Master Thesis

The stateless migrants - The Rroma community struggles against discrimination

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Abstract

The Rroma community is a fascinating research subject; their history, traditions, culture, and lifestyle prompted many researchers to delve deeper into topics that centred around this ethnicity.

There is a big possibility that we pass someone from this community every day. This possibility is a certainty if we find ourselves in Romania, the case study country selected for this research. Despite often passing by members of this ethnicity, many of their struggles and battles with discrimination and racism remain unspoken in the busy society of today, fearful about wars and waves of refugees, facing political and economic uncertainty, and being torn between the rise of extremists left and right. However, the Rromas were always here, regardless of all the turmoil other societies faced; they walked through all of it, stateless, less protected by a home country that could ensure their rights and safety.

Pushed at the margins of societies, the Rroma face constant discrimination. This research aims to find the link between their stateless status and the racist behaviour aimed towards them.

Key words: *identity, discrimination, stateless nation, ethnicity, Rroma*

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1. Introduction

The European Parliament states on their official website that `Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority. Out of an estimated total of 10-12 million in Europe, some 6 million live in the EU, and most of them are citizens of an EU country. `[1]

This study offers a new perspective on the reasoning behind discrimination against the Rroma minority, by linking contemporary attitudes and behaviours - both from political institutions and society - to the absence of a Rroma homeland. A nation of contrasts still holding onto its traditions and values, many Rromas still persuading arts and crafts, maintaining their specific colourful clothing, while having their own distinct language, which is only spoken and not written. They adapted to modern society, combining their rich cultural heritage with modern technologies and social standards.

The World Population Review official website, for the year 2025 claims *that no official or reliable data is available regarding the global Romani population*.[2] The reasoning for this could either be the unreliability of the data collected from the countries that take a minority census due to Rromas' refusal to declare their official identity as belonging to this group, fearing discrimination, or, like in the case of Denmark; some countries do not collect data on ethnicity.

In recent years, we have witnessed a rise of extremist political movements around the world, and inside the European borders; as we are going to debate in the following chapters, Rroma people have been a target of extremist movements across history. In the context of the current world political situation, this paper tries to shed some light on the struggles a `nationless` nation faces and tries to pinpoint the reasoning behind the racism and discrimination that affects them even today. Due to their high numbers, the Rroma are the largest minority on the European continent; making it difficult to trace and cover their movement since arriving in Europe till the present day. The best solution for this paper was to focus on the Rroma community established in a European country and, from there, to analyse how they were treated across the years and what impact the lack of a `home country` had on them.

Romania makes a fascinating case as it is an ex-communist country, member of The European Union, with a history of the Holocaust during the Second World War; it also hosts one of the highest numbers of Rroma people. In addition, there is a tacit frustration among the Romanian people towards the Rroma due to the name confusion and association between the two ethnicities. As mentioned, there is this common misunderstanding between `Romani` and

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[1] Lecerf, M. (2025). *Understanding EU action on Roma inclusion*. European Parliamentary Research Service, PE 690.629.
[2] World Population Review website, Roma Population by Country 2025, https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/roma-population-by-country acessed 20 April 2025.

`Romanians, ` sometimes, Western countries label all members of these two nations as the same. This, however, only sparked anger and hatred from the Romanian side due to the bad image associated with the Rromas as thieves and beggars. *In public discourse, as well as policy documents and legal systems across Europe, both mobility and begging are often described in terms of 'Rroma culture`.*[3]

In November 2002, a Romanian journalist published an editorial attacking the Romanian authorities for *'playing the democratic card' and failing to prevent 'thieves, hooligans and criminals'* from going to the West and disgracing all Romanians.[4] The journalist, Lia Lucia Epure, entitled her article 'Rromania', a play on the Romanian government's spelling of Roma (as 'Rroma'), and concluded that, if Romanians *'continue to accept identification with abnormals, then we will be become Rromania'.*[5]

According to Roma.org website[6] the percentage of Rroma in 2022 in Romania was as follow: the low estimate was 1,500,000; the high estimate was 3,000,000; the current population was 19,659,267 leading to a percentage of 15.26%, thus proving that Romania had the highest number of Rroma among European countries back in 2022. The Roma remain Europe's most disadvantaged and ostracized minority. With an estimated 1,850,000 people, or about 8.6 percent of its population, Romania has Europe's largest Roma population and since the collapse of communism, their social situation has remained largely unimproved or even deteriorated. [7]

If we were to observe the report released by The World Bank on `Romania Systematic Country Diagnostic` regarding the Rroma Inclusion in June 2018, it states that according to estimates by the Council of Europe, the Rroma make up 6 to 12 percent of the total population. Given the lack of ethnically disaggregated data and common reluctance among Rroma families to reveal their ethnic identity to officials, it remains difficult to precisely assess the size of the Rroma population. [8]

One of the biggest problems the Rroma are facing is that many societies in the better economically developed North-West of Europe have not changed their attitude towards minorities, especially towards them, regardless of their high standards for protection of human rights among their neighbours. In a survey by the Eurobarometer Report on Racism and

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[3] Friberg, J. H. (2020). *Poverty, networks, resistance: The economic sociology of Roma migration for begging.* Migration Studies, 8(2), 228–249, page 230.
[4] Adcock, S. (2007). *Romania and Europe: Roma, Rroma, and Ţigani as sites for contesting ethno-national identities. Patterns of Prejudice, 41*(5), 493–515. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220701657294
[5] Woodcock, S. (2007). *Romania and EUrope: Roma, Rroma and Ţigani as sites for the contestation of ethno-national identities.* Patterns of Prejudice, 41(5), 493–515. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220701657294
[6] rroma.org website, Roma Population, https://rroma.org/the-roma/rroma-population/, acessed 10 April 2025.
[7] Friberg, J. H. (2020). Poverty, networks, resistance: The economic sociology of Roma migration for begging. *Migration Studies, 8*(2), 228–249. https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mny038 page 228.
[8] The World Bank. (2018). *Romania systematic country diagnostic: Background note—Roma inclusion,* page 1.

Xenophobia among Western European countries, over 90% put equality above all, almost a third of the interviewed Western Europeans declared themselves quite or very racist, and 40% considered that there are too many foreigners or minorities living among them to feel comfortable. According to the same report, most European countries have the appropriate anti-racist legislation protecting their citizens, but "non-citizens" or "aliens" are generally not protected. Furthermore, in most Western European Democracies Rromas are denied the status as a racial or ethnic minority being are regarded as a "socially marginalized group".[9]

According to *The Dictionary Of Public Administration:* `A stateless nation is an ethnic group or nation that does not possess its own sovereign state.` [10] This is the dictionary`s official definition of the term. James Minahan work: `Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations: Ethnic and National Groups Around the World` from 2002 enumerates some examples of this nations include: Catalans and Basque in Spain, the Kurds mainly in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, Tamils in Sri Lanka, Tibetan in China and many more.

The Rroma differentiates from these groups as they do not represent a certain indigenous group of Europe, they never had any land claims like the Catalans and Basques in Spain or the Tibetans in China, as these groups had a certain geographical space that they can accurately pinpoint as being their original `nation`. However, for the Rroma - The Gypsies are a distinct nomadic tribe which migrated into Europe from Asia sometime during the 13th and 14th century[11] - there are no claims of a possible state that can serve as an independent `Romani country`.

This community is the largest in Europe with a high presence in Romania, so, this subject was picked due to the sensitivity of this topic as there are still on-going struggles in implementing a certain conduit and eradicating discrimination towards the Rromas. Additionally, there is the lack of acknowledgment and accountability for all the measures taken against them through the years such as forced sterilisation in former Czechoslovakia[12], deportations in the recent years, the genocide during World War II or the years they spent in slavery on the territory that formed modern Romania.[13]

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[9] Alexieva, P. (2007). *Roma Migration Inequalities in Modern Europe*. Department of Anthropology. page 5.

[10] *Dictionary Of Public Administration*, U.C. Mandal, Sarup & Sons 2007, 505 p.

[11] Alexieva, P. (2007). *Roma Migration Inequalities in Modern Europe*. Department of Anthropology, page 5.

[12] Amnesty International website, `Czech Republic: Hard won justice for women survivors of unlawful sterilization`, 22 July 2021, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/07/czech-republic-hard-won-justice-for-women-survivors-of-unlawful-sterilization/ accessed 1 May 2025.

[13] Delia, G. (n.d.). *The Rromany ethnic identity and the silent fight against racism reflected in the Rromano folklore as a manifestation of resilience,* page 91.

2. Research Question and Hypothesis

`Racist beliefs allow the majority to justify practices that keep Roma out, and to deny responsibility for their results. Racism is a tool in the fight for wealth and privilege. Racists have used it well enough over generations to have effectively turned Roma into something less than full citizens of the countries in which they live.` - from The European Roma Rights Centre[14]

RQ: `How did being a `stateless nation` affect the Rroma community life quality due to facing antiziganism and discrimination? `

As mentioned in the first chapter, this paper aims to determine the existence of a link between the statelessness of the Rroma nation, and the tendencies of discrimination and racism displayed toward them throughout history. Therefore, more hypotheses could be drawn on this subject, such as:

1. The statelessness of the Rroma affects their integration process as they face segregation and are misjudged due to their ethnicity.
2. Their history and the behaviour displayed towards them by other nations have deep roots, and antiziganism movements are spreading across Europe, affecting their quality of life.
3. The discrimination phenomena came as a direct result of the Rroma nation being stateless and seen as a burden.

3. Literature review

In the past twenty years, scholars have shown a particular interest in the Rroma population; numerous articles and books are available as they range from the history of this community and the persecution it faced to their nomadic lifestyle translated today as a constant migration, and to ample debates about the conservation of their heritage and culture. However, the most prominent theme that keeps on resurfacing in the specialized literature regards the social challenges they are facing in everyday life due to racism and racial discrimination.

This research aims to highlight how the stateless nation label impacted the Rroma community movement through the years. The literature used as a starting point for this particular subject ranges from case studies, such as Fiałkowska, Mirga-Wójtowicz, and Garapich's work on the experience of Polish Rroma, to Ardent most referential work "The Origins of Totalitarianism" and scholarly articles on the migration phenomenon and the resilience of this community despite years and years of systematic discrimination.

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[14] European Roma Rights Centre webpage, https://www.errc.org/ accessed 15 April 2025.

Firstly, the main concept behind the study comes from Hannah Arendt, who affirmed that: *"As long as mankind is nationally and territorially organized in states, a stateless person is not simply expelled from one country, native or adopted, but from all countries ... which means he is expelled from humanity."*[15] Under the definition of `stateless person` falls the Rroma individual, and through expansion, their whole nation. To better understand Arendt's ideas and vision, there is a need for a deeper dive into her reference work.

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1951[16], Arendt examines how stateless individuals, stripped of citizenship, become "rightless"—lacking legal protection and political recognition. She argues that without a state guaranteeing rights, individuals are vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. She introduces the concept of the "right to have rights," (1951: pp. 294-295) emphasizing that without belonging to a political community, individuals cannot claim or exercise rights. This framework is pertinent to many Roma migrants who, due to various historical and political factors, find themselves without clear citizenship status, leading to systemic discrimination and social exclusion.

Arendt introduces the notion of the "right to have rights", emphasizing that the most fundamental human right is the ability to belong to a political community where one's rights are recognized and protected. For Roma communities facing statelessness or marginalization, this concept underscores the importance of legal and political inclusion to ensure their basic human rights are upheld.

In "*Europe's perennial 'outsiders': A processual approach to Roma stigmatization and ghettoization*"[17] by Ryan Powell and John Lever, as a means to comprehend the stigmatization and marginalization of the Roma people in Europe, the writers consult the theoretical works of Loïc Wacquant and Norbert Elias. According to the paper, it is impossible to comprehend the continuous persecution of the Rroma as evidenced by social policies without taking into account the long-term social processes that shaped the unbalanced power dynamics between the Roma and non-Roma. The Rroma is a transnational foreign group, according to Elias' idea of the ties between the established and the outsiders. The psychological, social, and spatial aspects of stigmatization can be highlighted thanks to Wacquant's theoretical concept of the ghetto.

In the paper's conclusions, the authors emphasize the need to integrate historical background and a broader social context when debating the experiences of Rroma. The argument used is that the studies that concentrate more on the political measures and their results are not sufficient to uncover the means that lead to the social and spatial marginalization of Rroma.

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[15] Arendt Hannah (1906-1975), historian and philosopher.
[16] Arendt, H. (2017). *The origins of totalitarianism*. Penguin Classics.
[17] Powell, R., & Lever, J. (2015). Europe's perennial 'outsiders': A processual approach to Roma stigmatization and ghettoization. *Current Sociology, 65*(5), 680–699. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392115594213

Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper from The University of Warsaw explores in her work: *"Roma people – stateless ethnic group and the state mechanisms of culture preservation" the* complexities of being stateless in a contemporary context, highlighting that statelessness does not equate to being outside state organization. Her work highlights how states have a central role in the lives of individuals and groups, playing a part in shaping an individual. The two, the state and the ethnic groups that inhabitate it, lead to the formation of cultural identities and socio-political futures. The study case chosen for this paper is the Polish Rroma, as their lifestyle is a combination of keeping the old traditions alive while trying to integrate into modern society and modern structures. As a means to protect and preserve their heritage, the leaders of different Rroma formations try to align themselves with the state, sometimes adhering to modern strategies even if they do not align with the Rroma societal thinking. Some of these strategies advocate for improving the social situation of Rromas and aim to provide means for better integration. Some of these strategies advocate for improving the social situation of Rromas and aim to provide means for better integration. Examples of these strategies include demanding minority rights, advocating for the inclusion of the Romani language in school curricula, and seeking state protection against discrimination and intolerance. The author points to the sociological debates surrounding the "ethnic group" concept, the terms "ethnic minority" and "national minority," and the lack of agreement on a general definition for each of them.

One of the most comprehensive articles that guide this paper was written by M. Ahsan Ullah, Muhammad Azizuddin and Jannatul Ferdous *("The Roma Population: Migration, Settlement, and Resilience"[18], 2024)* and it serves more as a general perspective on the history of the Rromas, tracing their origins to India and discussing their migration routes through time. In addition, it reminds the readers about the slavery and persecution this community was subjected to, completed by genocide during the Second World War. In their research, it was discovered that Rroma communities have a preference for settling in marginal areas of different societies, thereby segregating themselves from other communities. This practice serves as an obstacle for the Rroma, whose access to health, education facilities, and job opportunities becomes restricted. What comes as proof of resilience is the maintenance of the Romani language, traditions, and crafts despite centuries of attempts of forced assimilation.

The authors identified a series of challenges that seem to resurface through many other articles that discuss the Rroma community, strengthening the idea that their integration was hindered due to persistent discrimination, poverty, and structural inequalities. In addition, it is

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[18] Ullah, A.K.M.A.; Azizuddin, M.; Ferdous, J. The Roma Population: Migration, Settlement, and Resilience. Soc. Sci. 2024, 13, 476. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13090476

noted that the negative stereotypes engulfed this population, while the lack of access to basic services perpetuates their marginalization.

Ullah, Azizuddin, and Ferdousn used in the theoretical framework the migration theories, intersectionality, Schiller transnationalism, and resilience theories. Each of the used theories aimed to explain a certain process; the migration one targeted the Rroma movements considering the push and pull factors and forced displacement. Two of the theories applied were intersectionality and structural violence and as a means to showcase how race, discrimination, and class overlap and shape one's experience. The resilience theory was also used in the article. The authors called for more inclusive policies, advocating for a deeper understanding of Roma migration, settlement, and resilience.

Authors Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov examine in their work *"Migration vs. Inclusion: Roma Mobilities from East to West"*, from 2018 [19] the historical and contemporary migration patterns of Roma communities from Eastern to Western Europe. It identifies three major migration waves: the first in the 15th century, driven by economic needs, the second in the 19th century, following the abolition of slavery, and the third since the 1960s, characterized by labour mobility and societal integration.

The authors agreed that nowadays, Rroma migration is fueled by the economic differences between Eastern and Western Europe. This migration process has two possible explanations: one would be the general movement of populations, while the other would use the transnationalism theory to argue that the Rroma use a defined ethnic network for facilitating their movement around the European continent. Despite various inclusion policies aimed at improving the situation, these often fall short of their goals. Instead of tackling the root causes -such as poverty and lack of opportunity - Roma communities are frequently scapegoated and portrayed as inherently problematic.

In destination countries, Roma migrants encounter obstacles shaped by stereotypes of nomadism and cultural divergence. On the other hand, those who remain behind in their country-of-origin face marginalization and social exclusion. The authors address a series of critics of the EU institutions, which do not adequately manage the Rroma inclusion nor reduce economic inequality.

Stoyanka Cherkezova and Ilona Tomova conducted a very interesting study on the Rroma community migration, debating its motivations, placing the decision of migration between an external opportunity and a chance for survival. Their paper: `*An Option of Last Resort?*

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[19] Marushiakova, E., & Popov, V. (2018). Migration vs. inclusion: Roma mobilities from East to West. *Baltic Worlds, 11*(2–3).

Migration of Roma and Non-Roma from CEE countries`, from 2020[20] used quantitative data in order to draw accurate answers and based on a recent study, discrimination appeared to be the main reason for migration among Roma (Infromation took from the FRA). In their article, the authors utilize data from the UNDP/WB/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011, employing a quantitative method for their analysis. Their research revealed that the percentage of Rroma who were discriminated against due to ethnic origin stood at 35%. This number led the authors to believe that the Romans became aware of the perception of the host country's citizens towards them. Even if they were faced with discrimination in a foreign country, only 1% justified their migration as motivated by a desire to establish themselves in a country that discriminates against them less, indicating that the hostile attitude is a general phenomenon and not isolated to a specific state or region of the world. However, the Rroma do not attribute their migration to discrimination in their country of origin directly, but rather, other factors determine their movement and personal struggles. An alternative explanation could be that there is discrimination in the host country and, in that case, the knowledge or ignorance of Rroma about what awaits them can produce the same effect.

Due to the nature of this paper, as it aims to discuss the Rroma Community movement from Eastern Europe to the West, more precisely from Romania, a case study that would serve as a similar example makes a valuable addition in order to identify patterns. The study: "*Unequal Citizenship and Ethnic Boundaries in the Migration Experience of Polish Roma*"[21] by Kamila Fiałkowska, Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz, and Michał P. Garapich, alsof ocuses on the Polish Roma community and their migration experience after 1989. The presence of ethnic boundaries and systemic inequalities are regarded as the main factors that led to the marginalization of the Rroma community.

The article discusses the socialist period, and the political strategies employed to assimilate the Rromas and erase their identity. After 1989, the country's new policies did not improve the Rroma's situation, prompting them to migrate to The United Kingdom or to Germany, where they were labeled as a problem and racialized.

The research focuses on two major Polish Roma groups, the Bergitka Roma and the Polska Roma, emphasizing the existence of networks between the members of the groups in attempts to facilitate the migration process and provide support; these actions reinforced ethnic

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[20] Cherkezova, S., & Tomova, I. (2013). *An option of last resort? Migration of Roma and non-Roma from CEE countries*. Roma Inclusion Working Papers, UNDP Europe and the CIS, Bratislava Regional Centre. page 48.
[21] Fiałkowska, K., Mirga-Wójtowicz, E., & Garapich, M. P. (2024). Unequal citizenship and ethnic boundaries in the migration experience of Polish Roma. *Nationalities Papers, 52*(2), 461–481. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2022.92

connections. In the conclusion part, the authors iterate the need for a shift in the research process on Roma communities, highlighting the importance of using historically accurate information.

The conclusion reiterates how there are constant similarities between these academic works and how it is easy to identify certain patterns through the shared stories of the Rromas - facing racial discrimination, lack of opportunities, stigma, and forced assimilation in host countries. Some articles keep on always reminding us about the slavery and hardships endured by this community, a taboo subject in Europe that impacted the Rroma population image. Most of these ideas align with Arendt's ideas of lacking rights as a nation due to the statelessness statute of one.

4. Theoretical Framework

First, the theory choice comes as a difficult decision due to the large number of possible options. In the specialized literature different theories were used to explain the migration of Rroma, to debate their status and to explain the discrimination towards them.

One theory belongs to Schiller et all. from 1992 and addresses the transnationalism process as the authors defined it as: 'the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement (...) transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations— familial, economic, social, organisational, religious, and political, that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously'[22].

This theory seems to be often used in migration studies as it tries to explain the relationships that emerge between the individuals who migrated and their families at home, this process transcending geographic, cultural, and political boundaries by maintaining social fields. The theory could be used to explain how the Rroma population maintains ties with their origin countries, while also engaging in socio-economic activities in the countries they migrated to.

In his study from 1999: `The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promises of an Emergent Social Field`, Portes and his colleagues came up with a more detailed definition for transnationalism, adding to the idea of cross-border interactions involving individuals, nonstate actors, and civil society actors following a set of practices and purposes that migrants need to engage into constantly in order to maintain their transnational character.

In the case of Rroma communities, we can see active involvement in transnational networks to maintain their unique culture, access to economic opportunities, or for simple mutual support. The discussion about the Rromas and transnationalism could also incorporate Crenshaw's

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[22] Tedeschi, Miriam & Vorobeva, Ekaterina & Jauhiainen, Jussi. (2022). *Transnationalism: current debates and new perspectives.* GeoJournal. 87. 10.1007/s10708-020-10271-8. Page 605

Intersectionality theory coined in 1989; the theory aims to address the challenges faced by women belonging to the African American community and who faced discrimination not only for their race but also for their position in society as women, to which is added the economic and social statute. So, intersectionality is a critical framework that aims to understand how one's overlapping identity layers interact and lead to different experiences of discrimination. The Rroma community experiences challenges associated with migration and dubbed by discrimination struggles that become easier to overcome when maintaining translational relationships.

In addition, this theoretical approach advocates for a multidimensional approach in the field of migration studies, as it calls for addressing both intersectionality and the strengths and resilience of the Roma community, resulting from transnational relationships. For Rroma populations, the cultural resilience framework emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage, kinship networks, and collective identity in promoting resilience during migration-related challenges. It emphasizes the role of cultural values in creating a sense of belonging, social support, and empowerment within Roma communities[23] Another aspect that is worth mentioning is the persistence of the Rromani language and their cultural practices, from their traditional clothing to following old beliefs and traditions, leading the community to remain bounded with their members and to fight against social exclusion in the host countries.

The pioneering African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois famously articulated in `The Souls of Black Folk` a heavy question posed implicitly to Black Americans: 'How does it feel to be a problem?`[24] A question that was asked in 1903, remains still relevant today and it can be aimed at the Rroma community in Europe, as `the Roma are like a nation in excess in Europe, which is singled out for hate not only because it is spread across borders, but because it incarnates the archetype of a stateless people, resisting the norms of territorialisation and cultural normalisation`[25]. In the next chapter some background regarding the hardships faced in the past by Rromas will be presented, such as the years of enslavement and the Porajmos: The Roma Holocaust[26] during World War Two (1939-1945); this short history of suffering providing a link in between Du Bois question and the Rromas that lived through history being regarded as `a problem`.

[23] Ullah, A. K. M. A., Azizuddin, M., & Ferdous, J. (2024). *The Roma population: Migration, settlement, and resilience*. Social Sciences, 13(9), 476. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13090476, Page 8.

[24] Yıldız, C., & De Genova, N. (2017). *Un/Free mobility: Roma migrants in the European Union*. Social Identities. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1335819, page 2.

[25] Yıldız, C., & De Genova, N. (2017). *Un/Free mobility: Roma migrants in the European Union*. Social Identities. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1335819[25] page 3.

[26] European Roma Rights Centre, Porajmos: The Roma Holocaust Factsheet.

Discussing about the topic of being regarded as a problem and integration difficulties, one of the most interesting theories comes from Hannah Arendt and regards the idea of `statelessness`. In her work, "The Origins of Totalitarianism," Arendt debates the condition of individuals stripped of citizenship, thus reducing them to being "rightless," lacking legal protection and political recognition. This framework is pertinent when analyzing Roma's historical and contemporary challenges in securing citizenship and recognition across Europe. This framework is pertinent when analyzing Roma's historical and contemporary challenges in securing citizenship and recognition across Europe.

Arendt's second class of criticisms concerns the ownership of rights and the addressees of those rights. Arendt asks: What is protected by human rights and who or what is responsible for providing that protection? In the first half of the question, it is evident that the U.N. Declaration contends that the individual is protected.[27] However, the individual protected by these human rights shall not be `rightless`; in Arendt's vision, one of the crucial human rights is belonging to a political community; her stance comes from the fact that being part of this political community one`s rights are guaranteed and protected by a supreme statal entity. What happens in the case of the Rroma, who are considered stateless and, by extension, 'rightless`?

She also introduces a new concept, "the right to have rights," emphasizing that without belonging to a political community, individuals cannot claim or exercise their rights.

One of Rroma's manifestations of resilience can be identified in the Rromano folklore by two important topics it approaches: the Romani ethnic identity as a way of resistance to cultural assimilation or acculturation and the silent fight against racism, most often manifested by trying to define and confront racist attitudes and behaviour and resisting them through a positive ethnic self-image.[28]

The theory choice came down to Arendt as her ideas are the central reasoning behind the other ethnicities' behaviour towards the Rroma in the past, and even today, despite all the attempts and measures taken in order to diminish social exclusion and promote integration. Originally made to address the refugees and migrants after the Second World War Arendt's theory of 'stateless' could be applied today to the Rroma community across the globe as they embody the outlines of her ideas about what is a stateless nation and how the rest of the nation's rapport themselves with it.

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[27] Cartland, J. D. C. (1992). *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights* (Master's thesis, Loyola University Chicago). https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/3912, page 6.
[28] Delia, G. (n.d) *The Rromany Ethnic Identity and the Silent Fight against Racism Reflected in the Rromano Folklore as a Manifestation of Resilience. Some Case Studies on Myths, Proverbs, Old Sayings, Short Stories and Oral Poetry.*

5. Methodology

This thesis seeks to uncover if there is any correlation between the treatment the Rroma community had faced in the past years, discrimination, racism, hate crimes, economic inequality, and their statute as a stateless nation due to the absence of a traditional home country.

For the methodology part, plenty of literature is available, from official documents to numerous articles written by Romanian scholars and research led by scholars from all around the world due to the fascinating heritage of this community and their efforts to keep their identity alive. This subject continues to engage and be of interest as the world changes toward a more inclusive society, trying to eliminate discrimination and racism. The Romani people have a tragic and unspoken history in Romania, as they were enslaved in the 18th-19th century. However, they showed resilience, building a valid national identity despite being a `nationless` nation.

Some of the concepts used in this paper are community, ethnic group, antitziganism, discrimination, racism, and identity. Unfortunately, there is no unique, clear definition for these concepts, as all of them are multidimensional, and some are abstract. However, there are agreed-upon definitions on an international level for the discrimination, racism, and antitziganism concepts.

One of the most widely used concepts in this paper is the concept of `identity. ` This concept has many definitions and encompasses various forms, ranging from cultural to social and national identity. According to Francis Fukuyama: `Identity has a wide number of meanings today, in some cases referring simply to social categories or roles, in others to basic information about oneself (..) Identity grows, in the first place, out of a distinction between one's true inner self and an outer world of social rules and norms that does not adequately recognize that inner self's worth or dignity. Individuals throughout human history have found themselves at odds with their societies. ` [29]

`Identity is the theme that underlies many political phenomena today, from new populist nationalist movements to Islamist fighters, to the controversies taking place on university campuses. (...) Identity can be used to divide, but it can and has also been used to integrate.` [30] On page 17 he mentioned that: `Contemporary identity politics is driven by the quest for equal recognition by groups that have been marginalized by their societies.` Fukuyama gives an example that could also be used when looking at the Rroma people: `A person living in

[29] Fukuyama, F. (2018). *Identity: the demand for dignity and the politics of resentment.* First edition. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, page 18.

[30] Fukuyama, F. (2018). *Identity: the demand for dignity and the politics of resentment.* First edition. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, page 146.

Barcelona who suddenly realizes her real identity is Catalan rather than Spanish is simply excavating a lower layer of social identity that has been laid down beneath the one nearer to the surface.`[31] Thus, over the Rroma identity new identities are added such as Romanian, Polish or Bulgarian, this identities come as an addition and not a cancelation of their original/real one. It is up to each individual from this community how they identify in terms of identity.

In his article from 2017: `International Migration, Internal Migration, Mobility, and Urbanization: Towards More Integrated Approaches` Skeldon argued that migration in general, and international migration in particular, is a complicated concept because "it's measurement depends entirely upon how it is defined in time and across space." However, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has better defined international migration as a "migrant" by avoiding time and territorial limitations. [32]

According to the definition provided by the International Organization for Migration: *A migrant is any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.[33]*.

"The Roma, whose historical homelands are the countries of central, eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, are an 'imagined community'. (...) The Roma, whose historical homelands are the countries of Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, are an "imagined community" in the sense formulated by Benedict Anderson. [34] According to Anderson: `Nation, nationality, nationalism - all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse.`[35] The author later completes his idea: `In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.`[36]

In `The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration` by Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex the term "ethnic identity" is disected; the author define `identity` as: "*both a psychological and a sociological term.*" Identity has a double role; firstly, it enables the

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[31] Fukuyama, F. (2018). *Identity: the demand for dignity and the politics of resentment.* First edition. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, page 53.

[32] Samson Maekele Tsegay, (2023) *International Migration: Definition, Causes and Effects*, Genealogy 7, 61, page 2.

[33] IOM, UN Migration website, `Who is a migrant?`, https://weblog.iom.int/who-migrant#:~:text=IOM%20defines%20a%20migrant%20as,the%20length%20of%20the%20stay accessed 1 April 2025.

[34] Marushiakova, E., & Popov, V. (2018). Migration vs. inclusion: Roma mobilities from East to West. *Baltic Worlds, 11*(2–3). page 89.

[35] Anderson, B. R. O. (2006). *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism.* Rev. ed. Verso, page 3.

[36] Anderson, B. R. O. (2006). *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism.* Rev. ed. Verso, page 5-6.

individual to produce order in their life, and secondly, it involves placing the individual within a group or 'identification' within a collectivity. The author use a quote from Anthony Cohen to provide an overview of how `ethnicity` and `identity` complete each other: '*Ethnicity has come to be regarded as a mode of action and of representation: it refers to a decision people make to depict themselves or others symbolically as the bearers of a certain cultural identity*.'[37]

The ethnic group is defined by Wsevolod W. Isajiw `as a community-type group of people who share the same culture or descendants of such people who may not share this culture but who identify themselves with this ancestral group.`[38] Also, Anthony D. Smith states that: `*Ethnie* (ethnic communities) may [...] be defined as named human populations with shared ancestral myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity.`[39]

Głowacka-Grajper determined that: `An ethnic group constituting a minority tends to live in a state of cultural uncertainty - uncertainty about the future of their own culture. It realizes the menace to the survival of its culture, and as a result the menace to the survival of its own identity. Therefore, striving for the preservation of the culture becomes essential for such a group and in order to succeed in it.`[40] For `racism` the website of the Australian Human Rights Commission provides the following definition: `Racism is the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race. Racism is more than just prejudice in thought or action. It occurs when this prejudice – whether individual or institutional – is accompanied by the power to discriminate against, oppress, or limit the rights of others. ` As for `discrimination, ` the simplest definition provided by the American Psychological Association is: `The unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or sexual orientation.`[41]

According to the European Network Against Racism: `Anti-gypsyism is a specific form of structural racism targeting Roma`; it is also known as antiziganism, referring to all groups stereotypically labelled as `gypsies`. In his paper, "Towards a Definition of Anti-Gypsyism," Valeriu Nicolae delves deeper into the meaning of this phenomenon, detailing the original

[37] P Premdas, R. (1999). Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex (Eds.), *The ethnicity reader: Nationalism, multiculturalism, and migration*. Nations and Nationalism, *5*(4), 577–604, page 4

[38] Wsevolod W. Isajiw, (1992), `*Definitions and Dimensions of Ethnicity: A Theoretical Framework*` in `*Challenges of Measuring an Ethnic World: Science, Politics and Reality*: *Proceedings of the Joint Canada-United States Conference on the Measurement of Ethnicity*`, April 1-3, page 411.

[39] Premdas, R. (1999). Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex (eds.), T*he Ethnicity Reader: nationalism, multiculturalism, and migration./The Concept of Ethnicity, Structure and Persistence of Ethnie* by Anthony D. Smith, Cambridge: Polity, 1997. *Nations and Nationalism*, *5*(4), 577–604, page 27

[40] Głowacka-Grajper Małgorzata, (2012) "*Roma people – stateless ethnic group and the state mechanisms of culture preservation*", The Politics of Culture. Perspectives of stateless nationalities/ethnic groups, page 82

[41] American Psychological Association website, *Discrimination: What it is and how to cope,* https://www.apa.org/topics/racism-bias-discrimination/types-stress, accessed 1 April 2025.

definition provided above. The author states that this phenomenon manifests itself through violence, hate speech, exploitation, and discrimination in its most visible form.

He states that the channels that facilitate the spreading of anti-gypsysim are the discourses from the political, academic, or civil societies, social and economic exclusion, segregation, and dehumanization. Anti-Gypsyism is used to justify and perpetuate the exclusion and supposed inferiority of Roma and is based on historical persecution and negative stereotypes.[42]

For the research design, a mixed method fitted best for this topic, as providing both quantitative and qualitative data led to a deeper understanding of the issues the Roma are facing as a possible result of their lack of a nation. Due to the nature of the gathered data - academic publications, government agencies, organizational records, and media and online platforms - secondary data only, the triangulation method seemed suited for obtaining these research findings. The analysis part was structured around four main themes: **employment, education, health, and social integration**. Within each theme, relevant indicators such as poverty, drop-out rates, housing, unemployment, segregation were identified. These indicators were the ones that prompted the data to be filtered and structured in order to be positioned in one of the themes.

By combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality, a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts, and a means of verifying many of these elements. The use of multiple lines of sight is frequently called triangulation. [43] Using multiple research design strategies and theories increases the depth of understanding an investigation can yield.[44]

This method was picked due to the size of available information on the topic of the Rroma nation and its movement. Many reliable statistics are made by the European Union institutions, independent international humanitarian organizations, and especially by Rroma organizations. It would have been impossible to gather the necessary quantitative data on this topic in such a short time as it would have been tough to obtain enough questioners responses in regards to how the Romani people see themselves in Europe, how they feel in regards to their history and their 'stateless' status, and how they perceive/ experience the antiziganism and discrimination. In addition, some of the analysed documents provided percentages on the same issue for both the ethnic Rromas and the non-ethnics leading to a clear illustration of contrasts between them.

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[42] Valeriu, N. (2006). *Towards a definition of anti-Gypsyism*. Policy Paper.

[43] Lune, H., & Berg, B. L. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (9th ed.). Pearson Education Limited, page 14.

[44] Lune, H., & Berg, B. L. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (9th ed.). Pearson Education Limited, page 15.

It is also challenging to gather people from this community for a focus group, as this would imply a pre-existing assumption when approaching them that they belong to this group. Because this research primarily focused on individuals who migrated from Romania, it is considered an offense to assume their ethnic background. That is why it was avoided to approach those who could have belonged to the Romanian Rroma nationally; as already discussed above, many Rromas do not want to be associated with this particular group.

This research aimed to capture the authentic stories and genuine feelings of those who identify themselves as Rromas, individuals who have lived by this community's rules and traditions. Numerous studies have already been conducted on this topic.

Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for this thesis. The quantitative data was selected only from reliable sources such as international organizations, governmental agencies, or sociological entities. For the qualitative data, many scholars were drawn to conduct interviews with Rromas from Romania; in addition, many academic papers used observational methods such as ethnography to deepen their understanding of the struggles of this nation due to racial discrimination. The documents and articles selected were the ones that used the questionnaire method to determine the living situation of the Rroma and were not written before 2007 – the year Romania joined the European Union (`An Option of Last Resort? Migration of Roma and Non-Roma from CEE countries by Stoyanka Cherkezova, Ilona Tomova - Roma Inclusion Working Papers/ `Romania Systematic Country Diagnostic`, Roma Inclusion by The World Bank). By the end of the analysis, all the answers were compared, and some common patterns and struggles among them were identified, while discrepancies between them were noted. The information gathered led to the formulation of the research findings.

The qualitative data pictures a real face and an authentic voice to the struggles that linger between the percentages and graphics, as it comes directly from those `rightless.` This data was available mainly in the Romanian language due to the choice of Romanian Rroma as a case study and the lack of English knowledge among the members of this ethnicity. The selected articles used the interview method as a tool for gaining authentic answers from members of the Rroma community (`Romani Students' Responses to Antigypsyist Schooling in a Segregated School in Romania` by Simina Dragos and Ioana Vrabiescu article: `Evictions and Voluntary Returns in Barcelona and Bucharest: Practices of Metropolitan Governance`).

This subject already presents ethical concerns; as mentioned before, it is impossible and morally wrong to assume that an individual belongs to the Rroma nations, even if they speak the language or could be easily recognized by their traditional clothes, as many of them refuse to acknowledge it. Thus, the safest option to avoid discomfort from both sides was to stick to

data collected from those who openly recognized themselves as Rromas and expressed interest in telling their stories.

Another important aspect was the avoidance of the word "gypsy" (tigan), as it appeared in some articles. Even if some members use the term to address their belonging, it is frowned upon to be used by those of different nationalities due to its negative connotation and history of being used as a slur.

Regarding the limitations of the chosen approach, we can debate how the triangulation method is complex. It requires a high volume of information, and it is easy for the researcher to get lost and confused. The high volume of information can also make the article difficult to follow from a reader's perspective, as this adds to the shortcomings in translation from the Romanian language to English and the bias present in most scholarly articles.

The goal of the chosen methodology was to produce an evidence-based overview on the Rroma economic and social situation as a mean to tie their living conditions with their past and with their international position as being `stateless`.

6. Background chapter

Rroma is a distinct nomadic tribe that migrated into Europe from Asia sometime during the 13th and 14th centuries. The name "Gypsies" came from "Egyptians".

Upon their arrival in Europe, the Roma were not slaves; however, political and economic circumstances quickly pushed the Roma into servitude and slavery. In the two territories that now form modern Romania, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, Roma communities were enslaved from the 14th century until the mid-19th century. Starting with the groundbreaking acts of Moldovan slave owners that freed their Romani slaves around 1842, Roma enslavement officially ended in 1864. [45]

Enslaved Romas were treated as property—bought, sold, inherited, and subjected to forced labor. Early documentary evidence, such as the 1385 record by Dan Vodă, indicates the institutionalization of Roma slavery in monastic donations, a practice that continued for centuries. Despite some autonomy and internal self-governance, Roma remained socially and legally subordinate.

In contrast, Roma in Transylvania were not systematically enslaved but were instead organized into voivodeships under their own leaders, although exceptions existed in border areas such as Țara Făgărașului.

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[45] Biggs, Thomas, (2013), *Unraveling the "Gypsy Question": The Tale of the Romanian Roma and Solutions to Romani Integration*, Library Research Grants, page 14. https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/libraryrg_studentpub/17

The 20th century brought further tragedy. During World War II, the Roma were targeted in the Nazi genocide known as the *Porajmos* ("the Devouring"), which resulted in the deaths of an estimated 500,000 Roma were killed, but the precise number is unknown, they died due to being subjected to forced labour, medical experimentation, and extermination in camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau.[46] Even after the war, Roma communities faced continued repression. In countries such as Czechoslovakia, Germany, Sweden, and Norway, Roma women were subjected to forced sterilizations well into the late 20th and early 21st centuries often as part of state policies aimed at population control.

Recognition of Rroma`s suffering has been slow and partial. West Germany formally acknowledged the Roma genocide in 1982, while countries such as Poland have since established Roma Genocide Remembrance Days and memorials. However, in Romania, societal awareness of Roma history remains limited. The legacy of slavery, the Holocaust, and the Communist era when forced assimilation policies were imposed are poorly understood or entirely omitted from public discourse and education.

After 1990, Roma was recognized as a national minority by the Romanian state, but they do not fully enjoy the cultural rights deriving from this status, against the background of stigmatization of ethnicity and persistence of racism in society and social exclusion, being approached as a socially vulnerable or disadvantaged social group.

As a historical minority in Romania, the Roma have been living with the majority population for about five centuries, according to documentary evidence. However, the social distance between Roma and the majority population continues to persist, with stereotypes and prejudices remaining the main vectors describing Roma in the majority mindset. This is due to the lack of awareness and recognition of Roma history and culture in society as a whole, but especially in the education system, which continues to suffer from a lack of consistent and sufficient information in the compulsory curricula for all pupils.

Romania needs to confront its past and prioritize a more inclusive history that aims to recognize the generational trauma suffered by the Roma community, who spent almost 5 centuries enslaved and was targeted by the Nazi regime for extermination. Only through education and remembrance can a society reconcile with its past; there is a need to acknowledge and highlight the historical injustices that the Rroma community suffered rather than denying or hiding them. By doing this, Romania and other European countries that oppressed this

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[46] Bunyan Rachael, (2019), `The Persecution of the Roma Is Often Left Out of the Holocaust Story. Victims' Families Are Fighting to Change That, article on Time website, https://time.com/5719540/roma-holocaust-remembrance/, accessed 11 April 2025.

ethnicity would take the right direction in moving forward and fighting against stigma, discrimination, and racial segregation.

When looking through the numerous sources that are available on this particular topic, this community appears under different names, `Roma`, `Rroma`, `Romani` and `Gypsys`. Why, in this particular research, did I use the term `Rroma` to address them? Well, the term `gypsy` (`tigan` is considered offensive in Romania and is regarded as taboo, so when addressing this community, if this particular word is used, then it comes as a means to offend and dehumanize them. Then there is the `Romani` word, which in some specialized literature suggests that it should be used to address the culture, traditions, and language rather than the minority group. The least common ones are the `Roma` and `Rroma`, and here, it is a personal preference to know why using `Rroma` is rooted in the Romanian language.

In the DOOM2 (Orthographic, Orthoepic and Morphological Dictionary of the Romanian Language), the word `Rrom` appears as accepted and tolerated, despite not being particularly recommended to be used due to strictly orthographic reasoning, as in the Romanian language is not common to have a double letter, recently in DOOM3, this variant of the word is considered incorrect.[47]

Furthermore, in the Romanian language, the word `rom` means `rum`, the alcoholic drink, and `Roma` is the capital city of Italy, `Rome`. This orthographic convention of spelling it with a double `r` was established to avoid confusion within the Romanian language.

In the Rromani language, they name themselves `rom`, which translates to man/person or `romnicel` which translates as `the son of the woman`. An academic article titled "Romania and Europe: Roma, Rroma and Țigani as sites for the..." discusses the Romanian government's adoption of the "Rroma" spelling in the early 2000s to align with international recommendations as a part of broader efforts to promote minority rights and combat discrimination.

7. Analysis

The selected resources were plentiful despite being only secondary data for the most essential part of the analysis. After a lengthy selection process, the most suitable articles and reports were selected as the base for the quantitative analysis.

Sources: Strategy Of the Romanian Government On Inclusion Of Romanian Citizens Belonging To The Roma Minority For The Period 2022 To 2027; The World Bank, Romania Systematic Country Diagnostic; Cherkezova, Stoyanka & Tomova, Ilona. (2020). An Option of Last Resort? Migration of Roma and Non-Roma from CEE Countries and also the FRA -

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[47] The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, https://dexonline.ro/intrare/rom/319326/definitii.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. While the first two papers focus exclusively on the Rroma community from Romania that live in Romania, the other two inquire about the situation in the EU, with Romania as one of the analysed countries.

Combining both quantitative and qualitative methods gives the analysis credibility, overlooking issues that the Rroma face from more angles and perspectives. In addition, the papers come from different years, also prompting the possibility of acknowledging the changes that occurred as societies moved forward and attempted to implement more Roma-friendly legislation and measures.

The main goal of this paper is to identify whether the Roma community's `statelessness` correlates with its economic and social status.

7.1 Quantitative analysis

The thematic framework established to facilitate the analysis focused on four main themes: education, health, employment, and integration. The goal was to identify patterns of inequality and provide evidence-based data to support the paper's main assumptions. The four themes were easily identifiable in all the selected documents, as each of them targeted a specific set of data:

1. **Education** - literacy, school attendance, drop-out rates, access to tertiary education.
2. **Health** - access to healthcare, sanitation, self-reported health conditions.
3. **Employment** - labour force participation, unemployment.
4. **Social Integration** - housing, poverty, segregation.

For the Strategy Of The Romanian Government On Inclusion Of Romanian Citizens Belonging To The Roma Minority For The Period 2022 To 2027 paper, the data is based on surveys conducted by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (IRES), one of the most reliable sources of information in the country, providing a wide range of polls on different themes and social issues at the country level.

In Romania, the national education system is pluralist (with public and private schools, confessional education, and educational alternatives) and provides schooling in the official language of the state (Romanian), in students' mother tongues for students from national minorities, or in world languages[48]. However, there is no education in the Romani language.

According to the Art. 16 from Law on National Education nr.1/2011, chapter one, general dispositions: (1) Compulsory general education consists of 10 grades and includes primary and

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[48] European Commision website, Key features of the Education System, https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/eurypedia/romania/overview, accessed 20 April 2025

secondary education. High school education shall become compulsory by 2020 at the latest. (2) The obligation to attend 10 grades of full-time education shall cease at the age of 18[49].

For the first identified theme, Education, the Romanian Government's strategy highlighted discrepancies between the attendance levels, performance, and early drop-out of Rroma children and non-ethnic ones. The discrepancy only depends on proven preferential treatments displayed toward the non-ethnic children, as well as poorer teaching quality and segregation tendencies toward the ethnic ones. The Council of the European Union also identified and criticized these obstacles in 2013.

The 2011 census in Romania showed a significant gap in completing education; for the Romanian ethnicities, the percentage stood at 1%, while the Rroma one was 14%. Of the total number of people considered illiterate, 229.721, almost 30% belong to the Roma minority (67.480). By contrast, while the share of the majority population with tertiary education was 15%, the share of ethnic Roma with tertiary education was below 1%. [50]

The paper took into consideration the results of a comparative study led by the IRES in 2018 that revealed that only two-thirds of the Rroma adults had completed higher secondary education, or they did not complete any education at all, the results being five times higher than the ones amongst the Romanian population. The gap decreases for upper secondary education, and the difference between the Rromas and the non-ethnics only rises to three times higher when it comes to the Romanians who completed this education cycle. The study also revealed that despite finishing eight classes and the gymnasium period, half of the Rromas either did not know how to write or had significant difficulties.

Regarding compulsory education, only 78% of Rroma children attended school, in contrast with 95% of Romanian children; when the children reached upper secondary education, the numbers increased to 22% for Rroma and 80% for Romanians. The government took measures to improve these numbers for the Rroma children by supplementing distinct places in high school and university levels for Rroma. In the last decade, some second chances literacy programs were also implemented to encourage finished studies even for those that exceeded the school class age by at least 4 years.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights provided additional information on the situation of Roma and their education. In 2014, 11 EU Member States were targeted for surveys. A total of 22,203 Roma and non-Roma were interviewed in the two surveys, providing

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[49] Fragment from: `Legea educației naționale nr. 1/2011`, https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/geztsobvgi/art-16-dispozitii-generale-lege-1-2011?dp=gq2tomrwgq4tk#google_vignette., accessed 21 April 2025.
[50] Strategy of the Romanian Government. *Strategy on the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022–2027: Context analysis and problem definition*, page 14.

information on 84,287 members of their households. Romania was one of the 11 chosen countries. [51]

The survey revealed that only one in two Rroma children attended preschool or kindergarten; it also revealed that for the whole compulsory education period (7 to 15 years), 9 out of 10 children are enrolled in school, with only 15% of them completing high school or professional school. However, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece set an example from these statistics, having lower numbers when it comes to Rroma education.

The World Bank raised the issue of inequalities between the Rroma and non-ethnics labelling it as a problem that starts early as only 38% of children between 4 and 6/7 attended some form of education back in 2016. The European Union implemented a strategic framework for cooperation in education and training – Education and Training 2020 that aimed to have a 95% of the children aged 4-6/7 enrolled and participated in education programmes. [52]

In addition, the same rapport revelled that young Rroma seem to struggle with the transition from education to employment as 63% of those between 16 and 24 years old are 'neither in employment, nor in education or training' (NEET), and mainly report unemployment or domestic responsibilities as their occupation status. It is particularly young Roma women who find themselves outside the labor market and education system: the NEET rate of Roma women is 77% compared with 52% of their male counterparts. [53]

When it comes to the Education theme, the CRT offers a perspective on this subject as education contrasts are not only an outcome of socioeconomic factors; they are also a product of years of systematic discrimination on race grounds and institutional bias.

Moving to the Health theme, looking at the data provided by the World Bank, only half of all Roma aged 16+ years indicate that they are covered by basic health insurance. Among the nine EU Member States included in the survey, only Bulgarian Roma have a lower rate of insurance coverage.[54] Going to the Strategy Of The Romanian Government On Inclusion Of Romanian Citizens Belonging To The Roma Minority, IRES conducted research in 2018 that revealed a series of differences when looking at health status and health services of the Rroma and non-Rroma. If 71% of the Romanian population takes their annual medical examination, in the case of Rroma, this number is lower, only 39%. In Romania, one must enrol in a family

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[51] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (n.d.). *Education: The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States: Roma survey – Data in focus*. https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/education-situation-roma

[52] The World Bank, (2018), *Romania Systematic Country Diagnostic BACKGROUND NOTE - Roma Inclusion*, page 3.

[53] The World Bank, (2018), *Romania Systematic Country Diagnostic BACKGROUND NOTE - Roma Inclusion,* page 5.

[54] The World Bank, (2018), *Romania Systematic Country Diagnostic BACKGROUND NOTE - Roma Inclusion,* page 6.

doctor to access basic health services. However, there are no significant differences between populations; the same goes for the prevalent diseases such as cardiovascular issues, digestive or dental, and ophthalmologic problems reported as prevalent in a family regardless of ethnicity.

Regarding access to health services, the number is slow, and it kept decreasing from 21% in 2012 to 12% in 2018, with a small number of Rromas claiming to receive hospital care. The most significant differences come from contraception and pregnancy, where the percent difference is 10% when it comes to the use of contraception between Rroma women and Romanians. Also, there is a higher tolerance for abortion amongst Rroma women, as 16% of them prefer to have an abortion, while for the Romanian ones was only 1% back in 2012. In addition, 18% of the Rroma women confessed to never visiting a doctor and receiving medical advice during pregnancy, having a lower pregnancy surveillance than the rest of the population. There are also lower vaccination rates for Rroma children in comparison with the rest of the population. `According to the Report Summary evaluation of the "First Priority: No invisible children "(ANPDCA, UNICEF Romania, 2017) when it comes to the vaccination of children aged 1-5, in 2015, the proportion of Roma children not vaccinated was three times higher than that of the majority unvaccinated children, and the situation has not improved significantly.`[55]

Employment

From a broader perspective, the FRA paper, which included Romania, provided data on employment among the Roma, noting that, on average, fewer than one in three Roma are reported to be employed and paid. Regarding the nature of jobs, one in three Rroma respondents reported being unemployed; the rest of the sample identified themselves as housewives, retired, disabled, or self-employed.

With a young population, over two-thirds of the total are inactive, leading to only one-third of the Roma participating in economic activity. There are noticeable differences in employment due to gender and residence, as back in 2013, almost 50% of Roma men and approximately two-thirds of the women were involved in the agricultural sector. After agriculture, the sectors preferred by Rroma men are, in descending order, trade (12.8%), manufacturing (12.6%), and construction (11.0%). Approximately one in five women are involved in manufacturing activities, and around 11% are in trade. [56]

The same paper delved into the unemployment rates as it affects Roma youth (15-24 years old) much more strongly. The youth unemployment rate is about 8-10 percentage points higher compared to that for Roma people aged 15-64.

[55] Strategy of the Romanian Government. *Strategy on the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022–2027: Context analysis and problem definition*, page 16.
[56] Ruxandra, M. (2015). *Etnia rromă – câteva particularități ilustrate prin date statistice*. Romanian Statistical Review - Supplement, 12, page 28.

As debated in the Education theme, there are problems for the 16-24 years old category as 64% of them are not present in the economy, nor in education or training programs, this numbers being particularly worrying when broke down to genders as for the young Rroma women the percentages reach 72 while for the men is only 55%. The European average stays at 12% young people, neither employed nor in education. [57]

Moving to the data identified in the World Bank document, the surveys analysed in 2014 showed that many Rroma parent, 73% wished for their children to complete at least, secondary education while for the non-ethnic parents this percentage stood at 92%. This discovery proved that the parental aspiration for their children education and future employment chances resembles regardless of ethnicity. In the Rroma community there is a shared belief that reaching a higher degree of education could be the only available solution to break the common stereotypes and lead a fulfilling life. Another discovery was the need for security amongst the Rroma as 74% men and 76% women reported a preference for a secure employment that would not be financial motivating rather that a good payment in an insecure and irregular workplace.

When looking at the numbers of average earnings and employment, there is another visible gap between ethnics and non-ethnics as almost half – 46% of the Rroma declared being in a paid workplace in 2016, whereas the national employment rate stood at 66%. To the discrepancy between Rroma men and women is important to mention that 56% of the women declared that their unemployment was a direct result of being the main caregivers at home and focusing mainly on domestic tasks and responsibilities while for the males this percentages is less than half standing at 22%. [58]

Since joining the European Union in 2007 Romania witnessed a massive migration, having in 2024 the highest share of emigrants among EU states, with 24% or 4.6 million people living abroad, as well as one of the highest volumes of remittances relative to GDP, namely 2.8% in 2023, according to an analysis by Alpha Bank.[59] `At the level of Romania, the World Bank estimates that EUR 887 million is lost each year as a result of the lack of opportunities to demonstrate the economic potential that the Roma population can provide, namely by insufficiently harnessing productivity and thus the associated tax contributions.`[60]

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[57] Strategy of the Romanian Government. *Strategy on the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022–2027: Context analysis and problem definition*, page 15.

[58] The World Bank, (2018), *Romania Systematic Country Diagnostic BACKGROUND NOTE - Roma Inclusion*, page 5.

[59] Dumitrescu Radu, (2025), `Roughly 24% of Romanians lived abroad in 2024, according to Alpha Bank analysis `, Romania-Insider website, https://www.romania-insider.com/romanians-lived-abroad-2024-alpha-bank-analysis?utm_source=chatgpt.com, accessed 15 May 2025.

[60] Strategy of the Romanian Government. *Strategy on the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022–2027: Context analysis and problem definition*, page 15.

Back in 2018 many Rroma worked outside Romania as a mean to gain a higher amount of payment, from 2012 the number of workers increased from 1 to 2% in the general sample and from 3 to 5% in the Rroma sample. When looking at the households with children whose parents left to work abroad the percentage is higher standing at 10 rather than 4% for the general Romanian population.

None of the analysed papers mentioned the isolation of women, child-marriages and how many women are forbidden to pursue school after marriage limiting their access to employment when reaching adulthood. Despite this phenomenon being a known one in some parts of the Rroma community, there are no measures taken by the authorities.[61]

The Integration theme came as one of the most complex and multilayered one encompassing the housing situation, alongside with segregation and the poverty indicators for this ethnicity. According to the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey report from 2018:

a. Romania was among the countries where 80% of Roma lived below the at risk-of-poverty threshold.

b. one in three Roma lived in a dwelling without running water.

c. one in 10 lived in a dwelling without electricity.

d. one in four Roma and one in three Roma children lived in a household where a family member went to picking up at least once in the last month. [62]

Poverty and material deprivation among Roma have declined but remain high, particularly in spatially segregated Roma neighbourhoods. According to Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey[63], the share of Roma at risk of poverty was 70% in 2016 declining from 84% in 2011 (UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Roma Survey).

In the World Bank report, it is indicated that poverty amongst Rroma has a strong connection with residential concentration. Specifically, if the neighborhood is predominantly Roma, the poverty level is more pronounced than in those where Roma is a minority. According to statistics, 68% of Rroma admitted to living in this type of segregated neighborhood, where 62% of the Rroma households that participated in the survey reported difficulties in making ends meet. Even if the percentage of poverty declined, there are still about a third of Rroma live in

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[61] Despite of not having a clear source, this information comes from leaving in an area around Rroma communities that practice child marriages, personally knowing young males, 14 years old that got married and forbid they wives, 12 years old, from continuing their studies. These events happened back in 2013 in the South of Romania.
[62] Strategy of the Romanian Government. *Strategy on the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2022–2027: Context analysis and problem definition,* page 11.
[63] European Union Agency for Fundamental Right, (2017), S*econd European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Main results.*

households that struggle with hunger and where there are family members who go to bed hungry. [64]

The poor housing quality affects the health of the tenants, which comes as a significant problem because, as previously discussed, the Roma have scarce interactions with the Sanitation field, many children are unvaccinated, and many adults do not have a family physician who could provide examinations and treatment. Back in 2016, 68% of Rroma were living in households where tap water was not available, being forced to carry water from the nearest outside water source. Additionally, 80% reported not having a shower or bathroom inside, which makes it challenging to maintain proper hygiene. Among the general population, only 38% did not have available tap water, and 31% did not dispose of waste inside the bathroom.

There is a considerable number of Romanian Roma who live in Italy; many of them migrated after Romania joined the EU in search of a better life and more employment opportunities. Due to this, the Romanian government approved a protocol of cooperation between the National Agency for Roma and the municipality of Milan, with the intention of facilitating the inclusion process. The original objective of this protocol was to assist Romanian citizens of Roma origin with their integration process and settlement in Italy. [65]

Some examples of negative public practices toward the Rroma community that need to be adressed in the analysis are Germany - back in 2009 when more than 100 Rroma were paid in an attempt to coerce them to return to Romania. France is another example; through their `Voluntary Repatriation Programme,` France sent more than 8000 ethnic rooms to Romania and Bulgaria. The program practically put out of sight the discriminatory nature of the selective expulsion, as those actions were explained with an illegal settlement problem. Another official argument was the high rate of unemployment among those communities. Each adult received 300 euros, or 415 USD, in exchange for leaving the country. It also included the dismantling of illegal Roma settlements. Later in 2012, the Rroma camps settled in France in Lille and Lyon were destroyed, the justification provided by the French authorities regarded the `unsanitary` conditions of the camps.[66] Back then, Nicolas Sarkozy was the president of France, and his actions against the Rromas were later followed by the Netherlands.

From the Scandinavian side of Europe, Denmark sent back to Romania 23 Rroma ethnics, Sweeden sent 50 Roma to Romania in 2010, and Finland threatened in 2010 with expulsions

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[64] The World Bank, (2018), *Romania Systematic Country Diagnostic BACKGROUND NOTE - Roma Inclusion,* page 3.

[65] European Union Agency for Fundamental Right, (2016), *Fundamental Rights Report*, page 102.

[66] Grigorovici Mădălina, (2014) *Institutionalizing the Intersectionality between Gender and Ethnicity in Romania: The Case of Roma Women,* page 27.

due to the public outcry aims the presence of Rromas in the country framing the situation as a public security problem. [67]

7.2 Qualitative analysis

For the qualitative analysis, two articles were selected, both of which employed the interview method to delve deeper into the Rroma community's struggles, complementing the information provided by the statistics and surveys from the quantitative analysis. The Integration and Education themes remain present; however, there is less data available on employment. However, the data regarding Health is insufficient to be debated in this part of the analysis.

The first selected article belongs to Simina Dragos, PhD candidate from the University of Cambridge. The article "Romani Students' Responses to Antigypsyist Schooling in a Segregated School in Romania" is a complex one, combining interviews and observations. In her paper, she interviewed both teachers and Roma pupils to get a comprehensive image of the discrimination and antitziganism phenomenon. The case study concerned a school with a majority of Roma students and was conducted at the end of 2018.

Starting with the Employment theme, here are two sides, two visions: the ones expressed by the teachers and the ones held by the Rroma pupils. From the teacher's side, the expectations were low, with no hopes for a future career, no encouragement or advice, and no support due to the pre-established idea that the Rroma children were 'stupid,' 'weak,' or 'mentally disabled.'

During an interview, one of the teachers expressed their vision of the future careers that the Roma children could have: *Nothing. From my perspective, nothing. Or some of them, who fend for themselves, will end up working in factories, but the majority will be on social benefits […] I don't see these students as doctors, teachers, or civil servants. No way.* [68]
Moving to the answers provided by the students, they did not regard their future as absolutely lacking any form of success, as pictured by their teachers; the students saw education as a tool to obtain a workplace and a driver's license (due to the theoretical part of the exam). In addition, one student admitted that she believed her father was exploited as a factory worker due to his lack of education, concluding that education is a means to avoid being exploited, as one would understand and argue for their rights.

From the education theme, again, there are two sides of the story with two different visions: the teacher's vision, which regards families as the main barrier to students' educational

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[67] Cherkezova, Stoyanka & Tomova, Ilona. (2020). *An Option of Last Resort? Migration of Roma and Non-Roma from CEE Countries*, page 52

[68] Dragos, S. (2022). Romani Students' Responses to Antigypsyist Schooling in a Segregated School in Romania. *Critical Romani Studies*, *4*(2), 122–140. https://doi.org/10.29098/crs.v4i2.95, page 131.

achievement due to being `problem families.` This assertion implies that Rroma parents do not prioritize their children's education, contradicting a previously analysed statistic by The World Bank (page 24), which stated that 73% of Rroma parents hope for at least a medium level of education for their children as a means to secure employment safely in the future.

The teachers also promoted a biased discourse, encouraging the Rroma students to act Romanian and to abandon their ethnicity and culture as this would be the only means of success: `*Roma students [...] in comparison with Romanian students, are their exact opposite. They don't have the ambition that Romanian students have [...] But the Romanianized Roma students become like Romanians and want to be their equals.*` From the observation, the author discovered that the teacher displayed authoritarian behaviours, as evidenced by complaints about having to teach Roma a particular class, underestimating the pupils' abilities, and not even attempting to educate them on specific subjects or finding ways to make them more conscientious. This behaviour was enforced when a teacher offered to grade a student a two out of ten, where the minimum passing grade is five, without any form of evaluation. The reasoning was as follows: *"You wouldn't get any more if I gave you a test either"* underestimating the student's capacities and robbing them of the chance to prove themselves.

From the Rroma side of the Education theme, the children provided a different story, telling the author about their future aspirations, school interests, and their community. All students described themselves as good students, explaining that being a good student was not just about achieving good grades but also about the interactions with those around them and the friendships formed. Of the 11 students interviewed, ten admitted that they wanted to attend high school, and more than half mentioned attending university; they also discussed their future careers.

The student's education and academic performance are also halted due to the racist behaviour displayed by some teachers: `*To me ... easy ... easy is Maths, Romanian, and History; I study these three subjects. But I don't study for Biology and Geography. [...] I don't study because [...] the Geography teacher is mean, once, yesterday, he hit [student]. [...] Because he says that we are stupid, like those people, handicapped, that we don't know how to write [author's emphasis].*` This behaviour leads the Rroma pupils to only learn the subjects taught by those who make them feel comfortable and who don`t try to dehumanize them.

The last theme identified in this section is the Integration theme; it is evident that the segregation among students and the racist tendencies displayed and encouraged by the teachers affected the student's integration process. However, there is a desire to make the Rromas Romanian, implying an attempt at integration through assimilation; however, as mentioned before, this would erase their identity. A first argument against the erasure of identity is the use

of Romanian, the second language for most Rroma children. Simina Dragos uses a quote from O'Hanlon and Holmes, 2004 to describe this situation for the Rromas, mentioning that: "Historically, the school is the institution of another culture".

When asked about the idealized image of a school, the children talked about eradicating the racist and violent tendencies that other students and teachers sometimes displayed toward them: `It would be nicer [...] because [Romanians] protect themselves from Roma, they say that Roma have something, that they are ugly and whatever [...] they [Romanians] keep swearing at us when we go to [computer room] [...] but no one says anything about them.` The pupils were able to identify racism and call out the discrimination. They also presented their community and families, portraying them as places of support and reiterating how they want to help their communities grow and improve in the future.

`Through practices of care of the self – naming oppression, refusing homework, speaking Romani, constructing counter-stories – the students showed a range of resistance tactics to racialised oppression.`[69] The paper also included the testimony of a young girl about sexual violence and harassment, leading to the Intersectionality theory; the Rroma women experience sexual violence due to their vulnerable statute and to the negative vision projected on them, and their accounts are dismissed. The girls recounted: `Mum doesn't want to leave me at this school, because, first, I had a sister in the 'second chance' programme and then a boy picked on her. He wanted to rape her and then my sister never wanted to come again [to school]. And then the headteacher said that no, it's not true and mum said that she's not gonna leave me for much longer either. `

The second paper selected for this type of analysis belongs to Ioana Vrabiescu and is titled: `Evictions and Voluntary Returns in Barcelona and Bucharest: Practices of Metropolitan Governance. The paper doesn`t provide information regarding the pre-established themes, but it was selected due to the information provided by the interviewees as it matched the last part of the quantitative analysis regarding coercing Rromas to move from one state to another due to their ethnicity and bad image. There are words that could belong to the Integration theme and brief accounts of Employment, but not enough to discuss each of them separately, as done above. The author combined different approaches for the data collection, using the interview method, participant observation, and secondary data analysis. The research was done between 2013 and 2015, placed temporally before the first discussed paper by Dragos.

The two cases presented are Barcelona and Bucharest, and in both cities, the author identified a tendency of the authorities to push the Rroma out. In the case of Bucharest, there is the

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[69] Dragos, S. (2022). Romani Students' Responses to Antigypsyist Schooling in a Segregated School in Romania. *Critical Romani Studies*, *4*(2), 122–140. https://doi.org/10.29098/crs.v4i2.95, page 134

constant presence of racist discourse, doubled by a constant marginalization within housing policies, which accelerates the social and spatial exclusion of people of Romani ethnicity.[70] One of the Rroma women that were interviewed recounted the hardships she faced due to being evicted; she mentioned how the manager of the housing department told her about his reservations in giving housing to the members of this particular ethnicity: `*He [the manager of housing department] said to me 'I cannot… it hurts my heart if I have to give houses to the Gypsies'.* Moreover, she related how the eviction affected her whole self-perception: only after `*I was evicted, thrown out into the street with my baby, did I realize that I am Roma.*`

Vrabiescu's paper is complex; there are other passages from interviews that enforce the idea that there are racist tendencies aimed towards this community: `*Nowadays, the Romanian is the scapegoat. Always when there is a problem – I am talking about the Romanian Gypsy – any problem, a Romanian Gypsy will show up. So, fantastic! The problem is already… only the Romanian Gypsy. In Badalona [part of metropolitan area of Barcelona], you know, the mayor won the elections doing a campaign against… focused on the issue of Romanian Gypsies and house squatting.* `[71]

The analysis findings and draw parallels with specific articles referenced in the Literature Review section of Chapter 3.

The intersectionality theory, coined by Crenshaw, complements Arendt's ideas, as in many instances, the Roma struggles are not a single individual matter but rather a multilayered issue that combines all the four identified themes. The themes are interdependent, as there is no possibility of employment without education. However, the integration struggles and poverty hinder access to education. The housing issue also affects the health of individuals due to unsanitary living conditions, but access to health insurance is often contingent upon being employed or enrolled in education. This interdependence proves that if one of the main themes is disrupted, there is a chance that the Rroma person would experience hardships within all three categories.

For the Intersectionality theory, there is the account of the sexual harassment of a young Rroma girl, but also the Romanian teacher's affirmation that dehumanized the Rroma students due to their race, culture, and families.

In the under the `stateless nation` theory and `the right to have rights` idea point to the accounts when the Romanian Rroma were sent back to their home country, country in which from the

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70 Vrabiescu, I., (2016), *Evictions And Voluntary Returns In Barcelona And Bucharest: Practices Of Metropolitan Governance*, Intersections. East European Journal Of Society And Politics, 2 (1): 199-218, Page 212.

[71] Vrabiescu, I., (2016), *Evictions And Voluntary Returns In Barcelona And Bucharest: Practices Of Metropolitan Governance*, Intersections. East European Journal Of Society And Politics, 2 (1): 199-218 page 208

quantitative and qualitative data it is known that they are not regarded as equal members of the society.

8. Conclusions and end notes

This paper has explored the profound ways in which the statelessness of the Rroma people impacted their marginalization and exposed them to systemic antiziganism and discrimination. By drawing on the theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw), the right to have rights, and stateless nations by Arendt, it was demonstrated through evidence-based arguments that the Roma person's experience is shaped by a cluster of historical, political, and social factors that affect their access to fundamental rights and dignity.

Returning to the RQ: `*How did being a `stateless nation` affect the Rroma community life quality due to facing antiziganism and discrimination?* `

There is no explicit mention that being stateless is a direct reason for the attitude displayed towards Rroma; there was no account of such a claim in any of the analysed papers. However, when examining past events that have left a lasting mark on the Rroma's history, it is crucial to acknowledge that their lack of political protection - protection that is usually offered by one's home country - may have been a factor. Returning to Du Bois's initial question, the analysis has demonstrated that the Rromas are widely perceived as a burden within Romania and abroad, where countries have developed policies explicitly aimed at repatriating them to Romania.

Across the four main dimensions examined, education, health, employment, and social integration, statelessness and discrimination intersect to form mutually reinforcing barriers:

Education starting from a young age, the Rroma have to face dehumanizing attitudes of some educators toward them, as mentioned in testimonies. This leads to the conclusion that a broader institutional prejudice perpetuates inequality. There is also the fear of some aroma parents or the negative attitudes that lead the pupils to drop out. The number of Rromas who reach the high school level of studies could be justified as being so low because, as the pupils grow, the

realization of discrimination deepens, and the injustice in the educational system drives them to abandon their studies.

Health outcomes for Rroma communities are similarly impacted by poor housing, lack of sanitation, and limited access to medical care. The intersectionality of poverty, unemployment, and exclusion from education means many Rroma are unable to access even basic healthcare.

Employment is difficult to obtain in a society where racial profiling and ethnic stereotyping. Many Rroma declared self-employed, and more than half of the women took care of the household. The employment issue is also strongly tied to the illiteracy rates.

The Social Integration theme is deeply affected by the segregation of housing, Rroma being limited to Rroma neighborhoods and being pushed to the margins of cities. The constant movement - sometimes involuntary of individuals to countries that nor embrace them, neither protect them highlights the Rroma ethnicity existence as a `stateless nation. `

In conclusion, the antitziganism behaviour is not a result of an isolated issue but a systematic failure; this failure is rooted in the history of Rroma on the European continent, a history non yet fully acknowledged and atoned for, and in ongoing racism and racial discrimination. The lack of a Romani country in its own sovereignty allowed the governments from the host countries of Rroma to push this hatred and segregation under the umbrella of integration reforms, reforms that never truly tacked the issue of the Rroma being at the end of the day rightless.

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