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REGARD - REMEMBERING GENOCIDE AGAINST ROMA DISCRIMINATION

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The current report is part of the REGARD project and of the participatory processes foreseen within the project. The report is composed of three parts:

- a brief overview of the project is included in chapter 1;
- the second chapter describes the methodological approach included;
- the third chapter presents the main findings of the Future Search Conference.

1. Regard project: a brief introduction

REGARD is an EU project funded by the CERV Programme and implemented by a partnership managed by CNR-IRPPS and composed of three Roma associations: Croatian Romani Union "Kali Sara" (Croatia); Association "Thèm Romano Onlus" (Italy); and Association "Centrul de Cultura al Romilor Dolj" (Romania).

Following the anniversaries of the Roma calendar, REGARD aims at preserving and transmitting the memory of Roma genocide and resistance by considering its root causes and consequences, and the implications for today.

As an integrated action model, the project plans to implement in Croatia, Romania and Italy a set of activities:

1. Surveys on the knowledge of Roma genocide and Roma culture and on antigypsyism;
2. Training modules for schools on Roma genocide, Roma resistance and Roma history and culture for students and teachers supporting the remembrance of Samudaripen in textbooks;
3. Participatory processes with institutions and civil society to foster a common culture of remembrance and mutual understanding between Roma and non-Roma, men and women, and develop shared intervention strategies for fighting antigypsyism;
4. Cultural events and artistic expressions of Roma created during and after Samudaripen, remembering the Holocaust including three international conferences open to the public and attended by Romani scholars of Roma culture scholars to sustain the EU goal of integrating the historical narrative of the Roma into the national and European one for both target groups.



2. Methodological approach

The participatory process foresees two phases.

- Semi-structured individual and anonymous interviews with local stakeholders that represent a wide variety of perspectives and resources on the project topics. The interviews were carried out between the 15th and 29th of September and involved 24 stakeholders. The results of the interviews were used to design the participatory event, which took place in the second stage of the participatory process.
- The organization of a participatory event to Lanciano, which adopted the Future Search Conference method.

The Future Search Conference (FSC) is a participatory design tool developed in the late 1980s, with the aim to engage key stakeholders of a certain territory in the creation of a shared vision of change. Therefore, the Future Search Conference is based on enhancing common interests among a group of stakeholders with the goal of achieving effective paths of change. Participants work together, taking into account their own past and present history, and they develop a common intervention scenario and a realistic path to realize it. The Future Search Conference involves group of people selected for their ability to represent a plurality of points of view, called to work as an "investigating community" to collectively focus on strategies for change and the ways to implement them. The group builds medium-long term future scenarios together, starting from a few elements: the past, the present or current trends, the probable future, and the desirable future. It concludes with an action planning phase to identify the actions to implement the scenario. The meeting ends with an action planning phase to identify the actions to implement the scenario.

The Future Search Conference organized to Lanciano involved 66 participants, both from within and outside the Roma community. Some participants were interviewed in the initial phase of the participatory process, while others were included based on the suggestions gathered during the interviews (using the "snowball method"). The selection of participants paid particular attention to creating a balanced group in terms of represented perspectives, gender, ethnicity, and age. The event included representatives from the civil society, academia, educational and training institutions, as well as public institutions and "ordinary" citizens of Lanciano. The participants included both women and men of different ages.

Since not all people involved in the event had participated in the initial phase of the participatory process, the engagement in the Future Search Conference was preceded by the preparation and sharing of a Discussion Guide. The Discussion Guide included a summary of the main findings regarding the discrimination of the Roma population and knowledge of Samudaripen collected during the interviews, a description of the goals of the Future Search Conference and of the functioning of this method, and the agenda of the event.

The Future Search Conference was structured as it follows:

- An introductory session including greetings from Them Romanò, the event organizer, and Avventura Urbana, which provided methodological support for the event.
- A plenary session including the creation of a timeline.
- Group work session for analysing current trends.
- Coffee break.
- A plenary session for sharing the current trends emerging from the working groups and selecting the four topics to be discussed in the following session.
- Group work session for defining an action plan for each topic selected previously.
- A plenary session for sharing the actions defined by each working groups and concluding remarks.





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3. The Future Search Conference: the main results

During the introductory session, Dr. Commendator Santino Spinelli, President of the Them Romanò Association, shared a brief overview of the Samudaripen and the discriminations experienced by the Roma population. Dr. Spinelli recalled that at least 500,000 Roma and Sinti were killed during the Second World War due to their ethnic background. As Dr. Spinelli pointed out, not only had the Roma population been deprived of their goods and killed, but it had taken several years before the Samudaripen was publicly recognized by European countries. Dr. Spinelli also emphasized that ethnic-based discrimination is not just a matter of Italy's past, but a reality that persists nowadays in Italy and in Lanciano.

Dr. Spinelli's presentation was followed by that of Dr. Fazio, partner at Avventura Urbana, who outlined the main objectives and operational steps of the Future Search Conference.

3.1 The timeline

During this session, participants were asked to collectively reflect on their own past and that of their community, in relation to the history of their city, Italy, and the world in general. Three questions guided the discussion:

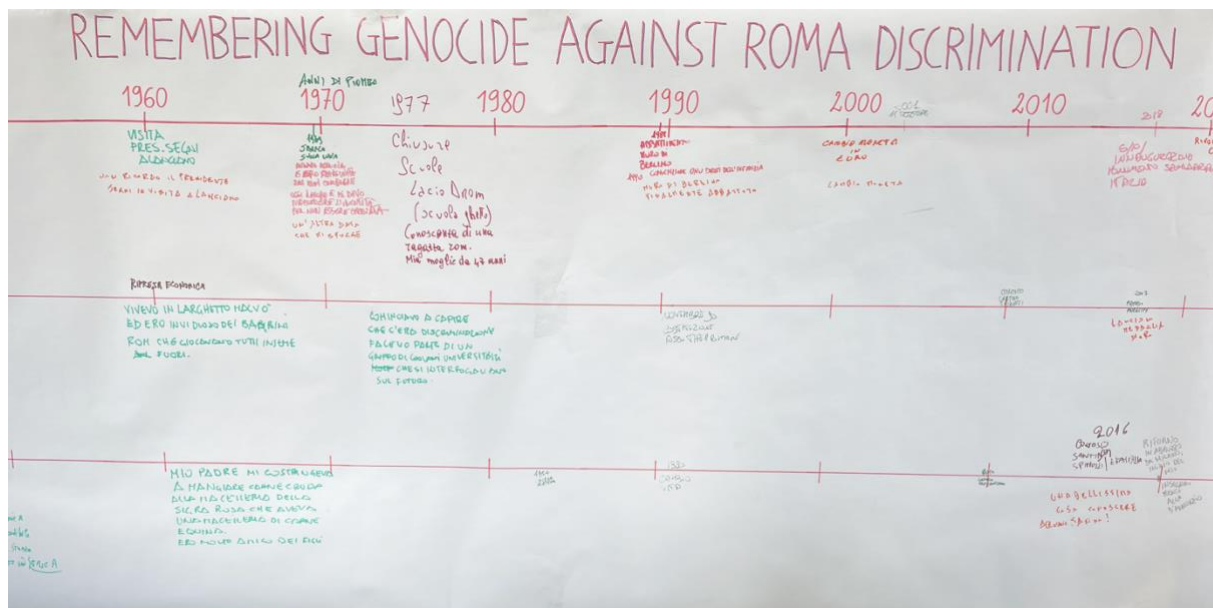
- What are the most significant events that have shaped your life?
- What are the most significant events that have marked the history of your Roma community and/or the Lanciano community?
- What are the most significant events that have characterized the history of Italy and of the world in the last 80 years?

With regards to the **events that have shaped participants' personal lives**, numerous persons recalled when they played with their fellow Roma and Sinti children as youngsters or when, as adults, they came into contact with the Roma population of Lanciano. Others mentioned significant events of their personal history, such as football team selections, meeting their life partner, attending classes reserved to Roma, and so on. One participant, in particular, mentioned having to hide his identity at the workplace.

As for **events that have marked the Roma community in Lanciano or the overall Lanciano community**, some of the most notable events mentioned regarded the first edition of the international competition "Amico Rom" in 1993, which has continued uninterrupted since then, the visit of the Prime Minister Antonio Segni to Lanciano, and the increase in the awareness of some of the university students on the discrimination faced by the Roma population.

Participants in the event mentioned several dates that marked the **Italian and European history**:

- August 2, 1944, the day when over 4,000 Roma people were killed during the closing of the Zigeunerlager. Nowadays it represents the day when the Samudaripen is remembered.
- The bombing of Hiroshima in 1945.
- The implementation of the Italian constitution in 1948.
- The moon landing in 1969.
- The closure of the Lacio Drom schools (special classes for Roma individuals) in 1977.





3.2 Current trends

Within this session, participants were randomly divided into 4 working groups. Each group reflected on the ongoing trends related to the recognition of Samudaripen and the fight against discrimination of Roma people, starting from the following questions:

- *What is the direction we are heading to?*
- *What would happen in the near future if nothing changed?*

The main trends emerged from the discussions of the 4 working groups focused on the following cross-cutting themes:

- **Knowledge:** Participants highlighted a trend consisting in forgetting Roma's history, a lack of knowledge about the Roma culture and the correct words to use, as well as the limited attention that the mass media pays to these issues.
- **Identity:** Participants emphasized the tendency of individuals belonging to Roma communities to remain invisible, meaning not openly declaring their ethnic affiliation, or conversely, assisting to its "exaggeration" through stereotyped narratives that romanticize Roma culture. They highlighted how these trends lead to ethnic disappearance, delegitimization, or labeling. However, it was also noted that the openness and hospitality of Roma people, which characterizes the Roma identity, represent a positive trend that offers hope.
- **Education:** According to participants in the event, the Roma and Sinti communities face a different access to education with respect to the other people. This originates from both prejudice against Roma and Sinti and the limited preparation of teachers to address these prejudices within the educational context.
- **Rights:** Discrimination against Roma people is linked to a denial of their rights, particularly regarding access to housing, education, and healthcare, which is rooted in their discrimination. Participants highlighted how the non-respect of Roma people's rights impacts negatively on their self-affirmation. Limited access to education, housing, services, and goods pushes the Roma population in a condition of economic and social disadvantage.
- **Discrimination:** As previously noted, various negative trends originate from the ongoing discrimination faced by Roma and Sinti. Participants pointed out the risk that, in the absence of an intervention to reduce the stereotypical portrayal of Roma and Sinti, prejudices may become stronger and more deeply rooted in contemporary society, eventually becoming normalized. This will produce negative social impacts, leading to on the one hand to the trivialization of discrimination against Roma and Sinti and on the other hand to the reinforcement of negative behaviours of Roma people that reflect those prejudices.

Participants highlighted how discrimination manifests not only through the dissemination of a stereotypical image of all Roma and Sinti people, but also through the use of derogatory terms (e.g., "gypsies").

- **Social Marginalization:** According to participants in the event, a prolonged situation of social exclusion and isolation of Roma and Sinti risks resulting in crime and polarization between the Roma population and the general population, leading to conflict situations. However, some participants also indicated a positive trend observed among youngsters, consisting in the curiosity and fascination with Roma culture, which could contribute to overcoming the negative trends described above.

The paragraphs below include further details on the findings of the 4 working groups.





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Group 1

- **Knowledge of Roma history and culture:** there is a recognized negative trend concerning the level of knowledge about Samudaripen and the culture and history of the Roma population. This low level of knowledge is considered the main cause of discrimination against Roma people. The low level of knowledge about these topics is primarily linked to the fact that they are not taught in schools at all levels of the education system. This is further exacerbated by the lack of preparation of teachers on Roma history and culture. Teachers not only lack general knowledge about these issues but they also lack the specific vocabulary and terminology to describe and name historical phenomena and events. Another problem related to the low level of knowledge of the Roma history and culture is the growing trend towards a low level of information and awareness through mass media (TV, electronic media) and media in general in shaping the general image of the Roma.
- **Prejudice and Discrimination:** a negative trend regards the growing prejudice against Roma people, fuelled by a "negative" memory passed down from generation to generation and a "mindset that doesn't change." Racism and anti-Roma intolerance affect transversally the entire citizenship and the life contexts of the Lanciano community.
- **Recognition/Identity:** the invisibility of Roma people and the lack of recognition of their own identity emerge as negative trends. As a consequence of the discrimination they face, many people choose not to reveal their identity for fear of being discriminated against or wrongly accused of criminal acts or criminal behaviour occurring in the Lanciano community. Hiding one's identity is also linked to the negative trend of "tarring everyone with the same brush." The hope, as well as a positive trend observed, is that the Roma community continues to be an open, welcoming, and hospitable community towards the others.
- **Socialization:** a positive trend is recognized among youngsters with regards to the social inclusion of Roma people, fuelled by their curiosity and fascination with the music, traditions, and celebrations of Roma people (regarding both festivities and life events like baptism, marriage, and funerals).
- **Isolation and social marginalization:** social marginalization is part of a more general trend towards individualism and social isolation that characterizes contemporary society and inevitably regards the urban space. Neighbourhood relationships and proximity are lost, as are opportunities for socialization and spontaneous interaction in public places.



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Group 2

The main trends identified by the participants in the working group regard education, culture, and identity:

- **The lack of recognition of Samudaripen** triggers the risk of a gradual loss of historical memory.
- **Individual and cultural disavowal:** focusing mostly on the recognition of Samudaripen can lead to a reduction in the cultural memory of Roma people and in arts (music, crafts, arts, etc.) for which Roma people are worth remembering.
- **Increased isolation:** not studying or not spreading the whole Roma history also leads to the spread of preconceived ideas and misinformation, which results in an increase in derogatory terms and appellations that tend to exacerbate the ongoing process of marginalization.
- **Loss of identity:** the habit of the Roma people to conceal their origins is highlighted. This triggers the risk of a gradual loss of identity and, consequently, of a decrease in socialization and social inclusion opportunities. This trend is partially countered by the more assertive attitude of youngsters, although the participants in the discussion did not recognize a clear predisposition of youngsters to self-determination.
- **Isolation and delegitimization of individual purchasing power:** participants point out long-standing stereotypes of Roma people, which limit their access to goods and services (such as buying a house) due only to their ethnicity.

Group 3

- **Higher isolation of Roma people** due to a more general sense of social isolation that also involves "labelling individuals," namely the tendency of the general population to stereotype everyone who belongs to the Roma community without distinguishing between individuals. This widespread attitude produces various consequences such as "denying one's origins" or, in some cases, at the very least, concealing them.
- **Ethnic Disappearance:** some members of the working group express concerns related to the possibility that the Roma ethnicity could be gradually erased and forgotten in the case of a continuity in current trends, following a constant and relentless "ethnic delegitimization," primarily driven by the country's leadership and political classes. The natural response to this fear, especially among youngsters, consists of "cultural exaggeration" by emphasizing Roma customs and traditions in the best-case scenario, but also by reinforcing prejudices in the worst one: "If you keep telling me I'm a thief, eventually, I'll become one." Participants consider that this attitude is as distorted and dangerous, as denial of their origins mentioned previously.
- **Strengthening of prejudices:** unless radical intervention is undertaken to reverse the current trend of stereotyping Roma and Sinti people, prejudices against this community



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will only continue to strengthen and become more deeply rooted, with a subsequent significant "**social impact.**" This attitude will trigger the negative consequences mentioned in previous paragraphs.

- **Increase in illegal behaviour of Roma and Sinti:** participants in the discussion highlighted that the "**social exclusion**" of Roma people from many settings and the frequent "**marginalization,**" especially of youngsters, will make them to engage in "**illegal**" behaviours caused by a lack of a sense of belonging.
- **Crystallization of stereotypes, meaning their normalization:** there is a general tendency to regard stereotypes of Roma and Sinti as true and consolidated, nullifying the sense of outrage. This risks to **worsen discriminatory methods,** which will likely be considered normal and just. As an example, participants recall what happened in 1938, when the adoption of the racial laws did not explicitly concern Roma and Sinti since they had been already considered not equal to the rest of the population.
- **Forgetting history due to an absent or even revised narration of historical events.** Hiding historical truths about the Roma population (especially those related to the Nazi-Fascist period) will inevitably lead to forgetting them. This could significantly contribute to the "lack of self-assertion" of the Roma and Sinti community as well as individuals.

Group 4

- **Different access to education:** participants in the event focused on the unequal access to education for Roma, highlighting its implications for social development of the community of Lanciano: e.g. perpetuation of the division in social groups, in this case, the Roma population, who is disadvantaged compared to the others due to varying level of educational attainment. Should this trend continue, it could fuel or maintain prejudices regarding their level of education.
- **Conflict:** there is a tendency to experience tensions determined by the perceived discrimination against Roma people and other ethnic groups, which risks leading to violence and polarization within local communities.
- **Lack of integration, isolation, and marginalization:** it refers to the inability or difficulty of Roma people to participate in activities or events organized within the local community.
- **Impact on the mental health and quality of life of Roma people** as a consequence of the discrimination and marginalization they face.





3.3 A look to the future: the action plan

The final session consisted of a reflection on what can be done to counteract negative trends and strengthen positive ones. Participants were specifically asked to indicate which actions should be primarily undertaken, how they can personally contribute to them, and what external resources are necessary for their implementation.

This session began with an overview of the main trends identified in the previous session and continued with the selection of those that should be prioritized in the development of an action plan. To this end, participants were asked to identify the three most urgent priorities for them by indicating them with coloured stickers. Based on participants' votes, the overarching topics were classified as it follows:

- **Education – 25 votes**
- **Knowledge – 22 votes**
- **Rights – 17 votes**
- **Social Marginalization – 16 votes**
- Discrimination – 12 votes
- Identity – 10 votes

The first four overarching themes were selected for an in-depth discussion in the subsequent session. Each theme was discussed in a different working group, with the support of a facilitator. Participants could choose the topic of interest among those selected and based on this choice joined a specific working group.

Each working group reflected on the following questions:

- *What actions should be primarily taken to counteract negative trends and strengthen positive ones on this theme?*
- *How can you personally contribute to them?*
- *What other resources are needed to implement the proposed action?*

The following **tables** show the main actions identified in each of the 4 working groups.

KNOWLEDGE

Increase knowledge about Samudaripen, the history and culture of Roma people

ACTION	WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE	WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED
<p>1. Self-enrichment and individual dissemination of knowledge to the new generations</p>	<p>– All people involved in the discussion: Santino Spinelli; Pietro Bomba; Marco Aldo; Giovanna Di Girolamo</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>2. Creating opportunities of meeting with humanitarian and philanthropic organizations/ Awareness-raising actions not only within the Roma community but also targeted at the civil society and politicians.</p>	<p>–</p>	<p>– Political and institutional will to recognize Roma as a minority through specific measures – Follow-up actions of the REGARD project</p>
<p>3. Update of the school documents and books aimed at the embedment of the Roma history/culture in school programmes</p>	<p>– Santino Spinelli: provision of scientific documents on Samudaripen, on the Roma resistance and on the Roma history and culture</p>	<p>– Availability to collaborate and economic resources provided by the Ministry of Education</p>
<p>4. Tourism and territorial promotion actions to replicate and extend the best practices of the "Lanciano" model:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community events, festivals, and celebrations • Roma Summer School (interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic)¹ 	<p>Participants in the discussion can contribute with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Knowledge of the territory – Publicity and word of the mouth – Organizational support – Availability to host people involved in the programme 	<p>– Sponsorship – Availability to collaborate and provision of economic resources by local institutions</p>

¹ It consists of a study vacation" programme aimed at a full immersion in the Roma culture. In the past it included lessons organized by the Thèm Romanó association, board and lodging with Roma families in Lanciano. It concluded with the issuance of a certificate of participation. Food and gastronomic culture, in general, are considered excellent means of socialization and community building.

EDUCATION

Promote the access to education of Roma and Sinti

ACTION	WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE	WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED
1. Updating school books targeted both at students and teachers	– Livia Primante (teacher): send a request to the publishing houses	– A Roma or Sinti minister of Education
2. Construction of a specific documentary anthology on the polymorphism of fascist racism.	– Gianni Orecchioni (Publisher): availability to publish it	– Contributions to the anthology and human resources
3. Creation of an after-school support service	– Livia Primante, Association “Ali Spiegare”: after-school volunteering	– Contribution/support of the local institutions (municipality)
4. Engagement of families		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cultural mediation – Projects designed together with the families (the so-called “progetti di servizio”) – Testimonies of people involved in these projects in schools
5. Provision of vulnerable people with school books	– Livia Primante: distribution of free copies for teachers when possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Customization of the procedure to obtain the books for families – Creation of a “Books bank”
6. Teachers’ continuing education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implementation of professional courses (including also digital or hybrid courses) – Involvement of organisations with a specific mission in this area

SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION

Reducing social marginalization of Roma people

ACTION	WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE	WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED
<p>1. Increase opportunities for discussion and interaction through social actions that can fuel debate and information through dedicated web pages, TikTok, Facebook, using creativity and humour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local cultural associations could manage a social media page by developing a common editorial plan. – [Giulia Spinelli suggested involving influential TikTokers in spreading Roma culture]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Human resources – Knowledge resources (publishing and marketing competences are deemed crucial) – Design of common objectives (building a common vision starting from the objectives/missions of each association)
<p>2. Promote volunteering through the involvement of Roma and Sinti in social and civic volunteering programmes to increase their social recognition within the community and reduce their marginalization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Caritas Diocesana, a staunch advocate of volunteering as an individual and societal path, is willing to promote the involvement of Roma people in volunteering activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Institutional Guarantor
<p>3. Countering disinformation, namely, initiate a reflection process to promote language policies, public communication, and information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Partnership made of associations – [Fernando Di Cicco] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Continuity and guarantee – Wide partnership

RIGHTS

Access of Roma people to their rights – the discussion focused in particular on the right to social inclusion

ACTION	WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE	WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED
<p>1. Promote the publication and distribution of books and literary contributions by Roma people on the topic of discrimination against Roma, as well as the organization of cultural events this topic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local cultural associations of Lanciano participating in the event and other associations and institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Public and private funds and other resources related to associations, in particular regarding volunteering
<p>2. Valuing the Roma handicraft as a local resource and cultural handicraft resources in general</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local cultural associations of Lanciano participating in the event and other associations and institutions – Available cultural associations : Joseph Cultural Association 	
<p>3. Promoting the participation of the Roma people to the social and institutional life of Lanciano</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In general, participants in the discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Change in citizens' personal attitudes towards discrimination and relation with Roma people in general