

**ERIAC**  
EUROPEAN ROMA  
INSTITUTE FOR ARTS  
AND CULTURE



Presidency of Germany  
Council of Europe  
November 2020 – May 2021  
Présidence de l'Allemagne  
Conseil de l'Europe

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



**CENTRAL COUNCIL** of German  
Sinti & Roma

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
**“Hate speech and Antigyptism in the Media”**  
10-11 March 2021

hosted by the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), in cooperation with the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Team, and the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma

**Speech by: Dan Pavel Doghi**  
**Chief of the CPRSI, Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues**  
**OSCE ODIHR**

**Dear organizers, dear colleagues and participants, it gives me pleasure to join the today’s discussion on this important aspect of the role of the media in portraying the Roma and Sinti people. I congratulate ERIAC for this initiative.**

**Roma’len, phrala’len thaj phenja’len, te aven saste thaj bahtale!**

This topic is part of the [2003 OSCE Action Plan](#) on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti, and reiterated by [MC decisions](#) from 2008, 2009, and 2013.

OSCE commitments stipulate that → **media should produce positive stories regarding Roma and Sinti, portray them in a balanced manner, and refrain from promoting discourses and stereotypes that could contribute to hatred and incitement against them.**

Whether we speak of Radio or Television, or the written press, be it printed or online, when it is about the Roma and Sinti people, their portrayal in and by the mass media is overwhelmingly unilateral, full of prejudices and stereotypes, many of them perpetuated through generations, from old chronicles and historic accounts, to nowadays advent of modern digital communication platforms.

The quest for sensationalism by many of the media entities and journalists is in direct contradiction with the values and principles of ethical and responsible journalism; as such, it violates codes of conducts, social norms, and oftentimes the laws.

Objectivity, impartiality, balanced portrayal, non-bias and non-discrimination are the real values that should constitute the moral and professional compass guiding the work of journalists and the media.

A pervasive pattern of news articles and audio-video broadcasts and materials make the daily highlights through Europe, depicting Roma and Sinti through a long list of epithets, such as

*“criminals, genetically-prone delinquents and deviants, thieves, cunning and untrustworthy, lazy and work-shy, parasitizing and exploiting the social welfare systems, savage or wild, asocial and inadaptatable, incapable of learning and unwilling to integrate and live a civil and lawful life”.*

Anti-Roma discourse and rhetoric of hatred about the Roma and Sinti are an unfortunate reality. They are propagated in our societies both by the media itself, through self-produced hate and biased materials, as well as by disseminating statements issued by State Presidents, high profile governmental officials and party leaders, public personalities and intellectuals. Such unfair conduct harms not only the Roma and Sinti people, but our society as a whole.

### **ODIHR Activities**

Relating to these concerns, in the past years the ODIHR has organized several activities, such as roundtables and consultations with professionals working in the media, and has gathered information through a small-scale [media monitoring](#) conducted by Roma journalists-consultants in 10 countries, looking at the portrayal of Roma and Sinti since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An internal database was built comprising 550 articles from national and regional media focusing on portrayal of Roma and the way some of the pandemic-related measures impacted upon Roma communities in a disproportionate manner.

### **The analysis confirmed that:**

- Hate speech made up 33% of news stories – which is also indicative of an ongoing problem with the media being a key driver and channel of racism towards the Roma and Sinti.
- 21% of the news reported on Incidents involving Roma communities, often portraying the Roma as the ‘rule-breakers’ and Roma settlements being the places that need police interventions or ‘intensified patrolling and control’.
- 32% of reports by media were balanced; this shows a progress of a human rights agenda gaining field in newsrooms across Europe.
- Misinformation and Fake /False news made up just 6% of the reports.

### **Few country examples:**

- **In UK**, the usual themes generated by British media about the communities focused largely on the impact of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (GRT communities) on majority communities. The news were largely conflict-driven and focused on use of police eviction powers on nomadic GRT groups, the impact of GRT community events such as funerals and horse fairs and whether these were safe in a time of a pandemic and outbreaks in GRT communities.

Negative or Hostile news made up 40% of the news, while Balanced /Professional news were at 20%. There were also a significant number of good-practice articles (40%) that looked at the impact of the pandemic on the community.

Protagonists: 28 articles (30%) were inclusive of Roma voice while the majority (70%) included non-Roma voices only.

- **In Ukraine**, the main topics that were published were about administrative and criminal offenses related to laws, the situation in Roma communities during the pandemic, culture and traditions, a case of hate speech in Ivano-Frankivsk (April 2020), and a case of physical pogrom in the village of Andriyivka, Kharkiv region.

According to data analyzed from the regional Internet-media: negative publications made up to 47%, neutral publications were at 40%, positive publications at 13%.

Protagonists: only 10% of the articles included Roma's own opinion or point of view.

- **In Hungary**, the media outlets reported mainly about the situation of Roma in the context of the pandemic and measures that directly affected Roma. Most of them were connected to the social-economic situation, health problems and /or overcrowding in Roma settlements, suggesting that most of these people are living in an environment that helps the spread of the virus not just in the circle of the there living Romani people but elsewhere as well.

At the independent media, around 90% of the articles had fair titles, however, almost all of these contained photographs that were biased in nature.

- **In Romania**, 54% of the media news incited hate speech, 25% reported about incidents, and less than 10% were about good practices. 32 articles depicted various police interventions into the Roma communities, and 24 articles blamed the Roma for the pandemic.
- **In Bulgaria**, 60% of the media news incited hate speech, and 10% reported about incidents that occurred in Roma settlements.

Findings of this media monitoring were presented last December during the Roundtable “**Promoting fair portrayal of Roma and Sinti by the media: Challenges and perspectives**”, organized under the auspices of three OSCE institutions, the [ODIHR](#), the [RFOM](#), and the [HCNM](#), together with journalists, both Roma and non-Roma, as well as other relevant entities and professionals working on the topic, who discussed about the role of the mass media in the perpetuation of a biased portrayal of the Roma and how this impacts negatively on the Roma inclusion efforts.

Aside from monitoring the media, ODIHR also supported the production of news articles and feature stories on the impact of the pandemic on the Roma and Sinti, with a number of them being published by various online portals and media outlets.

The work of journalists focused on combating biased media coverage as well as misinformation. They gathered information and stories that illustrated how Roma have been actively involved in countrywide efforts to prevent and mitigate the effects of the pandemic, as well as examples of how members of the community have initiated support to vulnerable and most affected Roma families.

Throughout these activities, the CPRSI has put together a solid compilation of recommendations for action by concerned actors. The Contact Point will follow up on these jointly with the mandated OSCE institutions, the Roma media professionals and other stakeholders.

### **As a conclusion:**

- The good journalistic practices need to be multiplied and expanded within countries and across Europe.
- One way of ensuring such good practices are identified and promoted is through regularly conducting media monitoring, replicated by many organizations and institutions, and their findings popularized and followed up.
- Advocate and pursue the inclusion of Roma and Sinti media professionals in the media regulatory institutions and commissions, within boards of public broadcasters and in their daily operational management, and as public broadcasting radio and television professional and personalities.
- Organize regularly public debates, antidiscrimination and awareness raising campaigns, and develop and implement joint training and capacity building programmes with and for the media, promoting ethical, responsible and accountable journalism.

**Thank you for your attention!**

[Info-graphics](#)

ODIHR's webpage on Roma and Sinti  
<https://www.osce.org/odihr/roma-and-sinti>