

CULTURAL INCLUSION AS A PRE-CONDITION FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION: TOWARDS A NEW EU ROMA STRATEGY POST-2020

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(ERIANC)**

Roma arts, culture, identity and history – Missing elements in the existing policy solutions at the EU level

The Roma are the biggest ethnic minority in Europe. Yet as a people, the Roma are mostly thought of and treated as a social problem, perceived through the prism of marginalization, exclusion and poverty. Roma ethnic identity tends to be problematized and carries with it an attributed social stigma – as if the socio-economic problems which many Roma face were characteristic of an ethnicity rather than symptomatic of structurally unjust societies and a consequence of centuries of oppression, prejudice, discrimination and genocide. The Roma history(ies) and culture(s) are an inseparable part of European and national cultural landscapes. Yet, Roma cultural heritage and history are rarely acknowledged and included in the collective European narrative or as part of the national histories and cultures.

The omission of the Roma arts and culture field from the existing policy solutions at the EU level is a major shortcoming of the collective efforts to improve the overall situation of European Roma citizens.

There are numerous challenges with regards to the situation of broadly-understood field of Roma arts and culture in Europe.

Firstly, arts, culture and history are completely left out of the current EU Roma Framework, and therefore also from the Commission's Evaluation. The only reference in the Evaluation is a recommendation to make 'Roma culture and history part of the education curriculum' but it lacks analysis and elaboration. Few EU member states have included measures in the field of arts and culture in the framework of their National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS), however, as this is not considered a priority area efforts and investment in this domain have been modest. Most member states have not dealt with Roma arts and culture at all. The exclusion of cultural recognition from the previous EU Roma Framework also results in important financial implications, as public institutions and civil society alike lack funding to implement specific measures targeting arts and culture.

Secondly, it should be noted that some aspects related to the field of Roma arts, culture and history fall under the framework of minority rights (as regulated, for example, by the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities). However, not all EU member states recognise the Roma as a national and/or ethnic minority. In these countries in particular Roma lack legal tools to protect and promote their cultural identity. In member states where Roma

do enjoy the status of a legally recognised ethnic minority, the application of the commitments included in Framework Convention is often superficial and partial. Consequently, the de-facto implementation of measures protecting national minorities' identity and culture are unequal across the EU.

Finally, at the EU level, not enough is being done to mitigate the uneven activity (if any) taking place in this field by member states. For example, the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage was not inclusive of Roma – Roma projects took place only under the “heritage year” (for which any project could apply for) but no direct funding was dedicated to make the heritage of biggest European minority visible. Moreover, Roma stand in competition with better-prepared major cultural producers for arts and cultural funding; some programmes under the MEDIA programme have requirements that are not met by any Roma led-institution, company or initiative currently in existence. Furthermore, as national funds for arts and culture rarely foster cross-country collaboration, the Roma lack resources to reinforce their European identity, especially in the context of the relatively high historical and contemporary mobility of Roma EU citizens across Europe.

Lack of policy and political commitment towards preserving, conserving and developing Roma arts and culture, in particular Roma cultural heritage, leads to cultural impoverishment and loss. Roma lack spaces and resources to conserve, document, develop and disseminate the diverse manifestations and artefacts of Roma culture. This is particularly striking in the field of language (Romanes): fewer Roma children learn it (it is not taught at school), there are limited possibilities for publishing in Romanes or using the language in the media. As Roma are not included into national cultural narratives, they are consequently absent from permanent national collections in the national archives or national museums. Likewise, Roma history and culture are not included in history books. The centuries of Roma contributions, achievements and cultural productions are not properly researched, documented and presented. An initial mapping conducted by ERIAC on Roma cultural heritage, estimates that there are approximately 10,000 artefacts of Roma culture kept in the basements and storerooms of ethnographic museums, but only two on permanent display in Europe.

Without policies and institutions, Roma art and culture are being appropriated by majority societies without a proper recognition of their Roma producers. There are no state-level or European level policies to counter the process of cultural appropriation. At the same time, Roma cultures are theorised into the outdated concept of “low culture”. In addition, many public collections, archives, museums and national cultural institutions have funding to acquire Roma artworks, but since these do not fit institutional narratives, they do not appear in permanent exhibitions. As a results, the Roma cultural products and artefacts remain hidden, unknown and inaccessible to the next generation of Roma and to the society at large.

In conclusion, given these disadvantages, Roma arts and culture remain greatly under-represented, both at the EU level and nationally. This has important consequences. The dominant discourse and imagery associated with Roma is negative and stereotypical. More balanced narratives, representations and positive examples in public spaces, which have the potential to challenge antigypsyism are lacking. At the same time, in the arts, being Roma tends to be an asset and Roma

culture is valued more positively. That is why, it is important to emphasise that the EC could use the universal language of arts and culture to educate the societies about Roma belonging, contributions and achievements in the context of national and European culture.

Why cultural inclusion? The added value of policy solutions in the field of Roma arts, culture, identity and history

Current EU Roma Framework is predominantly built on the premise of socio-economic inclusion. However, there is evidence that socio-economic injustice and cultural injustices are intertwined. According to Nancy Fraser (1995, 1996, 2000) there are two types of injustices groups face: socio-economic, related to the economic position of people and their social position within society on that basis; and cultural or symbolic injustices, stemming from the social representation of certain groups and the image majority society holds about them. In order to achieve equality and inclusion to remedy these two types of injustices, it is necessary to employ two parallel and inter-dependent approaches - of redistribution and recognition.

Current policy solutions at the EU level embrace the approach of politics of redistribution – in practice using the proxy of socio-economic as a defining feature of an ethnic group. However, with the growing consensus that antigypsyism is the root cause of historical and contemporary marginalization and exclusion of Roma, it is necessary to adapt policy solutions in the field of recognition. In this sense, recognition and redistribution approaches are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Unless the prejudiced image and representation of Roma among the majority society is challenged, socio-economic progress will be slow. It is increasingly clear that cultural recognition and cultural inclusion are a precondition for socio-economic inclusion and the success of any policy solutions targeting Roma.

Combatting anti-gypsyism at its roots – a proactive/ preventive approach and the need for counter-discourses

Existing anti-discrimination legislation provides insufficient tools to effectively counter anti-Gypsyism. Real socio-economic inclusion will not crystalize unless the deeply rooted racism in European societies and institutions is addressed.

Current policy-solutions rely on existing ant-discrimination legislation which is applied reactively when cases of discrimination occur. However, not enough is being done to challenge antigypsyisms at its root using preventive and proactive approaches. Prejudice and ignorance about Roma needs to be diminished proactively through measures which contribute to changing public perceptions on Roma and educating majority societies. This includes, among other areas:

- Awareness-raising campaigns promoting knowledge about the Roma history, culture and identity
- Reinforcing the notion of belonging of Roma as part of national cultures and histories, highlighting in particular the Roma contributions and achievements; likewise, inclusion of Roma in the narratives of European identity, history and culture is needed

- Inclusion of Roma histories as part of the canon of national and European historical narratives
- Self-representation of Roma through stories told in first-person, to communicate passionately and authentically the Roma experience
- Highlighting the diversity of Roma identities, cultures and lifestyles as well as the common elements of shared cultural histories and traits
- Highlighting realities of heterogeneity as well as intersectionality
- Inclusion of Roma in the arts and culture institutions, initiatives, spaces of the majority
- Creation of European and national institutions which visibilize and promote Roma arts and culture(s)
- Development of teaching materials and textbooks at all levels of education
- Development of Roma media and inclusion of Roma presence in mainstream media
- Adoption of measures and tools to safeguard, preserve and develop diverse expressions of Roma arts and culture
- Legal and symbolic acts of recognition of Roma culture, history and arts
- Assignment of resources for Roma arts and culture

Arts and culture represent useful tools which can contribute to greater mutual understanding and dialogue between Roma and non-Roma. It is also the most effective way to communicate the diversity of Roma cultures, identities, realities and lifestyles, challenging the homogenizing policy approaches towards Roma as a target group.

In this sense, inclusion of Roma arts, culture, history and identity among the policy priorities of the future EU Roma policy will complement existing policy efforts in other areas, by contributing to maximizing their chance for success, building greater social solidarity and empathy towards the Roma and reinforcing the narrative of belonging of Roma as part of the majority societies. The comprehensive fight against antigypsyism will not be complete unless proactive, affirmative and positive measures are introduced.

Consequently, in order to maximize the potential success, it is necessary to foster and fund innovative strategies aimed at changing public perceptions and discourses on Roma as well as at educating majorities about the rich Roma arts, culture and history.

The way forward: Roma arts, culture and history as a separate policy area in the next EU Roma Framework

It is vital that the next EU Roma policy will embrace politics of recognition alongside of policy of redistribution. In other words, the next EU Roma Strategy needs to include Roma arts, culture and history as one area of engagement, and establish synergies with existing policies, funds and other structures of the European Union in this field. Employing such strategies will play a significant role in fighting antigypsyism.

Arts and culture should not just be seen as valuable in and of themselves, but as a complementary strategy that maximises the success of other priority areas. By including Roma arts, culture and history in the future Roma strategy, the EC will send a message to member states that European

and national cultural narratives should highlight Roma belonging, contributions and achievements. This could be reflected in school curricula, the media and major arts and culture institutions.

Recommendations

1. The EC needs to use its available cultural policies and financial support, or develop new ones, and thus target the challenges Roma cultural heritage faces.
2. The EC should make sure that all EU initiatives in the fields of arts and culture, especially those launched and promoted by the EC, are always inclusive of a Roma dimension.
3. The EC should support the establishment of Programs for Roma recognition in the majority cultural spaces, and use existing Roma organizations as mediators.
4. The EC should support the establishment of cultural spaces and institutions where Roma art is in the permanent and primary position.
5. The EC need to consider exploring the inclusion of *Romanes* language as one of the official languages of the EU, so as to reach out to Roma in their mother tongue and fostering the official recognition and promotion of *Romanes* language.
6. The EC should consider working in close cooperation with other international and intergovernmental organizations with expertise in the fields of arts, culture and history in order to promote strategic, coordinated and complementary actions across the continent in this field.

Suggested indicators (not exhaustive list)

- Share of MS that officially recognize Roma as a minority and/or have established institutional acts of recognition of Roma culture and history
- Share of MS that officially recognize the Roma Holocaust
- Share of MS that established other institutional dates to symbolically recognize and commemorate Roma history
- Share of MS that teach Romanes in schools
- Share of measures and initiatives supported by MS in the field of language (including publishing activities)
- Share of MS that support Roma media and press
- Share of MS that allocate airtime to Roma in public media outlets
- Budget allocation for measures promoting Roma arts and culture
- Share of MS that include Roma in the canon of formal education (textbooks)
- Share of MS that provide support to Roma cultural organizations and foster establishment of local Roma cultural centers
- Share of MS that provide support to public events promoting Roma arts and culture (such as festivals, exhibition in majority spaces etc.)
- Share of MS which provide training opportunities about Roma arts, culture and history to public servants, teachers, police etc.
- Number of MS who engaged in cross-country collaboration promoting Roma arts and culture

- Share of Roma cultural producers involved in state-funded majority spaces, initiatives and events
 - Share of MS which establish state-funded awareness-raising campaigns or activities
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About ERIAC

The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture e.V. (**ERiac**) is a joint initiative of the Council of Europe, the Open Society Foundations, and the Alliance for the European Roma Institute. ERIAC represents a historical and ground-breaking development, initiated by Roma intellectuals and public figures, and is actively supported by the government of Germany who welcomed the ERIAC headquarters in Berlin.

ERiac's mission is to increase the self-esteem of Roma and to decrease negative prejudice of the majority population towards the Roma by means of arts, culture, history, and media. ERIAC acts as an international creative hub to support the exchange of creative ideas across borders, cultural domains and Romani identities. ERIAC aims to be the promoter of Romani contributions to European culture and talent, success and achievement, as well as to document the historical experience of Romani people in Europe. ERIAC exists to be a communicator and public educator, to disseminate a positive image and knowledge about Romani people for dialogue and building mutual respect and understanding.

The founding of ERIAC in 2017 is an achievement made by the transnational, well-organized and persistent Roma cultural movement and its non-Roma allies and supporters who understand that social inclusion is impossible without cultural inclusion, and who know that the security and well-being of the largest minority is a precondition for the stability and prosperity of Europe.

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