

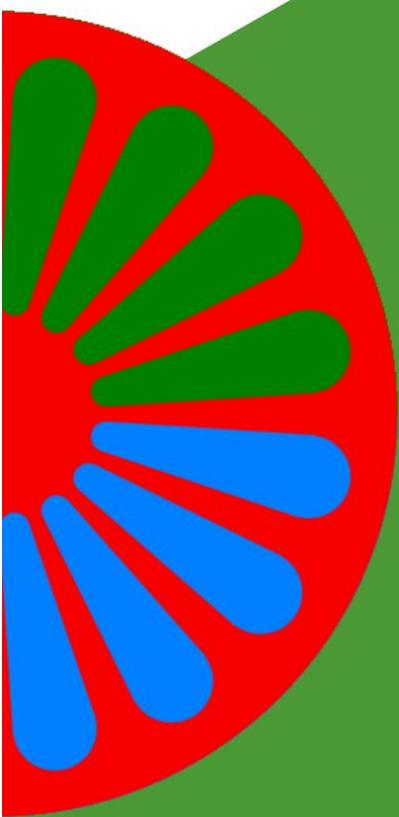
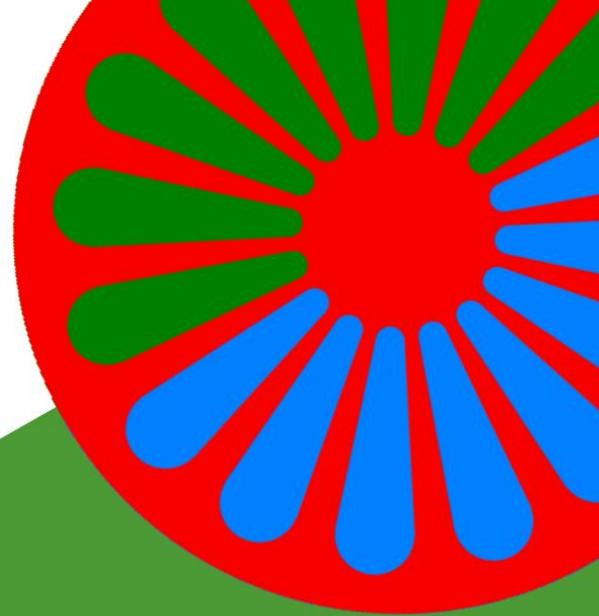


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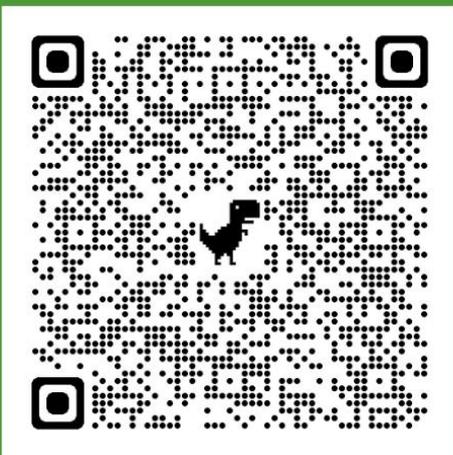
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**ROMA AND MEMORIALIZATION: ADVANCING
 RECOGNITION AND REMEDY FOR THE DARK
 CHAPTERS OF THE PAST AND THEIR IMPACT
 ON THE PRESENT**

**15 september 2022 | 9 am (Geneva time)
 Hybrid format (online and in person)**

For the registration details:



CHACHIPEN
 Truth and Reconciliation Process
 to address antigypsyism in Europe:
 Remembrance, Recognition, Justice
 and Trust-Building



**World Council
 of Churches**

ERIAN
 EUROPEAN ROMA
 INSTITUTE FOR ARTS
 AND CULTURE



FAGiC



**CENTRAL
 COUNCIL** [of German
 Sinti & Roma]



Roma and Memorialization:

Advancing Recognition and Remedy for the Dark Chapters of the Past and their Impact on the Present

Concept Note

International Roundtable, 15 September 2022, Geneva

The Initiative

A confluence of initiatives makes 2022 a timely moment to examine the current state of recognition of the dark chapters of history related to racism and discrimination against Roma, the impact of these legacies on the present and the continuing legacies of anti-Gypsyism¹/anti-Roma racism in impeding the right to know and the right to truth and justice.

The initiative brings together UN entities and special rapporteurs, civil society groups and coalitions, academics and representatives of Government to examine the state-of-play of Roma and memorialization, and to map steps forward for progress in this area.

Objectives

- a. Advancing recognition and memorialization of the problematic chapters of the Romani history and structural racism that affects the Romani people (Roma Holocaust, slavery, sterilisation of Romani women, other racial and anti-Gypsyist persecution, etc.) and their impact on the present.
- b. Combatting anti-Gypsyism/anti-Roma racism by advancing truth, recognition, remedy, trust and reconciliation processes.

¹ This paper uses the spelling generally recognised by international institutions, including the UN Human Rights Council and the Council of Europe's European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (<https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-13-on-combating-anti-gypsyism-an/16808b5aee>). The paper also recognises that EU institutions and a number of Romani grassroots voices a prefer the spelling and definition of "**antigypsyism**" used by the Alliance against Antigypsyism (<http://antigypsyism.eu/>).

- c. Advancing recognition in education and public memorialization of the affirmative contributions of Roma to all societies, as well as of the dark chapters of the past. Strengthening the Romani voice in education and in public life.
- d. Promoting awareness and recognition of anti-Gypsyism as a specific form of racism against Roma, Sinti, Travellers and others stigmatised as “Gypsies” in the public imagination, and as a root-cause impeding sustainable Roma inclusion.
- e. Promoting effective policies and strengthening structures to analyse, monitor and combat anti-Gypsyism, in particular through modes such as independent anti-Gypsyism commissions, truth and reconciliation processes and other transitional justice tools.
- f. Advocating the recognition and remembrance of the Roma Holocaust (Samudaripen), including in the context of 27 January International Holocaust Commemoration Day and 2 August Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, as well as on national-level commemoration days.
- g. Advancing memorialization as a component of the right to justice and, in particular, the right to an effective remedy for Roma concerns both present discrimination and abuses of the past.

Stocktaking International Roundtable 15 September 2022

The UN Human Rights Office Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section (OHCHR IPMS), in collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, and the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance together with the CEPS-led project [CHACHIPEN](#), World Council of Churches (WCC), Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, ERIAC, Dkih He Na Bister, Roma Advisory Council (RAC) and other civil society partners will hold an international stocktaking roundtable on 15 September 2022. The event is slated to take place in Geneva. We invite you to register for an online meeting/webinar format.

The event aims to take stock of the state of play, identify the next steps in this regard, and draw up a list of recommendations for the States. The partnership described below is a preliminary group committed to advancing this discussion. In the run-up to and following up the September 2022 meeting, it is hoped that this partnership expands to become a broad coalition.

Partnership

The Stocktaking International Roundtable is intended as a wider partnership, including with the [CHACHIPEN](#) consortium, World Council of Churches (WCC), Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, ERIAC, Dkih He Na Bister, Roma Advisory Council (RAC) and other civil society partners named below in the background, as well as with other human rights-based entities.

Process

The Stocktaking International Roundtable is intended not as a one-off, but rather as part of wider processes to strengthen Roma and Memorialization, and to advance recognition and remedy for the dark chapters of the past and their impact on the present. An outcome report of the meeting will be prepared and disseminated publicly.

Expected outcomes

- a. Specific recommendations to address the pressing human rights issues of Roma people will be identified,
- b. Wider alliances are established in advancing the rights of Roma for joint collaboration and ownership,
- c. Crucial topics of the Romani past will be discussed, raised, and advocated and the memorialization process would be bolstered,
- d. The next steps will be put forth to add value to the global efforts for Roma rights.

Background

Despite the vast contributions made by the Roma to the European continent and their early integration into local economies, mainly as blacksmiths, veterinarians and healers, a few decades after their arrival on this continent they were considered as a threat to the political status quo. Therefore, and above all during the constitution of European National States based on the exclusion of "unwanted" peoples, Roma were periodically subjected to raw persecution. In the Ottoman Empire, Roma occupied a low status, even when they were members of the privileged Muslim community. In the Iberian peninsula, the Roma were pressured to perform forced labor and were victims of genocide, as was the case of the Gran Redada in 1749.

In the Americas, prejudice and discrimination also marked the trajectory of Romani families since their arrival in the 16th century. Since then, they have been victims of persecution, deportation and anti-gipsy laws and decrees. In addition, Roma people were enslaved in the Romanian principalities. Worldwide, many Roma communities are descendants of people enslaved in present-day Romania, who left when the slave system broke down in the late 19th century. During 1942-1944, around 25,000 Roma, mostly children, were deported by the Romanian authorities to Transnistria and it is assumed that half of the deported Roma died there. In recent years, hundreds of Roma survivors of those deportations died without having received their legal rights under Law 189/2000 (a monthly allowance for the two years of deportation, access to medical treatment, and a burial plot free of charge). The last Roma survivors live in

extremely difficult conditions because of the administrative barriers raised by the pension offices that deny them these rights.²

From the beginning of the modern state, significant efforts were periodically undertaken – with mixed success – to assimilate Roma forcibly. Roma were targeted for the holocaust during World War II. The period since 1989 has seen a renewal of active anti-Romani antipathy throughout the European continent and in the Americas. Tens of thousands of Roma and other groups regarded as “Gypsies” were ethnically cleansed from Kosovo in the period 1999-present. Outbreaks of anti-Romani racism have plagued every European and American society without exception. In times of crisis, as was the case with the COVID19 pandemic and armed conflicts such as in Syria and Ukraine, prejudice increases and Roma are doubly harmed.

The troubled situation of Roma and Travellers³ is at the heart of the human rights review of States in Europe,⁴ as well as increasingly outside Europe. Discrimination against Roma has been the subject of a specific CERD General Recommendation 27 of 2000, as well as a 2014 Human Rights Council Resolution 26/4, recognizing that Roma have faced, for centuries, widespread and enduring human rights violations, discrimination, rejection, social exclusion and marginalisation all over the world and in all areas of life. The situation of Roma has been a focus of extensive commitments during the World Conference against Racism and its 2009 follow-up conference.⁵

In 2015, under the leadership of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, OHCHR published a [Global Study on the Human Rights Situation of Roma Worldwide](#), focussing in particular on human rights abuses driven by anti-Gypsyism.⁶ The report was undertaken as a result of United Nations Human Rights Council [resolution 26/4](#) adopted on 14 July 2014.

In the period since the publication of the 2015 report, successive [UN Special Rapporteurs on Minorities Issues](#) have dedicated concern, attention and

² Documents (an open letter to the Government of Romania), public proposals of Roma rights organizations in Romania i.e. Romani CRISS Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies & Asociația Uniunea Civică a Tinerilor Romi din România

³ Following the approach of the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner, “The minorities labelled “Roma”, “Gypsies” and “Travellers” in fact comprise a multitude of ethnicities and distinct linguistic communities, heterogeneous groups that are viewed as a unit primarily by outsiders.” This umbrella grouping “Roma and Travellers” is not intended to deny the self-identification of any person or group.

⁴ The situation of Roma is the subject of a number of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as of a comprehensive report by the Council of Europe’s Human Rights Commissioner. The European Union has opened infringement proceedings against a number of EU Member States for discrimination on the basis of racial or ethnic origin in the field of education, i.e. on the basis of Directive EC/2000/43, the so-called “Race Equality Directive”. Other relevant EU law includes Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law. The European Parliament has repeatedly expressed concern about the human rights situation of Roma in Europe, including most recently in November 2017, as noted below. In 2011, the European Union adopted a Framework for Roma Inclusion Strategies at a national level. (https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-countries_en).

⁵ See: Durban Review Conference, Geneva 20-24 April 2009, <http://www.un.org/en/durbanreview2009/ddpa.shtml>.

⁶ UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues (2015) “Global Study on the human rights situation of Roma worldwide”, UN OHCHR, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/SRMinorities/Pages/GlobalStudyonRomaworldwide.aspx>.

recommendations to the [situation of Roma worldwide](#). Other UN Special Rapporteurs have also dedicated focussed attention to the situation of Roma in particular situations, such as the [lead poisoning of Roma in camps for displaced persons in and around Mitrovica, northern Kosovo](#).

Outside Europe and also under the leadership of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, OHCHR produced two documents to highlight the human rights situation of the Roma community and encourage American countries to take action for equality. The first, from 2015, was the report of the "Regional Workshop on the Situation of Roma in the Americas" (A/HRC/31/CRP.2), produced after the "Roma in the Americas" meeting held in Brasilia, Brazil. In 2017, the second "Roma in the Americas" meeting was held and its main results and recommendations to the states were published in the annual report of the Special Rapporteurs on Minorities Issues (2017).

At the same time, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence has dedicated increasing attention to questions of [memorialization](#), in which he observed:

... the crucial role played by memorialization processes in the context of transitional justice, which is fully recognized by the rules and standards of contemporary international law. The work carried out on these past violations serves as a basis for reflection on the present and identification of contemporary issues related to exclusion, discrimination, marginalization and abuses of power, which are often linked to toxic political cultures. Positive work in the area of memory not only helps to build democratic cultures in which human rights are respected but also fulfils the legal obligation of States to guarantee human rights.

Attention to the dark legacies of the past that directly affected the Roma and their impact on the present in the forms of discrimination, exclusion and anti-Gypsyism have grown exponentially in recent years, as a result of civil society organisations worldwide, regional bodies such as the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and also because states have increasingly moved to recognize and memorialize events of the Romani past including the Holocaust, coercive sterilization, forced assimilation and forced settlement, collective expulsion and ethnic cleansing. For example, the European Commission has committed to "raising awareness on Roma history and culture, and promoting truth and reconciliation under the citizens, equality, rights and values programme".⁷

In 2014, the Swedish Government published a White Paper to set the basis for acknowledgement and to create an understanding of the situation of the Roma minority today by shedding historical light on the abuse suffered by Roma and how stereotypes and prejudices have emerged and been passed on from one generation to the next, and also how these have been allowed to form the basis of state policy.⁸

⁷ European Commission (2020), A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020 - 2030, COM(2020) 620 final_Brussels, 7 October.

⁸ Government of Sweden, Ministry of Culture (2014), 'The Dark, Unknown History: White Paper on Abuses and Rights Violations Against Roma in the 20th Century', <https://www.government.se/contentassets/eab06c1ac82b476586f928931cfc8238/the-dark-unknown-history---white-paper-on-abuses-and-rights-violations-against-roma-in-the-20th-century-ds-20148>

Norway has undertaken a Truth and Reconciliation process in relation to its treatment of Roma and Tatars, and Switzerland has similarly examined legacies of the treatment of Jenisch and Travellers. A number of lessons learned are available as concerns those processes.⁹ In Romania, in 2011 the government declared 20 February as the "Day of Emancipation of the Roma in Romania " to commemorate the end of Roma. In Germany, an officially established Commission on anti-Gypsyism has recently delivered an 800-page report on anti-Gypsyism in Germany, assessing historically rooted structural racism against Sinti and Roma ongoing in various societal fields from knowledge production to law. In 2021, the Government of Czechia approved a compensation mechanism for victims of coercive sterilisation, the overwhelming majority of whom are Romani women.

Outside of Europe, the Government of Colombia has recently adopted special measures recognizing injustices in the Romani past, and a draft resolution is pending in the United States Congress on the situation of Roma in the United States. In Brazil, the "Statute of the Roma People" has been in the process of parliamentary voting since May 2022. In Argentina, in 2021, the guide "Recommendations for treatment with a focus on the rights of the Roma population and culture in audiovisual media " was launched. In the United States, the resolution S.Res.124 celebrating the heritage of Romani Americans passed out of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) by voice vote in 2022.

Civil society efforts leading these developments are too many to list in full here. The non-governmental grassroots initiative Alliance against Antigypsyism has undertaken a detailed examination of these forces, in particular as concerns Europe.¹⁰

CHACHIPEN project – co-organiser

CHACHIPEN consortium is led by the Brussels-based think tank CEPS in cooperation with The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, the European Grass-roots Roma Organisations (ERGO) Network, Federación de Asociaciones Gitanas de Cataluña (FAGIC) in Spain and Asociația Fast Forward in Romania. This EU-funded project titled 'Paving the way for Truth and Reconciliation Process to address antigypsyism in Europe: Remembrance, Recognition, Justice and Trust-Building' will run during the period 2021-2023. The project is abbreviated as, CHACHIPEN, meaning 'truth' or 'justice' in Romani.

CHACHIPEN just launched its State of the Art report on [Transitional Justice for Roma](#).¹¹ It builds on the previous CEPS study assessing the feasibility of truth and reconciliation commissions as a model to address antigypsyism.¹² The initial study has been

⁹ OHCHR IPMS (2018), 'Background note on Truth and Reconciliation Processes involving indigenous peoples Meeting with MEP Soraya Post', July.

¹⁰ Alliance against Antigypsyism (2016), 'The Reference Paper', <http://antigypsyism.eu/>.

¹¹ Rostas, I., L. Vosyliūtė and M. Kalotay (2022), 'Transitional Justice for Roma', Chachipen State of the Art Report, 20 May, <http://antigypsyism.eu/transitional-justice-for-roma-in-europe/>.

¹² Carrera, S., L. Vosyliūtė, I. Rostas, S. Danova, J.Guerin and S. Brenda Smialowski (2019), 'Scaling up Roma Inclusion Strategies: Truth, reconciliation and justice for addressing antigypsyism' [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608859/IPOL_STU\(2019\)608859_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/608859/IPOL_STU(2019)608859_EN.pdf)

presented at the European Parliament along with the powerful testimonies of victims and survivors of antigypsyism.¹³

This momentum has brought together civil society and academia in this CHACHIPEN project in pursuit of furthering objectives including mapping states of play in acknowledging the dark chapters of antigypsyism in Spain and Romania. The project has learned from the experiences of setting up independent expert commissions on antigypsyism in [Sweden](#) and [Germany](#), to advance the public understanding of antigypsyism, and the impact of this dark history on the present of Roma communities. CHACHIPEN also aims to empower Romani activists to advocate for truth, justice and trust-building processes and ensure their co-ownership of the process by building up their knowledge of transitional justice tools and building moral and legal arguments.

URL: <http://antigypsyism.eu/chachipen/>

The World Council of Churches - the host of the event

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity. The WCC brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 120 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 580 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific. There are now 352 member churches.

For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space: one in which they can reflect, speak, act, worship and work together, challenge and support each other, share and debate with each other. As members of this fellowship, WCC member churches: are called to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship; promote their common witness in work for mission and evangelism; engage in Christian service by serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation; foster renewal in unity, worship, mission and service.

URL: <https://www.oikoumene.org/about-the-wcc>

Other civil society and institutional partners:

European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC)

ERAC has a unique and single mandate as the transnational, European-level organization for the recognition of Roma arts and culture. ERAC exists to increase the self-esteem of Roma and to decrease negative prejudice of the majority population towards Roma by means of arts, culture, history, and media. ERAC acts as an international creative hub to support the exchange of creative ideas across borders,

¹³ Euroactiv (2019), 'Time for Truth, Recognition and Reconciliation for Roma in Europe', 21 March, <https://www.euroactiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/opinion/time-for-truth-recognition-and-reconciliation-for-roma-in-europe/>.

cultural domains and Romani identities. ERIAC aims to be the promoter of Romani contributions to European culture and talent, success and achievement, as well as to document the historical experiences of Romani people in Europe.

ERiac exists since 2017 to be a communicator and public educator, to disseminate a positive image and knowledge about Romani people for dialogue and to build mutual respect and understanding. The founding idea of ERIAC is based on the struggle for self-definition and self-determination and the thought "that in order to be able to speak of ourselves, to express our interests, to develop a suitable image, we need our own narratives and our own institutions". The main long-term aims of ERIAC are to educate and inform the non-Roma population about Roma arts and culture and to help for creating understanding, tolerance and mutual respect between Roma and non-Roma communities. As well as to raise awareness among European institutions, policy-makers and stakeholders about the role of Roma arts and culture and to build up a broad partnership across Europe (and beyond) for support of Roma arts, culture and communities.

URL: <https://eriac.org/>

Dikh He Na Bister!

'Dikh He Na Bister!' means 'Look and don't forget!' in Romani. This Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative mobilizes each year thousands of young Roma and non-Roma all over Europe on the occasion of the 2 August – the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day – to advance remembrance, recognition and education about the Roma Genocide.

Dikh He Na Bister is a space for learning about the past, as well as for reflection on the role of young people in Holocaust remembrance. The initiative creates a dialogue and personal encounter between young people and Holocaust survivors. Their testimonies inspire the participants to address and resist against current challenges of antigypsyism, and other forms of racism in Europe today.

Dikh He Na Bister empowers young people in their struggle for justice and equality. Remembrance and commemoration activities do not only take place during the international event on 2 August in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Krakow but also through numerous local initiatives around Europe. In particular, youth groups promote a message of resistance and self-empowerment to mark Romani Resistance Day on May 16.

Dikh He Na Bister was founded by ternYpe International Roma Youth Network and its member and partner organizations in 2010 and is co-organized with the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma and in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

URL: <https://2august.eu/about-us/>

Roma Advisory Council (RAC)

During 2021 and 2022, OHCHR IPMS has been supporting the convening by groups of Romani activists from diverse backgrounds and countries in North and South America, resulting inter alia in the constitution of the Roma Advisory Council (RAC), an informal grouping of North American Roma rights activists. RAC priorities for the present period include strengthening memorialization in line with this initiative, and a number of actions were carried out during 2021, in particular as concerns Roma Holocaust remembrance. A second group from Latin American countries has met regularly and has addressed a number of serious human rights concerns, such as police brutality against Roma in Brazil.

Modality and Practical Information

- a. The event will take place in person in Geneva on 15 September 2022 at the Palais des Nations. The event will be organised in a hybrid format; participants will be joining online as well as in person.
- b. Access information and the full agenda of the event will be sent to the participants one day in advance.
- c. The event will feature simultaneous translation into Spanish, and possibly in other languages.
- d. A summary/outcome document of the event will be made public.
- e. For any questions, please send an email to: cnrasaili@gmail.com and (or) fellow.miklos@un.org



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