

**A Comparative analysis: Exploring Parallels and
Intersections between Romani Feminist Knowledge
Production and Roma National Frameworks (2005-2018) with
a Focus on Gender Equality and Discrimination Affecting
Romani Women**

By

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Abstract:

The primary objective of this research is to explore the inclusion of Roma feminist knowledge production and thus, the voices of Romani women at both the European and national institutional levels within Roma policies. By documenting the evolution of the gender perspective in National Roma frameworks and the theoretical knowledge generated by Romani feminists, my goal is to compare how these two aspects, intersect or don't over time in the implementation of Roma policies. Hence, my aim is to provide a chronological analysis of how EU Roma policies have addressed gender issues throughout different time periods and overtime.

Considering that Roma policy frameworks are specifically designed to address Roma issues at European level — embodying political, economic, and social commitments that all EU member countries should implement —, in this context, it is relevant to explore the extent to which national governments have improved the political, social, economic, and security status of Romani women within their territories. This examination encompasses the period from the inception of the Roma Decade (2005-2015) to the implementation of the first EU Roma Strategy (2010 – 2020). This period will enable me to trace the trajectory from the establishment of the pioneering Roma framework at the European level (2005-2015) to the culmination of the first EU Roma Strategy integration in 2020 (2010-2020).

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference. I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate: Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 18,066 words Entire manuscript: 23,918 words.

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List of abbreviation

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CoE - Council of Europe

EC - European Commission

ERRC - European Roma Rights Center

EU - European Union

FRA - Fundamental Rights Agenda

NRISs - National Roma Integration Strategies

OSI - Open Society Initiative

RCM - Roma Civil Monitor

RWI - Roma Women Initiative

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

WB - World Bank

Introduction

This research is a response to the tokenization of Romani women within European institutional spaces, particularly highlighted during my participation as a panelist in the LBT panel discussion in the sixth international Roma Women's Meeting organized by the Council of Europe in 2021. The meeting brought together Romani women from across Europe to discuss Romani women-related issues and provide recommendations. However, we quickly felt that our voices were marginalized as we ironically listened to predominantly male political representatives discussing our own contexts and needs. The strongest disagreement was stirred by a non-Romani woman presentation on European Roma policies, focusing on Romani women. She used a paternalistic and discriminatory tone, attributing our problems to our culture and holding us responsible for our problems.

This shocked and frustrated us, as our attempts to challenge these perspectives were dismissed, leaving us unable to express our dissatisfaction and anger. In response to this experience, my colleagues, Marina Csikós from Hungary and Maria Ruiz Dumitru from Romania and myself spent a year working together to establish the *Feminist Collective of Romani Gender Experts*, which we launched in November 2022. The collective aims to provide a safe space for professional growth, challenge the sexist and racist labor market, and reclaim political spaces for Romani women's visibility and recognition.

We recognize the key role that Romani women have played in European politics and activism, laying the foundation for theoretical and practical Roma feminist frameworks. Romani women activists and scholars have confronted both male leaders who denied the importance of gender within Roma politics and white women who blamed our culture for our difficulties while denying their own racism (Gheorghe 2016). Unfortunately, this has disproportionately hindered the political recognition and production of Roma feminist knowledge.

By addressing these challenges and amplifying the voices and experiences of Romani women, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of Roma feminism and its significance in combating intersecting forms of oppression. It

seeks to challenge the marginalization and underestimation of Romani women's knowledge and expertise, and to shed light on their pivotal role in shaping political and activist movements.

Therefore, with this study, I aim to examine the integration of Roma feminist knowledge within European and national Roma policies by comparing their intersections as a fundamental tool for the improvement of Romani women's contexts. I have gathered relevant and reliable data, utilizing the Roma Civil Monitor's reports spanning from 2005 to 2018. These reports provide valuable insights from civil society into how gender equality has been incorporated in national Roma policies and initiatives. Specifically, I my focused is on the seven European countries that participated in both the Roma Decade and the first EU Roma Strategy until 2020: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Spain. By examining these countries, I aim to provide a broader understanding of how gender equality has been pursued as a policy objective within European frameworks and the extent to which feminist knowledge has been integrated into these efforts.

Background

Political situation of EU in the early 2000s and its implication in the Roma context

In the early 2000s were occurring significant political changes in the European Union (EU) due to the expansion of EU borders. The new member states that joined the EU, from Central and Eastern Europe, granting freedom of movement to citizens, including the Roma population. However, the Roma continue to face numerous challenges as poverty and racism disproportionately affecting their communities in Eastern Europe, (van Baar, 2011). Moreover, media representations of the Roma were perpetuating xenophobic stereotypes that criminalized, associated with terrorism, prostitution, and savagery the Roma (van Baar, 2011). Within this context, Romani women experienced intersecting forms of discrimination due to their social classifications of race, gender, and class. They faced the compounded effects of anti-Roma practices and sentiments, and patriarchy that further marginalized their experiences. Overall, the political dynamics within the EU during this period had an significant impact on

the Roma community which shaped their migration patterns and subjected them to systemic discrimination and stigmatization which has current consequences.

Unveiling the intersectional agenda: the tokenization of Romani women' knowledge production at European level?

In 2003, considering the prevailing anti-Roma sentiment and discriminatory practices pervasive among European politicians and general society, the World Bank, Open Society Initiative (OSI), European Union (EU), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Council of Europe (CoE) considered as key international organizations took collaborative action. In 2003, they jointly hosted a high-level international conference titled '*Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future*'. (H.Ram 2017: 571).

The conference aimed to address the 'integration' of Roma within their respective countries and discourage their migration, particularly from Eastern to Western Europe. This objective was driven by the Western European concerns arising from the massive migration of Roma, mostly from Romania, Bulgaria, and ex-Yugoslavia, after opening borders among European member states, which granted citizens free mobility throughout Europe (van Baar, 2011). This significant event grounded the work for the policy agenda that would shape the Decade of Roma Inclusion, operating from 2005 to 2015.

Building upon the historical context of the Roma Decade, Nicoleta Bitu and Debra Schultz (2018) provide valuable perspectives on the political positionality of Romani women in the early 2000s and the emergence of organized Romani women activism in Central Eastern Europe.

In this regard, they highlight the work of Romani Women Initiative (RWI), an informal group of young Romani women leaders, aiming to spotlight Romani women's issues at international level through a feminist political agenda (Schultz & Bitu 2018: 30). These issues encompassed a wide range of concerns, including gender-based violence, access to education, poverty and economic empowerment, multiple discrimination, and gender politics within the Roma movement (Schultz & Bitu, 2018: 39). We can understand that Romani women were setting an international and intersectional perspective within both the Roma and women's movements, differentiating their struggles from Roma male and white female concerns.

Bitu and Schultz note that in the year 2003, a significant event also took place in Budapest known as the '*Roma Women's Forum*' with the participation of more than 100 Romani women experts and activists, including donors, international human rights leaders, and government representatives from Central and Eastern countries, (Schultz & Bitu, 2018: 39). During the conference, Romani women participants discussed two approaches to address gender equality within the Roma Decade's policies. The first involved treating gender equality as a separate and distinct priority area within the Decade, while the second involved integrating gender equality as a cross-cutting theme across all the Decade priorities, similar to how other minority groups and intergovernmental entities implemented it, (Matache 2015: 38) At the end, the Roma Decade implemented the second approach, as cross-cutting objective.

Despite the efforts and important contributions of the RWI in advocating for a feminist political agenda, the intersectional approach of the Roma Women's Forum inputs was unfortunately overlooked in the policy agenda of the Decade of Roma and excluded from the high-level conference '*Roma in an Expanding Europe*' (Schultz & Bitu, 2018:40). We should highlight the long-term consequences of excluding the Romani women's political agenda from the initial Decade of Roma policy framework. By doing so, we expect to gain insight into the subsequent years, including the EU Roma Strategy, in terms of addressing gender issues and combating discrimination against Romani women.

Roma Decade & EU Roma Integration Strategy up to 2020

The Decade of Roma

The Roma Decade's policy agenda was established as a result of the European high-level conference "*Roma in an Expanding Europe*" in 2003. Accordingly, the conference aiming to address the social, economic, and political challenges faced by the Roma community, while "integrating" the Roma population in their respective countries, marking a significant change-period in European initiatives. In this regard, the policy framework set as primary objectives to challenge the discrimination faced by Roma community focusing on the four pillars: housing, health, employment, and education as the four pillars of the Decade (Roma Decade 2005 - 2015).

Countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, and Slovakia jointly started the implementation of the Roma Decade in 2005 in their respective territories. Three years later, in 2008, Balkan's countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the initiative together with the western country like Spain. (Roma Decade, Regional Cooperation Council, accessed May 19, 2023). Although I believe that it would be relevant to analyze every country, I had to narrow down my research. Therefore, my focus is only on the 'European members states' such as Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Spain. Consequently, the Roma Decade was to focus on combating discrimination and addressing four key pillars: housing, health, employment, and education.

Additionally, the Roma Decade introduced the establishment of the Roma Civil Monitor, a platform created to monitor and assess the implementation and progress of national Roma frameworks and action plans across the participating members states (Roma Decade, Regional Cooperation Council, accessed May 19, 2023). The Roma Civil Monitor was important in providing independent evaluations and recommendations; we could compare its format to the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW's* shadow reports, highlighting areas of success and areas in need of improvement within national Roma policies. Furthermore, the comprehensive monitoring mechanism, involving Roma and non-Roma civil society organizations and experts, allowed for a more informed understanding of the impact and effectiveness of the Roma Decade, (Rorke & Matache & Friedman 2015).

EU Roma Integration Strategy up to 2020

Building on the Roma Decade, the European Union developed its first EU Roma Strategy using the Roma Decade as a framework template, covering the period from 2010 to 2020. In the same manner, the EU Roma framework called on Member States to prepare and revise National Roma Integration Strategies. The national Roma policies were designed to effectively address the challenges of Roma inclusion in four priority areas of education, employment, housing and health or integrated sets of policy measures targeting Roma within mainstream social inclusion policies.

The new EU Roma Strategy adopted a similar monitor model that its predecessor, the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project from 2017 to 2020, establishing an independent platform comprised

of civil society organizations. The inclusion of new actors injected fresh perspectives into the monitoring process, both in terms of the participating institutions and the range of topics addressed. As outlined in description of the EU Roma Civil Monitor pilot project (2017: 5), the participation of Roma communities and the promotion of gender equality are recognized as crucial horizontal issues that should be integrated into the analyses. However, there is a significant issue related to the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project, the imbalance of representation and involvement of Romani women's NGOs in 2018. According to the official pages of the Roma Civil Monitor, out of the 92 NGOs involved in the project, only four Romani women's led organizations participated and one non-Roma women NGO: E-Romnja from Romania, Panhellenic Educational Cultural and Creative Association of Roma women from the Greek, Federation of associations of Roma in Extremadura (FAKALI) and, Federación de Asociaciones de Mujeres Gitanas de Andalucía (KAMIRA) from Spain, and Gender Alternatives Foundation from Bulgaria.

Lídia Balogh (2022), supports this observation arguing that although the selection criteria for reporting and working in coalition had the inclusion of NGOs with leadership positions of Roma and women, there was no explicit requirement for a coalition of Roma and non-Roma women in the project's call for participation. This matter is significant for my research on the knowledge production of Romani women as it may underscores the lack of inclusion of their perspectives.

Chapter 1. Literature Review & Methodology

1. Introduction and case study of intersectional discrimination faced by Gitanas in Spain

The theoretical framework of intersectionality, famously created by American civil rights advocate and critical race theory scholar Kimberly Crenshaw in 1989, is well-known within academia and activism. She defines intersectionality (1989) as an understanding of the “paradigm of sexual discrimination often centers on the experiences of white women, while the model of racial discrimination tends to focus on the experiences of more privileged black individuals”, “how Black women are marginalized in the interface between antidiscrimination law and race and gender hierarchies”. (Crenshaw 1989: 151). Crenshaw further argues “any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated.” (1989: 140). Building upon this, Crenshaw underscores the importance of intersectionality as a critical framework, emphasizing how mainstream movements (feminist and anti-racist) were omitting their interconnectedness operating in black women experiences, in favor of their own privileges.

Since its beginning, scholars and activists from diverse backgrounds have explored, extended, and adapted the concept to their concerns and struggles. Evidently, this trend is occurring in Europe as well where, Romani women activists and scholars have been employing and developing intersectionality since the early 1990s. Angela Kóczé discusses in her article ‘*The Building Blocks of the Romani Women’s Movement in Europe*’, published by the RomArchive, how the Romani women's movement in Spain, known as ‘el movimiento de mujeres Gitanas’, has declared their intersecting identities based on gender and ethnicity. This stance differentiates them from both the Gitanos (Roma men) movement and the mainstream Spanish women's movement, (Kóczé, RomArchive; Schultz & Bitu 2018; Mirga-Kruszelnicka 2018).

To further explore the literature on intersectionality and its three implications (political, structural, and representational), I will take a non-traditional approach in developing my literature review. Instead, I will display a case study focusing on the intersectional discrimination faced by Gitanas (Romani women) in Spain in their daily lives. The reason for this choice is based on the broad discussion on how intersectionality is transferred into practice.

To this end, I will apply the intersectional lenses to a real-world scenario of intersectional discrimination faced by Gitanas.

In this regard, AMUGE a Romani women's self-led non-governmental organization based in Euskadi, Bilbao, Spain, has conducted the research on this topic. Their study shows how security guards and store workers disproportionately target Romani women and girls, thereby highlighting the intersectional physical and psychological discrimination and violence they face in their daily lives. Therefore, I will focus on this specific case study that demonstrates how the complexities of intersectional discrimination based on the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and class creates unique challenges in Romani women lives.

1.2. Case Study: ‘They Follow us’ (Nos Persiguen), 2021, Spain

The case study presents a research project investigating the discriminatory treatment of Romani women and girls in supermarkets and shopping centers in Bizkaia, Spain. The findings revealed a shocking prevalence of discrimination against the Romani women volunteers providing a startling insight into their daily experiences (AMUGE 2021)

The study argues that discriminatory treatment was observed in 16 out of 20 establishments, which is 80% of the sample, with Romani volunteers experiencing persecution, verbal accusations, excessive physical contact, and other forms of intimidation, mirroring the daily reality of Romani volunteers. Additionally, the Romani volunteers acknowledged that this experience echoed their daily reality: "it is a normal thing for us, I can never shop calmly, I always have to shop quickly", (AMUGE, 2021: 18)

I am referring to this recent case due to the convergence of race, gender, and class factors. On one hand, ethnicity has served as justification for the experienced persecution—stemming from racism as it is obvious through the study, Romani women were persecuted, and non-Roma women were not. In terms of class I consider that the study is relevant because it highlights the assigned perceived social status of Roma. The homogenization of the Roma results in that the society often categorizes them as to a single social class which is characterized by poverty and marginalization. Consequently, the stigma of poverty becomes intertwined with their ethnic identity, rendering them more susceptible to accusations of theft due to their disadvantaged economic circumstances.

Conversely, it is important to note that while race and class may imply a negative and stigmatizing narrative, the gender identity of Romani women alone does not make them suspects of thievery. However, due to traditional gender roles within the society at large, Romani women also are often assigned the responsibilities of grocery shopping and domestic care. Therefore, these gender roles significantly increase the likelihood that they will experience discrimination and violence.

In light of these findings, AMUGE asserts that experiences of discrimination reflect anti-Roma prejudices embedded in store and security personnel as a sample of society, rather than the individual attitudes of specific workers. AMUGE underscores that it extends beyond the sphere of commerce, permeating other areas such as the labor market, real estate, education, and health systems.

1.3. The political implication of intersectionality in Romani women's experiences

Political intersectionality as explored by Crenshaw (1989) refers to the implications of solely focusing on a top-down single aspect such as gender or race, which restricts the political inclusion of Black women's experiences by ignoring the concept of intersectionality.

Implementing Crenshaw thoughts, Romani scholar Alexandra Oprea in her article titled '*Re-envisioning Social Justices from the Ground Up: Including the Experiences of Romani women*' discusses how Romani women faced systemic barriers in accessing political arenas because of their persistent discrimination stemming from the intersecting oppressions of race and sex (2004: 30). Oprea further criticizes that this is compounded by the prevailing white feminist narratives that are often centered on gender struggles alone, bypassing intersectional considerations while anti-Roma struggle focuses on racism as the key factor (Oprea 2004). Very often, the voices of Romani women are marginalized within dominant white feminist and anti-Roma racist spaces due to the constant questioning of ethno-cultural identities and gender-related issues that differ from the experiences of those in privileged positions. At this point, the exclusion of Romani women from political theme, limiting their participation decision-making, and lack representation with their own voices, it may result in their issues being overlooked in political strategies.

Despite the widespread recognition of intersectionality in political, academia and activism arenas, for Romani women it is still a challenge the application of it within women and Roma

mainstream policy frameworks due to inner conflict of interest. This could lead to the understanding why Romani women's discrimination when shopping is not tackled by Roma policies since it underlines gender roles. Similarly, white feminist perspectives neglect it because of the race identity. Therefore, according to Oprea (2004) the systematic exclusion of Romani women feminists from both mainstream politics -Roma and women-, has several implications in Romani women's lives restricting their equal access to health, housing, employment, and education while perpetuating their discrimination.

In her side, Angela Kóczé argues for the incorporation of class into intersectional analysis framing Romani women's experiences while questioning if the three categories: race, gender, and class are enough to address the intricacy of Romani women issues (2009: 21) Engaging with the arguments of Kóczé, my research seeks to highlight the multiple factors that shape Romani women's experiences by focusing not only on the principal academically recognized identities – race, gender, and class, but underlining that there are other identities impacting Romani women's experiences beyond those.

Based on various discussions with feminist colleagues, I have observed that the emphasis placed on different identities within the spectrum of Romani women's experiences could vary depending on the activist's positionality. For instance, for a western middle-class Romani woman the nationality, class, and skin color could be not relevant factors within her intersectional framework. However, the same is not true for a lower middle class Romani woman from an eastern country.

We should consider when exploring intersectionality that the multiples interpretation of intersectionality from different actors could create a hierarchy of oppressions and fixed categories of identity, as Nash, (2008) further argues. Misusing or misinterpreting intersectionality can lead to the creation of hierarchies, resulting in a competition of who is the “most vulnerable discriminated against”. From my perspective, this angle may re-victimize certain groups and make others' oppression invisible while limiting the development of solidarity and sisterhood among women and even among such marginalized women as the Roma. Collins & Bilge, (2016) argue that while it may require an effort to comprehend and utilize intersectionality effectively, it is a vital tool for understanding social inequality. This consideration aligns with my concerns about the absence or inadequate application of intersectionality in the Roma policy frameworks while intending to acknowledge and address the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression.

1.4 Structural implications of intersectionality in Romani women's experiences

My exploration will initially focus on how various systems of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism converge and are ingrained within societal structures and institutions. These include education, economy, health systems, and the structure of families and households. Patricia Hill Collins presents the notion that structural intersectionality serves as a framework, useful for examining how these intersecting oppressions are not only interconnected but also mutually reinforcing, functioning at a more extensive societal level (Collins, 2000, Kóczé 2009).

To exemplify the structural implications of intersectionality, I will further delve into the case study, previously introduced, *'They Follow us'* (AMUGE, 2021), which explores the harassment of Romani women in supermarkets by security guards and workers. Applying the lens of structural intersectionality to this case allows us to pinpoint how intersecting forms of discrimination come together, resulting in the marginalization and criminalization of Romani women. Applying a structural intersectional analysis, as developed by Collins in her piece *'Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment'* (2000), enables us to comprehend the wider implications of this case. The harassment of Romani women signifies that, as Collins contends, their mistreatment is not merely a product of individual prejudices. Instead, it is deeply embedded in systemic inequalities, where multiple forms of oppression and structures interact (Collins 2000: 127). This perspective underscores the necessity to confront not only the direct instances of harassment but also the foundational structures and power dynamics that perpetuate such maltreatment. Regarding Romani women, their encounters with racism, sexism, class, and other types of discrimination intertwine and shape their daily lives. This intersection contributes to their criminalization, violence, and marginalization in public spaces, leading to traumatic and violent experiences.

Given this background, my research focusses on the discrimination faced by Romani women and girls within the four pillars of Roma policy frameworks, namely housing, health, employment, and education. I explored these areas as interlinked structures of domination and exclusion that mutually reinforce each other. By doing so, we can investigate how the domain of housing emerges as a significant structure of inequality. This is evident in the analysis of Roma policy frameworks, where widespread discriminatory practices and biases (Vincze,

2009) result in restricted access to suitable housing options. The close connection between housing and health is evident as substandard housing conditions can lead to various health issues. This situation is further impacted by the intersectional discrimination Romani women and girls face when accessing healthcare systems. Concurrently, inadequate housing and poor health conditions can hinder their full participation in the workforce, in addition to the exclusion they experience within the employment structure. Education also plays a pivotal role, especially for Romani women and girls, by perpetuating a cycle of limited opportunities and choices due to the numerous barriers they encounter in accessing quality education. Educational opportunities could serve as a mechanism to break free from systemic poverty, discrimination, and marginalization, which simultaneously results in a lack of opportunities for accessing suitable housing conditions.

These intersecting structural and systemic factors, characterized by interconnecting exclusions, contribute to the heightened susceptibility of Romani women and girls in their communities to abuse, exploitation, and gender-based violence. When women endure violence and structural discrimination, which can persist across time and generations, they frequently view marriage as a potential escape route from their homes, poverty, and environments with abuse and violence contexts. However, as emphasized by Crenshaw (1991), these practices not only sustain the marginalization and violence experienced by these women but also fortify traditional gender roles and responsibilities, where toxic masculinity plays a part in cultivating a culture of violence against women. Crenshaw further explores the linkage between racism and patriarchy (Crenshaw 1991: 1258). She posits that women lacking safe housing or financial stability are potentially at a higher risk of face gender-based violence (GBV), as such constraints frequently imprison them in abusive circumstances. In linking Crenshaw's analysis with my research on Roma women, the structural implications of intersectional discrimination and gender-based violence highlight the necessity for both qualitative and quantitative research on Romani women and girls, (Kózcé, 2009) Such research should strive to avoid the potential homogenization and culturalization of violence within specific social groups, like the Roma. Neglecting to do so can result, indeed, in damaging repercussions for Romani women and girl victims.

1.5 Representational implications of intersectionality in Romani women's experiences

The political construction and representation of the Roma ethnicity throughout history has served as a significant factor in their dehumanization and stigmatization (van Baar 2011, Matache 2016a) This unfavorable image as inferior, dangerous, thieves, and prostitutes, who do not deserve to live within Western societies, which persists even for Roma autochthonous in Western countries, such as the Spanish Roma (Cortés, Caro & End, 2021). The negative political representations of the Roma in Europe contribute to their political 'Otherness', (Spivak 1988). As a result, within the social hierarchy Romani women occupy a subaltern position, due to both their ethnic and gendered identities and class among other social classification.

However, to analyze the extent of this subaltern position, as Kóczé argues (2009: 25), we should rely on the intersections of identities such as race, gender, and class, to disclose the impact of it in Romani women's experiences. In line with Kóczé's critiques, Romani women face distinct political representational position in both the broader social and within their own community which directly ties into the focus of my research: to explore the degree to which this specific position has been incorporated within Roma policy frameworks. Linking the political representation of Romani women with Crenshaw's (1991) arguments on intersectional representations, in which popular and media culture play a significant role in reinforcing and perpetuating harmful stereotypes, contributing to their social marginalization and violence.

Consequently, according to the study '*Nos Persiguen*' (AMUGE 2021), when a Romani woman enters a supermarket or grocery store, the employees, influenced by years of embedded biases and dehumanizing political narratives about the Roma, often instantly suspect her of theft. This illustrates the pervasive influence of damaging stereotypical images in everyday interactions and in their subsequent consequences. As the AMUGE's director Tamara Clavería argues, they impact their health, their own self-perception, and the freedom to participate in public and ordinary life. I believe that it is important to reflect on the extent that this stereotyped image is internalized by Romani women and girls, while searching for strategies to combat it. These issues connect directly to the concerns of my research. I am asking how the depiction of Romani women influences the normalization of the violence they face. Regrettably, such stereotypes and the distorted image have become so embedded in society's consciousness that local people seldom question biased acts but tend to normalize and accept them.

Accordingly, this example underscores the gap in comprehensive analysis within the Roma policy frameworks, exploring how Romani women navigate and survive between their multiple identities. The permanent persecution of Romani women reveals the limitations of existing approaches that often prioritize a singular issue and overlook the intersectional experiences of marginalized groups. This critique was notably articulated by Jennifer C. Nash in "*Re-thinking Intersectionality*" (2008). Nash's argument is particularly relevant to my analysis as it encourages us to consider how power operates through social structures and institutions, a viewpoint that is frequently missed in the Roma policy framework for Romani women. In line with Nash's argument, in my Chapter 2: '*Unveiling Diverse Realities*', I explore how the different systems of oppression jointly influence the experiences of Romani women, and the failure of their separate analysis. I explain how political and institutional racism has placed Romani women at a disadvantage compared to both Roma men and non-Roma women. Concurrently, the overlooked influence of patriarchy has pushed the consequences of institutional racism to an almost invisible background in Roma national politics, with Romani women placed at the bottom.

To conclude this section, I shed light on the intersectional discrimination faced by Romani women, highlighting the importance of implementing an intersectional approach in understanding their experiences and needs. The case study on supermarket persecution is an example of how the intersecting dynamics of racism, sexism, and classism contributes to the discrimination, violence, and marginalization in Romani women's lives. Furthermore, analyzing the political, structural, and representational implications of intersectionality, I have exposed the systemic inequalities and stereotypes that perpetuate and reinforce their oppression. It is evident that existing Roma policy frameworks must embrace a comprehensive and intersectional approach to address the multifaceted challenges faced by Romani women. Through the intersectionality lens, we can strive to dismantle the interconnected systems of discrimination and oppression and develop a more equitable and inclusive Roma policy frameworks.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research questions

I. How has gender equality been addressed in the development of European Roma policies?

II. To what extent has Romani feminist knowledge production been incorporated into these policies?

The primary objective of this research is to explore the inclusion of Roma feminist knowledge production and thus, the voices of Romani women at both the European and national institutional levels within Roma policies. By documenting the evolution of the gender perspective in National Roma frameworks and the theoretical knowledge generated by Romani feminists, my goal is to compare how these two aspects, intersect or don't over time in the implementation of Roma policies. Hence, my aim is to provide a chronological inventory of how EU Roma policies have addressed gender issues throughout different time periods and overtime.

Considering that Roma policy frameworks are specifically designed to address Roma issues at European level — embodying political, economic, and social commitments that all EU member countries should implement —, in this context, I have found it relevant to explore the extent to which national governments have improved the political, social, economic, and safety status of Romani women within their territories. This examination encompasses the period from the inception of the Roma Decade (2005-2015) to the implementation of the first EU Roma Strategy (2010 – 2020). This period will enable me to trace the trajectory from the establishment of the pioneering Roma framework at the European level (2005-2015) to the culmination of the first EU Roma Strategy integration in 2020 (2010-2020).

To this end, my focus on this research is on those European countries that adopted and implemented the Roma policy frameworks from 2005 until 2020. This selection provides a transnational view of how EU countries have integrated gender equality within their policy borders. By doing so, I aim to avoid focusing on a single country, thereby limiting the scope of the insights to that specific nation. My interest lies not in how an individual country has integrated gender equality into its Roma policies framework, but rather in the collective European outcome.

Simultaneously, I should highlight that my goal is not to analyze public policies per se, but to create an inventory of the chronological development of the gender concept within the National Roma frameworks and then compare its evolution among them.

2.2. Position of the research

I will begin by acknowledging the importance of the concept ‘positionality’ in my research because it calls for a critical reflection and understanding of the position of the researcher themselves, particularly when studying marginalized groups like the Roma, (Brooks, 2009) Positionality entails recognizing power and abusive dynamics, and potential biases between the researcher and the research subjects, acknowledging subjectivity we can avoid stereotypes, and privileges, (Brooks 2009; Vajda 2019). I am aware that my position as an insider, as I am Roma feminist, which helps to do not suffer from stereotypes and biases against the Roma, but I do have a personal connection with the experiences that I will explore during my research.

Similarly, ‘situated knowledge’ as Donna Haraway emphasizes, is not objective and neutral but is shaped by personal perspectives. (Haraway 1988). As a Spanish-Romani woman, I possess my own intersectional situated knowledge, which is influenced by the continuous interaction of my identities. For me, it is important to acknowledge this situated knowledge to recognize the privileges that I have compared to those who are still marginalized and are the subject of the Roma policy frameworks.

2.3. Literature selection

For the literature selection, I conducted a comprehensive analysis across diverse databases and sources to gather relevant scholarly articles, book chapters, and studies that center on exploring intersectionality and addressing issues related to Romani women. I consider important to note that I had access to a significant Roma feminist literature thanks to my participation in the '*Roma Graduation Preparation Program*' (2020-2021) and the '*Advance Certificate Program in Romani Studies*' (2021-2022). These two programs provided me with a wide range of literature written by Roma authors, including Romani women. I have to add that the same has not happened during my academic year in Gender Studies (2021-2022) where no articles of

Romani feminist authors have been provided although every year students with Roma background participate in the academic course.

Similarly, I have also incorporated knowledge production from Black feminists on intersectionality, as well as works by non-Roma women allies. This inclusion helps address any potential gaps in the existing literature on Romani women and provides a broader perspective on intersectional experiences and scholarship.

2.4. Reports

During the selection process, I focused on reports from the Roma Civil Monitor that covered the Roma Decade and Roma EU Integration Strategies, from 2005 to 2020. Consequently, these reports monitor and evaluate seven countries that I selected: Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Spain. They served as valuable methodological resources for accessing information on how national Roma frameworks have addressed issues related to Romani women. By including this information in the appendices, the readers can access and review the specific data from reports, that informed the analysis and findings presented in this study. This allocation enables transparency and facilitates further examination of the research process.

1. Roma Decade & EU Roma Strategy Integration up 2020's reports

Year	2005/ 2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 2020
Country														
Bulgaria	X	X		X	X	X	X X	X	X			Y	Y	Y
Romania	X	X		X	X	X	X X					Y	Y	Y
Hungary	X	X		X		X	X X	X	X			Y	Y	Y
Croatia	X	X			X	X	X X	X	X			Y	Y	Y
Slovakia	X	X		X	X	X	X X	X	X			Y	Y	Y
Czech Republic	X	X		X	X	X	X X	X	X			Y	Y	Y
Spain				X	X	X	X X	X	X			Y	Y	Y

X Roma Decade Progress Report submitted by participant governments

X Decade Watch and Civil Society Reports in national language but not in English

X Report analyzed of Decade Watch and Civil Society Reports

Y Roma Civil Monitor 1 cycle.

Y Roma Civil Monitor 2-3 cycle

Accordingly, I focus on how the reports targeted Romani women specifically on discrimination and the four pillars of Roma policy frameworks: housing, health, employment, and education. To ensure a balanced analysis, I also conducted a review of European bodies' reports, such as Fundamental Rights Agenda (FRA), to provide another reality of the situation of Romani women and girls.

2.5.Data extraction & data analysis

To ensure the objectives of my study, my intention is not to analyze or study the policies implemented by the National frameworks or the reports provided by civil society themselves. My aim is to draw an inventory of the results of these policies by using the Roma Civil Monitor's reports as a reliable source of information directly provided by Roma and non-Roma civil society organizations working with the Roma community.

Considering this, I extracted relevant information from the Roma Civil Monitor reports (2005-2018), specifically focusing on elements that shed light on the discrimination and challenges faced by Romani women and girls. The information extracted is on the descriptions of Romani women in relation to discrimination, how they were identified as such, and the years in which they were depicted.

Through a review of the reports and the knowledge produced by Romani feminist scholars, I explore the development of intersectionality into the experiences and obstacles encountered by Romani women in relation to discrimination and gender-based violence. This analysis also aims to compare, explore, and contrast how the national Roma frameworks (2005-2018) have incorporated feminist knowledge production within their strategies.

I justify the employability of intersectionality in my research because I consider intersectionality as the closest theoretical concept which can represent the experiences of Romani women by considering the interconnected nature of race, gender, class, and other social identities and classifications.

2.6. Research limitations

In terms of research limitations, I have to acknowledge that using the reports from the Roma Civil Monitor (2005-2018) as a resource of information could be an effective methodology to gather accurate information provided by activist working in the field or at least connected to the Roma community. However, I am aware that it does have some limitations in relation to the scope of information provided since I am using a single line of analysis, such as the Roma Civil Monitor's reports. Moreover, I am aware that the information collected and presented by the Roma Civil Monitor may be subjected to personal bias of those who participated in the Monitor, based on the relationship between the country's monitoring entity - experts conducting the analysis of the National Roma Strategies, and the government in power.

Another aspect that has limited my research is the absence of reported data from 2013 to 2017. During this period, there are no reports available from civil society (Roma Civil Monitor), with only those performed by the respective governments being accessible.

Chapter 2. Unveiling Diverse Realities: Drawing parallels between the Gender Focus of the Roma Decade and EU Roma Strategy (2005-2020) with the Roma Feminist Perspectives. Compilation of Information from the Roma Civil Monitor (2005-2018) with a Focus on Gender Equality and (Anti)discrimination in Four Pillars: Health, Employment, Education, and Housing.

2.1 Contrasting information: Gender equality, and (anti)discrimination in the four pillars within the seven countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Spain (2005- 2018) and Roma Feminist Perspectives

In this chapter, I will examine how the Roma Decade and the EU Roma strategy framework (2005-2020) have approached issues related to Romani women. Additionally, I will compare the Roma frameworks approaches with the knowledge produced by Romani women scholars and activists during the same period. By analyzing these two perspectives, I aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of how Romani women's intersectional feminist knowledge production have been considered by the Roma Decade and EU Roma Strategy. To achieve this, I will utilize the data collected from the Roma Civil Monitor (2005-2018), which provides valuable insights from civil society.

In my assessment I will focus on the two key issues: Gender equality, and (anti)discrimination while exploring how both Roma Frameworks have drafted, these aspects in relation to Romani women and girls. By comparing the outcomes from the Roma civil Monitor (2005 - 2018) on the seven countries, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Spain, I aim to provide an overview of the National approaches toward addressing the concerns of Romani women and girls. This examination will assess the extent of the evolution of these approaches, whether they have improved or worsened, and highlight commonalities and differences in the strategies employed by the countries in addressing Romani women's rights.

2.1.1. Gender Equality within the Roma Decade and National Roma Integration Strategies 2005-2018

The Roma Decade (2005-2015) considered gender equality as a core issue when designing the four priority areas: education, employment, housing, and health:

“The Decade’s priority areas shall be: employment, education, health, and housing. While focusing on these priority areas, each participating Government shall in addition consider the other core issues of poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming.”

(Decade of Roma Inclusion, Terms of Reference, 2005)

Although the early 2000s brought the endorsement of the ‘Equality Directives’ at European level to later include the issue of multiple discrimination in the equality agenda, a “situation where discrimination takes place on the basis of several grounds operating separately”. (EU 2007: 16), the gender equality was not outlined with the Roma Decade’s key objectives, and therefore, it was also missed in the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS).

Romani women scholars such as Angela Kóczé (2003), was arguing, at European level, that both the gender and racial dimensions must be included in the development of “effective police” in order to improve the conditions of Romani women in Europe, (Kóczé, EC: Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, 2003). Similarly, together with Romani scholars and activist, the Roma Women Initiative (RWI) and their feminist policy paper, that I describe in the ‘*Unveiling the Intersectional Agenda*’ section, worked on the acknowledgement of the gender and race intersection by the different stakeholders. However, despite the efforts and the knowledge produced by Romani feminists, the reports from countries like Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania (2005-2009), Hungary and Spain (2009), pointed out that the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRISs) have not addressed gender equality as an issue within their policy frameworks but rather targeted the Roma community as homogenous group.

In this respect, Alexandra Oprea (2004) analyzed the one-dimensional approach of the ideology of anti-Roma racism, which serves to limit the experiences of the Roma community as it relates to heterosexual Roma men. Engaging with Oprea's critique and the lack of the gender equality implementation at National level, we can interpretate the male-dominant lens of the Roma

Decade's policy agenda and discourse which overlooked the Romani women's perspectives and expertise. Therefore, we can note that during the first four years (2005-2009) gender-related issues were omitted from the national Roma policies, leaving women out of reach improvements in their contexts.

Consequently, the exclusion of Romani women from Roma mainstreams public discourse (Jovanović & Kóczé & Balogh, et al., 2015; Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019) limited their political subjectivity. By 'political subjectivity,' it is meant the capacity to influence, participate in, and be represented within political processes and decisions making. The exclusion and limited political subjectivity of Romani women due to the patriarchal homogenization of the Roma cause is compounded by the denial of internal patriarchal structures by the Roma leaders in an attempt of avoiding weakening the fight against anti-Roma racism, as observed by Oprea (2004-12), Kóczé (2009), and Schultz & Bitu, et al. (2018). Consequently, this patriarchal approach complicates the inclusion of Roma feminist perspective at both the national and European levels. By bringing this issue to light, Romani women feminist underscore the need of shifting the narratives towards more inclusive and intersectional approach in Roma advocacy, but were men willing to cede their privileges in the name of equality?

The unitary approach during the Roma Decade unintentionally led to the depoliticization of the gender-based violence and gendered anti-Roma racism. This is clearly demonstrated in public discourse because of the prejudiced remarks made by Bulgarian political figures, (ERRC, 2004-2006) which hypersexualized and commodified Romani women and girls while reinforcing harmful stereotypes and racial discrimination. The intersection of gender, ethnicity, poverty, and sexualization underscores the systemic discrimination faced by Romani women and girls which have been denied by the first years of Roma policies.

The recurring theme of hypersexualization of Romani women's and girls' bodies, as point out by Kurtic (2014), Gheorghe (2016), and Vajda (2018), exemplifies the abusive structures of power and the dehumanization of Romani women and girls' image, in which such hate-acts are left aside from the Roma mainstream policies. Are we discussing neoliberal Roma politics that treat women's bodies as commodities? This systemic issue goes beyond reinforcing harmful stereotypes and discrimination—it is a gendered anti-Roma racism that affect not only women but rather the community, reducing women to mere objects of sexual exploitation. Notably, the intersection of ethnicity, gender, poverty, and location increases the risk of being a victim of human trafficking and forced prostitution, as reflected in the ERRC study in 2011. The question

raised is, would the reaction from European entities be different if the victims of such sexual exploitation were from non-Roma communities or Western societies? This question implicitly criticizes the perceived indifference or inadequate action taken by European authorities.

Building on the insights provided by Romani feminists on the failure of Roma mainstream narrative, it is crucial to examine the progress made in terms of integrating the gender equality and the inclusion of Romani women's issues in European Roma policy frameworks. The subsequent European Roma Integration Strategy, starting from 2010 to 2020 describes:

"To pay particular attention to the gender aspects of Roma inclusion and ensure that Roma women fully benefit from the strategies and that their concerns are taken into account"

(European Commission's Communication on the EU Framework for NRIS, 2009)

Consequently, the Roma framework at European level had to align itself with European standards in terms of the gender equality and it had to emphasize the promotion of mainstreaming gender equality and encouraged Member States to apply it as a cross-cutting objective. Having it in mind, the NRISs should incorporate the gender spectrum across all established priorities, such as education, employment, housing, and health. However, according to the 2012 Roma Civil Monitor's reports, the gender equality had not been implemented at the national or local level within their Action Plans. Ergo, two years after the implementation of the EU Roma frameworks and the ongoing Roma Decade, national governments persist in maintaining a homogeneous patriarchal perspective, perpetuating the invisibility of Roma women's issues.

Despite the recommendations, theorizing, and the tireless work of Romani women such as Angela Kóczé, Nicoleta Bitu, Ethel Brooks, Alexandra Oprea, Carmen Gheorghe, Patricia Caro, Vera Kurtic, among others, from before the Roma Decade (2005 – 2015) until the age of the European Roma Framework (2010 – 2020), it seems that NRIS failed to address the intersectional feminist discourse on addressing anti-Roma racism in the Roma political agenda. Considering the difficulties faced in including the gender equality into the NRISs, it would be important to explore the implications of the gap on the acknowledgement of Romani women's political subjectivity and their lived experiences.

When it comes to gender-related issues, as Oprea argues, are often relegated, or dismissed within the Roma male leadership as either 'white women's issues' or an 'untouchable Romani tradition' (2004: 34). In my opinion, if Roma male leaders with access to high-level education and international political influence have embedded and rooted this patriarchal mindset, what result and changes we are expecting to have at local and grassroots level were the access to information is limited?

This question echoes with, D'Agostino (2018) arguments about the inaccuracy in the process of selecting organizations or individual activists participating in policymaking and consultation in Roma policy processes. If Romani feminists has limited their participation in the policy-making process, and their voices unheard, it will lead to exclusionary practices that potentially perpetuated a gender-blind approach in formulating the Roma framework, as evident in the Roma Civil Monitor. In addition, internal community narratives that racialize and objectify Romani women along with poverty and exclusion pose an obstacle to their political recognition, limiting their ability and freedom to make decisions that change the path of their future and the generations coming. As a result of my personal relationships with Romani women in Europe, with whom I share common experiences, I have observed a trend among them in seeking their individuality by distancing themselves from gendered traditional Roma 'customs'. Many of them have pursued this path by gaining access to formal education and economic independency.

In this context, it is critical to engage with Harris's (1990) concept of knowledge homogenization in marginalized groups. The collective 'we' voice, often male-dominated, may inadvertently obscure less heard Roma narratives like those of women, girls, LGBT, and elderly. The prevalence of male-dominated discourses in Roma frameworks, as observed in the Roma Monitor results, have notable implications in how Romani women are portrayed at policy level as well as within and outside of the Roma community. In line with Harris, Carmen Gheorghe argues the dominant discourse perceives Roma as a homogeneous group, resulting in the framing of Romani women's issues solely within the context of race and socio-economic factors, while neglecting their gender identity, (2016: 20) The imprisonment of Romani women's concerns to their ethnicity, powered by institutional and political discourse, further marginalizes their voices while neglecting their intersectional experiences. This situation is exacerbated by the inadequate political inclusion of Roma feminist's perspectives. As Eniko Vinzce points out, Romani women are often reduced to symbols of racialized differences and their issues depoliticized, (2014: 448), highlighting the power dynamics and systemic

inequalities while neglecting the complexity of their experiences, which are often excluded within the political arena. In this respect, we can understand why gender-related issues such as gender-based violence, trafficking and forced prostitution are remarkably absent from Roma policies because these hate acts are understood as ethnical Roma issues.

This marginalization of Romani women is not limited to societal perceptions, but it is also reflected in the policies and strategies of some participating countries. The racialization of Romani women's experiences is evident in that although Spain and Hungary reports (2012-2018) recognized the multiple discrimination affecting Romani women, the concept was not consistently applied in the NRISs. Similarly, the 2018 report from Czech Republic's criticized the exclusion of disabled and LGBT+ groups concern within intersectionality's concept. Additionally, Romania, and Croatia's reports (2018) asserted that Romani women's issues were not adequately addressed within the NRISs or the mainstream women's movement.

According to the Roma Civil Monitor inputs, we can observe that over the years both the Roma Decade and the European Roma framework maintained similar yet insufficient approaches regarding the implementation of the gender perspective as a cross-cutting objective. Based on the information provided by civil society, countries such as Bulgaria (2005, 2007, 2012, 2018), Romania (2005, 2012, 2018), Hungary (2009, 2012), and Spain (2012 - 2018), Czech Republic (2005), Slovakia (2012) and Croatia (2018) assessed that gender equality was not implemented within the NRISs over time. Consequently, the results obtained are overwhelmingly negative, with all countries agreeing that gender equality has not been implemented or in a very limited manner within the NRISs.

Similarly, it seems that if we look at gender equality at the European level, we could observe that there was not much difference between Roma and Gender equality frameworks when it comes to the political recognition of intersectional Romani women-related issues. While the first European Strategy for Gender Equality (2014-2017) refers to Romani women as 'Roma people', the later European Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality (2016-2019) highlights the need for special attention to specific groups, such as 'Roma'. The question arises as to where Romani women can be recognized as political subjects in the European and national public discourse.?

Romani scholars and activists such as Oprea (2004-12), Matache (2015), Gheorghe (2016), Bitu (2018) criticize the absence of an intersectional feminist antiracist methodology in politics and policymaking while advocating for increased support for Romani women's leadership.

Additionally, Romani feminists have observed the existence of multiple barriers that restrict their participation in gender and anti-racist political systems, which are often designed as mutually exclusive structures at the European level. It would be interesting to discuss deeply the interest of both women and Roma movements in restricting Roma women's political access to power structures and positions, which would mean shifting the paradigms of what we understand today as feminist and anti-racist politics.

Although more Romani feminists are taking positions where their voices are heard, it remains challenging for racialized women to occupy spaces of power and decision-making at international level, but they do at local level. These local spaces provide opportunities to develop a comprehensive intersectional feminist agenda that centers the most marginalized, carrying out Roma feminist advocacy, community organizing and empowerment, and policy changing by working at grassroots level.

Recently, RomaniPhen, a Romani feminist NGO based in Berlin (2021), conducted research involving questioning 15 Romani feminists across 13 European countries about whether Romani women's issues are included in the national mainstream gender equality agenda. The response was unanimously negative, highlighting a significant gap in representation and advocacy as well as the lack of inclusion of intersectionality within both Roma and Gender Equality mainstream political agendas. This exclusion of racialized women from the European politics, feminist, and anti-racist agendas (Oprea, 2004), perpetuates the stereotype of Romani women as victims of their culture and ethnicity. By dehumanizing their experiences, society implicitly normalizes violence against them, further marginalizing already vulnerable women.

2.2. (Anti)discrimination within the Roma Decade and National Roma Integration Strategies 2005-2018 in the four pillars: Housing, Health, Employment, and Education

In this section, I will explore how the Roma Decade (2005 – 2015) and the EU National Roma Integration Strategies (2005 – 2020) have addressed the (anti)discrimination faced by Romani women within their four pillars: housing, health, employment, and education. In doing so, I will continue using the information provided by the Roma Civil Monitor (2005 - 2018), from Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Spain, which I gathered in the appendices section, to offer an overview of how National Roma frameworks have addressed these issues.

2.2.1. Assessment of Romani women within the housing objective

To begin with, both the Roma Decade and the EU Roma framework emphasized the importance to prioritize housing issue within the National Roma frameworks. In this line, I will explore how Roma frameworks (2005-2020) have addresses the housing pillar and Romani women's experiences. In doing so, we have to look into the 2009 reports to gather information about how National Roma frameworks minimally addressed Romani women within the housing pillar. Before that no information is available regarding Romani women. Consequently, the 2009 reports provided information in response to the question "to what degree do programs address gender issues?", with 4.29% very much, 27.43% somewhat, 35.23% not at all, and 33.06% "don't know" (Decade Watch, 2009: 63) These findings are concerning, as most experts reported the national Roma frameworks did not address the gender perspective within the housing pillar. This neglect towards gender issues has significant implications for Romani women and girls. The absence of safe house exacerbates the vulnerability and perpetuates a cycle of violence and poverty, restricts their freedom, and diminishes their overall well-being. The attention given to gender issues within housing policies was notably limited within the National Roma frameworks 2005 – 2009, as their experiences and challenges seem to be missed, as highlighted by civil society.

Therefore, National Roma frameworks appear to traditionally addressed housing issues using a homogeneous, gender-blind approach. However, Romani women scholars and activists, together with non-Roma women allies, have contested this one-size-fits-all strategy. Pioneers in this field, such as Angela Kóczé and Violetta Zentai (2005), and Eniko Vincze (2011), have highlighted the crucial role of intersecting identities and social classifications in housing issues. They have stressed that the disadvantage housing situation of Roma results from the structural and systemic social, economic, and political exclusion which is exacerbated in the case of Romani women.

As consequence of it, Roma community suffer the lack of basic facilities and overcrowded dwellings, as pointed out by Kóczé (2009), intensify their marginalization, and further reinforce the gender roles and responsibilities of Romani women which are further complicated by the substandard housing context. Consequently, the housing factors increase the vulnerability and risk of Romani women to suffer physical, psychological, sexual abuse, and exploitation. The intensified levels of poverty exacerbate their needs, forcing them to resort to

alternative means of making the living, such as involvement in the virginity market, trafficking, and forced prostitution, both within their own countries and beyond.

Similarly, beyond the housing conditions, the location where the Roma community is often forcibly placed in segregated settlements on the outskirts of the cities plays an important role. The segregate location leaves Romani women and girls isolated and often far away from crucial public services, such as police stations, hospitals, social services, and public transport services. Hence, in cases of gender-based violence the location plays a key factor for Romani women who face barriers in accessing the necessary support services and information, to escape from abusive and dangerous situations while hindering their empowerment and recover (National Domestic Violence Hotline: Domestic violence Support). Moreover, the widespread mistrust in State's institutions within the Roma community exacerbates the difficulty of seeking help in cases of gender-based violence, forced prostitution, and sexual exploitation, placing them in extreme vulnerable violent context. Additionally, Vera Kurtic (2014) highlights that sexual orientation may intensify violence against Roma women LBT because of lesbophobia, biphobia, and transphobia inside and outside of the community.

Despite the knowledge produced by Romani women on intersectional discrimination and housing issues, according to the Roma Civil Monitor's reports (2005-2009), the NRISs (2005 – 2009) targeted the housing pillar by treating the Roma as a uniform group, neglecting how intersectionality impacts Romani women experiences. Moving on to the reports from the Roma Civil Monitor from 2012 to 2018, it was expected that there would be more detailed information provided about the specific challenges and vulnerabilities faced by Romani women and girls within housing, similarly to what was found in the analysis of education, employment, and health. However, those expectation were not met since most of the national Roma frameworks did not address the issue of Romani women and housing during their 2012 –2018 according to the information included by reports of the Roma Civil Monitor (2012 - 2018). Only Slovakia's 2012 report highlighted the specific vulnerability of Romani women and girls living in segregated or marginalized communities. In doing so, Roma Civil Report's reports from Slovakia recognized the multiple discrimination that affects Romani women and girls based on factors such as ethnicity, gender, social exclusion, age, and disability. The report underlined that Romani women in excluded communities are at higher risk of domestic violence and become victims of trafficking, (2012: 40)

This ongoing neglect of the unique challenges of Romani women within National Roma frameworks' housing pillar highlights the absence of an intersectional approach in Roma housing policies. By solely focusing on providing housing for Roma based on their social class status, the specific needs of different groups within the Roma community are being overlooked. As noted by Sebijan Fejzula (2019), gender-blind housing policies have an impact on Romani women's life, including increased vulnerability to violence, limited access to education and employment.

Undoubtedly, ethnic and gender-neutral housing policies perpetuate marginalization, segregation, and the extent of poverty due to its influence on other structures while reinforcing the barriers to escape from violent contexts. Therefore, an intersectional approach is needed to deconstruct Roma housing policies that solely prioritize poverty, while overlooking the intersecting needs of gender, ethnicity, age, marital status, dependents, and victims of violence. In the context of housing policies, the intersectional methodology would prioritize the inclusion of the most vulnerable individuals, such as racialized women who may face a variety of characteristics: single or divorced, victims of gender-based violence, with dependents, and lacking social and economic support. These women should be given priority in social housing programs, both mainstream and Roma housing policies.

Furthermore, beyond racist housing policies, there is a persistent societal racism that creates a specific violence against Romani women. Based on my personal experiences with intersectional discrimination affecting Romani women, I have observed that Romani women face discrimination when trying to rent a flat due to racism and sexism. This is due to a stereotypical mindset among white individuals that portrays Romani women as problematic. They assume that she will have multiple children, and her family will cause issues because they do not believe that Romani women can live independently. General society may believe that Romani women could lack the ability to take care of their children, maintain cleaned the apartment, and pay the rent because they may struggle to find employment.

It is crucial to acknowledge the presence of racism in the society as well as structural and systemic discrimination within housing policies that disproportionately impact Roma communities. These discriminatory practices such as forced evictions, and the social housing programs confine Roma to segregated and peripheral areas. It is important to situate the ideology of social housing programs which build excluded social neighborhoods outside of the urban area where the 'poor' habitants will not disturb the 'normal' life in the city area. These

policies and practices restrict their freedom of movement, perpetuate institutional violence against excluded groups, forcing them into marginalized locations. As result of such policies, there is a general awareness of specific marginalized Roma neighborhoods across Europe without questioning the social implications of it, which perpetuates social exclusion and stigmatization. Structural racism and societal discrimination limit Roma individuals' mobility and housing choices, creating an unsafe and exclusionary background. As an example of its consequences, the mere location written in your ID could lead to discrimination when looking for job, access to health and education services.

Therefore, not only the state's segregationist housing programs but also general society's racism and stereotypical mindset exercise discriminatory practices that result in violence and traumatic experiences, the denial of human rights such as access to standardized housing, and equal treatment, causing physical and psychological health consequences.

Additionally, the consequence of institutional discrimination in housing programs affecting Romani women often restricts them from starting personal relations and marital unions outside their excluded neighborhoods. This social limitations, undoubtable, contributes to the marginalization's cycle where women who experience gender-based violence are limited to report it because their concerns are about the potential repercussions for their families who live in the same excluded areas. Institutions often deny these issues, considering them to be cultural traits of the Roma as it has been shown by Oprea, (2004); Izsák-Ndiaye, (2008); Matache, (2014); Kóczé (2015); Gheorghe, (2016) creating further barriers for victims of intimate and domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape, forced marriage, and sexual exploitation to come forward and report the situation.

Drawing from my professional experience as a social worker in the social housing programs of Madrid, I have witnessed firsthand how the housing policies tend to locate housing in the peripheries, lacking adequate public transport networks and proximity to essential services such as hospitals, polices, social services, and schools. This spatial organization creates isolated social suburbs where residents are restricted and face difficulties in accessing opportunities outside their neighborhoods. It becomes evident that the underlying ideology behind social housing programs is to establish tangible and social barriers between different social classes and groups. Undoubtedly, women residents of such neighborhoods who suffer gender-based violence have limited options for seeking help, which perpetuates their vulnerability.

Another interconnected issue explored by Gheorghe (2018) and Fejzula (2019) disproportionately affecting the Roma community is the ghettoization inside the cities, which places them into the marginalized and isolated environments and contexts. The ghettoization also increases their vulnerability to suffer gender-based violence, intersectional discrimination, limited access to information, support, and justice. As a result of this isolation, Romani women face systemically barriers that limit their access to equity, human rights, safety, and dignity. In this regard, Alexandra Oprea and Ioana Bunescu (2019) note that the exclusion of Romani women from decision-making processes related to housing policies and programs negative impacts on their health, education, and employment opportunities as well as their ability to exercise their rights and participate fully in society. Even though Romani women scholars and activist have extensively produced intersectional feminist knowledge and policies recommendations is seemed to be ignored by both the Roma Decade and EU Roma frameworks and at European and national levels.

2.2.2. Assessment of Romani Women within the health objective

To begin with, I will explore how Romani women are depicted within the health system, as subjects exposed to a structural intersectional discrimination. Both the Roma Decade and the EU Roma Integration Strategy (2005-2020) had to prioritize health as a pillar issue to be drafted, implemented, and evaluated by participating Member States at both national and local levels. Despite this reference, it was not until 2009 that the Roma Civil Monitor reported about how NRSs addressed the intersection of gender and health, recognizing the double discrimination faced by Romani women. The data provided in relation to this issue: answering the question “to what degree do programs address gender issues?” is as follows: Gender health programs - 9.24% very much, 45.72% somewhat, 20.72% not at all, and 24.30% don’t know (Decade Watch, 2009: 63). The results are concerning because almost half of them do not and do not know how to address gender perspective, which implies the neglect of the Roma frameworks towards Romani women’s health issues.

According to the civil society, in countries as Bulgaria (2007-2012), Hungary, and Spain (2018) acknowledged, to some extent, the disadvantaged situation of Romani women within the healthcare system, urging governments to implement targeted programs for Romani

women, primarily focusing on access to reproductive rights. Croatia and the Czech Republic (2005 - 2018) did not address the issue of intersectional discrimination faced by Romani women within their national Roma health policies, making it challenging to assess the experiences of Romani women in these countries.

Meanwhile, the reports from Slovakia and Romania (Roma Civil Monitor, 2012-2018) explore deeper into the violent and discriminatory experiences faced by Romani women, with also particular focus on reproductive rights. The reports criticize how Romani women experience severe discrimination in accessing gynecological and pediatric services, facing segregated rooms, degrading behavior, and judgmental remarks. This includes discriminatory and humiliating treatment during childbirth, inadequate hygiene standards in maternity wards, and obstacles in accessing reproductive healthcare services.

In general, it is challenging to assert the extent of how National Roma frameworks have addressed Romani women in the context of healthcare out of reproductive rights' issues (2005-2018). According to the inputs from the Roma Civil Monitor's reports, there have been no specific policies targeting intersectional discrimination throughout the National Roma Strategies, nor have there been changes over time to address it, as reflected by Romania and Slovakia (2012-2018). I believe it is crucial to emphasize the importance of ensuring their access to reproductive rights. However, it is significant to acknowledge that the current emphasis on these rights by the NRISs can perpetuate structural sexism by narrowly defining women's roles as mothers, while overlooking the discrimination they encounter in general healthcare. It is essential to address these broader healthcare disparities, considering that Romani women experience an eleven-year lower life expectancy compared to their non-Roma counterparts (FRA, 2021).

Accordingly, National Roma frameworks superficially targeted Romani women, failing to analyze the deep roots and implications of intersectional anti-Roma racism and gender inequality, which are critical factors in their violent and traumatic experiences within healthcare institutions. It is crucial to consider the systemic barriers that Romani women encounter when accessing healthcare, including discrimination, language barriers, poverty, and geographical location—especially for those residing in segregated communities on the outskirts or in remote villages. Incorporating these barriers, as identified by Crenshaw (1991), and further explored by Oprea (2012), Kóczé (2009 - 2015), and Gheorghe (2011), Matache &

Bhabha (2015) may result in restricted access to quality general healthcare, substandard prenatal care, and increased maternal and infant mortality rates.

Likewise, we should consider the violence experienced by Romani women from the health workers when accessing and staying in hospitals, general pediatric or gynecological care which highlights the abusive power relations – worker / patient – non-Roma / Roma – within institutions and the normalization of violence towards some specific groups, such as the Roma, as noted by Kóczé, (2011). Moreover, the healthcare industry is a gendered field in which nursing, gynecological and pediatric care are mostly performed by female actors. Consequently, relations between women themselves points out the racial hierarchy and discrimination which overlap, such as class, skin color, sexual orientation, language spoken that influence how Romani women interact in institutional structures.

A clear example of the outcomes of intersectional racial discrimination and violence suffered by Romani women in the healthcare is explained within the Romanian (2018) Roma Civil Monitor: “Romani women are less likely to seek medical treatment unless there is a Roma mediator who can facilitate communication and advocate for their needs” (2018: 23).

The intergenerational experiences of intersectional discrimination and violence faced by the Roma within healthcare institutions represent a harmful legacy that has dehumanized them as 'undeserving', as pointed out by Oprea (2014) and Kóczé and Theran et al. (2021). This legacy has resulted in Romani women being subjected to various forms of violence, including verbal, physical, and symbolic. In one hand, symbolic forms of violence that are often overlooked include that Romani women may alter their clothes, perhaps choosing not to wear traditional clothes or opting for less traditional alternatives to avoid potential racist incidents or stereotypical behaviors. In another hand, physical consequences of the intersectional anti-Roma racism reveal a systemic ethnic gap in women aged 50 and above reporting limitations in their daily activities due to health problems: Romani women reporting an average of 61% of them face limitation due to health issues compared to 45% of non-Roma women (FRA, 2014- 2019)

Similarly, psychological consequences are often overlooked and trivialized by politics and society in general and Roma communities, due to fact they are confronting and prioritizing the overlapping of issues faced, such as poverty, safety, lack of goods, violence rather than mental

health concerns. This raises the question of whether the very familiarity of being discriminated against and treated with violence when accessing and staying in the healthcare system and the very awareness of your limited opportunities to modify the situation are forms of violence itself. How do the Roma community and Roma women perceive that violence? What type of consequences does it have? Is this ‘knowledge’ transmitted and internalized intergenerationally?

The intersectional discrimination experiences faced by Romani women often leads them to stay silent about their mistreatment. Out of fear that speaking out might worsen their situation, due to racially power dynamics, they choose not to complain. Drawing from my personal experiences, I have had numerous conversations with Romani women in Spain, friends, and extended family’ members, who have been receiving such discrimination, particularly from gynecologists and pediatrics. Despite these injustices, they felt unable to protest or speak out because they were reliant on the treatment they needed, lacked the confidence to stand up against this violence and aware of the racism embedded in society and institution.

The intersectional discrimination and inequality faced by Romani women and girls, as Angela Kóczé (2009: 23) argues “are disempowering and silencing” them. This forced silence could lead them to avoid seek healthcare, at least it is absolute needed. This situation perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage and marginalization, further exacerbating the health disparities and the different life expectancy rates between Romani women and the rest of the population. This highlights the perception of the healthcare system as a hostile, violent, and discriminatory institutional structure for Romani women as indicated by Bitu and Popescu, (2018), which explains why Roma women are prevented from seeking healthcare. The implication of this structural intersectional discrimination is significant, particularly in cases of sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence. Romani women and girls who have been subjected to such violence may avoid seeking help from the healthcare system out of fear of a second victimization, judgment, and their sexuality and dignity questioned, this time by institutional structures, perpetuating the cycle of violence.

In conclusion, intersectional discrimination faced by Romani women and girls in the healthcare institutional structures exposes them to systemic violence perpetuated by racial and patriarchal power relations, racial profiling, bias, and abusive power dynamics. Further, the interaction of racism, sexism and classism place Romani women and marginalized women to navigate and

survive through severe contexts of violence inside and outside the community, which has health-related consequences.

2.2.3. Assessment of Romani women within the employment objective

Similarly, I will explore how the discrimination faced by Romani women is portrayed within the Roma employment policies through the information provided by the Roma Civil Monitor from 2005 to 2018. Both the Roma Decade and the EU Roma Integration Strategy were called upon by the European Commission (EC) to prioritize employment as a key issue to be developed, implemented, and evaluated by participating member states at national and local levels. However, it is notable that the Roma Decade's frameworks from 2005 to 2009 did not extensively address the situation of Romani women within the employment sector, with limited data provided in the 'Gender' section, according to the 2009 reports. In response to the question of the extent to which gender issues were addressed in employment programs, the experts' assessments varied, with 5.42% stating that programs addressed gender issues very much, 41.18% stating somewhat, 28.14% stating not at all, and 25.25% indicating uncertainty (Decade Watch, 2009: 63). It is important to highlight the lack of consideration of the gender perspective within the National Roma frameworks in which more than half of the programs hardly did or not addressed Romani women within the employment system.

Consequently, according to the information provided by the Roma Civil Monitor (2009), we can conclude that the early Roma employment policies failed to address the economic discrimination experienced by Roma women adequately. These policies focused primarily on ethnicity as the key aspect of program development, overlooking the impact of other social categories such as gender, age, color, ability, marital status, and dependents among others, on the experiences of diverse groups within the Roma community.

Unfortunately, national governments overlooked the significance of addressing the gender dimension during the first years of the Roma Decade framework (2005-2009). This oversight perpetuated the marginalization and exclusion of Romani women's experiences and hinder their individual development while reinforcing their economic dependency.

Romani scholars and activists, such as Kóczé (2006-2015), Bitu (2011-2016), Hrabanova & Kramolisch (2019), and Dumitru (2020), have extensively explored the multifaceted

challenges and consequences of discriminatory practices in the employment sector met by Romani women emphasizing the intersectional nature of their experiences. These challenges are shaped by various intersecting institutional structures, including housing and health conditions, as I explored in the previous section, together with the educational level, family responsibilities, and location. It is important to highlight that the employment issue is not a one-person-experience but rather a consequence of the intensified structural, and systemic discrimination and economic violence, which contributes to severe poverty and marginalization.

To understand the economic violence endured by Romani women and girls, we should examine their reality beyond the mere ‘access’ to employment and considers how intersecting identities and social classifications influence wage discrimination and economic disparities. Equally, we should also explore how Romani women navigate through forced economic migration, unequal access to resources, financial abuse, workplace exploitation, and the racially and gender-driven division of labor. Additionally, due to patriarchy, Romani women confront gender roles, and manipulation of financial resources by intimate partners or extended family which complement the complexities of their experiences. However, these issues are neglected or altogether omitted in the Roma policy frameworks.

Moving on to the European Roma Framework (2010-2020), it seems that some efforts have been made to explore the discrimination faced by Romani women in the labor market. In doing so, more detailed information regarding Romani women and the employment sector has emerged through the Roma Civil Monitor. Reports from Romania and Hungary (2012-2018) highlight the significantly extreme unemployment rates among Romani women, which are attributed to direct discrimination during the hiring process. Likewise, the Romania report (2018) specifically connects the unemployment rates of Romani women with human trafficking, emphasizing the need for attention to these issues. Similarly, the Slovakia report (2012) points out the lack of efforts in combating discrimination against Roma individuals, particularly Romani women, in the labor market. Similarly, countries such as Croatia, Spain, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria have not adequately addressed the discrimination faced by Romani women based on the information provided by the Roma Civil Monitor (2005-2018).

According to the information offered by Roma Civil Monitor's reports, the intersectional discrimination that Romani women experience due to their gender and ethnicity, has not been explicitly addressed in the national Roma frameworks, (Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria, 2005-2018). In line with the information presented by these reports, there is a lack of specific policies and intentions to address intersectional discrimination throughout the National Roma frameworks which further underscores the need for greater attention and action in this area, (Spain 2012-2018; Czech Republic 2018).

Overall, the Roma Civil Monitor's reports (2005-2018) agreed on the lack of gender perspective within the National Roma employment policies while pointing out that exacerbates discrimination faced by Romani women which is neglected by the NRISs.

To illustrate the consequences of the lack of addressing intersectional perspective within the Roma employment policies (2005-2018) and further support the analysis provided by Roma Civil Monitor about the discrimination affecting Romani women in the labor market I will display the statistical data from the Fundamental Rights Agency:

According to FRA (2014-2019), the situation of Romani women in the economy has shown limited improvement over the years. In 2014, the disaggregated data provided by the FRA's survey reveals that Romani women reported feeling discriminated against when searching for employment the 22%. Specifically, 13% of Roma women in Romania, 35% in the Czech Republic, and 23% in Hungary (FRA, 2014: 21-22). The most recent FRA survey on Roma women shows that 59% in Romania declared their main activity as "domestic work," while 34% in Croatia. The same survey also found that 32% of Romani women overall were unemployed, with higher rates in Spain at 51%, Bulgaria the 59%, the Czech Republic the 30%, Hungary the 51%, Slovakia the 46%, and 51% in Croatia (FRA, 2019: 29).

The intersectional methodology employed in the survey provides valuable insights into the extensive discrimination experienced by Romani women, highlighting the pervasive systemic nature of this discrimination in which half of the Roma female population is unemployed. However, despite the availability of statistical data, the inputs from Romani feminists, and the assessment of the Roma Civil Monitor, it appears that the Roma frameworks continue addressing Roma employment policies from a homogenous perspective. This one-single approach perpetuates the economic violence and poverty faced by Romani women and girls, with far-reaching implications for the entire Roma community. The consequences of this one-dimension approach, Romani women are forced to engage in informal and low-paying work in

the underground market, enduring extended working hours and inadequate employment conditions. They lack regulated working conditions, employment insurance, and social security contributions, which will influence limited access to future pensions. The Roma Civil Monitor has drawn attention to the amplified risk faced by women, who are susceptible to human trafficking and forced prostitution due to unemployment rates and poverty. In this complex landscape, the bodies of racialized women are instrumentalized and exploited within oppressive capitalist systems, as emphasized by Angela Davis (1982) and bell hooks (1984) due to the intersection of racist and sexist structures.

Angela Kóczé (2016) has critically analyzed the intersection of ethnicity and gender in Roma women's employment, highlighting the unique challenges that arise from this interaction - race and gender. By recognizing the complexities of the employment background of Romani women, we can better address the violence, discrimination, and systemic barriers they face.

Additionally, it is crucial to examine the inner patriarchal cultural structures and norms that continue to prioritize traditional gender roles faced by Romani women who are often confined to fulfilling household duties as mothers and wives, limiting their opportunities and agency within both the private and the public sphere. Examining it, Jovanovic (2019), highlights how these gender roles perpetuate the exploitation and subordination of Romani women, reinforcing cycles of poverty, exclusion, and economic violence. The burden placed on Romani women to navigate between the expectations of their community and employment institutions further compounds their challenges. They become the link between the Roma community and the structures of employment, leading to a violent work context characterized by abusive practices such as sexual harassment, physical violence, and emotional abuse (Kóczé and Theran et al., 2021). For Romani women, the pursuit and maintenance of employment are tense with hostility and violence, as they are continually subjected to oppression and violence. This constant exposure to abusive psychological and physical consequences results in traumatic experiences for Romani women in the labor market.

Drawing on my personal experience, in Spain, I am a white-passing Romani woman who has frequently felt the need to conceal my ethnicity in the workplace to secure and maintain my job. I consider myself fortunate, compared to many of my relatives and friends with visible ethnic features. They have had to modify their appearance, vocabulary, and even hairstyle during job interviews and in the workplace, striving to appear as "white" as possible. This issue extends beyond mere appearance, as they also face assumptions of guilt and are often the first

to be let go in times of conflict due to systemic racism and bias which is an intersectional form of violence in itself.

I will present the information that one Romani girl of 28 years old from, Palencia, Spain shared with me in an informal conversation, seeking employment and arguing about the challenges she encounters. She said,

“The situation is such that I cannot find jobs, even as a cleaner, because they think I will steal or that I don’t know how to do it because I am Gitana (Roma woman). It has made me stop looking for jobs altogether. I always have to modify myself for job interviews, straighten my hair, apply makeup in a specific way – the Gadge way – and adjust my tone and accent while speaking...even then, I feel the workers looking at me and thinking that I don’t deserve to work there, questioning why Romani woman would want to work in such spaces...it makes me feel unsafe and out of my context, questioning myself. Job searching is truly an unpleasant experience due to racism” (Personal communication, February 4, 2023).

Avoiding or attempting to hide the Roma identity is a form of symbolic violence that the Roma community faces daily. Unfortunately, it is an aspect that is not adequately considered by policymakers, stakeholders, and Roma frameworks (2005-2018). This pre- and post-discrimination within the employment structure is deep-rooted in the mindset of the Roma community, stemming from personal traumatic experiences. It forces individuals to develop defense and survival mechanisms against violence and performative expectations, ultimately discouraging them from seeking regular employment opportunities in the labor market.

The discrimination faced by Romani women within the employment system is a complex issue that has been extensively discussed by members of the Feminist Collective of Romani Women Gender Experts during their internal meeting and capacity-building workshop on April 27, 2023, titled 'Employment Coach Cycle: Beyond Challenges and Barriers.' Through their discussions, they identified various barriers that impede Romani women from accessing employment opportunities and maintaining their jobs.

Foremost among these barriers is the pervasive racism and discrimination that remains deeply embedded within the employment structure. Despite meeting all the requirements and qualifications for a job, Romani women often find themselves hindered from obtaining employment solely due to their ethnic background. Romani feminists have strongly criticized and reported instances where they receive lower salaries than their non-Roma counterparts, despite possessing equal qualifications and experiences. They also pointed out that employers often express surprise when Romani women demand the same standard average salary as their non-Roma peers. Moreover, the members of the Feminist Collective also raise concerns regarding the limited career options available to Romani women. They argue that Romani women are often determined in social-science jobs, which implies lower-paying salaries and offer fewer opportunities for development. This restriction on their employability perpetuates economic inequalities and further marginalizes Romani women in the labor market.

Moreover, Romani women face additional challenges when working in institutional or non-Roma workplaces due to their critical perspective on issues of race, class, and gender. Their disposition to challenge existing work cultures and advocate for change often puts their jobs at risk, as employers may prefer workers who are less likely to disrupt the status quo. Similarly, the knowledge production and expertise of Romani women at the grassroots and within NGOs often go unrecognized in academia. Despite being highly qualified and possessing valuable insights, Romani women struggle to secure employment in academic institutions. This lack of recognition further exacerbates their exclusion from mainstream employment opportunities and perpetuates the underrepresentation of Romani women in academia. (Source: Internal discussion of the Feminist Collective's members)

In summary, the discussion of the members of the Roma Feminist Collective called attention to the pervasive institutionalized intersectional discrimination experienced by Romani women within the employment system. The important questions raised by the previous discussion are: what type of knowledge is being passed on to the next generation if we consider that highly qualified Romani women continue to struggle in the employment system due to systemic and structural discrimination? what are the opportunities left for the next generation? It became evident that intersectional discrimination within the employment system is not solely based on individual experiences, but rather on larger structures and systems of exclusion and oppression

even if you have high-level education. This recognition underlines the critical need to implement comprehensive and systemic changes to address the rooted disadvantages faced by Romani women in the labor market.

2.2.4. Assessment of Romani women within the education objective

I will explore the how Roma frameworks have addressed the discrimination faced by Romani women in education policies through the Roma Civil Monitor (2005-2018). The Roma Decade and the EU Roma Integration Strategy both emphasized the importance of prioritizing education as a pillar to be addressed by member states at national and local levels. Correspondingly, we should look into the 2009 report to find information related to Romani women and education, implying that from 2005 to 2009 the gender perspective was missed within the Roma education policies. In doing so, the data collected in 2009 showed the attention given to gender issues, with 9.57% of programs addressing these issues very much, 40.01% somewhat, 31.34% not at all, and 19.08% responding "Don't know" (Decade Watch, 2009: 63). It is relevant to point out that more than only 9.57% of the programs addressed gender perspective while most of the programs neglect Romani women and girls' experiences and need within the education system. Therefore, based on the information provided by Roma Civil Monitor, the Roma Decade from 2005 to 2009 missed the gender perspective.

Romani scholar and activist Violeta Vajda explores the various obstacles faced by Romani girls and women in their access to education, emphasizing the detrimental impact on their educational opportunities and overall societal integration. In her article *'Breaking the Silence: Romani Women and Education in Romania'* (2014), Vajda identifies poverty, discrimination, cultural pressures, gender expectations, and pervasive stereotypes as significant challenges that impede their access to education. These barriers not only limit their educational achievements but also reinforce their marginalization within society at large restricting their possibility to accomplish economic independency.

Consequently, the tendency of the Roma frameworks (2005 -2009) to view the Roma community as a homogeneous entity can lead to the marginalization of individuals with specific needs. Engaging with Vajda's arguments, it seems that there is a failure to recognize how the sexist and racist political and social structures of power operate within the education

system. This failure perpetuates the discrimination faced by Romani women and girls by disregarding the intersectionality of their experiences and needs. As highlighted by Plaks (2012), this dynamic contributes to a cycle of early dropout and limited school attendance among further marginalized groups as Romani women and girls within Roma community.

It is noteworthy that the theorization on intersectionality of Roma feminist such as Kóczé (2009), and Plaks (2012), Gheorghe (2016) along with the inputs given by the Roma Civil Monitor, the established European Roma framework (2010 -2020) acknowledge the significance of addressing the intersecting forms of discrimination based on these social classifications, reflecting a growing recognition of the complex challenges faced by Romani women in the educational context.

However, the 2012 reports such the Romanian one continues draws attention to the limited educational access experienced by Romani women and girls, attributing it to their responsibilities within the family and household (Romania 2012: 118). Similarly, the 2018 Romanian report acknowledges the inclusion of a gender perspective in Roma education policy but highlights the lack of specific measures aimed at addressing the educational needs of Romani women and girls. As a result, the illiteracy rates among Romani women persistently remain 10% higher than those of Roma males (Romania, 2018: 28). These findings underscore the ongoing disparities and challenges faced by Romani women in accessing quality education, indicating a need for more targeted intersectional policies to address their unique circumstances.

In 2012, the reports from the Czech Republic and Slovakia highlight the disadvantaged position of Romani women and girls in accessing education which is influenced by traditional gender roles, family responsibilities, and community expectations (the Czech Republic and Slovakia, 2012). Similarly, same year, 2012, the report from Spain emphasizes the gender imbalance and its impact on high illiteracy rates among Romani women (Spain, 2012:12) In line with these findings, the Hungarian reports from 2012 to 2018, addresses the educational challenges faced by Romani women and girls, pointing out that they have lower levels of education compared to their non-Roma peers (Hungary, 2018: 26). These reports underline the different factors that contribute to the educational disadvantage Romani women and girls experienced, emphasizing the need for interventions to address these disparities and promote educational equity.

Despite the advancement in recognizing the discrimination faced by Romani women within the education system, based on the information given by the Roma Civil Monitor's reports, concrete measures to address these issues have been lacking over time. The 2012 reports from Romania, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia acknowledged that family care, household duties, traditional gender roles, and expectations hindered the access, retention, and success of Romani women and girls in education, (Roma Civil Monitor, 2012). However, subsequent reports in 2018 did not outline any specific measures implemented by the National Roma Strategies to address the intersectional challenges of Romani women within educational system. This indicates a gap between what its acknowledged and actioned, highlighting the need for more proactive and targeted interventions to ensure equal educational opportunities for Romani women and girls.

The reports from 2012 to 2018 indicate a concerning pattern of neglect towards the unique needs and experiences of Romani women and girls within the education system in the national Roma frameworks. Despite the recognition of a gender imbalance and high rates of illiteracy among Romani women, there has been a lack of intention and action from stakeholders at the national level as it has been assessed by the Roma Civil Monitor. Throughout the information offered by reports from the Roma Civil Monitor from 2005 to 2018, no concrete measures were implemented to address these issues. This may reflect a systemic failure to prioritize and address the discrimination and barriers that Romani women and girls face in accessing quality education by the National Roma policies.

However, the data from the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), despite the lack of focus on Romani women's experiences in the National Roma Strategies, paints a concerning picture that shows that there has not been improvement over time. Between 2014 and 2019, the study conducted by FRA reveals that a significant percentage of Romani women face barriers in accessing education. In 2014, the data of Romani women had never attended school was 19%, and although this data decreased in 2019, the truth is that young Romani women left school early in 2019, was 71%. In countries such as Bulgaria and Croatia, the gender inequalities are even more manifest, the percentage of Romani women leaving school early is higher compared to Romani men.

Furthermore, there is a significant gap in educational attainment between Romani women and the general population as it is demonstrated by the FRA's study. In 2017, in relation to Romani women had completed upper secondary, post-secondary, non-tertiary, or tertiary education the data shows that was only 16%, while the figure for women in the general population was 74.6%. At the same time, a large percentage of Romani women aged 16 to 24 are neither working nor in education or training, with high numbers observed in Spain, Croatia, and Slovakia as has been revealed by FRA.

Similarly, the 2019 FRA's survey highlights that there is an evident the gender gap in educational attainment, where a higher percentage of Romani women have lower educational achievements compared to Romani men in countries like Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. Additionally, the early marriage issue remains a prevalent practice among Romani girls, with a significant number of them marrying before the age of 18 in countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Spain, (FRA 2019) These persistent Romani women's educational disparities and challenges is underscore by the FRA's statistics which highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions and policies to address these issues and ensure equal educational opportunities no only for Romani women but also for all members of the Roma community.

The statistical data presented above reveals a concerning disparity in the educational opportunities and outcomes for Romani women. This disparity not only impacts their educational achievements but also has a direct influence on their employment scenarios, as discussed in the previous section on the *Assessment of Romani women within the employment objective*. The data supplied by the Roma Civil Monitor and FRA suggest that, despite 13 years of national Roma education policies, Romani women continue to face significant disadvantages and discrimination within the education system. This may suggest a limited intersectional approach within the National Frameworks since Romani women remains largely excluded from the educational achievements. The implications resulting for this exclusion are boarder, as it intersects with other structural systems such as employment, health, housing, marriage, and protection. Accordingly, there is a further exacerbates the marginalization and discrimination faced by Romani women in various aspects of their lives resulting by the interconnectedness of these systems.

Romani women scholars and activists, such as Alexandra Oprea (2005), Angela Kóczé (2009), Rita Izsak-Ndiaye (2012), have extensively analyzed the correlation between the lack of access to equal education, gender roles, social exclusion, increased risk of suffering violence by Romani women. They argue that limited educational opportunities contribute to ongoing poverty and hinder their ability to escape abusive situations which is further exacerbated by the structural racism.

However, although the Roma Civil Monitor (2012-2018) made a significant advancement to recognizing the intersectional discrimination faced by Romani women in education domain, it seems that Roma policy education frameworks have overlooked the valuable knowledge produced by Romani women feminists on this issue. The reports from 2005 to 2018 indicate the lack of inclusion of feminist perspectives and expertise in shaping educational policies and practices (Romani Civil Monitor reports, 2005-2018) missing the opportunity to develop more effective and inclusive educational interventions.

Rita Izsak-Ndiaye (2012) further emphasizes that this situation pushes Romani women and girls to adopt survival strategies within both Roma and non-Roma communities, thereby exacerbating intersectional discrimination and increasing their vulnerability to violence and exploitation. Additionally, the lack of access to quality education exposes them to higher risks of experiencing violence, sexual exploitation, and limited access to crucial information needed to escape from vulnerable situations. Laura Corradi (2017), explores the intersectional discrimination that Romani women and girls face when trying to access and benefit from protection and social services, often encountering racist and stereotypical attitudes from social workers.

Based on my professional experience as social work in Madrid, Spain within the system of protection for victims of gender and domestic violence. I have witnessed that a significant number of Romani women hesitate to seek protection services. This indecision results from the lack of trust in institutions, which is rooted in Roma community because of the historical persecution, assimilation, and violence experienced by the Spanish Roma. The mistrust of Romani women towards social and protection services is further exacerbated by the systemic violence and traumatic experiences they have endured, both personally and through witnessing similar experiences of other Romani women in comparable situations. Additionally, Romani

women have recognized that their limited access to education, because of intersectional discrimination, and the racism along with sexism have hindered their ability to seek alternative sources of income, leaving them in a vulnerable and precarious situation.

Consequently, this not a physical and psychological costs only for the individuals involved but also sends a damaging message to the entire Roma community. The negative knowledge and experiences of Romani women regarding various institutions such as education, employment, housing, healthcare, and social services are acquired through intergenerational cycles of violence and trauma experienced by generations. These joined experiences contribute to the extreme vulnerability of Romani women. Many Romani women are left behind with no other choice that to return to the abusive situations or tolerate further hardships due to the lack of viable alternatives.

Conclusion(s)

Inventory results

The struggle for gender equality and the improvement of Romani women situation within Roma policies has been an ongoing challenge as proved by the assessments and feedbacks from civil society between 2005 and 2018. The comparative analysis through the seven countries on the four pillars: housing, health, employment, and education reveals that despite the progress in reporting the challenges faced by Romani women, persistent inequality and discrimination continue to exist. The inclusion of the gender perspective within the National Roma frameworks remains inadequate, with a significant gap between civil society's awareness of gender-related issues and the actual implementation of measures and programs to address them. Similarly, the findings of the comparative analysis highlight a clear correlation between the absence of gender perspective within the National Roma frameworks and the persistent acknowledgment of patriarchy system, gender roles within the Roma community and the institutional racism as it has been stated by Romani, Slovakia, and Czech Republic's reports (2012 -2018). According to the Roma Civil Monitor (2005-2018), in the case of Croatia, it is significant to underline that no measures have been taken to address the inequalities and discrimination faced by Romani women. While Spain (2012-2018) and Hungary (2012-2028) acknowledge a gender unbalance in health and education domains.

In this respect, the analysis also shows a clear connection between the exclusion of the gender perspective in drafting it within the core objectives and persistent experiences of discrimination encountered by Romani women in the four pillars: housing, health, employment, and education. The absence of including the Roma feminist perspective, the intersectional approach, and consequently the comprehensive gender perspective in the Roma policy frameworks at the highest political level leads to the exclusion of Roma women from the specific objectives related to these areas. This exclusion contributes to persistent inequalities and barriers hindering the access of Romani women to suitable housing, adequate healthcare, equal employment opportunities, and quality education. Addressing these connections is crucial for promoting gender equality and combating discrimination in the key areas that significantly impact the lives of Romani women.

Therefore, the lack of inclusion of the intersectional feminist perspective within the Roma frameworks at European and national level exacerbates the risk of experiencing various forms of violence from different actors, such as violence from institutions and general society, gender-based violence, risk of trafficking and prostitution as it has been highlighted by Roma feminist activists and scholars together with the civil society from 2012 to 2018.

In this respect, civil society and Roma feminist authors emphasize the need to address these issues by incorporating a comprehensive gender perspective and intersectionality in the Roma policy design and implementation. The findings underscore the importance of recognizing the detrimental impact of homogenizing the Roma as one single gender, the male, which demand advocate for greater inclusion of Romani women's voices, knowledge, and experiences, those from the academia and the community itself, to create more effective and inclusive Roma policies. The failure to effectively integrate feminist knowledge and intersectionality into the Roma policy framework hinders the development in improving the conditions and situations of Romani women and girls across the seven countries. To bridge this gap, greater recognition and utilization of Romani women's feminist knowledge and increased inclusion in decision-making processes are essential.

A significant concern arises from this evident gap between the increased awareness of the Roma feminist perspective, and gender-related issues within civil society, as demonstrated by the Roma Civil Monitor, and the limited incorporation of this knowledge into the Roma policies by the National Roma frameworks. While civil society has shown a growing understanding of the importance of addressing gender-related challenges faced by Romani women, the translation of this consciousness into concrete actions and policies by the governing bodies remains insufficient.

Consequently, upon analyzing the results presented by the Roma Civil Monitor, it is evident that Roma feminist perspectives have influenced civil society to a greater or lesser extent, with a more noticeable impact since 2012. Regrettably, despite the observations and recommendations of the Roma Civil Monitor and Roma feminists, there has been a lack of substantial changes in the strategies and approaches adopted by these governing bodies in relation to Romani women's issues. This disparity highlights the need for stronger efforts to bridge the gap between awareness and implementation, ensuring that the knowledge and insights of Roma women feminist and civil society at national level are effectively integrated

into the design and execution of Roma policies aimed at promoting gender equality and combating discrimination against Romani women.

Furthermore, since 2012, the participating civil society in the Roma Civil Monitor (except for Hungary in 2007) recognized the concept of multiple discrimination and intersectionality that shapes the experiences of Romani women. However, despite this recognition, the 2018 reports indicate that national Roma policies have yet to effectively address this concept into practices. The lack of integration and application of the intersectional and multiple discrimination's concepts within Roma policies continues to be a significant concern among civil society and Roma feminists. Similarly, the detailed information provided by the Roma Civil Monitor together with the theorization of Romani feminist points out the correlation between gender roles and the unequal access to health, education and employment faced by Romani women. The analysis consistently highlights the persistent inequality from 2012 to 2018, further intensified by the lack of policies intended to reduce such disparities.

Additionally, there is widespread recognition among civil society from Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czech Republic about the interconnectedness between poverty, exclusion, and the increased risk of experiencing various forms of violence, including early and forced marriages, domestic violence, and human trafficking. This pattern of violence has remained prevalent in the reports from 2012 to 2018, suggesting a failure of the Roma national frameworks to implement preventive measures and actions addressing these issues which have been lacking.

It is notable that the pillar receiving the most attention within the Roma frameworks in relation to women is 'Health,' with all seven countries emphasizing the reproductive rights of Romani women. While this is an important matter, my concern is that the exclusive focus on reproductive rights may inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles by reducing Romani women to the unique role of motherhood. Therefore, the implementation of more comprehensive and intersectional methodology would help to embrace the various aspects of women's health and well-being,

This broader perspective should address not only reproductive rights but also the discrimination and violence faced by Romani women when accessing and staying in general healthcare services. By doing so, we can ensure that the Roma policy frameworks effectively address the diverse and intersecting health needs of Romani women, moving beyond the narrow focus on

reproductive rights and actively challenging the perceived traditional gender roles within national Roma frameworks.

Similarly, the homogenization of the Roma community, particularly focusing on the male gender, has resulted in the negative outcomes observed in the application of the gender perspective over the years. The persist homogenization also explains the lack of intention to bring amendments in the four pillars that I have analyzed. From 2012 to 2018, there has been a consistent recognition by civil society of the same problems in each pillar, including discrimination, violence, and gender roles. These factors serve as significant barriers that limit women's ability to improve their situations, as evidenced by the reports from Romania, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria.

At the same time, we can observe a consistent narrative maintained by feminist women authors over time regarding the issues faced by Romani women due to the absence of a gender perspective and the application of intersectionality in the Roma frameworks. This further reinforces the findings of the analysis, highlighting the failure in implementing the gender perspective and feminist knowledge within the national Roma policies.

Consideration(s) for future improvements of Romani women in policy.

The lack of inclusion of feminist knowledge production by the national Roma frameworks culminates, as we observed through the years of Roma Civil Monitor, in the formation of gender-blind policies, neglecting Romani women's unique experiences, perspectives and needs. Additionally, external and internal community narratives that racialize Romani women's issues is an obstacle to their political recognition. Addressing these issues requires a shift in the male community and institutional dominant narratives and a more inclusive of Romani women experts in all the steps of policymaking.

The presence of Romani women experts and Romani women from the community in decision-making processes and power position is essential for the development of comprehensive policies that directly influence their lives and communities. Romani women's voices and perspectives should be actively sought and incorporated to address the neglect of the gender perspective within the National Roma policy frameworks. This can be accomplished through

the creation of integrative spaces for dialogue between Romani women and the different stakeholders, capacity-building and empowering initiatives directly focus on Romani women and fostering partnerships among Romani women's organizations and networks at international, national, and local level.

Furthermore, to provide concrete measures that could be taken to ensure the meaningful inclusion of Romani women and the integration of their feminist expertise. One measure could be the implementation of a 'quota system,' which would allocate positions to Romani women feminist experts in gender studies and Romani women representatives from the Romani communities within the decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of Roma frameworks. This approach would ensure their active participation and contribution at all stages of policy development.

In addition, the establishment of an external body comprising feminist Romani women at the international, national, and local levels could play an important role. This body would provide specific policy recommendations and guidelines that must be addressed and integrated into the Roma frameworks. Their expertise and insights would contribute to more comprehensive policies that reflect the unique experiences and needs of Romani women and girls at the local level.

This requires engaging Romani women as active actors and leaders in shaping policies that impact not only them but also the community as a whole and providing support for their activism and advocacy efforts at international, national, and local level.

By implementing these recommendations, the Roma policy frameworks at European and national level can give a step towards a more equitable methodology that actively addresses the issues faced by Romani women and girls at the community level. I believe that this commitment would require a concerted effort to prioritize their voices, incorporate their feminist knowledge, and challenge the existing and interconnectedness of power structures. This transformative approach would improve the overall advancement of gender equality and social justice within the Roma community.

To the end, we cannot undoubtedly expect to have representation of Roma women's NGOs in every country due to various reasons, including lack of institutional support, financial and human resources, or subsidies, to foster the development of minority women's associations. However, it seems that solutions could be explored to cover this lack. In this line, to complete the initiative of the Roma Civil Monitor and its valuable work, I would suggest the engagement

of a team of Romani women gender experts who can complete the information related to gender issues by conducting evaluations from an insider intersectional perspective. Consequently, the Romani women gender expert group would be organized to visit those countries in order to make sure that Romani women situation and needs are represented and national and local level. This recommendation is based on the past example of Roma Women's Initiative (RWI), which has functioned effectively in the past.

Appendices

Data Collection from the Roma Decade and EU Roma Integration Strategy Reports (2005-2018): A Focus on Gender Equality and (Anti)Discrimination within the Four Pillars of Housing, Health, Employment, and Education.

Roma Civil Monitoring 2005-2018

In this section, I will enumerate the relevant information from the reports (2005 – 2018) from each participating Member States (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Spain), focusing on the two key issues such as Gender Equality and (anti)discrimination addressing the four pillars: Housing, health, employment, and education, exploring and listing when, and how they have referred to Romani women and girls.

The aim of including the information within the appendices' section is to provide additional context and empirical evidence that supports the findings and arguments presented in the main body of this thesis.

1. Bulgaria

Occurrence and subjects of Romani women's depiction: Reports (2005-2018)

2. Frequency and Topics of Romani Women's Representation according to Bulgaria's reports (2005-2018).

Years/issues	Gender equality	(Anti)discrimination			
		Health	Employment	Housing	Education
2005 - 2006	X				
2007					
2009				X	X
2012	X				
2018		X			

Bulgaria's Decade Watch report from **2005-2006**, expresses that the Decade Action Plan does not implement the gender equality objective which was designed as a cross-cutting issue (2005-2006).

Later, the **2009** Decade Watch report reveals that 57.14% of housing programs in Bulgaria do not address gender issues. Similarly, 50% of information provided by civil society indicates that the specific situation of Romani women is not considered in the education domain (2009).

The **2012** report acknowledges the lack of gender perspective resulting in significant weaknesses and sensitivities toward the specific Romani women's challenges (Bulgaria report, 2012). Moreover, the document suggests that "particular measures should be developed in early marriages, domestic violence, human trafficking" (2012: 29).

Bulgaria's **2018** reports states that Romani women's issues are not targeted by specifics measures. However, the report notes that the government has implemented a program targeting domestic and gender-based violence (2018: 55). In addition, civil society claims that the government justify its inaction addressing GBV due to the essentialization of Roma identity (2018). Furthermore, the document states "the Municipal Action plan does not have a gender-sensitive approach, it does not offer gender policies to empower and promote Romani women in their development. This omission reflects the local municipal leaders' mind-sets, who see Romani women mainly in their position as "mothers" and their problems related to reproductive health." (2018: 57-58).

2. Romania

Occurrence and subjects of Romani women's depiction: Reports (2005-2018)

3. Frequency and Topics of Romani Women's Representation according to Romania's reports (2005-2018).

Years/issues	Gender Equality	(Anti)-discrimination			
		Health	Employment	Housing	Education
2005					
2007					
2009					
2012	X	X	X	X	X
2018		X			X

Romania's reports from **2005 to 2008** do not mention Romani women issues in any of the dimensions analyzed (2005-2008).

The **2012** report provides information about Romani women in the four pillars with special attention to health. In one side, the information given discusses about the productivity of training Romani women on health mediator program (2012: 15). Additionally, **2012** report provides information on "the severe discrimination that Romani women face when accessing to gynecological and pediatric services. Segregated rooms on maternity and pediatric wards, degrading behavior, judgmental remarks addressed to Romani women are part and parcel of their daily experiences with the public healthcare system" (2012: 15) At the same time, the report comprises a specific section on Romani Women's Rights which includes "the principle of equal opportunities and gender awareness", - at an equal level to the principle of non-discrimination (2012: 58)

Moreover, the report affirms that programs addressing gender issues have been implemented by Roma NGOs and the National Agency for Roma but are not part of the NRIS. Similarly, it proclaims, "awareness-raising campaigns have been carried out in some traditional communities but no data on the results of these campaigns have been provided to assess changes in perceptions on the rights of Roma women in Roma communities" (2012: 58).

Likewise, the report refers to measures: "implemented information campaigns among Romani women about risks associated with early marriage, the prevention and combating of domestic violence and human trafficking." (2012: 93-94) However, the report also argues about the absence of evaluation of the progress of such measures.

The **2018** report expresses that some programs have been implemented to reduce the mortality when they give birth, counselling on early marriages and violence against women. However, the civil society claims "urgent issues are gender-based violence and sexual violence against Romani women and girls which is underreported and the difficulty of gathering data about it makes the phenomenon less prioritized. According to studies by Roma and non-Roma feminists, the biggest challenge that Roma women face is asking for support from authorities, whose racist attitudes discourage such action" (2018: 29).

Furthermore, the civil society continues stating that issues such as the control of Romani women's bodies by others as the cause of arranged and forced marriages, the cult of virginity and the cultural prohibition on contraceptive use are improperly addressed or altogether ignored. Moreover, civil society claims that there are not programs run by government or other public institutions targeting Romani women in local nor national level (2018: 29).

Similarly, civil society stresses the importance of collecting data disaggregated by ethnicity and gender due to it could “give a more comprehensive picture of the inequalities between Roma men and women, but also between Roma and non-Roma women” (2018: 29). Likewise, “the lack of health mediators of the same ethnic background is one of the reasons why Roma women do not go to the doctor when they have health issues” (2018: 42)

3. Hungary

Occurrence and subjects of Romani women's depiction: Reports (2005-2018)

4. Frequency and Topics of Romani Women's Representation according to Hungary's Reports (2005-2018).

Years/issues	Gender Equality	(Anti)discrimination			
		Health	Employment	Housing	Education
2005					
2007					
2009	X	X			
2012		X	X	X	X
2018		X			X

The Hungarian reports from **2005 to 2008** do not provide information related to gender equality programs. In the **2009** report civil society highlights that gender perspective is hardly implemented in Hungary's action plan. In turn, Romani women only mentioned in the topic of health which states that 33.33 % of the health programs did not address gender issues at all (2009).

Moving on, the **2012** report provides information targeting Romani women's problems on health, employment, and education as well as their limited access to public resources. Furthermore, civil society targets GBV in its recommendations arguing that 'Specific recommendations related to equal opportunities for Roma women 1) "The principle of gender

mainstreaming should also be applied in order to improve the situation of Roma women'. 2) "Public policy measures targeting Romani women should take into account the phenomenon of intersectionality". 3) "Adequate care should be provided for Romani victims of domestic violence; special programs for prevention should be launched" (2012: 46).

Similarly, civil society further recommends "When planning public policy measures, it should be taken into account that human trafficking and prostitution are areas where inequalities based on gender, ethnicity and social status interconnect" (2012: 47).

The **2018** report acknowledges the multiple forms of discrimination suffered by Romani women based on grounds such as ethnicity, social status, and gender. Civil society further criticizes that Romani women's face inequalities in accessing to general, sexual, and reproductive health services based on both gender and ethnic discrimination. These are due to low educational attainment, labour market disadvantages, their vulnerability and gender roles within the family (2018: 24)

Equally, the report points out the unequal situation faced by Romani women in education, employment and life expectancy as well as they underrepresentation and unequal participation in public and political life, (2018: 26)

4. Croatia

Occurrence and subjects of Romani women's depiction: Reports (2005-2018)

5. Frequency and Topics of Romani Women's Representation according to Croatia's Reports (2005-2018).

Years/issues	(Anti)discrimination				
	Gender Equality	Health	Employment	Housing	Education
2005					
2007					
2009					
2012					
2018					

Initially, it is important to note that although Croatia took part in the Roma Decade from 2005 Roma women was not specifically addressed until 2018. In this line, in 2018 civil society

claims that the cases involving discrimination affecting Romani women are frequently unreported (2018: 21). Drawing upon authors' insights "Romani women do not participate in mainstream women's rights movements despite Roma woman are often suffering from consequences of double discrimination and despite one of the most active Roma associations is Roma woman association "Better future." (2018: 16)

5. Slovakia

Occurrence and subjects of Romani women's depiction: Reports (2005-2018)

6. Frequency and Topics of Romani Women's Representation according to Slovakia's Reports (2005-2018).

Years/issues	Gender Equality	(anti)discrimination			
		Health	Employment	Housing	Education
2005					
2007					
2009					
2012	X	X			
2018	X	X			

The reports from **2005 to 2009** do not address Romani women's issues.

The **2012** Slovakia report assert that no efforts have been made to tackle discrimination experienced by both Roma generally and Romani women specifically on the labour market (2012: 9). Additionally, civil society further criticize the failure of addressing discrimination faced by Romani women in the healthcare:

"No specific measures addressing the particularly vulnerable situation of Romani women were recorded, especially in reproductive rights. Although no data mapping discrimination in health care is available, NGOs caution that the practice of segregation in maternity and gynecological wards continues." (Slovakia, 2012: 10)

In addition, the 2012 report, which has a specific section entitled *Multiple Discrimination of Roma Women*, recognizes the impact of the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class on women's lives while emphasizing the location. Similarly, civil society recognizes the aggravated

vulnerability of women living in marginalized contexts to be victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, (2012: 39-40)

Further, the civil society continues arguing that the Revised Action Plan and National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) overlook the issue of multiple form of discrimination. Besides, the gender equality as a cross-cutting objective was not included despite the requests of civil society. In addition, concrete measures were not developed to address domestic violence, teenage Romani girls' drop-out rates, employment for mothers with small children, work-family reconciliation, and reproductive health awareness which were imprecisely outlined (2012: 40).

Similarly, the 2012 report indicates that 60% of the victims of human trafficking are members of marginalized Roma communities; “experts estimate Roma individuals constitute up to 90% of all known victims trafficked for sexual purposes in Slovakia, with men more likely to be subjected to forced labor and women to street and highway prostitution” (2012: 41) Likewise, the report targets the discrimination in the health assess the “ongoing problem with segregation in maternity and gynecological wards in hospitals” (2012: 71)

Moving on to **2018** report, in its section entitled *Policies and Measures addressing Specific Needs and Challenges of Roma Women, Children and Youth* affirms that “although gender equality was set as principle, neither the NRIS nor the OAP did not systematically translate this principle into goals, indicators or specific tasks. Aside from few exemptions this principle is largely absent from the updated Action Plans for 2016-2018, which were approved in early 2017” (2018: 25).

The authors further describe the insufficient application of gender equality as a cross-cutting axis. Additionally, they criticize the failure to recognize the multiple discrimination faced by Romani women as a structural objective when drafting, implementing, and assessing policies and, programs, (2018: 25).

In the same year, 2018, the report also discusses information about discrimination within the health system, highlighting that Romani women face discriminatory and humiliating treatment while giving birth, as well as experiencing segregation and inadequate hygiene in maternity wards and, in accessing reproductive healthcare services.

Simultaneously, the authors argue that despite the fact that multiple discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and gender is to some extent acknowledged, this recognition is not applied to the grounds of Roma women with disabilities, LGBTI Roma or Roma belonging to religious minorities, (Slovakia, 2018: 31).

“While the action plan on non-discrimination at one point did recognize the issue of multiple discrimination based on social disadvantage, gender and age, it is not present in the specific goals, indicators or measures.”

(Slovakia, 2018: 28)

Furthermore, to the report (2018) highlights that the strongest opposition party, Liberty and Solidarity (SaS) proposed a Roma Reform that includes such as offering free sterilization for women over 35 after their third child and implementing a stringent workfare approach targeting socially excluded communities (2018: 14-15).

6. Czech Republic

Occurrence and subjects of Romani women's depiction: Reports (2005-2018)

7. Frequency and Topics of Romani Women's Representation according to Czech Republic's Reports (2005-2018).

Years/issues	Gender Equality	(Anti)discrimination			
		Health	Employment	Housing	Education
2005	X				
2007		X			
2009				X	X
2012					
2018					

The Czech Republic report (2005-2006) states that during both years, the Decade Action Plan (DAP) did not address gender identity within their assessment. The 2005 OAP contains a specific chapter devoted to gender, while the subsequent plan did not adequately it as a cross-cutting priority (2005-06: 78)

Subsequently, the **2007** report shifted the focus of women to the section of health, specifically addressing the issue of forced sterilization against Romani women, (Watch report, 2007). The **2009** Decade Watch report declares that gender issues are hardly addressed at the national level. To illustrate this, civil society explores that 75% of housing programs and 53.33% of education programs do not take into account the specific situation of Romani women (2009)

In the following years, the Czech Republic **2012** report introduces a specific section devoted to Romani women entitled *Measures to Address the Multiple Discriminations Faced by Roma Women*. The section focuses on the Czech Republic Government's failure to address the issue of coercive sterilization, despite judicial resolutions as sterilizations performed contrary to the law. No compensation for the Romani women who were victims has been provided (2012: 42). The section also reflects on how multiple discrimination and specific vulnerability faced by Romani women have not been mentioned in the Strategy for Combating Social Exclusion (2012: 42). The civil society continues highlighting the issue related to trafficking, recognizing the multilayer discrimination affecting Romani women, highlighting the vulnerability of Romani women due to structural forms of ethnic and gender discrimination, poverty, and social exclusion (2012: 43).

Similarly, the **2018** report reveals that the NRIS does not review and discusses the specific context of Romani women or Roma children and youth, and that their specific experiences. Furthermore, civil society claims that there has been no progress on the topic of compensation for the illegal sterilization of Romani women (2018: 26).

7. Spain

Occurrence and subjects of Romani women's depiction: Reports (2005-2018)

8. Frequency and Topics of Roma Women's Representation in Spanish Reporting Process (2005-2018).

Years/issues	Gender Equality	(Anti)discrimination			
		Health	Employment	Housing	Education
2009					
2012		X	X		X
2018	X		X		

To begin with, Spain was one of the last countries to join the Roma Decade in 2008, and therefore its Roma Civil Monitor began accordingly from 2009. In the **2009** and **2012** reports civil society points out the gender imbalance in health and education. Accordingly, Romani women present a significantly worse health status than Romani men, and the majority population (2012: 10-14). Moreover, the **2012** report points out that even though Romani women had higher illiteracy rates, the vast majority of Roma who reach university are women (2012: 11)

In **2012**, Roma civil society recognized the multiple forms of discrimination that affect Romani women and went further to criticize that social services and NGOs, seeming that is it insufficient to reduce the disadvantages of Romani women both within and outside their community (2012: 12) Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the report mentions non-Spanish Roma EU migrants from central and eastern Europe, targeting the issue of working while being officially unregistered results in denied access to free healthcare except in emergency situations or maternity (2012: 81).

Similarly, the **2018** report made explicit references to Romani women about projects and programs that were implemented to improve the health conditions of them. Accordingly, Roma civil society believes that gender equality and gender-related issues are maintained on the same lines, yet remain inefficient as in previous years:

“The authorities responsible for promoting equality between women and men have no specific plans or actions to promote the non-discrimination of Roma women. The Spanish state is not implementing the recommendations made by international organizations in this matter.

(Spain, 2018: 37)

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