

# **Countering Distortion through Governmental Action: Building the Capacity of Government Actors for Promoting and Protecting the Civil and Human Rights of Roma**

**Best Practice Report of the International Training Seminar**

**October 15-18, 2019**

**Bucharest, Romania**

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## 1. Context of the Best Practice Report

The Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR)<sup>1</sup> is an international nongovernmental organization that provides education, training, and technical assistance to states to develop and improve their atrocity prevention policy incorporating a whole of government approach. With offices in New York (USA), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Kampala (Uganda), Oswieçim – the site of the former Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz (Poland), and soon in Bucharest (Romania), AIPR is building a world that prevents genocide and other mass atrocities. Through its Global Raphael Lemkin Seminar, regional programs in Africa and in Latin America, and national programs worldwide, AIPR has trained more than 5,500 government officials from over 88 states in the prevention of mass atrocities at all stages of the conflict cycle.

The Auschwitz Institute organized a four-day regional seminar in Southeastern Europe in cooperation with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) on **Countering Distortion through Governmental Action: Building the Capacity of Government Actors for Promoting and Protecting the Civil and Human Rights of Roma**. The training took place from October 15-18, 2019 in Bucharest, at the Hotel Marshal Garden, and included 20 participants from 9 states, drawn from the ranks of public officials- experts on Roma issues, as well as representatives from the civil society and academia. The countries represented in the seminar were: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo<sup>\*2</sup>, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia.

The seminar provided the framework for discussions about how atrocity prevention policy is connected to their work and the role they play in supporting programs that combat distortion and promote and protect the civil and human rights of Roma. It also offered the space for an international exchange of best practices continued and furthered through its incorporation into the working agenda of the future Mediterranean Basin Network for Atrocity Crimes Prevention (MBN), an emerging informal network of states throughout Southeastern Europe dedicated to regional cooperation for atrocity prevention. The language of instruction was English.

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<sup>1</sup> Starting in January 2020, AIPR has changed its name in Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities (AIPG). For consistency purposes and since the seminar took place in October 2019, the report will use the initial name of the organization: AIPR.

<sup>2</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

The main **goals of the seminar** were:

1. To introduce participants to the concepts of genocide and other atrocity crimes, and the processes by which genocide occurs;
2. To enhance participants' knowledge and skills in recognizing, preventing and ending identity-based discrimination;
3. To empower participants with the practical competencies (foundational knowledge and skills) necessary to counter distortion and protect the civil rights and human rights of Roma;
4. To identify the role of government actors/ civil society in ending identity-based discrimination and violence against Roma, through actions taken at national and regional levels;
5. To foster dialogue about best practices and possibilities to incorporate them into the working agenda of the future Mediterranean Basin Network for Atrocity Crimes Prevention.

## 2. Seminar Agenda

### Day 1: Tuesday, October 15

Conference Room "Ametist" – 6<sup>th</sup> floor

09:30-11:00     **Opening**

Mr. Dan Neculăescu, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bucharest)  
Dr. Daniel Rădulescu, Secretary of State, President of the National Agency for the Roma (Bucharest)  
Mr. Jack Mayerhofer, Deputy Executive Director, AIPR (New York)

11:00-11:30     Coffee Break

11:30-13:00     **Introduction to the Concepts of Genocide, Atrocity Crimes, and Prevention**

Dr. Gabriela Ghindea, Director of Mediterranean Basin Programs, AIPR (Bucharest)

13:00-14:00     Lunch

14:00-15:30     **Exercise: What Is Identity and Why Does It Matter?**

Mr. Vahidin Omanovic, Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Center for Peacebuilding, Professional trainer in non-violent communication and training resolution (Sanski Most)

15:30-16:00     Coffee Break

16:00-17:30     **Case Study – The Holocaust: The Death of Democracy and the Rise of Nazism**

Dr. Hikmet Karcic, Researcher at the Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks (IITB), Research Fellow at the UNC Charlotte Center for Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Studies (Sarajevo/ Charlotte-US)

**Day 2: Wednesday, October 16**  
Conference Room “Ametist” – 6<sup>th</sup> floor

- 09:30-11:00    **Case Study – The Holocaust: Final Solution as Process**
- Dr. Hikmet Karcic, Researcher at the Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks (IITB), Research Fellow at the UNC Charlotte Center for Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Studies (Sarajevo/ Charlotte-US)
- 11:00-11:30    Coffee Break
- 11:30-13:00    **Case Study – The Genocide of the Roma: Pre-War Discrimination Against Roma**
- Dr. Lavinia S. Costea, Senior Researcher at the Oral History Institute, Babeş-Bolyai – University (Cluj-Napoca)
- 13:00-14:00    Lunch
- 14:00-15:30    **Case Study – The Genocide of the Roma: Nazi Policies of Destruction Against Roma**
- Dr. Lavinia S. Costea, Senior Researcher at the Oral History Institute, Babeş-Bolyai – University (Cluj-Napoca)
- 15:30-16:00    Coffee Break
- 16:00-17:30    **Case Study – The Genocide of the Roma: Post-War Discrimination Against Roma. Roma, Between Discrimination and Politics of Recognition**
- Dr. Margareta Matache, Director of the Roma Program at the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University (Boston)
- 19:00-22:00    **Official Dinner**
- Restaurant “Bistro La Taifas”, Mihail Moxa Str. 12, Bucharest (<https://bistrotaifas.ro>)

### Day 3: Thursday, October 17

Conference Room "Panoramic" – 5<sup>th</sup> floor

09:30-11:00 **Anti-Discrimination Training: Preventing Identity-Based Violence**

Mr. Andy Fearn, Co-Executive Director, Head of Learning and Outreach at "Protection Approaches" (London)

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-13:00 **Practical Application: Lessons Learned from the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC)**

Dr. Iulius Rostaş, Chair of Romani Studies/ Assistant Professor at Central European University in Budapest, Member of the Board of ERIAC (Budapest)

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 **Practical Application: Lessons Learned from the Politics of Collective Identity Formation of the Roma in Europe**

Dr. Ioana Bunescu, Researcher in Migration and Inter-Ethnic Relations, Malmö Institute for the Study of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM) (Malmö)

15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

16:00-17:30 **Practical Application: Lessons Learned from Combating Stereotypes and Discrimination through Public Policies**

Dr. Gelu Duminičă, Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Bucharest and Executive Director of the "Împreună" Agency for Community Development (Bucharest)

## Day 4: Friday, October 18

Conference Room "Ametist" – 6<sup>th</sup> floor

09:30-11:00 **Practical Application: Lessons Learned from the ROMED and ROMACT Programs**

Mr. Marius Jitea, MA, Seconded National Expert as Program Officer,  
DG II - Democracy, Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation, Council  
of Europe - Conseil de l'Europe (Strasbourg)

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break

11:30-13:00 **Discussion – The Way Forward: The Role of Government Actors in Ending  
Identity- Based Discrimination and Violence Against Roma**

Moderation: Mr. Jack Mayerhofer, Deputy Executive Director, AIPR  
(New York),  
Dr. Gabriela Ghindea, Director of Mediterranean Basin Programs, AIPR (Bucharest)

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 **Introduction to the Mediterranean Basin Network and Closing of Seminar**

Moderation: Mr. Jack Mayerhofer, Deputy Executive Director, AIPR  
(New York),  
Dr. Gabriela Ghindea, Director of Mediterranean Basin Programs, AIPR (Bucharest)

15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

16:00-17:30 **Departure**

"Human rights are universal and indivisible. Human freedom is also indivisible; if it is denied to anyone in the world, it is therefore denied, indirectly, to all people. This is why we cannot remain silent in the face of evil or violence; silence merely encourages them."

Václav Havel



### 3. Objectives of the Best Practice Report

The Best Practices Report of the International Training Seminar *Countering Distortion through Governmental Action: Building the Capacity of Government Actors for Promoting and Protecting the Civil and Human Rights of Roma* was mainly developed for government officials, civil servants, NGO workers, and academia in the countries that participated in the program. This report has been compiled for individuals within those sectors who were unable to attend the four-day seminar, but are interested in the topics and discussions of the event. It provides a concise summary of the knowledge exchanged within the framework of the seminar. In addition, the Best Practices Report supports the attendees of the seminar by refreshing the information they acquired during the event, and provides an opportunity for them to share this key knowledge and seminar debates with their colleagues.

The **objectives of the report** are:

1. To support readers to learn about key concepts, theories, and tools used in genocide prevention, but also in recognizing, preventing and ending identity-based discrimination;
2. To present case studies of the Holocaust and the genocide of the Roma, so that the readers can understand and address mass atrocities as a process;
3. To introduce best practices and lessons learned in different programs that were developed to prevent or end identity-based discrimination against Roma;
4. To share the main topics and the reflections the seminar's participants had during the event, as a result of the learning process they embarked on.

The report is structured in twelve chapters mirroring the modules from the seminar's agenda. Each chapter highlights the key topics of the session, the primary learning outcomes, and the participants' reflections and contributions. While the target public can choose to read the report chapters in any preferred order, we recommend following the structure given by the seminar's agenda, as the shared knowledge, case studies, and best practices were designed to contribute to reaching the seminar's goals gradually, as described above.

#### 4. Introduction to the Concepts of Genocide, Atrocity Crimes, and Prevention

Dr. Gabriela Ghindea, Director of Mediterranean Basin Programs, AIPR (Bucharest)

##### Key topics of the session

- The concepts of genocide and other atrocity crimes
- Mass atrocity as a process
- Genocide prevention

##### Principal learning outcomes of the session

Genocides have been – and continue to be – committed all over the world. Many believe that such atrocities are confined to the past, but one must remember that mass atrocities can happen again, and are committed more by ordinary people than we would like to believe. If history has taught us one thing, it is that anyone can become a victim or a perpetrator of genocide. Addressing misconceptions around genocide and how it happens is essential to ensuring history will no longer repeat itself.

##### The seminar rationale:

“...preventing genocide is an achievable goal. Genocide is not the inevitable result of ‘ancient hatreds’ or irrational leaders. (...) There are ways to recognize its signs and symptoms, and viable options to prevent it at every turn if we are committed and prepared. Preventing genocide is a goal that can be achieved...with the right blueprint.” (Genocide Task Force, 2008).

Genocide does not happen overnight. It is a process made up of several steps and stages, in which one can identify various **risk factors**. These include economic marginalization and the state-orchestrated separation of people according to identity. Before a genocide occurs, one can always identify a process of dehumanization in which a particular group is portrayed as the “other” or the “enemy”.

Understanding the risk factors is essential to prevention because it allows both state and society to take action. Prevention should not only involve actors at the governmental level but the whole of society. Philosopher Edmund Burke famously said, “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to say nothing”. To prevent history from repeating itself, societies can no longer be silent and act as passive bystanders; every individual bears a moral responsibility to recognize the warning signs and act before it is too late.

### Possible stages of a mass atrocity process:

- classification and dehumanization;
- social exclusion;
- legal attacks on civil and human rights;
- economic expropriation;
- state-sponsored violence;
- mass expulsion and forced emigration;
- forced concentrations;
- killing operations.

In the first part of her presentation, Dr. Ghindea introduced the participants to the concept of genocide. The term *genocide* was coined by the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, 1944. When Lemkin first developed the concept, its definition was quite inclusive. During the process of drafting the Genocide Convention, through which the concept became international law, it suffered many changes regarding 1) the groups of people protected by the Convention; 2) the acts defined as criminal and 3) the entities that have the jurisdictional authority to enforce the Convention.

Finally, in December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously passed the **Convention on the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide**, and thus genocide was recognized as an international crime, which states agreed to prevent and punish (Art.1).

#### Key concept

**Genocide is:** “a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.(...) Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.”

(Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, 1944)

“Art. 2 In the **present Convention, genocide means** any of the following acts committed with **intent to destroy**, in whole or in part, **a national, ethnical, racial or religious group**, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

(The Convention on the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, 1948)

Additionally, the participants learned about **the typology of mass atrocities**, in order to understand how genocide is recognized in terms of context, intent, and protected groups when compared to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Although genocide is generally seen as the “crime of crimes”, in reality, it is one of the categories of crimes that fall under the umbrella of mass atrocities. The other categories are **crimes against humanity** and **war crimes**. The United Nations also includes ethnic cleansing as a mass atrocity, though there is to date no legal definition for ethnic cleansing. Moreover, the acts that would traditionally fall under this category fit within the other three legal categories.

Genocide, similar to crimes against humanity, can happen in war or peacetime. While in the case of crimes against humanity or war crimes, the intent is not essential in being established, in the case of genocide, the intent to destroy specific protected groups is vital to recognize it. War crimes target civilian population or prisoners of war; crimes against humanity - any civilian population; and genocide targets, with intention, national, ethnical, racial, or religious groups. The legal concept of war crimes is many centuries old, while the one of crimes against humanity was defined in Hague Convention Preamble (1907), and the concept of genocide - in UN Genocide Convention (1948).

Finally, the participants learned about **the risk factors for genocide and other mass atrocities**:

- **Risks related to governance:** regime type, deficit in state legitimacy, weakness of state structures, identity-based polar factionalism or systematic state-led discrimination;
- **Risks related to conflict history:** history of identity-related tensions, prior genocides or politicides, past cultural trauma, legacy of vengeance or group grievance, or record of severe violations of international human rights and law;
- **Risks related to economic conditions:** low level of economic development, economic discrimination, lack of macroeconomic stability, economic deterioration, or growth of informal economies and black markets;
- **Risks related to social fragmentation:** identity-based social divisions, demographic pressures, unequal access to essential goods and services, gender inequalities, and political instability.

The session ended with a focus on the **prevention of genocide**. Starting from the belief that preventing genocide and other atrocity crimes is an achievable goal, prevention should be a continuous holistic endeavor of different stakeholders (governmental institutions, civil society, academia, international organizations, individuals). It should imply a broad range of tools and strategies which aim to prevent the occurrence of mass killings and other large scale human rights abuses. This can be achieved mainly through education, capacity building, specific policy development, and cooperation.

**Primary prevention is upstream prevention:** the “before” analysis of the longer-term governance, historical, economic, and societal factors that leave a country at risk for genocide and other mass atrocities; developing strategies to mitigate these risk factors; promoting and protecting civil and human rights, the rule of law.

**Secondary prevention is midstream prevention:** the immediate, real-time relief efforts “during” the crisis; protecting civilians; humanitarian aid; adoption of economic, political measures, and military intervention.

**Tertiary prevention is downstream prevention:** the “after” efforts to foster resilience by dealing with the acute, long-term consequences of mass violence through pursuits of justice, truth, and memory to help stabilize, heal, and rehabilitate a post-genocide society (transitional justice). As a key reading resource on preventing genocide, Dr. Ghindea recommended participants the book *Confronting Evil: Engaging Our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide*, by James Waller (2016).

## Reflections and contributions to the discussion

During the session, the participants were invited to work in groups and reflect on **possible conceptual problems of the Art. 2 of the Genocide Convention**, which defines genocide.

The main conceptual problems raised by the attendees and discussed in plenum referred to:

- Types of groups that are protected by the Convention (national, ethnical, racial or religious groups): many other identity groups are not protected by the article (political groups/ LGBTQI+, etc.);
- The article violates fundamental principles of equality before the law;
- Objective identities are not self-evident or stable;
- Often, the perpetrators’ subjective definition of the victim group is predominant;
- There is a clear need to broaden the category of protected groups through the national courts.
- The determination of the intent is problematic. Can intent always be proved in order to legally call a mass atrocity genocide?
- The meaning behind “in whole or part”: Is there a threshold of destruction that must be met?

Also, when genocide risk factors were discussed in detail, the participants and the instructor talked about the **democratic backsliding**, which can be observed to a different extent in all of the countries in the region. The participants and the instructor debated over examples in their societies or in other neighboring countries that could be interpreted as signs of democratic backsliding, respectively:

- Neutralization of an independent judiciary;
- Subjugation of the media;
- Demonization of migrants and other internal marginalized populations;
- Creation of loyal new elites through crony capitalism;
- Supporting a nationalist and xenophobic narrative of victimhood and heroism through the manipulation of historical memory;
- Claiming that the “people’s will” overrides constitutional checks and balances.

## 5. Reflection Exercise: What Is Identity and Why Does It Matter?

Mr. Vahidin Omanovic, Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Center for Peacebuilding Professional trainer in non-violent communication and training resolution (Sanski Most)

### Key topics of the session

- What is identity?
- How do people build their identity?
- Why does identity matter?

### Principal learning outcomes of the session

Mr. Vahidin Omanovic started the session with his personal story about how he became a peacebuilder, after surviving the war in Bosnia. He witnessed his village destroyed, and members of his family murdered. After many years of living with anger and vengeance feelings, he decided to dedicate his life to support others in processing their trauma through peacebuilding activities.

The session was built on a reflection exercise, which comprises the following steps:

1. The participants sit in a circle so that they can face each other and can be engaged easily in the discussions;
2. Each participant has to choose and write down six identities that are currently relevant to him/her;

3. Participants share the identities they wish, and present in more detail one of them, explaining why they decided to write it down;
4. Participants are asked to cross out one of the identities from the six they initially chose;
5. Then they are asked to cross out, one by one, other four identities, until only one is left on their list;
6. Participants are invited to share what was challenging in the process of crossing out their identities/ what they felt during the process, etc.;
7. Participants are then encouraged to share, if they want, moments of life when they chose to hide their identity/their identities, and why they felt the urge to do it, or moments in life when others made them feel uncomfortable about their own identities or were discriminated against based on their identities;
8. Participants are also invited to share, if they want, moments of life when they made others feel uncomfortable about their identities, or they discriminated unintentionally or intentionally others, based on their identity.
9. Finally, the participants share reflections about what they have learned during the exercise about identity and why identity matters to us.

The main objectives of the exercise were to help participants to be more aware of what determines the identity/ the identities of one person, about the mechanisms through which identity is constructed. At the same time, they were encouraged to reflect upon the multiple identities of one individual; to discuss how and why individual/ collective identity matters for a person; and to experience what people feel when they are asked to give up or hide their identity or parts of their identity. Additionally, the exercise was meant to further sensitize participants for two topics introduced in the precedent module by Dr. Ghindea: Objective identities are not self-evident or stable. Moreover, they are subjected to constant changes over time. In conflict situations, the perpetrators' subjective definition of identity (of one individual or of a group) prevails upon how the victim defines himself/ herself.

### Reflections and contributions to the discussion

The identity circle was called by the participants during the evaluation “the magic circle,” in which they felt they learned so much about their own identities, about the core values these are built upon, but also about the other participants' identities. The participants agreed that the exercise took them out of their comfort zone, but with a lot of learning benefits.

The participants considered that the most relevant part of the exercise, for themselves, was when they were asked to “cross out” the majority of their identities (five out of six). Even though the facilitator did not ask them to “give up” their identities, but to “cross them out on the paper”, the majority of the participants imagined they had to give up these identities, feeling frustrated and uncomfortable that



they are requested to take such an action. This was considered as a powerful exercise to prove that identity is essential to each individual, and “crossing it out” generates a lot of frustrations and conflicts.

They also appreciated that the majority of the people in the room opened up and shared personal stories about moments when they were discriminated against because of one of their identities, or they discriminated against others. A vivid discussion emerged starting from personal examples about the challenging interplay between the majorities in their countries and the Roma minorities, about open and hidden forms of discrimination, and modalities to address them.

The exercise also provided the opportunity to speak about the legitimacy of authority and mechanisms to question authority, which is perceived as “unjust”. The attendees analyzed their reactions towards the instructor who “commanded them to renounce at parts of their identities”. Some of them protested, other complied with the rules. This opened up a discussion about bystanders, and perpetrators in a potential conflict, but also about the realm of possibilities and leverage to act against discrimination.

The exercise offered an excellent opportunity to reflect on how a Roma individual is potentially feeling in different contexts, when subjected to biases and scapegoating-actions, met with distrust, and a variety of discriminatory and racist behaviors and which are, in reality, his possibilities to take a stand against them.

## 6. Case Study – The Holocaust: The Death of Democracy and the Rise of Nazism; Final Solution as Process

Dr. Hikmet Karcic, Researcher at the Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks (IITB),  
Research Fellow at the UNC Charlotte Center for Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights  
Studies (Sarajevo/ Charlotte-US)

### Key topics of the session

- What was the Holocaust?
- Rise of Nazism and democratic backsliding
- The Final Solution as a process
- Case studies in the Region

### Principal learning outcomes of the session

Dr. Hikmet Karcic started the session with an introduction on **what the Holocaust was**, from a historical perspective (Nazi destruction of the European Jews between 1939 and 1945, a genocide with a death toll of more than six million people), from the perspective of the Nazi regime (*the Final Solution/die*



*Endlösung*), from the etymological perspective (Sacrifice: derived from the Greek *holokauston*, meaning “burnt whole” or “totally consumed by fire” –in a sacrificial sense), and from a theological perspective (*Sho’ah*: Hebrew noun that signifies catastrophic destruction, doubt and despair).

For most of the people, the Holocaust is associated nowadays with the Nazi destruction of the European Jews between 1939 and 1945. At the same time, it is essential not to forget that the systematic killing actions of the Nazi regime also targeted other groups of victims. 42% of the victims were Jews, while the other victims were people afflicted with diseases or disabilities, persons deemed “dangerous” to the public order (political prisoners, criminals, Jehovah's witnesses, persons considered to be “asocial”), other nationalities under German control - Sinti, Roma, Slavic people of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Moreover, the first camps opened in Germany by the Nazis were for non-Jewish victims.

To understand the Final Solution as a process, Dr. Karcic presented in detail to the participants its historical background. After WWI, Germany was marked by the death tolls of the war, forced to restrict its military force, give up territories, and pay compensations to other countries. The country's transformation from a monarchy into a democratic republic (Weimar Republic) was characterized by political turmoil and economic chaos, and fear of a Communist revolution. Amid the general frustration, the Nazi Party launched its platform, the Nazi propaganda promising the electorate a stronger country. After being in prison, where he wrote his infamous *Mein Kampf*, and after losing a series of elections, Hitler and his party started to win progressively more votes, and in January 1933, he was named Chancellor by the president of the Weimar Republic, Hindenburg. This position gave him even more public recognition and power. In March 1933, the German Reichstag passed the “Enabling Act”, which granted Hitler dictatorial powers, also illustrated by the title of Führer, assumed in 1934.

The Final Solution developed into a process, with distinct and identifiable stages, from singling out the “otherness” to killing operations of ca. six million people.

**The steps of the Final Solution** process were introduced to the participants and explained with concrete examples from the history of the Holocaust:

- **Classification: definition of Jewishness**
- **Racial ideology and social exclusion**

To explain these two steps, Hitler’s propaganda strategy was presented in detail. Dr. Karcic explained the mechanisms through which the perception of danger related to “the otherness” was created and induced to the population. There were showcased examples of posters, charts developed by the Nazis to negatively portray Jews and establish the Aryan identity, as the “master race”.

- **Legal attacks on civil and human rights**

Examples of laws that were passed against German Jews in 1933 were discussed with the participants, together with the structure of the camp system developed by the Nazis. The system included concentration camps for “enemies of the state”, labor camps, and death camps (the six extermination camps in Poland, in 1941-1945).

- **Economic expropriation**

The participants learned about the boycott of the Jewish businesses, about the forced Aryanization of Jewish business and assets, and about the specific case of expropriation of Else Ury, a German-Jewish novelist and children's book author, who died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz II in 1943. The ones who benefited from the economic measures were Nazis (SS, Gestapo, etc.), sources of patronage for the Nazi Party, and ordinary Germans (state employees, Wehrmacht, civilians, etc.).

- **State-sponsored violence**

This step included actions, such as riots and violence against Jews on the streets, burning synagogues and Jewish businesses (Crystal night), the deportation of Jews in concentration camps, and murder of "the unfit" (T4 Euthanasia – the secret program started by Hitler).

- **Mass expulsion and forced emigration**

Initially, the Nazis wanted to deport the Jews to Madagascar in Africa, but they did not have enough ships. Thus, in 1933-1944, Jews were forced to leave Germany, but this governmental policy failed because of the global economic crisis and the refusal of other countries to accept deported Jews.

- **Forced concentrations**

Jews were moved into ghettos, while they were expropriated and gathered for deportation. Ghettos were set up in Eastern European countries and Baltic countries as well, from 1939 to 1944. Even if they did not support these actions, the local population and civil servants were aware of the ghettos, being "bystanders" in the genocide process.

- **Killing operations**

At the beginning of 1941, the killing operations (mass executions and mass graves) had started in occupied areas of the Soviet Union, through special operational units. However, shortly these were considered inefficient because of wasted bullets, escaping Jews, disobedient soldiers, sensationalism, and because of the psychological effects on the German soldiers. Thus, the Nazis decided to use camps for extermination and gas chambers.

Dr. Karcic invited the participants to debate about how genocide might end. The discussion established that the process could end through the suppression or destruction of the victim group, the military defeat of the perpetrators, or through external intervention. In the case of the Nazis' genocide, this was stopped through military defeat. At the end of the war, there were ca. 14 million European refugees who were unable to return home.

After presenting the Final Solution as a process, Dr. Karcic provided more information on specific **case studies from the Region**, showing how the genocide unfolded differently in countries, such as Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, where the regimes collaborated to different extents with the Nazi regime. The discussion also revealed exemplary acts of heroism, where local or religious authorities or individuals refused to cooperate with the Nazis and to send people to death.

**Greece:** 86% of the Jewish population died during the Holocaust (60,000 Jews), but there were also saviors, such as Athens Archbishop Damaskinos and Police Commissioner Angelos Evert, who issued fake identification cards to Jews, to protect them from deportation to extermination camps.

**Bulgaria:** The state refused to deport Bulgarian Jews; instead, they incarcerated them in labor camps in the countryside; however, the state deported over 11,000 Jews from the territories Bulgaria occupied during the war. Dimitâr Peshev, a prominent politician, was one of the key saviors of the Bulgarian Jews.

**Romania:** Antisemitic laws were enforced after 1940. The total death toll was of 280,000-380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews, and other 135,000 Jews in Transylvania. However, through the help of individual saviors such as Dr. Traian Popovici, Mayor of Cernăuți, thousands of Jews were rescued from deportation and death.

**Hungary:** In 100 days, in 1944, 440,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz, and they were all exterminated. The rest of the Jews were forced into ghettos, where the mass killings continued. The total death toll was 565,000 Jews. Saviors like Ádám László, a monk of St John Bosco in Budapest, managed to hide and save several Jews from deportation and death.

**Yugoslavia:** At that time, half of the country was administered by Germans, and the other half by Italians. In total, almost 100,000 of Jews, Roma, Serbs, and opponents of the Ustasha regime were murdered. Stories of saviors were also told: Ivan Vranetić, Croat doctor, saved several Jews from Ustashes (Ustasha being the Croatian Revolutionary Movement, following Nazis' plans); The Bosniak Muslim Hardaga family saved the Kavilio family from Ustasha in Sarajevo; Dragoljub Trajkovic, Serb railway worker saved the Ungar family from Germans.

## Reflections and contributions to the discussion

During and after the presentation of this concentrated overview of the history of the Holocaust and the Final Solution process, the participants were involved in vivid discussions on the following topics:

- About how perpetrators learned from each other, and how the same genocide methods were used in different historical moments;
- There were cases of several perpetrators, who were not tried by the states and continued their killing acts over generations in various wars;
- The relevance of the state-supported actions, using the law to suppress the victim group, in the genocide process in WWII;
- External intervention in stopping genocides – why in some situations powerful countries or international organizations intervened, but in other situations, the international community failed to act, and genocides were not prevented. Regarding this particular issue, Dr. Karcic

recommended the book *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia*, by Thomas Cushman and Stjepan G. Meštrović, 1996.

- Political will versus the importance of building resilience in the community to prevent genocide (an example of a French village that protected the Jews in their community by declaring that there were no Jews in their village and defying the orders of the government was extensively discussed).

Overall, the participants appreciated the very informative and interactive sessions, considering them good incentives to reflect about the current times we live in Europe, and about the threats posed by illiberal regimes to the rule of law, and the civil and human rights. At the same time, they reflected on how the different perspectives on the Holocaust can be brought together in a new and inclusive approach that could be more useful for their work.

Using the well systematized historical information about the Holocaust as a starting point, the participants also reflected on the conflict situation from the '90s in their own countries, identifying many similarities between the two moments in history. More importantly, the information presented in Dr. Karcic's two sessions helped them to be able to early detect the warning signs in a system that starts to target groups based on an ascribed identity. As a common conclusion, the attendees recognized the importance of early prevention and resilience building measures through thorough and efficient education about the past.

## 7. Case Study – The Genocide of the Roma: Pre-War Discrimination Against Roma

Dr. Lavinia S. Costea, Senior Researcher at the Oral History Institute, “Babeş-Bolyai”-University (Cluj-Napoca)

### Key topics of the session

- How do we know what we know about the Roma? Sources for the history of the Roma
- Roma in European history
- Case studies: Roma status in medieval states, multinational empires, and nation-states

## Principal learning outcomes of the session

Dr. Lavinia Costea's objective during this module was to establish in discussion with the participants the common ground of Roma history in the Region. The countries in Southeastern Europe were all part of multinational empires, which over the centuries, designed and implemented discriminatory measures and policies targeting Roma. In order to understand the roots of discrimination against the Roma population, one needs to explore and understand the history of the whole Region.

The session began with an interactive presentation of the sources of information for the **history of the Roma**:

- Archival documents (court records, census statistics, property documents, Ottoman archives, etc.).

The conclusion was that there are not numerous written sources available that could document the Roma history. Moreover, there are a lot of questions and reasonable doubts about the accuracy of the facts and information provided by these archival documents, the purpose of their creation and their interpretation.

- Literature (historical or fictional), including textbooks;
- Films, media, and digital media.

Dr. Costea mentioned that the movies and fictional literature contributed more to the general people's perception of Roma history than the historians did. All these above-mentioned sources generated what is called "the master narrative" about the Roma. This aspect is still highly problematic, as it is based on several distortions of the past.

- Oral histories (stories and interviews collected directly from Roma people, like recent research conducted in Romania by the Oral History Institute of "Babeş-Bolyai" University, which included over 400 interviews with Roma people).

These sources provide a complementary or alternative narrative to the master narrative. However, the research conducted by the Oral History Institute shows that when interviewed, Roma people tend to share the same master narrative over their history, as developed by the state, education, movies, literature, etc. Only a few of them knew and shared with the researchers complementary/alternative history facts, like the ones about slavery or deportation, which were not and still are not integrated into the master narrative of the Roma history.

Dr. Costea introduced the participants to key facts about the **history of Roma in Europe and the Region**:

- The migration of Roma, in this part of Europe, but also towards Western Europe, occurred in the 14th and 15th century;
- For centuries, the Roma populations were attested as a permanent (*in*)visible presence, as it could be observed in the previous discussion about sources for the history of Roma;

- Marginalization and cohabitation could be noticed simultaneously in history: while historical facts prove discrimination and marginalization actions, there is also information about how some Roma people resisted the system, sometimes in an organized manner; how some of them were free people, not slaves; how resistance manifested through culture, language, etc.;
- Centuries of racist stereotypes and prejudices against Roma can be attested in all European countries (Dr. Costea gave multiple examples, such as the reading textbooks in Germany, in the 18th century, in which the letter Z was explained to young children with the word “Zigeuner”, illustrations of Roma, using negative stereotypes of people portrayed as beggars and thieves);
- In Romania, until the mid-19th century, the majority of Roma people were slaves, owned by the state, the Orthodox church, or Romanian nobles;
- In the Ottoman empire, documents show that the Roma people were taxed like any other subject of the sultan in the empire;
- The Habsburg Monarchy imposed policies of assimilation of Roma, starting with the 18th century: they were forced to register and settle, give up horses, wagons; they were given land, and they were supposed to pay taxes. But the Habsburg Monarchy also applied eugenics measures, by encouraging mixed marriages with Hungarians, and forcibly removing Roma children from their families and giving them to Hungarian farmers or Austrian families. Similar assimilation measures were also imposed in other countries having Western Europe as a model;
- In the nation-states, significant anti-Roma measures emerged, such as forced registration and the development of special registers of Roma population (with names and fingerprints) (Austria, Germany), which were then used for discrimination and perpetration policies and actions; a special police to combat the “Gypsy menace” (Germany); forceful deportation in “gypsy-colonies” and restricted immigration (Austria); first concentration camp for Roma (France), labor camps (Czechoslovakia).

In conclusion, looking at the common history of Roma in the Region, the path to genocide was forged during all these centuries through different discriminatory policies towards the Roma populations. Starting from the 18th century, it was also paved with discourses about hygiene in the public sphere and eugenics.

### Reflections and contributions to the discussion

The participants worked together in identifying the sources of information for Roma history, and the trends of the “master narrative” that exists in the Region about the Roma and their past. During the discussions it became clear that the constructed image of the Roma in the mentioned sources oscillates between two poles: excessive romanticization/ exoticization and negative stereotypization. Both phenomena have contributed after WWII decisively to a denial of the genocide of the Roma or to a distortion of the past.

The attendees also debated over the case studies and examples provided by the instructor. They considered the session an informative history lesson, needed to better understand the general context of their work with the Roma population. Thus, the participants appreciated that during the session, they learned about the “bigger picture of the history of Roma in the Region”, understanding the common past and challenges faced by their countries. They all agreed that historical research is essential for understanding the current situation of Roma communities. Exploring the history and exposing the early roots of discrimination and identity-based violence against Roma can help to reveal and combat patterns of discrimination that are persistent over centuries in societies.

## 8. Case Study – The Genocide of the Roma: Nazi Policies of Destruction Against Roma

Dr. Lavinia S. Costea, Senior Researcher at the Oral History Institute, “Babeş-Bolyai” University (Cluj-Napoca)

### Key topics of the session

- Anti-Roma Nazi Legislation
- Forms of genocide against Roma
- Study case: Deportation of Roma to Transnistria

### Principal learning outcomes of the session

The session started with an interactive discussion on how much knowledge exists in the participants’ countries about the genocide of the Roma. The session’s goal was to discuss the genocide against Roma during the Second World War (WWII).

First, Dr. Costea presented some examples of **Anti-Roma policies**, which were put in practice by the Germans before the war, to incriminate and discriminate against the Roma population. These acts were based on the previous Habsburg Monarchy's attitude towards Roma, following the same pattern of perceiving Roma as “defect” and “criminals”. Here are some examples of this type of policies:

- July 1933 – “Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Defects”;
- November 1933 – “Law against Dangerous Habitual Criminals”: the police arrested many Roma along with others deemed as “asocial” – prostitutes, beggars, chronic alcoholics, and homeless;
- June 1936 – Central Office to “Combat the Gypsy Nuisance” Munich: 600 Roma, in 130 caravans, are forced to settle in a new internment camp (Zigeunerlager) - near a sewage dump and cemetery in the Berlin suburb of Marzahn;



- June 1938 – 1,000 German and Austrian Roma were deported to concentration camps at Buchenwald, Dachau, Sachsenhausen, and Lichtenburg (for women).

During WWII, the **genocide against Roma** was carried out in different ways. For instance, in Auschwitz-Birkenau existed a special “gypsy family camp”, located in the section BIIe of Birkenau. Many Roma died here of starvation and other diseases, but also due to horrific medical experiments run by Josef Mengele. The Roma camp was liquidated in one night (2-3 August 1944) by the Nazis. Almost 3,000 Roma people were murdered then.

During the war, camps for the Roma population also existed in countries such as France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, etc. Still, these were administered as temporary stations before sending the Roma to Auschwitz-Birkenau or other concentration camps in the Reich territory. In many of these countries, other persecution measures were implemented against the Roma, for example, forced registration, systematic acts of violence and cruelty, and mass executions.

Finally, Romania’s case of **the deportation of the Roma population to Transnistria** during WWII was presented to illustrate how the Romanian state committed genocide against the Roma. Here are some key- acts of the phenomenon:

- In supporting the Nazi army, the Romanian military marched in Transnistria and moved further to the East;
- In 1942, Marshal Ion Antonescu, running Romania at that time, ordered a Census of the Roma, with the goal of “getting rid of criminals and nomads”, by deporting them in Transnistria.
- All the Roma registered during the census were split into three categories: “nomads”, “settled with criminal records”, and “settled”.
- Deportation started with the “nomads” in July 1942 and ended with the “settled” Roma in October 1942.
- At the local level, during the census, there were different reactions of the local authorities: in some villages, the authorities wanted to expel all Roma from their communities, so they registered all Roma as “nomads”. However, in other villages, the mayors declared that there were no Roma in their communities, saving thus many from deportation.
- Once deported in Transnistria, Roma people were abandoned on deserted fields or in collective farms. They were guarded, and only a few of them managed to escape. Most of the deported Roma died of starvation and different diseases, not being able to survive deportation.

Dr. Costea also shared with the participants compelling recorded testimonies of Roma survivors of the Transnistria deportation, and also a documentary about the genocide and events in Transnistria: [Valley of Sighs](#).



## Reflections and contributions to the discussion

During the session and the following discussions, all participants agreed upon the fact that in the Region exists little knowledge shared in the public space about the genocide against the Roma. They also concluded that in most of the countries, the denialism of the Roma genocide is still very present.

Distortion of the Holocaust, in general, and the genocide of the Roma, in particular, is also present throughout Southeastern Europe, whether it is the depiction of dictators and collaborators as war heroes, or the lack of state and media recognition of atrocities, despite carefully documented evidence, such as the deportations of Roma and Jews to Transnistria. Hate speech flourishes online and offline, based on false narratives that distort historical facts regarding the motives, numbers, perpetrators, and periods of the deportation. One of the persisting fake stories argues that authorities deported the Roma only under the pressure of the German authorities. Another false claim is that the Roma were deported because of their “nomadic and criminal lifestyle”, having been accused of robbing victims of the war bombings. Other allegations insist that the Roma are driven nowadays to speak up, and tend to exacerbate stories of their deportations for financial benefit, in order to receive compensation from both the German and their home state. However, historical studies prove that the Roma genocide was supported in most of the cases by the national states, the central or local authorities, and often also by local civilians. At football game rallies, protests and commemorations alike, many racists continue to flash fascist salutes and racist paroles against Roma, without legal consequences.

This distortion has led to weak state policy on primary and secondary Holocaust education as well as inadequate, and in some cases, intentionally obstructive compensation processes for victims. There is still an obvious discrepancy between the existing legal framework and the reality of its implementation.

All participants stated the need for sustainable education programs, tailor-made for different categories of public, which address these topics, but also the necessity of developing counter-narratives that combat the distortions of the past efficiently.

## 9. Case Study – The Genocide of the Roma: Post-War Discrimination Against Roma. Roma Between Discrimination and Politics of Recognition

Dr. Margareta Matache, Director of the Roma Program at the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University (Boston)

### Key topics of the session

- The racial ideology or the racecraft of Roma inferiority – mechanisms of persistence and impacted policies, laws, and practices before and after the WWII
- Reparations – how to repair the harm done in the past and present state-sponsored injustices against Roma

### Principal learning outcomes of the session

The session aimed to find an answer to the provocative question: “Why do Europeans continue to stay inert and asleep in the face of increasing anti-Roma discrimination?” Dr. Margareta Matache presented **the theory of racecraft** (“a deployment of ideas to justify racism”) to answer this question. Depicting “Roma as criminals” helps racists to find a moral justification for their acts of discrimination. In this process of racecraft, discrimination and racism start from institutional racism, supported by ideological racism, and continue with interpersonal racism and the internalization of racism.

The process of racecraft of criminality and inferiority against Roma:

- started at the very first moment the Roma population arrived in Europe, being perceived and presented as an inferior ethnic group;
- was based on anti-Roma laws, institutional racism being practiced on a large scale;
- included assimilation policies targeting children (“saving the children from the Roma culture”) back in the 18th century, but also the 20th century. For instance, from 1926 to 1973, Switzerland implemented the “Children of the road” national policy. Through this policy, Roma children were forcibly removed from their parents’ home into orphanages;
- continues even now. Regular surveys certify constant strong anti-Roma prejudices. There are still a lot of gaps, regarding the access to education of Roma children, for which the states should find viable solutions.

The situation of access to education was presented as a case study to explain the racecraft process. Dr. Matache argued that when education appeared as a public service in Europe, this was not an option for Roma children. The situation did not change significantly over time. During the Holocaust, the German

state decided not to allow schools to enroll Jews and Roma children. Currently, only 1% of Roma people reach higher education, and segregation in education is more a mainstream phenomenon than an exceptional one in the majority of the European countries.

NGOs fight against segregation through activities, such as litigation, local networks of human rights monitors, research, anti-racist teacher training, developing models of intercultural, critical and inclusive education, implementation of community-based projects, etc. Dr. Matache also argued for restorative justice actions for Roma people who were taken the opportunity for education.

Different **forms of reparation**, proposed by scholars, such as Martha Minow and Howard Zehr, were debated with the participants: official apologies, access to information and systematic processes of truth-telling, monetary compensation, memorializing resistance, strengthening the voices of the victims/ sustainable tools for victim empowerment, offender accountability, restitution of misappropriated properties, vindication, etc.

## Reflections and contributions to the discussion

At the beginning of the session, the participants were asked to identify challenges that Roma people face in their countries nowadays. They mentioned difficulties such as access to education, prejudices against Roma children in schools, school segregation, access to jobs, the existence of ghettos/ particular areas in the cities designated to Roma, poor access to health services, evictions, etc. At the end of the exercise, the participants reflected on the many common challenges that the Roma population faces in their countries. The origins of these common perceptions, prejudices, problems, gaps, etc. were again problematized. Dr. Matache argued that the racecraft process could explain, in the context of a shared history of the Region, the commonalities of current problems faced by the Roma people.

Additionally, intensive discussions were led on topics such as:

- How aware can people be of their discriminatory attitudes/ acts, if they have internalized the ideology that depicts “Roma people as criminals”?
- The relevance of the public narrative about Roma in the process of racecraft;
- The importance of producing culture to change the ideology of “Roma people as criminals”;
- The new European trend on issuing national “anti-gypsyism” laws. What started the process, and what are the risks in using a derogatory term to fight discrimination?

## 10. Anti-Discrimination Training: Preventing Identity-Based Violence

Mr. Andy Fearn, Co-Executive Director, Head of Learning and Outreach at “Protection Approaches” (London)

### Key topics of the session

- What is identity-based violence?
- What processes lead towards identity-based violence?
- How can we prevent identity-based violence?

### Principal learning outcomes of the session

Mr. Andy Fearn introduced the participants to the key topics of the session, and presented the **concept of the identity-based violence**, as developed by his organization *Protection Approaches*. He discussed the key indicators of emerging identity-based violence.

#### Key concept

**Identity-based violence** is any act of violence motivated by the perpetrator's conceptualization of their victim's identity, for example, their race, gender, sexuality, religion, or political affiliation. It encompasses hate crime, violent extremism, and genocide and affects individuals as well as entire groups or communities all around the world.

It is a non-legal and politically-neutral term specifically developed to show that what are too often seen as unrelated problems are, in fact, part of the same shared but preventable global challenge.

If some years ago, people in the Western world believed that genocide prevention is needed only in “other remote countries”, nowadays identity-based violence can be observed everywhere, even in countries considered to have a democratic tradition.

What are **the indicators of identity-based violence**?

- national level of political or economic crisis;
- intergroup tensions or patterns of discrimination against identity groups;
- widespread perception/s of grievance or threat;

- normalization of hate speech, dehumanizing language, and incitement to violence against identity groups;
- revival of historic grievance, myths of collective victimhood, politicization of national memory;
- widespread acceptance of disinformation, propaganda, and fake news;
- widespread lack of trust in the media;
- widespread lack of trust in the Government;
- widespread belief that the democratic process cannot lead to positive change;
- removal of or failure to uphold human rights protections;
- growth in number and legitimacy of groups who use violence or the threat of violence;
- impunity for those who commit, incite, or threaten violence.

The indicators were explained through recent concrete examples from the UK. For instance, according to a national survey run by Protection Approaches in 2019, four out of 10 UK citizens consider Roma population, Immigrants, and Muslims as threats or major threats to Britain's success and prosperity. This data indicates intergroup tensions, patterns of discrimination against identity groups, and widespread perception of threat. The same study shows that people lack trust in the media, the government, or the politicians. Seven out of 10 citizens feel that the journalists, the politicians, or the Government do not value the citizens' point of view. Also, three out of 10 people said that themselves or somebody they know had been physically or verbally attacked in the last two years based on some aspects related to their identity.

At the end of the presentation of the current situation of these indicators in the UK, Mr. Fearn also shared with the participants a collection of thoughts of children/ teenagers who were asked what the word “gypsy” means to them. The associations were mainly defamatory: “bad people”, “people that can get angry easily”, “stealers”, “attackers”, etc. The participants discussed the sources of these prejudiced and racist behavior patterns at this young age identifying: kindergartens, schools, literature, family, TV, stereotypes developed in time, etc.

Finally, the presenter introduced to the participants **the actors of change**, which could reduce the risks of identity-based violence:

- State (government/ politicians/ civil servants);
- Civil society (non-governmental organizations, religious groups);
- Media (newspapers, TV, online);
- Judiciary and law enforcement;
- International community.

## Reflections and contributions to the discussion

During the session, the participants were split into five working groups, each group representing an actor of change from the above list. Then, they were asked to think about actions they could take to reduce the risk factors for identity-based violence, as representatives of the state, the civil society, the media, the judiciary or the international community.

### ***Ideas developed in the state group:***

- Organize public awareness campaigns against identity-based violence;
- Produce reports and statistics to follow the phenomenon closely;
- Develop long-term and sustainable policies and measures against identity-based violence;
- Provide scholarships to vulnerable groups;
- Open doors for internships for Roma in the government;
- Support vulnerable groups, such as Roma, to have access to education and jobs;
- Develop community-building activities at the local level, and cooperate with NGOs;
- Test and train the civil servants regarding tolerance/ equal treatment of others.

### ***Ideas developed in the civil society group:***

- Provide mediation services;
- Propose regulations/ laws/ policy briefs to the government to prevent identity-based violence;
- Deliver educational programs, and enhance people's critical thinking and media literacy;
- Monitor government's activity in the field;
- Give voice and create opportunities for vulnerable groups to speak out, especially in addressing the government.

### ***Ideas developed in the media group:***

- Educate journalists about identity-based violence and anti-discrimination, in general;
- Promote high-quality journalism and solutions-oriented journalism;
- Learn how to avoid mentioning identities in the negative news → ethnicization;
- Provide penalties for journalists who do not respect the code of ethics in journalism;
- Give voice to vulnerable groups, support them to become journalists or to report from their communities directly.

### ***Ideas developed in the judiciary and law enforcement group:***

- Provide training courses for judiciary system and law enforcement on identity-based violence;
- Promote transparency in the decision-making process;
- Revise and reinforce anti-discrimination laws;
- Organize public awareness campaigns;
- Provide free legal advice to vulnerable groups;
- Align the use of firearms with international laws.

***Ideas developed in the international community group:***

The group considered that the leading representative for the international community in their Region is the European Union. The EU has the power and the capacity to impose policies and develop programs in the field of prevention of identity-based violence.

- Propose two new European laws: on the protection of all minorities in Europe, and a separate document focused on protecting the Roma population;
- Create a body with executive power and special budget working closely with Roma communities from Europe;
- Find ways to enforce the laws at the national level in EU countries and EU candidate countries;
- Use international pressure and sanctions on national governments when they do not respect or do not comply with the EU regulations in the field.

At the end of the session, the participants were challenged to think individually, as civil servants, members of academia, or of the civil society, about what they can do to reduce identity-based violence risks towards the Roma population. The general conclusion was that there are small changes of attitude that everyone can implement in their respective jobs and positions to combat discrimination and promote the civil and human rights of Roma.

## **11. Practical Application: Lessons Learned from the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC)**

**Dr. Iulius Rostaş, Chair of Romani Studies/ Assistant Professor at Central European University in Budapest, Member of the Board of ERIAC (Budapest)**

### **Key topics of the session**

- The development and the way of working of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC)
- ERIAC's main events and conferences

### **Principal learning outcomes of the session**

Dr. Iulius Rostaş started the session with a reflection exercise, challenging the participants to write down associations made when hearing the following concepts: “Holocaust”, “genocide”, “atrocities”. Afterward, he explained the use of terminology such as “Holocaust”, “genocide”, “Porajmos”, “Samudaripen” and “Roma experiences during WWII”, and the politics around preferring one term to

another. The conclusion was that terminology is not innocent, often highly politicized, and thorough research must be done before choosing a specific terminology in every communication effort.

The debate on appropriate terminology is one of the primary debates that take place at **the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC)**, which was officially registered in 2017, in Berlin. The institute was developed with the support of the European Commission, and also the World Bank.

The initiators of the institute aimed to develop a transnational, European-level organization for the recognition of Roma arts and culture, and at the same time, an international forum for relevant debates regarding the identity of the Roma. First, they created an alliance for establishing the institute, bringing together the Council of Europe, the Open Society Foundations, and the Roma Leaders' initiative, but also governments and other stakeholders. In the process, they constantly challenged or recurred to colonial theories, post-colonial theories, feminist theories on Roma arts and culture; or fought against the common perception that Roma have no culture or memory, or against wrong attributions of cultural artifacts of Roma.

Finally, the institute was registered as a membership organization in 2017, and now it plans to open new branches in Venice and Tirana, with the goal of becoming an international creative hub to promote Roma culture and talent in Europe. In addition, the institute wants to present successful projects and achievements of Roma culture, but also to document the historical experiences of the Roma people in Europe. The institute has four areas of work: **arts and culture, history and commemoration, knowledge production and publication, and media and communication**. All events, publications, and other actions of the institute are organized around these areas.

So far, ERIAC organized multiple conferences, events, exhibitions to promote Roma arts and culture, commemoration and reconciliation events, drawing attention on many sensitive topics, such as Roma slavery.

Examples of the events were discussed as best practices in the field:

- [“The Future of Roma History: Remembrance, Historical Justice and the Role of Roma Youth”](#), 2018, Poland;
- [The Roma Pedagogy for Reconciliation](#), 2018, Croatia;
- [Roma: Contributions to the Development of the Romanian State](#), 2018, Romania;
- [Is “Auschwitz Only Sleeping”? Sinti and Roma Narratives after the Holocaust](#), 2019, Poland.

## Reflections and contributions to the discussion

During the session, participants raised the issue of “insecurity/ lack of confidence” that some public servants experience when they need to use terminology referring to Roma ethnicity and Roma



experiences during WWII in official communication. According to them, sometimes, this insecurity makes the public servants miss out on important debates and discussions that must transgress the realm of academia and be also led in the public space.

The general conclusion was that more training programs/ other educational programs should be provided to civil servants working in the field, in order to make them more aware and confident about the appropriate terminology and the instruments they can use in their area of activity. Thus, they would be more engaged in initiatives of combating discrimination, but also, in the subsidiary, promoting Roma arts and culture as an essential tool of countering the distortion of the past and the social stigma around the Roma communities.

## 12. Practical Application: Lessons Learned from the Politics of Collective Identity Formation of the Roma in Europe

Dr. Ioana Bunescu, Researcher in Migration and Inter-Ethnic Relations, Malmö Institute for the Study of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM) (Malmö)

### Key topics of the session

- The Roma people – terminology
- EU accession conditionality as a political opportunity context for Roma political representation in Europe
- Lessons learned from the politics of collective identity formation

### Principal learning outcomes of the session

Dr. Ioana Bunescu introduced her book - *Roma in Europe. The politics of collective identity formation* (2014), and her research on Roma collective identity formation. During the module, she presented relevant findings of this research and discussed them with the participants.

**The terminology used for the Roma population** is extremely relevant to understand how Roma prefer to refer to themselves, how they should be referred by others, but also to find a common term to be used for policy purposes. “Roma” was accepted as an umbrella-term for policy purposes in 1971 at the first congress of the International Romani Union in London, when a national Roma flag and an anthem was agreed upon, but it is not accepted by all groups in Europe that are identified under this umbrella term. Some groups prefer to be referred to as Sinti, Askalia, Egyptians, Gypsies, Gitanos, Travellers, Tsigani, etc.

**Roma collective identity formation** is a particular case as there is no common past territory of reference, leaving Roma at the mercy of states and regional laws to recognize them as a national minority, and in an asymmetric power relation compared to other minority groups in Europe, which most of the time have a state of reference. Besides territory, religion could be a reference as well for a collective identity, but in the case of Roma, a single religion cannot be taken into consideration as the Roma groups embrace various religions. However, the collective identity formation is also relational, and the Roma collective identity was built also through inter-ethnic relations, that is through the stereotypes that were ascribed and internalized.

The EU accession process, which for countries in Central and Eastern Europe started in the '90s, represented a political opportunity for the Roma political representation in Europe. In the context of the Balkan wars and post-communist transitions, one of the **EU accession conditionalities** was related to the protection of national minorities. In that context, the EU member states wanted to make sure that oppressed minorities from the region will not seek asylum in their countries, but be protected at home. However, the request for protection of the national minorities constituted a political pressure on Central and Eastern Europe countries, and not that much on countries already members of the EU.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities came into effect in 1995, and EU accession states ratified it. Counterintuitively, the existence of such a framework did not decrease the negative attitudes towards Roma, but on the contrary, the accession countries encountered an increase of negative societal attitude against the Roma and other minorities since the majority populations blamed and scapegoated the minorities for delaying the EU accession of accession countries. This is an example of how a legal framework alone could not safeguard the protection of minorities, without being coupled with efficient measures of monitoring and of implementing it at all levels of the public administration.

However, there were also positive effects of the EU conditionality of the protection of national minorities in accession states:

- A political opportunity for ethnic mobilization for Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, and the emerging of Roma political representatives at national and European levels;
- A bargaining tool for national and local authorities in accession countries with a large number of Roma to ask and apply for EU funds, to give robust support to the Roma communities and solve social issues related to Roma and other minorities.

According to Dr. Bunescu's research findings, the most important **lessons learned from the politics of collective identity formation** were:

- The common history of discrimination of the Roma groups represented a basis for a collective identity of Roma;
- Instances of Roma representation have multiplied, and an increasingly large group of highly educated Roma leaders has emerged;
- Poor integration of Roma civil servants at the level of local and national administration;
- The difficulty of coordination at European, national, regional and local level;

- Weak links in the communities between public administration and grassroots organizations;
- The need for a single EU standard of Roma minority protection and an action plan for monitoring its implementation in all EU member and accession states.

## Reflections and contributions to the discussion

During the session, the participants shared their experiences on working groups from their countries identified as Roma accepted to be identified under the umbrella term of “Roma”. They also appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the EU context in which anti-discrimination and inclusion policies, programs, and projects were developed. Also, challenged by Dr. Bunescu to share their experience on communication and coordination at different levels for minority protection, on the efficiency of the working groups and the difficulties these face, the participants gave the following examples:

- In some countries, there are minority councils that exist at the local level. They depend on the political decision of the mayor on which topics they are consulted and how much they are involved in the decision-making process. Other challenges of these councils are related to the legitimate representation of the Roma communities: some of the leaders are not recognized as legitimate representatives of the community by the Roma at the grassroots level, and thereby not all are perceived as effective liaisons between the local administration and the Roma communities.
- There is a need for more action and involvement of the local authorities in policy implementation of the Roma strategies or other national minorities protection strategies developed at the national level.
- Local authorities need sustained anti-discrimination training, that allows them to implement the existing legal framework.

### 13. Practical Application: Lessons Learned from Combating Stereotypes and Discrimination through Public Policies

**Dr. Gelu Duminiță, Visiting Professor at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Bucharest and Executive Director of the “Împreună” Agency for Community Development (Bucharest)**

## Key topics of the session

- Roma – a social category or a national minority?
- Rebranding Roma identity

## Principal learning outcomes of the session

Dr. Gelu Duminiță opened the discussion in the group about how Roma people are perceived in the participants' countries- as a **social category or a national/ ethnic minority**? By presenting definitions of "gypsy" and "Roma" used by official dictionaries, such as those from Romania (1982, 1939, 1994), stereotypical photos of alleged Roma people, but also specific social inclusion legislation, Dr. Duminiță stated that Roma are rather perceived as a social category than a national minority and that the social stigma related to Roma people developed in time. The identity that was discursively constructed was one of people who are "natively inferior and likely to commit deviant acts". Also, he showed that in the last 100 years, the stigma on Roma increased, the prejudices and stereotypes worsened, as Europe has been going through a hate period, in which politicians injected discrimination and hate speech in the society. Supporting the same conclusion, according to a study run by "Together"/ "Împreună" Agency (Agenția "Împreună") in 2018, when Non-Roma population hears the word "gypsy", this has negative meanings for 80% of respondents, positive meanings for 17% and neutral meanings for 3%. The same word "gypsy" has negative meanings for 45% of Roma population, positive meanings for 49% of them, and neutral meanings for 9%.

These findings apply to most of the countries in the Region. Approved by the participants, Dr. Duminiță supported the idea that there is an increased need for "rebranding" the Roma identity, and this can be achieved through a sustained Roma empowerment. He introduced, with examples, some of the activities that his NGO - "Împreună" Agency - has carried out or currently implements in order to support this process of "rebranding" the Roma identity:

- Redefine the "Roma"/ "Țigan" ("gypsy") item in the Romanian Dictionary from 2012;
- Promote the Roma contribution to the development of Romania;
- Empower the Roma middle class;
- Introduce the Roma slavery and the genocide of the Roma in the History of Romania textbooks;
- Use role models, and provide mentoring to young people;
- Provide scholarships for Romani studies;
- Develop the [LikeRom](#) platform - the community of Roma professionals;
- Advocate for a Museum of Slavery in the Romanian Territories.

Dr. Duminiță also challenged the participants to rethink their public policies that target the Roma population, such as those referring to social inclusion, education, or employment of Roma. He stated that these policies should empower Roma population, and not treat them as a vulnerable social category, as they are an ethnic group. The system should be restructured so that it is equitable to everyone, no matter their ethnicity. The states should stop treating their Roma citizens solely as a problematic, vulnerable group, as they are not vulnerable because of their ethnicity, but because of the

-+fact that many of them live in poverty, have no access to education, to well-paid jobs, adequate housing, etc. The states should focus on solving these problems for all their citizens, including Roma.

## Reflections and contributions to the discussion

The participants enjoyed the presenter's positive, proactive attitude and his perspective on the process of "rebuilding" / "rebranding" the Roma identity. They appreciated the concrete examples of actions taken by grassroots organizations, like the one run by the presenter, which contribute to this process of empowering Roma people in Romania. The participants also liked that their current policy perspective on Roma inclusion was challenged with a new view that recommends, as the presenter said, "to treat the general social problems, and not the ethnic groups". In addition, they acknowledged the importance of the approach proposed by Dr. Duminičă: to empower Roma and start the change also within the communities, in building this new identity as an ethnic group.

### 14. Practical Application: Lessons Learned from the ROMED and ROMACT Programs

Mr. Marius Jitea, MA, Seconded National Expert as Program Officer, DG II –Democracy Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation, Council of Europe - Conseil de l'Europe (Strasbourg)

## Key topics of the session

- The ROMED1 -2 & ROMACT Programs
- Key achievements and elements of impact
- Trainings 2016-2018
- Health mediators-facts check (milestones and challenges)

## Main learning outcomes of the session

Mr. Jitea's technical presentation highlighted the characteristics of three important European programs, founded by the European Union and the Council of Europe:

- **ROMED 1:** Training of Roma Mediators (CoESRSG Team / EU DG EAC, since 2011)
- **ROMED 2:** Democratic governance and community participation through mediation (CoESRSG Team / EU DG EAC, since 2013)

- **ROMACT:** Building up political will and understanding of Roma inclusion at local and regional level (CoESRSG – EU DGEMPL /complemented by DG REGIO, since 2013)

The mediation approach of these programs has as main objectives:

- Training of mediators as agents of change;
- Improving dialogue and building confidence between Roma and public institutions;
- Increasing responsiveness of public institutions towards Roma;
- Advocating for the improvement of the situation of mediators;
- Creating a community of Learning, Practice, and Change at European level;
- Creating European standards on Mediation;
- Working towards the transferability and sustainability of quality mediation.

### Reflections and contributions to the discussion

During the presentation of Mr. Marius Jitea about the mediators program, the participants asked questions and engaged in vivid debates about the way in which the program was run, but also about the impact of the program. They were particularly critical about the program's impact, about the results of the program initiated in 2011, about the number of mediators who are still working in the communities, and about any side effects of the program on Roma empowerment, and anti-discrimination measures.

Mr. Jitea responded that there are some visible results in terms of health and life expectancy in Roma communities that benefited from the health mediators program, results measured through research done by organizations such as Open Society Foundations. However, the Council of Europe (CoE) did not run an extensive analysis, following the medium and long-term impact of the program. Definitely, such impact research could also help in establishing other health programs for Roma communities - the mediators program was developed and considered, in a way, an emergency intervention program, and maybe now it is the time to design a different kind of instrument for intervention.

The participants were also interested in finding out how the certification system for mediators worked during the program. Mr. Jitea explained that CoE contracted trainers that prepared the health mediators, and the certification was given by the CoE, showing the specific competences the mediators developed. There were countries that fully recognized the competences and the certification, but there were also countries that considered that this training was not enough and they asked mediators to participate in other official national education programs, to be hired as health mediators for Roma communities.

Mr. Jitea took all the participants' questions as recommendations to share with the Council of Europe, in order to plan an impact analysis and research on sustainability, and on next steps to be taken for improving health services for Roma communities. He also mentioned that several instruments exist at the level of Council of Europe for national consultations, but sometimes these instruments are misused

at the national level. For example, currently, the national focal points are not consulted on Roma issues, even though they could cover these topics and raise questions, come up with solutions, etc. Mr. Jitea reminded that it is the national government's responsibility to make use of these instruments, such as focal points. Although the Council of Europe creates the framework for approaching and solving problems, developing and implementing the framework at the national level is the national governments' responsibility.

## 15. Discussion – The Way Forward: The Role of Government Actors in Ending Identity- Based Discrimination and Violence Against Roma. Introduction to the Mediterranean Basin Network

**Moderation:** Mr. Jack Mayerhofer, Deputy Executive Director, AIPR (New York) and Dr. Gabriela Ghindea, Director of Mediterranean Basin Programs, AIPR (Bucharest)

**Guest:** Ambassador Alexandru Victor Micula, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Romania) and Head of the Romanian Delegation at the IHRA

### Key topics of the session

- Introduction to AIPR's work
- Overview of state action for atrocity prevention at both national and regional level in a different Region
- National Mechanisms for Atrocity Crimes Prevention
- Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention.
- Discussion – best practices/ challenges/ support

### Principal learning outcomes of the session

Mr. Jack Mayerhofer, Deputy Executive Director, AIPR (New York), introduced the work of the **Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation** to the participants.

AIPR's work focuses mainly on upstream prevention of genocides and mass atrocities before the conflicts start. AIPR engages primarily with governments, but also with civil society organizations. The Institute provides education, training, and technical assistance to support states to develop or strengthen policies and practices for the prevention of genocide or other mass atrocities. In addition, AIPR helps countries and governments to understand risks of genocide and to identify the risk factors



by looking to conflict history, social fragmentation, economic conditions, and governance. The Institute also supports governments in uncovering patterns of discrimination towards real or perceived identity groups, while combatting denial, omission, and providing recognition and support to affected communities. Finally, AIPR encourages and supports the cooperation of states through regional and international networks to advance the prevention of genocide and other mass atrocities.

In their work, AIPR encourages governments to prevent atrocities through:

- Prioritization of the mass atrocity prevention agenda;
- Concrete steps of prioritization: developing government structures to assess and address risks both domestically (inward-looking) and internationally (outward-looking); cooperation at the regional or international level to support early, preventive actions.

Mr. Mayerhofer presented several examples of **national mechanisms for atrocity crimes prevention**, which are efficient at the national level in pursuing the targeted results.

- These are officially established inter-ministerial bodies that include representatives from different areas of government relevant to the prevention of atrocity crimes, including minority protection offices;
- Wide-ranging membership, including also civil society in the decision-making process;
- Tasked with a system-wide assessment of strengths and weaknesses, in order to identify areas of risk;
- Coordinate government-wide implementation of programs to bolster resilience to atrocity crimes;
- Make public policy decision-making more representative of the communities it is affecting.

Examples of successful national bodies were presented, in order to encourage the participants to think about possibilities of emerging national structures of this type in their own countries: the Office of the Ombudsperson in Charge with Atrocities Prevention (Ecuador), the National Committee for the Prevention of Genocide (Tanzania) and Atrocities Prevention Board (United States). Usually, these bodies address the history of discrimination towards perceived identity groups, acknowledge the human rights abuses, provide symbolic and material reparations. Additionally, these bodies are in charge of providing direct support to affected communities by including their voices in the decision-making process, delivering education and raising awareness on the historical facts of discrimination, abuses, or atrocities. They conduct upstream prevention of atrocities through public policies, early warning systems, and risk mapping, and include impacted communities in the decision-making processes.

Mr. Mayerhofer also presented an example of **regional cooperation for the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities: The Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention (LAN)**. LAN was developed in 2012 and includes now 18 state members. It started from the idea of providing



mandatory training for public servants in atrocity prevention, and currently, the network runs activities relevant for the Region, on topics such as:

- Memory, truth, and justice;
- Dealing with the past;
- Protection of vulnerable groups, anti-discrimination (LGBTIQ+);
- Marginalized group inclusion;
- Protection of Indigenous Communities;
- Security Sector Reform - Police force & peacekeeper training.

AIPR supported the development of the network, and it continues to do so by functioning as the Technical Secretariat for it, but it does not decide the agenda of LAN. The agenda and the activities are determined by the member states, based on their priorities for the Region. At the moment, the network does not include civil society organizations. These are reunited in another network. The involvement of civil society organizations in national-level activities of the LAN members depends on the cooperation level between the two sectors.

A special guest to the final round of discussions was Ambassador Alexandru Victor Micula. As Head of the Romanian Delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), Ambassador Micula addressed the participants a warm welcome and encouraged them to further pursue their much-needed work of preventing and ending identity-based discrimination and violence. He presented a detailed overview of IHRA's activities, and Romania's contribution to IHRA's agenda, especially during Romania's presidency (2016-2017), when the Working Definition of Antisemitism was adopted. He stressed the progress made by the Romanian government over the past years in raising awareness to stop racism, xenophobia, hate speech, etc. by creating, depending on the subject, hybrid task forces and bringing all vital stakeholders at the discussion table. One priority of the Romanian presidency was an increased focus on the Roma genocide during the Holocaust and on combating efficiently denialism and all forms of the distortion of the past. Romania has made progress in fighting against racism and developed strategies to act preemptively.

However, implementing the existing legislation remains a constant challenge. A typical example is that of prosecutors, magistrates, and police officers, who are often not aware of the transgression, and hence unable to combat discrimination, racism, and hate speech accordingly. The solution remains constant education and anti-discrimination training for key personnel. The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has encouraged over the past years activities that are complementary to the curriculum. A best practice example is the seminar organized in partnership with AIPR and the Public Ministry for judges, prosecutors, police forces on the prevention of atrocities, which received overwhelmingly positive feedback, and which facilitates the Romanian target public an intensive encounter with an international team of experts from the field, providing also the space for exchanging ideas and experiences.

Ambassador Micula emphasized the fact that prevention work is an ongoing process, and there will be many challenges to address in the future. However, many lessons can be learned from other countries and synergies can be created in the endeavor of combating these concerning phenomena. This is why the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in partnership with the AIPR and the Stanley Center for Peace and Security supports the establishment of the **Mediterranean Basin Network for Atrocity Crimes Prevention (MBN)**. The Network will assist regional policymakers in building capacity and developing policies in the field of atrocity crimes prevention (including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide), drawing on best practices from other regions and taking into account specific local expertise. In praxis, this is translated through:

- Creating a flexible framework/ working space for sharing best practices and providing an opportunity to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation on different topics related to atrocity prevention;
- Connecting participating states to resources and providing support related to identifying and accessing resources to assist them in pursuing their priorities and achieving their stated goals (experts database, funding, facilitated contact to over 5,000 fellow government officials who are active in the field of atrocity prevention);
- Sharing news, information, relevant data on topics of interest;
- Improving community resilience at the regional level;
- Providing technical assistance, research, and expertise on genocide and mass atrocity prevention;
- Connecting the states from the network with other networks: for example, the Latin American Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention and The Africa Network for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention.

The present AIPR/ IHRA – program is a concrete best practice example of regional cooperation in the field of atrocity prevention, on an essential topic: *Countering Distortion through Governmental Action: Building the Capacity of Government Actors for Promoting and Protecting the Civil and Human Rights of Roma*. The lessons learned in this program will be incorporated into the working agenda of the emerging MBN, remaining a priority for the future, and a starting point for further projects.

### Reflections and contributions to the discussion

After the introduction of AIPR's work and examples of national and regional mechanisms of genocide prevention, the moderators provided the participants a space to think about what has worked concerning protecting the human rights of Roma communities in their countries, where challenges are still present, and how these should be addressed in the future. The participants were split into four groups, and each group had to answer the following questions:

1. **What has been done so far, and what has worked?**
2. **Where are there still gaps and/ or challenges?**
3. **What can we do to address these gaps and/ or challenges?**
4. **How can AIPR or any other partners (national, regional, international) help in this effort?**

In the next part, the ideas developed by the four groups are summarized and presented as answers to the four questions mentioned above.

#### **What has been done so far, and what has worked?**

- Increased participation of Roma in policy design;
- Increased awareness of the issues of the Roma communities;
- More members from the minorities in public administration and the national Parliaments;
- Increased number of NGOs that include Roma, and work with Roma relevant topics;
- Scholarships to Roma children/young people to support them to go to school;
- Legislation/strategies/action plans at national and local level (National Strategies for Roma, national anti-discrimination laws);
- Institutional frameworks for implementation of these strategies and other specialized agencies (Roma focal points, national agencies for Roma and Roma culture, Commission for desegregation);
- Monitoring bodies for the implementation of the strategy documents;
- Health and school mediators for Roma communities;
- Good cooperation between countries to solve the problem of identity documents for Roma arriving from one country to another;
- Ensuring jobs for educated Roma, in public institutions, who then work as role models for other Roma, especially children/ teenagers;
- Celebration of International Roma Day, and other commemoration days, including 2 August, 16 May, or other national specific days.

#### **Where are there still gaps and/or challenges?**

- Missing budget for implementation of the strategies and national action plans;
- Lack of coordination among the bodies that already exist, and between national and local institutions;
- Lack of political will - in some countries there is more interest, in others - less interest;
- Missing data about the Roma population (some of Roma people are still not counted in the statistics because they do not have documents);
- Missing educated media in the field, to prevent increasing prejudices and stereotypes about Roma;

- Prejudices, stereotypes, marginalization, and discrimination in the following areas: education, health, employment, housing, and social services;
- Not enough visibility of Roma people in everything relevant for a community.

### **What can we do to address these gaps and/ or challenges?**

- Organize public debates to raise awareness within the general population on Roma issues and human rights for Roma;
- Monitor how the programs/ strategies are implemented in the field, for a clear picture of what is going on;
- Empower Roma and engage them in the development and the implementation of the strategies and action plans (“nothing about us without us”);
- At the local level, use community strategy development – consult all the community members when the strategy is developed, involving the Roma population as well;
- Bring in best practices in the field from other communities/ countries;
- Provide capacity building for civil servants and local authorities, in this field;
- Increase cooperation among all the actors: governments, NGOs, funding institutions;
- EU and state sanctions, especially for countries that became EU members and they do not respect and support human rights for all their citizens;
- The development of a regional task force on the topic of promoting human rights of Roma population (with a specific focus on the genocide of the Roma);
- Conduct research on the Roma Holocaust experience for bringing relevant information on the topic in the community, in the public sphere;
- Present truth-telling reports and organize truth-telling commissions that will focus on bringing the truth in the national conversations;
- Open museums, to raise awareness about the Roma Holocaust experience, and make them more appealing for the young people – including through digitalization of the sources;
- Share publicly and promote survivor stories and saviors’ stories in relation to the genocide of the Roma.

### **How can AIPR or any other partners (national, regional, international) help in this effort?**

- Organize conferences and training courses for NGOs, government representatives, civil servants, local authorities, museum workers, students, etc.;
- Organize more meetings among governments, but also invite NGOs;
- Become a resource center on topics such as prevention of genocide, preventing and ending identity-based discrimination and violence;
- Organize study visits for government officials for exchanges of good practices in the field;
- Support the development of regional and international networks on preventing Roma discrimination and promoting human rights of Roma;

- Promote actions of symbolic reparations to recognize the genocide of the Roma (street names, public events, etc.);
- Take public reactions towards those who deny the genocide of the Roma and combat the distortion of the past;
- Advocate and provide support, work together with the NGOs to introduce in the national curricula elements related to the Roma history;
- Develop networks for promoting the culture, art, and the history of minorities.
- Support an integrated and sustainable approach in the initiatives: bring all the relevant actors together.

During the presentations of the four groups, the participants shared their reflections on these ideas. Some of them were concerned about the general political will in their countries to implement measures like the one described in order to address the current challenges faced by the Roma population, while others stated that there is definitely a political will, as the governments are present through their relevant representatives at this table, but there is a lack of funds to support this will. Additionally, participants worried about the sustainability of programs and actions, and also about the low level of coordination among the international institutions, international donors, EU, governments, NGOs on the topic of preventing and ending identity-based discrimination and violence against the Roma.

At the same time, the participants were very enthusiastic about the ideas shared during the group work, and about the identified possible solutions in addressing the gaps and challenges of the current policies and programs meant to prevent identity-based discrimination and violence. They concluded they need to maintain their commitment and develop a regional plan of action in the field. Also, they expressed their interest in the next steps AIPR would take in developing this regional cooperation among the actors attending the seminar, and other relevant institutions and organizations.

## 16. Addendum: Follow Up Programs

During the follow-up discussions with the participants at the seminar, three main directions of continuing this incipient program within the emerging Mediterranean Basin Network for Atrocity Crimes Prevention (MBN) were identified. While two of them focused on programs of technical assistance for drafting the new National Strategies for Roma or for implementing them, the third one focused on training. The necessity of sustained anti-discrimination training for key personnel at the governmental level, and especially at the local level in the administrations, was expressed and confirmed by all partners.

The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other highly publicized events in the majority of the countries, have confirmed this priority. Millions of Roma in Southeastern Europe, most of whom live in precarious conditions without access to health care and basic sanitation, are facing now a humanitarian disaster. The Roma communities, which in general, are subjected to different forms of racism and discrimination, are now being treated with even more stigma and find themselves targeted as scapegoats for the current crisis. Unfortunately, the media has exacerbated the conflicts by ethnicizing all reports about the migration of Roma families between the countries and breaching the quarantine rules. On top of general measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, authorities have introduced additional restrictions to put Roma communities under quarantine, sometimes resorting to the use of police and military force. This has provided right-wing extremists, populist and nationalist politicians the perfect platform to inject fear and fuel latent racism in an already frightened population, which based on the above-mentioned discussions could easily escalate if the crisis continues long-term.

Auschwitz Institute will propose as next step a project that will produce a toolkit for policymakers across Southeastern Europe, for building capacity to implement sustainable policies that combat the marginalization and discrimination of the Roma people in the region. The toolkit will be developed through a cross-sectoral cooperation of civil society representatives, relevant government officials, academia, and other stakeholders from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Kosovo\*. Experts on a wide range of issues relevant to the protection of human rights of Roma communities will develop an online resource that, based on best practices from the Region, will provide guidance on successfully combating discrimination and on achieving the goals of States' National Strategies for the Roma. The activities will include an initial research period, followed by expert consultation and meetings, and finally, the development of a common toolkit, which will identify possible solutions to similar challenges the governments face in ending Roma discrimination in these countries. The toolkit will be implemented through a series of seminars organized for government officials and public servants in each of the identified countries. The toolkit will enhance the ability to develop and implement policies aimed at improving public discourse, education, research, and memorialization of atrocities and thereby provide

greater human rights protections to Roma communities today. The resource will take into account national specificities that will be addressed in the implementation seminars. The program will be a core element on the agenda of the Mediterranean Basin Network for Atrocity Crimes Prevention (MBN), the emerging informal network of states dedicated to regional cooperation for atrocity prevention in Southeastern Europe.