



Platforms, Experts, Tools: Specialised Cyber-Activists Network

Antigypsyism on the Internet

by Maren Hamelmann (Ed.)

with contributions from
members of the sCAN consortium



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Specialised Cyber-Activists Network**

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About the Project

The EU-funded project **sCAN** – *Platforms, Experts, Tools: Specialised Cyber-Activists Network* (2018-2020), coordinated by Licra (International League Against Racism and Antisemitism), aims at gathering expertise, tools, methodology and knowledge on cyber hate and developing transnational comprehensive practices for identifying, analysing, reporting and counteracting online hate speech. This project draws on the results of successful European projects already realised, for example the project “*Research, Report, Remove: Countering Cyber-Hate phenomena*” and “*Facing Facts*”, and strives to continue, emphasize and strengthen the initiatives developed by civil society for counteracting hate speech.

Through cross-European cooperation, the project partners are enhancing and (further) intensifying their fruitful collaboration. The sCAN project partners are contributing to selecting and providing relevant automated monitoring tools to improve the detection of hateful content. Another key aspect of sCAN is the strengthening of the monitoring actions (e.g. the monitoring exercises) set up by the European Commission. The project partners are also jointly gathering knowledge and findings to better identify, explain and understand trends of cyber hate at a transnational level. Furthermore, this project aims to develop cross-European capacity by providing e-learning courses for cyber-activists, moderators and tutors through the Facing Facts Online platform.

sCAN is implemented by ten different European partners, namely ZARA – Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit from Austria, CEJI-A Jewish contribution to an inclusive Europe from Belgium, Human Rights House Zagreb from Croatia, Romea from Czech Republic, Respect Zone from France, jugendschutz.net from Germany, CESIE from Italy, Latvian Centre For Human Rights from Latvia and the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences from Slovenia.

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Introduction

Sinti and Roma are Europe's most marginalized minority.¹ Antigypsyism is not only spread by far-right and right-wing extremist actors, but widely accepted in the general public and disseminated by political parties, individual politicians and the media.

In order to combat antigypsyism in Europe, a transnational understanding of the phenomenon is needed. The project "Research-Report-Remove: Countering Cyber Hate Phenomena" has contributed to this understanding in its report "Manifestations of Online Hate Speech"², analyzing antisemitism, antigypsyism, homophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany the Netherlands and Spain. Drawing on the findings of this report, the partners involved in the sCAN project decided to complement them with a transnational analysis of antigypsyism in seven countries represented in the project: Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia.

Seven partner organisations provided input and contributed with their extensive experience in the field of combatting hate speech, and in particular antigypsyism, online:

- ZARA – Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit (Austria)
- Romea (the Czech Republic)
- Licra - International League Against Racism and Antisemitism (France)
- jugendschutz.net (Germany)
- CESIE (Italy)
- the Latvian Centre For Human Rights (Latvia)
- University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences (UL-FDV) (Slovenia)

The input from ZARA was prepared by consulting and drawing input from Romano Centro, one of the first Roma associations in Austria. The input from jugendschutz.net stems from a joint research project with the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma and the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma.

After giving an overview of the historical background and providing context information on the current situation of (offline) antigypsyism in the analysed countries, this analytical paper will shed light on common narratives used in antigypsyist hate speech as well as the platforms and tools most frequently employed for its dissemination. The focus lies on a comparison of transnational commonalities as well as the specific characteristics of antigypsyism in different countries.

Where not quoted otherwise, the examples in this analytical paper are derived from the input and work experiences of the partner organisations.

¹ European Centre for Minority Issues (2014). *Roma in Focus*. Available at https://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx_lfpubdb/ECMI_Work_Roma.pdf (last accessed 02.11.2018).

² Hamelmann, M., Lhopitault, C. & Schadauer, A. (2017). *Manifestations of Online Hate Speech – Reports on antisemitic, antiziganistic, homophobic and anti-Muslim Hate Speech*. Available at http://www.inach.net/wp-content/uploads/Manifestations_of_online_hate_speech-short-final.pdf (last accessed 02.11.2018).

Terminology and Definition

As of yet, there is no universally accepted definition of antigypsyism. The terminology itself is also still evolving, with terms like 'antiziganism', 'anti-Roma Hate Speech' or 'Romaphobia' also being used in different contexts. In Slovenia for example, no specific term is in use to address and encompass the hostility, prejudice, discrimination or racism specifically directed at Romani people. In the German language context, the term 'antiziganism' (German: Antiziganismus) is most commonly used, although its usage is not undisputed. The term describes prejudices, discriminative and racist attributions or open hostility targeted at people perceived as 'gypsies' (German: Zigeuner) - an external ascription coined by European societies that leads to discrimination and social exclusion and can result in violence, direct and indirect harassment and hate speech.

One of the strongest points of criticism is that the use of 'antiziganism' reproduces the vilification inherent in this external ascription and can be seen as discriminatory in and of itself. Especially in Eastern Europe the terms 'cigan' or 'cikan' are used by right-wing extremists and nationalist politicians to spread hatred against Romani people.

While Romani people are most affected by antigypsyism, the ascription 'gypsies' is broader and also covers other communities. In France, for example, it also encompasses the Travelling community (French: Les gens du voyage), the Gypsies (French: Les gitans) and the Manouche (French: Les Manouches). In Germany and Austria, it also includes Sinti and Yenish people. It is important to note that these communities are not homogeneous and all have their own traditions, religions, history and legal status.

For the scope of the sCAN project the partners have agreed on the term 'antigypsyism', in line with the working definition on antigypsyism proposed by the Alliance against Antigypsyism³:

“Antigypsyism is a historically constructed, persistent complex of customary racism against social groups identified under the stigma ‘gypsy’ or other related terms, and incorporates:

- 1. a homogenizing and essentializing perception and description of these groups;***
- 2. the attribution of specific characteristics to them;***
- 3. discriminating social structures and violent practices that emerge against that background, which have a degrading and ostracizing effect and which reproduce structural disadvantages.”***

The European Union (EU) uses the spelling 'anti-Gypsyism'⁴. In accordance with the Alliance against Antigypsyism, however, we have chosen the spelling without a hyphen, because "the latter would inadvertently give the impression that something like 'gypsyism' exists"⁵.

³ Alliance against Antigypsyism (2017). *Antigypsyism - A Reference Paper*. p. 5. Available at <http://antigypsyism.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Antigypsyism-reference-paper-16.06.2017.pdf> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

⁴ See for example the European Parliament resolution on the situation of the Roma in the European Union of 2005 (available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2005-0151+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>, last accessed 02.11.2018) and the Europeans Commission Report on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies 2015 (available at <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2015/EN/1-2015-299-EN-F1-1.PDF>, last accessed 02.11.2018).

⁵ Alliance against Antigypsyism (2017). p. 6.

Context Information

Historical Background

Sinti and Romani people have been living in Europe for more than six centuries. The history of antigypsyist rhetoric, discrimination and political persecution is just as long. In order to understand contemporary forms of antigypsyism both on- and offline, it is important to know the historical background and context. This analytical paper can only provide a short delineation of the history of antigypsyism in Europe, based on the contributions provided by the project partners. A more detailed account can be found in the factsheets on Romani history by the University of Graz⁶.

Persecution of Romani people started soon after their first arrival in Europe. In the regions Wallachia and Moldova (contemporary Romania), for example, Romani people were held as slaves from the 14th century onwards and slavery was only abolished in 1856. During the late 18th century, the Austrian-Hungarian Empress Maria Theresa decreed a harsh assimilation policy, which led to the forced separation of Romani children from their families.⁷ From 1804 to 1867 the Habsburg Monarchy was formally unified as the Austrian Empire, and from 1867 to 1918 as the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the Habsburg-controlled areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which included the present-day Czech Republic, Romani people were historically “hardly tolerated”⁸ – in practice, this meant many Romani people had to navigate a complicated double bind of not being allowed to settle anywhere for long while simultaneously being maligned for living itinerantly.

With the rise of the movement for Czech independence and the Czech National Awakening at the end of the 19th century, social tensions between Romani people and others in the Czech lands were increasing. This development was part of a larger economic trend of industrialisation, when the previous social niche of Romani craftspeople trading with rural communities was destroyed. Compulsory education and factory work were changing society, but the exclusion and lack of participation by Romani people in these social developments deprived them of social capital.⁹ Industrialisation also had a negative impact on Romani people living in Italy, where many had found employment in the agricultural sector. With increasing mechanisation of the agricultural production system many of them lost their employment and were forced to move to areas of urban periphery.

The First Republic of Czechoslovakia (1918-1938) adopted the 'Law on Wandering Gypsies' in 1927 that remained in effect for decades. Under this law, all persons considered 'wandering Gypsies' had to apply for state-issued identification, the so-called 'Gypsy identification card' (Czech: Cikánská legitimace), and had to apply to local authorities for permission to stay the night on their territories.¹⁰

⁶ University of Graz, Factsheets on Romani History. Available at http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/?l_history=en#history (last accessed 02.11.2018).

⁷ Council of Europe (2015). *Human Rights Comment - Time to cure amnesia about the history of Roma in Europe*. Available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/time-to-cure-amnesia-about-the-history-of-roma-in-europe?desktop=true> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

⁸ University of Graz, Factsheets on Romani History, module 2.3. Available at http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/view_pdf.php?t=history&s=h_2_3&l=en (last accessed 02.11.2018).

Miklusakova, M. & Necas, C. (2018). The History of the Roma Minority in the Czech Republic, posted 13 June 2000 by Czech Radio, available at <http://romove.radio.cz/en/clanek/18913> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

¹⁰ *ibid.*

In France, the 'Law on the Exercise of Travelling Occupations and Control of the Movement of Nomads' (French: Loi sur l'exercice des professions ambulantes et la réglementation de la circulation des nomades; translation: University of Graz) was adopted in 1912, introducing the category of 'nomads' for Romani people and subsequently all people considered 'gypsies'. This law enabled the French authorities to control and surveil the movement of the so-labelled people. 'Nomads' were required to carry 'the anthropometric record card' which included their civil status, photographs and anthropometric features¹¹ and provided a full record of their movements. Their vehicles had to be registered and carry special registration plates.¹² According to Spreizer (2013, p.90), the law restricted the freedom of movement and "socially and juridically excluded nomads from French society"¹³.

In the German state of Bavaria, the police established a 'Gypsy department' (German: Zigeunerzentrale) in 1899, tasked with registering and monitoring Sinti and Romani people on its territory. Sinti and Romani people were further stigmatised in the 'law on combatting Gypsies, Travellers and work-shy people' (German: Gesetz zur Bekämpfung von Zigeunern, Landfahrern und Arbeitsscheuen; translation by the author), adopted by the Bavarian regional parliament in 1926. These structures lay the ground for racially motivated discrimination and served as precursors to the atrocities committed by the National Socialist regime.¹⁴ In 1942 the majority of German Sinti and Romani people were either forcibly sterilized or deported to the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they were subjected to forced labour and medical experiments and ultimately murdered. More than 85% of all Sinti and Romani people deported to Auschwitz were murdered in the gas chambers.¹⁵

During the German occupation of the Czech lands (the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia), Romani people were imprisoned in two waves in 1939 and again in 1942/1943 in punitive labour camps that were gradually transformed into internment camps and then designated as 'Gypsy Camps'. While not given the official title of 'Concentration Camp' at the time, today these camps are understood to have served the purpose of concentrating Romani people prior to their deportation to Auschwitz.¹⁶ In Latvia, around 70% of the Roma population were systematically murdered during the Nazi occupation.

In Italy, during the Second World War Romani people were arrested and interned in concentration camps which were scattered in remote areas of the country. Even though the exact numbers are unknown as of today, it has been established that Italian Roma were deported to the Nazi extermination camps between 1940 and 1944.¹⁷

¹¹ such as fingerprints and physical characteristics

¹² University of Graz, Factsheets on Romani History, module 5.3. Available at http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/view_pdf.php?t=history&s=h_5_3&l=en (last accessed 02.11.2018).

¹³ Spreizer, A. J. (2013). Roma, Gypsy, Travellers, Gens du voyage: people who travel?. In: Slovenian Migration Institute (ed.). *Dve Domovini / Two Homelands*, 38. pp. 87 – 95. Available at http://twohomelands.zrc-sazu.si/uploads/articles/1448467918_Spreizer_pepole%20who%20travel.pdf (last accessed 02.11.2018).

¹⁴ Lochbihler, B. (2017). Der Umgang mit dem Völkermord an den Sinti und Roma in Deutschland. In: The Greens/European Free Alliance in the European Parliament (Eds.). *Der Kampf gegen Antiziganismus in Europa*. p. 119 – 124. Available at <http://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/der-kampf-gegen-antiziganismus-in-europa/> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Miklusakova, M. & Necas, C. (2018).

¹⁷ Commissione Straordinaria per la Tutela e la Promozione dei Diritti Umani (2011). *Rapporto Conclusivo dell'Indagine sulla Condizione di Rom, Sinti e Caminanti in Italia*. Available at <https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/commissioni/dirittiumani16/RAPPORTO%20ROM%20.pdf> (last accessed 26.11.2018).

It is conservatively estimated that 500.000 European Sinti and Romani people were murdered during the Holocaust.¹⁸

In France, people labelled as 'nomads' under the law of 1912 were interned during the Second World War. Contrary to other countries occupied by Germany, however, there were no mass-deportations of these 'nomads' from internment camps to extermination camps.¹⁹

After the Second World War, discriminative structures and practices continued almost unchanged in some countries. In France, the law of 1912 remained in force unchanged until 1969, when the 'anthropometric record card' was replaced by 'circulation documents'.²⁰ Those documents still contained information on physical characteristics²¹ and had to be renewed by public authorities at regular intervals.²² The obligation to carry a circulation document was only lifted in 2015.

In Germany, Bavaria especially demonstrated a high continuity of antigypsyist discrimination. The law of 1926 was transposed into the 'Vagrancy Law' (German: Landfahrerordnung; translation by the author) in 1953 and a 'Vagrancy department' (German: Landfahrerstelle; translation by the author) was established, operating with a high continuity in personnel to the NS 'Reich Central Office for Combating the Gypsy Menace' (German: Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens; translation by the author). Both the 'Vagrancy Law' and the 'Vagrancy Department' were finally ruled unconstitutional and dissolved in 1970.²³ Discrimination was ongoing also in the other German states. Claiming reparation was made particularly difficult for Sinti and Romani people, as public authorities and courts denied the racial motivation behind their persecution by the Nazi regime. Even after such a judgment was overturned by the Federal Court of Justice in 1963, bureaucratic hurdles remained, and it was only in 1982 that the genocide of the Sinti and Roma was officially recognised in Germany.²⁴

In the Czech lands, the indigenous Romani population was almost entirely annihilated during the period of the Nazi occupation. However, the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia promoted a resettlement of Romani people as labourers throughout the industrial areas of Bohemia and Moravia as part of their policy of forced sedentarisation. In a law passed in 1958, the authorities were ordered to 'help' in the permanent settlement of 'itinerant persons'. In practice, the Romani people were given no choice but to reside where they were assigned by the state, without regard to the separation of their extended families.²⁵ Another discriminative policy adopted in Czechoslovakia during the communist era was that of coerced or even forced sterilization. From the 1970s onward, financial incentives were introduced for women to undergo sterilization, but social workers also used threats as a form of coercion and women were sterilized without consent while undergoing other procedures, e.g. Cesarean

¹⁸ Lochbihler, B. (2017).

¹⁹ University of Graz, Factsheets on Romani History, module 5.3.

²⁰ Spreizer, A. J. (2013).

²¹ European Committee of Social Rights (2008). *Complaint No. 51/2008 - European Roma Rights Centre v. France*. Available at http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/03/C4/m000003C4.pdf (last accessed 26.11.2018).

²² Lutaud, B. (2012). *Carnet et livret de circulation: quels sont ces documents des gens du voyage? L'actu expliquée*. Available at <https://www.ladepêche.fr/article/2012/10/05/1457594-carnet-et-livret-de-circulation-quels-sont-ces-documents-des-gens-du-voyage.html> (last accessed 26.11.2018).

²³ Lochbihler, B. (2017).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Marta Miklusakova, Ctibor Necas (2018).

delivery. Romani women were disproportionately affected by this policy. The financial incentive program was brought to an end in 1991, but doctors continued to sterilize Romani and other women without their informed consent well into the 21st century.²⁶

Current Situation

Nowadays, the number of Sinti and Romani people living in the countries covered by this analysis is relatively small. According to statistics from the Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Team from 2012, the estimated percentages of "Roma and Roma-related Groups" in the analysed countries range from 0.13% of the total population in Germany to 1.9% of the total population in the Czech Republic (Italy: 0.25%; Slovenia: 0.41%; Austria: 0.42%; Latvia: 0.56%; France: 0.62%).²⁷

In most Western European countries, the Sinti and Romani population can be divided into three groups: those holding the national citizenship of the respective country, those holding European Union citizenship (in particular after the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007) and those who migrated to Central and Western Europe in the aftermath of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Due to the repercussions of the war and the unwillingness of the newly formed states to recognize Romani citizens, they remain in a condition of de facto statelessness, rendering them most vulnerable.²⁸ In Slovenia there are three major groups which live in different regions and differ in cultural and linguistic terms: Prekmurje Roma, Dolenjska Roma and Gorenjska Roma.

Several countries have recognised Roma and Sinti as a national minority. Among the first to recognise them were the Czech Republic in 1991²⁹ and Austria in 1993³⁰, followed by Germany in 1995³¹. In France and Italy, Roma are not recognized as a national minority.³² In Slovenia, Roma are also not recognized as a national minority – due to the fact that they are not considered as 'autochthonous' – but the 'Roma community' has constitutionally granted special rights.³³ There is no list of officially recognised national minorities in Latvia. However, Roma are considered a traditional, historical minority in practise as they have lived on the territory of Latvia for more than six centuries.

²⁶ Albert, G. and Szilvasi, M. (2017). *Intersectional Discrimination of Romani Women Forcibly Sterilized in the Former Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic*. In: Health and Human Rights Journal, December 2017, Volume 19 No. 2, pp 23- 34. Available at <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2017/12/intersectional-discrimination-of-romani-women-forcibly-sterilized-in-the-former-czechoslovakia-and-czech-republic/> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

²⁷ Council of Europe (2018). *Estimates on Roma population in European countries*. Available at <http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680088ea9> (last accessed: 02.11.2018).

²⁸ Sardelic, J. (no date given). *The vulnerability of Roma minorities to statelessness in Europe*. Available at <http://stories.minorityrights.org/statelessness/chapter/the-vulnerability-of-roma-minorities-to-statelessness-in-europe/> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

²⁹ Český rozhlas / Czech Radio (2000). *Some Basic Information about the Roma Population in the Czech Republic*. Available at <http://romove.radio.cz/cz/clanek/18028> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

³⁰ Demokratiezentrum Wien (2015). *Minderheiten in Österreich*. Available at <http://www.demokratiezentrum.org/wissen/timelines/minderheiten-in-oesterreich.html> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

³¹ Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma. *Minderheitenrechte*. Available at <http://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/arbeitsbereiche/minderheitenrechte/> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

³² Memo, S. (2012). *The legal status of Roma in Europe: Between National Minority and Transnational People*. Available at http://eprints-phd.biblio.unitn.it/1010/1/MEMO_PhD_Dissertation.pdf (last accessed 26.10.2018).

³³ *Slovenian Constitution*. Article 65. Available at <https://www.us-rs.si/en/about-the-court/legal-basis/constitution/> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

Nevertheless, the historically continuous hostility, the history of systematic persecution and deeply embedded stereotypes still have a severe impact on the lives and opportunities of persons affected by antigypsyism.

Italy is the country with the highest intolerance against Romani people in Europe. In 2016, 82% of the Italian respondents to the Global Attitudes Survey said they have negative opinions about Romani people (Median: 48%).³⁴ Misconceptions about the number of Romani people living in Italy and about their lifestyle are prevalent: The majority of the less than 200,000 Romani people (the popular misconception is that they number around 2 million) lead a sedentary life. Despite this, local authorities continue to pursue policies of segregation and marginalization against the Romani people by financing the creation of settlements on the outskirts of their communities. Due to the precarious conditions and the lack of minimum safety and hygiene standards, those settlements are often subject to forced evictions. When this happens, the inhabitants are seldom given alternative housing solutions and instead are forced into homelessness or informal settlement. In June 2018, Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini proposed to conduct a national census on the Romani communities in order to expel those Romani people residing in the country 'illegally'. This proposal has been strongly rejected by part of the Government, and by Romani and Jewish associations and NGOs.

In Austria, four Romani men were killed in a terrorist attack on Romani people in Oberwart, a provincial city in the Federal province of Burgenland, in early 1995. This attack opened up a public discussion and more interest in the situation of Romnja/Roma and Sintize/Sinti in Austria, albeit only for a short period of time. More recently, Romnja/Roma and Sintize/Sinti are often associated with the so-called 'begging mafia'. Families affected by poverty have repeatedly been portrayed as 'organised beggar gangs' and connected to (petty) crime. The words 'beggar' and 'Roma' are sometimes even used as synonyms in media coverage. Therefore, the public discourses on begging and the ban of begging, as well as the creation of 'beggar databases' in two Austrian regions in 2015 and 2016, have to be seen in connection with antigypsyism.³⁵

In the Czech Republic, Romani people are discriminated against in education, on the job market, in housing and the health-care system. In addition to structural and institutional discrimination, Romani people or persons believed to be Roma are the most likely targets of online attacks, physically violent hate crimes, social rejection, and are the subjects of fake news reports and hoaxes.

In France, forced evictions of Romani people have been ongoing since 2010, despite being in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights and of the revised European Social Charter. According to the European Roma Rights Centre, since 2014 more than 10 000 Romani persons have been evicted each year.³⁶

³⁴ Wike, R., Stokes, B., & Simmons, K. (2016). Europeans fear wave of refugees will mean more terrorism, fewer jobs. Pew Research Center, 11, 2016. Available at <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

³⁵ Romano Centro (2018): *Antiziganismus in Österreich. Falldokumentation 2015 – 2017. Information für Betroffene und Zeuginnen*. Available at http://www.romano-centro.org/downloads/Antiziganismus_in_Oesterreich_2015-2017_web.pdf (last accessed 02.11.2018).

³⁶ European Roma Rights Centre (2018). Written comments of the European Roma Rights Centre concerning France for consideration by the Human Rights Council, within its Universal Periodic Review, at its 29th Session (January – February 2018). Available at http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/france-hrc-submission-27-june-2017.pdf (last accessed 02.11.2018).

In Germany, 40% of the respondents to the 2016 Global Attitudes Survey said they have negative opinions about Romani people.³⁷ In a survey conducted by the Center for Research on Antisemitism at the Technische Universität Berlin in 2014, 20.4% of respondents answered they would not want Sinti or Romani people as their neighbours. In the same survey, the most frequent associations with Sinti and Romani people were 'travelling people', 'criminality' and 'begging'.³⁸

In Latvia, Romani people are discriminated against in employment and education. Up to 2016, some educational institutions had special classes for Romani children. Even after the abolition of these classes, Romani children remain disproportionately represented in special primary education programmes for students with learning disabilities and mental development disorders. Furthermore, public opinion surveys show that Romani people are among those that are subject to public prejudice the most. According to the latest survey of Riga residents, only 6% would agree to be in contact with Romani people as close relatives or in marriage, just 12% as a close friend, while only 25% would accept Romani people as neighbours and only 6% as a colleague at work.

In Slovenia, Romani people are seen as inherently “different”, even though they have been residing in the territory since the 14th century. Living conditions and discrimination of Romani people vary between different regions. The situation is the worst in Dolenjska region, where Romani people live in segregated settlements that often lack a building permit and basic infrastructure.³⁹ They are discriminated against in education, employment and housing. In this region the relations between Romani and non-Romani local residents are often tense. In 2008, the city of Ambrus evicted a local Romani family after residents claimed they felt endangered by this family, members of which had been involved in several criminal acts. The eviction was supported by the Slovenian Minister of the Interior. The situation of Romani people in Slovenia (and elsewhere) must be considered as a case of multiple discrimination grounded in racism, ethnicisation of Romani people and an overemphasis on cultural differences.⁴⁰ Multiple discriminations are not a consequence of individual lack and deficiency of “luck”, but are consequences of social division of power and relationships of domination, which are being maintained unaltered by dominant social groups through institutions, practices, norms, relations and knowledge.⁴¹

³⁷ Wike, R., Stokes, B., & Simmons, K. (2016).

³⁸ Technische Universität Berlin, Center for Research on Antisemitism (2014). *Zwischen Gleichgültigkeit und Ablehnung - Bevölkerungseinstellungen gegenüber Sinti und Roma*. Studie im Auftrag der Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes. Available at http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/Expertise_Bevölkerungseinstellungen_gegenueber_Sinti_und_Roma_20140829.pdf;jsessionid=84423467CFFAD1BAABAC5C96BBEBD209.1_cid340?_blob=publicationFile&v=3 (last accessed 02.11.2018).

³⁹ Amnesty International (2011). *Vzporedna življenja*. London: Amnesty International Ltd. Available at http://www.amnesty.si/media/uploads/files/vzporedna_zivljenja.pdf (last accessed 02.11.2018).

⁴⁰ Hrzenjak, M. and Jalušič, V. (2011). *Vrata niso baš odprta (treba da jih gurneš, pa da se otvaraju): perspektive v reševanju kompleksnih neenakosti*. Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut. Available at http://siaprem.mirovni-institut.si/pdf/siaprem_vrata_niso_bas_odprta.pdf (last accessed 26.11.2018).

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 115

Antigypsyism Online

While antigypsyism has a long history and is still being perpetuated and institutionalized in the offline world, today most antigypsyist rhetoric takes place online. Our Czech partner reported that while Romani people are one of the most frequent targets of hateful online content in the Czech Republic, posts that targeted Romani ethnicity were the least frequently deleted. Furthermore, the impact of hateful discussions on silent bystanders is gaining more and more importance. While users in online forums might not be identified as Romani or Sinti if they do not want others to know their ethnicity, persons who belong to Roma communities can still be exposed to enormously hateful posts.

Transnational Narratives

The most common narratives of online antigypsyist hate speech in the six countries analysed in this paper can be clustered into three underlying principles: criminalisation, welfare chauvinism and de-humanisation.

Sinti and Romani people are often criminalized with assertions that the presence of camps or settlements has consequences on the resurgence of violence, delinquency and smuggling in the area. An article at an Austrian travel advice portal asserted that people travelling to Macedonia should be especially careful with their personal possessions in the presence of Romani people, because "Roma are often dependent on bettering their modest living conditions through property crime". Furthermore, Sinti and Romani families are often denounced as "gangs of thieves" or "gangs of beggars". Criminal stigmatisations aren't always expressed openly but also 'between the lines'. After the unpopular implementation of a new speed limit on national roads in France, the following post was shared on Facebook: "Notice to the Travellers // a speed radar contains 2 kg of copper". This post was designed to evoke antigypsyist prejudices about travelers as 'copper thieves' and suspicious 'metal wreckers' involved in trafficking. In Germany and Italy, accusations of Sinti and Romani people as 'child abductors' are common. Those accusations were also traditionally used in Slovenia, but are less frequent nowadays.

In Slovenia, the traditional saying "If you don't behave properly the '*cigani*' will come and take you away", which parents use to discipline their children, was efficiently subverted in 2005 in a public service announcement with the picture of a Romani child and the message: "If you don't behave properly the Slovenians will take you away." The campaign aimed to expose prejudices against Romani people and their discrimination and provoked a lot of public interest. It was also attacked by some extreme-right politicians and organizations claiming it hurt the feelings of Slovenian people.⁴²

Apart from criminalisation, Sinti and Romani people are often called 'beggars' who are 'poor', 'dirty' and allegedly live in unsanitary conditions. In Austria, the terms 'beggars' and 'Roma' are often used as synonyms, sometimes even in media coverage. In Germany, reports about so-called "junk properties" (German: "Schrottimobilien") are used to suggest that Sinti and Romani people are generally 'dirty' and 'unsanitary' and responsible for the derelict state of the buildings. Furthermore, in many countries Romani people are seen as 'inadaptable' to society. Even though the majority of Sinti and Romani people lead a sedentary life, people still

⁴² Mladina (11.8.2005). *Plakatna afera, drugič*. Available at <https://www.mladina.si/94713/plakatna-afere-drugic/> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

allege that they prefer to live in temporary encampments due to their 'nomadic' lifestyle. Closely connected to the assertion of 'inadaptability' is the claim that Romani people are 'lazy', 'work-shy' and only came into the respective country to exploit the social aid system. This in turn leads to welfare chauvinism and to demands that they be excluded from social aid systems.

The so-called 'refugee crisis' had an ambivalent effect on antigypsyist hate speech. On the one hand, it took the focus away from the Sinti and Romani communities for a while, so that several organisations reported a decrease in antigypsyist hate speech since 2015. On the other hand, welfare chauvinism and the assertion that people migrate to Europe to take advantage of social aid systems is a common denominator of antigypsyism and the hate speech directed against refugees from Africa and the Middle East. In this narrative, structural discrimination and violent persecution as causes of migration and flight are denied and instead a mere economic rationale of "poverty-driven migration" is constructed. A third trend was reported from France, where refugees, people of Arab descent and Romani people are played off against each other. Now that the number of refugees arriving in Europe is receding, however, the focus of online hate speech is shifting back to the Romani population.

Another common narrative in antigypsyist hate speech is the alleged (genetic) inferiority of Sinti and Romani people. De-humanising hate speech is also very often found in this context. Sinti and Romani people are defamed as 'parasites', 'vermin', 'rats' or 'disgusting animals'. In the Czech Republic, a high ranking politician posted on Facebook that "Gypsies are like jellyfish - poisonous and useless". In Austria, a Twitter user tweeted "A wise man once said that Gypsies are not human beings. I agree with him".

De-humanising hate speech can lead to calls for violence, arson attacks on Romani settlements or even murder. In Italy, a local city councilor wrote on Facebook: "integration policies have failed, for that camp the only solution is NAPALM". Allusions to the Holocaust were also frequently reported by the partner organisations. In the Czech Republic, a photograph of a first grade class in a local primary school that was comprised predominantly of children of either Arab, Romani or Vietnamese origin was commented on with a call to "gas" all the children, evoking the genocide during the Nazi occupation. In Austria, the slogan "Roma rauSS" was used to call for deportations – a deliberate spelling mistake to hint at the infamous SS. Other examples include "Hitler would be needed!!!! Let's kill all the gypsies!!!" (Slovenia) and "Uncle Adolf had already tried some politically incorrect remedies...but he didn't succeed either" (Italy). In Latvia, a YouTube user commented on a video about young Romani sportsmen with: "These are the next murderers, thieves and criminals. Must be sent to Auschwitz". In Germany, calls for forced sterilization and genocide could be found below a report on poverty in a Romani settlement.

Much less frequent, and only reported from Germany and Austria, are romanticizing depictions of the "gypsy life" (German: Zigeunerleben). Related prejudices include the idea of an 'unfettered' lifestyle, mysticism and 'being close to nature'. While not intended to discriminate against Sinti and Romani people, those depictions still reproduce racist stereotypes by framing an entire group of people as 'exotic' and 'fundamentally different' from the 'civilized' population.

Platforms

The platforms most frequently used to spread antigypsyist hate speech are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. While Facebook was mentioned by almost all partner organisations, Twitter plays a lesser role in the Czech Republic, where it is not commonly used by the general public and instead serves as a communication platform for journalists and politicians. YouTube is less frequently used in Slovenia and France to spread antigypsyist messages. In Austria and Germany, however, the comment sections below YouTube videos are often littered with hateful comments.

An exception to this dominance of social media is Italy, where websites, blogs and social media only account for a marginal share. Instead, between 80% and 90% of antigypsyist discourses are spread through online newspapers and traditional newspapers. Interesting enough, more than 70% of antigypsyist opinions are expressed by political representatives, followed by journalists and lastly by the general public.⁴³

Online media outlets also play a role in Austria, Germany, Latvia and Slovenia. An analysis of the portrayal of Romani people in Latvian media, conducted by the LCHR in 2015, showed that some media continue to portray Romani people as offenders, for example by indicating in the headline of an article and/or introductory text the ethnicity of the probable offender, thus reinforcing the negative perception existing in society of Romani people as 'criminals'. The analysis further showed that the comments on those publications are predominantly negative, full of stereotypes and hate speech. Very often comments are not linked to the content of the particular material, but just express a general negative or offensive opinion. Even if the tone of the article itself is not openly discriminatory, the comments often incite hatred against Sinti and Romani people. The partners stressed the need for good online moderation in order to keep comment sections from spiraling into hate-filled discussions.

Other platforms mentioned by the partners were online discussion forums, ultra-nationalist websites and the French "fachosphère". In the Czech Republic, fake news items are sent via e-mail to senior citizens, who tend to believe such fabrications more if they come from people they know.

Tools

In all the analysed countries fake news reports are used to incite hatred against Sinti and Romani people, usually built around the narratives of welfare chauvinism and criminalisation. In France, images are disseminated to depict Romani people and Travellers as 'dirty'. In the Czech Republic, fake news reports about privileges that Romani people allegedly receive, such as "special" social benefits or free prescription drugs, are particularly persistent. During a period when butter was either not available or extremely expensive, fake news reports were spread that Romani people received butter for free. In Italy, common fake news reports fabricate the existence of laws allowing Romani people to use public transportation freely, or protecting them from being arrested for stealing if the economic value of the stolen goods is below

⁴³ Associazione 21 luglio (2014). *Antiziganismo 2.0. Rapporto Osservatorio 21 luglio (2013-2014)*. Available at <http://www.21luglio.org/21luglio/antiziganismo-2-0-rapporto-osservatorio-21-luglio-2013-2014/> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

€200.⁴⁴ Another popular fake news report alleged that “Romani people are given villas to live in and 1000 € per month from the State”.

Another strategy used to disseminate antigypsyism online is de-contextualisation. Instead of straight-out fabricated fake news, already-existing reports or images are given a new, biased head-line and description in order to incite hatred. In Germany, reports about criminal offences are framed in a way to depict Sinti and Romani people as inherently criminal. Images and videos can also be de-contextualised to spread fake news. In the Czech Republic, a fake report doctored video footage of the theft of a TV set from a hospital in South America and claimed it had happened in the Czech Republic and had been perpetrated by Romani people.

Other tools were only reported in specific countries. In France, racist 'jokes' spread prejudices against Romani people and Travellers. In Germany, antigypsyist hate speech is also spread through right-wing extremist music that can easily be found online.

What We Do

Most project partners in the sCAN project have trusted flagger status and cooperate directly with Social Media providers, reporting hate speech and asking for its removal. The sCAN partners also participate in the European Commission's monitoring exercises on the adherence of Social Media providers to the Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online. When hate speech is shared not on Social Media but on a website or a public forum, the partners contact the website provider directly to ask for removal. Partner organisations also report instances of illegal hate speech to public authorities and law enforcement.

In addition to notice and removal actions, partners have exposed online hate speech through their own news server and Social Media profiles. The Czech partner Romea has also organized solidarity actions for hate speech victims.

⁴⁴ bufale e dintorni, 3 dicembre 2013. *BUFALA – Depenalizzano il furto di valori inferiori a 200 Euro se a commetterlo sono i Rom*. Available at <http://www.bufaleedintorni.it/2013/12/03/bufala-depenalizzano-il-furto-di-valori-inferiori-a-200-euro-se-a-commetterlo-sono-i-rom/> (last accessed 02.11.2018).

Conclusion

The findings of this analytical paper confirm those already established in the report "Manifestations of Online Hate Speech" by the project *Research-Report-Remove: Countering Cyber Hate Phenomena*. This proves a stable set of antigypsyist narratives over a total of 10 European countries (Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain).

The main narratives of antigypsyism online mirror the historical stereotypes and narratives that have been used for discrimination and persecution of Romani and other communities perceived as 'gypsies' for centuries. Criminalisation and construction of Sinti and Romani people as 'beggars' and 'travelling communities' who are unable or unwilling to integrate serve as excuses to call for discriminatory treatment and exclusion from the social aid system. Interestingly, the notion of 'travelling communities' remains a widespread stereotype, despite the majority of Sinti and Romani people living a sedentary life. The de-humanisation expressed in many comments on Social Media platforms and online media outlets often leads to calls for violence and even genocide.

Fake news and the de-contextualisation of images and videos is a popular tool to disseminate antigypsyist narratives and incite hostility against Sinti and Romani people. Most of those fake news stories are built around alleged special benefits for those communities.

Social Media, especially Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, are still the platforms most commonly used to spread antigypsyist hate speech. Discussions in comment sections of YouTube videos and beneath the articles of online media outlets often become platforms for de-humanisation and incitement to violence. Biased media reporting reinforces existing negative stereotypes. A special responsibility also lies with politicians and other public figures.

In order to combat antigypsyism efficiently, the existing cooperation between Romani representatives, Civil Society Organisations, Internet Service Providers and public authorities needs to be strengthened. Media should take care to provide unbiased reporting on Sinti and Romani people as well as other marginalised minorities. Reliable moderation is needed in online discussion forums and the comment sections of online media outlets in order to prevent hateful content from reproducing hostilities and dominating the discussions.

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