

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

JEKHIPE RESEARCH FINDINGS 2025

Based on research conducted in Germany, Spain, Italy, Romania, Czechia, and Sweden under the JEKHIPE Project

Roma Civil Rights Movements: From Survival to Political Voice

Across Europe, Roma communities have organized for decades to demand recognition, justice, and equality. Civil rights movements have transformed Roma from objects of policy into political actors shaping national and European debates.



Key Historical Milestones

Germany

- Late 1960s–1980s: Roma and Sinti organize, protest, and occupy archives.
- 4 April 1980: First major hunger strike at Dachau memorial.
- 1982: Genocide officially recognized; Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma established.

Spain

- 1978: Constitution opens political space; Juan de Dios Ramírez Heredia becomes first Roma MP.
- Post-1978: Over 1,000 Roma associations form; feminist organizing emerges; advocacy challenges flamenco stereotypes.

Italy

- 1960s–1990s: Early activism and growth of local Roma associations; links to international networks.
- 2000: Founding of Associazione 21 Luglio to document rights violations.
- 2010s–present: “Artist” cultural and digital activism.

Sweden

- 1960s: Civil rights struggle; advocacy by figures like Katarina Taikon.
- 1999: Recognition as a national minority; Romani Chib recognized as a minority language.
- 2013–2016: Police registry scandal exposes ethnic discrimination; legal victory reinforces rights.

Romania

- Post-1989: Rise of Roma civil society; activists like Nicolae Gheorghe mobilize communities.
- 1997–2001: Roma NGOs cooperate; first national Roma strategy established.
- Ongoing: Advocacy for recognition of Roma slavery and Holocaust deportations.

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Czechia

- Late 1960s: Roma cultural organizing begins.
- 1990s–2000s: NGOs like Slovo 21 promote anti-racism, education, and cultural projects.
- 2000s–2010s: Activism around segregation, Lety concentration camp site, and heritage recognition.



International Roma Civil Rights Movement

First World Romani Congress - 1971

Key moment that launched the international Roma political movement and adopted common symbols (flag and anthem).

Transnational organization

Groups like the International Romani Union coordinated Roma advocacy across countries.

Human rights agenda

Focus on fighting discrimination and gaining recognition of Roma genocide during The Holocaust.

Support for national activism

International networks helped strengthen Roma organizations and movements at national levels.



What JEKHIPE Shows

Civil rights movements are not symbolic, they are engines of structural change.

Memory work supports transitional justice.

Roma activism reshapes public discourse.

Cultural production strengthens political claims.

Institutional change follows sustained mobilization.