030 National Strategy introduces a more sophisticated understanding of antigypsyism, its impact is limited without:

- Legal recognition of Roma and Sinti as a national minority;
- Independent, well-funded institutions with enforcement powers;
- Comprehensive data collection and monitoring mechanisms;
- Structured Roma participation in policy-making;
- Transitional justice mechanisms for truth, recognition, and redress.

JEKHIPE provides a blueprint for moving from fragmented policy toward meaningful, justice-oriented transformation. It demonstrates that addressing antigypsyism is not simply a matter of inclusion—it is a matter of democratic accountability, historical truth, and human rights.

4. Stakeholder Mapping

4.1 Understanding Influence, Challenges, and Opportunities in Addressing Antigypsyism in Italy

Stakeholder engagement is essential to combating systemic antigypsyism in Italy. The fragmented nature of Italian governance—coupled with limited institutional accountability—means that advocacy efforts must be multi-level, cross-sectoral, and strategically aligned. Below is a comprehensive stakeholder mapping that identifies key actors, their roles, capacities, constraints, and strategies for engagement.

Stakeholder	Role & Relevance	Power/Influence/Support	Tools They Hold	What Influences Them	Advocacy Message	Engagement Strategy
Ministry of Justice	Legislative and judicial reform; potentially responsible for creating a truth commission or criminal justice guidelines for hate crimes	High power, historically low support	Law reform, Penal Code revisions, justice administration oversight	EU compliance, human rights treaties, media scrutiny	<i>"Justice reform must include Roma voices and address historical violence."</i>	Targeted policy briefs, strategic litigation, alliances with victim associations and constitutional scholars
UNAR (National Anti-Discrimination Office)	Coordinates the National Roma Strategy (2021–2030); equality body; key interlocutor	Medium power, mixed support; high symbolic value	Strategy planning, funding calls, national forums, monitoring reports	Parliamentary oversight, civil society cooperation, EC pressure	<i>"UNAR must be independent, Roma-informed, and properly funded to fulfill its mission."</i>	Strengthen Roma Platform, increase Roma presence in Registry, push for legal reform (e.g.,

Stakeholder	Role & Relevance	Power/Influence/Support	Tools They Hold	What Influences Them	Advocacy Message	Engagement Strategy
Ministry of Education & Merit	actor for Porrajmos inclusion	Medium power, traditionally low engagement on Roma issues	Curriculum commissions, textbook approval, national events	Teachers' unions, parental associations, cultural debates	<i>"Italy must teach the full truth: Porrajmos belongs in the schoolbooks."</i>	autonomy clause) Advocate via educational coalitions, organize teacher seminars, submit textbook proposals, partner with Holocaust memorial institutions
	Provide frontline services (housing, education, welfare); directly affect Roma living conditions	High practical power, low Roma inclusion; very politically variable	Zoning laws, urban planning, welfare offices, social housing	Local politics, media pressure, security narratives	<i>"Inclusive cities begin with inclusive policies – end camps, support families."</i>	Engage through local pilot projects, co-design welfare access tools, public awareness campaigns
Roma Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	Primary knowledge holders and service providers; build trust with Roma communities	Low formal power, high community legitimacy	Lived expertise, community access, grassroots networks	Donor support, institutional partnerships, EU platforms	<i>"Roma-led change builds trust, dignity, and effective solutions."</i>	Build advocacy coalitions, train emerging leaders, demand structural funding, increase

Stakeholder	Role & Relevance	Power/Influence/Support	Tools They Hold	What Influences Them	Advocacy Message	Engagement Strategy
Ministry of Interior	Manages police, migration, and public order; often responsible for forced evictions and profiling	High coercive power, low support; resistant to Roma inclusion	Policing powers, OSCAD (anti-discrimination police observatory)	Security policies, electoral narratives, media pressure	<i>"End racial profiling and forced evictions – Roma rights are constitutional rights."</i>	visibility in mainstream CSO spaces Work with oversight bodies, use litigation and international pressure, partner with police reform advocates
ISTAT (National Statistics Office)	Responsible for data collection essential to measure antigypsyism	Medium technical power, depends on political mandate	Data tools, surveys, institutional partnerships	Collaboration with ministries, ECRI/EC requests	<i>"No justice without data – count Roma communities, track discrimination."</i>	Push for Roma inclusion in datasets, revive Roma-UNAR-ISTAT working group
European Commission (DG JUST, DG EMPL)	Oversees compliance with EU anti-discrimination and Roma inclusion frameworks	High influence over national funding and benchmarks	Monitoring reports, infringement procedures, funding programs (e.g., CERV)	National implementation progress, civil society reports	<i>"Italy must implement the Strategy with justice and accountability – or face scrutiny."</i>	Provide shadow reports, amplify Roma voices in Brussels, advocate conditional funding

Stakeholder	Role & Relevance	Power/Influence/Support	Tools They Hold	What Influences Them	Advocacy Message	Engagement Strategy
Parliamentary Human Rights Committees (e.g., Chamber Committee on Rights & Equal Opportunities)	Could propose bills for recognition, minority rights, or independent equality bodies	Medium influence, fluctuating support depending on party	Legislative proposals, oversight hearings	Public opinion, pressure from watchdogs	<i>"Time to recognize Roma and Sinti as a national minority with dignity and legal standing."</i>	Submit draft bills with Roma CSO backing, organize parliamentary hearings on Porrajmos
Media and Journalists' Unions	Shape public opinion on Roma issues, often propagate or reduce antigypsyist narratives	High agenda-setting power, low awareness of antigypsyism	Access to mass audiences, editorial tools	Ratings, political climate, press freedom watchdogs	<i>"Journalism must not fuel hate – Roma stories matter and deserve dignity."</i>	Provide training on antigypsyism, develop ethical media charters, monitor hate speech cycles

4.2 Key Observations and Strategic Priorities

Bridging Institutional Fragility

As highlighted in the JEKHIPE report, a core obstacle to systemic progress is the institutional weakness of key actors such as UNAR and local municipalities. UNAR, while legally mandated to coordinate anti-discrimination efforts, is structurally tied to the executive branch and lacks full independence. Its budgetary instability and reliance on short-term project cycles limit its capacity to launch ambitious, long-term programs. Municipalities, often under-resourced and politically fragmented, are inconsistent in implementing Roma inclusion measures—even when funding exists.

Strategic Priority: Advocate for legal amendments granting autonomy to UNAR, and institutionalize Roma inclusion targets within regional/municipal development plans.

Expanding Roma Civil Society Voice

Roma CSOs remain chronically underfunded, fragmented, and sidelined from major national dialogues. Despite their central role in research, cultural preservation, and social services, they face bureaucratic hurdles, lack access to EU funds, and are rarely included in mainstream anti-racism platforms.

Strategic Priority:

- Expand Roma representation in national civil society forums.
- Develop core funding mechanisms through the Ministry of Social Affairs or EU Structural Funds.
- Establish a National Roma Ombudsman office.

Leveraging EU Institutions

The European Commission has repeatedly called on Italy to address institutional antigypsyism. The 2024 ECRI report urges the Italian government to enforce data collection mechanisms, end racial profiling, and fund inclusive educational materials. EU leverage remains one of the strongest tools to compel national action.

Strategic Priority: Strengthen cooperation with CEPS, ERGO Network, and Roma Civil Monitor to produce strong parallel reports for Brussels and Strasbourg.

Local-Level Innovation

Despite structural challenges, some municipalities (e.g., Bolzano, Florence, Milan) have piloted inclusive housing, education, and digital literacy projects. Programs such as MA.REA. (Mapping and Realizing Communities) implemented in Salone Camp (Rome) illustrate scalable models of Roma-led planning and participatory budgeting.

Strategic Priority: Expand successful models through cross-municipal peer learning platforms, linked with national Roma Strategy goals.

Educational and Cultural Institutions

The Ministry of Education remains slow in incorporating Roma history into curricula. However, collaboration with Holocaust museums (e.g., Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea) and teacher training bodies is gaining traction. Curriculum Axis 3.6 of the National Strategy mandates the inclusion of the Porrajmos but remains optional at the local level.

Strategic Priority: Develop national-level teacher resource kits, promote student storytelling contests, and push for institutional memorialization in public schools.

4.3 Conclusion

The stakeholder landscape in Italy is complex and dynamic. While power is concentrated at the national level, much of the implementation authority lies with local and regional actors. Therefore, engagement must be tailored—combining grassroots mobilization, institutional partnerships, and EU leverage.

JEKHIPE's Roma-led methodology and justice-centered framework position it uniquely to unite these actors around a shared agenda of remembrance, recognition, and reform. Building cross-sector alliances, empowering Roma voices, and embedding transitional justice across institutions will be critical to dismantling antigypsyism in Italy.

5. Key findings. Unmasking Everyday Antigypsyism: JEKHIPE project research (2024)

In late 2024, a national online survey entitled *Antigypsyism in Everyday Life* was conducted in Italy with the participation of fifty-four respondents, including both Roma and non-Roma residents. Participants were asked to describe how they experienced or witnessed discrimination in workplaces, schools, public transport, healthcare, and the media. Their testimonies were further complemented by in-depth interviews with Roma women in Umbria, a focus group in Rome with activists, officials, and experts, as well as desk research into legal and policy frameworks.⁷¹ Taken together, these materials reveal a stark picture of systemic antigypsyism and the social, political, and cultural structures that sustain it.

One of the most pressing challenges to emerge from the study is the **absence of formal recognition of antigypsyism as a specific form of racism**. Italian law provides a framework for addressing discrimination and hate crimes, but the silence around antigypsyism leaves communities vulnerable. Experts described this silence as producing **“relational voids” between Roma and public institutions, gaps marked by mistrust and invisibility that have deepened over decades of denial** (Romni, JEKHIPE project, 2024). Without naming the problem, targeted solutions remain impossible.

Another key barrier is the **lack of genuine political will**. While strategies for Roma inclusion exist on paper, respondents noted that **Roma voices are often relegated to tokenistic roles**. Policies, they observed, are written about Roma rather than with them. This dynamic reinforces exclusion and makes any progress fragile and easily reversible.

The issue of historical redress looms equally large. **Italy has not created mechanisms to acknowledge or repair past state violence against Roma and Sinti communities, from fascist-era internment camps to postwar policies of segregation**. During the focus group, a Roma woman voiced the urgency of connecting memory with justice: *“We cannot move forward when our history is erased. Justice begins with memory.”* (Romni, JEKHIPE project, 2024).

Despite these obstacles, the fieldwork also created spaces of listening and dialogue. Narrative interviews gave Roma women the chance to recount experiences of exclusion and resilience, often for the first time. For many, **sharing these stories helped to break the silence imposed by shame or fear**. The focus group in Rome provided a rare

⁷¹ The survey involved 54 participants (40 Italian and 14 non-Italian residents, including Roma and non-Roma). It was complemented by 15 narrative interviews with Roma women in Terni (Oct–Nov 2024), a national focus group in Rome (16 Nov 2024), and desk research on historical and policy contexts. Realized by ROMNI APS in the framework of the JEKHIPE project.

platform where Roma voices were heard alongside representatives of a ministry, a university, a public policy research institute and the reference equality body. By **situating antigypsyism within a continuum that links historical injustices to present-day discrimination**, participants began to imagine justice as both a matter of memory and of reform.

Proposals for change followed naturally from these discussions. A recurring demand was the **establishment of a National Office Against Antigypsyism, tasked with monitoring hate crimes, investigating institutional discrimination, and advising on Roma-led initiatives**. Others stressed the importance of **Roma participation in broader civic platforms**, where their concerns are too often dismissed as “too specific.” **Education** was another central theme: participants called for Roma-led curricula on the Porrajmos, the genocide of Roma under Nazism, and for school initiatives that would link Holocaust remembrance to Roma history.

Civil society actors, too, were urged to take on a more prominent role. Suggested strategies included **Roma-led media campaigns** to counter stereotypes, training programs in **digital advocacy** for Roma youth and women, and closer use of European Union monitoring and **accountability** mechanisms. Long-term alliances were seen as crucial, with some proposing a **National Advocacy Alliance Against Antigypsyism** that could unite Roma women’s groups, youth networks, human rights organizations, and progressive municipalities.

The everyday testimonies collected in the survey bring these **systemic issues played out in everyday life** into sharp focus. On **public transport**, Roma passengers described being left in isolation: *“When I take the bus, nobody wants to sit near me.”* (Romni, JEKHIPE project, 2024). At **municipal offices**, suspicion and mistrust reduce interactions to humiliating encounters: *“They always doubt what I say. They make me feel invisible.”* (Romni, JEKHIPE project, 2024). Such experiences leave many Roma women concealing their identities to avoid discrimination. Strikingly, **less than half of Roma respondents had ever heard of UNAR, the national equality body**, underlining their systematic exclusion from protection mechanisms.

Intersectional barriers sharpen these exclusions. **Migrant Roma women, in particular, face a compounded discrimination shaped by ethnicity, gender, and legal status**. As one participant explained, *“We are not just excluded from Italian society. We are excluded even from the people who are already excluded.”* (Romni, JEKHIPE project, 2024). These words underscore the need for coalition-building that transcends single-group advocacy and fosters **broader solidarity**.

The research paints a bleak portrait of persistent antigypsyism in Italy, but it also points to paths forward. Confronting the past through truth-telling, reforming institutions,

strengthening Roma participation, and embedding Roma history in collective memory are not optional measures—they are moral imperatives. A just and inclusive democracy can only emerge when Roma and Sinti communities are **recognized not as outsiders to be tolerated, but as equal citizens** whose dignity and contributions shape the nation's present and future.

6. Policy Recommendations

6.1 Toward Truth, Recognition, and Institutional Reform

The following 12 recommendations build on legal analysis, fieldwork, and the lived experiences of Roma communities in Italy. They align with the EU Roma Strategic Framework (2021–2030), the Italian National Strategy (2021–2030), and transitional justice principles, particularly as outlined in CHACHIPEN and UN OHCHR (2025).

Recommendation 1: Recognize Roma and Sinti as a National Minority	
Rationale:	The absence of minority status perpetuates cultural erasure, legal marginalization, and exclusion from rights enshrined in Law 482/1999.
Target Stakeholder:	Italian Parliament
Action Steps:	Reintroduce and debate bills from 2013, 2015, and 2016 that sought to recognize Roma and Sinti as linguistic-historical minorities. Amend Law 482/1999 or pass a dedicated protection law for Roma/Sinti.
Indicators:	Legal recognition adopted; Roma/Sinti added to official minority registries; funding mechanisms activated.
Timeline:	Medium-term (3–5 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Advocacy coordination, public campaigns, stakeholder dialogue.

Recommendation 2: Establish a National Office Against Antigypsyism	
Rationale:	Italy lacks an independent structure to monitor, prevent, and prosecute antigypsyist practices and ensure reparative justice.
Target Stakeholder:	Presidency of the Council of Ministers
Action Steps:	Create an autonomous office with investigative and sanctioning powers.

	Ensure representation of Roma legal and policy experts in leadership.
Indicators:	Office created, budget allocated, Roma-led staffing.
Timeline:	Medium-term (3–5 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Policy blueprinting, convening civil society, monitoring state action.

Recommendation 3: Institutionalize Porrajmos Education in National Curricula	
Rationale:	The denial of historical persecution contributes to ongoing stigma and invisibility.
Target Stakeholder:	Parliament; Ministry of Education
Action Steps:	Integrate Porrajmos into Holocaust education (Remembrance day January 27). Develop Roma-led curriculum materials. Support accredited teacher training.
Indicators:	Curriculum revised; % of schools implementing; educational events tracked.
Timeline:	Medium-term (3–5 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Co-create resources; monitor uptake; partner with memory institutions

Recommendation 4: Establish Structural Funding for Roma-Led Civil Society	
Rationale:	Roma organizations face chronic underfunding and exclusion from major funding streams.
Target Stakeholder:	Ministry of Social Affairs; Ministry of Education; Regions
Action Steps:	Create a Roma-specific civil society grant scheme with simplified access.

	Enable core (not project-only) funding for recognized associations.
Indicators:	Annual budget line established; number of Roma orgs receiving funds.
Timeline:	Short-term (1–2 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Train CSOs in grant writing, monitoring and evaluation, public communication; advocate with funders; link to EU streams.

Recommendation 5: Rebuild the UNAR–ISTAT Working Group on Roma Data	
Rationale:	Lack of disaggregated data enables invisibility and poor policy planning.
Target Stakeholder:	UNAR; ISTAT
Action Steps:	Restart and expand the working group to include Roma CSOs. Include Roma categories in national surveys on housing, health, education; and in Labor Force Survey.
Indicators:	Roma-specific indicators implemented; annual disaggregated reports.
Timeline:	Short-term (1–2 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Feed research insights into data indicators; coordinate Roma-CSO participation.

Recommendation 6: Create a Digital Repository on Roma History and Antigypsyism	
Rationale:	Lack of disaggregated data enables invisibility and poor policy planning.
Target Stakeholder:	UNAR
Action Steps:	Develop a centralized, multimedia, multilingual platform hosted on UNAR's website. Include video interviews, historical archives, lesson plans, and Roma-led narratives.

Indicators:	Platform launched; monthly visits and downloads; number of schools and CSOs using it.
Timeline:	Short-term (1–2 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Content creation; user testing; community training.

Recommendation 7: Mainstream Transitional Justice in the National Strategy	
Rationale:	Current Strategy lacks a justice framework that acknowledges historical and institutional harm.
Target Stakeholder:	UNAR; Interministerial Committee on Roma Strategy
Action Steps:	Add a transitional justice workstream to Axis 3.1 on Antigypsyism. Ensure cross-ministerial coordination (Justice, Interior, Education, Social Affairs).
Indicators:	Strategy updated; interministerial meetings tracked; funds allocated.
Timeline:	Medium-term (3–5 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Provide roadmap from CHACHIPEN; lead advocacy and consultation.

Recommendation 8: Dismantle Segregated Camps and Prevent Forced Evictions	
Rationale:	Ghettoization is a structural form of antigypsyism and violates human rights.
Target Stakeholder:	Municipalities; Ministry of Interior
Action Steps:	Legally prohibit public funding for segregated camps. Launch integrated housing projects with Roma co-design. Appoint a Roma Ombudsman for Housing Rights in cities with relevant Roma population.
Indicators:	Camp closures; social housing access rates; evictions halted.
Timeline:	Medium-term (3–5 years)

JEKHIPE Role:	Document violations; support Roma-led planning; legal mobilization.
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Recommendation 9: Reform Anti-Discrimination Legislation to Include Antigypsyism	
Rationale:	The current legislative framework lacks specificity on antigypsyism as a distinct structural issue.
Target Stakeholder:	Parliament
Action Steps:	Amend Legislative Decree 215/2003 and Art. 604-bis to explicitly reference antigypsyism. Incorporate transitional justice definitions into hate crime classification.
Indicators:	Legal text updated; number of antigypsyism cases reported and prosecuted.
Timeline:	Short-term (1–2 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Draft legal memos; submit expert reports; lobby Parliament members.

Recommendation 10: Create a National Roma Youth & Women's Leadership Academy	
Rationale:	Roma youth and women are emerging as pivotal voices but lack institutional pathways to influence.
Target Stakeholder:	Ministry of Youth, UNAR, Roma Platform
Action Steps:	Design an annual leadership training program co-led by Roma women/youth. Provide mentorship, policy internships, and public speaking opportunities.
Indicators:	Academy launched; number of graduates in public roles; stable funding.
Timeline:	Short-term (1–2 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Pilot content; mentor cohort; link to Roma Week events

Recommendation 11: Promote Digital and Media Literacy for Roma Inclusion	
Rationale:	Online hate speech, algorithmic bias, and digital exclusion affect Roma disproportionately.
Target Stakeholder:	UNAR, Government, Regions
Action Steps:	Fund Roma-led digital storytelling and advocacy programs (e.g., <i>Let's Talk About Us, Roma</i>). Develop inclusive tech literacy campaigns in camps and under-served areas.
Indicators:	Programs funded; Roma influencers trained; digital toolkits in circulation.
Timeline:	Short-term (1–2 years)
JEKHIPE Role:	Build curriculum; facilitate workshops; connect to schools and CSOs

Recommendation 12: Establish Truth-Telling Mechanisms on Antigypsyism	
Rationale:	Without historical reckoning, reconciliation and reform are impossible.
Target Stakeholder:	Ministry of Justice, UNAR, Roma Platform, Parliament
Action Steps:	Commission an independent report on the persecution of Roma/Sinti under fascism. Fund public hearings and truth-telling forums in affected regions.
Indicators:	Reports published; # truth forums held; survivor testimony archived.
Timeline:	Medium-term (3–5 years)

JEKHIPE Role:	Curate survivor testimonies; provide methodological guidance; collaborate with CREAA-Verona and memory institutions
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7. Conclusion: Toward Implementation and Structural Change

The above recommendations represent a roadmap to repair, redress, and reform. They should not be viewed as isolated initiatives but as interlocking pillars of a national framework for transitional justice. JEKHIPE's Roma-led approach can act as a catalyst for public engagement, cross-sector accountability, and long-overdue legal transformation. Italy stands at a crossroads. The political will to change is not surfacing—but the evidence, the strategies, and the leadership already exist.

The evidence gathered throughout this report underscores that antigypsyism in Italy is not an episodic phenomenon, but a structural reality that has shaped the lives of Roma and Sinti for centuries. Its roots extend from medieval expulsions to fascist-era persecution and postwar policies of segregation, producing a legacy of exclusion that has never been adequately confronted or repaired. The institutionalization of “nomad camps,” the emergency decrees of the late 2000s, and the continued denial of minority recognition are not isolated missteps but expressions of a broader political and cultural system that has consistently treated Roma as outsiders to be controlled rather than citizens entitled to dignity and equality.

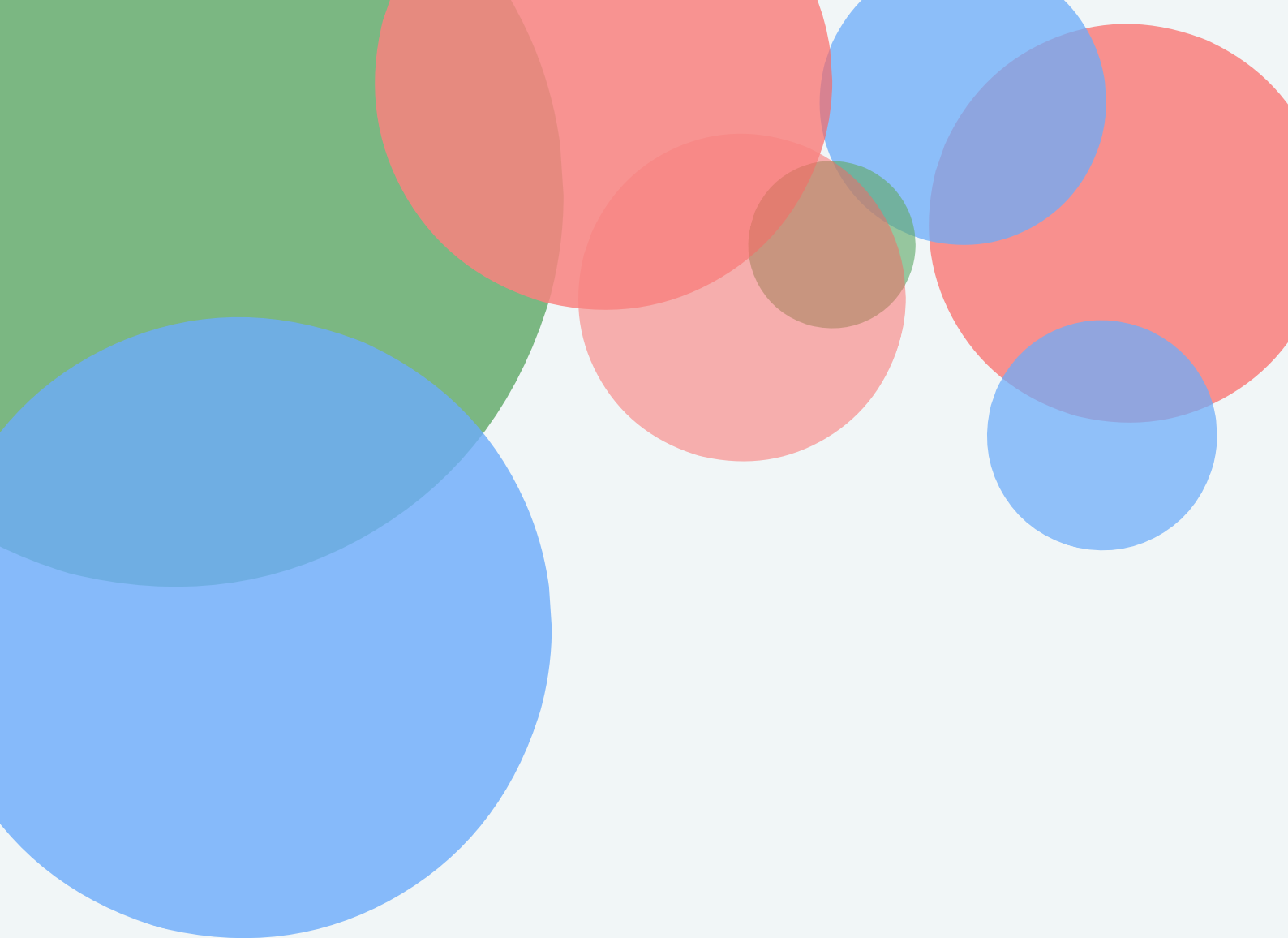
This history of marginalization is mirrored in the present. Testimonies collected by the JEKHIPE project reveal the persistence of everyday antigypsyism across workplaces, schools, public services, and media. Roma women in particular continue to experience intersectional discrimination so pervasive that many conceal their identities as a survival strategy. These experiences are reinforced by institutional fragility: equality bodies lack independence and resources, data on Roma living conditions remains scarce, and public authorities often frame Roma issues through the lens of public order rather than human rights. The result is a cycle of invisibility and mistrust that corrodes both Roma communities' access to justice and the broader legitimacy of Italian democratic institutions.

The absence of recognition and remembrance deepens this cycle. Unlike other groups targeted by fascist violence, Roma and Sinti have not been officially acknowledged as victims of the Holocaust. The Porrajmos remains absent from national curricula and public commemorations, contributing to a collective amnesia that normalizes their exclusion from Italian memory and citizenship. Without truth-telling, denial persists; without remembrance, past injustices echo into the present. The research demonstrates that historical amnesia is not merely symbolic—it actively enables discriminatory policies and public indifference to their consequences.

At the same time, the findings highlight spaces of possibility. Roma-led initiatives—whether advocating for remembrance of the Porrajmos, developing grassroots leadership among youth and women, or forging alliances with civil society actors—illustrate that communities are not passive victims but active agents of change. The JEKHIPE project has shown that centering Roma voices within a framework of transitional justice provides a roadmap for moving beyond tokenistic “inclusion” toward structural transformation. By framing antigypsyism as a matter of democratic accountability, rather than minority management, it opens the door to a politics of recognition, redress, and genuine participation.

The policy implications are profound. Dismantling structural antigypsyism requires more than incremental reforms or ad hoc strategies: it calls for a reconfiguration of Italy’s democratic compact. Recognition of Roma and Sinti as a national minority, the establishment of independent institutions with real enforcement powers, and the embedding of Roma history into collective memory are not technical adjustments—they are necessary steps to restore trust in the rule of law and to affirm the universality of citizenship. Transitional justice offers a powerful lens here, reminding us that reckoning with past and present injustices is not an optional exercise but a precondition for building a democratic future that is inclusive and credible.

Italy thus stands at a crossroads. It can continue to treat antigypsyism as a marginal issue, risking further entrenchment of exclusion and the erosion of democratic legitimacy. Or it can confront its history with honesty, empower Roma leadership, and reimagine its institutions in the service of equality. The way forward lies in truth-telling, structural reform, and solidarity across communities. Only by embedding Roma and Sinti as full and equal participants in the nation’s story can Italy begin to repair the harms of the past and lay the foundations of a democratic society rooted in dignity, justice, and belonging for all.



JEKHIPE

Reclaiming Our Past, Rebuilding Our Future:
New Approaches to Fighting Antigypsyism
