



THE TRACER PROJECT: FOUNDATIONS AND OVERVIEW

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Trasformative Roma Art and Culture for European Remembrance (TRACER)

CERV Programme (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Value)
May 2022-September 2024



Poland	Portugal	Italy
Krakow - Oswiecim	Braga	Bologna - Modena
	Figueira da Foz	Firenze - Prato
		Napoli

Which History? Holocaust/Porraimos

Several reasons for this choice:

- The holocaust is still an event that is difficult to understand.
- It was not the result of a momentary madness, but was conceived within a rational modern society. That is why it is a problem of this society and this culture (Bauman 1992)
- Dealing with the subject of the Holocaust means reasoning about the way institutions and members of contemporary society act, in which 'evil', according to Arendt (1991), takes the ordinary form of everyday life.
- The holocaust was a way to rationalise racism and define those who are 'different' as pathological, dangerous and worthy of elimination. In this idea of the 'different' as being 'pathological', is the history of the Roma and Sinti people, who have always embodied the symbol of diversity and for this reason have been subject to a process of stigmatisation. The Roma and Sinti people suffered discrimination long before the Nazi persecutions of the last century.
- The history of the Second World War, with the Holocaust, can provide an explanation of the current discrimination against the Roma and Sinti people.
- Remember the genocide is an imperative commitment in a society immersed in the present. Direct witnesses of what happened in the concentration camps are inevitably few and part of public opinion regards the Holocaust as a distant event, with few references to current events and casting no shadows on the future.

TRACER : AN ACTION-RESEARCH, A PROCESS

Promote → bring out knowledge

Activate → project, plan and change



ACTION RESEARCH

One fundamental principle of action-research is the promotion of **autonomy and empowerment among social actors** and the **collaborative construction of knowledge**.

In Tracer the main actors are **Roma** and non-Roma youth and adolescents from Italy, Portugal and Poland, in a process of co-construction of knowledge and change.

The target of the project is also subject of the research. Knowledge is produced collectively by youth and adolescents (Roma and not Roma), deconstructing the role of "specialist" normally assigned to scientist, and from this group it is shared with others. In this case this is achieved through a structured process involving **investigation, action, reflexivity, and (trans)formation**.

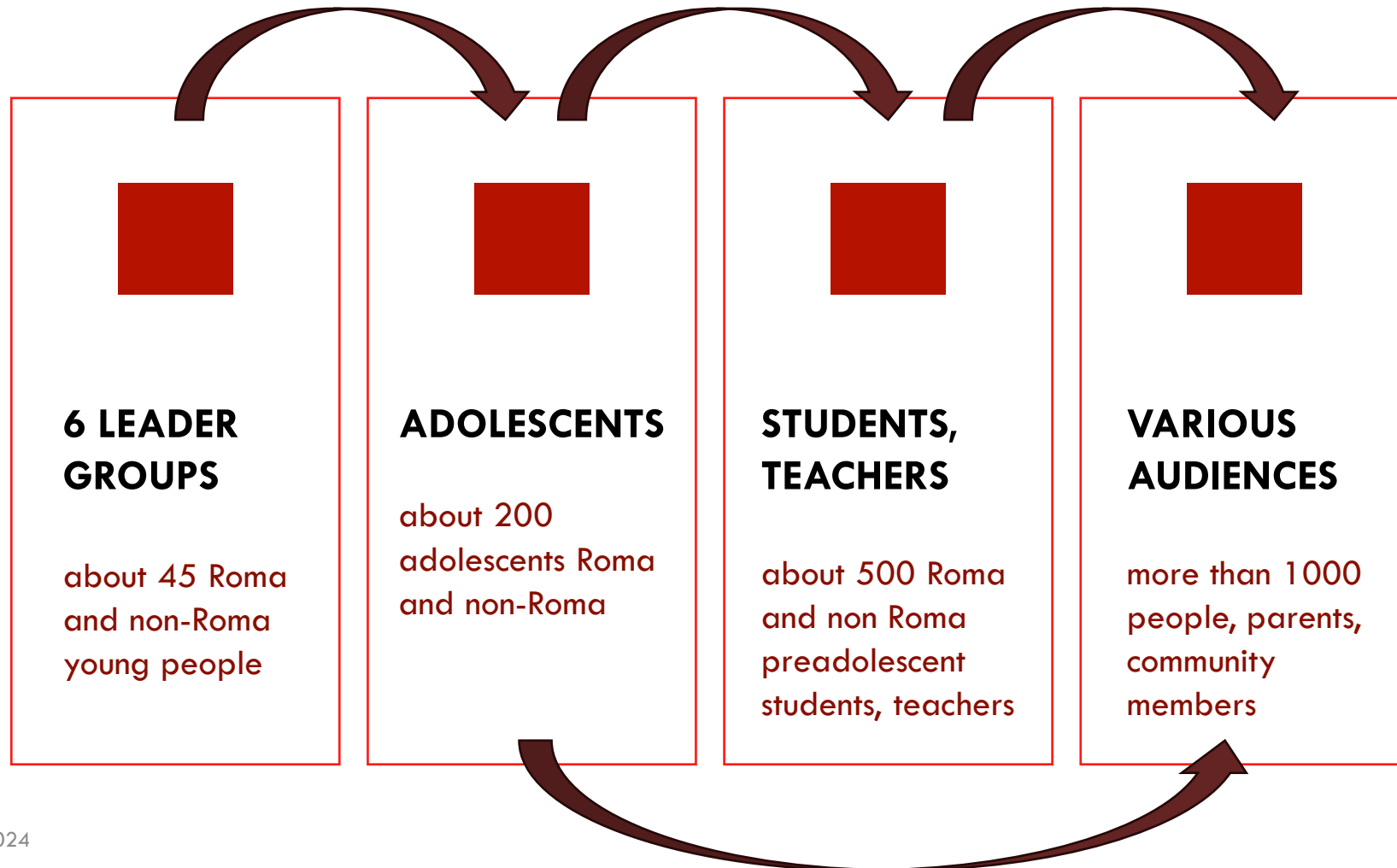


THE PROJECT AIMS TO:

- **mobilize groups of Roma and not Roma adolescents/young adults** (male and female) to collect narratives in Italy, Portugal and Poland about the Holocaust and Roma genocide.
- **Reconstructing and documenting the history of the Holocaust** through search in online national and international libraries and with interviews with significant witnesses from the Roma and non-Roma community and visiting significant Holocaust memorial sites.
- **Making young people (Roma and not Roma), aware of a history that links the Roma communities to Europe** and re-evaluating Roma membership in the EU.
- **Activating teenagers** (Roma and not Roma) to be trainers/informers through the construction of an artistic event on genocide aimed at a wide audience (graffiti, music, theatre, film/documentary, etc.) and increasing young people's awareness of peace and universal human rights.
- **Producing knowledge through training and educational workshops on genocide in schools** with Roma preadolescents, students and multi-ethnic classes.
- **Promoting reflection on the construction of prejudice and discrimination**

The construction of knowledge is not neutral, but political, based on the values

The logic behind the project is to spread knowledge of the Holocaust through a process of awareness and empowerment that starts with a group of Roma and non-Roma teenagers/young people and that cascades into a wider audience.



SOME ACTIONS

- Collection of historical informal documentation/researches
- Interviews with elderly members of the Roma community (grandparents, relatives) or significant leaders
- Training on Holocaust, History and Remembrance
- Training on action research
- Visit to Auschwitz – Birkenau and workshops in situ on discrimination and construction of prejudice
- Education workshops with students (adolescents and preadolescent) in school
- Workshops with teachers
- Performance and artistic events
- Production of videos, a book, a docu-film



CONTEXT AND IDENTITY

The history of Roma people is often not included in school curricula, and the Roma Holocaust, also known as the Porrajmos, is a topic that receives little attention.

Consequently, many Roma youth are unaware of this tragic chapter in history. Even the Roma community is not aware of what happened during the Second World War, and non-Roma people also lack knowledge about the Porrajmos.

„KTO NIE PAMIĘTA HISTORII SKAZANY JEST
NA JEJ PONOWNE PRZEŻYCIE”

GEORGE SANTAYANA

“THOSE WHO DO NOT REMEMBER THE PAST
ARE CONDEMNED TO REPEAT IT”

GEORGE SANTAYANA

The history of the Roma people is a story of discrimination and prejudice that has built through time

In many European countries, at least one in two harbors feelings of hatred towards Sinti and Roma (Pew Research Center, 2019).

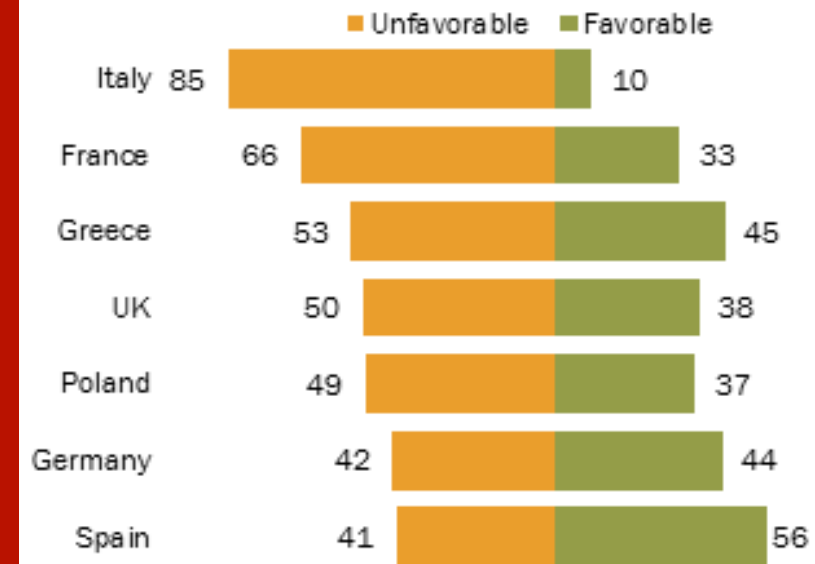
Antigypsyism is the most widespread form of racism towards Roma communities and feeds on stereotypes and prejudices built over the centuries and strengthened during Nazism and fascism. Hatred still affects Roma and Sinti who live in the present, although their history has always been deeply connected with the history of Europe. Knowing Roma history means showing Roma contribution to the construction of European cultural heritage and showing that prejudice is historically constructed across time.

ANTI-ROMA SENTIMENTS COMMON (PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2015)

There are similar ideological differences on attitudes toward specific minority groups. One of the groups that received particularly negative ratings in our survey was the Roma - a group that has often lived on the fringes of society in European countries and is sometimes referred to as Gypsies. There have been high profile controversies involving Roma communities in recent years in Italy, France, Greece and other countries, and public opinion leans negative toward the Roma in five of the seven nations polled. In Italy, fully 85% express an unfavorable opinion.

Unfavorable Views of Roma Widespread

% with a ___ view of Roma in their country



Note: In United Kingdom, asked as "Gypsies or Roma."

Source: Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey. Q37b.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

SOME ELOQUENT IMAGES OF DISCRIMINATION IN ITALY

The link between the Roma Holocaust and the prejudice that still accompanies the Roma community highlights the importance of educating about the past to combat present injustice.

"We easily blame the extermination of the past, but silence is maintained with respect to the ethnocide taking place in the present, with young Sinti and Roma girls and boys who feel conflicted between declaring themselves and enduring the constant denigration, or remaining silent and silently assimilating".



Collaborative research between Academia and Society

This project can count on an exceptional partnership:

- Public institutional partners in charge of higher education (Academies): **University of Bologna and of Florence** in Italy; **University of Braga** in Portugal
- The **High Commission for Migration, Public Institution**, directly dependent of the Presidency of the Ministers Council of Portugal, that works for the integration of the immigrants and ethnic groups in particular, the Roma Communities;
- two **social cooperatives of third sector (OpenGroup and CAT** in Italy) that have been working for years on the integration of the Roma population in educational projects in cooperation with the municipalities of Bologna and Florence (Prato), especially in Italian nomadic settlements;
- two **Roma associations (Stowarzyszenie Romów W Polsce** in Poland and **Ribaltambição** Associação para a Igualdade de Género nas Comunidades Ciganas in Portugal) working on the rights of Roma people.
- an **Association** “Chi rom e...chi no” (Italy) working to support the active participation of Romani people through the constitution of committees open to Roma and not-Roma people, making alliance with national and international organisations advocating for inclusive policies which overcome the “camp approach”/nomadic settlements.

SOME STRENGTHS OF THIS KIND OF RESEARCH

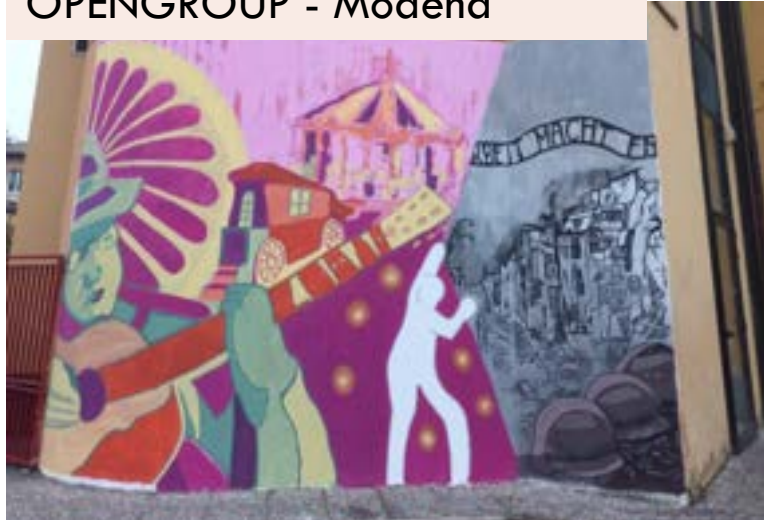
- Without Roma associations and NGOs, it would not have been possible to involve the Roma community and youth. To involve the Roma communities we need a relationship of trust, a relationship built over time.
- Building a very strong link between the Roma community and the University at all levels
- Union of discovery, knowledge and civic engagement

Towards the construction of a new identity



Leaving a trace: performance and artistic events

OPENGROUP - Modena



<https://www.tracerproject.eu/>



TRACER - Transformative Roma Art and Culture for European Remembrance is a project funded under the European Commission's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme. The aim of the project is to involve groups of Roma and non-Roma youths and teenagers in Italy, Portugal and Poland in the construction of a shared memory of the holocaust of Sinti and Roma minorities in Europe.

Documentation and visit to Auschwitz - Birkenau



Workshop Events



▶ History

▶ Arts

▶ Research

▶ Reflection

Action research with adolescent and youth



International meetings



THANK YOU

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