



Civil society monitoring report
on implementation of
the National Roma Integration Strategy
in France

*Identifying blind spots
in Roma inclusion policy*

Prepared by:
La voix des Roms
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on implementation
of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy
in France**

Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATMF	Association of Migrant Maghrebi Workers
DIHAL	Inter-Ministerial Delegation for Housing and Access to Housing
DILCRAH	Inter-Ministerial Delegation to Fight Against Racism, Anti-Semitism and Anti-LGBT hate
EGAM	European Grassroots Antiracist Movement
LICRA	International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism
MRAP	Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategies

NOTES ON VOCABULARY

While according to law “**gens du voyage**” are people with no fix permanent residence nor domicile for longer than six months in a year, who circulate or have ambulant activities, this naming is used also as politically correct for what could be called “French gypsies”.

The term “**EU mobile Roma**” in this report (as in the two previous RCM reports on France) refers only to those Roma European citizens (mostly Romanian and Bulgarian) who exercise their right to free movement and live in a precarious situation in France: in squats, shanty towns, social hotels. This category, as that of “*gens du voyage*”, is a creation of the external observation and not of those who are included. In French, it is also often referred to as “**Roms migrants**”.

The report uses the spelling “**Rrom**” or “**Rromani**” with the characteristic double “r” when referring to the historic, linguistic and cultural identity of those who self-identify with one of the three main groups present in France (Rroms, Sinté and Kalé), regardless of their social belonging.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Antigypsyism is the central blind spot of policies on *gens du voyage* and EU mobile Roma in France. For this reason, the present report focuses on its main declinations, and the way its absence in the perspective of the governmental measures and policies affects their efficiency. France regularly criticises the “ethnic approach” of the European Union and many other Member States when it comes to social policies and puts forward its equality principle as justification of its mainstreaming approach. From our point of view, these two approaches are not to be opposed; rather, each of them should be used as a mirror which helps to better understand the other. In fact, if social exclusion is to be addressed as such, the intervention in this sense cannot ignore its deep causes and antigypsyism is one of them for all those othered as “gypsies” (see below the definition of antigypsyism by the Alliance against antigypsyism). Moreover, this stigma affects Rromani people beyond their social status and hinders their equal participation in public life, and the very consideration of Rromani people in exclusive terms of social exclusion is an antigypsyist thought.

The analysis of the structure and the functioning of antigypsyism as “the specific racism towards Roma, Sinti, travellers and others who are stigmatised as ‘gypsies’ in the public imagination”¹ allows us to see how this racism has been formed by a sort of combination of both mainstreaming and ethnically specific approaches through the centuries. Denial of cultural identity and denial of equal citizenship are the two legs on which antigypsyism was developed and still stands today. As a consequence, combating antigypsyism requires both being aware of and being sensitive to the existence of a cultural Rromani identity, which is socially diverse and exists in a plurality of forms. It requires understanding the complex interactions between that cultural identity (the Rromani one) and the social identity (created by the racial stigma of being a “gypsy”) instead of ideologically refusing to recognise/consider only one of them (while focusing exclusively on the other). While refusing the “ethnic approach”, France should also recognise that its policies on “illegal camps and shanty-towns” or on “*gens du voyage*” do not target all the people living in illegal camps, in shantytowns or all those who travel or live in mobile housing. In fact, it targets those “stigmatised as gypsies in the public imagination”. As a European concept, that stigmatised group appeared in the public imagination in the Romanian principalities of Moldova and Wallachia during five centuries of slavery, under the name of “*țigani*”, which designated the social status of those slaves, whose majority were Rromani people. This image was consolidated with the legislation of the third French Republic which in 1912 created the legal category of “nomads”, an underclass category whose special legal status lasted until 2017.

From Romanian principalities to the third French Republic the European antigypsyism produces various types of exclusion which come as an addition to the “mainstream social exclusion” produced by the economic crisis. Antigypsyism excludes Rromani upper and middle-class from participating in public life as citizens, due to the stigmatisation of their identity. It excludes also those who are socially excluded because this is believed to be “a cultural choice” or “cultural opposition to integration”. These types of exclusion and the tensions they create are observed in France, where they prevent good achievements of the rare policies aiming at the integration of Roma and travellers.

Rromani and pro-Roma civil society

In a country with more than 1.5 million associations, the Rromani civil society is almost non-existent. As for the majority population, civic involvement in associations is mostly a characteristic of the middle and upper class. This explains the gap between Rromani community and the majority population concerning the civil society development. Actually,

¹ Definition of the Alliance against antigypsyism in “Antigypsyism – A reference paper”, www.antigypsyism.eu

as the Rromani identity is stigmatised, Rromani individuals or families belonging to middle or upper class usually hide their ethnic identity. Rromani organisations are outside the “safe space” in which they could display their identity without taking the risk to lose the fragile protection that their social integration offers them.

The pro-Roma civil society is stronger and more diverse. Since decades, departmental associations of *gens du voyage* offer services to traveller groups in the given department. While they include sometimes Rromani individuals in their board, their political weight is much reduced and these organisations act simply as service providers, especially assisting the community members to access their social rights. Their political role is almost inexistent, both at the departmental level and at the national one. They participate in local and national commissions, but their role is purely consultative.

Interactions between antigypsyism and social exclusion

Antigypsyism and social exclusion of Roma and travellers are in a circular relation. They mutually nurture and reinforce each-other. On one hand it is true that it is the antigypsyism which, in different ways pushes Rromani population on the margins and even outside the society. In return, the social exclusion of an important part of this population and especially its exposure as representing “the” Rromani community reinforces the stereotypes that found the rejection. A parallel but different mechanism operates as concerns the *gens du voyage*, whose public image is also distorted and biased.

In the public space, both “Roma” and “travellers” are two groups imagined by the majority population’s mind, whose representation is partial and distorted. The public policies design and implementation are also influenced by these representations, which somehow objectify the individuals belonging to these communities. Perceived as people in need for assistance or as people who refuse the help offered for them to integrate but never as subjects able to analyse and to actively participate in improving their situation, their ability to speak and act as citizens is unthinkable for many. Most often, when they are given the floor in meetings this is for them to “testimony on their experience” for EU mobile Roma, and on “their culture” for *gens du voyage*, and in both cases the discourse is reduced and reducing. This infantilisation that applies to the relations between beneficiaries and service providers has its counterpart also beyond this specific context. The invisibility of Roma or travellers who do not fit in the majority’s representation is not only due to their understandable unwillingness to be associated to that image, but also to the conceptual exclusion within the majority population, i. e. its intellectual impossibility to imagine Roma or travellers outside that image. Often incontinent, since even antiracist organisations ignore sometimes the few Rromani organisations involved in antiracist movement, it has to be properly addressed.

Interactions between antigypsyism and affirmation of Rromani identity

Identity is a product of constant negotiation and research of equilibrium between the self-identification and the hetero-identification. Each of them relates therefore to one referential, built by the observer or the bearer of the given identity. If these referential intersect enough, there is no conflict and the bearer of the discussed identity feels rather secure.

Due to the political tradition in France, the non-stigmatised cultural referential exists only in the private space. While this space is “secured” by a kind of rather impervious boundary with the outside world, it is also reduced and therefore cannot offer the necessary resources for a progressist evolution. Its openness too is reduced to a very limited number of outsiders, with whom the bearers have exceptional proximity relations.

The dominant referential, stigmatising and made of stereotypes and prejudices, goes mainstream. It prevails in media, political and public speech and also in arts and popular

culture.² True enough, a handful of Rromani people participate in the creation of this stigmatising referential, for immediate interests, whether material or of notoriety. The most often, however, they simply think contributing to changing the negative image of the community but are then disappointed by the final product in which their images are used.

This tension between the private, secure but reduced space where the identity referential can be positive but has few resources and the public space in which the identity referential is mostly negative and has mainstream resources, is particularly regrettable as well as a great paradox in France. In fact, the country hosts on one hand many resources internationally recognised in terms of knowledge: a university chair of Rromani language and culture,³ *Médiathèque Matéo Maximoff*,⁴ the revue *Etudes tsiganes*,⁵ to name but a few, and on the other hand the richest internal diversity of Rromani people – France being the only country in the world where the three big branches of the Rromani people (Roma, Sinté and Kalé) are historically present in considerable numbers. Unfortunately, this potential has not been efficiently used so far.

Interethnic relations and public policies

No integration policy on Roma can give positive and sustainable results without properly addressing the antigypsyism. It is still a political choice whether antigypsyism can be used for electoral purposes or be fought against, but once the choice of fighting it is made, it has to be consequent. This requires explicit positioning and courageous action.

While mainstream approach and colour-blindness of social policies are put forward as corollaries of non-discrimination in public speech, the social realities are different. Non-discrimination is not given naturally in social relations, but an objective to be reached by public action. Unfortunately, colour-blindness of social action is diverted from its initial and genuine objective, which is to avoid discrimination, and used to justify monopoly paternalist methods of the implementers of integration projects, who challenge in power relations their institutional ordering customers.

If the culturalist approach is a trap that should be avoided, the colour-blindness of social policies and actions hide an unwillingness to consider all stakeholders, starting by the beneficiaries. The avoidance of a culturalist approach should apply to all cultures at stake: those of the excluded communities as well as those that the structures implementing integration projects have developed during their decades-long experience. Unfortunately, this culture includes also condescendence towards the assisted public and mistrust of other players. This deprives the beneficiaries of agency in their own integration process and creates an unhealthy atmosphere of dependency and monopoly. Coordinated diverse interventions on the contrary create agency, mutual trust and self-confidence, and therefore ensure sustainable achievements of the actions undertaken.

The scarcity of Roma and travellers associations is a particular form of that conceptual exclusion, integrated by the Roma and travellers themselves. The way in which the “gens du voyage” have been approached and treated by public policies in the last decades shows more and more its limits in terms of social status improvement as well as the ongoing degradation of their ability to participate as citizens. In many aspects, the precariousness of the EU mobile Roma is less heavy than the precariousness of “travellers”, who are

² For example, if the film *A bras ouverts* depicted in 2017 the Rroms in a very negative way and triggered strong criticism: <http://www.leparisien.fr/culture-loisirs/cinema/a-bras-ouverts-vu-par-la-communaute-rom-le-film-nous-presente-comme-des-sauvages-05-04-2017-6825396.php>, culturalist sensationalism reinforces negative “othering” while pretending describing their “secret life”: <https://www.programme-tv.net/programme/culture-infos/r6195-zone-interdite/4877567-la-vie-secrete-des-gitans/>

³ Inalco, <http://www.inalco.fr/langue/rromani>

⁴ FNASAT, <http://www.fnasat.asso.fr/ressources.html>

⁵ *Etudes tsiganes*, <http://www.etudestsiganes.asso.fr/>

French citizens. This apparent paradox is in fact explainable by the fact that, although excluded, EU mobile Roma are not, or not for too long, in a dependency situation towards specialised structures of social work.

INTRODUCTION

The monitoring of the French NRIS has been since the very beginning a challenge because there is no such strategy formally identified in France. Therefore, the monitoring concerned policies, rather disparate, targeting the “EU mobile Roma” on one hand and “travellers” on the other, who in French jargon are referred to respectively as “*roms migrants*” and “*gens du voyage*”. The artificial junction of these two groups, who in the French discourse are systematically object to unclear distinction, forms adequately the heterogeneous entity that EU Framework targets under the denomination “Roma” with the planned recommendations for sectorial intervention (housing, education, health and employment). By the monitoring mechanism, the EU Framework served somehow as a catalyser for public intervention, and the National contact point (Inter-Ministerial Delegation for Housing and Access to Housing, DIHAL) tried to encourage at its best the initiatives taken by local authorities with regard to the implementation of the circulars on shanties clearing.

However, as the previous monitoring reports have shown it, the real impact of these policies remains weak.⁶ For example, concerning housing, the second report points the residential segregation resulting from both exclusion and housing policies. This phenomenon, as many others presented in that thematic report come as a logical consequence of antigypsyism⁷ and lack of consideration of the people concerned. This other aspect of the situation was also mentioned in the first monitoring report focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy.

A new impetus was given to the policy of shanties clearing with the Inter-Ministerial Instruction of 25 January 2018, which sets specific objectives. In autumn 2019, the government announced also the augmentation of the specific budget for this action, which will pass from 4 to 8 million in 2020, with among others the objective of reducing to the half the number of people living in shantytowns in 2022.

These two positive signals are very much welcomed. However, the principal barrier to effective and efficient policies for the integration of Roma, such as conceived by the EU Framework and the French policies is the antigypsyism. For this reason, we decided to dedicate this third monitoring report to this phenomenon, as a real blind spot of public policies. As this report concerns also the public policies in relation with the EU Framework, it will cover principally the topics immediately related to the group targeted by those policies. However, it will extend beyond that limited scope and (toucher) encompass, although briefly, the Rromani identity and Rromani civil society, to the extent that the contribution of the community might represent an asset (added value) for the inclusion policies and more broadly to equal citizenship.

Given the current state of art, the present report will not monitor policies against antigypsyism, as such policies do not exist yet. Rather, it will present the phenomenon of antigypsyism as thoroughly as possible, in the way it appears – sometimes impacting negatively integration policies in place, sometimes causing lack of action, sometimes justifying discrimination or violence. It relays on some scarce sources of information, such as reports from various bodies, both institutional and from civil society, but also on concrete cases from the ground that will be analysed. In doing so, the present report is conceived as a contribution to the current reflexion on actions to be taken in France against antigypsyism. The forthcoming review of the National Plan against racism and anti-

⁶ The [first report](#) was focused on the horizontal precondition of the Roma inclusion – governance, fight against antigypsyism and anti-discrimination. The [second report](#) concerned the four key policy fields – education, employment, healthcare and housing. All reports are available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/roma-civil-monitor-reports>

⁷ Definition of the Alliance against antigypsyism, In: “Antigypsyism – A reference paper”, www.antigypsyism.eu

Semitism (2018-2020) and the dialogue started with the DILCRAH give us confidence that antigypsyism could be taken duly into account in the next national plan after 2020.

RROMANI AND PRO-ROMA CIVIL SOCIETY

Definition of the problem

Civil society is quite developed in France. The number of active associations is estimated to be 1.5 million.⁸ However, their importance is very uneven, as is also their activity and management. Among these, there exist extremely few Rromani associations, and among them, less than a dozen are active. On the other hand, pro-Rromani organisations are not exclusively focused on Roma. Most of them are mainstream organisations who deal during a period of time with Roma, too. More rarely, local groups of support for specific Roma groups decide to register an association. However, most of the time they remain informal. The phenomenon is especially present in Paris area and these collectives benefit from some support from the National Collective for Human Rights *Romeurope*, who is a registered association and employs a team of three people.

As concerns the travellers, there is a longer tradition and usually specialised associations exist in almost all departments of France, each of them having in the official denomination the expression "gens du voyage" and the name or the identifying number of the given department. These are associations for social intervention and assist "gens du voyage" in various administrative steps and procedures. As an example, they provide them with administrative domiciliation. They include "gens du voyage" in their board and are interlocutors of institutions. Despite this fact, these associations are in fact service providers and not community organisations. Eighty of these associations are grouped in FNASAT (National Federation of acting associations solidary with gypsies and *gens du voyage*).⁹

In this landscape, the civic initiatives of Roma or travellers themselves are extremely rare. Three national organisations are led by people coming from the concerned communities: *La voix des Rroms*, ANGVC (National Association of Citizen [formerly "Catholic"] Travellers) and ASNIT (Social National International Gypsy Association). This last association is member of the French protestant federation and its main activity is the mediation for the organising of religious events. *La voix des Rroms* and ANGVC on the other hand focus more their activity in access to rights and advocacy. However, their resources are limited. Therefore, in terms of representation or participation in policies design, implementation, monitoring or in public life in general, Roma and traveller communities are not directly present. The structures that speak for them, including to decision makers, are generally intermediary associations composed by majority population in which at best there can be one or a few representatives of the community. However, the legitimacy of their discourse is based on the formal recognition and specific competences on their specific intervention, not on an overall knowledge of global situation of a given group/community.

True enough, the lack of organisation of the communities themselves makes the intermediary bodies privileged interlocutors, because they are more accessible for institutions and can communicate more fluently with these support bodies that employ professionals. However, the example of travellers, who are more numerous than "mobile EU Roma" and who are in this schema since a much longer time, since the 1960s, shows that this intermediation puts people in a vicious circle of exclusion. Actually, even without any intention, their voice – and thus their problems, expectations, ideas and proposals – is not heard as such but passed through the prism of the intermediary view on their situation. This view is necessarily incomplete because it is external, probably partial because the intermediary has also its own interests and possibly biased, as the stereotypes

⁸ Associathèque, "Etat du secteur associatif", <https://www.associatheque.fr/fr/creer-association/chiffres-cles.html> (consulté le 27/11/2019)

⁹ www.fnasat.asso.fr

on Roma and travellers are to be found across the society and the fact for a professional to get to know the most excluded of these communities can reinforce these stereotypes and prejudices.

Background and cause of the problem

There exist three types of associations whose domain of intervention includes Roma:

- Human Rights and antiracist organisations such as Amnesty International, *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme*, MRAP, LICRA, *SOS Racisme*, EGAM, etc.
- Humanitarian organisations such as Doctors of the World, *Fondation abbé Pierre*, Catholic Rescue etc, who are either specialised in one social intervention domain or more general,
- Rromani associations, whose domain is mostly mixed: social, cultural and antiracist.

This categorisation might look quite strange, not to say shocking, because while majority's associations are categorised according to their domain: Human Rights, antiracist or humanitarian, the Rromani associations are put into one single, ethnic category. Unfortunately, this corresponds to the reality, as does the fact that they are extremely scarce throughout France. These two facts are also related among them and to antigypsyism. The "associationism" is one of the characteristics of French society. However, this cultural trend has not touched enough the Rromani population, whose presence in the country is documented since 1419.¹⁰ This difference is certainly due to the persisting exclusion of these communities, who especially after the Second World War evolve in segregated areas, but who suffer also a social segregation, as mentioned in the previous report.

The Roma and travellers are less organised collectively even compared to other discriminated communities, such as some migrant ones. Although these last are in France for shorter time (two to three generations) and despite the fact that they too are often segregated in suburban quarters called "*cités*", their integration in the working class on one hand and maybe to a lesser extent the conservation of some common affiliation to their countries of origin helped them to create and keep some awareness on the necessity of organising and standing for one's rights, collectively. For example, the ATMF (Association of Migrant Maghrebi Workers) brings together several local associations and besides offering legal and administrative support fights also against racism and discrimination.

Apart from the exclusion and segregation, the extreme weakness in France of what elsewhere is called "Roma civil society" is also due to the stigma on "gypsies" and on "*communautarisme*", a French concept defined as being "*a trend of American multiculturalism that emphasizes the function of community organisations (ethnic, religious, sexual, etc.)*."¹¹ The "*communautarisme*" is perceived as a danger for national unity and for the republican principle of equality.

The lack of confidence in institutions or in success of anti-discrimination steps is quite well known and mentioned for victims of discriminatory exclusion from accessing basic social rights. These feelings of insecurity are however shared also by Rromani individuals belonging to the middle class, but appear in a different way. These individuals –or actually families – know that their relatively good situation as compared to those that one can call

¹⁰ Paul Bataillard, "De l'apparition et de la dispersion des Bohémiens en Europe" [premier article]. In: *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*. 1844, tome 5. pp. 438-475, https://www.persee.fr/doc/bec_0373-6237_1844_num_5_1_451779 (visited 24/11/2019)

¹¹ <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/communautarisme/17550>

"visible Roma" is systematically endangered by the stigma attached to the concept of "gypsies", regardless of what noun is used to name them in each occurrence. The easiest way to feel a bit more secure is then for them to keep away from showing publicly their ethnic belonging and/or to seek to distance themselves from the most excluded and stigmatised Roma. Therefore, they usually don't engage in civic associations.

The stigma on "*communautarisme*" is another factor that explains the weakness of the "Roma civil society" in France. As described in the first monitoring report, this makes it even more difficult for community organisations, both to obtain funding but also to exert some influence. This is an ultimate challenge, which applies to those processes which reach the constitution of a registered association with sufficient human resources to apply for funding or to have access to institutions. Very few initiatives reach this point of development.

To some extent, cultural factors explain also the weakness of "Roma civil society". These are not only related to Rromani cultures, but also to the culture of the service providers community. Traditional modes of communities' organisation, based on family networks declined as a result of overall evolution, in terms of economy, urbanism, etc. In the same time, the associations providing social services replaced progressively the traditional leaders and/or mediators. In this process, the communities organised by internal resources but in regular interaction with the outside world through economic activities (especially entrepreneurship), became dependent on external resources with limited interaction with the outside world (associations dealing with their procedures for social welfare and other administrative steps). This phenomenon touches massively the "*gens du voyage*" with the policies that apply to them, but similar mechanisms run also with "EU mobile Roma" when local authorities decide to implement integration projects.

Policy answer to the problem

First of all, it is noteworthy that civil society as a whole is in a certain crisis. The lasting movement of the yellow vests¹² shows not only the anger of a large part of the population towards the government, but also the distrust towards the political class and even towards civil society, i. e. the intermediary bodies. The associations find themselves in some crisis of recognition both in their role of intermediary bodies and interlocutors of institutions, and in relation with their constituencies. The government does not seem yet aware of this crisis and of its root causes and has not found an exit to this movement of weekly protests that has lasted for over a year, at the time of drafting this report. This is precisely because the government has still not found the way to respond to the novelty of this movement, i. e. the protesters' refusal of intermediary bodies entrusted with negotiation on the movement's claims. This situation should push therefore both the government and civil society to reflect on how to renew the mechanisms of democracy.

In this general context, and back to the reality of the Roma and travellers, some new trends should be mentioned, which attenuate a bit the description of the gap existing between non-Rromani and Rromani civil society. First of all, in the second category of civil society organisations, the humanitarian ones, we did not include the service providers, - called "operators" in French jargon. This is because they occupy a special place and are not necessarily associations but also enterprises. They form a group apart for this reason but overall because they are in charge with specific projects and missions on Roma or travellers communities, entrusted to them by public authorities, to whom they are accountable. The majority of these structures are established since a long time and have consolidated certain culture of intervention that gives very little, if any place to their public, with which they establish a vertical relation. Also, in their understanding the advocacy is

¹² Yellow vests movement is a conglomeration of people with different demands, problems, backgrounds etc. who feel betrayed by political class. It is not interested on Roma, nor in any particular community as such, but all kinds of communities find themselves in it, including many Roma and travellers.

damageable and proper to “activist organisations”, what they refuse to be. Apart the departmental associations of the *gens du voyage*, one can also mention in this category big and traditional structures like major social housing providers Adoma¹³ or Alteralia,¹⁴ the Red Cross etc., who are given responsibilities either for global projects of integration of specific communities located on the same place, or specific missions for people living in different locations. The traditional structures have created a culture of their own in the ways to work with vulnerable people, which is quite patronising, to say the least. While this culture persists in those structures, some new ones that appeared in the last years look more open to change (like ACINA or Les enfants du canal¹⁵, in Paris region). Concretely, they recruit sometimes Rromani people, either as employees or as civic volunteers and seek to empower them. In Lyon, the collective “SOIF de connaissance”¹⁶ which brings together academia, social workers but also representatives of the excluded communities, offers training for social workers. Recently, this collective has recruited also Rromani people who intervene in these trainings in the region Auvergne Rhône Alpes.

Unfortunately, these positive changes remain marginal but hopefully they could and should serve as examples for the necessary structural changes that are needed. For instance, “Social Life Councils” that are meant to guarantee the rights of the users and their participation in the functioning of a hosting establishment are not really effective. In Saint-Denis, where the association Aleralia is implementing a social project, this council was not functioning properly, due to the overall patronising behaviour of the implementer as well as to the lack of good communication. *La voix des Rroms* who know well this particular group of families since years proposed to intervene for better organising the community and their democratic participation in the council. The proposal was declined because of the refusal of Alteralia, who shows a clear opposition to any cooperation on equal foot with other associations. The municipality chose to submit to the methods of Alteralia, whose chairman is retired sub-prefect of the area. As a consequence, the council disappeared progressively.

¹³ www.adoma.fr

¹⁴ <http://alteralia.com/>

¹⁵ *Les enfants du canal*, <https://www.lesenfantsducanal.fr/>

¹⁶ *Soif de connaissances*, <http://www.collectif-soif.fr/le-collectif>

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ANTIGYPSYISM AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Definition of the problem

Antigypsyism and social exclusion of Roma and travellers are in a circular relation. They mutually nurture and reinforce each-other. On the one hand, it is true that it is the antigypsyism which, in different ways pushes Rromani population on the margins and even outside the society. In return, the social exclusion of an important part of this population and especially its exposure as representing "the" Rromani community reinforces the stereotypes that found the rejection. A parallel but different mechanism operates as concerns the *gens du voyage*, whose public image is also distorted and biased.

The very name "rom" was unknown for the French public until the end of 1990s. Only the Rromani people themselves used it and a reduced circle of academics or people in close contact with Rroms knew its existence and meaning. During the decade 1990-2000 several thousands of Romanian and Bulgarian citizens impacted negatively by the economic crisis that followed the collapse of communist regimes of their countries came to France. Among them there were a few thousands of Rromani people, these last with the particularity of coming in family. For this reason, but also due to the lack of networks and to the racism among their co-nationals in a context of competition for work in the black market, many ended up in slums in which at least they could count on intra-community solidarity. Humanitarian organisations were sensitive to their situation and started actions to assist them. The name "Rom" started to be used in their communication and therefore entered in media vocabulary. Used until then exclusively by Rromani people themselves, the name "Rom" entered into the French current vocabulary but with a restrictive and deformed meaning: Romanian (and to a smaller extent Bulgarian) person living in a slum, beggar, poor, thief, etc.

Although the *gens du voyage* are French citizens traditionally living in the country, they are even more silenced than the EU mobile Roma. Media reports on them concern mostly tense relations with authorities or the rest of the population because of land occupation, violence during protests or criminality of individuals, whose belonging to the community of *gens du voyage* is mentioned. Otherwise, TV shows depict the community in an exotic and culturalist manner, stressing on this or that tradition and even sketching scenes of life in pretended "immersion" documentaries. In all these cases, the real problems that the community face are absent and exceptionally, mentioned in a superficial manner. For instance, while illegal stationing and conflicts with the authorities are regularly reported, very little is said about the lack or the scarcity of equipped areas planned for by law, not to mention the extremely poor conditions of hygiene and security in the existing areas and the danger that they represent for the inhabitants, which are subjects totally ignored by media and therefore by the public.

To resume, in the public space, both "Roma" and "travellers" are two groups imagined by the majority population's mind, whose representation is partial and distorted. The public policies design and implementation are also influenced by these representations, who somehow objectify the individuals belonging to these communities. They are perceived as people in need for assistance or as people who refuse the help offered for them to integrate but not as subjects able to analyse and to actively participate in improving their situation. In general, their ability to speak and act as citizens, as equal members of the society, is more than denied, unimaginable. Most often, when they are given the floor in meetings this is for them to give "testimony on their experience" for EU mobile Roma, and on "their culture" for *gens du voyage*, and in both cases the discourse is reduced and reducing. This infantilisation that applies to the relations between beneficiaries and service providers has its counterpart also beyond this specific context. The invisibility of "Roma" or "travellers" who do not fit in the majority's representation is not only due to their understandable

unwillingness to be associated to that image, but also to the conceptual exclusion, i. e. the intellectual impossibility to imagine "Roma" or "travellers" outside that image. This phenomenon is certainly unconscious, since even antiracist organisations ignore sometimes the few Rromani organisations involved in antiracist movement. For example, following a series of racist attacks that took place as result of a web fake news on EU mobile Roma during the spring 2019, LICRA went to court alongside *La voix des Rroms* and other mainstream antiracist organisations. However, this French organisation had not thought of consulting Rromani organisations in France while coordinating an EU funded project one of whose deliverables is an analytical paper on antigypsyism on the internet.¹⁷

Background and cause of the problem

The previous chapter shows that the exclusion is not simply social, but conceptual. The social exclusion is one of the declinations, or consequences, of the mutually exclusive concepts of "gypsy" and "full citizen". Interesting enough, this mental scheme of mutual exclusion between the two concepts is the result of a very long process that started on territories that form today Romania and was concluded in France before spreading all over Europe. It is now a fact well known, although not fully recognised, that the Rroms were slaves for five centuries in the principalities of Moldova and Valachia, until 1856.¹⁸ They were not considered as juridical persons, but as simple goods, objects of property, which distinguished them from the serfs, who were considered as persons having usufruct rights on the landowners.¹⁹ During this long period, the exonym "*țigani*" that was used to name the Rroms, became synonym of "slave" and unlike the endonym "Roma" ended up by designating the social status of the slaves. It is with this signification of an inhuman status that the term, as well as the object it designated, circulated in Europe and European languages under different adaptations: *tsiganes* in French, *Zingari* in Italian, *Zigeuner* in German, to name but its derivations in Western Europe.

The idea of social inferiority and exteriority of the Rroms to the community, which since its origin was related to the absence of link with the land in the Romanian principalities was further sociologically consolidated and legally formalised in France with the law that in 1912 institutes the legal category of "nomads". Despite its obvious ethnic and discriminatory character,²⁰ this special status lasted more than a century before being repealed in 2017.²¹

Although the discriminatory law was repealed, the centuries-long European process that justified it in a republic based on the principle of equality still operates, because its main product is the almost irrefragable assumption of illegitimacy of the Rromani presence. It is precisely this presumed illegitimacy that explains their segregation and their exclusion, whether they live in their own country – like the *gens du voyage* – or in another EU member state – like the EU mobile Roma. The conscient association of the words "*voyage*" to the first or "mobile" (in French "*migrants*") to these groups, respectively "*gens*" and "Roma/roms" covers the unconscious feeling that their presence is temporary, almost accidental, and that therefore they are not supposed to be there, but elsewhere.²²

¹⁷ http://scan-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/sCAN_Antigypsyism_final-version.pdf (visited 01/12/2019)

¹⁸ https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/FS2/2.2_wallachia-moldavia_english.pdf

¹⁹ Saimir Mile, "Les Rroms dans les principautés roumaines : esclaves ou exclus ?", in *Études Tsiganes*, N°29 (1er trim. 2007), pp 68-71

²⁰ Christophe Delclitte, "La catégorie juridique "nomade" dans la loi de 1912", in *Hommes & Migrations*, Année 1995, 1188-1189, pp. 23-30

²¹ Art. 195 de la loi n° 2017-86 du 27 janvier 2017 relative à l'égalité et à la citoyenneté, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000033934948&categorieLien=id>

²² ERRC, *Always somewhere else - the antigypsyism in France*, Country reports series, no 15., November 2005, http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/01/A5/m000001A5.pdf

On their side, the Roms and the travellers feel the conceptual exclusion they face and react to it in different ways. The lack of confidence in oneself and in all those semblable is the most widespread effect of this conceptual exclusion, completed with an opportunistic confidence on non-Rromani people. This explains their very little participation in the public discourse about them, which as a consequence, being built by others, victimises or blames them. In the best case, they try to counter such discourse, but this is rather counterproductive, more often they try to attenuate it somehow, but they are almost never at the initiative of its construction. Hence, for example, the prevalence of negative discourses mentioned in the previous chapter in cases of unauthorised stationing of caravans. As the state or local authorities have the initiative, the information for the media and therefore the public is the illegal occupation of the land.

Policy answer to the problem

Although there is some awareness among decision makers that antigypsyism and social exclusion are related, their relationship is not properly understood. The idea that antigypsyism could be fought by social integration prevails within the DIHAL for instance, as according to this body the social exclusion is believed to be the source of antigypsyism, in a linear relation. This incomplete view is very probably due to its sectoral competence, which is housing. In the matter of antigypsyism too, a comprehensive approach is indispensable for fighting it efficiently, because of the very nature and structure of this specific form of racism. For the time being, the circular relationship between exclusion of Roma and travellers and antigypsyism is not yet understood enough, as it is not understood enough the real scope and various forms of antigypsyism and the way it affects, differently all Rromani individuals with different social profiles, on one side, and uniformly, individuals of different ethnic belongings but sharing a same social profile.

Antigypsyism is a blind spot of French policies on Roma and travellers, and its understanding is very incomplete. Like other forms of racism, it is considered to be related to the individual behaviour and not as a systemic action shaped by structural factors in which those individual behaviours evolve. The persistent refusal of ethnic and racial data collection confirmed by the Constitutional Council in 2007 makes difficult a proper and complete knowledge of the phenomenon. In its report of 2017 on fight against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, the CNCDH²³ suggests that, people who feel discriminated against "*should be given the possibility, in the framework of an investigation, to display, if they wish, the criterion or criteria on which is based, according to them, this discrimination*".²⁴ The fight against this type of racism following a comprehensive approach can take certain time. However, it is regrettable that the existing policies neglect totally not only how antigypsyism causes the social exclusion and marginalisation of the groups they target, but also how it can affect the way they are implemented. The condescending behaviour of the operators and the dependency of the beneficiaries is part of the implementers' culture, founded in decades of similar missions with immigrants. For integration strategies, actions and projects to succeed efficiently and durably, a cultural change is necessary within the implementers. The beneficiaries should be given agency in their own integration process.

²³ The CNCDH is the French institution for the promotion and protection of Human Rights in the sense of UNO. Among other activities, it publishes early a report on the fight against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. www.cncdh.fr

²⁴ Rapport CNCDH, *La lutte contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la xénophobie*, p. 24, Année 2017, La documentation française.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN ANTIGYPSYISM AND AFFIRMATION OF RROMANI IDENTITY

Definition of the problem

Like in many other countries, in France, too, affirming one's Rromani identity is not without any risk. The enduring stigmatisation of this identity makes it difficult for its bearers to affirm it outside a "safe space" which is more or less reduced, but always delimited. The insecurity of genuine bearers of this identity – i. e. Rromani people by birth – is something particular because Rroms are not a "visible minority" *stricto sensu*. Therefore, when they can go unidentifiable, they do so and are cautious not to take the risk of being "unmasked". This lasts as long as they are convinced, they can extend their "safe space" to the new people or contexts without risking. Symmetrically, the exoticisation and folklorisation of Rromani culture makes Rromani identity a kind of "refuge" for non-Rromani individuals in need of psychological well-being and/or social recognition in various activities. Last, but not least, some Rromani individuals, too, exploit and even develop stereotypes for short term profit. The complex relations between Rromani identity and participation in public life were indirectly mentioned in the first chapter of this report, concerning the civil society. In the present chapter we try to go more in depth and also treat them in a broader way.

Identity is a product of constant negotiation and research of equilibrium between the self-identification and the hetero-identification. Each of them relates therefore to one referential, built by the observer or the bearer of the given identity. If these referentials intersect enough, there is no conflict and the bearer of the discussed identity feels rather secure. The insecurity appears when the identity referential of the bearer has almost nothing in common with that of an observer with whom the bearer is in some relation. As explained, the common referential of "Rom" in France is that of extremely precarious and excluded Romanian migrants living in slums and who are particularly stigmatised. While the endurance of this situation makes it sometimes also a referential for the EU mobile Roma themselves, they see it only as temporary shameful status and never as a "genuine" or "cultural" aspect of their identity. This appears clearly for example in their profiles of social media. Especially pictures and videos they publish are taken in touristic places like the Eifel tower, restaurants etc. that would never let anyone imagine they live in slums.

The shame felt by EU mobile Roma about the way they are seen is all the more important for the hundreds of thousands Rromani people who live in France either as French citizens or as permanent residents, as these last referentials have nothing, or very few in common with it. Hence the distance they eagerly seek to keep with them, sometimes in a way that could be qualified as racist. More often however this hostility is very superficial, a kind of derived product of the mainstream antigypsyism that reduces the Rromani identity to social exclusion that it produces. In situations of crisis, these same "racist Rroms" show very sincere and active solidarity with the inhabitants of slums. In some instances, *gens du voyage* stress on their French nationality to distance themselves from the mainstream dominant referential of "Roma", and this too is a way to prevent worsening of their unequal and unjust treatment.

The correspondence of one's situation with the mainstream referential is always perceived as temporary and some individuals succeed to escape, often helped by luck. In these cases, they simply disappear in the eyes of the society and start the game with social life going unidentified and safe space of identity affirmation. The risk is then, - and sometimes it is realised, - for the person to seek to extend that "safe space" by seeking to overly valorise his/her individual efforts by contrasting them with the "unwillingness to integrate" of the others, immediately agreed upon by outsiders. Such speech reinforces the stereotypes within the majority population and affects all Rromani individuals. As per the Rromani person who uses this method for extending the safe space of identity affirmation, this is like an anaesthetic which temporarily calms the pain s/he feels as a "luxurious victim of antigypsyism".

Background and cause of the problem

Historically, the French nation-building process was founded on the eradication of pre-existent collective identities, these last being perceived as dangers for the national unity. The very concept of "assimilation" is perceived not only as positive, but as necessary in French political culture, in which it plays a complementary but indispensable role in the "social contract": in the same time that people abandon the sovereignty in the hands of the authorities of the state they are citizens of, they abandon their "particular collective identities" in the benefit of "a unified nation" that transcends those particular identities, fought against because they menace the nation's unity. Rooted in the French revolution, this idea was intensively implemented during the nineteenth century especially through the repression of regional languages in the educational system.

The last thirty years some reforms have attenuated this centralism, as the regionalism developed in the European Union. Especially, the recognition and revival of regional languages and cultures started being supported. However, these changes did not affect Romani people as their identity, culture and language is not a regional one. As a consequence, it could not rely on public institutions such as the regional councils etc.

The non-territoriality of the Romani identity leads logically to lack of institutions but also to its institutional consideration not as a cultural identity, but as a social one. We saw in the first chapter how the creation of the legal category of "nomads" in 1912 represents a momentum of consolidation of a European process that started with the slavery in the Romanian principalities. The consideration of Romani people under the only social status of slaves – let us recall that "*tigan*" designates then both the slave and the Rom – is the first layer of what one can call the "fainted colour-blindness of public policies towards Roma". This long process of transformation of the very nature of the Romani identity translated the progressive loss of agency of Romani people in their identity's strategies,²⁵ and as a consequence the creation of two separate spaces: a secure and reduced space of intimate Romani identity in a reduced family circle on one side and a vast public space where the Romani identity is represented and depicted by the others. While both these identities are subjective, the subject who expresses each of them is not the same, as are not the same the reasons or the ways to describe or to display it. The lack of agency of Romani people in public affirmation of Romani identity is even more acute and its consequences are more important than those concerning the interaction between antigypsyism and social exclusion. It is also more difficult to address, because while the ensuring individual access to social rights requires a negative approach of cultural identity (principle of non-discrimination), access to a cultural non-stigmatised referential requires also, beyond the non-discrimination, a positive approach in creating such cultural referential.

Due to the political tradition in France, the non-stigmatised cultural referential exists only in the private space. While this space is "secured" by a kind of rather impervious boundary with the outside world, it is also reduced and therefore cannot offer the necessary resources for a progressive evolution. Its openness too is reduced to a very limited number of outsiders, with whom the bearers have exceptional proximity relations.

The dominant referential, stigmatising and made of stereotypes and prejudices, goes mainstream. It prevails in media, political and public speech and also in arts and popular culture.²⁶ True enough, a handful of Romani people participate in the creation of this stigmatising referential, for immediate interests, whether material or of notoriety. The

²⁵ Jean-François Bayart, *L'Illusion identitaire*, Paris, Fayard, 1996.

²⁶ For example, if the film *A bras ouverts* depicted in 2017 the Roms in a very negative way and triggered a strong criticism: <http://www.leparisien.fr/culture-loisirs/cinema/a-bras-ouverts-vu-par-la-communaute-rom-le-film-nous-presente-comme-des-sauvages-05-04-2017-6825396.php>; culturalist sensationalism reinforces negative "othering" while pretending describing their "secret life": <https://www.programme-tv.net/programme/culture-infos/r6195-zone-interdite/4877567-la-vie-secrete-des-gitans/>

most often, however, they simply think contributing to changing the negative image of the community but are then disappointed by the final product in which their images are used.

This tension between the private, secure but reduced space where the identity referential can be positive but has few resources and the public space in which the identity referential is mostly negative and has mainstream resources, is particularly regrettable as well as a great paradox in France. In fact, the country hosts on one hand many resources internationally recognised in terms of knowledge – a university chair of Rromani language and culture,²⁷ *Médiathèque Matéo Maximoff*,²⁸ the revue *Etudes tsiganes*,²⁹ to name but a few, and on the other hand the richest internal diversity of Rromani people; France being the only country in the world where the three big branches of the Rromani people (Roma, Sinté and Kalé) are historically present in considerable numbers. Unfortunately, this potential has not been efficiently used so far.

Policy answer to the problem

As unfounded as it can be, the belief that recognition of particular identities endangers national unity is deeply rooted in the culture of the French institutions. This belief represents the first bridle to proactive policies aiming at promoting a valorising image of Rromani identity. Moreover, policies are in general well separated by sectors. Although the National contact point is an inter-ministerial body, culture is far from being an important topic in its work, both with EU mobile Roma and with “travellers”.

The last National Consultative Commission of the travellers which functioned from December 2015 to June 2019 set up a working group on culture. This working group achieved the signature of a Charter of objectives “Culture – travellers and Gypsies of France” by nine associations as well as by the Minister of culture.³⁰ Despite the high quality of its content however, the concrete outcomes of this Charter are rather invisible.

The National Commission of Follow-up of the slums’ clearing on the other side, which relates to the policies on “EU mobile Roma” does not include any representative of the ministry of culture, nor any working group on the topic. In fact, within this commission, the topic of culture is considered “non-relevant” and culture is only approached in terms of anti-discrimination, and more specifically in terms of combating stereotypes.

In both cases, the efficiency is questionable: The Charter on culture is an interesting political tool but its efficiency depends on the political strength of the Rromani actors in this domain. Unfortunately, they are not strong enough to develop a nation-wide cultural policy that reaches the people it should in the way it should, i.e. the Rromani and traveller people who could find there the necessary force and energy to feel more citizens and act as such. The same can be said for the disparate actions of the ministry of culture, like for example the publishing of a number of the revue “*Langues et cité*” on Rromani language.³¹ While cultural events or publications promote and value Rromani identity and culture, they are very rarely supported by public institutions and very rarely target or reach Rromani groups the most in need for self-confidence as equal citizens and active part of the country’s cultural diversity.

²⁷ Inalco, <http://www.inalco.fr/langue/rromani>

²⁸ FNASAT, <http://www.fnasat.asso.fr/ressources.html>

²⁹ *Etudes tsiganes*, <http://www.etudestsiganes.asso.fr/>

³⁰ *Signature de la Charte « Culture – gens du voyage et tsiganes de France »*, <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Presse/Archives-Presses/Archives-Communiqués-de-presse-2012-2018/Année-2016/Signature-de-la-charte-Culture-Gens-du-Voyage-et-Tsiganes-de-France>

³¹ *Langues et cité*, nr. 9, *La langue (r)romani*, <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Sites-thematiques/Langue-francaise-et-langues-de-France/Observation-des-pratiques-linguistiques/Langues-et-cite/Langues-et-cite-n-9-la-langue-r-romani>

INTERETHNIC RELATIONS AND PUBLIC POLICIES

Definition of the problem

Although there is not a single strategy on Roma or *gens du voyage*, and despite the blurry definition of these two categories, public policies do target them. On the other hand, the public opinion identifies these categories and the policies towards them in the same blurry way. Confusion and negative feelings are the master-words in this matter, especially in the current context of general worsening of the economic situation.

Despite the scarcity of policies in favour of EU-mobile Roma and *gens du voyage*, they still can look too much in the eyes of many. In fact, very often they are considered as illegitimate recipients of social welfare who do not pay taxes.³² This negative perception of the community is the product of a longstanding antigypsyism. Instead of combating it, politicians either exploit it for gaining popularity, or at best avoid the subject. Here too, the relation between popular antigypsyism and institutional antigypsyism is circular: they fuel each-other and each of them justifies itself by the other. In practice, this mechanism shows in different manners: either public authorities do not take action when they should, or they adopt a repressive position, or they remain as discreet as possible when they take positive measures, so that they do not lose popularity.

The lack of action explains the persistence of slums in France, while the number of people living in them is quite low and stable – about 15,000 – since 2012.³³ In the rare cases when local authorities engage in positive actions, they lack the necessary courage to assert any authority over questionable methods used by the implementers of integration projects, or feel the obligation to show particular severity with other groups of people who are not integrated in the project. The double position is particularly noticeable with regards to *gens du voyage*. As this was also mentioned in the [first](#) and [second](#) RCM reports, the legislation applicable to this community is usually two folded: one measure meant to be favourable but whose implementation is not – for example the caravans sites, in reality scarce and segregated³⁴ – and its repressive counterpart effectively implemented – for example the possibility for mayors to evict, which is more and more simplified.

The quasi-systematic segregation of the official caravans' sites³⁵ is maybe the best illustration of the circular relation between the public policies on "travellers" and the relations of these last with the majority population. Although according to the law these sites should be close to services, the authorities chose to locate them far from the urban areas, convinced that the majority population does not wish vicinity with the "travellers". In doing so, any improvement or normalisation of the interethnic relations is made impossible.

The public policies create also some tensions within the circle of the civil society organisations. As developed in the first chapter of this report, the Rromani associations are both less in their number and extremely weak in their structure as compared to the mainstream associations who intervene in the domain of Roma's and travellers' rights. Their respective legitimacy and potential are not recognised in their fullest, and this is especially true for the Rromani organisations, which in general are not "professional", in the sense that they do not offer services like some mainstream organisations do. However,

³² According to the CNCDH report 2018, in the period 2011-2018 the opinion that Roma are a group of outsiders in the society ranged from 65% to 87%, while it ranged from 23% to 31% concerning the Jews and between 35% and 56% for Muslims.

³³ <https://www.cohesion-territoires.gouv.fr/resorption-des-campements-illicites-et-des-bidonvilles>

³⁴ *Aires d'accueil et sédentarisation*, Lise Foisneau, Cécilia Demestre & Valentin Merlin 2015, <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/les-invites-de-mediapart/article/250815/aires-d-accueil-et-sedentarisation>

³⁵ William Acker, *Nouvelle approche cartographique des lieux "d'accueil des gens du voyage" en France*, https://medium.com/@Rafumab_80461/nouvelles-approche-cartographique-des-lieux-daccueil-des-gens-du-voyage-en-france-51268315cd1c

because of the proximity with the concerned communities, these small Romani organisations feel entitled to participate in consultations as well as in the implementation of policies and actions directed at the communities. On the other side, professional mainstream organisations specialised in social integration deem that the ethnic belonging of their public is not relevant for their action.

Background and cause of the problem

Preliminarily, it is necessary to clarify that there is no “interethnic conflict” as such; the existing interethnic tensions presented above should however be dealt with properly in order to avoid their possible further development. Misconceptions and misunderstandings are in the origin of these tensions, as well as some radical and unquestioned positioning of the players.

First of all, the question of the choice between mainstreamed or targeted policies has to be overcome as factually, both approaches coexist. The real question is rather whether a choice is to be made between colour-blind policies and actions and a culturalist approach of those policies and actions. It is in this discussion that focus is lost and as a consequence, the quality of social intervention suffers.

If the culturalist approach is a trap that should be avoided, the colour-blindness of the social policies and actions hides unwillingness to consider all stakeholders, starting by the beneficiaries. The avoidance of culturalist approach should apply to all cultures at stake: those of the excluded communities as well as those that the structures implementing integration projects have developed during their decades-long experience. Unfortunately, this culture includes also condescendence towards the assisted public and mistrust of other players. This deprives the beneficiaries from agency in their own integration process and creates an unhealthy atmosphere of dependency and monopoly. Coordinated diverse interventions on the contrary create agency, mutual trust and self-confidence, and therefore ensure sustainable achievements of the actions undertaken.

Unfortunately, colour-blindness of social action is diverted from its initial and genuine objective, which is to avoid discrimination. Instead, colour-blindness is used to justify monopoly paternalist methods of the implementers of integration projects. The example of Saint-Denis is but one which illustrates this phenomenon. The process starts with some local political will to support the integration of a given excluded Romani community, continues with the entrustment of this process to a private entity – either an NGO or a social enterprise – then ends up with this entity imposing a monopoly and an authoritarian approach over the assisted community. In that particular example, it was the organisation of the community itself during the harsh summer 2010, marked by massive forced evictions and a conflict between the government and the European Commission,³⁶ that brought local mobilisation and the political decision to help that community. During a first phase, only local resources were mobilised, and the community was actively included in the participatory process, bringing together the municipality, local groups and representatives of each family. The engagement of supplementary resources from the national government made possible a stronger intervention of a specialised NGO since 2015 but sacrificed the initial participatory dynamic to the achievement of formally contracted objectives with individual families with a paternalist approach while letting grow cold conflicts with other families, excluded from the project.

Another source of tension is the misconception among the majority population about both the Romani communities and about their treatment. The local authorities are naturally sensitive to the feelings of their voters and decide on their action, inaction and communication based on what they think these feelings are. Unfortunately, antigypsyism affects voting and sometimes politicians prefer discretion instead of publicity of their

³⁶ *Roms : Paris et l'Europe en conflit ouvert*, Libération,
https://www.liberation.fr/societe/2010/09/15/roms-paris-et-l-europe-en-conflit-ouvert_679108

action.³⁷ However, this strategy of discretion cannot be a winning one in the long term. In fact, it implies modest action – therefore insufficient, and as action cannot be totally hidden, voters can think that the politicians hide much more than what they actually do. The profound question in this respect is that of the necessary pedagogy that local authorities should use to accompany the equitable actions they undertake. This is the only way to respond in a sustainable way to the opinion “*You do all for Roma and nothing for us*” that a local politician deplored in the interview to *Slate* mentioned above.

Policy answer to the problem

Confronted with the tensions that grow between the communities, whether within the civil society or in the wide society, the political class has a strong responsibility to act. Unfortunately, the risks are not yet perceived and therefore no real action is undertaken to defuse them. These risks can be realised and show in a spectacular way or in a more diffuse, continuous one. The series of racist attacks against EU-mobile Roma in Paris area in the end of March 2019 was spectacular. Triggered by fake news that spread on social media, accusing “Romanians in a white truck” as children rapists, this organised violence would not happen without the constant dehumanisation of Rromani people since years. While these events sent a signal taken seriously by State authorities, they seem but the top of the iceberg. Colder tensions are active continuously which may give birth to violence in shorter or longer run. These include the constant reduction of “Roma” or *gens du voyage* to passive recipients of social assistance and their exclusion from social life. This conceptual exclusion –i.e. the unthinkability of their citizenship – leads to the degrading of their situation and in some context to violence as a consequence of lack of communication.

The scarcity of Roma and travellers associations is a particular form of that conceptual exclusion, integrated by the Roma and travellers themselves. The way in which the *gens du voyage* have been approached and treated by public policies in the last decades shows more and more its limits in terms of social status improvement as well as the ongoing degradation of their ability to participate as citizens. In many aspects, the precariousness of the EU-mobile Roma is less heavy than the precariousness of “travellers”, who are French citizens. This apparent paradox is in fact explainable by the fact that, although excluded, EU-mobile Roma are not, or not for too long, in a dependency situation towards specialised structures of social work.

Antigypsyism declinations are numerous, diverse and they transcend the social classes. The awareness on the phenomenon is embryoid among the institutions and still in study among the institutions, but sufficiently advanced for action to be taken. This action has to be comprehensive and embrace all spheres of life and all components of the society. From this point of view, the current lack of a policy against antigypsyism is more to be used as an opportunity for building an efficient one than to be criticised as a failure. One of the *sine qua non* conditions for an efficient policy against antigypsyism is the active inclusion of the relevant stakeholders. This includes of course the Rromani and travellers’ associations, which can bring valuable first-hand knowledge and expertise but also all the institutions that should mobilise their human and financial resources for the achievement of what should be considered as an objective of national interest: fighting antigypsyism as a particular form of racism and ensuring in the facts the equality of rights of a considerable part of French and EU citizens, excluded for too long.

The entrustment of DILCRAH³⁸ with the mission to answer to the request of *La voix des Rroms* for a National Plan for combating antigypsyism and the work initiated in the working group against discrimination put in place by the National Commission of follow up of slums’ clearing have to be the beginning of a process involving more players and enlarging its scope to the real extent of the antigypsyism.

³⁷ “Intégrer les Roms, ça ocute cher (politiquement)”, *Slate*, <http://www.slate.fr/france/84813/integrer-les-roms-possible-mais-politiquement-couteux>

³⁸ DILCRAH, <https://www.dilcrah.fr/>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rromani and pro-Roma civil society

To national authorities:

1. To actively fund, including through positive measures Rromani and *gens du voyage* groups and associations set up and conduct their activities, thus ensuring equal citizenship and participation for individuals belonging to these groups.
2. To actively include and consult Rroma and travellers in local level decision making, alongside with other groups.

To EU and national authorities managing EU funds

3. To ensure that EU funds use does not create dependency on intermediate service providers and that it encourages civic organisation of the Rroma and travellers.
4. To encourage active participation of the beneficiaries in integration projects by setting up measurable indicators concerning the Roma participants.

Interactions between antigypsyism and social exclusion

To national authorities

5. To adopt, as a complement to the plan against racism and antisemitism, a comprehensive national plan of fighting antigypsyism in all its forms and in all areas and allocate adequate means for its implementation.
6. To make sure, through institutional and financial tools, that integration strategies or actions at the local level avoid stigmatisation of Roma and travellers as a whole and dependency of the beneficiaries.
7. To assign to a public entity (for example, the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel*) the responsibility to set up a monitoring system of anti-Roma hate speech online and in the media with yearly publication of findings.
8. To encourage public prosecutors to investigate and pursue antigypsyist speech and acts, by specifically pointing these in criminal policy circulars.
9. Increase specialised training for prosecutors on all forms of hate speech, including with an antigypsyist bias
10. Mandate the Equality Body to fully implement the new EU standards for equality bodies, including by expanding its mandate on all forms of discrimination and intolerance, including hate crime and speech and in all areas.

To EU

11. To request from ESF and ERDF managing authorities at national level to include concrete measures and indicators in their funding calls and monitoring tools for combating antigypsyism.
12. To provide guidelines with good practices and training to national managing authorities on diversity and antigypsyism.

Interactions between antigypsyism and affirmation of Rromani identity

To national authorities

13. To support independent Rroma and travellers' civil society actions in spreading culture, especially among the community itself, through creating early dedicated funds.

14. To encourage a balanced depiction of Roma and *gens du voyage* through a wise use of the mechanism of public financial aid to media.
15. To support a media campaign about the diversity of Roma and travellers, including as role models.
16. To support sustainable educational, cultural programmes, events and publications about Roma and traveller communities, the extent and severity of the antigypsyism that they face in their everyday lives, but also about their diversity, their history, agency, arts and culture as contribution to majority society, and how the Roma civil rights movement is contributing to building up a more democratic Europe.
17. To ensure that Roma and travellers also lead on knowledge production about them.

Interethnic relations and public policies

To national and local authorities

18. To consider Roma and travellers as full citizens, associate them and their organisations in awareness raising activities aimed at combating antigypsyist attitudes.
19. To ensure that Roma and travellers and others stigmatised as “gypsies” and their organisations participate actively and independently in the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and refinement of policies and measures that concern them at local, regional and national level. Support the capacity building and cultural activities of Rromani civil society in the perspective of an efficient implementation of the Charter of objectives on Culture of Travellers and Gypsies of France

To EU and national authorities managing EU Funds

20. To include the fight against antigypsyism among criteria for access to EU funding for all spheres.
21. Prioritise funding for small-scale projects involving actively the communities suffering from antigypsyism.

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