

**19TH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
DIALOGUE WITH ROMA AND TRAVELLER¹ CIVIL SOCIETY**

**“SHAPING THE DRAFT COUNCIL OF EUROPE STRATEGY ON ROMA AND TRAVELLER INCLUSION
(2026-2030) THROUGH REFLECTIONS FROM ROMA AND TRAVELLER CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANISATIONS”**

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Report prepared by the General Rapporteur, Fanni Székely-Trendl

CONTEXT

The 19th meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society aimed to provide a space for discussion on the draft of Strategy on Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2026-2030) and to lay the groundwork for developing the next policy framework of the Council of Europe in the area of Roma and Travellers inclusion.

Considering the practical implementation of the strategy up to 2025 and the results of the mid-term monitoring report examining it, it can be stated that challenges are still being reported in areas such as antigypsyism, school segregation, housing and employment by Council of Europe monitoring bodies, the European Court of Human Rights, and Roma and Traveller civil society alike. The Committee of Ministers continues to oversee the execution of several judgments on complex topics such as school segregation, housing, ill-treatment by law enforcement officials and investigations into the racial motivation of crimes. To strengthen efforts to combat antigypsyism and promote equality and inclusion for Roma and Travellers across Council of Europe member States, a renewed commitment through to 2030 is essential. As such, the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM) has been tasked with drafting the Council of Europe Strategy for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2026–2030), with a deadline set for the end of 2025.

In May 2024 a working group was established, comprising representatives from Council of Europe member States, civil society organisations, and observers to the ADI-ROM. This group is supported by the Roma and Travellers Division within the Secretariat.

The drafting process is supported by reports on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020–2025), insights and recommendations from Council of Europe monitoring bodies, and contributions from member States and civil society organisations. The Strategy will be closely aligned with key internal strategic and policy documents, as well as relevant frameworks of external partners and organisations active in the field of Roma and Traveller inclusion.

¹ The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

A renewed commitment leading up to 2030 is deemed necessary to continue combatting antigypsyism and to ensure equality and inclusion for Roma and Travellers in Council of Europe member States.

In accordance with this process, the Dialogue meeting aimed to:

- present the Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) and provide an overview of its implementation;
- collect proposals on how to further develop co-operation between the Council of Europe and Roma and Traveller civil society and the future agenda of the Council of Europe bi-annual dialogue meetings with Roma and Traveller civil society;
- serve as a co-operative and networking platform for Roma and Traveller civil society organisations and other stakeholders;
- serve as a platform for extending knowledge of the Council of Europe's work in this area, exchanging experiences and sharing best practices on Roma inclusion, including with members of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM);
- highlight and exchange examples of good practice in addressing obstacles to Roma and Traveller inclusion;
- bring forward solutions to advance Roma and Traveller inclusion which could be incorporated into future actions of the Council of Europe;
- identify possible topics that should be included in the future Council of Europe Strategy on Roma and Traveller inclusion.

25 civil society participants were chosen through an open call published on the website of the Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Division. Participants included representatives of Roma and Traveller organisations, including youth and women's organisations, and experts from international, national and local civil society organisations. Priority was given to representatives with specific expertise in the different priority areas of the Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025).

THEMATIC SESSIONS

1. Workshops on the Follow-up to the Thematic Report *Antigypsyism - Causes – Prevalence – Consequences – Possible responses (2022)* and to the *Thematic report on the ADI-ROM visit in Germany on combating antigypsyism (2024)*

The session was held jointly with the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM), looking at possible responses to counter antigypsyism and following up on two thematic reports on this topic issued by ADI-ROM.² Participants discussed in three groups the following sub-topics: legal responses to antigypsyism; policy responses to antigypsyism; and data collection, training and raising awareness. Based on their contributions, participants highlighted the following questions and challenges:

- The definition and conceptualisation of antigypsyism in (legal and social) practice is often difficult to distinguish from the phenomenon of discrimination. Therefore, continuing efforts to enhance knowledge of institutions and general public alike remains essential.
- Supporting cross-sectional recognition is necessary, as there are overlapping forms of discrimination that many Roma and Travellers face, as a result of intersections such as ethnicity and gender, age, sexual orientation, migration status, disability and other factors.

² [Antigypsyism- Causes – Prevalence – Consequences – Possible responses \(2022\)](#)

- In most countries, antigypsyism as a concept is still being introduced at the levels of civil society, government, and legislative bodies. Spain stands out as an example of an advanced process whereby antigypsyism is already used as a subtype of hate crime, ranging from its definition in the criminal code to its application in everyday practice.
- In countries where Travellers reside, it would be advisable to adopt the terms “anti-Travellerism” and “antinomadism”.
- Speakers emphasized the importance of conducting campaigns and training sessions on the topic, which have proven effective within civil societies. However, it is necessary to continue antigypsyism-related training for law enforcement agencies and those responsible for implementing laws.
- In addition to addressing antigypsyism at the individual level, it is equally important to focus on structural and institutional antigypsyism and to develop actions aimed at its reduction.
- Together with increasing knowledge, reporting and data collection remain crucial, as it is widely acknowledged that many cases often go unreported. Since reporting methods and tools vary across countries, the development of a unified monitoring system would be beneficial.

2. Draft Council of Europe Strategy for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2026-2030)

The second session was also held jointly with the ADI-ROM, during which participants collaboratively reviewed the draft strategy for the upcoming period. A highly informative presentation on the proposed strategy was delivered, outlining three provisional priorities as well as the administrative process for its adoption. Civil society representatives present at the meeting shared their insights on the draft. The struggles faced by the Traveller and Roma population in France in achieving recognition as a minority were highlighted. Those leading a nomadic lifestyle continue to face systemic challenges, as their way of life is not acknowledged and is instead administratively restricted, hindering their inclusion into societal structures.

The creation of a memorial commemorating the internment involving Roma and Travellers during the Second World War represents an important form of state recognition. Including the history, lifestyle, and contemporary experiences of Roma and Travellers in the official educational curriculum of member states was highlighted as crucial. In addition, all students, regardless of their ethnic origin, should receive information about Roma history, culture and contribution to society within mandatory school subjects. Further, it was argued that Roma students should learn the Romani language and Roma history within the framework of compulsory education.

North Macedonia was highlighted as a leading example in the field of political representation, with three current ministers openly identifying as Roma. Addressing intersectionality at political and decision-making levels should be ensured.

Increasing participation of Roma in the labour market fosters greater trust and acceptance of Roma within society as a whole.

Recognition of Traveller housing conditions and support to improve these was identified as an area requiring attention. A request was made for the ADI-ROM to establish a dedicated working group to address this issue.

On the second day, the discussions proceeded along three main thematic points:

- 3. Equality of Roma and Traveller Women, Youth, and Children**
- 4. Democratic Participation of Roma and Travellers**

5. Countering Antigypsyism

Each topic was introduced through brief plenary presentations, providing insights into the Council of Europe's work in these areas, the progress achieved, and the current situation. These presentations were enriched by contributions from experts and representatives of civil society organisations from various countries.

3. Equality of Roma and Traveller Women, Youth, and Children

The thematic session on the Equality of Roma and Traveller Women, Youth, and Children opened with a reflection on how, in the current context of war, the voices of Roma women - and their representation in political and decision-making bodies – have become more critical than ever. Roma have historically been an integral part of both Europe's and Ukraine's multicultural societies, and their participation in decision-making processes is vital. As Ukraine prepares for EU accession, the ongoing development and modification of legal frameworks concerning the Roma population represent a significant step towards improving the quality of life and equality for Roma in Ukraine.

It was pointed out during the session that, although the focus was on the equality of women and children, men still dominated among the attendees, signalling the need for further efforts in this area. The future of Roma communities is fundamentally shaped by the status of women and children. Improving their situation requires:

- Enhancing educational systems and increasing knowledge about Roma culture and history;
- Providing Roma women with opportunities to hold representative roles;
- Ensuring that financial resources are distributed and utilised in ways that genuinely reach the target groups;
- Strengthening and advocating for human rights in response to the evolving global political landscape.

There are limited opportunities available to young people, particularly Roma youth, for genuine political representation and participation in decision-making mechanisms. The need for improvement in this area was emphasized, as issues like the global climate crisis disproportionately affect young people, making their involvement in policymaking processes essential.

General and institutional racism hinder political participation and representation; therefore, it is crucial for policymakers to propose the introduction of a quota system.

It was further highlighted that Roma women's rights are inseparable from fundamental human rights and should be addressed within this broader framework. Reference was made to the latest FRA survey which reveals significant gender disparities, underscoring the urgent need to address longstanding gaps. Recommendations in this area included:

- Increasing access to education, healthcare, housing, and labour markets;
- Incorporating an intersectional perspective into anti-discrimination laws;
- Standardising data collection to strengthen collective action.

Emerging exclusionary and selective mechanisms in the education sector were brought into the discussion. Research was presented indicating a growing proportion of Roma children being classified as having special educational needs over the past decades. The findings suggest that this classification has been used within the Hungarian education system to

segregate Roma students. To combat this trend, the Rosa Parks Foundation, in collaboration with other Hungarian groups, is undertaking the following activities:

- Enhancing knowledge and awareness among Roma parents;
- Advocating for more objective expert committee evaluations and ensuring parent-appointed representatives can participate in assessments;
- Emphasizing the importance of data collection, tailored to Roma communities and in compliance with data protection laws.

4. Democratic participation of Roma and Travellers

An overview of the Council of Europe's efforts to maintain, develop, and implement democratic practices amidst the changing global political landscape was given. These efforts lie at the core of the Council of Europe's objectives for the coming years. This work is grounded in the Reykjavik Declaration, adopted in December 2023, which outlines the fundamental principles to secure and strengthen democracy and good governance at all levels throughout Europe.

Building on this framework, the Council of Europe has implemented programmes at local, regional, and national levels through initiatives like ROMACT and ROMACTED. Currently, a pilot initiative is being developed in collaboration with several universities to establish Roma political schools. The aim is to empower individuals and communities for meaningful representation.

One of the speakers, a delegate from the educational organisation RomaVersitas, discussed the practical implementation of this political school model in Albania. He highlighted that the recognition of Roma as a national minority in Albania was a significant milestone. While Roma representatives are not yet in parliament, the collaboration with the Council of Europe has led to further progress, including the adoption of governmental action plans for the Roma minority.

During the discussions, participants generally expressed support for the Council of Europe's initiatives, while also voicing concerns about the slow pace of progress. A key question emerged: Who bears the responsibility for achieving the emancipation of Roma communities—the national governments, the European Union, the Council of Europe, or the Roma communities themselves?

The Council of Europe's upcoming strategy will prioritise efforts to enhance knowledge, genuine representation, and participation in the coming years.

5. Countering antigypsyism

Insights from the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme EQUIROM were shared, relating to a media campaign showcasing the lives and achievements of Roma individuals across Romanian, Bulgarian, and Greek platforms. This campaign successfully delivered impactful positive messages to a wide majority population, thus challenging stereotypes.

The work of the Council of Europe on supporting the implementation of the Roma and Traveller-related judgments of the European Court of Human Rights was presented. While antigypsyism is not mentioned as such in the case-law of the Court, various manifestations of antigypsyism represent violations of the European Convention on Human Rights. It was

concluded that strategic cases can lead to the development of international legal norms and procedures as well as a change in national legislation and practices.

The “Dikh He Na Bister” campaign, which annually gathers together hundreds of Roma and non-Roma youth in remembrance of the Roma Holocaust, was presented. Non-formal educational methods in teaching Roma history are efficient. The campaign’s resources are publicly accessible in English. National governments were called on to support translation efforts to make these tools more accessible locally.

The Independent Antigypsyism Reporting and Information Center MIA has established an online system for monitoring antigypsyism, funded by the German government. This system exemplifies a commitment to addressing antigypsyism. There is still a gap between reported cases and actual antigypsyism incidents. A legal team is being established to offer legal assistance to victims as well.

The final session, in a workshop format, resulted in a set of recommendations that are presented in the last section of this report.

6. Recommendations

I. Recommendations for member states of the Council of Europe

- Recognise antigypsyism as a specific form of racism in national legislation, following Spain’s example.
- Adopt and implement terms like *anti-Travellerism* and *antinomadism* to address discrimination against Travellers.
- Ensure intersectional approaches in anti-discrimination laws, considering gender, age, disability, migration status and other relevant criteria.
- Integrate Roma and Traveller history and culture into national curricula for all students.
- Support Romani language education and ensure Roma students can learn their history in schools.
- Combat educational segregation, including misuse of special needs classifications.
- Introduce quota systems to enhance Roma and Traveller representation in political and decision-making bodies.
- Support Roma political schools and leadership development initiatives.
- Support the translation and dissemination of educational tools like “Dikh He Na Bister” in member states.
- Standardize data collection on Roma and Traveller inclusion, ensuring privacy and legal compliance.
- Establish independent monitoring bodies to track and report on antigypsyism and related discrimination.
- Improve access to housing, especially for nomadic communities, and support culturally appropriate living conditions.
- Ensure equitable access to healthcare, education, employment, and legal protection.

II. Recommendations for the Council of Europe

- Ensure that the 2026-2030 Strategy reflects civil society input, especially on intersectionality, education, and political participation.

- Establish a dedicated working group on Traveller housing conditions under the ADI-ROM.
- Expand training for law enforcement and the judiciary to antigypsyism and Roma rights.
- Support the translation and dissemination of educational tools like “Dikh He Na Bister”
- Support strategic litigation initiatives to address structural antigypsyism through the European Court of Human Rights.
- Promote harmonised data collection methodologies across member states.
- Strengthen the bi-annual dialogue platform with Roma and Traveller civil society.
- Facilitate cross-country exchanges of good practices and successful policy models.

III. Recommendations for Roma and Traveller Civil Society Organisations

- Advocate for the legal recognition of antigypsyism and related forms of discrimination.
- Push for inclusion in national education reforms, especially regarding Roma history and language.
- Promote leadership among women and youth, and support their participation in political processes.
- Raise awareness among Roma parents about educational rights and assessment procedures.
- Engage in strategic litigation and collaborate with legal aid networks.
- Contribute to data collection efforts while safeguarding community privacy.
- Develop and share non-formal education tools to teach Roma history and rights.
- Participate in campaigns that challenge stereotypes and promote positive narratives.