

# Institutional Weaknesses and Relational Voids: Historically Rooted Structural Barriers in Countering Antigypsyism in Italy



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CEPS, Centre for European Policy Studies & Romni APS



**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 – both institutional and interpersonal, past and present – is the foundation of the persistent structural exclusion of Roma and Sinti in Italy. Persistent non-recognition of Roma and Sinti as a minority reflects a long-standing institutional pattern of exclusion from citizenship. This ‘ban and delegitimize’ approach was further reinforced and exacerbated under the fascist regime through confinement, deportation, property confiscation and differential treatment. The absence of legal recognition of cultural identity and citizenship rights has historically relegated Roma and affairs to police and local law-enforcement. The institutionalised system of housing segregation in camps, along with the so-called ‘nomads’ emergency in the early 2000s, mirrored this same pattern.

Recent efforts have begun to uncover the historical truth of fascist-era racial persecution against Roma and Sinti, a critical step toward transitional justice. The next step is to acknowledge that fascism did not create the Roma as victims. Rather, antigypsyism enabled fascism to carry out unpunished violence with ease. Democracy and the protection of universal human rights are therefore essential to (1) prevent and sanction antigypsyist violence and rights violations, and (2) promote a culture that values diversity.

Transitional justice could offer mechanisms for this progress. Yet in Italy, a foundational element is missing: public recognition that

- antigypsyism exists and is deeply entrenched;
- it remains even within equality and diversity movements;
- it permeates all institutional levels and sectors.

This is a two-tiered democratic failure. At the national level, the Italian Republic does not recognize Roma and Sinti as a minority, primarily due to their prejudicial framing as ‘nomads’. This has created a trans-generational transmission of flawed citizenship, depriving new generations of the protections and resources needed to affirm their identity and equality as Italian citizens. At the European Union level, complexities around EU and non-EU citizenship have left many Roma stateless or undocumented, reinforcing intergenerational exclusion.

The Italian state’s failure to address these issues has caused lasting educational, housing, and identity-related harm. Barriers to a viable future underscore the urgent need for Roma associations to lead civil society and parliamentary efforts to initiate a truth and reconciliation process.

A new advocacy platform should:

- build a national multi-stakeholder advocacy coalition inspired by the European Alliance Against Antigypsyism<sup>1</sup>;
- embed transitional justice mechanisms<sup>2</sup>, to recognize and redress historical and institutional antigypsyism, aligned with Italy's National Roma and Sinti Equality, Inclusion and Participation Strategy 2021-2030<sup>3</sup>;
- maintain consistent pressure on UNAR and public authorities to comply with European Commission requests<sup>4</sup>.

This Report outlines a series of concrete recommendations, which may also be pursued as stand-alone advocacy and educational initiatives, given the current pivotal moment. While Italy's political climate trends toward exclusion and securitisation, EU strategies and local Roma partnerships continue to promote rights-based inclusion. The main obstacle to truth and reconciliation remains the institutional fragility of the actors involved.

Two critical preconditions for implementing a transitional justice approach are (1) an independent, well-funded National Office against Antigypsyism with enforcement powers, (2) a stable, independent, and competently staffed national Roma and Sinti representative body.

To move toward transitional justice and institutional reform, the following additional actions are recommended:

- Officially acknowledge the historical schism between Roma and Sinti communities and the institutions of the Italian Republic, as a necessary first step toward reconciliation.
- Invest in repairing 'relational voids' – between Roma and non-Roma; between different Roma and Sinti groups; between Roma and Sinti in Italy and their communities across Europe; and between genders and generations – through long-term, trust-building initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://antigypsyism.eu/alliance/>.

<sup>2</sup> As proposed in Carballo-Mesa, A., Carrera, S., Casermeiro Cortés, P., Rostas, I., Selling, J., & Stan, L. (2023, July). *Paving the way for truth and reconciliation processes to address antigypsyism in Europe: Remembrance, recognition, justice and trust-building* (Policy Brief). Centre for European Policy Studies.

<sup>3</sup> UNAR – Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali. (2021). *National Roma and Sinti equality, inclusion and participation strategy (2021–2030)*. [https://unar.it/portale/documents/20125/51449/National\\_Roma\\_and\\_Sinti\\_strategy\\_2021-2030\\_EN+16.11+%281%29.pdf](https://unar.it/portale/documents/20125/51449/National_Roma_and_Sinti_strategy_2021-2030_EN+16.11+%281%29.pdf)

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

- Recognize and actively support full and equal citizenship for Roma and Sinti in practice, not just in law, as a constitutional obligation<sup>5</sup>.
- Embed transitional justice in a holistic, inclusive framework, as recommended by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNGA 2025), ensuring joint action between Italian institutions and European Union bodies<sup>6</sup>.
- Prioritize inclusive nation-building that affirms diversity and ensures the political, legal, cultural, and social inclusion of Roma and Sinti, moving beyond temporary or emergency measures.

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<sup>5</sup> Article 3: *All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organisation of the country.*

<sup>6</sup> Recommendations 68(c): *To ensure dedicated long-term support and protection to help create a conducive environment for transitional justice measures and initiatives, as well as related experts and personnel, to work independently and free from threats and reprisals;* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (9 January 2025). *Human rights and transitional justice: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/58/36)*. United Nations, p.18.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose of the report

This National Report is part of the JEKHIPE project 'Reclaiming Our Past, Rebuilding Our Future: New Approaches to Fighting Antigypsyism' coordinated by ERGO Network and funded by the European Union (CERV-2023-EQUAL). The project explores historical and contemporary antigypsyism in Europe, emphasizing intersectionality and Roma-led research to develop new strategies for justice and inclusion.

Building on the groundwork of the CHACHIPEN project on remembrance and transitional justice<sup>7</sup>, this Report serves two main purposes:

1. To provide ERGO Network and the emerging European advocacy coalition with a baseline assessment of antigypsyism in Italy, contributing a broader strategy for transitional justice across diverse national contexts.
2. To offer Roma activists and allies in Italy a practical, accessible tool for advocacy and policy engagement.

## 1.2. Methodology

In full alignment with the intersectional and advocacy-driven approach of the JEKHIPE project, this Report was developed through a collaborative effort by the Romni APS team, the Italian member of ERGO Network, under the supervision of CEPS – Centre for European Policy Studies. The research comprised Dr. Ksenija Fonović, researcher and policy advisor to Romni and long-time mentor of the Roma Women Network Italy (RoWNI), who served as coordinator and lead researcher; Sorina Rita Sein, Roma activist and Romni collaborator, who was responsible for field-work and ensured the inclusion of diverse perspectives throughout all phases of the process; and Saška Jovanović, leader of Romni APS – Italy, who contributed institutional knowledge, credibility, and organizational context that greatly enriched the preparation of the Report.

A mixed-methods research design was employed. This approach combined several methodologies in a synergistic manner<sup>8</sup>, with an emphasis on the contributions of

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<sup>7</sup> CHACHIPEN – *Truth and Reconciliation for Roma in Europe*, funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014–2020. For more information, see <https://www.ergonetwork.org/chachipen/>.

<sup>8</sup> Lange, K. (2013). A synergistic approach: Conducting mixed methods research with typological and systemic design considerations. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*.



Roma-led associations and activists as knowledge producers<sup>9</sup>. Three substantial streams of input converged in the creation of this synthesis report.

1. **Desk Research and Literature Review:** Desk research was scoping in nature and aimed at identifying the most recent and the most comprehensive sources to support a synthetic overview of the current state of antigypsyism in Italy. This included reviews of scientific<sup>10</sup> and grey literature, data collection, and media analysis. A review of the Romni APS documentation archive was conducted to compare current findings with past associational work relevant to documenting and exposing antigypsyism. The materials include working documents, project outputs, meetings minutes, video testimonials, transcripts of interviews, and media clippings<sup>11</sup>. The literature review was also enriched by internal discussions within the Romni team and the archival collection of interviews conducted by Mirinda Ashley Karshan, researcher for Romni APS in the project 'Intersect Voices in Europe – combating discrimination against Roma women' (Romni APS archives). The original empirical research aimed to assess the current landscape and to foster critical reflection on both institutional and everyday antigypsyism. This phase of the research work conceived as part of the 'National Advocacy Plan Italy' within the framework of the JEKHIPE project, serving as a foundational step in building the Italian Advocacy Alliance against Antigypsyism. Empirical efforts focused on critical reflection and the emphatic sharing of personal and family experiences of antigypsyism by migrant Romanì women – considered among the most disadvantaged groups<sup>12</sup>.
2. **Original Empirical Research:** Semi-structured, in-depth narrative interviews (Appendix 1) with Roma women were conducted to capture lived experiences of everyday antigypsyism. Sorina Rita Sein interviewed fifteen Roma women of Romanian origin residing in Terni (Umbria region)<sup>13</sup>. A focus group with experts (Appendix 2) was held in person in Rome on 15 November 2024. The intentionally small group (8 components) included a mix of Roma and non-Roma (gagé), activists and researchers, legal and public policy experts, public officials, and civil society leaders. The structured discussion lasted four hours and generated strong commitment to continued engagement and future

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<sup>9</sup> Norström et al. (2020). Principles for knowledge co-production in sustainability research. *Nature Sustainability*, 3(3), 182–190.

<sup>10</sup> Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 draw on the work of Paola Trevisan, author of a recent comprehensive book on the persecution of Roma and Sinti during fascist Italy: Trevisan, P. (2024). *La persecuzione dei Rom e dei Sinti nell'Italia fascista: Storia, etnografia e memorie*. Viella.

<sup>11</sup> Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 are informed by the work of Giulia Perin, human rights lawyer and legal expert for Romni APS in the JUSTROM project (Romni APS archives).

<sup>12</sup> Wolff, J., & De Shalit, A. (2007). *Disadvantage*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>13</sup> A synthesis of findings appears in Section 4.3 *Personal accounts and testimonials*.

collaborations<sup>14</sup>. An online survey, 'Antigypsyism in everyday life' (Appendix 3) gathered the views and experiences of 54 participants (40 Italian and 14 non-Italian). The questionnaire was designed to prompt critical self-reflection by presenting everyday scenarios that reveal both active and passive discriminatory behaviors<sup>15</sup>.

3. **Legal and Policy Analysis:** The legal and policy analysis phase began with an inception interview with Dr. Alessandro Pistecchia, an official from UNAR – Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali. The video interview, conducted in English by Claudia Compagni, a Romni APS collaborator, took place on 7 October 2024.

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<sup>14</sup> Romni APS gratefully acknowledges the voluntary contributions of time, knowledge, and passion from these experts, whose input is reflected in Section 5.2 *Impact on Roma communities*.

<sup>15</sup> Romni APS intends to use the survey as a model in future educational and advocacy work. Survey results are also presented in Section 5.2 *Impact on Roma communities*.

## 2. Historical background

### 2.1 Instances of historical injustice

#### 2.1.1 Before 1914<sup>16</sup>

'Zingari' have been reported in local chronicles of Northern Italy since 1422, typically described as arriving and then moving on. Their historical presence during the centuries of the *ancien régime* is primarily documented through *bandi*; institutional notices banning their presence, transit, or residency in municipal territories. From the earliest records, two key traits emerge that continue to characterise the Italian context today: first, the vague, undocumented identity of so-called 'nomads'; and second, the distinct differences between the North and South of the peninsula. In the North, 'Sinti' and 'Egyptians' were considered exotic wanderers, moving dynamically between municipalities in continental Europe and Northern Italian. In the South, by contrast, 'zingari' often arrives across the Adriatic alongside Slavs, Greeks, and Albanians fleeing Ottoman oppression. These groups tended to settle, becoming part of the artisanal economy within the Kingdoms of Naples, Sardinia, and Sicily.

The Duchy of Savoy, which later played a central role in Italian unification, banned 'zingari' from 1601. In 1632, it prohibited individuals and communities from offering them food, shelter, or assistance. In 18<sup>th</sup> century, within the Kingdom 'idle, vagabonds and zigans' were subjected to imprisonment for 3 to 5 years of prison (except those serving as soldiers). The Grand-duchy of Tuscany passed a Law in 1780 banning 'charlatans, barkers, storytellers, fortune tellers and the like', aiming to distinguish lawful mobile trades (e.g., horse trading) from swindling or begging<sup>17</sup>.

The 1859 Penal Code of the Kingdom of Sardinia, influenced by the Napoleonic Code, became a key reference point for the criminalisation of Roma in the unified Italian Kingdom. It constructed the category of 'vagabonds' as a collective threat to society as a whole:

Those who have neither a fixed abode nor means of support, and who do not habitually exercise a trade or profession. Those who wander from place to place, engaging in a trade or profession, but insufficient to procure their own livelihood. Those who make a living guessing, predicting, or explaining dreams to take advantage of others' credulity<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Trevisan (2024). Translations in English by Ksenija Fonović for the CEPS JEKHIPE Report.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>18</sup> Article 436 quoted Ibid, p. 27.

Punishments included eviction, imprisonment, and forced residence.

The Penal Code of 1889, guided by liberal principles, reclassified vagrancy and idleness as personal status, with beggars subject to up to 5 days of prison. However, that same year, the Unified Text of Public Security Laws introduced 'formal admonitions' for those designated 'by the public voice as habitually guilty of crimes'<sup>19</sup>. This laid the groundwork for Italy's current system of preventive security measures.

North-South differences persisted: in the South, Roma were more sedentary and embedded in economically marginalized communities; in the North, families (especially those linked to the circus tradition) frequently crossed Germanic borders. Notably, Sinti were forbidden from registering the births of their children in their municipalities, further institutionalizing their marginal status. At the start of the 20th century, Italy faced a growing influx of Roma from abroad. This highlighted a duality in governance: between local and central authorities, and between 'neighbouring' and 'barbaric' foreigners. In the North, officials dealt with cross-border Roma groups like the Sinti, Estraixaria, and Krasarja through routine regional cooperation with France, Switzerland, and the Habsburg Empire. By contrast, the arrival of large caravans from Eastern Europe stirred alarm and reinforced narratives of a 'foreign invasion'<sup>20</sup>.

Between 1907 and 1915, the police created a specific filing code – *12100.14 Zingari* – under the broader category of *12100 - Foreigners, extraditions, expulsions*. This system documented and often expelled Roma families, regardless of criminal charges. Cross-border movements continued, but states avoided regularizing them, as this would entail granting citizenship. A proposed inter-state conference by the Helvetic Confederation to address the 'Roma issue' ultimately failed for these reasons. Meanwhile, some 'Italian' 'Sinti' managed to sustain officially tolerated 'nomad' trades.

During the early fascist years (1924-1940), policies largely continued the decentralisation of the previous liberal era. The first fascist circular, dated August 1924, responded to the arrival of Polish Roma with valid passports and visas. It instructed embassies not to issue visas to Roma, citing public health concerns. Nonetheless, entries continued from Spain, Montenegro, Greece, Algeria, and Croatia. In 1926, two further circulars instructed police to push back vagabonds and beggars at the border and dismantle caravans, which were described as unsanitary and disorganized. Their possessions, considered part of their 'organization', could be confiscated and sold by

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> In the period between the two World Wars, the issue of Italian citizenship, systematically denied to Roma on the basis of their presumed 'vice' of nomadism, became particularly relevant in the North-Eastern regions of Venezia Giulia and Trentino. This reflects yet another thread of historical continuity: the 'Eastern border' of Italy would remain a porous and contested space at various critical moments: during the fascist regime, in the aftermath of World War II, throughout the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s, and again with the European Union's enlargement in the early 2000s. Annex I – translation of Ibid, pp. 96-98.

the state. In 1928, additional circulars claimed that 'zingari' spread communist propaganda, a theme that resurfaced in 1940 and 1943.

### 2.1.2 During the fascist regime: 1922-1943

The 'Manifesto of Race Scientists'<sup>21</sup> and subsequent racial laws did not explicitly mention Roma. Trevisan<sup>22</sup> endorses the interpretation of Bravi and Bassoli<sup>23</sup>, who argue that antigypsyist prejudice was already so deeply engrained and managed through established practices of security control, that it was deemed unnecessary to codify it in juridical terms. In fascist ideology, Roma were seen as those furthest removed from the interests of the State.

Scholarly work during the fascist period elaborated on notions of 'irreducible nomadism' and Roma otherness with respect to European culture and ethnic identity. These depictions oscillated between stigma, linking to greed and primitivism, and romanticised fascination, emphasising their supposed free lifestyle and musicality. In 1940 'zingari' were mentioned alongside Jews in two articles of the journal "La difesa della razza" ("Defence of the Race"). But the "Ufficio studi del problema della razza" ("Office for the Studies of the Problems of the Race") established in 1938 never categorized Roma in legal terms. Until the end of World War II, 'zingari' remained under the jurisdiction of the Police Division of the Directorate General of Public Security.

In 1940, the fascist regime divided 'zingari' in three groups: *foreigners*, who were to be expelled;

*individuals suspected of espionage* or anti-national activity, who were to be interned in concentration camps; and those of *certain or presumed Italian nationality*, who were to be confined in designated provincial location and given a diminishing subsidy (lower than for other population). Sedentary groups in the South were not mentioned, maintaining the surrounding their classification as sedentary or nomadic, but certainly not 'Italians'.

Confinement was administered by prefects and local police chiefs, and practices varied widely. Numerous Roma children were also affected. While there were intentions to provide schooling, these often failed due to lack of funding and discriminatory assumptions about Roma families as undeserving because of extreme poverty. Southern regions such as Molise, Abruzzo, Basilicata, and Calabria are the Southern regions were home to large, largely sedentary Roma communities, but archival

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<sup>21</sup> 'Fascismo e i problemi della razza', Ibid, p. 76.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Bravi, L., & Bassoli, M. (2013). *Il Porrajmos in Italia. La persecuzione di Rom e Sinti durante il fascismo*. Bologna: Odoja.

documentation from these areas is sparse. Meanwhile, 'foreigners' in Trentino and Venezia Giulia were considered particularly dangerous.

In the Spring of 1941, the Boiano concentration became designated exclusively for 'zingari' due to conditions deemed unsuitable for other groups. After several months, the detainees were transferred to Agnone (province of Isernia, Molise, bordering Abruzzo). In the summer of the same year, another exclusively 'zingari' camp was established in Tossicia (province of Teramo, Abruzzo) to intern people deported from Ljubljana, Slovenia, under Italian occupation. According to available data, between January 1938 and the summer of 1943, approximately 1,130 people were persecuted as 'gypsies'. This included: 231 Roma and Sinti from Venezia Giulia and Trentino-Alto Adige confined and another 64 forcibly relocated to Central and Southern Italy; around 534 Italian Roma and Sinti interned in designated localities; and about 300 Italians and foreigners sent to concentration camps or border colonies. These figures represent a conservative estimate, as archival documentation is incomplete<sup>24</sup>.

Following the armistice of 8 September, some Roma managed to flee just before the regions they inhabited became battlegrounds between German and Allied forces. During this period, deportations to Northern Italy and Nazi concentration camps began, primarily affecting Roma from Italian-occupied areas of present-day Slovenia and Croatia.

Public awareness of the Abruzzo concentration camps only began to emerge in the 1980s. Personal testimonies helped map the network of fascist-era camps in Italy, such as Boiano (CB), Agnone (IS), Tossicia (TE), Gonars (UD), Prignano sulla Secchia (MO), and Berra (FE), and revealed the internment of entire families prior to their deportation to Nazi-Fascist extermination camps, most notably Auschwitz. For example, 27 Sinti from the Held and Suffer families in Trieste, and 23 Roma from the Hudorovic, Brajdich, and Bresciak families in Rovigo were detained and deported<sup>25</sup>. Much of the historical truth regarding Italian Roma and Sinti in Nazi concentration and extermination camps has come to light through testimonies of Jewish survivors, including accounts about the revolt in the *Zigeunerlager* at Birkenau in Birkenau<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Trevisan (2024), p. 262.

<sup>25</sup> Bravi & Bassoli (2013), p. 78.

<sup>26</sup> Rizzin, E. (Ed.). (2021). *Attraversare Auschwitz. Storie di rom e sinti: identità, memorie, antiziganismo*. Roma: Gangemi, pp. 102-104.

### 2.1.3 Italian Republic: 1946-present

In the post-war period, one of the most notable segregationist policies implemented was the introduction of 'special classes' in elementary schools, which had long-lasting impacts<sup>27</sup>. These classes were created in the 1960s in regions with significant Sinti population and remained in practice for about two decades. Roma and Sinti children were placed in separate rooms or buildings, often adjacent to 'camps', and were taught using a simplified curriculum. They operated on the assumption that Romani children were inherently 'different' and incapable of meeting the standards of mainstream education. Although 'special classes' were abolished in the 1980s, the educational trajectories of children living in 'camps' (since the 1990s) continue to fall into the same patterns of structural discrimination.

To this day, antigypsyism in Italy remains a deeply rooted and widespread societal attitude<sup>28</sup>. In the eyes of both the general population and public institutions, Roma are still perceived as 'zingari' and 'nomadi'. The visibility of antigypsyism in public discourse tends to fluctuate with media attention, particularly through private television networks, local news outlets, and older social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. Media-driven moral panics are often triggered by crime reports and the absence of another scapegoat. In recent years, refugees, Muslim terrorists and same-sex parent couples have alternated with Roma as the primary targets ~~objects of~~ of discriminatory and hate-filled narratives.

Associazione 21 Luglio, in its communication to the UN on racial discrimination in Italy, describes this persistent societal attitude as a substantial and resilient obstacle to inclusion:

*Antigypsyism remains one of the distinguishing features of Italian society that in alternating periods sees its intensity increase or decrease. Antigypsyism is a specific form of racism and a powerful obstacle to Roma inclusion. There is a direct connection between discriminatory and segregative public policies and 'hate speech' addressed to Roma communities; this can be more visible particularly during election campaign periods, when these phenomena increase both in terms of numbers and intensity. In areas where institutional and informal settlements exist and where inclusive policies are non-existent or weak, it is certainly easier to detect words that expose an attitude of intolerance and open hostility. After all, the existence of a "downward spiral" has been evident for years now. This spiral is created because where numerous Roma slums and forced eviction operations*

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<sup>27</sup> Piasere, L. (Ed.). (1996–2002). *Italia Romani* (Vols. 1–3). Roma: CISU.

<sup>28</sup> Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM). (2022). *Antigypsyism: Causes, prevalence, consequences, possible responses*. Council of Europe.

*occur, a greater level of antigypsyism develops proportionally, which in turn increases the pressure on local Administrators who feel so legitimate in persevering in the implementation of policies characterized by security approaches, in the repetition of the clearing operations and in the construction of mono-ethnic settlements*<sup>29</sup>.

According to Osservatorio 21 Luglio, hate speech against Roma remains an entrenched and endemic phenomenon in Italy, fueled primarily by local political rhetoric. It produces three main structural effects: A direct impact of daily discrimination on those affected; A deterrent for policymakers attempting to implement inclusive policies; The normalization of explicit, racist rhetoric in public discourse, paving the way for more overtly violent expressions<sup>30</sup>.

The most intense and explosive period of post-war antigypsyism occurred between 2006 and 2011, often referred to as the 'Nomad Emergency'<sup>31</sup>. This phase followed the arrival of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma (new EU citizens) and a surge in both institutional and informal 'nomad camps' in urban areas. Roma became scapegoated by both local and national politicians, especially after highly publicised crimes were attributed to them, such as the 2007 murder of Giovanna Reggiani in Rome and the 2008 Ponticelli pogrom following a false accusation of child abduction. In May 2007, the mayors of Rome and Milan signed 'security pacts' aiming to evict up to 10,000 Roma individuals from settlements around major cities. In July 2008, Italy's High Court overturned a prior conviction of individuals who had called for the expulsion of Roma from Verona in 2001, ruling that discrimination could be justified on the basis of the Roma being perceived as thieves.

This period, known as the 'season of ordinances', saw local-level discriminatory measures proliferate, often framed as public safety. These ordinances targeted spontaneous Roma settlements and included a range of 'security exclusion' initiatives, such as mobilizing municipal police, transport inspectors, and even private citizens to

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<sup>29</sup> (Associazione 21 Luglio. (2021). *Submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Concerning Italy 101st Session*. United Nations Secretariat, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Among numerous commentaries, see in English Clough Marinaro, I., & Sigona, N. (2011). Introduction: Anti-Gypsyism and the politics of exclusion: Roma and Sinti in contemporary Italy. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16(5), 583–589; Hepworth, K. (2012). Abject citizens: Italian 'Nomad Emergencies' and the deportability of Romanian Roma. *Citizenship Studies*, 16(3-4), 431–449; Merlino, M. (2009). *The Italian (In)Security Package: Security vs. Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights in the EU*. Challenge Liberty & Security Research Paper No. 14. CEPS; Sigona, N. (2015). Campzenship: Reimagining the camp as a social and political space. *Citizenship Studies*, 19(1), 1–15. For the framing in the larger European context see Yıldız, C., & De Genova, N. (2018). Un/Free mobility: Roma migrants in the European Union. *Social Identities*, 24(4), 425–441.



identify and remove so-called irregular migrants<sup>32</sup>. On 21 May 2008, the Italian government issued the Prime Ministerial 'Nomad Emergency Decree' for the regions of Lazio, Campania, and Lombardy. In 2009, it was extended to Piedmont and Veneto. The decree was renewed through 2011. This reliance on emergency legislation, rather than structural planning, reflects how the state viewed Roma and Sinti; referred to as 'nomads' despite being largely sedentary. Under Law 225/1992, a State of Emergency may be declared in response to 'a calamity, catastrophe', or events of such scale that they require extraordinary powers. Many commentators noted parallels with Fascist-era policies: extraordinary securitarian measures justified by 'public order' but applied on an ethnic basis, reflecting deep-rooted antigypsyism that presumes Roma as inherently criminal and dangerous.<sup>33</sup>

These developments were denounced by human rights organizations, European Roma networks, and international institutions<sup>34</sup>. In 2011, Italy's Council of State (the highest administrative court), declared the 'Nomad Emergency' unlawful, noting that the government lacked a factual basis and that the mere presence of Roma did not constitute an emergency<sup>35</sup>. In 2013, the Supreme Court upheld this decision, definitively declaring the emergency decree unfounded and unlawful<sup>36</sup>.

In 2016, the Italian Parliament's Special Commission on Hate, Intolerance, and Xenophobia released the 'Jo Cox Report on Hate, Intolerance, and Xenophobia in Italy'<sup>37</sup>. This report presented data, analysis, and policy recommendations to counter hate speech and promote social inclusion. It underlined the roles of political discourse, media narratives, and digital platforms in fuelling division and made a strong case for coordinated responses. The Jo Cox Commission, led by Chamber of Deputies President Laura Boldrini, included MPs, Council of Europe representatives, Istat, UNHCR, civil society groups, and academic experts. Its recommendations included:

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<sup>32</sup> Ambrosini, M. (2013). "We are against a multi-ethnic society": Policies of exclusion at the urban level in Italy. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(1), 136–155.

<sup>33</sup> Shoah Foundation - USC University of Southern California (2008)  
<https://sfi.usc.edu/sites/default/files/roma-sinti/assets/gallery/III.1.B/misure%20straordinarie%20-%20Stato%20di%20emergenza.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> See 'Security a la Italiana. Fingerprinting, Extreme Violence and Harassment of Roma in Italy'  
[https://www.errc.org/uploads/upload\\_en/file/m00000428.pdf](https://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/m00000428.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Consiglio di Stato, Sezione IV. (2011, November 16). *Sentenza n. 6050: Abrogazione dello stato d'emergenza in relazione agli insediamenti di comunità "nomadi" nelle regioni Lombardia, Lazio e Campania*. Official administrative court decision.

<sup>36</sup> Corte Suprema di Cassazione. (2013, April 22). *Sentenza n. 9687: Rigetto dell'appello contro la sentenza del Consiglio di Stato n. 6050/2011*. Official court decision.

<sup>37</sup> Camera dei Deputati. (2017, July 6). *Relazione finale della Commissione "Jo Cox" sull'intolleranza, la xenofobia, il razzismo e i fenomeni di odio*. Parlamento Italiano.

- Political parties adopting codes of conduct to avoid hate speech;
- Ethical reporting by media to avoid stereotyping;
- Stronger regulation of online hate and misinformation;
- Public education programs to promote tolerance and critical digital literacy;
- Consideration of enhanced legal tools to prevent incitement to hatred.

The Report's 'pyramid of hate'<sup>38</sup> remains influential in illustrating the escalation from stereotypes to discrimination, hate speech, and ultimately hate crimes.

In 2010, OSCAD – Osservatorio per la Sicurezza Contro gli Atti Discriminatori [Observatory for Security Against Discriminatory Acts] was established as a specialized law enforcement body under the Ministry of the Interior. Coordinated by the Polizia di Stato (State Police) and the Arma dei Carabinieri (Carabinieri Corps), its mission is to enhance the police response to hate crimes and improve access to justice for victims. OSCAD's objectives include:

- Enhancing the ability of law enforcement to recognize, prevent, and combat hate crimes;
- Simplifying reporting mechanisms for victims;
- Improving coordination between law enforcement agencies, civil society, and other national and international partners;
- Providing training to police forces on handling discrimination-related crimes;
- Monitoring and analysing hate crime data in Italy.

Although OSCAD engages in initiatives such as sports-sector outreach (e.g. in collaboration with football leagues and UNAR), there is little evidence of specific work targeting the Roma community. The relationship between law enforcement officials and Roma remains strained, marked by deep mutual mistrust<sup>39</sup>. Racial profiling is an emerging, under-documented concern<sup>40</sup>, with Roma frequently targeted. The issue has become more acute following the creation of so-called 'zone rosse' [red zones] in major cities such as Milano (December 2024) and Rome (January 2025). These zones have been established key urban nodes (e.g. train stations) by local authorities in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior, by the order of 'Prefetto', the local government authority. The declared objective is to enhance security in areas identified

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[https://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/uploadfile\\_commissione\\_intolleranza/files/000/000/006/INFOGRAFICA\\_EN.pdf](https://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/uploadfile_commissione_intolleranza/files/000/000/006/INFOGRAFICA_EN.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> ECRI (2024), p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

as hotspots for criminal activities through heightened police powers and mobility restrictions. The specific regulations can vary based on local ordinances and the unique challenges of each zone. Critics warn that these measures echo past securitarian, discriminatory practices and represent a dangerous precedent.

The case of OSCAD above, illustrates one of the most insidious forms of entrenched antigypsyism: guilt by omission. Roma are frequently overlooked; not out of explicit exclusion but simply because they are not considered part of the 'ordinary'. This omission occurs even in the most progressive of environments. For example, Roma associations are not represented in the national civil society networks 'Forum del Terzo Settore'. The project 'Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti (Vox) - Italian Observatory on Rights, run by a consortium of major universities (Statale di Milano, Aldo Moro di Bari, Sapienza di Roma, and IT'STIME at Cattolica di Milano), not monitor online sentiment against Roma as a distinct group, despite the presence of the term 'zingaro' in the word cloud featured on the 2023 edition cover of its 'Map of Intolerance'<sup>41</sup>.

While the term 'zingari' (gypsies) is avoided in official policy and institutional discourse, it continues to surface in hate speech. According to UNAR's 2023 report:

In 2023, the (UNAR) Contact Center detected 437 cases of Hate Speech, almost all of which were tracked through media and web monitoring activities (399, or 91.3 percent). The data collected shows a higher frequency of disparaging acts and offenses united by ethnic, religious or sexual identity factors than other grounds. In fact, 52.9 percent of the identified cases refer to ethnic-racial discrimination (231 cases), mostly because of 'skin color' or 'foreigner' status<sup>42</sup>.

In 2023 (idem) 8.5% of all cases of hate speech refer explicitly to Roma, Sinti and Camminanti. Monitoring and denouncing hate speech follows European<sup>43</sup> and international<sup>44</sup> recommendations. It contributes to the work of national-level networks<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> edition (2023), [Mappa-dellIntolleranza-7.pdf](#).

<sup>42</sup> UNAR – Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali. (2023). *Relazione al Parlamento sull'attività svolta e sull'effettiva applicazione del principio di parità di trattamento*, p.16. [https://unar.it/portale/documents/20125/51622/relazione\\_unar\\_parlamento\\_09.pdf](https://unar.it/portale/documents/20125/51622/relazione_unar_parlamento_09.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Raccomandazione CM/Rec (2022)16 del Comitato dei Ministri agli Stati membri sulla lotta contro i discorsi d'odio <https://rm.coe.int/italian-rec-2022-16-combating-hate-speech-it-2764-7330-5863-1/1680ad6162>

<sup>44</sup> OHCHR UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODY  
[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2FC%2FITA%2FCO%2F21-22&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2FC%2FITA%2FCO%2F21-22&Lang=en)

<sup>45</sup> CERD- Rete Nazionale per il Contrasto ai Discorsi e ai Fenomeni d'odio <https://www.retecontrolodio.org/>  
<https://www.retecontrolodio.org/2023/09/11/pubblicato-report-2023-cerd/> and National Observatory of the project "REASON" - REAct in the Struggle against ONline hate speech, promoted and financed by EU, coordinated by UNAR in partnership with Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, IRS - Istituto per la ricerca sociale SCARL and Associazione Carta di Roma <https://www.unar.it/portale/web/guest/progetto-reason>

and concentrates on the digital sphere<sup>46</sup>. 71.6% of occurrences of hate speech were detected online, prevalently on Twitter and Facebook. Also in the domain of sports, the color of skin (42.8%) is the predominant underground of hate speech.

Vestiges of cultural antigypsyism also appear in unexpected places. UNAR reported and corrected a university criminal law textbook that included derogatory references to “gypsy subculture,” describing it as a ‘subcultural system in which there are norms and customs that encourage the commission of crimes’<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> In conformity with digital services act package - Digital Services Act - DSA and Digital Market Act -DMA  
<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/it/policies/digital-services-act-package>

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 69.

### 3. Current manifestations of antigypsyism

#### 3.1. Recognition and remembrance

The failure of the Italian Republic to recognize Roma and Sinti as victims of fascism or as contributors to the anti-fascist partisan resistance has long served as an excuse to ignore historical injustice and institutionalised antigypsyism. This silence has reinforced the broader societal resistance to acknowledging and supporting Roma and Sinti demands for equal access to 'effective citizenship rights'<sup>48</sup>.

A crucial role in recovering this memory has been played by an alliance of Italian researchers, ethnographers, historians, and Roma activists whose efforts have helped bring to light the persecution of Roma and Sinti under the fascist regime<sup>49</sup>. Personal testimonies have been especially powerful in this regard<sup>50</sup> as archival documentation is limited and written records are not traditionally maintained within families. An important institutional resource is the Centre for Ethnographic Researches and Applied Anthropology 'Francesca Cappelletto' (CREAa) at Verona University, initially directed by Leonardo Piasere and now led by leading Sinti scholar Eva Rizzin.

Italy's first National Roma Inclusion Strategy introduced the remembrance of the Porrajmos during Holocaust Memorial Day (January 27):

The systematic introduction of 'Porrajmos' into all public events dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust will contribute to the acceptance of such communities among those affected by the tragedy of the extermination. The youth will be able to enjoy a further opportunity of human rights education. The entire national community will benefit from this path since it will learn the wider program of death elaborated by Nazi-Fascism policies<sup>51</sup>.

Roma delegations visit Auschwitz, promote Agnone as a memorial site, create educational material and work in schools to foster awareness. The National Strategy

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<sup>48</sup> Trevisan (2024), p. 231.

<sup>49</sup> Two key websites provide resources for preserving and educating about this history: [www.porrajmos.it](http://www.porrajmos.it) and [www.romsintimemory.it](http://www.romsintimemory.it).

<sup>50</sup> Piasere (1996–2002); Bravi & Bassoli (2013); Rizzin (2021); Spinelli, S. (2021). *Le verità negate. Storia, cultura e tradizioni della popolazione romaní* (pp. 271–275). Roma: Meltemi, pp. 271–275.

<sup>51</sup> National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Camminanti Communities (2012-2020) – European Commission Communication n. 173/2011  
[https://www.unar.it/portale/documents/20125/51449/italy\\_national\\_strategy\\_roma\\_inclusion\\_en.pdf/b12fb82d-02ea-5878-df96-d4ef754618f9?t=1644234982738](https://www.unar.it/portale/documents/20125/51449/italy_national_strategy_roma_inclusion_en.pdf/b12fb82d-02ea-5878-df96-d4ef754618f9?t=1644234982738).

2021-2030 includes Porrajmos<sup>52</sup> in its section on 'Tools for School Inclusion. Measures to be Implemented' encouraging teaching initiatives focused on recognition and dialogue:

It is particularly useful to include the history of the Porrajmos and, more generally, of the persecutions that have affected the Roma and Sinti communities in the context of school learning: these events offer an opportunity to build paths of recognition and knowledge of a page of history present within the memory of the Romani communities (often absent outside them) and are elements that can open up programming aimed at Constitutional issues and the recognition of full European citizenship. Particular attention should also be paid to the reconstruction and dissemination of knowledge in the Italian context of the facts that refer to the fascist dictatorship. These events are reflected in the memory of the Roma and Sinti communities that have long been settled in Italy and offer an opportunity for contact, comparison and mediation on the basis of historical recognition<sup>53</sup>.

In 2024 UNAR launched the first 'Week for the Promotion of Roma Culture and the Fight Against Antigypsyism', aligning with the International Roma Day - Romanò Dives (April 8). For two years now, UNAR publishes an open call for small grants for civil society organizations from the Platform and the Forum to organise events in schools and public initiatives<sup>54</sup>.

## 3.2. Legislation and policy framework

### 3.2.1. Anti-discrimination norms

Italy's highest anti-discrimination legal provisions are found in the 1947 Constitution (Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana). Article 3 guarantees the 'equal dignity' of all citizens and equality before the law 'without distinction based on sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, or personal and social conditions'. The Constitutional Court has repeatedly affirmed that these protections extend to all persons within Italian territory. Article 2 further acknowledges the inviolability of human rights, while Articles 10 and 117 ensure that ratified international treaties such as the European Convention

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<sup>52</sup> The term Porrajmos is used in this report for ease of reference and in coherence with the terminology of the National Strategy. A significant number of Roma activists in Italy prefers to use the term Samudaripen.

<sup>53</sup> UNAR – Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali. (2022, May 23). *Strategia nazionale di uguaglianza, inclusione e partecipazione di Rom e Sinti 2021–2030 (Decreto direttoriale)*, Section 3.2.2, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> Roma week calendar – year 2025

[https://www.unar.it/portale/documents/20125/675591/calendario\\_iniziativa\\_antiziganismo\\_2025.pdf/7be32891-dc88-e67c-a4cb-64effa512562?t=1744286165515](https://www.unar.it/portale/documents/20125/675591/calendario_iniziativa_antiziganismo_2025.pdf/7be32891-dc88-e67c-a4cb-64effa512562?t=1744286165515)

on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Treaty on European Union (TEU), carry the same weight as national legislation. In addition, the Italian Civil Code (1942) specifies contracts involving racial discrimination are not legally permissible (Art. 1343) and are null and void even if signed (Art. 1418).

Beyond constitutional and civil code protections, Italy also maintains a significant body of tertiary anti-discrimination regulations. For example, Legislative Decree No. 286 of 1998 includes:

- Provisions for equality between citizens and foreigners in accessing public services and engaging with public administration (Art. 2);
- A definition of discriminatory actions based on racial, ethnic, national, or religious grounds, applicable to Italian citizens, EU citizens, and stateless persons (Art. 43);
- Civil procedures to combat discrimination (Art. 44).

However, while these legal norms are in place, they often been criticised (especially at the EU level) for being inadequate or poorly enforced. ECRI has repeatedly condemned Italy for systemic discrimination against Roma, particularly in the area of housing, where segregated ‘nomad camps’ persist.

Table 1. ECRI reports on Italy

Year	Report Number	Main Topics
2002	2nd Report	Segregated camps, forced evictions, documentation, schooling, employment, health, police/justice abuse
2006	3rd Report	Policy stagnation, national Roma policy needed, continued evictions, statelessness, school segregation
2012	4th Report	Political hate speech, forced evictions, UNAR's limited independence
2016	5th Report	Ethnic profiling by police, xenophobia, need for Protocol 12 ratification
2024	6th Report	Rising xenophobic discourse, Roma-targeted racial profiling, lack of police oversight, UNAR's weakness

In the Collective Complaint No. 27/2004, filed and won by the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) against Italy (decision of 7 December 2005), the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) found Italy in violation of Article 31 of the Revised European Social Charter (1996). Italy was held responsible for inadequate housing conditions in segregated and substandard camps, systemic forced evictions without provision of suitable alternatives, and the absence of permanent, inclusive housing policies aimed

at social integration. This constituted discriminatory treatment of Roma compared to the general population, thereby also breaching Article E.

Comprehensive legislation was later adopted in 2003 when Italy transposed the Race Equality Directive<sup>55</sup> and the Employment Equality Directive<sup>56</sup>. Moreover, in December 2009, following a formal warning from the European Commission, Italy transposed the European directive on equal opportunities through Legislative Decree 5/2010, which amended Legislative Decree 198/2006 (the Code of Equal Opportunities). This reform introduced protections for women's employment and reinforced anti-discrimination institutions.

When the criminal code was first adopted in 1930, it did not include any explicit provisions on racist crimes. While Article 415 criminalizes incitement to social hatred, it was only in 1952 that Law No. 645 implemented the Constitution's transitional provision XII, targeting fascist and racist propaganda. Law No. 654 of 1975 introduced specific provisions against racism and discrimination, although it did not recognize racism as an aggravating factor in other crimes.

The most significant legal instrument for prosecuting hate crimes is Law No. 205 of 1993, commonly known as 'Mancino's Law'. Article 3 allows judges to increase sentences by up to half for crimes committed with the intent of discrimination or hatred based on ethnicity, nationality, race, or religion, or in support of organizations with such goals. This aggravating circumstance applies to all crimes except those punishable by life imprisonment.

The normative framework offers a valuable legal tool for denouncing rights violations and advocate for enforcement. Yet in practice, it often serves more as a horizon of aspirations than a functional means of securing individual rights. Embedding anti-discrimination in legal culture requires not only laws but a broader cultural shift. Transitional justice tools may help translate legal norms into a lived culture of equality.

### 3.2.2. Legal framing of hate speech

Although Italy lacks a single, agreed-upon legal definition of hate speech, Article 3 of Law 654/1975 provides a foundational reference by criminalising the 'crime of propaganda of ideas based on ethnic or racial hatred' and 'violence or instigation to violence for racial, ethnic, national or religious reasons'.

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<sup>55</sup> EU Directive 2000/43/EC on equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, adopted by Legislative Decree 2015 on 9 July 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Council Directive 2000/78/EC on equal treatment in employment and occupation, adopted by Legislative Decree 2016 on 9 July 2003.



Despite international recommendations calling for stronger measures, Italy still does not have specific, dedicated legislation to counter hate speech. The 1993 Mancino's Law<sup>57</sup> criminalizes incitement to or acts of violence motivated by racist, ethnic, national, or religious animus. It also penalizes the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred with up to four years' imprisonment. However, Law 85 of January 2006 weakened these provisions. It amended the terminology by replacing 'incite' with 'instigate', effectively reducing penalties. In cases of instigating racism or discrimination, punishment was lowered to 18 months of imprisonment, which can be commuted to a fine.

Law 11 of 2006 introduced a special aggravating circumstance that punishes with propaganda, incitement, or instigation to racial, ethnic, or religious hatred; when such acts pose a real risk of diffusion and involve denial, minimization, or justification of the Shoah, genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes, as defined by the Rome Statute ratified by Italy (Law No. 232 of 1999). Penalties range from two to six years. More recently, Legislative Decree No. 21 of 21 March 2018 amended the Penal Code with a new section, "Crimes against Equality" (Chapter III, Section I-bis, Title XXII, Book II). It introduced Articles 604-bis (incitement and acts based on race, ethnicity, or religion) and 604-ter (aggravating circumstances for hate-motivated crimes), reinforcing the legal basis for prosecuting hate speech and hate crimes.

### 3.2.3. Legal status of Roma in Italy

Roma in Italy are commonly referred to as Roma and Sinti (previously as Roma, Sinti, and Camminanti (RSC)). While this terminology is widely used in policy and advocacy contexts, Roma are not recognized as a national minority. Roma activists, legal scholars, and advocates have long campaigned for official recognition. Since the 1990s, various legislative proposals have been submitted to Parliament<sup>58</sup>. These efforts have followed two main legal paths, but neither has succeeded.

The first approach sought to include Roma and Sinti under Law no. 482/1999 ('Laws for the protection of linguistic-historical minorities'). This initiative, endorsed by Roma activists and the Senate's Extraordinary Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights<sup>59</sup>, was ultimately rejected. Law on linguistic minorities<sup>60</sup> applied only to

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<sup>57</sup> Law n. 2015 of 25<sup>th</sup> June 1993, amends Article 3 of the Law 654/1975.

<sup>58</sup> For a complete review see Vitale, T. (2010). *Roma e sinti in Italia: condizione sociale e linee di politica pubblica*. Milano: Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI).

<sup>59</sup> 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.

<sup>60</sup> Law 482/1999 "Norms in matters of protection of historical linguistic minorities".

groups with a distinct language historically rooted in a defined territory; criteria deemed incompatible with the dispersed presence of Roma communities.

The second approach, championed by legal experts and pro-Roma advocates, called for the adoption of a comprehensive, dedicated law for the safeguard of rights and cultural promotion of Roma<sup>61</sup>. Public and political interest in such a law grew during the 'nomad emergency' (in the (2006-2009) when dramatic living conditions in institutionalised segregated settlements and discriminatory norms provoked strong reactions from civil society and international institutions. A visit by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay to the Italian Senate in March 2010 marked the culmination of international concern. This context contributed to the creation of the ambitious National Roma Strategy 2012-2020. However, even then, momentum for recognising Roma and Sinti as a national minority was not strong enough. As a result, the absence of minority status remains as an open *vulnus* of the Italian legal system, both symbolically and practically. Without legal recognition, Roma communities face limitations in cultural preservation, institutional support, self-organisation, and access to public funding.

The most recent legislative developments include<sup>62</sup>:

- A Senate bill (2013)<sup>63</sup>, proposing "Regulations for the protection and equal opportunities of the Roma and Sinti minority" (no examination initiated);
- A draft law (2015)<sup>64</sup> amending to Law 482/1999 to include Roma as a protected national minority;
- A draft law (2016)<sup>65</sup> proposing the recognition of the Romani language as a historical linguistic minority, developed in collaboration with Roma associations.

In short, Roma and Sinti are treated as a de facto minority for policy purposes but lack de jure recognition. This gap also intersects with the legal and institutional status of UNAR (National Anti-Discrimination Office), which has been criticized for its limited independence<sup>66</sup>. The Roma population in Italy spans a complex intersection of legal statuses: Italian citizens (Roma and Sinti), EU citizens (e.g. Romanians, Bulgarians), war refugees (e.g. Croatians), and non-EU nationals from pre-accession countries (e.g. Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo). Some are stateless or lack regular residency. This heterogeneity

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<sup>61</sup> Bonetti, P., Simoni, A., & Vitale, T. (2011). *La condizione giuridica di rom e sinti in Italia*. Milano: Giuffrè.

<sup>62</sup> UNAR (2022), p. 92.

<sup>63</sup> [Parlamento Italiano - Disegno di legge S. 770 - 17ª Legislatura.](#)

<sup>64</sup> [XVII Legislatura - XVII Legislatura - Lavori - Progetti di legge - Scheda del progetto di legge.](#)

<sup>65</sup> [XVII Legislatura - XVII Legislatura - Lavori - Progetti di legge - Scheda del progetto di legge.](#)

<sup>66</sup> Council of Europe, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. (2023). *Opinion on Italy adopted on [insert adoption date]* (ACFC/INF/OP/I(2023)004), p. 4.

creates a tangled policy terrain involving citizenship, state protection, persecution, and minority rights<sup>67</sup>.

### 3.2.4. Multi-level legislation and multi-sectoral policy framework

National legislation providing for protection from discrimination is but one factor of influence. Access to citizenship rights and essential services (housing, education, healthcare, employment) depends on both sectoral policies at the national level and implementation at the local level. In the Italian subsidiary system, Regions and Municipalities play a crucial role in Roma inclusion. Local authorities are often the primary actors in the practical realization of Roma rights, making them central to the success or failure of integration strategies.

Table 2: Competences of local authorities in key areas of Roma integration

Regional Level	Sub-Regional Level
Housing	
Develop and implement housing policies.	Administer social housing programs.
Manage funds and subsidies for low-income families.	Allocate public housing units.
Regulate zoning and land use.	Implement urban planning and construction regulations.
Education	
Manage vocational education and training (VET) programs.	Municipalities: manage kindergartens and primary schools.
Health	
Manage regional health services and hospitals.	Provinces: oversee secondary schools and technical institutes.
Allocate budgets to local health authorities (ASL).	ASL: provide direct health services (hospitals, clinics).
Implement healthcare programs tailored to local needs.	Municipalities: manage (elderly care, disability services).
Employment	
Implement active labour policies (training, retraining).	Provinces: oversee employment centres.

<sup>67</sup> Guild, E., & Carrera, S. (2013). Introduction: International relations, citizenship and minority discrimination. In D. Bigo (Ed.), *Foreigners, refugees or minorities? Rethinking people in the context of border controls and visas*. Taylor & Francis.

Coordinate employment centres and vocational training.	Municipalities: job placement assistance and social inclusion programs.
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### 3.2.5. UNAR – governmental equality body

Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali [National Office Against Racial Discrimination] (UNAR) is Italy's governmental equality body responsible for that National Roma and Sinti Equality, Inclusion and Participation Strategy 2021-2030. It reports to Parliament through an annual 'Report to Parliament' on its activities, the effective application of the principle of equal treatment, and the functioning of protection mechanisms.

Thanks to convergence between its institutional mandate, expertise of human resources and high reputation in administrative and civil society spheres, UNAR offers the best potential to act as promoter of truth and reconciliation process. But the perspectives to this end are substantially hindered by the lack of institutional independence and scarcity of resources.

Operating under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers within the Department for Equal Opportunities, UNAR is led by a Director appointed by the President of the Council of Ministers. Established in 2003 by Legislative Decree No. 215/2003 in compliance with EU Directive 2000/43/EC, UNAR is mandated to combat discrimination based on race or ethnic origin in various areas, including employment, education, healthcare, and access to services. As an administrative office within the Italian government, it lacks the full independence typical of some other European equality bodies function autonomously from the executive branch. UNAR also led the first National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti (RSC) 2012-2020.

UNAR's core mission is to promote equality and prevent racial discrimination in Italy. Its key functions include: Monitoring and Prevention; Assistance to Victims; Promoting Positive Actions; Policy Advocacy and Legislative Support; Awareness-raising; and Coordination with Civil Society.

UNAR convenes two major governance bodies that include Roma activists: the National Platform and the Community Forum (established in 2017). The 2021-2020 Strategy reaffirms their role and includes proposals for their reinforcement.

The Registro delle Associazioni e degli Enti che svolgono attività nel campo della lotta alle discriminazioni [Registry of Associations and Entities Working in the Field of Anti-Discrimination], managed by UNAR, is a key mechanism for fostering collaboration between public institutions and civil society in combating discrimination. The Registry recognises, coordinates, and supports associations engaged in anti-discrimination work

across Italy. Registered organisations can take part in UNAR-led initiatives, funding programs, and policy discussions, and may access limited resources and training. As of 23 January 2025, 601 associations were listed.

Although both the functioning of the Platform and access to funding have been criticized<sup>68</sup>, registration in the UNAR Registry provides institutional recognition to Roma organisations, particularly important for collaborations with local administrations. Likewise, the Platform remains the only open space for engaging collectively with the Government.

UNAR is also responsible for the National Action Plan Against Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance. The last implemented plan covered 2014-2016. Although work on the 2021-2025 plan began, it was not completed.

### 3.2.6. National Strategy 2021-2030

The National Roma and Sinti Equality, Inclusion and Participation Strategy 2021-2030<sup>69</sup> constitutes Italy's institutional policy platform<sup>70</sup>. It builds on the goals of the 2012-2020 Strategy and reflects recent EU policy developments.

The Strategy's overarching ambition is to foster a shift in institutional attitudes toward Roma and Sinti. Its guiding principles include:

1. Removing the so-called 'Roma issue' from institutional consideration as an emergency, as this is politically and institutionally simplistic, subject to exploitation by the media and potentially subject to emotional or contingent approaches;
2. Considering the opportunity to schedule medium and long-term integration operations, no longer accepting 'exceptional measures';
3. Making the inclusion of Roma and Sinti communities part of a cultural development process that affects the whole of society, contributing to the dissemination of Roma and Sinti culture and to the knowledge of their history, which has often been painful and marked by discrimination and violence;

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<sup>68</sup> Sources are partially listed in methodological notes on the consultation process of the National Strategy 2021-2023. UNAR (2022), p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> In response to response to the Council of the European Union Recommendation of 12 March of 2021 (2021/C93/01).

4. Giving the Strategy an institutional and symbolic value, investigating certain specific topics (e.g.: Porrajmos) and including them in the institutional calendar and school curriculum;
5. Dealing with the issue on an inter-ministerial and inter-institutional basis, starting with the four critical indicators (education, employment, housing and health) suggested by the European Commission's communication<sup>71</sup>.

In alignment with EU policy, the fight against antigypsyism serves as the Strategy's cross-cutting pillar. The theme Antigypsyism. Prevention, Contrast and Removal (Axis 3.1) includes training activities (notably for public officials), information campaigns, and promotion of positive narratives, each supported by progress indicators<sup>72</sup>. One objective is a national campaign to combat antigypsyism by promoting Roma and Sinti history as an integral part of Italy's cultural fabric, particularly with reference to World War II.

The Strategy includes six thematic areas. Relevant among them are: Promoting awareness of Roma and Sinti art, history, and culture (Axis 3.6)<sup>73</sup>; Access to quality, inclusive education (Axis 3.2)<sup>74</sup>, using cultural knowledge to reduce prejudice; and the Right to adequate housing and accommodation (Axis 3.4)<sup>75</sup>. The Strategy also emphasizes the importance of data collection, supporting the continued work of the RSC National Statistical Information Working Group, coordinated by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).

From 2017-2020, third-sector organizations coordinated independent monitoring of the Strategy's implementation under the Roma Civil Monitor (RCM) pilot project<sup>76</sup>. After four years, reports<sup>77</sup> confirm on the basis of interviews with UNAR, that monitoring and accountability procedures are yet to be designed and contracted.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 88.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.romacivilmonitoring.eu/countries/italy/>; Associazione 21 luglio, Associazione Community Organizing Onlus, Cooperativa Roma Solidarietà, Consorzio Nova and Fondazione Casa della Carità.

<sup>77</sup> Roma Civil Monitor (2023) Civil society monitoring report on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation in Italy. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/RCM2-2022-C2-Italy-FINAL-PUBLISHED-CATALOGUE.pdf> and Roma Civil Monitor (2025) Civil society monitoring report on the implementation of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation in Italy. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. <https://www.romacivilmonitoring.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/RCM2-2024-C2-Italy-FINAL-ISBN.pdf>

### 3.3. Personal Accounts and Testimonials

This section presents firsthand accounts of structural antigypsyism experienced by Roma women of Romanian origin living in small central Italy city<sup>78</sup>. These women represent one of the most marginalized groups within Roma and Sinti communities, exposed to intersecting forms of discrimination: ethnic, gender-based, socio-economic, and institutional. This territory has never been explored by field research before. The resulting narratives offer rare, unmediated insights into how structural antigypsyism endures, even in contexts where socio-economic conditions have improved over the past two decades; from extreme poverty and informal settlements to relative social stability.

The Roma community in Terni originates from two villages in northwestern Romania (Deta and Banloc) with the first families arriving in 2002. Initially, living in cars and makeshift shelters, facing severe housing insecurity. Local Catholic organizations, particularly Caritas Terni, played a crucial role in supporting the community's early integration efforts. Caritas provided non-discriminatory material assistance, free Italian language courses, and facilitated employment opportunities, especially in domestic care for the elderly and disabled.

This support enabled families to transition into rented housing and begin integration. Children from the Roma community began attending local schools, and today all children are enrolled in the education system. Notably, several Roma adolescents have successfully completed secondary education and earned Italian diplomas. Among young Roma women, five out of six who completed secondary school have obtained driving licenses; a significant step towards independence and social mobility. Importantly, these young women have not experienced forced marriage; rather, within this community of approximately 60 people, there are two mixed marriages and a same-sex relationship, both of which are accepted: an indication of social progress and openness.

Despite these achievements, Roma women in Terni still face institutional discrimination. Although nine of them hold secondary or higher education qualifications, including Master's degrees earned in Italy, all are at risk of life-long economic exclusion. Unemployment among women in Italy is high, and active labor policies are ineffective. This systemically pushes Roma women to the furthest margins of the job market.

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<sup>78</sup> Annex 1. Field Researcher: Rita Sorina Sein. Place: Terni, Umbria. Period: November 2024.

*I get up from three o'clock in the morning every day, I clean apartment buildings, and at the end of the harvest I don't have enough money, I don't know what I have to do anymore and where I have to go...<sup>79</sup>.*

Housing insecurity continues to compromise family life, perpetuating intergenerational poverty.

*I don't always have the possibility of paying a rent, so when we find an abandoned house, we move in until we find a chance to pay the rent. In those abandoned houses there is no hot water, heating or light. This winter seems like hell for my family and me..., nobody helps us<sup>80</sup>.*

As poverty pushes people in grey areas of illegality, it then reinforces stereotyped imagery of Roma in public perception, widening the gap of mistrust between communities and institutions, especially social and health services. Roma women fear approaching social services due to a pervasive fear of losing their children.

*Social services do not exist for us Roma. They exist in case we rely on them to pick up our children and put them in social care centres. No Roma would want that. Better I die than they take my children<sup>81</sup>.*

Mistrust extends to health authorities. Few Roma women have regular access to doctors, gynecologists, or preventive care. Testimonies reveal severe prejudice in medical settings, particularly hospitals:

*During a medical examination, I was humiliated by a doctor who forced me to take a shower before I could be examined, treating me as if I were an inferior person, not worthy of respect, as if I were an animal<sup>82</sup>.*

*I thought you foreigners didn't know how to prepare and were always dirty<sup>83</sup>.*

Interviews confirmed over and over again the dominant view that 'all Roma are the same', dirty, thieves, and beggars; what the Alliance against Antigypsyism<sup>84</sup> called a 'homogenizing and essentializing perception'. This ethnic prejudice operates as structural, institutionalised violence. The fight against antigypsyism requires a transitional justice approach. Italian society must recognize its historical role in

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<sup>79</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-15.

<sup>80</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-06.

<sup>81</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-13.

<sup>82</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-06.

<sup>83</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-13.

<sup>84</sup> Alliance against Antigypsyism. (2016). *Antigypsyism – a reference paper*.



maintaining exclusionary structures. Roma women's lives are shaped by constant anxiety:

*Their eyes! The way they look at me!*<sup>85</sup>

Those who are less visibly Roma, with a lighter complexion, who do not stand out in appearance, or in voice, experience less overt hostility. The dominant coping mechanism is identity concealment: when not recognized as Roma, one can pass as a 'normal' person. But this excludes those who cannot hide. It 'leaves out' Roma women who 'stand out'. Their Italian is poor, hindering their job prospects and social interactions. Simultaneously, the use of Romanés language is declining, especially among younger generations lured into social conformity. As a result, Roma women are therefore being left without language, without words and will to speak out: voiceless. Identity concealment may lead to cultural erasure. When probed about their ambitions and wishes, none of our respondents formulated a coherent life plan, only hopes for future generations:

*I only pray for my children and grand-children*<sup>86</sup>.

Evidently, the burden of truth and reconciliation in Italy must not rest solely on the shoulders of Roma communities. A broader civil society coalition must take up this responsibility.

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<sup>85</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-06.

<sup>86</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-10.

## 4. Results – state of the art

In this section, we present relevant data and address specific issues that characterise the Italian context, which should be taken into account when devising strategies for implementing transitional justice mechanisms.

### 4.1. Assessing Progress

#### 4.1.1. National Strategy

The National Strategy 2021-2030 is a comprehensive and forward-looking document that identifies countering antigypsyism as the key cross-cutting priority for Roma and Sinti integration. It promotes cultural initiatives, acknowledges the historical suffering of Roma during World War II, prioritises educational interventions, and encourages dialogue with Roma communities.

Built on a critical assessment of the previous strategy<sup>87</sup>, this Strategy provides a framework for cultural transformation.

*It's very important to think this process in a long term approach, to think that we have eight years to build it and to build it together. Major efforts must go to collaboration with local levels. This is very important for fighting antigypsyism, because the work on the local level can make the difference<sup>88</sup>.*

However, the strategy's primary limitation is its lack of legal force. It serves as a guide, but wields no decisional capacity, cannot sanction institutions and has no dedicated funding mechanisms or legal guarantees<sup>89</sup>. Its budget is limited to office operations, some research, and support to associations for Roma Week initiatives. Notably, sectors like employment and health, more hierarchical and more highly institutionalised environments, lack targeted actions to combat antigypsyism as a priority.

The Country Report on Non Discrimination recognizes the efforts of UNAR and of the Strategy in producing recent improvements:

*[...] the hostility against the Roma has always been high, and is at certain times fuelled by politicians who have, at local level, persisted in applying measures that have contributed to housing segregation and high school dropout rates among*

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<sup>87</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, & Ciniero, A., Bravi, L., Pasta, S., & De Vito, D. (Eds.). (2022). *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy in Italy*.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Alessandro Pistecchia, UNAR – National Office Against Racial Discrimination, Council of Ministers, reference officer for the National Strategy, personal communication.

<sup>89</sup> ECRI (2024), p. 26.

*Roma pupils. However, the measures adopted to overcome the situation of Roma camps and to integrate Roma pupils that have been implemented throughout Italy in very recent years appear to have begun producing some positive effects<sup>90</sup>.*

Nevertheless, UNAR is not institutionally independent and its governance remains subject to political influence. The effectiveness of the suggested measures depends exclusively on the good will, personal interest and knowledge of public officials in local administration, and on the political orientation of the moment. The European Commission has also criticised UNAR for failing to meet 'the requirement of independence of an equality body<sup>91</sup>'.

To date, Roma Week remains UNAR's only visible public initiative. The structural shortcomings of the First National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Sinti 2012–2020 persist. Key issues include:

- A complex and adverse socio-economic context;
- Structural and widespread discrimination;
- Weak governance mechanisms;
- Local authorities' limited capacity to design and implement effective interventions.

UNAR's evaluation<sup>92</sup> noted technical difficulties, a lack of expertise, and a lack of coordination between the various measures put in place. The absence of an integrated approach has resulted in fragmented and often ineffective actions. Finally, the strategy has completely sidestepped the political and symbolic issue of the legal recognition of Roma and Sinti as a national minority, leaving open a fundamental question for the respect of the rights, representation, and protection of these communities.

The most persistent barrier remains the deeply rooted perception of Roma and Sinti as 'other'. Italians consistently rank among the most intolerant in Europe regarding close contact with Roma<sup>93</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, & Favilli, C. (2024). *Country report non-discrimination – Transposition and implementation at national level of Council Directives 2000/43 and 2000/78 – Italy*.

<sup>91</sup> ECRI (2024), p. 5.

<sup>92</sup> UNAR (2022), p. 13.

<sup>93</sup> Vitale, T., & Claps, E. (2011). Not always the same old story: Spatial segregation and feelings of dislike towards Roma and Sinti in large cities and medium-size towns in Italy. In M. Stewart & M. Róvid (Eds.), *Multi-disciplinary approaches to Romany studies*. Budapest: Central European University Press.

### 4.1.2. Public institutions

The complexity of governance of the Italian subsidiary legal order, while ideally providing for solutions at the level most proximate to citizens' needs, has so far significantly hindered the implementation of the National Strategy. In the first place, this makes funding allocations and policy priorities and orientations dependent on the particular institutional culture of the moment; a mix of knowledge about and awareness of Roma issues, relationships with local third sectors, political orientations, and local priorities and interests. The history of emergency situations and media exposure related to begging and petty crime affects negatively influence both elected officials and public servants. With no structured channels to access public services, Roma face a patchwork of institutional contacts, often reinforcing experiences of latent and explicit antigypsyism. This in turn provokes Roma withdrawal and mistrust. This disconnect is particularly stark in large cities and among camp residents.

A major challenge in Roma-institutions interactions is the lack of basic language, literacy, and civic skills. Many Roma do not know their rights, do not understand how the system works, are not able to orient themselves in public offices or articulate requests. The number of community members equipped to deal with public institutions and who are available to provide paid or unpaid help, are still few.<sup>94</sup>

### 4.1.3. Roma community

Housing segregation, illiteracy, and multidimensional poverty exacerbate the perception of otherness and generate fear in the mainstream population. At the same time, it enhances defensive mechanisms within the Roma community: fear, retreat, resignation. Structural exclusion and antigypsyism are mutually reinforcing.

The digitalisation of public services has widened the gap. Recent community work research by Romni APS shows that digital illiteracy, especially among youth, and the lack of computer access remain serious obstacles<sup>95</sup>.

Alarmingly, educational attainment remains very low. According to the EU FRA Roma Survey 2021<sup>96</sup>:

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<sup>94</sup> Romni APS archives; Romni APS. (2020). *Document for the Roma Strategy 2021–2025*. Romni APS archives; Romni APS and Programma Integra (2024). Italian National Report. Acade\_Me: Accelerating Capabilities against Anti-gypsyism and Discriminations in Education. CERV-EQUAL Project Number: 101144820. <https://academe-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/EBOOK-D2.1.pdf>

<sup>95</sup> DIRA Project. (2022). *Digital Skills in the Roma Community – Results of the survey implemented in Finland, Italy, Serbia and North Macedonia*.

<sup>96</sup> <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/2023/roma-survey-2021>.

- Only 30 % of Roma children (aged 3–6) attend nursery school (vs. 93 % national average);
- Only 26 % of Roma aged 20–24 have completed upper secondary education (vs. 83 %);
- 47 % of young Roma are NEETs (56 % women, 36 % men), more than double the national average (19 %).
- Conditions are even worse in camps<sup>97</sup>. For example:
  - 21.6 % of children who finish primary school do not continue to secondary;
  - Only 1.2 % have completed secondary school;
  - Among adults aged 15–62, 15.4 % have no formal education, and just 0.1 % hold a university degree<sup>98</sup>.

The number of stateless persons (especially among Bosnian Roma) is unknown and politically sensitive. The fourth generation of undocumented children of Bosnian Roma resident in Italy are victims of family statelessness<sup>99</sup>, a product of historically constructed transnational institutionalized collective breach of justice. Their case exemplifies the need for a full transitional justice approach: truth, justice, reparations, guarantees of non-recurrence, and memorialisation.

#### 4.1.4. Prejudice

The disconnect between formal equality laws and societal attitudes is striking<sup>100</sup>. As observed by the ECRI: ‘The public discourse has become increasingly xenophobic and political speech has taken on highly divisive and antagonistic overtones particularly targeting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, as well as Italian citizens with migration backgrounds, Roma and LGBTI persons. Hate speech, including by high-level politicians, often remains unchallenged<sup>101</sup>’.

65 % of Italians perceive widespread discrimination against Roma (up 4 % since 2019). This is higher than perceived discrimination based on skin colour (61 %) or ethnic origin

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<sup>97</sup> Comune di Roma. (2023). *Rapporto sulla condizione educativa dei rom e sinti a Roma*. Comune di Roma., p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Neimarlija, F. (2011). *Un popolo senza patria, i Rom: tra immigrazione e integrazione* (Master's thesis, Second-Level University Master's Program); Associazione 21 luglio (2020) Fantasmi urbani. La condizione giuridica dei cittadini Rom di origine jugoslava negli insediamenti italiani. <https://www.21luglio.org/2018/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/fantasmi-urbani-edit.pdf>

<sup>100</sup> EC & Favilli (2024).

<sup>101</sup> ECRI (2024), p. 5.

(60%). 33% of Italians would feel uncomfortable having a Roma coworker: the highest in the EU.

Still, attitudes are slowly improving. Since 2019: Those comfortable with Roma colleagues rose by 9 percentage points. Young people (15–24), those more educated, and professionals show higher acceptance. With regard to children: 37 % report feeling ‘totally comfortable’ with their children having Roma schoolmates: the highest in the EU. Since May 2019, 71 % now support including Roma history and culture in school curricula (+18pp)<sup>102</sup>.

## 4.2. Impact on Roma Communities

Structural antigypsyism continues to affect every aspect of life for Roma and Sinti in Italy. It was acknowledged by UNAR as one of the primary causes of the failure of the first strategy (2012-2020): The persistent discrimination suffered by members of the Roma and Sinti communities. An almost always unfavourable context in terms of perception, public debate and political orientation<sup>103</sup>.

Our survey (Appendix 3) confirms that antigypsyism is not an episodic or marginal phenomenon, but a deeply embedded cultural mechanism that permeates all areas of daily life, producing concrete effects of social exclusion, isolation, and mistrust.

For example, in public transportation, it has been found that people tend to physically avoid proximity to Roma individuals, choosing not to sit or stand next to them.

*When I take the bus, if it is full, only I can sit, nobody sits close to me. They leave me to sit alone*<sup>104</sup>.

Similar situations are observed on the street, where passers-by change sidewalks to avoid contact with Roma people. Discrimination is evident in work settings: Roma colleagues are frequently excluded from social events such as parties or informal gatherings. In the workplace, attitudes of mistrust persist, such as reluctance to leave personal belongings unattended next to Roma colleagues or a lack of commitment to providing references or recommendations, even when there is direct knowledge of the person<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission, & Kantar. (2023). *Special Eurobarometer 535: Discrimination in the European Union* (Fieldwork: April–May 2023). Publications Office of the European Union.

<sup>103</sup> UNAR (2022), p. 13.

<sup>104</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-06.

<sup>105</sup> Romni JEKHIPE Survey, November 2024.

In public spaces and offices, there is a lack of recognition and respect that translates into a failure to greet someone when they enter a room where a Roma person is present, or a failure to exchange basic courtesies such as asking permission at the entry door of the residences. Similarly, in situations where people are waiting, for example in line to obtain documents, the testimonies collected<sup>106</sup> indicate that the words of a Roma person are often considered unreliable or are ignored.

The attitude and un-preparedness of public officials has been indicated as a problematic issue from the 1990s and is still indicated as a priority by experts, Roma, and non-Roma alike:

*There is a problem with the lack of training for public administration officials at all levels<sup>107</sup>.*

In healthcare settings, several respondents testified personal experiences of patients requesting a change of room if their bed-neighbour is a Roma person<sup>108</sup>. Inadequacy and outright psychological violence of health professionals have been dramatically revealed through our testimonials of Roma women (Annex 1).

*The day before my breast operation, the nurse told me: 'I thought you foreigners didn't how you had to shave, I thought you were dirty.' It was like a knife in my heart<sup>109</sup>.*

This commands further investigation and a dedicated strategy for establishing transitional justice mechanisms in the health field. European Union institutions and the Italian Conference of State and Regions should be called upon to play a leading role.

Exclusion also affects children, who are not invited to play with other children in playgrounds, green areas, or on the beach, thus contributing to early isolation. In school, Roma children are often not invited to their classmates' homes<sup>110</sup>.

*When we are at a meeting in school or there is a party, the Italians talk among themselves, but they don't talk to us. I don't take the children any more to birthday parties. We are always left aside<sup>111</sup>.*

The situation in primary school necessitates extensive evaluation. In many cases it represents the primary, and often the only, avenue for possible wider socialization not

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<sup>106</sup> Romni APS (2024). Appendix 3 - Survey.

<sup>107</sup> Focus group 16 November 2024.

<sup>108</sup> Romni JEKHIPE Survey, November 2024.

<sup>109</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-13.

<sup>110</sup> Romni JEKHIPE Survey, November 2024.

<sup>111</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-09.

only of children but of entire families. In many cases, the experience is positive. But, our interviewees report also highly disruptive experiences of their young children, exclusion by peers and mistreatment by teachers.

*I dressed them, I washed them, they went (to school) clean. Because at that time I had money. But the children always cried when they came home because other children teased them and no one wanted to play with them<sup>112</sup>.*

The long-term negative impacts of the failures of early schooling cannot be overemphasized.

*Respect for diversity stems from childhood<sup>113</sup>.*

Discrimination in public education is not only a deterrent for employment prospects (as it stimulates early drop-out). It also cuts at the roots the potential for establishing social networks, building social capital and self-esteem. Experts convened in the Focus group (Appendix 2) stress the importance of education:

*Human rights education is one of the answers. Not only in school, but within the larger educational community. The role of family is of fundamental importance<sup>114</sup>.*

Roma women demand only what others take for granted. It all starts from noticing, denouncing, and standing up for dignity and belonging:

*Our children should not be put at the last desk in class or called 'dirty' or sent away<sup>115</sup>.*

Everyday activism must be matched by systemic change.

*There is a need to create alliances, in order to co-plan and co-design, with Roma communities, third sector organizations and national and local public bodies. The objective is to generate shared and participatory public policies<sup>116</sup>.*

Mainstreaming policy and advocacy networking must be accompanied by deep-work on interpersonal relationships. Yet for many Roma, social connection is out of reach.

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<sup>112</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-06.

<sup>113</sup> Focus group 16 November 2024.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-13.

<sup>116</sup> Focus group 16 November 2024.



*I don't have any Italian friends. Where is it that you get to know a person? Because you work together. Because he's your neighbour. In front of school. I have no job. I live in a camp. I can't walk my kids to school<sup>117</sup>.*

This stems from 'a lack of mutual recognition'<sup>118</sup>. Antigypsyism is not just prejudice, it is a distinct and often deeper form of racism:

*There is a greater aversion to Roma people than to migrants<sup>119</sup>.*

Survey respondents believe that Roma are discriminated against more than other groups with specific characteristics, such as immigrants or those of a different religion other than Catholicism. Half of the respondents also believe that immigrants have the same strong discriminatory attitudes to Roma as the Italians, while only one fourth of respondents think that immigrants are less discriminatory than the mainstream population.

Field research (Annex 1) shows how systemic antigypsyism erodes identity and belonging.

*There is a risk of assimilation<sup>120</sup>.*

Hiding one's identity becomes a survival strategy<sup>121</sup>, while segregated spaces, such as camps in Rome, become refuge from everyday harm. They provide a safe place for persons who feel constantly exposed to shame and harm in the outside world. But isolation also leads to ignorance of rights: only 37 % of Roma know that an equality body exists (EU FRA 2023).

This contributes to the phenomenon of under-reporting.

*Under-reporting. This is when victims do not realise or are not fully aware of the discrimination they suffer and accept it without protest. They may lack the language and cultural tools to grasp these situations, or may simply accept that the majority discriminates against minorities, that institutions themselves were designed by the majority and are destined to privilege that majority. An ability to identify discrimination is an important stimulus in combating it, by placing those directly involved in the forefront. Lack of perception consolidates injustices and inequalities.*

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<sup>117</sup> Interview quoted in Neimarlija, F. (2011). *Un popolo senza patria, i Rom: tra immigrazione e integrazione* (Master's thesis, Second-Level University Master's Program).

<sup>118</sup> Focus group 16 November 2024.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Pasta, S., & Vitale, T. (2018). "Mi guardano male, ma io non guardo". Come i rom e i sinti in Italia reagiscono allo stigma. In A. Alietti (Ed.), *Razzismi, discriminazioni e diseguaglianze. Analisi e ricerche sull'Italia contemporanea* (pp. 217–241). Milano: Mimesis.

*While it may perhaps help maintain social peace today, it prepares the ground for more serious social divisions and conflicts in the future. Minorities which are permanently discriminated against and segregated pose a risk to society as a whole*<sup>122</sup>.

### 4.3. Best practices

In this section we propose different types of actions where transitional justice mechanisms could be meaningfully introduced.

The cultural work of Roma associations and activists, supported by UNAR, can help educate the broader public about Roma history and identity in Italy. The strength of musical and cultural events lies in their potential for wide outreach and for generating direct connections among people. However, limiting such events to Roma Week represents a missed opportunity.

Two significant cultural outputs from 2025 could serve as tools for educational tools and be replicated in other contexts:

- A Romani language and culture course for university students at Sapienza University of Rome, led by the prominent activist Santino Spinelli<sup>123</sup>.
- An autobiographical novel focused on family history, written by the prominent activist Dijana Pavlovic<sup>124</sup>.

The strong point of Roma Week is its yearly recurrence. This enables planning, preparation, and the building of networks. A similarly impactful event is the Festival of Roma and Sinti culture organized every year in Isernia by prominent activist and fashion designer Concetta Sarachella (Sara Cetty)<sup>125</sup>.

For truth and reconciliation processes, historical research and personal testimonies related to the Roma experience during the Second World War are essential. It is important to preserve and share family accounts of deportation, segregation, and the Samudaripen under fascism, but also testimonials of Roma and Sinti who contributed to the Resistance movement. In order to build these aspects into structured transitional justice mechanisms, alliances should be built with natural partners: historians,

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<sup>122</sup> ASGI & Medi Study Centre Genoa. (2023). *When institutions discriminate: Equality, social rights, immigration. Report of Project L.A.W. – Leverage the Access to Welfare*, p. 41.

<sup>123</sup> <https://seai.web.uniroma1.it/it/corso-di-lingua-e-cultura-romani>.

<sup>124</sup> Dijana Pavlovic (2025), *Irriducibili. Alterità dell'anima zingara*, UPRE Roma.

<sup>125</sup> Associazione 'Rom in Progress' on Facebook.

constitutional defenders, the National Association of Italian Partisans (ANPI)<sup>126</sup>, universities, mainstream media<sup>127</sup>, and the Jewish community. Young generations, in particular, show growing interest in learning about the Sinti battalion and Roma women's wartime contributions.

Denouncing institutional violence remained essential, as court rulings on the cause of human rights are powerful tools for both redress and advocacy. Legal mechanisms should be pursued in particular on the issue of segregated housing and the enduring use of 'nomad camps'. These efforts help establish a growing body of legal precedents to inform and pressure local authorities. A recent example is the complaint<sup>128</sup> filed before the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) in March 2025 against the forced evictions in the Southern Campania region. The strategic partnership behind this case (a European-level advocacy body, a national human rights organization, and a grassroots Roma and pro-Roma group) offers a strong model for leveraging legal action within a transitional justice framework.

Such actions can amplify and support structural integration efforts, making them more visible, compelling, and effective.

#### 4.3.1. Structural action best practice: City of Rome action plan to 'overcoming camps'

The case of Roma camps in Italy illustrates a long-standing structural issue, recently condemned again by ECRI<sup>129</sup>, that can be better understood from a historical-institutional perspective.

Rome, the largest metropolitan city in Italy (4.2 million inhabitants), has the highest concentration of Roma 'camps'. Over the years, particularly during the 'Nomad Emergency' era, these settlements became the focus of extreme negative media coverage, hate speech, and stigmatization. Evictions were frequent, and the camps became synonymous with social tragedy, scandal, and international condemnation.

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<sup>126</sup> <https://www.patriaindipendente.it/servizi/quegli-eroi-ed-eroine-rom-e-sinti-della-resistenza-italiana-ed-europea/>.

<sup>127</sup> <https://www.micromega.net/ombre-nella-storia-luci-nella-resistenza-i-partigiani-rom-e-sinti/>.

<sup>128</sup> <https://www.errc.org/press-releases/activists-file-urgent-complaint-to-stop-forced-eviction-of-roma-from-giugliano-camp-in-italy>.

<sup>129</sup> ECRI (2024), p. 5.

A new chapter has now begun, following years of advocacy by Roma activists and the principles laid out in the National Strategy. Associazione 21 luglio provides comparative data illustrating the transformation<sup>130</sup>:

Table 3. Situation of Roma and Sinti in Italy. Comparison years 2010 - 2025

	Year 2010	Year 2025
Roma and Sinti in the camps	40.000	10.455
Number of camps	250	105
Approach – culturalist vision	Dominant	almost in-existent
Hate speech	Prominent	rather circumscribed
Policy	special provisions	ordinary policy-making
Emergency situation	yes, in force	no
Forced evictions	yes, as a rule	rarely, as exception

Source: Associazione 21 luglio, 2025.

The new City Plan 2023-2026 (Annex III) developed to support Roma in accessing adequate housing and life opportunities, represents a promising example of the inter-institutional cooperation envisioned by the Strategy. As UNAR notes: Promotion of Local Action Plans (LAPs), to encourage the planning, design and co-design of interventions in line with the National Strategy, incentivizing the start of multi-stakeholder processes that involve cooperation between local authorities and third sector organizations<sup>131</sup>.

The Plan incorporates many insights from the focus group experts. It provides one of the first experimentations of co-programming and co-design on the basis of Articles. 55 and 56 of the Third Sector Code in the field of Roma integration.

The methodology applied by Associazione 21 luglio in the Salone camp, called MA.REA. (Mapping and Realizing Communities), consists of six phases: (1) community engagement, (2) development of community action group, (3) development of a community action plan, (4) financing and implementation, (5) communication campaign, and (6) monitoring and sustainability. The Plan operate across five areas: (a) legal

<sup>130</sup> Associazione 21 luglio (19 February 2024), Presentation at the conference 'A second life. Overcoming Roma camps in Rome. Life stories' organized in collaboration with the City of Rome. [www.21luglio.org](http://www.21luglio.org).

<sup>131</sup> UNAR (2023), p. 40.

regularization; (b) education; (c) health; (d) employment; (e) housing. The results are measurable: the camp population decreased from 1 000 in 2010 to 380 in 2023. Within a year of the 'Overcoming camps' project (Jan 2024-Jan 2025) the number of residents in Salone dropped from 364 to 197.

Activities developed under the JUSTROM project<sup>132</sup> (Annex IV) could be scaled up nationally under the guidance of UNAR. Its focus on Roma women and youth aligns well with the National Strategy's priorities and offers proven, replicable methods.

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<sup>132</sup> <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/it/web/access-to-justice-for-roma-women/justrom>.

## 5. Paths to Justice for Roma

### 5.1. Conclusions: A political reading of the current situation of antigypsyism in Italy

The persistence of historically rooted institutional and everyday antigypsyism underpins the structural exclusion of Roma and Sinti in Italy. Their non-recognition as a national minority continues a legacy dating back to the liberal regime of the nascent Italian state, which systematically labelled Roma and Sinti as ‘nomads’ and ‘foreigners’, avoiding any formal recognition of their citizenship. This logic of exclusion was amplified under fascism, leading to confinement, deportation, property seizure, and systemic discrimination. Today, the absence of legal recognition perpetuates a pattern where Roma issues are handled by police or local enforcement agencies, often bypassing broader institutional protections. The legacy of the ‘nomad camps’ and the ‘Nomad Emergency’ of the early 2000s is a modern echo of these discriminatory patterns.

Denying Roma and Sinti recognition as a legal minority is tantamount to denying their identity. Framing them as foreigners or wanderers feeds a narrative of inferiority, both in public prejudice and institutional treatment.

Recognizing Roma and Sinti as victims of nazi-fascist regimes is a crucial first step, but insufficient on its own. The next step is to understand then to acknowledge that it was not fascism alone that made Roma targets of persecution, but the deeper and older root of antigypsyism, which fascism merely enabled with impunity. Therefore, the best defence is democracy and the safeguarding of universal human rights protections, both to prevent and redress violations and to foster a culture of respect for diversity.

Italy is currently at a tipping point. On one hand, the political situation moves mass politics and public discourse in the direction of racism, exclusion, erosion of human rights, and cuts in social investments. On the other, European-level strategies and local-level cooperation between Roma organisations, civil society, and public institutions (e.g., municipalities and schools) are paving a progressive path. The National Strategy 2021-2030 embodies this direction, highlighting that exposing and combating antigypsyism is a foundational need for successful integration.

So far, public discourse in Italy has largely overlooked the potential of applying truth and reconciliation processes to address historical and institutional antigypsyism. Transitional justice is based on five pillars: truth, justice, reparations, guarantees of non-recurrence, and memorialisation<sup>133</sup>. In Italy, only the first and last, truth and

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<sup>133</sup> [RomaMemorializationSeptember2022-GenevaRoundtableOutcomeReport.pdf](#).

memorialization, have been partially pursued, but without explicit reference to the transitional justice approach.

The CHACHIPEN project<sup>134</sup> has conceptualised how the EU could apply a transitional justice framework to Roma issues. Recently, the United Nations has urged regional and transnational adaptation of transitional justice principles to unresolved historical injustices<sup>135</sup>. Italian civil society should seize this moment by pursuing two mutually reinforcing advocacy paths:

- Partnering with Romanian and Bulgarian Roma organizations to secure full access to European citizenship rights, regardless of residence or origin.
- Collaborating with peacebuilding and victims' associations in the former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to ensure full truth, justice, reparations, and memorialisation for refugees of war and their descendants.

These actions, grounded in European principles, could finally ensure historical justice and prevent future recurrences.

However, all actors pursuing this progressive path remain institutionally feeble. UNAR lacks independence and enforcement powers. Roma associations lack core funding, staffing, training, and platforms for pooling knowledge, tools, and experiences. Roma and Sinti families are fragmented and disengaged, with few cultural mechanisms to foster identity or pride. Youth are severely under-educated and risk losing community identity and future societal inclusion. Even key stakeholders at the local level need convincing that the cause of Roma and Sinti is valid: municipalities are severely underfunded and constantly under pressure from conflicting priorities; civil society organizations are often focused on other pressing human rights, peace and diversity issues.

To shift momentum in the right direction, it is essential to invest in bridging long-standing relational divides: between Roma and non-Roma; among diverse Roma and Sinti groups; between Roma and Sinti in Italy and their communities across Europe; between Roma and Italian institutions, and within Roma communities, across gender and generational lines.

## 5.2. Recommendations

This report calls for the initiation of a truth and reconciliation process in Italy to address the historical responsibility towards Roma and Sinti communities, following a

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<sup>134</sup> Carballo-Mesa et al. (2023).

<sup>135</sup> United Nations General Assembly. (2025). *Human rights and transitional justice: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*. A/HRC/58/36.

transitional justice approach as proposed by the CHACHIPEN Policy Brief. This new advocacy direction should:

- Build on the Human rights and transitional justice Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>136</sup> invitation to Member States to pursue transitional that are sensitive to local circumstances and inclusive of historically victimised groups as active agents;
- Work in synergy with European Union bodies and draw on experiences of transitional justice mechanisms implemented across Europe;
- Implement joint transnational mechanisms with countries from which most significant Roma communities in Italy originate – namely Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Bosnia;
- Mainstream the transitional justice approach into all activities of the National Strategy 2021-2030 and within all publicly funded and endorsed programs in key areas such as housing, education, and integration;
- Fully and promptly comply with recent high-level institutional recommendations and strategic policy orientations, explicitly recognising institutional antigypsyism as a historical responsibility;
- Take into account the Recommendations of this Report detailed below.
- These recommendations aim to:
- Serve as a foundation for a mid-term review of the National Strategy's implementation;
- Underpin large-scale national programs and locally rooted initiatives along two key inter-institutional work streams: housing and education, essential for mainstreaming antigypsyism awareness;
- Prioritize strengthening Roma activism in Italy, recognizing its structural needs;
- Broaden the cultural alliance against antigypsyism.

The proposed systemic actions through transitional justice focus especially on investing in children and youth, whose future emerged in this research as the Roma community's top priority and as promising terrain for overcoming latent antigypsyism in Italian society.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.



**Recommendation 1:** UNAR and the Roma Platform should engage with this Report, the CHACHIPEN Policy Brief, and the UN Report and take a formal position on the transitional justice approach and truth and reconciliation processes.

**Recommendation 2:** The Roma Platform should urgently call on UNAR to act on the two key ECRI Recommendations.

These recommendations provide a concrete basis to raise public awareness against rising intolerance and to forge civil society alliances, particularly in a period when the focus is on migration rather than antigypsyism:

When it comes to combating hate speech, the authorities should organise an awareness raising campaign with a view to i) creating a better understanding of the general public of the extent of racist and other forms of hate speech and the harm it causes to the individuals and communities concerned and ii) promoting equality, diversity and intercultural and interfaith dialogue, with a particular emphasis being placed on the positive contributions of people with a migration background, Roma, members of Jewish and Muslim communities and people of African descent to the society as a whole<sup>137</sup>.

The authorities should promptly commission a comprehensive and independent study with the aim of detecting and addressing any racial profiling practices by law enforcement officials affecting in particular Roma and people of African descent, in the light of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 11 on combating racism and racial discrimination in policing and General Recommendation No. 36 of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on racial profiling by law enforcement officials<sup>138</sup>.

**Recommendation 3:** Establish institutional independence and stable funding mechanisms for UNAR and Roma organisations.

The demand for an independent and structurally funded equality body<sup>139</sup> must be matched by a call for a representative Roma and Sinti body with sustainable resources. UNAR must have the capacity to collaborate with public institutions on an equal footing. Roma representatives need resources (knowledge and financial) to actively participate, especially at the local level. This would help overcome the democratic deficit in the Strategy and build citizenship capacity within Roma communities. UNAR should also sustain Roma activism on a European level, facilitating access to training, exchanges, and capacity-building initiatives tailored for Roma youth and women.

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<sup>137</sup> ECRI (2024), p. 6.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> ECRI (2023), p. 26.

This recommendation aligns with the European Parliament's 2017<sup>140</sup> call to 'promote the establishment of independent Roma civil organisations and public institutions and the empowerment of a young, progressive Roma leadership' and on the UN Report<sup>141</sup> recognizing the transformative role of women in transitional justice.

**Recommendation 4:** Establish an online, multimedia, multilingual digital repository of educational resources on Roma history, and culture, the Porrajmos and antigypsyism, hosted on UNAR's website.

Numerous resources exist but are scattered, making them hard to access, particular for schools to locate and use. An institutionally curated repository would support educators, Roma activists, local administrations, and parents by making ready-to-use materials easily available<sup>142</sup> This would help spread the capacity to recognize and address antigypsyism in underserved urban and rural areas. Key users include educators, Roma activists, civil society groups, local administrations; and especially Roma youth and parents.

The repository should be multimedia and multilingual, offering pathways for individual, family, and community learning, as well as adaptable resources for various educational and social contexts. UNAR should provide institutional hosting, ensure the allocation of expert resources for cataloguing and regular updates, and guarantee the platform's long-term stability. Design and promotion should be developed jointly with the Roma Platform, with funding for outreach and training involving Roma communities. Other institutional partners should also be engaged in these support processes.

The repository offers a low-cost high-impact infrastructure that supports the implementation of the Strategy's transversal objective: Antigypsyism. Prevention, Contrast and Removal<sup>143</sup>. These tools should support truth and reconciliation processes within a shared European framework. In particular, we recommend seeking practical, collaborative platforms in: Historical research and the safeguarding of collective memory, particularly of the Samudaripen, and production of multilingual and multiperspective cultural and educational resources.

**Recommendation 5:** UNAR should coordinate data collection and research to support transitional justice processes.

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<sup>140</sup> European Parliament (2017).

<sup>141</sup> United Nations General Assembly (2025).

<sup>142</sup> (CoE ACFC 2023, p. 4).

<sup>143</sup> (Axis 3.1) (Annex V).

The UNAR-ISTAT working group<sup>144</sup> should be reactivated and broadened to integrate data from administrative, civil society, and community sources. Research and observatories on hate speech, hate crime, and discrimination must explicitly include Roma and Sinti as a category. A historical study on antigypsyism in education and health should be conducted under the leadership of Roma organisations.

**Recommendation 6:** Collaborate with local authorities to implement housing support plans for families in need.

The eradication of segregated camps must be a top priority. Forced evictions have long fueled public antigypsyism<sup>145</sup> and should face zero tolerance. The Italian Republic must not tolerate ghettoization.

Suggested mechanisms of public pressure include:

- Identify and expose segregated housing;
- Challenge forced evictions and other violations of human right in court;
- Prohibit public funds for ‘camps’ and segregated housing;
- Appoint a Roma Ombudsman to the Municipality Commission for Social Housing.

**Recommendation 7:** Ensure education policy and school practices address the specific needs of Roma children and youth.

No child should be left behind<sup>146</sup>. Schools are crucial for learning how to engage with diversity and act as hubs for community interaction. Schools are much more than classrooms. They provide rare opportunities for Roma and non-Roma (gagé) to form personal relationships: the best antidote to antigypsyism. Roma children need support to nurture their aspirations, including access to digital tools like personal computers, extracurricular activities, and personalised engagement from their educational communities.

**Recommendation 8:** Promote digital inclusion through community-driven strategies.

Digital literacy is essential for countering media-based antigypsyism and supports wider competencies in literacy, citizenship and cultural mediation. UNAR and the Roma Platform should adopt and expand models like the *Let’s Talk About Us, Roma* project (Annex VI)<sup>147</sup>, which equips Roma youth and women with skills to act as media creators

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<sup>144</sup> ECRI (2023), p. 28.

<sup>145</sup> ECRI (2024), p. 6.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, pp. 6, 28.

<sup>147</sup> <https://panorproject.wordpress.com/>.

and advocates<sup>148</sup>. This initiative should become a structural program to enhance Roma capacities for media engagement and institutional dialogue.

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<sup>148</sup> RCM (2024), pp. 24-25.

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## 6. Annexes

### 6.1. Annex 1. Interviews

Semi-structured, in-depth narrative interviews with Roma women were conducted by Sorina Rita Sein, a Romani activist residing in Italy.

The interviews took place face-to-face and were carried out in Romanés and Romanian. Interviewees ranged in age from 22 to 71, and their length of residence in Italy varied from as little as 3 months to as long as 25 years. The decision to focus on this specific target group for the interviews was driven by two main factors. First, the feminist and intersectional approach of Romni APS that focuses attention on Roma women as doubly discriminated against; subjected to patriarchal norms both within and outside their communities, which makes them particularly vulnerable to antigypsyism. Second, recent developments in Roma migration to Italy: following the Covid-19 pandemic, a new wave of Romanian Roma arrived from extremely impoverished rural areas. This prompted a need to test existing knowledge of institutional and everyday antigypsyism through the lived experiences of Romanian Romnja, who are among the most publicly visible and stigmatized.

The interviews followed the well-established emphatic peer-to-peer methodology developed by Romni APS, originally structured for fieldwork in the 'Marry When You Are Ready' project, which addressed the taboo theme of early marriage in Roma communities in Europe. The interviews were conducted in line with JEKHIPE guidelines, recorded, and fully transcribed in the original language, then translated in Italian. Excerpts were translated in English for use in this Report.

The interview was structured in 28 questions divided into the following sections: Personal and demographic information, Education and employment, Access to social services and healthcare, Experiences with discrimination, Community and support networks, Identity and history, and Closing reflections.

### 6.1.1. Interview Log

Code	Date	Sex	Age	Occupation	Years in current residence	Residence
JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-01	03/11/2024	Female	38	unoccupied	5 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-02	03/11/2024	Female	59	unoccupied	5 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-03	06/11/2024	Female	43	unoccupied	25 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-04	10/11/2024	Female	42	unoccupied	22 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-05	06/12/2024	Female	56	disable person	23 yeas	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-06	15/12/2024	Female	25	seasonal work	She doesn't know for sure, maybe for 10 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-07	18/12/2024	Female	35	unoccupied	14 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE-WP2-IT-08	19/12/2024	Female	22	unoccupied	22 years	Terni, Umbria

						region, Italy
JEKHIPE- WP2-IT-09	26/12/2024	Female	28	companion of disabled person	15 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE- WP2-IT-10	26/12/2024	Female	69	unoccupied	3 months	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE- WP2-IT-11	26/12/2024	Female	40	unoccupied	12 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE- WP2-IT-12	26/12/2024	Female	38	unoccupied	23 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE- WP2-IT-13	27/12/2024	Female	48	unoccupied	20 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE- WP2-IT-14	27/12/2024	Female	34	unoccupied	15 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy
JEKHIPE- WP2-IT-15	27/12/2024	Female	71	disable person	10 years	Terni, Umbria region, Italy

## 6.2. Focus Group

Organized in Rome, Casa del Municipio Roma 1, 16th November 2024.

The objective of the Focus Group was to discuss antigypsyism in institutional, social, and cultural contexts and to explore strategies for promoting Roma history and culture in Italy.

The outcome was a set of recommendations aimed at strengthening public policies and fostering inclusive practices.

Participants engaged in a critical assessment of 15 years of activism by Romni APS and the 10-year history of the Roma Women Network Italy (RoWNI). They assessed both barriers and the potential for Roma women's and youth activism through an intersectional lens.

Methodology: The working group, composed of 8 selected participants, operated in a structured and facilitated setting, guided by a discussion framework prepared by the research team. The session lasted 4 hours.

The contributors to the focus group are:

- Laura Berardi, University "G. D'Annunzio" Chieti, Professor of economics and third sector scholar, expert in social accountability of business and non profit entities;
- Maja Bova, lawyer, PhD in International Law, expert in human rights and non-discrimination, consultant with CIDU – Inter-ministry Committee for Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, National Coordinator for UE-CoE JUSTROM program for the access to justice for Roma women;
- Marco Brazzoduro, founder and leader of association Cittadinanza e Minoranza, prominent Roma advocate, professor at Sapienza University in retirement;
- Giulia Di Rocco, Roma activist (Abruzzo Region), lawyer, trainer and politician, co-founder of the first Roma political party Mistipè;
- Giulia Perin, lawyer and legal counsellor, expert in international labor and social rights law and human rights, member of ASGI – Association for legal studies on immigration, lead legal expert for UE-CoE JUSTROM program for the access to justice for Roma women;
- Alessandro Pistecchia, UNAR – Italian National Office against Racial Discrimination – Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for Equal Opportunities, expert in Roma issues;

- Sabina Polidori, INAPP – Italian National Institute for Public Policy Analysis – Civil Economy and Migration Processes Unit, expert in volunteering, third sector, social and solidarity economy and co-design and co-production of public services;
- Concetta Sarachella, Roma activist (Molise Region), youth trainer and coach, fashion stylist and entrepreneur, co-founder of RoWNI – Roma Women Network Italy.

Maja Bova was in charge of steering the focus group work. Maja Bova and Sabina Polidori drafted and shared the report of the proceedings.

### 6.3. Annex 3. Survey

Google Form online – Period: November 2024

Respondents:

Italian questionnaire – in Italian: 49

International questionnaire – in English: 14

The results of the online survey 'Antiziganism in everyday life', conducted in November 2024 during the Romni-RoWNI umbrella initiative, offer a significant insight into the perception and experience of antigypsyism in Italy and abroad. Through 49 responses collected in Italian and 14 in English, a picture emerges of recurring episodes of discrimination and daily microaggressions, often normalised or invisible in public discourse. The responses highlight that antigypsyism manifests itself not only in explicit forms, but also in subtle and systemic attitudes, experienced by both Roma and gagé who actively participate in intercultural contexts. The use of the questionnaire in English made it possible to compare the perceptions of Roma not residing in Italy, outlining some differences but confirming the transnational spread of stereotypes and prejudices. This tool, designed with accessible language and everyday situations, proved useful not only for collecting data but also as a means of stimulating reflection and critical awareness. The questionnaire will therefore be used as a replicable model in future awareness-raising and training initiatives.

Invitation to answer the questionnaire for the research work of JEKHIPE project on antigypsyism in Italy

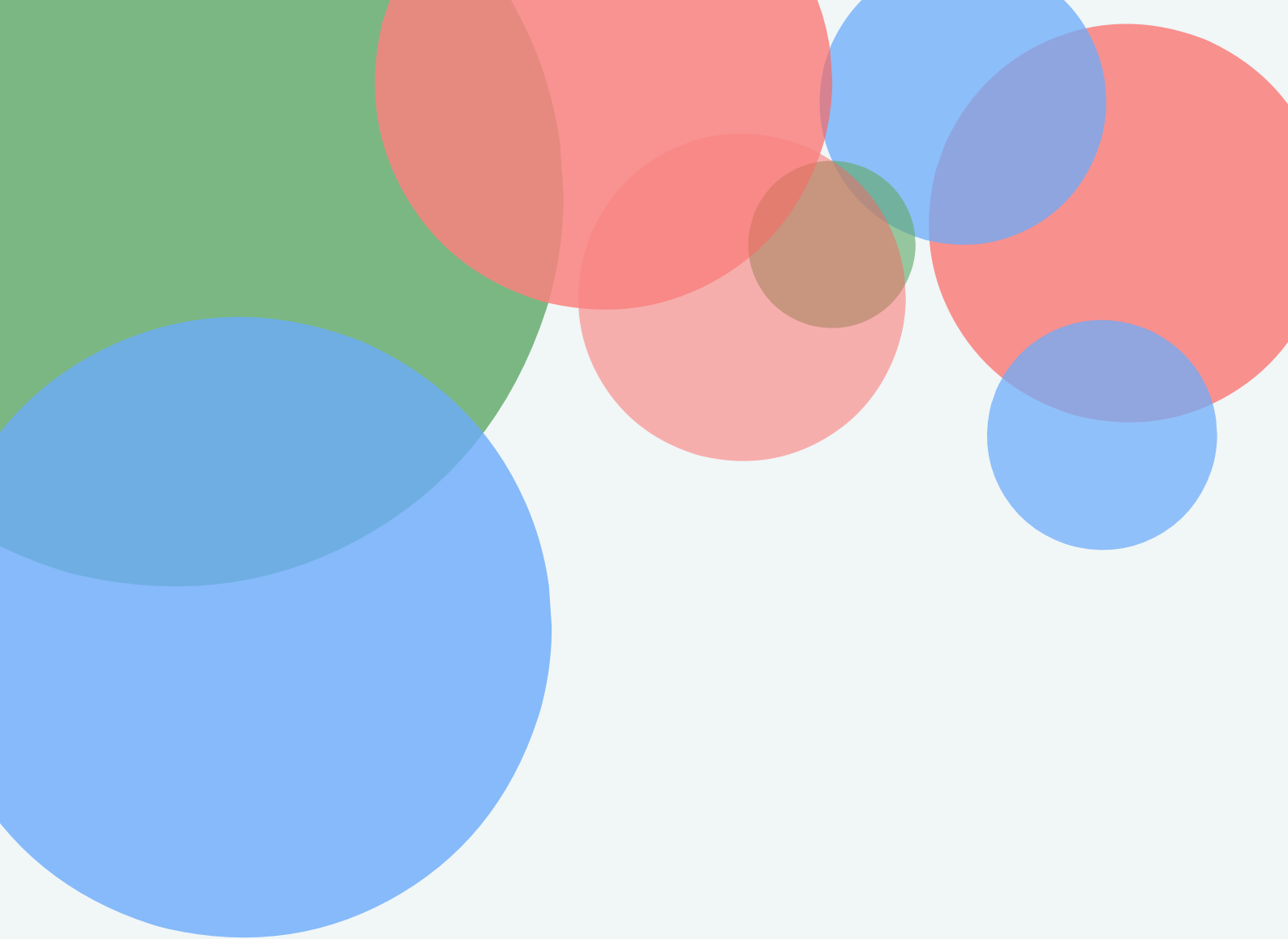


**WE WANT YOU**

**What is the impact of antigypsism on the life of Roma and Siti people?** Let us know what do think about and help ROMNI with its research for JEKHIPE – *Reclaiming our past, rebuilding our future: new approaches to fighting antigypsism.*

  
SCAN ME





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New Approaches to Fighting Antigypsyism

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