

Work Package 1

Roma Probationers Testimony Collection

Lead beneficiary: RNDP

Involved Consortium Organizations:

- West University of Timișoara
- Romanian National Probation Directorate
- Penal Reform International
- General Directorate Execution of Sentences, Bulgaria

Deliverable 1.1.

EDS - Roma Probationers Testimony Collection, Methodology document, Students survey report

Deliverable description:

- **Type of event:** In situ
- **Indicative dates of the event and duration:** Months 1 - 8 (March - October 2025)
- **Place(s) of the event:** Romania and Bulgaria
- **Number and name of eligible countries** (countries of habitual residence of participants): 2, Romania and Bulgaria.
- **Estimated number of individual direct participants:** around 280 participants were estimated at the beginning of the activity, and 352 direct participants were involved by the end of the work package.
- **Brief Description of the target groups:**
 - for the interviews Roma ethnics and their family members from Romania and Bulgaria (162 persons);
 - 190 students from Romanian universities.
- **Brief description of the event:**
 1. Life story collection methodology designed, containing key elements regarding group selection and semi-structured interviews;
 2. Planning, conducting and transcription of interviews;
 3. Evaluating the level of knowledge that students have regarding the history of the Roma through discussions in seminars and completing surveys - Western part of Romania and Bucharest - Written students survey report

Contents of Deliverable 1.1.

1. Life story collection methodology	3
2. Interviews with roma ethnics	30
3. Students survey report	32

1. Life story collection methodology

CONTENT:

PART A. INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY - ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

1. Brief introduction and preliminary documentation
2. Research methodology
 - 2.1. Purpose
 - 2.2 Specific objectives
 - 2.3. Working methods
 - 2.4. Selection of participants
 - 2.5. Procedure
 - 2.6. Ethical considerations
 - 2.7. Data analysis
3. Qualitative interview sheet
4. INFORMATION AND CONSENT FOR THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA - Romania
5. INFORMATION AND CONSENT FOR THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA - Bulgaria

PART B. STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE - ROMANIA

1. Objectives of the study addressed to students
2. Questionnaire addressed to students regarding knowledge of Roma history
3. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS PRO-VOCEM - Student Seminars
4. INFORMATION AND EXPRESSION OF CONSENT for the processing of personal data - student seminars

PART A. INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY - ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

1. Brief introduction and preliminary documentation

The PRO-VOCEM project aims to capitalize on the professional experience of the five organizational partners (West University of Timisoara, Romanian National Probation Directorate, General Directorate Execution of Sentences, Bulgaria, Penal Reform International of the Netherlands and Solidart Association of Romania) to research the complex historical roots and manifestations of racism, discrimination and social exclusion faced by Roma people serving non-custodial sentences, especially Roma women. By amplifying personal narratives, the project contributes, at a systemic level, to the deconstruction of stereotypes, the analysis of the historical impact of migration and deportations and promotes new interventions in probation systems. At the same time, the project aims to raise awareness among probation professionals, future professionals in training, as well as the general public, regarding the issues identified in the undertaken research.

The starting point of the examination is the recognition that historical phenomena of migration and forced deportations have left lasting marks on European societies, influencing current social dynamics and structural inequalities. Regarding Roma population, throughout history, special challenges represented by the ethnic barrier could be identified, as they were also treated by in the book "Gypsies", which refers to the early 20th century migrations of Roma from Romanian and Balkan countries.

The preliminary documentation for building the study methodology emphasizes the need for an approach that integrates a deep understanding of the cultural and historical context experienced by the Roma ethnic group, and this first section summarizes a series of contextual starting points, essential for implementing the research data collection methodology.

Regarding the current European framework in which this research is conducted, it is worth mentioning that the European Union pays special attention to the protection of ethnic minorities, promoting policies and strategies aimed at combating discrimination and ensuring their social and economic inclusion. In particular, the Roma population benefits from a specific intervention framework, embodied in the European Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion, initially adopted in 2011 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52011DC0173>) and subsequently updated for the period 2020-2030 (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1813). The new EU strategic framework for Roma establishes a series of objectives until 2030, which aim to promote effective equality, socio-economic inclusion and real participation of Roma.

The objectives that the European Commission aims to achieve by 2030 include improving the situation of Roma, with a view to significantly reduce discrimination and increase their ability to complain about abuses, reducing economic disparities, facilitating access to quality education and combating school segregation. Other aspects targeted include improving access to essential services such as drinking water, reducing the differences in housing conditions, employment and life expectancy, in order to move towards real and full equality between Roma and the rest of the population. This strategy underlines the importance of an integrated and multi-sectoral approach, with education, employment, health and decent housing as priorities. Furthermore, through specific funding and recommendations addressed to Member States, the European Union aims to combat stereotypes, segregation and social exclusion, while promoting the active participation of Roma in decision-making processes and in the implementation of public policies aimed at them. These specific objectives are found within the broader EU framework of promoting a society based on diversity, pluralism and non-discrimination.

These actions currently undertaken in the European Union space take into account the history of Roma communities, which have been subjected to long-standing discrimination and marginalization, exacerbated by experiences of migration, displacement and socio-economic challenges. Within this broader framework, the Pro Vocem project aims to connect the histories of oppression, forced migration and dehumanization of Roma communities in Romania and Bulgaria to the current marginalization, stereotyping and disproportionate criminalization. Moreover, the project considers that ethnic Roma in the criminal justice system face specific discriminatory phenomena. These include systemic discrimination and social exclusion linked to criminality, the roots of which can be traced to the same complex historical narratives of oppression, forced migration and intergenerational trauma that can attract and perpetuate stereotypes, disproportionate criminalization and true cycles of crime.

By collecting Roma voices, exposing the line of discriminatory attitudes and illuminating the intergenerational trauma caused by migration/displacement, the project seeks to build public awareness of these issues, both at the level of the two implementing countries and at the European level.

National contexts - Romania and Bulgaria

In Romania, a country with a deep and complex history, the Roma community remains one of the most marginalized and misunderstood ethnic groups. Burdened by a history of over five centuries of slavery, which lasted until the mid-19th century, the Roma community in Romania still bears the traces of this oppression. This painful history has left

deep scars, which are reflected in the socio-economic challenges that the Roma still face today.

According to a quantitative study conducted in 2022 by the National Probation Directorate in Romania, on a sample of 874 persons sentenced to non-custodial criminal penalties, a number of aspects to be taken into account in building the research methodology were highlighted. Thus, the overrepresentation of Roma ethnic groups (8% of the total number of respondents, compared to 4-5% of the total population of the country), low levels of education, high residential mobility, as an indicator of marginalization, as well as a disproportionate number of Roma women on probation (20% Roma women, compared to 9% women of all probationers in Romania) were highlighted.

Education also remains a significant barrier for the Roma community, with a worrying 20% of Roma probationers having not been involved in formal education at all, compared to just 7% of the general probation population nationally. This lack of access to education perpetuates a cycle of poverty and marginalization, severely limiting opportunities to improve their lives.

Regarding the employment of Roma women, over 70% of those included in the sample were housewives or child care workers.

Housing and residential mobility are two other areas where Roma people differed from other respondents. Over 11% of them declared that they live in a country other than Romania (compared to almost 8% of the entire sample), and around 19% of them declared that they intend to leave Romania in the next two years, even seasonally (compared to around 12% of the entire sample).

Despite all the challenges, it can still be seen that the spirit of the Roma community remains alive, deeply rooted in their cultural traditions and customs. Oral traditions, for example, are extremely valuable in the Roma community, serving not only as a form of preserving history and teachings, but also as a means of resistance and asserting identity in the face of ongoing oppression. However, some of these traditions, such as early marriage, can also contribute to the perpetuation of social norms that hinder progress, especially among Roma women.

At the crossroads of East and West, Bulgaria presents a rich cultural tapestry, in which the Roma community occupies a complex and nuanced place. With deep roots in the country's history, Bulgarian Roma face challenges similar to those in Romania, but with specificities that reflect the unique Bulgarian context.

Education and literacy also remain major challenges in Bulgaria, where many people of Roma origin have serious literacy problems and are often socially neglected. This neglect contributes to their continued isolation and difficulties in integrating into the wider socio-

economic structures of the country. Roma women, in particular, face double discrimination, struggling with both ethnic and gender prejudices, which limits their access to resources and opportunities.

However, the Roma community in Bulgaria maintains a deep connection to their traditions and culture. The voices of community leaders, such as Shakir Pashov, reflect resilience and a desire to change the negative narratives surrounding them. The collaboration between the probation service and various non-governmental and community organizations demonstrates a conscious effort to address the specific needs of Roma, through education programs and social integration initiatives.

In these contexts, the PRO-VOCEM project aims to amplify the voices of Roma and, based on the collected personal narratives and testimonies, to promote interventions in the probation systems in Romania and Bulgaria, to intensify dialogue and increase public awareness about the challenges and history of the Roma community, connecting the historical past with the contemporary marginalization of Roma, and contributing to building a more just and equitable society.

In order to build the research methodology applicable to the project, historical events that can be classified into the categories of: unique experiences and needs of Romani women, especially in contexts defined by migration, evacuation, expulsion, but also experiences of entire Roma populations, such as racism, marginalization, social exclusion or oppression, were also studied. On a time axis, summarized in **Tables 1 and 2**, relevant periods can be distinguished for the generations of Roma that the project aims to meet, or whose life stories will be recovered. Reflections of the synthesized historical events, observed in the stories, photographs, objects, behaviors of family members will be recorded during the interviews conducted.

Table No. 1
Romania

Time intervals relevant to the study	2007-present	1990-2006	1944-1989	1942-1943	Distant past
The dominant imprint of these periods	The post-accession period of Romania to the EU	Post-anti-communist revolution period	Communist period	The period of deportations to Transnistria and World War II	History, beyond living generations
Significant events in the history of the Roma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - since January 1, 2007, movement within the European space has been much easier; - 2009, the inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial in Bucharest, which also includes the Roma Wheel; - 2011, March 20 is declared the Day of Commemoration of the Emancipation of the Roma in Romania; - 2011/2021, population and housing censuses; - 2019, June 16 is declared Romani Language Day; - 2020, August 2 is declared the National Day of Commemoration of the Holocaust against the Roma - Samudaripen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - opening of Romania's borders; - interethnic conflicts: October 9, 1990, Mihail Kogălniceanu (Constanța), March 17, 1993, Cărpiniș (Timiș); - 2000, Roma begin to recover their gold confiscated by communist authorities; 2002 - The European Union eliminates the mandatory visa regime for Romanian citizens traveling to the EU - the beginning of the formation of a Roma diaspora; - 2006, April 8 is also celebrated in Romania as International Roma Day (declared in 1971, at the first Roma congress). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1945, agrarian reform, the land ownership of 19,559 Roma families; - 1949, the General Union of Roma in Romania is abolished (and, thus, there is no longer any political and associative representation of Roma in the RPR); - 1950, movement from one region to another is prohibited; - 1960-1970, urban systematization, destruction of Roma neighborhoods on the outskirts of large cities; - 1978, the authorities confiscate gold (especially from the Roma who were nomads, potters); - sterilization of Romanian women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1942, May 25, national census of Roma; - 1942, June 1 - July 18, deportation to Transnistria of approximately 25,000 Roma. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the emancipation of the Roma: March 22, 1843 (princely slaves, Wallachia), January 31, 1844 (monastery slaves, Moldavia); February 14, 1844 (princely slaves, Moldavia); February 11, 1847 (monastery slaves, Wallachia); December 10, 1855 (boyar slaves, Moldavia); February 20, 1856 (boyar slaves, Wallachia); - The Revolution of 1848, the organization of a "Roma company"; - migratory waves of Roma: 1860, 1905-1913.

Table No. 2
Bulgaria

Time intervals relevant to the study	2007 - present	1990-2006	Communist period 1944-1989	After the Liberation of Bulgaria (1878 - 1944)	In the Ottoman Empire (1396 - 1878)
The dominant imprint of these periods	The post-accession period of Bulgaria to the EU	Democratic period	Communist period	The period of New Bulgarian state and World War II	History, beyond living generations
Significant events in the history of the Roma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - since January 1, 2007, movement within the European space is much easier; - Antiroma riots in Bulgaria since 2011; - 2011/2021, population and housing censuses; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - restoration of ethnic and religious rights of minorities in Bulgaria - Immediately after the changes of 1989 many Roma organisations were established. Among them are: the Cultural and Educational Organization of the Roma in Bulgaria, the Democratic Union "Roma" (1990), the Movement for Social and Cultural Development of the Roma (1992), the United Roma Union (1992), the Confederation of Roma in Bulgaria (1993), the Political Movement "Euro Roma" (1998), the Roma Party (2001); - The Bulgarian Parliament ratified the Framework Convention for the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After the establishment of the communist regime in 1944, the Roma were embraced by the new government's minority policies, with the creation of Roma cultural organizations, periodicals and theater in the Roma language, and special schools to eradicate the high illiteracy rate. - 1946 population and housing censuses; - During the mass Turkish expulsions of 1949-1950, a number of Roma were included in the mass expulsions, sparking protests from Turkey. - In 1945, the Roma organization "Ekipe" was founded and became active, publishing the newspaper "Romano essi" and founding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After the Liberation the Roma became the second largest ethnic minority in the newly formed Bulgarian state, at that time slightly more than half of them were Muslims and the rest - Christians. In some places, Muslim Roma were forcibly Christianized. - In 1901, the government initiated the revocation of the voting rights of the Roma. The law remained in force until the introduction of compulsory voting in 1919. - The first Roma organization in Bulgaria was founded in 1910. - In the mid-1930s, the Roma in Vidin were relocated with municipal funding to a new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first Bulgarian text devoted to the Roma was an article by Petko Slaveykov in the newspaper Gajda in 1866; - There is evidence of Roma participation in the April Uprising and the Liberation War.

		<p>Protection of National Minorities in 1999.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adoption of a national framework program for Roma integration and anti-discrimination legislation 1999. - Roma case in Mechka village <p>2001 - The European Union eliminates the mandatory visa regime for Bulgarian citizens traveling to the EU</p>	<p>numerous local organizations, community centers, a sports society and the Central Roma Theater. In 1946 its chairman Shakir Pashov became the first Roma member of the parliament. Initially tolerated by the regime, in 1950 the organization ceased its activities, which were taken over by the cazonal Otechestven Front. After Shakir Pashov's mandate, the Roma had no representation in parliament until the end of the regime.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 1958, measures were taken to permanently settle about 14,000 Roma. In the late 1950s, many of these measures were abandoned as ineffective, as the marginalization of the Roma intensified and urban Roma ghettos grew. - Throughout the period, the totalitarian regime monitored and tried to limit the reluctance of the Roma to assimilate into the Bulgarian ethnicity, defined in the State Security documentation as " Roma nationalism". Under this concept are included two separate phenomena undesirable for the regime - 	<p>neighborhood near the city. In 1941, the first school in the country specifically dedicated to the education of Roma was opened there.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roma are affected by xenophobic legislation from the 1940s discriminating against minorities. - In 1942, the Muslim Roma were forcibly Christianized and renamed. Roma were subjected to civil mobilization, mainly for the construction of railways and other public works. 	
--	--	---	--	---	--

			<p>Turkishness ("nationalism on a pro-Turkish basis") and the aspiration for the emancipation of the Roma community ("pro-Roma nationalism"). At the end of the period, Roma nationalism was often associated with the activities of the International Roma Union, which was supported by the Yugoslav government and considered by State Security to be a conduit of foreign influence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In an attempt to limit Turkishness among the Muslim Roma from the late 1950s, the regime began a campaign to change their Muslim names, which provoked resistance and led many of those affected to try to pass themselves off as Turks, citing the identity documents issued to them under a relaxed procedure in 1950-1953. The campaign continued with varying intensity until 1980-1983, when, as part of the so-called "revival process", some 250,000 Muslim Roma were massively renamed; - 1989 mass resettlement of Roma in ghettos. 		
--	--	--	--	--	--

During the interviews, certain aspects found in previous research (RNDP, 2022) will be taken into account, which can be reconfirmed and deepened in the current study, and can guide the understanding of participant involvement, interaction, and data collection.

Anticipated particularities in the interaction with the interviewees, from the experience of previous research findings:

- In traditional communities, there is likely to be an expectation to also dialogue with Roma men, not just Roma women.
- The temporal framing of the events narrated could be difficult, given: some superstitions (which make it impossible to see a clock in many Roma homes), the volatility associated with the nomadism of many generations, the approach to distant historical events.
- Some historical events (e.g. deportation) may be taboo.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Purpose

The Pro-Vocem study aims to bring to the forefront the voices of Roma people under supervision, especially women, to highlight their experiences of prejudices associated with racism, (cultural) discrimination, social exclusion, and interaction with the probation system (see

<https://oxfordre.com/communication/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-164>). It also aims to understand historical influences (migration, deportations) and deconstruct stereotypes related to Roma.

2.2. Specific objectives

1. Identifying the personal experiences of supervised Roma people related to discrimination and racism.
2. Exploring how historical experiences (deportations, forced migration) influence identity and current condition.
3. Amplifying personal narratives to combat stereotypes and stigma.
4. Assessing the perception of the probation system and insufficiently in-deepened needs.
5. Formulating recommendations for culturally sensitive and inclusive interventions in probation.

2.3. Working methods

To achieve the purpose and specific objectives of the research, qualitative methods will be used to allow in-depth exploration of personal experiences and the social and historical context:

a. Semi-structured interviews

- The interviews will be conducted face-to-face, with an average duration of 45-60 minutes, audio recorded with the participants' consent.
- Objective: To identify and explore personal experiences regarding racism, discrimination, and interactions with the probation system. The semi-structured interview allows the adaptation of questions depending on the context and participants' responses, facilitating free and authentic expression.

b. Study of historical and social documents

- Study of relevant literature on Roma history, especially deportations and forced migrations.
- Objective: To contextualize and understand how historical experiences influence the current condition of participants and contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes.

c. Participatory observation

- Participation and observation in the environments of interaction (the interviewer will also have the role of an active observer, to capture non-verbal aspects, gestures, emotional reactions and the interaction of the interviewees with the environment. Relevant elements from the context will be noted, e.g. tone of voice, hesitations, atmosphere, maintaining an empathetic, neutral and open attitude, to encourage the free expression of the interviewee. Observations will be recorded immediately after the interview or, if possible, discreetly during it.)
- Objective: direct observation of social dynamics, identification of subtle forms of exclusion and discrimination.

d. Narrative analysis

- In-depth analysis of personal narratives obtained from interviews.
- Objective: amplifying the voices of participants and highlighting the historical and social context in which these experiences manifest.

The collected data will be analyzed using thematic and interpretive analysis to extract main themes and formulate pertinent recommendations for inclusive probation policies and practices.

2.4. Selection of participants

Inclusion criteria : Roma people who have experienced contact with the probation system as supervised persons (men and women) and their family members, with an emphasis on women; age - over 18 years.

Estimated number of participants : approximately 80 in Romania and 80 in Bulgaria.

Selection method : purposive and "snowball" sampling. Recommendations from probation counselors from the Romanian counties involved: Timiș, Ilfov, Ialomița and Constanța and from Bulgaria, regarding people of Roma ethnicity, preferably those who are known to have knowledge of such experiences (deportations, forced migration) or who have felt the effects of significant and striking historical events. Also, if possible, to diversify participant selection, outreach will include Roma-rights NGOs, human rights organizations focused on criminal justice, news agencies, and other civic initiatives.

2.5. Procedure

Interviews will be conducted face-to-face, based on an appointment with the interviewees, at their homes or at the probation services' offices, depending on the availability and comfort of the participants.

Each interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, but may be longer, depending on the number of participants.

Informed consent will be obtained and confidentiality will be guaranteed for the individuals interviewed.

The interviews will be audio-recorded, with the participant's consent, and transcribed in full. Participants will be encouraged to accompany their stories with family photos, objects associated with the significant events explored; if they allow us, we can take photos of objects with symbolic value (which we will then submit to a section of the website designed for the project).

Once the audio recording of the conversation works, free expression from family members will be encouraged, starting the discussion with the oldest.

2.6. Ethical considerations

- ✓ Respect for the principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent.
- ✓ Using culturally sensitive language and avoiding reinforcing stereotypes.
- ✓ Ensuring the possibility of withdrawing from the research at any time.

- ✓ At all stages of the research, the “Do No Harm” principle will be upheld, ensuring that participants do not experience any physical, psychological, social, or legal harm as a result of their involvement in the study.

2.7. Data analysis

2.7.1. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) will be used to identify recurring patterns and themes in narratives. **Thematic analysis** is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in qualitative data. It is a flexible technique, suitable for a variety of research questions and theoretical positions, and is often used in social and humanities research.

Thematic analysis can be used both in an **inductive approach** (starting from data, without pre-existing hypotheses - useful in exploratory studies) and in a **deductive approach** (guided by existing theories or concepts). It can also be positioned in a **constructivist perspective**, in which reality is understood as socially and contextually constructed. The advantages of the method are: flexibility and accessibility in different research paradigms, focusing on the participant's voice, identifying not only what is said, but also how it is said.

Stages of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

1. Familiarization with the data

- Transcription of interviews.
- Reading and rereading texts to understand the depth and context of the narratives.
- Noting preliminary ideas, relevant expressions, or affective reactions.

2. Initial coding (code generation - manually or computer assisted)

- Extraction of significant units of meaning (words, phrases, sentences) from the text.
- Coding will be carried out by at least 2 independent coders, followed by peer debriefing sessions and codebook negotiation.
- Assigning descriptive or interpretative codes to each relevant segment.
- Codes can be direct labels from the participant's language ("in vivo") or analytical concepts proposed by the researcher.

3. Searching for themes

- Grouping similar codes into thematic categories.
- Identifying candidate themes: recurring patterns, central ideas, or relevant dimensions of experiences.
- Organization of main themes and sub-themes.

4. Reviewing themes

- Re-evaluating the themes in relation to the entire data set.
- Checking the internal coherence of each theme and the distinction between themes.

- Rewording or combining themes, if necessary.

5. Defining and naming themes

- Clarifying the essence of each theme: what story does it tell? What does it mean for the entire research?
- Establishing the final title of the themes, in a clear, concise and expressive way.

6. Writing the report

- Choosing representative interview excerpts for each theme.
- Critical and interpretive analysis of the themes in relation to the research objectives.
- Integrating specialized literature to support interpretations.

2.7.2. The contrast of individual and collective experiences will be pursued, with an emphasis on the intersectionality between ethnicity, gender and social status.

2.7.3. Coding will be done manually or assisted by qualitative analysis software (MAXQDA)

3. Qualitative interview sheet

Interview date:

Location:

Duration:

Interviewer:

Context data (completed by the interviewer or self-reported by the participant)

	Interviewee 1 (person in direct contact with probation)	Interviewee 2	Interviewee 3	Interviewee 4
		Family/affinity relationship with Interviewee 1		
Age				
Gender				
Declared ethnicity				
Marital status				
Education level				
Locality/environment (urban/rural)				
Current professional status (employed/unemployed/other)				

Notes on the atmosphere of the interview

(e.g. availability, expressiveness, technical difficulties, visible emotions, etc.)

.....

Post-interview observations

(Changes in tone, relevant information appearing "off the record", etc.)

.....

Interview guide - topics and guiding questions

A. IDENTITY AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

- How do you define yourself ethnically? What does being Roma mean to you?
- How do you think your ethnicity influences how others perceive you?

B. GENDER AND INTERSECTIONALITY

- What do you think are the challenges you face as a Roma woman, compared to men or other non-Roma women?
- How are Roma women perceived and treated in your community and in society in general?

C. HISTORICAL MEMORY AND MIGRATION

- What stories have you heard in your family about deportations, migration, or other significant historical experiences?
- How do you think the historical past influences your present and that of the community?

D. COVID 19 PERIOD

- How do you assess the treatment of Roma people during the COVID-19 pandemic in interaction with the medical system, public authorities, detention facilities, etc.?
- Do you have an incident or experience that you think shows how Roma have been viewed or treated during the pandemic?

E. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROBATION SYSTEM

- How were you treated in your contact with probation? Did you feel that your ethnic identity influenced this treatment?
- Have you ever felt that something during probation didn't seem fit or wasn't useful for you because of your cultural background, traditions, or way of life?
- Have you ever felt that other people got more support or different types of activities or that there might be services or activities available that were not offered to you? If yes, could you give an example?
- Did you feel that the support you received during probation helped you, in one way or another, to move forward with your life plans - whether it was about work, family, or something else important to you?

- What changes would you like to see in the probation system to make it more fair and inclusive?

F. SOLUTIONS AND HOPES

- What would you change in the way Roma are perceived in society?
- What would you change in the way Roma are perceived by the judicial authorities? What message would you send to others about who Roma really are?

G. DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

- Have you ever experienced discrimination or different treatment because of your ethnicity? Where? How did you feel?
- Can you tell me about a specific situation in which you felt excluded or stigmatized?
- Are there certain places or contexts where you feel discrimination or racism is more present?

Finally, would you like to add any more details about your experiences?

As a suggestion for recording some data, the table organized according to the Life History Calendar (LHC) can be used, for each interviewee.

Table No. 3 *LHC**

Interviewee no. Initials	Age of the person interviewed at the date of the event																											
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	N			
School start																												
School break Reason																												
Marriage/cohabitation																												
Childbirth (year of birth: 1..., 2..., 3...)																												
Mother (year of birth:) Age at birth of the Interviewee																												
Father (year of birth:) Age at birth of the Interviewee																												
Special personal events (eg. Relevant events for them, work, economic and social support, previous convictions - in the final stage of the interview) E1 En																												

*Optional

4. INFORMATION AND CONSENT FOR THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA - ROMANIA

INFORMATION AND EXPRESSION OF CONSENT

for the processing of personal data

within the PRO-VOCEM project

In accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 27, 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), as well as Law No 190/2018 on the implementing measures of the Data Protection Regulation, the National Probation Directorate is obliged to process under secure conditions and only for the purpose specified below the personal data you provide us with about yourself.

Thus, the National Directorate of Probation processes your personal data in order to achieve the objectives proposed in the PRO-VOCEM project, which aims to bring to the forefront the voices of supervised persons of Roma ethnicity, especially women, in order to highlight their experiences of the prejudices associated with racism, (cultural) discrimination, social exclusion, and interaction with the probation system. The purpose of the data processing is both to conduct a study by recording, storing and analyzing the interviews conducted and to promote the "Pro Vocem" project (conferences, round tables, seminars).

The personal data processed are: name, surname, gender, age, declared ethnicity, family situation, level of education, locality, current professional status, images (objects, photos from personal archives, ...), voice, date of interview, place and duration of the interview, data concerning nonverbal and paraverbal communication, opinions or beliefs expressed, number of children and year of their birth, age of birth of children, marital status, signature.

The data will be stored in secure conditions and, according to the institutional rules, the minimum storage period is 5 years from the date of completion of the project (July 2027). Data may be communicated to project partners or other third parties in a form that does not allow your identification. Data will be communicated in a non-anonymized form only for the purpose of fulfilling a legal obligation incumbent on the controller.

The rights recognized to you by EU Regulation 2016/679 are: the right of access to data, the right to erasure of data ("right to be forgotten"), the right to restriction, the right to data portability, the right to object, the right to rectification in accordance with the legal provisions in force. The means by which I request to be contacted for the purpose of providing information is the e-mail address _____ or telephone number _____.

If you believe that your rights have been violated as a result of the processing of your personal data, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the relevant supervisory authority, namely the National Supervisory Authority for the Processing of Personal Data, at the following e-mail address: anspdcp@dataprotection.ro

We inform you that you are under no obligation to provide the National Probation Directorate with your personal data. You also have the right to revoke your consent at any time, by submitting a written request to (indicating the address of the service to which the person was/is being interviewed). Neither the consent given nor any subsequent withdrawal of it will in any way influence the supervision or assessment process in the relationship with the probation service.

In accordance with the above information,

I, the undersigned, _____, as a participant in the project, declare that I have understood the information given and give my consent to the processing of my personal data.

Full name _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

5. INFORMATION AND CONSENT FOR THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA - BULGARIA

INFORMATION AND EXPRESSION OF CONSENT

for the processing of personal data

within the PRO-VOCEM project

In accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 27, 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), as well as Law No 190/2018 on the implementing measures of the Data Protection Regulation, the General Directorate Execution of Sentences, Bulgaria is obliged to process under secure conditions and only for the purpose specified below the personal data you provide us with about yourself.

Thus, the General Directorate Execution of Sentences, Bulgaria processes your personal data in order to achieve the objectives proposed in the PRO-VOCEM project, which aims to bring to the forefront the voices of supervised persons of Roma ethnicity, especially women, in order to highlight their experiences of the prejudices associated with racism, (cultural) discrimination, social exclusion, and interaction with the probation system. The purpose of the data processing is both to conduct a study by recording, storing and analyzing the interviews conducted and to promote the "Pro Vocem" project (conferences, round tables, seminars).

The personal data processed are: name, surname, gender, age, declared ethnicity, family situation, level of education, locality, current professional status, images (objects, photos from personal archives, ...), voice, date of interview, place and duration of the interview, data concerning nonverbal and paraverbal communication, opinions or beliefs expressed, number of children and year of their birth, age of birth of children, marital status, signature.

The data will be stored in secure conditions and, according to the institutional rules, the minimum storage period is 5 years from the date of completion of the project (July 2027). Data may be communicated to project partners or other third parties in a form that does not allow your identification. Data will be communicated in a non-anonymized form only for the purpose of fulfilling a legal obligation incumbent on the controller.

The rights recognized to you by EU Regulation 2016/679 are: the right of access to data, the right to erasure of data ("right to be forgotten"), the right to restriction, the right to data portability, the right to object, the right to rectification in accordance with the legal provisions in force. The means by which I request to be contacted for the purpose of providing information

23

is the e-mail address _____ or telephone number _____.

If you believe that your rights have been violated as a result of the processing of your personal data, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the relevant supervisory authority, namely the, at the following e-mail address:

We inform you that you are under no obligation to provide the General Directorate Execution of Sentences, Bulgaria with your personal data. You also have the right to revoke your consent at any time, by submitting a written request to (indicating the address of the service to which the person was/is being interviewed). Neither the consent given nor any subsequent withdrawal of it will in any way influence the supervision or assessment process in the relationship with the probation service.

In accordance with the above information,

I, the undersigned, _____, as a participant in the project, declare that I have understood the information given and give my consent to the processing of my personal data.

Full name _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

PART B. STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE - ROMANIA

In the initial phase of the activities, information will be collected, through an applied questionnaire, to assess the level of knowledge that Romanian students have regarding specific aspects of Roma history (e.g., historical events, cultural practices, contributions to society, challenges faced by the Roma community).

The research has an **exploratory-descriptive** character, aiming to identifying the level of knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of students towards Roma history and culture. It is a research **included in the quantitative and qualitative paradigm**, using the questionnaire as the main data collection tool.

The mixed questionnaire, with closed, semi- open and open questions will be applied to students, in physical or online format, and the responses will be analyzed and interpreted in order to highlight the trends and level of knowledge of students regarding the history of Roma people. Both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of the responses will be carried out. The quantitative analysis will be used to describe and interpret frequencies, distributions and correlations from the measured variables through the closed-ended items of the questionnaire, while qualitative analysis, through thematic analysis techniques, will allow for an in-depth exploration of the perceptions, representations and attitudes expressed by respondents to the open-ended questions.

1. Objectives of the study addressed to students

General objectives

01. Evaluating students' knowledge level regarding Roma history in Romania.
02. Exploring students' representations and perceptions of the Roma culture and the members of this ethnic group.
03. Analysis of students direct interaction with Roma people and the influence on their perceptions.
04. Determining students' perception of the educational and professional relevance of Roma history and culture knowledge.

Specific objectives

- S01. To identify the level of information and sources of knowledge regarding the history of the Roma. (Items 1,2,3,4)
- S02. To explore the way in which students perceive Roma culture and members of this community. (Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)
- S03. To analyze the influence of direct contact with Roma ethnicity on perceptions and attitudes. (Item 12)
- S04. To evaluate the perceived relevance of learning about Roma history for students' education and careers. (Items 13, 14, 15)

2. Questionnaire addressed to students regarding knowledge of Roma history

This questionnaire aims to assess students' level of knowledge regarding Roma history.
Estimated time to complete: 5-7 minutes. Responses are anonymous and will be used strictly for research purposes.

Demographic data:

Age:

Gender Identity: M/F/non-binary

Study cycle (bachelor's/master's, year):

Faculty, specialization/University:

Ethnicity: Roma/Romanian/German/Hungarian/Serbian/...

Citizenship:

1. Have you participated in discussions or seminars about Roma history?

Yes/No

2. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate your knowledge of the history of the Roma in Romania?

- ☐ I have no knowledge about the history of Roma people in Romania
- ☐ I have very little knowledge, I only know a few general things
- ☐ I have a moderate level of knowledge, I am familiar with some essential aspects
- ☐ I have fairly good knowledge, I understand the main events and context
- ☐ I have very good knowledge, I can speak knowledgeably about the history of Roma people in Romania

3. To what extent do you know about the following events in Roma history?

Event	Answer options
Roma slavery in Romanian	Not at all/To a small extent/Medium/To a large extent/To a very large extent
The emancipation of the Roma	
The Roma Holocaust	
Policies of forced assimilation of Roma	
Interethnic riots against Roma	

4. Which source gave you the most information about Roma history?

School (courses/seminars)
Mass media (TV, press, internet)
Family/friends
Literature
Other sources

5. Name 3 customs and traditions specific to the Roma, that you know.

6. What effects have you noticed that these customs and traditions have on the lives of Roma?
7. How do you think these customs and traditions are viewed by the majority population?
8. Can you name two or three personalities representative for the Roma culture?
9. Beyond public figures, what specific qualities have you noticed in ordinary Roma?
10. What losses have you noticed that Roma people often experience precisely because they belong to a culture different from the majority culture, such as Roma culture?
11. Would your answer be different for Roma women?
12. What losses have you noticed that Roma individuals often experience, precisely because they belong to a culture different from the majority culture, when interacting with the probation system (the system for enforcing non-custodial criminal sanctions)?
13. If you were Roma and felt prejudiced for this reason, what would you do to get out of the problematic situation?
14. Can you also answer the same question, thinking that you are a Roma woman?
15. Throughout my life, I have had:
 - Roma relatives Yes/No
 - Roma Schoolmates Yes/No
 - Roma friends Yes/No
 - Roma neighbors Yes/No
 - Passing acquaintances of Roma ethnicity Yes/No
 - I have never interacted with people of Roma ethnicity Yes/No
16. Do you think the topic of Roma history would be useful in your study program?
 - Not at all/ To a small extent/ Average/ To a large extent/ To a very large extent
17. Thinking about your future profession, do you think it would be useful to have more knowledge about Roma history?
 - Not at all/ To a small extent/ Average/ To a large extent/ To a very large extent
18. In your opinion, what would be the main benefits of having knowledge regarding the history of Roma ethnics?

Fight stereotypes and prejudices
Better understanding of cultural diversity
Promotion of social inclusion
Development of empathy and respect for minorities
Getting a more complete perspective on national and european history
No significant benefit
Other

3. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS PRO-VOCEM - Student Seminars

No.	First And Last Name	Affiliation	Country	Contact Email	Gender			Signature
					Female	Male	Non Binary	

Project: Project 101196353 - PRO-VOCEM - Probationers' Voices Reviving Memories . Project funded by the European Commission, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV), CERV 2024-CITIZENS-REM, Objective 3 - CERV-2024-CITIZENS-REM-HISTMIGRATION – Migration, de-colonisation and multicultural European societies

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

4. INFORMATION AND EXPRESSION OF CONSENT for the processing of personal data - student seminars

In accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of April 27, 2016 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), as well as Law No 190/2018 on the implementing measures of the Data Protection Regulation, the National Probation Directorate is obliged to process under secure conditions and only for the purpose specified below the personal data you provide us with about yourself.

Thus, the project's partners processes your personal data in order to achieve the objectives proposed within the PRO-VOCEM project - collecting oral histories and testimonies from Roma and their older relatives, analyzing the links between personal narratives and the wider historical context, conducting round tables with experts, synthesizing information into research reports and educational materials, organizing awareness-raising and consciousness-raising events on the complex historical roots and manifestations of racism, discrimination and social exclusion faced by Roma people under the supervision of the probation system, conducting forum theatre sessions, organizing educational and training workshops for future professionals, engaging in dissemination and advocacy activities.

The personal data processed are: name, surname, gender, e-mail address, educational background, ethnicity, nationality, answers expressed in relation to the questionnaire items, signature.

Data will be stored securely and according to institutional rules the minimum storage period is 5 years from the project end date (July 2027). Data may be communicated to project partners or other third parties in a form that does not allow your identification. Data will be communicated in a non-anonymized form only for the purpose of fulfilling a legal obligation incumbent on the controller.

The rights recognized to you by EU Regulation 2016/679 are: the right of access to data, the right to erasure of data („right to be forgotten”), the right to restriction, the right to data portability, the right to object, the right to rectification in accordance with the applicable legal provisions. The means by which I request to be contacted for the purpose of providing information is the e-mail address or telephone number provided below.

If you believe that your rights have been violated as a result of the processing of your personal data, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the relevant supervisory authority, namely the National Supervisory Authority for Personal Data Processing, at the following e-mail address: anspdc@dataprotection.ro

Please note that you are under no obligation to provide the National Probation Service with your personal data. You also have the right to withdraw your consent at any time by submitting a written request to Contact on <https://www.uvt.ro/provocem/>

In accordance with the above information, I hereby consent to the processing of my personal data:

Nr. Crt.	Full Name	E-mail or phone number	Date	Signature

2. Interviews with roma ethnics

2. Interviews with roma ethnics

Title of the event: Planning, conducting and transcribing the interviews

Type of event: In situ

Indicative dates of the event and duration: Months 2 to 8 (April - October 2025)

Place of the event: Romania and Bulgaria

Estimated number and name of eligible countries: 2, Romania and Bulgaria

Number of individual direct participants: 162 roma ethnics (81 in Romania and 81 in Bulgaria)

Brief Description of the target groups: probationers of declared roma ethnicity and their relatives

Brief description of the event:

This activity entails the planning, implementation, and transcription of qualitative interviews conducted in situ with Roma probationers and their relatives in Romania and Bulgaria. The objective of the activity was to collect first-hand information on the experiences, perceptions, and resilience mechanisms of Roma individuals involved in probation services, as well as the perspectives of their family members.

The event took place over a seven-month period (April - October 2025), allowing for adequate preparation, fieldwork, and systematic transcription of data. A total of 162 direct participants were involved, comprising 81 Roma probationers and their relatives in Romania and 81 in Bulgaria.

The activity will contribute to a comparative understanding and analysis of the connections between personal narratives and the wider historical context to identify ways in which Roma histories of migration, expulsion and deportation may impact on crime rates and perpetuate cycles of crime among Roma on probation and of the socio-cultural dynamics and reintegration processes of Roma probationers across the two participating countries, enhancing the project's evidence base for policy and practice recommendations.

3. Students survey report

3. Students survey report

Title of the event: Evaluating the level of knowledge that students have regarding the history of the Roma through discussions in seminars and completing surveys

Type of event: In situ

Indicative dates of the event and duration: Months 1 to 8

Place of the event: Romania

Estimated number and name of eligible countries: 1, Romania

Number of individual direct participants: 190 students participating at seminars (from which, 175 completed the survey)

Brief Description of the target groups: students from the Western part of Romania and Bucharest

Introduction

The present study was carried out within the project Pro Vocem - Probationers' Voices Reviving Memories, funded by the European Executive Agency for Education and Culture (EACEA), within the Call CERV-2024-CITIZENS-REM, under the theme CERV-2024-CITIZENS-REM-HISTMIGRATION, whose partners are the West University of Timișoara (Romania), the National Probation Directorate of Romania, Penal Reform International (Netherlands), the General Directorate of "Execution of Sentences" in Bulgaria and the Solidart Association - Basque Theatre (Romania).

The survey results aim to inform and improve the workshops conducted within the ProVocem project with students, in order to promote a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of Roma history among them.

Research methodology

The study aimed to assess the level of students' knowledge of Roma history, in order to identify any educational gaps or stereotype-based attitudes.

Data on Roma history knowledge was collected during several seminars with groups of social and legal science students from three Romanian universities. The survey was conducted online during the seminars. The survey was administered during the seminars through an online survey. The moderators also recorded their observations on the topics discussed in an observation sheet form.

Student participation was voluntary. They were informed in advance about the purpose and objectives of the study, how the data would be analyzed and reported, and any foreseeable

risks associated with it. They were also given explanations about the measures taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity in accordance with ethical regulations, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before they were included in the study.

Research tools

The questionnaire aimed to provide insight into how Romanian university students relate to Roma history and culture.

The questionnaire contained both open and closed questions focusing on topics such as educational experience and level of knowledge, sources of information, representations and perceptions, and personal experiences of interaction and the perceived benefits of knowing the history of the Roma. The demographic variables included in the questionnaire targeted age, gender, ethnicity, citizenship and educational level. The educational variables targeted university, field of study and level of studies.

To ensure confidentiality, respondents' personal data was not included in the questionnaires so that the answers could not be associated with the people who provided them.

During the seminars, moderators completed observation sheets on the topics discussed.

Research participants

The study sample comprises 175 students from three Romanian higher education institutions: the West University of Timișoara (70.85%), the University of Bucharest (13.14%), and the Vasile Goldiș West University of Arad (16%). In terms of level of study, most participants are enrolled on bachelor's degree programs (77.53%), followed by those on master's degree programs (20.79%), with a small percentage enrolled on postgraduate programs (1.69%). Regarding the year of study, the distribution is as follows: 53.11% of respondents are in their first year, 42.37% in their second year and 4.52% in their third year.

The age distribution of the participants reveals a pronounced asymmetry in favor of the under 25s, who make up 65.14% of the sample, suggesting a predominance of first-year students. At the same time, marginal groups of participants aged between 45 and 55 years are present, accounting for 26% of respondents. The median age of participants is 22 years, with 20 years appearing most frequently as the mode.

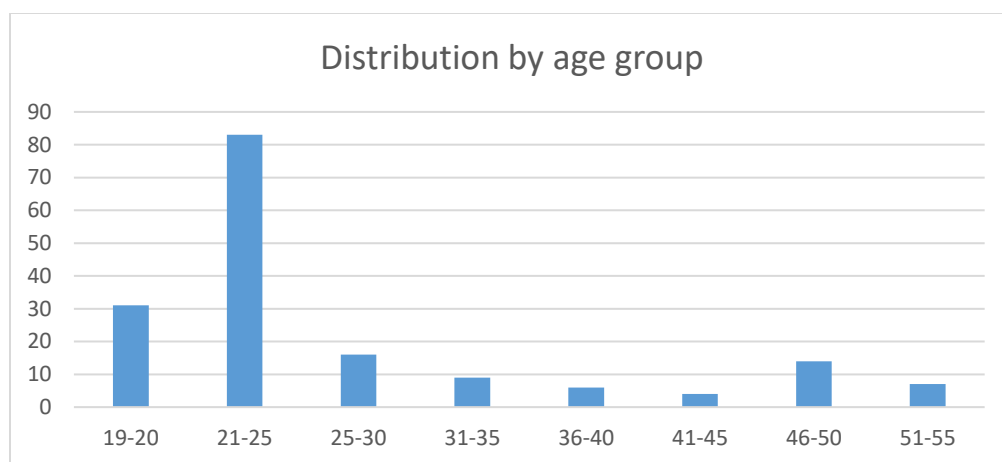


Fig. 1 Distribution by age group

Of the total participants, 90.34% (n = 159) self-identified as female, 9.09% (n = 16) as male, and 0.57% (n = 1) as non-binary. This distribution is characteristic of socio-human fields at university level.

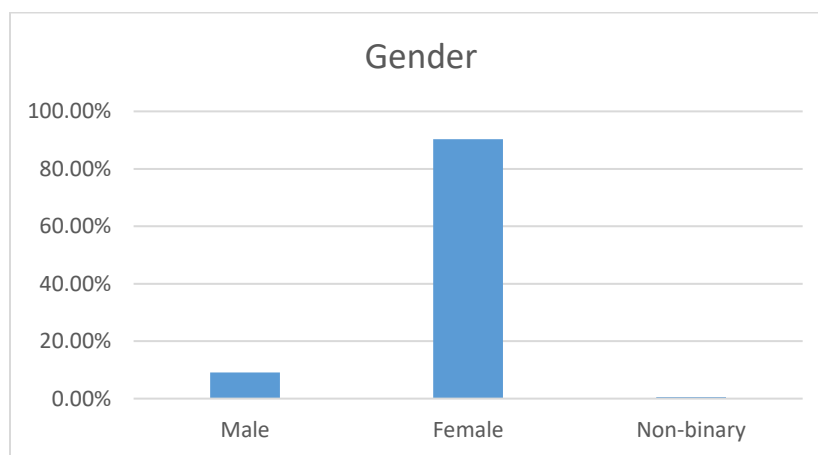


Fig. 2 Gender distribution

The distribution by self-declared ethnicity highlights the clear dominance of the Romanian population (88%), followed by ethnic minorities in smaller proportions: Hungarian (3.43%), Serbian (1.71%), Bulgarian and Ukrainian (1.14%), and German and Moldavian (0.57% each). 2.29% of respondents chose not to declare their ethnicity. Notably, no participant in the study identified as Roma.

Regarding declared citizenship, almost all respondents identified as Romanian (97.71%), while the rest mentioned other nationalities: Serbian (1.14%), German (0.57%), and Moldavian (0.57%). Overall, there is a high degree of correspondence between ethnic and civic identity (citizenship).

Data analysis

Descriptive data analysis was performed in Microsoft Excel using basic statistical functions to summarize and interpret the collected information. Histograms were used to graphically represent frequency distributions, facilitating a visual understanding of the essential characteristics of the dataset, which will be presented in this report.

Research results

The data collected reveal significant respondent involvement in educational activities related to Roma history, with 69.89% (n = 123) declaring participation in discussions or seminars on the topic. However, their self-perceived knowledge level is predominantly low: only 1.70% (n = 3) consider themselves to have very good knowledge, while 39.20% (n = 69) say they only have general information and 5.68% (n = 10) claim to have no knowledge at all about the history of the Roma people in Romania. The median response suggests an average level of knowledge (38.64%).

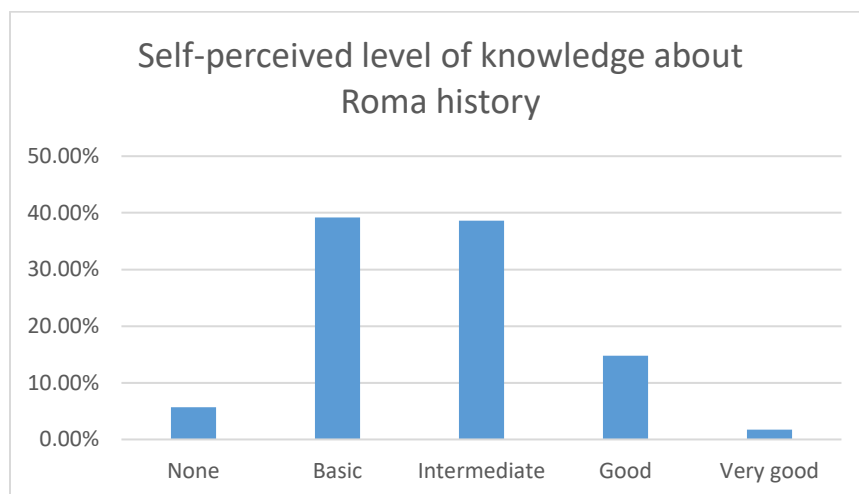


Fig. 3 Self-perceived level of knowledge about Roma history

Respondents' **knowledge of key historical events** related to the Roma community was assessed using a five-point Likert scale (from “Not at all” to “To a very great extent”). Regarding their perception of relevant historical moments and social phenomena, such as emancipation, slavery, the Holocaust, forced assimilation policies, and interethnic riots, most respondents indicated a medium or low level of knowledge. For instance, only 1.14% consider themselves to be very knowledgeable about the emancipation of the Roma, and 27.84% have no knowledge whatsoever of forced assimilation policies. Similarly, 18.18% knew nothing about aspects related to the Roma Holocaust and 23.86% knew nothing about interethnic riots. During the seminar discussions, students' historical knowledge focused mainly on the 500-year period of slavery in the Romanian Principates, which participants perceived as a source of enduring, transgenerational trauma. One participant, referring to the initial enslavement, stated: *“The Roma people were enslaved for around 400-500 years and were considered movable property. This historical treatment has created a lasting social burden, as another participant observed, noting that ‘it is very difficult for a Roma person... to escape this stigma.’* This evidence highlights the centrality of slavery in the students' collective consciousness and suggests that current social and economic challenges, such as poverty and integration difficulties, are a direct consequence of this long period of systemic dehumanization. Several students noted that *“the subject of the Roma Holocaust is not even discussed in Romanian society.”*

Analysis of the responses highlights significant differences in participants' familiarity with various historical topics related to the Roma population. Based on an average score calculated according to the responses, the most well-known topic is the slavery of the Roma in Romania (average score: 2.76), followed by the Roma Holocaust (average score: 2.53). These topics probably benefit from greater visibility in educational and media discourse. In contrast, the emancipation of the Roma (average score: 2.43), policies of forced assimilation (average score: 2.15), and interethnic riots against the Roma (average score: 2.30) are the least well known, indicating a gap in historical education and public awareness of these issues.

In a context where education should actively contribute to combatting discrimination and promoting inclusion, the high percentage of respondents who indicated 'not at all' or 'to a small extent' for these topics suggests the need for them to be more consistently integrated into public information initiatives.

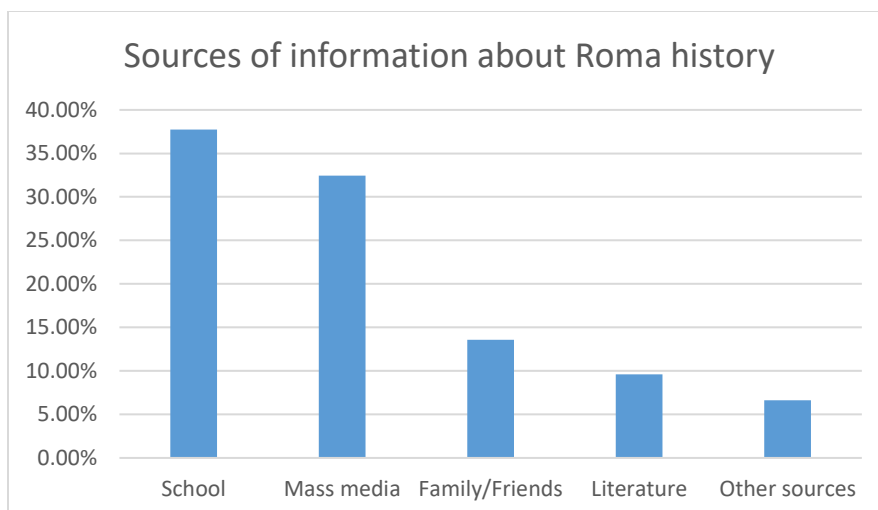


Fig. 4 Sources of information about the history of the Roma

The participants' main ***sources of information*** for the participants were school (37.75%) and the mass media (32.45%), followed by family and friends (13.58%), literature (9.60%), and other sources (6.62%). These results suggest the need to strengthen formal and non-formal education on Roma history and culture to combat stereotypes and promote social inclusion.

Qualitative analysis of responses to the open-ended question about specific Roma customs and traditions reveals recurring themes reflecting respondents' knowledge and cultural perceptions. These themes were also evident in the analysis of the survey responses and in the participants' observations during the seminars. The students' responses regarding the history, cultural practices, and contemporary challenges faced by the Roma community were nuanced.

The most prominent and recurring thematic category was that related to *marriage and the traditional family*, which dominated the students' declared knowledge. This theme included three high-frequency sub-concepts:

Child/early marriage, which was mentioned in approximately 83% of the analyzed responses.

Arranged/promised marriage was often associated with the first concept, reflecting an understanding of traditional mechanisms of forming couples.

Virginity testing (the 'sheet/shirt game'): this practice was mentioned by 8.57% of respondents, indicating a focus on rituals perceived as intrusive or controversial.

This thematic density indicates that the representation of Roma culture among students is centered on marital norms that are perceived as deviating from the norms of majority society.

Discussions of certain social practices, especially early marriage, during the seminars revealed challenges in interpreting Roma customs, such as determining whether they constitute a genuine cultural tradition or are historical mechanisms of survival. One participant initially described early marriage as a method of '*protection*' for girls and a means of promoting family-centered alliances. However, another participant contradicted this view, insisting that the practice '*is not a cultural thing, but rather a survival mechanism during the period of slavery*'. Ultimately, this debate highlighted the need for proactive commitment to empowerment and education, as systemic change depends on addressing the causes of historical trauma and its contemporary manifestations.

The second set of themes, which were mentioned in approximately 44% of the analyzed responses, refer to *elements of visible cultural expression*.

- Fiddle music/singing, which is consistently recognized as a specific tradition.
- Distinctive attire and clothing: mentions focused on visible elements, such as long, colorful skirts for women and wide-brimmed hats for men, indicating knowledge based on external signs of differentiation.

Traditional crafts, such as pottery making and blacksmithing, which are passed down from generation to generation, are also mentioned as part of the cultural heritage.

These aspects suggest knowledge based on public observation and aesthetic elements associated with Roma identity.

From the observations of the dialogue between the seminar participants, the participants acknowledged that this community is not a homogeneous group, noting internal divisions such as coppersmiths, blacksmiths and fiddlers, each with their own "*rules*" and distinct "*traditional values*". From a cultural perspective, the participants emphasized the role of crafts and certain professions as '*the engine of the rural economy*', as well as the significant and undeniable influence of music on Romanian folk and contemporary genres.

A smaller but consistent percentage (approximately 20%) of students mentioned aspects related to the community's internal structure:

- Gender roles and family respect, including respect for elders and the family hierarchy, as well as the subordinate role assigned to women.

- Traditional legal systems were also mentioned, with references to the Gypsy court and the Bulibaşa (community leader), demonstrating limited awareness of internal regulatory mechanisms.

During the seminars, participants emphasized the importance of their unwritten moral and social codes, including the '*Gypsy judgement*', as well as the importance of transmitting oral knowledge. These observations demonstrate the students' ability to recognize the active historical and cultural role of the Roma people, offering a valuable counterbalance to their often romanticized and superficial portrayal in public discourse. However, recognizing cultural depth and internal differentiation becomes complicated when discussing certain highly visible social practices, necessitating a critical interpretation of their origins.

A distinct section of the questionnaire responses included themes that, while they may be based on isolated practices, reflect stereotypical or negative perceptions. These included:

- Lack of education/schooling and child labor (instead of education).
- Occupations associated with illegality or marginalization (theft, cheating, begging). Approximately 11% of responses included at least one item from this category, indicating that students' perception of "traditions" is also influenced by problematic associations perpetuated in the public space.
- Elements of spirituality and beliefs, such as divination, superstitions and purification rituals, are sporadically evoked but carry a strong symbolic charge. It is noteworthy that 8.57% of respondents stated that *they did not know the traditions of the Roma*, which indicates a divergence in the level of information and a possible influence of cultural stereotypes.

These results suggest that students have only a basic understanding of Roma culture, which is heavily influenced by topics that generate social visibility and controversy, such as early marriage and virginity testing, or recognized folkloric elements, such as music and traditional clothing. The thematic approach predominantly focuses on normative deviance in relation to the majority and pays less attention to positive internal values, complex social systems, and the history of traditions.

The answers to the open-ended question regarding *the observed effects of customs and traditions on the lives of Roma* highlight a complex, but also polarized impact of traditional practices on the individual and community life of Roma. From the 175 responses

40

collected, a clear distinction is observed between internal effects (on community cohesion and identity) and external effects (on the relationship with the majority society and inclusion), as well as a segregation between effects perceived as positive and negative.

A significant proportion of respondents highlighted perceived negative consequences (~72%), most of which were related to obstacles to personal development and social integration.

Table 1. Percentage estimate of students' perception of the negative effects of customs and traditions on the lives of Roma

Sub-theme	Description	% of responses
Early marriage/underage mothers	Explicit mention of early marriage or underage motherhood as a negative effect.	~27%
Impact on education / School dropout	Lack of education, school dropout or non-continuation of higher education.	~22%
Social exclusion / isolation / marginalization	Effects of breaking away from society, isolation, marginalization or the establishment of closed communities.	~20%
Stigma / prejudice / discrimination	The fact that Roma are judged, stigmatized, discriminated against or treated differently by society.	~17%
Limitation of freedom / Gender inequality	The role of the housewife, submission, misogyny, male authority or the restriction of individual freedoms.	~11%
Lack of development / Limited prospects	The fact that they are stopped from evolving, do not develop or have limited access to opportunities.	~9%

- Impact on education and personal development: the most frequently mentioned negative effect is school dropout, especially for girls, which is often directly linked to early marriage. This traditional practice is seen as leading to underage mothers, lack of education and limiting the prospect of personal and professional development. *Sample answers: "Limited access to education and personal development", "developing jobs and not continuing higher education", "Most have completed primary school at most. Both girls and boys are forced to mature, their childhood is stolen", "They do not continue their studies, women are housewives, women do not work, they only take care of children", "They have a major impact because, after getting married, girls are somehow obliged to have children, which means they cannot continue their studies".*

- Social exclusion and stigmatization: customs and traditions are perceived as factors that generate social isolation and social exclusion, creating closed communities and barriers in interaction with other communities. Respondents noted that these practices make Roma people “stand out” and become a reason for stigmatization and different treatment by society. *Sample answers: “Prejudices are created that contribute to social exclusion”, “Their traditions make them stand out and a lot of people in Romania judge Roma people”, “they are marginalized”, “they can lead to discrimination from society and can limit individual freedom, especially women”, “they do not integrate into the community”, “they break away from society”, “Living strictly in their community, when they have contact with outsiders, they do not adapt accordingly.”*
- Limitation of individual freedom and gender inequality: Respondents perceive a restriction of individual freedom, especially for women. Marriage is sometimes perceived as imposed or forced, leading to unhappiness, physical abuse and gender discrimination. Male authority and rigid gender roles are mentioned, contributing to the perpetuation of misogyny and the idea of women's inferiority. *Examples of answers: “I think they have negative effects, children at a young age and sometimes divorce”, “These customs have negative aspects regarding the family life of young people who marry at a young age”, “Both girls and boys are forced to mature, their childhood is stolen”, “Perpetuation of misogyny, financial dependence on men”, “Women are housewives, women do not work, they only take care of children”, “Birth at a young age, The authority of men”, “A limit to individual freedoms - forced marriage for example”, “Gender discrimination is increasing, men are considered the head of the family and its leader”, “Girls become pregnant at a young age and have a negative effect on them because their bodies and minds are not ready. Women are inferior to men and domestic violence occurs very often among them”.*

Despite the mentioned negative effects, many respondents recognize the fundamental role of traditions in maintaining identity and internal social structure.

Table 2. Percentage estimate of students' perception of the positive effects of customs and traditions on the lives of Roma

Sub-theme	Description	% of Responses
Preserving identity / tradition / roots	Maintaining culture, originality and cultural identity.	~17%
Social cohesion / unity / belonging	The fact that it brings them closer together makes them feel protected, united, or strengthens social bonds.	~15%
External appreciation (music/style)	The fact that their music and style are appreciated helps them to integrate into larger groups.	~4%

Traditions and customs are seen as strengthening cultural identity and ensuring the preservation of originality and ethnic roots. They provide a sense of belonging and support within the community. *Sample responses: "these practices strengthen cultural identity, provide a sense of belonging", "Group cohesion", "Preserving tradition".* Responses indicate that traditional practices, such as respecting hierarchies and traditional justice, bring order to the community and facilitate the rapid resolution of conflicts. A positive effect that was frequently mentioned is the increased appreciation of Roma cultural elements, particularly music and dance. These elements help with integration into larger groups and provide an opportunity for self-expression.

Some respondents provided neutral responses (~24%), indicating a lack of knowledge or observation of the effects (*"I have not observed any effect", "I do not know"*) or mentioned the simultaneous existence of positive and negative effects, which co-exist. One response summarized this duality as *'Cultural identity in contrast to social exclusion. Kind of advantage and disadvantage'*.

While Roma customs and traditions are important for strengthening ethnic identity and internal cohesion, they are often viewed as posing significant risks to access to education, individual development (particularly for women) and inclusion in mainstream society due to the stigma associated with certain practices, such as early marriage.

The analysis of the 175 responses to the open-ended question *"How do you think these customs and traditions are perceived by the majority of the population?"* indicates a predominantly negative perception, marked by misunderstanding, criticism and stereotyping.

Although there is a punctual appreciation of certain cultural elements, the general tone of the responses suggests a significant cultural barrier.

The majority of respondents (78%) believe that Roma customs and traditions are viewed with reluctance and disapproval by the majority population. These perceptions are often associated with current social and legal norms.

Table 3. Percentage estimate of students' perception of customs and traditions by the majority population

Sub-theme	Description	% of Responses
Judgment / stigma / discrimination	Roma people are judged, stigmatized, discriminated against, or looked down upon.	~20%
Criticism of early marriages	Early marriage is interpreted as abuse, a violation of child rights, or a scandalous practice.	~18%
General negativity/rejection	Negative, bad, wrong, stupid perception, or direct rejection of habits.	~26%
Outdated / outdated / unadapted	Customs are perceived as outdated, retrograde, or inconsistent with current social norms.	~15%
Prejudice/lack of knowledge	The population is influenced by stereotypes, lacks real knowledge of the culture, and generalizations are made.	~13%

- The terms most often used to describe the majority's attitude towards Roma people are: judged, stigmatized, discriminated against, and viewed “*with contempt.*” Respondents emphasize that Roma are often associated with negative stereotypes and unfair generalizations.
- Criticism of early marriages: early marriage (including underage marriage) is the most vehement point of criticism. This practice is perceived as “*scandalous*”, a “*violation of children’s rights*” and an “*abuse*” by society. It is considered not to be in line with the legal and moral norms of today’s society. *Sample answers: “The majority of the population perceives these customs influenced by stereotypes and the lack of real knowledge of Roma culture. Many people view them with distrust or prejudice, especially when it comes to arranged marriages or strict norms regarding the role of women. Due to cultural differences, these traditions are sometimes considered outdated or oppressive.” “They are not viewed favorably; they are not considered normal. In some cases, attempts are made to correct those customs that are harmful,*

such as early marriage.” Marrying girls at a young age is widely considered to be a form of abuse.” Some are not perceived as appropriate for the century we live in, such as selling children or promising a girl to someone.” Some customs are harshly criticized by society, especially arranged marriages between minors. ”Regarding the expectation that the bride must be a virgin, I believe it is a widely held view. However, I believe that we are a developed and modern country and that we no longer take these aspects into account.”

- The perception of being outdated and unadaptable: Many traditions are labelled as “outdated,” “backward,” or a “proof of a lack of culture.” They are considered to be out of step with modern society and its potential for evolution. *“Most people think they are outdated, some people make jokes about them.”*
- Association with negative aspects: customs are associated, implicitly or explicitly, with poverty, delinquency and lack of education, although this association is often made due to a lack of information and understanding of the cultural context. *“As non-conforming to social norms. Some are even considered deviant.”, “Perceived as outdated, barbaric, disturbing, deviant.” “I think that the majority of the population is willing to associate absolutely anything related to Roma with something negative.” “The majority of the population perceives the customs and traditions of the Roma, in general, in a negative way, often due to a lack of information. Many people associate these traditions with poverty, delinquency or lack of education, without understanding the cultural context. Generalizations are frequently made, and traits of small groups are attributed to the entire ethnic group.” “They are perceived as strange, disorderly, deviant.”*

The terms used to describe the majority's attitude do not simply reflect an individual reaction, but signal the existence of systemic prejudice and deep social stigma at a societal level.

Criticism of early marriages represents a conflict of values at the intersection of legal, moral norms and traditional cultural practices. The majority reaction is one of moral outrage, centered on the vulnerability of minors. However, the discourse around early marriage is often used to make negative generalizations about the entire Roma culture, ignoring the nuances and

internal efforts for change. It is crucial to distinguish between criticizing the action (underage marriage) and condemning the ethnic group (the Roma).

The association of Roma customs with poverty, delinquency, and lack of education reflects a process of socio-economic stereotyping, through which cultural behaviors are confused with the effects of structural exclusion.

Labelling of traditions reveals a cultural hierarchy, in which the majority (modern) culture is positioned as the norm and standard of evolution, while Roma traditions are seen as obstacles to progress.

Another important category of responses refers to labeling these customs as simply “different” or “unusual”, indicating a cultural misunderstanding (~39% of responses). Strangeness and exaggeration: Traditions are frequently perceived as “strange”, “exaggerated,” or “absurd” (e.g., public display of virginity). This lack of real understanding leads to their being perceived as “unnatural” or “meaningless” in relation to the majority population. Respondents’ placement of Roma customs signals a lack of familiarity or cultural misunderstanding.

- 11% of respondents said that they did not know or did not have a specific opinion. For these respondents, the Roma group and its traditions are not a concern for them, which indicates a low level of integration and visibility of Roma communities in the public sphere, beyond negative media coverage.

Although they are in the minority, several respondents acknowledge a mixed perception, oscillating between misunderstanding and stigmatization, and a selective appreciation of certain elements. Positive appreciation focuses particularly on certain cultural aspects that are easy to assimilate or admire, especially in two main areas: art and culture, and internal social values.

- Appreciation of art and culture is one such area, with positive elements including music (fiddle/party), which is often sought after and assimilated. Cultural elements that are pleasant or easy to consume are accepted, while practices that require a change in perspective or adaptation on the part of the majority are rejected. Sample answers: *‘From what I have observed, older people do not agree with these customs and consider them inferior. On the other hand, young people generally like their music and partying*

style." Speaking of music, the perception is positive because it is known that they are good at it, whether through talent or hard work, or both.

- Respect and solidarity: there is recognition of internal values such as community solidarity and respect for the elderly. *"Any people admire the Roma's solidarity and involvement in their culture."* Some of them are perceived with respect and admiration for things like respect for the elderly and solidarity within their community.

The analysis of the responses to the open-ended question "Can you name two or three personalities representative of Roma culture?" reveals a strong concentration of knowledge on a narrow category of public figures, while a significant proportion of respondents indicated a lack of knowledge or the inability to name such figures. Approximately 44% of the total responses of the 175 participants were: "No", "I don't know", "I don't know", "I can't think of any" or equivalent. This high rate of non-response suggests a reduced visibility of Roma cultural and civic figures in the public space or an isolation of Roma culture in the collective consciousness, limiting the ability of the general population to identify leaders and representatives.

The mentioned personalities were classified by fields of activity, highlighting a dominance of figures from the social/civic environment and music.

Table 4. Hierarchy of representative personalities of Romani culture, identified by respondents

Rank	Name	Main domain	% of responses (N=175)
1	Gelu Duminičă	Sociologist, Civic Activist	19.4%
2	Connect-R	Artist (Pop/Hip-Hop Music)	9.1%
3	Damian Draghici	Musician (Instrumentalist, Politician)	5.7%
4	Alina Serban	Actress, Activist	5.1%
5	Doinița Oancea	Actress, Activist	4.6%
6	Florin Salam	Artist (Manele)	4.0%
7	Grigoras Dinicu	Composer, Violinist (Classical/Fiddle)	3.4%
8	Ion Voicu	Violinist (Classical)	3.4%
9	Alex Velea	Artist (Pop/Dance Music)	3.4%
10	Madalin Voicu	Musician, Politician	2.9%

Of the names identified, a few recurring and visible figures in contemporary mass media stand out. The most dominant personality is Gelu Duminică (N = 34, 19.4%), a Romanian sociologist and civic activist associated with promoting Roma rights. He is mentioned twice as frequently as the second-ranked personality. This suggests that the discourse on inclusion and combating discrimination, as promoted by activists, is highly recognized in public spaces, reflecting intense media exposure and resonance with current social themes.

Most of the top positions are occupied by figures from the artistic domain, but there is notable fragmentation by genre, indicating how Roma culture is perceived and consumed is segmented: Urban music: Artists such as Connect-R (second place, 9.1%) and Alex Velea (ninth place, 3.4%) enjoy an average level of recognition. Their association with the musical mainstream suggests that cultural inclusion is most effectively facilitated through accessible and commercially successful genres. Traditional music: Figures from classical and fiddle music, such as Damian Drăghici (third place, 5.7%), Grigoraș Dinicu (seventh place, 3.4%) and Ion Voicu (eighth place, 3.4%), demonstrate recognition of the historical contribution of the Roma people to national and international cultural heritage. However, this recognition is less frequent than that given to contemporary activists.

Other isolated mentions were: Alina Șerban, Doinița Oancea, Delia Grigore, Florin Cioabă, Johnny Răducanu, Nicolae Guță and Bănel Nicoliță.

The set of responses outlines a polarized structure of cultural representations: ignorance and an absence of references dominate on the one hand, while visibility is limited to a few highly publicized public figures on the other. The results suggest that the image of Roma culture in the collective consciousness is fragmented and partial, and is formed more through the media than through direct contact or authentic knowledge.

The analysis of *specific qualities observed in the Roma community* reveals a strong and consistent recognition of a set of social values and artistic and practical skills. This contrasts with the negative stereotypes addressed in previous questions. 4.6% of the responses were neutral or non-answerable (“I did not notice”, “I do not know”). The rest of the responses focus on specific qualities.

Table 5. Percentage estimate of perceptions of qualities observed by participants in Roma people (social values)

Observed Quality	% of responses (N=175)
Solidarity of families	~20.0%
Unity/close relationships in the community	~13.7%
Solidarity / helping each other / altruistic	~11.4%
Loyalty (to family/community)	~5.7%
Respect for the elderly	~3.4%

Family solidarity is the most frequently mentioned, namely the strong orientation towards the family and its role as a social nucleus, indicating that the internal social structure of the Roma is the main feature observed by the respondents. Roma are perceived as essentially familial, placing a major emphasis on blood ties and maintaining group unity. *Sample answers: "I care a lot about family and the idea of staying together". "Ordinary Roma are people who care a lot about family, are talented and do well in any situation." "They are very attentive / care a lot about family", "defend and take care of their family to the end." "Close relationships between family members". "The quality of staying close to family." "Family solidarity because they place a great emphasis on family and adaptability due to continuous migration"*

The high level of community solidarity is observed by ~13.7% as a mechanism of internal social support, acting as a safety net, especially in the face of economic difficulties and marginalization.

Responses indicating solidarity, mutual aid, or altruism accounted for approximately 11.4% of the total. These observations support the idea that mutual support and cooperation are internalized values.

Loyalty, mentioned in 5.7% of responses, emphasizes individual devotion to the group, but appears less frequently compared to broader collective values, such as respect for elders.

The second major theme concerns innate talents or skill in crafts, reflecting their contribution to art and manual labor.

Table 6. Percentage estimate of perceptions of qualities observed by participants in Roma people (skills)

Observed quality	% of responses (N=175)
Musical talent / artistic sense / dancing	~13.1%
Resourceful / clever	~6.9%
Skilled in crafts / manual work / hardworking	~6.3%
Gastronomy / cooking very well	~4.0%

In addition to social and family values, some respondents identified traits related to skills, talents and practical competences, which contribute to building a complementary image of Roma culture, oriented towards expressiveness and ingenuity. Roma people are associated with a high level of artistic inclination, especially in music and dance (13.1% of responses), indicating recognition of their cultural capital. Around 6.9% of respondents described the Roma as resourceful and smart, while around 6.3% attributed skill in crafts, manual dexterity or diligence to the Roma community, considering them to be skilled in various trades (from blacksmithing to copper modelling). Qualities related to cooking or gastronomy (4%) are less common, but significant in that they highlight hospitality and domestic cultural expression.

The third theme that emerged from the responses to the question about specific Roma qualities is character traits, highlighting the interpersonal and emotional dimension of students' perceptions. This category encompasses relational and attitudinal qualities which reflect an open, expressive and adaptable nature in interpersonal relationships. Unlike the other analyzed dimensions (familial and aptitude), these traits reflect how Roma are perceived in everyday interactions.

This category encompasses character attributes related to interaction, emphasizing an open nature and flexible attitude.

Table 7. Percentage estimate of perceptions of qualities observed by participants in people of Roma ethnicity (character attributes)

Observed quality	% of responses (n=175)
Welcoming / hospitable / good hosts	~6.9%
Adaptability / flexibility / resilience	~6.3%
Generosity / soulful / kind-hearted	~5.7%
Respect (for others/culture) / honesty	~5.1%

The most frequently mentioned trait is hospitality (~6.9%), with the Roma community being perceived as “welcoming” and “good hosts.” This quality highlights the traditional values of generosity and openness towards others, associated with a community model based on interaction and conviviality.

Around 6.3% of respondents mentioned adaptability and flexibility as typical Roma traits. This perception expresses recognition of the capacity to adapt to difficult contexts. *Sample answers: “Their capacity to adapt and survive, support for each other, community solidarity.” “Adaptability, resilience.” “I noticed a great capacity to adapt in the face of difficulties.” “They are flexible, they are adaptable, they are smart.” “Adaptability due to continuous migration.” “Their capacity to adapt and survive, support for each other.”*

Traits such as generosity, kindness and sensitivity (5.7%) suggest a positive emotional perception, whereby the Roma are viewed as warm, empathetic and generous individuals. *Sample answers: “The Roma I interacted with were much more open to helping me, treating you nicely, respecting you and trying to make you feel as good as possible.” “Some of them have a good heart and want to help you.” “They are very welcoming when it comes to someone new who crosses their doorstep.”*

Qualities related to respect and sincerity (~5.1%) reveal a positive moral perception, centered on authenticity and mutual respect. Traits of passion and extroversion were sporadically associated with the Roma community.

The analysis of the responses to the open-ended question about ***the losses observed as often felt by Roma people, precisely because they belong to a culture different from the majority culture***, reveals a consensus among respondents, who identify systemic discrimination as the main cause of functional losses (education, work) and psychosocial losses (respect, self-esteem). The responses are grouped around three major categories of losses, which are directly correlated with the negative perception of Roma culture by the majority.

The most frequently mentioned loss of certain opportunities refers to *concrete obstacles to socio-economic integration*. The loss of equal access to education was identified as the most critical issue and is often seen as a failure of the inclusion system. This issue is sometimes exacerbated by internal cultural practices, as evidenced by the responses regarding early marriages. Access to education was the most frequently mentioned limitation, reported by 27.4% of respondents. Losses in the labour market are perceived as a direct consequence of

employment discrimination and a lack of qualifications resulting from dropping out of school. Problems related to employment and professional integration were mentioned by 20% of respondents. Around 6.9% of respondents cited a lack of equal opportunities as a functional loss, while 3.4% mentioned difficulty accessing health and other public services. Overall, the distribution of responses reveals a public perception focused on structural inequalities rather than cultural differences. Education and employment are seen as key factors in functional marginalization and are considered to be interdependent and primary causes of socio-economic exclusion.

Another recurring theme is that of discrimination, which describes the attitudinal consequences of the majority population, which affect the psychological and social well-being of Roma. The most frequently mentioned form of psychosocial loss is discrimination, reported by 23.4% of respondents. This includes explicit references to racism, segregation and unequal treatment, perceived as omnipresent and systematic phenomena. Discrimination is the most frequently mentioned form of psychosocial loss, reported by 23.4% of respondents. This includes explicit references to racism, segregation, and unequal treatment, which are perceived as pervasive and systemic phenomena. A significant proportion of respondents explicitly mentioned discrimination, recognizing it as the main force generating marginalization and social exclusion, as manifested in education, work, access to services, and everyday relationships. Around 13.7% of respondents cited *stigma* and *prejudice* as sources of psychological and social loss, while 9.7% explicitly mentioned respect, dignity and self-confidence as affected areas.

Cultural and identity losses refer to losses affecting the Roma culture itself as a result of pressure to adapt. Although identity loss is mentioned less frequently than functional or psychosocial losses, it is a significant factor in understanding how the Roma community is perceived in relation to its own culture. Only 6.3% of respondents explicitly referenced the identity dimension, which was divided into two subthemes: loss of cultural identity and loss of public voice. Around 3.4% of respondents mentioned the loss of the Romani language, traditional dress, or other forms of cultural expression as a result of identity erosion. A total of 2.9% reported the loss of public voice in terms of lack of representation, listening and public visibility. Those who raised these themes demonstrated sensitivity to the cultural dimension of

inclusion, recognizing that the loss of language, traditions and public representation signifies not just cultural change, but the gradual erasure of a collective identity.

Analysis of the answers to the question about *the losses observed as often being felt by people of Roma ethnicity, precisely because they belong to a culture different from the majority culture if participants were referring to Roma women*, it indicates a polarization of perception, but with a significant tendency to recognize the aggravated discrimination (double discrimination) faced by Roma women. Of the total of 175 respondents: approximately ~37% answered “Yes” or provided an explanation suggesting a difference; approximately ~57% (99 responses) answered “No” or “Same”, indicating that the losses are similar to those experienced by men. Approximately ~6% were neutral/unclear (“Don’t know”, “Probably”, “So and so”). Although the majority (57%) suggest that discrimination is uniform, the “Yes” category recognizes a more complex mechanism of discrimination. Responses supporting differentiation emphasize the intersectional nature of the losses, where gender is added to ethnicity, creating additional obstacles.

Table 8. Perception of discrimination against Roma women

Identified theme	% of responses (n=175)
Double discrimination (Roma + woman)	~6.3%
Limitations due to tradition/gender	~5.1%
Loss of education/job (specifically for women)	~4.0%
Loss of autonomy/freedom of decision-making	~2.9%

Respondents who differentiated their response emphasized that Roma women experience additional disadvantages imposed by the rigid gender norms of their own community, especially early and forced marriage and the role of housewife leading to lack of education and economic isolation. While the majority of respondents did not see a difference, a minority of participants identified Roma women as a marginalized group, facing obstacles to integration such as ethnicity (societal discrimination), gender (community and social norms) and low education level (a consequence of the first two). “Yes, the answer would be different if we were to specifically refer to Roma women, as they often face double discrimination, both as Roma and as women.” “Roma women also face additional restrictions imposed by their own traditions, such as early arranged marriages or strict gender roles.” “Yes, Roma women have

more difficulties because they are discriminated against and have strict roles in the family.”
“Yes. I think they are more disadvantaged than men. Lack of personal autonomy. Early and forced marriage. Discrimination at work. Exclusion from their own community if they break the patterns.”

The analysis of the responses to the question about ***the losses observed as often felt by Roma people, precisely because they belong to a culture different from the majority culture, when interacting with the probation system*** reveals an acknowledgement of the existence of systemic and attitudinal barriers that amplify the difficulties of reintegration for Roma under the supervision of the probation system. The losses observed focus on institutional discrimination and prejudice, functional barriers to reintegration and psychosocial losses. Approximately 25% of the responses (44 out of 175) were neutral or non-answers (“I don’t know”, “I didn’t notice”, “I can’t say” or did not answer).

The most frequently mentioned issues were institutional discrimination and prejudice, reflecting the perception that the judicial system does not treat Roma equally. The responses suggest the existence of “institutionalized racism” or cognitive biases among professionals, whereby Roma individuals are pre-labelled as criminals at high risk of reoffending. This perception leads to unequal treatment, as evidenced by harsher judgements, a lack of credibility, and the perception of the need for more severe supervision. *Sample responses:* “Roma people often feel a loss of trust from the authorities, being viewed with suspicion due to cultural prejudices. They face difficulties in understanding legal requirements and administrative language, due to cultural differences and, sometimes, low levels of education. They often miss the opportunity for real reintegration, because the probation system is not sufficiently adapted to their cultural needs and values.” “They are almost always the first to be considered guilty.” “They are treated less seriously by the institutions.” “They are considered guilty to the point where they are convicted just because they are Roma and many of them do not have access to a lawyer.” “They are discriminated against and considered guilty simply because they are Roma.” “It is harder for them to get out of the probation system and they are more likely to end up in detention centers.” “They are judged much more easily because they are Roma and they are also incarcerated for acts they probably did not commit.” “The probation officer can find it easier to find weak points because of their culture.”

“Discrimination in places where they execute sanctions.” “I think they are treated more harshly, that they are perceived as having a higher risk of recidivism, that they are prone to breaking the rules of the system.” “They are viewed with suspicion and are not always given credibility.” Interaction with the system, perceived as hostile, generates a feeling of continuous marginalization.

The analysis of the responses to the hypothetical question *“If you were of Roma ethnicity and felt prejudiced for this reason, what would you do to get out of the problematic situation?”* reveals an action-focused vision and an implicit recognition that solving the problem falls, to a large extent, on the burden of the prejudiced individual. The responses were organized into three categories: personal development and demonstration of competence, mobilization and appeal to external support, and avoidance or passivity strategy.

The most frequently mentioned strategy was *education and studies* (12.6%), followed by work and personal/career development (5.7%), and demonstrating the opposite of stereotypes (5.7%). The dominant strategy is an individual one, suggesting that educational and professional success is seen as the capital necessary to cancel prejudices. Answers such as *“I would overcome my condition”* or *“I would try to prove that I am not like others”* indicate the internalization of the idea that the responsibility for changing perceptions belongs to the person in question and that assimilation through performance is the fastest way out of the problematic situation. Also, mentions such as assuming identity with dignity (4.0%) or dialogue and open communication (4.0%) emphasize the importance of authenticity and affirmation of one's ethnicity as a strategy for strengthening respect and social recognition. *Sample answers: “I would be vocal, but with respect and clear arguments, so that I would be heard not for the noise, but for the message. I would seek to inform myself and educate myself as much as possible, so that I could counter stereotypes with facts and solid knowledge. I would use my education and culture as a bridge, showing the value and beauty of Roma culture in dialogue with the majority. I would categorically reject any form of violation of personal freedom (such as forced marriage) and support the rights of women and all marginalized people. I would express my dissatisfaction and needs through constructive channels – letters, petitions, participation in NGOs or even politics – for real changes. I would be patient and persistent, knowing that changing mentalities takes time, but that every step counts.” “I would continue*

my studies at any cost and I would accept to work and socialize and integrate as much as possible. Like you throw me out the door, I enter through the window. Education and socialization and work.” “I would fight for my rights.” “I would try to get out of the problematic situation through education, dialogue and involvement.” “I would try to get out of the problematic situation through a combination of asserting my own identity and actively engaging in change, even if this can be difficult and requires constant effort.” “I would try to report injustices, I would be vocal about it, there would also be some awareness that it is very possible that justice will not be done to me.” “I would try to focus on my strengths and study.” “I would do my best to pursue secondary and higher education.” “I would continue my studies in a big city, to socialize and get involved in different activities.”

Another category of responses focuses on *external support and collective action*. This includes: seeking support in the community or among trusted people (9.1%), appealing to authorities or institutions such as CNCD (National Council for Combating Discrimination) (4.6%), getting involved in NGOs or collective actions (3.4%), and making the situation public/raising awareness (2.9%). Some respondents recognize that the fight against prejudice cannot be fought individually, emphasizing the importance of internal social capital (community support and non-prejudiced people). Appealing to authorities and non-governmental organizations suggests an awareness of civic rights and the legal nature of discrimination. These responses reflect a strategy of active resistance and social mobilization. *Sample answers: “I would look for allies and communities that support Roma rights, so as not to fight alone and to create a support network.” “I would look for support and validation in the community.” “I would talk to the people around me to try to make them understand that being of another ethnicity does not make you less of a person.” “I would ask for support, talk to someone I trust and find out about my rights.” “...seek support in communities or organizations that fight for human rights.” “I would educate myself about my rights, seek support in the community and in special organizations, turn to anti-discrimination institutions and organizations”*

A segment of respondents would opt for *passive strategies*: isolation and emotional denial (indifference) (6.3%), 2.9% would choose to conceal ethnic identity to avoid the consequences of prejudice, acceptance/helplessness/I would do nothing (5.7%) and a segment of 8.6% did not know or had not thought of a strategy. *Sample answers: “I would try not to stand out.”*

In most cases, respondents considered that in the same situation, if they were women (Q22) the strategies to get out of the problematic situation remain the same, but are applied in a context of increased vulnerability and discrimination. A proportion of 70% of respondents indicated that the answer would be the same (“Yes”, “Same”, “Same answer”) or would act similarly in both situations. For 12% the answer is unclear (“I don’t know”), and for 18% the answer is negative (No). This suggests that the main strategy to fight prejudice is perceived as universally valid, regardless of gender, and focuses on education and performance: *“I would educate myself as much as possible”, “I would go to study.”; affirmation of dignity: “I would fight for my rights”, “I would demonstrate through deeds that I can overcome stereotypes.”; communication: “I would talk openly with those who show prejudice.”, solidarity: “I would look for a support group formed by other Roma women or people who fight for women’s rights.” “I would try to find and support other Roma women who feel marginalized, let’s be stronger together.”* Participants highlight that Roma women face a double challenge: ethnic stigmatization and gender discrimination. *“I would understand that I face a double challenge: to be respected as a Roma and as a woman...” “I would feel pressure not only from the majority society, but sometimes also from within my own community.”*

Examining the **degree of direct interaction and the types of relationships** that respondents had with Roma people highlights the differences between the types of interaction. Education and social circles seem to be the main contexts of contact with Roma people, while contact through family is more limited. 17.61% of respondents said they had Roma relatives, while 82.39% said they did not. This suggests that perceptions about Roma are often formed outside the family context, as direct family interaction is limited. Contact with Roma schoolmates is much more frequent, with 79.55% of respondents reporting such experiences. This demonstrates that the educational environment is the primary setting for social interaction, providing an opportunity for regular contact and the potential to reduce stereotypes through direct engagement. The high proportion of respondents who have Roma friends (71.02%) indicates considerable acceptance and an ability to overcome prejudices at an individual level. 63.64% of respondents said that they have Roma neighbors, and 80.11% have had contact with Roma acquaintances. 12.5% state that they have never interacted with Roma people. While these data suggest a high level of social contact, they also highlight a clear

differentiation between the types of interactions (institutional/casual versus intimate/familial). Students participating in the study know Roma people, but often in peripheral social roles (neighbors, colleagues and casual acquaintances) rather than in contexts of symbolic equality (relatives).

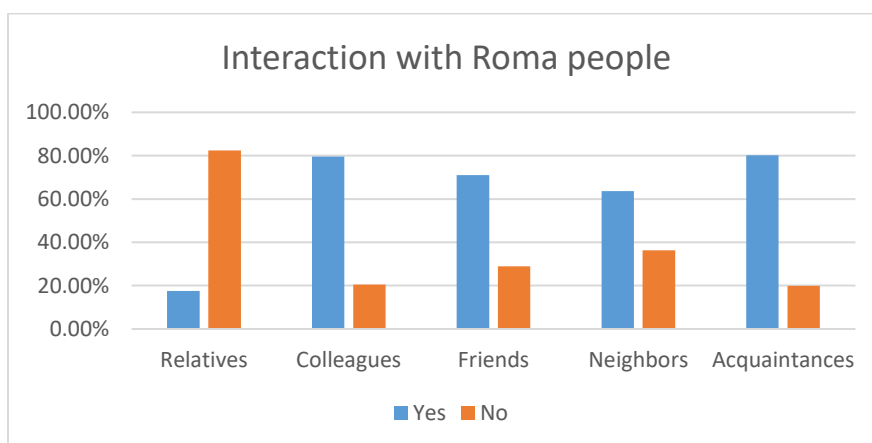


Fig. 5 Percentage distribution of respondents' direct interaction with Roma people

The high level of social contact through school and friends (as shown in Fig. 5) provides context for the previous analysis. This indicates that prejudice and discrimination (as described in Q18-Q22) do not result from a lack of contact, but rather from the nature and quality of that contact.

Analysis of *the perceived usefulness of Roma history in educational and professional contexts* indicates positive perceptions of its usefulness for personal and curricular development, as well as for professional development. Two-thirds of respondents (65.91%) consider studying Roma history useful, indicating recognition of current educational gaps and a desire for more comprehensive knowledge. Almost a quarter (23.86%) of respondents see moderate usefulness, suggesting that the subject is relevant but perhaps not a priority compared to other subjects. Conversely, 10.22% consider the subject irrelevant.

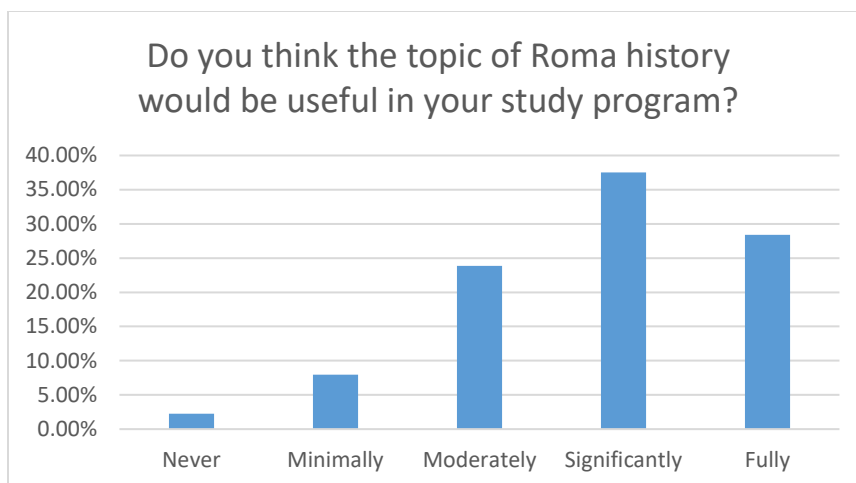


Fig. 6 Percentage distribution of students' perception of the usefulness of including the topic of Roma history in study programs

Respondents expressed a strong interest in including Roma history in the academic curriculum. Two-thirds of respondents (35.80% to a large extent and 42.05% to a very large extent) consider studying Roma history useful, indicating a recognition of current educational gaps and a desire to supplement knowledge. However, almost a quarter of respondents (16.48%) see only moderate usefulness, suggesting that the subject is relevant but perhaps not as high a priority as other subjects. A very small percentage consider the subject irrelevant.

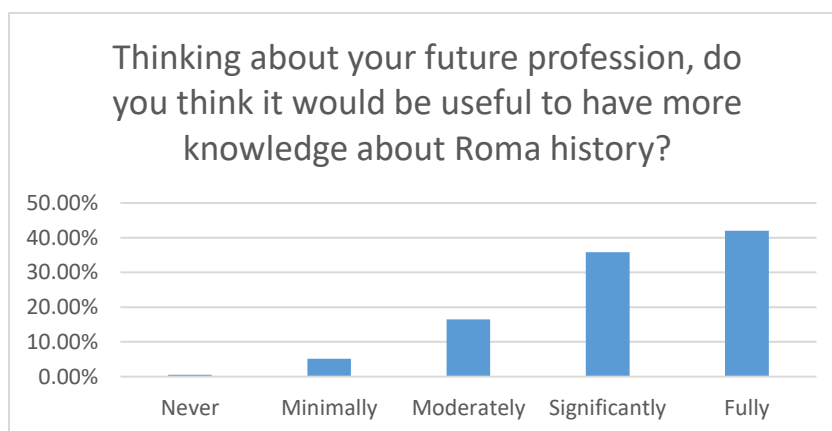


Fig. 7 Percentage distribution regarding the perception of the usefulness of knowing Roma history in a professional context

The professional usefulness of knowing Roma history is perceived as even greater than the purely academic usefulness, given that most respondents are in socio-human and legal fields.

In terms of identifying the participants' perceptions of the role of historical and cultural education in relation to the Roma community, the distribution of responses highlights a major consensus on the formative and integrative value of knowing Roma history, with a predominance of responses linking this approach to reducing prejudice and developing intercultural empathy. Combating stereotypes and prejudices (23.08%) is the most frequently mentioned category, suggesting that respondents perceive history education as a strategy to counteract stigmatization. The second most frequent category, understanding cultural diversity, indicates that participants value cultural pluralism and recognize the importance of familiarizing themselves with the traditions, values and experiences of the Roma community. Promoting social inclusion expressed by 20.46% of respondents highlights the direct perceived link between education and social inclusion. 20% of the respondents believe that learning Roma history favors the development of empathy and tolerance. This perspective emphasizes the emotional and relational dimension of intercultural education, through which knowledge becomes a form of human rapprochement and reduction of the symbolic distance between majorities and minorities. It is relevant that the proportion of this response is almost equal to that regarding social inclusion, which indicates a correlation between empathetic attitude and pro-inclusive behavior. 15.38% expressed as a benefit obtaining a more complete perspective on national and European history, highlighting an integration of Roma history within the broader framework of official history, as a constitutive part of European identity. The tiny proportion of respondents (0.15%) who consider that there are no significant benefits indicates a general positive consensus in favor of the value of historical education among the participants, knowledge of Roma history being perceived as legitimate, necessary and constructive.

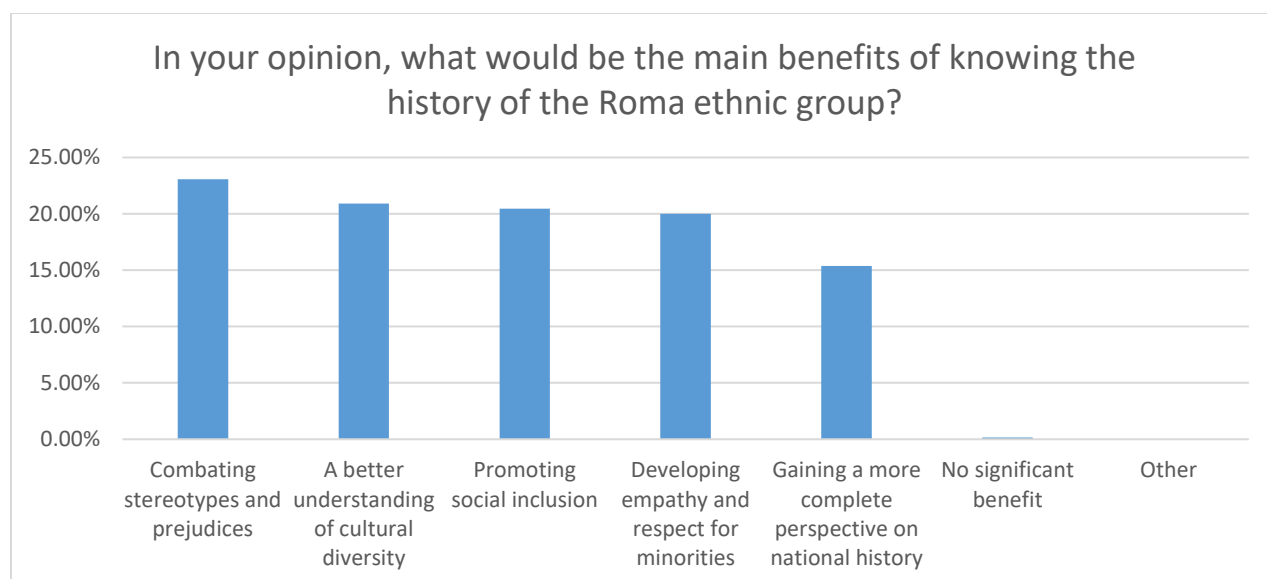


Fig. 8 Percentage distribution regarding the perception of the benefits of knowing the history of the Roma

Conclusions

The present study highlights a significant discrepancy between the amount of Roma history covered in academic contexts and the level of knowledge students in the fields of social sciences and law actually demonstrate in Romania. While respondents are familiar with certain emblematic events, such as Roma slavery and the Holocaust, this knowledge appears to be largely influenced by dominant public and educational discourse. While these narratives are important, they only reflect part of the complex historical experience of Roma communities. In contrast, events that are essential for understanding the processes of Roma inclusion, such as emancipation, forced assimilation policies, and episodes of interethnic conflict, are significantly less well known. This selective knowledge of history indicates a systemic gap in educational content and public discourse that may hinder the formation of nuanced perspectives on Roma identity and rights.

Cultural representations of Roma among students are also limited and often focus on topics that generate social visibility through controversy, such as early marriage. This focus on practices perceived as deviant from majority norms contributes to the marginalization of the internal cultural values, complex social structures and traditional crafts that define Roma

heritage. This perception perpetuates stereotypes and obscures the richness and diversity of Roma cultural expressions.

Furthermore, a significant proportion of respondents associated traditional Roma customs with negative social effects, including school dropout, social exclusion and gender inequality, particularly the restriction of women's freedoms. These associations reflect broader social narratives that deepen cultural differences rather than contextualizing them within historical and structural inequalities.

The predominantly negative and stereotypical perception of Roma traditions, as reported by most students, highlights the persistence of value conflicts, particularly concerning early marriages, as a central axis of social rejection. The high non-response rate to the question about prominent Roma figures indicates the low visibility of Roma leaders and role models in public spaces, perpetuating the marginalization of Roma contributions to society.

Recommendation

In light of these findings, the study highlights the need for a more inclusive educational approach to Roma history and culture. Such an approach should aim to deconstruct dominant stereotypes, expand the historical narrative, and promote intercultural understanding, essential elements for strengthening social cohesion and equity in Romanian society.

In order to promote a more precise and comprehensive understanding of Roma history among them, we propose:

1. ***Expanding the historical content*** to include modules dedicated to Roma emancipation, forced assimilation policies, and interethnic uprisings, to complement the historical narrative focused exclusively on slavery and the Holocaust, as well as case studies on key moments in Roma history, with a focus on their impact on civil rights and inclusion processes.

2. ***Diversifying cultural representations*** by presenting examples of positive values and internal social systems of Roma communities and using audiovisual materials and interviews with members of the Roma community to provide an authentic and nuanced perspective on the culture.

3. ***Combating stereotypes through critical analysis***, introducing exercises to analyze public and media discourse about Roma, to develop students' critical thinking regarding stereotypes and prejudices, as well as organizing thematic debates on controversial topics (e.g.

early marriage), in which cultural differences are discussed in the context of human rights and social norms.

4. **Increasing the visibility of Roma role models** by creating themes dedicated to contemporary and historical Roma personalities, from fields such as education, art, civic activism or politics, including by inviting Roma leaders and professionals as speakers in workshops, to provide students with real models of success and civic engagement.

6. **Reflective and formative approach** by including personal reflection questions to stimulate awareness of one's own attitudes and prejudices, as well as the use of participatory teaching methods to facilitate intercultural understanding.

List of figures

Fig. 1 Distribution by age group

Fig. 2 Gender distribution

Fig. 3 Self-perceived level of knowledge about Roma history

Fig. 4 Sources of information about the history of the Roma

Fig. 5 Percentage distribution of respondents' direct interaction with Roma people

Fig. 6 Percentage distribution of students' perception of the usefulness of including the topic of Roma history in study programs

Fig. 7 Percentage distribution regarding the perception of the usefulness of knowing Roma history in a professional context

Fig. 8 Percentage distribution regarding the perception of the benefits of knowing the history of the Roma

List of tables

Table 1. Percentage estimate of students' perception of the negative effects of customs and traditions on the lives of Roma

Table 2. Percentage estimate of students' perception of the positive effects of customs and traditions on the lives of Roma

Table 3. Percentage estimate of students' perception of customs and traditions by the majority population

Table 4. Hierarchy of representative personalities of Romani culture, identified by respondents (N=175)

Table 5. Percentage estimate of perceptions of qualities observed by participants in Roma people (social values)

Table 6. Percentage estimate of perceptions of qualities observed by participants in Roma people (skills)

Table 7. Percentage estimate of perceptions of qualities observed by participants in people of Roma ethnicity (character attributes)

Table 8. Perception of discrimination against Roma women