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PROVIDE SOCIAL PATHWAYS FOR ROMA PEOPLE

PR1: IDENTIFICATION OF CIVIC EDUCATIONAL MODELS FOR DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION OF ROMA ADULTS

NATIONAL REPORT - GERMANY

Erasmus+ Programme

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1. DESK RESEARCH

1.1 Main characteristics of the Roma in Germany

According to civil society estimates, between 70,000 and 150,000 (Council of Europe, 2012) members of the national minority of German Sinti and Roma and more than 100,000 Roma migrants live in Germany¹.

The Roma population in Germany can be differentiated into at least three groups with different legal status:

- Firstly, there are a considerable number of Roma people who have lived for generations in Germany and have the normal legal status of Germans. In formal terms, they have the same rights as other German population groups²;
- Secondly, there are Roma people from other member states of the European Union who live temporarily or permanently in Germany. Many of them come from the new European member states in the south-east of Europe, especially from Romania and Bulgaria. The members of this group have the full rights of European citizens³;
- Thirdly, there is a group of Roma people who over the past decades immigrated as migrant labourers or as displaced persons from other countries outside of the EU, in legal terms the so-called “third states”. Within the last 15 years, many Roma have come as refugees from Kosovo or other regions of the former Republic of Yugoslavia.

As a national minority in Germany, German Sinti and Roma enjoy protection under the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The Romany language is officially recognized as a minority language in line within Germany’s commitments under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The situation and the identity of the Roma population in Germany today cannot be understood without knowledge of the historical background of the Roma and especially of the racist prosecution during National Socialism in the 1930s and 1940s in Germany. Since the 1970’s, the civil and human rights

¹ See <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/bundesregierung/staatsministerin-fuer-kultur-und-medien/kultur/kunst-kulturfoerderung/foerderbereiche/unterstuetzung-minderheiten>.

² Marx 2011; Bundesministerium des Innern 2010; UNICEF 2007)

³ (Marx 2011: p. 41)



engagement of Roma in the Federal Republic of Germany has increasingly taken place against a background of generational change and the transformation of the political culture.

1.2 Policies targeting Roma in Germany

According to the federal structure of the German state, the political responsibility for the integration of Roma is split up between the Departments of the Interior at national as well as state level. Because most of the programmes to promote the situation of the Roma population are the responsibility of the states and the local authorities, it is almost impossible to get a clear picture of the volume, content and effects of these programmes.

The overarching objective of Germany's national integration policy is for all people living here legally to be able to realise their own potential and bring it to bear in society regardless of whether they were born here or not. That objective applies in equal measure to all Sinti and Roma living in Germany.

Integration activities are meant to all legal migrants in Germany, regardless of national, ethnic or religious affiliation. They cover the following three areas:

- language teaching,
- integration in training, work and (tertiary) education, and
- social integration.

The Federal Government implemented the EU Framework up to 2020 by launching measures as part of a broad-based policy strategy on integration which is open to all migrants. Besides integration and inclusion, equality and participation also have a key role to play under the new EU Framework Strategy, in particular tackling antigypsyism and discrimination. The Federal Government regards civic education as essential when it comes to preventing and fighting antigypsyism. the Federal Agency for Civic Education has various (online) publications, handouts and webpages on dealing critically with antigypsyism⁴. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, BMFSFJ) the first time provided funds to an Antigypsyism Centre of Excellence focusing on

- awareness-raising among the general population as regards antigypsyism stereotypes and prejudice,
- supporting Sinti and Roma social participation,
- supporting empowerment structures, and

⁴ See <https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/antigypsyismus>



- historical-political education in relation to the persecution and murder of Sinti and Roma during the Nazi era

One of the main problems faced by disadvantaged young Sinti and Roma for accessing the labor market is that a large part of them do not have a school leaving certificate, because of drop outs from education before acquiring them. This is one of the main barriers to getting adequate jobs by the employment office or courses for further qualification. In the case of foreign Roma, the low level of the German language represents an additional obstacle. There is a lack of language courses for free for disadvantaged migrants. This would increase their opportunities at the labor markets.

2. Brief summary of the key findings reached through the online survey

2.1 Methodology

This research targeted seven Roma adults living in any Federal States of Germany, with over eighteen years. The online survey was conducted during March 2022 and it was posted on social media and sent on emails to contacts that the organization has with the target group. By the end of the research period we got fourteen respondents. The Response Rate is 73%.

The online survey aimed at getting first-hand information concerning the challenges and obstacles facing the Roma communities that hinder them from civic engagement and participation in their local community. The survey has twenty-three questions, a combination of closed and open questions aiming to get direct answers regarding the skill gaps and training needs of Roma communities

Table 1

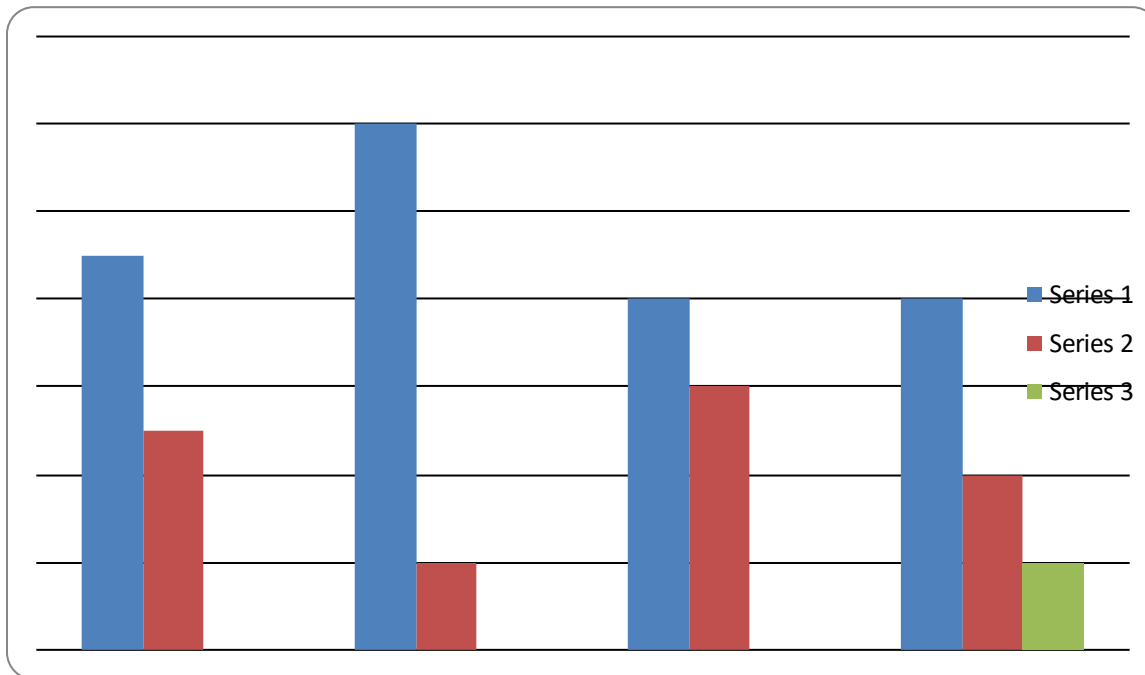


Table 1 refers to demographic characteristics of the respondents. The demographic statistic is essential when it comes to concluding and generating statistical conclusions. It can be noticed that 9 are males and 5 are females. Regarding the age groups, 12 are between 18 – 24 and 2 are between 25 – 39 years. Moreover, the demographic characteristics show that 8 living in Germany from 1 – 5 years, are from 6 to 10 years. It can be concluded that the respondents are migrants in Germany, 8 from Macedonia, 4 from Serbia and 2 from Bulgaria.

When it comes to education, % are with secondary education and % are with primary education. In this regard a country where the education is finished and what type of secondary education the respondents have matters in a way to be figured out either their diplomas can be recognized in Germany⁵. In terms of employment 7 are employed, 3 are in Integration course, learning German language, 1 is attending VET course and 3 are social benefits beneficiaries. For the section about the job title it can be seen that all 7 are employed in low paid jobs positions such as cleaning, production technicians in factories and one bus driver.

⁵ Mostly Diplomas obtained in a Foreign country from technical schools can be Nostrificated in Germany. More at: https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/en/index.php?gclid=Cj0KCOjwyMiTBhDKARIsAAJ-9VuDFZWhF3bY_1x1hF95bgTEgVzvmPeB9-yngb2qDtfuZarRmcjxecaAstCEALw_wcB



2.3. Data analyzing

The first set of questions reflects the general knowledge and information of the Roma about the Civic training program in Germany. Through these questions one can get an overview regarding to which extent the Roma are familiar with the civic training programs and upskilling opportunities that are offered. German language proficiency as it was mentioned in the Desk research plays one of the crucial roles in this regard. It was pointed out also by respondents that a certain level of German language is required to get entered in a civic training program. Usually a minimum standard is B1 level, the same as it is required by the Integration Policies. The respondents are aware of any civic training program, if we analyze it, can be concluded that those living shorter in Germany, with less German language knowledge are either less aware of the civic training opportunities. The next question is about taking place in some civic training program as they are respondents from not European member countries – North Macedonia and Serbia, it is also important their legal status.

As it was also mentioned before it implies their eligibility in such programs. Generally can be noticed low level of participation in civic training programs which correspond with many other researchers' findings. It is notable that the age group from 18 to 25 years 3 respondents stressed out that took place in non formal education activities on the topic of Roma Community organizing and Roma History and Holocaust in comparison with the other age groups who all of them said that have not taken part in such training activities. In contrast to the current low level of participation, the next question regarding the willingness if they are offered an opportunity, will they be part of, determines a high level of motivation by the respondents willing to take part in such training programs. Their motivation is explained through believing for better employment opportunities. It is indicative that the research confirms the need for civic training programmes for Roma.

In this regard the Federal Employment Agency's integration concept also includes strategies for action which relate to migration-specific problems (for example, insufficient language skills or non-recognised professional qualifications acquired in another country). In the context of basic welfare provision and unemployment insurance, the advisory concept – which is based on skilled work – seeks to provide optimum support appropriate to the individual, which contributes to the achievement of the necessary steps towards integration. As part of the work of the network of employment agencies and local job centres in the regions, this cooperation contributes to an improvement in the intercultural skills of employees and increases their awareness of issues relating to migration. The acquisition of these skills is also supported by intercultural qualifications offered by the Federal Employment Agency which are at present undergoing further development. Furthermore all respondents believe that participation in civic training programmes will increase Roma involvement in democratic, cultural and community activities.

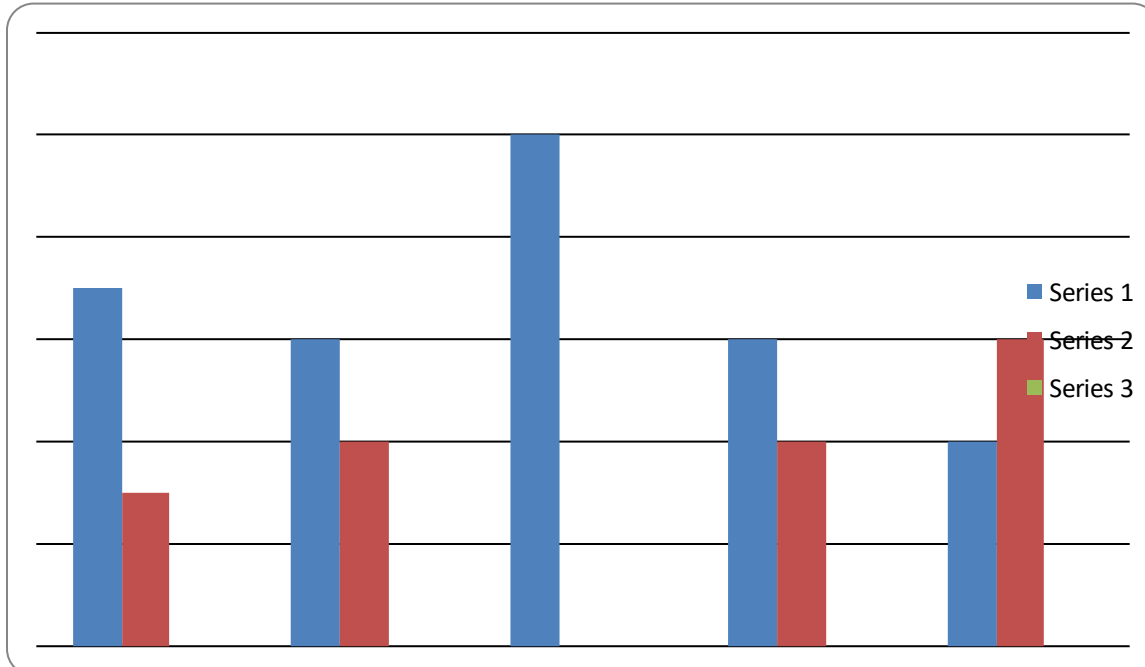


Based on our experience most of the Roma understand the participation in the context of social inclusion projects and policies not as political participation. 2 respondents stated that during the Corona 19 pandemic they followed German language classes. On the other hand there are comments that the technology plays a crucial and innovative way in increasing the civic engagement training to Roma as many people are already using digital technologies and it gives flexibility in the time schedule. This must be taken into account when designing programmes targeting the Roma community, especially if aiming at women's involvement.

Lastly the research notes the low level of Roma people's civic engagement and several barriers were mentioned such as: German language knowledge; low motivation and lack of information, not having time to attend civic training programs and they are supposed to bring income in the family; lack of necessary educational or technical skills, as well as formal qualifications to participate

3. Brief summary of the key findings reached through the online survey with Professionals

The demographic elements of the respondents are explained in the next chart:



Participants are freelance trainers and staff who are working with Roma adults. Following areas they have been engaged: General educational training, Skills and Democratic and inclusion support. 7 out of 10 have been between 3 and 5 years engaged in training and supporting the Roma while 3 are more than 7 years.



6 answered that they are aware of the civic training program while all of them agreed that there is a need for a civic training program for the Roma people. It can be concluded that further ToT programs that will develop their skills and knowledge are required. 6 noted that they accessed training resources for the Roma and all of them agreed that educational resources that they can use in training with Roma adults are very valuable.

Moreover, respondents have already used technology in training and the following forms were mentioned: videos, documentary movies, online platforms, ZOOM, Skype, Powerpoint presentation etc. Respondents marked that using e learning platforms contributes for remote education and it gives flexibility to Roma adults but on the other hand it also brings a risk for Roma adults not to be able to follow the course due to lack of IT skills. Language barriers appear to be more often barriers. In our experience almost all training are conducted on Non Roma which is also a barrier for many Roma adults especially for the recent migrants in Germany.

3 said that more often are updating with civic educational training models in the EU while the rest 7 less often. Organisation that are enhancing the civic engagement of Roma were mentioned: Roma and Sinti Documentary Center, Romnoher and Carmen e. V. The Roma civic engagement was characterized as low by all the respondents which correspond with the findings from other researches. All respondents said that they very often create awareness about the democratic participation among the Roma and also regularly evaluate their trainings. As main barriers were noted:

- Lack of information by the Roma about the training opportunities
- Lack of motivation to take part in
- Language barrier
- Time restrictions
- Lower educational level
- Topics are not aligned with their needs
- Programs need to have Roma identity elements

4. Brief summary of the key findings reached through the organised focus group / interviews in each country with Roma adults.

The present findings focused on civic, democratic and cultural engagement among Roma people. In particular, we explored their experience of citizenship; their perceptions about participation; their sources of information and knowledge; their personal and group experiences of participation; and their proposals for promoting inclusion and civic participation of Roma in Germany. Our main goal was to identify the factors and processes which are responsible for engagement and participation. No



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differentiating factor such as a country of origin is present because they have been living in Germany for such a long time.

Getting Roma interested and involved in democratic processes and civic participation programmes can be challenging. Most of them are interested in how it can resolve their most pressing needs, and participation in training programmes may be understood as a waste of time at the first look. On the other hand meaningful and deep participation also requires time to allow participants to develop their communication and other skills.

Following experiences regarding the civic engagement were mentioned by the participants:

- Social media engagement discussing social, cultural and political issues regarding the Roma
- Commenting, sharing videos, photos and statuses of politician and Roma activists on Facebook
- Getting involved as virtually as in demonstration for the incident in Hanau motivated by racism, among the victims two are Roma origin
- Get involved in Commemoration events for the Roma and other victims from the Genocide during the Nazi period
- Participation in conferences and panel discussions with authorities regarding the Roma inclusion
- Participating in celebration of 8th of April the International Roma day and 6th of May Herdelezi holiday
- Integration courses learning German languages, German politic and History

Moreover addressing basic needs, such as adequate housing, access to healthcare, education, and employment can also be important before more abstract forms of community development action is taken. Along with the daily problems discrimination against Roma is one of the cross cutting topics that Roma people would be civically engaged. Through the discussion interviewers believe that this topic is very sensitive and has a common ground for community actions to be undertaken and many Roma and pro Roma to be engaged on. It was anticipated that factors such as low educational level, lack of opportunities and resources, social discrimination and unemployment would affect Roma participants' perceptions and patterns of civic, democratic and cultural engagement.

The set of questions regarding the EU rights, European values, principles of unity and diversity seems that Roma are aware of the basic EU rights. Freedoms of movement, health insurance, right to vote on European elections were mentioned. Regarding the sense of European belonging was explained that Germany is very diverse country that welcomes many refugees including now Ukrainians, third counties citizens including other EU member states citizens and learning from the past and previous civic rights movement of Roma in Germany pointing out the specific historical role of Germany, Roma feels much more integrated in Germany then in other EU countries. On the other hand still ongoing



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human rights violations are registered culminating with killing in Hanau⁶ but there are incentive inclusion programmes by the state for all people including the Roma.

Participants did not mention personal cases of being discriminated against but they referred to the overall perception and cases that occur in German society, for example Roma children are often sent to special schools (Förderschulen) without those pupils having special needs. They are sent there because teachers, educators and school authorities categorise those children as having „emotional or learning” handicaps; cases were also reported described as institutional discrimination. Institutions such as Public employment offices (Agentur für Arbeit and Jobcenters), Aliens Departments (Ausländerbehörden), Social Welfare Offices (Sozialämter) were mentioned.

In terms of role models Mr Romeo Franz and Mr Romani Rose were mentioned mainly as persons who contributed to Roma inclusion in German society not as persons who personally helped the participants to get civically engaged. Romeo Franz is a German musician, human rights activist and politician of Alliance 90/The Greens who has been serving as a Member of the European Parliament since 3 July 2018. From 2003 until 2013, he was a board member of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma. Romani Rose is a Romany activist and head of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma. He lost 13 relatives in the Holocaust He is important for the Roma civic movement, organizing the hunger strike by 12 Sinti in the former KZ Dachau on Easter 1980.

In regard to upskilling programs participants mentioned it would be helpful additional assistance for German language as it would help many Roma smoother to finish or begin some educational program. As a good example it was mentioned that Children care enabled many Roma women to finish integration courses.

5. Brief summary of the key findings reached through the focus group / interviews in each country with educators, professionals, and volunteers working with adult Roma adults.

Interviewers are freelancer trainers, and went through different national and COE ToT programs. All of them are more than 7 years working as trainers with Roma Community but not only with. They are highlighting that most of the Roma are aware of their right to vote as one of their civic duties but in general lack of knowledge and information regarding democratic participation is lacking.

Low participation is noted in processes linked with the Roma Strategy although Germany’s national Roma integration strategy is not a strategy as such, but rather an integrated set of policy measures within Germany’s social inclusion policies. They focus, in particular, on the areas of education, employment, health and housing.

Therefore it can be concluded that there is still an opportunity to increase Roma participation by promoting the inclusion of representatives of this community in various decision-making and consultative

⁶ <https://www.dw.com/en/mass-shooting-in-hanau-grief-and-rage-persist-one-year-on/a-56612160>



bodies. Roma participation in such bodies may bring a variety of benefits – it enhances their group participation, improves the group’s image among the majority community and allows individuals to acquire new skills, thus contributing to weakening a certain monopoly of leaders.

All the interviews explain that they are adapting the existing programs and toolkits to the Roma needs or sometimes need to create their own program and content mostly related to Roma history and origin. Materials related to increasing Roma civic engagement based on the daily Roma challenges will be an incentive. As a valuable set of knowledge and skills they emphasize a good knowledge of Roma history, origin, traditions and direct work experience with the Roma. Digital participation, social media and IT skills among the trainers are the skills gap, according to the interviewers. They think the programs and training should be aligned with the general trends in non formal education. Another interviewer pointed out that creative methods such as Forum Theater, music and art are attractive to younger generations and educators might be trained in using such methods.

In terms of materials specific on Roma issues mostly are using those created by COE: Mirror, Right to Remember and Roma history, Rom archive but generally as said before they are adjusting the existing ones. No language and cultural barrier were noted as interviewers are Roma origin but on the other side German language might be a problem for those Roma who do not speak the Roma language. A good civic educational model was mentioned the ROMED program⁷ - Democratic Governance and Community Participation through Mediation coordinated by COE. Beside the above creative methods, community organizing and Digital Participation were mentioned as methods that could be adopted to improve the Roma community’s civic engagement.

6. Brief summary of the conclusions reached through the selected good practices

- Information Centre for Sinti and Roma in Wilhelmsburg : The aim is to integrate long-term unemployed Sinti and Roma, especially young people, into the labor market. The project provides advice on how to deal with problems and how to develop personal skills and professional perspectives. Roma women are being trained to raise their qualifications and become self – employed. On the other hand they have been involved in practical skills development as for example sewing.
- Documentation and Cultural Center of German Sinti and Roma: A visit to the Documentation and Cultural Center offers the opportunity to encounter the history and the present of the Sinti and Roma and allows for an examination of the persecution of this minority during the Nazi era

⁷ More for this Program at: <https://coe-romed.org/>



- The Federal Agency for Civic Education prevents and fights Antigypsyism: The Federal Agency for Civic Education has various (online) publications, handouts and webpages on dealing critically with antigypsyism. One key concern is supporting those civil society forces committed to combating racism and antigypsyism
- ReFIT for Roma Migration: Promoting research cooperation projects between self-organisations and research facilities is thus to make a key contribution to developing and improving methods for researching the social situation
- Modellprojekt Roma: Students are involved in a “safe environment” freed from the inherited stereotypes and prejudices.

7. National level conclusions and recommendations that should be linked with the capacity building programme (O2).

Through this research was acknowledging the necessity to fight antigypsyism. Fighting racism in general and antigypsyism in particular is one of the Federal Government’s key policy priorities – including and precisely because racism, marginalization and violence are on the rise again today. Hate speech and antigypsyism on the internet and in social media also reinforce the trend of scapegoating of the Roma community.

Owing to its specific historical responsibility, Germany is under a particular obligation to take a determined stand – at political and social level – against ongoing antigypsyism in Europe. The Federal Agency for civic education is paying great attention to this issue.

The issue of Antigypsyism was pointed out as a main factor of social and democratic participation on the focus groups as well. “Around the issue of discrimination should stand the entire Roma Community not only in Germany but in all Europe.”⁸ Trainers also highlighted that knowing the Roma history and fighting against the antigypsyism are the cons in their capacity building.

⁸ Interviewer in focus group with Roma adults.