

## Ensayo Científico



## Scope, Structure, Aspects of Antigypsyist Hate Speech Online: European Union context, monitoring and reporting

## Alcance, estructura y aspectos del discurso en línea de odio antigitanista: contexto de la Unión Europea, seguimiento y presentación de informes

**Selma Muhič Dizdarevič**

Department of Civil Society Studies of the Faculty of Humanities at the Charles University of Prague  
E-mail: selma.muhic@fhs.cuni.cz  
0000-0001-5620-7658

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56162/transdigital79>

Section: **Scientific Essay**

Date of receipt: 30/07/2021 | Date of acceptance: 15/09/2021

Article reference in APA style 7th edition:

Muhič Dizdarevič, S.(2020). Scope, Structure, Aspects of Antigypsyist Hate Speech Online – EU context, monitoring and reporting. *Transdigital*, 2(4), 1–24.  
<https://doi.org/10.56162/transdigital79>



Licencia [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)  
International License (CC BY 4.0)

# Abstract

This article aims to provide the relevant parameters of the phenomena of antigypsyism, online hate speech, and their connection. The parameters serve as background for finding out about the trends in online hate speech directed at the Roma community, the most important concepts and tropes regarding antigypsyism, and the relevant trends in antigypsyist online hate speech. The article will focus on the European Union context because it provides a comparative political and legal framework and possibilities of joint activities and policies to tackle Roma discrimination. By combining scholarly resources and governmental reports, monitoring and reporting collected through nongovernmental organizations, it is concluded that the phenomenon of online antigypsyism is getting stronger. It mirrors offline hate speech and is relatively poorly monitored. It is spread via all mainstream social media platforms whose record on its removal tends to oscillate. A brief section is dedicated to intersectional aspects of antigypsyist hate speech whose iterations in the digital space are under-researched.

**Keywords:** Antigypsyism; online hate speech; social media; Roma studies; nongovernmental organizations

# Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo proporcionar los parámetros relevantes de los fenómenos del antigitanismo, el discurso de odio en línea y su conexión. Los parámetros sirven como base para conocer las tendencias en el discurso de odio *online* dirigido a la comunidad romaní, los conceptos y tropos más importantes sobre el antigitanismo y las tendencias relevantes en el discurso de odio *online* antigitanos. El artículo se centrará en el contexto de la Unión Europea porque proporciona un marco político y jurídico comparativo y posibilidades de actividades y políticas conjuntas para abordar la discriminación contra los romaníes. Al combinar recursos académicos e informes gubernamentales, el seguimiento y los informes recopilados a través de organizaciones no gubernamentales, se concluye que el fenómeno

del antigitanismo *online* se está fortaleciendo. Refleja el discurso del odio *offline*, que está relativamente mal monitoreado. Se difunde a través de todas las principales plataformas de redes sociales cuyo historial de eliminación tiende a oscilar. Una breve sección está dedicada a los aspectos interseccionales del discurso de odio antigitanista cuyas iteraciones en el espacio digital están poco investigadas.

**Palabras clave:** Antigitanismo; discurso de odio en línea; redes sociales; estudios románicos; organizaciones no gubernamentales

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of antigypsyism has understandably attracted interest from numerous authors across scientific disciplines. It seems, however, that: a) a considerable amount of literature on antigypsyism comes from a variety of governmental and nongovernmental resources rather than from academic ones, and b) a limited number of references deal with this form of intolerance and hate in the online setting. This article will try to provide a synthetic approach based on available literature in combination with relevant reports and surveys in order to understand the online forms of antigypsyism. In regards to social context, the article is limited to the European Union Member States (EU).

As a specific form of racism directed at Roma people, antigypsyism does not exist only in an online setting, divorced from real-life conditions. The designation Roma is used in the article as an umbrella concept covering Roma, Sinti and Traveler communities. The interconnectedness between online and offline forms of hate speech and hate crime holds for all groups and individuals affected by online hate speech. Still, it is especially pertinent to the Roma communities, which tend to be affected by exclusion and poverty more than other minorities in the EU (Gómez & End, 2019). Thus to understand the online form of antigypsyism, we must consider Roma communities' reality, i.e., economic, social, and political aspects that affect the strength and nature of antigypsyism as such. That is why this article will provide a brief context of Roma communities' positions across the EU in their structural status in housing, health, job market access, and education. We should keep in

mind that Roma community is by no means monolithic and lives in vastly different countries in terms of their economic situation, historical background, and relation to the Roma minority. Many elements of antigypsyism, though are shared across communities.

In terms of the definition of antigypsyism, this article will work with the broad definition used by Alliance against Antigypsyism since Roma people themselves proposed it in their organized effort to counter it:

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 (Alliance, 2016, p. 5).

I am mentioning two other definitions used in the EU institutions to broaden the scope of the defined issue:

According to ECRI, antigypsyism is

*an especially persistent, violent, recurrent and commonplace form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanization and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatization and the most blatant kind of discrimination (ECRI, 2011, p. 1).*

In 2012, the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner defined antigypsyism as "the specific expression of biases, prejudices and stereotypes that motivate the everyday behavior of many members of majority groups towards the members of Roma and Traveler communities" (Lajčáková, Hojsík & Karoly, 2020, p. 14).

The working definition stresses aspects relevant to the phenomenon in the online setting. These are: painting all Roma with the same brush, assigning collective guilt to the whole community and each Roma individual, claiming that the essence of being Roma exists and negatively affects their ability to work or adapt to majority society, discriminating, segregating, excluding, ostracizing and calling for violence toward Roma people.

In addition to the definition of antigypsyism, we refer to a definition of hate speech which I selected because it is used across the EU documents, particularly when monitoring illegal hate speech online (see below).

Per the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation 97(20) on hate speech, the term "hate speech":

*shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin (CoE, 1997, p. 107).*

The online hate speech phenomenon gained visibility and prominence with expanding social media and various types of digital spaces. The parameters of online hate speech relevant for this article can be summarized in the following cluster of problems:

- Freedom of speech vs. anti-discrimination provisions. On the one end of this spectrum, we find proponents of unlimited freedom of speech even when it goes against legal requirements of anti-discrimination and other types of legally defined acts that call for sanctions. On the other end, we find problems of over-regulation, censorship, and counter-productive punitive measures (e.g., removal with no education on the reasons for the removal or counterspeech support). Although dependent on national legislations, generally hate speech acts punishable by law fall under the scope of “advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence” (International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights), incitement to racism (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination), genocide denial (in some states), etc.
- Illegal vs. harmful aspects of hate speech. Here again, we find a continuum of illegal online hate speech, defined by laws, traversing into harmful but legal speech. It is not possible or feasible to expect hate speech to be regulated exclusively via legal means. It is time-consuming, expensive, and often connected to fears of police/authorities to use legal means in all cases. That's why there is a need for a broader coalition of engaged citizens (through formal and informal associations online and offline) to identify, tackle and educate about harmful aspects of hate speech.
- Profitability vs. social responsibility. Social media, which nestle hate speech, are almost exclusively run by companies whose primary goal is to increase profit. However, there is growing pressure for the companies, which provide platforms and host different content providers, to assume corporate social responsibility for identifying, reporting, removing, and remedying hate speech. See more in the section on the monitoring activities.

Going back to antigypsyism, I should point out that the issue of antigypsyism is nearly universal in the Member States and beyond. According to Loveland and Popescu:

*The Roma represent, in the words of James Goldston, Europe's "quintessential minority" (2002, p. 147; see also Tileaga, 2006a). Without a "mother state" to represent them, historically marginalized and vilified, the Roma are the largest minority in Europe. "Their renown as musicians, dancers, and palm-readers" Goldston argues, "is surpassed only by the near-universal belief among the Gadze –or non-Roma–that Gypsies are also liars, thieves and cheats" (2002, p. 146) (Loveland & Popescu 2016, p. 330).*

## 2. Context of antigypsyism

This section will provide a short historical account for understanding the Roma people's current situation. It will be then explain the social and economic challenges Roma people face in the EU Member State countries. Understanding circumstances in which most Roma people live is both the background of online antigypsyism and a possible basis for counterspeech and educational activities.

For historical background, It will be draw on factsheets on Romany history created by the University of Graz (n.d) and structured in the report produced within the sCan project (2018).

Sinti and Roma people have been living in Europe for more than six centuries. Persecution of Romani people started soon after their first arrival in Europe. In the regions Wallachia and Moldova (contemporary Romania), 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. In the Habsburg-controlled areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which included the present-day Czech

Republic, Romani people were historically "hardly tolerated" – in practice, this meant many Roma people had to navigate a complicated double bind of not being allowed to settle anywhere for a long while simultaneously being maligned for living itinerantly.

According to Nils Muižnieks,

*Roma were banned from the Holy Roman Empire in 1501 and, as of this date, could be caught and killed by any citizen. In France, Louis XIV decreed in 1666 that all Gypsy males should be sent for life to galleys without trial, that women should be sterilized and children put into poorhouses. In Spain, it was decided in 1749 to detain all Roma in operation known as the "Great Gypsy Round-Up" (CoE, 2015, p. 2).*

He also states that Roma children were removed from families in Switzerland in more recent times and that Roma people in camps in France were not liberated right after the end of WWII, but were kept in detention until 1946 while some Roma survivors of Nazi concentration camps were deprived of nationality long after the war ended. The violence accumulated throughout centuries culminated in Porajmos – the Roma Holocaust – in which, in some countries, 90% of the Roma population disappeared (CoE, 2015). Despite this, the overall Roma history in general and the Roma Holocaust in particular remain on the sidelines of mainstream history to the extent that sometimes the Roma Holocaust is referred to as the forgotten Holocaust. According to Council of Europe (CoE), "public knowledge about the history and culture of this nation, which numerically is the largest minority in Europe, is still marginal or inexistent among ordinary people" (CoE, n.d., p. 1)

According to the Fundamental Rights Agency Survey from 2012, Roma represent the most numerous European minority of 10-12 million people. It is thus very problematic that at the same time, they are the most marginalized, impoverished and excluded group. One in three covered by the survey is unemployed, 20% have no health insurance, and a staggering 90% live below the poverty line (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2012). Roma are most numerous in the following European (EU and non-EU states) as a national



minority: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain (FRA 2012, p. 4). Roma are also migrants, mostly from Romania, Bulgaria and ex-Yugoslav countries, migrating to EU countries such as Italy and France. While when in a position of a national minority, Roma are typically citizens of the given countries, the situation is very different when they are in the position of both EU (e.g., Romanian Roma migrating to Italy) or non-EU migrants (e.g., Kosovo Roma relocating to France). More about intersection of being a Roma and a migrant will be explained in the part on intersectionality.

The FRA Roma pilot survey covered Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain. The UNDP, World Bank and European Commission (UNDP/World Bank/EC) regional Roma survey also covered five of these, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and, in addition, six non- EU countries in the Western Balkans and Moldova. We will briefly summarize the results in several selected areas relevant for understanding the connection between online and offline hate directed at Roma. The reason why data from 2012 is presented (FRA, 2012, p.12), but not from the Second EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey from 2016 is that the survey from 2012 was broader in scope and that the results have not significantly changed, compare with FRA (2016).

- In education: during compulsory school age, except for Bulgaria, Greece and Romania, nine out of 10 Roma children aged 7 to 15 are reported to be in school; participation in education drops considerably after compulsory school: only 15 % of young Roma adults surveyed complete upper-secondary general or vocational education.
- In employment: on average, fewer than one out of three Roma are reported to be in paid employment; one out of three Roma respondents said that they are unemployed; others said that they are homemakers, retired, not able to work, or self-employed.

- In health: one out of three Roma respondents aged 35 to 54 report health problems limiting their daily activities; on average, about 20 % of Roma respondents are not covered by medical insurance or do not know if they are covered.
- In housing: about 45 % of the Roma live in households that lack at least one of the following basic housing amenities, namely an indoor kitchen, indoor toilet, indoor shower or bath and electricity.
- Poverty: on average, about 90 % of the Roma surveyed live in households with an equalized income below national poverty lines; on average, around 40 % of Roma live in households where somebody had to go to bed hungry at least once in the last month since they could not afford to buy food.
- Discrimination and rights awareness: about half of the Roma surveyed said that they had experienced discrimination in the past 12 months because of their ethnic background; around 40 % of the Roma surveyed are aware of laws forbidding discrimination against ethnic minority people when applying for a job.

Particularly worrisome findings, relevant for the online antigypsyism, of numerous reports on the position of the Roma population, are: poverty with the corresponding limited access to various sources, including the digital ones (more specifically digital literacy and digital divide) and low level of grassroots organizing within the Roma community (due to discrimination, lack of trust in the institutions, including police and legal system).

The digital divide and inequality have been increasingly researched in the context of vulnerable and socially excluded communities (Gilbert, 2010; Van Dijk, 2005). The digital divide is not anymore only about resources in terms of possession of devices or internet access/data poverty, but also about the users and their digital skills and safety. One of the rare studies that focused on Roma/Gitano ICT use and inclusion (albeit only among Spanish adolescents) concludes that:

*In short, although these children have access to devices, inequality essentially takes the form of an absence of digital skills that could allow them to benefit*

*from other opportunities provided by the digital environment. As for protection, this group displays a striking level of digital vulnerability in relative terms, with families rarely regulating their use of technology. Most parents lack the digital skills to be able to supervise or mentor their children's online activity (Garmendia & Karrera, 2019, p. 28).*

### **3. Online hate speech – monitoring activities and reports**

Companies are increasingly embarking on implementing the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Tilt, 2016). The essence of this corporate policy is responsibility and interest in the communities, among which companies and organizations make a profit. In this vein, we should regard the efforts of the European Commission (EC) to establish responsibility for illegal hate speech removal on various social networks and other platforms. The participation of the companies tested within the monitoring is voluntary. In May 2016, the Commission agreed with Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube on a Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online. In the course of 2018, Instagram, Snapchat and Dailymotion joined the Code of Conduct. Jeuxvideo.com joined in January 2019, and TikTok announced their participation in the Code in September 2020 (European Commission, n.d.). The Commission defined the categories of hate speech to be monitored on the platforms, with antigypsyism being one of them. The monitoring exercise is carried out by the selected nongovernmental organizations in the individual Member States. Besides, some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) carry out their own independent monitoring.

The shortcomings of the monitoring exercise can be summarized as not representative (low number of entries); platforms are usually informed that their removal policy would be tested in the given period; the limited expertise of the NGOs involved (NGOs usually specialize in monitoring hate speech against some groups and not the other). In addition, the NGOs engaged in hate speech monitoring have repeatedly pointed out that social media companies must be more transparent in disclosing which technological tools

of moderation they design and use, particularly how they relate to artificial intelligence (the algorithm) that both removes the content automatically and is used to train human moderators. The companies have argued that the algorithm is their specific know-how covered by intellectual property/trade secrets regulations.

The new Digital Service Act (DSA 2020) proposed by the European Commission on 15 December 2020 and currently under examination by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union envisages the establishment of national Digital Service Coordinators and the European Board for Digital Services. The forthcoming (September 2021) call from European NGOs to the Members of the European Parliament and the representatives of the Member States warns about the necessity to secure genuine independence of the future coordinators. It also proposes a right for organizations and NGO representatives to appeal to the EU Court of Justice.

However, the monitoring exercise does provide the critical signal that platforms are held responsible for managing the content and provide NGOs with some leverage to tackle hate speech. To understand the scope and structure of antigypsyist online hate speech, I will be draw data from 1. The EU monitoring exercise statistics, 2. The report produced by sCan project (from both EC and independent monitoring), and 3. From the Roma Civil Monitor Synthesis Report.

During the first three monitoring exercises out of the total of five, carried out in 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively, the category antigypsyism was not included as a possible ground for hate speech. In 2019 (the results of the 2021 monitoring are still pending ), when the category was introduced, it ranked 4th after xenophobia, sexual orientation and anti-Muslim hate (European Commission, 2019). In the 5th monitoring exercise evaluation, the "ranking" was sexual orientation, xenophobia (including anti-migrant hate) and antigypsyism (European Commission, 2020).

Considering only a few organizations specialized in online antigypsyism are involved in the monitoring exercise, it is consider this ranking worrisome. It testifies to the fact that

antigypsyism is a prominent type of hate present throughout the EU (the Commission does not desegregate data according to the Member States).

According to sCan project report on antigypsyism online, which covered seven countries (Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia), the most common narrative related to antigypsyist hate speech online can be clustered in three groups of slurs: criminalization, welfare chauvinism and dehumanization (sCan, 2018). First used by Andersend and Bjørklund in their article from 1990, the concept of welfare chauvinism can be summarized as welfare provisions, services and system in general should be restricted to our own group. They should exclude Roma or migrants because they are perceived as not contributing and abusing the social welfare system. Examples' range can be gauged from the following materials: an article at an Austrian travel advice portal asserted that people traveling to Macedonia should be cautious with their possessions in the presence of Roma people, because "Roma are often dependent on bettering their modest living conditions through property crime." Furthermore, Sinti and Roma families are often denounced as "gangs of thieves" or "gangs of beggars". 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.

In the Czech Republic, one of the code words for Roma are "inadaptables", related to one of the widely spread forms of antigypsyist hate speech referring to the claim that Roma people can never adopt and adapt to the majority culture. Hence, no policies work or will work because their culture does not allow them to become equal members of society. This culture is defined by claims that Roma people are lazy, work-shy and dependent on social benefits either as migrants or as national minorities. This in turn leads to welfare chauvinism and demands to exclude Roma from the social aid system.

Another common narrative in antigypsyist hate speech identified by the report (sCan, 2018, p. 14) is the alleged (genetic) inferiority of Sinti and Romani people, which testifies to the dehumanization trend. Sinti and Roma 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*.

An especially persistent trend in antigypsyism is denying, mocking or supporting Roma Holocaust. Some examples from the report detect this trend: 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.

Online hatred is spreading mainly via the usual platforms, e.g., *Facebook, Twitter* and *YouTube*, although this might vary in individual countries. Besides the platforms, hate can be found in blogs and particularly in comments under the media outlets' content (e.g., articles). In some cases, such as in the Czech Republic, hate content targets senior citizens by sending emails, which they evaluate as more credible since they usually know persons who dispatch such emails. In France, there is a whole separate internet space for spreading hate, which has already been labeled as *fachosphère*.

Fake news/hoaxes and de-contextualization are further prominent tools for spreading hate. The report refers to some examples: 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 for free or protecting them from being arrested for stealing if the economic value of the stolen goods is below €200. Another popular fake news report alleged that Romani people are given villas to live in and 1000 € per month from the state. Some fake news is recycled with suspicious regularity. The de-contextualization example in the Czech Republic relates to a 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. How persistent and rooted in real life these prejudices are can be observed in various surveys such as the one conducted by Slovak Academy of Science from 2019, which determined that 80% of the sample believes that Roma have access to benefits they do not deserve. Furthermore, 64% believes Roma steal and are lazy (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020, p. 16).

Roma Civil Monitor (RCM) Synthesis Report, which covers information on the progress of Roma integration in 27 Member States, is a result of observations of 90 NGOs and individual experts. Even more relevant is the fact that many of those 90 represent Roma organizations. We will focus here on the part of the report related to hate speech. Thus, the report says that:

*A high number of the RCM reports attest to the prevalence and rising incidence of hate speech towards the Roma in the media and on social media. There appears to be a rising trend of online hate speech and antigypsyism directed at the Roma. The Spanish report notes with some pertinence that "a cursory look at existing platforms shows us that they reproduce the same phenomena, power relations, inequalities and injustices that exist in offline society (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020, p. 18).*

And concludes that some of the racism has become casual and entered into everyday language. Furthermore, both Lithuanian and Portuguese reports show normalization of hate speech directed at Roma. The latter says that it became almost patriotic to say that one is against Roma and spread this view on Facebook. It stresses also that *Facebook* is a great platform for sharing fake news and legitimize hate online. The RCM Spanish report goes as far as to say that if there is no coordinated and focused effort to fight antigypsyism online, it might lead to horrible events that happened in the 40s of the previous century. It is noteworthy that the same report questions the quality of monitoring activities regarding EU Code of Conduct mentioned above – despite signing the Code, at least in Spain the platforms failed to react to antigypsyist hate speech. That is in accordance to sCan report ROMEA's finding that posts targeting Romani ethnicity were the least frequently deleted (sCan, 2018, p. 13).

In the light of the findings of this section of the comparative report, the FRA conclusion seems highly relevant:

*EU Member States should develop concrete measures to tackle hate crime and hate speech motivated by antigypsyism. Such measures should ensure that Roma, like everyone else, are aware of and can benefit from the protection of the law against hate crime and hate speech (FRA, 2018, p. 12).*

## 4. Antigypsyism and intersectionality

It is consider important to refer to some aspects of the intersectionality of antigypsyism, including its form online. The concept of intersectionality introduced originally within the feminist discourse (Crenshaw, 1989) refers to discrimination and oppression based on more than one feature of the perceived identity of an individual or a community. When it comes to antigypsyism, intersectional hate has the following vital aspects: hate speech is directed at individuals and groups both by the majority and by minority (women, LGBT+). It will be,



therefore, briefly said something about hate speech directed at Roma women and the LGBT+ Roma community.

Intersectionality applied to Roma women has taken some aspects of their Romany identity and poverty/gender into account in research literature but almost never gender/ethnicity (race)/class (Kóczé, 2019, p. 14). According to FRA's Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Roma women in nine EU Member States, published in 2019, and providing data from Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain, gender dimension in reports and policies on Roma population is often disregarded or underreported (FRA, 2019, p. 41) In some countries, Roma women are still disproportionately affected by early marriage, impacting their education and job prospects. A survey carried out in the Czech Republic found that Roma women accept the traditional view of gender roles but also that there is a growing awareness of women's rights among them (Slovo 21, 2014).

Disregard for the gender dimension and pressures within Roma community coming from men is perhaps the reason why we have so little information about hate speech directed at Roma women. An example of this compounding hate combining misogyny and antigypsyism can be found in the sCan Intersectional Hate Speech Online report. In an example from Italy, a Roma woman was accused of stealing and disparaged with the slurs *Zingara* (engl: gypsy) and *puttana* (engl: whore) on social media. Additionally, the post expressed insulting, overgeneralized statements against Roma people. The misogynist slur *whore* would not be used against a man in Italian (sCan, 2019 p. 6).

According to the Czech ROMA LGBT nongovernmental organization ARA ART (2021), in Roma tradition, the issues of sexuality, including different sexual orientations, are a strong taboo. People with homosexual identity are under pressure from their communities and are often excluded from them. Therefore, they experience triple discrimination: as Roma, as gay persons and as gay Roma in their own community. Again, according to the sCan report's example from France, "another element of this intersectional hate speech is the existence of a racist hate speech amongst the LGBTI+ community. The Instagram account *Personnes racisées Vs Grindr* (Racialized people vs Grindr) created by the journalist Miguel Shema,

identifies and collects the racist messages sent to users on the private platform and denounces a *fetishisation* of People of Colour on the dating app" (sCAN, 2018, pp. 8-9).

In the Czech Republic, there was a rift in online comments under a *Facebook* post by a Roma woman who criticized a picture of a Roma man holding the rainbow flag. She commented that it was a shame for the community and received some support. Finally, it will be referred to the intersection between Roma identity and migrant status in the EU Member States. Although discrimination of Roma migrants in the Western EU states is well documented, we have few if any comprehensive reports on how it reflects on hate speech within online settings. According to an article by Yildiz and De Genova, "Thus, in Europe's most glamorous globalized cities, such as London, Paris, Berlin, and Milan, Roma migrants are routinely engaged in onerous, low-paid, often unsafe jobs during the day, while not uncommonly finding themselves homeless by night, often sleeping outdoors or in makeshift camps." (Yildiz & de Genova 2018, p. 434).

The accession of Bulgaria and Romania (countries with the highest numbers of Roma population in the EU), a massive exodus of the Roma population happened, particularly to Western Europe's countries, most notably to Italy, France, Germany and the UK. During the economic crisis of 2008, "the clash of Roma immigrants living on the edge of poverty became a flashpoint, which deepened and intensified anti-Roma sentiments among the peoples of those countries and contributed to the radicalization of policies towards the Roma" (Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, 2015, p. 115). The nexus of Roma and migrant identities reflects on the question of EU identity and citizenship and often triggers hate speech online directed at both Roma and the EU, which allowed for freedom of movement of EU citizens, including Roma.

It should be mentioned a worrisome trend of normalization of hate speech directed at Roma by politicians and prominent public personalities both on online platforms and in media. For example, in the Czech Republic, MP for the extreme right party, Freedom and Direct Democracy, called a Roma concentration camp on Czech territory from WWII – a pseudo concentration camp. The President of the mentioned party called for the mass transfer of the Roma population from Czech lands to India. Such remarks are dangerous not only because

of their content and because of the power those who utter them have, but also because they usually trigger a torrent of online hate, which the politicians often consciously provoke.

## 5. Conclusions

The article identified the following features and trends when it comes to antigypsyist hate online. Based on the definition that implies essentializing and collective guilt of Roma people, it can be said that online antigypsyism is rooted both in the history of Roma people in European countries and in concrete, material, economic and social discrimination they experience offline. Their offline deprivation has consequences for online hate, counterspeech and choice of tools to tackle antigypsyism. If Roma communities are with high regularity poor and under-educated, it is needed special tools to reach the population and get it engaged. If a high percentage of Roma people experience institutional discrimination, it is only understandable they will be suspicious when it comes to cooperation in the matters of reporting and removal of hate speech online.

Roma are not a homogenous group and this article is well aware of that. However, in the online setting, it can be seen some trends that created a pattern on the EU level. These are criminalization, dehumanization, welfare chauvinism, othering and exclusion. Within online hate speech, Roma people are presented as criminals and a crime from a single Roma is seen as a guilt of the whole community. Particularly persistent is the trope of Roma as thieves. Dehumanization, a process that played a key role in Roma genocide during the WWII, is visible in insulting Roma by calling them animals, vermin, pest, and unhygienic. Their humanity is denied and they are not perceived as belonging to the same human/national community as the rest. This is visible in the malicious myth about Roma stealing children or not taking care of their own children. Welfare chauvinism is a part of the trope that sees Roma as parasites and swindlers of the social benefits. It is one of the most persistent tropes regularly recycled in hoaxes and disinformation materials. Roma are being called online *the inadaptables*, those who are so *other* that they cannot participate in the majority society. This is presented as a fact that cannot change. All these features of online hate speech against

Roma come from and lead to their exclusion from society, sometimes by calling for their complete removal from a particular country.

According to the findings, antigypsyism online is on the increase and there is a continuous trend of normalization of hate speech against Roma. This is evident in hate speech and policies formulated by people in power, such as politicians. They participate in spreading Roma Holocaust denial together with other citizens. Roma Holocaust denial is related to the identified lack of awareness of what happened to Roma community during the WWII, which prompts the name *the forgotten Holocaust*.

The platforms used for spreading anti-Roma hate speech do not differ much from other types of hate speech. There are some reports from NGOs monitoring hate speech online that antigypsyist hate speech is not addressed or is not removed at the rate usual for other forms of hate. European Commission itself introduced antigypsyism as a monitored category for illegal hate speech with its Code of Conduct monitoring exercises only in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> monitoring cycle. The tools used to spread antigypsyism online are hoaxes, fake news and disinformation materials. In some countries, chain emails are directed at particular groups of citizens, e.g., senior citizens, to stalk hate and confusion.

Finally, intersectional aspects of antigypsyism online can be observed as a constant trend. However, there is a lack of data focusing on monitoring this *compounded* type of hate. That goes particularly for Roma women, LGBT+ Roma community and Roma who are in the position of regular or irregular migrants in the EU countries.

## Acknowledgements

This publication was supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports - Institutional Support for Long-term Development of Research Organizations - Charles University, Faculty of Humanities (2020) and by the Project Re-ACT, funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC 2014-2020).

# References

Alliance against Antigypsyism. (2016). *Antigypsyism - a reference paper*.  
<https://secureservercdn.net/192.169.221.188/abv.a52.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Antigypsyism-reference-paper-16.06.2017.pdf>

ARA ART (2021). <https://www.araart.cz/cs/roma-lgbt>

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

Council of Europe. (1997). *RECOMMENDATION No. R (97) 20*.  
[https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680505d5b](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680505d5b)

Council of Europe. (n.d.). *Roma History/Holocaust*. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/roma-history/-/holocaust>

Crenshaw, K. (1989) Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics, *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(8). <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>

Data from the 4th monitoring exercise evaluation.  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/code\\_of\\_conduct\\_factsheet\\_7\\_web.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/code_of_conduct_factsheet_7_web.pdf)

Data from the 5th monitoring exercise evaluation.  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/codeofconduct\\_2020\\_factsheet\\_12.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/codeofconduct_2020_factsheet_12.pdf)

Digital Service Act, 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=COM:2020:825:FIN>

Muhič Dizdarevič, S.(2020). Scope, Structure, Aspects of Antigypsyist Hate Speech Online – EU context, monitoring and reporting. *Transdigital*, 2(4), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.56162/transdigital79>

ECRI. (2011). *General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on Combating Anti-Gypsyism and Discrimination Against Roma*. <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-13-on-combating-anti-gypsyism-an/16808b5aee>

European Commission, n.d. *The EU Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online*. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-code-conduct-countering-illegal-hate-speech-online\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-code-conduct-countering-illegal-hate-speech-online_en)

European Commission (2019). *Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online – Results of the fourth monitoring exercise*. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/code\\_of\\_conduct\\_factsheet\\_7\\_web.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/code_of_conduct_factsheet_7_web.pdf)

European Commission (2020). *Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online – Results of the fifth monitoring exercise*. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/codeofconduct\\_2020\\_factsheet\\_12.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/codeofconduct_2020_factsheet_12.pdf)

FRA. (2016). *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey – Roma Selected Findings*. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/second-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey-roma-selected-findings>

FRA. (2018). *A persisting concern: antigypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion*. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b262c438-387b-11e8-b5fe-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

FRA. (2019). *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Roma women in nine EU Member States*. [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2019-eu-minorities-survey-roma-women\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-eu-minorities-survey-roma-women_en.pdf)

FRA, UNDP. (2012). *The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States*. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2012/situation-roma-11-eu-member-states-survey-results-glance>

Muhič Dizdarevič, S.(2020). Scope, Structure, Aspects of Antigypsyist Hate Speech Online – EU context, monitoring and reporting. *Transdigital*, 2(4), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.56162/transdigital79>

Garmendia, M., & Karrera, I. (2019). ICT Use and Digital Inclusion among Roma/Gitano Adolescents. *Media and Communication*, 7(1), 22-31. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v7i1.1624>

Gilbert, M. (2010). Theorizing digital and urban inequalities: Critical geographies of 'race', gender, and technological capital. *Information, Communication and Society*, 13(7). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2010.499954>

Goméz, C., End, M (eds.), (2019). *Dimensions of antigypsyism in Europe*. European Network Against Racism and the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma.

Kóczé, A. (2009). *Missing Intersectionality. Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Current Research and Policies on Romani Women in Europe*. Center for Policy Studies, Central European University. <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/cps-policy-study-missing-intersectionality-2009.pdf>

Lájčaková, J, Hojsík, M, Karoly, M (2020). *Combating Antigypsyism*. European Commission. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/post2020\\_eu\\_roma\\_in\\_antigypsyism.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/post2020_eu_roma_in_antigypsyism.pdf)

Loveland, M. T., & Popescu, D. (2016). The Gypsy Threat Narrative: Explaining Anti-Roma Attitudes in the European Union. *Humanity & Society*, 40(3), 329–352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597615601715>

Roma Civil Monitor, (2020). *A synthesis of civil society's reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union. Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy*. <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3172/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-synthesis27-2020-eprint-fin.pdf>

sCan project (2018). *Antigypsyism on the Internet*. <http://scan-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/scan-antigypsyism.pdf>

sCan project (2019). *Intersectional Hate Speech Online*. [http://scan-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/sCAN\\_intersectional\\_hate\\_final.pdf](http://scan-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/sCAN_intersectional_hate_final.pdf)

Muhič Dizdarevič, S.(2020). Scope, Structure, Aspects of Antigypsyist Hate Speech Online – EU context, monitoring and reporting. *Transdigital*, 2(4), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.56162/transdigital79>

Slovo 21 (2014). *Position of Roma Women in the Czech Republic – Research Results*. <http://www.slovo21.cz/images/dokumenty/POSITION%20OF%20ROMA%20WOMEN%20IN%20THE%20CZECH%20REPUBLIC%20-%20RESEARCH%20RESULTS.pdf>

Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, J. (2015). Roma immigrants in western europe – the example of france and italy. *Politeja*, 31/2, 111–122. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24919779>

Tilt, C.A. (2016). Corporate social responsibility research: the importance of context. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 1(2) <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-016-0003-7>

University of Graz (2021). *Factsheets on Romani History*. [http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/?l\\_history=en#history](http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/?l_history=en#history)

Van Dijk, J. (2005). *The deepening divide: Inequality in the information society*. Sage Publishing.

Yıldız,C., & De Genova, N. (2018). Un/Free mobility: Roma migrants in the European Union. *Social Identities*, 24(4), 425-441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1335819>.

Muhič Dizdarevič, S.(2020). Scope, Structure, Aspects of Antigypsyist Hate Speech Online – EU context, monitoring and reporting. *Transdigital*, 2(4), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.56162/transdigital79>