



Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

Conference

The power of remembrance: addressing antigypsyism through heritage and culture

29 May 2026, Athens

Date: Friday 29 May 2026

Venue: Hellenic Parliament, Senate Hall, Leof. Vasilissis Sofias 2, Athens

Time: from 9 am to 1 pm

Interpretation will be provided in English, French and Greek.

Background

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), through its Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and its General Rapporteur on Roma and Travellers, plays a key role in promoting the rights and full inclusion of Roma and Travellers in the political, social and cultural life of Council of Europe member States. Roma and Travellers constitute the largest minority in Europe, yet they continue to face deep-rooted social exclusion driven by antigypsyism - a specific form of racism - fuelled by harmful stereotypes and a persistent lack of awareness of their history and culture.

This marginalisation has deep historical roots. Its most extreme manifestation was the Roma Holocaust, during which hundreds of thousands of Roma and Sinti were persecuted and killed during the Second World War. Yet antigypsyism continues to be felt today, with widespread discrimination in education, healthcare, employment and housing remaining a stark reality across the continent.

PACE has consistently advocated for comprehensive action to address these challenges. Through resolutions such as [Resolution 2153 \(2017\)](#) on "Promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers", the Assembly has called on member States to step up efforts to combat discrimination and promote inclusion. It has also underscored the importance of remembrance and education as essential tools to counter prejudice, recognising that acknowledging past injustices and Roma and Traveller contributions to Europe's shared heritage are fundamental to building more cohesive societies.

Against this backdrop, this conference, co-organised with the Hellenic Parliament and the Greek delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly, aims to explore how remembrance, heritage and culture can serve as concrete tools to combat antigypsyism and promote Roma and Traveller inclusion across Europe. It will bring together parliamentarians, historians, memorial institutions, cultural organisations, Roma activists and civil society representatives to share experiences and identify actionable recommendations.

Theme of the conference

The conference "*The power of remembrance: addressing antigypsyism through heritage and culture*" will focus on the role of memory, history and culture as active tools to combat antigypsyism and foster the inclusion of Roma and Travellers across Europe. While primarily involving parliamentarians, the conference will draw on the expertise of historians, cultural organisations, memorial institutions and Roma activists to foster a collaborative and action-oriented dialogue. Key points for discussion include:

- Memory as resistance: the importance of documenting, teaching and commemorating Roma and Traveller history as a direct tool to counter antigypsyism and the discrimination it generates, and the role of memorial institutions and education systems in keeping this memory alive.
- Reclaiming the narrative: how Roma artists, activists and cultural organisations are shaping their own representation to challenge stereotypes and hate speech, and the responsibility of parliaments and public institutions to support and amplify these cultural efforts.
- From awareness to action: how remembrance and cultural initiatives can translate into concrete policy responses, including through parliamentary action, national strategies and Council of Europe mechanisms, to promote the full inclusion of Roma and Travellers in European societies.

The conference will aim to generate actionable recommendations for parliamentarians and institutions on how to harness the power of remembrance and culture to dismantle antigypsyism and build more cohesive and equal societies, preventing history from repeating itself.

Preliminary programme

08:45 – 09:00 *Registration and welcome coffee*

09:00 - 09:15 Opening remarks

- Ms Petra Bayr, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
- Ms Sofia Zacharaki, Minister for Education, Religious Affairs and Sport, Greece
- Mr Georgios Stamatis, PACE General Rapporteur on Roma and Travellers
- Mr Michael O'Flaherty, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (*video message*)

09:15 - 09:45 Roundtable: History and culture of Roma in Europe

- Ms Sini Paukkunen-Mykkänen, Ambassador, Permanent Representation of Finland to the Council of Europe (*video message*)
- Mr Rui Macieira, Ambassador of Portugal to Greece
- Ms Carmen Ileana Mihalcescu, Ambassador of Romania to Greece
- Mr Wojciech Ponikiewski, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of Poland to Greece
- Mr John Devlin, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Ireland to Greece

09:45 – 10:00 *Coffee Break and family photo*

10:00 - 11:00 Session 1: Memory as resistance: Preserving Roma and Traveller history to counter antigypsyism

Moderator: Ms Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of the Roma and Travellers Division, Council of Europe

Speakers: Ms Simona Cruciani, Political Affairs Officer, UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (*video message*)
Mr Mladen Antonijevic Priljeva, First Vice-President of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Serbia
Ms Beata Bislim Olahova, Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR)
Ms Maria Kamilaki, Deputy Head of the Directorate-General for e-Administration, Library, and Publications, Hellenic Parliament
Mr Ioannis Georgiou, Sociologist

11:00 – 11:30 *Coffee Break*

11:30 - 13:00 Session 2: Reclaiming the narrative: Roma culture and identity to foster inclusion

Moderator: Mr Georgios Stamatis, PACE General Rapporteur on Roma and Travellers

Speakers: Ms Manuela Demir-Kariman, Head of Pride and Community Outreach, European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC)
Dr Ismael Cortés, Executive Director of the Roma National Institute of Culture, Spain (*video message*)
Ms Alexandra Karagianni, Lawyer, Alternate Member of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR)
Mr Donald Myrteli, Representative of ternYpe International Roma Youth Network

Mr Nikos Batzalis, Author of the book *Gkogi-Memory*, ERIAC Member
Ms Vivi Konstantinidou, Food editor, Gastronomos magazine-Kathimerini
Ms Evangelia Mama, Association of Greek Roma Mediators