

ADVANCING ROMANI MEDIA REPRESENTATION AND PRODUCTION IN EUROPE AND BEYOND: A POSITION PAPER

By
EUROPEAN ROMA INSTITUTE FOR ARTS AND
CULTURE (ERIANET)

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FOREWORD

For generations, dominant media narratives have played a decisive role in shaping public perceptions of Roma communities. Too often, these narratives have reinforced stigma, normalized exclusion, and upheld a legacy of antigypsyism that persists across Europe and beyond. This position paper seeks to confront that legacy directly. It argues that the same powerful mechanisms through which media have contributed to misrepresentation can—and must—be mobilized to dismantle harmful stereotypes and replace them with truthful, respectful, and ethically grounded portrayals.

The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAN) stands at the forefront of this effort. Through our cultural, artistic, and intellectual work, ERIAC promotes counter-narratives that challenge entrenched misconceptions and introduce a fuller, more dignified understanding of our Roma identity, history and culture. Rather than stories imposed from the outside, ERIAC offers a platform for narratives rooted in subjective and authentic experiences—stories shaped by pride, creativity, affirmation, and resilience. These counter-narratives are not simply responses to discrimination; they are expressions of our living, evolving Roma culture which asserts its rightful place within the broader European sphere.

Central to this endeavour is the principle of self-representation. When Roma authors, journalists, filmmakers, and media professionals speak in their own voice, they perform an act of cultural and intellectual emancipation. They reclaim authority over how Roma communities are seen, understood, and discussed. This shift from passive subjects to active narrators is fundamental to dismantling the historical structures that have denied Roma agency in public discourse.

The urgency of this transformation cannot be overstated. Media—whether traditional or digital—remain among the most influential forces in shaping public attitudes. The persistence of antigypsyism within these spaces continues to have real and measurable consequences for millions of Roma people. Yet the potential for change is equally powerful. When Roma perspectives enter mainstream newsrooms, editorial boards, production studios, and cultural institutions, they contribute not only to more accurate reporting, but also to the formation of a more inclusive public conscience.

Diversifying *who* produces media is, therefore, as essential as diversifying *what* media portray.

This position paper calls upon media professionals, policymakers, public administrators, EU institutions, and the Council of Europe to recognize both their responsibility and their opportunity. Ensuring a more equitable presence and representation of Roma in the media landscape requires coordinated, sustained action: investment in Roma media platforms, pathways for Roma journalists into mainstream outlets, ethical standards that prevent the reproduction of harmful stereotypes, and collaborative strategies that integrate Roma expertise at every level of decision-making.

The reflections and recommendations presented here aim to build a shared sense of urgency and commitment. They underline that rectifying the failures of the past is not enough; we must actively cultivate conditions in which Roma voices flourish, influence, and shape the narratives of our collective future. Only through such collaboration can we establish a media environment that reflects the diversity of European societies and honors the cultural wealth of Roma communities.

We offer this paper in the conviction that change is both possible and necessary—and that through mutual effort, we can foster a media discourse grounded in respect, truth, and the full recognition of Roma humanity.

Dr. Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka,
Deputy Director, ERIAC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Europe's 12 million Romani citizens occupy an unenviable place in the continent's media representation. On the world hand they are highly visible when conflicts arise but are largely invisible within the staffing of the newsrooms which must and do report upon the community. They are highly visible in output of streaming giants like Netflix as they capitalise on fascination with the Romani community with series such as *Peaky Blinders* and the recent Polish production *Infamia*, yet largely invisible in the circles that wield editorial power over their lives.

This position paper seeks to study the gap between that hyper visibility and invisibility. It seeks to find out how the media often drives antigypsyism and how the media can be turned to help end it.

By speaking to Romani journalists, film makers and story tellers within and outside the ERIAC associate membership, many of whom have working at coal face attempting to change Romani media representation, it seeks to uncover why the improvement of Romani media representation has in some cases stalled. By looking for inspiration from good practice within the community and other communities it seeks to imagine what media equality may one day look like and define some innovative steps that may help to achieve it.

Finally, it lays down a series of recommendations and moral challenges to the actors whose moral responsibility it is to help end the marginalisation caused by media inequality. If you care about how and why Europe's Romanies are badly represented and want to do your bit to end that bad representation we encourage you to read this position paper and act upon it.

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

About ERIAC

About European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERiac)¹

ERiac has a unique and single mandate as the transnational, European-level organization for the recognition of Roma arts and culture.

The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture is a joint initiative of the Council of Europe, the Open Society Foundations, and the Roma Leaders' initiative – the Alliance for the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture. ERIAC is an association registered under German law in April 2017, in Berlin, Germany. ERIAC launched in June 2017.

ERiac exists to increase the self-esteem of Roma and to decrease negative prejudice of the majority population towards the Roma by means of arts, culture, history, and media.

ERiac acts as an international creative hub to support the exchange of creative ideas across borders, cultural domains and Romani identities. ERIAC aims to be the promoter of Romani contributions to European culture and talent, success and achievement, as well as to document the historical experiences of Romani people in Europe.

ERiac exists to be a communicator and public educator, to disseminate a positive image and knowledge about Romani people for dialogue and building mutual respect and understanding.

The main long-term aims of ERIAC are:

- To educate and inform the non-Roma population about Roma arts and culture and to help for creating understanding, tolerance and mutual respect between Roma and non-Roma communities;
- To raise awareness among European institutions, policy-makers and stakeholders about the role of Roma arts and culture and to build up a

¹ ERIAC, About ERIAC (<https://eriac.org/about-eriac/>), (2017).

broad partnership across Europe (and beyond) for support of Roma arts, culture and communities.

ERIAN's vision is grounded in six founding principles, which define the Institute's establishment, core functions, governance, structure, and membership:

- Respect of the dignity of Romani people and Romani identity
- Diversity and plurality of Romani identities and cultures
- Romani leadership with the support and co-operation of non-Roma
- Engagement and contribution of Romani organizations and individuals in the establishment and ongoing activities of the Institute
- Political autonomy and non-partisanship, openness for collaboration with public authorities and political institutions as partners
- Highest quality standards in the domains of arts and culture, as well in as its own operational performance.

ERIAN's previous work on Romani media representation and production

For ERIAC, the media is not merely a channel for artistic promotion, it is a strategic arena where attitudes, policies, and social inclusion about Romani people are shaped. The mainstream media not only reproduces stereotypes and excludes Romani voices, its unchallenged biases and editorial direction actually drives antigypsism. As such it is a key arena for ERIAC's work, that has the ability to mitigate against and reverse centuries of antigypsism.

ERIAN's work, therefore, treats the media both as an arena of intervention which changes how Roma are covered, and as a sector within which to empower by building Roma-led media capacity. Our approach links cultural visibility with political and social rights, arguing that when Roma control our own representation, public discourse, institutions and policies follow more equitable paths.²

²News Spectrum, Fellowship for minority-language media, (ERIAN, 2021)
<https://eriac.org/newsspectrum-fellowship-for-minority-language-media-opens-first-call-for-applications-2/>

Some of the key programmes and actions that ERIAC has done in the media to date include:

1. Media Mentoring and Professional Development³

ERIAN runs dedicated mentoring and training schemes for Roma media professionals. These programmes pair Roma journalists, editors and media workers with mainstream newsroom mentors, giving mentees practical newsroom experience, editorial skills and professional networks. The aim is both immediate (by placing Roma professionals in mainstream outlets) and long-term (by transforming newsroom cultures to report on Roma communities with nuance and dignity). This work started in 2021 when ERIAC worked with the MIDAS (the European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages) and the International Press Institute (IPI) on the News Spectrum Fellowship to place journalists and other media professionals working for minority-language media in the EU (including Roma and migrant languages) and aims to encourage working partnerships between minority- and majority-language news outlets.

Recent editions of the Media Mentoring Programme and related trainings (by organising workshops on transforming media narratives) have shown ERIAC's emphasis on capacity-building across the Western Balkans and Türkiye region. Implemented by ERIAC Serbia branch, with the financial support of the "Roma Integration III Joint Programme" of the European Union and the Council of Europe, throughout 2024 the Media Mentoring Programme placed eight talented Roma media professionals at mainstream media outlets⁴.

2. Building a Database of Roma Journalists and Outlets

To make Roma media visible and easily reachable by partners, ERIAC has initiated a pan-European database of Roma journalists, reporters, and outlets (in both digital and print). This mapping effort

³ Media Mentoring Program: Meet the young Roma reshaping the narrative, (<https://eriac.org/media-mentoring-program-meet-the-young-roma-reshaping-the-narrative/>) ERIA, 2025

⁴ <https://eriac.org/announcing-the-2024-media-mentoring-program-mentees/>

supports networking, research, emergency rapid response (for example, to hate speech events), and helps funders and editors locate Roma talent for commissions and collaborations. It also creates an evidence base for advocacy that mainstream media and institutions often demand.

3. Strategic Romani media production

ERIAN has also got directly involved in high quality media production that platforms and promotes Romani voices. For example, as part of its Proud Roma campaign, ERIAN coordinated the production of two films that sought to build Romani pride ahead of national census across campaigns in 2021 and 2022. Pablo Vega's film '**Proud Roma**'⁵ was directly inspired by the 1940 film 'The Great Dictator' – created by and starring Charlie Chaplin, who unbeknownst to many was of Roma origin – the short film 'Proud Roma' reflects the richness and diversity of the Roma nation.

The film challenged dominant historical narratives and negative stereotypes of Roma while recalling the many cultural and historical contributions Roma have made to Europe over the centuries. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiC_gwD5FHs&list=PLHWfwoIJXhLjNmTn0ghwyZlr2yMmoSL0Y&index=3

ERIAN also co-produced '**Hurjasa**'⁶ (*We will fly*) by Romani film maker (and co-author of this paper) Jake Bowers. A cinematic portrait of Europe's largest ethnic minority, 'Hurjasa' features over 30 Roma role models from the Western Balkan region, all thriving in their respective professions and homes. The epic poem is narrated in Romanes and is directly inspired by the Black American poet Maya Angelou's civil rights anthem "Still I Rise". The film was produced in collaboration with the Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration to boost Roma pride and encourage civic participation among Roma. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FeVLLhMIV0

⁵ Proud Roma by Pablo Vega, (ERIAN) 2022
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiC_gwD5FHs&list=PLHWfwoIJXhLjNmTn0ghwyZlr2yMmoSL0Y&index=3)

⁶ Hurjasa (We Wil Fly), ERIAN
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qiC_gwD5FHs&list=PLHWfwoIJXhLjNmTn0ghwyZlr2yMmoSL0Y&index=3) 2022

ERIAC has also produced high quality educational lectures as part of its **Barvalipe Masterclass Series**⁷. The idea of the Barvalipe Masterclass was born from the desire for a more appealing presentation and higher-quality production. In the frame of the Barvalipe Masterclass, ERIAC presented engaging speakers with excellent rhetoric skills, who are the most prominent Roma academics and voices in their field of expertise.

Lastly, as a high-profile cultural institution ERIAC is often contacted by journalists and media organisations seeking a representative voice of the Romani community. Journalists and organisations can work with ERIAC by:

- Engaging with ERIAC training and mentoring calls as entry points for collaboration and hiring Roma media talent.
- Becoming members of the Media and Information Section
- Using RomArchive and ERIAC's publications for context and source material to avoid stereotype-driven reporting.
- Partnering on residencies and co-commissions to amplify Roma media projects and ensure sustained visibility.

⁷ Barvalipe Masterclass Series, ERIAC, <https://eriac.org/barvalipe-masterclass/>) 2022

About ERIACNET4EU

This paper is published in the frame of the ERIACNET4EU: ERIAC NETWORK TO ADVANCE ROMA INCLUSION BY COMBATTING AND PREVENTING ANTIGYPSYISM IN THE EU⁸ project. ERIACNET4EU, initiated in 2022, is a multi-year initiative developed through a framework partnership agreement (FPA) under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) of the European Union.

Project Description

With the adoption of the new EU Roma Framework, the EU and its member states move towards implementation where expert advice as well as reliable partners on all levels of policy-making and implementation (local, regional, national, European) are needed.

The ERIACNET4EU project is offering the expertise, specific know-how and reliable methodologies to support the implementation of the new framework.

The ERIACNET4EU project aims at protecting, promoting and raising awareness of rights of Roma citizens of the EU and thereby at strengthening the EU values, in particular of equality, justice and non-discrimination and thus contributing to building a more democratic EU where all citizens can enjoy equal access and protection of their rights. It aims to do so by providing support to ERIAC network members, including civil society organizations active at local, regional and transnational level, to increase their capacities, establish channels of communication and participation with public authorities and EU institutions to ensure their active engagement in policy implementation and design targeting Roma. At the same time, it will result in providing informed, reliable, consolidated and quality input to European and national policy-makers and public institutions, to increase the effective implementation of strategies and laws that affect the lives of Roma in the EU.

⁸ Eriacnet4EU: Eriac network to advance inclusion by combating and preventing anygyssam in the EU (ERIANET4EU) <https://eriac.org/eriacnet4eu/>

ERIANET4EU serves the following objectives:

1. Ensure quality input to policy-making and policy-implementation at local, regional, national and EU levels through mutual learning and exchange of good practices among/ between ERIAC members as well as with other public and private stakeholders
2. Awareness raising, information and dissemination activities
3. Increasing capacities and knowledge-base of members and other stakeholders through training activities
4. Growing the network and community outreach

ERIAN has a unique and single mandate as the transnational, European-level organization for the recognition of Roma arts and culture.

The ERIAC office in Berlin serves as the headquarters to support the large network of Roma individuals and organizations working in the fields of arts and culture.

ERIAN functions as an international hub which strives to promote the activities of Roma organizations, intellectuals, and artists to form multilateral initiatives and regional alliances, and to connect them with the policymakers and leaders of the different national and European levels.

The front office in Berlin gives space to a contemporary art gallery and an educational program which is open to the public and welcomes individual visitors and visitor groups.

Objectives of the Position Paper

Drawing on the knowledge, experience, and expertise of the ERIAC community, this position paper provides a comprehensive overview of crucial issues in Romani media representation and production. This paper, based upon consultations with the ERIAC associate members and veteran Romani media producers and journalists, analyses the causes and effects of bad media representation. It briefly discusses the collective efforts to remedy such bad representation through community and mainstream Romani media production and the lived experiences of Romani journalists.

It explores how Roma and other minority communities have attempted to remedy media inequality. It also imagines what better media equality

might look like in 2035, before proposing concrete solutions that might help to reach much better media equality and representation.

One goal of this paper is to improve how Roma people are represented and included in European media. It is meant to guide policymakers, public broadcasters, media regulators, funders, universities, and civil society in creating fair and equal opportunities for Roma in the media world.

Another goal was to collect and connect what we already know about Romani journalists working in the media and the conditions of the working environment within which they work, for that reason we have included research, data, and experiences from journalists and organizations. Our aim was to understand how antigypsyism can be more successfully tackled through media stories and production.

We want to create more professional opportunities for Roma working in media. This includes education, training, mentorship, and internships that build both technical and editorial skills. Roma community media should be supported through fair funding, partnerships, and stronger business models. Encouraging media production in the Romani language is also important to protect culture and promote linguistic diversity.

We want to provide some innovative thinking on how connecting Roma journalists and creators across Europe through exchanges and joint projects can help them reach larger audiences and decision-making positions.

We wish to change policies to ensure fair treatment and equal access. This paper therefore concludes with calling on European and national institutions to make stronger rules against antigypsyism in the media, with clear monitoring and penalties for discrimination. We believe this can only be rapidly accelerated by public broadcasters including Roma in their programming and workforce.

We believe that Roma people must have the editorial power to tell their own stories. This means giving them control over how they are represented in media known and creating their own narrative. The goal is to increase the number and quality of Roma stories in television, film, radio, and online media through collaborations, festivals, and co-productions.

The expected results would be:

- A stronger and more visible Roma media sector.
- Less antigypsyism and hate speech in media and public discussions.
- More Roma-language content and professional opportunities.
- Permanent inclusion of Roma voices in media governance and decision-making.

METHODOLOGY

This evidence-based position paper analyses pressing issues and recommendations on Romani media representation and production, drawing on the experiences of ERIAC associate members and experienced Romani journalists. In our research we employed a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.

ERIAN gathered professional experiences of Romani journalists through an online survey which mapped and analysed the experiences of 59 Romani journalist living in countries from Canada to Tajikistan conceived by Bosnian Romani journalist Dalibor Tanic. The authors also travelled to a series of events throughout the autumn of 2025 to informally consult with their peers. These included:

- The **Ake Dihkea** Romani film festival in Berlin, October 2025⁹
- **Council of Europe** Roma holocaust media training for journalists, October 2025¹⁰
- **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe** meeting on a draft best practice guide on Roma and Sinti reporting in Warsaw, November 2025¹¹
- Attending the International Conference. **Visibilities of Memory: The Representation of Sinti and Roma in Holocaust Film** at the Critical Film and Image Hub at the Research Centre on Antigypsism at the University of Heidelberg, November 2025.¹²

These informal discussions focused on the state of Romani media representation and production. Specific ideas for policy, political,

⁹ Ake Dihkea Romani Film Festival, Berlin, Germany, organized by RomaTrial e.V., October 9–12, 2025. [akedikhea.com+2akedikhea.com+2](https://www.akedikhea.com+2akedikhea.com+2)

¹⁰ Council of Europe – Roma Holocaust Media Training for Journalists, organized by the Council of Europe in Berlin, Germany, under the “RomaMemory” Programme, September/October 2025 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/-/registrations-are-open-council-of-europe-training-on-roma-holocaust-for-journalists-and-media-representatives?utm>

¹¹ OSCE Meeting on Roma and Sinti reporting / draft best practice guide, organized by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Warsaw, Poland, November 2025. https://www.osce.org/odihr/WHDC2025_ODIHR_Side_Events?utm

¹² International Conference “Visibilities of Memory: The Representation of Sinti and Roma in Holocaust Film,” organized by the Critical Film & Image Hub, Research Centre on Antigypsism, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany, November 12–14, 2025. <https://www.fsa.uni-heidelberg.de/en/filmhub/holocaust-film/conference2025>

structural and institutional improvements were discussed to re-invigorate progress in Romani media representation and production. The quantitative data includes responses from ERIAC associate members and non-member journalists on their working conditions and lived experiences. The study was complemented by in-depth desk research of known best practices of media representation and production within Romani, Welsh and Canadian First Nation communities.

ROMANI MEDIA REPRESENTATION IN EUROPE – MAJOR ISSUES AND RESPONSES TO DATE

*“Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” –
English Proverb.*

It's widely but falsely believed that words alone cannot hurt. But the fact is that the stereotyping, negative tropes and poor representation of Romani people blights, limits and sometimes ends our lives. Popular culture is full of Romany characters whose characteristics are endlessly recycled and re-invigorated in modern media representation, from Disney's representation of Esmeralda in *Hunchback of Notre Dame*¹³ to Emir Kusturica's representation of Romani gangsters in his *Black Cat, White Cat*¹⁴, which won the [Silver Lion](#)¹⁵ for Best Direction at the Venice Film Festival.

The vast canon of European literature, visual art, songs, fictional film and documentary film over hundreds of years has created embedded a set of stereotypes so strong that their influence still pervades and shapes the vast majority of media productions about us. The stereotypes which drive antigypsyism are too numerous and well established to discuss here in detail, but the gravitational pull of the stereotype of either the *dirty Gypsy* or the *noble savage Gypsy* is so strong that there are few forms of media representation that do not escape their grip.

These stereotypes are paradoxical and often highly contradictory. It is perhaps because we are an eastern culture that has travelled west in

¹³ Notre Dam, Hunchback of Notre Dame,
<https://www.scribd.com/document/522947067/Noter-Dam>

¹⁴ Emir Kusturica, *Black Cat, White Cat* (*Crna mačka, beli mačor*), film, France/Germany/FR Yugoslavia, 1998.

¹⁵ Silver Lion https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Lion

peace, rather than an eastern culture that has been directly colonised by western military and imperial force that our representation remains a largely untouched expression of Edward Said's *Orientalism*.

As a European people with an Asian cultural origin, without state power to express our modern realities or historical contributions, we exist in an unaddressed orientalist blind spot. When *Said* described how the orientalist gaze tended to essentialize and exoticize the cultures of the East, depicting them as static, mysterious, and backward he was largely writing about Arabic cultures, but he could just as well be describing contemporary attitudes to Europe's Romani community.

Said was correct in describing how orientalism constructed an image of the east that served colonial powers by providing a rationale for colonial and imperial expansion, but although oil and independence movements may have brought those misadventures to an end, the full decolonisation of Romani identity is yet to happen.

Before looking at how a generation of Romani journalists and content creators have attempted to decolonise Romani identity and representation through their own involvement with the media, it's useful to quantify exactly how bad or indeed good Romani media representation currently is.

A snapshot in time

In 2020 and 2021, as the worldwide COVID pandemic transformed and alarmed societies across the world, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI) commissioned a team of experienced Romani journalists from 11 countries to examine whether Europe's largest and most marginalised ethnic group was at risk of being blamed for the pandemic. Across two years this team of 11 Romani journalists monitored and analysed their own countries media representation for everything from hate speech to misinformation and journalistic good practice. Though their initial focus was on the pandemic they ended up capturing a continent wide picture of contemporary Romani representation.

In his presentation to the *“Hate speech and Antigypsyism in the Media”*¹⁶ conference in March 2021, hosted by the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAN), in cooperation with the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Team, and the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, Dan Pavel Doghi, Chief of the CPRSI and Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues OSCE ODIHR succinctly described what the media monitors found.

An internal database comprising over 800 articles from national and regional media focused on the portrayal of Roma was created across two years. This database, while considered small scale, represents perhaps the most up to date and wide-ranging analysis of European news media ever produced by Romani journalists of Romani representation.

The analysis confirmed that:

- Hate speech made up 33% of news stories –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.

From the United Kingdom to Albania and from Spain to Ukraine, the exercise captured worrying similarities and differences, worrying extremes and hopeful examples in how the media across Europe represents our communities.

In the UK, for example, the usual themes generated by British media about the communities focused largely on the impact of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (GRT communities) had on majority communities. The news was largely conflict-driven and focused on use of police eviction

¹⁶ International conference: Hate speech and Antigypsyism in the Media (March 3rd ERIAC 2021)
<https://eriac.org/international-conference-hate-speech-and-antigypsyism-in-the-media/>

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. In terms of whose voice was allowed to speak, only 30% were inclusive of the Romani 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 analysed from the regional Internet-media: negative publications made up to 47%, neutral publications were at 40%, positive publications at 13%. Only 10% of the articles included a Romani opinion or point of view.

- In Romania, 54% of the media news incited hate speech, 25% reported about incidents, and less than 10% were considered good journalistic practice. 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.¹⁷

The exercise found a huge variation in fulfilling the basic journalistic standards of impartiality, accuracy and fair representation. The analysis of Czech media, for example, showed a mature and balanced reporting of Romani issues. Of the 64 media reports analysed, 54 were informative and 10 were misleading. But the most biased content of all was judged to

¹⁷ INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE "Hate speech and Antigypsyism in the Media" 10-11 March 2021
<https://eriac.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Media-monitoring-by-CPRSI-Dan-Doghi-presentation.pdf>

be in Bulgaria where 10% of articles were professional, and 90% were non-professional.

In 1954, psychologist Gordon Allport published his *Scale of Prejudice and Discrimination* as a way of measuring the manifestation of prejudice in a society. His now famous model which described how hate speech towards a minority can ultimately lead to extermination, described how the terrible process of mass murder begins with antilocution, or the projection of negative imagery through things such as hate speech.¹⁸ If left unchecked Allport observed how the prejudice builds until it results in eradication.

The OSCE's media monitoring found hate speech towards the Romani community to varying degrees in the mass media throughout Europe. Generations of Romani journalists have become journalists precisely to tackle this issue, determined to rise to the challenge that if the media is somewhere where anti-Romani hatred begins, it must also be somewhere that it ends.

The growth of Romani community media: opportunities and challenges

The widespread existence of negative representation of Roma in the media across Europe, has been mirrored by a realisation within Romani communities that better representation will only be achieved through direct involvement with the media. From Romani activists and organisations being willing to be the Romani voice in the mainstream media, to Romani journalists and content producers becoming part of the media in its widest possible sense, it is their dogged effort over decades that has led to the examples of better practice now being found in the European media. But there is still much work left to do.

From the establishment of Radio Patrîn in the Netherlands in the 1970s by veteran Romani journalist Orhan Galjus, to the rise of very popular TikTok influencers like US based Roma activist Florian Taco, decades of effort have sometimes succeeded in giving Romani communities a mass and community media voice. The work of female Romani producers from Hungarian Roma journalist Ágnes Daróczi in Hungarian TV to the more recent work of German Romani journalist Nadine Mena Michollek for

¹⁸ Allport, Gordon (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley. ISBN 0-201-00179-9.

International German broadcaster Deutsche Welle underline how women have been a huge part of the effort to challenge Romani media representation. But sadly there are as many initiatives that have failed or closed, such as the Roma News Network founded by the late Marko Knudsen or the Roma Virtual Network created by the late Valery Novoselsky.

Across Europe perhaps hundreds of Romani journalists (nobody knows how many) are now using the media to articulate a different reality. Most work within community media which is by, for and about the Romani community itself. Often underfunded and overstretched, media such as Romea.cz in the Czech Republic, which describes itself as “Everything about Roma in one Place”, do a remarkable job. For years it has produced up to date news and features about current Romani realities in and beyond the Czech Republic and is also published in Czech and English.¹⁹

In the United Kingdom, Travellers Times has recently achieved full independence as a separate charity with a staff that is largely drawn from the UK’s diverse Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. It’s website proudly describes its mission: “For over 20 years, we have sought to provide high-quality news and information about these cultures, and enabled people from them to tell their stories through print and online journalism, film, and other media.”²⁰

“Travellers’ Times stands in direct challenge to one-sided views of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller life. Whilst it is not possible to act against every piece of unfair coverage, we try to be at the heart of a different view. But we also support direct responses to unjust reporting and politics.” Like many Romani community media organisations across Europe Travellers Times has become an incubator of Romani talent which has launched the careers of people like Romani writer Damian Le Bas, Romani journalist and co-author of this position paper Jake Bowers and Romani film maker Lisa Smith.²¹

For other’s such as Romanian Romani actor, director and activist Alina Serban the mission is personal rather an institutional. ‘When I was growing

¹⁹ Roma.cz, Article/Slovenia adopts scandalous law targeting Romani people, human rights organizations protest it as antigypsyism and human rights violation; <https://romea.cz/en> 2025

²⁰ Travellers Times <https://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/about>

²¹ Travellers Times The only magazine for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers
<https://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/sites/default/files/paragraphs/filelink/TT%2055%20web.pdf>

up, I didn't see anyone who looked like me in a positive role. That absence is deeply damaging', says actress, filmmaker and ARTivist Alina Șerban, recalling her childhood in Romania.²²

'Representation is power. I want Roma girls to know that their identity is a source of power, not shame,' she adds. In her journey from Romania to London's prestigious Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts to the Cannes Film Festival she has charted a course for others to follow. This award-winning Romani storyteller has done more than most to decolonise the Gadge (Non-Roma) gaze and redefine the way we, and the world see ourselves.

Some Romani communicators have made the leap into mainstream broadcasting, either because they have been leveraged the legal requirement to provide minority language broadcasting in Romani such as Swedish Radio's Radio Romano²³(see case study below) or their exceptional journalistic talent has been sought after to add to the national story such as Czech news presenter and Roma role model Richard Samko.

Other Romani film makers have used mainstream platforms to tell hidden Romani stories across boundaries. In 2025, for example, Swedish Rom Rikard Jansson created and presented a three-part series in English, Swedish and Romani about his hero the world heavyweight boxing champion Tyson Fury called *Gypsy King*. Broadcast nationally at prime time on Sweden's main public service TV channel, it examines Fury's roots and story in a way that is still unthinkable on the BBC, the national broadcaster of Fury's home. Being given three hours to broadcast in Romani about a Romani sporting hero on a mainstream national European TV channel is still an enticing and out of reach dream for most Romani journalists.²⁴ because Sweden, sadly, is still very much the exception to the rule.

With so few mainstream outlets for Romani voices the community has had to celebrate its own stories. Now in its ninth year, the Berlin-based Ake

²² The Unheard 12 million, Michael O'flaherty; https://rm.coe.int/book-on-roma-and-travellers-the-unheard-12-million-the-unstoppable-voi/488028aa54?fbclid=IwY2xjawNLCZZleHRuA2FlbQlXMAbicmlkETFOUIZ3a3hZejJzelRVWUEwAR6MMAIntdxdmJx8JiNmyleQZZAObIj23bpTPTPT-2EeAQ6zok9cYnwdFm8pA_aem_DiL_flGggpBQTakQjCzM9Q_CoE_2025.

²³ Radio Romano, case study <https://www.sverigesradio.se/radio-romano>

²⁴ Broadcast nationally at prime time on Sweden's main public service TV channel <https://www.svtplay.se/gypsy-king>

Dikhea film festival curates and screens the best of Romani film making in both fictional and fact based forms. Each year stunning and thought-provoking films are screened in Berlin's Babylon Cinema, though few, if any, are ever shown across town at the huge Berlin Film festival six months later. Similar film festivals in Brasov, Romania and the Rolling Film festival curated by film maker Sami Mustafa in Prishtina, Kosovo create important spaces for Romani film to be screened, watched and discussed. Yet compare their resources, audiences and impact to the Cannes, Venice or Berlin film festivals and it soon becomes clear that these festivals are only reaching a tiny fragment of their potential audience and impact. These festivals are temples of truthful Romani representation where the faithful have their faith in better representation renewed, but through no fault of their own, their message only rarely reaches beyond the temple walls.

The professionalisation and inclusion of Romani journalists and film makers in the mainstream media

The sad fact is, that despite notable success stories, great story tellers, determined community media, and the rare break into the mainstream; the collective Romani effort to redefine and re-educate the Gadjo gaze has until now barely made a dent in our bad representation. Consider this; the most well-known and critically successful Romani film director of all Tony Gatlif, whose films such as *Latcho Drom* and *Gadjo Dilo* have reached mainstream audiences, won his Best Director prize at the Cannes film festival in 2004. This is not because his output has got worse or ceased, a film of his was shown at Cannes in 2025, but it does show that no one has yet managed to emulate or surpass his success in over 21 years.

The continued existence and abundance of vibrant Romani community media, whether on air, online or in film festivals is truly something to celebrate because its existence is so fragile. Most Romani media are segregated much like the communities many of our people still live in. They exist far away from the mainstream media and are constantly fighting for survival with uncertain funding and a community audience that cannot or will not pay for their content.

For community media when the funding ends the newsroom closes. For those hardy souls that have made the jump to working in the mainstream media, they often find their career ghettoised into only reporting on Roma

community stories or unable to thrive beyond community programmes. A common misconception levelled at Romani journalists in mainstream environments is that a lack of professionalism will prevent them from producing balanced coverage of their communities in a way that no one would ever suggest that Bulgarian or French journalist of being inherently incapable of producing balanced coverage of their respective countries. Some Romani journalists receive excellent formal education, and others are self-taught or train on the job, but all these routes are established pathways to professionalism. Many Romani journalists have made the transition from activist to impassioned storyteller only to find their passion for their community regarded as a weakness in their impartiality.

Tragically, in order to survive at all in their career many Romani journalists are often forced to work simply as access fixers while non-Roma directors re-invigorate and re-project tired and outdated tropes and stereotypes about our community. In television, for example, Romani journalists are very rarely given any form of editorial equality in terms of job role and the all-important power wielded in the edit suite. As a result, many Romani broadcasters simply walk away from their careers with their potential impact never having been realised. The internal cognitive dissonance created by having to reinforce stereotypes they set out to challenge is usually too much for them to bear. Many return to community activism where their integrity will remain intact while their profession ambitions whither.

But the mainstream media is clearly interested in Romani stories. From the BBC's hugely commercially successful *Peaky Blinders* to Netflix's recent series *Infamy* made in Poland and the UK, Romani stories can generate large audiences. Both in their own way were plagued by the mythical Romani archetypes described above, probably because in both cases while Romani individuals were employed as part of the research or even acting cast, the editorial power remained far from Romani hands. In both fiction and fact-based programming, the problem persists that Romani storytellers may be used for access into what remains a hidden secretive world for the gadge, but they are very rarely ever given the narrative sovereignty to tell the stories they themselves want to tell about issues that they want to explore.

In conclusion, the incubation of Romani talent within Romani community media often fails to make the jump to the mainstream media where its impact to truly influence and change popular culture can happen. The barriers of lack of trust, resources and opportunity, trust and institutional racism are often solid and insurmountable. The few Romani storytellers that have emerged owe their success to dogged determination, luck and sheer persistence.

Brave new world: how Romani social media influencers are challenging the narratives

With the barriers to the mainstream media being so solid, a younger generation of Romani communicators are finding ways of bypassing the barriers and levelling the playing field. Just as digital technology has placed more cameras in more hands than ever before, the ubiquity of the smartphone and social media apps has presented new opportunities for Romani communicators. For younger audiences at least the rise of social media apps like YouTube, Instagram and Tik Tok has inevitably led to the irrelevance and slow fragmentation of legacy media audiences.

Influencers like Florian Tacorian²⁵ are beginning to gain widespread following through simply providing a Romani counterbalance to mainstream. From a mixed Armenian and Romanian Kalderash background but living in the US state of Florida, Florian has found a very large audience on what are generally considered shallow, short attention social mediums.

Florian is active across all social media platforms used by young people in 2025 and has racked up millions of views for his short form content that covers everything from who should play Esmeralda in the latest interpretation of the *Hunchback of Notre Dame* to easy to access comparisons between the Romani language and modern Indian languages. With 315,600 followers and 38,000,000 likes on Tik Tok alone Tacorian and his fellow Romani influencers are not waiting for the legacy or mainstream media to start balancing the representation of the Romani people, they are using the ubiquitous technology of the smart phone to do it for themselves.

²⁵ Florida.florian (Florian) <https://www.tiktok.com/@florida.florian?lang=en>

Chantelle Fury²⁶ in the United Kingdom is from a Romanichal community in Bedfordshire. With 463,800 followers and 17,000,000 likes she has successfully harnessed the tabloid media fascination for Romani culture to build up an impressive platform of her own. From “Gypsy cleaning tips” featuring in the UK’s best-selling tabloid the Sun, which has often printed hostile articles about the community, to featuring in the BBC documentary *Growing Up Gypsy*, Chantelle is as likely to talk about her weight loss journey and struggles to conceive children as she is to campaign against antigypsyism.²⁷

At times Chantelle has faced a backlash from the Romani community itself for speaking about taboo subjects such as female fertility, but her refusal to be silenced just makes her more fragile, human and liked by a mainstream audience. Each European country and language now has Romani social media influencers who are not waiting for the mainstream media to provide them with a platform, they are rolling their sleeves up and using the level playing field available to anyone with a smart phone to produce one for themselves.

Fighting antigypsyism through the media in the Balkans

Across Europe, Roma people are often spoken about, but rarely listened to. Negative stereotypes and hate speech still appear in newspapers, television, and online platforms. But a new regional effort led by the Council of Europe and supported by the European Union is trying to change that.

The initiative, called Roma Integration III Media Activities, brings together journalists, editors, and media regulators from seven countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye.

Its goal is simple: to make the media more fair, inclusive, and accurate when reporting about Roma communities.

Antigypsyism, discrimination and hostility towards Roma people; often appears in media stories that show Roma as poor, criminal, or dependent.

²⁶ Chantelle19xoxo <https://www.tiktok.com/@chantelle19xoxo?lang=en>

²⁷ Growing Up Gypsy, Chantelle, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJJJa14lsSnE> A day in the life of a Gypsy TikTok | Stacey Dooley: Growing Up Gypsy

The project wants to break this pattern by training journalists and supporting Roma reporters to tell their own stories.

In Albania, an important first step was the creation of the No Hate Alliance a partnership between the People's Advocate, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, the Audiovisual Media Authority, and the Albanian Media Council. Together, these institutions work to prevent hate speech and promote tolerance through campaigns, staff training, and cooperation with schools and civil society groups.

"This kind of alliance is essential," said one media expert involved in the programme. "It means the institutions that protect human rights and freedom of expression are finally working together."

A new generation of Roma journalists in the Western Balkans

A regional training and mentoring programme has recently brought Roma journalists from across the Western Balkans together.

In September 2024, 30 Roma journalists and media professionals took part in a training session called "Transforming Media Narratives on Roma", held in Belgrade. Over two days, they learned how to identify antigypsyism in reporting, how to tell positive stories about Roma people, and how to use social media to reach wider audiences.

The training was followed by a special exhibition titled "Combing Through Time: Untangling Hidden Histories of the Roma Genocide". It showed the often-forgotten suffering of Roma people during World War II and reminded visitors of the importance of memory and respect in journalism.

Soon after, eight young Roma journalists joined mainstream newsrooms for a two-month mentorship programme. They worked at major media outlets such as BIRN in Albania, Al Jazeera Balkans in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo 2.0 and Radio Mitrovica North in Kosovo, Vijesti in Montenegro, TV Telma in North Macedonia, N1 in Serbia, and Halk TV in Türkiye.

These placements gave them real newsroom experience writing articles, producing reports, and learning how editorial decisions are made.

“For many of us, it was the first time we were part of a professional team in a national media outlet,” said one participant. “It helped us understand how powerful storytelling can be when it includes Roma voices.”

Since March 2025, journalists and media partners involved in the project have started producing weekly stories and videos that show the achievements and everyday lives of Roma people. These stories are shared on the Council of Europe’s Roma and Travellers Division social media pages and on local media channels.

One of the first videos features a successful Roma entrepreneur from Kosovo, showing how education and determination can change a person’s future. The idea is to highlight Roma people as active members of society teachers, artists, doctors, or business owners not only as victims of discrimination.

These positive stories help to replace old stereotypes with new, realistic images of Roma life. They show that Roma communities are diverse, creative, and deeply connected to European societies.

In Albania, new Ethical Reporting Guidelines have been written to help journalists report on Roma issues with fairness and respect. The guidelines give practical advice such as avoiding offensive language, checking facts carefully, and letting Roma voices be heard in every story. Training sessions for journalists, editors, and students began in June 2025 to promote these standards across the country.

The Roma Integration III programme has achieved visible progress training new journalists, building cooperation among institutions, and creating a wave of positive Roma stories. But challenges remain.

The number of Roma professionals in mainstream media is still small, and many find it hard to get permanent jobs. Some media outlets continue to use harmful language or ignore Roma stories altogether. Experts say the next step should be to make these new practices part of everyday journalism not just special projects.

The **Roma Integration III** project shows that change is possible when cooperation, training, and trust come together. By giving Roma journalists a voice and a platform, it is slowly rewriting how Europe sees its Roma

citizens not as outsiders, but as storytellers, professionals, and full members of society.

INSPIRATION FROM ROMANISTAN AND BEYOND

The truth is that Romani people are just one among many diverse peoples who are struggling against media stereotypes created by others. In fact, most linguistic and racial minorities across the world are facing similar struggles. So before discussing in greater detail what a road map to better representation might look like let us first look at how a selection of Romani and non-Romani communities are fighting for and sometimes achieving media equality.

Case Study 1: Narrative sovereignty amongst the First Nations of Canada

For the indigenous First Nations of North America the right to ancestral homelands has often come first in order to secure survival and basic living standards. While European colonisation succeeded in robbing them of much of their land and physically marginalising them to reservations that weren't deemed of much value, much of their historical struggle therefore has necessarily centred around the concept of **territorial sovereignty**. But just as with the Romani community, demonisation through racist colonial stereotyping has also highlighted the media as a key ground upon which liberation now needs to be fought. As a result, they have invented a key concept that Romani communities can use in our struggle to redefine the way the world sees us. It is called **Narrative Sovereignty**.

Narrative sovereignty for First Nations in Canada refers to the inherent right and power to define and tell their own stories, control their own data, and shape their own cultural and political narratives, free from colonial perspectives. This involves rejecting stereotypes and asserting an indigenous worldview-driven approach to media and information, and it is a crucial aspect of self-determination and decolonization. Narrative sovereignty is about reclaiming the narrative by re-telling stories from an Indigenous perspective, which actively counters and unravels the harmful and dehumanizing narratives imposed by colonialism. It also involves approaching media production based on community values and worldviews rather than on profit or external, Western-based objectives.

Canada's Indigenous Screen Office (ISO), for example, is an independent national advocacy and funding organization serving First Nations, Inuit and Métis creators of screen content in Canada. The ISO's mandate is to foster and support narrative sovereignty and cultural revitalization by increasing Indigenous storytelling on screens and promoting Indigenous values and participation across the sector. The creation of the ISO in 2017-18 was the result of decades of advocacy from Indigenous industry professionals and creators who identified that an organization supporting Indigenous storytellers was a crucial component to a healthy and robust media landscape in Canada.²⁸

In August 2025, Kerry Swanson, CEO of the Indigenous Screen Office (ISO), confirmed that a record number of Indigenous films from across Canada were selected for the 2025 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), an equivalent of the Berlin film festival that rarely features any Romani content.

The ISO invested a combined total of \$3.5 million Canadian Dollars in the development and production of eight feature films, which spotlights a list of talented emerging voices and award-winning established Indigenous filmmakers.

"As an entity that exists solely to support Indigenous voices and vision, we are deeply proud of the delegation of Indigenous filmmakers attending TIFF this year, as the festival marks their milestone anniversary," said Kerry Swanson. "Spanning across all the TIFF programming streams, these films are a powerful reflection of Indigenous talent, vision, and storytelling, and the impact of the ISO. The ISO Story Fund has provided support for all eight of TIFF's Indigenous feature films from Canada and we look forward to celebrating these new works with festival audiences."

The eight Indigenous feature films from Canada confirmed to premiere at TIFF 2025 reveals a breadth and development of film making talent at a major international film festival that the Romani community would surely love to emulate. They were:

- **Shane Belcourt & Tanya Talaga's** Ni-Naadamaadiz: Red Power Rising – World Premiere, TIFF Docs – Despite it lasting 90 days in

²⁸ Indigenous screen office, <https://iso-bea.ca/>

1974, there is only eight minutes of footage about an Indigenous youth-led armed occupation in Kenora, Ontario. The documentary *Ni-Naadamaadiz: Red Power Rising* tells that story of Indigenous resilience and power.²⁹

- **Bretten Hannam's** *Sk+te'kmujue'katik (At the Place of Ghosts)* – World Premiere, Platform – This genre-bending otherworldly drama follows two brothers' journey to avenge the spirits that haunt them from their childhood.³⁰
- **Tasha Hubbard's** *Meadowlarks* – World Premiere, Special Presentations – Based on her 2017 documentary *Birth of a Family*, Tasha Hubbard's *Meadowlarks* is an emotional drama that follows four siblings, separated by the Sixties Scoop, as they come together over a week.³¹
- **Zacharias Kunuk's** *Uiksaringitara (Wrong Husband)* – North American Premiere, Special Presentations – A strange death, village upheavals, and swarming suitors lead to a love story gone awry in acclaimed Inuk filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk's latest enthralling imagining of ancient Inuit stories.³²
- **Gail Maurice's** *Blood Lines* – World Premiere, Centrepiece – The second feature from director Gail Maurice (*ROSIE*, TIFF '22) is a singular film: a Métis same-sex romance led by actor Dana Solomon.³³
- **Darlene Naponse's** *Aki* – World Premiere, TIFF Docs – Set on Atikameksheng Anishnawbek (formerly known as Whitefish Lake), this visual art documentary follows the seasons in director Darlene Naponse's home community in Northern Ontario.³⁴
- **Eva Thomas' Nika & Madison** – World Premiere, Discovery – A fateful encounter with the police propels two estranged friends to

²⁹Shane Belcourt & Tanya Talaga's *Ni-Naadamaadiz: Red Power Rising* – World Premiere, TIFF Docs –

<https://tiff.net/films/ni-naadamaadiz-red-power-rising>

³⁰**Bretten Hannam's** *Sk+te'kmujue'katik (At the Place of Ghosts)* – World Premiere, Platform <https://tiff.net/films/sktekmujuekatik-at-the-place-of-ghosts>

³¹ Tasha Hubbard's *Meadowlarks*– <https://tiff.net/films/meadowlarks>

³² **Zacharias Kunuk's** *Uiksaringitara (Wrong Husband)* – North American Premiere, Special Presentations <https://tiff.net/films/uiksaringitara-wrong-husband>

³³ **Gail Maurice's** *Blood Lines* – World Premiere, Centrepiece – The second feature from director Gail Maurice (*ROSIE*, TIFF '22) <https://tiff.net/films/blood-lines>

³⁴ **Darlene Naponse's** *Aki* – World Premiere, TIFF Docs – Set on Atikameksheng Anishnawbek <https://tiff.net/films/aki>

reevaluate their relationship, in Eva Thomas' thoughtful and urgent debut.³⁵

- **Rhayne Vermette's** *Levers* – World Premiere, *Wavelengths* – In the enigmatic and much-anticipated follow-up to her award-winning *Ste. Anne*, Manitoban filmmaker and artist Rhayne Vermette weaves through a community that must grapple with a shaken sense of stability after a blast plunges them into a day of total darkness.³⁶

Case Study 2: Welsh language broadcasting in the UK

But you don't need to cross the Atlantic to see how effective institutional support has led to a dramatic expansion of a threatened minority worldview. In the United Kingdom, legal recognition of the Celtic language of Welsh combined with substantial resources supporting Welsh language broadcasting, has led to a revival of the Welsh language.

In the 1960s Welsh was thought to be on the brink of extinction. The Welsh government has set ambitious targets under the Cymraeg 2050 strategy, which includes reaching one million speakers by 2050 and increasing the percentage of daily Welsh speakers to 20% of the population. The Welsh Language (Wales) Act 2025 provides a legal framework to support these goals.

Much of the cultural impetus behind the revival of Welsh has been driven by Welsh language education in schools and Welsh language broadcasting. Welsh-language broadcasting in the UK is primarily provided by S4C, a dedicated Welsh-language television channel, and BBC Cymru Wales, which produces Welsh content for radio and TV. S4C is the Welsh equivalent of the British commercial and public service broadcaster Channel 4. S4C is the only channel broadcast exclusively in Welsh, it airs over 115 hours of programming per week and commissions most of its content from independent producers in Wales.

But while S4C's role in reviving the Welsh language is undisputed, like all mainstream broadcasters, its audience is not guaranteed. Just as young people all over the world abandon legacy media in favour of social

³⁵ Eva Thomas' *Nika & Madison* – World Premiere, Discovery <https://tiff.net/films/nika-and-madison>

³⁶ Rhayne Vermette's *Levers* – World Premiere, *Wavelengths* <https://tiff.net/films/levers>

media, there are signs that S4C's audience is also fragmenting. In September 2025, it launched its five year strategy to make it "more than a TV channel."³⁷

In its new strategy, S4C emphasised its core purpose of 'showing our world through the Welsh language' and promises to 'inspire, entertain and reflect Wales with great content for everyone.' It outlined the steps it will take over the next five years to:

- Expand viewing through its content
- Transform to a digital-first approach
- Collaborate to help Wales thrive

Over the next five years, S4C said it will embrace opportunities to serve diverse audiences across multiple platforms – confidently moving towards becoming a digital-first service. As a first step, S4C is inviting new YouTube content commission proposals for audiences aged 25–44, with an investment of nearly £1m.

Launching the new strategy, Geraint Evans, S4C's chief executive, said:

"Public service broadcasters across the world are facing unprecedented challenges as viewing habits change. But with every challenge, comes the opportunity to innovate, and by working with our partners in the broadcast sector, our new strategy will cement S4C's position at the forefront of the change across the industry."³⁸

Beyond the admirable impact the Channel has had on the revival of the Welsh language, the fact that S4C is a public service broadcaster means that its costs, audiences and impact can be quantified and compared to the extremely limited extent of Romani language broadcasting across Europe.

S4C's total annual income for the financial year 2023–24 was £90.75 GBP million for around 538,300 people aged three and over could speak Welsh as recorded in the 2021 UK census. Meaning that approximately £168 GBP

³⁷ 'S4C – More than a TV channel': S4C launches new strategy with the first Welsh-language vertical TikTok drama broadcast
<https://www.s4c.cymru/en/press/post/65551/s4c-launches-new-strategy-with-the-first-welsh-language-vertical-tiktok-drama-broadcast/>

³⁸ S4C <https://www.s4c.cymru/en/>

per head was spent (quite rightly) from the BBC licence fee to support the language of every Welsh speaker. The figure for BBC spending on Romani language broadcasting is currently £0, a situation of absolute broadcasting inequality that has existed since the BBC stopped its only programme for the Romani community in 2008.

Looked at another way, if an institution was to support Romani language broadcasting for all 12 million Romani citizens across Europe at the same level as S4C it would need an annual budget of over £2 Billion GBP!

Case Study 3: Roma Media in Kosovo

The Roma community in Kosovo holds a unique and historic place in global media. They were the first in the world to produce television programmes in the Romani language, a milestone that took place in 1986 at the former Radio Television of Pristina (RTP). This marked the beginning of a new era for Roma representation in the media, allowing Roma voices and stories to be heard on a national platform for the first time.

After the war in Kosovo, these programmes continued under Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK), where they are still broadcast today.

Since 2003, RTK has aired a weekly magazine show called “Yekhipë” which means “Togetherness/Unity” in Romani. The programme focuses on the life, culture, traditions, and achievements and social inclusion of the Roma community in Kosovo. It offers an important platform to share positive stories, preserve cultural identity, and highlight issues that affect Roma citizens.

In addition to the weekly magazine, since 2011, RTK has also broadcast daily news in the Romani language. These news segments inform viewers about key national and international events, ensuring that Roma audiences receive timely and reliable information in their mother tongue.

Radio also plays a vital role in Roma media life. Since 2006, Radio Kosovo has aired a daily one-hour programme in the Romani language. It includes news, cultural segments, and reports that reflect the daily life, challenges, and successes of the Roma community.

Beyond national television and radio, the Roma community has also developed local media outlets. One of the most notable is Radio Romano Avazo (which means “Roma Voice”), serving as an important local source

of information and cultural promotion. Additionally, Radio Graçanica and Radio Gjakova also produce programmes in the Romani language, helping to promote Roma culture, music, and traditions across different regions of Kosovo.

Together, these initiatives show the strong commitment of Roma journalists and broadcasters to preserve their language, strengthen their identity, and ensure that Roma perspectives are part of Kosovo's public media landscape.

Case Study 4: Radio Romano, how linguistic and national minority status has led to a generation of Romani journalists in Sweden

Sometimes it's the smallest countries that are nimble enough to make the most progress. The Scandinavian country of Sweden has a population of just 8 million people, with a Romani population of anywhere between 42,500 people and 100,000, meaning that the Romani population makes constitutes as little as 0.4 per cent of the population. The community is diverse, ranging from the Resande community (Travellers) that have been in the country for centuries to recent Roma migrants from the Balkans.

The five national minorities in Sweden are the Jews, the Roma, the Sami (an indigenous people), the Swedish Finns, and the Tornedalers. The minority languages are Jiddisch, Romani chib, Sami, Meänkieli and Finnish. But because Romani is recognised as one of the five national minority languages, the country's public service broadcaster Swedish Radio (Sveriges Radio) has a duty to broadcast in Romani.³⁹

In 2024, Swedish Radio's Radio Romano celebrated 20 years of broadcasting in Romani. Editor-in-chief Veli Brijani was there from the very beginning and remembers the beginning.

"We started with half an hour a week in 2002, and since then the broadcast time has only increased. Today, Radio Romano broadcasts at 4-4:30 PM Monday-Friday on the P2 and P6 channels." Both channels are

³⁹ Lansstyrelserna, National Minorities and national minority languages, <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/english/society/social-sustainability/national-minorities-and-national-minority-languages.html#:~:text=The%20five%20national%20minorities%20in,%2C%20Sami%2C%20Me%C3%A4nkieli%20and%20Finnish>

mainstream channels broadcast across the country. Radio Romano offer listeners news, culture and language from a Romani perspective.

“It is a human right to have access to media in your mother tongue. Our job is to find the Romani angle, how does this news affect the Romani people,” says Veli.

An example of this was when Russia invaded Ukraine. Radio Romano was quick to interview Roma in Lviv, Ukraine, and covered how Roma refugees were treated on the borders with Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. In addition to covering what is happening here and now, Roma inclusion, mother tongue education, and the upcoming elections are important areas of coverage.

Several different Romani dialects, known as varieties, are spoken in Sweden, which can be a challenge for the editorial staff. Radio Romano's staff covers the five most common Romani dialects in Sweden and they are constantly trying to learn more. Veli Brijani speaks Arli and Gurbeti himself, but also knows several others. – The most important thing is that the listeners understand. Veli says the staff try to use what is known as “medie Romani”, that is, use as many international words as possible.

For his work on finding a radio language that can reach all of Sweden's Roma, Brijani received Sveriges Radio's Language Prize in 2015. Although the preservation of the Romani languages is central to Radio Romano, it is equally important to develop them and reach the message to listeners, he believes.

Most listeners are in the big cities where most Romanies live – the most common listener is a middle-aged Romani woman. But it's not just Swedish Romanies who listen to Radio Romano, but also Romanies around Europe.

“When social media and new digital platforms came, it exploded,” says Brijani. Some days we have 10-14,000 followers on Facebook. On a top news story, it can be as many as 100,000, says Brijani.

Radio Romano's editorial office is in the Radihuset (The Radio House) in Stockholm. Three of the eight employees work in Malmö. “We at Sveriges

Radio are independent and impartial, which means we can highlight sensitive topics and let different Roma voices be heard,” says Brijani.

In addition to news, Radio Romano broadcasts children's programs on Thursdays and music on Fridays. Every year they also have special programs about different Romani dialects. Veli Brijani wants to show the new program *Fatta språkter*, which is available on the website. In seven programs, the host Mirelle Gyllenbäck and guests discuss the situation of the oldest and most endangered Romani dialects, the Swedish and the Finnish.

Being embedded and supported by Swedish public service radio has led to the creation of a whole new generation of Swedish Romani broadcasters who have now also moved into television. Regular series invite a mainstream and Romani audience to view the Romani Talkshow “Meet with the Romani” (Mote Med Romani). In it hosts Jenni Kay and Jaqueline Horvath invite interesting and current guests to the studio. The programme is broadcast in a mix of Romani, Swedish and English and is available online across the world. In 2025, the programme’s presenter Jenni Kay was awarded the prestigious Katarina Taikon Prize because of her work promoting the Romani language and the Romani minority.

She has, among other things, led the SVT program *Jenni meets* and is currently developing methods to promote the Romani language at the *Institute for Language and Folklore*. The jury described her as “an inspirer who builds bridges between generations, cultures and linguistic worlds.”

The Katarina Taikon Prize, named after the famous Romani civil rights leader, was established in 2015 by the City of Stockholm and is awarded each year to private individuals or organizations whose work strengthens human rights. Kay is not alone.

In 2025 Lovari journalist Rikard Jansson presented the three-part docuseries *Gypsy King* in which he went in search of his idol world heavyweight boxing champion Tyson Fury. The programme was broadcast in Romani, English and Swedish on SVT1 the nation’s premier TV station at primetime. Sadly, such an in depth look at Fury’s life remains unthinkable on the BBC in Britain the land of his birth which has a Romani community of 600,000 people.

FUTURE POSITIVE: DEFINING, DREAMING AND QUANTIFYING WHAT EQUAL ROMANI MEDIA REPRESENTATION SHOULD LOOK LIKE

In many countries in Europe Romani people experience quantifiable and total media inequality. The exclusion of proud Romani voices from the mainstream media is in some places absolute or near absolute. In Albania, for example, the only TV broadcasting dedicated to its 150,000 Romani citizens is a single five-minute programme in which mainstream news is simply translated into Romani.

At the other end of Europe in the UK, the annual budget dedicated to Romani community broadcasting is £0.00 GBP, after the BBC cancelled its short-lived experiment in Romani broadcasting *Rokker Radio* in 2010. Even in countries with dedicated Romani broadcasting, like Spain, the growth of a Romani media voice is hampered by very low resources and unsuitable broadcast times.

But what could media equality look like? To visualise that requires a thought experiment that is an exercise in idealistic dreaming and imagination. The gap between the fantasy that is about to follow and the current reality underlines how much work remains to be done, but also highlights how much potential for change remains unrealised.

There follows an entirely fictitious and improbable European timeline of Romani culture achieving recognition, inclusion and celebration in the media. Let's say it is in 2035. The names of the events and people involved are real, even if the projects are currently imagined.

It is February 2035 and strong slate of Romani films has entered the *Berlin International Film Festival* (Berlinale) competition in all categories with the financial support of Eurimages, the EU's Creative Europe programme and ERIAC. The Golden Bear, the competition's top prize goes to **Sami Mustafa** for his docudrama about a Romani homecoming in Kosovo long after the Balkan wars. A Silver Bear is also won by Romani director and actor **Alina Serban** for her harrowing historical drama focusing on the emancipation of Romani slaves in Romania.

April's International Roma Day is marked by primetime screenings of authored national Romani histories on public service broadcasters across

Europe. Netflix also unveils a season of Romani films on its platforms across Europe in connection with Britain's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month in June.

In May, the Cannes Film Festival awards its prestigious Palmes D'Or to Spanish Romani director **Pablo Vega** for his futuristic science fiction *Galactic Ghetto* about the full-scale planetary deportation of Europe's Romani community to a marginal desert planet in the far corner of the milky way.

Later that month veteran feminist Roma rappers Pretty Loud win the Eurovision Song Contest with their song Mother Trucker. The victory coincides with the fifth anniversary of the EBU's crucial support for syndicated Romani programming among its member states. The fifth anniversary also coincides with a renewed 10 year commitment from EBU countries to finance and support Romani broadcasting through national TV licence fees and generalised national taxation.

In August, a powerful stage show about Scotland's attempt to eradicate Scottish Traveller culture in the *Tinker Experiment* wins rave reviews at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. It later goes on a European tour to selected cultural venues. On August 2nd, an intense drama *Tattoo Z* depicts the only known uprising at Zigeunerlager at the Auschwitz concentration camp. It is released on Amazon Prime to critical acclaim.

In September and October, *Porrajmos: the great devouring*, a series produced by German broadcaster Deutsche Welle and directed by French director Tony Gatlif, examines the Romani holocaust and subsequent decades of social exclusion. Across two months it is sold to be broadcast to over 120 territories at the International Broadcast Convention in Amsterdam and MIPCOM at Cannes in France.

The fact that such victories are currently unthinkable, means that we must now dare to dream they are possible. Working towards goals with such impact is nothing less than what we need to tackle media inequality and what our ancestors and descendants surely expect of us.

MAPPING OF ROMA JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA OUTLETS: QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

In the autumn of 2025 ERIAC conducted an online survey of Romani journalists from across the globe. Bosnian Roma journalist Dalibor Tanic found 59 self-identifying Romani journalists and asked them about their work. The results are a fascinating insight into the collective experience of those Romani individuals who have long been engaged in changing the media by being the media.

Geographical locations

Firstly, Tanic asked the journalists where they lived. The responses came from 22 countries, ranging from Canada to Tajikistan, but predictably 53 of the journalists lived in Europe. Although very evenly spread across Europe, there were more than one survey response from the following countries:

Serbia: 9 Roma journalists responded
United Kingdom: 7 Roma journalists responded
Kosovo: 7 Roma journalists responded
Romania: 5 Roma journalists responded
North Macedonia: 3 Roma journalists responded
Sweden: 2 Roma journalists responded
Bosnia: 2 Roma journalists responded
Montenegro: 2 journalists responded
Ukraine: 2 journalists responded

Interpretation

As expected the geographical diversity of Romani journalists is huge. The concentrations reflect both the presence of large Romani communities, but also where significant investment, infrastructure and opportunity for Romani journalists currently exists. This produces data in which the concentration of Romani journalists may be disproportionately large or small compared to the audience they are serving. For example, there appear to be more Romani journalists in the UK than Romania which has a significantly larger Romani population. The statistics may also of course

reflect where Romani journalists are connected to the wider ERIAC network.

Nevertheless, the number of journalists, their geographical concentrations and spread reveal the presence of a significant professional network of Romani media professionals that are working to change Romani representation. Everyone represents a foundation from which to build better representation.

Primary language

Tanic asked the journalists what their primary language was. The results showed huge linguistic diversity with many respondents responding with a national language of the country where they live as well as Romani. This doubling of results is reflected in the data.

Swedish:	2	3.3%
Serbian:	7	11.6%
Romani:	18	30%
English:	10	16.6%
Bosnian:	3	5%
Hungarian:	2	3.3%
Croatian:	2	3.3%
Polish:	1	1.6%
German:	1	1.6%
Turkish:	1	1.6%
Slovenian:	1	1.6%
Spanish:	2	3.3%
Russian:	1	1.6%
Czech:	1	1.6%
Romanian:	3	5%
Bulgarian:	1	1.6%
Macedonian:	2	3.3%

Interpretation

The results show that Romani journalists represent a huge linguistic diversity and that is key tool in their crafts as communicators. Many respondents were clearly multilingual. It also worryingly showed that many did not

speak the Romani language, a key marker of Romani identity and skill for media production in the Romani language. This highlights a training need and need for the intergenerational transmission of the Romani language. Simply put, if Romani journalists cannot speak Romani the chances of more media produced in Romani is limited.

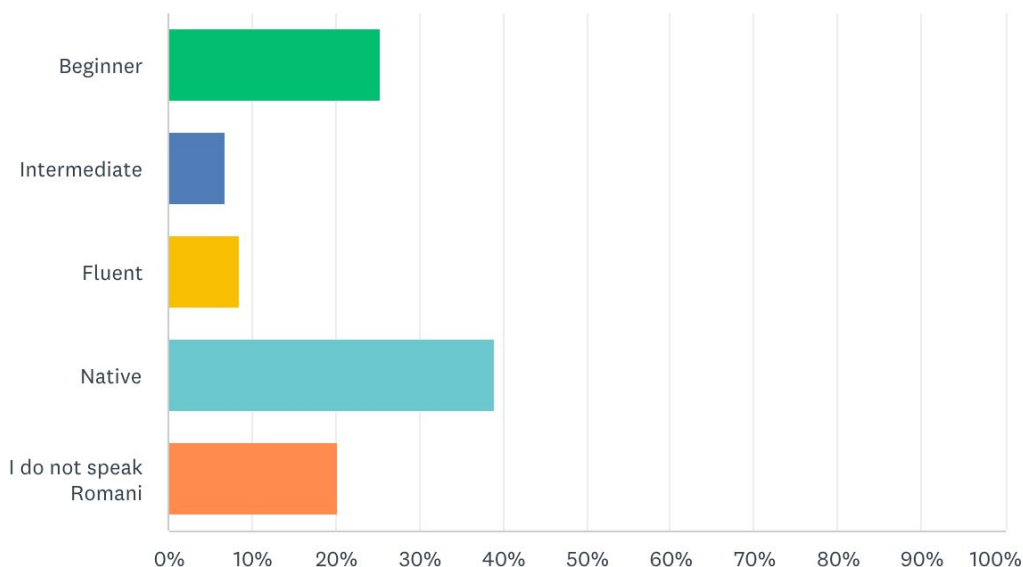
The high scoring of Serbian and Romani in the data reflects both a concentration of where journalists live and the fact they often use English as a means of international communication. This reflects a positive skills base rather than a deficit.

Romani language proficiency

Tanic also asked what level of proficiency in the Romani language the journalists had. The results were:

What is your level of proficiency in the Romani language?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



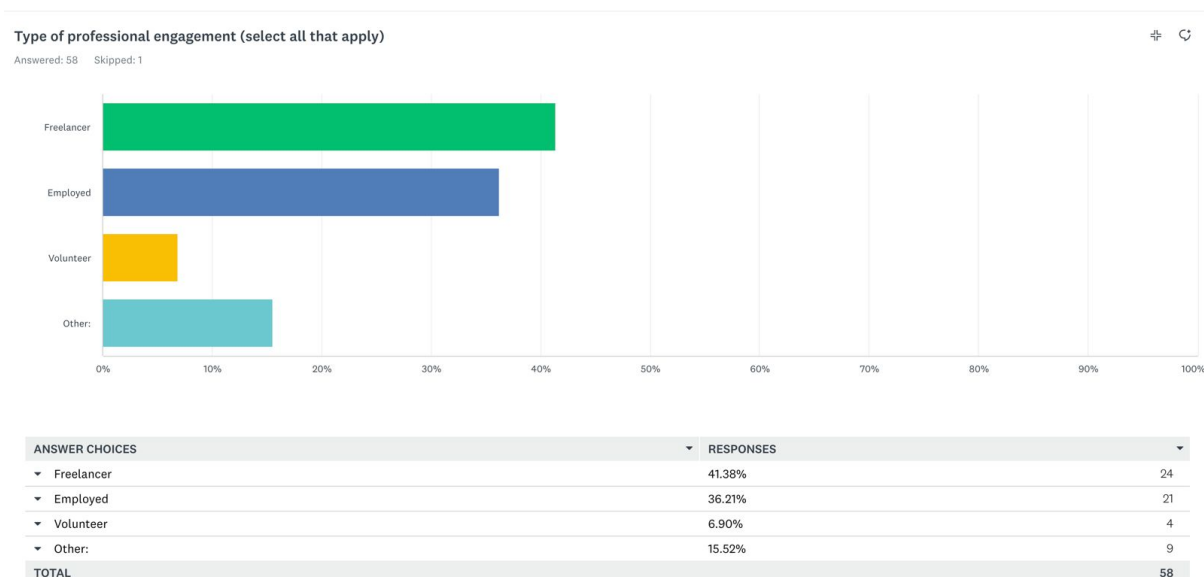
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Beginner	25.42%	15
Intermediate	6.78%	4
Fluent	8.47%	5
Native	38.98%	23
I do not speak Romani	20.34%	12
TOTAL		59

Interpretation

These results reveal both a high number of native/fluent Romani speakers amongst the journalists but also an ongoing if incomplete process of Romani journalists attempting to learn their mother tongue. The fact that only 38.98% of Romani journalists speak Romani fluently reflects the fact that Romani is under threat even at the heart of the community and underlines the importance of ERIACs Romani language activity.

Job Security

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many people stop working as Romani journalists because of insecure work or lack of opportunity. So Tanic asked about the employment status, the results were:



Interpretation

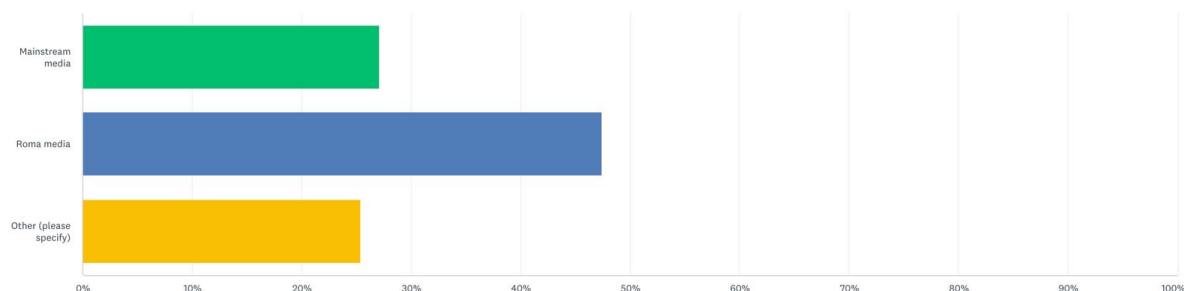
The results are in line with anecdotal experience that most Romani journalists are in insecure, voluntary or temporary employment. Their achievements in becoming journalists are hugely important but fragile, subject as ever the whims of funders. Many are simply not involved in public sector broadcasting and the job security it often involves.

Media audience

Tanic also asked which kind of media the journalists worked in, in terms of whether their audience was for the Romani community or a mainstream audience. With the boundaries between traditional and social media audiences constantly shifting the responses naturally reflected how the respondents personally identified which kind of media they worked in, but the results are still quite clear.

Type of media you work in (select all that apply)

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Mainstream media	27.12%	16
▼ Roma media	47.46%	28
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 25.42%	15
TOTAL		59

Interpretation

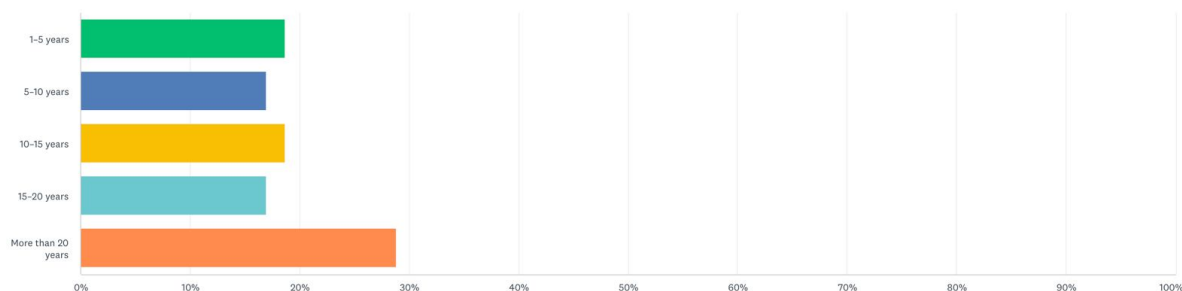
Just over a quarter of Romani journalists produce content for a mainstream audience. Many Romani journalists are stuck in a marginalised but nevertheless crucial communications ghetto. They may be quite content to only service the needs of their own community, but others are finding their careers and opportunities limited by lack of opportunity to reach wider and bigger audiences. As with much of Romani life across the continent, the opportunity to thrive for many Romani journalists is stymied by segregation.

Depth of Experience

Tanic asked how many years of experience the respondents had? Length of experience of course does not always translate into seniority within a media organisation, but it does sometimes.

Years of journalistic experience

Answered: 59 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ 1-5 years	18.64%	11
▼ 5-10 years	16.95%	10
▼ 10-15 years	18.64%	11
▼ 15-20 years	16.95%	10
▼ More than 20 years	28.81%	17
TOTAL		59

Interpretation

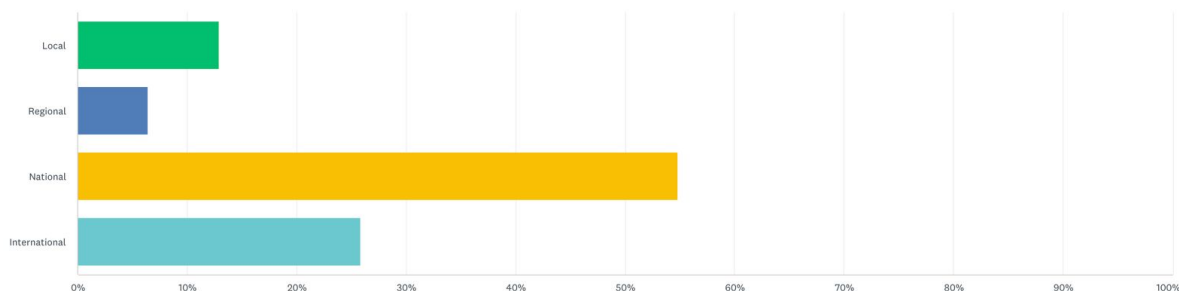
The highest number of respondents had been journalists for more than twenty years suggesting either a dogged determination to keep telling Romani stories or continued support for those stories. It would be possible to conclude that Romani journalists were an aging population were it not for journalists reporting career lengths of a variety of shorter timeframes. The diversity of length of service represents a talent pool from which to expand and improve Romani media representation and production.

Geographical breadth of audience

Tanic also asked what the geographical breadth of journalist's audience was. The results were as follows:

Scope

Answered: 31 Skipped: 28



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Local	12.90%	4
Regional	6.45%	2
National	54.84%	17
International	25.81%	8
TOTAL		31

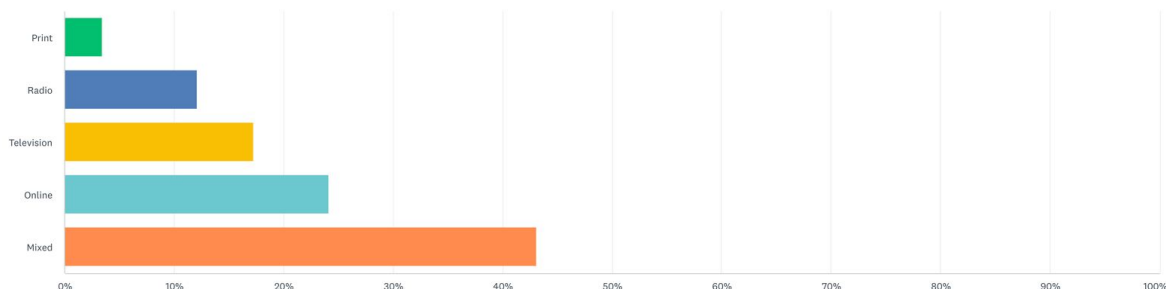
It seems that although most Romani journalists work within national or linguistic boundaries, their reach is national or even international. Romani communities are clearly looking for their content at a national or national level, the internet has allowed a transnational free market of broadcasting that Romani audiences are tuning into.

Primary platform

Tanic asked which media the journalists were working in. Given the known decline of printed media and the growth of digital media the results were not surprising.

Primary platform of activity (select all that apply)

Answered: 58 Skipped: 1



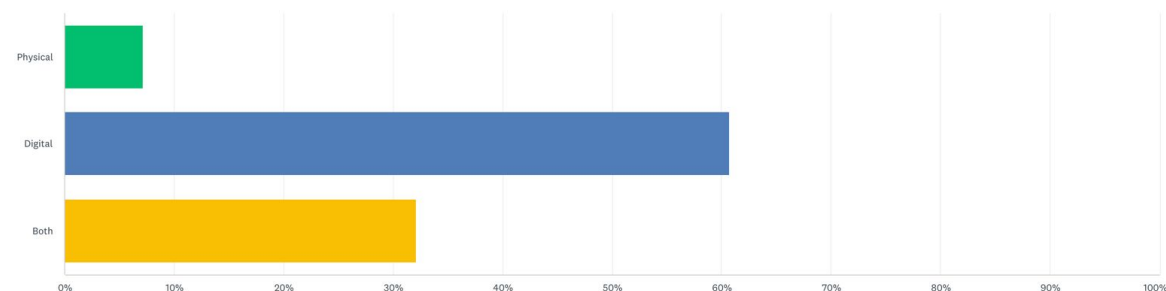
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Print	3.45%	2
▼ Radio	12.07%	7
▼ Television	17.24%	10
▼ Online	24.14%	14
▼ Mixed	43.10%	25
TOTAL		58

Interpretation

The results show an interesting level of skill and adaptability to work across media in a rapidly fragmenting and digitising media environment. The hallmark of course of many Romani communities is the ability to move with the times and go where work is and this is clearly being repeated in the work environment of Romani journalists. The supplementary question below Tanic asked about the format most journalists worked in underlined the point that many Romani journalists are highly skilled and adaptable.

Format

Answered: 28 Skipped: 31



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Physical	7.14%	2
▼ Digital	60.71%	17
▼ Both	32.14%	9
TOTAL		28

CONCLUSIONS: IT IS TIME FOR A GUIDING STAR AND CONCEPT

On the 2nd of October 2025, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights published its latest report into how Roma are faring in Europe.⁴⁰ Whilst the living conditions of our people have marginally improved since it's last survey in 2016, the progress is so slow that the FRA predicts that not a single European country will have succeeded in eliminating the gaps in integration by 2030.

More worrying still, when it comes to Romani and Traveller experiences of discrimination and the willingness to report such discrimination the situation is getting worse. The survey found that:

- 31% of Roma and Travellers face discrimination because of their ethnic origin – similar to 2016 (26%).
- Even though their awareness of equality bodies is improving, less than 6% of Roma and Travellers report discrimination. This is much less than in 2016 (16%).

As we have outlined above, discrimination begins in the mindset of the majority but plays out in the bodies, life expectancy and lived experience of our communities. Furthermore, if the media is a key societal machine for driving discrimination, it can and must be the machine that successfully tackles and prevents it. But as we have also outlined above, the attempt by the Romani community to enter the media is often stalled, frustrated and prevented by the same systemic factors that have left it perennially on the margin of European societies. For that to fundamentally change a sizeable intervention is clearly now needed.

Instituting change: A European Roma Broadcasting Service

The successful model created by Sveriges Radio (Swedish Radio) in the form of Radio Romano shows that a public service model of media equality can have an enormous impact in creating an authentic and powerful Romani voice that is mainstreamed rather than marginalised.

⁴⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European countries - Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024
<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/roma-survey-2024>

The weekly programming in the Romani language, linked to the Roma community's status as one of the five national minorities, has led to the strengthening of the language and created some acceptance within Swedish society that the Roma are valued part of Swedish society. As an institution within Sveriges Radio, Radio Romano has also created a powerful pathway into the mainstream media both in terms of Romani staff members, but also revolutionary Romani authored content such as the TV series about Tyson Fury *Gypsy King*.

From Spain to the Ukraine Romani broadcasting is established and important, but it is often marginalised in schedules or subject to under funding and temporary. The plethora of short-lived Romani media initiatives that have come in many nation states in Europe that have sadly gone, shows that the mission of changing the media by being the media is constantly threatened by impermanence, transience, marginalisation and exclusion. But where ERIAC has led since 2019 with building a sustainable institution that has successfully weaponised culture as a mean of combatting Antigypsism, the time has now come to establish a European Romani Broadcasting Service that can scale up the model created and refined in Sweden.

The expectations on ERIAC are enormous and will likely always exceed the capacity of ERIAC to deliver. Funding is limited, scarce and hard won. In addition, right wing populism is entering government across Europe threatening even the gradual progress Romani civil society has produced to date. So let us be clear: we don't propose to add to ERIAC's load but export its rationale to national and international media bodies where it should already reside. Europe's 12 million Romani citizens are TV licence fee payers, consumers and taxpayers across Europe. In terms of media equality, we are collectively experiencing taxation without adequate representation. In very real terms we are paying for a product we are not adequately receiving.

A European Roma Broadcasting Service (ERBS) should be instituted in direct cooperation with public service broadcasters across Europe. Britain's BBC, Germany's Deutsche Welle, Swedish public TV and Radio and Spain's RTVE (Radiotelevisión Española) are all home to long-standing indigenous Romani communities and sizeable Roma migrant communities.

By working proactively with transnational media organisations like the European Broadcasting Union, which unites 113 Public Service Broadcasters across 56 countries, ERBS would work to rapidly mainstream Romani voices. Its work could and should be supported by established European bodies such as the European Union, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as regional intragovernmental organisation such as the Nordic Council or the Western Balkan Regional Cooperation Council. By utilising transnational funding, a European Roma Broadcasting Service could create and syndicate Romani content for use by broadcasters across the continent free at the point of use, but funded by institutions who have already accepted their responsibility to end the marginalisation of Romani communities.

ERiac, however, would be uniquely placed to lead and guide the Romani self-representation of the ERBS in accordance with its founding principles which are:

- Respect of the dignity of Romani people and Romani identity
- Diversity and plurality of Romani identities and cultures
- Romani leadership with the support and co-operation of non-Roma
- Engagement and contribution of Romani organizations and individuals in the establishment and ongoing activities of the Institute
- Political autonomy and non-partisanship, openness for collaboration with public authorities and political institutions as partners
- Highest quality standards in the domains of arts and culture, as well in as its own operational performance. (cite)

This position paper is not the place to prescribe exactly how an ERBS could function, ideally that would be explored in a feasibility study that would engage the key institutions with the concept, but a final thought is that its content should of course be bilingual. Romani broadcasting should broadcast in the Romani language as a key driver in the intergenerational transmission of a central part of our common identity. But broadcasting only in Romani effectively excludes the non-Romani audience from our stories and culture, so the ERBS should also broadcast in the lingua franca of our age which is English.

Finally, an ERBS should have an additional guiding principle added to the six above. All content should apply the concept of narrative sovereignty to its work. This concept first developed by the indigenous First Nations of Canada, simply reinforces that idea that a community's story is primarily owned by the community itself. In practical terms this means that at least 51% of the cast and crew involved in any media production are drawn from Romani community itself. It leaves the door open for allyship and collaboration but places editorial power firmly in the hands of the Romani community itself. As a guiding concept, Narrative Sovereignty is embodiment of Romani self-representation as applied to media production.

We believe that the creation of an ERBS would make a huge contribution to fulfilling the following strategic components in ERIACs current draft strategy for 2026 to 2030, which includes the following objectives:

1. Strengthen ethnic pride and sense of belonging among the Roma. ERIAC will rebalance its focus to prioritize Roma audiences, becoming the main source of discourse and content to generate pride among Roma communities.

In cooperation with the Roma Foundation for Europe (RFE) network organizations, other Roma NGOs and platforms, as well as by mobilizing ERIAC associate membership, ERIAC will design, test and learn from innovative methodologies which advance the sense of Roma pride and increase access to cultural content and identity discourses.

2. Become the referential organization on Roma history and language education for Roma communities, member states, intergovernmental organizations and academic institutions.

ERIAN will continue to build on the collaboration with the Council of Europe to support implementation of the Council of Europe Recommendation on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials (2020) and A Curriculum Framework for Romani (2008) through its flagship projects: Barvalipe Roma Online University (with its Barvalipe Masterclasses) and the Romani Language Initiative).

3. Engage cultural diplomacy to upscale talent, visibility and recognition of Roma arts and culture.

ERIAC will focus on building long-term partnerships with majority high-impact spaces, networks, platforms, festivals and actors, to maintain the ERIAC

brand in arts and culture and promote new talent, focusing on diverse genres of the arts. Without excluding other cultural expressions, ERIAC will rebalance investment to performing arts (film, theatre and music) and literature, and encourage production of marketable outputs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As well as the establishment of the ERBS as a primary recommendation, we make the following recommendations for the wide variety of actors that have moral and legal responsibility for promoting Romani inclusion.

Recommendations for Romani civil society

Romani civil society must become a key part of the mission to turn the media from an actor that sometimes demonises Romani communities into one that humanises and emancipates us. This will require overcoming decades of mistrust and bad experiences to welcome a new generation of journalists into our homes and communities.

This process can and must be turbo charged by embracing the concept of narrative sovereignty and supporting Romani communicators, from journalists to social media influencers, to create and share excellent content.

It will also mean pressing legacy media of all forms to end the abysmal lack of representation and bad service Romani communities are getting for their contributions in the form of TV licence fees and general taxation.

At a time of rising right-wing nationalism and policy it will require Romani civil society to embrace the power of public service broadcasting and initiatives like the European Romani Broadcasting Service or local variants.

Recommendations for European Union and the Council of Europe

The European Union and the Council of Europe must continue and expand their support of initiatives that integrate rather than assimilate Romani communities.

The EU must use its role as media regulator and funder to challenge bad representation and create good representation guided by the principle of Romani narrative sovereignty. Specifically:

- The EU should use the legal basis of the *Audiovisual Media Services Directive* (AVMSD, Directive 2010/13/EU, revised in 2018) to not only actively challenge anti-Romani hate speech, but actively promote works by European Romani producers
- The EU must use the *Digital Services Act (DSA)* and *Digital Markets Act (DMA)* (in force 2024–2025) to regulate and remove content that perpetuates antigypsism
- The EU must use the *Creative Europe Programme* (2021–2027, budget €2.44 billion) to actively support Romani authored content guided by the principle of Romani narrative sovereignty.
- The EU should support the creation of a European Romani Broadcasting Service.

The **Council of Europe** must expand its support of Romani human rights through its key mechanisms such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and European Social Charter.

The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) must actively press for the Romani language to be recognised in all CoE member states where it is spoken. Recognition of these linguistic rights must then be used to leverage meaningful support for Romani broadcasting in national public broadcasting.

The CoE's dedicated structures for Romani inclusion, such as the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Team and the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) should actively support the creation of a European Roma Broadcasting Service.

Recommendations for European member states media and cultural ministries

European member states should become far more active watchdogs in challenging antigypsism in the media. Specifically, they should:

Embed equality and diversity in media policy frameworks: Ensure national media laws reflect commitments to fair representation of Romani communities in the media.

Monitor national progress: Establish metrics to evaluate media reporting with regard to hate speech, including where it concerns Romani communities.

Support media literacy programs: Fund initiatives that educate the public about Roma-related historical and new stereotypes and their harms and combat antigypsyism.

Publicly advocate for inclusivity: Use available platforms to emphasize the importance of diversity in both media content and staff.

Host thematic conferences and workshops: Facilitate knowledge sharing on inclusive reporting.

Encourage cross-border collaboration: Foster partnerships between Roma journalists across national media.

European member states should also use their powers as media regulators to:

Establish diversity guidelines: Define specific standards for fair representation of Romanies in the media.

Implement monitoring mechanisms: Regularly review media output for adherence to these guidelines.

Sanction illegal discriminatory content, such as, *inter alia*, serious forms of hate speech.

Incentivize and Reward inclusive reporting: Recognize media outlets that consistently promote balanced reporting on Roma.

Engage with advocacy groups: Collaborate with Roma and non-Roma civil society organizations that monitor hate speech and unfair or biased representation.

Facilitate public monitoring: Establish mechanisms for the public to report instances of hate speech and unfair or biased representation.

Promote Roma representation: Ensure Romanies have a voice in regulatory bodies.

Recommendations for national public sector broadcasters, private media and community media organisations

Media producers have an enormous role to play in removing demonising media coverage and promoting positive alternatives. They should:

Conduct diversity audits: Regularly evaluate how Romani and other marginalized groups are portrayed. Make monitoring a long-term regular process.

Establish anti-bias policies: Incorporate specific guidelines addressing media representation of Roma.

Monitor progress: Set clear benchmarks for improving diversity in content and staffing.

Adopt inclusive recruitment: Advertise media employment opportunities to attract Roma talent and actively hire Romani representatives.

Encourage employee training on diversity issues: Offer ongoing workshops on inclusive reporting practices.

Establish support networks: Develop inclusive platforms within the organization where Roma employees can freely share their experiences, perspectives, and ideas.

Collaborate with advocacy groups: Partner with Romani organizations to create ethical guidelines.

Allocate resources: Ensure sufficient funding for in-depth, culturally sensitive reporting guided by the principle of Romani narrative sovereignty.

Reward ethical reporting: Recognize journalists who demonstrate excellence in inclusive storytelling.

Fund Roma journalism: Establish paid internships for aspiring Roma journalists to enable talented Roma to bypass economic inequality to become valued members of staff.

Explore Roma audiences: See the rapidly growing and young Roma community as an opportunity to grow your audience.

Fund and syndicate content produced by a European Romani Broadcasting Service.

Recommendations for individual producers and Romani journalistic allies

Journalists and editors working within media organisations must make better representation a personal mission. They need to:

Establish inclusive editorial policies: Set standards for fair, unbiased representation of Romanies, focusing on solutions and fostering solidarity to combat stigma in reporting and approve content with this lens.

Encourage diverse stories: Solicit stories that go beyond stereotypes, crisis narratives or specific calendar events, include everyday experiences, challenges, and successes of Roma representatives, including Roma women.

Monitor biases in headlines and images: Ensure they do not result in ethnic profiling or reinforce harmful stereotypes against Roma.

Provide feedback on sensitivity: Guide journalists to improve cultural and gender awareness when reporting on Roma communities.

Foster accountability: Implement internal review mechanisms for biased reporting.

Promote balanced assignments: Encourage Roma and non-Roma journalists to work collaboratively on assignments.

Highlight positive role models: Actively include stories of Roma excelling in various fields.

Monitor diverse story sources: Demand varied and authentic sources to represent Roma accurately.

Lead by Example: Demonstrate inclusive leadership in all aspects of the editorial process

Mainstream Roma representation: Include Roma sources and stories on issues that affect all of society, so that Romani voices are included in non-Romani stories so that their presence as valued members of the community is implicit.

ANNEXES

About authors

Avni Mustafa is a human rights activist, trainer and expert on Roma Inclusion. He has been working on Minority issues for over 15 years and holds a BA in Management from the University of Pjeter Budi.

Avni was born in Prishtina, in 1987. Avni's mother tongue is Romani, he speaks fluently in 3 other languages: Albanian, English and Serbian.

As a young activist, Avni managed local NGO "Romano Resaibe", here he published an article entitled "The needs and problems of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian in the municipality of Obiliq", which has shaped his interest and engagement with the topic over the years. His professional experience includes working with Balkan Sunflowers International, as a production media manager, where he produced over 50 eyewitness reports related to Roma life in Kosovo and North Macedonia.

All reports were broadcast by public television in Kosovo RTK. He the Director of the Roma Film Festival, for films made by and about Roma to fight discrimination and dispel negative stereotypes, which were well attended by all facets of Kosovo society. He also worked as a trainer and production manager during the shooting of Cikore Filmya. Since June of 2017, Avni is the Executive Director of Roma Versitas Kosovo, a leading student support organization with more than 10 different programs and projects seeking better inclusion of Roma.

Jake Bowers is a British Romani journalist, producer, media teacher and film maker with over 25 years' experience in the media. He trained as a journalist with regional newspapers publisher Johnston Press and the BBC before starting his own successful production company the Gypsy Media Company Ltd in 2007. He once produced and presented the only radio programme the BBC ever produced for the Romany community *Rokker Radio* and is a former editor of the community medium *Travellers Times*. In 2022 he series produced the only community led production in British Television, *60 Days with the Gypsies* for commercial broadcaster Channel 4.

The Gypsy Media Company Ltd is the production company of Romani journalist and film maker Jake Bowers. It has traded since 2007 making high impact media productions for some of the world's biggest broadcasters and media producers. From its 2020 remake of the George Michael's iconic Freedom music video championing LGBTQ+ rights, to its depiction of Native American culture in Virgin Music's Alive music video for Chase and Status, the Gypsy Media Company specialises in amplifying marginalised voices in mainstream spaces.

Jake is also an artist blacksmith currently working on a series of 12 sculptures celebrating Romani history and culture which are being erected throughout the British landscape. He is also co-chair of the British Romani civil rights organisations Drive 2 Survive and chair of ERIAC's Barvalipe Academy.

Dalibor Tanić has been a journalist and activist for almost 20 years. Editor of the Newipe portal, a platform dedicated to reporting on the Roma community in Bosnia and Herzegovina whose concept is "Voice of the Roma". He is a winner of the European Union Prize for Investigative Journalism In Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2014. Dalibor is a member of the NARON network, which brings together journalists from the Roma community and a participant of the ROMANI-TRANSLATION SUMMER INSTITUTE at Concordia University in Montreal. He is a winner of the "Ronald Lee Translator Award" for Romani Journalism and Translation, awarded at Concordia University, Montreal.

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