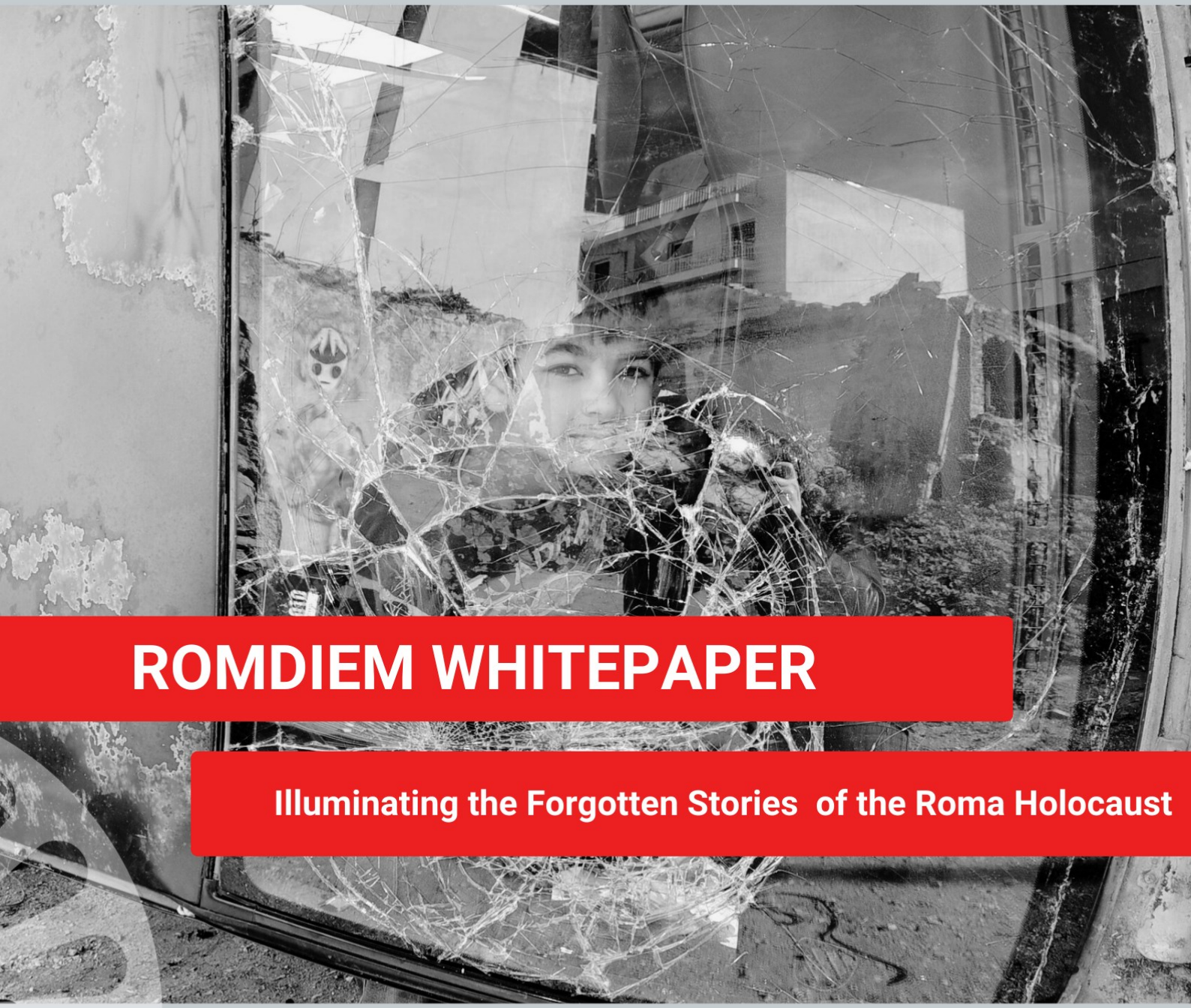
ROMDIEM



ROMDIEM WHITEPAPER

Illuminating the Forgotten Stories of the Roma Holocaust

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The Cover Image is and created by Artemis Alkalai, *"Recycling in Metaxourgeio"*, from the art exhibition *"Metaxourgeio: The Myth of the Neighborhood"*, curated by Maro Amilitis, Museum of Modern Greek Culture, 30 June 2026 – 31 December 2026.

Content

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brief overview of the project

The Romdiem project investigates a critical yet marginalized dimension of European history: the genocide of the Roma[1] during the Second World War, commonly referred to as *Samudaripen* or *Porrajmos*. Despite the systematic nature of this persecution - characterized by forced deportations, sterilizations, internment, and mass executions - the Roma Holocaust has long been neglected in both scholarly research and public commemoration.

The primary objective of Romdiem is to address this deficit of recognition by documenting, preserving, and disseminating the testimonies of survivors and their descendants, situating them within a broader transnational framework of European remembrance. To this end, the project combines archival analysis, desk research and field research. In particular, 51 interviews have been conducted across seven European countries: Belgium, Slovakia, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Hungary. This research thus provides comparative insights into both the historical experiences of persecution and the contemporary challenges of remembrance.

The findings demonstrate a striking consistency across national contexts. The *Samudaripen* remains marginal within institutional memory, largely absent from school curricula, and inadequately represented in museums, memorials, and official commemorations. Where remembrance exists, it is often symbolic rather than systematic, leaving Roma communities to shoulder the responsibility of preserving their own history. The consequences are twofold: on the one hand, the intergenerational transmission of memory is precarious and increasingly threatened; on the other, the broader European public remains unaware of the

[1] Note that the term *Roma* is employed in this Report as an umbrella category that encompasses all the groups of which the Romani population is composed (Sinti, Manouches, Kale, Rominachals). Cfr. S. Spinelli, *Rom, genti libere*, Delai editore, Milan, 2012.

scale and significance of Roma persecution, perpetuating stereotypes and discrimination.

Romdiem argues that the recognition of the Roma Holocaust is not solely a matter of historical justice, but a prerequisite for building a genuinely inclusive European identity. Integrating Roma voices into the collective memory of the Holocaust contributes to countering anti-Gypsyism, one of the most enduring and widespread forms of racism in Europe. Moreover, it strengthens the foundations of democratic citizenship by acknowledging diversity as an essential element of European heritage.

The project recommends a multi-level strategy for the institutionalization of Roma memory. This includes the integration of the *Samudaripen* into national and European educational frameworks; the establishment of permanent archives and cultural platforms dedicated to Roma history; the systematic inclusion of Roma narratives in museums, memorials, and commemorative practices; the promotion of innovative dissemination tools - ranging from documentaries to digital media - capable of engaging younger generations.

By highlighting both the historical realities of persecution and the contemporary dynamics of remembrance, Romdiem contributes to filling a longstanding gap in European historiography and cultural policy. Its central claim is that remembrance of the Roma Holocaust must be recognized as an integral part of European memory, essential not only for the preservation of historical truth but also for the promotion of social justice and democratic cohesion in the present.

Objectives of the Whitepaper

This Whitepaper has been conceived as both an academic synthesis and a policy instrument. While the Romdiem project pursues operational goals -such as the collection of testimonies, community engagement, and dissemination activities – this document translates those efforts into a higher-level reflection. Its objectives are to restore visibility to the Roma Holocaust within European

memory, to consolidate a transnational perspective, to promote educational reform, to empower Roma voices as agents of their own history, and to argue that recognition of the *Samudaripen* is a prerequisite for combating antigypsyism and building a democratic and inclusive Europe.

The objectives of this Whitepaper are closely related to, but distinct from, those of the broader Romdiem project. While the project itself is structured around operational tasks, management procedures, and concrete deliverables, the Whitepaper has a different mission: to synthesize research findings into an academically rigorous and politically relevant document that addresses both scholarly communities and policymakers. It transforms the project's activities into a coherent interpretative framework that advances knowledge, strengthens collective memory, and generates practical recommendations.

The first objective of the Whitepaper is to bring visibility to the Roma Holocaust as a neglected dimension of European history. By analyzing testimonies, expert interviews, and oral histories collected in the seven countries involved, the Whitepaper seeks to correct this omission and to establish Roma persecution as a central component of the European experience of the Second World War. The Whitepaper aims to frame these narratives within a scientific and political discourse that demonstrates their historical significance and contemporary relevance.

The second objective is to consolidate a transnational approach to remembrance: the document compares the different national contexts to identify common patterns of silence, marginalization, and resilience. In this way, the Whitepaper contributes to building a European-wide culture of remembrance that goes beyond fragmented national narratives.

A third objective is educational, as the Whitepaper examines the absence of Roma history from curricula and provides arguments and data that can be used to influence educational policy. Its aim is not simply to disseminate knowledge but to reshape the symbolic framework of education so that the Roma

Holocaust is treated on equal footing with the Jewish Holocaust and other histories of persecution.

A fourth objective is to empower Roma voices in the construction of memory: Roma voices are treated not merely as data but as epistemic contributions, because remembrance must be co-authored by Roma themselves and recognized by academic and institutional actors as *agents* of history. This objective aligns with the project's emphasis on inclusivity but expresses it in normative and scientific terms, calling for a paradigm shifts in memory studies.

Finally, the Whitepaper has an explicitly political and normative objective. The project aims to foster inclusion and combat antigypsyism through cultural and educational activities.

The Whitepaper transforms this aim into a structured argument: remembrance of the Roma genocide is a prerequisite for justice, equality, and democratic legitimacy in Europe today. In this sense, the Whitepaper functions as both an academic synthesis and a policy instrument.

Main Findings and Recommendations

The qualitative analysis of the interviews collected within the Romdiem project highlights several convergent findings that cut across national contexts, institutions, and personal perspectives. The most consistent theme is the marginalization of the Roma Holocaust. Despite the catastrophic scale of persecution, remembrance remains fragmented, precarious, and largely confined to oral transmission within Roma families and communities, with minimal institutional recognition.

This gap between lived experience and official commemoration constitutes the central findings of the research. A second recurrent finding concerns the silence and neglect of institutions. These silences are not accidental but reflect enduring structures of antigypsyism that extend from wartime persecution to contemporary memory politics.

Third, the interviews underscore the fragility of oral transmission. The breaking of family structures during the war undermined traditional channels of memory, leaving descendants with fragmented and often painful recollections. Yet, oral memory also emerges as a site of resilience: stories told within families have preserved elements of Roma history otherwise absent from archives and textbooks. This dual nature - fragility and resilience - marks Roma memory as both vulnerable and vital.

Fourth, education emerges as both a critical gap and a potential resource. Roma persecution remains almost absent from school curricula. At the same time - it has been underlined - the potential to involve young people directly in research and commemoration is strong and transformative. The consensus across interviews is that schools are crucial for ensuring long-term remembrance, but systemic reform is still lacking.

Fifth, the role of women and intersectional perspectives was strongly emphasized: Roma women's voices are often silenced even within their communities, and the Roma Holocaust must be understood not only as an ethnic genocide but also as a gendered experience.

Sixth, the interviews reveal the significance of comparative memory and stressed the importance of building spaces where different victim groups are remembered together. A comparative perspective underlines both the shared structures of Nazi persecution and the specificities of Roma victimhood.

Seventh, several interviews point to the creative and cultural dimensions of remembrance: art can be a powerful vehicle for transmitting memory, particularly to younger generations. The emphasis on comics, literature, theatre, and digital archives as tools of remembrance shows that memory must be both preserved and reinvented in forms that are accessible and engaging.

Finally, the findings highlight the political dimension of memory: the denial or minimization of Roma suffering after 1945 was not simply an oversight but a

political act that reinforced their marginalization. Memory cannot be separated from the struggle against contemporary antigypsyism. The recognition of the *Samudaripen* is not only about historical justice but about present-day inclusion, rights, and citizenship.

A cross-country comparison shows that while these themes are common, their manifestations vary. In Belgium, where prewar Roma communities were small, deportations under Nazi occupation did occur but are rarely highlighted in national memory. Holocaust institutions sometimes acknowledge Roma victims, yet their presence in curricula and commemorations remains limited. In Slovakia, mass killings of Roma occurred during the Slovak National Uprising of 1944, but recognition is uneven, with local memorials existing alongside widespread social prejudice. Greece provides a striking case of absence: the persecution of Roma under Nazi occupation is scarcely documented, and commemorative practices focus almost exclusively on Jewish victims, leaving Roma suffering invisible. In Italy, despite the historical presence of the Roma, persecution under fascism is seldom remembered, and public discourse is dominated by contemporary debates over “nomad camps” rather than historical justice. Serbia endured large-scale massacres of Roma under German occupation and through local collaborationist forces, yet commemoration is overshadowed by broader narratives of national suffering and victimhood, making Roma history marginal. In Bulgaria, the saving of the Jewish population has become a cornerstone of national pride, while the persecution of Roma through forced labor, sterilization, and segregation is absent from mainstream memory. In Hungary, Roma were deported to camps and massacred in rural areas, and although recent community-led initiatives have improved visibility, state-level recognition remains weak and inconsistent.

Taken together, these national perspectives confirm that the Roma Holocaust remains a trans-nationally marginalized memory. Whether through neglect, selective recognition, or symbolic gestures, the result is the same: Roma experiences of genocide are insufficiently integrated into European

remembrance. Yet, the interviews also highlight resilience and resistance. Across all seven countries, memory survives in families, community initiatives and activist projects, providing the foundations upon which Romdiem seeks to build. The principal result of this research is therefore twofold: it documents the structural silencing of Roma history, but it also demonstrates the creative, educational, and political strategies through which Roma individuals and communities reclaim their past and demand their place in Europe's collective memory.

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Roma Holocaust, known as *Samudaripen* or *Porrajmos*[2], constitutes one of the least acknowledged dimensions of European collective memory. During the Second World War, the Roma were subjected to systematic persecution, deportation, forced sterilization, internment in concentration camps, and mass killings perpetrated by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. Despite the scale of this genocide, the Roma Holocaust has remained largely absent from official historiography, judicial processes, and institutional commemoration.

This absence has had long-term implications for the ways in which memory is preserved and transmitted. In most European countries, remembrance of the Roma genocide has persisted primarily through oral traditions within families and communities, rather than through formal education or institutional frameworks. The result is a fragile and fragmented memory which risks being lost with the passing of the last direct witnesses. At the same time, the persistent marginalization of Roma communities in contemporary Europe - including widespread discrimination in housing, education, health, and employment - creates additional obstacles to the consolidation of historical recognition.

The Romdiem project was developed in response to this historical and political vacuum. Its central aim is to document and safeguard Roma testimonies while situating them within a transnational and multidisciplinary framework of European remembrance. By integrating historical research with qualitative field research, the project highlights both the commonalities and specificities of Roma experiences of persecution across the seven European countries

[2] The term recognized in all communities is *Samudaripen* ("all dead", in Romani language). The term *Porrajmos* literally means "devouring" but in some communities it can have a sexual meaning and therefore has gradually been set aside. Cfr. Cfr. Hancock I., *A Glossary of Romani Terms*, in Weyrauch W. O. (eds), *Gypsy Law: Romani Legal Traditions and Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 2001.

involved. In doing so, it emphasizes that the *Samudaripen* is not a marginal or isolated phenomenon, but an integral component of Europe's twentieth-century history.

The Whitepaper emerging from the project has a dual purpose. On the one hand, it seeks to consolidate an empirical record of survivor testimonies and community narratives, thereby contributing to the preservation of cultural memory. On the other hand, it aims to formulate recommendations for policymakers, educators, and cultural institutions regarding the integration of Roma Holocaust history into educational curricula, commemorative practices, and public discourse. The broader objective is to transform Roma memory from a fragmented and marginalized heritage into a shared European responsibility, essential for fostering democratic values and combating anti-Gypsyism in the present.

From a methodological perspective, the project combines desk research with qualitative field research. The desk research involved a systematic review of: academic literature, institutional reports, and archival sources related to the Roma Holocaust. The field research consisted of semi-structured interviews with survivors, descendants, and community representatives, complemented by participant observation and the analysis of cultural and social practices of remembrance. This methodology allows for the integration of academic analysis with lived experiences, ensuring that Roma voices occupy a central place in the construction of knowledge about their own history.

By situating Roma testimonies within a comparative, transnational perspective, Romdiem contributes to filling a significant gap in European memory studies. It demonstrates that recognition of the *Samudaripen* is not merely a matter of recovering a neglected past, but a crucial step toward constructing a more inclusive and plural European identity. The following sections of this Whitepaper present the historical framework, research findings, and policy recommendations arising from the project, with the aim of advancing both scholarly knowledge and practical measures for remembrance.

Central to the Romdiem project is the documentation and preservation of testimonies. Recognizing that the voices of survivors and descendants are at risk of disappearing, Romdiem has prioritized the collection, recording, and safeguarding of oral histories, expert interviews, and community testimonies. In doing so, the project ensures that Roma voices will endure for future generations and provide researchers, educators, and policymakers with a body of evidence to counter historical erasure. This archival effort is accompanied by an equally strong commitment to education and awareness-raising. Since the Roma Holocaust remains almost entirely absent from school curricula and textbooks, Romdiem promotes the development of innovative educational resources, ranging from teaching materials to exhibitions, artistic productions, and digital tools, designed to make memory both accessible and engaging. Education is understood not merely as the transmission of historical facts, but as a transformative process capable of fostering empathy, civic responsibility, and a critical awareness of the ways in which past injustices resonate in the present.

The project also places a strong emphasis on community empowerment and inclusion. Romdiem is not designed to speak *about* Roma but *with* Roma. Its participatory framework involves Roma individuals, associations, and intellectuals in every phase of the process, ensuring that remembrance is co-authored rather than imposed from outside. Particular attention is devoted to amplifying the voices of women and youth, groups that have often been doubly marginalized, both within Roma communities and in broader society. By foregrounding these perspectives, Romdiem challenges dominant structures of representation and affirms Roma as active agents in the preservation and transmission of their own history.

Another major objective is the creation of transnational networks and platforms for remembrance. The genocide of Roma was not confined to any single country but unfolded across Europe with varying modalities and intensities. By connecting experts across Belgium, Slovakia, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Bulgaria,

and Hungary, the project fosters the exchange of knowledge and practices while situating Roma memory within a European framework. This comparative perspective underscores both the commonalities of persecution and the specificities of national contexts, ultimately contributing to the construction of an inclusive European culture of remembrance that resists fragmentation and nationalist appropriation.

Advocacy and policy impact form another vital dimension of Romdiem. By collecting and analyzing testimonies and expert perspectives, the project provides evidence-based arguments that can inform policymaking at both national and European levels. These include the need for dedicated memorial sites, the systematic inclusion of the Roma Holocaust in curricula, and the integration of Roma narratives into museums and archives. In this way, Romdiem positions itself as a bridge between academic research, community voices, and institutional frameworks, translating memory into measures of justice and recognition.

Underlying all of these objectives is the conviction that remembrance is inseparable from the struggle against contemporary antigypsyism. Remembrance thus becomes both retrospective and prospective: it honors the victims of the past while contributing to the creation of a more democratic and plural European future.

Taken together, the objectives of the Romdiem project encompass the preservation of memory, the development of educational resources, the empowerment of Roma communities, the creation of transnational networks, the promotion of institutional recognition, and the fight against discrimination.

The Relevance of the Roma Holocaust in European Memory

The relevance of the *Samudaripen* in European memory lies not only in the historical importance of the events themselves but also in the ways in which

remembrance, or the absence thereof, continues to shape questions of identity, justice, and democracy across the continent. The extermination of the Roma was an integral component of Nazi and Fascist racial policies, comparable in scope and logic to other forms of persecution, yet its memory has remained marginalized for decades. The significance of this absence is twofold: on the one hand, it reveals structural hierarchies of memory in postwar Europe; on the other, it underlines the persistence of antigypsyism as a form of racism that has survived the collapse of the Nazi regime and continues to affect Roma populations today. Understanding the relevance of the Roma Holocaust is therefore indispensable for any comprehensive conception of European collective memory.

The Holocaust has come to occupy a central place in European identity, particularly since the 1990s, when European Union institutions increasingly presented remembrance of the Shoah as a moral and cultural foundation of integration. As Assmann has argued, the Holocaust functions as a shared memory of atrocity that underpins commitments to human rights and democracy.[3] Yet, within this emerging "European memory culture," the position of Roma victims has remained uncertain. Whereas Jewish suffering has been institutionally recognized through museums, memorial days, and educational programs, Roma experiences have largely remained peripheral, often acknowledged symbolically but without the same structural integration. This asymmetry demonstrates that the European project of memory, though ambitious, is still incomplete.

The marginalization of Roma memory has profound consequences. As Milton observed, Roma victims were excluded from the Nuremberg trials and from compensation schemes in the Federal Republic of Germany, effectively denying them legal and symbolic recognition.[4] This exclusion was not a simple

[3] A. Assmann, *The Long Shadow of the Past: Memorial Culture and Historical Justice*, Munich, Beck, 2006.
[4] S. Milton, "Holocaust: The Gypsies,", in *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, Macmillan, New York, 1990, vol. II, pp. 631-639.

oversight but reflected the continuity of Nazi stereotypes, which categorized Roma as "asocial" rather than as racial victims. The persistence of these categories in postwar administrations reinforced the invisibility of Roma suffering and contributed to the long-term neglect of their history. The failure to integrate Roma experiences into postwar justice processes has had enduring repercussions, as it deprived survivors and their descendants of recognition and contributed to the fragility of memory.

From a historiographical perspective, the neglect of the Roma Holocaust has been widely documented. Hancock has repeatedly emphasized that Roma are "the forgotten victims" of Nazi genocide, marginalized both in historical research and in public commemoration.[5] Lewy has shown that Roma were subject to centrally coordinated persecution and extermination policies, undermining earlier claims that their fate was less systematic than that of Jews.[6] Fraser, Willems and Crowe have each contributed to documenting the scope of Roma persecution across Europe, yet their works remain less widely disseminated than equivalent scholarship on the Shoah.[7] The imbalance of historiography is thus mirrored in public memory: despite growing academic recognition, the Roma Holocaust has yet to be fully integrated into the mainstream narrative of European history.

The relevance of Roma memory also lies in its potential to challenge and enrich European conceptions of diversity and citizenship. Remembering the *Samudaripen* is not only a matter of historical justice but a means of confronting the persistence of antigypsyism. The continued existence of segregated settlements, discriminatory laws, and social stigmatization demonstrates that the logic of exclusion has not disappeared but has merely transformed. In this sense, remembrance is inseparable from contemporary struggles for equality: to recognize the Roma Holocaust is to acknowledge the structural continuities

[5] I. Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, University of Hertfordshire Press, Hatfield, 2002.
[6] G. Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.
[7] A. Fraser, *The Gypsies*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992; W. Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution*, Frank Cass, London, 1997; D. M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994.

between past persecution and present discrimination. This insight links memory politics with the sociology of racism, suggesting that the study of remembrance is not only backward-looking but also forward-oriented, with direct implications for human rights.

At the European level, there have been important steps toward recognition. The European Parliament's 2015 Resolution declaring 2 August as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day represents a milestone, embedding Roma remembrance within the symbolic calendar of the Union. The Council of Europe and the OSCE have also promoted initiatives to raise awareness, fund research, and develop educational materials. Yet, these initiatives often remain confined to institutional or activist circles, with limited penetration into national school curricula, museums, or public consciousness. The gap between European-level recognition and national practices remains stark. In countries such as Greece or Bulgaria, Roma persecution is scarcely acknowledged in official history, while in others, such as Italy or Slovakia, commemoration remains fragmented and overshadowed by broader national narratives. The persistence of these gaps illustrates the uneven geography of memory across Europe.

The Roma Holocaust is also relevant because it compels a rethinking of the categories of Holocaust studies. While Jewish persecution was defined primarily in racial and religious terms, Roma were targeted as both a racial and an "asocial" group.[8] This hybrid categorization challenges the binary frameworks often used in genocide studies and highlights the intersectionality of exclusion.

Cultural representations of the *Samudaripen* also remain scarce, yet where they exist, they illustrate the potential of creative approaches to expand awareness and engagement. The integration of Roma memory into European cultural production - through museums, films, literature, and digital media -

[8] M. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"*, Christians, Hamburg, 1996.

remains a crucial task for ensuring that remembrance is not confined to specialists but becomes part of collective consciousness.

Finally, the relevance of the Roma Holocaust in European memory is inseparable from the broader project of constructing a democratic and plural Europe: memory is not only about the past but about the values that societies choose to uphold.[9] Remembering the Roma genocide is therefore a test of Europe's commitment to inclusivity: The *Samudaripen* is not a peripheral issue but a central challenge to the integrity of European identity. By integrating Roma memory, Europe strengthens its claim to universal values, confronting the exclusions of the past in order to build a better future.

Purpose of the Whitepaper

This Whitepaper is designed as both a scholarly synthesis and a policy instrument. Its purpose is to translate the empirical findings of the Romdiem project into a coherent framework that addresses academics, educators, policymakers, and Roma communities alike. Its scope is interdisciplinary, combining history, sociology, anthropology, and political science, and transnational, encompassing seven European countries. Beyond academic analysis, the Whitepaper seeks to impact education, cultural policy, human rights, and civil society, advocating for the inclusion of Roma memory as a constitutive element of European remembrance. By doing so, it positions itself not as a comprehensive history but as a tool for recognition, dialogue, and transformation.

In this scenario, the Whitepaper is not merely a report of activities, nor a technical summary of project outcomes; rather, it is a scholarly and political document designed to intervene in the wider debate on European memory, historical justice, and the fight against antigypsyism. It functions both as a tool

[9] A. Assmann and S. Conrad (eds.), *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2010.

of knowledge production and as an instrument of advocacy, thereby bridging the gap between research and practice.

The scope of the Whitepaper is necessarily interdisciplinary. The Roma Holocaust cannot be understood within the confines of a single discipline, whether history, sociology, anthropology, or political science. Instead, it requires a synthesis of approaches capable of capturing its complexity. Historical research is essential to situate the *Samudaripen* within the broader framework of the Second World War and to counter denial or minimization. Sociological inquiry is crucial to understand the mechanisms of memory transmission, silence, and forgetting, as well as the contemporary persistence of antigypsyism. Anthropology provides tools for engaging with cultural practices, oral traditions, and community perspectives. Political science and law illuminate the connections between remembrance, citizenship, and human rights. By integrating these perspectives, the Whitepaper situates Roma memory at the crossroads of scholarly disciplines and societal concerns.

The transnational character of the Whitepaper constitutes another defining aspect of its scope. The research carried out across the seven countries involved demonstrates that while modalities differed, the underlying logic of exclusion and elimination was shared. By presenting these findings together, the Whitepaper establishes the *Samudaripen* as a European tragedy, not a local or peripheral episode.

The scope of the Whitepaper also extends to several practical fields at the European level. In the field of education, the document can serve as a resource for the development of curricula, textbooks, and teaching materials that include Roma history. In the field of cultural policy, it provides guidance for museums, archives, and memorial institutions on how to incorporate Roma narratives into exhibitions, collections, and commemorative practices. In the field of human rights and anti-discrimination policy, it offers evidence that can inform strategies at both national and EU levels, reinforcing commitments to equality and the fight against antigypsyism. In the field of civil society and community activism**,** the

Whitepaper supports grassroots initiatives by offering scholarly legitimacy and transnational visibility. In the media and cultural industries, it provides background and inspiration for films, literature, and artistic projects that can expand the cultural representation of Roma history.

By engaging with these diverse fields, the Whitepaper ensures that its impact is not limited to the academic sphere but extends into the practical domains where memory is shaped, contested, and transmitted. Ethical and methodological considerations further define the purpose and scope of the Whitepaper. Built on qualitative sociological research, the document foregrounds oral testimonies and expert interviews as primary sources of knowledge. It treats Roma voices not as supplementary but as central, recognizing that lived experiences are indispensable for reconstructing histories that have been silenced in archives and institutions.

This methodological orientation also defines the ethical stance of the Whitepaper: it refuses to appropriate Roma voices but seeks to amplify them, presenting them as co-authors of remembrance. The purpose is not only to document absence and neglect but also to highlight resilience, creativity, and strategies of survival, thereby offering a more complete and humanizing account of the Roma experience.

The Whitepaper also acknowledges its limitations. It does not claim to provide a comprehensive history of the Roma genocide, nor to speak for all Roma communities. Rather, it situates itself as part of an ongoing dialogue, contributing evidence, interpretations, and recommendations while leaving space for further research, debate, and community input. In this sense, the Whitepaper is both diagnostic and prescriptive: it diagnoses the structural silences of European memory while prescribing pathways for redress, including educational reform, cultural representation, institutional recognition, and political commitment.

Methodology: Synthesis of Desk and Field Research

The Romdiem project adopted a qualitative sociological approach, designed to illuminate the mechanisms through which the memory of the Roma Holocaust is preserved, silenced, or contested across different national and community contexts.

The methodological framework of the Romdiem project combined desk research and field research to construct a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the Roma Holocaust and its memory in contemporary Europe. Desk research provided historical, institutional, and historiographical background, while fieldwork enabled the collection of qualitative data that captured the lived experiences, perceptions, and strategies of remembrance among Roma and non-Roma actors. Together, these methods created a dynamic interplay between documentary evidence and personal narratives, bridging the gap between established historiography and voices that have long been excluded from it.

The desk research phase focused on reviewing existing literature, archival sources, and institutional documents concerning the Roma Holocaust and the politics of memory in Europe. This included academic works in history, sociology, and anthropology, as well as reports produced by international organizations such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the European Union. Desk research also examined national legislation, museum programs, educational curricula, and policy documents, showing the uneven landscape of recognition across different European countries. This systematic review confirmed that the *Samudaripen* has been only partially institutionalized, with significant gaps remaining in public history, education, and official commemorations.

In addition to historiographical analysis, the desk research examined oral history methodologies and memory studies as theoretical foundations for fieldwork. Key references included the work of Portelli on oral history, which

emphasizes the interpretive value of personal narratives, and the theories of collective memory developed by Halbwachs and Assmann, which highlight the social construction of memory and its role in shaping group identities. These perspectives provided the conceptual tools to analyze not only what interviewees remembered, but also how and why their memories are framed in particular ways, influenced by silences, trauma, and social contexts. By grounding field research in these theoretical traditions, Romdiem ensured that testimonies were not treated as raw data but as complex narratives shaped by history, culture, and power.

The fieldwork component constituted the core of the project's empirical research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the seven countries involved, with a wide range of respondents.

The analysis of the interviews followed qualitative sociological methods, particularly thematic coding. Transcripts were examined for recurring patterns, categories, and metaphors, which were then compared across national contexts. Several themes emerged consistently: the perception of the *Samudaripen* as a "second-class memory"; the absence of it from school curricula and public commemorations; the persistence of stereotypes and antigypsyism; the fragility and resilience of oral transmission; the gendered dimensions of memory, particularly the silencing of women's voices; and the comparative dimension, with frequent references to Jewish memory and other victim groups. These themes were interpreted not only as reflections of historical events but also as indicators of broader social processes of exclusion, recognition, and identity formation.

The strength of the field research lies in the richness and diversity of voices. Their words highlight not only the persistence of silences but also the strategies of resilience and creativity through which Roma communities reclaim their history. The different perspectives emerged from the interviews illustrate the capacity of qualitative research to capture complex and sometimes conflicting interpretations that cannot be reduced to statistical generalizations.

At the same time, the methodology acknowledges its limitations. The sample of interviewees, though diverse, cannot claim to represent all Roma experiences across Europe. Oral testimonies are subject to selective memory, silences, and reinterpretations, and the absence of quantitative data makes it difficult to assess the prevalence of particular attitudes or beliefs. Nevertheless, these limitations are inherent to qualitative inquiry and do not diminish its value. On the contrary, they underscore the importance of interpretation, reflexivity, and contextualization in making sense of narratives. The goal of the project was not to produce exhaustive data but to reveal processes, structures, and dynamics that would otherwise remain hidden.

The integration of desk and field research provided a comprehensive perspective. Desk research situated Roma persecution within broader historical and historiographical frameworks, identifying the gaps and silences that characterize institutional memory. Fieldwork filled those gaps with voices, stories, and perspectives that resist erasure, grounding the analysis in lived experiences.

In conclusion, the methodological design of Romdiem reflects its dual ambition: to recover a neglected past and to intervene in contemporary debates on memory, justice, and inclusion, combating against current discrimination.

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

A Historical Perspective on Samudaripen at a European level

The genocide of the Roma during the Second World War must be understood within a broader continuum of exclusion, stigmatization, and violence that has characterized European attitudes towards Roma populations for centuries. Anti-Gypsyism is not a twentieth-century invention but a deeply rooted phenomenon, structured over time through mechanisms of cultural othering, legal marginalization, and pseudo-scientific racism. This longue durée of prejudice provided the cultural and political conditions for the radicalization of exclusion into extermination during the Nazi period. Since their arrival in Europe between the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, Roma were subjected to slavery, forced assimilation, and expulsion. In the Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, Roma remained in a state of slavery until the mid-nineteenth century, while across Western and Central Europe they were targeted by laws that criminalized nomadism and itinerant lifestyles, producing a persistent image of Roma as alien and threatening.[10]

In the nineteenth century, the rise of positivism, anthropology, and criminology added a veneer of scientific legitimacy to pre-existing prejudices. Lombroso pathologized criminality as hereditary and identified Roma as predisposed to deviance.[11] Such discourses converged across Europe, providing fertile ground for administrative control and exclusion.

With the rise of National Socialism, these prejudices were codified into law and expanded into systematic persecution. The 1933 *Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring* authorized forced sterilizations of those deemed biologically unfit, including Roma. The 1935 Nuremberg Laws

[10] L. Piasere, *I rom d'Europa. Una storia moderna*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2009; Spinelli S., *Rom, questi sconosciuti*, Mimesis, Milan-Udine, 2016.

[11] C. Lombroso (1876), *L'Uomo delinquente in rapporto all'antropologia, alla giurisprudenza e alla psichiatria*, Turin, Bocca, 1897, vol. III.

extended prohibitions on intermarriage and stripped Roma of citizenship rights, placing them outside the Volksgemeinschaft (people's community). Michael Zimmermann has demonstrated that Nazi policy towards Roma was not accidental but part of a coherent racial strategy rooted in "racial biology".[12]

The persecution intensified with the outbreak of war. Roma were increasingly interned in concentration camps such as Dachau and Buchenwald. In February 1943, Heinrich Himmler ordered the deportation of all Roma within the Reich to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where a special family camp (*Zigeunerlager*) was established. Conditions were catastrophic: starvation, disease, forced labor, and medical experiments decimated the camp population. On the night of 2 August 1944, the *Zigeunerlager* was liquidated, and nearly 3,000 Roma were murdered in the gas chambers in a single night.[13] This massacre stands as the most emblematic event of the *Samudaripen* and is commemorated annually as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day.

Beyond Germany, Roma were persecuted across occupied and allied states. In Romania, the Antonescu regime deported over 25,000 Roma to Transnistria, where thousands died of starvation, disease, and exposure. In Croatia, the Ustaša regime exterminated Roma in the Jasenovac camp. In Slovakia, Serbia, and Hungary, local militias and collaborationist authorities organized mass shootings and deportations of Roma families.[14] In Western Europe, including France and Belgium, Roma were subjected to surveillance, internment, and deportation, while in Scandinavia coercive sterilization programs targeted Roma women well into the post-war decades[15].

In the immediate post-war years, the persecution of Roma was largely absent from trials, reparations, and memorialization. Academic recognition of the

[12] M. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"*, Christians, Hamburg, 1996.
[13] S. Milton, "The Context of the Holocaust," in D. Crowe and J. Kolsti, *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 1991, pp. 81–90.
[14] G. Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.
[15] M. Runcis, *Steriliseringar i folkhemmet*, Ordfront, Stockholm, 1998.

Roma genocide also emerged late. For decades, the *Samudaripen* was scarcely addressed in Holocaust historiography, reflecting the absence of Roma voices in academia and the persistence of stereotypes. *The Pariah Syndrome*, by Hancock, was a pioneering study that combined historical research with political advocacy, framing Roma persecution as a continuous process culminating in genocide.[16]

The Gypsies (1992), by Fraser, provided a broad historical overview of Roma communities, situating the genocide within a centuries-long continuum of exclusion.[17] Willems emphasized the role of state bureaucracies and modern institutions in producing Roma marginalization, linking administrative control to the logic of extermination.[18]

Crowe offered detailed accounts of Roma persecution in Eastern Europe, documenting the catastrophic deportations to Transnistria and the role of Einsatzgruppen in mass killings.[19] Lewy demonstrated the systematic nature of the Nazi project and highlighted the inconsistencies of post-war justice.[20] More recently, the increasing involvement of Roma scholars, such as Spinelli in Italy and others across Europe, has been critical in reframing the narrative from within, ensuring that Roma are not only objects of research but also subjects of memory production.

Taken together, this historical and historiographical evidence reveals the *Samudaripen* as both a European tragedy and a European silence. It demonstrates that Roma persecution was rooted in a long-standing culture of anti-Gypsyism, radicalized under Nazism, and perpetuated through post-war neglect. Recognition of this history is essential not only for historical accuracy

[16] I. Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution*, Karoma, Ann Arbor, 1987.
[17] A. Fraser, *The Gypsies*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992.
[18] W. Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution*, Frank Cass, London, 1997.
[19] D. M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994.
[20] G. Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.

but also for justice in the present, as Roma communities continue to face structural discrimination.

By situating Roma memory within a transnational framework, projects such as Romdiem contribute to breaking the cycle of invisibility. They transform fragmented oral testimonies into collective heritage, inscribing the Roma genocide into European memory.

Common Patterns of Persecution, Marginalization, and Violence

A comparative analysis of the persecution of Roma across different European contexts reveals the existence of recurring models which, while varying in their local manifestations, share common underlying logics: stigmatization as "asocials," territorial marginalization through segregation practices, and systemic violence exercised both administratively and physically. These models were not exclusive to the Roma but characterized the entire Nazi repressive apparatus, which also targeted Jews, persons with disabilities, homosexuals, and political dissidents.

The first pattern is the definition of Roma as "asocial" and "deviant," a concept rooted in nineteenth-century criminological and anthropological theories and transformed by the Nazi regime into a legal category. This designation legitimized preventive internment, forced sterilizations, and deportations to concentration camps, making mere ethnic or social belonging a sufficient ground for repression.[21] This discursive construction also resonated in other European countries, where stereotypes of innate criminality and social unreliability accompanied discriminatory measures against Roma.

The second pattern concerns territorial marginalization. In many contexts, Roma communities were confined to segregated spaces, often on the outskirts

[21] M. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"*, Christians, Hamburg, 1996.

of cities, in dumpsites, or on land unsuitable for everyday life. The logic of confinement reached its most extreme form in the *Zigeunerlager* established by the Nazi regime and in French internment camps, but it continued into the postwar period, as exemplified by the "nomad camps" created in Italy from the 1970s onwards.[22] Territorial segregation has never been neutral but rather a political device of exclusion.

The third pattern is systemic violence. Roma communities were subjected to mass deportations, summary executions, forced sterilizations, medical experiments, and forced labor under inhumane conditions. Lewy has shown that in many cases local authorities actively collaborated with German occupiers in the identification and elimination of Roma, demonstrating that the genocide was not only a project imposed from above but also the outcome of entrenched social dynamics.[23] This complicity highlights the transnational nature of the *Samudaripen*, in which violence was not confined to German-occupied territories but also involved allied regimes and local populations.

The extermination of the Jews is, fortunately, quite well known, although we should never stop studying it. Less well known is the *Aktion T4* program directed to disable people and people with mental illnesses. A program that constituted a direct precedent for the Shoah and for the genocide of Roma.[24] Based on the principle of "lives unworthy of living", this program introduced sterilization and euthanasia practices that were later applied in extermination camps. Like the disabled, Roma were considered an economic and biological burden to be eliminated, assimilated into the category of "asocials" to be neutralized in order to purify the social body.

Homosexuals, persecuted under Paragraph 175 of the German penal code, were interned in concentration camps and forced to wear the pink triangle.[25]

[22] L. Piasere, *I rom d'Europa. Una storia moderna*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2009.
[23] G. Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.
[24] H. Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1995.
[25] R. Plant, *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals*, Holt, New York, 1986.

The parallel with Roma lies in the criminalization of identity itself: being Roma or being homosexual was sufficient to justify internment, regardless of individual behavior.

Political dissidents - communists, socialists, trade unionists, Catholic and Protestant opponents - were among the first to be interned in concentration camps from 1933 onwards.[26] Their persecution was not based on biological criteria but on ideological belonging; nonetheless, the repressive logic was analogous: to eliminate anyone deemed a threat to the unity and purity of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

These comparisons reveal that the Nazi concentration camp system was capable of operating with parallel logics across diverse groups: identifying the "internal enemy" through pseudo-scientific or ideological categories; isolating it through territorial segregation and discriminatory laws; and annihilating it through forced labor, sterilization, deportation, or extermination. In the case of the Roma, the specificity lies in their liminal position: not persecuted as the principal enemy like the Jews, but eliminated as a population deemed "useless" and "asocial." This intermediate position explains both the extent of the violence suffered and the subsequent absence of full recognition in the postwar period.

In this sense, the *Samudaripen* must be understood as an integral part of the broader Nazi genocidal project, a process that targeted different categories but united them under the same logic of dehumanization.[27] Understanding these common patterns makes it possible to restore the Roma genocide to its rightful place in the history of twentieth-century Europe, not as a peripheral episode but as a fundamental component of a systemic violence that continues to shape majority/minority relations to this day.

[26] N. Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2015.
[27] C. Volpato, *Deumanizzazione. Come si legittima la violenza*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2011.

Gaps in Memory and Problems of Recognition

Although the *Samudaripen* constituted a genocide of continental scale, its memory was for decades relegated to the margins of both public discourse and scholarly inquiry. The persecution of the Roma was largely absent from the Nuremberg trials, from early historiography, and from national and international commemorations.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, Roma survivors encountered structural obstacles in seeking justice and compensation. In West Germany, indemnification laws initially excluded Roma on the grounds that their persecution had allegedly been based on "asocial behavior" rather than racial policy.[28] This interpretation perpetuated Nazi stereotypes by framing Roma as criminals rather than as victims of genocide, and only in the 1960s and 1970s, under pressure from survivors' associations and human rights advocates, did partial recognition begin to emerge.[29]

The persistence of memory gaps reflects broader cultural and political dynamics. Recently, as already stated, some progress has been made: The European Parliament's 2015 resolution designating 2 August as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day marked a turning point and the Council of Europe and the OSCE have promoted initiatives to raise awareness. Yet, these remain largely confined to experts and activists, with limited diffusion into national education systems or cultural institutions.

The persistence of gaps in memory and recognition calls for urgent action. Education must ensure the systematic integration of the Roma genocide into national curricula, textbooks, and teacher training, guaranteeing parity with the Shoah. Museums and memorials should include Roma experiences within Holocaust institutions while developing dedicated spaces for Roma memory. Archives and research programs must be created at a transnational level to

[28] G. Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.
[29] D. Kenrick and G. Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, Basic Books, New York, 1972.

safeguard oral testimonies and ensure their accessibility to future generations. Cultural initiatives in cinema, literature, and the arts are needed to bring Roma narratives into the mainstream of European remembrance. Most importantly, Roma communities must be involved not only as subjects of history but as authors of their own historical narratives.

The Romdiem project, by investigating memory practices across seven countries, has highlighted the persistence of these problems at the national level. In Belgium, prewar Roma communities were small, yet many were deported under Nazi occupation, and remembrance today remains fragmented, with little attention in education. In Slovakia, where Roma were massacred during the Slovak National Uprising of 1944, recognition remains limited to a few memorials and is absent from school curricula. In Greece, persecution of Roma under Nazi occupation is poorly documented and virtually absent from public discourse, while Holocaust commemoration focuses almost exclusively on Jewish victims. In Italy, the Roma are among the oldest minorities, yet they are not recognized as a linguistic minority, their persecution under fascism is rarely commemorated, and public debate continues to focus more on contemporary “nomad camps” than on historical recognition. In Serbia, where large-scale massacres occurred both under German occupation and through local collaborationist forces, commemoration remains limited and overshadowed by broader national narratives of suffering. In Bulgaria, where the saving of the Jewish population has become central to national memory, the persecution of Roma - subjected to forced labor, sterilization, and segregation - remains largely absent. In Hungary, Roma were deported to camps and massacred in rural areas, yet recognition is still weak, with some community-led initiatives emerging but little systematic institutional support.

Main findings

Across all seven countries the same pattern emerges: the *Samudaripen* remains a “second-class memory,” transmitted primarily within Roma families and communities and rarely institutionalized. The lack of consistent recognition reveals that Roma remain excluded not only from social and political equality but also from symbolic belonging to the European historical community.

The findings demonstrate a striking consistency across national contexts. The *Samudaripen* remains marginal within institutional memory, largely absent from school curricula, and inadequately represented in museums, memorials, and official commemorations. Where remembrance exists, it is often symbolic rather than systematic, leaving Roma communities to shoulder the responsibility of preserving their own history. The consequences are twofold: on the one hand, the intergenerational transmission of memory is precarious and increasingly threatened; on the other, the broader European public remains unaware of the scale and significance of Roma persecution, perpetuating stereotypes and discrimination.

The recognition of the *Samudaripen* is not solely a matter of historical justice, but a prerequisite for building a genuinely inclusive European identity. Integrating Roma voices into the collective memory of the Holocaust contributes to countering anti-Gypsyism, one of the most enduring and widespread forms of racism in Europe. Moreover, it strengthens the foundations of democratic citizenship by acknowledging diversity as an essential element of European heritage.

The project recommends a multi-level strategy for the institutionalization of Roma memory. This includes the integration of the *Samudaripen* into national and European educational frameworks; the establishment of permanent archives and cultural platforms dedicated to Roma history; the systematic inclusion of Roma narratives in museums, memorials, and commemorative practices; and the promotion of innovative dissemination

tools - ranging from documentaries to digital media - capable of engaging younger generations.

By highlighting both the historical realities of persecution and the contemporary dynamics of remembrance, Romdiem contributes to filling a longstanding gap in European historiography and cultural policy. Its central claim is that remembrance of the Roma Holocaust must be recognized as an integral part of European memory, essential not only for the preservation of historical truth but also for the promotion of social justice and democratic cohesion in the present.

DESK RESEARCH FINDINGS BY COUNTRIES

Italy

Historical Context of the Samudaripen

While anti-Roma prejudice in Italy predated the Fascist regime - local Municipalities often issued ordinances restricting camping, travel, and residence of itinerant families - the dictatorship institutionalized and expanded these practices, transforming prejudice into state policy. Already in the 1920s, police prefectures and municipal authorities introduced surveillance registers of "nomads," subjecting Roma to forced settlement and continuous monitoring. By the late 1930s, these measures converged with a broader racial ideology that culminated in the *Leggi Razziali* of 1938.[30]

From 1940, the Ministry of the Interior and local prefectures issued directives ordering the arrest and internment of itinerant Roma families. The internment network included several camps in Italian localities such as

[30] L. Bravi, M. Bassoli, *Il Porrajmos in Italia. La persecuzione di rom e sinti durante il fascismo*, Emil di Odoya, Bologna, 2013.

Boiano, Tossicia, Agnone.[31] internment network included several camps in Italian localities such as Boiano, Tossicia, Agnone.[32]

The situation worsened after September 1943, when the German occupation of Northern and Central Italy (Repubblica Sociale Italiana) escalated persecution. SS units and Fascist militias rounded up Roma families, sending some to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they perished in the Zigeunerlager. Others were executed in reprisals in Piedmont, Lombardy, and Tuscany, often alongside Jews and partisans. Municipal officials and police prefectures frequently collaborated by providing lists of Roma families to German and Fascist authorities, facilitating arrests and deportations. Scholars estimate that several thousand Roma were subjected to internment within Italy, while hundreds were deported or killed during the German occupation. The Italian trajectory of the *Samudaripen* thus combined both domestic Fascist persecution through internment and Nazi-led escalation to deportation and killings.[33] After the end of the Second World War, the "Gypsy" continued to be seen as "asocial," "foreign," and "nomadic," meaning that the same stereotypes and representations did not cease with the end of the *Samudaripen*.[34] In Italy, *special classes* for "Gypsy children" were even established and remained active until the 1980s. Moreover, starting precisely in the 1980s, still based on the stereotype of nomadism, institutions began to design and finance the so-called "nomad camps."[35]

[31] L. Bravi, M. Bassoli, *Il Porrajmos in Italia. La persecuzione di rom e sinti durante il fascismo*, Emil di Odoya, Bologna, 2013.

[32] L. Bravi, M. Bassoli, *Il Porrajmos in Italia. La persecuzione di rom e sinti durante il fascismo*, Emil di Odoya, Bologna, 2013.

[33] P. Trevisan, *La persecuzione dei rom e dei sinti nell'Italia fascista. Storia, etnografia e memorie*, Viella, Rome, 2024; C. *Nencioni, A forza di essere vento. La persecuzione di rom e sinti nell'Italia fascista*, Edizioni ETS, 2024, Pisa.

[34] L. Bravi, *Rieducare i rom e sinti tra passato e presente. Il genocidio e l'etnocidio culturale*, in "Palaver", 5/1, 2019, pp. 75-102; Piasere L., *I Rom d'Europa*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2004; L. Piasere, *I Rom d'Europa*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2004.

[35] L. Bravi, *Rieducare i rom e sinti tra passato e presente. Il genocidio e l'etnocidio culturale*, in "Palaver", 5/1, 2019, pp. 75-102; Piasere L., *I Rom d'Europa*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2004.

National and Institutional Recognition

Roma survivors - dispersed, impoverished, and marginalized - lacked the organizational resources to press claims. Official records ignored their petitions, further entrenching exclusion. For decades, Roma suffering during the war was reduced to a footnote in both public history and legal restitution, even if many of them died as partisans.[36]

Italy instituted *Giorno della Memoria* (27 January) as a national day of remembrance for the Holocaust. Yet, the law establishing this remembrance day still does not include any reference to the *Samudaripen*. Moreover, Roma were seldom included in official ceremonies, and when mentioned, they were typically grouped among "other victims".[37] Recognition of the *Samudaripen* was instead promoted by civil society, notably through the work of activists and intellectuals such as Spinelli, who tirelessly advocated for Roma history to be acknowledged as part of Italy's Holocaust memory.[38] Even today, Roma are frequently included only symbolically, without systematic policies of remembrance or education.

Presence in Educational Curricula

Holocaust teaching in Italian schools has expanded since the 1990s, reinforced by national guidelines, regional projects, and partnerships with Jewish communities. Textbooks devote significant attention to Jewish persecution, deportations, and the Resistance, framing these as the central narratives of the Italian wartime experience.[39] NGOs and academic institutions have attempted to bridge this gap. The *Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea*

[36] E. Rizzin, *Resistenze e storie di rom e sinti per costruire insieme la memoria collettiva*, in L. Bravi, C. Martinelli, S. Oliviero (ed. by), *Raccontare la Resistenza a scuola. Esperienze e riflessioni*, 2022, pp. 193-197, Firenze University Press, Firenze, 2022. Cfr. also: E. Rizzin (ed. by), *Attraversare Auschwitz. Storie di rom e sinti: identità, memorie, antiziganismo*, Gangemi, Roma, 2020.
[37] OSCE/ODIHR, *Holocaust Memorial Days in the OSCE Region*, OSCE, Warsaw, 2019.
[38] Spinelli S., *Rom, genti libere. Storia, arte e cultura di un popolo misconosciuto*, Delai Editore, Milan, 2012.
[39] Ministry of Education, *Linee guida nazionali. Per una didattica della Shoah a scuola*, Italy, 2017, https://www.mim.gov.it/documents/20182/0/Linee+guida+nazionali+per+una+didattica+della+Shoah+a+scuola.pdf/98d90ec7-0e36-40cf-ba67-4d79836186a8?version=1.0&t=1531153062490.

(CDEC) has developed modules that include references to Roma persecution, while OSCE/ODIHR guides on teaching about the Roma genocide are a very important tool.[40] Despite these efforts, integration into mainstream curricula remains inconsistent, and teaching about Roma persecution depends largely on individual teacher initiative. The result is a pedagogy of selective memory, where the Holocaust is presented as a history of Jewish suffering alone, erasing Roma experiences and undermining the inclusive potential of Holocaust education.

Sites of Memory, Archives, and Law

Italy's commemorative landscape reflects similar silences, even if in the last years some changes occured. Worth mentioning is certainly the commemorative monument inaugurated in Lanciano (Abruzzo Region) in 2018. Commemorative initiatives - carried out also with the involvement of public institutions - have intensified since the adoption, in 2012, of the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma.[41] This document, approved by Italy in implementation of the European Commission Communication 173/2011, included among its various objectives the commemoration of the *Samudaripen* as well as the establishment of a Roma representative body. From that moment onwards, remembrance of the genocide of the Roma has become more prominent, also thanks to the direct contribution of the Roma activists themselves.

The subsequent document, the National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2021-2030[42], adopted by Italy in 2021, likewise includes among its goals the explicit promotion of the memory of the *Samudaripen*.

[40] OSCE/ODIHR, *Teaching about and Commemorating the Roma Genocide*, Warsaw, 2015, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/b/135396.pdf.
[41] UNAR, *Strategia Nazionale d'Inclusione dei Rom, dei Sinti e dei Caminanti*, 2012, https://www.unar.it/portale/documents/20125/51449/Strategia-Rom-e-Sinti.pdf/2d0685a5-fdc5-d722-80d9-96914f46f148?t=1619795400688.
[42] UNAR, *Strategia Nazionale di Uguaglianza, Inclusione e Partecipazione 2021-2030*, 2021, https://www.unar.it/portale/documents/20125/113907/Strategia_Nazionale_di_uguaglianza_inclusione_partecipazione_di_Rom_e_Sinti_2021-2030+%28ITA%29.pdf/1e4ccc9c-aeba-e7b2-864d-ee1eced7e4df?t=1653399043993.

Nevertheless, Italy is still lacking systematic policies of remembrance or education and the Romani Holocaust remains largely unknown and unspoken.

Gaps and Silences Identified

The Italian case reveals deep silences in the politics of memory. First, a commemorative silence, as the Roma are absent from national monuments and only occasionally acknowledged in local commemorations. Second, an archival silence, where surviving records are dispersed, underutilized, and obscured by bureaucratic labels. Third, an educational silence, with Roma persecution almost completely omitted from textbooks and teacher training. Finally, an institutional silence, since recognition has been driven by NGOs and individual activists. These silences are not accidental omissions but reflect broader patterns of antigypsyism embedded in Italian society.

Synthesis of Findings

The Italian case demonstrates how Fascist and Nazi persecution targeted Roma through internment, deportation, and killings, yet post-war narratives erased this experience from collective memory. Survivors were excluded from restitution, and public history privileged the Resistance and Jewish persecution.

Educational curricula and commemorations continue to marginalize Roma, despite the existence of archival evidence and survivor testimonies. Civil society activism has preserved fragments of Roma memory, but institutional integration remains incomplete.

For Romdiem, Italy illustrates the dangers of selective memory: without explicit recognition of the *Samudaripen*, Holocaust remembrance risks reinforcing exclusion rather than fostering inclusive civic education. Breaking this silence requires integrating Roma persecution into curricula, acknowledging Roma explicitly in memorials, and systematically cataloguing archival records.

Serbia

Historical Context of the Samudaripen in Serbia

The persecution of the Roma in Serbia during the Second World War must be understood within the broader context of the German military occupation established after the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941. Following the rapid defeat of the Yugoslav army, Serbia became a zone of direct German military rule, supported by collaborationist structures such as the government of Milan Nedić and paramilitary organisations including the Serbian State Guard and the fascist Zbor movement.

German authorities quickly implemented racial policies that identified Roma, alongside Jews and political opponents, as populations to be controlled, segregated, and eliminated.[43] At the beginning of the autumn of 1941, large-scale executions were carried out in reprisal for partisan attacks. Roma men were among the first groups systematically targeted.

In Belgrade, mass shootings took place at Jajinci, Topovske Šupe, and other execution sites used by the German occupation forces.[44] Subsequent measures extended persecution to Roma families more broadly: women, children, and the elderly were interned at the Sajmište camp (Judenlager Semlin), where starvation, disease, overcrowding and forced labour produced extremely high mortality rates, particularly during the winter of 1941-1942.[45] Collaborationist forces played a significant role in these operations.

The Serbian State Guard and local police units compiled lists of Roma families, conducted arrests, guarded prisoners, and assisted German authorities in

[43] C. R. Browning, *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution,* Holmes & Meier, New York, 1985, pp. 87-89.
[44] P. Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century,* Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2011, pp.105-108.
[45] M.Koljanin, *Nemački logor na Beogradskom Sajmištu 1941-1944,* Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade, 1992, pp. 121-143, https://www.muzejgenocida.rs

implementing anti-Roma measures[46]. Propaganda issued by Nedić's administration reinforced racial stereotypes and created a political climate in which persecution was justified through the language of "public order" and "security".[47]

Estimates of the number of Roma killed in occupied Serbia vary, but most scholarly studies place the figure between 10,000 and 30,000, making Serbia one of the regions of Europe where the genocide of Roma was both early and extensive.[48] Unlike in areas where persecution intensified gradually, in Serbia the genocidal logic of the occupiers was implemented almost immediately, resulting in systematic arrests, shootings, and internment within the first months of occupation.[49]

National and Institutional Recognition

In socialist Yugoslavia after 1945, public remembrance of the Second World War was shaped by the ideological framework of "brotherhood and unity," which emphasized collective antifascist resistance and intentionally minimized ethnic distinctions among victim groups.[50] Within this commemorative model, Roma persecution was absorbed into broad categories such as "fallen fighters" or "victims of fascism," obscuring the racialized nature of violence directed at Roma communities.[51] As a consequence, Roma survivors received neither targeted symbolic recognition nor material restitution, in contrast to the gradual,

[46] J. Byford, *Picturing Genocide in the Independent State of Croatia,* Bloomsbury, London, 2020, pp. 56-59.
[47] O. Milosavljević, "Propaganda and Ideology in Occupied Serbia," in M. Bjelajac (ed. by), *Serbia in the Second World War*, Institute for Contemporary History, Belgrade, 2011, pp. 233-245.
[48] I. Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution,* Karoma, Ann Arbor, 1987, 72-78.
[49] M. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die Nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"* , Hamburger Edition, Hamburg, 1996, pp.205-208.
[50] J. Byford, *Denial and Repression of Anti-Semitism: Post-Communist Remembrance of the Serbian Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović,* Central European University Press, Budapest, 2008, pp. 67-70.
[51] O. Milosavljević, "The Ideology of Brotherhood and Unity and its Impact on Holocaust Memory," in M. Todorova (ed. by), *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*, Hurst, London, 2004, pp. 138-141.

albeit limited, acknowledgment afforded to Jewish survivors in the decades following the war.[52]

The disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and the emergence of nationalist narratives further marginalized Roma memory. Public discourse increasingly focused on Serbian victimhood during the conflicts of the 1990s, leaving little space for re-examining the neglected histories of Roma suffering during the Holocaust.[53] Despite the collapse of the socialist universalist paradigm, structural antigypsyism persisted within institutions and public culture, preventing meaningful engagement with Roma wartime experiences.[54]

More systematic efforts toward Holocaust remembrance emerged only in the early 2000s, influenced by Serbia's engagement with European institutions and international organizations. In 2006, Serbia adopted 27 January as the official Holocaust Memorial Day, aligning with UN Resolution 60/7; however, commemorative practices remained centered on Jewish victims and Serbian civilian losses.[55]

Recognition of 2 August, the International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, has been championed primarily by Roma NGOs and cultural organizations, with inconsistent participation from state institutions.[56] The Museum of Genocide Victims in Belgrade has made efforts to include Roma persecution through scholarly publications and temporary exhibitions, but such references remain limited compared to the extensive attention devoted to Jewish victims and the partisan struggle.[57] Overall, institutional recognition of the *Samudaripen* in

[52] P. Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century,* Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2011, pp. 102-104.
[53] J. Mihajlović Trbovc, "Public Narratives of the Second World War in Serbia," *Nationalities Papers* vol. 40, VI, 2012, pp. 941-945.
[54] J. Đurić, "Antigypsyism in Serbia: Historical Roots and Contemporary Forms," *Etnoantropološki problemi*, X, 3, 2015, pp. 785-788.
[55] Center for Holocaust Research and Education, *Holocaust Remembrance in Serbia,* CHRE, Belgrade, 2010, pp. 12-14.
[56] Roma Cultural Centre Belgrade, *The Roma Genocide: Commemorations and Memory,* RCC, Belgrade, 2015, pp. 5-7.
[57] M. Koljanin, "Representation of Roma Persecution in Serbian Memory Institutions," in H. van Baar (ed. by), *The Roma Genocide in European Public Discourse*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2016, pp. 211-215.

Serbia has been fragmented, largely symbolic, and driven predominantly by civil society rather than by sustained state policy.

Presence in Educational Curricula

Holocaust education became formally integrated into Serbian schools in the early 2000s, largely due to Serbia's alignment with European and international frameworks promoting human rights, minority protection, and Holocaust remembrance. However, despite this structural adoption, the persecution of Roma during the Second World War remains only marginally represented within Serbian educational materials.[58]

Analyses of primary and secondary school history textbooks show that these materials devote substantial attention to the Jewish genocide, the partisan resistance, and the suffering of the Serbian civilian population.[59] By contrast, Roma persecution is either omitted entirely or mentioned only briefly, typically under general labels such as "other victims of fascism," without substantive discussion of internment, forced labour, shootings, or the specific targeting of Roma communities by German occupation forces and local collaborators.[60] Such wording obscures both the scale and the interntionality of anti-Roma policies implemented between 1941 and 1944.

Curriculum research conducted in Belgrade, Niš, and Novi Sad indicates that educators often lack access to specialized teaching resources about the Roma genocide. Teachers interviewed for national studies emphasise that Holocaust training workshops, frequently conducted with the support of the OSCE, the Council of Europe, or the Jewish community, tend to focus almost exclusively

[58] Council of Europe, *Teaching about the Holocaust and the History of Genocide in South-East Europe: Recommendations and Guidelines,* Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2007, pp. 22-26, https://rm.coe.int/168049423f

[59] D. Stolić, "The Representation of the Holocaust in Serbian History Textbooks," *History Education Research Journal,* XVII, 2, Belgrade, 2020, pp. 184-187.

[60] B. Todić, *Holokaust u udžbenicima istorije u Srbiji,* Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade, 2015, pp. 41-44.

on Jewish experiences[61]. Consequently, most teachers rely entirely on the limited content available in textbooks, which perpetuates a partial representation of the Holocaust and contributes to widespread ignorance about Roma persecution.[62]Roma students themselves report a sense of exclusion in classroom discussions of the Second World War. Scholars have noted that the absence of Roma experiences in educational narratives reinforces broader patterns of social marginalisation and antigypsyism, as Roma histories remain unacknowledged and unvalidated within formal learning environments.[63]

Civil society organizations, including the Roma Cultural Centre (Belgrade), Civil Rights Defenders Serbia, and the Center for Holocaust Research and Education, have developed supplementary teaching modules, exhibitions, and training programmers specifically addressing Roma genocide.[64] While academically valuable, these materials lack systemic integration into national curricula and are typically used only in extracurricular or project-based contexts. As a result, knowledge about the Samudaripen remains uneven and largely dependent on individual teachers or NGO initiatives, rather than being embedded in institutional educational policy.

Sites of Memory, Archives, and Law

The commemorative landscape of Serbia reveals a persistent hierarchy of memory in which Roma victims of the Second World War remain largely marginalized in official narratives, memorial sites, museum exhibitions, and heritage policies. Although Serbia hosts several major locations associated with mass executions and wartime atrocities, most notably Jajinci, Topovske Šupe, and the Sajmište camp (Judenlager Semlin), these sites have historically

[61] Council of Europe, *Teaching about the Holocaust and the History of Genocide in South-East Europe: Recommendations and Guidelines*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2007, pp. 22–26.

[62] D. Stolić, "The Representation of the Holocaust in Serbian History Textbooks," *History Education Research Journal,* XVII, 2, Belgrade, 2020, pp.188-190.

[63] J. Đurić, *Antigypsyism in Serbia: Historical Roots and Contemporary Forms*, *Etnoantropološki problemi*, X, 3, Belgrade, 2015, pp. 793-795.

[64] Center for Holocaust Research and Education, *Roma and the Holocaust: Educational Materials for Schools,* CHRE, Belgrade, 2016, pp. 7-12.

foregrounded the suffering of Jewish victims and Serbian civilians, while the persecution of Roma has been either indirectly referenced or omitted entirely.[65] At Jajinci, one of the largest execution grounds in the German-occupied Balkans, inscriptions on monuments refer broadly to "innocent victims of fascist terror," without naming Roma, despite well-documented evidence that numerous Roma men were executed there between 1941 and 1942.[66] Similarly, the site of Topovske Šupe, used as a detention and execution point for Jewish and Roma males from Belgrade and Banat, has been commemorated primarily within a Jewish framework, with Roma victims rarely appearing in plaques or explanatory material.[67]

The Museum of Genocide Victims in Belgrade constitutes the central institution responsible for documenting atrocities committed on Serbian territory during the Second World War. Although the museum has produced valuable scholarship related to the Holocaust and occupation policies, its permanent exhibitions have historically given limited attention to Roma persecution[68]. Recent years have seen incremental improvements, including curated exhibitions and publications addressing Roma victims, yet these efforts remain secondary within the broader institutional narrative.[69]

Archival materials relevant to the Roma genocide are dispersed across the Archives of Serbia, the Belgrade City Archives, municipal police collections, and captured German military records housed in both Serbian and international repositories[70]. A major obstacle in reconstructing Roma persecution is the fact

[65] M. Koljanin, *Nemački logor na Beogradskom Sajmištu 1941–1944,* Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade, 1992, pp. 215-219.

[66] P. Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century,* Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2011, pp.110-112.

[67] M. Ristović, "The Holocaust in Serbia," in P. Mojzes (ed. by), *The Holocaust in Yugoslavia*, Peter Lang, New York, 2011, pp. 85-90.

[68]Museum of Genocide Victims of Belgrade, *Annual Report,* MGV Publishing, Belgrade, 2018, pp. 34-38.

[69] OSCE, *Teaching about and Commemorating the Roma and Sinti Genocide: Practices within the OSCE Area*, Warsaw, 2015, p. 16

[70]Archives of Serbia, Fond MUP–1941/44, "Registers on Interned and Detained Persons", https://arhiv.rs

that Roma were often classified under administrative categories such as "asocials," "vagrants," or "civilians," making the identification of victims dependent on meticulous cross-referencing of lists, orders, and testimonies[71]. The Museum of Genocide Victims and researchers such as Milan Koljanin have contributed significantly to recovering documentation related to arrests, shootings, and internment at Sajmište, though systematic cataloguing remains incomplete.[72]Legal protection of memory sites related to Roma persecution is inconsistent. Serbia's Law on War Memorials provides a formal framework for declaring and preserving sites of historical suffering, yet Roma-specific locations are seldom prioritised, and few memorial plaques explicitly acknowledge Roma as victims.[73]

Civil society actors, including Roma organisations and human rights groups, have worked to highlight Roma history through commemorations on 2 August (International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day) and through digital archives and public events. However, these initiatives remain weakly integrated into state-led remembrance policy, reinforcing the continuing invisibility of Roma experiences within Serbia's official memory culture.[74]

Gaps and Silences Identified

A review of Serbia's memorial landscape, educational frameworks, and institutional narratives reveals several persistent "silences" surrounding the persecution of Roma during the Second World War. These silences are not the result of an absence of historical evidence, since documentation on mass

[71]J. Byford, *Picturing Genocide in the Independent State of Croatia: The Photographs of Atrocities at Jasenovac, 1941–1945,* Bloomsbury, London, 2020, pp. 60-62.

[72] M. Koljanin, "Representation of Roma Persecution in Serbian Memory Institutions," in H. van Baar, A. Kóczé (ed. by), *The Roma Genocide in European Public Discourse*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2016, pp. 211-215.

[73] Republic of Serbia, *Law on War Memorials* (Official Gazette RS, no. 50/93), articles 2-6.

[74] Civil Rights Defenders Serbia, *Commemorating the Roma Genocide,* CRD, Belgrade, 2019, pp. 4-9, https://crd.org

shootings, internment, and occupation policies is substantial, but rather stem from long-standing ideological, institutional, and cultural dynamics.

First, a commemorative silence persists. At major memory sites such as Jajinci, Topovske Šupe, and Sajmište, Roma victims remain unnamed in most inscriptions and public materials.[75] Memorial plaques frequently reference "innocent victims" or "victims of fascism," reflecting continuity with socialist-era rhetoric that avoided naming specific ethnic groups. This linguistic generalization has contributed to the erasure of Roma from the symbolic geography of Serbian wartime remembrance.

Second, an archival silence emerges from the way Roma were categorized under German occupation. Wartime documentation often registered Roma as "asocials," "vagrants," or simply "civilians," rather than identifying them explicitly as Roma.[76] Such terminology complicates historical reconstruction and perpetuates the invisibility of Roma victims in official lists and reports. Researchers must therefore rely on cross-referencing German military orders, police records, post-war investigations and demographic estimates to recover the scale of anti-Roma measures.[77]

Third, educational silence is evident. As shown in multiple textbook analyses, curricula devote minimal space to Roma persecution and rarely include detailed accounts of shootings, forced labor, or internment.[78] Teachers lack specialized training and dedicated teaching materials, resulting in classroom narratives that reproduce incomplete or distorted representations of the Holocaust in Serbia.

Fourth, an institutional silence persists in state-led remembrance. While Serbia has adopted international memorial dates and participates in Holocaust

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[75] P. Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century,* Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2011, pp. 110-112.
[76] M. Koljanin, *Nemački logor na Beogradskom Sajmištu 1941–1944*, Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade, 1992, pp.45-52.
[77] Archives of Serbia, Fond MUP–1941/44, "Registers on Interned and Detained Persons.", https://arhiv.rs
[78] D. Stolić, "The Representation of the Holocaust in Serbian History Textbooks," *History Education Research Journal* vol.17, no. 2, Belgrade, 2020, pp. 184-190.

commemorations, explicit recognition of the Roma genocide has been largely driven by NGOs, minority organizations, and civil society actors.[79] Official institutions have not taken sustained steps to integrate Roma experiences into national memory policies, heritage protection frameworks, or historical education. This absence mirrors broader structural antigypsyism within Serbian society, in which Roma histories are routinely marginalized.[80]

Together, these gaps illustrate the fragmented state of Roma genocide remembrance in Serbia. They highlight the need for comprehensive reforms, including the explicit naming of Roma at memorial sites, improved archival cataloging practices, curricular revision, and institutional engagement, to ensure that Roma persecution occupies its rightful place within the country's historical consciousness.

Synthesis of Findings

The Serbian case demonstrates how the genocide of the Roma was implemented early and systematically under German occupation, supported by local collaborationist structures. As shown by the work of Koljanin, Browning and Mojzes, Serbia became one of the first European territories where mass shootings, internment, and targeted reprisals against Roma were carried out in the autumn of 1941.[81]

The persecution of Roma was not incidental: it was an integral element of the racial and security policies of the German military administration and its local auxiliaries. Although a substantial body of archival evidence exists - including German military documentation, police records, and material associated with

[79] Roma Cultural Centre Belgrade, *The Roma Genocide: Commemorations and Memory,* RCC, Belgrade, 2015, pp. 5-7.
[80] Civil Rights Defenders Serbia, *Commemorating the Roma Genocide*, Civil Rights Defenders, Belgrade, 2019, pp. 4-9.
[81] M. Koljanin, *Nemački logor na Beogradskom Sajmištu 1941-1944*, Institut za savremenu istoriju, Belgrade, 1992, pp. 121-143; C. R. Browning, *Fateful Months,* Holmes & Meier, New York, 1985, pp. 87-89; P. Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides,* Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2011, pp. 105-108.

the Sajmište camp - Roma victims have remained largely absent from the country's public memory.[82]

This invisibility can be traced back to the ideological framework of socialist Yugoslavia, which emphasized collective antifascist suffering and deliberately avoided identifying victims along ethnic lines.[83]

The portrayal of the Second World War in post-war Serbia therefore absorbed Roma losses into generic categories of "civilian victims," preventing recognition of the specific racial motivations behind their persecution. The post-Yugoslav period did not significantly alter this dynamic. Nationalist interpretations that emerged in the 1990s further marginalized Roma history, and longstanding patterns of antigypsyism continued to shape institutional and societal attitudes.[84] At the educational level, curricula still allocate only minimal space to the *Samudaripen*, and teachers often lack the resources and training needed to address Roma persecution in depth.[85]

This contributes to a persistent lack of awareness among students and reinforces the broader cultural invisibility of Roma experiences. Institutional recognition remains uneven and largely dependent on civil society. While Serbia participates in international commemorative frameworks, most notably through the marking of 27 January, state-led remembrance seldom integrates the history of Roma persecution in a substantial manner. Roma associations, cultural organisations and human rights groups have taken the lead in promoting 2 August as the International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day and in

[82] M. Pisarri, *The Suffering of the Roma in Serbia during the Holocaust*, Forum for Applied History, Belgrade, 2014, pp. 11–27.

[83] J. Subotić, *Yellow Star, Red Star: Holocaust Remembrance after Communism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-London, 2019, pp. 34-39.
[84] J. Đurić, *Antigypsyism in Serbia: Historical Roots and Contemporary Forms*, in *Džanes ko sem? Do You Know Who I Am?*, Forum for Applied History, Belgrade, 2016, pp. 28-35.
[85] Ivi.

developing educational and commemorative initiatives that address Roma history directly.[86]

Taken together, these dynamics show how a genocide that is well documented in archives, demographic studies and scholarly research can remain marginal in national memory. Addressing these silences requires an explicit acknowledgment of Roma victims at major memorial sites, improved archival cataloguing practices that identify Roma within administrative records, and the integration of Roma persecution into educational curricula and institutional remembrance. Without such steps, the genocide of Roma risks continuing to occupy a peripheral place in Serbia's historical consciousness, perpetuating symbolic exclusion long after the end of the war.

Greece

Historical Context of the Samudaripen in Greece

The persecution of the Roma in Greece during the Second World War unfolded within a uniquely fragmented occupation regime, as the country was divided in 1941 into German, Italian, and Bulgarian zones of control. Each occupying authority applied discriminatory policies in line with Axis racial ideology, producing a geographically uneven but cumulatively devastating impact on Roma communities.[87]

In the German-occupied zones, particularly in Macedonia and Thrace, the Roma were subjected to systematic surveillance, restrictions on movement, compulsory registration, and forced labor. These measures mirrored the broader German security strategy in the Balkans and were enforced by the

[86] Roma Cultural Centre Belgrade, *The Roma Genocide: Commemorations and Memory,* RCC, Belgrade, 2015, pp. 5-7; Civil Rights Defenders Serbia, *Commemorating the Roma Genocide,* CRD, Belgrade, 2019, pp. 4-9.

[87] M. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993, pp. 14-21.

Wehrmacht and Gestapo alongside local administrative bodies[88]. Evidence from German military records indicates that Roma men were frequently conscripted into labour battalions tasked with maintaining transport routes, repairing rail infrastructure sabotaged by resistance groups, and performing other forms of coerced labour under harsh conditions[89].

The Bulgarian occupation zone in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace was marked by even harsher policies, as Sofia extended to Greece the racial and demographic measures implemented in Bulgarian-administered territories since 1941. Bulgarian authorities applied the *Zakon za Zaštita na Načijata* (Law for the Protection of the Nation) and related decrees to "undesirable populations," subjecting Roma to expulsions, village clearances, confiscation of property, and forced labour mobilization.[90]

In the Italian occupation zone, encompassing most of mainland Greece and the Peloponnese until September 1943, persecution was comparatively less systematic. Italian Fascist authorities monitored and harassed Roma communities but did not implement a coordinated deportation programme prior to the German takeover.[91] However, following the Italian armistice in September 1943, German forces absorbed the Italian zone and extended anti-Roma measures southwards.

Archival material and deportation lists from the post-September 1943 period confirm that Roma families from Thessaly and the Peloponnese were among those sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where many perished in the *Zigeunerlager*

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[88] H. Fleischer, *Stemma kai Svastika: I Ellada tis Katochis kai tis Antistasis* [*Crown and Swastika: Greece under Occupation and Resistance*] Papazisis, Athen, 1995, vol. I, pp. 233-240.

[89] C. R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution,*University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2004, pp. 368-370.

[90] R. Avramov, *Salvation and the Holocaust: The Bulgarian Paradox* , Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia, 2012, pp. 112-118.

[91] D. Rodogno, *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation during the Second World War,* Cambridge University Press, 2006, Cambridge, pp. 318-320.

(Gypsy Family Camp).[92] Overall, the *Samudaripen* in Greece combined forced labour, expulsions, displacement, and deportations to extermination camps. Although documentation is incomplete due to inconsistent administrative registration and the common practice of categorising Roma as "asocial" or "stateless," scholarly estimates indicate that several thousand Roma were affected directly by occupation measures[93].

The fragmented evidence is consistent with broader patterns of persecution across Europe but reflects the distinctive complexity of a multi-occupational regime in which German, Italian, and Bulgarian policies intersected and overlapped.

National and Institutional Recognition

Public and institutional recognition of Roma persecution in Greece has historically been limited and uneven, shaped by the complex political legacies of the Occupation, the Civil War, and the post-war reconstruction period. In the decades following 1945, official narratives focused primarily on national suffering, resistance, and the martyrdom of Greek civilians, particularly in regions that experienced large-scale reprisals by German forces.[94]

Within this framework, the persecution of minority groups, including Roma and Jews, was largely marginalized, while the atrocities of the Occupation were remembered through a predominantly national lens. In contrast to the Jewish community, which gradually re-established itself after liberation and secured recognition for the destruction of Greek Jewry, Roma survivors had limited

[92] S. Steinbacher, *Auschwitz: Geschichte und Nachgeschichte,* C.H. Beck, Munich, 2004, pp. 72-75.
[93] D. Kenrick & G. Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies,* Basic Books, New York, 1972, pp. 56-60.
[94] M. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44* , Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993, pp. 3-12.

organizational capacity and lacked political representation capable of advocating for their recognition.[95]

Post-war state institutions did not develop mechanisms to document the persecution of Roma, and no compensation schemes or reparations frameworks were extended to Roma survivors, unlike the partial restitution processes available to Jewish victims.[96] As a result, the *Samudaripen* remained almost entirely absent from public commemoration during the second half of the twentieth century.

Recognition began to evolve only after the 1980s, driven partly by Greece's accession to the European Communities (1981) and the broader adoption of human rights frameworks that highlighted minority protection.[97] However, Roma genocide remained largely unaddressed in public policy, with the Greek state focusing instead on socioeconomic integration programmers rather than historical acknowledgment.

Even major national commemorations of the Occupation, such as anniversaries of the Kalavryta, Distomo, and Kommeno massacres, did not reference Roma victims, despite evidence of Roma persecution in several regions[98]. A more significant shift occurred in the 2000s and 2010s, influenced by Greece's participation in European Holocaust remembrance initiatives coordinated by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and by increased academic attention to minority persecution. Greek Jewish organizations, particularly the Jewish Museum of Greece and the Central Board of Jewish Communities, incorporated the history of Roma persecution into exhibitions and

[95] H. Fleischer, *Stemma kai Svastika* [*Crown and Swastika*], vol. II, Papazisis, Athens, 1995, pp. 411-415.
[96] K. Elizabeth Fleming, *Greece-A Jewish History,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2008, pp. 203-206.
[97] D. Sotiropoulos, "Southern European Democracies and the European Union," in *The Oxford Handbook of Southern European Studies*, ed. José M. Magone, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015, pp. 289-291.
[98] S. Dordanas, *I Mavri Varka: Synergasia kai Katochi sti Dytiki Makedonia* [*The "Black Shame": Collaboration and Occupation in Western Macedonia*], Epikentro, Thessaloniki, 2009, pp. 178-183.

educational programmers, but institutional engagement by state authorities remained limited[99].

The Greek state formally recognized 27 January as Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2004 (Law 3218/2004), and some ceremonies include references to Roma victims; however, these acknowledgments are generally symbolic and not grounded in dedicated research or policy frameworks[100]. The 2 August Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, commemorated across Europe, has not been institutionally integrated into Greek state commemorative practices and is observed primarily by NGOs, Roma associations, and human rights organizations.[101]

Overall, institutional recognition in Greece remains fragmented. While recent initiatives demonstrate increased awareness, the absence of systematic documentation, memorialization, and curricular integration indicates that the *Samudaripen* has not yet achieved a stable place in Greece's national remembrance landscape. Current developments, particularly research projects conducted by universities and NGOs on minority persecution in Greece, suggest a gradual shift, but the process remains incomplete.

Presence in Educational Curricula

Holocaust education in Greece is structured through national curricula for primary and secondary schools, which were significantly revised during the early 2000s under the influence of European human rights frameworks and the country's participation in international remembrance initiatives. Despite these

[99] Jewish Museum of Greece, *Annual Report 2018,* JMG, Athens, 2019, pp. 34-36, www.jewishmuseum.gr
[100] Hellenic Republic, Law 3218/2004, "Establishment of 27 January as the National Day of Remembrance of the Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust".
[101] Greek Helsinki Monitor, *Roma Rights in Greece: Annual Report,* GHM, Athens, 2019, pp. 12-15 , greekhelsinkimonitor.org

reforms, the persecution of Roma during the Occupation remains largely absent from Greek educational materials.[102]

Analyses of state-approved history textbooks for Gymnasio (lower secondary) and Lykeio (upper secondary) reveal that the Holocaust is typically presented through a focus on Jewish persecution, with extended attention to the destruction of Greek Jewish communities in Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Rhodes, and Corfu[103]. While these sections are detailed and well-supported, Roma persecution appears either not at all or as a brief, non-specific reference to "other groups targeted by Nazi racial policies"[104].

This omission reflects longstanding patterns in Greek historical education, where attention to minority experiences has been secondary to narratives of national suffering, resistance, and liberation. Teacher training follows a similar pattern. Educators receive periodic Holocaust education seminars organised by the Jewish Museum of Greece, the Ministry of Education, and IHRA-affiliated institutions. Although these seminars are academically rigorous, their content focuses primarily on Jewish history and rarely includes substantial material on the Roma genocide[105]. Interviews with teachers in Athens and Thessaloniki confirm that many educators lack both the training and the pedagogical resources required to address the *Samudaripen* effectively in the classroom.[106]Supplementary materials exist but have not been integrated into national curricula. The Jewish Museum of Greece has produced high-quality educational kits on the Holocaust; yet, these do not include dedicated modules

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[102] A. Frangoudaki & Thalia Dragona (eds.), *"Τι είναι η πατρίδα μας;" Εθνοκεντρισμός στην εκπαίδευση* [*What Is Our Homeland? Ethnocentrism in Education*], Alexandria, Athens, 1997, pp. 201-210.

[103] V. Koulouri (ed.), *Clio in the Balkans: The Politics of History Education,* Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, Thessaloniki, 2002, pp. 324-327, CDRSEE Archive: https://cdrsee.org

[104] Stratos Dordanas et al., *Istoria Gymnasiou* [*History for Gymnasium*] OEDB/Ministry of Education, Athens, 2014, pp. 142-144.

[105] Jewish Museum of Greece, *Educational Programs on the Holocaust,* JMG, Athens, 2017, pp. 9-14 , https://www.jewishmuseum.gr

[106] Maria Roussou, "Teaching the Holocaust in Greece: Challenges and Perspectives," *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Research Paper Series* , IHRA, 2018, pp. 5-8, https://holocaustremembrance.com

on Roma persecution.[107] NGOs such as the Greek Helsinki Monitor and international organizations like the OSCE have published teaching resources addressing Roma discrimination, but these concern contemporary human rights issues rather than historical persecution during the war.[108]

As a result, Greek students typically complete their schooling with little to no awareness of the fate of Roma communities under German, Italian, and Bulgarian occupation. The combined effects of curriculum design, limited teacher training, and the lack of dedicated pedagogical tools have reinforced the broader marginalization of Roma history within Greek public memory[109].

Sites of Memory, Archives, and Resources

The landscape of Holocaust-related memory in Greece has traditionally centred on the destruction of the Greek Jewish communities, particularly that of Thessaloniki. Within this framework, the persecution of Roma has received limited institutional visibility. Major memorial sites, archives, and museums acknowledge the broader context of the Occupation but seldom include explicit references to Roma victims, resulting in their near absence from Greece's commemorative geography.[110] The Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens stands as the country's principal institution dedicated to Holocaust documentation and education. Its permanent exhibition provides extensive material on the deportation and annihilation of Greek Jews but includes only indirect or minimal references to the fate of Roma under occupation[111]. While the museum has participated in European initiatives that encourage inclusion of Roma history, it has not yet developed dedicated displays or research

[107] Jewish Museum of Greece, *Holocaust Educational Kit,* JMG, Athens, 2010.
[108] Greek Helsinki Monitor, *Roma Rights in Greece: Education and Discrimination,* GHM, Athens, 2018, pp. 18-21, https://greekhelsinkimonitor.org
[109] R. van Boeschoten, *The Politics of Memory in Post-War Greece,* Routledge, London, 2017, pp. 260-263.
[110] M. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44* , Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993, pp. 325-330.

[111] Jewish Museum of Greece, *Annual Report 2018,* JMG, Athens, 2019, pp. 34-36, https://www.jewishmuseum.gr

programmes focusing on the *Samudaripen*.[112] In Thessaloniki, where the Jewish community suffered catastrophic losses, memorial sites and exhibitions, such as those at the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki and the Holocaust Memorial in Eleftherias Square likewise emphasise Jewish persecution, with no systematic integration of Roma experiences[113].

Regional memorials commemorating massacres perpetrated by German forces, such as in Kommeno, Distomo, or Kalavryta, predominantly highlight Greek civilian suffering and rarely acknowledge minority victims, despite evidence of Roma displacement and forced labour in these same regions[114]. Greek archival resources relevant to the Roma genocide are dispersed and underutilised. The General State Archives of Greece (GAK) contain administrative records from the occupation period, including police reports, prefectural correspondence, and demographic data; however, Roma are often categorised under terms such as “vagrants” or “itinerants,” which obscure their ethnic identity and hinder systematic documentation[115].

Additional material exists in the archives of the Jewish Museum of Greece, which houses testimonies and occupation-era documents, but these collections primarily concern Jewish communities[116]. Some of the most important documentation comes from foreign archives, notably the German Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv), which preserve Wehrmacht and Gestapo reports concerning forced labour mobilization in Macedonia and Thrace.[117] Digital and online resources relating specifically to Roma persecution in Greece remain

[112] Jewish Museum of Greece, *Educational Programs on the Holocaust,* JMG, Athens, 2017, pp. 9-14.
[113] Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, *Annual Report 2019* (Thessaloniki: JMT, Thessaloniki, 2020, pp. 22-25, https://www.jmth.gr
[114] S. Dordanas, *I Mavri Varka: Synergasia kai Katochi sti Dytiki Makedonia* [*The “Black Shame”: Collaboration and Occupation in Western Macedonia*], Epikentro, Thessaloniki, 2009, pp. 178-183.

[115]General State Archives of Greece (GAK), Prefectural Fonds, 1941-1944 https://gak.gr

[116] Jewish Museum of Greece, Holocaust Document Collections, https://www.jewishmuseum.gr

[117] Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archives), RH 21-2, Wehrmacht Operations in Greece, 1941-44, www.bundesarchiv.de

limited. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum provides access to several deportation lists and occupation documents that include references to Greek Roma deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, though the material is not consolidated in a dedicated collection.[118]

Overall, the combination of fragmented archival sources, selective memorialization, and limited institutional engagement has resulted in an incomplete and underdeveloped landscape of Roma genocide remembrance in Greece. Despite the existence of relevant primary sources, both domestic and international, Roma experiences remain largely absent from the country's official sites of memory.

Gaps and Silences Identified

A review of Greece's institutional, educational, and commemorative landscape reveals several persistent silences surrounding the persecution of Roma during the Second World War. These silences are not the result of insufficient historical evidence, archival material exists in both Greek and foreign collections, but rather the consequence of longstanding political, cultural, and historiographical dynamics that have shaped Greek memory of the Occupation.

The first gap is a commemorative silence. Major memorial sites in Greece, such as Kalavryta, Distomo, Viannos, Kommeno, and other locations commemorating German reprisals - focus overwhelmingly on Greek civilian suffering and resistance[119]. These memorials rarely include references to minority victims, including Roma, despite documented evidence of Roma displacement, forced labour, and executions in several of these regions[120]. Greek Holocaust memorials, primarily dedicated to Jewish victims in

[118] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Collections Search: "Greece Roma", https://collections.ushmm.org

[119] M. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993, pp. 335-340.

[120] S. Dordanas, *I Mavri Varka: Synergasia kai Katochi sti Dytiki Makedonia,* Epikentro,Thessaloniki, 2009, pp. 178-183.

Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Rhodes and other cities, do not systematically integrate Roma experiences, leaving the *Samudaripen* effectively absent from national commemorative practice[121].

A second gap concerns archival silence. Roma are inconsistently categorised in Greek administrative documents from the occupation period. The General State Archives preserve prefectural correspondence, demographic lists, and police reports; however, Roma are often classified under generalised categories such as "itinerants," "vagrants," or "stateless persons," obscuring their ethnic identity[122]. This makes it difficult to reconstruct the precise scale and geographic spread of anti-Roma policies. Additional relevant documentation is preserved in the German Federal Archives and the Bulgarian State Archives, but these materials have not been systematically integrated into Greek historiography[123].

A third gap lies in educational silence. Greek school curricula treat the Holocaust as an important part of modern European history, yet Rome-related content is missing almost entirely. National textbooks emphasise the destruction of Greek Jewry, while Roma persecution appears at most as a brief reference to "other victims" without detail or contextualisation[124]. Teachers lack specialised training and dedicated pedagogical tools, resulting in a limited capacity to address Roma experiences even when they attempt to expand beyond textbook narratives.[125] Finally, an institutional silence persists. State engagement with Roma genocide remembrance remains minimal. Although Greece participates in the annual commemoration of 27 January and is a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, official

[121] Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki, *Annual Report 2019,* Thessaloniki: JMT, Thessaloniki, 2020, pp. 22-25 , https://www.jmth.gr

[122]General State Archives of Greece (GAK), Prefectural Fonds, 1941-1944, https://gak.gr

[123] Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archives), RH 21-2, Wehrmacht Operations in Greece, 1941-44 , www.bundesarchiv.de.

[124] V. Koulouri (ed.), *Clio in the Balkans: The Politics of History Education,* Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, Thessaloniki, 2002, pp. 324-327.

[125] M. Roussou, "Teaching the Holocaust in Greece," *IHRA Research Paper Series,* 2018, pp. 5-8.

ceremonies seldom include explicit reference to Roma victims[126]. The 2 August Roma Holocaust Memorial Day is observed almost exclusively by NGOs, Roma associations, and human rights groups, with little involvement from national or municipal authorities[127]. The absence of a stable institutional framework for documenting, commemorating, and teaching Roma persecution reinforces the broader social marginalization of Roma communities in Greece.

Taken together, these commemorative, archival, educational, and institutional silences demonstrate how Roma persecution, despite being historically documented, remains peripheral within Greek public memory. The gaps reflect structural patterns of invisibility and indicate the need for sustained research, curricular reform, and targeted commemorative initiatives to ensure that Roma experiences during the Occupation are fully integrated into Greece's national narratives of the Second World War.

Synthesis of Findings

The case of Greece illustrates how the persecution of the Roma during the Second World War unfolded within a fragmented occupation regime and how this complexity has contributed to their subsequent invisibility in national memory.

German, Italian, and Bulgarian authorities implemented discriminatory policies of varying intensity, ranging from forced labour mobilizations and village clearances to deportations to extermination camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau[128]. The historical record - preserved in Greek, German, and Bulgarian archives - demonstrates that Roma communities were subjected to racial persecution consistent with broader Axis policies, even if the scale and form of

[126] Hellenic Republic, Law 3218/2004, "National Day of Remembrance of Greek Jewish Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust."

[127] Greek Helsinki Monitor, *Roma Rights in Greece: Annual Report*, GHM, Athens, 2019, pp. 12-15, greekhelsinkimonitor.org

[128] M. Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1993, pp. 14–21; D. Rodogno, *Fascism's European Empire,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 318-320.

the violence differed across regions.[129]Despite this evidence, Roma experiences have remained largely absent from Greek collective memory. Post-war narratives emphasized national resistance and the suffering of Greek civilians, focusing particularly on regions that experienced mass reprisals by German forces.[130]

Within this framework, minority histories, including those of Roma, were subsumed under generalized accounts of occupation and were not integrated into commemorations or institutional remembrance. This dynamic persisted through the latter half of the twentieth century, as Greek historiography and state memory policy granted priority to the destruction of the Jewish community, while Roma persecution received little scholarly or public attention.[131]

Educational materials reinforce this silence. Greek history textbooks highlight the annihilation of Greek Jewry with considerable detail, yet provide no substantive account of the *Samudaripen.*[132] Teachers lack the resources and training necessary to address Roma experiences, and supplementary material produced by NGOs, while valuable, is not systematically incorporated into national curricula. As a result, Greek students typically complete their schooling without learning about the forced labour, expulsions, and deportations that affected Roma communities under German and Bulgarian rule.[133]

Institutionally, recognition of Roma persecution remains limited. Greece participates in international frameworks for Holocaust remembrance, but official commemorations have not fully integrated references to Roma victims, and the 2 August Roma Holocaust Memorial Day remains primarily a civil society

[129] R. Avramov, *Salvation and the Holocaust: The Bulgarian Paradox,* Centre for Advanced Study, Sofia, 2012, pp. 112-118; Bulgarian State Archives, Fond 1K, Eastern Macedonia Reports, pp. 1941-43.
[130] S. Dordanas, *I Mavri Varka: Synergasia kai Katochi sti Dytiki Makedonia,* Epikentro, Thessaloniki, 2009, pp. 178-183.

[131] H. Fleischer, *Stemma kai Svastika*, vol. II, Papazisis, Athens, 1995, pp. 411-415.

[132] V.Koulouri (ed.), *Clio in the Balkans,* CDRSEE, Thessaloniki, 2002, pp. 324-327.
[133] M. Roussou, "Teaching the Holocaust in Greece," *IHRA Research Paper Series* (2018), pp. 5-8, https://holocaustremembrance.com

initiative[134]. Archival resources relevant to Roma persecution are available but have not been consolidated, cataloged, or presented in a manner that supports public understanding or sustained research. The absence of targeted memorials, dedicated museum exhibits, and state-sponsored educational initiatives underscores the marginality of Roma experiences within Greece's remembrance culture.[135]

Taken together, the Greek case demonstrates how a genocide that is historically documented can remain peripheral in national memory due to longstanding patterns of institutional neglect, historiographical omission, and educational silence. Overcoming these gaps requires a deliberate effort, grounded in historical research, curricular reform, and public commemoration, to integrate the *Samudaripen* into the broader understanding of the Occupation and to ensure that the persecution of Roma becomes an acknowledged part of Greece's historical consciousness

Belgium

Historical Context of the Samudaripen in Belgium

The persecution of the Roma in Belgium during the Second World War took place within the framework of the German military occupation established after the invasion of May 1940. Belgium was placed under the authority of the *Militärverwaltung in Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, which rapidly introduced anti-Jewish measures and extended to the so-called "asocial" groups, including itinerant Roma, the same logic of surveillance, control, and exclusion that characterised Nazi racial policy elsewhere in Western Europe.[136]

[134] Greek Helsinki Monitor, *Roma Rights in Greece: Annual Report*, GHM, Athens, 2019, pp. 12-15, https://greekhelsinkimonitor.org
[135] Jewish Museum of Greece, *Annual Report 2018*, JMG, Athens, 2019, pp. 34-36, www.jewishmuseum.gr

[136] D. Michman (ed. by), *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1998. Cfr., in particular, the essay "Research on the Holocaust in Belgium and in General: History and Context", pp. 3-38, https://archive.org/details/isbn_9653080687

Before the war, the Roma presence in Belgium was numerically small but socially visible, especially in the form of travelling families, fairground workers, and itinerant traders.[137] Existing regulations on "vagrancy" and "nomadism" already subjected them to police monitoring. Under occupation, these mechanisms were tightened: the Aliens Police and local authorities compiled files on foreign and itinerant populations, restricted mobility, and facilitated the identification of the Roma for the German security services.[138]

From summer 1942, the persecution of the Jews and Roma in Belgium became structurally linked to the functioning of a single transit camp. The former Dossin barracks in Mechelen (*Kazerne Dossin*), located between Brussels and Antwerp, was converted by the *Sicherheitspolizei* into the SS-Sammellager Mecheln, the only transit camp on Belgian territory.[139] Between 1942 and 1944, 28 convoys departed from Mechelen, deporting more than 25,000 Jews and, in early 1944, approximately 351-352 Roma, most of them to Auschwitz-Birkenau.[140] The Mechelen camp thus became the central instrument for implementing both the Final Solution and the *Samudaripen* in Belgium.

The deportation of the Roma from Belgium formed part of a broader policy decided at the level of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA). A directive of 29 March 1943 ordered the deportation of the Roma from German-occupied territories in Western Europe - including Belgium, Luxembourg, Alsace-Lorraine, the Netherlands and parts of France - to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where

[137] M. Steinberg, L. Schram, *Mecheln-Auschwitz 1942-1944. The Destruction of the Jews and Gypsies from Belgium*, VUBPress, Brussels, 2009.
[138] European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI), "Deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau (Belgium)", Encyclopaedia of ghettos and camps, https://encyclopaedia-gsr.eu/lemma/deportation-to-auschwitz-birkenau-belgium-en-1-0/
[139] L. Schram, "The Transit Camp for Jews in Mechelen: The Antechamber of Death", *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, Sciences Po, Paris, 2008, https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/transit-camp-jews-mechelen-antechamber-death.html
[140] W. Adriaens, M. Steinberg, L. Schram et al., *Mecheln-Auschwitz 1942–1944. 28 transporten, 18.522 portretten*, VUBPress, Brussels, 2009.

they were registered in the so-called *Zigeunerlager* (Gypsy Family Camp).[141] In Belgium, the implementation of this order culminated in the arrest and transfer to Mechelen of Roma families, many of whom had lived in the country for years or decades. From there, they were deported in a dedicated transport to Auschwitz in 1944.

Although the absolute number of deported Roma from Belgium (around 350 persons) was small compared to the number of Jewish deportees, the impact on this already tiny and marginalised minority was devastating[142]. A large proportion of those arrested were either Belgian nationals or long-term residents; only a handful survived the camp system. In this sense, the Belgian case exemplifies a broader European pattern: a numerically limited but targeted genocide that aimed at the near-total destruction of the Roma communities present on the territory under Nazi control.[143]

National and Institutional Recognition

The institutional recognition of the Roma persecution in Belgium has developed slowly and unevenly since the end of the Second World War. In the immediate post-war period, Belgian remembrance policy focused overwhelmingly on national suffering, armed resistance, political deportees, and the destruction of the Jewish community whose near-annihilation created one of the most significant demographic ruptures in Belgian history.[144] Within this

[141] Ghetto-Shoah. Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, "Deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau (Belgium)", March 29th 1943, https://encyclopaedia-gsr.eu/lemma/deportation-to-auschwitz-birkenau-belgium-en-1-0/

[142] Council of Europe, *Factsheet on the Roma Genocide - Belgium*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-genocide/belgium

[143] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), *Roma and Sinti Holocaust. Recognition, Education and Justice*, European Parliamentary Research Service, Brussels, 2023, pp. 3-6, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/751424/EPRS_BRI(2023)751424_EN.pdf

[144] D. Michman (ed. by), *Belgium and the Holocaust: Jews, Belgians, Germans*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1998, pp. 3-38, https://archive.org/details/isbn_9653080687

commemorative framework, the experience of the Roma deported from Belgium remained almost entirely absent from public discourse for decades.

Unlike Jewish survivors, who re-established communal structures and obtained a measure of institutional recognition, the Roma deportees in Belgium lacked organized representation capable of advocating for acknowledgment or restitution.[145] No compensation scheme was directed toward Roma survivors, and post-war administrative reports rarely identified them as a distinct victim group.[146] This silence persisted well into the late twentieth century, reinforced by the small size of the the Roma population in Belgium and by broader European patterns of antigypsyism.

A turning point occurred in the 1990s and 2000s, when academic research, particularly in association with the Mechelen documentation centre, began to shed light on the deportation of the 351-352 Roma from Belgium in 1944. The transformation of the former transit camp into the Kazerne Dossin - Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre significantly advanced institutional recognition by explicitly integrating the Roma into the Belgian narrative of Nazi persecution.[147] Since its opening, Kazerne Dossin has systematically documented the identities of the deported Roma, included them in its permanent exhibition, and supported research through its documentation centre.

In 2007, Belgium signed the European Parliament's declaration on commemorating the Roma genocide, and Belgian representatives within the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) have progressively incorporated the *Samudaripen* into national reports and recommendations.[148] The Federal Public Service for Justice has also acknowledged the Roma

[145] Andrew Woolford, Stefan Wolejszo, "Collecting on Moral Debts: Reparations for the Holocaust and Porajmos", in «Law & Society Review»,XXXX, 4, 2006, pp. 871-901.
[146] L. Schram, *Dossin. L'antichambre d'Auschwitz*, Racine, Bruxelles, 2017, pp. 56-61.
[147] Kazerne Dossin - Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre, *Permanent Exhibition Guide*, VUBPress, Brussels, 2016, pp. 112-119, https://kazernedossin.eu/en
[148] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), *Belgium - Country Report*, IHRA Secretariat, Berlin, 2012, pp. 14-16, https://holocaustremembrance.com

among the victim groups of Nazism in official publications concerning deportations, although without establishing targeted memorial policies or educational mandates.[149]

Commemoration remains primarily driven by civil society. Roma associations, in collaboration with Kazerne Dossin, organise annual ceremonies on 2 August, the International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. Yet Belgian federal and regional authorities have not established this date as an official national commemoration, and Roma genocide remains far less visible in public ceremonies than the Holocaust of the Jewish population.[150]

Overall, Belgium has made substantial progress in recognising Roma victims, particularly through museum-based initiatives and research institutions. However, public, educational, and governmental acknowledgement remains uneven, and the *Samudaripen* has yet to achieve a degree of institutional centrality comparable to other victim histories within Belgian remembrance culture.

Presence in Educational Curricula

The integration of the persecution of the Roma into Belgian educational curricula remains limited and uneven. Belgian Holocaust education has been shaped primarily by the history of the Jewish community, whose destruction provides one of the most documented and institutionally recognized chapters of the Occupation. As a result, while the deportation of Belgian Jews is presented in considerable detail in textbooks, the *Samudaripen* receives minimal or no attention.[151]

[149] Ghetto-Shoah. *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, voce «Deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau (Belgium)», https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/deportations.
[150] Council of Europe, *Factsheet on the Roma Genocide – Belgium*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-genocide/belgium
[151] M. Prazan, *Former à l'histoire du génocide des Juifs de Belgique*, Bruxelles, Fondation Auschwitz, 2014, pp. 15-21.

Belgium's educational system is decentralized, with the French, Dutch and German-speaking communities each setting their own curricula. Across all three systems, Holocaust education is mandatory at the secondary level, but the focus is overwhelmingly on the Final Solution, the persecution of Jewish families, and the functioning of the Mechelen transit camp.[152] Curriculum guidelines mention "other victims of Nazism," yet do not explicitly require coverage of Roma persecution. This omission is reflected in the content of official textbooks, which typically frame Roma within generic categories such as "asocials" or "nomads," without contextualizing the racial policy that led to their deportation.[153]

Teacher training equally reflects this imbalance. Professional development programs - particularly those run in collaboration with Kazerne Dossin, the Université Libre de Bruxelles, and the Flanders Holocaust and Genocide Museum initiatives - offer high-quality workshops on the Holocaust. However, these programs prioritize Jewish history and do not systematically include modules on the deportation of the Roma from Belgium.[154] As a result, even well-trained teachers often lack the pedagogical tools and historical resources needed to incorporate the *Samudaripen* into classroom instruction.

Some progress has been made since the 2010s through partnerships between civil society organizations and regional education ministries. Kazerne Dossin has integrated the history of the Roma deportees into its permanent exhibition, and its educational materials now include short sections dedicated to the 1944 Roma transport.[155] These materials, however, are supplementary and not required components of national or regional curricula.

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[152] J. van der Leeuw-Roord, *Holocaust Education in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg*, European Association for History Education (EUROCLIO), The Hague, 2010, pp. 33-41

[153] L. Schram, *Dossin. L'antichambre d'Auschwitz*, Racine, Bruxelles, 2015, pp. 56-61.

[154] Kazerne Dossin, Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre, *Annual Report 2018*, Mechelen, 2019, pp. 14-20.

[155] Kazerne Dossin, *Permanent Collection – Exhibition Overview*, Mechelen, 2016; L. Schram, *Dossin. L'antichambre d'Auschwitz*, Bruxelles, Racine, 2016, pp. 112-130.

In the French-speaking community, the Décret Missions of 1997 encourages schools to address human rights, discrimination, and the mechanisms of genocide, but again does not mandate explicit coverage of Roma genocide.[156] In the Flemish community, the curriculum documents on "historical thinking" and "citizenship education" encourage the study of persecution during the Second World War, yet Roma are rarely included in approved teaching resources.[157]

Overall, the presence of the Roma in Belgian educational curricula remains structurally marginal. While Belgium has invested significantly in Holocaust education, the *Samudaripen* has not yet achieved formal curricular visibility comparable to the Jewish genocide. This gap contributes to a continued lack of public awareness and underscores the need for dedicated materials, teacher training, and institutional mandates ensuring that the history of the Roma persecution is systematically included in classroom teaching.

Sites of Memory, Archives, and Law

Belgium's memorial landscape reflects both the strength of Holocaust remembrance and the longstanding marginalization of the the Roma. The central site of memory is the Kazerne Dossin - Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre in Mechelen, located in the former SS transit camp used between 1942 and 1944 for the deportation of more than 25,000 Jews and approximately 351/352 Roma.[158] Kazerne Dossin has played a crucial role in integrating the Roma into the national narrative of persecution: its permanent exhibition includes Roma deportees in transport lists and biographical panels, while its research centre has compiled the known names of Roma victims from

[156] Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, *Décret du 24 juillet 1997 définissant les missions prioritaires de l'enseignement fondamental et de l'enseignement secondaire*, Moniteur belge, Bruxelles, 1997, https://www.gallilex.cfwb.be/sites/default/files/textes-normatifs/2025-01/19970724s21557.pdf

[157] V. Overheid - Departement Onderwijs en Vorming, *Eindtermen Secundair Onderwijs (VASO & VOET)*, Brussel, Vlaamse Overheid, 2014, https://www.onderwijsdoelen.be

[158] L. Schram, *Dossin. L'antichambre d'Auschwitz*, Racine, Bruxelles, 2017, pp. 56-61.

Belgian territory.[159] Despite this, most commemorative content continues to priorities the Jewish genocide, and Roma remain a secondary presence in site interpretation.

Local memorials reinforce this imbalance. Several Belgian municipalities have erected plaques or memorials to Jewish deportees - especially in Antwerp, Brussels, Liège and Charleroi - but the Roma victims are rarely mentioned.[160] The only commemorative initiatives explicitly naming Roma deportees have been developed mainly by civil society organizations in collaboration with Kazerne Dossin, particularly around the annual 2 August Roma Holocaust Memorial Day.[161] National or regional authorities have not yet established Roma-specific memorials or dedicated remembrance dates beyond these civil society initiatives.

Belgian archival resources related to the persecution of the Roma are dispersed among multiple institutions. The State Archives of Belgium (Archives générales du Royaume) preserve administrative and police files concerning itinerant populations, foreign nationals, and wartime “public order” measures, though the Roma were often classified under generic categories such as “nomads,” “travellers,” or “asocials,” complicating direct identification. Kazerne Dossin maintains the most complete dataset of Roma deportees from Belgium, drawing on German *Sicherheitsdienst* documents, lists compiled by the *Sicherheitspolizei* in Brussels, and post-war investigations.[162] Additional documentation is held in the German Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv), which

[159] Ivi, pp. 110-130.

[160] N. Wouters, *Mayoral Collaboration under Nazi Occupation in Belgium, the Netherlands and France, 1938–46*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, pp. 210-215.

[161] Council of Europe, *Factsheet on the Roma Genocide - Belgium*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-genocide/belgium

[162] M. Steinberg, L. Schram, *Mecheln-Auschwitz 1942-1944. Vol. 1*, VUBPress, Brussels, 2009, pp. 90-95.

include RSHA directives and deportation records relevant to the 1944 Roma transport.[163]

Legal frameworks for memory also show uneven development. Belgium recognizes 27 January as Holocaust Remembrance Day and conducts annual commemorative ceremonies, but state speeches and official documents rarely mention Roma victims explicitly.[164] Belgium endorsed the European Parliament's 2015 resolution urging Member States to recognize 2 August as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, yet this date has not been formally adopted as an official national day of commemoration.[165] There is likewise no legal framework specifically protecting Roma-related heritage sites or mandating their integration into educational or memorial policies.

In sum, Belgium possesses significant archival and institutional resources related to the persecution of the Roma, yet these materials remain under-acknowledged in official remembrance. The result is a landscape in which Roma genocide is documented but not yet central to Belgian public memory.

Gaps and Silences Identified

The memory landscape of Belgium reveals several persistent silences surrounding the persecution of the Roma during the Nazi occupation. Although archival documentation and museum research provide a solid historical record of the approximately 351/352 Roma deported from Belgium via the Mechelen transit camp in 1944, this history has not achieved the same degree of public, educational, or institutional visibility as the deportation of Jews.

The first silence concerns commemorative practices. Belgium has developed an extensive framework for Holocaust remembrance, centred on the

[163] Bundesarchiv, R 70/146, *Reichssicherheitshauptamt Direktiven zur Deportation der Zigeuner*, Bundesarchiv, 1943, Berlin, https://www.bundesarchiv.de
[164] Kazerne Dossin, Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre, *Annual Report 2018*, Mechelen, 2019, "National commemorations", pp. 40-42.
[165] European Parliament, *Resolution on the Recognition of the Roma Genocide*, EU Publications Office, Brussels, 2015, https://eur-lex.europa.eu

destruction of its Jewish population and anchored institutionally in Kazerne Dossin.[166] Yet, the Roma remain marginal in public commemorations. The annual ceremonies held on 27 January at the federal and regional levels rarely mention Roma victims explicitly, and only a limited number of municipalities have included Roma in local memorial plaques or commemorations.[167] The 2 August Roma Holocaust Memorial Day is observed primarily by NGOs and Roma associations, without formal integration into the national commemorative calendar.[168] This results in a symbolic imbalance where Roma are documented historically but remain largely absent from official remembrance.

A second silence emerges from educational practice. While Holocaust education is compulsory at secondary level across Belgian communities, Roma persecution is not required content and is seldom presented in textbooks.[169] Teachers frequently rely on the educational materials of Kazerne Dossin, where Roma are mentioned but receive proportionally limited coverage compared to Jewish victims. Even in teacher training programmers, which have improved significantly since the 2000s, the *Samudaripen* remains peripheral.[170] Consequently, generations of Belgian students have completed their education with minimal awareness of Roma deportations from Mechelen.

A third silence is archival and administrative. Belgian wartime administrative records often categorized the Roma under generalized labels such as “nomads,” “travellers,” or “asocials,” making them difficult to identify individually.[171] Although Kazerne Dossin and academic researchers have reconstructed the names of most deportees, the fragmentation of sources

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166 L. Schram, *Dossin. L’antichambre d’Auschwitz*, Racine, Bruxelles, 2017, pp. 56-61.
167 Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, *International Holocaust Remembrance Day - 27 January*, Bruxelles, 2018, diplomatie.belgium.be
168 Council of Europe, *Factsheet on the Roma Genocide – Belgium*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-genocide/belgium
169 J. van der Leeuw-Roord, *Holocaust Education in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg*, EUROCLIO, La Haye, 2010, pp. 33-41
170 Kazerne Dossin - Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre, *Annual Report 2018*, Mechelen, 2019, pp. 14-20.
171 L. Schram, *Mecheln-Auschwitz 1942-1944. Vol. I: La déportation des Juifs et des Tsiganes de Belgique*, Bruxelles, VUBPress/ASP, 2009, pp. 87-95.

across the State Archives, municipal archives, police files, and German documents complicates systematic study.[172] Moreover, Belgium has not undertaken a state-led programme to consolidate or digitize Roma-related wartime records in the way it has done for Jewish deportation lists.

A fourth silence concerns post-war recognition and restitution. Belgium developed compensation mechanisms for political deportees and, later, for Jewish victims, but no parallel compensation scheme was ever extended to Roma survivors.[173] The lack of post-war recognition reinforced the invisibility of Roma deportees in public memory and limited the development of survivor organisations capable of advocating for institutional acknowledgment.

Taken together, these silences reveal a structural marginalisation of the Roma within Belgian remembrance culture. Their genocide is documented but remains peripheral in national narratives, highlighting the need for targeted policy measures, educational reform, archival consolidation, and official recognition to ensure that the Roma persecution becomes an integral part of Belgium's historical consciousness.

Synthesis of Findings

The Belgian case illustrates how the genocide of the Roma, though numerically limited in comparison to the destruction of the Jewish population, was nonetheless systematic, targeted, and consistent with the broader racial policies implemented across Nazi-occupied Western Europe. The deportation of approximately 351-352 Roma via the Mechelen transit camp in 1944 demonstrates that Belgium was fully integrated into the Reich's directives concerning the persecution and extermination of itinerant and "asocial" groups.[174] Although the Belgian Roma population was small, the impact of

[172] M. Steinberg, L. Schram, *Mecheln-Auschwitz 1942-1944. Vol. 1*, VUBPress, Brussels, 2009, pp. 90-95.
[173] N. Wouters, *Mayoral Collaboration under Nazi Occupation in Belgium, the Netherlands and France, 1938-46*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, pp. 210-215.
[174] L. Schram, *Dossin. L'antichambre d'Auschwitz*, Racine, Bruxelles, 2015, pp. 56-61.

these measures was devastating: entire families were arrested, transferred to Mechelen, and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where most perished.[175]

Despite the existence of extensive archival documentation - preserved in Belgian, German, and municipal archives - the *Samudaripen* remains marginal within Belgian remembrance culture. Post-war commemorative priorities centred on political deportees, resistance fighters, and especially Jewish victims; Roma were neither recognized administratively nor included in restitution or compensation schemes, contributing to their post-war invisibility.[176] The lack of survivor organisations capable of advocating for recognition further reinforced this silence.

The educational system reproduces this pattern. Holocaust education is well-established across the French-, Dutch-, and German-speaking communities, and Belgium is often cited as an example of comprehensive Holocaust pedagogy. However, curricular guidelines do not require instruction on Roma persecution, and approved textbooks devote little or no space to the deportation of Roma from Belgium.[177] Teachers rely primarily on materials provided by Kazerne Dossin, where Roma are documented but not given the same narrative prominence as Jewish victims. This limits students' exposure to the mechanisms and logic of anti-Roma persecution during the Occupation.

In recent years, Kazerne Dossin has played a decisive role in advancing historical recognition by including Roma deportees within its permanent exhibition and by supporting research into the 1944 Roma transport. These efforts represent the most significant institutional contributions to the study and public understanding of the *Samudaripen* in Belgium.[178] Yet, national and

[175] M. Steinberg, L. Schram, *Mecheln-Auschwitz 1942-1944. Vol. 1*, VUBPress, Brussels, 2009, pp. 90-95.
[176] A. Woolford, S. Wolejszo, "Collecting on Moral Debts: Reparations for the Holocaust and the Porajmos", *Law & Society Review*, XXXX, 4, 2006, pp. 871-902.
[177] J. van der Leeuw-Roord, *Holocaust Education in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg*, Euroclio, La Haye, 2010, pp. 33-41.
[178] Kazerne Dossin, Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre, *Annual Report 2018*, Mechelen, 2019, pp. 14-20, https://kazernedossin.eu/en

regional authorities have not established dedicated commemorative frameworks, and the 2 August Roma Holocaust Memorial Day has not been institutionalized. Public memorials across Belgium likewise continue to omit explicit references to the Roma, even in sites associated with deportations or occupation-era repression.

Overall, the Belgian case demonstrates that while the persecution of the Roma is historically well-documented, it has not been accorded the same symbolic, educational, or institutional status as other victim histories. Addressing these limitations requires sustained efforts in archival consolidation, curricular reform, public commemoration, and official recognition to ensure that the genocide of the Roma becomes an integral component of Belgian memory culture.

Hungary

Historical context of the Samudaripen in Hungary

The persecution of the Roma in Hungary during the Second World War unfolded in two distinct but interconnected phases: the policies of the interwar authoritarian regime and the radicalisation that followed the German occupation of March 1944. While Hungary did not initially implement a systematic extermination policy against Roma, racialised surveillance, forced labour, and arbitrary violence were already widespread before the Nazi takeover. These measures intensified dramatically after 1944, culminating in mass executions and deportations to concentration camps.

During the interwar period, Roma communities were subject to increasing restrictions through local decrees regulating movement, residence, labour obligations, and police surveillance.[179] Although these measures were framed in terms of "public order" or "labour discipline," recent scholarship has demonstrated their role in marginalising Roma as a racialised social group

[179] Z. Ferge, *Társadalompolitika és Szegénység Magyarországon 1938-1948* [Social Policy and Poverty in Hungary], Új Mandátum, Budapest, 1998, pp. 112-118.

within the Hungarian state.[180] Forced labour battalions, introduced during the 1930s and expanded under the Horthy regime, often targeted Roma men, who were conscripted into road-building, agricultural work, or military labour service.[181]

A decisive shift occurred with the German occupation of Hungary on 19 March 1944 (*Operation Margarethe*). Under the collaborationist government headed by Döme Sztójay, racial policy radicalised rapidly. Although anti-Jewish laws were implemented with speed and brutality, the persecution of Roma followed a more fragmented trajectory, varying by region and depending heavily on local authorities, gendarmerie units, and military commanders.[182]

Forced labour operations expanded, and Roma settlements were subjected to raids, beatings, and mass arrests. The Hungarian gendarmerie carried out punitive actions in rural areas - particularly in Transdanubia, the Great Plain, and northern regions - under pretexts of combating "banditry" or "subversion.[183]" Several massacres are documented in 1944, including the killings at Doboz, Lajoskomárom, Lengyel, and Nagykanizsa, where Roma men, women, and children were executed extrajudicially by gendarmerie units or local Arrow Cross militias.[184]

From autumn 1944 onward, under the Arrow Cross regime of Ferenc Szálasi, persecution intensified still further. Roma were rounded up for labour service, marches, and camp transfers; many were sent to Mauthausen, Dachau, or its

[180] I. Kemény, *Hungarian Gypsies: An Outline of Their History and Sociology*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 2005, pp. 44-51.
[181] R. L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2000, I, pp. 236-240.

[182] R. L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide*, II, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2000, pp. 671-678.
[183] K. Ungváry, *A Horthy-rendszer mérlege* [The Balance Sheet of the Horthy System], Jelenkor Kiadó, Budapest, 2012, pp. 412-417.
[184] Á. Daróczi, J. Bársony (ed. by), *Pharrajimos: The Fate of the Roma During the Holocaust*, CEU Press, Budapest/New York, 2008, pp. 120-131.

satellite camps.[185] Archival documentation also confirms that groups of Roma prisoners were held in the Kistarcsa and Komárom camps, where they faced starvation, forced labour, and violence.[186]

Although Hungary did not deport Roma to Auschwitz-Birkenau in dedicated transports as occurred in Belgium, the Netherlands, or France, individuals and families were deported within mixed prisoner groups, and many Roma died in Austrian and German camps during late 1944-1945.[187] Estimates of Roma victims in Hungary remain difficult due to inconsistent registration and the frequent classification of Roma as "vagrants," "labour deserters," or "political suspects." However, scholarly consensus places the number of Roma murdered or who died as a direct result of persecution in Hungary at between 5,000 and 10,000 persons.[188]

In sum, the Hungarian *Samudaripen* was characterised by a combination of forced labour, mass violence, forced displacement, and deportation, shaped by a radicalisation of state and paramilitary structures after the German occupation. Although the pattern differed from regions where genocide centred on deportation to Auschwitz, the cumulative effect was a targeted destruction of Roma communities across Hungary.

National and Institutional Recognition

Institutional recognition of Roma persecution in Hungary has followed a protracted and uneven trajectory. In the socialist period, the state's official memory framework centred on antifascist resistance and class-based victimhood, a narrative that effectively obscured ethnic distinctions. Roma suffering was subsumed under the generalized category of "civilian losses,"

[185] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, III, USHMM Press, Bloomington, 2018 - entries on Mauthausen and Dachau Roma prisoners, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org
[186] L. Karsai, *Holokauszt* [Holocaust], Pannonica Kiadó, Budapest, 2001, pp. 295-301.
[187] J. Bársony, Á. Daróczi, *Pharrajimos*, CEU Press, Budapest/New York, 2008, pp. 92-98.

[188] I. Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Roma History*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1987, pp. 96-101.

with no explicit acknowledgment of racial persecution. Unlike Jewish survivors, who gradually secured partial forms of restitution and symbolic recognition, Roma were entirely excluded from compensation schemes and commemorative practices.[189]

Assimilationist policies reinforced this erasure. Throughout the socialist era, Roma were characterized as a "socially backward group" requiring modernization, rather than as an ethnic minority subjected to targeted wartime violence. This ideological framing hindered the collection of survivor testimonies, suppressed academic inquiry, and prevented the development of institutional memory concerning the *Samudaripen*.[190]

A substantive shift emerged only after 1989. The democratic transition, the rise of Roma civil society, and Hungary's increasing engagement with European normative frameworks opened new avenues for public acknowledgment. In 2005, the government officially recognized Roma victims during the national Holocaust Memorial Day, marking the first significant institutional step toward acknowledging the *Samudaripen.*[191] Roma organizations have since commemorated August 2 as the International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, though state participation has remained inconsistent and often largely symbolic.

Hungarian memory institutions have taken tentative steps toward integrating Roma history.

The Holocaust Memorial Center in Budapest, established in 2004, includes dedicated sections on Roma persecution, yet these remain limited in scope compared to the extensive documentation on Jewish suffering. Scholars and

[189] M. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die Nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"*, Hamburg, Christians, 1996, pp. 312-318.
[190] J. Bársony, Á. Daróczi (ed. by), *Pharrajimos: The Fate of the Roma During the Holocaust*, CEU Press, Budapest/New York, 2008, pp. 22-33.

[191] E. Rosenhaft, R. Aitken (ed. by), *Africa in Europe: Studies in Transnational Practice in the Long Twentieth Century*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2013, p. 241.

Roma activists continue to emphasize that such inclusion is partial, fragmented, and insufficiently embedded in national narratives.[192]

Overall, Hungary's institutional recognition of the Roma genocide is characterized by belated acknowledgment and persistent asymmetry. Civil society actors, rather than state institutions, remain the primary drivers of remembrance, and Roma voices continue to be underrepresented in official commemorations and public history.

Presence in Educational Curricula

Holocaust education has been formally embedded in the Hungarian school system since the 1990s, yet the representation of Roma persecution remains marginal and fragmented. National curricula prioritize the deportation of Hungarian Jews in 1944 and the political context of the Horthy regime, while the *Samudaripen* appears, when mentioned at all only in brief, de-contextualized statements.[193] Textbooks typically devote extensive space to the Jewish genocide, resistance movements, and political consequences of the German occupation, but references to Roma suffering are limited to short sentences that do not address forced labour, mass executions, or deportations to Auschwitz-Birkenau.[194]

Teachers report structural obstacles to including Roma history in their lessons. Interviews conducted in both Budapest and rural areas indicate a widespread lack of pedagogical resources, training, and institutional support. Many educators rely heavily on state-approved textbooks, which offer little to no material on the *Samudaripen*. As a result, the inclusion of Roma persecution

[192] K. Fings, *Sinti and Roma: The History of an Ethnic Minority*, C.H. Beck, München, 2019, pp. 154-159.

[193] R. L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, vol. 2, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2000, pp. 1120-1123.
[194] H. Sadílková, *Mapping the "Forgotten": Representation of the Roma Genocide in Central European School Curricula*, Charles University Press, Prague, 2018, pp. 45-52.

often depends on individual initiative rather than curricular requirement[195]. Roma students frequently describe a sense of exclusion in Holocaust units, noting that their families' experiences are absent from the narratives presented in the classroom.

Supplementary educational materials exist but remain peripheral. Since 2004, the Holocaust Memorial Center in Budapest has produced teaching modules on Roma persecution, and several civil society initiatives -such as those developed by the Roma Press Center and the Roma Civil Rights Foundation- have created exhibitions and school workshops. International organizations, including OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe, have supported teacher-training programmers emphasizing the Roma genocide[196]. However, these efforts have not been systematically integrated into the national curriculum, limiting their reach and impact.

Overall, the Hungarian educational landscape reveals a persistent asymmetry: while Holocaust education is well institutionalized, the *Samudaripen* remains largely absent, reinforcing a hierarchy of victim-hood and perpetuating the marginalization of Roma history in public memory.

Sites of Memory, Archives, and Law

Hungary's landscape of Holocaust remembrance reveals a persistent imbalance in the representation of Roma victims, an imbalance rooted in both commemorative practices and the structure of available documentation. Although the country has invested significantly in Holocaust memorialization since the 1990s, the visibility of Roma persecution remains limited. The Holocaust Memorial Center (HDKE) in Budapest incorporates material on the *Samudaripen* within its permanent exhibition; yet, these sections are

[195] A. Kende, V. Messing, *Invisibility, Exclusion and the Roma in Hungarian Education*, in "Intersections: East European Journal of Society and Politics", II, 1, 2016, pp. 73-76.
[196] OSCE/ODIHR, *Teaching About and Commemorating the Roma and Sinti Genocide*, OSCE, Warsaw, 2020, pp. 18-23.

comparatively small and introduced as complementary rather than integral to the broader narrative of wartime persecution[197].

This asymmetry is echoed at local levels: in municipalities where Roma were subjected to forced labor, mass executions, or deportations, memorial plaques and monuments frequently employ generic formulations such as “innocent victims” or “civilians,” effectively obscuring the identity of Roma victims and reinforcing their marginalization in public memory.[198] Communities often report visiting execution sites or former labor service locations where the Roma presence remains entirely unacknowledged.

These commemorative gaps are closely linked to the archival record. Documentation preserved in the Hungarian National Archives and regional administrative collections includes decrees and correspondence concerning forced labor service, surveillance, and wartime mobility restrictions. However, Roma are rarely recorded explicitly; instead, they appear under bureaucratic categories such as *asociális elemek* (“asocial elements”), *földönfutók* (“vagrants”), or “labor service conscripts,” which obscure the racialized character of their persecution[199]. As a consequence, researchers attempting to reconstruct the scale and modalities of the *Samudaripen* must rely heavily on oral history materials and community-based documentation projects. Since the 1990s, Roma activists and scholars, most notably Ágnes Daróczi and János Bársony, have collected testimonies describing forced labor conditions, arbitrary violence by gendarmes, and the disappearance of family members

[197] Holocaust Memorial Center (HDKE), *Permanent Exhibition Catalogue*, Budapest, HDKE, 2014, pp. 55-61
[198] J. Bársony, Á. Daróczi (ed. by), *Pharrajimos: The Fate of the Roma During the Holocaust*, CEU Press, Budapest/New York, 2008, pp. 112-125.
[199] R. L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, II, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2000, pp. 1148-1154.

during the German occupation. These initiatives, though invaluable, remain underfunded and insufficiently integrated into state archival infrastructures[200].

Legal and institutional frameworks further illustrate the fragmented nature of recognition. While post-1989 memory policies increasingly incorporated the Holocaust into the national narrative, explicit reference to Roma victims emerged only in the mid-2000s, influenced in part by Hungary's commitments within European organizations.

The official acknowledgment of Roma victims during the 2005 national Holocaust Memorial Day constituted an important symbolic milestone, yet its practical implications remain limited[201]. State participation in Roma-led commemorations of August 2 is inconsistent, and no comprehensive national strategy exists for documenting, preserving, or memorializing the Roma genocide. Moreover, the absence of targeted funding mechanisms or institutional mandates means that civil society organizations continue to bear the primary responsibility for sustaining and transmitting memory of the *Samudaripen*.

Taken together, Hungary's commemorative sites, archival practices, and legal frameworks reveal a multilayered structure of omission. The scarcity of explicit markers at memorial sites, the bureaucratic erasure of Roma identity in wartime documents, and the piecemeal nature of legal recognition collectively reflect broader patterns of structural antigypsyism. Despite recent advances, the representation of Roma persecution remains peripheral, and the national memory culture continues to reproduce a hierarchy of victimhood in which Roma experiences are insufficiently acknowledged.

[200] Ágnes Daróczi, "Oral History and the Roma Genocide in Hungary," *European Roma Rights Journal*, no. 2, 2010, pp. 27-34.
[201] A. Pető, *Memory and the Holocaust in Hungary*, Budapest, CEU Press, 2015, pp. 87-94.

Gaps and Silences Identified

The Hungarian case reveals a complex set of structural silences that continue to shape the representation of Roma persecution in public memory, scholarship, and institutional practice. These silences are not incidental absences but the outcome of long-standing patterns of antigypsyism embedded in both state policy and societal attitudes.

A first and pervasive silence concerns commemoration. Despite the existence of national and local memorials dedicated to the Holocaust, explicit references to Roma victims remain scarce. Many sites associated with forced labour, executions, or deportations, particularly in rural regions, lack any marker acknowledging Roma suffering. When commemorative plaques exist, they often employ generic terms such as “innocent victims,” thereby effacing ethnic identity and contributing to the symbolic erasure of Roma from the national memory landscape.[202] The marginal presence of Roma in official ceremonies, where their participation is often limited to brief symbolic gestures, reinforces this commemorative silence.

An equally significant silence emerges within archival and documentary practices. Wartime administrative records rarely identify Roma explicitly; instead, they categorize individuals using terms such as *asocial elements* or *vagrants.*[203] This bureaucratic vocabulary obscures the racialized nature of persecution and creates substantial methodological obstacles for researchers. The scarcity of precise ethnic identifiers hampers demographic reconstruction, while the fragmentation of surviving sources - scattered across national, regional, and military archives - further limits the visibility of Roma experiences. Oral history initiatives developed by Roma activists since the 1990s have partially compensated for these gaps, yet they remain underfunded, rarely

[202] J. Bársony, Á. Daróczi (ed. by), *Pharrajimos: The Fate of the Roma During the Holocaust*, CEU Press, Budapest/New York, 2008, pp. 112-125.
[203] R. L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, II, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2000, pp. 1148-1154.

incorporated into national archives, and largely dependent on civil society efforts.[204]

A further layer of silence concerns education and curricular representation. Although Holocaust education is well established in Hungary, the *Samudaripen* occupies only a marginal position within textbooks and official pedagogical materials. The absence of structured curricular content, combined with insufficient teacher training, results in inconsistent classroom practices where Roma persecution is often omitted altogether.[205] This educational silence has long-term effects, shaping public perceptions and perpetuating a hierarchy of victimhood that prioritizes certain narratives of suffering while relegating Roma to the margins.

Finally, a persistent institutional silence characterizes the broader legal and policy framework. While Hungary's official recognition of Roma victims in 2005 represented an important symbolic gesture, it has not been followed by systematic policies for documentation, commemoration, or integration of Roma history into national memory institutions. Government involvement in Roma-led commemorations remains sporadic, and no long-term strategy exists to address the legacy of the *Samudaripen*[206]. The reliance on NGOs and community organizations to sustain remembrance highlights the limited institutional commitment and reflects broader structural inequalities.

Together, these commemorative, archival, educational, and institutional silences form a mutually reinforcing system. They constrain public understanding of the *Samudaripen*, limit scholarly investigation, and perpetuate the marginalization of Roma within Hungary's collective memory. As a result, the genocide of Roma remains insufficiently integrated into national narratives

[204] Á. Daróczi, "Oral History and the Roma Genocide in Hungary," *European Roma Rights Journal*, II, 2010, pp. 27-34.
[205] H. Sadílková, *Mapping the "Forgotten": Representation of the Roma Genocide in Central European School Curricula*, Charles University Press, Prague, 2018, pp. 45-52.
[206] A. Pető, *Memory and the Holocaust in Hungary*, CEU Press, Budapest, 2015, pp. 87-94.

of the Second World War, despite substantial historical evidence of persecution.

Synthesis of Findings

The Hungarian case illustrates the complex interplay between state-driven persecution, local collaboration, and the structural forms of marginalization that shaped both the wartime experience of Roma communities and their subsequent place in national memory. The trajectory of violence unfolded in two distinct but interconnected phases: the pre-1944 period under the Horthy regime, characterized by forced labour, restrictive policing, and deep-rooted antigypsyist attitudes; and the post-German occupation period, during which persecution escalated into more systematic roundups, mass violence by gendarmerie units, and deportations to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The cumulative impact of these policies resulted in the death, disappearance, or displacement of tens of thousands of Roma, even though precise numbers remain difficult to establish due to fragmented documentation and bureaucratic categories that obscured ethnic identity.

In the post-war decades, the socialist state's universalist narrative - premised on antifascist struggle and collective victimhood - absorbed Roma suffering into a generic category of "civilian losses," thereby erasing the racialized dimension of their persecution. Survivors received no restitution, and institutional historiography failed to acknowledge the *Samudaripen* as an integral component of Hungary's wartime history. The absence of targeted academic research, the lack of institutionalized testimony collection, and the broader assimilationist framework all contributed to a prolonged silence that profoundly shaped public understanding.

After 1989, political democratization and the rise of Roma civil society created new opportunities for recognition. Yet the shift has been partial and uneven. While explicit acknowledgment of Roma victims entered official discourse in 2005, national memory institutions have integrated Roma history only

superficially. Educational curricula continue to marginalize the *Samudaripen*, and archival practices remain constrained by the classificatory schemes of the wartime and socialist bureaucracies. Commemoration initiatives rely heavily on NGOs and Roma-led organizations, revealing the limited extent to which the state has assumed responsibility for preserving and disseminating this history.

Taken together, these findings point to a persistent hierarchy of victimhood embedded in Hungary's memory culture. Despite the availability of substantial evidence - survivor testimonies, administrative records, oral histories - the genocide of the Roma remains insufficiently institutionalized. The Hungarian case demonstrates how structural antigypsyism can shape not only the mechanisms of persecution but also the forms of remembrance that follow. For Romdiem, this underscores the need for sustained investment in documentation, curricular integration, and inclusive commemorative practices that recognize Roma suffering as an essential part of Hungary's Holocaust history, rather than a peripheral or supplementary narrative.

Bulgaria

Historical Context of the Samudaripen

The trajectory of Roma persecution in Bulgaria during the Second World War must be understood against the backdrop of the country's alliance with Nazi Germany and its specific combination of domestic nationalism, statist social engineering, and imported racial ideology. Long before 1941, Roma communities in Bulgaria were already subject to local forms of stigmatization and control: municipal ordinances regulated settlement, restricted access to central urban areas, and enabled routine police surveillance of so-called "vagrant" or "itinerant" groups. These pre-war practices provided an administrative and discursive framework that made it easier to incorporate

Roma into broader exclusionary policies once Bulgaria formally joined the Axis.[207]

With the adoption of the Law for the Protection of the Nation in January 1941, which largely mirrored the logic and structure of the German Nuremberg Laws, the Bulgarian state codified a hierarchical vision of belonging that primarily targeted Jews but also affected Roma, who were increasingly classified as "asocial" or "undesirable" elements. While the law did not name Roma explicitly, its implementation went hand in hand with decrees on registration, restrictions on movement, and growing police interference in the economic and social life of Roma communities. In many towns, Roma were barred from certain trades, pushed out of central neighbourhoods, and subjected to intensified surveillance by the Ministry of the Interior and local police authorities.[208]

From 1942 onwards, the authorities escalated repression through the introduction and expansion of forced labour battalions. Thousands of Roma men were conscripted into these units, often under the same legal rubric as other "unreliable" or "politically suspect" groups. They were deployed to build roads, railways, and fortifications, frequently in harsh climatic conditions and with minimal food, inadequate clothing, and systematic physical abuse by officers. Contemporary reports and later testimonies describe men "digging trenches from dawn to dusk, barefoot and beaten for the slightest perceived infraction." Mortality in these units was high, although precise figures remain elusive due to the absence of ethnic markers in official records.[209]

The situation was particularly severe in the annexed territories of Thrace and Macedonia, occupied by Bulgaria with German approval after 1941. In these regions, Sofia extended its racial and security policies to a broader spectrum of

[207] E. Marushiakova, V. Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1997.

[208] M. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische "Lösung der Zigeunerfrage"*, Christians, Hamburg, 1996.

[209] K. Fings, *Sinti and Roma: The History of an Ethnic Minority*, C.H. Beck, München, 2019.

groups considered undesirable. Alongside the well-documented deportation of Jews to German extermination camps, Roma communities were subjected to expulsions, village clearances, and extreme forms of forced labour. Entire Roma neighbourhoods were destroyed or emptied; families were driven from their homes, and men were sent in labour columns from which many never returned. Oral testimonies collected after the war speak of Roma being "chased out with whips and rifles," their houses burned, and their belongings confiscated.[210]

Unlike in some areas under direct German occupation, Bulgaria did not establish extermination camps on its pre-war territory, and there is no evidence of a centrally planned policy aimed at the physical annihilation of all Roma. Nonetheless, the combination of discriminatory legislation, forced labour, expulsions, and violent abuse in the annexed regions amounted to a systematic programme of persecution that was clearly informed by Axis racial ideology and by domestic antigypsyist traditions. The cumulative effect was the disruption of Roma social and economic life on a massive scale, the death of an unknown but significant number of people, and the creation of a post-war landscape in which many families had lost homes, livelihoods, and relatives without ever having their suffering formally recorded or acknowledged.[211]

National and Institutional Recognition

In the post-war period, Bulgaria's institutional approach to the memory of the Second World War was shaped overwhelmingly by the ideological framework of the communist state, which subsumed all victim groups under the collective category of "victims of fascism." Within this narrative, distinctions based on ethnicity or racial persecution were deliberately downplayed. As a result, Roma persecution, despite being historically documented through forced labour, expulsions, and violent abuses, was neither acknowledged nor integrated into

[210] A. Weiss-Wendt (ed. by), *The Nazi Genocide of the Roma: Reassessment and Commemoration*, Berghahn Books, New York-Oxford, 2013.

[211] D. Kenrick, G. Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, Heinemann, London, 1972.

public commemorations, academic historiography, or restitution mechanisms.[212] Roma survivors received no compensation, as their suffering was not legally recognized as racially motivated persecution; instead, it was treated as a by-product of wartime hardship or "anti-social" behaviour, a continuation of pre-war stigmatizing categories.

The communist regime's assimilationist policies further entrenched this silence. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Bulgarian Roma were subjected to measures that aimed to "modernize" or "normalize" them, including settlement policies, restrictions on cultural practices, and discouragement of ethnic self-identification.[213] This framework framed Roma not as a minority with specific historical experiences, but as a social problem requiring state intervention. Such a perspective effectively erased the memory of wartime persecution and prevented the development of any systematic documentation of Roma suffering.

After 1989, the transition to democracy brought an initial diversification of memory discourses, yet institutional recognition of the Roma genocide remained extremely limited. Bulgaria's public memory increasingly highlighted the narrative of the "rescue" of Bulgarian Jews, an important but politically selective storyline that reinforced national pride and overshadowed other forms of victimization, including the persecution of Roma and Jews in the annexed territories of Thrace and Macedonia.[214] This emphasis on Jewish rescue further marginalized Roma by presenting Bulgaria as a state that had largely protected its minorities, thus implicitly denying or downplaying the extent of Roma suffering.

[212] R. Detrez, *Historical Dictionary of Bulgaria*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2019, pp. 257-259.

[213] E. Marushiakova, V. Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, Peter Lang, 1997, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 85-102.

[214] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2001, pp. 44-50.

Only in the early 2000s, under pressure from European institutions such as the Council of Europe and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), did Bulgaria begin to acknowledge Roma within broader frameworks of Holocaust education and minority protection. However, this acknowledgment has remained largely declarative. Official Holocaust Memorial Day ceremonies on 27 January rarely mention Roma explicitly; when they do, references are brief and not accompanied by substantive policy commitments. August 2, the International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, is commemorated mainly by Roma NGOs, community groups, and occasionally by foreign diplomatic missions, with minimal state involvement.[215]

Institutional memory organizations have made some modest steps, such as including references to Roma persecution in reports submitted to IHRA or OSCE/ODIHR. Yet these acknowledgements have not translated into curriculum integration, museum exhibitions, or dedicated research programmes. The absence of state-supported documentation and commemorative initiatives perpetuates a structural silence that mirrors the broader social marginalization faced by Roma in contemporary Bulgaria.

Overall, the Bulgarian case demonstrates a persistent gap between symbolic recognition and substantive institutional engagement. While the rhetoric of inclusion has gradually entered official discourse, the concrete mechanisms of remembrance, research, and education remain underdeveloped. This disconnect reflects both the historical legacy of communist universalism and the enduring influence of national narratives that prioritize heroism and rescue over the recognition of minority suffering.

Presence in Educational Curricula

Holocaust education in Bulgaria has developed gradually since the 1990s, yet the representation of Roma persecution remains marginal, fragmented, and

[215] A. Weiss-Wendt, *The Nazi Genocide of the Roma: Reassessment and Commemoration*, Berghahn Books, New York-Oxford, 2013, pp. 210-215.

largely dependent on external initiatives rather than national policy. The Ministry of Education has introduced frameworks that mandate the teaching of the Holocaust - particularly the narrative of the "rescue" of Bulgarian Jews - which occupies a central position in textbooks and public pedagogy. However, this emphasis has created a selective memory structure in which Roma suffering is almost entirely absent.[216] Textbooks typically present the Holocaust through the lens of Jewish deportations from Thrace and Macedonia, German occupation policies, and the heroism of individuals or institutions that intervened to protect Bulgarian Jews. Roma are rarely mentioned; when they do appear, it is as part of an undifferentiated list of "other victims," without historical detail or contextual explanation.[217]

In Bulgaria, the teaching of the Roma genocide remains structurally limited due to the absence of dedicated curricular guidelines, insufficient teacher training, and the lack of specific educational materials. According to OSCE-ODIHR, Bulgarian public education does not provide systematic instruction on the genocide of the Roma, and teachers have access to very few resources that would enable them to integrate this topic meaningfully into their lessons. The Council of Europe likewise notes that, although the Holocaust is included in compulsory subjects, greater emphasis is placed on the national narrative of the "rescue" of Bulgarian Jews, while no specialized training is offered to educators. As a result, classroom materials tend to mention Roma persecution only sporadically or omit it entirely. This structural gap is confirmed by comparative educational research, which highlights that the *Samudaripen* is still rarely taught in schools and that Roma history appears only marginally in

[216] R. Detrez, «"And the Bulgarian Jews were saved": A History of Holocaust Education in Bulgaria», *Colloquia Humanistica*, 10, Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, Varsavia, 2021, pp. 131-137; N. Ragaru, *Bulgaria, the Jews, and the Holocaust, On the Origins of a Heroic Narrative*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, 2023, pp. 249-257; A. Mirga-Kruszelnicka, E. Acuña, P. Trojański (ed. by), *Education for Remembrance of the Roma Genocide, Scholarship, Commemoration and the Role of Youth*, Libron, Cracovia, 2015.
[217] N. Ragaru, *Bulgaria, the Jews, and the Holocaust: On the Origins of a Heroic Narrative*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, 2023, pp. 246-255; A. Mirga-Kruszelnicka, E. Acuña, P. Trojański (ed. by), *Education for Remembrance of the Roma Genocide: Scholarship, Commemoration and the Role of Youth*, Libron, Kraków, 2015, p. 4.

Bulgarian textbooks.[218] Roma students, in turn, often describe experiences of exclusion, noting that their family histories and community narratives are not reflected in lessons about the Second World War. This dynamic reinforces the broader societal perception that Roma are peripheral to Bulgaria's historical trajectory.

Efforts to address these gaps have emerged largely from civil society and international organizations. NGOs such as the Roma Education Fund, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, and smaller Roma community groups have produced educational modules, exhibitions, and workshops focusing on the *Samudaripen*.[219] International institutions, including the Council of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR, and IHRA, have supported teacher-training seminars and produced methodological guides that explicitly call for the inclusion of Roma experiences in Holocaust education. Nevertheless, these initiatives remain supplementary and depend on intermittent funding. They have not been systematically integrated into national curricula, nor have they led to structural changes in teacher training programs at Bulgarian universities.

The cumulative effect is an educational environment in which the Holocaust is taught, but the Roma genocide is not. Roma suffering remains largely invisible to students, educators, and the public, perpetuating a narrow and selective understanding of the Second World War. The absence of Roma from curricula thus reinforces broader patterns of exclusion and demonstrates how educational systems can sustain historical silences even in contexts where formal Holocaust education is well established.

[218] OSCE/ODHIR, *Teaching about and Commemorating the Roma and Sinti Genocide: Practices within the OSCE Area*, OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw, 2015, p. 12; Council of Europe, *Factsheet on the Roma Genocide in Bulgaria*, Strasbourg, "Teaching about the Roma Genocide", p. 74 https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-genocide; Council of Europe, *Factsheet on the Roma Genocide in Bulgaria*, ibid., "Recognition of the Roma Genocide.

[219] OSCE/ODIHR, *Teaching About and Commemorating the Roma and Sinti Genocide*, Warsaw, OSCE, 2020, pp. 25-29.

Sites of Memory, Archives and Law

The commemorative landscape in Bulgaria reflects a broader hierarchy of memory in which the rescue of Bulgarian Jews has become the dominant narrative of the Second World War, while the persecution of Roma remains largely invisible. National monuments and memorial sites - such as those in Sofia, Plovdiv, and Vidin - primarily commemorate antifascist fighters or emphasize the protection of Jews within Bulgaria's pre-war borders.[220] In contrast, there are virtually no public monuments recognizing Roma victims, even in regions where expulsions, forced labour, and violent abuses are well documented. This absence is particularly striking in the annexed territories of Thrace and Macedonia, where Roma communities experienced some of the most severe persecution, yet where commemorative markers almost exclusively reference Jewish deportations or general wartime suffering.[221]

This commemorative silence is closely linked to the structure of surviving archival materials. Bulgaria's state archives, including the Central State Archives (CSA) and regional police and prefectural collections, contain extensive documentation on administrative measures enacted during the war: registration orders, mobility restrictions, and forced labour conscription. However, Roma are rarely identified explicitly. They appear under general categories such as "asocials," "vagrants," or "labour conscripts," terms that obscure ethnicity and hinder efforts to reconstruct persecution patterns.[222] Reports from the annexed territories describe expulsions of "undesirable populations," but seldom specify Roma as a distinct group, forcing researchers to rely heavily on oral history interviews collected after 1989 by Roma NGOs and multidisciplinary research teams.

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[220] T. Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1999, pp. 44-50.

[221] R. Avramov, *Salvation and Fall: Microeconomics of State Anti-Semitism in Bulgaria (1940–1944)*, Open Society Institute, Sofia, 2012, vol. II, pp. 112-119.

[222] E. Marushiakova, V. Popov, «State Policies towards Roma in Bulgaria», in M. Rady, P. F. Sugar (ed. by), *Studies on Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe*, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1995, pp. 85-102.

Archival fragmentation was deepened during the communist era, when archives were reorganized to support a narrative centered on antifascist resistance and national unity. Documents that contradicted this narrative were marginalized or classified, delaying scholarly engagement with Roma-related materials. Only in the early 2000s did Bulgarian historians begin to systematically examine the Roma dimensions of wartime documentation, often with international support.[223] Yet, the absence of consistent ethnic markers continues to complicate historical reconstruction.

Legal and institutional frameworks show similar limitations. Post-1989 legislation on Holocaust remembrance references the need to preserve memory and educate future generations, but it contains no explicit provisions addressing the Roma genocide.[224] State institutions participate annually in Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January, yet public statements overwhelmingly emphasize the Jewish rescue narrative. Roma victims are rarely mentioned, and when they are, references remain brief and unaccompanied by concrete initiatives. August 2, the International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, is observed predominantly by Roma NGOs and foreign diplomatic missions rather than by Bulgarian state authorities.[225]

Museums and memory institutions have integrated Roma experiences only minimally. National and regional museums - including the National Museum of History, the Regional History Museum of Plovdiv, and the Jewish Museum of History in Sofia - provide little or no dedicated space to the Roma genocide. Some temporary exhibitions have been organized by Roma NGOs and

[223] S. S. Brooks, «The Deportation and Murder of the Roma in Occupied Serbia», in: Anton Weiss-Wendt (ed. by), *The Nazi Genocide of the Roma: Reassessment and Commemoration*, Berghahn Books, New York-Oxford, 2013, pp. 204-215.

[224] N. Danova, "The Bulgarian Archives and the Study of the Holocaust," *Journal of Genocide Research*, V, 3, 2003, pp. 421-430.

[225] OSCE/ODIHR, *Teaching about and Commemorating the Roma and Sinti Genocide: Practices within the OSCE Area*, OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw, 2015, pp. 9-12, 24-25, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/4/510329.pdf

research collectives, but these initiatives have not led to sustained institutional inclusion or permanent displays.[226]

Taken together, these commemorative, archival, and institutional dynamics reveal a coherent pattern of structural marginalization: the history of Roma persecution remains underrepresented across Bulgaria's memory institutions. This reflects not only gaps in documentation, but also enduring political narratives that prioritize national rescue stories and minimize minority suffering. As a result, Roma experiences remain peripheral to Bulgaria's public understanding of the Second World War, despite substantial evidence of persecution.

Gaps and Silences Identified

The Bulgarian case reveals a multilayered structure of silences surrounding the persecution of Roma during the Second World War. These silences - commemorative, archival, educational, and institutional - do not stem from the accidental absence of sources but from the combined effects of historical erasure, national memory politics, and long-standing antigypsyist assumptions that shaped both wartime policies and post-war narratives.

A first and pervasive silence concerns commemoration. Bulgaria's dominant memory framework privileges the narrative of the "rescue" of Bulgarian Jews, a historically significant but politically selective storyline that leaves little conceptual space for acknowledging the persecution of Roma. National memorials rarely mention Roma victims, and even in regions where forced labour, expulsions, and violent abuses are documented, memorial plaques refer only to "innocent civilians" or commemorate antifascist resistance.[227] This

[226] Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance, *Annual Activity Report 2018*, Veliko Tarnovo, 2019, https://amalipe.bg/en/annual-reports/.

[227] N. Ragaru, *Bulgaria, the Jews, and the Holocaust: On the Origins of a Heroic Narrative*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, 2023, pp. 231-239; E. Marushiakova, V. Popov, "Ethnic Identities and Interethnic Relations in Bulgaria," in *Nationalities Papers*, vol. XXVIII, 3, 2000, pp. 445–446.

exclusion reinforces the public perception that Roma were not significant victims of wartime policies and contributes to their continued marginalization in contemporary memory practices.

A second silence emerges within archival documentation, where the bureaucratic terminology of the period systematically obscured Roma identity. State archives - particularly police, prefectural, and labour/service records - categorize Roma under administrative labels such as *asocials*, *vagrants*, or "labour conscripts".[228] These classifications conceal ethnicity and render quantitative estimates extremely difficult. The fragmentation of archival materials, especially from the annexed territories of Thrace and Macedonia, further hampers reconstruction of Roma experiences. Educational practices contribute to a third silence. Bulgarian Holocaust education strongly emphasizes the prevention of Jewish deportations from pre-war Bulgaria, but largely omits the fate of Jews and Roma in the annexed territories, let alone the broader patterns of Roma persecution on Bulgarian-controlled soil. Textbooks rarely mention Roma, and teacher training programmes offer no guidance for integrating Roma narratives into lessons on the Second World War.[229] The result is a curricular imbalance in which students encounter the Holocaust primarily as a story of national moral exceptionalism, reinforcing a hierarchical understanding of victimhood.

Finally, institutional silences persist in legal and policy frameworks. Although Bulgaria participates in Holocaust Memorial Day ceremonies and engages with international organizations such as IHRA and OSCE/ODIHR, it has not developed a comprehensive national strategy for documenting,

[228] A. Weiss-Wendt, "Introduction", in *The Nazi Genocide of the Roma: Reassessment and Commemoration*, Berghahn Books, New York-Oxford, 2013, pp. 5-9; M. Zimmermann, "The National Socialist 'Solution of the Gypsy Question'," in D. Stone (ed. by), *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2004, pp. 410-412.

[229] OSCE/ODIHR, *Teaching about and Commemorating the Roma and Sinti Genocide: Practices within the OSCE Area*, Warsaw, OSCE/ODIHR, 2015, pp. 9-12/ 24-25; Council of Europe, "Factsheet: The Roma Genocide in Bulgaria," Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2016, p. 2.

commemorating, or teaching the Roma genocide.[230] Roma participation in official ceremonies remains largely symbolic, and the responsibility for remembrance continues to fall almost entirely on NGOs and community groups. This institutional absence mirrors broader social inequalities and indicates that formal recognition has not translated into meaningful structural commitment.

Taken together, these silences form a coherent pattern of historical marginalization. They reflect not only gaps in documentation or public awareness but also the persistence of national narratives that prioritize heroism and unity over the acknowledgment of minority suffering. The cumulative effect is a memory landscape in which Roma persecution remains peripheral, insufficiently researched, and weakly institutionalized, despite substantial evidence of systematic discrimination, forced labour, and violent abuse. For Romdiem, the Bulgarian case underscores the need to address these silences through sustained archival work, curricular reform, and inclusive commemorative practices.

Synthesis of Findings

The Bulgarian case demonstrates how the persecution of Roma during the Second World War has been rendered structurally marginal within national memory, despite clear historical evidence of systematic discrimination, forced labour, expulsions, and violence. Roma communities experienced significant repression both within pre-war Bulgaria and in the annexed territories of Thrace and Macedonia, where some of the harshest measures took place. Yet the cumulative impact of these policies - displacement, loss of life, destruction of livelihoods, and long/term social disruption - remained largely unacknowledged in the post/war decades.

Under communism, the state promoted a universalist narrative centred on antifascist resistance and collective victimhood, leaving no conceptual room for

[230] Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance, *Annual Activity Report 2018*, Veliko Tarnovo, 2019, pp. 4–7.

recognizing the racialized targeting of Roma. Their experiences were absorbed into the category of “asocials” or “victims of fascism,” without reflecting the specificity of their persecution. This erasure was reinforced by assimilationist policies that discouraged ethnic identification and suppressed community memory. As a result, Roma survivors were excluded from restitution processes, lacked access to official recognition, and saw their histories systematically omitted from public discourse.

The democratic transition of 1989 did not fundamentally alter these dynamics. Bulgaria’s dominant narrative of the wartime period increasingly highlighted the “rescue” of Bulgarian Jews, a central element of national pride that, while historically significant, also functioned to obscure the suffering of minorities who did not fit into this framework. The experiences of Roma in Thrace and Macedonia, where Bulgaria collaborated with Nazi deportation and segregation policies, remain especially absent from official memory. Educational curricula, commemorative practices, and public institutions have been slow to integrate Roma history, and most initiatives in this direction have come from NGOs, researchers, or international organizations rather than from the state itself.

Archival gaps and bureaucratic classifications further complicate historical reconstruction. The fact that Roma were seldom identified explicitly in wartime documents reinforces the perception that their persecution was less systematic or less severe, even though this impression results from administrative practices rather than historical reality. Oral histories collected after 1989 have been crucial in filling these gaps, but they remain only partially integrated into national repositories and scholarly frameworks.

Overall, the Bulgarian case highlights how national narratives, administrative legacies, and structural antigypsyism can interact to produce enduring silences. For Romdiem, it underscores the need to address these layered omissions through inclusive curricula, systematic archival work, and commemorative practices that explicitly name and recognize Roma suffering. Only through such efforts can the *Samudaripen* be integrated into Bulgaria’s broader

understanding of the Second World War, ensuring that Roma experiences are no longer relegated to the margins of history.

Slovakia

Historical Context of the Samudaripen

The persecution of the Roma in Slovakia during the Second World War unfolded within the framework of the Slovak State (1939-1945), a clerico-fascist satellite regime aligned with Nazi Germany and led by President Jozef Tiso and the Hlinka Slovak People's Party. Although the regime's most systematic racial policies targeted Jews, Roma were subjected to a combination of repressive measures, segregation, forced labour, and mass violence that intensified dramatically after the German occupation of 1944. Pre-war and early-war administrative practices already framed Roma as a socially and morally threatening population, laying the groundwork for more severe forms of persecution once broader Nazi racial ideology penetrated state structures.[231]

Before direct German intervention, Slovak authorities had already implemented a series of discriminatory decrees designed to restrict Roma mobility and regulate their presence in public spaces. Municipal orders prohibited the Roma from entering towns without police permission, mandated forced settlement at the margins of villages, and banned traditional itinerant practices. Men were frequently conscripted into labour battalions tasked with constructing fortifications, repairing roads, and working in mines under harsh conditions.[232]

Testimonies describe widespread beatings, starvation, and deaths caused by exhaustion, revealing the violent nature of these ostensibly non-racial measures. Although the Slovak State did not initially apply a systematic racial policy towards Roma, the convergence of state surveillance, economic

[231] T. Podolinská, D. Ponížil, "Roma in the Slovak State (1939-1945), *Policies, Persecution, and Everyday Life*, in "Romano Džaniben", XXII, Institute of Ethnology SAS, Bratislava, 2014, pp. 55-78.
[232] E. Lacková, *A False Dawn: My Life as a Romani Woman in Slovakia*, University of Hertfordshire Press, Hatfield, 2000, pp. 54-61.

exploitation, and local antigypsyism produced an environment conducive to escalating violence.

The situation changed dramatically in 1944 following the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising and the subsequent German occupation. In retaliation for partisan activities, German security forces and collaborating units of the Hlinka Guard carried out mass executions of Roma in several regions. Entire settlements were burned and families massacred in punitive operations designed to intimidate local populations[233]. Well-documented cases include atrocities in Sklenné, Dubnica nad Váhom, and other villages where Roma communities were targeted collectively, without distinction between combatants and civilians. These events illustrate how Roma were racialized as inherently suspect and collectively punishable, reflecting the logic of Nazi policies in the occupied territories.

The persecution also extended to internment and deportation. Roma were detained in the Sereď camp - previously a key site for Jewish deportations - where they were subjected to forced labour, starvation, and periodic violence by guards.[234] Some Roma were subsequently transferred to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they perished in the *Zigeunerlager* (Gypsy family camp), although precise numbers remain difficult to establish due to inadequate ethnic classification in transport lists and camp records. The destruction of Roma family networks, displacement, and the collapse of community structures resulted in long-term social disintegration that persisted well into the post-war decades.

The cumulative effect of these policies - forced settlement, segregation, labour conscription, mass executions, and deportations - demonstrates that the *Samudaripen* in Slovakia was shaped by both local collaboration and German-

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[233] M. Javor, *Genocide and Massacres of Roma Communities during the Slovak National Uprising*, in "Holocaust Studies and Materials", VII, Polin Museum, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 131-150.

[234] A. Cichopek-Gajraj, *Beyond Violence: Jewish Survivors in Poland and Slovakia, 1944-48*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014, pp. 29-31.

directed genocide. Although documentation is incomplete, historians estimate that several thousand Roma were murdered in Slovakia, while many more suffered severe deprivation, violence, and displacement.[235] The fragmented nature of archival records reflects not only wartime chaos but also administrative choices that deliberately obscured Roma identity, complicating efforts to quantify the full extent of persecution.

Presence in Educational Curricula

Holocaust education in Slovakia has developed progressively since the 1990s. Yet, the representation of Roma persecution remains limited, fragmented and insufficiently integrated into the national curriculum. The Ministry of Education has introduced guidelines for teaching the Holocaust and schools are required to address the wartime Slovak State, deportations of Jews and the Slovak National Uprising. Yet Roma experiences appear only marginally, often confined to short references within broader descriptions of Nazi racial policies.[236] Textbooks commonly devote extensive space to Jewish suffering, political collaboration and resistance, while the *Samudaripen* is reduced to a few sentences that do not explain the scale or mechanisms of persecution.

Teachers report that the scarcity of pedagogical materials and the absence of training specifically addressing the Roma genocide make it difficult to incorporate this topic into classroom practice. Interviews conducted in regions such as Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice indicate that educators rely heavily on state approved textbooks, which rarely mention forced labour camps, mass executions or deportations affecting Roma communities.[237] As a result, the inclusion of Roma narratives depends largely on individual initiative, creating a strong heterogeneity between schools. Roma students frequently

[235] M. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid*, Christians, Hamburg, 1996, pp. 287-292.

[236] G. Eckert Institute, *The Representation of Roma in European Curricula and Textbooks*, GEI, Braunschweig 2018 (chapter about Slovakia).

[237] Open Society Foundation – Bratislava, International Step-by-Step Association (ISSA) & UNICEF, *Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI+). Slovak Republic Report*, Bratislava, 2017, pp. 44-49.

describe feeling excluded from discussions of the Second World War, noting that their family histories are absent from the curriculum.

In recent years civil society organizations have attempted to fill these gaps. NGOs, like the Roma Institute and the Milan Šimečka Foundation, have developed educational materials, school workshops and small exhibitions focusing on Roma wartime experiences.[238] International organizations, including OSCE ODIHR and the Council of Europe, have supported training sessions for teachers and produced methodological guides that encourage the inclusion of Roma persecution in Holocaust education.

These initiatives, however, remain supplementary and rely on external funding, without being formally embedded in national educational policy. Although Slovakia participates in international commemorative frameworks, such as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, curriculum development has not progressed in parallel. The Slovak National Museum and the Institute of Ethnology have produced limited research intended for educational use, but these materials have not been adopted on a national scale.[239] The result is a persistent educational silence in which Roma suffering remains insufficiently acknowledged, reinforcing broader patterns of marginalization and sustaining a selective memory of the wartime period.

Sites of Memory, Archives and Law

The landscape of Holocaust remembrance in Slovakia reveals a persistent imbalance between the well established commemoration of Jewish suffering and the marginal visibility of Roma persecution. National memorials and museums tend to prioritise the destruction of the Jewish population and the political history of the wartime Slovak State, while the *Samudaripen* is either briefly mentioned or absent. The Holocaust Museum in Sereď for example

[238] OSCE/ODIHR, *Teaching about and commemorating the Roma and Sinti genocide: practices within the OSCE area*, ODIHR, Warsaw, 2015, pp. 31-36.
[239] A. Jurová, *Rómska menšina na Slovensku v dokumentoch (1945–1975)*, Košice, Spoločnosť pre výskum a dokumentáciu rómskej kultúry, 2004.

includes a small number of references to Roma internment and deportation, but the narrative remains dominated by Jewish experiences and lacks a dedicated section on Roma victims.[240] At the local level, memorial plaques in towns affected by mass executions or punitive operations during the German occupation seldom identify Roma explicitly, and often use generic formulations such as "civilians killed during the uprising".[241] This contributes to the ongoing symbolic erasure of Roma suffering from the national commemorative landscape.

Archival documentation reflects similar silences. Wartime police records, prefectural correspondence and labour battalion files preserved in the Slovak National Archives contain references to mobility restrictions, forced resettlement and labour conscription, but Roma are usually categorised through administrative terms such as "asocials," "unreliable persons" or "persons requiring supervision," rather than identified as members of an ethnic community.[242] These bureaucratic classifications complicate historical reconstruction and contribute to the difficulty of establishing precise numbers of Roma victims. Archival material from the period of the Slovak National Uprising and subsequent German occupation, including military court reports and Sicherheitsdienst documents, confirms that Roma settlements were frequently targeted for collective punishment, yet even these sources rarely name Roma explicitly.[243]

The absence of systematic documentation has made oral history a crucial source for understanding Roma wartime experiences. Since the 1990s, researchers and Roma activists have collected testimonies describing forced

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[240] Holocaust Museum Sereď, Permanent Exhibition (catalogue/booklet), Slovak National Museum, 2016; Invisibilizing Responsibility: The Holocaust Museums of Slovakia and Hungary, https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/eehs-2023-0027/

[241] Ústav pamäti národa (Nation's Memory Institute), *The Romani Holocaust*, Bratislava, UPN, 2017, https://www.upn.gov.sk/data/files/skladacky-2017-7_8.pdf?

[242] M. Zimmermann, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische Lösung der Zigeunerfrage*, Christians, Hamburg, 1996, pp. 287-292.

[243] J. Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator, Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2013, pp. 284-293.

labour conditions, deportations from Sered' and the destruction of settlements during anti partisan operations. These collections, however, are often dispersed, underfunded and not fully integrated into state archival structures.[244] The lack of formal institutional support has limited the long term preservation of this material and reinforces wider patterns of exclusion.

Legal and institutional frameworks in Slovakia have evolved slowly. The state officially adopted January twenty-seven as Holocaust Memorial Day and participates in international commemorative initiatives, but these practices rarely translate into sustained attention to Roma victims. Government statements usually focus on the persecution of Jews and the moral lessons of the wartime Slovak State, while Roma are referenced only briefly or omitted altogether.[245] August two, the International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, is marked primarily by NGOs, Roma community groups and occasionally local municipalities, rather than by central government institutions.

Museums, educational institutions and state agencies have taken some steps toward acknowledging Roma suffering, for example through small exhibitions, workshops or joint projects with Czech and international partners. Nonetheless, these initiatives remain partial and uncoordinated. Slovakia lacks a dedicated museum or permanent exhibition on the *Samudaripen* and archival research on Roma persecution is still significantly less developed than scholarship on the Jewish Holocaust or political collaboration under the Tiso regime.

Overall, the commemorative and archival landscape in Slovakia demonstrates a pattern of structural omission in which Roma persecution remains insufficiently recognised. The scarcity of explicit memorials, the bureaucratic

[244] A. Jurová, "The Roma Holocaust in Slovakia, Documents and Testimonies", in Anton Weiss Wendt (ed. by), *The Nazi Genocide of the Roma*, New York Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2013, pp. 187-200.

[245] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), *An Overview of Holocaust Remembrance Days* in "IHRA Member, Liaison and Observer Countries", IHRA, Berlin, 2021, https://holocaustremembrance.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2021-Holocaust-Remembrance-Days-in-IHRA-Member-and-Observer-Countries-1.pdf.

invisibility of Roma in archival sources and the limited engagement of state institutions reflect broader societal and political dynamics that have historically marginalised Roma communities. These gaps underline the need for sustained documentation, inclusive memorial practices and institutional commitment to integrating Roma experiences into Slovakia's broader understanding of the wartime period.

Gaps and Silences Identified

The Slovak case displays a multilayered constellation of silences that continue to shape public understanding of Roma persecution during the Second World War. These silences arise not only from the fragmentary nature of wartime documentation, but also from the political and cultural dynamics that have influenced collective memory since 1945. The result is a landscape in which Roma suffering is partially acknowledged, yet structurally marginal.

One of the most persistent silences concerns public commemoration. National memory has traditionally prioritized the destruction of the Jewish population and the moral lessons associated with the wartime Slovak State. This focus has meant that Roma victims rarely appear in official speeches, museum exhibitions or state ceremonies.[246] Memorial plaques in areas where Roma were executed during the German occupation often refer only to "civilian victims", leaving the Roma unnamed and unrecognized. Such practices encourage a public perception that Roma persecution was less significant or less systematic than other forms of wartime violence, despite clear historical evidence to the contrary.

A second major silence is embedded in archival documentation. Wartime police files, prefectural instructions and labour battalion records seldom identify Roma explicitly. Instead, they are classified using administrative labels such as asocials, "suspect persons" or labour conscripts, which obscure ethnicity and

[246] J. Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator - Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2013, pp. 284-293.

make quantitative analysis extremely difficult. This bureaucratic invisibility is not accidental. Rather, it reflects a broader administrative logic that did not consider Roma an ethnic group worthy of explicit identification. Even where Roma were subjected to collective punishment during the Slovak National Uprising and subsequent German reprisals, archival material rarely names them, forcing researchers to rely on oral histories collected only after 1989.[247]

A third silence emerges in education and curriculum development. Holocaust teaching in Slovakia remains focused on Jewish deportations and the political history of the Tiso regime, while Roma experiences appear only sporadically. Teachers consistently report a lack of resources, limited guidance in official curricula and minimal training on the *Samudaripen*.

As a result, Roma history is rarely integrated into classroom discussions, leaving students with an incomplete understanding of the wartime period[248]. This contributes to a long term cultural pattern in which Roma communities remain on the margins of national history.

The final silence is rooted in institutional frameworks. While Slovakia participates in international commemorations, there is no dedicated museum, research programme or state funded documentation initiative focused on Roma persecution. August two, the International Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, is marked mostly by NGOs and local communities, with limited involvement from national authorities. Substantial responsibility therefore falls on civil society and academic institutions, whose efforts, although significant, cannot substitute for sustained state engagement.[249]

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[247] Ústav pamäti národa (Nation's Memory Institute), *The Romani Holocaust*, UPN, Bratislava, 2017.

[248] H. Sadílková, "Representation of Roma in Czech and Slovak Educational Materials", in "Romano Džaniben", XXI, 2014.

[249] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), *An Overview of Holocaust Remembrance Days in IHRA Member, Liaison and Observer Countries*, Berlin, IHRA, 2021, https://holocaustremembrance.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2021-Holocaust-Remembrance-Days-in-IHRA-Member-and-Observer-Countries-1.pdf?

Taken together, these commemorative, archival, educational and institutional silences reinforce one another. They produce a collective memory in which the *Samudaripen* is acknowledged in theory but remains underrepresented in practice. Despite growing scholarly interest and increasing availability of testimonies, Roma persecution continues to occupy a peripheral place in Slovakia's historical narrative. For ROMDIEM, this underscores the need for comprehensive documentation, curricular integration and the creation of memory practices that fully recognize Roma suffering as an essential part of the country's wartime history.

Synthesis of Findings

The Slovak case illustrates how the persecution of the Roma during the Second World War has been shaped by multiple layers of historical violence, administrative invisibility and post-war marginalization. While the wartime Slovak State implemented a combination of discriminatory regulations, forced labour, segregation and locally driven mass violence, the German occupation of 1944 intensified these measures and resulted in numerous executions, village burning and deportations. The available evidence, including survivor testimonies and scattered archival traces, confirms that Roma communities experienced systematic persecution, even though the bureaucratic language of the period often concealed ethnicity behind administrative labels. The fragmentation of documentation, together with the absence of ethnic identifiers in many official records, has contributed to continuing uncertainty regarding the precise scale of Roma victimization.

The post-war period did little to correct this invisibility. Under communism, the state adopted a universalist antifascist narrative that absorbed all forms of persecution into a general category of "victims of fascism". This framework erased the specifically racial character of Roma persecution and denied survivors access to restitution. Assimilationist policies reinforced this erasure

by framing Roma as a social problem rather than an ethnic community with distinct historical experiences. As a result, testimonies were rarely collected, research remained limited and public institutions did not acknowledge Roma suffering.

After 1989, Slovakia began to reassess the wartime past, but the growing attention to the political history of the Tiso regime and the rehabilitation debates did not translate into sustained recognition of Roma victims. Jewish persecution gradually received more integrated institutional attention, while Roma experiences remained peripheral. Although Slovakia participates in international commemorative initiatives, Roma are seldom mentioned in official ceremonies and August two is marked mostly by civil society. Educational curricula and museums likewise devote minimal attention to the *Samudaripen*, leaving most of the work of documentation and remembrance to NGOs and academic researchers.

Taken together, these patterns reveal a persistent hierarchy of victimhood in Slovakia's public memory. The silences found in archives, memorial practices, education and institutional frameworks reinforce one another and sustain the perception that Roma persecution was less significant or less systematic than other forms of wartime violence. The Slovak case therefore demonstrates the need for comprehensive documentation, inclusive curricula and institutional commitment to fully integrate Roma history into the broader narrative of the Second World War. Only through such efforts can the legacy of the *Samudaripen* be recognized and preserved.

FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS BY COUNTRIES

Italy

Interviewee Profile

The interviewees constitute a highly specialized group of academics, activists, and cultural practitioners whose professional trajectories converge around the themes of *Samudaripen*, collective memory and social marginalization. Their expertise spans multiple disciplines, thereby offering a multidimensional approach to the study and representation of Roma persecution. Most of them have combined scholarly research with direct field engagement, often working for decades with Roma communities in Italy and across Europe. A central unifying feature of their work is the intersection of academic inquiry and activist commitment, through which they aim to challenge systemic discrimination and contribute to the recognition of Roma history and rights. Several interviewees are university professors or independent researchers, while others operate within artistic or legal-activist frameworks, yet all demonstrate a shared focus on memory practices, cultural emancipation, and education. Their engagement is not limited to historical analysis but extends to practical initiatives such as commemorative events, exhibitions, pedagogical projects, and artistic performances that foster dialogue between marginalized communities and broader society. Italy engaged 7 people in the process.

Key Themes Emerging from the Interviews

The interviews reveal a systemic neglect of the *Samudaripen* in Italian and European memory, noting its absence from curricula, textbooks, media, and public commemorations. This omission constitutes structural erasure that perpetuates cultural invisibility, reinforces stereotypes, sustains historical trauma, and shapes contemporary Roma exclusion. Commemorations attract mainly those already engaged in remembrance and lack institutional recognition. Respondents highlight continuity between historical persecution

and present-day marginalisation, drawing parallels between concentration camps and current Roma settlements marked by legal exclusion, segregation, precarious housing, and economic vulnerability. They argue that meaningful remembrance must address these ongoing discriminations by linking Holocaust memory to active social and political engagement. Education and public memory are identified as critical, with calls to integrate Roma history, resistance, and cultural contributions into curricula and to adopt pedagogies that combine knowledge with empathy and critical reflection. Interviewees stress the exclusion of Roma voices and advocate for initiatives based on community perspectives, testimonies, and artistic expression. Art, activism, and research are seen as essential for creating spaces of remembrance, fostering trust, supporting intergenerational memory, strengthening Roma agency, documenting trauma, challenging discrimination, dismantling stereotypes, and promoting cultural recognition. The combination of lived experience, academic insight, and creative practice is described as key to understanding Roma history and its contemporary relevance. Finally, interviewees call for structural and institutional recognition at national and transnational levels, including legal acknowledgment of Roma as a minority, consistent commemorative policies, inclusive public discourse, and coordinated local, national, and European strategies for sustainable memory, education, and civic engagement.

Perspectives on Memory, Education and Consequences

The interviews show that memory, education, and the consequences of the Roma Holocaust are deeply interconnected. The *Samudaripen* remains largely absent from curricula and public discourse in Italy and Europe, creating structural invisibility that sustains ignorance, stereotypes, and intergenerational trauma. This erasure functions as symbolic exclusion for both Roma and non-Roma communities. Education is viewed as essential to counter this marginalisation. Interviewees call for integrating Roma history, resistance, and survivor testimonies into formal teaching, using participatory, local, oral, and artistic methods to promote critical thinking, empathy, and awareness. They

argue that education must link historical memory with present-day discrimination. The consequences of neglecting memory and education include intergenerational trauma, social exclusion, cultural and linguistic loss, institutional mistrust, and ongoing systemic discrimination. The lack of recognition and commemorative frameworks reinforces invisibility and limits civic and political participation; internal community divisions can further weaken agency. Interviewees stress that memory and education can drive social transformation. Roma-led initiatives, artistic practices, and local history projects make memory tangible, engage wider audiences, and support reconciliation. Memory can shape educational content and societal perceptions, linking historical acknowledgment with social justice. Finally, respondents call for systemic, cross-sectoral strategies - combining education, public discourse, artistic intervention, and policy recognition - to foster remembrance, promote inclusion, and enable Roma communities to reclaim agency. Only the active interplay of memory, education, and acknowledgment can address long-term trauma and support a more equitable society.

Gaps in Recognition or Public Awareness

The interviews identify a systemic lack of recognition and public awareness of the Roma Holocaust in Italy and Europe. The *Samudaripen* is largely absent from curricula, textbooks, media, and public commemorations, producing structural invisibility that sustains ignorance, stereotypes, and Roma marginalisation. Limited political and institutional engagement further deepens this gap. This invisibility generates intergenerational trauma, social exclusion, and lack of cultural validation for Roma communities, while non-Roma populations remain unaware of Roma suffering and historical contributions. The gap is reinforced in education and media, where coverage is minimal and commemorations are mostly symbolic. Interviewees highlight activism, art, and scholarship, especially community-led initiatives, participatory artistic projects, and local history documentation, as essential for reclaiming Roma narratives and challenging stereotypes. They argue that closing this gap requires systemic, multi-level action: legal recognition of Roma as a minority, consistent

curricula, meaningful commemorations, and stronger media engagement. Because the recognition gap affects both memory and contemporary inclusion, coordinated efforts across education, public discourse, and community participation are needed to build an accurate and inclusive collective memory.

Recommendations of the Interviewees

A central priority is integrating Roma history and narratives into education through curricula, textbooks, and higher education courses that include the Roma genocide, survivor testimonies, and historical context. Suggested pedagogies include participatory research, local history projects, and innovative methods that combine factual knowledge with empathy, critical thinking, and engagement with current social issues. Another key recommendation concerns public recognition and commemoration. Interviewees call for institutional acknowledgment through national and local events, media coverage, museum exhibitions, and public initiatives centred on Roma experiences. They stress the inclusion of Roma voices and highlight community-led memory projects and artistic interventions, such as art, performance, film, and participatory storytelling, as essential for authentic representation and for challenging stereotypes. Policy and legal reforms are also emphasised, including formal recognition of Roma as a minority, the closure of segregated camps, and action against spatial segregation. Respondents call for frameworks that link historical memory to contemporary social justice, ensuring that recognition translates into improved living conditions, civic inclusion, and broader societal awareness. Interviewees also propose targeted public awareness strategies beyond formal education, using mainstream and social media, accessible formats like short videos and booklets, and initiatives that engage everyday citizens to break stereotypes, foster empathy, and connect past and present discrimination. Finally, the recommendations highlight Roma agency and community participation as essential.

Ethical Reflections and Observations

The interviews offer a broad understanding of the *Samudaripen* and the challenges surrounding its recognition and transmission. All interviewees highlight the persistent absence of Roma suffering from Italian educational systems, public institutions, and cultural memory, noting that curricula, textbooks, and memorial practices often omit or marginalise Roma experiences. This invisibility reinforces ignorance, stereotypes, and intergenerational trauma, underscoring the relevance of initiatives like Romdiem in recovering suppressed narratives. Respondents stress that remembrance must be connected to concrete political and social action. They point to the continuity between historical persecution and current marginalisation, such as segregated Roma camps, and emphasise the need to engage communities beyond academic settings to dismantle stereotypes and promote everyday awareness. Education is described as central for fostering collective memory. Interviewees call for innovative pedagogies that integrate research, participation, and creative media, while highlighting the importance of recognising Roma agency and linking historical memory to contemporary social contexts. Artistic and participatory practices are identified as crucial for making invisible histories visible. Performative, symbolic, and community-led approaches help uncover silenced experiences and create alternative spaces for dialogue where institutional recognition is lacking. Finally, the interviews emphasise that memory is plural and dynamic, requiring inclusive spaces where Roma voices can express their histories and identities. Overall, the findings point to the need for a multilayered approach that combines education, art, policy reform, and community activism to transform the legacy of the *Samudaripen* into an active force for social justice and cultural renewal.

Serbia

Interviewee profile

The group of interviewees selected in Serbia represents a highly specialized and interdisciplinary set of professionals. They combine scholarly rigor, field-based experience, and long-term engagement with marginalized communities,

providing authoritative insights into both historical events and contemporary challenges related to memory, education, and institutional recognition. Several members of the group are distinguished historians and researchers who specialize in the persecution of Roma during World War II, mechanisms of genocide, and the systemic marginalization of Roma victims in historical narratives. Their expertise is grounded in extensive archival research, scholarly publications, and active participation in public commissions and academic institutions. Other experts combine academic and cultural leadership with direct experience in memorialization and educational outreach. Some serve as witnesses or community leaders, offering first-hand knowledge of historical events while actively educating younger generations about the significance of the Roma Holocaust and broader World War II history. The group also includes professionals who provide comparative, interfaith, and socio-political perspectives. Other members bring field-based documentation, media advocacy, and firsthand collection of survivor testimonies. Serbia engaged 7 people in the process.

Key themes emerging from the interviews

The interviews reveal persistent structural marginalisation of the *Samudaripen*. Interviewees describe institutional oblivion: Roma suffering is largely absent from dominant historical narratives, undercounted in statistics, and weakly represented in memorial sites. Commemorative practices from socialist Yugoslavia often subsumed Roma under generic categories, erasing the racialised nature of their persecution and limiting postwar justice. A major theme is the educational deficit. The *Samudaripen* appears rarely and superficially in school curricula, teacher training, and university programmes. The lack of materials, museums, and systematic preparation reinforces stereotypes, weakens empathy, and restricts both majority understanding and intra-community transmission. Interviewees also highlight intergenerational trauma and a culture of silence, shaped by wartime violence, postwar depersonalisation, and ongoing discrimination. Political-ideological frameworks, especially Yugoslavia's "brotherhood and unity," further obscured

ethnic distinctions in victimhood. Recent legal gestures, such as recognising Roma suffering at Staro Sajmište, mark progress but remain inconsistently implemented. Severe data and research gaps persist, including minimised victim numbers, destroyed records, and neglected topics such as later persecution phases, gendered experiences, property loss, and postwar exclusion. Respondents call for coordinated action across education, memory institutions, research, and public communication to transform remembrance into a civic resource, counter discrimination, and embed the *Samudaripen* within a shared historical consciousness.

Perspectives on Memory, Education and Consequences

The interviews describe a persistent marginalisation of the *Samudaripen* in public, institutional, and educational memory. The *Samudaripen* remains fragmented and weakly recognised, with recent gestures insufficient for systemic memorialisation. Education is identified as the most critical gap. The *Samudaripen* is almost absent from school curricula, textbooks, and teacher training, and when mentioned, it appears superficially. Interviewees call for comprehensive educational reform that includes Romani history, language, culture, and documentation of wartime persecution to support recognition, identity empowerment, and cultural pride among young Roma. Education is also viewed as essential for countering stereotypes, requiring interdisciplinary approaches and better training, resources, and institutional commitment. The consequences of historical neglect are described as psychological, social, and political. Postwar discrimination and poverty are seen as continuations of wartime dehumanisation, producing unprocessed trauma and internalised stigma. The absence of collective remembrance weakens identity and reinforces social distance between Roma and non-Roma. Interviewees note that forgetting also affects understanding of more recent violence, including the persecution and displacement of Roma during the 1999 Kosovo conflict. Overall, the interviews show that memory, education, and consequences are interdependent. Institutional neglect fuels educational gaps, which sustain ignorance and enable ongoing marginalisation.

Gaps in Recognition or Public Awareness

The interview corpus consistently depicts a pronounced gap between the historical scale of Romani persecution during the Second World War and its visibility within public awareness and official recognition. This deficit is neither accidental nor merely temporal; rather, it is reproduced by durable institutional, ideological, and epistemic mechanisms that suppress the specificity of anti-Romani violence and render the *Samudaripen* marginal to the national memory scape. Contemporary gestures of acknowledgement, including recent legislative references to Romani victimhood, are welcomed but assessed as preliminary and weakly implemented. The interviews emphasize that the *Samudaripen* is largely absent from school curricula, teacher training, and university syllabi. When present, it appears episodically, typically around commemorative dates, rather than as an integrated historical module with analytical depth. The interviews underline the lack of age-appropriate materials, trained educators, and institutional incentives. Interviewees describe a media environment in which the *Samudaripen* is rarely investigated in depth and frequently avoided, reinforcing public amnesia. Moreover, the legacy of the socialist period's depersonalized narrative persists in contemporary discourse, where commemorations may be ritualistic and non-didactic.

Recommendations of the Interviewees

The recommendations articulated across the interviews converge around a shared vision: the urgent need to institutionalize the remembrance of the *Samudaripen*, embed it within educational systems, and strengthen the agency of the Roma community in shaping its own historical narrative. While perspectives vary in scope and emphasis, they consistently call for structural, educational, and symbolic reforms that would transform fragmented memory into an active and inclusive culture of remembrance. Several respondents emphasize the necessity of creating a dedicated Romani Holocaust museum and establishing memorial plaques, monuments, and named lists of victims. The envisioned museum is expected to mirror successful European models,

such as Heidelberg's documentation centers, while maintaining autonomous Roma management to guarantee representational authenticity. A second set of recommendations focuses on expanding scholarly and community-based research into Romani history. Interviewees advocate for systematic archival work, interviews with descendants of victims, and the collection of memoirs and testimonies to create comprehensive databases of persecution, both from the Holocaust and subsequent conflicts. They call for coordination among academic institutions, cultural organizations, and Roma associations to avoid duplication of efforts and to maximize human and financial resources. Research requires sustained funding and institutional commitment. The outcomes should not remain confined to academic circles but be disseminated through documentaries, exhibitions, public lectures, and artistic forms accessible to diverse audiences. An important dimension of this recommendation is the transnational perspective: documentation efforts must be international in scope, connecting Roma experiences across Europe. Education emerges as a central field of action. Interviewees consistently stress that the Romani Holocaust must be introduced systematically into school curricula, teacher training programs, and university courses. This inclusion should extend beyond general references to fascist victims to encompass specific histories of persecution, cultural loss, and survival. Field visits to memorial sites such as Sajmište are recommended as pedagogical tools that promote empathy and historical understanding. Respondents further propose the development of dedicated textbooks, educational films, and interactive materials that integrate Roma perspectives into national and European histories. The media are seen as a double-edged instrument: while capable of amplifying education and awareness, they can also perpetuate stereotypes and misinformation, especially with the rise of generative technologies. Therefore, partnerships between educators, journalists, and civil society actors are recommended to ensure that public communication about Roma history remains factual, humanistic, and educationally grounded. Interviewees also highlight the potential of projects such as Romdiem to act as catalysts for curricular reform by supporting the production of teaching materials, training educators, and

facilitating collaboration among stakeholders. While state recognition is vital, self-organization, cultural pride, and internal community mobilization are seen as prerequisites for long-term transformation: strengthening the Romani language, affirming cultural identity, and promoting intellectual leadership within the community are positioned as integral to the broader project of historical and civic emancipation. Several respondents identify the Romdiem initiative as a potential catalyst for many of these transformations. The project is viewed as an enabling platform that could connect scholars, institutions, and communities; coordinate fragmented efforts; and channel resources into concrete, sustainable outcomes.

Ethical Reflections and Observations

The ethical reflections in the interviews confront historical neglect, institutional silence, and the moral responsibility of remembrance. Participants describe persistent marginalisation in which Romani suffering has been systematically excluded from institutional memory, education, and public discourse. They stress the ethical duty to recognize, document, and integrate these experiences into European Holocaust history as a moral and civic obligation. A key concern is the burden of truth-telling in contexts marked by denial, distortion, and indifference, where recalling and transmitting memories of violence demands both emotional engagement and responsibility toward victims and future generations. The interviews highlight the tension between historical accuracy and the empathy required to honour lived trauma. Another central theme is the need to translate remembrance into action through systematic and mandatory education on the *Samudaripen* in both national curricula and local initiatives. Interviewees also warn of ethical risks posed by misinformation, especially in the age of artificial intelligence, which can distort historical truth and fuel hate speech. The testimonies emphasise the importance of intercultural solidarity and dialogical remembrance, noting parallels with other communities affected by genocide and underscoring empathy, mutual recognition, and shared responsibility. Finally, the interviews expose systemic ethical failures, including

inadequate institutional support, limited research coordination, and the insufficient visibility of Roma voices in public discourse.

Greece

Interviewee Profile

The corpus of interviews presents a diverse and interdisciplinary selection of voices. The participants represent a range of professional, intellectual, and community-based perspectives. This multiplicity reflects an intentional effort to approach the topic not only as a historical or political issue, but as a living moral, cultural, and emotional challenge embedded in contemporary Greek society. From the academic and analytical perspective, the interviews include experts in history, minority studies, and political science. Their work provides the structural and interpretive framework necessary to situate the Roma Holocaust within both national and European contexts. Complementing this are voices emerging from Roma communities and cultural research. These interlocutors bring deeply embodied perspectives on identity, memory, and belonging. Their reflections combine historical awareness with activism, highlighting how remembrance functions as both cultural resistance and self-definition. The corpus also includes professionals working in psychological and educational contexts, whose experiences provide insight into the affective and intergenerational dimensions of trauma. Equally significant are the contributions rooted in faith-based and community activism. Moreover, the creative and artistic domain provides another essential layer of reflection. Greece engaged 7 people in the process.

Key Themes Emerging from the Interviews

A first recurring theme is the systematic erasure of Roma suffering from Greek and European historical consciousness. The educational deficit emerges as another central concern. Across testimonies, interviewees emphasize that Greek school curricula omit Roma history almost entirely. This selective

pedagogy perpetuates ignorance and reinforces stereotypes. Interviews also expose the psychological and intergenerational dimensions of historical trauma. Roma youth in Greece often exhibit an absence of historical memory not due to apathy but as a defense against inherited pain. Silence within families mirrors societal amnesia. Without understanding the historical roots of their marginalization, young Roma risk internalizing stigma and disconnection. Another prominent theme concerns the moral and political implications of recognition: remembrance detached from rights risks becoming a ritual of moral convenience rather than a practice of justice. To remember the Roma victims is to confront ongoing antigypsyism. The role of art, culture, and self-representation recurs across interviews as a vital countermeasure to historical erasure. Art is able to destabilize stereotypes, humanize the marginalized, and transform memory into a participatory, dialogical act. However, several voices caution against the commodification of culture; diversity must not be aestheticized into folklore. Ethical art, they insist, connects remembrance to present-day realities of discrimination. A further thematic lies in the intersectionality of exclusion. Gender, sexuality, and class are shown to interact with ethnicity in producing layered forms of marginalization.

Perspectives on Memory, Education, and Consequences

Across the interviews, a coherent analytical picture emerges in which memory, education, and consequences operate as a self-reinforcing circuit around the *Samudaripen* in Greece. Here, large-scale deportations did not materialize primarily because administrative registration was thin and local mechanisms of identification were inconsistent. The same invisibility that reduced exposure to exterminatory bureaucracy also enabled postwar erasure. Modern nation-building privileged ethnic homogeneity, casting Roma as citizens in law yet socially external to the imagined community. Public discourse and media frames have reinforced this position by ethnicizing deviance while exceptionalizing achievement, creating a reservoir of stereotypes readily mobilized in times of political or economic stress. Education is repeatedly identified as the principal transmission belt of either empathy or indifference.

Current curricula largely omit Roma history; when the Holocaust is taught, it is framed as a single-group tragedy, relegating other victimized populations to marginal mentions. At the communal level, the absence of validated history undermines pride and agency; language loss exemplifies this process, as the attenuation of Romani erodes a key repository of memory and identity while remaining unprotected by policy. Structurally, selective remembrance aligns with policy ambivalence: ceremonial statements coexist with segregated schooling, episodic policing, inadequate housing, and media ecosystems that normalize bias. Memory that excludes produces curricula that misinform; misinformed education rationalizes unequal arrangements; enduring inequality, in turn, sustains selective memory. Under these conditions, remembrance functions as ceremonial alibi and the Roma continue to be invisible.

Gaps in Recognition or Public Awareness

Across the collected testimonies, a striking and persistent gap emerges between the historical reality of Roma persecution and its acknowledgment within Greek and European public consciousness. This absence of recognition is not due to ignorance but to a deliberate avoidance rooted in the structures of national identity, educational omission, and institutional hypocrisy. The Roma, although citizens of the Greek state, have long been rendered invisible within the nation's historical narrative, which prioritizes unity, heroism, and ethnic homogeneity. Postwar Greece constructed a collective memory that celebrated resistance but omitted minority persecution. This selective remembrance reinforced a national myth that excluded Roma experiences, preserving a comfortable moral self-image for the majority. The educational system perpetuates this silence. The Roma genocide is absent from school curricula, textbooks, and teacher training, while the Holocaust is presented almost exclusively through the lens of Jewish suffering. This educational omission reinforces a broader societal ignorance that allows prejudice to persist unchallenged. Professionals working with Roma youth report that most have no knowledge of their own people's history: an amnesia that functions as both protection and loss. When Roma are mentioned in the news, it is often in

association with crime or poverty, creating an “ethnicization of deviance” that perpetuates stigma.

Recommendations of the Interviewees

The interviewees first stressed the need for official recognition: the Greek state should formally acknowledge the Roma genocide, include it in national commemorations, and allocate funding for research, education, and community initiatives. Educational reform was identified as the most urgent priority. The *Samudaripen* should be integrated into school and university curricula, and teacher training should include modules on Roma history, culture, and antigypsyism. Participatory and creative pedagogies, such as site visits, oral history, theatre, and film, were highlighted as essential for fostering both emotional and cognitive understanding. A further recommendation concerns community empowerment. Roma individuals and organisations should actively participate in designing and delivering educational, cultural, and remembrance programmes, supported by scholarships, research grants, and media training. Participants also emphasised the need for structural policy measures, linking remembrance to material justice through adequate housing, equal access to education and healthcare, and protection from police discrimination. Intercultural and intersectional approaches were seen as necessary to reflect the diversity of Roma experiences. Media responsibility and cultural production were identified as powerful tools for change. Interviewees called for ethical media guidelines to prevent the ethnicisation of crime and for support to Roma creators in film, theatre, and digital storytelling. Finally, participants proposed establishing a national monitoring framework to evaluate progress in recognition, education, and inclusion, supported through cooperation between government institutions, academia, and Roma civil society.

Ethical Reflections and Observations

Across the interviews, participants proposed a consistent set of recommendations to transform remembrance of the *Samudaripen* into educational, cultural, and political change. A central ethical theme concerns the

politics of memory and moral accountability. Several interlocutors emphasize that silence, omission, and selective remembrance constitute forms of complicity. Another recurring observation highlights the ethical role of education and representation. For many participants, teaching about the Roma Holocaust is not a matter of curricular expansion but an ethical commitment to justice and empathy. Ethical reflection also extends to the responsibility of institutions and intellectuals. Interviewees insist that universities, museums, and cultural authorities must not only preserve memory but democratize it. Ethical remembrance requires that knowledge be co-produced with the communities it concerns. The Roma are not to be treated as subjects of study but as authors and carriers of historical truth. This ethical stance challenges the asymmetry between those who narrate and those who are narrated, calling for participatory and dialogical forms of knowledge production. The ethical discourse is further enriched by reflections on faith, humanity, and moral consistency. Some voices insist that remembrance must be animated by compassion and solidarity, transforming education into a moral practice of coexistence.

Belgium

Interviewee Profile

The interviewees include figures working in education, cultural management, research, gender equality, community activism, and intercultural programmes, as well as individuals engaged in Roma-led organisations and heritage initiatives. Some interviewees are affiliated with academic and research institutions, contributing backgrounds in the study of history, social sciences, and contemporary European issues. Others work within community organisations, foundations, and cultural institutions dedicated to promoting Roma inclusion, education, and cultural preservation. Their roles often involve coordination of educational programmes, community outreach, and cultural initiatives. The group also includes practitioners engaged in public-facing activities. Several interviewees contribute experience in youth engagement,

educational training, and project development within Roma communities. In addition, some participants bring an international or comparative perspective shaped by professional activities across multiple countries. This diversity of backgrounds provides an understanding of varied institutional frameworks, social environments, and cultural contexts in which Roma-related initiatives are developed. Belgium engaged 11 people in the process.

Key Themes emerging from the Interviews

The interviews reveal a set of key themes that explain how the memory of the *Samudaripen* has been shaped by historical erasure, institutional neglect, and enduring structural discrimination. A first major theme concerns the systemic exclusion of the *Samudaripen* from educational frameworks. School curricula, textbooks, and teacher training rarely include Roma persecution, resulting in generations with little or no knowledge of the Roma experience during the Holocaust. This pedagogical deficit reinforces widespread stereotypes and contributes to a broader societal ignorance that affects both non-Roma populations and Roma communities themselves. The interviews stress that remembrance and education are inseparable, and that the absence of historical knowledge weakens cultural continuity and civic equality. A second theme is the persistence of structural discrimination. The legacy of the genocide continues to manifest in contemporary socioeconomic exclusion, limited access to rights and justice, and the ongoing stigmatization of Roma identities. The interviews underline that these present-day inequalities cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the historical roots of anti-Roma persecution. A third key theme is the need to transform remembrance from symbolic ritual into an ethical and educational process. Participants agree that genuine remembrance requires moving beyond commemorative gestures toward frameworks aimed at recognition, reparation, and social transformation. In this view, remembering the *Samudaripen* is not solely about the past but about challenging inherited structures of exclusion in the present. Finally, the interviews emphasise that integrating Roma history into national and European

narratives is essential. Only by embedding the *Samudaripen* within broader Holocaust memory can the equal dignity of Roma today be affirmed.

Perspectives on Memory, Education and Consequences

The *Samudaripen* remains largely absent from official narratives, post-war justice processes, and national commemorations, resulting in a prolonged form of symbolic exclusion. This silence has limited public understanding and has contributed to the erosion of collective identity within Roma communities. The Roma genocide is rarely included in school curricula or teacher training programs, and when mentioned, it is treated superficially. This omission reinforces stereotypes, prevents intergenerational transmission of culture and language, and perpetuates widespread ignorance among both Roma and non-Roma populations. The lack of documentation and systematic research further deepens this gap, leaving victim numbers uncertain and local histories unrecorded. Participants also underline the long-term social and psychological consequences of the genocide. Beyond the mass loss of life, the destruction of community structures, cultural practices, and linguistic traditions has left lasting wounds. Survivors and their descendants have faced persistent poverty, displacement, and mistrust toward institutions, reflecting a continuity between wartime persecution and contemporary discrimination. Although local initiatives and civil society groups have attempted to preserve memory, institutional recognition remains limited and predominantly symbolic. Commemorations are often ritualistic, lacking educational depth and failing to address structural inequalities.

Gaps in Recognition or Public Awareness

The collected testimonies highlight a persistent and structural gap in the public and institutional recognition of the *Samudaripen*. This deficit is most evident in education, where the *Samudaripen* is rarely included in curricula, teacher training, or learning materials, resulting in widespread ignorance and

reinforcing historical invisibility. The absence of systematic research and dedicated pedagogical tools contributes to a broader cultural and political neglect, in which Roma persecution remains marginal within museums, memorials, and public discourse. Official recognition, where it exists, tends to be symbolic rather than substantive, limited to isolated ceremonies without structural follow-up or institutional investment. This reflects deeper forms of antigypsyism, political inertia, and limited Roma representation in decision-making processes. Media portrayals further compound the issue, alternating between stereotyping and invisibility, leaving the public with fragmented and biased understandings. Despite these challenges, emerging Roma-led initiatives, such as exhibitions, community education projects, and cultural programs, demonstrate growing efforts to reclaim memory and challenge institutional silence.

Recommendations of the Interviewees

The recommendations emerging from the interviews outline a multidimensional agenda for strengthening the recognition and transmission of the *Samudaripen*. A central priority is the formal acknowledgment of the Roma genocide by national and European institutions. Such recognition is viewed as a prerequisite for justice, reparation, and the dismantling of structural antigypsyism. Interviewees also call for robust legal reforms, including stronger anti-discrimination measures, the recognition of Roma as a historical-linguistic minority, and the establishment of mechanisms, such as truth commissions, to address past and present injustices. Education is identified as the most impactful area for long-term change. Respondents recommend the systematic integration of Roma history, culture, and Holocaust experiences into school curricula, teacher training programs, and university research. They emphasize that museums, cultural institutions, and local initiatives should become active spaces of learning, fostering dialogue and embedding the Roma genocide within broader European historical narratives. To complement formal

education, the interviewees stress the importance of public awareness campaigns and responsible media engagement. These measures aim to counter persistent stereotypes and increase the visibility of Roma contributions to European society. Creative and community-led initiatives such as theatre, exhibitions, oral history projects, and local commemorative events are recommended as effective tools for strengthening participation and cultural empowerment. Finally, the interviews underscore the need for transnational cooperation among Roma organizations, educational bodies, and European institutions.

Ethical Reflections and Observations

The reflections emerging from the interviews reveal a deeply ethical engagement with the meaning of remembrance, justice, and human responsibility in relation to the *Samudaripen*. Each testimony intertwines intellectual rigor with emotional awareness, demonstrating that memory is not only an object of study but an ethical duty that shapes the moral identity of Europe. The respondents converge on the idea that silence and denial constitute forms of violence that perpetuate historical injustice. Remembering, therefore, becomes an act of resistance and restoration, a moral obligation to confront the erasure that has long excluded Roma experiences from public consciousness. Their observations expose the asymmetry of memory across Europe, where symbolic gestures too often replace structural change, and where commemoration lacks the political and educational depth necessary to prevent the repetition of exclusionary ideologies. Education emerges as an ethical cornerstone: teaching the Roma genocide is viewed not only as an academic necessity but as a transformative process that nurtures empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility. The testimonies also emphasize the moral imperative of Roma self-representation, urging institutions to move beyond paternalistic frameworks and to create spaces where Roma voices define their own narratives. Ethical remembrance, in this sense, implies active participation, shared accountability, and the recognition that history cannot be separated from the pursuit of justice in the present. The conversations

illuminate the interdependence between individual conscience and collective action, between historical truth and civic equality. They remind us that remembrance without ethical reflection risks becoming a hollow ritual, whereas remembrance grounded in moral awareness has the power to renew democratic values and strengthen social cohesion.

Hungary

Interviewee profile

The interviewees comprise eight professionals from diverse fields, including education, cultural policy, activism, and politics. Their expertise reflects a multidimensional approach that connects historical awareness, civic participation, and community empowerment. Educators and cultural practitioners among them view remembrance as a pedagogical and ethical responsibility. They integrate Roma history and Holocaust education into formal and informal learning, promoting empathy, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding. Activists and community organizers contribute by linking local initiatives with national advocacy, demonstrating how remembrance can foster social justice and democratic engagement. Political representatives and cultural mediators complement these perspectives by translating memory into policy and using research and artistic expression to recover silenced histories. Collectively, the group embodies an interdisciplinary understanding of remembrance, framing the *Samudaripen* not only as a historical event but as an ongoing moral and social imperative within contemporary European society. Hungary engaged 7 people in the process.

Key themes emerging from the interviews

The *Samudaripen* is described not only as a historical atrocity but also as an ongoing ethical challenge shaping identity, education, and citizenship in contemporary Hungary. Remembrance is framed as both a moral and civic duty

that transcends ethnic boundaries, serving as a measure of democratic integrity and collective conscience. A central theme is the persistent absence of the *Samudaripen* from educational curricula, a silence understood as a structural form of exclusion that undermines equality and historical truth. Education therefore emerges as a crucial tool for restoring accuracy, fostering empathy, and strengthening civic understanding. The interviews also highlight the continuity between past persecution and present marginalisation, noting that invisibility, stigma, and dehumanisation remain enduring consequences of historical erasure. Another key theme concerns the gendered dimensions of memory. Roma women are identified as essential transmitters of oral history and resilience, yet their exclusion from formal narratives reflects wider patterns of double discrimination. Across all accounts, the need to integrate the *Samudaripen* into the shared moral and historical framework of Hungarian and European society is strongly emphasised. Remembrance, interviewees argue, must extend beyond minority commemoration to become a collective ethical commitment linking historical truth with present responsibility. Ultimately, the interviews converge on the view that remembrance must move beyond symbolic gestures toward structural transformation. Embedding Roma history in education, policy, and public discourse is essential.

Perspectives on Memory, Education and Consequences

The interviews outline a set of interconnected perspectives on memory, education, and the enduring consequences of the *Samudaripen*. The Roma genocide is described not only as a historical event but as an ongoing ethical challenge that continues to shape identity, citizenship, and social relations in contemporary Hungary. Remembrance is presented as both a moral and civic responsibility, extending beyond minority concerns and serving as a measure of democratic integrity and collective conscience. A recurring theme is the persistent absence of the *Samudaripen* from educational curricula. This silence is seen as a structural form of exclusion that distorts historical truth and undermines equality. Education therefore emerges as a critical arena for restoring accuracy, cultivating empathy, and strengthening civic understanding.

The lack of formal instruction contributes to a broader continuity between past persecution and present marginalisation, reflected in ongoing invisibility, stigma, and dehumanisation. The interviews also highlight the gendered dimensions of memory, noting that Roma women play a central role in preserving oral histories and resilience, yet remain largely excluded from institutional narratives. Their marginalisation reflects broader patterns of double discrimination that further limit the transmission of memory. Across all perspectives, there is a strong emphasis on integrating the *Samudaripen* into the shared historical and moral framework of Hungarian and European society. Remembrance must move beyond symbolic gestures and become a structural commitment embedded in education, policy, and public discourse.

Gaps in recognition or public awareness

The interviews reveal a persistent gap in the recognition and public awareness of the *Samudaripen*, reflecting structural, educational, and cultural deficiencies that continue to marginalise Roma memory within national and European narratives. Despite official commemorations and legal frameworks, remembrance often remains symbolic and disconnected from genuine civic engagement or pedagogical practice. The lack of institutional commitment manifests in fragmented initiatives, limited Roma participation in decision-making processes, and a tendency toward performative gestures rather than substantive inclusion. Education emerges as the most critical yet underdeveloped domain, with the *Samudaripen* largely absent from curricula and teacher training. Roma history remains peripheral both in national consciousness and in the collective moral imagination. Nevertheless, the interviews also point to emerging opportunities. Grassroots initiatives, Roma-led archives, artistic projects, and digital storytelling are reframing remembrance as an act of empowerment and self-representation. These bottom-up approaches, often sustained by volunteers and small NGOs, serve as counter-monuments to institutional neglect, demonstrating how memory can become participatory and transformative. Yet without structural support,

sustainable funding, and integration into formal education and cultural policy, such initiatives risk remaining isolated. Bridging this gap requires shifting from commemorative tokenism to systemic recognition, embedding Roma history within national curricula, museum programs, and public discourse as a shared component of European heritage. Only through this integration can remembrance evolve from symbolic performance to collective awareness, fostering empathy, historical responsibility, and social cohesion.

Recommendations of the interviewees

The interviewees collectively emphasised the urgent need for structural, educational, and institutional reform to ensure the sustainable recognition of the *Samudaripen* and to embed Roma history within national and European narratives. Central to their recommendations is the integration of Roma history, including the *Samudaripen*, into national curricula and teacher-training programmes at all levels, supported by educational resources co-authored by Roma scholars and educators. Such inclusion is seen not only as a matter of representation but as an ethical imperative, promoting historical accuracy and empathy-based learning. The establishment of permanent institutions, such as national Roma memory centres or archives, was widely proposed to consolidate research, documentation, and public education. Interviewees highlighted the importance of gender-inclusive remembrance, advocating for the preservation and dissemination of women's oral histories as an essential component of collective memory. They also recommended the transition from symbolic commemorations to continuous, community-based practices supported by multi-year funding schemes, thereby reducing dependence on short-term grants. Collaboration among Roma and non-Roma actors, particularly through partnerships between NGOs, universities, and local governments, was identified as a key mechanism for ensuring inclusivity and continuity. Several experts stressed the potential of digital media and creative arts to engage younger generations and to democratise access to historical knowledge. They called for Roma representation within decision-making bodies in order to transform participation from token inclusion to leadership. Ultimately,

the interviewees envision remembrance as an active civic practice that transcends ethnic boundaries: a moral framework for democracy in which Roma history becomes an integral part of European heritage, fostering social cohesion, equality, and mutual respect.

Ethical reflections and observations

The ethical reflections emerging from the interviews reveal remembrance as both a moral responsibility and a transformative civic act. The interviewees consistently interpret memory not as a passive recollection of the past but as an ethical commitment to justice, equality, and human dignity in the present. They underscore the interdependence between remembrance and representation, asserting that the absence of Roma voices in historical narratives perpetuates epistemic injustice and moral exclusion. Ethical remembrance therefore entails repositioning authority, ensuring that Roma individuals are not subjects of study but authors of their own histories. Education is framed as the principal arena for ethical engagement, where teachers and learners can cultivate empathy, critical awareness, and democratic responsibility. The act of teaching the *Samudaripen* becomes an ethical practice of care, connecting historical truth with emotional literacy and collective accountability. Several perspectives converge on the view that remembrance must extend beyond institutional rituals into the spaces of everyday life - homes, classrooms, and communities - where empathy transforms into participation and care becomes resistance. Feminist ethics play a central role in this vision, situating remembrance within relationships of solidarity and mutual recognition, particularly highlighting the unacknowledged labour of Roma women in preserving collective memory. The ethical challenge, as articulated across all testimonies, is to move from symbolic commemoration to sustained civic practice, where remembrance is lived as an act of justice rather than ceremony. Ultimately, the interviews present memory as an ethical horizon: a continuous process through which societies learn to confront their

silences, repair historical harm, and reaffirm the moral foundations of democracy.

Bulgaria

Interviewee profile

The interviewed target group consisted of eight experts with diverse but interrelated professional profiles, all engaged in research, education, or community work concerning Roma history, culture, and social inclusion in Bulgaria and Europe. The group included university scholars in linguistics, history, and ethnology; secondary school educators with direct experience teaching Roma students; policymakers and civil society representatives with long-standing involvement in Roma inclusion and educational integration; as well as a community mediator offering an on-the-ground perspective on discrimination, memory, and identity. Together, these participants provided a multidisciplinary understanding that integrates theoretical, institutional, and experiential knowledge. Their reflections illuminate both structural and everyday dimensions of Roma marginalization, the enduring silence surrounding the *Samudaripen*, and the need for educational and commemorative frameworks that promote recognition, justice, and intercultural dialogue. Bulgaria engaged 8 people in the process.

Key themes emerging from the interviews

The overarching finding is the persistent absence of institutional and societal acknowledgment of Roma persecution during World War II. Education represents the domain where this gap is most evident. The *Samudaripen* is largely absent from the national curriculum and Roma history, when mentioned, is typically framed through marginal, stereotypical, or deficit-oriented perspectives. Teachers who wish to address the topic must rely on personal initiative, as there is no formal pedagogical guidance, curricular integration, or institutional support. This omission reflects and reinforces broader social

indifference and contributes to the continued reproduction of prejudice and historical invisibility. The interviews also highlight the intergenerational effects of this erasure. The lack of acknowledgment has weakened collective identity and belonging among Roma communities, while the recovery and teaching of this history through non-formal education and civic initiatives have shown a strong potential to foster empowerment, dignity, and social participation. Memory, in this sense, emerges as both a form of historical justice and a tool for identity reconstruction. A further theme concerns the heterogeneity of Roma identity in Bulgaria. The experts emphasised that Roma communities are internally diverse in linguistic, religious, and regional terms, which complicates unified representation and calls for more nuanced approaches to policy, education, and remembrance. Finally, the findings underline that the recognition of the *Samudaripen* is not only a historical or educational issue but also a deeply political and cultural one. It involves societal willingness to confront marginalised histories and to expand the boundaries of collective memory. Achieving inclusive remembrance requires institutional commitment, cross-sectoral cooperation, and targeted educational reform, ensuring that Roma experiences are integrated into shared European narratives of the Holocaust and human rights.

Perspectives on memory, education and consequences

The interviews reveal a persistent absence of institutional recognition and a marginalisation of Roma narratives within national historiography, creating a significant void in collective remembrance. This silence distorts historical truth and reinforces systemic discrimination, limiting the development of inclusive memory practices and intercultural understanding. Experts consistently note that Roma persecution during World War II remains largely absent from Bulgaria's commemorative landscape. The lack of memorials, educational initiatives, and public acknowledgment contributes to the perception that Roma history is peripheral to national identity. This neglect has produced intergenerational trauma, where silence, fear, and fragmented family memories

replace collective remembrance. Education is identified as a central domain through which this invisibility is reproduced. The *Samudaripen* is omitted or only briefly mentioned in textbooks, and there are no structured curricula, teacher training programs, or institutional resources dedicated to its teaching. Although some educators attempt to fill these gaps voluntarily, their efforts remain isolated and unsupported. This omission not only sustains ignorance among both Roma and non-Roma students but also weakens cultural identity and community cohesion. The erasure of Roma suffering undermines a sense of belonging. Knowledge of ancestral persecution and resilience strengthens pride, identity, and civic engagement, showing that memory can function as a source of empowerment and social inclusion. Finally, the interviews underline that remembrance, education, and social equality are deeply interconnected. Addressing the *Samudaripen* requires historical research, curriculum reform, and a broader societal commitment to confronting discrimination and challenging exclusionary national narratives.

Gap in recognition or public awareness

The interviews reveal a profound and multi-level lack of recognition and public awareness of the *Samudaripen* in Bulgaria. This gap stems from political and institutional neglect, reflected in the absence of official acknowledgment, dedicated memorials, archives, or state-supported remembrance initiatives. Roma victimhood is largely excluded from national narratives and remains marginal even within broader European Holocaust commemorations. Education reinforces this invisibility, as the Roma genocide is absent from curricula, teaching materials, and classroom practice. At the societal level, widespread anti-Roma prejudice further obscures historical truth. Public indifference, discriminatory narratives, and media silence contribute to the perception that Roma suffering is irrelevant to national history, while internalised stigma within Roma communities, shaped by trauma and exclusion, discourages open recognition of identity and past persecution. A significant obstacle is the lack of systematic documentation and historical

research. Without institutional investment in archival recovery, Roma experiences remain largely unintegrated into mainstream historiography. Despite these challenges, the interviews highlight emerging opportunities through grassroots initiatives, non-formal education, and EU-supported research projects that seek to challenge historical silence and promote awareness. Overall, the findings indicate that the recognition gap is structural rather than informational, rooted in entrenched social hierarchies and persistent discrimination. Addressing it requires coordinated action across education, research, and policy to ensure that Roma persecution is recognised as an integral part of European history and collective remembrance.

Recommendations of the interviewees

The interviewees unanimously stressed the need for a comprehensive and systematic strategy to integrate Roma history and the *Samudaripen* into public education, research, and commemoration. Education was identified as the most urgent domain, with recommendations to include Roma history at all levels of schooling, develop accurate teaching materials, train educators, and expand access to archival resources. The interviewees also highlighted the need for greater investment in academic research and archival work, including the collection of oral testimonies, digitization of historical records, and interdisciplinary collaboration among historians, educators, and cultural institutions. This was seen as essential for countering historical erasure and strengthening the foundations of remembrance. A recurring recommendation concerned inclusive and community-centered commemoration. The experts called for the creation of memorials, local memory spaces, and artistic projects that authentically reflect Roma experiences, stressing that remembrance should be participatory and human-centered rather than symbolic or decorative. They also underscored the need to address structural and symbolic discrimination in public discourse and media representation, urging policies that challenge stereotypes, promote accurate portrayals, and highlight examples of Roma resilience and achievement. Awareness campaigns and media literacy

initiatives were identified as key tools for reshaping public perception. Finally, the interviewees emphasized that remembrance must be connected to broader social transformation, linking memory work to efforts that advance equality, inclusion, and Roma participation in cultural and civic life.

Ethical reflections and observations

The ethical reflections emerging from the interviews converge on a shared concern: the moral imperative to confront historical erasure, social injustice, and the enduring consequences of discrimination against Roma communities. The *Samudaripen* is presented not only as a past tragedy but also as a contemporary test of collective conscience. Its ongoing neglect in education, policy, and public discourse constitutes an ethical failure at the societal level. A central ethical theme concerns the relationship between truth and silence. The systematic omission of Roma suffering from historical narratives is described as a form of moral harm that spans generations, producing internalized stigma, weakening identity, and normalizing exclusion. Another key dimension relates to the ethics of education. Teaching Roma history, particularly the *Samudaripen*, is identified as essential for fostering respect, critical awareness, and intercultural understanding. Educators hold a moral duty to challenge stereotypes and humanize historical narratives, ensuring that marginalized experiences are treated as integral parts of the shared European story rather than supplementary content. The interviews also draw attention to the ethical implications of representation in media and research. Persistent deficit-oriented portrayals of Roma communities contribute to symbolic violence, reinforcing social bias and legitimizing inequality. Ethical communication demands accuracy, nuance, and respect for human agency, while ethical research requires engaging Roma voices as active contributors rather than passive subjects. Finally, the reflections underscore the moral connection between remembrance and present-day responsibility. Ethical engagement with the past cannot be separated from the ongoing pursuit of social justice.

Slovakia

Interviewee Profile

The interviewees form a highly qualified, interdisciplinary group of experts with extensive experience in Holocaust studies, Romani history, ethnology, museology, human rights education, and the social sciences. Their academic training comes from leading Slovak universities, and collectively they have held research, teaching, and leadership roles in museums, universities, and research institutes. Several have contributed to building institutional frameworks for Holocaust remembrance, directing museums, engaging in international organisations, and serving on national and European expert committees. Their work includes producing documentary films with survivors, creating pedagogical materials, conducting teacher-training programmes, and representing Slovakia in bodies focused on Holocaust memory and Roma issues. Others have advanced academic research through ethnographic fieldwork, oral history collection, and the publication of key studies on Roma history, culture, and persecution. Their contributions also encompass curatorial work, monographs, textbooks, and analyses of non-democratic regimes and their repressive mechanisms. The group further includes professionals active in civil society, who implement programmes on intercultural dialogue, human rights education, and Roma social inclusion. Slovakia engaged 7 people in the process.

Key Themes Emerging from the Interviews

The interviews highlight several interconnected themes. First, the *Samudaripen* has remained largely invisible within public discourse, education, and national historiography. This omission, reinforced during the communist period and only partially addressed after 1989, reflects a broader structural disregard for Roma memory. Linked to this is the post-war silence of survivors, who returned to hostile environments where former persecutors often remained in authority. The absence of recognition, compensation, and societal support contributed to intergenerational trauma and discouraged open remembrance. Another key

theme concerns the limited institutional and educational engagement with the Roma genocide. Although NGOs and individual researchers have documented testimonies and created memorials, these initiatives remain fragmented, and mainstream education continues to overlook Roma experiences. This lack of institutional commitment mirrors persistent social exclusion. Continuity between past and present discrimination also emerges strongly. Wartime policies of segregation, forced labour, and social control laid foundations for structural inequalities that still shape Roma settlements today. Mechanisms of dehumanisation from the wartime era persist in contemporary forms of prejudice and marginalisation. The interviews further underline the challenges of memory and representation. Roma perspectives remain underrepresented in public remembrance, despite the importance of oral history initiatives in recovering silenced narratives. Finally, the ethical imperative of remembrance is emphasised: addressing the Roma genocide is essential not only for historical accuracy but for preventing the continuation of discrimination and strengthening commitments to equality and human rights.

Perspectives on Memory, Education, and Consequences

The material highlights a persistent continuity between the historical silence surrounding the *Samudaripen* and present-day forms of discrimination. A central theme is the absence of the Roma genocide from public memory and national narratives. After the Second World War, Roma survivors returned to communities that neither acknowledged their suffering nor removed former persecutors from positions of authority. Education emerges as the principal arena where this silence has been reproduced. For decades, the *Samudaripen* has been omitted or treated as a marginal topic within Slovak curricula, preventing a full understanding of Roma persecution and reinforcing their exclusion from national history. The consequences of this neglect extend beyond memory and education to the social and material conditions of Roma communities. The continuity between forgotten history, educational omission, and social inequality emerges as a core finding. The absence of Roma voices in collective memory is not an accidental gap but a reflection of broader societal

hierarchies. Conversely, oral history projects and community-based initiatives demonstrate how documenting Roma experiences can transform private memory into shared understanding, fostering empathy and challenging selective national narratives. Overall, addressing the silence surrounding the *Samudaripen* requires structural reforms that integrate Roma history into curricula, support research and documentation, and create inclusive spaces of remembrance. Only through such sustained efforts can memory become a tool for social transformation and for confronting the enduring legacies of exclusion.

Gaps in recognition or Public Awareness

The material reveals a persistent, multilayered gap in recognition and public awareness regarding the *Samudaripen* and the broader status of Roma communities in Slovakia. This gap spans historical research, institutional responsibility, education, media, and collective memory, reinforcing long-term ignorance and inequality. Historically, the Roma genocide remained marginal in academia and public discourse until 1989, and even today awareness remains limited and largely confined to specialists. Institutional inaction further sustains this deficit: although Roma are formally recognized as a national minority, practical measures remain minimal, and minority inclusion often takes symbolic rather than substantive form. Education constitutes a major area of neglect. Despite formal curricular references, the *Samudaripen* receives little attention in classrooms, and teachers lack training and support. This results in fragmented implementation and prevents the development of historical understanding or empathy among students. At the societal level, marginalization persists through symbolic exclusion and the absence of Roma history from public consciousness, which reinforces stereotypes and normalizes discrimination. Short-term projects and exhibitions show potential but lack institutional continuity and Roma participation. The limited visibility of Roma voices in academia, media, and commemorative practices confirms a structural hierarchy of memory, in which non-Roma perspectives dominate and Roma experiences remain peripheral.

Recommendations of the Interviewees

The material outlines a set of interconnected recommendations aimed at addressing the long-standing neglect of the *Samudaripen* and strengthening remembrance and education in Slovakia. A central priority is comprehensive educational reform: the Ministry of Education should ensure full curricular integration of the Roma genocide, supported by accurate textbooks, teacher-training modules, and accessible materials for both Roma and non-Roma students. Experiential and participatory learning, such as joint commemorations, local history projects, and student-led research, should complement formal instruction by fostering empathy and contextual understanding. Interviewees also stress the need for institutional commitment. Museums, cultural institutions, and research centers must be revitalized, adequately funded, and equipped with staff capable of sustaining long-term work on Roma history. Roma narratives should be included in permanent exhibitions to correct their current marginalization. A further recommendation concerns public communication. Media and cultural producers should develop engaging narrative content as documentaries, articles, exhibitions, or theatre, grounded in personal stories that make Roma history visible and relatable. Local-level initiatives are highlighted as key spaces for rebuilding trust, where shared community projects and memorials rooted in verified historical research can connect Roma experiences to broader wartime histories. Finally, all recommendations converge on the importance of participatory, intergenerational remembrance. Sustainable progress requires coordinated policies, long-term funding, and active Roma involvement in research, education, commemoration, and media production. Remembrance must evolve from symbolic gestures into a structural, civic, and cultural commitment.

Ethical Reflections and Observations

The material presents a rich set of ethical reflections on the responsibilities involved in studying, teaching, and commemorating the *Samudaripen*. The interviews highlight how scholars, educators, and activists navigate the

intersection of historical accuracy, moral responsibility, and collective memory, insisting that remembrance must function as both civic and ethical engagement. A central theme concerns the duty to confront historical injustice through precise, verifiable, and empathetic representation. Collecting and preserving testimonies is described as an ethical act of restorative justice, countering denial and ensuring that Roma suffering is publicly acknowledged. Another key observation relates to the moral significance of acknowledgment. Recognition of Roma persecution is seen as ethically transformative, restoring dignity and encouraging reflection among both majority and minority populations. This ethical stance frames commemoration not as symbolic ritual but as a process that rebuilds trust and affirms shared responsibility. The interviews also identify a tension between knowledge and action. Ethical engagement requires moving beyond academic analysis toward concrete social impact, addressing institutional inertia and superficial public discourse. Emotional and empathetic understanding is emphasized as essential, with narrative approaches seen as powerful tools for ethical education. Further reflections underscore the importance of inclusivity and intercultural dialogue. Ethical remembrance must involve collaboration between Roma and non-Roma communities, challenging hierarchical modes of knowledge production and grounding memory in participatory practice. Finally, the interviews affirm that ethical reflection on the Roma Holocaust must be linked to contemporary struggles against prejudice and systemic discrimination, highlighting the continuity between past injustice and present moral responsibility.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Similarities and differences across the seven countries

Across the seven European countries analyzed, the research highlights a shared pattern of structural marginalisation of Roma memory within national historiographies, alongside diverse trajectories shaped by local political cultures, post-war narratives, and degrees of European integration. In each context, the *Samudaripen* remains a peripheral element of national remembrance, more often acknowledged symbolically than embedded institutionally.

Despite variations in political history, several common denominators emerge. The first concerns the *temporal delay of recognition*: in all countries, formal acknowledgment of the Roma genocide occurred decades after. The second shared feature is the *fragmentation of memory*: remembrance efforts are dispersed among small NGOs, activists, or educators, without sustained state coordination. The third concerns *educational silence*: the *Samudaripen* is largely absent from curricula, teacher training, and public media, perpetuating the invisibility of Roma history.

Nevertheless, there are also clear national differences which reflect divergent political legacies. Western and Southern European countries tend to frame remembrance within the broader discourse of European values and human rights, whereas post-socialist states continue to negotiate their relationship with the past through the lens of national sovereignty and ethnic majoritarianism. Yet, despite these contextual nuances, the overall picture reveals a Europe still struggling to translate symbolic recognition into systemic inclusion.

Shared patterns of educational exclusion and institutional oblivion

The educational field is the most consistent site of exclusion across all seven contexts. School curricula, textbooks, and pedagogical frameworks rarely incorporate Roma history as an integral part of national or European narratives.

Where it is mentioned, the treatment is superficial, often limited to a few sentences describing the Roma as marginal wartime victims. This absence perpetuates epistemic inequality: a form of educational discrimination that mirrors broader social hierarchies.

Teacher training represents another shared deficit: the *Samudaripen* is never systematically included in teacher education or professional development. This pedagogical anxiety leads to avoidance, reinforcing silence. The situation is compounded by the scarcity of Roma educators within national systems, which deprives students of role models and firsthand perspectives.

Institutional oblivion extends into laws, archives, museums, and cultural policy. Documentation concerning Roma persecution remains scattered and often unclassified. Research vacuum impedes both scholarship and pedagogy. In most national Holocaust museums, Roma history occupies minimal space, physically and narratively. Exhibitions tend to present Roma suffering as an adjunct rather than as a central element of genocide studies.

This institutional neglect is not merely historical but structural. Ministries of Education and Culture often delegate remembrance to NGOs or local initiatives, producing short-lived projects dependent on temporary funding. Without legal or curricular mandates, Roma memory remains contingent upon individual commitment rather than institutional responsibility. Across the seven countries, this pattern constitutes a silent architecture of exclusion: a bureaucratic system that perpetuates “forgetting”.

Comparative visibility in national narratives

Visibility within national narratives reflects the broader politics of belonging. The *Samudaripen* remains trapped between symbolic inclusion and cultural marginality. While most governments officially recognise 2 August as Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, the day itself functions more as ritual than as education. Commemorations are typically attended by officials and activists but

receive minimal public or media coverage, revealing a disconnection between political gesture and societal engagement.

Media visibility follows a similar pattern. When the *Samudaripen* appears in national discourse, it is often confined to human-interest stories or anniversary reports rather than integrated into historical or civic debates. The Roma are thus framed as passive victims of history rather than active participants in European modernity. This mode of representation contributes to the persistence of stereotypes, reinforcing the perception of Roma people as objects of empathy - at best - rather than subjects of history.

Comparative visibility remains uneven and fragile. Roma narratives surface periodically through international initiatives, but they seldom penetrate the mainstream historiographical canon. The result is a Europe of fragmented memories, where some recognition exists but is neither comprehensive nor transformative.

Contradictions and tensions

Across the seven countries, several deep contradictions underpin the field of Roma remembrance. The most evident is the gap between commemorative rhetoric and social reality. Governments endorse remembrance events that symbolically include Roma, yet simultaneously maintain or tolerate policies that perpetuate segregation, discrimination, or housing exclusion. This coexistence of memory and marginalisation exposes the moral paradox of contemporary Europe: remembrance without equality.

Another recurrent tension lies between external promotion and internal inertia. EU institutions and international donors often serve as catalysts for remembrance projects, but these initiatives rarely become embedded in national policies once external funding ends. This dependence on temporary frameworks creates cycles of progress and regression, where memory becomes project-based rather than policy-based.

A further contradiction emerges within academia and cultural production. Roma subjects are increasingly studied, filmed, or represented, yet rarely control the means of representation. Non-Roma scholars and curators still dominate the field, while Roma voices are solicited primarily for testimony rather than authorship. This dynamic reproduces a hierarchy of knowledge: remembrance that speaks *about* Roma rather than *with* them.

Psychological and emotional tensions also emerge within Roma communities themselves. The intergenerational transmission of trauma is often compounded by contemporary experiences of racism: historical silence and present stigma are strongly connected.

Finally, contradictions arise in the language of inclusion itself. Many national frameworks adopt multicultural rhetoric while maintaining assimilationist expectations, celebrating diversity symbolically while erasing difference structurally. These tensions illustrate that the politics of remembrance cannot be detached from the politics of citizenship. Without addressing inequality in the present, memory work risks becoming a moral performance rather than a transformative act.

Emerging best practices

Despite the systemic challenges identified, several innovative practices across the seven countries demonstrate pathways toward a more inclusive and sustainable remembrance culture.

Educational reform and co-authorship stand out as foundational. Pilot initiatives carried out in Belgium, for example, illustrate the impact of involving Roma educators and scholars in designing curricula and producing teaching materials. These co-authored approaches not only enrich content accuracy but also model democratic participation. When Roma voices shape educational narratives, students encounter history as a shared human experience rather than as a compartmentalised minority story.

A second best practice concerns community-based remembrance. Grassroots projects, such as local archives, travelling exhibitions, and participatory art programmes, have proven effective in linking historical memory with contemporary social empowerment. By connecting remembrance to lived culture, these initiatives transform memory into civic practice.

Digital innovation represents a third area of promise. Online platforms, virtual exhibitions, and youth-led digital storytelling initiatives have broadened access to Roma history, particularly among younger generations. In countries where mainstream institutions remain closed, digital media provide alternative spaces for transnational dialogue and self-representation.

Gender and intergenerational inclusion constitute another emerging dimension. Projects that document Roma women's experiences, from survival stories to post-war resilience, expand the ethical and emotional vocabulary of remembrance. These initiatives not only correct historical omissions but also foster cross-generational solidarity, positioning women as custodians and transmitters of cultural memory.

Finally, Roma-led institutional participation represents the most transformative trend. When Roma experts hold decision-making roles in cultural councils, museums, or national curriculum boards, remembrance transcends tokenism and becomes an exercise in shared authority. This shift redefines memory as a form of democratic governance: a field where equality is enacted, not merely proclaimed.

Collectively, these best practices point toward a European model of remembrance that is participatory, dialogic, and future-oriented. They demonstrate that when memory is treated as a civic right rather than a symbolic gesture, it can foster inclusion, empathy, and resilience across generations.

Policy Recommendations for the Institutionalization of Roma Holocaust Memory in Europe

The findings of the Romdiem project demonstrate that the genocide of the Roma during the Second World War (Samudaripen) remains structurally marginalized within European systems of remembrance, education, and cultural representation. Despite increasing recognition at the European level, particularly through resolutions of the European Parliament and initiatives promoted by international organizations, this recognition has not yet translated into systematic, sustained, and institutionalized practices at national and local levels. Memory of the Roma Holocaust continues to depend largely on civil society initiatives and on the efforts of Roma communities themselves, resulting in fragmented, precarious, and uneven forms of remembrance.

Policy recommendations are therefore urgently needed. The persistence of antigypsyism across Europe, combined with the gradual disappearance of direct witnesses, creates a critical moment in which inaction risks the irreversible loss of memory and the perpetuation of historical injustice. The recognition of the Roma Holocaust is not merely a matter of historical accuracy; it is inseparable from the European Union's foundational values of human dignity, equality, democracy, and respect for minority rights. A European memory culture that excludes Roma experiences undermines the credibility of these values and weakens the moral and civic foundations of European integration.

The Romdiem project confirms that the marginalization of Roma memory is not confined to a single national context but constitutes a transnational pattern. Across the seven countries studied, similar gaps emerge in education, institutional commemoration, archival preservation, and public awareness. These shared deficiencies call for coordinated European action that complements national responsibilities while respecting historical and cultural

specificities. The following recommendations are intended to support European institutions, national governments, educational authorities, cultural organizations, and civil society actors in transforming Roma Holocaust memory from a marginalized narrative into an integral and enduring component of European remembrance.

Recommendations by Policy Area

A. Education

Education constitutes the most decisive arena for ensuring the long-term transmission of memory and for combating structural antigypsyism.

Recommendations:

- Integrate the history of the Roma Holocaust systematically into national school curricula at primary and secondary levels, ensuring parity with the teaching of the Shoah and other forms of Nazi persecution.
- Develop dedicated curricular modules on the Samudaripen that combine historical analysis with survivor testimonies, local case studies, and comparative European perspectives.
- Strengthen teacher training by including mandatory components on Roma history and the Roma Holocaust in initial teacher education and continuous professional development.
- Promote the use of existing European-level guidelines and resources, including those developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the OSCE/ODIHR, and the Council of Europe, adapting them to national educational contexts.
- Encourage experiential and participatory learning approaches, such as student involvement in oral history projects, visits to memorial sites, and cooperation with Roma cultural organizations.

B. Cultural Institutions and Memory

Museums, memorials, and cultural institutions play a crucial role in shaping public understanding of history and collective memory.

Recommendations:

- Ensure the systematic inclusion of Roma persecution within Holocaust museums, memorial sites, and permanent exhibitions, rather than treating Roma victims as an ancillary or symbolic category.
- Support the creation of dedicated exhibition spaces, both permanent and temporary, focused on Roma history and the Samudaripen, particularly in regions where persecution was extensive.
- Establish clear standards for explicitly naming Roma victims at sites of memory, moving beyond generic references to “other victims” or “civilian casualties.”
- Promote cooperation between mainstream cultural institutions and Roma-led organizations to co-curate exhibitions and commemorative events.
- Encourage the use of innovative cultural formats—such as digital exhibitions, documentary films, theatre, literature, and visual arts—to engage wider and younger audiences.

C. Research and Documentation

The sustainability of Roma Holocaust memory depends on robust research infrastructures and the preservation of testimonies.

Recommendations:

- Establish permanent transnational archival platforms dedicated to the Roma Holocaust, integrating oral histories, documents, photographs, and audiovisual materials.
- Support the systematic collection and digitization of survivor and descendant testimonies, prioritizing ethical standards and long-term accessibility.
- Promote and fund Roma-led research initiatives, recognizing Roma scholars, activists, and community historians as key producers of knowledge.
- Encourage interdisciplinary research that combines history, sociology, anthropology, gender studies, and memory studies.
- Ensure that research and documentation initiatives adopt gender- and youth-sensitive approaches, addressing the specific experiences of Roma women and younger generations in both persecution and memory transmission.

D. Governance and Policy

Institutional recognition requires coherent governance frameworks and sustained political commitment.

Recommendations:

- Encourage Member States to adopt explicit national strategies for Holocaust remembrance that include the Roma genocide as a distinct and integral component.
- Integrate Roma Holocaust memory into broader EU frameworks addressing antigypsyism, equality, and minority rights.

- Develop monitoring mechanisms at national and European levels to assess the inclusion of Roma history in education, cultural institutions, and public commemorations.
- Ensure that EU funding instruments—such as the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and Creative Europe—explicitly support projects related to Roma Holocaust remembrance.
- Promote coordination among EU institutions, international organizations, and national authorities to avoid fragmentation and duplication of efforts.

E. Participation of Roma Communities

Meaningful remembrance cannot be achieved without the active participation of Roma communities themselves.

Recommendations:

- Recognize Roma individuals and organizations as co-authors of memory, not merely as beneficiaries or sources of testimony.
- Establish long-term institutional partnerships between public bodies and Roma organizations in the fields of education, culture, and research.
- Ensure that Roma experts are systematically involved in advisory boards, curriculum development, museum governance, and policy consultations.
- Support capacity-building initiatives that strengthen Roma participation in cultural and academic institutions.
- Promote intergenerational dialogue within Roma communities to facilitate the transmission of memory and empower younger generations as custodians of history.

Cross-Cutting Principles

The successful institutionalization of Roma Holocaust memory requires adherence to a set of overarching principles that cut across all policy areas.

First, Roma must be recognized as knowledge producers. Historical research and memory practices should not speak *about* Roma without speaking *with* Roma. This implies a shift from extractive approaches to participatory and co-creative models of remembrance.

Second, intersectionality must be systematically integrated. The Roma Holocaust was experienced differently by men and women, adults and children, sedentary and itinerant communities. Policies and practices must reflect these differences and avoid homogenizing Roma experiences.

Third, transnational coordination is essential. The Samudaripen was a European genocide, and its remembrance cannot be confined within national borders. European-level frameworks should facilitate the exchange of best practices, research findings, and educational tools while respecting national contexts.

Finally, sustainability must guide all interventions. Remembrance initiatives should be designed to endure beyond individual projects or funding cycles. This requires embedding Roma Holocaust memory within permanent institutions, legal frameworks, and educational systems.

By implementing these recommendations and principles, European institutions and Member States can take decisive steps toward correcting a long-standing injustice and strengthening a democratic and inclusive European memory culture in which Roma history is fully recognized as part of Europe's shared past and present.

CONCLUSION

Reflections on the Importance of Remembrance

The comparative findings from the seven participating countries confirm that remembrance of the Roma Holocaust extends far beyond the scope of historical inquiry. It represents an ethical foundation for democratic societies and a moral imperative to confront entrenched structures of inequality and silence. Across all contexts, the act of remembering emerges as both a civic responsibility and a pedagogical process: it is through memory that societies learn to name past injustices, recognise their continuity in the present, and redefine belonging on inclusive terms.

In most national frameworks, the Roma Holocaust remains insufficiently integrated into public consciousness. While symbolic gestures - annual ceremonies, memorial plaques, official statements - have multiplied in recent years, they rarely translate into educational transformation or institutional self-reflection. This discrepancy between commemoration and comprehension reveals a deeper challenge: the persistence of selective empathy and fragmented memory, where remembrance risks becoming an aesthetic of compassion rather than an instrument of justice.

Remembrance, as the research demonstrates, cannot be limited to ritualised mourning. It must be reframed as a living, dialogical process that links historical accountability to present-day equality. When memory is taught critically, through inclusive curricula and community participation, it becomes a form of social literacy: an education in empathy, agency, and shared responsibility. The *Samudaripen*, in this sense, functions not only as an historical episode but as a mirror reflecting the health of European democracy. The ways in which a society remembers its most marginalised victims are inseparable from how it recognises the rights and dignity of its citizens today.

Thus, remembrance is not a retrospective act; it is a forward-looking practice that sustains moral imagination and strengthens civic cohesion. The absence of Roma history from textbooks, museums, and media narratives signifies more than an omission: it signifies the ongoing exclusion of Roma identity and rights from the nation's moral framework and institutional practice. Addressing this absence requires sustained educational policy, ethical commitment, and intergenerational dialogue. Through remembrance, societies learn not only what happened, but who they choose to be.

Romdiem's Contribution to Historical Justice and Intercultural Dialogue

Against this backdrop, the Romdiem project has played a transformative role in bridging memory, research, and participation across diverse European contexts. By combining desk research with fieldwork interviews, the project provides both structural analysis and lived insight into how remembrance operates - or fails to operate - within national systems of education and culture. It moves beyond description to propose an epistemological shift: from studying Roma communities as subjects of history to recognising them as co-authors of collective memory.

The project's transnational framework enables comparative reflection on shared patterns of exclusion while simultaneously highlighting local specificities. Across the seven countries examined, Romdiem reveals a consistent gap between institutional narratives and community memory. It shows that the *Samudaripen* is too often acknowledged only in principle but marginalised in practice: a form of symbolic inclusion without epistemic justice. By bringing together educators, historians, artists, and Roma activists, Romdiem started to transforms remembrance from an isolated act into a networked, participatory process.

This contribution to historical justice lies in the project's insistence on agency and authorship.

Equally significant is Romdiem's impact on intercultural dialogue. By framing remembrance as a shared European responsibility rather than an ethnic duty, it redefines memory as a space of encounter. Through the dissemination of knowledge and comparative findings, the project encourages Roma and non-Roma citizens alike to engage in mutual learning. It challenges monocultural conceptions of national identity and situates Roma history within a wider European and human-rights discourse. In doing so, Romdiem aligns memory education with democratic renewal, proving that remembrance, when co-created, can serve as both a pedagogical and political instrument for inclusion.

Moreover, the project's interdisciplinary methodology, involving different perspectives and privileged observers belonging to multiple disciplenes and areas of interventation, illustrates how remembrance can evolve into a living system of knowledge production. By empowering Roma voices and connecting local initiatives, Romdiem contributes to a more plural and self-reflective European identity. Its work stands as evidence that remembrance is not merely a moral obligation but an infrastructure for coexistence.

Sustainability Vision and Next Steps

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of Romdiem's outcomes requires embedding its principles into structural and policy frameworks. The most pressing challenge is to transition from project-based innovation to systemic transformation. This involves three interrelated dimensions: institutional consolidation, pedagogical continuity, and civic participation.

First, institutional consolidation must prioritise the integration of the *Samudaripen* into teacher-training programmes, national curricula, and heritage institutions. Permanent partnerships between ministries of education, cultural foundations, and Roma organisations should be established. Creating European Roma Memory Networks could provide ongoing platforms for research exchange, curricular development, and policy advocacy.

Second, pedagogical continuity requires resources that transcend funding cycles. Sustainable remembrance depends on stable infrastructures: long-term research centres, multilingual digital archives, and locally managed “memory hubs” that connect academic knowledge with community engagement. Digital innovation should serve as both preservation and pedagogy, using online platforms, podcasts, and interactive storytelling to reach younger generations across linguistic and geographic boundaries.

Third, civic participation remains the cornerstone of remembrance. Empowering Roma communities to lead, rather than participate peripherally, ensures the authenticity and endurance of memory work. This means institutionalising Roma representation in curriculum councils, museum boards, and educational authorities, thereby transforming remembrance from consultation to co-governance. The future of memory education must rest on collaboration grounded in equality, not hierarchy.

Looking forward, the project’s sustainability vision aligns with broader European objectives for inclusion, human rights, and democratic resilience. The remembrance of the Roma Holocaust offers a framework for addressing contemporary challenges such as hate speech, historical denialism, and educational segregation. By linking the ethics of memory with the politics of equality, Romdiem provides not only an academic contribution but also a civic blueprint.

Ultimately, sustainability is not merely a matter of duration but of transformation. The goal is to embed remembrance within the moral architecture of everyday life, so that memory can become a continuous commitment to justice, empathy, and truth instead of a set of ritual ceremonies.

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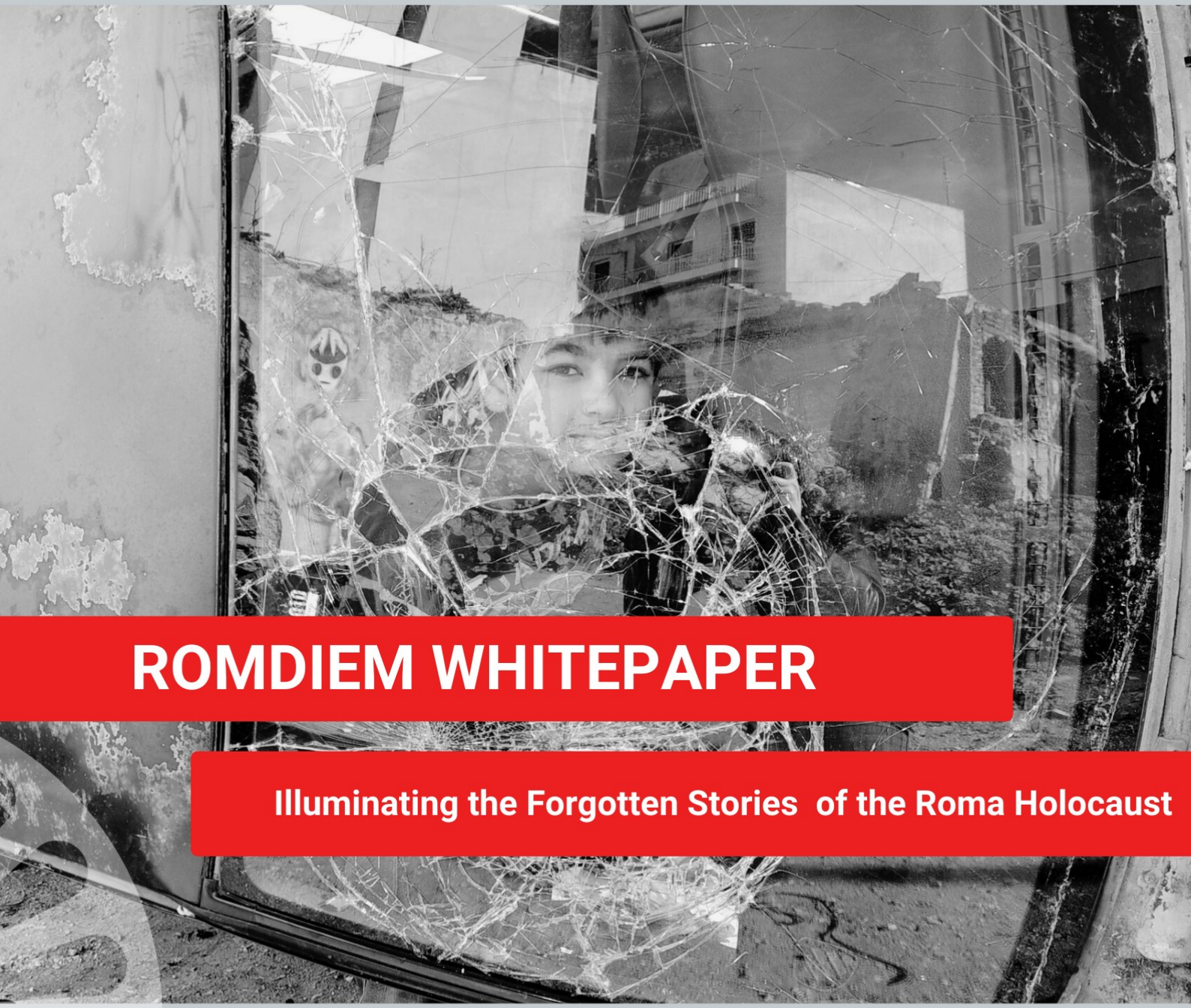

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