



RESTORE

**POLICY
RECOMMENDATION
FOR ROMA CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



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Foreword

These Policy Recommendations have been developed as part of the project entitled Provide social pathways for Roma people, RESTORE, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, with project reference number: 2021-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000029489. This document combines the partners' previous experiences and the input received during the project's implementation and evaluation by the relevant stakeholders and direct involvement of the project target groups. The Policy Recommendations aims to increase the civic participation of Roma adults by setting out recommendations to support the high-level and policy organizations to adapt and efficiently to implement the policies that are in concern of the Roma inclusion and participation in a whole.

Institute for Roma and Minorities Inclusion as a leader of this Working Package has been developed internal methodological framework on policy suggestions and all partners contributed to the final version. The division of the Policy Recommendations is based on the results from the first project result, the research: Identification of civic educational models for democratic participation of Roma Adults available on the project web site.

Introduction of the Restore project

RESTORE is a European project which underlines the need of fostering civic engagement of Roma adults in their local communities, bringing them closer to EU values and ideas of union and diversity. RESTORE addresses the following needs:

- lack of Roma's civic engagement into their local communities,
- difficulty of Roma adults to be provided with upskilling pathways,
- discrimination barriers of local communities towards Roma minorities,
- gap of low-skilled adult trainers concerning the provision of tailored-made civic training and
- the lack of appropriate knowledge regarding the civic educational models that are existing in the EU that can be related to a notable increase of civic engagement of Roma.

RESTORE focus on the formulation of a holistic training methodology, from the identification of civic educational models already existed in the EU to the delivery of policy recommendations and proper enhancements of them.



The project is funded by the European Commission under the call for proposals KA220-ADU – Cooperation partnerships in adult education and lasts from 01/11/2021 to 31/10/2023.

Partnership

Restore is a consortium of 6 organizations from 5 countries: Institute for Roma and Minorities Inclusion (DE)- coordinator, BK Consult GbR (DE) Vienna Association of Education Volunteers (AT), Symplexis (EL), AKMI (EL), RRC - Roma Resource Center (MK) and ROMAVERSITAS ALAPITVANY Citizens Association for Support of Marginalized Groups (HU).

Expected Results

- Introduction of an interactive map, which will cover issues related to unity, diversity and cultural heritage, inspiring the target group to get to know the European values.
- Incorporation of Role models, who will teach in a way, Roma adults on how to be adapted in the local environment, as well as helping them in the democratization process.
- Creation of a holistic OER training programme for Roma adults, in view of covering issues related to self-awareness, dialogue and reflection etc.
- Formulation and delivery of a mobile app connected to the OER programme for Roma adults, in view of making it accessible 24 hours a day.
- The identification of civic educational models, which will guide them into choosing how the training programme will be better, served to Roma adults.
- The delivery of a support repository which will cover civic learning practices and offer extra training resources.
- The evaluation of the training programme, resulting to a holistic report of policy.
- Recommendations related to the best civic engagement approach towards Roma adults.



Project results and activities

1. Research: Identification of civic educational models for democratic participation of Roma adults

The transnational report includes results of national surveys and reports in the 5 participating countries relating to:

- the situation and specific characteristics of the Roma population in these countries,
- policies for political education, mobilization, and social inclusion of Roma,
- the learning needs of Roma population in relation to their active political participation,
- good practices concerning the political education and participation of Roma.

The report is the result of desk research, online questionnaires for interested Roma citizens, adult educators or professionals dealing with Roma political education and social inclusion, as well as focus groups with concerned Roma citizens and expert adult educators and professionals working in the field of Roma social inclusion in each of the participating countries of the project.

Both the research and the transnational report aim to make recommendations on the learning objectives that an OER capacity building programme for Roma could have, and corresponding educational measures and tools aimed at political education, mobilisation, information and promotion of active citizenship for our Roma fellow citizens.

1.1. Methodology report introducing role models from cultural minorities

The methodology addresses a particularly important challenge on how a vulnerable group such as Roma learners can use Role models in their everyday life and in their educational process to develop new or hidden potentials, to be trained in more favorable conditions and to use examples during their education for civic participation and active citizenship.

By "Role model" we mean a person or a group/collective of people whose behavior, example, or success are or can be emulated by others, especially by younger people or by people who seek to improve their lives, skills, social status and become active



citizens. The approach of Role Models for the promotion of social participation and active citizenship of Roma proposed in this Methodology report can be used both in an in person and in an online training with Roma learners.

The methodology uses a combination of the theoretical elements, assumptions and practical methods from the "social learning theory" of academic psychologist, Albert Bandura and from the theoretical model and adult education and the practical methods of the great adult education theorist Jack Mezirow for transformative learning as perceived by the Greek academic Alexis Kokkos in the stages of implementing transformative learning through critical reflection and aesthetic experience, substituting in fact experience, aesthetic motivation, observation and contact of learners with role models instead of artworks.

2. Designing and delivery of an OER capacity building programme tailored to the civic skill gaps of Roma adults: "Social Pathways for civic engagement of Roma adults in the EU"

The purpose of the OER is to develop a new training material for Roma adult learners aiming to increase the knowledge regarding the Roma civic engagement. During the research implementation we have detected the learning needs of the Roma Community regarding to their civic engagement. In that sense target groups are the Roma adult learners and the educators in the Adult education who are working with Roma people.

Based on the research results the training material provided under OER are divided into simple learning modules covering all features that have been identified as more important under research. It is used on the one hand to cover the learning objectives and on the other hand as self-teaching material for individuals that want to master their skills, needed for civic engagement.

Five Modules have been developed:

- Antigypsyism and discrimination
- Basic rights and respond to violence
- European values
- Participation of Roma in democratic processes
- Tools and methods of Roma civic engagement



3. Delivery of policy suggestions regarding civic engagement of Roma adults

According to the EU's strategic framework for Roma's equality and participation, participation through empowerment, cooperation and trust is the key priority of EU's 2030 agenda. However the majority of Roma adults are excluded from the local community and are absent in democratic activities. Having this in mind, the project tries to cover a strategic gap, by ensuring that policy recommendations on civic engagement will be formulated.

The idea here lies upon:

1. Preparation of policy suggestions related to Roma's civic engagement
2. Evaluation of findings through the launching of 2 monitoring-consultation meetings with public authorities on the respected methodology being created
3. Finalization of the whole programme's design and idea

Methodology of the Policy Recommendations

Specific methodology was developed by the IRMI as a leader of this working package for data collection. Namely it has 3 steps:

1. Preparation of Policy Suggestions on the enhancement of civic competences of Roma adults

Under this output the consortium examined potential models of proper enhancement of civic competences, based on:

- Policy reports and recommendations, based on OECD, EU commission's reports, world bank and FRA strategic frameworks
- Results that we have gathered under the training of Role models
- Results that we have collected under the creation of digital tools related to civic competences
- Extra bibliography being used under the repository of practices
- Good practices report under PR1
- Results and impact of the training on the participants



2. Evaluation of findings through the organization of public consultation with stakeholders related to Roma's civic engagement

Under this activity each partner organized two consultation meetings with 10 representatives of policy stakeholders. Each partner focused on one of the five sub-units:

- Racism and Antigypsyism – Institute for Roma and Minorities Inclusion and BK
- Basic rights and response to violation – Symplexis and AKMI
- European values - Vaev
- Participation in democratic processes - RRC
- Adaptation and understanding of EU values – Romaversitas

During the consultation meetings partners followed the “Questionnaire” as part of the Methodology for Policy development.

IRMI who is responsible for this Working package collected the data from the project partners and co-authored the present Policy Recommendations.

Each sub-unit in this Policy Recommendations is divided into two categories: the recommendations for high-level policy makers and the recommendations for policy organizations. The first category, the high level policy level refers to the European, national, local authorities and other stakeholders while the second category is focused on Policy organizations including Roma and pro Roma entities predominantly at national and local level.

Policy Gap

During the implementation of project’s activities, especially by organizing the two consultation meetings within the WP3, the stakeholders mentioned policy gaps that stand on the way of civic engagement and participation of the Roma Communities. In this chapter, we have collected, organized, and present these policy gaps.



Greece

1. Lack of commitment to implement NRIS actions from local authorities

Policy changes are needed regarding the commitment and non-negotiable obligation of local authorities to implement the actions of the National Roma Integration Strategy

2. Lack of representation and communication between authorities and Roma

Policy is needed to continuously update the list of Roma organisations, especially at the level of the Confederations of Regions with the data of the members of the Presidencies and to improve the communication system between the Ministry and the Roma authorities.

3. Lack of basic issues of Rights-Antigypsyism-Citizen Participation in the education system

Racism-Antigypsyism-, Basic Human Rights, and Democratic Participation issues should be integrated by policy, as a regular part of the education curriculum in primary and secondary schools for all students.

4. Lack of teacher training in intercultural education especially for Roma

Funding policy for intercultural education of teachers with state, regular and subsidised seminars on teaching Roma children and children of vulnerable groups the critical issues of anti-gypsyism, democratic participation of young people from vulnerable groups.

5. Lack of training of Roma representatives & Roma population on key issues related to the project

Funding policy for regular training and awareness raising programmes for members of local Roma associations, at local and regional level with the cooperation of local authorities and Roma citizens on the critical issues: Racism-Antigypsyism, Human and Political Rights in Greece and Europe, Democratic Participation and Representation, Greece-Europe Values and Culture, Consultation techniques and procedures, Claiming European Programmes and Funding.



Austria

1. Comprehensive Curriculum on European Values

- Embedding European values in the education system is a fundamental step towards fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society.
- It is important that early education in instilling these values, as it lays a strong foundation for future generations.

2. Youth Leadership Programs

- It is of significant importance of empowering Roma youth as leaders who embody European values.
- Leadership programs can play a pivotal role in promoting active citizenship and social inclusion among the Roma community.

3. Community Dialogues

- Open discussions where both Roma and non-Roma individuals can engage in dialogue about European values.
- Dialogues to foster mutual understanding and collaboration, ultimately strengthening the bonds within diverse communities.

4. Media Literacy Programs

- Media literacy programs that promote responsible and unbiased reporting on Roma issues.
- More informed and democratic society by ensuring the integrity of media content.

5. Integration of Roma Cultural Festivals

- Incorporating Roma cultural festivals into broader national and European is a powerful way of promoting inclusivity.
- Celebrating diversity in public events aligns perfectly with European values, furthering social cohesion.



Hungary

1. Lack of Roma participation in designing and implementing policy initiatives.

Roma participation in Hungary in designing and implementing the EU Framework is limited mostly to minority representation mechanisms. There is a lack of meaningful participation and policy initiatives aiming Roma's participation in decision-making processes. Minority self-governments lack the capacity to effectively promote Roma inclusion as they are heavily dependent on local governments. Meanwhile there is no platform and resource provided by the state for Roma and pro-Roma organizations to carry out their activities adequately and independently.

2. Lack policy initiatives on combating antigypsyism within the political and civic sector

In spite of the well-documented and widespread state of racism and antigypsyism against Roma in Hungary, there is no efficient legal and policy framework for tackling these issues. Anti-discrimination laws have failed in the past multiple times and also the existing framework does not consider structural and institutional discrimination. For instance, in spite of the adoption and implementation of the Equal Treatment Act, the school segregation of Roma has increased in the last years and racially motivated attacks prevail without adequate sanctions. Anti-roma sentiments are also widespread in political and activist fields, which means huge barriers for Roma to be trusted and engage in democratic processes in meaningful ways.

3. Lack of policies toward meaningful integration of Roma in democratic processes

The state does not give a priority to attract Roma's political engagement, there is no policy initiative or programme at the national level aimed at enhancing employment the political education and participation of Roma. In fact, many times Roma – especially who live in socially excluded settlements – are vulnerable to vote buying at all levels of elections and political parties. Besides, many Roma who only access low-paying jobs



and are in a constant struggle to sustain themselves financially feel “left behind” and that political parties do not address their everyday issues.

Germany

1. Lack of Comprehensive Legislation

German government has made efforts to combat racism and discrimination; there is still a need for comprehensive legislation specifically addressing antigypsyism and racism against the Roma and Sinti communities. Specific anti-discrimination laws can help provide legal recourse and protection against discrimination.

2. Public Awareness and Education is not taking place

Due to hysterical context, deep and structural discrimination is widespread in the German society including the online media. There is a lack of formal and non formal education to combat the negative stereotypes and prejudices towards the Roma and Sinti community.

3. Inadequate support of victims

There is a need for better support services for victims of antigypsyism and racism, including legal aid, counseling, and community support. Victims often face numerous barriers in accessing justice and support

4. Weak Political Representation

Ensuring that the Roma and Sinti communities have adequate representation in political and decision-making processes is crucial. This can help address their specific concerns and needs.

5. There is a need of social inclusion

Many Roma and Sinti communities face issues related to housing, economic opportunities, and social inclusion. Policies that address these challenges can contribute to reducing discrimination and marginalization.



North Macedonia

1. Lack of commitment to implement the National Strategy for Roma inclusion from the central and local authorities

Improving the structures in the central and local institutions and employment of capable Roma in positions in order to support and to force the implementation of the strategy for Roma.

2. Lack of political power and political representation of Roma

Enhancing the political participation of Roma in the mainstream political party including Roma youth and adults and improving the political authority of the Roma political party in front of the Macedonian political parties,

3. Lack of communication with the national and local media for promoting of positive examples and role models of the Roma

Enhancing the cooperation with the media and increasing the participation of the Roma in the media for presenting of the positive aspect of the inclusion of Roma and the civic engagement of Roma in the society

4. Lack of measures for supporting and promoting of civic engagement and active citizenship in NMK

To consider the possibility for developing a measures for promoting of the civic engagement and the active citizenship through supporting programs and to provide a Funding policy for regular training and awareness raising programmes for members of local Roma associations, at local and regional level with the cooperation of local authorities and Roma citizens on the critical issues for the Roma community.

5. Lack of carrier centers for motivation of young adults and the others to be active citizens and to developed their carrier using the civic engagement models

To increase the number of carrier centers for Roma in order to support them, to increase their capacity and knowledge and to involved them in the processes of civic engagement.

6. The new digital agenda and the requirements which are coming with the new digital era

Developing of policies and programs for structural and systematic approach for digital education and learning such us learning of new digital tools and techniques in order the Roma community to be prepare for the new digital world and to know how to use the digital tools and techniques in terms of active citizenship.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Antigypsyism and discrimination

The 10 to 12 million Roma people in Europe are long term socially excluded, denied basic human rights and victims of widespread discrimination, racist attacks and hate speech. As stated in the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020 – 2030 structural and institutional racism against Roma, defined as Antigypsyism, is a root cause of Roma exclusion. Antigypsyism is the specific racism towards Roma¹ and others who are stigmatised as 'gypsies' in the public imagination. Antigypsyism is often used in a narrow sense to indicate anti-Roma attitudes or the expression of negative stereotypes in the public sphere or hate speech. Antigypsyism is not only widespread, but also deeply entrenched in social and cultural attitudes and institutional practice. This makes the challenge of tackling it both more urgent and more difficult.

Some of the manifestations of the Antigypsyism include: barriers are being built in cities throughout Eastern Europe to separate Roma from the rest of society; Anti-Roma rhetoric including public marches are often used to mobilise votes by populist and far right groups and parties; Roma children are segregated in schools and classrooms and very often Roma children are placed in special needs education and following a programme for mental disability due to the lack of knowledge of the language, low performance; For many Roma is difficult to access basic rights to education, employment and healthcare, forced eviction, police brutality, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGH-LEVEL POLICY MAKERS

Effective legal framework in line with the manifestation of the Antigypsyism and its proper implementation

It is necessary inclusion policies and measures to be comprehensive ensuring the focus is on the widespread discrimination, exclusion and racism. For this purpose firstly a wide recognition of the Antigypsyism by the European and National governments is a

¹ Unless otherwise specified, in line with the terminology of European institutions and international organisations, the term 'Roma' is used here to refer to a number of different groups (e.g. Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Do, Lom, Rom, Abdal), without denying the specificities of these groups. This reference also includes Travellers



prerequisite. Comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, including anti-Roma discrimination in all aspects of life, including employment, education, housing, healthcare, and access to public services. These policies should be followed by specific action plans, which can be intensively implemented at local level, providing guidelines and indicators for the stakeholders.

In this regard some good examples are the Anti-Gypsyism Law adopted by Romanian Parliament, 8 January 2021; Spain's anti-discrimination laws which includes specific mention of anti-Roma racism. The proposal will add the term "anti-gypsyism" into the criminal code for the first time and making discrimination against the Romani community punishable with up to four years in prison.

Never the less an effective legislation framework should have proper mechanisms for victims to report cases of discrimination and hate crimes, with a focus on making the reporting process accessible and confidential. The victims of Antigypsyism are in need of support program and counseling service.

Civic education on Antigypsyism in the public sector and the general population

Tailor made civic education that includes knowledge in regard to Roma history, Roma culture, manifestation of the Antigypsyism in the past and nowadays with focus on hate speech, institutional Antigypsyism and Antigypsyism in the perspective of the Human Rights Education is required especially for the public servants, teachers, health personal, decision makers, judges, journalists, prisons and members of police force. Another layer is to include the history, culture, and contributions of Romani people in the national curriculum. Roma genocide needs to be included in the History books. In the other hand, in the public sphere should be promoted positive stories and role models of Roma to challenge the public negative stereotypes including private companies as potential employers.



Increase Roma political participation and empowerment

Policy makers should ensure proactive participation of the Roma Communities enable them to become creators and lead the process of developing policies and measures that concern them at local, regional, national and EU level. In that sense mainstream political parties should advocate for increased Roma representation, both at the local and national levels and include Roma candidates and prioritize their concerns in their platforms. In that sense involvement of Roma community to vote in local and national elections is a high priority. Empowerment programs that target the Roma community can include training in life skills, financial literacy, and advocacy. These programs help Roma individuals and communities gain the tools and knowledge to improve their socio-economic status.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO ROMA'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Capacity Building and access to funding for civil society working to combat Antigypsyism and promote the civic engagement among Roma

Policy organizations are supposed to engage with Roma communities, drawing by their needs and priorities. The bottom up approach can help address the longstanding challenges Roma communities face. On the other hand the Policy organizations should build their capacity to be able to propose, monitor and evaluate the Roma related policies such as National Roma Inclusion and Anti-Gypsyism Strategies based on positive effect on the Roma community. Some of the areas for capacity building are: evidence based researches, advocacy and leadership skills, Political participation and self organizing. Nevertheless the consulted stakeholders within this Policy document call for support for Roma and pro Roma organizations working to promote the civic engagement either from local, national or EU funds.

In this regard capacity-building programs for Roma organizations to enhance their management, fundraising, and project implementation skills will lead to bigger absorption of funds in favor on the Roma Community. This will make them more effective in their work. There are calls to target Roma more explicitly under European and national programmes, such as the youth guarantee and Erasmus+



Awareness raising of the Roma community for their participation, empowerment and inclusion into society

Roma and pro Roma organisations to ensure that the Roma communities have access to information about their rights, available resources, and opportunities for participation. Training programs to highlight the success stories and achievements of Roma individuals who have made a positive impact in various fields. Offer workshops and training programs that focus on building essential life skills, such as literacy, numeracy, job skills, and digital literacy, which can empower community members to lead to increased participation and inclusion. Provide training in advocacy, including understanding one's rights, how to navigate bureaucratic systems, and how to engage with policymakers and institutions effectively.

Strengthening the cooperation, networking and representation into mainstream institutions

Participants stated that create a formal and inclusive network or umbrella organization that brings together various Roma organizations from the same country or region ensuring the Roma diversity and representation is needed. This network can serve as a platform for sharing information, resources, and best practices. Moreover there is a need that Roma and pro Roma organizations to collaborate on projects related to education, employment, healthcare, housing, and cultural preservation. Create a central online platform where Roma organizations can share information, research, and resources.

This platform can serve as a repository of knowledge and a space for discussions. In this regards the RomArchive was noted as a good practice. The Digital Archive of the Roma, makes arts and cultures of Roma visible, illustrating their contribution to European cultural history. Through narratives told by Roma themselves, RomArchive creates a reliable source of knowledge that is internationally accessible on the internet, thereby countering stereotypes and prejudices with facts.



Basic rights and response to violence

Roma in the European Union have exactly the same rights and obligations as all citizens and people living in the European Union. That is, they are equal as citizens and human beings with all citizens regardless of their origin, nationality, gender, language, cultural background, religion, belief, or ability and should be treated as such by all governments, state institutions, and their fellow citizens.

Roma, either as citizens of EU Member States or as people moving within the European Union, even if they do not permanently reside in EU countries, are protected by a range of human and civic rights. These rights are fully guaranteed by the European treaties and EU laws, and apply without exception to all EU countries.

It is, therefore, essential that all EU member countries, their governments, their state institutions and their citizens respect them. This report aims to present a series of policy recommendations for Greece, which could ensure the protection of Roma rights, and their access to the commodities these rights foresee.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGH-LEVEL POLICY MAKERS

Policy changes are needed regarding the commitment and non-negotiable obligation of local authorities to implement the actions of the National Roma Integration Strategy

Policy changes are needed in terms of commitment and non-negotiable obligation of local authorities in terms of implementation of actions of the National Roma Integration Strategy. There must be a policy change so that local authorities are committed to the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion, committed to the implementation and support for the implementation of its actions in all Pillars, especially in Pillar 4 "Promoting the active participation of Roma in social, economic and political life", in order to stop the eunophobia or non-implementation at local level by municipalities and the conflict of responsibilities between Ministries and local authorities. For the time being in Greece the NRIS may include actions at local level for the active participation of Roma in society and economy, but in most cases the municipal and regional authorities do not



implement actions because they are not obliged to do so and because there is a conflict of responsibilities with the respective Ministry that supervises the implementation of the NRIS.

A policy is needed to continuously update the list of Roma organisations and Presidencies [Roma Confederations of Regions] and measures to improve the communication system between the Ministry and the Roma authorities.

A policy is required to continuously update the list of Roma organizations especially at the level of Confederations of Regions with the membership data of the Presidencies available to the actors implementing the policies of the National Strategy for Roma Social Inclusion, because the phenomenon of the contraction or cessation of the functioning of Roma Federations and Confederations at the regional level is created, leaving Roma associations and organizations without a voice and contact with the planners of Roma policies. While at the same time, in order to improve the communication between the Ministry -Region and Roma, regional councils can be established to monitor the implementation of NRIS policies and actions at the regional level with the participation of stable Roma organisations and their representatives who will inform the relevant Ministry on a quarterly basis.

Integration of civic education issues for Roma and non-Roma in the education system

Combatting Racism-Antigypsyism-, Basic Human Rights, as well as reaction to violation, and issues of Democratic Participation should be integrated by policy by the official education bodies Institute of Education Policy, Ministry of Education, as a regular part of the education programme in primary and secondary schools for all pupils, with emphasis on schools belonging to the Priority Education Zones and Second Chance Schools in the "Social Education" programme, where high concentrations of Roma pupils and students are observed.



Funding policy for regular training and information programmes for members of local Roma associations at local and regional level with the cooperation of local authorities

Fund, organize and develop regular training and information programmes for members of local Roma associations at local and regional level, with the cooperation of local authorities, on critical issues: Racism-Antigypsyism, Human and Political Rights in Greece and Europe, Democratic Participation and Representation, Greece-Europe Values and Culture, Consultation techniques and procedures, Claiming European Programmes and Funding.

Funding policy for regular training and information programmes for members of local Roma community [simple citizens] at local and regional level with the cooperation of local authorities.

Fund, organize and develop regular training and information programmes for members of local Roma communities [citizens] at local and regional level, with the cooperation of local authorities, on critical issues: Racism-Antigypsyism, Human and Political Rights in Greece and Europe, Democratic Participation and Representation, Greece -Europe Values and Culture, Consultation techniques and procedures, Claiming European Programmes and Funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY ORGANIZATIONS RELATED TO ROMA'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Funding policy for intercultural education of teachers with state or private regular and subsidized seminars on teaching issues to Roma children

Funding policy for intercultural training of teachers with state, regular and subsidized seminars on issues of teaching Roma children and children from vulnerable groups the critical issues of anti-gayism, combating racism & discrimination, human rights and ways to protect or denounce their violation, as well as on issues of promoting democratic participation of young people from vulnerable groups.



Exploitation and utilisation of state resources for political and integration education of the Roma population by Roma organisations in cooperation with municipal or regional authorities

Create regular education and information programmes for Roma citizens [general population] at local level with the cooperation of local Roma associations, local authorities, on critical issues: Racism-Anti-Gypsyism, Human and Civil Rights in Greece and Europe, Democratic Participation and Representation, Greece-Europe Values and Culture

Use of Media and Communication

As we live in the digital age, Roma organisations should promote awareness through media, highlighting the importance of the cultural, and historical heritage of Roma, their achievements, and aspirations in the society.

Expose in a positive way the importance of civic participation for Roma people, and gain support from bottom-up. Good exposure could help putting pressure to policy makers to promote the civic participation of Roma.

Show the cultural, linguistic connection with Roma and the country, as culture should bring all people together and create a more collective society, taking advantage of the digital tools and media for quick and effective spreading of information.

Employment and Equal Opportunities

Implement education and training programs, for which Roma could be benefitted and upskilled, allowing them to have more chances finding work.

Create and develop a plan of employment integration for Roma people, ensuring them job positions in different sectors.

Expand on benefits, both financial and other, as well as policies for the integration of Roma youth, adolescents and adults in Second Chance Schools, VET Institutions, to improve their educational level and link them to the labour market.

Increase the percentage of advertised positions in Municipalities and Districts (8 months or 12 months) that could be secured for Roma in the regions and municipalities of the country where traditionally large Roma communities and high population concentration are observed.



European values

The Restore Project is dedicated to uplifting and empowering the Roma community. We believe that European values, such as diversity, human rights, and inclusion, are crucial for creating a better future for everyone. Our project includes various policies like educational programs, leadership initiatives, open dialogues, and media literacy efforts, along with celebrating Roma culture. These efforts aim to help the Roma people become active members of European society, where their rights and culture are respected and valued. Together, we're working towards a more inclusive and diverse Europe.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGH-LEVEL POLICY MAKERS

Ensure adequate financial support and funding for projects and activities that facilitate intercultural dialogue

By providing financial support for intercultural dialogue projects, we can promote interaction and understanding between Roma and the majority population, fostering acceptance and cooperation. This approach draws inspiration from successful initiatives in Hungary and Greece.

Implement a comprehensive curriculum on European values, including diversity, human rights, and multiculturalism, in primary and secondary schools.

Introducing a comprehensive curriculum on European values, including diversity, human rights, and multiculturalism, in primary and secondary schools is essential for instilling these principles in the younger generation. This approach promotes social inclusion, cultural awareness, tolerance, and a stronger sense of shared responsibility, ensuring a more harmonious and cohesive European society in the future.

Establish leadership programs specifically targeting Roma youth, emphasizing European values such as democracy, inclusion, and active citizenship



Youth Leadership Programs targeting Roma youth and focusing on European values like democracy, inclusion, and active citizenship play a pivotal role in empowering young Roma individuals to become future leaders. By nurturing their commitment to these values, we ensure their ability to promote and uphold these principles within their communities, thereby fostering social progress and inclusion.

Recommendations for Policy organizations related to Roma's civic engagement

Organize community dialogues and forums where Roma and non-Roma individuals can engage in open discussions about European values and their practical application in daily life

Community Dialogues, involving both Roma and non-Roma individuals, provide a platform for open discussions about European values and their real-world application in everyday life. These dialogues foster mutual understanding and collaboration, encouraging joint efforts to uphold and promote European values within diverse communities, ultimately leading to greater social cohesion and shared commitment to these principles.

Collaborate with media organizations to develop media literacy programs that promote responsible and unbiased reporting on Roma issues

Partnering with media organizations to promote responsible and unbiased reporting on Roma issues through media literacy programs aligns with the European value of a free and diverse media landscape. These initiatives encourage critical assessment of media content, fostering a more informed and democratic society.

Incorporate Roma cultural festivals and events into broader national and European celebrations to showcase the richness of Roma culture and promote inclusivity.



Integrating Roma cultural festivals and events into broader national and European celebrations highlights the richness of Roma culture and promotes inclusivity. This practice aligns with European values that emphasize diversity and social cohesion, creating a more harmonious and united society.

Tools and methods of Roma civic engagement :

The civic engagement of the Roma community has been limited by a combination of social, economic, and political factors. Restricted access to civic life and public discourses is present on multiple levels for Roma and leads back to multiple key policy challenges. Some of the most important key policy challenges are deep-rooted educational and labor market inequalities; the problem of underrepresentation and lack of accessibility of Roma in meaningful decision-making processes; and the widespread state of antigypsyism in all social arenas. Based on these policy gaps, outlined below are our recommendations for high-level policymakers and policy organizations related to Roma's civic engagement.

Recommendations for high-level policy makers

Enact and rigorously enforce anti-discrimination laws that provide comprehensive protection to the Roma community

The persistence of anti-Roma violence and hate speech and discrimination in all spheres of life – including education, employment, housing and political and democratic processes – will prevail without resolute and unequivocal actions. There is a need for EU-level objectives and its unanimous approval of EU states which address the protection of Roma citizens against discrimination in all fields of life. Regarding the civic engagement of Roma, this entails that the member states prevent any constraints and ensure that Roma people enjoy the right to freedom of assembly and their political rights. The European Commission should ensure the full implementation of relevant legislation and appropriate sanctions against racial crimes in all Member States.



Develop policies that focus on improving access to quality education for Roma children

Roma people face systematic discrimination in accessing quality education which means that they may have limited access to information, resources, and opportunities that are essential for active civic engagement. NRIS and its action plans should set clear targets on Roma having access to quality education and should include firm and unambiguous commitment to end school segregation and discriminatory and unlawful practices against Roma children in schools. Besides, EC Framework should require governments to activate measures for support Roma to pursue higher education careers.

Roma youth should be a strategic priority on international, European and national level agendas

Specifically improving the sense of ownership and political participation of Roma Youth with adequate measures and policies is essential for the sustainability of strategies and policies around Roma civic engagement. EU-level actors should support the development and implementation of youth policies in line with the needs of Roma youth. Besides, governmental agencies and National Roma Contact Points should adequately address the needs of young Roma, their inclusion and active civic and political participation as a cross-cutting target.

Increase the participation and representation of Roma in institutions of political democratic processes

Structural inequalities affecting Roma and uneven access to political and democratic arenas hinders their meaningful self-representation and participation. The European Commission, governmental agencies and National Roma Contact Points should ensure lasting mechanisms of meaningful participation. Decision-making bodies and structures should seek an active dialogue and cooperation with Roma organizations specifically working on political participation and implement specific measures aimed at increasing the number of Roma in politics and in different levels of public administration.

Provide support for the capacity-building of Roma NGOs

Many grassroots Roma-led initiatives having active relationship with local Roma communities are heavily under resourced and under capacitated. EU and national-level



policy agencies should ensure that Roma organizations take part in consultation processes and other institutionalized forms of involvement. Besides, funding, operational and management support should be provided for grassroots organizations and making sure that they access international networks and discourses relevant to their work.

Recommendations for Policy organizations related to Roma's civic engagement

Advocate and run public awareness campaigns on antigypsyism and promote the representation of Roma civic engagement

Relevant policy organizations should work with a strong anti-discrimination approach run campaigns to combat the discrimination of Roma and to promote Roma in a positive way. specifically related to their participation in democratic processes. Besides, there is a need to evaluate the impact of anti-discriminational legislations and policies and monitor and ensure that they are meaningfully implemented in practice.

Advocate for inclusive education policies that address school segregation, provide support for Roma students, and integrate Roma history and culture into curricula

Relevant national and local level actors on the field should monitor the specific educational issues of Roma and informed by their lived experiences advocate for the adoption and implementation of inclusive educational policies addressing school segregation, cultural sensitivity, early school leaving and quality preschool education. Besides, it would be important to encourage parental involvement in Roma children's education through awareness campaigns, parent-teacher associations and initiatives that help parents support their children's learning.



Stakeholders should focus on the support of Roma youth participation

It is important that relevant local stakeholders put emphasis on the participation of Roma youth in democratic processes and their civic engagement. They should ensure access to Roma youth in learning and training on human rights issues and political and democratic involvement and specifically the improvement of political skills. Roma youth should specifically be provided by employment and traineeship opportunities in EU institutions and national and local level institutions in public administration.

Advocate for inclusivity and mobilize Roma to engage in political and democratic processes

Policy agencies at the national level can have a driving force in increasing the engagement and meaningful involvement of Roma in the political field in various ways. There should be publicly available data on the issue to identify barriers in representation as well as successful cases and best practices. Relevant stakeholders should also advocate for legal and institutional frameworks with better inclusivity. Political forums and networks for Roma should be established and programs and trainings offered for Roma interested in political engagement should be implemented.

Policy organizations can play a vital role in providing assistance and fostering collaboration with local Roma communities

Policy organizations can raise awareness about the challenges faced by Roma communities, including discrimination, poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, and housing issues. They can advocate for policies that promote equal opportunities and social inclusion. These organizations can conduct research to gather data on the living conditions, needs, and aspirations of local Roma communities. Policy organizations can exchange with local informal and formal groups and NGOs of Roma and support initiatives that help Roma community members engage in the political process.



Provide digital platforms and opportunities for e-participation to increase the engagement of Roma youth

Young Roma might feel less concerned about politics and that they don't know enough to choose who to vote for. Strategies must therefore take into account how they can make the issues more relevant to them, and convincing enough for them to create engagement. There should be a focus on creating e-platforms, apps and social media campaigns and other digital tools targeting the Roma youth that promote and provide opportunity for them for democratic engagement.

Initiating more online and in-person community/citizen forums

In promoting local democracy, giving voice to marginalized groups as the Roma community, and ensuring the participation of all citizens online and in-person community/citizen forums are essential, however many times neglected. Municipalities should include in their statutes the role of community forums as a form of including citizens' concerns in the decision-making processes at the local level. Contrary to other participatory processes, participants of community forums are able to engage in discussions as members of specific interest groups.

Participation of Roma in democratic processes

Participatory democracy is a type of democracy, which is itself a form of government. The term "democracy" is derived from the Greek expression δημοκρατία (dēmokratia) (δῆμος/dēmos: people, κράτος/kratos: rule). It has two main subtypes, direct and representative democracy. In the former, the people have the authority to deliberate and decide legislation; in the latter, they choose governing officials to do so. While direct democracy was the original concept, its representative version is the most widespread today.

Public participation, in this context, is the inclusion of the public in the activities of a polity. It can be any process that directly engages the public in decision-making and gives consideration to its input. The extent to which political participation should be considered necessary or appropriate is under debate in political philosophy.



Accordingly, the participation of the Roma in the democratic processes is a crucial for inclusion of the Roma community in the civic engagement and been active citizens through their involvement in the participatory processes of advocacy, developing of policies, etc. Take in account that the democratic processes of civic engagement is the only way how the people could be directly involved in processes of changes and improving of their life and life of some group, it is very important the Roma community to understand better how to be more active and to have a crucial role as individuals or group and to promote different strategies and approaches how to be more involved and to participate in the democratic processes in all level such us: EU, national and local level.

Recommendations for high-level policy makers

Transitions to political and economic involvement of the Roma communities

In order to provide an appropriate involvement and inclusion of the Roma in the democratic processes the relevant institutions should provide a special programs/activities for transitions of the Roma community in political processes and to provide to exercise their own human rights for voting and choosing the better option for them, such us improving the economic transitions of Roma in order to empower them to be able to go further for fighting for their own rights using the democratic processes of civic engagement.

It is need to be enhanced and improve the political participation of Roma as the most important process of civic engagement of Roma in the democratic process and directly involvement in the processes for decision making. For example, in North Macedonia the participation of Roma in the politic system was better and stronger before 2016, but at the moment the participation of Roma in the politic is poorly represented such in the decision making level as well in the executive level.

Improving the policy for civic engagement of Roma in all partner countries

The relevant institutions in the partner countries should develop and adopt a relevant policy documents for defining and organizing of the civic engagement of Roma in all democratic processes. One from the pillar for providing a better society is active engagement of the citizens in supporting of the development and improvement of their everyday lives such us solving some issues or advocate for some interest of their local community or neighborhoods. At the moment in some partner countries there is some



policies for active engagement of youth, but this is not for adult Roma. Due this, it is necessary the relevant institutions to work on providing of appropriate policy documents in order to provide a systematic possibility of involvement of adult Roma into democratic processes and to become active citizens in the local, national and EU level.

Enhancing the participation of Roma in the process of developing of policy documents for Roma

In each country is implementing a process of developing of policy documents for Roma integration and inclusion. In this process the Roma community are represented by the NGOs and the Roma representatives in the institutions. In order to improve the involvement of Roma in the process of developing of the policies which are related with improving of their life and the policies and to those policies are meant for them, than it is necessary to enhance the direct participation of the Roma in the processes of developing of this policies.

Improving the employment of Roma in the decision-making positions

Taking in account that all the national policies and measures are developing in the institutional level and the decision-making processes are closely dependent on the people who are in the position, it is very important and crucial the participation of Roma representatives in decision making and policy developing processes to be enhanced and to be employed in appropriate positions. Through this it will be improved the participation of Roma in such important processes and in the policies will be present the real needs of the Roma community for their inclusion and integration.

Recommendations for Policy organizations related to Roma's civic engagement

Awareness campaigns on civic engagement and active citizenship and promote the inclusion of Roma through the democratic processes

The local CSOs should implement awareness campaigns on a local level in order to inform the local communities for the importance of the engagement in the democratic processes as a step for improving of the inclusion of Roma. IN general the Roma community is very passive and this should be changed through awareness changes and



using all available tools and methods of civic engagement. In this processes the NGOs has a very important and crucial role.

Advocate for active participation of the Roma in the decision making processes on a local and national level

The NGOs as a representatives of the local Roma communities should implement a regular advocacy activities in front of the local and national level in order to improve the participation of Roma in all democratic processes of civic engagement and active citizenship. As most experience body, the NGOs should organize the Roma community and regularly to inform them about the actual situations on a local level for relevant questions appropriate for the Roma, and to organize them to ask questions, to submit requests to the local and national institutions, to participate in the meetings in the councils, to meet the decision-making people on a local and national level, etc.

Capacity building of the Roma for active citizenship and civic engagement

The local NGOs as experienced and relevant body in civic engagement and democratic processes should organize and provide a regular capacity building of the local Roma community for democratic processes of participation, civic engagement and active citizenship.

The most important is that the local NGOs should contribute to change the mindset of the Roma community for their important role as citizenship and to advocate for their own problems and interest as a community in order to improve their life and their activism on a local level

Organizing a community activities in order to increase the motivation of the local Roma community to be more active and to be involved in the decision making process and civic engagement

The local NGOs should work also on increasing the motivation among the Roma community. The Roma community should be more stronger, motivated and well informed about their power as a community which is in important representations on a local and national level. In order to become more active citizens the Roma community is need a motivation. Once to accept and to understand their role as citizens from one



side and their power from other side, the Roma community will be more active and will be involved more and more in the democratic processes. The important role of the local NGOs is very important in order this to be active.

Awareness campaign for understanding of the power of vote of the citizens during the election processes

In all countries in the region such as in EU, the Roma are politically manipulated. The Roma community is not aware for the power which they have with their vote during the elections process. It is crucial once and for all the Roma to understand their political power during the elections. The local NGOs are playing crucial role in this process. The NGOs should work with the local Roma community regularly to inform them and to change their attitude for their power as voters. The Roma should understand that the elections are the one from the powerful tool for democratic participations and involvement in processes of engagement for improving of their life and the life of their community. The NGOs should work regularly with the Roma community in order this situation to be improved.

Monitoring

The NGOs as experienced body should implement systematically monitoring of the progress of the Roma community in terms of activism, active citizenship and civic participation of Roma. It is important to follow the progress of the community in terms of their activation in the democratic processes on a local and national level.

This monitoring will provide a concrete information of the progress in certain localities and positive aspects could be systematically collected and to be shared with other local communities and know – how approach to be used in order to improve the active citizenship and civic engagement of the Roma such their involvement in the democratic processes.



Conclusion

The Roma community's civic engagement is an essential aspect of fostering inclusivity and empowerment within societies. Their involvement in civic activities, political participation, and community initiatives plays a crucial role in advocating for their rights and addressing the challenges they face.

However, Roma civic engagement continues to encounter numerous obstacles, including historical discrimination, social exclusion, economic disparities, and systemic barriers. To enhance Roma civic engagement, it's imperative to implement inclusive policies, address systemic biases, provide access to quality education, employment opportunities, and ensure equal access to healthcare. Encouraging representation in decision-making processes and promoting cultural awareness and understanding are also crucial in fostering a more inclusive society.

The progress of Roma civic engagement is a work in progress, requiring continued efforts and collaboration among governments, organizations, and the community itself to create environments where the Roma can actively participate, have their voices heard, and contribute meaningfully to society. Ultimately, recognizing and valuing the Roma community's perspectives and experiences is vital for building a more equitable and inclusive society for all.

The Restore project showed that there are common struggles in the partners' countries and each country is making its own effort to overcome these challenges. The Present Policy Recommendations is a joint effort of the partnership of the Restore project with the Policy Recommendations elaborated in the form of guidelines for high-level and policy organizations in order to increase the civic engagement and meaningful participation of Roma Communities. This Policy Recommendations Paper will be sent to the relevant policy makers in the participating countries and at EU level as a part of the dissemination of the project results.



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