

Report of the 21st meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society

Learning, Protecting, Innovating Democracy:

Roma and Travellers' Role and Perspectives on the New Democratic Pact for Europe

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1. Introduction and Strategic Context

Across Europe, democratic systems are under increasing strain. The gradual weakening of fundamental rights and equality, growing pressure on independent institutions and stakeholders, and deepening social polarisation continue to shape the conditions under which participation and representation take place. Within this context, the democratic engagement of Roma and Travellers is shaped by a paradox: while policy frameworks increasingly emphasise participation and inclusion, in practice political representation and access to decision-making remain limited. Evidence shows that ongoing discrimination undermines trust in institutions and reduces participation levels.



The protection of the rights of Roma and Travellers lies at the core of the Council of Europe’s mission and forms part of its mandate to uphold human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.¹ As European societies enter a turbulent era in which the rules-based order appears to be unravelling, the 21st Meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society provided a crucial platform for a collective response aimed at strengthening democratic resilience and legitimacy within the framework of the New Democratic Pact for Europe (hereinafter “the Pact”).

The Pact aims to strengthen democratic resilience, expand participation, and rebuild trust in democratic institutions across Europe. At the time of the Dialogue meeting, the Pact was still under development, creating an important opportunity for Roma and Traveller civil society to actively contribute to shaping its priorities, approaches, and future implementation. The Pact therefore not only addresses democratic deficits affecting Roma and Travellers, but also recognises their role as active contributors to democratic life and inclusive governance across Europe.

The Council of Europe also remains a vital space for addressing political participation and democracy in a broader sense, not only through policy frameworks but also through genuine engagement with issues such as representation, having a voice, and decision-making. As the President of the Roma Foundation for Europe, Zeljko Jovanovic, emphasised during the meeting, these discussions must go beyond formal policies and focus on how Roma and Travellers can meaningfully shape democratic life in practice. By contrast, when looking at other structures such as the EU Roma Framework, there remains very little substantive focus on Roma political participation, which makes the Council of Europe’s work even more important in filling that gap.

The Dialogue meeting aimed to place Roma and Traveller perspectives at the centre of the Pact - the Council of Europe’s strategic framework designed to revitalise democratic resilience through its three interdependent pillars: *Learning and Practicing*, *Protecting*, and *Innovating for Democracy*. Crucially, this gathering aligns with two landmark institutional tools: the recently adopted *Council of Europe Strategy for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2026-2030)* (hereinafter “the Strategy”), and the ongoing consultation on the draft *Handbook on Democratic governance, representation and participation of Roma and Travellers in public and political life* (hereinafter “the draft Handbook”). As the draft Handbook was still under development at the time, the meeting provided a timely opportunity to collect reflections from Roma and Traveller civil society on how it can better

¹ CM(2025)180-add1

respond to current realities, support meaningful participation, and strengthen democratic governance at local, national, and European levels.

The meeting's objectives were to:

- present the Pact, including its three pillars, and its relevance for Roma and Traveller inclusion;
- discuss and identify practical ways in which Roma and Traveller participation can strengthen democratic resilience and legitimacy within the Pact's framework;
- collect feedback from Roma and Traveller civil society organisations (CSOs) on the draft Handbook;
- develop actionable proposals for collaboration between Roma and Traveller civil society and the Council of Europe to advance the Pact's implementation, including through exchanges with representatives of member states (members of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM));
- explore opportunities for innovation, including digital inclusion and new participatory tools, to ensure that Roma and Travellers are not left behind in democratic renewal.

Importantly, the Dialogue included a joint session with members of the ADI-ROM, creating a valuable space for direct exchange between Roma and Traveller civil society and government representatives. This interaction enabled more grounded discussions on the gaps between policy commitments and lived realities, while also fostering mutual accountability and identifying concrete entry points for advancing inclusive democratic governance. The meeting brought together approximately 45 participants in a hybrid format, reflecting a diverse range of perspectives from across Europe and reinforcing the importance of sustained, structured dialogue in bridging institutional frameworks with community-led priorities.

2. The New Democratic Pact for Europe and its relevance for Roma and Traveller inclusion

The Pact is more than just an institutional project; it is a strategic framework to revitalise democracy in response to rising polarisation and declining public trust. Roma and Traveller participation can strengthen democratic resilience. The explicit inclusion of Roma and Travellers in the Pact marks a critical turning point: these issues can no longer be treated as an afterthought or addressed only when they become politically trendy. Delayed recognition frequently results in Roma being sidelined during pivotal moments of transitional justice and reconciliation, despite their lived experiences being integral to Europe's democratic fabric.

By collecting feedback for the draft Handbook, the Council of Europe seeks to move from theoretical concepts to actionable proposals that give Roma and Traveller communities a genuine voice in policymaking, implementation and monitoring in line with the Pact's objectives.

Through the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Roma and Traveller perspectives can be mainstreamed across the political spectrum, ensuring that the Pact's principles are championed by national representatives. Because PACE members are elected national parliamentarians, they offer a direct way back into the national level where they can advocate for legislative change within their own constituencies and parliaments. For the Pact to succeed, it must foster an environment in which Roma and Travellers are active participants rather than passive recipients.

While the discussions rightly emphasised social and political rights as prerequisites for Roma and Traveller participation, it is equally important to acknowledge and explore more deeply how democratic revitalisation cannot succeed without a firm commitment to upholding human rights. Democratic renewal is not simply about expanding participation or strengthening institutions: it is also about ensuring that those institutions protect the fundamental rights that make participation meaningful in the first place. This Dialogue meeting showed that Roma and Travellers experience democracy not only through voting or representation, but also through whether their rights are respected in their daily lives, whether they can live without fear of discrimination, and whether they have recourse when those rights are violated. Strengthening democracy therefore means making human rights not a parallel agenda, but the foundation upon which participation, trust, and legitimacy are built. Roma and Traveller democratic participation constitutes a litmus test for the credibility of European democracy. A democracy that excludes Europe's largest minority community cannot claim legitimacy or resilience.

2.1. Thematic Pillar I: Learning and Practicing Democracy

The *Learning and Practicing Democracy* pillar is grounded in the fundamental principle that democratic competences and civic literacy are not innate; they must be nurtured from an early age and sustained throughout a person's life. For Roma and Traveller communities, this process is frequently disrupted by structural barriers such as school segregation, early school leaving, and pervasive discrimination - factors which weaken democratic empowerment before it can even take root. Participants noted that by prioritising equal access to democratic learning and intercultural dialogue, the Pact can strengthen the capacity of Roma youth to not only engage in political processes, but also to actively challenge the discriminatory structures that have historically excluded them.

In assessing the current landscape, participants identified a combination of systemic challenges and emerging opportunities. On the one hand, participation is often dismissed as symbolic rather than meaningful, hindered by a lack of sustainable funding and insufficient institutional feedback mechanisms. The continuing effects of antigypsyism and mistrust further limit the space for engagement, particularly for Roma women and youth. On the other hand, the rise of Roma women's networks and youth-led initiatives provides a solid foundation for community-based approaches and coalitions between Roma and non-Roma parties - essential for opening long-closed institutional doors.

Moving forward, the approach must centre on a definitive shift from symbolic consultation to real co-ownership. This means that civic education cannot exist in a vacuum; it must be linked to real power-sharing and leadership development. Participants emphasised the need to organise Roma communities as informed and active voters who can influence decision-making at both local and national levels. By fostering a culture of critical thinking and leadership, starting from the most basic grassroots level, the goal is to move Roma and Travellers from being subjects of policy to becoming the leaders, organisers, and shapers of democratic life.

To turn these strategies into reality, several practical tools and successful models were highlighted. The Roma Political Schools in Greece and Montenegro serve as prime examples, combining a wide range of political education topics on Roma inclusion with leadership training to prepare youth and women for meaningful political participation. Similarly, the EU-CoE Joint Programme ROMACTED demonstrated success in transforming the relationship between municipalities and communities by treating Roma residents as equal partners in design, implementation and monitoring of policies that concern them. These models show that when civic education is paired with grassroots mobilisation and direct dialogue, it creates a sustainable path towards democratic representation.

Finally, the role of digital literacy and digital organising has emerged as a new prerequisite for democratic empowerment. Tools such as social media, video platforms, and modern voter engagement apps are now essential for informing and connecting communities. Beyond technology, the inclusion of Romani history and language in educational curricula was identified as a vital tool for strengthening civic confidence and identity. By combining these modern tools with research and evidence-building, the Pact aims to create a well-informed public capable of ensuring the long-term sustainability of Europe's democratic institutions.

2.2. Thematic Pillar II: Protecting Democracy

Democratic backsliding is experienced by Roma and Traveller communities as a daily reality, marked by discrimination from public authorities, the misuse of security policies, and shrinking civic spaces. Participants emphasised that genuine protection of democracy requires moving beyond procedural equality to ensure that the rule of law and the judiciary are genuinely impartial and accessible to those who have historically been excluded.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the systemic barriers within state institutions, where institutional racism in public administration often leads to the poor implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks. This manifests in discriminatory local decision-making, particularly in relation to property rights and access to social housing. Furthermore, participants highlighted the criminalisation of nomadic lifestyles as a tool of exclusion: the failure to implement housing programmes, cited specifically in cases from France and Ireland, effectively cuts off access to basic services like water, healthcare, and education. In France, for instance, only 10% of the required stopping areas have been set up, leaving families to face heavy fines or even imprisonment, which directly destabilises children's school attendance.

The integrity of the electoral process was another area of acute concern, with calls to prevent electoral coercion, vote-buying, and the tokenistic placement of candidates on party lists. Protecting democracy under the Pact means ensuring that Roma participation is substantial rather than symbolic. This is currently threatened by a shrinking of civic space and increased administrative barriers for Roma-led NGOs, which often face funding cuts and regulatory pressures while hate speech and misinformation against their communities continue with impunity.

To restore democratic legitimacy, participants argued for the explicit recognition of antigypsyism as a specific form of racism that must be addressed through justice, reparations, and public accountability. This includes addressing historical injustices and advancing transitional justice, as the absence of the history of Roma in education and their exclusion from reparations frameworks continues to undermine their trust in modern institutions. There is a growing sense of urgency to reframe these issues not just as minority concerns but as systemic challenges that, if left unaddressed, weaken the democratic fabric for all citizens.

Finally, this pillar underscores the need for strategic litigation and policy innovation to counter these discriminatory trends. By strengthening independent equality bodies and ensuring robust rule of law mechanisms, the Council of Europe aims to build a protective framework in which Roma and Travellers are no longer the targets of political rhetoric or

scapegoating. The goal is to move from a system of tolerated antigypsyism to one of public accountability, where the rights of human rights defenders are protected and inclusion is treated as a fundamental requirement for a healthy democracy.

2.3. Thematic Pillar III: Innovating for Democracy

Pillar 3: Innovating for Democracy seeks to harness digital technologies to broaden access and restore public trust. However, innovation presents unique barriers for Roma and Travellers, particularly regarding digital representation and the inherent biases of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Participants noted that tools like ChatGPT often provide incorrect or even fabricated information about Roma and Travellers, reflecting a long history of segregation and discrimination that is now embedded in AI databases. To counter this, national strategies must move beyond procedural steps and develop reliable digital platforms that promote an authentic representation of community identity, ensuring that Roma and Traveller culture is portrayed with the same dignity and accuracy as any other.

To bridge the digital divide, the Council of Europe and its member states have to ensure that Roma and Traveller communities are not merely consumers of technology, but critics of technology who possess the skills to navigate and challenge digital information systems. This requires significant investment in education and digital literacy, providing community members with the necessary methodological tools to use digital devices effectively. Innovation under the Pact should specifically hype and boost digital opportunities for Roma and Travellers, especially youth, moving from a model of simple participation to one of active employment in the IT and information sectors. This shift should ensure that Europe's digital landscape is built with Roma and Traveller expertise informing, shaping, and influencing digital transformation.

The role of national institutions is equally critical in this digital evolution, especially in tackling the lack of meaningful action against online harassment, abuse, and hate speech. Participants raised urgent questions about whether country-level institutions are being properly evaluated for their performance in these areas. For the Pact to be operative, Roma/Traveller action plans must include the creation of dedicated digital platforms for information sharing and collaboration with AI developers to remove anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice and bias from databases. Only by upholding a system in which inclusion is the norm can these institutions regain the trust of marginalised voters who currently feel abandoned.

Finally, the meeting identified several actionable proposals to translate these digital concepts into reality. These include establishing specialised IT platforms or applications for Roma and Traveller-specific information, providing budgetary support for community-led

digital spaces, and creating paid internship positions to support the next generation of Roma and Traveller IT professionals. Innovative tools such as chatbots for legal advice were also suggested to improve access to information and legal protection. By implementing these practical measures, the Pact can ensure that Roma and Travellers are empowered as a political and digital force capable of strengthening the very foundations of European democracy.

3. Aligning the Strategy for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2026-2030) with the New Democratic Pact for Europe

The Strategy is presented as a vital policy anchor fully aligned with the objectives of the Pact. It is framed not merely as a social policy tool but also as a deeply democratic instrument, because it addresses fundamental questions of political participation: who has a voice, who shapes decisions, and who is recognised as a political subject.

The Strategy builds on a long-standing continuum of development, drawing on initiatives such as the Roma Political Schools, EU-CoE co-operation programmes (such as ROMACT and ROMACTED), and other activities targeting women and youth. These initiatives guide participants from awareness-raising and skills-building to leadership development, ensuring meaningful engagement in democratic life. Particular emphasis is placed on Roma and Traveller women and youth, whose inclusion is strengthened by supporting their participation in public and political life and ensuring their voices influence every stage of the policy cycle, from mapping to monitoring.

Adopting a “less is more” philosophy, the Strategy avoids an overambitious wish list and concentrates on areas where the Council of Europe can make the greatest impact - especially in combating antigypsyism as an integral horizontal priority. To prevent fragmentation and ensure proper monitoring, ADI-ROM, as the inter-governmental body, provides space for member states to report twice a year, ensuring that the Strategy becomes an operative framework.

A recurring message is the urgent need for a structured, long-term civil society mechanism to contribute to shaping policies, monitoring implementation, and following up processes. The Dialogue, which takes place twice a year, already represents an important and valuable mechanism for sustained engagement between the Council of Europe and Roma and Traveller civil society. It is recognised as a useful space for consultation, exchange of experiences, co-ordination, and joint reflection on broader democratic and participation processes.

Roma and Traveller CSOs build trust where institutions are weak, serving as essential bridges between communities and policymakers to ensure meaningful participation rather than tokenistic inclusion. They also act as watchdogs, questioning whether institutions are listening and delivering on their commitments. Their role extends beyond policy delivery to testing whether Europe is prepared to uphold its democratic values for all citizens. Monitoring must therefore move beyond formal execution to address structural antigypsyism and enforce institutional responsibility.

For civil society to fulfil this role, sustainable resources are indispensable. Governments must adopt a long-term vision that treats CSOs as integral democratic stakeholders, not external critics. A broader, well-connected civil society consortium is necessary to ensure that national strategies remain grounded in local realities.

A key lesson from past implementation is the need to clearly define antigypsyism, a term often used without a shared understanding across member states. The Council of Europe is expected to set rigorous standards - drawing on ECRI recommendations - to ensure that antigypsyism is recognised in its structural and institutional dimensions, not only in individual acts of discrimination. This requires going beyond the execution of court judgments to confront systemic biases within public administrations.

Monitoring is described as the engine of the Strategy, yet current gaps in data governance, limited access to data, and weaknesses in reporting hinder progress.² Roma civil society remains the primary source of ground-level monitoring and accountability. Participants called for stronger alignment between Council of Europe and EU monitoring frameworks. As the European Commission integrates civil society reports, the Council should do the same to avoid duplication and siloisation, and improve implementation.

The Strategy's impact is most visible - and most challenged - at the local level. The example of Switzerland, particularly regarding travelling and encampments, illustrates how municipalities struggle with entrenched biases and a lack of designated spaces for Yenish and Traveller culture. True implementation requires translating high-level standards into meaningful local engagement, ensuring Roma voices shape practical decisions. Tools like the Roma Inclusion, Participation & Equality Index (RIPE)³ and co-operation with monitoring bodies will be essential to verify whether standards are becoming lived realities.

² Council of Europe, *Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), Final evaluation report on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller inclusion (2020–2025)*, CM(2025)180-add2, 1548th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, item 4.1c.

³ RIPE is a unified framework to assess and compare the situation of Roma populations across different political, social, and economic contexts. The Index systematically assesses a broad range of rights and indicators, ensuring comprehensive coverage from human rights to socio-economic conditions. See full

Participants expressed strong appreciation for the extensive consultations and diverse stakeholder contributions that shaped the Strategy. Yet the core challenge remains the persistent gap between commitment and implementation. As networks like ternYpe noted, Roma engagement often stops after consultation, leaving no clear path for accountability. To move beyond formalism, the Strategy must transform Roma and Travellers into active political subjects who co-shape the decisions affecting their lives.

This transformation depends on a long-term civil society mechanism, sustainable resources, and a shift from consultation to co-ownership. Without these, the Strategy risks remaining another “nice piece of paper” rather than a genuine driver of democratic resilience and inclusion.

3.1. Consultation on the draft Handbook on “Democratic governance, representation and participation of Roma and Travellers in public and political life”

The draft Handbook is a democratic instrument that strengthens the recognition of Roma and Travellers as active political subjects and contributes to the implementation of the Pact and to the Strategy.

The discussion highlighted the need to strengthen the operational dimension of the Handbook. While its conceptual framework was widely welcomed, stakeholders called for more practical guidance, including step-by-step tools, clearer institutional responsibilities, and tested methodologies such as Roma Political Schools and mentoring schemes. Ensuring that these standards are supported by sustainable funding, particularly through alignment with EU instruments, was seen as essential to avoid short-term, project-based engagement.

A strong emphasis was placed on the role of youth and women, not as beneficiaries but as central contributors to democratic life. The draft Handbook includes dedicated sections on empowerment strategies for women and youth, providing an important foundation for translating democratic participation principles into practical and inclusive approaches. The digital dimension was also identified as a growing area of concern, with participants pointing to risks of exclusion, bias, and discrimination in online and AI-driven environments, and the need to equip Roma communities to critically engage with these systems.

report: ERGO Network (2026) *Roma Index: Capacity Building for Roma and Traveller Civil Society Organisations to Use the Council of Europe Standards and Mechanisms for Promoting Rights of Roma and Travellers. Complete Overview of 20 Council of Europe Member States*. Available online at: <https://ergonetnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/RIPE-report-April-2026-web.pdf>

Finally, the Handbook was seen as a potential bridge between communities and institutions, provided it is effectively co-ordinated across European frameworks and adapted to national contexts. Importantly, participants also shared emerging national practices illustrating the Handbook's potential application. A governmental representative from North Macedonia highlighted plans to use the Handbook as a tool to reorganise government structures and integrate Roma youth more systematically into national action plans. This example demonstrated both the demand for practical guidance at the national level and the potential of the Handbook to bridge the gap between European standards and domestic implementation.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

To Council of Europe member states

Learning and Practicing Democracy

1. Member states must guarantee meaningful participation by moving from symbolic presence to real co-ownership and power-sharing. This requires establishing structured, long-term civil society mechanisms for continuous monitoring and decision-making, rather than relying on one-off consultations.
2. Participation should be formalised across local, regional, and national levels, ensuring that Roma and Traveller youth and women move from being passive recipients to becoming active agents and leaders in democratic life.

Protecting Democracy

3. National parliaments should mainstream Roma and Traveller perspectives by leveraging the Pact's principles to champion legislative changes that empower Roma and Traveller communities, especially women and youth.
4. Member states should adopt a standardised definition of antigypsyism that explicitly includes its structural and institutional forms, in line with ECRI standards. This must be accompanied by transitional justice measures and reconciliation processes to address historical injustices, such as the Roma Holocaust and forced sterilisation. Targeted, mandatory training for the judiciary, police, and public administration is essential to dismantle the institutional racism that hinders service delivery.
5. Housing, healthcare, and education should be treated not just as social issues, but as fundamental democracy enablers. Member states must view decent housing as a prerequisite for civic engagement; without a stable residence or recognised address, citizens are effectively disenfranchised and unable to register to vote. Resources must be allocated for desegregation in education and for the provision of culturally appropriate housing, including the legal recognition of nomadic lifestyles.
6. Member states must safeguard Roma human rights defenders and NGOs from shrinking civic space, regulatory pressures, and foreign agent narratives. Financial support for Roma-led civil society should move from project-based grants to sustainable, long-term funding. This would ensure that CSOs function as an independent corrective to government measures and build trust where public institutions are weak.

Innovating for Democracy

7. Innovation must go beyond basic broadband access to include digital literacy that empowers Roma as critics rather than just consumers of technology. Member states should include Roma experts in AI governance and data-ethics bodies to counter algorithmic bias and the reproduction of anti-Roma stereotypes in generative AI.
8. Strategic investments should support paid internships for Roma youth in IT sectors and the creation of sovereign digital platforms to protect against online hate speech.

To the Council of Europe and its Bodies

Learning and Practicing Democracy

1. Programmes that foster a continuum of development - from awareness-raising to leadership - should be expanded. This includes scaling up the ROMACT and ROMACTED Joint Programmes to strengthen local governance, as well as the Roma Political Schools to prepare youth and women for genuine political representation. These initiatives should move beyond project-based logic towards long-term investment in people, focusing on transformative leadership that enables Roma to become the architects of their own democratic future.

Protecting Democracy

2. The Council of Europe should ensure that Roma and Traveller perspectives are not isolated but integrated across all three pillars of the Pact: Learning, Protecting, and Innovating. Inclusion must be treated as a test of the credibility of European democracy. Specifically, Roma and Traveller components should be embedded into the six transversal areas of the Pact - particularly social rights, countering disinformation, and new technologies - to ensure that these communities are part of the collective intelligence response to democratic backsliding.
3. To avoid siloisation, the Council of Europe should build stronger operational links between the Roma and Travellers Division, the ADI-ROM, PACE, and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The Special Committee on the Pact within PACE should formalise Roma representation to provide a platform for innovative proposals grounded in community expertise. Furthermore, the role of the General Rapporteur on Roma and Travellers should be leveraged as a vital bridge to national parliaments to ensure that European standards are championed at the national level.
4. The Council of Europe should include specific Roma and Traveller democratic participation indicators in the annual reporting on the Pact. To bridge existing data gaps, the Council should align its monitoring efforts with those of the European Union

(Fundamental Rights Agency and European Commission), incorporating civil society shadow reports and tools such as the ERGO Index. Evaluation frameworks must prioritise disaggregated data - while maintaining ethical standards - to ensure that the progress of the most marginalised is visible and accountable.

Innovating for Democracy

5. The Council of Europe should actively apply the Convention on Artificial Intelligence to safeguard Roma and Travellers from algorithmic discrimination and historical biases embedded in datasets. All digital governance initiatives must include equality impact assessments to prevent technology from reinforcing existing inequalities or spreading harmful stereotypes.
6. The Council of Europe should also promote the development of sovereign digital platforms and Roma and/or Traveller digital observatories to monitor and counter online hate speech and misrepresentation.

To Roma and Traveller Civil Society

Learning and Practicing Democracy

1. Roma and Traveller civil society must move beyond isolated activism towards a strategic unification of their efforts. As the battle for democracy increasingly takes place at the level of public narrative rather than just through policy, it is essential to build broad cross-national alliances with any group dedicated to upholding a system in which inclusion is the norm. Aligning with pro-democracy, environmental, and social justice movements ensures that Roma issues are not treated as marginal but as a central test of European democratic resilience.
2. To bridge the gap between symbolic consultation and real influence, Roma and Traveller organisations should seek to embed their expertise directly within institutions. This involves moving away from unpaid or tokenistic advisory roles towards secondments, fellowships, and permanent employment within national administrations and European bodies. By hiring Roma and Travellers as experts in fields such as law, AI, and economics, institutions can ensure that lived realities are integrated into the design and execution of public policy.

Protecting Democracy

3. Advocacy must be rooted in robust data and community-led research to demonstrate the systemic nature of structural antigypsyism. By building a body of case law through strategic litigation and evidence-based reporting, civil society can challenge the

institutional racism in public administration that leads to discriminatory local decisions, particularly in housing and access to justice.

4. Civil society must insist on co-ownership of the democratic process, rejecting any role that is merely symbolic or project-based. This means that Roma and Traveller experts should be involved in the entire policy cycle, from initial mapping and decision-making to final evaluation and monitoring. When institutions fail to deliver, civil society must function as a corrective, holding governments accountable to European standards and ensuring that participation leads to visible impact rather than frustration and distrust.

Innovating for Democracy

5. As democracy enters the digital era, Roma and Traveller civil society must transition from being mere consumers to becoming critics and providers of data. Establishing Roma/Traveller digital observatories will enable the community to evaluate the performance of tech companies and state institutions, particularly in documenting algorithmic bias, hate speech, and the misrepresentation in generative AI. Promoting content production in multiple languages and creating sovereign digital platforms will protect community organising from the noise of external hate speech.