

Tool 6

Teaching about the Roma Holocaust and other historical persecutions of Roma and Travellers from a human rights perspective



TOOLKIT FOR TEACHING ROMA AND/OR TRAVELLER HISTORY

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Teaching about the Roma Holocaust and other historical persecutions of Roma and Travellers from a human rights perspective

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TOOLKIT FOR TEACHING ROMA AND TRAVELLER HISTORY

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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.

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Introduction

Embedded within the tapestry of European history lies a narrative often overlooked and underestimated: the rich and complex story of the Roma and Traveller communities. For centuries, diverse and resilient groups of people have left a significant mark on European societies, cultures, languages and traditions, yet their contributions remain obscured by a veil of prejudice and discrimination. Moreover, the history of discrimination, persecution, systemic violence and genocide inflicted on Roma communities in various parts of Europe remains largely unrecognised and is often distorted in the mainstream discourse.

Recognising the imperative to confront this historical erasure and to promote comprehensive education on the Roma Holocaust and other historical persecutions of Roma and Travellers is an important step in combating historical injustices. This tool, in conjunction with other resources developed by the Council of Europe, has emerged in response to a critical need for accurate, accessible and inclusive educational resources for teachers throughout Europe. By providing educators with comprehensive knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and ready-to-use educational activities, this handbook seeks to empower them to effectively address the historical persecutions of Roma and Travellers, and to foster empathy, critical thinking and solidarity among their students.

This practical tool builds on the Council of Europe's longstanding commitment to advance the rights and dignity of Roma and Traveller communities. It complements existing initiatives, particularly Recommendation CM/Rec (2020)2 on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials, adopted on 1 July 2020. The tool also builds on materials developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), particularly the "Recommendations for teaching and learning about the persecution and genocide of the Roma during the Nazi era". Furthermore, it aligns with broader efforts to combat antigypsyism and to foster intercultural dialogue, contributing to the Council of Europe's vision of a Europe where diversity is celebrated and human rights are upheld for all.

At the heart of this handbook lies a commitment to education as a tool for empowerment and social change. By seeking to challenge stereotypes, combat antigypsyism and foster greater understanding and empathy among students, it highlights the interconnectedness of European societies and the richness of cultural diversity.

The author would like to thank the ADI-ROM working group in charge of preparing a "Capacity-building programme and tools supporting the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2" for their review, and to extend appreciation to the following people for their feedback and contributions: Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka, ERIAC; Karola Fings, Heidelberg University and IHRA Committee on the Genocide of the Roma; Oana Bajka and Tena Bajeglav, TOLI – The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights; and the HISTOLAB team.

Structure of the handbook

This resource, tailored for educators in high school and middle school settings, adopts an interdisciplinary approach that integrates history education, human rights education and intercultural education. It offers educational activities aimed at actively engaging students in learning experiences while enhancing their competencies for democratic culture.¹ Every activity is accompanied by a detailed walk-through of the learning process and provides recommendations for teachers on how to implement and adjust the activity to suit the specific context of their teaching environment. In the final chapter, recommendations are offered for supplementary resources that educators can explore and incorporate into their teaching practice.

1. See Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture/rfcdc.

Note on terminology

The terminology used by the Council of Europe to refer to the mass murder of the Roma carried out by the Nazi regime and its collaborators varies between the "Roma Holocaust" and the "Roma genocide" or "Genocide of the Roma", including in official documents, such as recommendations of the Committee of Ministers. Other international organisations use the term "Roma genocide" or "genocide of the Roma".

This practical tool is developed as part of the "Capacity-building programme and tools supporting the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 at national level". In Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 the term used is "Roma Holocaust". This tool will use the same term, while teachers can choose between "Roma Holocaust", "Roma genocide" and "Samudaripe(n)", or use them interchangeably.

1. Pedagogical approach

Teaching about the Roma Holocaust and other historical persecutions of the Roma and Travellers is not only an act of historical remembrance, but also a crucial step in challenging discrimination and advancing human rights, educating students about these historical events and empowering them to champion democracy and human rights. Thus, the educational endeavour should aim not only to impart knowledge but also to cultivate empathy, awareness and a dedication to combating prejudice and discrimination in contemporary society.

This aim can be achieved only through an interdisciplinary approach, which combines the tools of Holocaust education with human rights education and intercultural education.² By exploring the historical injustices faced by Roma communities and the ongoing challenges they encounter today, through the lens of human rights, students can develop a nuanced understanding of core democratic values, and thereby gain a sense of civic responsibility and a commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. The tools of intercultural education, such as exploring one's own stereotypes and identity, as well as the role played by stereotypes and identity in shaping anti-Roma racism, both in the past and in the present, provide another layer of analysis for a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon, which has been present in Europe for centuries and continues to the present day.

The 20 competences that young people need to live in democratic societies – compiled in the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture – can be developed through this interdisciplinary approach, especially the three values of the model: valuing human dignity and human rights; valuing cultural diversity; and valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law.

The historical persecutions of the Roma and Travellers is a sensitive and important topic. The following are some general methodological recommendations for teachers.

- ▶ Ensure that students learn about the persecutions of the Roma and about the Roma Holocaust in connection to the broader historical context of the Holocaust and European history.
- ▶ Discuss common stereotypes and misconceptions about Roma communities and challenge them with historical facts and personal narratives.
- ▶ Create a classroom environment where students feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics, and encourage open dialogue and the sharing of opinions.
- ▶ Allocate time for students to reflect on what they have learned, their emotional responses and how this knowledge can inform their actions by promoting tolerance and social justice.
- ▶ Tailor activities to the students' age, maturity and cultural background, ensuring that the topic is introduced in an appropriate and respectful way.
- ▶ Incorporate primary sources such as survivor testimonies, photographs and official documents into the history to make it more tangible and relatable.
- ▶ Emphasise the human stories behind the statistics, and encourage students to empathise with the experiences of Roma survivors and their descendants.
- ▶ Give students opportunities to explore Roma culture in the present and to learn about Roma communities in their area.

2. For more details about the interdisciplinary approach, see Nestian-Sandu O., *Learning from the past, acting for the future: An interdisciplinary approach to holocaust, human rights and intercultural education*, TOLI, Timisoara, 2022, www.toli.us/announcements/learning-from-the-past-acting-for-the-future.

- ▶ Promote critical thinking by discussing the reasons behind the lack of acknowledgement and recognition of the Roma Holocaust, and encourage students to analyse and challenge historical narratives.
- ▶ Encourage students to conduct their own research, and enable them to explore specific aspects of the Roma Holocaust that interest them.
- ▶ Connect historical events to contemporary issues of discrimination, racism and prejudice, and encourage students to consider the lessons that can be learned from the past.
- ▶ Inspire students to become advocates for acknowledging the Roma Holocaust and fighting against discrimination in all forms, and discuss how they can take meaningful action.
- ▶ Consider seeking professional development or training to enhance your skills and approach in teaching about sensitive historical topics.

2. Educational activities

These activities are designed to empower educators to facilitate interdisciplinary learning experiences centred around historical persecutions of the Roma.

The proposed activities are primarily intended for high school students but, with appropriate modifications, many of them can be adapted for middle school students. While the activities provide significant historical information, students should have a foundational understanding of the Holocaust and the interwar period, including its historical context and significance. While they do not need to be experts, a basic knowledge of this part of history is essential. These activities can be seamlessly integrated into the regular teaching process to complement traditional history lessons. They encourage students to engage in deeper reflection, and connect historical events with contemporary issues.

These activities aim to inspire teachers to employ interactive and engaging teaching methods to convey historical knowledge and information. They encourage students to actively participate in the lesson and to make meaningful connections with the subject matter. It is important to ensure that students have sufficient background information to actively participate in the activities. Teachers should avoid teaching about the Roma Holocaust in isolation.

The suggested activities can easily be customised to suit various educational settings and student needs. It is suggested that educators tailor these activities to fit the local context and specific requirements of their students. This may involve integrating the personal narratives of individuals who have been directly impacted with the history of the region. However, this flexibility does not mean limiting the content to students' immediate surroundings. By exploring other regions of Europe, students have the opportunity to cultivate global citizenship. Therefore, educators are encouraged to facilitate their students' exploration of Roma history as an essential component of European history.

The educational activities include a step-by-step description of the learning process, including handouts and videos that can be used, additional information for teachers on how to conduct or adapt the lesson, further resources and a list of competences that can be developed by students who engage in that activity. The activities are presented in a logical order, but each activity can stand alone or be incorporated into the regular teaching process, school projects or informal education activities.

The methodologies used in the design of these educational activities are student-centred and are based on the principles of experiential learning and a human rights-based approach. They include individual, collaborative and peer learning processes. Students are challenged to learn not only about history but also from history, to reflect on their own biases and to unlearn these by using the lens of human rights in analysing historical facts, human behaviour and present-day discrimination.

Activity 1 – Roma history and antigypsyism

Overview

This activity engages students in a process of critical analysis of past persecutions of the Roma from the perspective of antigypsyism.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handout (one copy per student)

Duration: one hour

Information for teachers

It is probable that students know very little about Roma history, and some students may harbour prejudices against Roma. Teachers should be mindful of the potentially sensitive nature of the topic. They should not expect Roma students to know more about Roma history than other students. However, if Roma students want to contribute with certain information and details they should be encouraged to do so. If possible, it would be better to have groups containing a mix of Roma and non-Roma students to encourage diverse perspectives and ensure that everyone's voice is heard. Nevertheless, Roma students should not be asked to give "the Roma perspective" or to act as ambassadors of Roma culture. The history of Roma is an integral part of general history and culture. They do not stand side by side each other but are interwoven.

It is important to encourage students to approach the learning process with empathy and an open mind, with cultural sensitivity and respect. A willingness to identify blind spots and biases is necessary to avoid perpetuating stereotypes or biases.

The terms "antigypsyism" and "anti-Roma racism" are both used to refer to racism and discrimination against Roma, which characterise many societies and have severe negative effects. Experts in the field have strong arguments for the use of each of these terms. This topic may be too complex to discuss with students, but if teachers are interested to learn more about it, as well as about the causes, prevalence and possible responses to antigypsyism/anti-Roma racism, they can consult the 2021 Report of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM).³

At the end of the activity, students are encouraged to continue learning about Roma history and culture outside of the classroom, and to engage in further discussions with family and friends. The teacher should be ready to offer some guidance for students in this process and to recommend sources of information. For example, "RomArchive"⁴ is an international digital archive that focuses on self-representation. While traditional archives often portray Roma in stereotypical ways, RomArchive offers content created by Roma themselves, with new narratives reflecting the diversity of identities, realities of life and self-positioning of Roma. In addition, the Barvalipe Roma Online University⁵ offers online courses and masterclasses on Roma history and culture in various languages.

3. "Antigypsyism: Causes, prevalence, consequences, possible responses" (2021), <https://rm.coe.int/adi-rom-2020-27-final-antigypsyism-causes-prevalence-consequences-poss/1680a6d053>.

4. RomArchive, www.romarchive.eu/en/.

5. Barvalipe Roma Online University, <https://eriac.org/barvalipe-roma-online-university/>.

Description of the activity

1. The students are informed that in this activity they will learn some facts about the discrimination and persecutions that Roma have endured in Europe throughout history. Each student receives a copy of the handout and is asked to read it and to underline the main idea presented in the text.
2. The students are asked to work in groups of four to five and to discuss the following.
 - a. What information in this text was new to you?
 - b. What information in this text did you already know?
 - c. What other information do you know about Roma history?
3. The teacher brings all the students back together and conducts a debriefing discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. What aspects of the text or the discussions with your colleagues did you find most interesting?
 - b. Did anything surprise you?
 - c. To what extent were you aware of the discrimination and persecution of Roma in Europe?
4. The teacher explains to the students that anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism has been present throughout history until today. The teacher shares with students the definition used by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) for anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism:

A specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanization and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatization and the most blatant kind of discrimination.⁶
5. The teacher discusses the definition briefly with students to make sure that it is clearly understood by everyone, and asks students to look at the text in the handout again to see if they can identify examples of antigypsyism. The teacher or a volunteer student writes down on the board the identified examples.
6. The teacher asks students to look at the list and reminds them that it is only an overview of the discrimination and persecutions suffered by Roma in Europe. They tell the students that, even though it is an important part of European history, Roma history has not been sufficiently studied and learned. In the next activities, students will have the opportunity to learn more about Roma history and culture, with a particular focus on the Roma Holocaust.
7. Students are asked to talk to their friends and family to find out what they know about Roma history and where they have learned this information (school, TV, books, social media, online courses, etc.)

6. ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on combating antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma (2011), <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-13-on-combating-anti-gypsyism-an/16808b5aee>.

Handout – One copy for each student

Roma in Europe⁷

The Roma emigrated from India to Europe over a period of several centuries. The Romani language belongs to the Indo-Aryan language group and was influenced by other languages from the areas in which Roma communities lived for a period.

In Wallachia and Moldavia (historical regions that are part of present-day Romania and the Republic of Moldova), Roma were enslaved for five centuries by the state, the Orthodox Church and boyars (landowners, members of the nobility). In the 19th century an abolitionist movement, influenced by European revolutions, emerged and Roma were liberated. Most of the enslavers received compensation for liberating their slaves, but the Roma themselves did not receive any support to help them integrate into society.

In central Europe, the fate of Roma was determined by political changes and by wars with the Ottoman Empire. Roma were often forced to live at the edge of towns or were evicted, even though they paid taxes and fought in the army. Spain pursued coercive measures of assimilation, while Portugal, and later on the United Kingdom, deported Roma people to the Americas. In the second half of the 19th century, more and more regulations were issued by the German and Austro-Hungarian Empire restricting opportunities for the Roma to earn a living, including banning them from certain professions.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, racially motivated police checks were conducted on Roma communities in Germany and Austria. Nazi propaganda contributed to spreading existing stereotypes of and prejudice against Roma. In 1936 a central agency was formed to combat the "Gypsy problem" in Vienna. The Nuremberg laws of 1935 classified Roma as a "foreign race" and stripped them of their German citizenship. Similar laws were passed in other European countries, especially after the outbreak of the Second World War. In Germany, German-occupied countries and collaborating countries, Roma were deported to concentration and extermination camps, and were subjected to forced labour and dehumanisation. They were killed in ravines and forests, left to die in camps such as those in Transnistria or gassed in extermination camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau. Despite brave attempts to resist the perpetrators – uprisings, escapes, rescues, participation in partisan troops, legal complaints and so on – a significant number of Roma perished in the Holocaust. The exact number is unknown, but most estimates count around 500 000 people.

Antigypsyism did not end with the Second World War. After the war, there was no public interest in the fate of the Roma. Restitution or compensation payments for the Holocaust were issued very late, if at all. For many years, Roma were not considered victims of the Holocaust.

Despite persecution, discrimination and marginalisation, the Roma contributed significantly to the development of the cultural heritage of Europe.

7. This text is an adaptation of the article published by Nicoleta Bitu, "Roma: Who are we?", RomArchive, www.romarchive.eu/en/about/context-project/. The adapted version is used with permission, from *Learning from the past, acting for the future – An interdisciplinary approach to Holocaust, human rights and intercultural education* (2022).

Activity 2 – Stereotypes and prejudices against Roma

Overview

In this activity students engage in a reflection process about the complexity of their own identity and the dangers of stereotypical views of Roma identities.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handout (one copy per student)

Duration: one hour

Information for teachers

Ideally, more time should be dedicated to ensuring that students understand the concept of stereotypes and the ways in which stereotypes affect our understanding of the world. Two short but impactful activities – “Do you see what I see?” and “Find your group” – are described in the Intercultural Learning T-Kit published by the Council of Europe.⁸

Teachers should be mindful when conducting these activities and consider that, if participants have experienced discrimination and abuse in their own lives, the activity may affect them emotionally. A teacher should be available to offer additional support for students during and after the activity.

When discussing where students learned single stories (overgeneralised and overly simplistic narratives based on stereotypes) about Roma, the teacher should emphasise the importance of evaluating information sources critically for accuracy and bias. Often people from dominant groups are not overtly racist or do not intend to unfairly judge the behaviours of others, but stereotypes create blind spots in their understanding and, even if they have good intentions, their actions and beliefs create hierarchies between “us” and “them”, and lead to their seeing others in an overgeneralised negative light.

8. Council of Europe and European Commission, *T-Kit 4 Intercultural learning*, 2nd edition, Council of Europe Publishing, 2018, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-4-intercultural-learning>.

Description of the activity

1. The students are informed that in this activity they will explore their identities and the ways in which people in our society view one another's identities.
2. Each student receives a copy of the handout and is asked to write down 10 aspects of their own identity. They can refer to what defines them as a person, what values guide their decisions, what they like, what they dislike, their moral/spiritual beliefs, and so on.
3. Students are asked to form groups of four and to share what they have written. Then they should try to identify what they have in common and a) circle the identity aspects that all four people in the group have in common; b) circle with a different colour the aspects that only three people in the group have in common.
4. The teacher engages the class in a debriefing discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. How did you feel during this activity?
 - b. How many aspects did all the members of your group have in common?
 - c. Were you surprised by the things that were common/different?
5. The teacher shares with students the following: we as individuals have the tendency to put people into boxes based on a certain aspect of our identity and to believe that all the people in one group are the same. Now consider that if four students in one class do not completely overlap in aspects of their identity, how can we expect an entire people to overlap in all aspects of their identity?
6. The students are asked to do a little experiment. They are asked to look around the room for 10 seconds and identify all the red objects in the room. The teacher then asks the students to close their eyes and name all the blue objects in the room. The teacher discusses with the students the fact that we see only what we want to see. We are often oblivious to aspects that are not of interest to us, and we tend to see what we are searching for and what reinforces our beliefs.
7. The teacher shares with the students the concept of stereotypes: an assumption about what someone will do or how they will behave that is based on the groups to which they belong (or are perceived to belong), for example ethnic group, gender, religion, sexual orientation or ability. Stereotypes act like a lens that makes us pass judgement on people without actually knowing them. Stereotypes are based on a single story about a group of people. Our stereotypes make us label people according to the group (we think) they belong to, and limit our understanding of the complexity of a person's identity.
8. The teacher discusses with the class how, just as a focus on red objects prevents students from seeing the blue objects, stereotypes prevent us from seeing what is in front of us and skew our perceptions, so that we see only what validates our stereotypical view.
9. The students are asked to work again in groups of four or five to discuss the following, but the composition of the groups should be different from the previous part of the activity.
 - What is the single story that you heard about the Roma from your family, from the media or from other sources?
 - Have you encountered people or been in situations where a stereotypical image of Roma has been challenged? What did you think?
 - Why do you think people have stereotypes about Roma?
 - If there are any Roma students in the class: As a Roma person, how do you feel when you come across these stereotypes?
 - If there are no Roma students in the class: How would you feel if you came across such stereotypes about your own culture?
 - Have you ever realised that these images are overgeneralised and cannot be true of an entire cultural group?
10. Students are brought back from their group work to engage in a discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. What is the main thing you have learned from this activity?
 - b. What can we do not to fall prey to stereotypical images about Roma and other people?

11. The teacher explains that stereotypes are based on a very limited and biased understanding of the world and are prevalent in our societies. They are transmitted to us by our parents, teachers, books, movies, music and so on. It is not our fault that they exist, but it is our responsibility to try to understand them, to challenge them, to stop acting based on them and to stop perpetuating them.

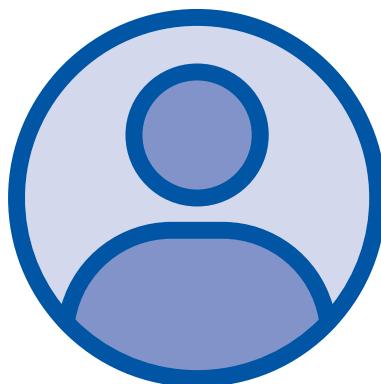
12. As a follow-up to this activity, students can watch a TED Talk such as:

- "Romani or Gypsies by Dijana Pavlovic", www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTIQMOdeW_8;
- "The danger of a single story", by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,⁹ www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda Ngozi Adichie the danger of a single story.

9. Subtitles in several languages are available.

Handout – One copy for each student

My identity



Activity 3 – Persecutions of Roma and Travellers before the 20th century: England and Scotland

Overview

In this activity, starting from 16th-century legislation against Roma and Travellers, students research historical persecution of these groups in England and Scotland, reflecting on their resilience and the ways in which this history must be commemorated.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity
- ▶ Autonomous learning skills
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: two handouts – Handout 1 for groups A and B and handout 2 for groups C and D; access to the internet, archives, libraries.

Duration: two to three hours – The activity consists of three parts of one hour each and includes an assignment between the first and the second part with an estimated duration of 30-120 minutes, depending on the interest and age of the students.

Information for teachers

This educational activity asks students to research the history of Roma and Travellers in England and Scotland. Using this model, similar activities can be developed for other parts of Europe. It is important to acknowledge, and even discuss with students, that information on this topic is not easily available and that the sources are not always trustworthy. History is often written from the perspective of the dominant groups, which can lead to biased interpretation of the facts.

Teachers are encouraged to discuss with students how, when information is lacking, this should be acknowledged, and the temptation resisted to come up with a narrative that fills the blanks without solid evidence. When information is lacking, assumptions can be made, but it should be clear that these are just assumptions and not evidence-based information, and that even assumptions need to demonstrate respect for human dignity and cultural diversity.

If teachers consider that students may face difficulties conducting research on the internet, they can prepare some materials beforehand to make the research easier or more focused on certain topics. Alternatively, teachers may invite experts and members of Roma and/or Traveller organisations to provide students with the information they need.

Additional resources on Roma and Traveller history in the United Kingdom

- ▶ The Traveller Movement, *Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller history and culture*, <https://travellermovement.org.uk/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history-and-culture>.
- ▶ Historic Environment Scotland, *The persecution of Gypsy Travellers in Scotland – A timeline*, <https://blog.historicenvironment.scot/2023/06/persecution-of-gypsy-travellers-in-scotland/>.
- ▶ Historical Association, *Teaching Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history*, www.history.org.uk/secondary/resource/10115/teaching-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history.

Description of the activity

1. The teacher informs students that in 2008 the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month was established in Britain to raise awareness of these communities, to highlight their contributions to society and to combat negative stereotyping and prejudices. For various reasons, the history of Roma and Travellers in the UK is not well known and researched. As a result of their mainly nomadic lifestyle and oral culture, and the systemic persecution they endured throughout the centuries, their history has been written by scholars of the dominant group, whose interpretations lack insider knowledge.
2. The teacher asks the students to watch this video, which explains the three terms: <https://travellermovement.org.uk/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history-and-culture>.
3. The teacher informs the students that they will act as historians in this lesson, and try to piece together information regarding the persecution of Roma and Travellers in Britain and to link the past with the present through the lens of human rights.
4. The students are split in four groups: groups A and B will focus on the Roma and Travellers in England and groups C and D on the Roma and Travellers in Scotland. The groups will each receive a handout that includes information about 16th-century persecutions and a list of research questions for each group. Their task is to come back with informed answers to the questions in the handout. Groups A and C will focus on the legislation and actions against Roma and Travellers in England and in Scotland respectively, while groups B and D will focus on how Roma and Travellers were able to overcome their persecution in England and Scotland respectively.
5. Students can start this research in class and continue at home.
6. Each group presents their main findings and the teacher engages the class in a debriefing discussion based on the following questions.
 - Was it difficult to find the information required?
 - Why do you think so little attention is paid to the history of Roma and Travellers?
 - What can be done to ensure that this part of British history is appropriately remembered?
 - What can we learn from the resilience of Roma and Travellers who, despite facing grave human rights violations, were able to survive and to maintain their culture and identity?

Handout 1 – Groups A and B

Legislation against the Roma and Travellers in 16th-century England

► The Egyptians Act of 1530

King Henry VIII forced all the people referred to as “Egyptians” out of England:

“The Egyptians now being in this realm, have monition to depart within sixteen days. ... from henceforth no such person be suffered to come within this the King's realm and if they do, they ... shall forfeit to the King our Sovereign Lord all their goods and titles and then to be commanded to avoid the realm within fifteen days under pain of imprisonment”.

► The Egyptians Act of 1554

The 1530 Act did not succeed in its aim of expelling all the Roma and Travellers from England. Queen Mary complained that “Egyptians” were plying their “devilish and naughty practices and devices”. The Egyptians Act of 1554 punished Roma and Travellers with deportation on pain of execution, but did not impose prosecution of those who gave up their nomadic lifestyle, which was described in the act as their “naughty, idle and ungodly life and company”.

- In 1562, legislation was enacted to grant all Roma people born in England and Wales the possibility of becoming English subjects on condition that they fully assimilated into the local population. However, they were forced into a life on the margins and were discriminated against by the authorities and the general population. Those who refused this offer were punished by death.
- There is evidence that, over the next 100 years, hundreds of Roma and Travellers were hanged for being who they were. Further acts enforced banishment, fines, servitude or death.

Tasks	
Group A	Group B
<ul style="list-style-type: none">► What further legislation was enacted in England to persecute Roma and Travellers throughout the centuries?► What do you think motivated the authorities to pass legislation against Roma and Travellers?► When did the legislation start to change to ensure respect for human dignity of Roma and Travellers in the UK?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">► What did Roma and Travellers do in the face of legislation that rendered their presence and their lifestyle illegal?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where did they go?• How did the ones who remained survive?► How is Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month celebrated/commemorated throughout the UK?

Handout 2 – Groups C and D

Legislation against Roma and Travellers in 16th-century Scotland

- ▶ In 1541 an Order in Council ordered “Egyptians” to leave Scotland within 30 days, on pain of death.
- ▶ In 1571 legislation increased the punishment for anyone convicted of being “Egyptian”. It became legal to hang or drown people.
- ▶ In 1579 reprisals intensified, with legislation stating that “the idle people calling themselves Egyptians are to be nailed to a tree by the ears and, thereafter, the said ears cut off”¹⁰ as punishment for their offence (i.e. their identity).
- ▶ In the years that followed, large numbers of people were burned, hanged, shipped to the Caribbean as slaves and deported to the American colonies.

Tasks	
Group C	Group D
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What further legislation was enacted in Scotland to persecute Roma and Travellers throughout the centuries?▶ What do you think motivated the authorities to pass legislation against the Roma and Travellers?▶ When did the legislation start to change to ensure respect for human dignity of Roma and Travellers in the UK?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ What did the Roma and Travellers do in the face of legislation that made their presence and their lifestyle illegal?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where did they go?• How did the ones who remained survive?▶ How is Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month celebrated/commemorated throughout the UK?

10. For more information, see www.iriss.org.uk/resources/reports/gypsy-traveller-history-scotland.

Activity 4 – Persecutions of Roma and Travellers before the 20th century: the Great Round-Up of the Roma in Spain

Overview

In this activity students learn about persecutions carried out against the Roma in Spain from the first *pragmática* to the Great Round-Up, as well as about forms of resistance employed by Roma in the face of their unfair treatment and the harsh living conditions arbitrarily imposed on them.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- ▶ Autonomous learning skills
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handout 1 (one copy per student); handout 2 (copies for half of the class); handout 3 (copies for the other half of the class)

Duration: one hour

Information for teachers

The Great Round-Up was a historical event to which little interest has been paid in historiography. Only recently has it started to be studied and brought to the forefront of public awareness. This educational activity starts with information about the Great Round-Up. The class is then divided into two groups. One half of the class studies the factors that enabled the Great Round-Up – the hundreds of *pragmáticas* issued throughout centuries. This process will show students that the persecution of the Roma in Spain was a long process aimed at forced assimilation and/or extermination, and that the round-up was not an isolated event. The other half of the class studies the resistance of the Roma during the round-up. This process will show them that the Roma had agency: they were not willing to be imprisoned and found various ways to resist the dehumanisation to which they were subjected. At the end of the activity the two groups reunite, share their new findings and discuss the importance of human rights.

The handouts in this lesson plan are based on two articles published on RomArchive: "Anti-Gypsy legislation in Spain from the Catholic kings to the Great Raid", by Araceli Cañadas Ortega,¹¹ and "Forms of resistance during the Great Round-Up (Spain, 1749-1763)", by Nicolás Jiménez González.¹²

11. Cañadas Ortega A, "Anti-Gypsy legislation in Spain from the Catholic kings to the Great Raid", www.romarchive.eu/rom/flamenco/antigypsy-legislation-spain/.

12. Jiménez González N., "Forms of resistance during the Great Round-up (Spain, 1749-1763)", <https://eriac.org/>.

Description of the activity

The teacher shares with students that the first document mentioning the Roma in Spain dates from 1425, when Alfonso V of Aragon granted a letter of passage to Don Juan of Egypt Minor. The number of Roma people who entered Spain in the 15th century is estimated at 3 000. They earned a living through itinerant trades, travelling in groups of around 100 people, led by a man.

1. The teacher then shares that between 1749 and 1763 an event called the Great Round-Up of the Roma took place in Spain. Each student receives a copy of handout 1 and, in groups of four, the following questions are discussed.
 - a. What motivated the Spanish authorities to engage in such an action?
 - b. Why were the Roma targeted?
 - c. How was it possible to arrest so many people, including children, without trial or formal conviction?
 - d. What were the long-term consequences of these actions?
2. The teacher asks students to share the main aspects of what they discussed. It is possible that many students will not know how to answer these questions. The teacher can help them with further questions such as: Do you think there were economic reasons for these actions? Do you think there were racist reasons? Do you think that the Roma ever regained their trust in the Spanish authorities? Alternatively, the teacher can provide some of the answers.
3. Students are divided into two groups. One group studies the enabling factors of the Great Round-Up (handout 2) and the other group the Roma resistance during the Great Round-Up (handout 3). Depending on the class's interest and time available, students can either limit their reading to the handouts or further research information that is available online. Each group discusses the reflection questions available at the end of their handout.
4. The groups are asked to present to each other what they have learned, starting with the enabling factors.
5. The teacher conducts a debriefing discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. What can we learn from this lesson about the power of the state?
 - b. What can we learn from this lesson about Roma history?
 - c. What can we learn from this lesson about human rights and the importance of mechanisms to promote and protect human rights?

Handout 1 – One copy for each student

The Great Round-Up of the Roma

In 1749 the Spanish authority, the monarchy and the Catholic Church attempted to exterminate the Roma. Known as the Great Round-Up, or General Imprisonment, of the Roma, this action took place across Spain on 30 July 1749 and was aimed at capturing all Roma people in the Spanish territory and confiscating their assets. It is estimated that between 9 000 and 12 000 people were arrested and consigned to slave labour.

Men and children aged 7 and older were forced to work in arsenals and mines and in rebuilding the Spanish navy, while women, girls and boys under the age of 7 were imprisoned in hospitals, where they were made to look after contagious patients, and “houses of mercy”, where they were made to do textile work. Their properties were confiscated and auctioned to finance the operation itself.

Although the objective of the Great Round-Up was to capture all Roma people residing in Spain, some managed to escape, especially nomadic families and those who, for various reasons, were absent from their usual places of residence. On 12 August 1749 an additional raid was carried out to capture all Roma.

Given the disorder in the classification of ethnicity, some people who were old *castellanos* –people of Roma origin who did not reside in Roma neighbourhoods, did not meet with other Roma families in public or private, mingled with and married non-Roma people and fulfilled the obligations of being Catholic, and were thus not viewed as Roma by the authorities – were also imprisoned. In September 1749 it was decided that the old *castellanos* should be released. Many people were released, but several thousand remained imprisoned and were subjected to forced labour.

The General Imprisonment of Roma lasted for 14 years until 1763, when a general pardon was issued. By then, many Roma had died as a result of the inhumane conditions in which they were forced to live and work.

Handout 2 – Copies for half of the class

Enabling factors of the Great Round-Up

The 1749 mass imprisonment of Roma in Spain did not come out of nowhere. Over two centuries of anti-Roma legislation provided the social and legal foundation for the Great Round-Up. The first anti-Roma legislation was issued in 1499. Between 1499 and 1783 more than 250 laws were passed with the intention of eradicating the Roma as a distinct ethnic group.

The Catholic monarchs issued the first *pragmática* (a law issuing sanctions) against the Roma in 1499. Roma (called *Gitanos*) were given two months to assimilate – to abandon their itinerant trades, customs, traditions and way of dressing and, instead, live at a fixed address and take on mainstream trades. Failure to do so would result in expulsion or slavery. At the same time, Roma were defined as inherently dangerous and as criminals. It is worth mentioning that a similar process happened with other communities who were forced to assimilate or be expelled (Muslims, Jews and Moors). This *pragmática* served as the basis for future provisions promulgated by the monarchs.

Charles I reissued the Pragmatic Sanction of 1499 in 1525, 1528, 1534 and 1539. In 1560, 1566 and 1586 Philip II revised and elaborated on the existing points, ordering that the Roma be condemned to serve in the galleys to cover the Spanish navy's rowing requirements. He considered the Roma to be vagabonds and forbade them to go to or to live in the Indies.

Philip III prohibited all signs of Roma identity – name, language, clothes and customs – in an attempt at forced assimilation in 1611 and 1619. Roma were forced to leave Spain within six months or to live in places with over 1 000 inhabitants, and were not allowed to buy or sell livestock. The expulsion of Moors, Jews and Muslims from Spain, in addition to wars, plagues, famine and emigration to the American colonies, led to a serious decline in the population. In 1633 Philip IV withdrew the expulsion decree and allowed the Roma to be “kingdom’s subjects”, not foreigners, on several conditions. The term *Gitano* or *Gitana* was prohibited, as were celebrations such as dances or plays, and living in a community such as the *Gitanerías* (Roma neighbourhoods).

Charles II introduced censuses in 1692, 1693, 1695 and 1699, which collected information on name, residence, civil status, number of children, trades, weapons, property, horses and mules owned and so on. It also prohibited the Roma from working as blacksmiths and introduced harsh penalties for *encubridores* (anybody who helped or protected the Roma). In 1717 Philip V allowed Roma families to settle in one of only 41 cities, which had the police resources and infrastructure considered necessary to “monitor and control the Roma population”.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ How did previous *pragmáticas* contribute to the Great Round-Up?
- ▶ What other factors contributed to such major actions taken against the Roma for a period of 14 years?
- ▶ Why do you think this part of Spanish and Roma history is not well known?

Handout 3 – Copies for the other half of the class

Roma resistance during the Great Round-Up

Roma were not willing to be captured, and resisted as far as they could. They rebelled against the Great Round-Up from the beginning, through various means, despite the great challenges of facing up to the state authorities and professional armies. The following were some of their forms of resistance.

Association

In 1753, during the Great Round-Up, a group of Roma from Triana (Sevilla) led by Sebastián Miguel de Varas y Miranda established the first brotherhood of Roma in Spain, the Hermandad de Señor de la Salud and María Santísima de las Angustias, also known as Los Gitanos. These were some of the few Roma who managed not to get imprisoned. This religious organisation was created with the aim of improving the social image of the Roma, to highlight their faith and religious devotion through involvement in ecclesiastical acts. This approach did not enable Roma to avoid prison but showed that Roma families were respectable and integrated into society.

Escape

Their eagerness to regain their lost freedom prompted many Roma to engage continually in escape attempts to return to where they were from and to search for their families, particularly their wives and children. Between 1752 and 1765, a total of 335 escape attempts were recorded, of which an estimated 85% were successful.

Roma women also rebelled against their imprisonment. In January 1753, 52 Romani women, led by Rosa Cortés, fled from the Royal House of Mercy in Saragossa by breaking a wall using nails from the rooftop beams. Likewise, in August 1753, 40 women escaped, helping each other climb the 4½-metre-high wall, and in June 1758, 12 imprisoned Roma women organised a riot.

Confrontation

During the period of imprisonment, organised armed resistance also took place. In August 1749, during the early days of the round-up, in the hermitage of San Andrés (El Viso del Marqués, Ciudad Real), more than 40 Roma managed to resist arrest by the authorities, until the army intervened. Similarly, a group of 13 Roma took refuge in the monastery of Santa María de la Victoria, where they held out for two weeks. Finally, on 12 August 1749, they were captured when the ecclesiastical authority authorised the army to enter the monastery.

Legal resistance

Roma used legal means to resist unjust treatment during the Great Round-Up. Many Roma knew the law and used legal tools with such frequency that in November 1751 the Madrid Chamber of Mayors ordered that all Roma who approached the court to request the release of their relatives be sent to prison.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ Why do you think people chose to resist the actions of the Great Round-Up?
- ▶ Why is it important to learn about the resistance in the face of oppression?
- ▶ Are you aware of other forms of resistance (during the Great Round-Up or other oppressions)?

Activity 5 – Persecutions of Roma and Travellers before the 20th century: Roma slavery in Romanian Principalities

Overview

In this activity students learn about the enslaving of Roma in the Romanian Principalities and analyse it by exploring primary sources. They reflect on the abolition process and its aftermath.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Autonomous learning skills
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: The activity includes two videos and an online publication, as well as an assignment for students to research information, all of which require access to the internet.

Duration: two to three hours

Information for teachers

This activity has two parts. In the first part students learn about Roma slavery by exploring primary sources – documents that attest to the selling or exchange of slaves – and in the second part they learn about the abolition of slavery. This topic is connected to the concept of human dignity. It offers students a lens through which they can view historical events, as well as reflect on them through an essay-writing assignment.

Description of the activity

Part I

1. Students are informed that in this lesson they will discuss Roma slavery in Romania. First, students are asked to make word associations with the word "slavery". Then they are asked to reflect on the opposite of slavery. After students have presented their ideas, the teacher tells (or reminds) students about the concept of human dignity¹³ and explains that slavery is an infringement of human dignity.
2. The teacher asks students if they are aware of situations in which people have been held as slaves in any part of the world. Afterwards, the teacher tells students that, in the Romanian Principalities, Roma were held as slaves for five centuries. This is a little-known part of European history both within and outside Romania. Teachers can present the information below – ideally in an interactive and engaging format – to students, to offer them a general overview of this history.¹⁴

13. For more information, refer to the next activity, "The Roma Holocaust through the lens of human dignity".

14. The historical information presented in this section is based on the Council of Europe's "Roma History Factsheets – Wallachia and Moldavia", <https://rm.coe.int/wallachia-and-moldavia-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b19be>.

The origins of slavery in the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldova are still debated. Some historians think that the Roma were brought there as slaves by the Ottoman army, while others think they were enslaved for economic reasons after having lived there as free people. The enslaved people were classified into three groups, on the basis who "owned" them: slaves of the state; slaves of the Orthodox monasteries; and slaves of the boyars (aristocrats).

The Roma individual had no legal status as a person and was considered as property. The "owner" had the right to sell them or exchange them for various goods, as well as to treat them with physical violence and torture, but had no right to kill them. Enslaved people were not allowed to marry without the consent of the "owner", and marriages could not be organised between free and enslaved people. When slavery was abolished in the second half of the 19th century, the number of Roma was estimated to be around 250 000, approximately 7% of the population.

3. Students are divided into groups of four to five to study archival documents. They can use documents collected and translated into English (or translate them into other languages) in the *Roma slavery and the places of memory – Album on social history*, which is available online.¹⁵

Each group will receive one of the following documents from the above-mentioned album to read and discuss.

- a. 1648 August 10 – The ban Radu Buzescu and his wife Mailina donate to the Patriarchate of Alexandria a clan of Gypsies, namely Radu and his wife Carsitna and his son Nicula (p. 7).
- b. 1668 March 15 – Selling deed by which Nica, son of Gligore from Sateni sells to Captain Stoian a Gypsy girl, Pauna, for 19 golden coins (p. 9).
- c. 1682 October 15 – Ianache, the son of sluger Nica from Purani, sells to Voivode Serban Cantacuzino and to Cotroceni Monastery a Gypsy clan, namely Gypsy Ion with his wife Stanca and their children Stanciu, Petru, Stan and Neagoe for 125 thalers (p. 13).
- d. 1701 June 6 – John, the archimandrite of the Hurezi Monastery, exchanges with the Stanesti Monastery two Gypsies for a bigger Gypsy woman, Chita, which he then gave to the Dobrusa Monastery (p. 19).
- e. 1738 April 14 – Anica Constantin, hatman and Dumitru, former great chamberlain, founders of Ramnic Monastery, donate to Ramnic Monastery and to Simeon, the hegumen of the monastery, a Gypsy girl Safta, daughter of Maria the Gypsy (p. 40).

4. The teacher conducts a debriefing discussion based on the following questions.

- a. What did you learn from these documents?
- b. What surprised you when you read these documents?
- c. Do you think that the enslavers cared about human dignity?
- d. What do you think motivated them to engage in such practices?

5. At the end of the lesson students can watch this short video about Roma slavery, www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwJuZcpbCo, which also touches on the topic of the Roma Holocaust, and on the long-term consequences of these historical persecutions. The teacher assigns students an essay, in which they reflect on human dignity and Roma slavery.

Part II

1. This activity is dedicated to the abolition of slavery. The teacher informs students that, after more than five centuries, Roma were gradually emancipated, starting in 1843 with the abolition of slavery for Roma who were "owned" by the state and ending with the 1856 bill on the emancipation of Roma "owned" by private individuals. In Romania, 20 February commemorates the abolition of slavery. However, the emancipation completely neglected the economic and moral aspects of the oppression. The enslavers who had to free their slaves were financially compensated for their loss, while the Roma received no compensation and no support to integrate into a society that continued to stigmatise them and to view them as inferior.

15. See Furtună, A.-N. et Turcitu, V.-C. (dir.) (2021), *Roma slavery and the places of memory – Album on social history*, Dykhta! Publishing House, Bucharest.

2. Students are shown a short film portraying the struggles of a freed Roma woman, Ioana Tinculeasa Rudăreasa, to gain official recognition of her status. The film is called *Ioana's Truths (Adevărurile Ioanei)*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Do8mLLdeqGM.
3. Students are asked to work in groups of four to five, with each group given the task of researching one of the following.¹⁶
 - a. What motivated the authorities to issue legislation for the emancipation of the slaves?
 - b. What were the long-term effects of slavery on Roma communities and on Romanian society in general?
 - c. What kind of reparations were offered (or should be offered) to Roma for the atrocities they and their families had to endure?
 - d. How is Roma slavery commemorated in Romania and in Europe, or how should it be commemorated?
4. Each group presents the results of their research, after which the teacher engages the students in a debriefing discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. What are the main things you learned from these lessons about Roma slavery?
 - b. Why do you think it is important to learn about this part of European history?
 - c. What could we as students, teachers and the school community do to raise more awareness about this topic and its long-term consequences?
5. The teacher asks students to revisit the essay they wrote after Part I of this activity and update it in light of the new information. A group reading of the essays can be organised afterwards, in a separate meeting.

16. Teachers may want to share with students an additional resource about Ioana Tinculeasa Rudăreasa's case, <https://eriac.org/re-thinking-roma-resistance-stories-of-resistance/>.

Activity 6 – The Roma Holocaust through the lens of human dignity

Overview

In this activity students learn about the atrocities carried out against the Roma during the Holocaust and analyse them from the perspective of human dignity.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Autonomous learning
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handout (one copy per student)

Duration: The activity has two parts, each one hour long; if time is limited, it is possible to do only the first part.

Information for teachers

Recognition of human dignity is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, as stated in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This activity starts by unpacking the first article of the UDHR as a way of deepening students' understanding of human dignity and of how the actions taken by the perpetrators of the Roma Holocaust conflict with human dignity.

The concept of human dignity refers to the belief that all people hold a special value that is intrinsic to their humanity and that has no connection with gender, religion, ethnicity, abilities, sexual orientation or any other factor other than being human. The interpretation given to human dignity in the UDHR differs from its prior meaning, which connected it to an individual's class, perceived race, lifelong achievements or other advantages. Human dignity was seen as something that people had earned and that came from their status. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights clearly states in its preamble that "these rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person". However, this understanding did not start with the modern framework of human rights. For centuries, religions and philosophers around the world have promoted the idea of human dignity and equality. Nevertheless, most people are not able to express – or have never been asked to think about – what human dignity means for them.

Understanding the Roma Holocaust through the lens of human dignity helps students to connect with this part of history (which may seem remote to them) from a human perspective, so as to understand its impact on individuals and their families and to go beyond the geopolitical.

Description of the activity

Part I

1. The teacher informs students that in this activity they will learn more facts about the Roma Holocaust and reflect on them from the perspective of human dignity. The first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is made visible to them on a screen or a flipchart or in a handout.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

2. The teacher informs students that human rights are defined as a set of minimum standards that allow us to live a life of dignity. The teacher displays the concept of human dignity on a board or in a shared document, and asks students to make free associations and to share how they understand the concept of human dignity. If students need help in coming up with ideas, the teacher can guide them by suggesting they think of situations in which they or other people have been treated as less than human, or were discriminated against, abused or treated unfairly.
3. The teacher summarises the ideas expressed by the students and, if needed, adds further information to ensure a clear understanding of the concept.
4. Each student receives a copy of the handout and is asked to read it and to underline the aspects that conflict with the concept of human dignity. Students are encouraged to consider how they would feel if such actions were taken against them. While reading each paragraph they can try to consider questions such as: Would I still feel like a person in such a situation? Would I be motivated to act for the common good?
5. After individual reading and underlining, the students work in groups of four to discuss the following:
 - What infringements on human dignity did you identify in the text?
 - How did each action/ideology contribute to the genocide?
6. The students are brought back together for a discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. Was there something you did not understand in the text you read?
 - b. What kind of actions were committed against the Roma during the Holocaust?
 - c. What were the intentions of those who committed these actions?
 - d. Based on your reading, why do you think the Nazis and their collaborators decided to murder the Roma?
 - e. Why do you think there was no significant resistance from other citizens to the plan to exterminate the Roma?
 - f. What do you think we can do today to ensure that there are no such infringements on human dignity for anyone?
7. Students are asked to write an essay with their reflections about human dignity and the treatment of the Roma during the Holocaust. This activity can be done as homework.

Part II

The teacher asks a few volunteer students to read their essays, after which there is a debriefing discussion based on the following questions.

- a. How did you feel while writing this essay?
- b. Did you feel you needed more information than what was provided? If so, were you able to find that information?
- c. What else would you like to learn about the Roma Holocaust?
- d. Why is it important to ensure respect for human dignity for all people?
- e. What lessons can we learn from this atrocity that we can apply today to build a better world?

Handout – One copy for each student

A brief overview of the persecutions of the Roma in Germany¹⁷

The Roma Holocaust was made possible by the historical and political context in which a negative image of Roma had prevailed. These negative views were presented as scientifically based, but were based on nothing more than speculation fuelled by hatred and the need to prove the superiority of the so-called Aryan race.

In 1876 Cesare Lombroso published *The criminal man*, which contained a lengthy chapter on the genetically criminal character of Roma, whom he described as "a living example of a whole race of criminals".¹⁸ His work was translated into German and had a profound influence on German public attitudes and laws.

In 1899 the police in the German state of Bavaria founded the Central Office for Gypsy Affairs (*Zigeunerzentrale*) to co-ordinate police action against Roma. After the Nazis came to power in 1933, the police in Germany began to enforce these laws more rigorously against Roma. One of the Nazis' main concerns was the systematic identification of all Roma people, whom they characterised as having "alien blood" and were therefore racially "undesirable". German eugenicists recommended that the Roma be forcibly sterilised because they were alleged to represent a danger to German society.

The Nuremberg Race Laws passed by the Nazis in September 1935, which forbade intermarriage or sexual relationships between so-called "Aryan" and "non-Aryan" people, also affected the Roma. In 1936 Heinrich Himmler founded the Reich Central Office for Combating the Gypsy Plague in Berlin. This agency took over and expanded the bureaucratic measures for the systematic persecution of Roma. At the Olympic Games in Berlin that year, Roma were not allowed to appear in public; they were arrested and forced to relocate to Marzahn, an open field near a garbage dump.

All over Germany, local authorities began forcing Roma into municipal camps. These camps later evolved into forced labour camps for Roma. Roma people were interned in almost every concentration camp in Germany and were later sent to extermination camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, where Section B1e was reserved for the Roma from February 1943 to August 1944. Of the 23 000 Sinti and Roma who were deported there, 21 000 were murdered.

Roma people were also killed in mass executions by SS *Einsatzgruppen* (paramilitary death squads), who murdered them with the help of the army behind the front lines. In 1943 some Roma were still serving in the army, even though it was involved in the Holocaust of the Roma and thousands of Roma had already been killed in concentration camps.

Not a single Roma was called as a witness at the Nuremberg trials against the Nazis in October 1945.

17. Based on the timeline of anti-Roma laws and policies in "Germany: a brief history (1890-1992)", published in *Right to remember: A handbook for education with young people on the Roma Genocide*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2017, p. 43, <https://rm.coe.int/168070309f>; on the article "O porrajmos: The Romani holocaust", by Ian Hancock, <https://docslib.org/doc/1180370/o-porrajmos-the-romani-holocaust-ian-hancock>; and on the article published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the "Persecution of Roma (Gypsies) in prewar Germany, 1933-1939", <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/persecution-of-roma-gypsies-in-prewar-germany-1933-1939>.
18. Lombroso, C. (1876), *L'uomo delinquente*, Ulrico Hoepli, Milan, p. 123.

Activity 7 – Genocidal actions throughout Europe

Overview

In this activity students learn about genocidal actions against Roma taken by different governments throughout Europe, which will add nuance to their understanding of the Roma Holocaust.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Autonomous learning skills
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handout

Duration: three hours: the activity is divided into three parts of one hour each and includes an assignment between the first and the second part with an estimated duration of 30-120 minutes, depending on the interest and age of the students.

Information for teachers

Approaching the multitude of forms of persecution against Roma during the Holocaust may seem a daunting task because of the complexity of the topic and the limited sources of information. With scarce research in the field even now, 80 years after the events, some aspects remain unclear, especially the number of people who were persecuted and murdered. Various sources offer different estimates, and teachers are encouraged to explain to the students that significant evidence has been destroyed, or was never documented, and limited research has been conducted on the subject. Nevertheless, there is irrefutable evidence of the genocidal actions carried out against the Roma, not only by Nazi Germany but also by its allies.

When students find out details about violent actions against human beings, it is important to consider the emotional toll it will take on them. Their emotions need to be addressed, acknowledged and validated. It is recommended that teachers avoid provoking strong emotional reactions among students by showing explicit, violent pictures and videos. However, when emotional reactions appear, they should be validated. At the same time, students may come across violent content when conducting their own research. Teachers should warn them of this possibility and advise them to avoid including such content in their presentations, reminding them that sensationalist content is not necessary to understand the gravity of what happened. Moreover, we show respect for the dignity of the victims by not disseminating violent content.

One of the topics addressed in this activity is forced sterilisation. Teachers are encouraged to listen to the testimony of Rita Prigmore, who tells the story of her mother facing forced sterilisation,¹⁹ and to share it with the group that will focus on this topic.

19. An interview with Rita Prigmore was published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn60517>.

This activity has three parts and includes a research activity conducted by the students. After the students have learned about the persecution and murder of Roma in different parts of Europe, they can conduct further research on sub-topics of their interest. The last part of the activity includes a meeting with an expert on the Roma Holocaust, who can further clarify certain aspects that the students could not research on their own. Teachers are encouraged to invite a Roma researcher to join their class. This will ensure representativity and also contribute to countering stereotypes that students may have regarding the competences and professions of Roma people.

Description of the activity

Part I – Introduction

1. The teacher gives a short introduction about how Roma were persecuted during the Holocaust. The information in the handout for the activity "The Roma Holocaust through the lens of human dignity" can be used for this purpose.
2. Students are asked to form five groups, and each group is given one of the texts in the handout. They are asked to read the text and to prepare a presentation of the main ideas for their classmates.
3. Each group makes their presentation, and the teacher conducts a discussion with the class based on the following questions.
 - a. Was there any information from the presentation that you already knew?
 - b. What new information have you learned in this process?
 - c. Was there anything that surprised you?
 - d. Is there any other information you know that has not yet been shared?
 - e. What other groups of people were targeted by similar forms of persecution?
 - f. What aspect(s) of the subject would you like to know more about?
4. The teacher writes on the board aspects of the subject that the students would like to learn more about and organises them into sub-topics. Each student is asked to choose a sub-topic, and all the students interested in the same sub-topic form a study group. If there are more than five students in a study group, some students are asked to find another sub-topic of interest, or there can be two study groups on the same sub-topic but focusing on two different geographical areas, for example, or on two different periods of time.
5. Each study group should draw up a research plan to learn more about their sub-topic. The teacher asks the groups to create a list of questions to which they want to find answers, and gives them a list of websites where they can start their research. The teacher encourages students to search for testimonies of Roma people connected to their sub-topic. The groups have until the next class meeting to do their research and prepare a 5-10-minute presentation; depending on the number of groups, all the presentations should take no more than an hour, including time for questions and answers. The teacher encourages students to be creative in their presentations and at the same time not to lose their focus on the content. If time allows, the presentations can be longer.

Part II – Presentations

1. Students present their research to their fellow students. After all the presentations, students can ask questions or make comments on and connections to what they themselves have researched. The teacher can ask questions or make comments too, to help the class better understand the presentations. If students present incorrect information, the teacher provides the correct information or, if they are not sure, may ask the students about their sources of information and make a note to look into it further before the next session.
2. After the Q&A session, the teacher checks the emotional state of the students to ensure that any difficult and/or intense emotions are expressed and acknowledged.
3. The teacher concludes that the persecution of the Roma in Europe was a complex system of measures taken in various countries, often with the involvement of the local authorities, who either acted autonomously or collaborated with Nazi Germany in carrying out various forms of persecution.

4. The teacher distributes a reflection questionnaire (or a link to one), which the students are asked to complete by the next class meeting, based on the following questions.

- a. What are three main things that you learned about the Roma Holocaust from doing this research and from listening to other presentations?
- b. What were the aspects of the topic that surprised you or provoked an emotional reaction?
- c. What question(s) do you still have? (The teacher collects the questions and informs students that they will have the opportunity in the next class to meet an expert on the Roma Holocaust and discuss these questions with them.)
- d. Do you feel that your perception of Roma people has changed now that you have learned more about their history?
- e. How was the process of working with your classmates on this topic?

Part III – Meeting an expert

The teacher carefully plans a meeting with a guest researcher, historian or expert on the Roma Holocaust, sharing in advance with the guest the research conducted by the students and the questions they still had after presenting their research. The guest prepares a presentation complementing the information already obtained by the students, and discusses with them the questions they have already raised, as well as any new questions they may have.

Handout – Texts for group work

1. Extermination camps

On 16 December 1942, Heinrich Himmler issued a directive calling for all “Gypsies” still living in the “German Reich” to be deported to Auschwitz. More than 20 000 Roma were subsequently interned in Auschwitz, most of whom came from detention or transit camps in Germany, Austria, German-occupied Poland, Belgium, the Netherlands and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. In the first few months after their arrival, hundreds of Roma died from malnutrition, epidemics and forced labour. Of all the sections of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Camp Section BIIe, where Roma were incarcerated, had the highest mortality rate. Over 19 300 people lost their lives there: 7 000 were gassed, and 13 700 died from hunger, lack of medical care, appalling sanitary facilities, brutal violence from SS guards and medical experiments.²⁰ Towards the end of July 1944, all the Roma inmates from Auschwitz-Birkenau who were thought to be still able to work were transferred to other concentration camps. On 2 August 1944, all the remaining Roma prisoners in Auschwitz were murdered in the gas chambers.²¹

The second largest centre of the extermination of Roma was the Jasenovac camp, set up by the Croatian Government, an ally of Nazi Germany. The killing of Roma in Jasenovac was exceptionally cruel. It is estimated that approximately 16 000 people (almost all the Roma in the Independent State of Croatia) were murdered.²² In July 1942, when the number of Roma arriving in the camp was at its highest, they were separated into two groups. The older men, women and children were separated from the younger men and immediately sent to be killed in Donja Gradina. The younger men were kept outdoors in Camp III-C, where many died of hunger, dehydration, exhaustion and physical abuse. Some Roma prisoners were housed in the village of Uštica, in the abandoned houses of murdered Serbian families. Regardless of age or gender, almost no Roma who entered the camp survived.²³

2. Concentration and detention camps

In Germany, shortly before the opening of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, the police forcibly relocated all Roma in Greater Berlin to Marzahn, an open field located near a cemetery and sewage dump in eastern Berlin. In 1938 and 1939, the Reich Office of the Criminal Police ordered about 3 000 Roma men and women who were capable of carrying out hard physical labour to be deported to concentration camps. In 1940 Himmler ordered another group of about 2 500 Roma (mainly Sinti) from the territory of the German Reich to be deported to the General Protectorate in today’s Poland. Nearly every concentration camp in Germany and occupied territories had Roma prisoners.

In Italy, following the directive of the Italian Ministry of Interior from September 1940, Roma people were interned in various camps. In some camps, particularly Boiano, Agnona and Tossicia, they constituted the majority of prisoners. At Boiano prisoners were housed in the sheds of an old tobacco factory, in conditions so inhumane that even the Fascists sought to move them to other premises. However, they were not moved until the camp closed down in August 1941. In Tossicia, one of the worst camps in central Italy, Roma lived crowded together in barracks where conditions were intolerable: there were no windows or water, and the sewers constantly overflowed.²⁴

20. Council of Europe, “Roma History Factsheets: Holocaust”, <https://rm.coe.int/holocaust-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ab0>.
21. Council of Europe, “Roma History Factsheets: Concentration camps”, <https://rm.coe.int/concentration-camps-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ab9>.
22. “European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma, The genesis and course of the Nazi persecution of Roma and Sinti”, www.roma-sinti-holocaust-memorial-day.eu/history/the-genesis-and-course-of-the-nazi-persecution-of-roma-and-sinti/.
23. “Roma in Jasenovac concentration camp”, www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=9823#breadCrumbs.
24. Council of Europe, “Roma History Factsheets: The Nazi Period in Italy”, <https://rm.coe.int/the-nazi-period-in-italy-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ac5>.

In France, about half of the pre-war Roma population of approximately 13 000 people were interned in special camps throughout the country, where they suffered disease and hunger and from where they were recruited for forced labour. In Alsace-Lorraine, Roma people were expelled to the unoccupied zone and interned in camps originally built to house Spanish Republicans. In the rest of the unoccupied zone, the fate of Roma depended on the goodwill of the prefects, who could intern any "nomads" they judged undesirable. In the occupied zone, on 4 October 1940, the German High Command in France ordered the transfer of Roma prisoners to camps under French police guard. The camp system was constantly reorganised and the prisoners were moved many times, as the French authorities viewed internment of the "nomads" as a first step towards forcing them to settle. The authorities agreed to release the Roma unconditionally only in 1946.²⁵

In the Slovak Republic the government set up a "Gypsy Camp" at Dubnica nad Váhom, where around 800 people were interned under terrible conditions and later killed or deported.²⁶

Roma people from Romania were taken across the river Dniester to Transnistria (present-day Ukraine). The deportations began on 1 June 1942 with itinerant Roma, who travelled on foot or with wagons from one precinct to the other; this made their trip several weeks long. On arrival in Transnistria, some people were accommodated in huts and others in houses. A few villages on the Bug River were completely evacuated for this purpose, with the Ukrainian population being relocated to the central areas of the county. In the first winter, which was very harsh, many thousands of Roma died of cold, hunger and typhus. Out of the approximately 25 000 Roma deported to Transnistria, it is estimated that half survived and returned to Romania.

3. Forced labour

Forced labour was used by the Nazis and their collaborators to sustain their war efforts. Roma men, women and children were subjected to forced labour in inhumane conditions, both within and outside the concentration camps set up in Germany, post-Anschluss Austria and the German-occupied territories of central and eastern Europe. Initially, most of these camps were designed as punitive labour camps for working Roma men only. Some camps, for example Lety in Bohemia (present-day Czech Republic) and Belzec in Poland, were turned into camps for Roma men, women and children. Some of these camps were closed in 1943, with the inmates deported to death camps or other labour camps, or killed on the spot. Camps such as Lackenbach in Burgenland (present-day Austria) existed until the end of the war.

In spite of the appalling standards of living, the internees had to perform hard physical labour, digging feeders, regulating rivers or reservoirs, labouring on roadworks and in fields, and working for companies of all kinds.²⁷ They were rented out to various enterprises such as forest domains, agricultural manors, farms, brickyards and a silkworm farm, or were forced to work on public road-building projects. Their wages were handed over to the camp administration and the Roma themselves only received pocket money.²⁸ Mortality was high because of malnutrition, hard physical labour and disease.

In France, Roma and Sinti interned in camps were often recruited for forced labour. In addition to their usual duties in the camps, some prisoners worked for private companies within the camp itself. Others worked outside the camp on farms and forestry holdings but were always guarded by gendarmes. Part of their pay was withheld to meet the cost of their internment.²⁹

25. Council of Europe, "Roma History Factsheets: Holocaust", <https://rm.coe.int/holocaust-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ab0>.
26. Council of Europe, "Roma History Factsheets: Concentration camps", <https://rm.coe.int/concentration-camps-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ab9>.
27. Council of Europe, "Roma History Factsheets: Holocaust", <https://rm.coe.int/holocaust-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ab0>.
28. Council of Europe, "Roma History Factsheets: Concentration camps", <https://rm.coe.int/concentration-camps-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ab9>.
29. Council of Europe, "Roma History Factsheets: Internment in France 1940-1946", <https://rm.coe.int/internment-in-france-1940-1946-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1c15>.

In Auschwitz-Birkenau, Roma prisoners were used for clay and building work within the camp. In Transnistria, the Romanian authorities subjected Roma to forced labour, which included agricultural labour, repairing roads and railroads, cutting down willow trees on the bank of the Bug River, chopping wood in forests and military-related tasks in the Nikolaev region (in German-occupied territory on the opposite side of the Bug).

The situation of the Roma varied from county to county, district to district and even farm to farm. It depended on many factors, including the Romanian official at the head of the administrative unit.³⁰

4. Forced sterilisation, pseudo-medical experiments and euthanasia

Forced sterilisation was one of the ways in which the Nazis tried to extinguish the Roma. This inhumane action was carried out both within the camps and in hospitals outside the camps. Thousands of Roma, mostly women and girls, had to suffer this operation, often without anaesthesia, and many died during the operation.³¹ A law had already been passed in 1933 to force Roma to undergo sterilisation.

In Auschwitz and other camps, so-called medical experiments were performed on Roma. The imagination of the doctors charged with this task, foremost among them Josef Mengele, knew no boundaries. Mengele carried out his experiments in the name of "science", crippling and murdering hundreds of people. Roma were injected with saline solutions, typhus bacillus and colour pigments, and given heart injections.³² Experiments were also carried out in an attempt to find simple methods for mass sterilisation, and even very young girls were abused for such experiments. Particularly infamous were Mengele's experiments on twins, which included blood transfusion between twins and medicine testing on deliberately infected children.³³

Roma prisoners were also victims of Action 14f13, a Nazi campaign to murder concentration camp prisoners, which started in April 1941. A panel of doctors would visit concentration camps to select sick and incapacitated prisoners for "elimination". Prisoners were sometimes encouraged by the camp administration to come forward if they felt sick or unable to work. They were told they would be taken to "recovery camps" where they would perform lighter duties. Many prisoners believed the lie and readily volunteered, when they were actually taken to killing centres to be gassed.

5. Mass executions

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, which was waged as a "war of extermination", meant an escalation of violence against Jews and Roma. Thousands of Roma fell victim to mass executions by the SS *Einsatzgruppen* (paramilitary task forces), who, with the army's assistance, murdered them behind the front. Hundreds of Roma people were among the victims of the mass murder in Babyn Yar near Kyiv. In Latvia, about half of the 3 800 Roma were massacred between 1941 and 1943. In Estonia more than 90% of 750 to 850 Roma were murdered. In Lithuania, historians estimate most of the Roma living there were shot.

In German-occupied Poland and other territories of eastern Europe and the Balkans occupied by the Nazis, more Roma were killed through mass executions than in the extermination camps. Serbia, which had been occupied by the Germans since 1941, saw the so-called revenge executions of Jews, Serbs and Roma: 100 hostages were killed for each German soldier killed and 50 for each German soldier wounded. Harald Turner, head of the German military administration, declared in 1942 that Serbia was the only country in which the "Jewish and Gypsy question" had been "solved".³⁴ The *Einsatzgruppen* and the armed forces were supported by local fascist organisations.

30. Council of Europe, "Roma History Factsheets: Deportations from Romania", <https://rm.coe.int/deportations-from-romania-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1c27>.
31. Council of Europe, "Roma History Factsheets: Holocaust", <https://rm.coe.int/holocaust-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ab0>.
32. Ibid.
33. European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma, Dr. Mengele and experiments on prisoners, www.roma-sinti-holocaust-memorial-day.eu/history/dr-mengele-and-experiments-on-prisoners/.
34. Council of Europe, "Roma History Factsheets: Holocaust", <https://rm.coe.int/holocaust-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ab0>.

In Croatia, the Ustasha and in Hungary the Arrow Cross fascists carried out the mass executions, organised deportations and ran the camps.³⁵ Between 1944 and early 1945 thousands of Slovak and Hungarian Roma were killed or deported to concentration camps. Roma from southern and western Hungary were arrested by Hungarian fascists and taken on death marches to the central camp at Csilla, near the city of Komárom, in northern Hungary, from where the survivors were deported by the German SS.³⁶

35. Ibid.

36. Council of Europe, Roma History Factsheets: Concentration Camps, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/concentration-camps-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1ab9>.

Activity 8 – Teaching with testimonies

Teaching with testimonies can be a powerful educational approach for bringing history to life and for fostering empathy and respect for human dignity.

Testimonies allow students to connect with the history of the Roma Holocaust on a personal level. Hearing the voices of survivors or their descendants makes history more relatable and memorable. The stories they hear stay with them, shaping their values and attitudes. As testimonies usually evoke emotional responses such as empathy and outrage, they can instil in students a sense of responsibility, motivating them to learn more and to take action against discrimination.

As first-hand accounts of historical events, testimonies provide a different perspective from textbooks or documentaries, which allows students to relate to the experiences of individuals and families affected by historical events. This in turn can lead to more profound learning. However, the use of testimonies in the educational process requires careful planning.

Testimonies can be emotionally distressing, especially when dealing with traumatic events such as genocides. Therefore, it is important to prepare students mentally and emotionally for the content they will encounter and to avoid overwhelming students with excessive graphic or distressing content. Teachers should foster a classroom environment where students feel safe to express their emotions and ask questions. Students' distress can be balanced by addressing acts of kindness from individuals and communities that made positive differences and resistance during the Roma Holocaust or by engaging students in present-day acts of kindness or change-making.

As memory is fallible, testimonies may contain inconsistencies or inaccuracies. Teachers should be able to offer historical context to help students understand the broader picture and the significance of the testimonies in the context of the Roma Holocaust. Combining testimonies with other teaching methods and resources is important in providing a well-rounded understanding of the Roma Holocaust.

More than 4000 survivors' testimonies are available on the IWitness platform of the USC Shoah Foundation.³⁷ They can be freely accessed by creating an account on the platform. Using the filter Experience, and selecting Roma Survivor, results in a selection of 40 testimonies in nine languages³⁸ recorded with Sinti and Roma survivors. Multiple filters allow for a more refined search according to gender of the interviewee, language of the interview, availability of subtitles and/or a transcript, country of the interview or country of birth, and length of the interview. A complex filter helps the user narrow down their search according to topics that the interviewees address, using a search for key words, for example "forced labour", "education" or "family life". These topics are automatically connected to a fragment of the testimony. This way, even though the testimonies include videos ranging from 30 minutes to over eight hours, it is possible to find specific references for use with the teachers' educational objectives.

Other curated selections of Roma testimonies are shown below.

- ▶ Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies (FVAHT), <https://fortunoff.library.yale.edu>.
- ▶ European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma, www.roma-sinti-holocaust-memorial-day.eu/testimonies-of-holocaust-survivors/.
- ▶ Forced Labour 1939-1945: Memory and History, www.zwangesarbeit-archiv.de/en/index.html.

Starting from testimonies, different types of educational activities can be conducted including those below.

- ▶ Students can watch or read the testimony of a Roma Holocaust survivor and then engage in research on the context in which that person lived and was persecuted. This approach³⁹ guides students in a process that begins with an individual story and then students learn more about the general historical

37. See <https://iwitness.usc.edu>.

38. In April 2024.

39. Inspired by the activity "Individual stories – A starting point for understanding history" described in *Learning from the past, acting for the future – An interdisciplinary approach to Holocaust, human rights and intercultural education* (2022), www.toli.us/announcements/learning-from-the-past-acting-for-the-future/.

context of the Roma Holocaust, starting from the information provided in the testimony. Questions like the ones below can guide students in their research process.

- How was life in [area where the survivor lived] before the Second World War?
- Which historical events are relevant for this part of Europe in the 1930s and the early 1940s?
- What measures were taken against Roma in [area where survivor lived]?
- How was [name of survivor] affected by these measures?

► Students can watch or read the testimony of a Roma Holocaust survivor and then write a letter to that person. In the letter they can share their personal feelings and thoughts, information about how the society is progressing in the present, their commitment to being compassionate and to standing up against injustice, and so on.

► The teacher can guide discussions about topics (depending on what the survivor is addressing in their testimony) such as resilience, the importance of standing up to injustice, valuing human dignity and overcoming loss.

► The testimonies can be analysed together with information about the historical text, as in the case studies described next.

CASE STUDY – ROMANIA

Overview

In this activity students explore the Roma Holocaust in a specific part of Europe and engage with a survivor testimony.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Co-operation skills
- Respect
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handouts 1 and 2 (one copy per student)

Duration: one hour

Information for teachers

This activity is designed to combine macro and micro perspectives: students get an overview of the Roma Holocaust in Romania and the testimony of a survivor. Through a set of questions, they learn to put a personal story into the wider context and to look at the historical narrative through the lens of an individual experience.

The teachers can adapt this activity and create handouts for any country of interest. While learning about what happened in their own country may be more interesting for students, learning about what the Roma had to endure in other countries gives them a more nuanced understanding of the Roma Holocaust and a better grasp of the enormity of this atrocity. Teachers may use the available testimony either in a written format – as presented in handout 2 – or in a video format from one of the sources mentioned in the introduction to this activity "Teaching with testimonies" or from another source.

Description of the activity

1. The teacher starts by telling students that the Nazis were not solely responsible for the Roma Holocaust but that many other countries also carried out genocidal actions, passed legislation against the Roma and persecuted, deported and murdered them.
2. The teacher divides the class into two groups. One group receives handout 1, "The Roma Holocaust in Romania" (one copy per student), the other group receives handout 2, "The Story of Saveta Clopotar" (one copy per student). Students are asked to read the handouts they received and to underline the aspects of the topic they find most relevant.
3. After reading the handouts, students from the two groups come back together to form groups of four students, each consisting of two students who read the overview and two students who read the testimony. In these groups, students discuss the different texts they read, using the overview to put the testimony into context and the testimony to understand that, beyond numbers and statistics, there are always individuals who suffered terribly. The questions for the group work are as follows.
 - What were the conditions that made it possible for Saveta and her family to be deported to a concentration camp?
 - What were the conditions in the camp?
 - What do you think made Saveta not lose hope in the face of such inhuman actions?
 - Who were the perpetrators? What motivated their actions?
4. The teacher oversees a class discussion based on the following questions.
 - How did you experience this activity?
 - What did you learn about the Roma Holocaust from this activity?
 - What did you learn about human beings from this activity?
 - What did you learn about human rights from this activity?
 - Were you surprised about some of the things you learned from this activity?
 - Are there any aspects of the topic you do not understand? (The teacher provides clarification as needed.)
 - What can we learn from personal stories that we cannot learn from texts written by historians? What can we learn from texts written by historians that we cannot learn from personal stories?

Handout 1 – One copy for each student

The Roma Holocaust in Romania⁴⁰

In 1942 Marshal Antonescu, the prime minister of Romania and Hitler's second most important Axis ally, and the Council of Ministers tasked the Ministry of Internal Affairs with deporting "undesirable" Roma people to Transnistria. Consequently, in May 1942, a secret census was conducted to identify and keep track of all "undesirable" Roma living in Romania. A total of 40 909 persons were included on the list, of which 9 471 were classified as "nomads" and 31 438 as "sedentary".

The deportations took place during the summer and fall of 1942. During the first stage (1 June-15 August 1942), 11 441 Roma (men, women and children) classified as "nomads" were rounded up and deported to Transnistria using their own carts and horses. During the second stage (12-20 September 1942), 13 176 Roma (men, women and children) classified as "sedentary" were rounded up in several cities, forced to board freight trains and transported in dreadful conditions to Transnistria. Deportees had their belongings and properties confiscated by the local authorities and were forced to leave their villages or hometowns with barely enough food and personal possessions to survive.

The authorities in Transnistria routinely settled Roma in makeshift, ghetto-like settlements, to which they delivered insufficient and irregular food rations. Two mass shootings were carried out in Transnistria in 1942, but starvation and death by infection or infestation were also used as extermination methods. Between autumn 1942 and spring 1944, thousands of Roma deportees perished from typhus or as a result of the cold weather, inadequate housing, food shortages and starvation. As the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania noted, "The food rations established by the government were not observed; sometimes none would be distributed for weeks. Roma were also not provided with firewood; so, they could neither prepare their food nor warm themselves."

Here is an excerpt from the historian Jean Ancel's portrayal of the fate of Roma women:

After being robbed by the Romanian Gendarmes and the representatives of the National Bank of Romania, after having been stripped of their gold, their carts, their horses, and their belongings amassed over hundreds of years, the Roma were left starving, naked, without the most basic means of subsistence. ... But the most terrible situation in Transnistria was reserved for Roma women, considered a war bounty. Romanian gendarmes, like the Nazis, raped Roma women, who were deprived of their status as human beings and were eventually sentenced to death, and for these reasons, these "beasts with epaulets" could do with them whatever their heart desired.⁴¹

According to official Romanian sources, approximately 11 000 Roma – a conservative estimate – perished in Transnistria. The means of extermination included deportations, internment, mass shootings, starvation and death from infestation and disease.

40. This text is an excerpt from the study "The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in Southeastern Europe. Between oblivion, acknowledgment, and distortion" (2022), <https://rm.coe.int/the-roma-holocaust-roma-genocide-in-southeastern-europe-report/1680a8a4c9>.
41. Jean Ancel, "Tragedia romilor și tragedia evreilor din România: asemănări și deosebiri", [The Roma and Jewish Plights in Romania: Similarities and Differences], in Luminița Mihai Cioabă, ed., *Lacrimi rome* [Roma Tears], Ro Media, 2006, p. 30.

Handout 2 – One copy for each student

The story of Saveta Clopotar⁴²

Born in the picturesque village of Bârghiş in Sibiu county, Saveta Clopotar hailed from the proud lineage of the Cortorari, a tribe of Romani nomads. When Saveta was merely seven or eight years old, she was ensnared in the first wave of deportations targeting nomadic Roma. Officers gave them a semblance of hope, telling them to "Move on! Don't stop! You'll soon be home". But it was a lie, a mere mirage to keep them in line. She and a convoy of other Roma travelled from Agnita, journeying day and night, by horse and wagon, for three gruelling months until they reached Bug. Upon their arrival, their only means of transportation and livelihood – their animals and wagons – were taken away.

The Vradievka camp in Transnistria was nothing short of a living nightmare. People starved, diseases like typhus were rampant, and lice infestations were everywhere – to the extent that even the soil was teeming with them. The imminent warfront deprived them of essentials like soap, compelling women to wash their hair with oil. They lived in stables filled with smoke, often going a week without a morsel to eat. Saveta painfully recounted how, in utter desperation, some resorted to consuming raw meat from cats, rabbits, or horses. "We ate watermelons and fell sick with typhus. With typhus, you can't eat. People were dying of hunger, five, six, even ten a day ... They were buried like dogs. In Bug, it was even worse; they shot us. Soldiers, too, died of hunger as they had nothing to eat."

Saveta described a horrifying interaction with German soldiers, who often preyed on women: "Russians were alright, repentant. But the Germans were feeble-minded; they never spared the women. In fear, women would comply. Imagine facing a German with a gun ... Some women smeared their faces with charcoal to deter them. Russians, on the other hand, were polite and didn't bother the women."

One of the many tragedies Saveta bore was the loss of one of her brothers and both her parents to typhus. Even as a young girl, she toiled in the fields alongside her siblings. It was there she met the man who would become her husband. After the liberation, the Russians resettled them in nearby villages since they were left with nowhere else to go. For two and a half years they stayed, but as the warfront approached, they embarked on a daunting journey home. "We returned in January; the snow was deep. Children, scantily dressed in paper-like clothing. I couldn't walk any further from hunger ... My grandmother carried me. We lost hope, thinking we'd never return."

Returning to Răvăşel, a village close to their native village of Bârghiş, they built a small shelter with logs and straw, initially taking daily wage jobs and later working in an agricultural co-operative farm. Yet, their living conditions remained dire: "Everyone in the village knew how we lived. We never stole or harmed anyone. Even during Ceauşescu's time, a woman trusted me to keep her money at my home while she worked."

Saveta Clopotar's story is a testament to human resilience, the capacity to endure in the face of adversity, and the sheer will to survive against all odds.

42. This text is based on an interview with Saveta Clopotar, conducted by Adrian-Nicolae Furtună and Oana Burcea in 2017 and published in the tri-lingual (English, Romani and Romanian) volume *Rroma from Romania and the Holocaust: History, theory, culture*, published in 2018 by Dykhta Publishing House.

CASE STUDY – SERBIA

Overview

In this activity students explore the Roma Holocaust in a specific part of Europe and engage with a survivor testimony.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handouts 1 and 2 (one copy of each per student)

Duration: one hour

Information for teachers

This activity is designed to combine macro and micro perspectives: the students get an overview of the Roma Holocaust in Serbia and the testimony of a survivor. Through a set of questions, they learn to put a personal story into a wider context and to look at the historical narrative through the lens of an individual experience.

Teachers can adapt this activity and create handouts for any country of interest. While learning about what happened in their own country might be more interesting for students, learning about what Roma had to endure in other countries gives them a more nuanced understanding of the Roma Holocaust and a better grasp of the enormity of this atrocity. The teachers may use the available testimony either in written format (as presented in handout 2) or in video format from one of the sources mentioned in the introduction to this activity "Teaching with testimonies", or from another source.

Description of the activity

1. The teacher starts by telling students that the Nazis were not solely responsible for the Roma Holocaust but that many other countries also carried out genocidal actions, passed legislation against the Roma and persecuted, deported and murdered them.
2. The teacher divides the class into two groups. One group receives handout 1, "The Roma Holocaust in Serbia" (one copy per student), while the other group receives handout 2, "The Story of Anka Vasić" (one copy per student). Students are asked to read the handouts they received and to underline the aspects of the topic they find most relevant.
3. After reading the handouts, students from the two groups come back together to form groups of four students, each consisting of two students who read the overview and two students who read the testimony. In these groups, students discuss the different texts they read, using the overview to put the testimony into context and the testimony to understand that, beyond numbers and statistics, there are always individuals who suffered terribly. The questions for the groups work are as follows.
 - What were the conditions that made it possible for Anka and her family to be deported to a concentration camp?
 - What were the conditions that made it possible for her to escape the camp?

- What do you think gave Anka the courage to defy the perpetrators?
- Who were the perpetrators? What motivated their actions? What happened to them afterwards?

4. The teacher oversees a class discussion based on the following questions.

- How did you experience this activity?
- What did you learn about the Roma Holocaust from this activity?
- What did you learn about human beings from this activity?
- What did you learn about human rights from this activity?
- Were you surprised about some of the things you learned from this activity?
- Are there any aspects of the topic you do not understand? (The teacher provides clarification as needed.)
- What can we learn from personal stories that we cannot learn from texts written by historians? What can we learn from texts written by historians that we cannot learn from personal stories?

Handout 1 – One copy for each student

The Roma Holocaust in Serbia⁴³

In 1941 the territory of present-day Serbia was divided into different occupation zones. In the north, the region of Bačka was annexed by Hungary, while Srem was under the rule of the Croatian fascists. The south-east came under Bulgarian rule, while most of Kosovo became part of Greater Albania. The Nazis established a military occupation in the central region, called "Territory of the Military Commander in Serbia", to which they added the Banat region (with its strong local ethnic German minority). It is estimated that around 60 000 Roma were living in the territory occupied by the Nazis.

In May 1941 the Nazis issued an order that the Roma and Jews had to wear a yellow armband, were fired from their jobs and were forbidden to use public transport or go to public places or hospitals. Two months later, the same German authorities issued another order stating that the racial laws were to be implemented only against Roma individuals who could not prove that they had a stable job and a permanent residence. However, employment opportunities were scarce and prejudices against the Roma limited their job opportunities.

In July 1941 the Gestapo opened Banjica concentration camp in Dedinje, Belgrade, primarily for communists, but Roma, Jews and Serbs were also interned there and many were killed. Topovske Šupe, a camp established in August 1941 for Jewish men who were to be executed, also contained 1 500 Roma detainees, who had been arrested by Serbian collaborationists on German orders. Many of them were shot, including at the Jabuka killing site, not far from Belgrade. Roma women and children were interned in the Sajmište camp, along with Jewish women and children. However, most of them were released when legislation passed in May 1941 was changed to exclude Roma individuals "who have honest jobs, lead proper lives and whose ancestors had been permanent residents at least since the year 1850".

While Serbian Roma were interned and/or killed in concentration camps such as Crveni Krst, Sajmište and Topovske Šupe, mass shootings of Roma people took place in several other Serbian cities, including Kragujevac, Šabac, Kruševac, Leskovac and Niš. Roma people also died in the October 1941 killings in Kragujevac and in the 1942 Novi Sad raid.

The decision to pass legislation against the Roma and to kill Roma men, women and children was taken by the Nazis, but their killing was carried out in conjunction with the Serbian forces. The collaborationists massacred Roma people on several occasions. In Kragujevac, when the Nazis ordered the shooting of more than 2 500 civilians in retaliation for the killing and wounding of German soldiers, Serbian voluntary troops known as Ljotićevci identified about 250 Roma and gave them up to the Nazis in exchange for Serbian hostages. Roma people were also arrested or killed for helping the partisans.

Limited research means that there is no agreement on the number of Roma Holocaust victims, with estimates ranging from a few thousand to tens of thousands. Although the Yugoslav authorities acknowledge the racially motivated persecution of the Roma, nobody has been prosecuted for the crimes committed against them.

43. This text is based on excerpts from the study "The Roma Holocaust/Roma Genocide in Southeastern Europe. Between oblivion, acknowledgment and distortion" (2022), <https://rm.coe.int/the-roma-holocaust-roma-genocide-in-southeastern-europe-report/1680a8a4c9>, and on Pisari M., *The suffering of the Roma in Serbia during the Holocaust*, Forum for Applied History, Belgrade, 2014.

Handout 2 – One copy for each student

The story of Anka Vasić

Anka Vasić (*née* Tomić) was born in 1921 in Belgrade, Serbia, and lived with her parents and a brother in one of the Roma neighbourhoods in the city. Her mother died when Anka was eight years old and her father soon remarried, but his new wife did not get along with his children, especially Anka. Because of that, her aunt, who stopped Anka going to school and found her a job, adopted her. Like many Roma in her neighbourhood, Anka became a singer and travelled around Serbia and the region with an orchestra.

When the Second World War began in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, on 6 April 1941, Anka was living with her brother and his family. She remembered the fear when Belgrade was bombed, and the terrible living conditions during the war, with no food or jobs. On 27 October 1941, her brother, together with all the other men from their neighbourhood, were arrested by Germans and deported to the Autokomandacamp. Anka and her family never found out what happened to him.

Around a month later, the Nazis started also arresting Roma women and children. Local police knocked on the door of the apartment where Anka was living with her brother's mother-in-law, his wife and six children, including a newborn. They were deported to Sajmište concentration camp, where the living conditions were horrible. They slept on wooden boards, with one hole in the ground that served as a fireplace for heating. The pavilion was already crowded with previously deported Roma, and they needed to find their place.

Anka remembers the visit of Milan Nedić, the main political leader of Serbia at the time and a Nazi collaborator, to the pavilion. He concluded that it was good and comfortable for them, and gave orders only to bring some straw on which the inmates could sleep. Anka felt humiliated that they were treated as animals in a barn and not as human beings.

After a few days, they were moved to pavilion 5, where the conditions were slightly better and there were bunk beds – one for each family – and a big stove in the middle. However, the windows were broken and snow came into the pavilion. The food they received was just soup with beans or cabbage and one small piece of bread for the whole family.

In January 1942 the relatives who were still free submitted a request, with a guarantee, for them to be released. However, as these were relatives of Anka's sister-in-law, her name was not mentioned. When other women were standing in a row waiting to be released, she was last in line, together with the youngest child. She hid the child under her clothes and used the child's name to free herself from the camp. She managed to get out, together with the little girl and the rest of the family.

When they got back to their apartment, they took off all their clothes, which were full of lice, and burned them. After a few days, Anka went to Kruševac to live with her stepsister and her family. She was safe in Kruševac because Roma were not being arrested there.

After the war, Anka returned to Belgrade, where she lived in the small apartment they owned and started singing again and working to earn a living. Most of her family members managed to survive the camps and were still together in their neighbourhood.

Activity 9 – Human rights and the Roma Holocaust

Overview

In this activity the students reflect on different atrocities committed by the perpetrators of the Roma Holocaust through the lens of human rights.⁴⁴

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handout: the teacher selects for each group two examples of human rights violations during the Roma Holocaust.

Duration: one hour

Information for teachers

The dynamic of this activity depends on the prior knowledge students have about human rights. The first part of the activity can be shortened for students with more knowledge, or it can be expanded. If this is the first time that students are learning about human rights, at least one lesson should be dedicated to ensuring that they grasp the concept, and understand human rights principles and values. The group task can be assigned in class or as homework.

Description of the activity

1. The teacher asks students to share what they know about human rights. The students are encouraged to say general things they know about human rights, as well as to mention specific rights of which they are aware. After students share what they know, the teacher makes sure that the following are highlighted.
 - Human rights are internationally agreed standards, based on a set of universal values that have been agreed by every government around the world.
 - Human rights are a set of minimum standards that define what is required for people to live a life of dignity.
2. The teacher informs students that Jews, Roma, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people and other groups deemed “unworthy” by the Nazis and their collaborators suffered severe human rights violations during the Holocaust. The students are divided into five groups. Each group receives two examples of human rights violations during the Roma Holocaust from the handout, and is asked to discuss the two examples and to identify:
 - who carried out those actions;
 - what motivated them to carry out those actions;
 - what Roma must have felt or thought in such situations.

44. This activity is inspired by *Right to remember – A handbook for education with young people on the Roma Genocide*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2017, www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/right-to-remember1, and *Compass: Manual for human rights education with young people*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2023.

3. Each group presents the main aspects they identified, and the teacher engages the class in a debriefing discussion based on the following questions.

- Has this activity helped you better understand the Roma Holocaust? In what way?
- Why do you think it was possible for the perpetrators to take all these measures against Roma?
- Why do you think almost no one (regular people, politicians, academics, etc.) responded to these measures?
- Do you think people would respond more if something like this happened today?

4. The teacher concludes by reminding students that the system of international human rights was established immediately after the Second World War as a response to the crimes committed during the Holocaust. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations in 1948. Human rights were drafted to protect citizens from their own governments and to ensure that governments work towards guaranteeing that the basic needs of every individual are met, with the central aim of promoting respect for human dignity.

Handout – Two examples selected by the teacher for each group

Some examples of human rights violations during the Holocaust⁴⁵

- ▶ **Violation of the right to life:** death in the gas chambers; starvation and disease in places of exile (including concentration camps); shootings by SS *Einsatzgruppen*; and murder or preventable death by any other form.
- ▶ **Torture, inhuman and degrading treatment:** beatings; harsh medical experiments; forced sterilisation; severe humiliation and degradation, including the conditions in labour camps; and failure to provide adequate food and water or proper sanitation.
- ▶ **Slavery and forced labour:** Roma prisoners of all ages, from young children to elderly people, were forced to work long hours, in unhealthy and degrading conditions, for no pay. Other labour rights, such as the right to free association and collective bargaining, were also ignored.
- ▶ **Discrimination:** the different (and inhuman) treatment accorded to individuals simply because they were Roma were all examples of discrimination. No provision was made for the specific needs of children, women, people with disabilities and those who were sick and elderly.
- ▶ **Violation of the right to liberty:** confinement in camps, prisons, ghettos, segregated regions and so on.
- ▶ **Violation of the right to fair trial and the presumption of innocence:** there were no trials to assess the "guilt" of members of the Roma population; all were "guilty" merely because they were Roma.
- ▶ **Violation of the right to private life, family life and home:** families were split up, people were removed from their homes, and every element of privacy and dignity was violated.
- ▶ **Violation of the right to adequate healthcare:** sickness, disease and malnutrition were all inflicted on huge numbers of the Roma as a result of the conditions they were forced to live in; almost no medical care was provided.
- ▶ **Violation of the right to property:** Roma property was confiscated and never returned in almost all cases; when Roma tried to return to their homes after the war, most found that their houses had been destroyed and their possessions looted, and no attempts were ever made to return them.
- ▶ **Violation of the right to effective remedy:** even after the war ended, most Roma were given no compensation for the crimes committed against them, nor were these crimes even acknowledged for many years afterwards.

45. This handout was included in *Right to remember – A handbook for education with young people on the Roma Genocide*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2017, www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/right-to-remember1.

Activity 10 – Roma resistance

Overview

This activity helps students reflect on their understanding of resistance and learn about the various ways in which Roma resisted during the Holocaust.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

Valuing human dignity and human rights

- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handout (one example of resistance per group)

Duration: one hour

Information for teachers

When teaching about the Roma Holocaust, it is crucial to ensure that students gain a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of Roma communities. Some activities can help shift the perception that Roma people were simply helpless victims during this period. It is important to convey that, as with other groups affected by the Holocaust, Roma individuals also exhibited courage and employed various means of resistance. Additionally, it is worth noting that the Roma, like many others, were initially unaware of the intentions of the Nazis and their collaborators, and did not believe the rumours about extermination camps, especially considering the deceptive messages they received from the authorities (e.g. that they were to be relocated to Transnistria where they would receive land to work on). Moreover, the persecution of the Roma was very disorganised and incoherent (e.g. many Roma men were still fighting in the army in various countries while their families were being deported).

Teachers can freely access the resources on Roma resistance developed by ERIAC and available online at <https://eriac.org/re-thinking-roma-resistance/>, where they will find the following.

- ▶ “Stories of resistance” – real-life individual stories of Roma bravery and heroism, stories of over 40 women and men, organised by country.
- ▶ “Sites of resistance” – an interactive map with places across Europe that commemorate the events of Roma resistance.
- ▶ *Rethinking Roma resistance throughout history: Recounting stories of strength and bravery* (2020), edited by Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka and Jekatyerina Dunajeva, with chapters written by a diverse group of researchers.
- ▶ “Roma heroes game” – an educational board game featuring real-life stories of 24 Roma heroes.

Description of the activities

1. The teacher asks students to brainstorm the word “resistance”. The word is written on the board or in a shared document, and the teacher or a volunteer student writes down the ideas suggested by students around it.
2. Students are asked to work in four groups. Each group receives one example of resistance from the handout, and has to read and discuss it, for each member of the group to understand it and be able to present it to another group that has not read it.

- 3.** New groups are then formed, each with four students, each of whom has read a different example of Roma resistance. Students share what they have learned in the groups, so that all members of the group become familiar with all the forms of resistance presented in the handout.
- 4.** All the groups come together and the teacher guides a discussion based on the following questions.

 - a. Were you aware of these forms of Roma resistance?
 - b. Did anything surprise you in these examples? If so, what?
 - c. What do you think motivated people to resist?
 - d. Are you aware of other forms or examples of resistance than the ones we have discussed? If so, what are they?
 - e. What can we learn from the Roma who resisted?
 - f. How can we apply this learning to everyday life?
 - g. Would you add or change anything in your initial understanding of resistance?
- 5.** As a follow-up assignment, students can individually choose one aspect of Roma resistance (e.g. a specific uprising, escape attempt, partisan group or rescuer) and research it further. They can then write a short essay or create a presentation that can be used as part of a commemoration event.⁴⁶

46. A detailed proposal for organising a commemoration event with students is presented in the following educational activity, "Roma remembrance".

Handout – One copy for each student

Forms of Roma resistance

Uprisings

One of the most symbolic acts of Roma resistance was the uprising in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. According to survivors, the Nazis were planning to liquidate the Camp Section BIIe, where the Roma were incarcerated, on 16 May 1944 in a mass execution of all 6 000 Roma in the camp. Learning about the planned action, Roma prisoners refused to attend the daily roll call and instead fortified themselves in their barracks. They improvised weapons from any available material, signalling their intent to resist any attempt to exterminate them. Their brave resistance forced the Nazi guards to rethink their approach and stopped any Roma from being killed in the gas chambers that day. The Nazi leadership, wary of a more extensive insurrection, subsequently relocated 3 000 Roma to different camps and murdered the other 3 000 on the night of 2-3 August 1944 in gas chambers.

This audacious act of resistance on 16 May 1944 is now commemorated as Romani Resistance Day, a poignant reminder of the Roma and Sinti communities' undying spirit and fight for survival, dignity and humanity during one of history's darkest periods.

Escape attempts

Attempts to escape from camps, ghettos, pogroms or transports to places of extermination show the profound resilience and determination of the Roma to challenge their oppressors and to regain their freedom. The archives of Auschwitz-Birkenau camp contain evidence of 38 Roma and Sinti who managed to escape. Many people who tried to escape were caught and either murdered or sent back to the camp. There was a higher incidence of escapes in Transnistria, but it was not just physical escapes that marked their resistance. Many Roma people sought to challenge the authorities through written appeals, sending them letters to request a review of their families' deportation orders, emphasising their significant contributions to Romanian society and the war effort prior to their untimely and unjust deportation.

They organised large-scale escape attempts, several of which were successful. One of these was in France, where the camp at Arc-et-Senans had to be shut down in September 1943, when a vast number of Roma inmates managed to break free.

Partisans

During the Second World War, Roma men and women took part in the resistance movement and in partisan units. Most of the Roma in the resistance movement had escaped from ghettos, camps, sites of pogroms, massacres or transport in transit to extermination sites.

The partisans fought in organised groups, often acting under the cover of darkness and with the help of the local population. They had few resources and weapons but were able to make a significant contribution to the fight against the Nazis. The partisans conducted systematic attacks on the Nazis' communication network and small-scale warfare operations, published underground newspapers and provided intelligence on the Nazi army, among other things.

Roma partisans gained a reputation for being brave, courageous, loyal and disciplined soldiers. Roma women and youth acted mainly as lookouts, emissaries, messengers and couriers, and spies who provided valuable information about the number of soldiers and their weapons.

Rescuers

Roma men and women conducted operations to rescue Jewish and Roma children and adults. The following accounts are a couple of examples of their bravery.

Alfreda Markowska, a Polish Roma woman, endured the tragic loss of her parents, siblings and community members at the hands of the Nazis in 1941 as the sole survivor of her family. Evading capture, she took on the heroic mission of rescuing both Jewish and Roma children from the Holocaust. Whenever she received news of a massacre, she would rush to the scene to search for any

survivors; she would then place these children in hiding, secure falsified documents for them and search tirelessly for families or guardians willing to shelter them. In several cases, she even assumed the role of guardian herself. It is estimated that, through her valiant efforts, Markowska saved at least 50 children from certain death.

Iosif Teifel, a Roma man from Czechoslovakia, skilfully orchestrated the hiding of vulnerable individuals from the Mukačevo ghetto, ensuring their temporary safety from the watchful eyes of the Nazis. In addition to this, he made significant strides in providing much needed food aid to the starving residents of the ghetto. Teifel's bravery and dedication to the cause saw him extend his efforts beyond the ghetto walls to engage in resistance activities against the Nazis.

Activity 11 – Roma remembrance

Overview

In this activity students reflect on the importance of remembrance and commemoration, and learn about the organisation of a commemorative event.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- ▶ Autonomous learning
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability
- ▶ Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- ▶ Co-operation skills
- ▶ Conflict-resolution skills
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Self-efficacy
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: access to the internet; a venue for the event and other materials needed for the commemoration event.

Duration: one hour for the first part and two to three hours (as well as time to work at home) for the preparation of the event.

Information for teachers

Commemoration of historical persecutions is not merely a matter of historical acknowledgement but a profound and moral imperative that honours the memory of the victims while confronting the injustices of the past. The persecution of the Roma – and Roma history in general – has often been marginalised and forgotten, lacking the recognition it deserves. This lack of commemoration, coupled with the absence of adequate reparations, has perpetuated a painful legacy of neglect and invisibility.

Remembrance is a powerful countermeasure against this historical injustice. Remembrance, done properly, can serve as a warning – to show us the power of ideologies, of human action and inaction and of racism and intolerance, and it can teach us to stand up to regimes and to act to promote and protect human rights. However, empty and meaningless commemorations can also serve as a stark reminder of the insufficient attention paid to the suffering of Roma. Superficial observances devoid of substance can trivialise the immense suffering endured by the Roma community. Therefore, genuine and meaningful commemorations must involve more than just symbolic gestures. They should encompass education, awareness and advocacy for the rights and dignity of the Roma.

It is crucial to remember the persecution of Roma and the Roma Holocaust not just on specific dates or occasions. Keeping the memory alive serves as a constant reminder of the enduring need to combat discrimination, hatred and prejudice in all forms and to strive for a world where the atrocities of the past are never repeated, and where the dignity and rights of all individuals, regardless of their background, are safeguarded and celebrated.

The educational process described below is an example of a project-based learning activity focused on the commemoration of the Roma Holocaust. Using the same structure, teachers can organise activities commemorating other historical persecutions of Roma, including topics like Roma slavery, round-ups and pogroms.

Description of the activity

Part I

- 1.** The teacher informs students that recognition of the Roma Holocaust has come very late and there is still much work to be done to ensure acknowledgement of responsibility from the different governments and a dignified commemoration of the Roma Holocaust. An important figure in the process of receiving recognition for the crimes committed against Roma during the Holocaust was Romani Rose, whose grandparents were murdered by the Nazis: his grandfather Anton Rose was murdered in Auschwitz and his grandmother Lisetta Rose died in Ravensbrück, a women's concentration camp. His father, Oskar Rose, was able to avoid arrest and even to help his brother Vinzenz escape from Neckarelz concentration camp. Romani Rose could not accept that there was no official recognition of the crimes committed against Roma. In 1980, at the age of 30, he took part in a week-long hunger strike at the Dachau camp memorial, together with Vinzenz and 10 other Roma from Germany, demanding full "moral rehabilitation". Their action led to acknowledgement from the German chancellor that the crimes against the Roma had been racially founded and amounted to genocide.
- 2.** The teacher then guides students in a discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. Why do you think it is important to officially acknowledge the Roma Holocaust?
 - b. Why do you think the German Government – and other governments – did not want to do this?
 - c. What do you think motivated Romani Rose and the other Roma to risk their lives in a week-long hunger strike to obtain official acknowledgement of these crimes?
- 3.** The teacher asks students to work in groups of four to five to research information regarding the steps that were taken to acknowledge and commemorate the Roma Holocaust. The following questions can guide students' research.
 - a. When was the first official acknowledgement of the Roma Holocaust in Germany? What about other countries?
 - b. Find out what "reparations" means in relation to the Roma Holocaust. What legislation was passed for reparations and when?
 - c. What memorials and museums exist to commemorate the Roma Holocaust?
 - d. Are there public events to commemorate the Roma Holocaust in your country?
- 4.** Students can start this research in class and continue it at home.
- 5.** After students present the results of their research, the teacher engages the class in a discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. How did you find the process of searching for information about the commemoration of the Roma Holocaust?
 - b. Were you surprised by the information you found?
 - c. Were people not aware of this legislation, or was it simply very difficult to prove that they were victims of the Roma Holocaust?
 - d. There are very few memorials and mentions of Roma in museums. What could be done to change this? Who should do it?

Part II

In this part, students are asked to plan and organise a remembrance event. Using the project-based learning approach, the teacher can guide the students in the following process.

► **Selection of a type of commemorative event**

Students decide whether they want to organise a public event at school, outside school, online or somewhere else. They select a date that is meaningful.

► **Selection of the topics to address in the event**

Students discuss and decide what they want to include in the event: testimonies, presentations, posters, poems, music and so on.

► **Research and preparation**

Students work in groups to prepare for the event. They research the information they need and prepare the content of the event. In this phase, the teacher can help the students interact with a historian of the Roma Holocaust, a second- or third-generation survivor of the Roma Holocaust or a Roma activist. The students put together the different parts of the event and rehearse their roles. They invite other students and teachers from the school, parents and other members of the community to the event.

► **Commemoration event**

The students organise the event and present their work.

► **Reflection**

Students engaged in a reflection process and discuss:

- the way in which they organised the process;
- the result of their work;
- the lessons learned and ideas for organising future similar events.

Activity 12 – Roma after the Second World War

Overview

In this activity, students learn about the beginning of the Roma movement and about Roma culture.⁴⁷

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handout; meeting with a member of a Roma community or a visit to a Roma art exhibition, performance, etc.

Duration: one hour for the first part and one hour for the second part (possibly longer for the option of visiting an art exhibition or participating in a cultural event).

Information for teachers

This series of activities includes a meeting with a member of the Roma community or a visit to a Roma cultural event. The speaker can be invited to the school, or students can visit a Roma association and attend the presentation there. If the teacher chooses to take the students on a visit to a Roma cultural event, prior research about the event will be needed. It is important to ensure that the event is organised by Roma artists and is not a form of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation takes place when members of a dominant group adopt cultural elements of a non-dominant group in an exploitative, disrespectful or stereotypical way, for example, when members of a dominant group profit financially or socially from the culture of a non-dominant group; when they oversimplify that culture or approach it as a joke; and when they separate a cultural element from its original meaning. If a physical visit or event is not possible, teachers could consider online or virtual exhibitions or tools. ERIAC offers many online Roma exhibitions and cultural events, including musical performances.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, many people in Europe still hold to stereotypes about and prejudices against the Roma. These prevent them from engaging in authentic dialogue with the Roma. An encounter with Roma persons who can present and discuss aspects of their culture gives students an opportunity to engage in intercultural dialogue and to develop their appreciation of cultural diversity and respect for human dignity. It is also a good opportunity for Roma students to feel represented, to learn more about their own culture and community, and potentially to find role models.

Teachers may consult the following resources to learn more about the organised actions of Roma people to ensure respect for human rights:

- ▶ "Beginnings and growth of transnational movements of Roma to achieve civil rights after the Holocaust", an article by Thomas Acton, published by RomArchive;⁴⁹
- ▶ Historical information, educational resources and online exhibitions provided by World Roma Congress.⁵⁰

47. This activity is used with permission and slight adaptations from *Learning from the past, acting for the future – An interdisciplinary approach to Holocaust, human rights and intercultural education* (2022), www.toli.us/announcements/learning-from-the-past-acting-for-the-future/.

48. Available on the ERIAC YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/channel/UCHezmRtxs8Ekxpg7J2T9RwQ.

49. Acton T. , "Beginnings and growth of transnational movements of Roma to achieve civil rights after the Holocaust", www.romarchive.eu/en/roma-civil-rights-movement/beginnings-and-growth-transnational-movements-roma/.

50. See <https://worldromacongressart.com/the-archive/first-world-roma-congress/>.

Description of the activities

Part I

1. The teacher informs students that they are going to engage in a series of activities to learn about the Roma after the Second World War.
2. The students are asked to work in groups of four to five. Each group receives the handout to read the text and attempts to answer the questions. Students can search for the answers online if they do not know them already. After they have discussed the text and the questions in small groups, they share their answers with the whole class. Where there are four groups, each group can share the answer to two of the eight questions, to cover all the questions and not have students repeat what has already been said.
3. The teacher engages the class in a discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. Were you previously aware of some of the things we discussed today? Which ones?
 - b. Did anything surprise you in what you learned today?
 - c. Is there something you did not understand? If so, what?
 - d. What else would you like to know about Roma culture?
4. The task set for the students depends on what is being planned for the next part.
 - If the next part consists of a meeting with a member of a Roma community, the teacher encourages the students to write down the things they would like to know about Roma culture and the Roma community in their town or country, or in Europe or around the world, and to formulate them as questions for the member of the Roma community they will meet.
 - If the next part consists of an activity such as visiting an exhibition of Roma art or attending a Roma cultural event, the teacher writes down what the students have said they would like to know and prepares information to discuss with the students in the third part of the activity.

Part II

► Meeting with a member of a Roma community

A meeting with a member of a Roma community is carefully planned by the teacher. The meeting can take the form of a presentation followed by questions and answers, or it can start directly with questions from the students, in which case the speaker can add things that have not been raised by the students, at the end or throughout the discussion.

After the meeting, the teacher guides the students in a reflection process based on the following questions.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you learned from the discussion with [name of person]?
- b. Did anything surprise you during our meeting?
- c. Has your understanding of Roma communities changed as a result of this meeting?
- d. What else would you like to know about Roma communities? Where can you learn this information?
- e. Who else do you think should learn about Roma communities? Can you help them learn?

► Visiting an exhibition of Roma art or attending a Roma cultural event

After the visit/event, the teacher guides the students in a reflection process based on the following questions.

- a. How did you feel during the visit/event?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you learned from the experience?
- c. What part(s) surprised you or made you think?
- d. Has your understanding of Roma communities changed as a result of this experience?
- e. What else would you like to know about Roma culture? Where can you find this information?
- f. Who else do you think should learn about Roma culture? Can you help them learn?

Handout – One copy for each student

World Roma Congress⁵¹

In the 1960s the Roma movement started to be more active on an international level. In 1971 the first World Roma Congress was held in Orpington, near London. It was attended by participants from 14 countries separated by the Iron Curtain, who travelled to this unique event to affirm their common ethnic identity. Tentative steps had been taken before the Second World War, at a 1931 congress in Bucharest. The Roma flag was adopted at the 1971 Congress, as well as the Roma anthem "Gelem, Gelem". The flag consists of a blue and green background (representing heaven and earth) and a 16-spoke red chakra (symbolising the Roma's itinerant tradition and a homage to India). The motto "Opre Roma!" became the political credo of the Roma movement and its fight for social justice and equality. Among the aspects discussed at the congress was the need to challenge the use of words such as "cigani", "Zigeuner" and "gypsy", which have signified denigration, marginalisation and exclusion for centuries. The word "Roma" was to replace these misnomers. To date, 11 Roma Congresses have been organised in different parts of Europe.

Questions for reflection

- ▶ What is a misnomer?
- ▶ What does the word "Roma" mean in Romani language?
- ▶ What words do you know in Romani language?
- ▶ What does "Opre Roma" mean?
- ▶ What are the words of the Roma anthem?
- ▶ Why does the Roma flag pay homage to India?
- ▶ When is the International Roma Day celebrated? Why was this date chosen?
- ▶ What was the Iron Curtain?

51. This text is based on the Council of Europe's Roma factsheets (www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/roma-history-factsheets) and on the text written by Grattan Puxon at the François-Xavier-Bagnoud Center at Harvard (<https://fxb.harvard.edu/2019/04/25/london-1971-the-first-world-roma-congress/>).

Activity 13 – Antigypsyism today

Overview

In this activity, students engage in a reflection process about the present-day human rights violations and discrimination faced by the Roma.

Competences for democratic culture addressed

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Civic-mindedness
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world

Number of participants: 10-30

Resources and materials: handout (one copy for each student); access to the internet

Duration: The duration of this activity varies depending on the amount of time allocated for the research part. It can run for two hours (one hour for each part of the activity – with the possibility of doing only the first part) or for four to five hours (if students are given more time to research information by engaging with various entities or by conducting interviews).

Information for teachers

This activity works better with students who already have some basic knowledge of human rights. If the activity runs for a longer period, intermediary meetings (between when the task was assigned and when students do the presentation) can be held to discuss their preliminary findings with students, to identify the obstacles they face in their research and how to overcome them, and to offer suggestions for further research areas.

Students can access many sources to find information, including reports from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), country reports, shadow reports, studies carried out by universities and Roma organisations, and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

Teachers can learn more about antigypsyism, as well as current attempts to combat this form of racism, at the following links.

- ▶ Working definition of antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination, <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antigypsyism-anti-roma-discrimination>.
- ▶ "Antigypsyism – A reference paper", by Alliance against Antigypsyism, <https://antigypsyism.eu/reference-paper/>.

Description of the activity

Part I

1. The teacher discusses with students how antigypsyism did not disappear after the Second World War: many people still harbour prejudices against Roma today, and the discrimination faced by Roma in education, employment, housing and other areas of life prevents them from fully enjoying their human rights.
2. The teacher asks the students to form groups of four to five. Each group receives a handout with an abridged version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (handout) and has to identify concrete situations today where Roma people face human rights violations and discrimination. Each group can research information related to one or more rights.
3. For this activity, the students should have access to the internet to search for articles, reports and so on. Students may also choose to contact local or national institutions or to meet with experts and human rights activists. Students can continue their research at home.

Part II

1. Each group presents the results of their research, and the teacher engages the class in a debriefing discussion based on the following questions.
 - a. Was it difficult to identify information about human rights violations and discrimination faced by Roma? Why?
 - b. Were you surprised by the information you found?
 - c. How has this activity contributed to shaping your understanding of human rights and of the discrimination faced by the Roma?
 - d. Do you think most people in our society are aware of their human rights? Do they know what to do when their rights are being violated?
 - e. What can be done to make people more aware of their human rights?
2. The teacher concludes by saying that we can all do something to combat the discrimination faced by Roma, from very small acts, such as becoming informed and aware of our own stereotypes and prejudices, to bigger ones, such as influencing national legislation. There are various activists for Roma rights – individuals and organisations – in each country. The teacher may choose to present the work of some Roma and non-Roma activists for Roma rights to inspire students to become active citizens themselves.

Handout – One copy for each student

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Summary)

ARTICLE 1 Right to equality	ARTICLE 16 Right to marriage and family
ARTICLE 2 Freedom from discrimination	ARTICLE 17 Right to own property
ARTICLE 3 Right to life, liberty, personal security	ARTICLE 18 Freedom of belief and religion
ARTICLE 4 Freedom from slavery	ARTICLE 19 Freedom of opinion and information
ARTICLE 5 Freedom from torture and degrading treatment	ARTICLE 20 Right of peaceful assembly and association
ARTICLE 6 Right to recognition as a person before the law	ARTICLE 21 Right to participate in government and in free elections
ARTICLE 7 Right to equality before the law	ARTICLE 22 Right to social security
ARTICLE 8 Right to remedy by competent tribunal	ARTICLE 23 Right to desirable work and to join trade unions
ARTICLE 9 Freedom from arbitrary arrest and exile	ARTICLE 24 Right to rest and leisure
ARTICLE 10 Right to fair public hearing	ARTICLE 25 Right to an adequate living standard
ARTICLE 11 Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty	ARTICLE 26 Right to education
ARTICLE 12 Freedom from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence	ARTICLE 27 Right to participate in the cultural life of the community
ARTICLE 13 Right to free movement in and out of the country	ARTICLE 28 Right to a social order that articulates this document
ARTICLE 14 Right to asylum in other countries from persecution	ARTICLE 29 Community duties essential to free and full development
ARTICLE 15 Right to a nationality and the freedom to change it	ARTICLE 30 Freedom from state or personal interference in the above rights

Resources for teachers

Council of Europe, *Compass: Manual for human rights education with young people*, www.coe.int/en/web/compass.

Council of Europe, *Mirrors: Manual on combating antigypsyism through human rights education*, www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/mirrors-manual-on-combating-antigypsyism-through-human-rights-education.

Council of Europe, *Right to remember: A handbook for education with young people on the Roma genocide*, www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/right-to-remember1.

Council of Europe, "Roma history factsheets, Roma and Travellers", available at Encyclopedia of the Nazi Genocide of Sinti and Roma in Europe, <https://encyclopaedia-gsr.eu/eng/>, www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/roma-history-factsheets.

ERIAC, Barvalipe Roma Online University – Courses and masterclasses, <https://eriac.org/barvalipe-roma-online-university/>.

European Holocaust Memorial Day for Sinti and Roma, www.roma-sinti-holocaust-memorial-day.eu.

"The Fate of European Roma and Sinti during the Holocaust", www.romasintigenocide.eu/en/home.

"Forgotten Genocide", <https://romasinti.eu>.

"Histolab Tutorial Series", created in partnership with ERIAC, <https://histolab.coe.int/activities/tutorials>.

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, "The Genocide and Persecution of Roma and Sinti. Bibliography and Historiographical Review", <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/genocide-roma-sinti-bibliography>.

Histolab, *Learning from the past, acting for the future – An Interdisciplinary approach to Holocaust and human rights education*, Council of Europe, <https://www.toli.us/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Handbook-Learning-from-the-Past-Acting-for-the-Future.pdf>.

RomArchive – Digital archive of Roma, www.romarchive.eu/en/.

The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, New York, U.S.A. and The François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University (2022), "The Roma Holocaust/Roma genocide in southeastern Europe: Between oblivion, acknowledgment, and distortion".

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Genocide of European Roma (Gypsies), 1939-1945", <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/genocide-of-european-roma-gypsies-1939-1945>.

"Voices of the victims", www.romarchive.eu/en/voices-of-the-victims/.

About the author

Oana Nestian-Sandu is the Director of International Programs at TOLI – The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights. With a Ph.D. in Social Psychology and two decades of experience, she has worked with thousands of teachers in over 15 countries to develop transformative educational programmes on the Holocaust, human rights and intercultural education. She is the author of *Learning from the past, acting for the future*, a widely used interdisciplinary handbook for teachers.

Oana brings her expertise to international organisations such as the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, where she contributes to advancing education that addresses Holocaust distortion and strengthens remembrance practices. At the heart of her work is a deep commitment to promoting respect for human dignity. She supports educators in confronting antisemitism, anti-Roma racism and other forms of hate by fostering empathy, historical understanding and a sense of civic responsibility.

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