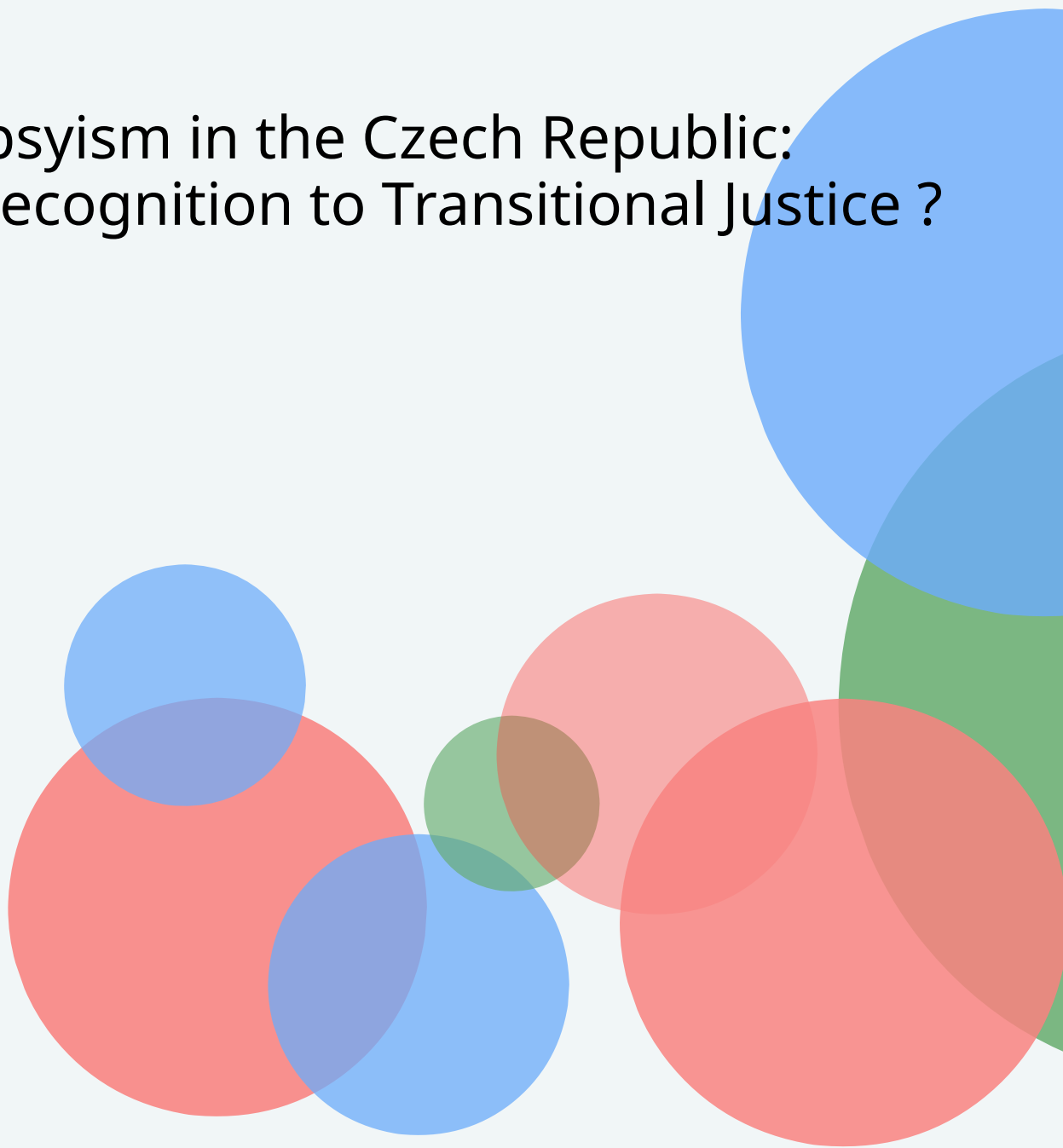


Antigypsyism in the Czech Republic: From Recognition to Transitional Justice ?



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JEKHIPE
RECLAIMING OUR PAST. REBUILDING OUR FUTURE.
NEW APPROACHES TO FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

The JEKHIPE Project

The JEKHIPE project, Reclaiming our past, rebuilding our future: new approaches to fighting antigypsyism against Roma, 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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The JEKHIPE County Briefing has been coordinated by CEPS.



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Executive Summary

This report analyses antigypsyism in the former Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic, tracing its roots from the 19th century to the present day. It explores recent efforts to render antigypsyism socially unacceptable and to integrate its historical context into educational and institutional frameworks in the Czech Republic. Recognising the enduring nature of antigypsyism is central to Roma civil society's advocacy for the legal, political, and structural reforms essential to Roma inclusion, as well as to transitional justice and truth and reconciliation initiatives. The report draws on desk research and qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 10 Roma respondents across generations, ranging from civil society figures to past and present government officials. The interviews centre on respondents' lived experiences of antigypsyism and highlight the deep and pervasive ways in which this form of discrimination affects even the most personal aspects of life. Respondents reflected on the concept of antigypsyism and the extent to which it is understood, or misunderstood, by various stakeholders. Most respondents requested anonymity.

Roma civil society has played a crucial role in driving the limited progress that has been made in acknowledging and combating antigypsyism. However, the Czech Republic lacks a singular, influential body comparable to Germany's Central Council of German Sinti and Roma. Instead, there is a loose network of Roma-run organizations and civil society groups considered 'pro-Roma' which advocate for change. Advocacy for Roma in the country is nowhere near as firmly established as it needs to be and efforts to influence policymaking tend to falter where there is no strong institutional commitment. The relative ethnic homogeneity of the Czech Republic and Roma community's size, no more than 2.5 % of the population, help explain limited Roma political representation. Nevertheless, the continued presence and resilience of Roma civil society is impressive, even as substantive policy gains remain limited.

The key findings of the present research are as follows:

- Pervasiveness of Antigypsyism: Antigypsyism has been a constant feature of Czech society across all historical periods, from the country's independence as a parliamentary democracy in the early 20th century through to the present, leading to institutional social exclusion, persistent stereotypes, stigmatisation, and targeted violence against Roma.
- Holocaust Remembrance: While the Czech state has begun commemorating the Roma victims of the Holocaust, foreign investment continues to be the primary source for remembrance efforts. This reliance delays meaningful domestic public education on this chapter of history.

- Forced Sterilisation: The issue of the forced sterilisation of Roma women, beginning under communist rule and continuing into the post-communist era, remains largely absent from public discourse, despite the recent introduction of a compensation scheme.
- Violence and Emigration: Fatal far-right violence targeting the Roma has yet to be fully recognized as a push factor in Roma emigration and social exclusion.
- Policy Philosophy Divide: A fundamental divide persists in state policy approaches (beginning during the communist era) between those who advocate a 'colour-blind' approach to addressing social exclusion and those insisting that policy on reducing social exclusion should involve Roma in its design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation to be effective.
- Educational Segregation: Ethnic segregation in Czech schools remains entrenched. Political reluctance to support desegregation stems from fears of voter backlash.
- Antigypsyist Rhetoric in Politics: Antigypsyism has featured in every democratic election in the Czech Republic to date, contributing significantly to the ongoing lack of Roma political representation.
- Ethnic Data Collection: Widespread misunderstanding about the protection of personal and sensitive information means many officials believe it is impossible to generate anonymized data that can be disaggregated by ethnicity. However, the recent piloting of such data collection by the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA) show potential and should be expanded.
- Lack of Historical Acknowledgment: Past injustices against Roma are not yet fully acknowledged, recognized, or redressed, hindering a shared historical understanding between Roma and non-Roma in the Czech Republic.
- Persistent Discrimination: Discrimination continues to block Roma access to socioeconomic rights, with insufficient efforts for equal opportunities underway.
- Data Deficiencies: Roma-related data remains scarce and there is no effective monitoring system in place to track trends across policy areas.

- Insufficient Institutional Support: Civil society and the institutional structures tasked with furthering inclusion of the Roma lack the funding and support to drive meaningful change.
- Weak Legal Protections: Current legal measures are ineffective with regard to combating discrimination, hate crime, hate speech, and violence involving or targeting Roma.
- Absence of Transitional Justice: Transitional justice or truth and reconciliation processes regarding human rights abuses motivated by antigypsyism do not exist.
- Gaps in Public Awareness and Education: Awareness-raising initiatives to combat antigypsyism are underfunded and underdeveloped. The lack of systematic incorporation of Roma-related topics in curricula means educators have yet to fully engage with or implement inclusive educational practices.

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Introduction and Note on Methodology

This report examines the persistence and impact of antigypsyism in the Czech Republic, past and present, and assesses the limitations of policy efforts aimed at rendering such attitudes socially unacceptable. It draws on a literature review, legal analysis, and both qualitative and quantitative data on Roma socioeconomic status and their access to justice. Ten structured, individual interviews were conducted with Roma respondents of varying ages, genders, and regional backgrounds, including civil society leaders and current and former government officials. Most requested anonymity. Respondents were asked about their personal experiences of antigypsyism and how they believe this concept is reflected in different aspects of policy, as detailed in Appendix 1. The findings are summarized in the report, which concludes with recommendations for further action within the Czech Republic and at the international level.

The report is structured chronologically to underscore that antigypsyism has remained a constant across numerous political regimes throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. It begins with the former Czechoslovakia (1918-1939, 1945-1989, 1989-1993), discusses interwar laws targeting those termed ‘gypsies’, the impact of the Holocaust, and the transition to communist rule. Special attention is given to the policy of forced sterilisation of Roma women, which began in the 1960s and led to the state instituting a compensation process that ran from 2022 through 2024. After discussing the 1989 democratic transition, there is a review of the policies on Roma adopted after the democratic transition until 2004, many of which were influenced by the accession procedure to the European Union that year.

The report details ongoing antigypsyist practices, including mass and ultra-right violence from the 1990s onward, and institutional discrimination in the education system. These include the practice of the ethnic segregation of Roma children upon enrolment into compulsory education, their misclassification as having cognitive disabilities, their subsequent undereducation, and the long-standing failure to provide equal educational opportunities. The development of ethnic segregation on the housing market, whereby Roma are disproportionately resident in the ‘socially excluded localities’ after 1989, as well as their disproportionate housing deprivation, are also reviewed. The report also examines Roma experiences within the justice system, including allegations of systemic bias and disproportionate incarceration.

Contemporary phenomena, such as the role played by the Internet and social media in spreading antigypsyist disinformation and hate speech, are addressed. The issue of how data on ethnicity can be anonymously collected safely so as to measure the impact of policies on different groups in the population is discussed. A recent method piloted by the Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs is highlighted

as an important step in producing representative data on the socioeconomic status of Roma in the Czech Republic.

Attention is also given to Roma civil society, the 25-year absence of elected Roma officials from the national legislature, and how antigypsyist tropes affect the image of the Roma in the media and public discourse. Antigypsyist rhetoric is routinely exploited in elections at every level of government, shaping the environment in which Roma candidates must operate.

The report then assesses current efforts and policies aimed at addressing antigypsyism and their results to date. These include recent progress in recognizing and commemorating the Roma and Sinti victims of the Holocaust, as well as a review of international efforts to support survivors. Other initiatives covered include advisory mechanisms to the Government and the creation of the Agency for Social Inclusion. The most recent such mechanism is the office of the Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs. Under the Commissioner's leadership, antigypsyism has been formally acknowledged in a non-binding definition adopted by the Senate Committee on Human Rights, three subcommittees of the Chamber of Deputies, and the Government itself, which endorsed the definition unanimously on International Romani Day (8 April). While such gestures do not have the force of law, they are explicit acknowledgments by key members of two branches of government that antigypsyism is a concrete and urgent societal issue. The report also briefly addresses the European Union's infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic's continued violation of the Race Equality Directive, specifically concerning the persistent ethnic segregation of Romani children in education.

Before presenting its final conclusions and recommendations, covering developments through April 2025, the report discusses transitional justice in the Czech context and what the prospects are for undertaking such processes with regard to antigypsyism.

1. Antigypsyism from the former Czechoslovakia to the Czech Republic

Roma, Sinti, and related groups in the Czech lands were historically targeted by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its subsidiary monarchies. These regimes permitted the killing of 'gypsies' with impunity, imposed corporal punishments for their presence, and initially forbade them from settling; only to later enforce mandatory settlement and assimilation.¹

Czech-language orientalist literature from the 19th century contributed to contemporary antigypsyism beginning with *Otto's Educational Dictionary*, the first encyclopaedia to feature entries in both Czech and German. The entry for *Cikáni* ('Gypsies') presents, as alleged 'facts,' a list of traits deemed inherently incompatible with those attributed to 'natives,' 'Europeans,' or 'Westerners'² These include so-called 'nomadism', contempt for 'settled' life, an absence of foresight or civic responsibility, superstition, immorality, dishonesty, aversion to labour, and a general lack of piety. These features were all grouped under the label of being 'uncivilized'³.

Such depictions were framed as objective 'fact', built on centuries of cultural production (art, literature, and folklore) that both demonized and romanticized 'gypsies'.⁴ Some of the most renowned 20th century Czech writers of the 20th century made contributed to these tropes by exoticizing and sexualizing Roma women and girls⁵. Roma have frequently been cast as the antithesis of the 'European' or 'white' identity and placed metaphorically outside of historical time⁶. These perceptions remain embedded in public attitudes today⁷.

¹ Vera Sokolova, *Cultural Politics of Ethnicity: Discourses on Roma in Communist Czechoslovakia*, ibidem-Verlag, Stuttgart (2008), p. 53.

² J. Otto *Ottův slovník naučný* 5, Praha (1892), pp. pp. 365-366, available at: <https://ndk.cz/view/uuid:f9297320-e6e5-11e4-a794-5ef3fc9bb22f?page=uuid:885a6a80-07da-11e5-8ce5-005056825209&fulltext=cik%C3%A1ni>, accessed 29 January 2024.

³ Sokolova, p. 109.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 33-34, 106. The author recounts how the letters of the preeminent novelist of the Czech National Revival, Božena Němcová, who was otherwise not given to sentimental portrayals of the peasantry, expressed envy of what she imagined the Roma ('gypsy') lifestyle to be, supposedly full of 'bliss' at being constantly outdoors, p. 107.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 112-113, discussing Karel Čapek's novel *Ordinary Life* (1935).

⁶ Ibid, p. 104.

⁷ In January 2025, local politician Alena Pataky was forced to resign after saying in an interview that 'The mentality of the Roma has not changed since the 13th century because of their absolutely different equipment, genetically speaking.' ČTK, Zdeněk Ryšavý, Gwendolyn Albert, Romea.cz, 'CONFIRMED: Czech vice-mayor resigns over antigypsyist remarks', 6 January 2025, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-vice-mayor-reportedly-resigns-over-antigypsyist-remarks-but-the-announcement-is-not-yet-official>, accessed 29 January 2025. This remark is reminiscent of the claims of Nováček (1968) regarding the allegedly uniform 'mentality' of 'gypsies' cited in Sokolova (2008), p.129.

Recent scholarship has challenged such narratives. Research shows that life on the road in what became Czechoslovakia in the early 20th century was neither 'aimless' nor random, but structured around travel to and from recognised home bases⁸. Sokolova observes, 'People are fixed in positions and situations that presumably reflect their cultural identity, but often only represent their strategy for survival'⁹.

Despite systemic marginalisation, some Roma in Czechoslovakia accessed higher education by the 20th century. Tomáš Holomek (1911-1988) moved from a stigmatised Roma settlement to Svatobořice in 1917, became one of the first Roma graduates of Charles University's law faculty. He later joined the Communist Party, held elected office, and co-founded the country's first officially-recognized Roma organization¹⁰.

1.1. Interwar antigypsyist legislation

In 1918, following the end of the First World War, Czechoslovakia declared independence and adopted a parliamentary democratic system. Antigypsyism, however, remained unchanged. Eugenic discourse was pivotal to interwar state-building, with an emphasis on restoring the 'physical health' of the nation. Donert highlights how new national borders led to intensified surveillance of 'people on the move' and the rise of statelessness as a mass phenomenon in Europe. She further notes that 'pressure from the public' spurred Czechoslovak officials to develop new methods for addressing what was then referred to as the 'gypsy question'¹¹.

On 14 July 1927, the Act on Wandering Gypsies was passed, replacing previous imperial Austrian regulations. The law allowed police to maintain local registries of 'gypsies' and required every 'traveling gypsy' aged 14 and older to carry an identification passbook detailing their personal data, physical description, and fingerprints, subject to inspection 'on demand'¹². The law regulated 'gypsy identification' and nomadic trade licenses, significantly restricting freedom of movement. Signs barring entry to 'wandering gypsies and vagrants' became common. The same methods of surveillance and restriction would later be

⁸ Markéta Hajská, *The Stojka family: Spatial mobility and territorial anchoredness of Lovara Vlach Roms in the former Czechoslovakia*, Karolinum (2024).

⁹ Sokolova, p. 38.

¹⁰ Tomáš Holomek, Wikipedia, available at https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom%C3%A1%C5%A1_Holomek, accessed 29 January 2025; Jana Horváthová a kol., *...to jsou těžké vzpomínky*, Museum romské kultury (2021), pp. 39-40.

¹¹ Donert, Celia, *The Rights of the Roma* (Cambridge 2017), pp. 18, 21-22, 26.

¹² Zákon ze 14.VII.1927 č. 117 Sb. o potulných cikánech. See Pape (1997), p. 25; Donert, p. 22; Sokolova, p. 83.

repurposed for the genocide of Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust and again postwar to support their forced assimilation and geographic redistribution.

Between 1918-1938, Czechoslovakia was the only Central European country to remain a parliamentary democracy. By contrast, Nazi Germany, under Hitler, annexed Austria in 1938 and began an undeclared war against Czechoslovakia, seizing border areas of Bohemia, Moravia, and Czech Silesia and expelling non-Germans. In October 1938, Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia formed autonomous governments. That same month, the Czechoslovak president resigned and formed a government-in-exile in London. In November, the country ceded one-third of Slovak territory to Hungary. This period marked the short-lived Second Republic (October 1938 – March 1939), during which Czechoslovakia enacted several measures that laid the groundwork for Nazi persecution of Roma and Sinti¹³.

In March 1939, Slovakia declared independence and became a client state of Nazi Germany, while the remaining Czech territories were transformed into the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia under German control. Fearing persecution, Roma and Sinti fled to neighbouring territories, including to the Slovak State¹⁴. At this point, 'Czechoslovakia' survived only in the minds of the exile government, Czechoslovak Allied troops, and the domestic resistance movement; until the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945.

1.2. Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

Even before Hitler's rise to power, European police forces were coordinating efforts to monitor 'gypsies', whom they increasingly identified as a distinct class of mobile criminals. Donert notes that 'gypsies' were categorised based on lifestyle¹⁵. In 1932, an international police conference in Rome agreed to establish a central office in Vienna for the 'elimination of gypsyhood'. Such actions normalized the idea of 'gypsies' as 'asocial', and when they were later targeted during the Holocaust, there was little to no public outcry. As Donert observes, Nazi persecution of 'gypsies' drew on longstanding exclusionary traditions that long predated Nazism¹⁶.

Under Nazi Germany, the 1936 Nuremberg Race Laws designated 'gypsies' and Jews as 'subhuman'. The Research Institute for Racial Hygiene analysed 'gypsies'

¹³ Markus Pape, *A Nikdo Vám Nebude Věřit...*, GplusG (1997), p. 26.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 29.

¹⁵ Donert, pp. 23-24. This report does not cover the treatment of Roma in Slovakia during the Second World War.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 15.

according to racial criteria¹⁷. A 1937 decree on 'crime prevention' included 'gypsies, gypsy half-breeds, and persons travelling in the gypsy way' as among the 'asocials' allegedly responsible for crime. In 1938, mass internments of such individuals began in Nazi Germany. At the end of that year, SS¹⁸ leader Heinrich Himmler issued a directive on 'eliminating the gypsy nuisance from a racial perspective', tasking the Reich Centre for the Elimination of Gypsyhood with registering all 'gypsies and gypsy half-breeds'.

In 1938, the Czecho-Slovak Government sent a delegation to Germany to study labour camps. On 6 February 1939, Prime Minister Beran instructed the Ministries of Defence and Public Works Ministry to establish labour camps for 'gypsy families and other wandering persons'. A front-page article on 25 February 1939 reported that 'all gypsy tribes' had already been registered in 1937-38.

After the Protectorate was established in March 1939, General Ježek of the Czech Gendarmerie became Interior Minister. In November, his ministry ordered itinerant people to settle by January 1940 or be sent to penal labour camps. A February 1940 decree required municipalities to assist these people, though some claimed itinerants had no domicile rights¹⁹. Confusion persisted into 1941 regarding whether settled 'gypsies' or those with jobs should still be issued 'gypsy identification'; provincial authorities confirmed they should²⁰.

By 1939, the Nazis had ordered the registration of 'gypsies, gypsy half-breeds, and persons traveling in the gypsy way' aged six and above, prohibiting their freedom of movement. In 1940, Criminal Police in western Germany received orders to deport 2,500 'gypsies' to occupied Poland, first for forced labour, then to extermination camps. This became the model for persecution in the Protectorate²¹.

Two penal labour camps were established in 1940, one in Bohemia (Lety) and one in Moravia (Hodonín), to which adult men of any ethnicity could be sentenced for three months²². Lety will be examined in detail, though similar processes occurred in Hodonín.

¹⁷ Holocaust Encyclopedia, 'The Nuremberg Race Laws', available at <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nuremberg-race-laws>, accessed 29 January 2025; Pape, pp. 20-21; Donert, p. 29.

¹⁸ A paramilitary organization under Hitler that spread throughout occupied Europe during the Second World War.

¹⁹ Pape, pp. 21-29, 95.

²⁰ Horváthová a kol., '...to jsou těžké vzpomínky', Muzeum romské kultury (2021), pp. 239-241.

²¹ Pape, p. 22.

²² Ibid, p. 27.

The Protectorate administered both the penal labour camps (1940-1942) and the 'Gypsy Camps' (1942-1943). Ježek founded the Lety penal labour camp on 15 July 1940; the first 12 prisoners arrived on 17 July. Prisoner No. 1, Martin Čermák, a horse breeder from Prague, was arrested at home and had next to his name a capital 'C' for *Cikán* in red, marking him as Roma. Not all inmates were similarly labelled. On 10 August 1940, the ministry issued instructions defining who these penal labour camps were for and mentioning 'traveling gypsies' as a target group; in 1941, Ježek told the camp commanders the inmates were an 'ulcer' on society, that he believed they should be imprisoned for life (at this juncture there were still time limits on their incarceration), and that they had no civil rights there²³.

Postwar testimony from guards revealed brutal conditions: undernourishment (due to stolen rations), excessive labour, lack of medical care, and frequent injuries. Inmates resorted to self-harm requiring hospitalization and inmates who tried to escape got corporal punishment. In his 1941 report, camp administrator Janovský listed 537 inmates of whom 463 were first-time offenders; 25 of the 27 inmates who escaped were apprehended and only 45 were officially recorded as 'gypsies'²⁴.

Germany's 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union escalated its policies into genocide, with mass shootings and deportations of Roma and Sinti throughout Nazi-occupied Europe²⁵.

In January 1942, authorities discussed transforming the penal labour camps into concentration camps. On 9 March 1942, the Protectorate adopted Edict 89 on 'crime prevention', defining 'preventive police custody' for 'habitual or professional criminals' as well as 'gypsies and persons living in the gypsy way'. Part Four of this edict said: 'Gypsies and persons wandering in the gypsy way are forbidden to leave the places to which they are officially assigned without the permission of Criminal Police headquarters'²⁶.

Janovský later testified that '...the [Lety] camp was originally intended for ex-convicts and persons dangerous to public order and peace. Later it was transformed into a Gypsy Camp. I had no influence over that'. The Criminal Police oversaw the 'Gypsy Camps', namely, František Kuchař and Josef Mareš, a police expert on 'the gypsy question' who was fluent in the Romani language and had published articles in police periodicals with titles such as 'Gypsies Have To Work'²⁷.

²³ Pape, pp. 34-36, 100-101, 131.

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 37-43.

²⁵ Donert, p. 28.

²⁶ Pape, pp. 43-46.

²⁷ Ibid.

On 24 June 1942, Protectorate Interior Minister Bienert ordered the registration of all 'inadaptable gypsies' and persons living like them for incarceration in the 'Gypsy Camps', while General Commander Böhme of the Plainclothes Police issued 'guidelines for eliminating the gypsy nuisance' ordering their concentration there²⁸. Before the camps became facilities for 'gypsies' only, the 'asocial', non-'gypsy' prisoners were deported to Auschwitz II-Birkenau or sent to a penitentiary in Prague to make room for the new inmates; only a few dozen ostensibly 'gypsy' prisoners would be inmates during both phases²⁹.

Today these camps are understood to have been concentration camps. Police warned those targeted that from 0:00 on 1 August to 24:00 on 3 August 1942 they were forbidden to travel; those who could not prove they had 'full-time, productive' work and those 'living in the gypsy way' were sent to the 'Gypsy Camps'. About one-third of the 6,500 Roma in the Protectorate were affected.³⁰ From the start, inmates tried to escape—some joined the resistance—but were deported to Auschwitz if caught. Others were sent directly to other Nazi camps without passing through the 'Gypsy Camps'³¹.

On 27 August 1942, Janovský issued new intake rules: heads shaved for lice, property confiscated and (allegedly) worthless items destroyed; men were issued uniforms, while children and women were kept in civilian clothes; everybody had to work; inmates were forbidden correspondence or visits; and burials could not be attended by relatives³².

According to postwar testimony, Janovský insisted on being greeted with the Nazi salute by the Czech guards; he issued a standing order to shoot any inmate who disobeyed, resisted, or tried to escape; and he beat inmates himself. Captured escapees were strung up for hours by their wrists with their arms raised behind them so that just the tips of their toes touched the ground; this public torture happened where roll call was taken each morning.

²⁸ Pape, pp. 47, 96.

²⁹ Ibid. Most of the approximately 17 000 children, men and women who died in the 18 months during which the 'Gypsy Family Camp' at Auschwitz was in operation died of disease, exhaustion, guards assaulting them, or medical experiments before the last remaining 4 300 inmates were gassed to death; see Donert, pp. 33-34.

³⁰ Pape, p. 52; Ctibor Nečas, *Českoslovenští Romové v letech 1938-45*, Brno: Masarykova univerzita (1995).

³¹ Josef Serinek and Jan Tesář, *Česká cikánská rapsodie, Triáda* (2016).

³² Pape pp. 56-59. The oral history of one female Lety survivor describes how the women wore headscarves wrapped around their heads 'like turbans' despite the inconvenience because they did not want to be seen with short hair, see Horváthová a kol., p. 520.

After a typhus outbreak, provincial authorities informed police in January 1943 that the camp and its environs were quarantined; burials in the cemetery in the nearby village of Mirovice stopped and a burial ground was designated in the forest near the camp. After most inmates had been deported to Auschwitz, the final 20 had to disinfect the fixtures and food supplies, set the wooden buildings on fire, clear the grounds, and sprinkle them with lime chloride. The inventory in June 1943 found items unaccounted for, such as a personal vehicle, a truck, and a flag of the German Reich.

The 'Gypsy Camp' in Lety closed on 6 August 1943. Despite reports that food went unused due to offsite work, malnutrition was cited as the main cause of the high death rate. The official death toll was 327 people, mostly children.

The slow deaths at Lety remained hidden until January 1943. Despite knowing of the conditions, police sent inmates there through the end of 1942. The Protectorate Interior Ministry tolerated this, despite receiving accurate reports from an official named Letov³³.

Both Lety and Hodonín had high inmate mortality due to overcrowding and starvation and were closed in 1943 after typhoid erupted in both; surviving prisoners were transported to Auschwitz³⁴. Of the 6,500 Roma in the Protectorate, only 300 remained free; most of the rest were murdered. At least 2,645 Protectorate Roma were murdered in Auschwitz II-Birkenau alone. Unknown numbers were labelled 'asocial' and perished in camps such as Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Ravensbrück. The number of Sinti and Roma sent straight to the concentration camps from the border regions of Czechoslovakia during the occupation has yet to be determined. Only 583 Roma concentration camp prisoners returned to postwar Czechoslovakia³⁵. The genocide of the Roma and Sinti in the Protectorate was, therefore, one of the most successful perpetrated by the Nazis and local collaborators, who exceeded expectations when it came to the 'Gypsy Camps' in the Protectorate.

Friedrich Sowa of the German Criminal Police in Prague was later charged with complicity in the deaths of Roma and Sinti murdered in Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Arrested on 28 December 1946 in Germany and extradited to Czechoslovakia, he admitted to supporting Nazism before an Extraordinary People's Tribunal that indicted him for 'causing the death of thousands of gypsies'³⁶. The Czechoslovak Interior Ministry report on his trial noted that 'gypsy' survivors of Auschwitz testified

³³ Pape, pp. 60-91.

³⁴ Horváthová a kol. notes that the rise in the illness rate from August 1942 to March 1943 was even charted as a graph for the Hodonín camp in official material also prepared by Letov, p. 280.

³⁵ Nečas, C. (1999), *Holocaust českých Romů*, Prostor, Praha, p. 173.

³⁶ Pape, pp. 108-109.

against him. Sowa said the Reich Criminal Police Bureau in Berlin ordered the 1943 registration of 'wandering gypsies and gypsy half-breeds' in the Protectorate for transport to Auschwitz so they could be put to work and prevented from perpetrating crimes, which the head of the security forces in Prague ordered should be done not by German officers, but by Czech ones. He also testified that the full deportation of 'gypsies' from the Protectorate was not 'achieved' until 1944, calling it 'desired by the Czech population, primarily in rural areas, for understandable reasons'. His testimony did not mention morbidity and mortality in the 'Gypsy Camps'. He was convicted on 3 May 1947 and sentenced to 10 years in a maximum-security prison. He was released early, deemed to have been acting on orders resulting in 'about 2,000 professional and habitual criminals being sent to...Auschwitz'. He was then deported to Germany³⁷.

Lety was investigated by commissions to purge public employees. Janovský was arrested on 20 September 1945. On 18 October, he was charged with crimes under the Decree on Retribution no. 16: false imprisonment and battery; forcing labour for the German war machine; incitement to false imprisonment and battery; and enrichment through exploiting others' distress on the basis of their nationality, politics, or race. In late December he was released; his trial took more than three years. An Extraordinary People's Tribunal ignored his active support for the Nazi regime and mismanagement of prisoners' food for his own gain, relied exclusively on witnesses in his favour, and acquitted him on 9 September 1948. Not all of the former guards who wanted to testify against him were allowed to do so.

The only Czech gendarme convicted of crimes at Lety was Josef Luňáček, Janovský's aide. A 'commission to purge public employees' charged him in 1946 with hostile behaviour toward his colleagues and abusing the inmates. He was found guilty on 10 January 1947 of 'professional collaboration with a Czech traitor [Janovský]'.

August Lyss, the inspector identified by Janovský as the official in charge and therefore responsible for the Lety prisoners' deaths, was never charged. However, Jiří Letov, the Interior Minister official who reported accurately on what was happening and ran risks to save the Lety prisoners, was arrested in 1945 and charged with being co-responsible for their inhumane living conditions; he was released in 1946 and acquitted in 1948³⁸.

³⁷ Donert, p. 44.

³⁸ Pape, pp. 98-110.

1.3. Postwar antigypsyist legislation and events until the 1989 democratic transition

Czechoslovakia was revived in April 1945 and officially prohibited discrimination on racial or religious grounds. However, the equality of its citizens depended mainly on their labour contributions rather than their inherent humanity³⁹.

In Bohemia, the ban on discrimination was evidently not understood to apply to 'gypsies'. In December 1945 the Prague Regional National Committee⁴⁰ called for the abolition of alleged 'gypsy wandering', echoing the rhetoric of Nazi Germany's ban on 'gypsies' entering resorts and other towns⁴¹.

Immediate postwar justice was framed as requiring a 'national cleansing' to purge the country of perceived aliens. By the end of 1945, approximately 700,000 ethnic Germans were expelled from the border areas. In 1946 and 1947, more than 2.5 million more were expelled. During this same period (1945-7), tens of thousands of Roma, mostly from Slovakia, moved to the now-empty borderlands alongside millions of Czechs, Slovaks, Volhynians, and others moving west⁴².

1.3.1. The communist coup

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) won the 1946 elections with 38 % of the vote and its leader, Klement Gottwald, became premier. In 1947, Stalin summoned him to Moscow, after which the KSČ launched a coup d'état in 1948, starting 40 years of totalitarian communist dictatorship in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSR). Mass media, popular culture, and the visual arts became subject to censorship, central planning, and ideological indoctrination, including propaganda about who the Roma – or in the parlance of the time, 'our gypsies' – were. Eugenic thought continued to influence policy⁴³.

In 1946 and 1947 a three-tiered concentration camp system for 'gypsies' was proposed, but in April 1947 the Government rejected it as racially discriminatory. That summer, the police announced they would resume registering 'nomadic gypsies', even as memories of the Nazi registrations remained fresh. Sokolova has analysed how Czechoslovak communist discourse about 'gypsies' exploited

³⁹ Sokolova, p. 70; Donert, p. 49.

⁴⁰ In this context, a National Committee (národní výbor) was a municipal, provincial, or regional branch of the state administration of Czechoslovakia starting in 1945.

⁴¹ Sokolova, p. 73.

⁴² Ibid, p. 66; Donert, pp. 35-37.

⁴³ This persisted despite the closure of the Czech Eugenics Society in 1952. Sokolova, pp. 120, 122; Donert pp.168-169.

contemporary anxieties about 'degeneracy', casting Roma as deviants lacking genuine ethnicity or nationality⁴⁴.

In 1949, the Ministry of Labour unsuccessfully proposed establishing 'special labour camps' for 'nomadic and work-shy' persons. ČSR policy on Roma required their assimilation into the proletariat. In 1950, authorities studying 'gypsy' employment reported that some respondents, described as 'more advanced', refused to identify themselves as 'gypsies'; while authorities saw this as proof of their assimilation, it may have been a protest against the term⁴⁵.

In 1952, the government issued a decree on 'Adjusting the Conditions of Persons of Gypsy Origin', marking a shift from repression to efforts to 'enlighten' (i.e., indoctrinate) such persons. Officials were instructed to inform them that 'they are citizens whom the bourgeois regime did not give a chance to become useful and proper members of human civilization [...], but whom we all today want to help to do so'. However, experts advising the Government objected to proposals that the Romani language be used for such education, or that literary or written Romani should be developed⁴⁶.

1.3.2. The 1958 Act on the Permanent Settlement of Nomadic Persons

In 1956, the USSR banned 'nomadism'. In 1957, Czechoslovak security officials warned that ignoring complaints of alleged 'gypsy crime' could lead to popular violence, and consensus was reached that 'nomadism and vagrancy' should be banned. The country became the first Soviet satellite to issue a secret decree on 'Work Amongst the Gypsy Population' in 1958, followed by the Act on the Permanent Settlement of Nomadic Persons, which referred not to ethnicity, but to the 'mobile part of Czechoslovak society'⁴⁷.

Donert notes that complaints from local non-Roma probably had as much influence on the secret decree as Soviet policy, while Sokolova notes that the lack of ethnic terminology in the new law has been interpreted by some as proof of the regime's allegedly 'good intentions' toward the Roma. The Communist Party of Slovakia began lobbying for the 'organized' resettlement of Roma from Slovakia to the Czech lands;

⁴⁴ Sokolova, pp. 80-81, 209; Donert, p. 40.

⁴⁵ Donert, p. 64; Sokolova, p. 86

⁴⁶ Sokolova, pp. 65, 87-88; Donert, p. 150.

⁴⁷ Donert, pp. 123-124; Sokolova, p. 94; France and West Germany also maintained registers of 'nomads' or 'nomadic Gypsies' into the 1960s, see Donert, p. 117.

officials from Bohemian and Moravian municipalities visited Slovakia to select suitable Roma families for relocation⁴⁸.

In 1958, fewer than 10 % of Roma lived on the road, yet the law affected settled Roma as well. Its implementing regulations defined 'nomadism' to include not only vehicle-based movement but also walking. Reviving earlier practices, those targeted were registered over three days in February 1959. Their property was confiscated without remuneration (including horses, which were slaughtered), and their identification passbooks were stamped to indicate the area beyond which they could not travel. Police were on alert during the registration, and security services in Hungary and Poland were asked to pay special attention at their borders with the ČSR. Ideologues framed the law as 'assistance', but Roma compared the registration to fascist-era practices⁴⁹.

'Nomadism' was defined vaguely. Those targeted had to report to local police wherever they went. Although local authorities were supposed to assist them, this rarely happened. Most were confined to their registered municipalities, limiting employment opportunities. Non-compliance could result in imprisonment. Combined with the Roma labour migration from Slovakia to the Czech lands (both officially organized and informal) the 1958 law became the centrepiece of a policy of forced assimilation and geographic dispersal⁵⁰.

At the time, some Roma intellectuals and their non-Roma allies began arguing that the Roma issue should be treated as a 'nationality question'. They contended that raising Roma national consciousness was essential, as it was non-Roma denial of Roma nationhood that prevented integration. This view did not prevail, including among the Roma elite themselves. In the 1950s, the party followed the recommendations of experts that 'cultural differences between [the] Czechoslovak and [the] gypsy populations rest on the shortcomings in employment, health, education, housing, and hygiene [of the 'gypsies']'⁵¹.

'Committees for Work among the Gypsy Population' were established in the 1960s, mostly staffed by non-Roma. Roma party members who sought to join these committees had to defend themselves against charges of disloyal Roma nationalism. A 'Government Committee for the Gypsy Population' introduced a new administrative category dividing 'Gypsies' into three groups based on 'objective'

⁴⁸ Sokolova, p. 95; Donert, pp. 121, 159-160.

⁴⁹ Donert, pp. 96-133.

⁵⁰ Sokolova, p. 139

⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 91- 93.

indicators of their 'adaptability'. 'Gypsies' were the only group in national crime statistics with their own dedicated section⁵².

Roma members of the military or the party were considered proof that assimilation was the answer to the 'gypsy question'. Debates over whether policy should target antigypsyism or Roma 'underachievement' continue into the 21st century (see Section 3.4).

1.3.3. The Union of Gypsies-Roma (1968-1973)

One ally of Roma empowerment was Dr. Milena Hübschmannová (1933-2005). In 1968-69, she helped Roma intellectuals officially establish the Union of Gypsies-Roma, with a Czech and a Slovak branch, each with its own periodical (*Romano Lil* in the Czech Republic and *Romani Pajtrin* in Slovakia)⁵³.

While allowing 'Gypsies-Roma' to manage the organization was seen as progressive, the KSČ framed it not as ethnic representation, but as a 'cultural'(perhaps civilizing) project⁵⁴. The Union was part of the National Front, the party's 'right hand' organization ensuring ideological conformity. At the first convention of the Czech branch in 1969, Roma leaders demonstrated alignment with official policy. Chairman Miroslav Holomek described Roma as a 'social group' hoping 'to fulfil the progressive program of socialism.' Delegate Rudolf Jedla complained his fellow Roma were 'unable or unwilling to assimilate'. Donert notes the leaders were ideologically 'the offspring of Gottwald', the hardline Stalinist leader of the KSČ until 1953⁵⁵.

The Union's activities, including its publications, public speeches by educated Roma, and perceived integration, were 'shocking' to many non-Roma. Its propaganda value was clear from news reports praising it for 'fulfilling the goals of socialism to achieve a more just world'⁵⁶.

The Union signalled the beginning of a Roma 'cultural revival'. In 1970, it received approval to run cooperative 'gypsy units' to employ Roma, making it possible for Roma intelligentsia to supply Roma contract workers to industry and produce their own goods. Starting with 27 full-time staff, the Czech branch requested funding to increase that number to 40 and received approval from the National Front, only to have the state allocate it less than a third of the previous budget, with the Slovak

⁵² Donert, pp. 154-158.

⁵³ Sokolova, pp.133, 135.

⁵⁴ Intellectuals who founded the Czech branch of the Union in Brno were all from the two main Romani families which dominated the upper class of the Roma community there. Ibid, p. 144.

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp. 142-150; Donert p. 181.

⁵⁶ Sokolova, pp. 152, 161, 164.

branch receiving similar treatment. Some scholars argue the party was aware such cuts would create problems⁵⁷.

After accusations that Union management was living 'above standards', an audit was ordered and the leadership fought for their reputations. The audit recommended closing the 'gypsy units' for alleged financial mismanagement; reportedly, the accounting technique used ignored assets generated by the Union itself, and the Liquidation Commission eventually found the Union was solvent. However, it also found the Union and its 'gypsy units' had 'not respected the socialist legal order', and dissolved them⁵⁸.

1.3.4. The Prague Spring, the Warsaw Pact invasion, and normalization

The 'Prague Spring' (1963-1968) saw the lifting of censorship and a surge in open political discussion. Cultural output revealing the reality of communist life boomed; however, even widely praised works often included antigypsyist elements. Journalists reported on Roma in rural eastern Slovakia in terms of 'blacks' and 'whites', alluding to similarities with the racially-segregated American South that was so justifiably pilloried by communist propaganda⁵⁹.

The 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion abruptly ended this brief liberalisation. Roma intellectuals publicly likened the occupation to the Nazi invasion⁶⁰.

A reactionary 'normalization' period followed, purging thousands of bureaucrats, intellectuals, party functionaries, and scholars. The dissolution of the Union of Gypsies-Roma in 1973 epitomized this rollback. Scholars allied with the Union lost their positions for their 'outspoken criticism' of official policies on Roma. During this period, 'social curators' were introduced to oversee Roma assimilation, wielding such power that one of the first demands made by Roma after the 1989 transition was to abolish the role⁶¹.

In 1977, the dissident, pro-democracy, pro-human rights organization Charter 77 circulated its samizdat critiques. In 1978, its 'Document 23' on 'Gypsies-Roma' raised alarm over Roma women being sterilised under questionable circumstances. It

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 153-165.

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 170-172.

⁵⁹ Sokolova, pp. 115, 118, 140-141, discussing Larks on a String (1969), and the popular folk singer/songwriter Ivo Jahelka (1988); Donert p. 176.

⁶⁰ Donert, p. 137.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 188; Donert also notes that economic and social rights for children, women and workers were also expanded during normalization; Sokolova p. 181, p. 191; defenders of this profession argued that its members had 'done their best' to aid the Roma and considered the call to abolish the position a 'tragic mistake', p. 216.

alleged that consent for sterilisation via tubal ligation was obtained through coercion and that social workers were being evaluated based on how many Roma women they persuaded to undergo the procedure. The document warned that 'Czechoslovak institutions will soon have to answer charges that they are committing genocide'⁶².

1.4. Forced sterilisation of Roma women during communism and beyond

The 1960 Civil Code defined motherhood as a social obligation. Paradoxically, the targeting of Roma women for sterilisation emerged in this pro-natalist context. As birth rates declined and more women entered the workforce (trends the regime sought to reverse), public health authorities began to focus on the 'quality' of births, particularly concerning disabilities.⁶³

In 1968, Slovak Health Ministry officials discussed 'limiting the undesirable population amongst Gypsies', proposing that a 'more flexible' sterilisation policy could limit 'undesirable' reproduction among 'asocials and those with a lower mental level, when all other methods of persuasion [to use birth control] have been unsuccessful'. In 1970, the sterilisation of Roma women 'from disadvantaged environments' was proposed as official policy. By 1972, a Decree on Sterilisation specified the criteria to access such surgery. 'Medical indicators' for sterilisation by tubal ligation included 'psychopathy with asocial behaviour and recurrent criminality', 'severe sexual deviations', 'idiocy and imbecility', 'chronic alcoholism', 'a specific parental pair already having a genetically defective child', or an expertly-determined 'predisposition' to give birth to such a child; the definition of proof of such indicators, the diagnosing of these conditions, and the arrangement of 'expert tests' lay with doctors and social workers.⁶⁴

In addition to medical reasons, a 'socioeconomic indicator' was introduced, which required no medical diagnosis. In 1979, financial incentives to undergo sterilisation were codified and social workers were tasked with promoting the procedure, emphasizing the 'genetic aspects' of sterilisation (i.e., that it would prevent the birth of disabled people) and framing it as in the woman's best interest. In 1988, a new decree regulating such financial incentives in the Czech Socialist Republic was

⁶² Charta 77, *Situace Cikánů-Romů v Československu* (1978).

⁶³ Sokolova, pp. 213-216; Donert, p. 146.

⁶⁴ Donert, pp. 173-174; Decree on Sterilisation, Bulletin of the Ministry of Health of the Czech and Slovak Socialist Republic (*Věstník Ministerstva zdravotnictví České a Slovenské socialistické republiky*) Part 1-2, Volume XX, 29 February 1972, as cited in Sokolova.

published that was overtly eugenic, stating their purpose was 'to preserve the healthy population'. These incentives were abolished in 1991⁶⁵.

Gynaecologists published on these sterilisations, with one claiming the money paid to the Roma women he sterilised was 'insignificant' compared to the financial burden of caring for 'genetically damaged' children. He even promoted a 'special form' to apply for sterilisation, to be completed not by the patient, but by regional welfare offices. Others lamented the allegedly high fertility of Roma women and their reluctance to use birth control. The Health Ministry lamented that very few 'Gypsy' women used IUDs. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Regional National Committees regularly reported to the 'Committee for the Gypsy Population' on the 'contraceptive education' of Roma women⁶⁶.

Sokolova notes that while these forced sterilisations were underway, some scholars dismissed them as statistically 'insignificant' and therefore unworthy of further study⁶⁷. However, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination asked the ČSR to report in detail on how it was protecting 'Gypsy' rights in 1977. After 1989, the forced sterilisation issue was reopened. The Government's Human Rights Committee asked the General Prosecutor to investigate, which happened in 1990⁶⁸.

In 1995, the Office for the Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (the ODICC) investigated whether sterilisations in communist Czechoslovakia constituted genocide. In 1997, after reviewing the General Prosecutor's investigation, the ODICC concluded that since Roma were not explicitly specified in the 1988 decree, the 'intention of the then government to curb the birth rate among Roma women specifically by this provision cannot be demonstrated'⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ European Roma Rights Centre, 'Coercive and Cruel: Sterilisation and its Consequences for Romani Women in the Czech Republic (1966–2016)', Budapest, November 2016, p. 23; Czech Socialist Republic Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 'Decree no. 152 executing the Act on Social Security, dated 8 September 1988.', in ERRC 2016, p. 24; Gwendolyn Albert and Marek Szilvasi, 'Intersectional Discrimination of Romani Women Forcibly Sterilised in the Former Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic', Harvard Journal of Health and Human Rights, December 2017, p. 26.

⁶⁶Sokolova, pp. 231-237; Donert, p. 222.

⁶⁷ Sokolova, p. 209.

⁶⁸ Donert, pp. 224-5; Claude Cahn, 'Sovereignty, Autonomy and Right: Human Rights Law and the International Effort to Seek Justice for Romani Women Coercively Sterilised in the Czech and Slovak Republics', Ph.D. thesis on file at Radboud University Nijmegen (2014), pp. 42, 45.

⁶⁹ Office of the Public Defender of Rights, 'Final Statement of the Public Defender of Rights in the Matter of Sterilisations Performed in Contravention of the Law and Proposed Remedial Measures' (2005), p. 31, available at <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.ochrance.cz/uploads-import/ENGLISH/Sterilisation.pdf>, accessed 15 February 2025.

Although incentives stopped, allegations persisted that Roma women were still being sterilised without their free and informed consent during other gynaecological or obstetric procedures; in 2003, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), an international human rights organization, asked the Government Human Rights Commissioner about the issue, who recommended raising it with the Public Defender of Rights (the ombudsman)⁷⁰.

In 2005, the ombudsman disputed the conclusions of previous investigations, stating:

It would be wrong to believe that the relation[ship] of the pre-November [1989] Czechoslovakian state authority to Roma was random, uncontrolled and lacking co-ordination. It is also impossible to agree that no documents exist on the practical shape of Czechoslovakia's Roma policy. Rather the opposite; there are already the first complete historical studies that map the development of Roma policy, drawing from preserved archive documents⁷¹.

The ombudsman concluded that state policy until 1991 had been driven by eugenics and recommended compensating those sterilized under the incentive program. Those sterilized outside the program, he said, should seek redress through the courts. However, a 2008 court ruling imposed a three-year statute of limitations on such claims⁷². Since most forced sterilisations had not occurred within the last three years, the known victims had no redress.

In 2009, the Government Human Rights Council recommended compensating the victims, reiterating the call in 2012⁷³. In 2015, the premier denied that the state had promoted the systemic sterilisation of Roma women, but recommended victims seek

⁷⁰ European Roma Rights Centre, *Ambulance Not on the Way: The Disgrace of Health Care for Roma in Europe*, Budapest: ERRC (2006), pp. 44-49.

⁷¹ Office of the Public Defender of Rights, *Final Statement*, pp. 43-44.

⁷² *Ibid*, pp. 68-72. 'The extended panel of the civil law and commercial college of the Supreme Court in its judgment of 12/11/2008, sp. stamp 31 Cdo 3161/2008, came to the conclusion that the right to compensation for non-pecuniary damage in money according to § 13 of the Civil Code (Act No. 40/1964 Coll.) is time-barred within the general three-year period, and therefore most lawsuits for the protection of personality through which victims of illegal sterilisation claimed compensation were rejected due to the statute of limitations on the claim within the three-year limitation period, calculated from the time the sterilisation was carried out and not from the moment when the victim found out the true meaning and all the consequences of this procedure.' Translation by the present author, from *Návrh věcného záměru a paragrafového znění zákona o odškodnění osob sterilisovaných v rozporu s právem na území České republiky*, Czech Helsinki Committee (2013), p. 20.

⁷³ ERRC 2016, p. 35; Marek Szilvasi, 'Czech Government Should Stop Gambling with the Country's Reputation – the Fight for Forced Sterilisation is not over,' *Romea.cz*, 4 November 2015, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/marek-szilvasi-czech-government-should-stop-gambling-with-the-country-s-reputation-the-fight-for-compensation-for-forced>, accessed 25 January 2025.

legal redress, notwithstanding the courts' inability to award financial compensation⁷⁴.

A compensation procedure was signed into law in 2021, the result of advocacy by Roma forced sterilisation survivor Elena Gorolová and her supporters⁷⁵. It came into effect from 1 January 2022 and remained active until 1 January 2025. On 2 January 2025, the Health Ministry reported it had received 2,226 compensation requests: 720 were approved, 576 rejected, with others still under review⁷⁶.

International human rights organizations called for the compensation process to be extended, and a bill extending it passed the lower house and awaits adoption by the Senate⁷⁷. Those illegally sterilised between 1966 and 2012 (the year when enhanced protection of informed consent to sterilisation was enshrined in law) have been entitled to CZK 300,000 (approx.. EUR 12,000). Many initially rejected applicants have had to sue for compensation. The Supreme Administrative Court confirmed that the ministry cannot reject applications solely because original medical records are missing and affirmed that the burden of proof lies with the state, not the victim⁷⁸.

One case underscores the antigypsyist nature of these forced sterilisations: a woman whose Roma origin was explicitly cited in her medical records as grounds for sterilisation was initially rejected for compensation⁷⁹. The ministry did not address

⁷⁴ Reply of Mr. Bohuslav Sobotka, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, to the letter of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, concerning the bill on reparations for involuntary sterilisation of Roma women, Council of Europe: Commissioner for Human Rights, 22 October 2015, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coechr/2015/en/112294>, accessed 25 January 2025.

⁷⁵ Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Elena Gorolová, spokeswoman for the illegally sterilised, calls on Czech MPs to support first reading of bill to compensate them', Romea.cz, 9 February 2021, available at <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/elena-gorolova-spokeswoman-for-the-illegally-sterilised-calls-on-czech-mps-to-support-first-reading-of-bill-to-compensate>, accessed 23 January 2025.

⁷⁶ ČTK and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Health Ministry has received 2,226 requests for compensation for illegal sterilisations, but expects more, the deadline may be prolonged', Romea.cz, 3 January 2025, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-health-ministry-has-received-2226-requests-for-compensation-for-illegal-sterilisations-but-expects-more-the-deadline-may-be-prolonged>, accessed 15 February 2025.

⁷⁷ Zdeněk Ryšavý and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Chamber of Deputies passes extension of deadline for compensating those who have been illegally sterilised', ROMEA, 23 April 2025, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-chamber-of-deputies-passes-extension-of-deadline-for-compensating-those-who-have-been-illegally-sterilised>, accessed 25 April 2025.

⁷⁸ ČTK and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Key court decision: Czech Health Ministry must change its approach when verifying illegal sterilisations, lack of medical records must not be an obstacle', Romea.cz, 8 July 2024, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/key-court-decision-czech-health-ministry-must-change-its-approach-when-verifying-illegal-sterilisations-lack-of-medical-records-must-not-be-an-obstacle>, accessed 15 February 2025.

⁷⁹ Zdeněk Ryšavý and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Health Ministry scandalously rejects compensation to woman whose Romani origin is listed as the reason for her sterilisation', 7 November 2022, Romea.cz, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-health-ministry-scandalously-rejects->

the applicant's arguments in its decision, which was overturned on appeal⁸⁰. The term 'ROMO' in the records cannot be interpreted as anything but a reference to the patient's ethnicity and should have been accepted as proof that the 'consent' to this surgery was neither free nor informed.

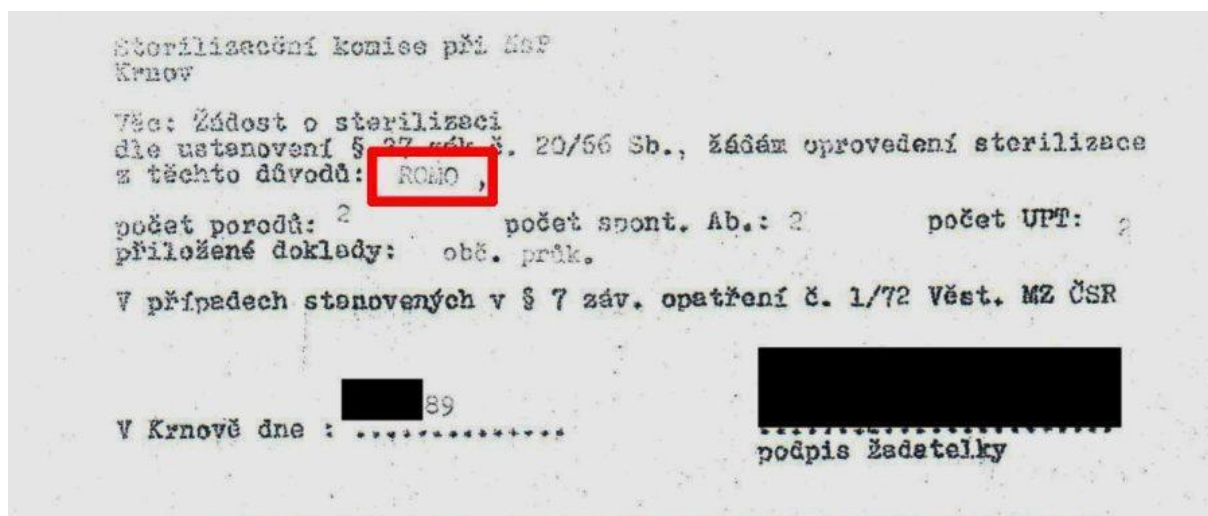


Figure 1. This anonymized protocol from a sterilisation commission reads, in part: 'Re: Application for sterilisation. Per the provisions of Section 27, Act No. 20/66 Coll., I request the performance of sterilisation for these reasons: ROMO,...' Image published by Romea.cz.

Although the internal appeals process at the ministry and subsequent court decisions have been essential for individual justice in forced sterilisation cases, this process does not yet meet the standards of transitional justice. As described by Rostas, et al (2022):

Transitional justice focuses on how the past defines the present, and is 'ultimately concerned with the just pursuit of societal transformation'.... Transitional justice is also relational, acknowledging how different interpretations of past events and human rights violations change relations among citizens and between citizens and state institutions⁸¹.

[compensation-to-woman-whose-romani-origin-is-listed-as-the-reason-for-her-sterilisation](#), accessed 15 February 2025.

⁸⁰ ROMEA and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Health Minister reverses his ministry's decision: Applicant has been awarded compensation for being unlawfully sterilised', 18 March 2023, Romea.cz, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-health-minister-reverses-his-ministrys-decision-applicant-has-been-awarded-compensation-for-being-unlawfully-sterilised>, accessed 15 February 2025,

⁸¹ Julius Rostas et al, State of the Art Report: Transitional Justice for Roma in Europe, Centre for European Policy Studies (2022), p. 19, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363318764_State_of_the_Art_Report_Transitional_Justice_for_Roma_in_Europe, accessed 25 April 2025.

The fact that so many applicants were initially rejected, while nearly all who then pursued legal action had their claims upheld, indicates that the societal transformation envisioned by those advocating for compensation remains in its infancy. A genuine transitional justice process would go beyond financial compensation and proactively ensure non-repetition. However, the significance of these past events is contested. While there is a common understanding among the applicants, their advocates, the ombudsman, the lawmakers, the lower courts, and the Supreme Administrative Court, the ministry's arguments suggest that it does not agree forced sterilisations of Roma women were systemically perpetrated. Nor does it recognise that its role is to compensate individual instances of what was a larger process in society. On the contrary, for all but the most glaringly obvious cases, the ministry has pedantically contested each compensation request, causing secondary victimisation to the applicants, several of whom passed away before receiving any redress. Although the law required the ministry to respond within 60 days, many applicants waited as long as 16 months for an initial decision⁸². This is a key reason an extension of the law is now sought.

Freedom of Information Act requests reveal that at least 25 applications were suspended because the alleged forced sterilisation occurred *after* 2012, suggesting that this practice may still be ongoing. If this process were one of transitional justice, the ministry would proactively investigate such allegations instead of suspending applications on a technicality and would take active steps to prevent recurrence.

Elena Gorolová reports that when she assists her fellow victims with accessing medical records, healthcare personnel often accost her, denying the illegality of these sterilizations and defending the practice⁸³. Where it matters most, relations between citizens and health personnel have yet to show that the lessons of this history have been understood.

1.5. Policies and developments affecting Roma between 1989 and 2004

The 1989 transition to democracy and capitalism, termed the 'Velvet Revolution' for its nonviolent character, ushered in freedoms of assembly, speech, and movement, along with human rights protections, including official recognition of Roma as a

⁸² ČTK and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Health Ministry should have decided compensation request for unlawful sterilisation in 60 days but the applicant waited 16 months, ombudsman has reviewed the case', Romea.cz, 13 February 2025, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-health-ministry-should-have-decided-compensation-request-for-unlawful-sterilisation-in-60-days-but-the-applicant-waited-16-months-ombudsman-has-reviewed-the-case>, accessed 15 February 2025.

⁸³ Personal communications from Elena Gorolová, April 2025.

national minority. Many Roma intellectuals welcomed the opportunity to 'take their destiny into their own hands for the first time'⁸⁴.

In 1991, Milena Hübschmannová founded the Romani Studies Program at Charles University. A publishing boom followed, with Roma authors bringing their experiences of antigypsyism into print⁸⁵. That same year, the Museum of Romani Culture was established as a nonprofit.

Czechoslovakia remained a federal state until the end of 1992. The first free elections since 1946 were held in 1990, with a 95 % turnout; pro-democracy forces won landslides in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic and a majority in the Federal Parliament. By 1992, the Slovak push for autonomy created political gridlock. Unable to reconcile, the two republics peacefully separated in the so-called 'Velvet Divorce,' beginning 1993 as independent states⁸⁶.

Following independence, the Czech Republic refused to grant citizenship to residents born after a certain time in Slovakia, rendering them aliens who became stateless in mid-1994. Many Roma had to apply for citizenship and meet new requirements. In 1997, the Supreme Court ruled that citizenship could not be denied on the basis of conviction for petty crime⁸⁷.

Progress was made in recognizing the Holocaust of the Roma. In Mirovice, Mayor Adolf Vondrášek and local residents repaired the overgrown, unmarked mass graves of the Lety inmates in the local cemetery and installed a plaque at the entrance reading 'To the victims of the concentration camp who died under cruel, inhumane conditions'⁸⁸. In 1997, the Museum of Romani Culture and the Hodonín Municipal Authority erected a cross at the site of the burial ground near the former concentration camp there, and in 1998, the museum installed a memorial plaque to victims buried in the Černovice cemetery. The Committee for the Redress of the Roma Holocaust, another non-profit, was established in 1998. New publications on this history sparked national debate.

As the country pursued EU accession, international human rights advocates used the process to highlight shortcomings in the treatment of Roma. While this external

⁸⁴ Donert, p. 250.

⁸⁵ Sokolova, p. 126, quoting Koptová writing about how non-Roma adults chastised Roma children for speaking Romani.

⁸⁶ The situation of Roma in the Republic of Slovakia after 1993 is outside of the scope of the current report.

⁸⁷ Sokolova, p. 256; Donert, p. 260. The case involved a plaintiff who had lived in the Czech Republic from the age of three months, had been raised in orphanages, and was sentenced to expulsion after stealing sugar beets of very low value.

⁸⁸ Pape, p. 114.

pressure prompted some policy changes, they were often implemented without broader public engagement or understanding, fuelling resentment.

Significant milestones ahead of EU accession included the establishment of an Interministerial Commission on Roma Community Affairs in 1997, which was transformed into the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs in 2001, an advisory body that still exists.

The post-1989 era also saw a resurgence of far-right violence and white supremacist ideology. While some argue ethnic discrimination and violence were 'new' at this time, the historical record shows otherwise; Sokolova contends that democratization facilitated the explicit manifestation of pre-existing racism and xenophobia. Neo-Nazi publications gained traction among the growing far-right, whose members publicly assembled and intimidated Roma. Although some publishers faced lawsuits, results were mixed⁸⁹. The far right saw a boom that has yet to subside. Antigypsyist violence escalated, with fatal neo-Nazi attacks on Roma occurring in public spaces and even within their homes. Public reactions ranged from celebrating the perpetrators as 'patriots' to complete indifference about the racist motives behind the crimes, leaving Roma communities demoralized⁹⁰.

While media coverage progressed from using 'gypsy' in the early 1990s to using the term 'Roma', the news and entertainment industries continue to profit from antigypsyist tropes, often portraying Roma as inherently criminal⁹¹.

Discrimination of Roma in education, health care, housing, and employment was, and remains, widespread. In the 1990s, 'socially excluded localities' emerged: substandard housing areas with high rents, often predominantly Roma. Rising transportation costs intensified this exclusion. Scholars who interviewed Roma

⁸⁹ Sokolova, pp. 15-16; ČTK and Gwendolyn Albert 'Czech court tries another case of Holocaust denial over books rehabilitating Hitler, spreading antisemitism and racism', Romea.cz, 23 January 2025, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-court-tries-another-case-of-holocaust-denial-over-books-rehabilitating-hitler-spreading-antisemitism-and-racism>, accessed 25 April 2025.

⁹⁰ Jan Charvát, 'Radicalization of Czech society: a new phenomenon, or the result of long-term developments?', Heinrich Böll Foundation, 15 February 2025, available at: <https://cz.boell.org/en/2023/01/03/radikalizace-ceske-spolecnosti-novy-fenomen-nebo-vysledek-dlouhodobeho-vyvoje>, accessed 25 April 2025; Rosie Johnston, 'Czech Roma are travelling – and many choose not to return', Radio Prague International, 25 April 2008, available at: <https://english.radio.cz/czech-roma-are-travelling-and-many-choose-not-return-8596686>, accessed 25 April 2025.

⁹¹ Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Romani People Face Discrimination and Negative Media Portrayal in Czechia', Balkan Insight, 1 November 2023, available at: <https://balkaninsight.com/2023/11/01/romani-people-face-discrimination-and-negative-media-portrayal-in-czechia/>, accessed 25 April 2025; ROMEA, 'Commentary: Romani actors should refuse to perpetuate stereotypes in Czech television programs', Romea.cz, 25 September 2020, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/commentary-romani-actors-should-refuse-to-perpetuate-stereotypes-in-czech-television-programs>, accessed 25 April 2025.

women during this period discovered they expressed fear not only of bureaucracy but also of public healthcare; their anxieties did not reflect 'cultural differences' as much as they were a logical consequence of the experience of the Holocaust and the postwar forced sterilisation campaign⁹².

Large-scale Roma emigration began in the 1990s and continues today. British, Canadian, and Czech authorities cooperated on monitoring this 'exodus', seemingly with the shared goal of preventing Roma from emigrating in the short term. While the racist violence they were fleeing was acknowledged as grounds for asylum by some countries, public discourse often depicted Roma as undeserving. Roma were blamed for the 1997 reintroduction of visa requirements between Canada and the Czech Republic, further complicating their asylum claims⁹³.

Roma who speak of unofficial apartheid are often labelled 'radical.' Yet, for decades, many non-Roma have prevented Roma from entering discos, public swimming pools, or restaurants; refused to hire them; refused to rent or sell them housing; agreed to teach their children only if they are taught separately from non-Roma, preferably after having been labelled 'slow'; refused to provide them medical treatment; and policed, prosecuted, and judged them more harshly than non-Roma. The pressure and the temptation to assimilate and 'pass' as non-Roma, especially for persons who look 'white', is as high as ever. The use of the Romani language has declined sharply⁹⁴.

Reluctance to address past human rights violations, whether the forced sterilisations of Roma women or the 'Gypsy Camps' during the Protectorate, further eroded trust. In 1994, instead of dismantling the pig farm at Lety, the farm's public owners privatized it. President Václav Klaus dismissed the suffering and death endured in those camps, prompting criticism from Sinti and Roma in Germany and elsewhere. President Miloš Zeman later stated the farm should remain⁹⁵.

⁹² Donert, p. 269; Sokolova, p. 59, citing Tracy Smith.

⁹³ Gwendolyn Albert, 'Anti-Gypsyism and the Extreme Right in the Czech Republic, 2008-2011', in Stewart, Michael, ed. *The Gypsy 'Menace'*, Hurst & Co. (2012), p. 152. Canadian visas were reinstituted for the same reason in 2009.

⁹⁴ See European Roma Rights Centre, 'Justice Denied: Roma in the Criminal Justice System of the Czech Republic', 2023, available at: www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/5451_file1_justice-denied-roma-in-the-criminal-justice-system-of-the-czech-republic-english.pdf, accessed 30 January 2025; ROMEA, 'Roma in the Czech Republic losing their language, parents not speaking it with children', ROMEA.cz, 16 February 2014, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/roma-in-the-czech-republic-losing-their-language-parents-not-speaking-it-with-children>, accessed 25 April 2025.

⁹⁵ Pape, p. 114; Kenety, Brian, 'Lety u Písku: The politics behind the 'concentration camp' pig farm', Radio Prague International, 19 May 2005, available at: <https://english.radio.cz/lety-u-pisku-politics-behind-concentration-camp-pig-farm-8099096>, accessed 25 April 2025; Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Czech President Zeman is in favor of leaving pig farm on site of former concentration camp for Roma', ROMEA, 30 June 2017,

Despite repeated calls for change, the history of Roma in this region remains absent from the mandatory school curriculum⁹⁶.

available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-president-zeman-is-in-favor-of-leaving-pig-farm-on-site-of-former-concentration-camp-for-roma>, accessed 25 April 2025.

⁹⁶ Ruth Fraňková, 'Council of Europe calls on Czech Republic to teach Roma history in schools', Radio Prague International, 7 March 2020, available at: <https://english.radio.cz/council-europe-calls-czech-republic-teach-roma-history-schools-8685525>, accessed 25 April 2025.

2. Context of antigypsyism today

This section reviews antigypsyism-related events over the past 35 years, including violence targeting Roma, judicial responses, and the public, symbolic denigration of Roma. This history is part of a continuum in which the resurgence of freedom of expression in the late 20th and early 21st centuries emboldened individuals to express antigypsyist views more openly, testing the limits of democratic tolerance.

2.1. Antigypsyism-related events in the 1990s

Czechoslovakia's first year of independence saw one of the worst antigypsyist events in modern history: the first of approximately 30 murders of Roma perpetrated by neo-Nazis in the years to come. On 24 September 1993, 17-year-old Tibor Danihel was one of four Roma minors attacked by 60 masked skinheads wielding baseball bats and nunchaku. They chased the group into the Otava River, took up positions on both banks, and prevented them from returning to shore, shouting that they were 'Teaching the gypsies to swim'. Tibor drowned as a result.

The police investigation never identified all the perpetrators, but one year later, 18 were accused of 'promotion of a movement aimed at suppressing rights and freedoms'; just two were convicted and put on probation. Tibor's death was ruled accidental.

The Danihel family appealed, won, and police continued investigating. In 1995, four suspects were charged with racially-motivated assault and extortion. In March 1997, two were convicted and sentenced to 31 months in prison, while two others were given 24 month sentences, conditionally suspended for 60 months.

In February 1998, the Justice Minister reopened the case and the Supreme Court reclassified the crimes as one count of murder and three counts of attempted murder. In 1999, three perpetrators were sentenced to between 84 months and 102 months without parole; they appealed and the sentences were reduced to between 72 months and 99 months. One defendant was acquitted in 2000 for lack of evidence.

Mr. Danihel's mother had to endure being mocked by the defendants in court and died five years after her son; she did not live to see the conviction of the perpetrators on murder charges. His headstone reads 'He died because he was Romani' in Czech and 'We will never forget' in both Romani and Czech⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ Pelíšek, A. (2015), 'Zemřel, protože byl Rom. Utopil se v Otavě, kam ho nahnali skinheadi.', iDNES.cz, 11 November 2015, https://www.idnes.cz/ceske-budejovice/zpravy/skinheadi-smrt-tibor-danihel-pisek-1993.A151031_2202336_budejovice-zpravy_mrl, accessed 2 February 2025.

Beyond neo-Nazi sprees, antigypsyism was also expressed by lawmakers. The Republican Party chair⁹⁸ called for the age of criminal liability to be lowered for Roma to 10. In 1996, he claimed: 'Gypsies should be criminally liable from birth, because being born is practically their greatest crime'. His remarks were condemned, but he was never stripped of parliamentary immunity for prosecution.

In 1999, the Czech Republic drew international criticism over the installation of a two-meter-high, 65-meter-long wall on Matiční Street in Ústí and Labem. Residents claimed Roma neighbours were intolerable and needed to be hidden from view. Local authorities called it a noise barrier that would prevent Roma children from running into the road. The central government opposed the measure. EU Commissioner Günter Verheugen called it a human rights violation. On 24 November 1999, the wall was dismantled. The central government gave local authorities funding to improve coexistence, but most of it was used to buy out the non-Roma residents so they could relocate, further intensifying Roma spatial segregation⁹⁹.

2.2. Antigypsyism-related events in the 2000s

In 2003 a neo-Nazi was convicted of the racially motivated murder of a Roma man in Svitavy and sentenced to 17 years, the first such conviction in the country. Following his sentencing, local skinheads staged annual protests and local Roma felt compelled to leave town during those periods¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁸ Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa (SPR-RSČ) was a Czech far-right political party. It was seated in 1990 and in 1992–1998 in the lower house and briefly in both houses of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly in 1992. Its best-known figure was its founder and chair, Miroslav Sládek. The party was dissolved in 2013, after which Sládek established another such party in 2016, the Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánská strana Československa Miroslava Sládka, which was dissolved in 2023. See ČTK, 'Soud pozastavil činnost Sládkových republikánů. Nepředkládali úřadům výroční finanční zprávy.', iROZHLAS, 19 April 2023.

⁹⁹ Sokolova, pp. 247-9; Alexandra Poolos, 'Czech Republic: A Wall Divides the Country', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 9 October 1999, available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/1092446.html>, accessed 25 April 2025; Ray Furlong, 'Czechs pull down Gypsy wall', 24 November 1998, BBC, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/534383.stm>, accessed 30 January 2025.

¹⁰⁰ Sokolova, p. 254; Pechanec, who has always maintained his innocence, was granted early release after serving 12 years and undertook a failed bid as a candidate for the neo-Nazi Workers' Social Justice Party (DSSS) during regional elections in 2016 and another failed bid with the DSSS for mayor of Svitavy in 2018. See 'Rasistická vražda Roma Oty (†29): Před 21 lety ho ubodal neonacista Pechanec. Pak chtěl být starostou.' BLESK.CZ, 20 July 2022, available at <https://www.blesk.cz/clanek/zpravy-krimi/718151/rasisticka-vrazda-roma-oty-29-pred-21-lety-ho-ubodal-neonacista-pechanec-pak-chtel-byt-starostou.html>, accessed 7 February 2025.

That same year, the Workers' Party (Dělnická strana – DS) was founded. The party publicly gathered to spread antigypsyism with neo-Nazis from other European countries on dates of significance in the Nazi calendar¹⁰¹.

In 2006, Vsetín Mayor Jiří Čunek forcibly evicted hundreds of Roma, manipulating them into moving to other administrative regions and assuming mortgages for properties unfit for human habitation, all while making antigypsyist remarks to the media. Some families have spent nearly 20 years pursuing legal redress. Vsetín continues to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.¹⁰² Čunek remains in political office and is affiliated with the Christian Democrats. At the height of his political power he was simultaneously Deputy Prime Minister and Regional Development Minister (2007-2009), party chair (2006-2009), senator (2006-present), regional assembly member (2000-2008 and again in 2012), and mayor (1998-2007, 2014-2017, and 2022-present).

Starting on 6 September 2008, there was an arson attack on a Roma home every weekend. On 4 October, the DS harassed Roma at the Janov housing estate in Litvínov; police intervened. On 20 October, 500 police protected Roma from an attempted pogrom at Janov by neo-Nazis who assaulted officers. The DS assembled in Prague on 28 October (Czechoslovak Independence Day); 10 of the 200 neo-Nazis were arrested for carrying blade weapons; three caused a random pedestrian severe injury. Two Roma were assaulted that same day in Hodonín by five neo-Nazis. On 8 November, neo-Nazis attacked two Roma men in Havířov, one of whom sustained serious brain damage and paralysis¹⁰³.

The largest outbreak of racist violence in the 2000s occurred on 17 November, a national holiday marking the democratic transition. After a DS rally in Litvínov, 1,000 riot police protected Janov and its Roma from hundreds of neo-Nazis attempting a pogrom¹⁰⁴. The violence injured eight officers, three journalists, one human rights observer, and five rioters. Video showed non-Roma residents applauding the attackers. Police later uncovered military-grade weapons stashed across the estate¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰¹ Albert, 2012, pp. 140-141.

¹⁰² ČTK and ROMEA, 'Vsetín podá v kauze vystěhování Romů stížnost k evropskému soudu ve Štrasburku, advokátka romských rodin neví v čem by měla být porušena práva města', Romea.cz, 19 June 2025, available at <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/vsetin-poda-v-kauze-vystehovani-romu-stiznost-k-evropskemu-soudu-ve-strasburku-advokatka-romskych-rodin-nevi-v-cem-by-mela-byt-porusena-prava-mesta>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹⁰³ Albert 2012, pp. 146-147.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 147-148.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 148.

Just before midnight on 19 April 2009, four neo-Nazis set the home of a Roma family in Vítkov on fire. Three threw Molotov cocktails while a fourth drove the getaway car. Eight people were sleeping in the house. The father and mother of the children were harmed and their two-year-old daughter suffered third-degree burns over 80% of her body, losing three fingers and requiring lifelong care. The perpetrators were sentenced to 20 or 22 years for racially-motivated attempted murder and ordered to compensate the family and their health insurer. Their ties to the DS and neo-Nazis, their participation in the Litvínov riots, and the timing of the attack as a celebration of Hitler's birthday figured prominently in their prosecution. The attack galvanized the Roma, who turned out in demonstrations numbering upward of 3,000 people nationwide, signed petitions, and donated to relief for the victims¹⁰⁶.

2.3. Antigypsyism-related events in the 2010s

In 2010, the DS was dissolved by court order. That same year, its former leadership took over the Strana občanů republiky České (Citizens of the Czech Republic Party) and changed its name to the Workers' Social Justice Party (Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti – DSSS)¹⁰⁷.

That year, a Molotov cocktail attack targeted a Roma home in Ostrava. Senator Liana Janáčková claimed, without evidence, that the family staged the attack to seek asylum abroad; she did not apologize until the family's non-Roma neighbours, a mother and son, were convicted and sentenced to seven and four years, respectively, for the arson¹⁰⁸.

In November 2010, the mayor of Nový Bydžov published an antigypsyist statement to the town website after a non-Roma woman was allegedly raped by a Roma man; his remarks were hailed by neo-Nazis, with the DSSS offering 'aid'. The mayor convened a meeting in February 2011, and 60 mayors signed a petition demanding the Government delegate them powers to address alleged 'difficulties with Roma'. In March 2011, the DSSS protested in Nový Bydžov, marching on its Roma neighbourhood; police only intervened against peaceful counter-protesters and failed to prevent neo-Nazis from assaulting three local Roma. In April 2011, the DSSS demonstrated in Krupka, marching on a Roma neighbourhood there; police

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, pp. 151- 152.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 156; 'Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti', Wikipedia, available at https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C4%9Blnick%C3%A1_strana_soci%C3%A1ln%C3%AD_spravedlnosti, accessed 15 February 2025. The DSSS shut itself down in 2024.

¹⁰⁸ Albert 2012, p. 157.

dispersed only the clergy and counter-protesters, hundreds of them Roma, who gathered for religious worship to block the march¹⁰⁹.

In May 2011, non-Roma in Votice mistook migrant workers from Romania for Roma and assaulted them in their accommodation¹¹⁰. In June 2011, 11 masked neo-Nazis marched through Krupka with flaming torches, while in Vsetín, Roma reported vandalism at their homes and verbal abuse. In July 2011, 20 masked neo-Nazis carried flaming torches through Most to the Chanov housing estate, inhabited by Roma, and a torch was used in an arson attempt on a Roma home in Býchory. In August 2011, in Nýrsko, two non-Roma men assaulted a Roma family in their home with baseball bats. In Rumburk, street fighting between non-Roma and Roma led a neo-Nazi organization to try to gather there. While the neo-Nazis were denied permission, the Social Democrats were allowed to hold a rally attended by 800 locals that became a rampage by people of all ages and sexes throwing rocks at Roma homes, trying to break into them, shouting 'Gypsies to the gas chambers!', and trampling a fence. One local Roma family said when they called police after receiving death threats they were told to barricade themselves indoors or leave town¹¹¹.

Every weekend in September 2011 saw anti-Roma marches in northern Bohemia. On 2, 3, and 9 September, several hundred locals marched through Varnsdorf trying to attack Roma. On 10 September, the DSSS held anti-Roma demonstrations in Nový Bor, Rumburk, and Varnsdorf resulting in 41 arrests and six injuries, with police using a water cannon to disperse them in Varnsdorf and being criticized by non-Roma for protecting the Roma. Marches were held on 17 and 24 September, with the vice-mayor targeted after he criticized these events¹¹².

According to a 2012 EU Fundamental Rights Agency report¹¹³ on minority crime, Roma in the Czech Republic reported the highest rates of being targeted for in-person, racially-motivated crime; 18 % of Roma across the seven EU Member States surveyed reported at least one racially-motivated crime in the last 12 months, with Roma from the Czech Republic above-average at 25 %. The Roma victimization rate in the Czech Republic for any crime, irrespective of motivation, was the second-highest of the countries surveyed, at 46 %. Roma in the Czech Republic reported the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pp 157- 159.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 159.

¹¹¹ Ibid, pp. 160-161.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2012. EUMIDIS Data in Focus 6: Minorities as Victims of Crime.

highest rate of in-person, racially motivated crimes (32 %), tied only with Somalis in Finland.

In 2012, antigypsyism unleashed social unrest in Břeclav. A non-Roma teenager alleged Roma had caused him serious injury. This led to demonstrations, weekend after weekend, of non-Roma trying to storm the Roma neighbourhood. A police investigation revealed the teenager had accidentally caused his own injuries and invented the story of non-existent Roma assailants. By the time the truth was revealed, multiple demonstrations by hundreds of non-Roma had terrorized Roma. Anti-racists defended Roma by holding their own events there¹¹⁴.

That year in Chotěbuz, a non-Roma man murdered a Roma man with a crossbow. The archer was tried in 2013 and claimed it was an accident occurring as he prepared to defend himself, but never expressed regret. He was sentenced to 10 years¹¹⁵. Under cross-examination, the defendant confirmed that if the man whom he thought was a thief had been 'white', he would not have shot him. The trial revealed he never called an ambulance, but told the other Roma with the victim to remove the arrow from his head, put him in their car, and leave. He also did not provide first aid. His neighbours wrote a petition disagreeing with his prosecution saying they would have done the same thing.

In Tanvald in 2012, a non-Roma man shot and killed one Roma man and injured another, but no charges were brought as the case was called self-defence and racial motivation was ruled out¹¹⁶. Public broadcaster Czech Television produced a documentary, 'Life and Death in Tanvald', in which an anonymous eyewitness said the description of the incident in the indictment did not match what he saw¹¹⁷, further

¹¹⁴ ČTK and Radka Steklá, 'Czech Republic: Hate is No Solution Will Defend Romani Neighborhood this Sunday and into June'. Romea.cz, 21 April 2012, available at: https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-republic-hate-is-no-solution-will-defend-romani-neighborhood-this-sunday-and-into-june?fbclid=IwY2xjawISjs5leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHUxclMeZPpxdFYvXTuUfv-8KvTh9DqXyJLA8NhvMU600L72yq_oovozD5A_aem_-LwqxgrsNAOBZOPpRBDLgg, accessed 7 February 2025; see also Gwendolyn Albert, 'Hate Crimes and Antigypsyism in the Czech Republic', in Dimensions of Antigypsyism in Europe, (European Network against Racism/Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, 2019), pp. 151-152.

¹¹⁵ ČTK, 'Czech Republic: Crossbow shooter claims death was accidental', Romea.cz, 21 May 2013, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-republic-crossbow-shooter-claims-death-was-accidental>, accessed 15 February 2025; ČTK, František Kostlán, Markus Pape, 'Chotěbuzský střelec z kuse dostal za zabiti Martina Hospodiho 10 let', ROMEA, 31 May 2013, available at <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/chotebuzsky-strelec-z-kuse-dostal-za-zabiti-martina-hospodiho-10-let>, accessed on 15 February 2025.

¹¹⁶ ČTK, 'Zastřelení Roma v Tanvaldu bylo podle státního zástupce nutnou sebeobranou', Romea.cz, 18 June 2012, available at <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/zastreleni-roma-v-tanvaldu-bylo-podle-statniho-zastpce-nutnou-sebeobranou-stihani-dlchodce-proto-zastavil>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹¹⁷ Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Patrik Tatar dostal dva roky vězení za výtržnictví kvůli incidentu při kterém byl zastřelen jeho bratr', Romea.cz, 20 November 2013, available at <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/patrik-zastrelen>

alleging that a knife sent for DNA testing as purportedly the one used to assault the non-Roma victim was not the knife from the crime scene¹¹⁸. In 2013, the injured Roma man was sentenced to two years for disorderly conduct¹¹⁹. He insists on his innocence and that the investigation was biased against him because of his ethnicity.

In 2013, the NGO In IUSTITIA recorded 211 hate crimes, up from 38 in 2012. Of the 58 victims with whom In IUSTITIA spoke in 2013, 22 were Roma and 15 incidents involved physical assault, including incidents related to anti-Roma demonstrations¹²⁰.

In October 2016, a Roma man died in a pizzeria in Žatec after being restrained by non-Roma men while police watched¹²¹. No charges were filed. Bystander video shows non-Roma men bringing the Roma man to the floor and kneeling on him while punching him five times in the upper body; police said the blows were to force him to stop allegedly biting somebody's leg. No eyewitnesses saw the victim biting those restraining him and CCTV footage did not show the Roma man assaulting anybody. Police said the victim died because his heart was damaged by long-term use of methamphetamine, which he was reportedly on at the time. The prosecutor rejected the victim's family's complaint that the investigation was unjustifiably lengthy, that evidence was not properly secured, that there were errors in the interrogation of witnesses, and that the wrong conclusions were drawn from the autopsy¹²². Two eyewitnesses to the incident testified to news server Romea.cz about what they saw, but mainstream media only reported statements from the pizzeria owner (who did not witness the incident) claiming that nobody assaulted the Roma man¹²³.

tatar-dostal-dva-roky-vezeni-za-vytnictvi-kvuli-incidentu-pri-kterem-byl-zastrelen-jeho-bratr, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹¹⁸ Jarmila Balážová, 'Život a Smrt v Tanvaldu získal cenu filmového festivalu Finále', Romea.cz, 29 April 2013, available at <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/zivot-a-smrt-v-tanvaldu-ziskal-cenu-filmoveho-festivalu-finale>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹¹⁹ Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Patrik Tatar...'.

¹²⁰ ROMEA, 'Czech Republic: Number of Victims of Hate Violence Rose in 2013'. 20 February 2014, Romea.cz, available at: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-republic-number-of-victims-of-hate-violence-rose-in-2013>, accessed 23 January 2025.

¹²¹ Jitka Votavová, 'Czech Police find no crime was committed in death of Romani man last fall', Romea.cz, 2 February 2017, available at <https://romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-police-find-no-crime-was-committed-in-death-of-romani-man-last-fall>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹²² Jitka Votavová, 'Czech State Prosecutor rejects complaint from family of Romani man who died in presence of police', Romea.cz, 28 April 2017, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-state-prosecutor-rejects-complaint-from-family-of-romani-man-who-died-in-presence-of-police>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹²³ ROMEA, 'Czech Republic: Eyewitness video footage shows Romani man was subjected to violence before he died', Romea.cz, 31 October 2016, available at <https://romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech->

In response, 500 people peacefully assembled in Žatec, most of them Roma, and hundreds gathered in Ostrava, Prague, and elsewhere¹²⁴. The Žatec assembly proceeded to the pizzeria to light candles at an improvised memorial, but non-Roma men in clothing associated with the far right blocked them, shouting racist slogans like 'Bohemia for the Czechs'. Police prevented physical conflicts. A name said to be that of the pizzeria's chef was posted to social media with allegations that he 'killed' the Roma man; in November, a Roma youth made a death threat against the chef on Facebook and was sentenced to four months in maximum-security prison in December¹²⁵. Police investigated other threats against pizzeria staff.

In 2017 in Chomutov, a non-Roma man shot dead a Roma man and a dog and was charged with aggravated homicide¹²⁶. At 3 AM, the Roma man was in the driver's seat of a van, arguing with his family inside a nearby building through the open window; while driving away, he ran into a parked car owned by the shooter, who emerged from the building shouting antigypsyist abuse and firing 13 rounds, eight of which struck the Roma man¹²⁷. He was sentenced to 10 years in 2019¹²⁸. Racial motivation was ruled out.

That same year, a class photo in Teplice showing mostly Roma and Arab first-graders triggered online death threats. The fact that the victims were six-year-olds sparked a wave of online solidarity with them¹²⁹. The main perpetrator, Vítěslav Kroupa,

republic-eyewitness-video-footage-shows-romani-man-was-subjected-to-violence-before-he-died, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹²⁴ ČTK, Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Hundreds around Czech Republic honor memory of dead Romani man, right-wing extremists assemble at site of his death, riot police deployed', Romea.cz, 28 October 2016, available at <https://romea.cz/en/news/czech/hundreds-around-czech-republic-honor-memory-of-dead-romani-man-right-wing-extremists-assemble-at-site-of-his-death-riot>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹²⁵ ČTK, Jitka Votavová, 'Czech court sentences youth to four months in prison for threatening to shoot man on Facebook', Romea.cz, 8 December 2016, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-court-sentences-youth-to-four-months-in-prison-for-threatening-to-shoot-man-on-facebook>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹²⁶ ČTK, Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Czech Republic: Non-Romani man shouts racial abuse at 34-year-old Romani man before shooting him dead', Romea.cz, 27 May 2017, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-republic-non-romani-man-shouts-racial-abuse-at-41-year-old-romani-man-before-shooting-him-dead>, accessed 15 February 2025

¹²⁷ ČTK, František Kostlán, 'Czech gunman who murdered Romani man in his own vehicle will serve 10 years', Romea.cz, 27 June 2019, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-gunman-who-murdered-romani-man-in-his-own-vehicle-will-serve-10-years>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Gwendolyn Albert, 'Hate Crimes and Antigypsyism in the Czech Republic', in *Dimensions of Antigypsyism in Europe*, (European Network against Racism/Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, 2019), p. 159.

whose initial comment launched the online barrage of hate, received a 16 month suspended sentence. The Supreme Court rejected his appeal.¹³⁰

Lawmaker Miloslav Rozner of the 'Freedom and Direct Democracy' (SPD) party criticised the decision to buy the pig farm at Lety in 2017, calling it a 'non-existent pseudo-concentration camp'. Charges were filed; after losing re-election he got six months in prison, a verdict upheld on appeal, for denying genocide¹³¹.

In January 2018, the chair of the SPD, Tomio Okamura, made deceptive remarks about the Lety concentration camp, claiming it was never fenced and inmates freely came and went there. He apologized in February, but quoted a 1999 book by an historian who alleges the 'Gypsy Camps' were not concentration camps¹³².

In March 2018, the Lety Cultural Heritage Monument was desecrated with a severed pig's head. In May, charges were filed against a suspect who cooperated with the investigation, claiming his action was a protest against the cost of moving the farm; the incident was likely treated as a misdemeanour¹³³.

In November 2018, police charged two men from a group called *My proti všem* [Us against Everybody] with denying genocide after they placed insulting placards at the Lety Cultural Heritage Monument the previous May. Signs reading 'This memorial is dedicated to the historically last Roma ever to work on the territory of the Czech Republic' were affixed to signage on a hiking trail explaining the history of the camp and to a tree near the monument. The group posted about desecrating the memorial on their website, belittling Roma suffering and calling the investment into removing the farm 'absurd', alleging Lety had 'just' been a labour camp. A first-instance court sentenced the two to 12 months and eight months in prison, respectively, suspended for 24 months. The appellate court reclassified the charges as disorderly conduct and reduced the sentences to seven and five months in prison, respectively, suspended

¹³⁰ČTK, Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Czech Supreme Court upholds sentence for hate posted about non-white first-graders: Not a joke, but the promotion of Nazism', Romea.cz, 15 October 2021, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-supreme-court-upholds-sentence-for-hate-posted-about-non-white-first-graders-not-a-joke-but-the-promotion-of-nazism>, accessed 28 April 2025.

¹³¹ Daniela Lazarová, 'Prague Court of Appeal upholds a six-month suspended sentence for Holocaust denial', Radio Prague International, 12 June 2022, available at <https://english.radio.cz/prague-court-appeal-upholds-six-month-suspended-sentence-holocaust-denial-8768989>, accessed 28 April 2025.

¹³² Jana Baudyšová, 'Czech MP apologizes for 'imprecision', then urges people to read historian who calls the Romani Holocaust a 'myth'', Romea.cz, 4 February 2018, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-mp-apologizes-for-imprecision-then-urges-people-to-read-historian-who-calls-the-romani-holocaust-a-myth>, accessed 28 April 2025.

¹³³ František Bikár, 'Czech Police apprehend youth who desecrated Romani genocide memorial with pig's head', Romea.cz, 8 May 2018, available at <https://romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-police-apprehend-youth-who-desecrated-romani-genocide-memorial-with-pig-s-head>, accessed 28 April 2025.

for 18 months. The Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court both rejected their appeals¹³⁴.

The events of the 2010s reveal a deeply-rooted, persistent pattern of antigypsyism in Czech society, expressed through violent acts and dehumanising public discourse. From arson attacks, racially motivated murders, and organised neo-Nazi marches to political figures denying historical atrocities, these incidents underscore how Roma continue to be targeted, not just by extremist groups and individuals, but also within mainstream institutions, including political ones. The repeated failure to recognise racial motivation, the leniency shown in prosecutions, and the lack of political or public condemnation point to a systemic unwillingness to confront antigypsyism as a serious form of racism. Instead, the dominant discourse often shifts blame onto Roma communities or minimises their suffering, reinforcing their marginalisation. This structural disregard perpetuates impunity for hate crimes and contributes to the normalisation of antigypsyist sentiment in public life.

2.4. Antigypsyism-related events in the 2020s

On 19 June 2021, a Roma man named Stanislav Tomáš died in Teplice after police pinned him to the ground, kneeling on his neck area for several minutes while he was handcuffed. Bystander video of the death went viral on social media, drawing comparisons with the murder of George Floyd and sparking protests across Europe. Mr. Tomáš cried out repeatedly and onlookers tried to warn police he couldn't breathe. He was pronounced dead in an ambulance called to the scene¹³⁵. An autopsy concluded that he died of a drug overdose. In response, police released a video showing two unidentified, half-naked men brawling, titled 'No Czech Floyd', purportedly to illustrate Mr. Tomáš's behaviour before his arrest. Officials expressed support for police even before the autopsy results were released¹³⁶.

¹³⁴ ČTK, Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Czech Constitutional Court rejects complaint from man responsible for desecrating memorial to the Holocaust and its Romani victims at Lety', Romea.cz, 6 April 2022, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-constitutional-court-rejects-complaint-from-man-responsible-for-desecrating-memorial-to-the-holocaust-and-its-romani>, accessed 28 April 2025.

¹³⁵ Anna Koslerova, 'Death of Romany man knelt on by Czech Police must be investigated urgently', The Guardian, 23 June 2021, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/23/death-of-romany-man-knelt-on-by-czech-police-must-be-investigated-urgently>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹³⁶ ČTK, Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Czech President believes police on death of Stanislav Tomáš, has no reason to doubt the conclusions of the investigation into their actions', Romea.cz, 28 June 2021, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-president-believes-police-on-death-of-stanislav-tomas-has-no-reason-to-doubt-the-conclusions-of-the-investigation>, accessed 26 April 2025.

Mr. Tomáš's sister filed a lawsuit¹³⁷. In December 2021, the deputy ombudsman found police made three errors in the arrest and one in their subsequent investigation: 1) Officers waited too long to call an ambulance; 2) Officers failed to monitor his state of health; 3) Officers kept him in handcuffs after he collapsed and did not try to resuscitate him. The investigation did not include the testimony of the ambulance crew, who said the detainee collapsed before they arrived, contradicting the police claim that he walked to the ambulance. The final police report included both versions without resolving the discrepancy.

The Council of Europe called for an independent investigation¹³⁸. The RVZRM said the incident was disproportionate use of force. In March 2022, the General Inspection of Security Forces found nothing wrong with the arrest and said the intervention had not caused the death. The case was filed with the European Court of Human Rights in August 2023 and began to be reviewed in 2024¹³⁹.

In July 2021 in Sokolov, a group of young non-Roma men disembarked from a train and assaulted young Roma children playing nearby before attacking Roma adults, breaking a woman's arm while shouting 'Black swine, we'll kill you, we'll send you to the gas chambers'¹⁴⁰. Police allegedly insulted the Roma who called them, briefly interrogated the assailants and then released them, after which they beat up another 14-year-old Roma boy. Police identified some of the perpetrators as football hooligans and initiated proceedings against one suspect¹⁴¹. An internal review found that the police responded appropriately.

In 2022, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Roma refugees fleeing to the Czech Republic faced discriminatory treatment. Authorities and media falsely

¹³⁷ European Roma Rights Centre, 'Family of Stanislav Tomáš file criminal complaint against Czech Police with ERRC support', 30 June 2021, available at <https://www.errc.org/press-releases/family-of-stanisлав-tomas-file-criminal-complaint-against-czech-police-with-errc-support>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹³⁸ Spokesperson of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, 'Czech Republic: Council of Europe Calls for Urgent Independent Investigation into Romani Man's Death', 23 June 2021, available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/czech-republic-council-of-europe-calls-for-urgent-independent-investigation-into-romani-man-s-death>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹³⁹ Application no. 28273/23, S.T. versus the Czech Republic, European Court of Human Rights, lodged on 4 July 2023, communicated on 30 January 2024, available at [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#/%22itemid%22:\[%22001-231321%22\]](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#/%22itemid%22:[%22001-231321%22]), accessed 28 April 2025.

¹⁴⁰ ROMEA, 'Out-of-town youth assault Romani child and then other Roma in Sokolov, Czech Police defused the conflict and are investigating, local Roma not happy with their response', Romea.cz, 25 July 2021, available at <https://romea.cz/en/news/czech/out-of-town-youth-assault-romani-child-and-then-other-roma-in-sokolov-czech-police-defused-the-conflict-and-are>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹⁴¹ František Bikár et al., 'Czech Police prosecuting one of the men who assaulted Romani people in Sokolov this summer, internal affairs says officers' procedure was correct', Romea.cz, 14 October 2021, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-police-prosecuting-one-of-the-men-who-assaulted-romani-people-in-sokolov-this-summer-internal-affairs-says-officers>, accessed 15 February 2025.

portrayed them as bogus refugees. In April, the ombudsman found Roma were treated as 'second-class' refugees at a Prague reception centre. News server Romea.cz reported that an Ostrava reception centre segregated and mistreated them. The Governor of the Moravian-Silesian Region falsely accused such refugees of theft, alleging that 'so-called specific groups...people who are quite inadapted...so-called Hungarian Roma, i.e., nomadic groups of people...' were causing problems. The Interior Minister claimed the Roma Ukrainian 'influx' was tied to organized crime, calling it 'welfare tourism', and vetting processes were instituted which left Roma Ukrainians without food or shelter. The minister alleged they held dual Hungarian and Ukrainian citizenship and were ineligible for temporary protection. Hundreds sheltered in the main railway station in Prague in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions while waiting for authorities to decide their status¹⁴². When CNN pressed the Interior Ministry for details, less than 3 % of those seeking temporary protection were also citizens of Hungary, not the 30 % the minister had claimed.

Inter-ethnic violence between Czech Roma and non-Roma Ukrainians has risen sharply since 2022. In 2023, the killing of a Czech Roma man by a non-Roma Ukrainian in Brno heightened tensions. Several altercations followed, some fuelled by disinformation. The killing was ruled self-defence in 2024 and the accused was acquitted¹⁴³.

Media, police, and politicians are inconsistent in how they report the ethnicity, citizenship, or nationality of crime suspects. Following the 2023 incident, police referred to the perpetrator as a 'foreign national', while some Roma, based on local accounts, believed the suspect was Ukrainian and suspected preferential treatment. Even when police avoid referencing ethnicity, local politicians or sloppily-compiled media reports may do so and may also include insufficient detail, such as omitting how long a suspect has lived in the country. This fosters the impression that Ukrainians arrive directly from the war zone to commit violence, whereas many have lived in the Czech Republic for years¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴² Robert Tait, "'They won't accept us': Roma refugees forced to camp at Prague train station", The Guardian, 25 May 2022. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/25/they-wont-acceptus-roma-refugees-forced-to-camp-at-prague-train-station>, accessed 7 February 2025.

¹⁴³ Zdeněk Ryšavý and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech prosecutor explains why he did not appeal the acquittal verdict in the case of the death of a Romani man in Brno: the court's conclusion is acceptable, given the evidence', Romea.cz, 19 April 2024, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-prosecutor-explains-why-he-did-not-appeal-the-acquittal-verdict-in-the-case-of-the-death-of-a-romani-man-in-brno-the-courts-conclusion-is-acceptable-given-the-evidence>, accessed 15 February 2025.

¹⁴⁴ 'Fake News and Disinformation in Roma Communities', Research Summary, RADIRIGHTS project 2023-2024, Autonómia, available at <https://www.sdruzeniromea.cz/index.php/pripravujeme/56->

In 2024, three perpetrators of the 2009 Vítkov arson attack were granted early release. They have made only token payments toward the compensation owed to the victims¹⁴⁵.

2.5. Ethnic segregation and undereducation of the Roma

In 1997, the Constitutional Court ruled on allegations of Roma segregation into 'special schools' on an ethnic basis, finding the 18 plaintiffs' rights were not violated¹⁴⁶. They turned to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and in 2007 it ruled in *D. H. and Others vs. Czech Republic*¹⁴⁷ that the country had violated their rights.

The Czech government argued that a new Education Act, effective from 2005, addressed such discrimination¹⁴⁸. However, this law merely abolished the term 'special school', which had become stigmatised, without addressing the ethnic aspect of segregation. It did not fundamentally change the processes by which Roma are disproportionately assigned to education for the intellectually disabled, perpetuating their undereducation.

Between December 2007 and mid-2009, Education Minister Ondřej Liška initiated reforms to address ethnic segregation¹⁴⁹. He removed ministry staff responsible for discriminatory practices from policymaking roles, prompting backlash from opponents of the *D.H.* ruling¹⁵⁰. Liška also tried to collect anonymized data on the ethnic composition of schools¹⁵¹.

His successor urged principals of schools for children with intellectual disabilities to ensure that only children with genuine special needs were enrolled, but simultaneously reduced resources devoted to this issue¹⁵². Nonetheless, several

[projekty/aktualni-projekty/171-boj-proti-dezinformacim-a-za-demokraticka-prava-radirights](#) , accessed 12 February 2025.

¹⁴⁵ ČTK and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech court to rule on early release for another perpetrator of 2009 racially motivated arson on 18 September', Romea.cz, 30 August 2024, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-court-to-rule-on-early-release-for-another-perpetrator-of-2009-racially-motivated-arson-on-18-september>, accessed 25 February 2025.

¹⁴⁶ Gwendolyn Albert, 'Education Policies in the Czech Republic', in *Ten Years After*, Rostas, Iulius, ed., (CEU: 2012), p. 179.

¹⁴⁷ See <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22%3A%22001-83256%22%7D>.

¹⁴⁸ Albert (CEU: 2012), p. 179.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 180.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

working groups drafted amendments to the decrees regulating special needs education and the testing centres diagnosing children's aptitude, aiming to hold those implementing these processes more accountable¹⁵³.

In March 2010, the Czech School Inspectorate reported gross negligence in 34 former 'special schools' where at least 5,000 children, most of them Roma, had been assigned without proper documentation of disability. The Inspectorate found that 83 % of such schools were not transformed under the Education Act. Roma made up approximately 35 % of those diagnosed with 'mild mental disability' in these schools; in some regions, the figure reached 53 %¹⁵⁴.

In July 2010, resources for addressing segregation were further reduced, and the director of the Special Education and Equal Opportunities Department resigned over the Government's refusal to take effective action. The 2004 legislation had also introduced the ethnocentric concept of 'sociocultural disadvantage' as a kind of disadvantage that might require special education measures, without defining this term.¹⁵⁵

In November 2010, the premier claimed that discrimination against Roma in schools was no longer occurring, a view echoed by many special needs educators. Human rights researchers, however, reported and continue to report rising ethnic segregation. One mechanism perpetuating Roma segregation is the opening of preschool classes in 'practical schools'; in 2010, officials reported that just 10 % of Roma from such classes enrol into mainstream schools¹⁵⁶.

The *D. H.* judgment remains under supervision by the Committee of Ministers at the Council of Europe, which has repeatedly found that Roma children continue to face ethnic discrimination and are overrepresented in special needs education.

The Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs (RILSA) conducted a randomised, representative survey from September 2023 to February 2024 of 1,268 people age 16 and older who self-identify as Roma, and/or speak the Romani language, and/or

¹⁵³ Ibid, pp. 180-2

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 193.

have at least one parent who identifies as Roma¹⁵⁷. With respect to education, the survey revealed the following:¹⁵⁸

- Of the respondents aged 20–24, fewer than half (40.2 %) have attained upper secondary education, compared to 90.3 % of persons aged 20-24 in the general population;
- Of the respondents aged 19-24, just a single individual was attending post-secondary education compared to 37.5 % of persons aged 19-24 in the general population;
- Statistically 0 % of the respondents aged 30–34 had completed post-secondary education (this does not mean no respondents in this age category had this level of education, just that their occurrence was so sparse as to be statistically insignificant). In the general population, 36.5 % of those aged 30-34 have post-secondary educations;
- According to the respondents who have children enrolled in school, 21.3 % of them attend a school where ‘all or most of their classmates are Roma’;
- Fewer than one-quarter (19.4%) of respondents have attained an education higher than the one attained by their parent(s).

In summary, the data confirm that a statistically significant portion of Roma are undereducated, many attend ethnically segregated schools, and intergenerational educational mobility remains limited. As such, the prospects for significantly increasing Roma participation in post-secondary education remain poor.

2.6. Residential segregation and comparative housing deprivation of the Roma

Open discrimination on the housing market has made it extremely difficult for Roma to buy or rent housing. Roma disproportionately live in substandard housing, paying exorbitant rents.

¹⁵⁷ ČTK, ‘Extensive survey shows shocking differences between non-Roma and Roma in the Czech Republic when it comes to precarity,’ Romea.cz, 23 June 2024, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/extensive-survey-shows-shocking-differences-between-non-roma-and-roma-in-the-czech-republic-when-it-comes-to-precary>, accessed 16 February 2025.

¹⁵⁸ Ivana Šimíková et al, Report on the Socio-economic Situation of the Roma Population in the Czech Republic 2023/2024: Results of the sample survey, RILSA Research Centre in Brno, 2024, pp. 22-32, available at: https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz_556.pdf, accessed 7 February 2025.

RILSA conducted a randomized survey from September 2023 to February 2024 of 1,268 people age 16 and older who self-identify as Roma, and/or speak the Romani language, and/or have at least one parent who identifies as Roma. The sample can be considered representative and the findings can be generalized, although the authors caution that some data points are indicative rather than definitive¹⁵⁹. With respect to housing, the survey revealed the following¹⁶⁰:

- With regard to heating in their homes, 16.9 % of Roma believe their heating is insufficient compared to 6.1 % of the general population;
- 2.7 % of the Roma respondents live in residential hotels; because of the uneven distribution of such facilities, this result is just indicative. The available comparative figure for the general population is not representative, but qualified estimates of persons living permanently in residential hotels (i.e., people who are not short-term, visiting workers) are that just 0.1 to 0.2 % of the general population lives in such facilities;
- The proportion of Roma who reported living in an environmentally polluted locality is 24.5 %, compared to just 7.9 % of the general population;
- When asked to estimate the ethnicity of their neighbours, 32 % of Roma say they live on a street where 'all or most' of their neighbours are Roma, and 44.3 % of Roma live in a building or on a street where more than half of the neighbours are Roma.

To summarize, Roma are far more likely to live in housing that is harmful to their health and precarious than are non-Roma. Nearly half reside in ethnically segregated locales.

2.7. Roma in the justice system today

Besides the RILSA study, there are very little anonymized data disaggregated by ethnicity and no statistics on the proportion of Roma in the criminal justice system. The ERRC¹⁶¹ has interviewed criminal justice professionals on this; many lawyers and prosecutors said Roma are overrepresented in the system, given their scarcity in the

¹⁵⁹ ČTK, 'Extensive survey shows shocking differences between non-Roma and Roma in the Czech Republic when it comes to precarity,' Romea.cz, 23 June 2024, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/extensive-survey-shows-shocking-differences-between-non-roma-and-roma-in-the-czech-republic-when-it-comes-to-precarity>, accessed 16 February 2025.

¹⁶⁰ Ivana Šimíková et al, pp. 22-32.

¹⁶¹ European Roma Rights Centre, Justice Denied: Roma in the Criminal Justice System of the Czech Republic (2023), available at <https://www.errc.org/reports--submissions/justice-denied-roma-in-the-criminal-justice-system-of-the-czech-republic>, accessed 16 February 2025.

population (2.5 %). Most of the ERRC's Roma respondents said they believe police are more present in Roma neighbourhoods and reported being targeted with or witnessing antigypsyist remarks from police; some heard officers addressing Roma whom they did not know informally and impolitely. However, the judges and prosecutors interviewed by the ERRC did not agree that police discriminate against Roma or that bias plays any role in their own work.

Many Roma defendants interviewed by the ERRC said accessing legal aid was hard; most said they had no counsel in their criminal proceedings, either because they did not know how to obtain one or could not afford one, while some complained about their court-appointed counsel. Lawyers interviewed by the ERRC confirmed that Roma defendants frequently face such barriers.

Judges and lawyers interviewed by the ERRC expressed concern over sentencing laws for repeated thefts, which disproportionately impact Roma. Under current law, anyone reconvicted of theft within three years of a prior conviction (regardless of the severity) can be sentenced to six to 36 months in prison. This means a person can be imprisoned for stealing something of little value. Nearly all judges and lawyers interviewed called this unnecessarily harsh¹⁶². Several expressed concern about the 'chaining' of 'criminal orders', which leads to unfair imprisonment of petty criminals generally. Criminal orders are simplified decisions issued without hearings for petty crimes, imposing community service, conditional sentences, fines, or house arrest. When a person reoffends after receiving such orders, previously suspended sentences can be activated in sequence, meaning repeated minor offenses can lead to imprisonment equivalent to that for a serious crime¹⁶³.

Antigypsyism is illustrated by a 2020 column by a non-Roma prison inmate for a high-circulation magazine describing Roma inmates as the 'worst' part of prison. He commented on their discomfort with nudity and cited a publication on 'Roma psychology' featuring antigypsyist tropes, such as claims that Roma do not understand the concepts of the past or the future; focus on meeting present-moment, 'physiological' needs; and tend to 'automatically consider everybody members of their community who will follow its customs', meaning Roma prisoners allegedly expect non-Roma prisoners to share things with them, allegedly leading to conflict¹⁶⁴.

¹⁶² This was reportedly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the maximum penalty for repeated theft was as high as eight years in prison. The interviewed judges and lawyers expressed concern that any repeated thefts committed during the COVID-19 state of emergency had resulted in excessively lengthy sentences.

¹⁶³ ERRC, *Justice Denied* (2023), p. 42.

¹⁶⁴ 'Zápisky českého vězně: Jak žít ve vězení společně s jinými etnickými skupinami', [Notes from a Czech prisoner: How to live in prison together with other ethnic groups], REFLEX, 8 September 2020, available

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment reported in 2018 that during their visit to the Czech Republic they received allegations of excessive use of force during the apprehension of suspects, as well as allegations of verbal abuse, including abuse of a racist or xenophobic nature, by police. It also noted that the presence of officers during detainees' medical examinations could discourage them from reporting mistreatment¹⁶⁵.

The ombudsman reviewed civil judgments from 2015-2019 in cases alleging discrimination and found 52 % were rejected (consistent with the 2010-2014 period)¹⁶⁶. Two cases involved Roma plaintiffs alleging ethnic discrimination in access to health care¹⁶⁷. Two others involved Roma plaintiffs alleging ethnic discrimination in access to education, with one succeeding. Seven Roma plaintiffs alleged ethnic discrimination in access to housing, with mixed outcomes. One case concerned ethnic discrimination of a Roma customer in a hotel; it failed until the Constitutional Court overturned the lower court's rulings¹⁶⁸.

2.8. Antigypsyist hate speech – social media platforms and responses

Social media remains a major platform for antigypsyist hate speech, much of which persists online even after complaints are filed. While some such speech is prosecuted, most persons convicted are placed on probation and many incidents are classified as misdemeanours. There is little societal disapproval for this behaviour, which is rampant. Social media is rife with memes alleging Roma are responsible for most crime, a claim that has been rebutted by fact-checkers who are, however, unable to provide the actual crime rate among Roma or information about whether

at <https://www.reflex.cz/clanek/zajimavosti/102784/zapisky-ceskeho-vezne-jak-zit-ve-vezeni-spolecne-s-jiny-mi-etnickymi-skupinami.html#:~:text=V%20tuzemsk%C3%BDch%20v%C4%9Bznic%C3%ADch%20zauj%C3%ADmaj%C3%AD%20Romov%C3%A9,ofici%C3%A1ln%C4%9B%20veden%C3%A9%20jako%20%E2%80%9Estandardn%C3%AD%E2%80%9C> accessed 18 February 2024.

¹⁶⁵ Council of Europe, Committee for the Prevention of Torture, Report to the Czech Government on the visit to the Czech Republic carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 2 to 11 October 2018, Strasbourg, 4 July 2019, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168095aeb4>, accessed 12 February 2025.

¹⁶⁶ Veřejný ochránce práv, Rozhodování českých soudů o diskriminačních sporech 2015–2019 Výzkum veřejného ochránce práv 2020 Sp. zn.: 61/2019/DIS/JF, Č. j.: KVOP-40830/2020, p. 9, available at <https://www.ochrance.cz/dokument/rozhodovani-ceskych-soudu-o-diskriminacnich-sporech-2015-2019-2020-vyzkum-judikatura-dis.pdf> accessed 12 February 2025.

¹⁶⁷ Veřejný ochránce práv, Rozhodování českých soudů (2020), p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

ethnic bias plays a role in criminal justice because anonymised data disaggregated by ethnicity are unavailable¹⁶⁹.

Antigypsyists often use coded language to evade censorship or prosecution. The term most used is 'inadaptables' (*nepřizpůsobivé*), dating to the Nazi era¹⁷⁰ and still used by mainstream media and politicians. Facebook, the most-used platform, makes it possible to establish 'closed groups' for invited users to share hate. Such posts repeat antigypsyist stereotypes about 'all' Roma allegedly being on welfare. Roma are described as allegedly inherently criminal, foreign, and subhuman.

Since 2022, Roma Ukrainians have been targeted for hate online. Many antigypsyist comments refer to the Second World War, calling for Roma to be 'sent to the gas chambers', expressing Nazi sympathies, or denying that the Holocaust of the Roma happened. There are also complaints that the focus on memorials for Roma victims of the Holocaust takes resources away from memorials to other Holocaust victims, or that the camps in Hodonín and Lety were 'just' labour camps and not concentration camps. Antigypsyists complain that 'gypsy' is considered a racial slur, alleging the term 'Roma' is invalid.

Some antigypsyist hate speech responds to coverage of events such as the 2021 death of Stanislav Tomáš in police custody, interethnic violence between non-Roma and Roma, or the 2009 Vítkov arson case. Posts by the SPD and even police social media profiles have attracted antigypsyist comments which remain online¹⁷¹.

The Interior Ministry report on extremism for Q3/Q4 2023 listed 181 hate crimes and 98 prosecutions for violence against a group, with Roma the most-victimized group¹⁷². The report for Q1/Q2 2024 said the editor of a disinformation outlet

¹⁶⁹ Ladka Mortkowitz, Agence France-Presse Česká republika, 'Šíří se falešné informace o kriminalitě Romů v ČR a jejich údajných výhodách ve srovnání s většinovým obyvatelstvem', [False information is spreading about the criminality of Roma in the Czech Republic and their alleged advantages compared to the majority population], 23 July 2020, available at <https://napravoumiru.afp.com/siri-se-falesne-informace-o-kriminalite-romu-v-cr-jejich-udajnych-vyhodach-ve-srovnani-s-vetsinovym>, accessed 18 February 2024.

¹⁷⁰ Ondřej Liška and Gwendolyn Albert, 'The state is 'inadaptable', not the children', 22 October 2012, Romea.cz, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/the-state-is-inadaptable-not-the-children>, accessed 28 April 2025.

¹⁷¹ Gwendolyn Albert, Challenging Digital Antigypsyism in the Czech Republic, ERRC (2024), available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/5546_file1_challenging-digital-antigypsyism-in-the-czech-republic.pdf, accessed 16 February 2025.

¹⁷² ČTK and ROMEA, 'Czech extremism report for the second half of 2023: Romani influencers contributed to radicalizing the Romani community against Ukrainians, Roma are most often the victims of hate crime', Romea.cz, 1 February 2024, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-extremism-report-for-the-second-half-of-2023-romani-influencers-contributed-to-radicalizing-the-romani-community-against-ukrainians-roma-are-most-often-the-victims-of-hate-crime>, accessed 18 February 2024.

received a three-year sentence, suspended for two years, for inciting hatred and defaming Roma in an article about a 2020 fire that killed Roma. He was fined CZK 30,000 [EUR 1,200]; the business running the server was dissolved. This was the first verdict against a disinformation outlet for incitement. In Q3/Q4 2024, Ukrainians and Jews became the most-targeted groups, but incidents against Roma still increased: from eight in Q1/Q2 2024 to 17 in Q3/Q4 2024¹⁷³.

2.8.1. Interethnic hate speech: impact of Ukrainian refugee reception

Anti-Ukrainian sentiment among some Roma has sharply increased since 2022, driven by a growing number of altercations involving Ukrainians and Roma. Roma have assembled publicly in response; some demonstrations demanded safety, while others featured anti-Ukrainian chants. In some cases, Roma marched to buildings where they believed the perpetrators lived. Non-Roma from anti-system movements have tried to co-opt the protests to spark anti-Ukrainian sentiment, but in one case were rebuffed because they addressed the Roma as 'gypsies'.

The Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs has convened meetings with Roma and Ukrainians in an effort to de-escalate tensions. A reconciliation round table was convened in Kutná Hora after a local Roma man was assaulted by a Ukrainian, sparking a Roma demonstration. The meeting involved the mayor, police, and local Roma and Ukrainians, who came to an understanding about how the assault engendered fear among local Roma. Consensus was reached as to the unacceptability of hate speech and threats, as well as the idea that parents should refrain from expressing prejudices to their children. Roma told the media they were surprised how many Ukrainians participated in good faith, acknowledged mutual fear, and said they believed the meeting would calm the situation. Police officers were also introduced as designated liaisons to these minority communities¹⁷⁴.

These efforts, while informal, serve as supplements to formal justice mechanisms and can foster mutual understanding more rapidly than court proceedings. They closely resemble transitional justice practices, which aim to address past harms to

¹⁷³ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Manifestations of Extremism and Prejudiced Hatred, Summary Situation Report, First Half of 2024, July 2024, available at <https://mv.gov.cz/mvcren/article/documents-on-the-fight-against-extremism.aspx>, accessed 14 February 2025; Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky, Projevy extremismu a předsudečné nenávisti, Souhrnná situační zpráva 2. pololetí roku 2024, 7 February 2025, available at <https://mv.gov.cz/clanek/zprava-o-extremismu-za-2-pololeti-2024-antisystemove-hnuti-slabne-silu-ziskava-online-radikalizace.aspx>, accessed 14 February 2025.

¹⁷⁴ Lukáš Cirok and Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Kutná Hora, Czech Republic: Roma and Ukrainians seek understanding after recent assault on a Romani man and demonstration', Romea.cz, 12 May 2024, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/kutna-hora-czech-republic-roma-and-ukrainians-seek-understanding-after-recent-assault-on-a-romani-man-and-demonstration>, accessed 26 April 2025.

support societal transformation¹⁷⁵. Although the motive behind the Kutná Hora assault remains unclear, the state-facilitated dialogue provided a constructive, consensus-based response.

2.9. Disinformation in the Roma community and its impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the dangers of disinformation. Roma influencers spread allegations about the virus and the vaccine which were not based in fact and contributed to some Roma ignoring fact-based recommendations. Some of these influencers later joined anti-system movements that also disseminate pro-Kremlin propaganda.

In 2023-2024, the ROMEA organization participated in a project on combating disinformation among the Roma, mapping it in three communities¹⁷⁶. Many cases involved anti-Ukrainian sentiment. Some Roma social media users believe Kremlin propaganda, and this conditioning, along with the number of Ukrainian refugees, aggravates anti-Ukrainian sentiment. Besides violence against Roma triggering panic, some Roma social media users have deliberately published misleading claims about non-existent incidents allegedly committed by Ukrainians. When such falsehoods are proven, police investigate and prosecute them for spreading alarm.

One meme went viral using a photograph from a demonstration held after a Roma man was killed by a Ukrainian. The Labour and Social Affairs Minister used this image in an Instagram post promoting proposed welfare reforms, claiming his plans will eliminate alleged welfare 'abuse', implying that Roma abuse welfare¹⁷⁷. Other ministers publicly criticised his actions¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁵ Iulius Rostas et al, State of the Art Report: Transitional Justice for Roma in Europe, Centre for European Policy Studies (2022), p. 19, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363318764_State_of_the_Art_Report_Transitional_Justice_for_Roma_in_Europe, accessed 25 April 2025.

¹⁷⁶ The present author was involved in this project; a manual and report from it are available at <https://www.sdruzeniromea.cz/index.php/pripravujeme/56-projekty/aktualni-projekty/171-boj-proti-dezinformacim-a-za-demokraticka-prava-radirights>, accessed 30 April 2025.

¹⁷⁷ Zdeněk Ryšavý, Richard Samko and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Labor Minister uses stereotypical image of Romani man on Instagram to represent supposed welfare fraud, Michal Miko says that stigmatizes the minority', Romea.cz, 31 July 2023, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-labor-minister-uses-stereotypical-image-of-romani-man-on-instagram-to-represent-supposed-welfare-fraud-michal-miko-says-that-stigmatizes-the-minority>, accessed 16 February 2025.

¹⁷⁸ ČTK, Zdeněk Ryšavý and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Govt colleagues of Labor Minister sharply criticize him for his Instagram post about welfare featuring a Romani man's photo', Romea.cz, 2 August 2023, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-govt-colleagues-of-labor-minister-sharply-criticize-him-for-his-instagram-post-about-welfare-featuring-a-romani-mans-photo>, accessed 16 February 2025.

2.10. The refusal to produce data disaggregated by ethnicity

Officials often claim it is ‘too difficult’ to produce anonymised data that can be disaggregated by ethnicity. Such claims are based on a misunderstanding of personal data protection laws and concerns rooted in past unethical demographic practices during the communist era. Some Roma are sceptical that anonymisation can be guaranteed or misunderstand its purpose; many oppose such efforts due to historical experiences of being registered as ‘gypsies’. No such registration efforts are proposed, but the issue of producing anonymised data is conflated with that past. The stigmatisation of Roma identity means many Roma do not want to reveal their ethnicity to the state, including during censuses, although in the most recent census respondents could declare more than one nationality.

Czechoslovak demographers analysing the 1969 census found that the number of persons labelled ‘Gypsy-Roma’ was decreasing despite an increase in the birth of persons considered ‘Gypsy-Roma’ in 1968¹⁷⁹, interpreting this to mean the assimilation of such persons was happening at a ‘satisfactory speed’, i.e., fewer ‘seemed’ to be ‘Gypsy-Roma’¹⁸⁰. The method used was third-party identification, whereby census-takers added the letter ‘c’ for ‘*cikán*’ in coloured pencil to the form for ‘gypsies’ and were instructed to ‘evaluate the overall way of life’ of the respondents. Demographers at the time recognized this category was ‘fuzzy’, defining ‘Gypsies-Roma’ in both anthropological and ethno-social terms, but claimed the number of almost 220,000 Gypsy-Roma in the 1970 census were ‘100 %’ Gypsy-Roma, not ‘half-Gypsies’, i.e., not of mixed parentage¹⁸¹.

The first post-communist census in 1991 recorded 33,000 Roma in the Czech lands and almost 76,000 in Slovakia, but these figures were widely understood to undercount the Roma population by about fivefold¹⁸². This pattern has persisted in every census since.

Following the *D.H.* judgment, principals have been required to provide ‘qualified estimates’ of the number of Roma in the schools, also using third-party identification, so the state can track progress in reducing discrimination. A vocal minority of educators has refused to comply, undermining the reliability of the data.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Sokolova, p. 218.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 189.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 190; Donert, p. 197.

¹⁸² Gwendolyn Albert, ‘Education Policies in the Czech Republic’, in *Ten Years After*, Rostas, Iulius, ed., (CEU: 2012), p. 189.

¹⁸³ “Řada ředitelů odmítá určovat žáky podle jejich etnického původu kvůli obavám o právní důsledky a problémy spojené s přesností odhadů.” [Many principals refuse to designate the ethnic origin of their pupils for fear of legal repercussions and problems related to the precision of the estimates.], in *ROME A*,

In 2023-2024, RILSA piloted a methodology for anonymized polling of Roma using self-identification¹⁸⁴. Some findings from this work are discussed in Sections 2.5 and 2.6.

2.11. Roma representation in civil society and in politics

Many Roma-run NGOs and those called ‘pro-Roma’ (organizations without Roma in management which undertake Roma-related programming), have been attempting to improve the position of Roma in society since 1989 by making proactive demands for meaningful participation by Roma representatives in civil society and politics. In 2022 a coalition of such NGOs proposed that the Government institute mechanisms to guarantee Roma will monitor the outcome of public spending on Roma based on data disaggregated by ethnicity; that the Government raise awareness about the measures of the Roma Strategy and reinforce its importance to society; that the Government create conditions for implementation of the Roma Strategy by municipalities, the non-state sector (including the private sector), the public sector, and Regional Authorities; and that the Government create conditions for channelling EU resources appropriately so as to achieve programme synergy across the IROP, OPE, and OP JAK operational programmes.¹⁸⁵

Public money has been invested in projects ostensibly addressing Roma marginalization which have had little impact. The EU has been a significant source of funding, as has Norway Grants. Most resources go to ‘pro-Roma’ organizations where management and staff are not Roma although their clients are. These funding mechanisms and groups are then criticized by Roma civil society for absorbing these

‘Anonymní sčítání má zabránit segregaci romských žáků, školám pomůže cílit podporu, říká Fuková a dodává: Spojovat jména s etnicitou? V žádném případě’, Romea.cz, 31 October 2024, available at: <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/anonymni-scitani-ma-zabranit-segregaci-romskych-zaku-skolam-pomuze-cilit-podporu-rika-fukova-a-dodava-spojovat-jmena-s-etnicitou-v-zadnem-pripade>, accessed 19 June 2025.

¹⁸⁴ See the material at ‘Creating a system for quantitative data collection to evaluate the situation of Roma in Czech society’ available at <https://www.rilsa.cz/projekty/vytvoreni-systemu-sberu-quantitativnich-dat-pro-vyhodnocovani-situace-romu-v-ceske-spolecnosti-2/>, accessed 14 February 2025.

¹⁸⁵ See the poster on the recommendations from the 2022 Roma Civil Monitor report on Czechia, available at <https://www.romacivilmonitoring.eu/countries/czechia/>, accessed 19 June 2025.

resources without involving Roma¹⁸⁶. The perception is that such investments are ineffective¹⁸⁷.

Funding for nonprofits is precarious, and given the level of antigypsyism in society, it is not surprising Roma-run organizations have fundraising problems.¹⁸⁸ Human rights organizations have also had a minimal impact on reducing antigypsyism.

In terms of political participation, the democratic transition began with promise: 11 Roma candidates were elected to Parliament in 1990, the most in any post-communist state¹⁸⁹. However, representation rapidly declined, and the last Roma MP served 25 years ago. Roma occasionally win seats in local governments.

2.12. Image of Roma in media and public discourse

Surveys have consistently shown Roma are negatively perceived. A 2023 poll found Roma remain unwanted as neighbours (less desirable than Turks, but more desirable than Syrians, Sudanese, Arabs, and Afghanis) - just 24 % of respondents would accept a Roma neighbour. Research commissioned by the HateFree Culture project found youth attitudes have gradually improved over the last decade, but only about Roma as potential co-workers – most non-Roma youth still would not want Roma to marry into their families. Non-Roma parents still inculcate their children

¹⁸⁶ Lukáš Círok, Zdeněk Ryšavý and Kristian Szinai, 'Czech Govt Council for Roma Minority Affairs holds its first session of 2025, Czech Govt Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs says projects must respond to real needs', Romea.cz, 27 March 2025, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-govt-council-for-roma-minority-affairs-holds-first-session-of-2025-czech-govt-commissioner-for-roma-minority-affairs-says-projects-must-respond-to-real-needs>, accessed 26 April 2025.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ "Securing continuous funding...is...one of the main concerns for Roma NGOs. Private foundations do not do much giving in the area of Roma inclusion, and if they do, it is mostly through scholarship programmes... Private companies do not usually support activities targeting groups for whom there is little empathy, which is... the case of the Roma minority in the Czech Republic. The same applies to contributions from the general public. Private contributions in this area being insignificant, NGOs rely mostly on state funding. The financing of NGOs active in Roma inclusion is generally perceived by the NGOs as not appropriately secured given the scope of the issues dealt with. Mainly service-providing NGOs are active in this area, and few can be considered Roma organisations in terms of their establishers or management. The NGOs are not providing services exclusively to Roma, but to all people endangered by social exclusion in general, a significant percentage of whom are of Roma origin... Finances for social services are mainly distributed through the Regional Authorities, which receive money annually from the state budget in a way that regularly creates problems with the continuous funding of services." In Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy in the Czech Republic: Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (2020), p. 13.

¹⁸⁹ Donert, pp. 251-252.

with fear of 'gypsies', and antigypsyism persists among educators. Notably, the more educated non-Roma are, the more likely they are to express antigypsyist views¹⁹⁰.

2.13. Exploitation of antigypsyist rhetoric in democratic elections

Antigypsyist rhetoric has been a persistent feature of elections since the democratic transition, appearing at all levels and across party lines. Politicians regularly scapegoat Roma as 'inadaptables' or promise to remove them from certain areas. Key examples include:

2008 Regional and Senate Elections (Ústecký Region): The Civic Democratic Party (ODS) published ads mimicking Roma speech: '*Gadje* [non-Roma], get to work so we can be better off', a message implying Roma are undeserving of welfare. Their lead candidate claimed to have seen such graffiti on a Roma-inhabited housing estate¹⁹¹.

2009 European Parliament Elections: An antigypsyist ad for the ultra-right National Party was aired by public broadcaster Czech Television and remains on YouTube; using photos of 'Gypsies' in stereotypically oversized gold jewellery, the ad called for an end to the alleged 'favouring/privileging' of 'Gypsies', calling them 'black racists'¹⁹². The ad was condemned by the premier and the Council of Europe Secretary-General¹⁹³. In those same elections, public broadcaster Czech Radio refused to broadcast two separate ads for the ultra-right DS with the message: 'We reject the Government policy of Gypsy racism when the Gypsies are paid from our taxes so they do not have to work and spend their free time harassing decent people'¹⁹⁴.

2010 Senate and Local Elections: The Social Democrats used billboards reading 'Why should I regret being the majority nationality in my homeland?'¹⁹⁵.

2016 Senate and Regional Assembly Elections: Anti-establishment parties made gains, with Senator Jaroslav Doubrava's Severočešín.cz party winning re-election with 57.89 % of the vote and his colleague Alena Dernerová winning 70.81 % of the vote.

¹⁹⁰ HateFree Culture, 'Mladí Češi jsou vůči Romům stále tolerantnější ukazuje časosběrný výzkum pro HateFree Culture', 22 November 2023, available at <https://www.hatefree.cz/clanky/mladi-cesi-jsou-vuci-romum-stale-tolerantnejsi-ukazuje-casosberny-vyzkum-pro-hatefree-culture>, accessed 16 February 2025.

¹⁹¹ Albert (2012), p. 145.

¹⁹² See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9xIG1rDjZc> – accessed 26 January 2025; today the ad has no soundtrack, but originally it featured music by a Finnish band that was used without permission. See Gwendolyn Albert, 'Anti-Gypsyism and the Extreme-Right', in Stewart, Michael, ed. The Gypsy 'Menace' (2012), p. 139.

¹⁹³ Albert (2012), p. 154.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 158.

Both are infamous for their antigypsyist views¹⁹⁶. In the 2016 regional assembly elections, Jiří Čunek (Christian Democrats), won decisively; as discussed in section 2.2, his political rise was based on antigypsyism¹⁹⁷.

The “Freedom and Direct Democracy” (SPD) movement combined antigypsyism with Islamophobia and nationalism in the 2016 regional assembly election, taking votes away from right-wing extremist parties focused more on immigration, then shocking observers by entering the lower house in 2017¹⁹⁸.

The victor of the 2016 regional and Senate elections, the Association of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO), won the lower house election of 2017; its chair made a crude reference to the ‘Gypsy Camp’ at Lety, and after being criticized, visited there, ostensibly to pay his respects, but doubled down by referencing alleged Roma ‘parasitism’¹⁹⁹.

Jaroslav Foldyna, a Social Democrat leading the 2016 candidate list in Ústecký Region, had previously organized anti-Roma demonstrations (see Section 2.3). After his 2017 re-election, he intensified his antigypsyist rhetoric, accusing Roma of abusing the foster care system and attacking the news outlet Romea.cz for platforming critical Roma voices, alleging that it gives ‘room to Roma to say vulgar things about the majority’²⁰⁰.

2016 Regional Elections: The ODS revived its ‘*Gadje*, get to work’ slogan in the Ústecký Region through a video which opens by asking: ‘Hey, *gadje*, why do you have time to sit down? Get to work so we’ll have enough money for welfare!’ The video then shows a Roma man entering a casino and losing all his money.

2018 Local Elections in Most: Campaign materials by ‘Open City Hall Most’ featured slogans like ‘Poison isn’t strong enough for these pests’ next to the slogan ‘Zero tolerance for inadaptables’. The movement claimed the juxtaposition of the messages was unintentional. Police concluded that while the ad did target Roma, it

¹⁹⁶ Gwendolyn Albert, ‘Antigypsyism during the 2016-2017 election campaigns in the Czech Republic’, in Mack, Jonathan (Ed). 2017. Antigypsyism in Public Discourses and Election Campaigns. Heidelberg: Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, p. 95, available at: <http://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/antigypsyism-in-public-discourses-and-election-campaigns/>, accessed 25 January 2025.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 96.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid; the present author is a member of the ROMEA organization and translates the content on Romea.cz into English.

was not criminal. The city's misdemeanour commission later decided it did not violate local rules in 2019²⁰¹.

2024 European, Senate, and Regional Elections: The SPD published two racist ads. One featured a graphic of two Roma boys smoking cigarettes with the messages: 'They say we should go to school, but our folks couldn't care less...' and 'Welfare just for families whose children attend school!' Lawsuits brought to prohibit the ads were unsuccessful²⁰². In 2025, the lower house voted to strip the SPD chair of his parliamentary immunity so he can be prosecuted for incitement to hatred²⁰³.

²⁰¹ Zdeněk Ryšavý, 'Czech town hall decides local election slogans about pests and poison were not even misdemeanours', Romea.cz, 30 June 2019, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-town-hall-decides-local-election-slogans-about-pests-and-poison-were-not-even-misdemeanors>, accessed 16 February 2025.

²⁰² ČTK, ROMEA, Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech lower house might vote on stripping Okamura of immunity as soon as next week', Romea.cz, 7 February 2025, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-lower-house-might-vote-on-stripping-okamura-of-immunity-as-soon-as-next-week>, accessed 16 February 2025.

²⁰³ ČTK, ROMEA, Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech lower house strips Tomio Okamura of immunity, he can now be prosecuted for racist campaign ads', Romea.cz, 12 February 2025, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-lower-house-strips-tomio-okamura-of-immunity-he-can-now-be-prosecuted-for-racist-campaign-ads>, accessed 16 February 2025.

3. Current efforts and policies to address antigypsyism and their results

Reducing antigypsyism is the focus of a dedicated chapter in the Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation 2021-2030, the Czech national strategy under the EU Roma Strategic Framework.²⁰⁴ Other chapters address the issue more indirectly, as do key policy developments of the last 20 years. Some of these efforts involve Holocaust remembrance, others focus on Roma participation. Collectively, these developments have laid the groundwork for transitional justice processes.

The role of antigypsyism in the discrimination and segregation of Roma in education remains a sensitive subject that has proven difficult to address through policy. The initiation of EU infringement proceedings on this matter underscores how entrenched such practices are and how difficult they are to dismantle. This section reviews existing policies.

3.1. The Museum of Romani Culture

Founded in 1991 as a nonprofit organization, the Museum of Romani Culture became a state-supported institution under the Ministry of Culture in 2005, increasing its public prestige. Its collections document Roma culture and history with examples of crafts and professions, dwellings, interior furnishings, clothing and jewellery, artworks, written materials, posters and invitations, audio recordings, photographs, and video, and a collection on how non-Roma society depicts Roma, including examples of antigypsyism. It publishes a journal with peer-reviewed content and catalogues on its temporary exhibitions; its headquarters include a café and a library, and it holds cultural events. Its main attraction is the permanent exhibition 'The Story of the Roma'.

On 26 March 2025, the Culture Ministry announced it will establish a new advisory board for the museum to strengthen its supervision and open up its management to input and participation from more Roma. The board will have 15 members - Roma artists, descendants of Roma and Sinti survivors of the Holocaust, academics, experts, and ministerial staff. They will advise on development strategy and be able to establish working groups on the memorials to the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti²⁰⁵. Since 2018, the museum has administered those memorials, and since 2019

²⁰⁴ Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, COM/2020/620, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0620&qid=1615293880380>, accessed 19 June 2025.

²⁰⁵ Zdeněk Ryšavý and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Culture Minister to appoint new advisory board for the Museum of Romani Culture', Romea.cz, 26 March 2025, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-culture-minister-to-appoint-new-advisory-board-for-the-museum-of-romani-culture>, accessed 27 April 2025.

it has administered the future headquarters of the Centre for the Roma and Sinti in Prague (CRSP). These are discussed below.

3.2. Recognition of the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti

In terms of antigypsyism and transitional justice, Holocaust remembrance is a logical starting point. Dignified remembrance sites for Roma and Sinti victims now exist. It remains to be seen whether all schools will teach this history.

Understanding Holocaust remembrance today requires acknowledging how the communist regime instrumentalized Holocaust history for ideological purposes. For example, a tourist guide from before 1989 to the former Nazi ghetto of Theresienstadt referenced '360,000 Czech citizens' having been killed by the Nazis without acknowledging that they were Jews murdered for being Jews²⁰⁶.

From 1968 to 1973, the Czech branch of the Union of Gypsies-Roma, led by Holocaust survivors, made redress a key part of its platform. The Slovak branch surveyed its members about participation in the resistance or incarceration in concentration camps during the war. Those certified as Nazi political prisoners qualified for disability pensions or early retirement in the 1970s, but the racial aspect of the persecution of Roma applicants was not recognized and few Roma claims for certification succeeded²⁰⁷.

In 1971, the first World Romani Congress was held in Orpington, England; Roma from Czechoslovakia attended²⁰⁸. The Roma anthem and flag were adopted and use of the word 'Roma' rather than 'gypsy' was declared the official designation; a sub-commission was established on crimes against Roma during the war²⁰⁹.

Holocaust redress procedures have not served all Roma victims. In 1997, the Swiss Special Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust started; in March 1998, the Fund made its first payments to Roma victims from Germany. In August 1998, the Fund announced that only camp inmates would qualify due to the unexpectedly high

²⁰⁶ Donert, p. 198.

²⁰⁷ Sokolova, p. 146; Donert, pp. 199-201.

²⁰⁸ Donert notes that they were closely monitored by Czechoslovak Embassy staff and that some Union members reported receiving 'very positive' feedback on their performance at the First World Romani Congress from their minders; the Second World Romani Congress in Geneva was also exploited by the Czechoslovak authorities for anti-Western propaganda and Czechoslovak secret police surveilled some of the Roma activists who attended these international meetings. The Third World Romani Congress in West Germany was seen by the Czechoslovak authorities as urging Roma to 'infiltrate' the state apparatus, and even Romani labourers, not just dissident intellectuals, were seen as taking up the challenge to do so. Donert, pp. 210, 237, 238, 239.

²⁰⁹ Entry on 'World Romani Congress', Wikipedia, available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Romani_Congress, accessed 16 February 2025.

number of applicants, but the restrictions applied just to Roma. Mr. Čeněk Růžička, chair of the Committee for the Redress of the Roma Holocaust, which had been assisting applicants, condemned this²¹⁰.

The EP adopted a 2015 resolution on 'anti-Gypsyism in Europe and EU recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide during World War II', designating 2 August as that day²¹¹. Roma civil society marks this day annually.

Two main memorial sites at the former 'Gypsy Camps' of Hodonín and Lety serve both commemorative and educational purposes. There is also a local memorial to Roma children incarcerated in a Liberec concentration camp before their deportation to Auschwitz. These are described in detail below.

3.2.1. The Hodonín u Kunštátu Memorial

This is the preserved site of what was called a 'Gypsy Camp' between 1942 and 1943 in Moravia where entire Roma and Sinti families were concentrated prior to their deportation to Auschwitz²¹². Since 2018, its administrator is the Museum of Romani Culture. In 2021, an extensive permanent exhibition opened called 'Hodonín u Kunštátu Camp: Intersecting Tragedies 1940–1950. Central Europe.' There are two spaces for temporary exhibitions.

In 1940, a penal labour camp opened here that became an internment camp in January 1942²¹³. On 2 August 1942, during the three-day registration targeting 6,500 persons as 'gypsies and gypsy half-breeds', the camp became a 'Gypsy Camp'. During the penal labour camp and internment camp phases, able-bodied men were incarcerated for up to six months to exploit their labour; of the 1,032 inmates from 1940 to August 1942, 167 (16 %) were recorded as 'gypsies'.

Hodonín could house 300 inmates in summer and 200 in winter, but in August 1942, more than 1,000 families, most of them Roma, were imprisoned there. As additional barracks were built, the inmates lived in tents and wagons, but the overcrowding was never resolved. They were subjected to a degrading intake process involving

²¹⁰ European Roma Rights Centre, 'Swiss Fund Restricts Eligibility for Roma Holocaust Survivors', 10 September 1998, available at <https://www.errc.org/roma-rights-journal/swiss-fund-restricts-eligibility-for-roma-holocaust-survivors>, accessed 12 February 2025.

²¹¹ Donert, p. 46.

²¹² Museum of Romani Culture, available at: <https://www.rommuz.cz/en/hodonin-u-kunstatu/>, accessed 16 February 2025

²¹³ Ibid, available at: <https://www.rommuz.cz/en/hodonin-u-kunstatu/history-of-the-memorial/history/>, accessed 16 February 2025.

registration, confiscation of their property, delousing, and shaving. Everybody age 10 and older had to work either in the camp, in the nearby quarry, or on the highway.

This 'Gypsy Camp' was run by former gendarmes and managed by a former first lieutenant of the gendarmerie. Inmates were tasked with keeping order, including through corporal punishment, and some were brought there from Auschwitz I for that purpose. Prisoners were malnourished, lacked water, performed hard labour, and were subjected to violence. These conditions impacted their health, and in the winter of 1942-43, an epidemic of typhoid erupted. Of the 73 victims buried in the cemetery in nearby Černovice from August 1942 to January 1943, most were children. On 7 December 1942, 91 Hodonín inmates were sent to Auschwitz I as part of a transport of 'asocials'.

In January 1943, representatives of the Inspector of the Plainclothes Protectorate Police were ordered to start burying dead inmates in mass graves near the camp at a site in the woods that would be called Žalov. The camp was quarantined in February 1943.

From 21-22 August 1943, 749 Hodonín inmates were sent to Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The 'Gypsy Camp' closed on 30 September 1943. The 25 remaining prisoners were forced to clear the camp and transported to Auschwitz on 28 January 1944. A total of 1,396 children, men and women, mostly Roma from Moravia, were imprisoned in Hodonín. At least 207 did not survive. There were 67 escape attempts, most of which failed, and 262 persons were released after being recategorized as not 'gypsies' after all. Most inmates transported to the Nazi concentration camps died in them.

After the 'Gypsy Camp' closed, the site was repurposed multiple times: Wehrmacht units trained there, then the Red Army headquartered a military hospital there, and Romanian soldiers used it, too. In 1946, elderly Germans who would not survive expulsion from Czechoslovakia were imprisoned there, 80 of whom died. Between 1949 and 1950, a forced labour camp for opponents of the Communist Party ran there, after which it was used as a recreation site for decades.

The Roma victims were commemorated after the war with a birchwood cross and a stone inscribed '*Žalov obětí nacismu*' (Žalov, to the victims of Nazism') at the site of the mass graves in the woods. On 18 March 1973, the first public commemoration was held there, organized by the Union of Gypsies-Roma. As a nonprofit, the Museum of Romani Culture resumed that tradition in 1995 and, together with the Hodonín Municipal Authority, erected a cross in 1997 at Žalov designed by Roma sculptor Eduard Oláh (1955–2018). In 1998, the museum installed a plaque to the victims in the cemetery in Černovice, designed by the Roma artist Božena Přikrylová.

Oral history interviews were conducted in the 1990s with many Hodonín survivors who described prisoners being killed for resisting and corporal punishments²¹⁴. Roma forced to perform service roles there were interviewed as well, such as Marie Ondrášová, who was ordered to work as the camp nurse; her story is now part of the permanent exhibition²¹⁵.

3.2.2. The Lety u Písku Memorial

This 'Gypsy Camp' is described in Section 1.2 above. After it was closed in 1943, former inmates visited annually to light candles at the unmarked burial ground in the woods. In the early 1950s, the family of prisoner Martin Čermák commissioned a beechwood cross, attached a crown of thorns made of barbed wire to it, and erected it over the unmarked burial ground²¹⁶. The Richter and Šmíd families installed a plaque on the cemetery wall in Mirovice in 1960 reading: 'Here the victims of the concentration camp in Lety lie in eternal rest'; the mayor installed a similar plaque there in 1992²¹⁷.

In the 1970s, agricultural cooperatives built an industrial pig farm for 13,000 animals over the former concentration camp site. Survivor Františka Čermáková protested the desecration, but officials refused to acknowledge Lety had been a concentration camp. A windstorm in the 1980s erased visible traces of the burial site²¹⁸.

After 1989, American genealogist Paul Polansky uncovered local archives and publicized the camp's history internationally, prompting the Czech government to respond. In 1994, the very year the farm was privatised, the Foreign Ministry commissioned an historical study on the camp, and in 1995 a monument was unveiled near the presumed location of the unmarked burial ground by President Václav Havel on the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. It remained difficult to access for years²¹⁹. Journalist Markus Pape's 1997 book *A Nikdo Vam*

²¹⁴ Horváthová a kol., p. 480

²¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 440, 560.

²¹⁶ Documentarian Miroslav Bárta made a 20-minute documentary in 1959 about Lety entitled 'Nezapomeňte na tohle děvčátko', [Don't Forget about That Little Girl] which can be viewed online today with English subtitles at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpFpojRyzo>, ROMEA TV, accessed 14 February 2025.

²¹⁷ Pape, pp. 113-114.

²¹⁸ Ibid, p. 114.

²¹⁹ Ibid, p. 115.

Nebude Věřit... [And Nobody Will Believe You...] criticized the neglect of survivor testimonies and called for deeper historical research²²⁰.

The Committee for the Redress of the Roma Holocaust (VPORH), a civil society group, was established in 1998 by Roma survivors of the Holocaust and their relatives²²¹. VPORH raises awareness of historical Roma and Sinti suffering and has successfully organized annual commemorations, campaigned for the closure of both the Hodonín recreational facility and the Lety farm, and gained diplomatic support for these efforts.

In Mirovice cemetery, VPORH installed name plaques in 2000 and a sculpture in 2002. In 2005, VPORH created a travelling exhibition about Lety which was presented at the EP in Brussels and in both houses of the Czech Parliament, followed by another travelling exhibition in 2007 that toured domestically. VPORH assisted the Database of Roma Victims of the Holocaust project from 2016-2020.

The Czech state purchased the Lety farm in 2018. Archaeological surveys in 2017 and 2019 confirmed the burial ground location and found artefacts from the camp, finally refuting disinformation that the farm never overlapped the former concentration camp site. The farm was demolished and the landscape rehabilitated in 2022, after which construction of a memorial started. It opened in 2024, largely financed by Norway Grants, with contributions from Germany and the Czech Culture Ministry.

In 2020, the winning design of the international landscape architecture competition for the memorial was announced. The jury included Roma and Sinti descendants of Holocaust survivors as voting members, two of whom, Mr. Jan Hauer and Mr. Čeněk Růžička, died in 2022. During the selection of the final design, they had raised one caveat: The memorial features a walkway encircling the area of the former camp, inset with spokes, each engraved with the name of a prisoner and other information (birth and death dates, the number assigned to their family, and their eventual fate

²²⁰ Pape noted reservations expressed by Romani Rose, the Sinto activist whose work led to the establishment of the Documentation Center of German Sinti and Roma in Heidelberg, Germany, about taking Nazi records at face value. Pape's aim was to inspire study of the history of Nazism in the Czech lands. While the claims of Lety survivors to have witnessed executions, murders, and rapes of inmates by guards there are not verifiable, the available information does not rule out the idea that such crimes could have been committed with impunity; Pape also noted that some prisoners were misidentified as 'gypsies' and that a Protectorate official who attempted to stop the genocide had yet to be rehabilitated. He called for the Czech and German authorities to jointly establish an Anti-Racist Documentation Center for Human Rights in the Czech Republic to commemorate the racialized persecution perpetrated during the Second World War and show their commitment to civil society development.

²²¹ Its chair was Mr. Čeněk Růžička (1946-2022), whose parents were in Lety at different times; his father, Jan (1917-1994), later survived the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp and his mother, Alžběta (1924-1998), later survived Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Schuster, Michael, 'Committee for the Redress of the Roma Holocaust', *Enzyklopaedie des NS-Völkermordes an den Sinti und Roma in Europa*, 12 March 2024, <https://encyclopaedia-gsr.eu/lemma/committee-for-the-redress-of-the-roma-holocaust-en-1-0/> and personal communication from Jana Kokyová, January 2024.

– whether they died in Lety, were transported to Auschwitz, escaped, or were released)²²². These jurors were concerned it would be possible for visitors to walk on the names and asked for that to be prevented²²³.

The current VPORH chair, Jana Kokyová, told the author that memorial administration should include the descendants of Lety survivors²²⁴. She stressed the importance of involving them in educational and interpretive efforts. Without their active involvement, decisions may be made on remembrance and on telling the story of Lety with which the descendants might disagree. She believes it would be best for an entity to manage the Lety memorial where the descendants of the Lety victims are represented, to prevent their perpetually being in a ‘watchdog’ position rather than participating in official decision-making²²⁵.

3.2.3. The Liberec Memorial to local Roma children transported to Auschwitz

On 22 February 2024 a memorial was unveiled in Liberec bearing the names of 11 boys born in a local concentration camp for Roma and Sinti who later died in

²²² Muzeum romské kultury a Onplan, Krajinařsko-architektonická soutěž o návrh „Lety u Písku. Památník holokaustu Romů a Sintů v Čechách“ Protokol o průběhu soutěže, p. 39, available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://novypamatniklety.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/LETY_SOUTEZNY_PROTOKOL.pdf, accessed 16 February 2016. The relevant passage from the competition protocol reads: ‘Při diskusích poroty byla, především ze strany pozůstalých, vznesena námitka proti umístění jmen obětí v chodníku kolem centra tábora, které znamená, že návštěvníci budou po jménech šlapat.’ [During the discussions of the jury the objection was raised, primarily by the descendants, to installing the victims’ names in the walkway around the center of the camp, which means visitors will walk on the names. – author’s translation]

²²³ As currently installed, the memorial does not yet effectively prevent visitors from walking on the names, an issue raised with the Culture Ministry by descendants of the survivors. In late April 2025, the architect, the builder, and the landscaper; descendants of survivors and their supporters; the Culture Ministry; and the Museum of Romani Culture agreed in principle on improvements, specifically, that barriers will protect the names on the walkway and that a clearly legible list of the names will be permanently installed elsewhere at the memorial. See Horváthová, Jana, ‘Jana Horváthová: Please, let’s be fair! The dispute over the names of the Lety prisoners at the new memorial was about the size of the letters’, Romea.cz, 26 April 2024, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/opinion/jana-horvathova-please-lets-be-fair-the-dispute-over-the-names-of-the-lety-prisoners-at-the-new-memorial-was-about-the-size-of-the-letters>, accessed 16 February 2025, and Kokyová, Jana, ‘Jana Kokyová: Descendants of Romani survivors of the Holocaust spoke and were not listened to during the implementation of the winning design for the memorial to their forebears in Lety u Písku, Czech Republic’, Romea.cz, 2 May 2024, available at <https://romea.cz/en/opinion/jana-kokyova-descendants-of-romani-survivors-of-the-holocaust-spoke-and-were-not-listened-to-during-the-implementation-of-the-winning-design-for-the-memorial-to-their-forebears-in-lety-u-pisku-czech>, accessed 16 February 2025. The author personally attended the April 2025 meeting to discuss the resolution of this issue.

²²⁴ Interview respondent 6, see Appendix 2.

²²⁵ Interview of 20 January 2025.

Auschwitz²²⁶. The memorial marks the final site of the camp on Kunratická Street²²⁷ where more than 130 Roma and Sinti were interned between 1941 and 1943, after which the Nazis transported most of them to the Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Ravensbrück concentration camps, where they were murdered²²⁸. The memorial consists of a nearly three-meter-high, six-ton granite stone sourced from Liberec. A bronze plaque affixed to the stone bears the names of the 11 boys and a description of the historical events being commemorated.

However, sometime before 5 April 2025, the memorial was vandalized; its plaque struck multiple times with a sharp object, defacing the names. The damage was discovered by students during a Holocaust education workshop. As of this writing, police have not identified the perpetrator or timeframe of the attack²²⁹. The vandalism drew strong condemnation from Roma civil society and Holocaust survivor descendants, who called it 'a perverse expression of hatred and deep-rooted racism'. It also echoes an earlier incident of desecration at the Lety Cultural Heritage Memorial in the 2010s, raising critical questions about whether sufficient progress has been made in the legal and social protection of memory sites. The only related policy change in the interim has been the creation in 2024 of the Government Council for the Agenda of Remembrance, a permanent advisory body on issues related to the agenda of remembrance that is tasked with accumulating and discussing material related to the historical memory of totalitarian regimes and expressing its opinion on the framework of the relevant subsidies for overcoming the residual effects of totalitarian regimes on Czech civil society, as well as with drawing attention

²²⁶ ČTK, Zdeněk Ryšavý and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Liberec, Czech Republic: Memorial to the children born in the local concentration camp for Roma and Sinti during WWII who died in Auschwitz', Romea.cz, 4 March 2024, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/liberec-czech-republic-memorial-to-the-children-born-in-the-local-concentration-camp-for-roma-and-sinti-during-wwii-who-died-in-auschwitz>, accessed 28 April 2025.

²²⁷ Following the deportations, the camp was repurposed to imprison French prisoners of war. During the Nazi occupation, Liberec hosted 108 camps of various kinds.

²²⁸ Local Roma community member Jan Cverčko learned of this history in 2016 when news server Romea.cz published an excerpt of a book by historian Ivan Rous called *Tábory a válečná výroba* [Camps and Wartime Production]. In 2017, Roma NGOs in the Liberec Region formed an association and contacted Liberec City Hall about commemorating the site, which local officials agreed to do. The first step was the installation of three Stolpersteine, or 'stones of the disappeared', on Dr. Edvard Beneš Square in Liberec, with the names of three Roma victims identified by Rous in his book. More names were then discovered from the archives at the Auschwitz Memorial. In 2019, seven wooden crosses were installed at the site of the former camp. Next, a base for the Liberec Region's emergency services was planned for the site which included a memorial to the victims in its design. An archaeological survey, financed by the Liberec Region and conducted by the Museum of North Bohemia, uncovered artefacts and the camp's concrete foundation. Governor Martin Půta approved funding for the memorial, which was installed by Rous and his colleagues.

²²⁹ ROMEA and Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Police seek witnesses to attack on the Holocaust memorial to 11 Romani children born in Liberec concentration camp,' Romea.cz, 27 April 2025, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-police-seek-witnesses-to-attack-on-the-holocaust-memorial-to-11-romani-children-born-in-liberec-concentration-camp>, accessed 28 April 2025.

to the serious problems of those who participated in the resistance to totalitarian regimes requiring measures which fall into the competence of multiple ministries; as of June 2025 there are no experts on Roma-related subject matter included as members of this council.²³⁰

Despite the increased visibility of Roma history in public discourse, the recurrence of such attacks on Holocaust memorials to Romani victims suggests enduring societal ambivalence and persistent gaps in protection. While Czech criminal law does provide penalties for hate crimes and property damage, enforcement remains inconsistent, and public awareness of antigypsyism is limited. At the time of writing, no new protective measures or policy responses have been reported in connection with the Liberec incident. This case illustrates the broader challenge of achieving societal consensus on the memory of Roma persecution, underscoring the need for more locally proactive protection of such vulnerable heritage sites. Embedding the issue of antigypsyism in national memory policy and hate crime prevention strategies would help ensure such memorials are not only erected, but also respected.

3.2.4. The Centre for the Roma and Sinti in Prague

The Centre for the Roma and Sinti in Prague (CRSP) was financed by Norway Grants and administered by the Museum of Romani Culture. It was conceived by Čeněk Růžička, co-founder and first chair of the VPORH, who envisioned a workplace in the capital focusing on Roma and Sinti indigenous to the Czech lands and the Holocaust. Although a villa in Prague has been administered by the museum since 2019 as the future CRSP headquarters, it has yet to be reconstructed; the initial funding for the renovation was returned to Norway.

Despite these delays, the CRSP delivered impactful programming. It partnered with the European Wergeland Centre from Norway to offer educational workshops, developed a methodology based on competences for democratic culture, and organized public events, including a commemoration at Prague-Ruzyně marking the deportation of Roma and Sinti to Auschwitz II-Birkenau²³¹. It held cultural events and discussions, including on the forced sterilisation of Roma women. Its exhibition called '[*Otevřená cesta / The Road is Open / Phundrado Drom*](#)' in the Ethnographic

²³⁰ See the entry for this council on the website for the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, available at <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/ppov/rvppa/rada-vlady-pro-pametovou-agendu-214537/>, accessed 19 June 2025.

²³¹ ČTK, ROMEA, Gwendolyn Albert, 'Exhibition in Prague reveals the stories of the Romani and Sinti women and men who survived the WWII-era concentration camp in Lety u Písku', Romea.cz, 17 April 2024, available at <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/exhibition-in-prague-reveals-the-stories-of-the-roma-and-sinti-women-and-men-who-survived-the-wwii-era-concentration-camp-in-lety-u-pisku>, accessed 30 April 2025.

Museum in Prague featured samples from various collections of the Museum of Romani Culture, including artworks by self-taught Romani artists; it closed in July 2024.

Although the CRSP's programming earned a strong reputation and was in high demand, including among schools, it was suspended for lack of funds. As of this writing, it is entirely dependent on foreign financing; according to the Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs, Norway Grants will repeat its support to reconstruct its headquarters.

In an interview for this report, VPORH chair Jana Kokyová stressed the importance of having a central institution in Prague to complement the Lety memorial's remote location²³². She believes the CRSP should focus on the culture of the Roma and Sinti indigenous to the Czech lands and emphasize their experience of the Holocaust through programming in a dignified setting where non-Roma and Roma can discuss current events, too. An office for the VPORH was originally envisioned there that could be a brilliant instrument for combating antigypsyism. She regrets that the villa remains unreconstructed and that its programming was suspended.

Reopening the CRSP and securing its long-term funding are priorities A.2.2 and A.2.3 of the national Roma Strategy²³³. Ms. Kokyová believes the CRSP should also be financed by the City of Prague and the Czech state as well as Norway Grants; while she is not optimistic this will happen, she remains committed to advocating for that outcome²³⁴.

3.3. Policies on Roma inclusion and participation

3.3.1. Council for Roma Minority Affairs

The Government established an Interdepartmental Commission for Roma Community Affairs in 1997. In 2001, it was renamed the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs (RVZRM)²³⁵. It is a permanent advisory and initiatory body for systematic advice on this issue, drafting position documents for Government decisions, commenting on draft legislation, approving motions for Government review, adopting strategies, drafting measures, approving a regular Report on the Status of the Roma Minority and assessments of the progress on fulfilling

²³² Interview respondent 6, see Appendix 2.

²³³ Strategie romské rovnosti, začlenění a participace 2021-2030, úkolová část, 2024 revision, available at <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/pracovni-a-poradni-organy-vlady/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/uvod-5779/>, accessed 30 April 2025

²³⁴ Interview respondent 6, see Appendix 2.

²³⁵ The author has been a civil society member of this body since September 2020.

Government resolutions, recommending priorities for state financing, assessing methodological support to Regional Roma Coordinators and local Romani advisors, meeting international governmental and non-governmental institutions and the EU, educating the public, and assessing the work of the Agency for Social Inclusion, including by assessing where it operates. The RVZRM, its committees, and its working groups are given technical support by the Division of National Minorities and Roma Affairs at the Office of the Government.

The RVZRM has 36 members. It is chaired either by the Prime Minister or the Human Rights Minister. Its first vice-chair is the Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs and its second vice-chair is a civil society member of Roma origin. Other members are: a representative of the central state administration; the Labour and Social Affairs Minister, the Culture Minister, the Regional Development Minister, the Education Minister and the Interior Minister; the Government Human Rights Commissioner; Deputy Ministers or Senior Section Directors from the Finance Ministry, Foreign Affairs Ministry, Health Ministry, and Justice Ministry; the head of the Office of the Government; a representative of the Association of Regions (at the level of Governor); a representative of the Union of Cities and Municipalities (at the level of either mayor or vice-mayor); a representative of the Regional Roma Affairs Coordinators; a representative of the Office of the Public Defender of Rights; the Museum of Romani Culture (a state institution); civil society representatives and scholars. For each member who works for a public authority there is one civil society member. Most of the current civil society members are Roma; they are unpaid.

Several Roma respondents noted that the RVZRM's advisory status limits its influence and that public awareness of its work remains low. While older respondents acknowledged some progress, others expressed frustration that its civil society members are not fully leveraging the platform for advocacy²³⁶.

3.3.2. Division of National Minorities and Roma Affairs

Housed in the Department of Human Rights and Minority Protections, the Division of National Minorities and Roma Affairs oversees the operations of the Council on National Minorities and the RVZRM at the Office of the Government. The division is staffed by a head who also serves as the RVZRM secretary; by an administrator of the subsidy program for Community Work and Prevention of Social Exclusion; by an administrator of the subsidy program of Support for Roma Affairs Coordinators; and by another dedicated staffer. The head and the subsidy administrators also perform other tasks for the Council on National Minorities.

²³⁶ Interview respondents 1, 5, and 9 (see Appendix 2 for all respondents); Interview respondent 8.

The division has long been understaffed. Three Roma respondents expressed concern that no Roma are employed there²³⁷, and that staff often lack lived experience or deep understanding of Roma issues, making it harder to translate Roma civil society input into concrete policy²³⁸. The division was said to be unable to ensure proper oversight of the Roma Coordinators at regional level, most of whom are also not Roma²³⁹. Respondents involved with these efforts for a longer time recalled an earlier configuration of this division where staff undertook field visits and were more operationally in contact with the ministries than today²⁴⁰.

One Roma respondent said the problem is not the expertise or number of division personnel, but that ministries lack expertise on Roma issues. The respondent said such institutions all lack national minority departments and suggested pushing the national minority agenda up to ministerial level would be the best solution²⁴¹.

3.3.3. National Roma Integration Strategy

The Government's primary policy document in this area is the Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation 2021-2030, adopted May 2021 and revised in February 2025²⁴². The Strategy addresses antigypsyism, hate crime, discrimination, and Roma representation, among other things. It mandates the monitoring and evaluation of antigypsyism, improved legal support for victims, and combating segregation and stereotypes.

The 2025 revision was developed collaboratively by ministries, the Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs, the RVZRM and its committees and working groups, the Regional Roma Coordinators, representatives of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), representatives of Roma civil society and Roma and pro-Roma NGOs coordinated by RomanoNet, experts on hate crime, and experts from the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. There are no plans for another revision before 2030.

²³⁷ Interview respondents 2, 4, and 8.

²³⁸ Interview respondent 4.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Interview respondents 2 and 8.

²⁴¹ Interview respondent 5.

²⁴² See the Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (Strategy for Roma Integration) 2021-2030, available at: [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/Strategy-for-Roma-Equality--Inclusion-and-Participation-_Strategy-for-Roma-Integration_-2021-2030.pdf](https://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/aktuality/Strategy-for-Roma-Equality--Inclusion-and-Participation-_Strategy-for-Roma-Integration_-2021-2030.pdf), accessed 27 April 2025.

The revised Strategy calls for an analysis of the impact of structural antigypsyism on Roma with an emphasis on particularly vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, migrants, LGBTI+ persons, persons living in deep poverty, persons living with disabilities, women, and youth. It will focus on the impacts and manifestations of antigypsyism and will serve as a basis for applying and implementing EU Directive 2000/43/ES, the Racial Equality Directive, to effectively prevent discrimination against Roma; to prevent administrations from taking segregationist approaches toward Roma; and to create instruments to successfully combat antigypsyism and anti-Roma sentiment. The analysis should be published in 2027 and will be undertaken by the Human Rights Department of the Office of the Government.

The EU Roma Strategic Framework is fairly well reflected in the revised Strategy and even exceeds its expectations in some respects (for instance, the EU recommends ensuring at least 70 % of Roma children participate in preschool by 2030, while the revised Strategy calls for 86 % of Roma children participating in preschool by 2030)²⁴³. The implementation gap, however, remains quite stark with regard to the field of education; it is quite jarring, when reading the revised Strategy, to note that even as both the *D.H.* judgment and the infringement proceedings for discrimination in access to education remain unresolved, ethnic segregation in education continues to accelerate. While there is no lack of analysis of the problem or proposing of solutions to it, the pace of execution would need to accelerate in ways which may simply be unfeasible in order to achieve the declared aims by 2030.

Roma respondents interviewed prior to the revision said the Strategy is too vague to be implemented well and needs a more coordinated approach with regular assessments and communications²⁴⁴. Others said it is a set of unenforceable recommendations²⁴⁵ with unrealistic aims, without a strong monitoring team, and it needs more specific action plans. Some said they were satisfied with the fact that Roma contributed to drafting the Strategy, but lamented its implementation is not progressing²⁴⁶. Others said the Strategy counts too much on EU funding for measures which should be financed by the state itself²⁴⁷. Lastly, some believe it is the role of pro-Roma and Roma civil society to advocate for the Strategy to be

²⁴³ Strategic Aim C. 1; the revised strategy [Revidovaná Strategie] is available here for download in Czech only: <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/pracovni-a-poradni-organy-vlady/zalezitosti-romske-komunity/uvod-5779/>, accessed 19 June 2025

²⁴⁴ Interview respondent 8.

²⁴⁵ Interview respondent 5.

²⁴⁶ Interview respondent 4.

²⁴⁷ Interview respondent 2.

implemented and that results cannot be expected overnight, since the social decline of the Roma has been underway for at least 20 years²⁴⁸.

3.3.4. Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs

Lucie Fuková, a Roma community member, was appointed in December 2022 as the first Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs, a Strategy milestone. The role was created to focus specifically on Roma issues previously handled by the Human Rights Commissioner.

The statutes describe the role of the Roma Commissioner as collaborating with stakeholders, arranging for Roma participation in proposal development, and involving non-state, nonprofit organizations, Regional Roma Coordinators, and local governments in that work²⁴⁹. The Roma Commissioner should be the main point of contact for EU bodies on matters regarding the Roma and should work with other entities abroad on addressing Roma inclusion, coordinating cooperation between them and domestic institutions. The Roma Commissioner comments on materials and proposals to cabinet sessions relevant to Roma inclusion.

In her interview for this report²⁵⁰, Ms. Fuková said her function is to support Roma with their coexistence and sees this post as a unique opportunity to support positive change. With regard to combating antigypsyism, she has made it a priority. In 2020, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) urged the Czech Republic to adopt its definition of antigypsyism. Following her advocacy, the RVZRM adopted a working definition in February 2024, followed by non-binding endorsements from Senate and parliamentary committees. On 8 April 2024, the Government formally adopted a non-binding working definition to mark International Romani Day.

Wording of the Government's non-binding definition of antigypsyism

Antigypsyism, i.e., discrimination against Romani people, is the actions and speech of individuals as well as the practices and strategies of institutions which lead to the exclusion or marginalization of Romani people, to the devaluing of the culture and lifestyle of the Roma, to physical violence against the Roma or to displays of hate targeting Roma and other groups and individuals considered 'Gypsies'. For this reason, such persons are stigmatized and have been, both during the Nazi era and today, targeted for persecution. As a consequence of this discrimination, Romani people are subsequently

²⁴⁸ Interview respondent 7.

²⁴⁹ The Statutes of the Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs are available for download here in Czech only: https://vlada.gov.cz/en/ppov/government_commissioners/government-commissioner-for-roma-minority-affairs-209453/, accessed 19 June 2025

²⁵⁰ Interview respondent 3.

treated as an allegedly foreign, different group and are associated with many insulting stereotypes and biased ideas which in and of themselves represent a specific form of racism.

The current displays of antigypsyism include the following, depending on context:

- *Denying or distorting the genocide of the Roma or their persecution.*
- *Approving of the genocide of the Roma.*
- *Belittling, excusing or perpetrating violence committed against Romani communities and individuals of Romani origin, or belittling, excusing, or perpetrating the destruction of property belonging to the Romani community or individuals.*
- *Coerced or forced sterilisation and mental or physical violence against Romani people.*
- *Maintaining and supporting biased stereotypes about Romani people.*
- *Accusing Romani people of causing actual or fictitious problems of a cultural, economic, political, public health or societal nature and displaying hate for them on that basis.*
- *Disseminating the stereotype that Romani people have a tendency to commit crime.*
- *Using the term 'Gypsy' as a term of abuse.*
- *Approving or supporting mechanisms excluding Romani people on the basis of racially discriminatory assumptions, such as excluding them from the mainstream schools or implementing institutional procedures and policy measures which lead to the segregation of Romani communities.*
- *Implementing policy measures to arbitrarily or discriminatorily displace Romani communities and their individual members with no legal basis, or to create conditions facilitating such displacement.*
- *Ascribing collective responsibility for the actual or fictional behaviour of individual Romani people to all Roma.*

- *Disseminating hate against Romani communities in any form, such as through the media, including the Internet and social media.*²⁵¹

Some Roma respondents interviewed for this report said the term *antigypsyism* remains controversial, even among Roma themselves, and that the Roma Commissioner's communications on the topic should be made more concrete²⁵². Others expressed the hope that institutions such as the police will start using this term²⁵³. Several interviewees remarked that most of Czech society does not acknowledge, and likely never will acknowledge, the existence of antigypsyism²⁵⁴.

3.4. The Agency for Social Inclusion

In 2007, a department of the Office of the Government was created that was called the Agency for Social Inclusion in Socially Excluded Roma Localities²⁵⁵ to provide services to local authorities to eliminate and prevent the social exclusion of Roma-inhabited localities and streamline the drawing of EU Structural Funds for this purpose. Such funding would offer unique opportunities to finance improvements to Roma access to education and employment, improving Roma living standards and socioeconomic conditions.

In 2012, when anti-Roma pogroms were taking place for a second year in a row as described above in Section 2.3, the Government removed the reference to Roma from the Agency's name and expanded its scope to include all localities experiencing social exclusion, not just ones where Roma live²⁵⁶. The Government conditioned the Agency's work on expanding to include the homeless, isolated senior citizens in remote locations, and people living with disabilities, irrespective of ethnicity. The theory is that a 'colour-blind' approach will make investment into social inclusion *per*

²⁵¹ Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 'Vláda dnes jednomyslně přijala právně nezávaznou definici anticikanismu', press release, 10 April 2024, available at: <https://vlada.gov.cz/cz/media-centrum/aktualne/vlada-dnes-jednohlasne-prijala-pravne-nezavaznou-definici-anticikanismu--212819/>, accessed 27 April 2024.

²⁵² Interview respondent 8.

²⁵³ Interview respondent 9.

²⁵⁴ Interview respondent 1.

²⁵⁵ Zmocněnec vlády pro lidská práva, 'Agency for Social Inclusion in Socially Excluded Roma Localities', 2007, available at: [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/zmocnenec-vlady-pro-lidska-prava/AGENCY_FOR_SOCIAL_INCLUSION_IN_SOCIALLY_EXCLUDED_ROMA_LOCALITIES.pdf](https://vlada.gov.cz/assets/ppov/zmocnenec-vlady-pro-lidska-prava/AGENCY_FOR_SOCIAL_INCLUSION_IN_SOCIALLY_EXCLUDED_ROMA_LOCALITIES.pdf), accessed 16 February 2025.

²⁵⁶ ČTK, 'Agentura pro začleňování by se nově měla zaměřit i na jiné vyloučené skupiny obyvatel', Romea.cz, 26 July 2012, available at <https://romea.cz/cz/domaci/agentura-pro-zaclenovani-by-se-nove-mela-zamerit-i-na-jine-vyloucene-skupiny-obyvatel>, accessed 16 February 2025.

se more popular while also improving the Roma situation; in practice, social exclusion has intensified, including Roma social exclusion.

Because municipal cooperation with the Agency is voluntary, some of the areas with the most entrenched Roma exclusion have declined its support. Additionally, the RVZRM has requested that the Agency not operate in municipalities where openly antigypsyist politicians are in power²⁵⁷.

In December 2024, the Supreme Audit Office concluded that the impact of public spending aimed at improving social inclusion had been limited²⁵⁸. For instance, just 24 % of Labour Ministry project participants secured full-time jobs. The auditors said this spending was defined too generally, the projects had no measurable targets, and the ministry did not track whether this investment tackled the root causes of social exclusion. The auditors also found the financing method for the Agency for Social Inclusion privileges the design of short-term solutions. The Regional Development Ministry agreed financing for the Agency should be more systematic.

Many Roma respondents expressed opposition to the Agency's 'colour-blind' approach²⁵⁹. One stated that expectations of the Agency were too high, emphasizing that its main role has only ever been to connect local authorities with funding²⁶⁰. Another criticized staff reductions and called for a clearer definition of the Agency's mission, proposing that it do more to analyse regional funding and encourage its use to combat exclusion²⁶¹. One respondent remarked cynically that 'the Agency staff have never seen a Roma person, not even from an express train'²⁶².

The vice-chair of the RVZRM and the RomanoNet umbrella organization have publicly called for a transformation of the Agency's approach to Roma inclusion. Agency leadership has disputed this criticism²⁶³.

²⁵⁷ In June 2018, David Beňák, a member of the Roma community, became director of the Agency and served during its transformation from a department in the Office of the Government to a department of the Regional Development Ministry; his term coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and he stepped down in 2022.

²⁵⁸ ČTK, ROMEA, Gwendolyn Albert, 'Czech Supreme Audit office reveals that billions of crowns in social inclusion spending have yielded just limited results, Labor and Social Affairs Ministry rejects the criticism', Romea.cz, 9 December 2024, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/czech-republic/czech-supreme-audit-office-reveals-that-billions-of-crowns-in-social-inclusion-spending-have-yielded-just-limited-results-labor-and-social-affairs-ministry-rejects-the-criticism>, accessed 16 February 2025.

²⁵⁹ Interview respondents 2, 4, 5, 7, 8.

²⁶⁰ Interview respondent 1.

²⁶¹ Interview respondent 2.

²⁶² Interview respondent 5.

²⁶³ Martin Šimáček, 'Director of Czech Agency for Social Inclusion says criticism from Romani civil society is 'untrue', claims to actively involve Roma and work for their benefit', Romea.cz, 22 August 2024,

3.5. The infringement proceedings for violation of the Racial Equality Directive

In 2014, the EC launched infringement proceedings for failing to stop ethnic discrimination of Roma children in education, a failure to uphold the EU Racial Equality Directive²⁶⁴. Such proceedings involve three stages: a formal letter of notice, a reasoned opinion, and referral to the European Court of Justice.

In late 2024, the EC issued a second letter of formal notice to which authorities were asked to respond with proof of what has been done to end ethnic segregation of Roma in education. The letter noted that Roma children remain disproportionately represented in separate educational settings for pupils with behavioural and developmental disorders or disabilities, and that segregation also persists within mainstream schools²⁶⁵. The Government's response has not yet been made public.

Most Roma interviewed for this report expressed alarm at Roma school segregation and hope the authorities will be held accountable²⁶⁶. One respondent observed that since some improvements followed the *D.H.* judgment, a new ruling might be necessary to spur further change²⁶⁷.

available at <https://romea.cz/en/opinion/director-of-czech-agency-for-social-inclusion-says-criticism-from-romani-civil-society-is-untrue-claims-to-actively-involve-roma-and-work-for-their-benefit>, accessed 30 April 2025.

²⁶⁴ Amnesty International, 25 September 2014, "EU action against Czech Republic for discrimination in schools is a victory for rights, justice, and Roma", available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/09/eu-action-against-czech-republic-discrimination-schools-victory-rights-justice-and-roma/>, accessed 19 June 2025.

²⁶⁵ ČTK, ROMEA, Gwendolyn Albert, 'European Commission warns Czechia: End the discrimination of Romani children in the schools', ROMEA.cz, 3 October 2024, available at: <https://romea.cz/en/world/european-commission-warns-czechia-end-the-discrimination-of-romani-children-in-the-schools>, accessed 30 April 2025.

²⁶⁶ Interview respondents 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10.

²⁶⁷ Interview respondent 4.

4. Paths to justice and potential for transitional justice tools

In their 2022 report on transitional justice for Roma, Rostas, et al. observe that in the human rights and medicine context, a patient's right to ignore personal medical information has been enshrined internationally; they postulate this could buttress arguments for a right to be spared historical knowledge.²⁶⁸ The interests of the victims of human rights violations in seeing their history publicly validated should override such a putative right, but there is no guarantee that argument will prevail, especially in societies where recognizing Roma suffering is interpreted as 'privileging' Roma. Anti-system movements are enjoying unprecedented influence politically now and are not candidates for dialogue on these issues – rather, they are likely to argue they have a 'right' to disregard historical facts.

To date, transitional justice processes in the Czech Republic have focused on the transition from communism to democracy²⁶⁹. Public support for these processes remains limited. David (2015) argues that a lack of focus on reconciliation and on the forward-looking aspects of such processes could be why, noting that: 'Without reconciliation, transitional justice is just a power game with new actors in the same roles of exclusion'²⁷⁰. The absence of reconciliation means alternatives to revelatory processes like lustration, such as the personal confessions of Poland's or South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation processes, have yet to be adopted²⁷¹. On the other hand, property rehabilitation and restitution, including to churches, has affected hundreds of thousands of people. David (2015) found that support for individual reparations ranged from 40 % to over 50 %, while processes aimed at exposing former secret police informers remain far less popular²⁷².

Two public institutions currently examine this historical period: the Office for Documenting and Investigating the Crimes of Communism, established in 1995, and the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, established in 2008. Similar NGO

²⁶⁸ Iulius Rostas et al, State of the Art Report: Transitional Justice for Roma in Europe, Centre for European Policy Studies (2022), p. 19, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363318764_State_of_the_Art_Report_Transitional_Justice_for_Roma_in_Europe, accessed 25 April 2025.

²⁶⁹ Roman David, 'Transitional Justice Effects in the Czech Republic', Chapter 5 in Post-Communist Transitional Justice: Lessons from Twenty-Five Years of Experience, pp. 97-120, Cambridge University Press 2015, available at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/postcommunist-transitional-justice/transitional-justice-effects-in-the-czech-republic/271E3CEDBC05D44D88CFBC383E095668>, accessed 30 April 2025. At the time of publication, the scale of this in the Czech Republic was said to be unprecedentedly high for the region.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid. There have been some private initiatives, such as a relative of a communist official compensating the relatives of political prisoners.

²⁷² Ibid.

initiatives, such as the Memory of the Nation project, include some Roma in 20th-century oral history documentation, and the ROMEA NGO has its Memory of the Roma project, making video interviews with Roma figures about history available²⁷³.

However, the Czech Republic has not yet undertaken anything equivalent to Germany's Commission on Antigypsyism²⁷⁴. While the Ombudsman has investigated forced sterilisation and historians have documented the Roma Holocaust, antigypsyism itself has never been the explicit focus of an authoritative, official inquiry.

Progress on addressing historical wrongdoing motivated by antigypsyism has been due to civil society advocacy, which has taken decades and is still considered controversial²⁷⁵. Most of society does not yet understand the Roma perspective on this shared history or the larger context of the aversion to the Roma held by most people. The number of powerful politicians who have decided it is in the public interest to acknowledge the persecution of the Roma during the Protectorate, or the forced sterilisations of Roma women, is extremely small; recognition remains politically sensitive and often perceived as risky.

A promising development has been the establishment of the internationally-focused Prague Forum for Romani Histories in 2016²⁷⁶. As an academic platform in Europe for historical research on Roma, it facilitates joint research among humanities and social science scholars, promoting interdisciplinary, intersectional, transnational scholarship asserting the centrality of the study of Roma to an understanding of contemporary society and European history. Any attempts at approaching transitional justice for Roma in the Czech Republic in the future would greatly benefit from their expertise.

According to Carballo-Mesa, et al., the EU could enhance existing transitional justice efforts in Member States by prioritizing the implementation of recommendations issued by international human rights bodies to combat antigypsyism under its Strategic Framework on Roma. The EU could also comparatively evaluate such

²⁷³ <https://www.memoryofnations.eu/en> and <https://www.pametromu.cz/>.

²⁷⁴ Ana Carballo-Mesa et al, Paving the Way for Truth and Reconciliation Process to Address Antigypsyism in Europe Remembrance, Recognition, Justice and Trust-Building, Centre for European Policy Studies 2023, available at <https://antigypsyism.eu/truth-and-reconciliation-process-to-address-antigypsyism-in-europe/>, accessed 30 April 2025

²⁷⁵ Examples of such advocacy are discussed herein, namely, the successful campaign to remove the industrial pig farm from the former concentration camp for Roma in Lety and the campaign to compensate the victims of forced sterilizations.

²⁷⁶ Prague Forum for Romani Histories, see <https://www.romanihistories.usd.cas.cz/>, accessed 16 February 2025.

processes, perhaps stimulating collaborations between countries with shared histories such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Slovakia.

5. Recommendations and conclusions

Transitional justice is essential for addressing the historical wrongs committed against Roma. However, these processes must be forward-looking and guided by a clear, publicly accessible vision of the societal change they aim to bring about. Currently, there is no broad societal consensus in the Czech Republic that recognizes antigypsyism as a form of racism. Without such a foundation, launching a Truth and Reconciliation Commission focused on the treatment of Roma risks being premature and could ultimately undermine its intended goals.

This report puts forward the following conclusions highlighting key challenges and opportunities for applying transitional justice tools, truth and reconciliation processes, and inclusive Roma participation in the Czech context:

- Antigypsyism has been a consistent, systemic feature of Czech society, appearing in every historical period from the country's early 20th-century democratic independence through the communist era to the present day. Its enduring presence has seriously damaged interethnic relations and must be acknowledged as a structural injustice for transitional justice efforts to take root.
- Official remembrance of Roma suffering during the Holocaust, while symbolically important, remains under-resourced. The Czech state's reliance on co-financing with foreign partners like Norway has slowed domestic engagement with this history. A fully state-funded commitment would signal a clearer willingness to confront past wrongs and support public education and truth-telling.
- The legacy of forced sterilisation of Roma women, spanning from the communist period into the democratic era, is poorly understood by the general public. Although a compensation mechanism now exists, this issue has not yet been situated within a broader narrative of racialised harm or formally acknowledged as part of the country's transitional justice obligations.
- Violent attacks by ultra-right actors against Roma, including fatal incidents, remain under-recognized as key drivers of Roma migration and exclusion. Proper recognition of this violence within transitional justice frameworks could help validate Roma experiences and lay the groundwork for accountability and redress.
- There remains a deep, unresolved divide in how state policy approaches Roma inclusion, with some favouring a 'colour-blind' model of social policy and others calling for targeted, participatory

approaches. Transitional justice mechanisms that embed Roma participation in the design, implementation, and evaluation of inclusion strategies would help address this divide and foster greater trust.

- Efforts to desegregate Czech schools remain stalled, due to political reluctance at all levels of government. Transitional justice tools, particularly those grounded in truth-telling and public education, could help shift societal attitudes and build support for equitable education reform.
- Antigypsyism continues to shape electoral discourse in the Czech Republic, serving as a recurring rhetorical force in every democratic election to date. This contributes to the chronic underrepresentation of Roma in elected office. Truth and reconciliation processes could help address the political normalisation of antigypsyism and promote greater inclusivity in public life.
- Misconceptions about data privacy have hindered the collection of the anonymized, ethnically disaggregated data essential for monitoring systemic discrimination. The recent RILSA pilot demonstrates that such data can be gathered responsibly and should be further developed to inform evidence-based transitional justice policies.

The author makes the following recommendations to the Czech authorities and civil society:

- Officials in the state administration at every level should be trained in, and required to enforce, antidiscrimination law to the fullest extent with regard to antigypsyism. Public agencies must be required to prioritize eliminating antigypsyism from their workplaces and interactions with the public. Contact workers for Roma should be established at public agencies to assist Roma with reporting discrimination.
- Political movements and parties should actively cultivate Roma representatives, and civil society organizations, include private foundations, should actively cultivate Roma members, staff, and volunteers, especially organizations not directly focused on Roma-related issues; the parties now in government should lead by example here.
- Education on Roma-related content must be required across the curriculum at all levels to normalize the understanding that Roma have continually resided on Czech territory for centuries and are equal citizens today.

- Education on the Holocaust and its Roma and Sinti victims should be compulsory for eighth-grade pupils in all kinds of educational arrangements, and programs should be funded by the state to bring schoolchildren to the Hodonín u Kunštátu Memorial to the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti in Moravia and the Lety u Písku Memorial to the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti in Bohemia for guided tours with experts.
- The Czech Government should seek to establish, together with the German Government, an Anti-Racist Documentation Center for Human Rights to document past anti-racist efforts and partnerships between nationals of the two countries and promote existing and future such efforts and partnerships.
- The Czech Government should institute an advisory body on racism and xenophobia.
- The state should fully finance and prioritize the Centre for Roma and Sinti in Prague as a venue for the Roma and Sinti to explore their own history and for educating the public about the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti and antigypsyism.
- A desegregation target should be established for nursery and primary schools. Schools where 50% or more of the student body are Roma should be transformed into schools with less than 30% Roma students by 2030. The Government should fund expert advisors to assist these schools in achieving this transformation.
- Using the RILSA methodology, the Interior Ministry and Justice Ministry should task an independent research agency with collaborating with the prison service to produce data disaggregated by ethnicity on the charging, conviction, and sentencing of Roma defendants to produce comparative data on charges, conviction rates, and sentencing between non-Roma and Roma defendants and whether there are disparities.
- Paid participation by Roma professionals in the design, execution, monitoring, and assessment of all publicly funded programs and projects targeting Roma should be a prerequisite for their funding.
- The Government should expand, institutionalize, and stabilize its technical support for both the RVZRM and the Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs.

- Public investment into preventing and eliminating social exclusion must address root causes, investigate whether structural antigypsyism is part of the picture, and take concrete action to eliminate it.

The author makes the following recommendations to the European Union:

- Explore whether institutions of memory in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Slovakia would be interested in participating in a comparative evaluation of transitional justice processes related to the history of antigypsyism in their respective countries, with the aim of fostering future collaboration among these Member States.
- Drawing on the existence of current Roma history projects throughout the EU, establish a European Museum for Roma History as envisioned by Carballo-Mesa, et al (2023).
- Prioritise the fight against antigypsyism within the EU Roma Framework Strategy.
- Establish a Transitional Justice Toolbox as envisioned by Carballo-Mesa, et al (2023) to provide Member States with guidance and resources for acknowledging and addressing past and present antigypsyism.

6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix 1 – Roma respondents' personal experiences of antigypsyism

The author approached 20 Roma respondents in the Czech Republic with whom she had existing relationships through her work as a human rights activist and member of civil society, asking whether they would be willing to be interviewed about antigypsyism and to recommend other potential interviewees. Structured, individual interviews were then conducted with 10 Roma respondents from all over the country, representing different generations and genders. The respondents included civil society figures as well as past and present government officials, most of whom chose to remain anonymous. Some interviews were held online, while in other cases the respondents answered questions in writing. Details are provided in Appendix 2.

The respondents were asked about their personal experiences of antigypsyism and about how they believe this concept to be reflected in various policy areas. Specifically, they were invited to share their views on: the Government's actions regarding Holocaust commemoration and/or the compensation for forced sterilization; the way the Office of the Government handles policy development concerning antigypsyism and the Roma; the current Roma Strategy; the role and effectiveness of the Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs; the performance of the Agency for Social Inclusion; and how the Education Ministry's understanding of antigypsyism relates to the ethnic segregation of Roma in education.

Most respondents reported personal experiences of antigypsyism²⁷⁷. Some recounted being inappropriately recommended for placement in 'special schools' as children, with their parents having to fight for their access to mainstream education²⁷⁸. Others noted that, despite being well-educated, their relatives still struggle to find jobs matching their qualifications²⁷⁹.

Several respondents shared stories of marrying non-Roma and being rejected by their partner's relatives due to their ethnicity, or of being ostracized by non-Roma friends of their partner²⁸⁰. One respondent described the experience as follows:

My in-laws' opinion of the Roma minority was clear, full of prejudices and stereotypes (Roma = brothel keepers, noisy people with a low intellect, thieves, etc.). They had zero [personal] experience of Roma. In their small town there was just one Roma

²⁷⁷ Interview respondents 1, 2,3,4, 5,7, 8, 9, 10 (see Appendix 2 for list of respondents).

²⁷⁸ Interview respondent 8.

²⁷⁹ Interview respondent 4.

²⁸⁰ Interview respondent 9.

family of musicians who were totally integrated. Their aversion was based on total ignorance. They know nothing of our culture, history, or language, just general stereotypes. After many years they have accepted me as part of their family, but even after 25 years of knowing me they have no interest in Roma culture. They do not comprehend that Roma are a part of Czech history, a part that everybody should know. They consider their grandchildren Czech, but fortunately our children have accepted both cultures and take their grandparents with a grain of salt.²⁸¹

Another respondent described receiving threatening messages referencing 'gypsies' after moving a Roma organization into a new office building, and being ostracized by other tenants. The police were unable to identify the perpetrator(s)²⁸².

The Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs recounted an official interaction with a Health Ministry bureaucrat who treated her so rudely that she lodged a formal complaint with the minister. The author witnessed both the incident and the complaint ²⁸³.

One respondent described being insulted as a child by teachers who called him a 'gypsy parasite' and refused to call on him in class, deeming him unworthy of attention. He attended a mainstream school where he was considered a 'problem', as educators believed he should be in a 'special school'. The respondent stated this practice continues today in some regions, mentioning the Ústecký Region in particular. He also described being physically assaulted for no reason by police. On one occasion, an officer approached him disrespectfully and accused him of stealing his own car. He cited a 2005 survey conducted among Police Academy students, which found that two-thirds reported knowing racist officers, and he believes such attitudes persist within the security forces²⁸⁴.

Another respondent spoke of experiencing humiliation and antigypsyist jokes from colleagues, and of witnessing senior officials dismiss academic studies on Roma discrimination. He also recounted instances of antigypsyist remarks made by local politicians²⁸⁵.

²⁸¹ Interview respondent 7.

²⁸² Interview respondent 10.

²⁸³ Interview respondent 3.

²⁸⁴ Interview respondent 1.

²⁸⁵ Interview respondent 2.

In 2002, one respondent was refused service at a restaurant on the grounds that he was not a member of the club to which it was a part. Non-Roma colleagues stood up for him, and the owner was later fined CZK 250,000 [EUR 10,000] over the incident²⁸⁶.

Several respondents mentioned difficulties in retail environments. One said clerks often spoke down to her, and that security guards regularly followed her in shops, suspecting her of theft ²⁸⁷. Another said she had repeatedly experienced antigypsyism from personnel in bars and shops, as well as in school ²⁸⁸.

Finally, one respondent recalled an experience from 24 years ago, when her parents were selling their home. When some potential buyers saw her father, who is dark-skinned, they refused to enter the house. After that, her mother, who is a light-skinned Roma woman, handled the viewings, which meant everybody else in the family had to stay out of sight. The respondent recalled hiding in a closet during one such showing of the house so the prospective buyers would not catch sight of her²⁸⁹.

²⁸⁶ Interview respondent 5.

²⁸⁷ Interview respondent 4.

²⁸⁸ Interview respondent 7.

²⁸⁹ Interview respondent 4.

6.2. Appendix 2 – List of respondents with whom interviews were conducted

Respondent #	Field of expertise	Method of response	Date
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 01 (anonymous)	Journalism	Written	14 January 2025
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 02 (anonymous)	Bureaucracy	Online verbal interview	7 January 2025
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 03 Czech Government Human Rights Commissioner Lucie Fuková	Bureaucracy	Online verbal interview	9 January 2025
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 04 (anonymous)	Civil society/NGO sector	Written	21 January 2025
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 05 (anonymous)	Civil society/NGO sector	Written	3 December 2025
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 06 Jana Kokyová, chair, Committee for the Redress of the Roma Holocaust (VPORH)	Civil society/NGO sector, descendant of Holocaust survivors	Written	20 January 2025
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 07 (anonymous)	Civil society/NGO sector	Written	17 January 2025
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 08 (anonymous)	Bureaucrat/Civil society	Online verbal interview	8 January 2025
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 09 (anonymous)	Bureaucrat/Civil society	Online verbal interview	2 January 2025
JEKHIPE-WP2-CZ 10 (anonymous)	Civil society/NGO sector	Online verbal interview	6 February 2025

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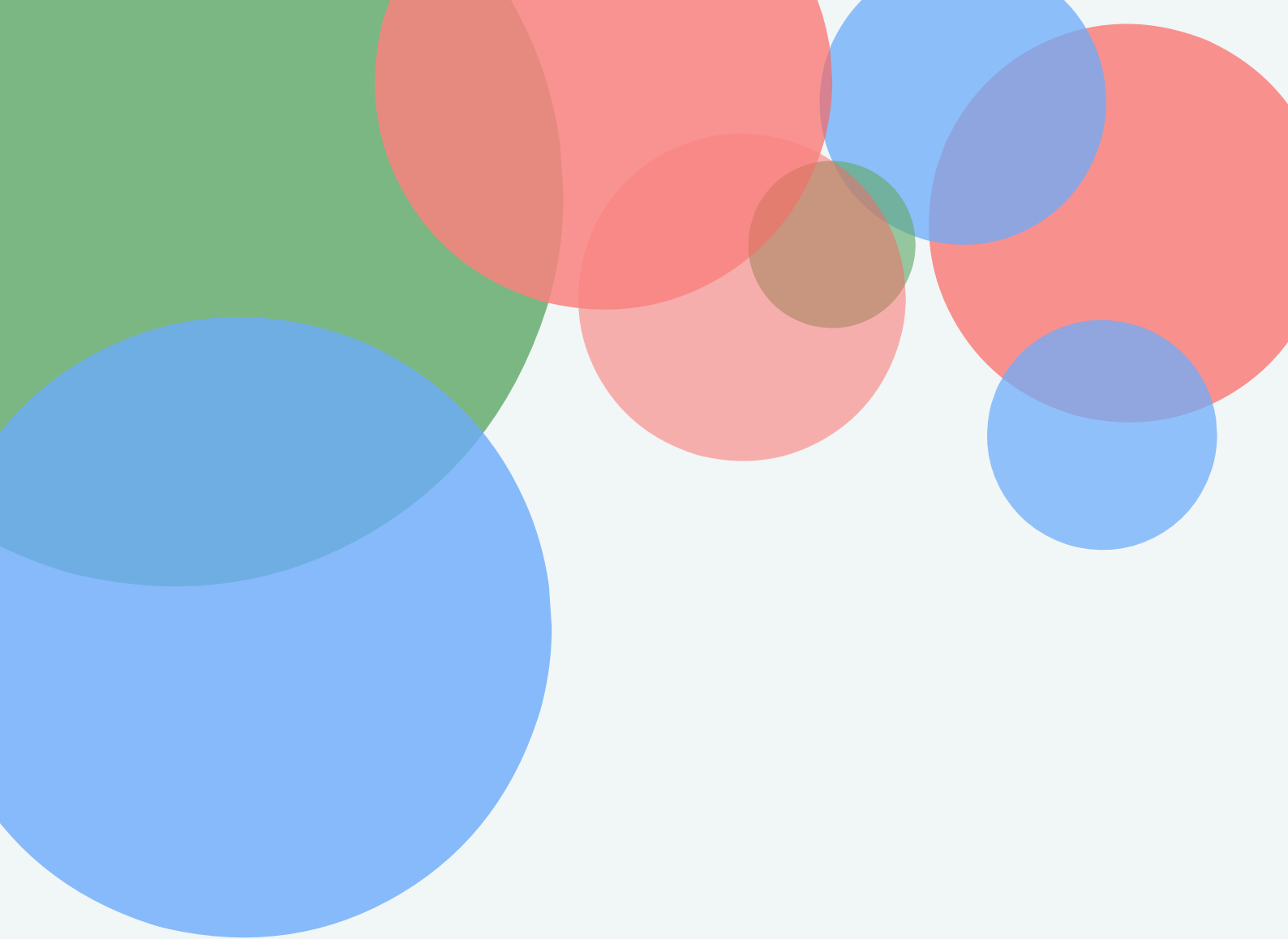
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JEKHIPE

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