# BEST PRACTICES TO COMBAT ANTIGYPSYISM
IN ITALY

Highlighting inclusive approaches and local solutions to support Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti communities across Italy
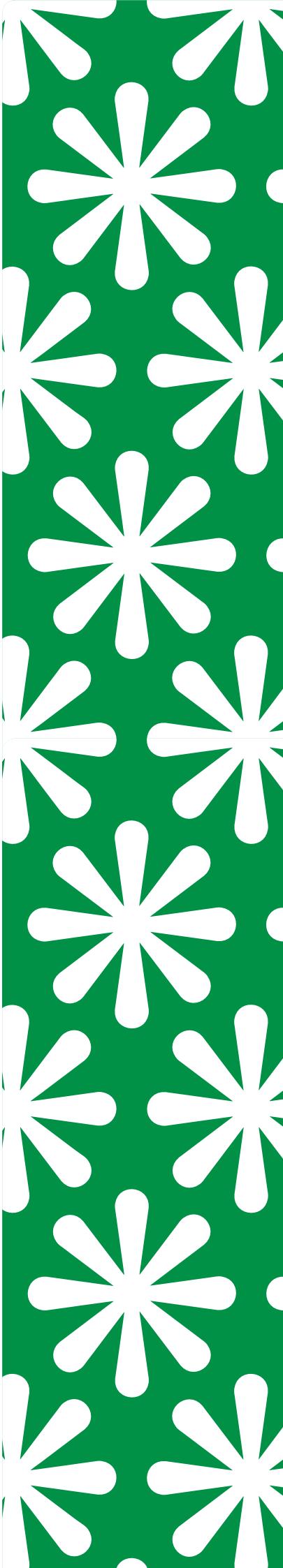
ERGO
NETWORK

ABOUT ERGO NETWORK

ERGO Network brings together Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations from across Europe to fight discrimination, promote equality, and strengthen Roma participation in policy-making. Through advocacy, capacity-building, and grassroots empowerment, ERGO Network works to ensure Roma communities are heard at local, national, and European levels.

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This brochure presents an overview of best practices to combat antigypsyism in Italy. It outlines the current situation of Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti communities through the lenses of the selected initiatives, showcasing awareness-raising actions, local engagement, and Roma-led narratives aimed at challenging stereotypes and promoting social inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

What is Antigypsyism?

Antigypsyism is a specific form of racism directed against Roma, Sinti, Caminanti and other groups that are socially perceived or labelled as "Gypsies". It is a historically constructed, persistent, and structural form of dehumanisation and discrimination that affects millions across Europe. (see: European Commission 2020; Alliance Against Antigypsyism 2016; FRA 2018).

It manifests through widespread stereotypes, hate speech and violence, systemic social exclusion, segregation in housing and education, racial profiling and police abuse, or unequal access to services and opportunities.

Context in Italy

Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti (RSC) communities in Italy are estimated to number **between 130,000 and 180,000 people**, according to UNAR and civil society data. Despite public perception, **over 60% are Italian citizens**, and many have lived in Italy for generations. Yet, Italy remains among the EU countries with the highest perceived levels of antigypsyism, matching trends observed in the 2019 Eurobarometer and reaffirmed in the 2023 Eurobarometer. RSC communities face deep-rooted structural discrimination, particularly in the areas of housing, education, employment, and healthcare. The persistence of **"nomad camps"—often segregated, under-serviced, and in breach of international human rights standards**—is a stark symbol of this exclusion. These camps are frequently located on the outskirts of cities, lack adequate sanitation, and expose residents to forced evictions, police harassment, and surveillance.

Legal and institutional framework

Italy has formally committed to advancing Roma inclusion through various legal and institutional frameworks, yet gaps in implementation, enforcement, and political will continue to undermine progress.

Italy adopted its first **National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti** (NSRSC) in 2012, updated in 2022 to align with the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2020–2030). The strategy identifies four priority areas—education, employment, health, and housing—and recognises the need to address antigypsyism and promote Roma participation.

The **National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR)**, under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, is the coordinating body for Roma inclusion policy. It monitors the implementation of the national strategy and chairs the National Roma Platform, which includes civil society representatives.

BEST PRACTICE 1: MOVING ON

Implemented by: The project is a collaborative effort involving seven civil society organisations: ALDA, ERRC, Exchange House Ireland, FAGiC, FARE Network, GEA Cooperative, and INEX-SDA.

Overview

"**MOVING On**" is an EU-funded project focused on promoting the inclusion of Roma, Sinti, and Traveller communities in Europe through sport. Active in seven countries, the project recognised sport not only as a right, but as a transformative tool for communities facing systemic exclusion.

The core goal of MOVING On was to foster equality, inclusion, and participation of Roma, Sinti, and Travellers in sport and leverage sport as a means to promote positive narratives, counter anti-gypsyism, and develop effective inclusion strategies at local, national, and EU levels.

Focus in Italy

In Italy, the project particularly targeted Roma youth, emphasising intersectional discrimination, including gender inequality and antigypsyism in public spaces.

Key actions

- Promoting equal access to sports and preventing discrimination.
- Building the capacity of grassroots sports organisations and public authorities to promote inclusion.
- Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sports participation and providing alternative engagement opportunities.
- Creating positive storytelling around successful inclusion stories to inspire others and combat antigypsyism.

Result

The **MOVING On** project contributed to the broader EU policy framework for Roma inclusion, particularly in areas such as sports, health, and education.

Why it matters

Sport in Italy is often inaccessible to marginalised Roma youth due to segregation, socioeconomic exclusion, and racialised policing. This project tackled antigypsyism by:

- Breaking stereotypes through visibility and success stories;
- Challenging the implicit bias that Roma are outsiders to mainstream civic life;
- Strengthening participation, not just "integration."

Reference:

https://www.alda-europe.eu/moving-on/

BEST PRACTICE 2: REMAGAINSTDISC / PORRAJMOS.IT

Implemented by: Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties & Rights, University of Florence, Sucar Drom, Associazione 21 Luglio

Overview

This EU-funded initiative focused on remembrance, recognition, and historical justice by documenting the Nazi-Fascist persecution of Roma and Sinti in Italy. Despite being victims of genocide during WWII, Roma and Sinti remain largely absent from Italian public memory.

The project revitalised the first Italian Virtual Museum on the Porrajmos, offering a platform for education, memorialisation, and empowerment.

Key Actions

- Conducted **original archival and oral history research** (University of Florence + Sucar Drom);

- Digitally renovated the **Virtual Museum of the Porrajmos** and translated it into English;

- Produced **targeted toolkits and training** for:

  1. Teachers – to embed Roma history in school curricula;
  2. Social workers – to understand the Roma historical trauma in service delivery;

Policy-makers – to rethink housing policy and segregation

Impact

- Enhanced public recognition of Porrajmos as a central European genocide.

- Broader awareness and institutional uptake: toolkits used by ~200 professionals; some local authorities have initiated participatory pathways to close the Roma mega

- Educational reach: school curricula are beginning to reference Porrajmos; publishers have shown interest in integrating it into textbooks.

- Sustainability: partners committed to continuing these activities beyond the formal project end, embedding them into institutional practices.

Why it matters

Memory is political. Denial or marginalisation of Roma history sustains antigypsyism today. This initiative:

- Fosters transitional justice by recognising past violence;
- Creates empathy and awareness among professionals;
- Builds public pressure for policy change grounded in historical responsibility.

Last but not least, it demonstrates that strengthening public memory, crafting role-tailored tools, involving affected communities, and building sustainable institutional links together form an effective model in the fight against antigypsyism.

Reference

https://porrajmos.it/en/luoghi/

CONNECTING PRACTICE TO POLICY

These best practices show that fighting antigypsyism requires both recognition of past harm and action in the present; structural change needs cross-sector partnerships—between Roma communities, institutions, educators, and culture-makers; visibility and voice are not optional; they are the building blocks of justice.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Antigypsyism in Italy is not only a legacy of the past—it remains embedded in public policies, social narratives, and institutional practices today. Despite Italy's legal and strategic commitments, segregation, forced evictions, discriminatory rhetoric and spatial exclusion persist, often under the guise of "emergency measures" or "security policies."

The examples in this brochure show that Roma-led, inclusive, and justice-oriented approaches are not only possible but also effective. However, these initiatives remain fragile unless backed by political will, sustainable funding, and structural reform.

To truly combat antigypsyism and build democratic resilience, stakeholders must shift from integration "projects" to rights-based policies that dismantle exclusion and centre Roma voices.
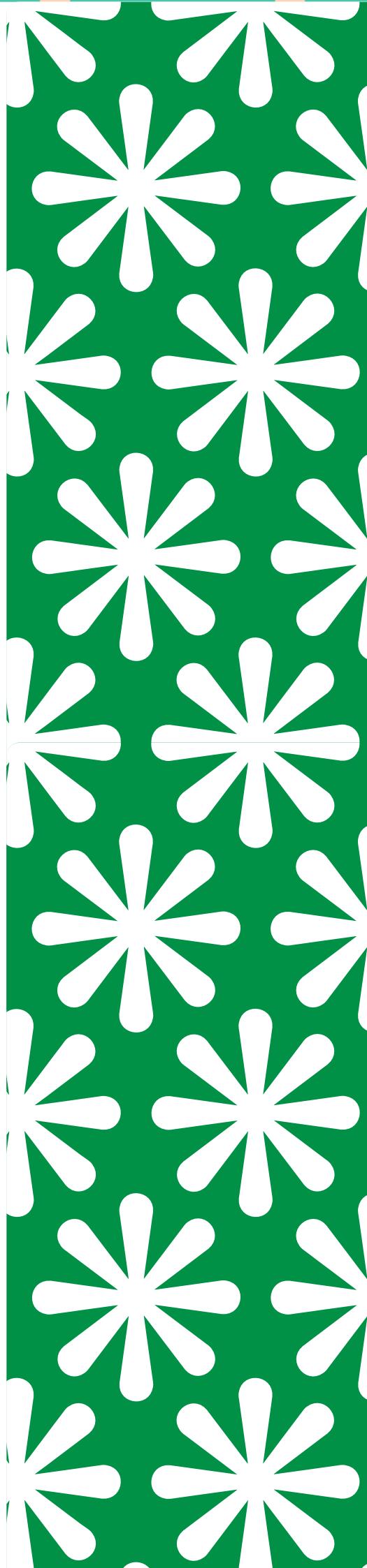
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

For National and Local Authorities:

- Dismantle segregated "nomad camps" and prohibit policies that institutionalise spatial apartheid.
- Recognise and address antigypsyism as a distinct form of racism in national and local strategies, in line with the EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020–2030.
- Ensure meaningful Roma participation in policy design, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Invest in Roma history education, including the Porrajmos, in school curricula, teacher training, and public commemorations.

For Institutions and Oversight Bodies:

- Strengthen accountability mechanisms to monitor discrimination and institutional racism (e.g., empower UNAR with enforcement tools).
- Track and sanction municipal practices that violate Roma rights (e.g., unlawful evictions, exclusion from social housing).
- Use EU tools (e.g., Article 7 TEU, Rule of Law Mechanism) to monitor structural antigypsyism and human rights violations.

For Civil Society and Media:

- Build alliances across movements (anti-racism, feminist, anti-fascist, housing justice) to fight antigypsyism as part of broader systemic oppression.
- Amplify Roma narratives, leadership, and memory work, including through culture, journalism, and public storytelling.
- Support youth engagement and community education as tools of collective empowerment.