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REGARD - REMEMBERING GENOCIDE AGAINST ROMA DISCRIMINATION

The current report is part of the REGARD project and of the participatory processes foreseen within the project. The report presents the main findings of the Future Search Conference, organized within the participatory process foreseen by the project, on the 26th of May 2023 in Craiova.

The report is composed of three parts: a brief overview of the project included in chapter 1; the description of the methodological approach included in chapter 2; an overview of the past included in chapter 3; an overview of present trends included in chapter 4 and an overview of the future included in chapter 5.

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1 Introduction to the REGARD project

REGARD is a European project funded by the CERV Programme, dedicated to the remembrance of Samudaripen and the fight against Roma discrimination. The project takes place in three countries (Croatia, Italy and Romania) between February 2023 and April 2024.

The coordinator of the project is the Italian National Centre of Research (**CNR-IRPPS**) and the local partners of the three countries are: **Croatian Romani Union "Kali Sara"** (Croatia); **Associazione Thèm Romano Onlus** (Italy); and **Asociatia Centrul de Cultura al Romilor Dolj** (Romania).

Following the anniversaries of the Roma calendar, REGARD aims at preserving and transmitting the memory of Roma genocide and resistance by considering its root causes and consequences, and the implications for today. As an integrated action model, the project plans to implement in Croatia, Romania and Italy a set of activities:

1. Surveys on the knowledge of Roma genocide and Roma culture and on anti-gypsyism;
2. Training modules for schools on Roma genocide, Roma resistance and Roma history and culture for students and teachers supporting the remembrance of Samudaripen in textbooks;
3. **Participatory processes with institutions and civil society to foster a common culture of remembrance and mutual understanding between Roma and non-Roma, men and women, and develop shared intervention strategies for fighting anti gypsyism;**
4. Cultural Events and on the artistic expressions of Roma created during and after Samudaripen, remembering the Holocaust including three international conferences attended by Romani scholars of Roma culture scholars to sustain the EU goal of integrating the historical narrative of the Roma into the national and European one for both target groups, but open to the public.

2 Methodological approach

The participatory process foresaw three phases.

1. Semi-structured interviews

The conduction of an initial desk review and subsequent individual and anonymous semi-structured interviews with local strategic stakeholders representing a wide and diversified range of points of view and resources on discrimination against Roma people and remembering the Samudaripen. Overall 18 online/in-person semi-structured interviews were carried out in this phase. The results of the interviews are part of a specific report on the interviews and of a synthesis report. Furthermore, the results were used to design the participatory event, which took place in the third phase of the process.

2. Training of local facilitators on the Future Search Conference (FSC) method

The training included two sessions (one online and one in-person) and aimed at empowering Roma and non-Roma facilitators to facilitate working groups foreseen within the Future Search Conference. The training included both a theoretical part and a practical one consisting in a simulation of a FSC working group. Four local facilitators attended the two training sessions.

3. The realization of a participatory event, which adopted the Future Search Conference (FSC) method

The FSC (futuresearch.net) is a participatory planning tool developed in the late 1980s which is based on the enhancement of the common interests of a group of stakeholders with the aim of creating effective paths of change. It is a visioning tool for involving, in the initial setting phase of a project, the main players of a territory or a community of interests in building a vision of change.

The FSC consists in a meeting that involves a group of people selected for their ability to represent a plurality of points of view, called to work as an "investigating community" to collectively focus on strategies for change and the ways to implement them. Normally, the method envisages that the group builds the medium-long term future scenario together, starting from a few elements: the past, the present or current trends, the probable future, and the desirable future. It concludes with an action planning phase to identify the actions to implement the scenario.

The **REGARD FSC** in Romania **took place on the 26th of May**. Due to methodological and logistical issues, the meeting was not opened to the wide public. Participants in the event were selected, involving the stakeholders interviewed in the first phase of the project, the stakeholders suggested by the interviewees and other stakeholders deemed relevant by Asociația Centrul de Cultura al Romilor Dolj. Even though the event was not opened to the wide public, the organizers ensured that selected participants represented a mixed and balanced group from the point of view of the age, gender, belongingness to the Roma community, institutional, political and civil society representativeness, engagement of citizens – e.g. young students-within and outside the Roma community). Invitations to the event were delivered by Asociația Centrul de Cultura al Romilor Dolj through e-mail and telephone. Overall, around **60 representatives of the civil society, citizens, academia, and institutions were involved in the event**.

As not all participants were involved in the first phase of the project and, hence, were not aware of the purpose of the event and more in general of the project, a Guide to the FSC was prepared prior to the event by Avventura Urbana. The Guide was translated into Romanian and shared with the participants invited to the event by Asociația Centrul de Cultura al Romilor Dolj. The Guide included information on the objectives of the event, the functioning of the FSC method and on the main issues regarding discrimination against Roma and knowledge of the Samudaripen that had emerged from the interviews, conducted in the first phase of the participatory process. The Guide also stated clearly that no specific "technical" knowledge was requested for the participation in the event.

The event started with greetings by the organizers (Asociația Centrul de Cultura al Romilor Dolj), of the Museum of Art of Craiova hosting the event and of Avventura Urbana Srl., in charge of providing methodological support for the organization of the event and of organizing it jointly with Asociația Centrul de Cultura al Romilor Dolj. The greeting session was followed by an introduction of the objectives and functioning of the FSC by Avventura Urbana. Then, it foresaw an active role of the participants, who were



invited to discuss the topic of the day through an alternation of plenary sessions and working groups: timeline of the past; analysis of present trends and definition of an action plan.

Due to time limit constraints, the working sessions foreseen by the method had to be streamlined. The box below included the detailed agenda of the FSC.

Agenda of the FSC

26th of May, 14.00-17.00, Art Museum of Craiova

14.00 – 14.15: Greetings and introduction

14.15 – 14.45: Timeline of the past – plenary session

14.45 – 15.30: Analysis of present trends – working groups

15.30 – 16.00: Coffee break

16.00 – 17.00: Definition of an action plan – plenary session

3 An overview of the past

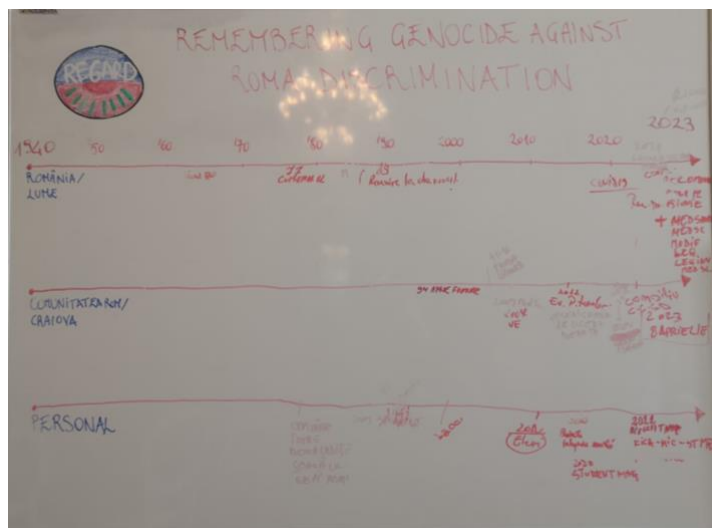
This session focused on past events marking the personal life of the participants in the event, the life of the Craiova community (Roma and the overall community), and the life of the Romanian population overall as well as of the world. Therefore, participants were asked to reflect collectively on their past and on that of their community, in relation to the history of Craiova, of Romania and of the world in general between 1940 and 2023.

The main question guiding the discussion was: *“What are the most important events that characterized your life, the history of your community and history of Romania and the world, in the last 80 years?”*.

The beginning of the session was marked by an initial difficulty of participants to engage actively in this session. However, that difficulty was partially overcome during the session. A certain reticence of some of the participants continued throughout the session, even though many of them engaged actively in the discussion.

It is important to note that in all cases (personal life, Roma community in Craiova/Craiova community, Romania/world) participants focused on events starting from the 70s.

The topic of education emerged as a marking event in both the personal life of participants and the life of Roma people of Craiova. With regards to this latter aspect, it was underlined in particular the availability of specific places in high schools and universities for Roma people. At national level, participants pinpointed the 2023 legislation in the educational area which foresees the increase in places reserved to Roma children in universities. However, participants underlined that even though places in universities had been increased, no reserved places are available for Roma people in the Faculty of family medicine. At local level participants emphasized that since 2012, two places had been made available to Roma children within the Art High School of Craiova. While at the beginning, the places remained unoccupied, since the following years they have been always occupied by Roma children. This acknowledgement was deemed particularly relevant for participants as it meant recognizing that Roma artistic talent is not limited to music. In relation to this aspect, two other events were identified as particularly relevant for Roma community in Craiova and at national level: the launch of the poetry volumes of Izabela Tiberiade in 2011 and 2012.



According to participants, other events that marked the life of Roma community in Craiova after the 90s were the creation of the association Asociatia Centrul de Cultura al Romilor Dolj and more recently (2023) the Council of the C.C.S.D. Moreover, the reelection of Romeo Tiberiade as president of “Partida Romilor Pro Europa” was also recognized as relevant for the Roma community in Craiova.

Events celebrating the International day of Roma people, organized yearly on the 8th of April, were also acknowledged as particularly relevant for the Roma community in Craiova/Craiova municipality.

The adhesion of Romania to NATO and afterwards to the EU was also deemed relevant at both local and national level for Roma and non-Roma community.

The creation of free newspapers and other media platforms between 1995 and 1996 was also considered particularly relevant.

At national level, the participants identified some key events that marked the life of the Romanian society: the decree prohibiting abortion in 1966, the earthquake in 1977, the return of democracy in 1989, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the closure of the pandemic period in 2023.

It is worth noting that no specific events marking the life of Roma people/people from Craiova/Romania were identified during the second world war and in the immediate period after its end.



4 An overview of present trends

The second session focused on the present period and main trends regarding discrimination against Roma people and knowledge about Samudaripen. During this session participants were divided into four working groups to analyse the current trends on these two issues. They were asked to debate within their working groups starting from the following question: *“In which direction are we going? What would happen in the next future if nothing changed?”*.

The main trends regarding discrimination against Roma people and knowledge about Samudaripen emerging from the four working groups are:

4. Lack of moral reparations for the genocide to which Roma people were subject to during the second world war.
5. Lack of education of Roma community.
6. Insufficient knowledge about the genocide.
7. Economic and educational disparity between the Roma community and the majority population and within the Roma community in particular between women and men.
8. Continuous discrimination that is related to both the lack of education of Roma community and insufficient knowledge about the genocide.
9. Insufficient and sometimes unfit measures for fighting discrimination against Roma people.
10. Unequal attention to the rights and obligations of the Roma community.
11. Disinformation.
12. Self-stigma (being ashamed of being a Roma person).



Most of the current trends identified by participants are in line with the findings of the interviews conducted in the first phase of the participatory process. However, during the FSC working groups three new trends were identified by participants: the lack of moral reparations; disinformation; and unequal attention to the rights and obligations of the Roma community.

The box below includes a description of the main topics emerged in each of the four working groups.

Topics emerged within the FSC working groups – in detail

Working group I

The main **current trends** identified by participants in the first working group are:

- *The lack of education of the Roma community.* According to participants, this is related to the continuous discrimination to which Roma people, including children, are subject to. Furthermore, the fact that Roma people with a high level of education do not acknowledge their ethnicity hinders the possibility for them to represent role models for the Roma students and makes successful Roma people invisible.
- *Positive, but still insufficient measures for enhancing the social inclusion of Roma people.* Participants acknowledge that there has been an evolution in the integration of Roma people in society following the measures undertaken by public authorities and the facilities introduced for Roma people. Despite recognizing the positiveness of these measures, participants deem them insufficient for the social inclusion of Roma people in the Romanian society.
- *Discrimination against Roma people in all areas of life.* As mentioned previously despite measures adopted, Roma people are still facing discrimination in all areas of life (education, labour market, ...). This impacts negatively on the improvement in their living conditions and often results into their emigration.
- *Lack of knowledge of the Roma history, identity and genocide.* Participants in the discussion sustain that this is due to the fact that history of Roma people is not taught in schools. There are no optional classes focused on the history of Roma people and neither is the history of Roma people taught within the classes of Romanian history. This also confirms that Roma people are invisible in the Romanian society. Moreover, this also results in a limited knowledge of the Samudaripen.

Working group II

The main **current trends** identified by participants in the second working group are:

- *Overall, lack of knowledge of the Samudaripen.* However, some participants underline that, despite this general lack of knowledge, the topic is known in certain groups. Participants also underline that the communist period impacted negatively on the lack of knowledge. Moreover, participants reveal that the steps undertaken until now for improving knowledge on Samudaripen are insufficient. According to some of the participants the lack of knowledge of the Roma genocide also fuels discrimination against Roma people.
- *Positive, but insufficient measures to fight discrimination against Roma people.* Participants underline that several measures have been undertaken to fight discrimination against Roma people (specific legislation on discrimination, positive discrimination measures, etc.). However, such measures seem to be insufficient for fighting discrimination against Roma people. This is due to multiple factors: lack of information of the measures adopted within the wide society; unfitness of some of the measures taken and their maintenance for political reasons; lack of resources for further/improvement in measures especially during the COVID-19 period; lack of respect of the measures taken.
- *Limited focus on the overall responsibility of the community, including of the Roma community, in the respect of both social rights and obligations deriving from them.* Some participants underline that, in

the Romanian society there is a strong focus on social rights, while there is a lack of/limited focus on the responsibility of the Romanian society in complying with obligations deriving from these rights. This holds true in the case of the rights of minorities. According to participants, unless both rights and obligations accompanying them are met by both minorities (including Roma) and the overall Romanian society, progress in the inclusion of the Roma minority in society is difficult to be reached.

- *Economic and educational poverty of the Roma community.* Participants reveal that Roma communities are still facing poverty from both an economic and educational point of view. Participants underline that poverty is higher among Roma women that are subject to double discrimination (gender and ethnicity) within the Romanian society and to gender-based discrimination within their societies. Participants also report intergenerational differences in poverty levels.
- *Intergenerational differences in shaping inclusion of Roma people.* Some of the participants report that there are significant intergenerational differences in the way development of Roma communities is shaped, with adults/old Roma people being more resistant to change than Roma youngsters.

Working group III

The main **current trends** identified by participants in the second working group are:

- Lack of education, including also the lack of parents' support to children's education. This is often due to conservatory traditions.
- Discrimination. Despite measures taken over the years, Roma people are still subject to stereotyping and receive an unequal treatment.
- Lack of information among the majority and minority communities on the genocide.

Working group IV

The main **current trends** identified by participants in the second working group are:

- Lack of education of Roma youth people in the context of parents' migration and their lack of support to children's education.
- Discrimination. Roma people are still victims of discrimination both in the overall society and in the professional environment. Roma people are often subject to stereotypes. Due to discrimination Roma people do not have access to their rights. Furthermore, discrimination also creates frustration among Roma people.
- Lack of communication between the general society and Roma people which often causes disinformation about Roma culture and Roma people in general.
- Lack of the acknowledgement of the Roma identity among some of the Roma people due to fear of discrimination and social exclusion and low self-confidence.

5 A focus on the future: defining an Action plan

The last session consisted in a collective reflection on what can be done to counter negative trends and to enhance positive trends. Participants were specifically asked to indicate which actions should be taken primarily, and how they can personally contribute.

This session opened with an overview of the main trends emerged from the previous session and followed with the identification of the main trends to focus on in defining an Action plan for reaching the desired future in the fight against Roma discrimination and knowledge on Samudaripen. In order to identify the main trends to focus the debate on, participants were asked to vote the most relevant priority for them. Each participant could indicate only one priority. Based on participants' voting, current trends were ranked as it follows:

1. Lack of education of the Roma community
2. Discrimination against Roma people
3. Disinformation and Lack of stigma
4. Insufficient knowledge of the genocide, economic and educational disparity of Roma people, and in particular of Roma women.

The unequal attention to the rights and obligations of the Roma community was not selected as a priority by any participant.

The collective reflection focused on the following main priority trends:

- Lack of education of the Roma community
- Discrimination against Roma people
- Disinformation

The collective reflection was structure around the following question: *“Which actions should be taken primarily to counter negative trends and enhance positive trends? How can you personally contribute?”*.

The table below includes the main actions identified by participants in this session together with the contribution they could make to the delivery of the actions and the other resources needed.



Current priority trend	Action to be taken	Contribution of participants	Other resources needed
Lack of education of the Roma community	<p><i>Integrated measures for enhancing education of Roma people</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to participants educational measures are not sufficient to enhance participation of Roma children in education. Measures in the educational field need to be integrated with measures in the social assistance area (social scholarships, financial subsidies for mitigating the poverty of Roma families, measures to fight discrimination against Roma children/youth, etc.). To this end, some participants underline that the social assistance law should be written from the children/youth perspective and it should be integrated with measures in the educational field. 	<p>Participants', in particular from the educational area, availability to build partnerships with actors from other areas (e.g. social assistance) and to deliver the agreed measures in their schools.</p>	<p>Higher budget not only for measures in the educational field, but also for measures in related areas (e.g. social assistance)</p> <p>Collaboration between the different actors involved in these measures</p> <p>Collaboration with the third sector to define and deliver measures</p>
	<p><i>Parents' education and in particular of Roma women</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participants acknowledge the role of Roma parents in enhancing education of their children/youngsters and in particular of Roma women and consider that educational measures aimed at improving the level of education of Roma children/youth should be targeted to both children/youth and parents. 	<p>Partnerships with NGOs active in Roma inclusion</p> <p>Delivery of measures defined.</p>	<p>Collaboration with the third sector to define and deliver measures</p>
	<p><i>Knowledge of good practices undertaken in other EU MS to improve education of Roma children/youth and their transferability in Craiova</i></p>	<p>Building partnerships with other actors and replicating successful</p>	<p>Building partnerships with good practices</p>

Current priority trend	Action to be taken	Contribution of participants	Other resources needed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants underlined the relevance of exchanging knowledge and good practices on this topic with other EU MS to innovate solutions delivered in this area. 	measures implemented elsewhere.	
Fighting discrimination against Roma people	<i>Mutual knowledge, collaboration and tolerance between the Roma people and the majority population</i>	Consolidation of the collaboration between Roma and non-Roma civil society organisations Exchanges of experience Partnerships with cultural institutions	Availability to collaboration of all public and civil society actors engaged in fighting discrimination against Roma people
	<i>Publication of positive news in the media, including also social media</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants pinpoint the need for the dissemination of good news on the Roma community in the media so that people know better the Roma community and do not associate it only with illegal acts. 	Dissemination of good news related to the Roma community by Roma NGOs	Interest of the media in publishing good news on Roma community
	<i>Stop ethnic identification when illegal acts are reported on in the media</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants underline that in reporting on crimes newspapers underline the ethnic origin of people if they are Roma, which shapes a negative image of Roma people in society. 	-	Law prohibiting ethnic association in the media, including the social media.
	<i>Application of the law on discrimination</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants reveal that, according to the Romanian legislation, discrimination including on the base of ethnicity is prohibited. However, often the 	-	Concrete sanctions delivered by public institutions in charge of the applying the law

Current priority trend	Action to be taken	Contribution of participants	Other resources needed
	law is not applied and discrimination against Roma people persists in society.		Active civil society, including citizens, in reporting discriminatory actions
Fighting disinformation	<i>Reforming the minority law</i>	-	Political parties' willingness to change the minority law in order to strengthen it
	<i>Introduction of Roma history in schools.</i> In order to push for the introduction of the study of the Roma genocide in schools, some participants sustain that a joint lobby of Roma communities around Europe should be undertaken.	-	Decision by the Ministry of Education to include Roma history within the history curriculum in schools