



Antigypsyism

Tackling racist clichés about Romani people



14-18



3 x 45 min.



board/flip chart; smartphones/computer with internet access for students; computer with internet access and attached projector; computer workstations or mobile terminals;



This topic explores the workings and mechanisms of prejudice and racism directed towards Romani people and other groups stigmatised as 'gypsies' (*antigypsyism*)



Ethics/Religion Political Studies



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



All contents, in particular texts, pictures and graphics, are protected by copyright. Unless expressly stated otherwise, copyright is held by reflections.eduskills.plus and is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution - Non-commercial - Distribution under the same conditions 4.0 International license. They may be subject to the terms of the license.

Introduction

Background information and didactical perspective

Antigypsyist ideology is founded on the stigmatisation of individuals and groups as 'gypsies'. This stigmatisation draws its purported legitimacy from the assumption that those belonging to the group labelled 'gypsies' form a homogeneous entity with immutable characteristics. A further feature of antigypsyism is the generalising attribution to this group of stereotypical, abnormal traits, which may find expression in claims such as 'it's in the gypsy blood' or 'Romani people tend to steal'. The core of these stereotypes is formed by beliefs which have often existed for centuries and resurface repeatedly in societies in response to contemporary situations.

Antigypsyist exclusion, discrimination and persecution refer to this ideology. Usually and most often, those actions and social structures target Romani people, but - depending on social and historical circumstances – they can also affect other groups or individuals perceived as 'gypsies'.

The work with Facebook posts and media reports in this series of lessons is intended to enable students to critique depictions of this group in mass and social media. The role play's purpose is to provide a pupil-centred practical opportunity for pupils to experience processes of group dynamics that generate discrimination and empathise with those subject to them.

Learning outcomes

Competencies

- Accurately recapping and critically evaluating media content and analysing it in accordance with tasks set; learning about opportunities and risks associated with social media (media competencies)
- Accurately explaining and analysing the workings of discrimination using the example of antigypsyism
- Putting oneself in another's place and empathising with their perspective (multi-perspectivity)
- Arriving at and reflecting upon one's own point of view on political and social issues
- Describing ways of tackling discrimination
- Successfully working in a heterogeneous group and contributing to the group on one's own initiative
- Ability to openly and non-violently discuss and resolve conflict; respectful engagement with others and their points of view (values orientation)

Topics / National curriculum

Antigypsyism, discrimination, racism, violence and conflict, minorities, Romani people, media, Difference and Respect for Diversity, Actions that can be taken individually and collectively, Ethically responsible behaviour

Lesson plan

Abbreviations:

A = Activity
D = Discussion
GW = Group work
IW = Individual work

HW = Homework
PW = Partnerwork
PTS = Previous Teacher's Study

PO = Pupils opinions
PP = Pupil's presentations
TP = Teacher's presentation

Lesson No 1 : The Case of 'Maria'

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Introduction (15 min.) TP D	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pupils will engage with and find out key information on the events around 'Maria' and the subsequent public debate on the case. <p>Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The teacher provides sufficient copies of materials 3, 4 and 5 (three groups) and ensures the technical conditions for the projection of the videos of material 1 and 2.Flipchart, blackboard or smartboard are available.The teacher may prepare herself or himself by reading about the history of Roma (see for example 'Fact Sheets on Roma History', https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/histoculture_EN.asp) <p>Execution</p> <p>Step 1 The teacher shows the video produced by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (Material 1) and distributes the transcript.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Subtitles in different languages are available. <p>Step 2 The teacher introduces the topic of the module and responds to any pupil questions on the material. Pupils may ask questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Who or what are 'Romani people'?What do people mean when they say 'gypsy'?What is antigypsyism? <div><p>The teacher should avoid overloading the pupils with information at this point, and should simply provide sufficient information for them to acquire a basic understanding of the following film on the case of Maria. The remainder of the lesson, particularly the group work phase, will provide opportunities to explore all further questions.</p></div>	M1 Video, transcript "I'm not a swindler"

Main
section
(15 min.)

A

- Step 1** The teacher shows the video produced by Deutsche Welle (Material 2) and distributes the transcript.
- Step 2** The teacher should divide the pupils into three groups of equal size.
- Step 3** Group 1 will read the information in Material 3 and answer the questions on the worksheet.
- Step 4** Meanwhile, group 2 will read the press release issued by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma (Material 4) and do the corresponding worksheet.
- Step 5** Group 3 reads the informative piece by Benjamin Ignác on the case of 'Maria' from the perspective of Roma NGOs (Material 5) and completes the worksheet.
- Step 6** During this phase, the teacher should be available to support pupils' work, respond to questions and aid understanding.
- Step 7** The teacher may wish to encourage the groups to find their own examples of discriminatory reporting and present them to the rest of the class. If they act on this suggestion, it will be imperative to point out and discuss elements of discriminatory reporting within the example/s presented. These may include:
- Inappropriate generalisations
 - Inaccurate assumptions and/or unfair conclusions
 - Suggestive questions which are in fact statements
 - The use of discriminatory statements or language stemming from third parties without comment or contextualisation
 - Selective reporting, stereotypical images
 - Emotional or dramatic language

M2
Video, transcript
"Romani people
protest against
reporting on 'Maria'"

M3
Worksheet "The
'Maria' case in the
media"

M4
Worksheet "Press
release issued by
Central Council of
German Sinti and
Roma"

M5
Worksheet "The
case of 'Maria' from
the point of view of
Roma NGOs"

Presentation
of results
(15 min.)

PP

- Step 1** Now the pupils briefly outline the results of their group work to the rest of the class.
- Step 2** Depending on availability of facilities, they can use a smartboard or alternatively write relevant pieces of information on the board or a flipchart.
- Step 3** The teacher should correct any inaccurate information or add things the pupils have missed out or any relevant further detail.
- Step 4** Key results:
- Maria attracted the attention of the police officers because her skin tone and hair colour did not match the racialized perception of them.
 - The media reported on the case worldwide because the story fits the deeply rooted stereotype of child-abducting 'gypsies'.
 - The police's actions in Greece had consequences for Romani people around the world as they were suspected to be child abductors and lived in fear of their children being taken away.

Additional material
• board/flip chart

Lesson No 2 : Detailed work on the Antigypsyist prejudice around alleged child abduction

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Introduction (10 min.) TP	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Exploring some examples, pupils engage closely with the antigypsyist prejudice that alleges that so-called 'gypsies' regularly abduct children. <p>Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The teacher provides sufficient copies of {1}Fake news{/1} (Material 6), {2}Attacks in Italy{/2} (Material 7) and {3}The Hunchback of Notre Dame{/3} (Material 8) (three groups).Flipchart, blackboard or smartboard are available. <p>Execution</p> <p>Step 1 The teacher explains, that negative ideas about so-called 'gypsies' have been around for centuries and that old prejudices still exist, no matter how absurd they are.</p> <p>Step 2 The teacher should transition to the next phase by telling the pupils that one of these centuries-old prejudices centres around the idea that so-called 'gypsies' regularly abduct children, and that they are now going to look more closely at this prejudice in group work.</p>	
Main section (15 min.) GW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Working in three groups, pupils now explore a range of examples of antigypsyist prejudice around alleged child abduction by 'gypsies' and do the task assigned to their group:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Group 1: {1}Fake news{/1} (Material 6)Group 2: {1}Attacks in Italy{/1} (Material 7)Group 3: {1}The Hunchback of Notre Dame{/1} (Material 8)	<p>M6 Worksheet "Fake news: Examples from Germany"</p> <p>M7 Worksheet "Attacks in Italy"</p> <p>M8 Worksheet "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"</p>

Presentation
of results
(20 min.)

PP PO

Step 1 Each group of pupils now presents its findings to the other group. They should focus on the role of the prejudice around alleged child abduction in the example they are describing.

Step 2 Key results:

- Pupils recognise the similarities of the examples presented and see the connection to the reporting on Maria.
- Pupils realise how this stereotype may lead to exclusion of and violence against Romani people.
- Pupils realise that the stereotype is not based on a false generalisation, but on a deeply rooted fear in societies that is projected onto Romani people.

Step 3 Pupils then move on to a discussion of any similarities or differences they notice between their examples and the case of 'Maria'.

Step 4 The teacher may wish to find out if the pupils have heard of this prejudice in any other context.

Additional material

- board/flip chart

Lesson No 3 : Detailed work on essentialising ideas around 'race', 'culture' and 'ethnicity'

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Introduction (5 min.) TP	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pupils will learn about and reflect on the ways in which the construction of groups of people defined by essentialising characteristics can give rise to discrimination, exclusion and ostracism. By the end of the lesson, pupils should be aware of the processes of essentialisation and attribution (of characteristics) as two steps or phases in the formation of antigypsyist prejudice. <p>Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The teacher provides coloured stickers (office supplies stores). The dots should have a maximum of two differences, e.g. colour (red, blue, yellow etc.) and markings (for example, some have a smaller black dot in the centre while others do not). <p>Execution</p> <p>'Dot on your Forehead'</p> <p>Step 1 The teacher asks the pupils to bring their chairs into a circle and to close their eyes for approximately one minute. Pupils should also be advised that no talking is allowed for the duration of the exercise.</p> <p>Step 2 The teacher explains to the pupils that when they have opened their eyes, they will see a small change in the others' appearance, but does not explain what that change will be.</p> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">The teacher should take care when distributing the dots to avoid reproducing existing groupings and hierarchies within the class (e.g. by giving all the members of a particular friendship group the same colour dot).Any pupils who are resisting taking part due to the initially 'secret' nature of the exercise can be taken aside and told that the 'change' is a small sticker on the pupils' foreheads.</div> <p>Step 3 When the pupils have closed their eyes, the teacher goes round and places the stickers on the pupils' foreheads. One pupil should be missed out. Under no circumstances should this pupil be one whom, in day-to-day school life, the rest of the class tend to regard as an 'outsider'.</p> <p>Step 4 Once the teacher has been round the class, pupils can be asked to open their eyes.</p> <p>The role play used here is inspired by and draws on the exercise 'Dot on your Forehead' (Punkt auf der Stirn) from a German practical handbook on antigypsyism for school and extra-curricular educational use (Methodenhandbuch zum Thema Antiziganismus für die schulische und außerschulische Bildungsarbeit) issued by Alte Feuerwache e.V. Jugendbildungsstätte Kaubstraße, 2014, pp. 110-113.</p>	<p>Additional material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">coloured dot stickers

Role play
(10 min.)

Step 1 The teacher gives the pupils the following task: 'You have seven minutes to form groups without talking to each other.'

Step 2 During the seven minutes that follow, the teacher primarily observes what takes place. They should pay particular attention to the dynamics that arise among the pupils so that pupils can be supported with any emotions that emerge during the process. Pupils should not be forced to participate in anything they feel uncomfortable with. The teacher additionally needs to make sure pupils do not speak and give regular updates on the time remaining.

The exercise should always last seven minutes, even where group formation appears complete before this period has elapsed and pupils are indicating that they have 'finished'. Continuing to the end of the allotted time period can permit the emergence of additional dynamic processes of group formation and, in some instances, of creative acts by individuals or groups. Should this happen, the teacher should observe closely what takes place.

Step 3 Once seven minutes have elapsed, the teacher tells the pupils they may speak again and asks them to come together in a circle, remaining in the groups in which they have arranged themselves.

Analysis
and
discussion
(30 min.)

D PO

- The purpose of the now-ensuing discussion is to enable the pupils to reflect on the exercise together and to connect the experience to the topic of antigypsyism.
- The teacher may wish to ask the following questions in order to initiate discussion:
 - Why did you form the groups you did?
 - How did you (individually) experience the process of forming the groups? Did you feel welcome in your group, or did it feel as if the others were only tolerating you?
 - How did you experience being 'labelled' with the stickers?
 - (To the pupil without the sticker) How did you feel during the exercise? Did you feel disadvantaged and left out, or special and free?
- (Now transitioning to the pupils' everyday experience)
 - Who decides who we are and determines our identity?
 - How are groups formed in your day-to-day school lives?
 - In what ways can these group formation processes cause problems?
 - How can we be more aware of processes by which some people end up excluded?
- When transferring the learnings from the exercise to the topic of antigypsyism, teachers should explore aspects of societal processes of attribution of characteristics, including contradictions between a person's self-image and the image others hold of them, societal influences on ascriptions and attributions made to individuals or groups, and issues around identity.
- The teacher should ensure the following issues come up in the discussion:
 - The process of group formation which took place in the 'dot exercise' was outside the individual pupils' control in two ways: a) the dots (like stigmata) were applied by an external authority, and b) the pupils received a number of signals from other pupils as to which group they were 'supposed to' be in.
 - There is never a completely unambiguous way of dividing people into groups in accordance with to actual or purported external differences.
 - It's always a few particularly proactive people who bring groups together and drive the process of their formation. We need to take a closer look at their role and how they do what they do.
 - Group formation processes always take place on the basis of socially constructed categories – this means that people create these categorisations. It's not about people's actual skin or hair colour (or other distinguishing characteristics), but rather about social perceptions of these characteristics. This point will require particular emphasis if pupils begin drawing analogies between the 'dots' and skin colour or other properties.

Lesson No 4 : Transferring our new awareness to the events around 'Maria'; Summary of unit

Phase	Content	Media, Material
Introduction (20 min.) D PO	<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">By the end of this lesson, pupils should understand the process of essentialisation which drove the events around 'Maria'. They should be able to identify and distinguish the processes of essentialisation and attribution (of characteristics) as two steps or phases in the formation of antigypsyist prejudice. <p>Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teachers should prepare by reading 'The workings of antigypsyist prejudice' (background information, Material 9).They ensure the technical requirements for the projection of a still image (time code 00:04) from the video of Material 2. <p>Execution</p> <p>Step 1 To transition the pupils' focus back to antigypsyism, the teacher asks them to think back to the 'dot exercise' and attempt to identify a characteristic (like the different dots) which played a decisive role in the categorisation of the individuals involved in the 'Maria' case.</p> <p>Step 2 To help pupils, the teacher can remind them of the press release issued by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma (Material 4): (Quote from press release)</p> <p><i>'The Central Council is of the view that the actions of the police in this case were based solely on pseudo-ethnic criteria, namely that blond children found with Romani parents or carers constitute grounds for police suspicion of illegal activity.'</i></p> <p>Step 3 Following this, the teacher shows the pupils the still image of 'Maria' and her foster parents from the Deutsche Welle film (Material 2) and asks them if they can think why this particular image appeared in almost all media reports on the case.</p> <p>Step 4 The teacher can additionally ask the pupils – if the issue does not arise by itself – what they think might have happened if the parents had been blond and the child dark.</p> <p>Step 5 It is important to point out that the 'pseudo-ethnic criteria' referred to in the Central Council's press release are of influence not only in sectors of society which tend to adhere to right-wing or populist views, but also – often at an unconscious level – in mainstream organisations and media which view themselves as having high editorial standards.</p>	<p>M2 Video, transcript "Romani people protest against reporting on 'Maria'"</p>

Diagram for summarising learnings (20 min.)

TP

Step 1 The teacher now creates a diagram (see Material 10) which presents a rough overview of how antigypsyist prejudice arises.

Step 2 It is more helpful to learning for the teacher to complete the diagram while giving the explanation rather than showing the complete diagram and then explaining.

Step 3 The teacher should provide a particularly detailed explanation of stages 1 and 2 of the process. In so doing, they can refer back both to the phenomenon of categorisation based on the assumption of a single 'Romani' skin tone (step 1), and the prejudice around alleged child abduction as an attribution of a trait to Romani people (step 2) and link these to the more general principles underlying the workings of prejudice.

Step 4 To conclude, the teacher may wish to explain that antigypsyist perceptions lay the foundations for continually repeated instances of discrimination, ostracism and persecution, leading to incidents such as the attacks by 'Italians' on the innocent residents of the buildings attacked in Naples.

M9

Background information "The workings of antigypsyist prejudice"

M10

Diagram "How antigypsyist prejudice arises"

Additional material

- board/flip chart

M1 Video, transcript “I'm not a swindler”

- Girl 1** Hi, my name is Samara...
- Girl 2** I'm Lolita.
- Girl 3** My name is Rosa.
- Girl 1** ... I am eight years old und what I like most is playing papa and mama with my friends.
- Boy 1** I like to go on holiday and if I had a boat, I would go on a trip.
- Boy 2** To Hawaii.
- Boy 1** To Miami.
- Girl 4** What I like most is eating ice cream.
- Girl 5** Painting my nails.
- Boy 3** I would like to study Law.
- Girl 6** Mathematics, Spanish, and everything.
- Boy 4** And I want to wear my hair up like this.
- Off voice** Now I would like you to take the dictionary and look for the word 'Roma'.
- Girl 1** It's heavy.
- Girl 4** How to spell 'Roma'?
- Boy 2** Let me see...
- Boy 1** Roma: ...
- Boy 3** Roma...
- Boy 2** A person belonging to a community...
- Boy 1** ... originally from India...
- Boy 3** From the word "Egyptian" as it was first believed they came from Egypt.
- Boy 2** 5. Swindler.
- Girl 5** Swindler.
- Off voice** Do you know what swindler means?
- Girl 3** No.
- Boy 3** No.
- Boy 1** No.
- Off voice** Could you look it up, please?
- Boy 1** Just a second.
- Girl 1** Swindler...
- Boy 3** Swindler.
- Girl 1** ... who cheats...
- Girl 1** ... who with cunning ...
- Girl 6** ... deceits...
- Girl 3** ... and lies.
- Boy 3** Tries to cheat somebody...
- Boy 1** ... out of something.
- Boy 4** We don't do that.

Boy 2 But other people can do that too.

Girl 2 I don't like what the dictionary says about us.

Girl 6 It says bad things about us.

Girl 3 It doesn't seem fair.

Girl 1 Because this is a lie.

Girl 2 I'm not a swindler.

Girl 4 Dictionary of the Spanish Language.

Text I'm not a swindler.

Sources:

Fundación Secretariado Gitano, broadcast 8 April 2015

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano is a Spanish NGO working for the inclusion and support of the Romani community in Europe

M2 Video, transcript “Romani people protest against reporting on ‘Maria’”

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfIM4qandVs> (01:05 min.)

Greek police noticed Maria during a swoop on a Romani settlement – because she was blonde and did not resemble the people who claimed to be her parents. A number of media outlets jumped to conclusions, referring to child abduction by – in their words – ‘gypsies’. This was demonstrably not the case; the supposition emerged, says [the Romani rights activist] Romani Rose, from deeply rooted prejudice against his people. An expert on racism comments that crime occurs in all sections of society, ‘but when an impoverished Romani family has a child with the wrong colour hair, the entire mechanism of age-old prejudices and ghoulish phantasms kicks in... [Wolfgang Benz, racism expert]’. And this seems to happen not only among adherents of extreme right-wing ideologies, but also in a wide range of media outlets, and among the broad mass of society. Romani Rose is even of the view that antigypsyism has experienced a renaissance in Germany in recent years.

Sources:

Deutsche Welle, DW Nachrichten, broadcast 5 November 2013

Udo Bauer, ‘Roma gegen “Maria”-Berichterstattung’

M3 Worksheet “The ‘Maria’ case in the media”

The scandal around ‘Maria’ began in October 2013. Various media outlets in Germany and numerous other states in Europe and beyond carried reports of a police raid on a ‘Roma camp’ in the Greek town of Farsala during which officers ‘noticed’ a small girl due to the difference in her looks from those of the couple, Eleftheria D. and Christos S., who claimed to be her parents. The reports recounted how these two individuals were then arrested and remanded in custody on suspicion of child abduction and other offences. They also informed readers and viewers that a DNA test had revealed that the girl was not the biological daughter of her supposed parents and that the couple’s papers contained inconsistencies relating to further children.

The media were quick to report the assumption of the Greek police that a ‘child trafficking ring’ was in operation. Numerous articles described how the events had inspired new hope in the parents of Madeleine McCann (‘Maddie’), a British child who had disappeared in Portugal in 2007, that they might be reunited with their daughter. Many media reports carried photographs of the two arrested adults and the girl with the intent of emphasising the perceived differences in their appearance. Adjectives frequently used to describe Maria included ‘blond’, ‘fair-skinned’ and ‘green-eyed’.

A few days after the first reports, some media claimed that Maria’s case was ‘probably not an isolated one’, backing up their assertions with reports of another case of ‘alleged child trafficking’ in Greece and of the removal of a further ‘blond girl from [a] Roma family’ in Ireland. Claims made by Kostas Giannopoulos, head of the children’s charity ‘The Smile of the Child’, which had looked after Maria after she was removed from the care of Eleftheria D. and Christos S., also served the media as proof for the supposition of widespread child abduction. Giannopoulos argued that some of the abductions were masterminded by criminal Roma syndicates with connections to Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, which targeted children of northern European parents and from Balkan countries for abduction.

In Ireland, where two children were removed from their homes, DNA tests revealed within two days of the removals that both children had in fact been taken from their biological parents. The authorities promised a thorough investigation, which led in July of 2014 to the publication of a report of almost 140 pages by Emily Logan, the then Irish Ombudsman for Children, which termed the case an instance of racial profiling. The parents of one of the children were awarded 60,000 Euro in compensation in 2015.

The ‘Maria’ case concluded some days after the initial reports with the discovery of the child’s biological mother, a Roma woman from Bulgaria, whose statement – that she had left Maria in the care of the two arrested adults because she herself was unable to look after her - was consistent with the unofficial foster parents’ account. Despite this, the couple received a custodial sentence for various offences and Maria remained in the care of the state. Media later reported that a court had removed the couple’s right to care and control of Maria in May 2014; at the same time, a request from Bulgarian authorities to take on the care of the child was refused. The child abduction case against the couple was not dropped until November 2015.

In Germany, the tone of reporting on the case changed after 5 November 2013, when the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma held a press conference at which it sharply criticised the media and accused its outlets of stigmatising and criminalising the entire Romani minority. Among the proliferation of media reports on this critique, few involved any reflection on the outlet’s own previous reporting of the case.

Sources:

Deutscher Presserat (2014): Pressemitteilung vom 12 March 2014: Spekulationen um Limburger Bischof/Diskriminierende Bildunterschrift. <http://www.presserat.de/presserat/news/pressemitteilungen/datum/2014/>

Ireland: Weiteres blondes Mädchen aus Roma-Familie genommen (2013). In: Die Welt. 22 October 2013.

<http://www.welt.de/vermischtes/article121116789/Weiteres-blondes-Maedchen-aus-Roma-Familie-genommen.html>

Kálnoky, Boris/ Moutzouri, Dimitra (2013): Findelkind: Maria erst seit Juni in Griechenland gemeldet. In: Die Welt. 21 October 2013.

<http://www.welt.de/vermischtes/article121086484/Maria-erst-seit-Juni-in-Griechenland-gemeldet.html>

Logan, Emily (2014): Garda Sfochana Act 2005 (Section 42). Special Inquiries relating to Garda Sfochana. Order 2013. Report of Ms Emily Logan.

<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Emily%20Logan%20report.pdf/Files/Emily%20Logan%20report.pdf>

Maddie Kindesentführung: Vierjähriges Mädchen entdeckt (2013). In: Frankfurter Rundschau. 19 October 2013.

<http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/maddie-kindesentfuehrung-vierjaehriges-maedchen-entdeckt,1472782,24683648.html>

Statement von Romani Rose, Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma, zur Pressekonferenz. 05 November 2013.

<http://zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/wp-content/uploads/presse/294.pdf>

Roma Griechenland: Fall Maria ist wohl kein Einzelfall (2013). In: Frankfurter Rundschau. 25 October 2013.

<http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/roma-griechenland-fall-maria-ist-wohl-kein-einzelfall,1472782,24782178.html>
Tichomirowa, Katja (2013): Griechenland: Ist Maria Opfer von Kinderhändlern? In: Frankfurter Rundschau. 22 October 2013.
<http://www.fr-online.de/panorama/griechenland-ist-maria-opfer-von-kinderhaendlern-,1472782,24743076.html>
Zieheltern Sorgerecht entzogen: Roma-Mädchen Maria bleibt in Griechenland. RP Online. 31 May 2014.
<http://www.rp-online.de/panorama/ausland/roma-maedchen-maria-bleibt-in-griechenland-aid-1.4280161>

Tasks

1. Describe what actually happened in Greece as neutrally and objectively as possible.

2. Similarly, describe what actually happened in Ireland.

If you have time, you can look online for examples of discriminatory reporting in the case. Use search terms such as ‘Maria’, ‘Roma’, ‘Greece’ and ‘abduction’.

You will find most examples of discriminatory reporting in pieces written or made before November 2013.

M4 Worksheet “Press release issued by Central Council of German Sinti and Roma”

‘Stolen children’?

Public vilification of Roma in Europe and the media’s responsibility

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma is deeply concerned about the effects of national and international media reporting on alleged cases of ‘abduction of blond children’ by Roma people in Greece and Ireland. Police raids, first in Greece, subsequently in Ireland, led to children being removed from their parents or carers and placed in state care.

The Central Council is of the view that the actions of the police in th[ese] case[s] were based solely on pseudo-ethnic criteria, namely that blond children found with Romani parents or carers constitute grounds for police suspicion of illegal activity. Subsequently to these events, media speculation produced supposed connections between the raids and all sorts of criminal activity, from child abduction and abuse and forced marriage to alleged trading in human organs. Some media reports created original versions of the events and evidently inaccurate images of a supposedly ‘traumatised child abducted by Roma’ which were subsequently projected onto the entire Roma minority in Germany and similarly worldwide. Once the details of the cases had emerged, it was only some media outlets that admitted to having been influenced in their reporting by old antigypsyist prejudices and animosities.

It is entirely understandable that the hundreds of parents whose children are missing responded to these reports with new hope that their children may be alive and living with their Roma abductors. Yet this response effectively turns all Sinti and Roma people into potential child-stealers. The impact on the Sinti and Roma communities in Germany has already been severe. Sinti in Germany have told the Central Council of being made to feel shame and humiliation in their interactions with neighbours and work colleagues. Children from Sinti and Roma families have been asked by schoolmates if they steal children or were stolen themselves.

In this way, across Europe and beyond, the entire Romani minority has suffered stigmatisation and criminalisation, and has fallen under suspicion worldwide of keeping missing children from their true parents. Skinheads attacked a Roma family with a blond child in Serbia; in Ireland, children were removed from their parents in highly disproportionate police raids on the sole basis of so-called ‘observations reported by the public’ and of the children’s blond colouring. Subsequent DNA tests proved that these children had been separated from their biological parents.

The Central Council welcomes the appeals made by Irish human rights organisations to the government of Ireland to conduct a detailed investigation into the circumstances of these unjustified police raids and to apologise to [Ireland’s Roma] minority.

The manner in which these police operations were conducted, and the subsequent media reporting with its exclusive focus on the ‘white’ and ‘blond’ appearance of the children in question, were essentially founded on racist assumptions which are now exerting a severe impact on the entire minority in Germany and across Europe.

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma wishes to emphasise its awareness that it is the task of the police and state authorities to take action against every case of human trafficking and illegal adoption. However, we consider it inappropriate and illegitimate to generate images in the public consciousness that reactivate and reinforce racist prejudices. The Central Council therefore calls upon the newly constituted Bundestag to appoint a panel of experts to document and quantify hostility and animosity towards Sinti and Roma people in Germany and report back to the {1}Bundestag{/1} once in each parliamentary term. We consider such action essential in view of Germany’s history and the murderous effects of the National Socialist racial ideology which systematically ascribed negative characteristics to the [Roma] minority in order to legitimise the genocide committed in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Romani Rose

Chair, Central Council of German Sinti and Roma

Source:

Press release issued by Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, 5 November 2013.

Tasks

1. Which criticisms does the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma make of media reporting on the case of 'Maria'?

2. Give your views on these criticisms.

M5 Worksheet “The case of ‘Maria’ from the point of view of Roma NGOs”

Informative piece by Benjamin Ignác¹

“The case of ‘Maria’ from the point of view of Roma NGOs”

After local media reported on the case of the “blonde angel” Maria – a light-skinned, green-eyed, blonde young girl found in the custody of a dark-skinned Romani couple – the whole world suddenly became outraged and interested in this Romani family. The case of Maria is interesting both from the perspective of media communications and as a perfect illustration of how media can be used to resurrect long-forgotten stereotypes and incite hate against certain groups of people - in this case the Roma.

Maria started appearing in the media during October 2013, shortly after she was taken into state care because the authorities would not believe that a blonde-haired girl with a light complexion could be the daughter of a Romani couple with dark complexions. According to Panayiotis Pardalis, a spokesman for the charity “Smile of the Child”, which took custody of Maria, ‘it was obvious’ that she was not a Roma girl.

In 2014, the authorities conducted an investigation and found out that Maria is in fact Romani, but her biological parents live in Bulgaria. They returned Maria to the Greek Romani couple, who love the child, have raised her as their own, and did not intend to sell her, as some reports have claimed.

According to the Ukrainian Roma expert Natasha Dukatch, “international news overflowed with details of Maria’s situation, stirring up public opinion against the Roma people and awakening stereotypes from the Middle Ages. [...] From the time the story broke, international media created an evil image of the Roma couple as kidnappers and poor and despicable creatures. [...] In repeating biased information, media around the world did not fact-check the information from the local Greek press, and they never pointed out that the Roma couple was telling the truth from the start.”

Human Rights Watch reported some of the headlines in the Greek newspapers: “Roma snatch babies!” “The DNA ‘spoke’: The 4-year-old found in a Romani settlement is not a Gypsy,” “Amber Alert: Dangerous Roma circuit snatches babies!!!”.

In 2013, in a public statement, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) asked the media “to act responsibly in reporting the situation, especially as the full facts of the original case have still not been established.” The ERRC statement underlined that “irresponsible reporting could have severe, negative consequences for Roma families across Europe. If a crime has been committed in Greece, and this is still by no means clear, those who committed it should be treated as individuals, not as representatives of their ethnicity. Criminality is not related to ethnicity.”

According to Romea – a Romani news agency in the Czech Republic - “The media created panic in the Roma camps and they kept looking for blonde kids. If they knew the community at all they’d know that many Roma children are blonde. There’s a complete ignorance of Roma issues and a disinterest to learn about them. They’ve harmed an already vulnerable community and sent them further into the margins.”

The charity “Smile of the Child” received over 8,000 calls and emails from parents around the world, claiming that ‘gypsies’ had kidnapped their daughters. Three couples, one each from Greece, Britain and Ireland, insisted that Maria looked like their missing child.

The account of what happened in Greece may have prompted Irish police in different parts of the country to take two blond children, a 7-year-old girl and a 2-year-old boy, away from their Roma parents. In both unrelated cases, DNA tests showed the children indeed had been living with their real parents.

Serbian news media reported that a group of skinheads in the Serbian city of Novi Sad had tried to abduct a Roma child from in front of his house because his skin was fairer than that of his father.

In Italy, the anti-immigrant Northern League responded to news of Maria’s supposed abduction by demanding inspections of all Roma communities to check for missing children.

Not a single article even mentioned the possibility of human rights violations against the Roma couple. As they had adopted Maria illegally and had problems with their papers, no one considered their human rights. The media failed to report on this angle or even ask the question as to whether Roma have human rights. It seems that Roma people will always be guilty of alleged crimes until they are proven innocent.

In an interview with the *New York Times*, the former director of the European Roma Rights Centre, Dezideriu Gergely, said: "Imagine if the situation were reversed and the children were brown and the parents were white, would they have ever been taken away? The most dangerous consequence of the hysteria is that now we have to live in fear that our children can be removed from us on the basis of a wrong perception. No one should be profiled on the basis of their ethnicity. [...] Applying collective responsibility to the entire Roma community is unacceptable."

In the years that followed, only a handful of media outlets and Roma NGOs kept reporting on the injustice endured by Maria and her parents. Some of the charges against the parents were dropped and Maria stayed long in state care. The world is no longer interested, so now she will become invisible once more. The only thing that will remain is the negative public perception of Roma as baby snatchers.

¹ Benjamin Ignác is the Digital Communication Manager at the European Roma Rights Centre.

Sources:

- Apostolou, Nikolia: Breaking News No More: Life for Roma in Greece a Year after "Maria". In: Romea.cz News. 27 October 2014.
<http://www.romea.cz/en/features-and-commentary/breaking-news-no-more-life-for-roma-in-greece-a-year-after-maria>
- Bilefsky, Dan: Roma, Feared as Kidnappers, See Their Own Children at Risk. In: The New York Times. 25 October 2013.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/26/world/europe/for-the-roma-fears-of-kidnapping-in-europe-only-mirror-their-own.html>
- Cossé, Eva: Europe: Time to Drop the Roma Myths. In: Human Rights Watch. 4 November 2013.
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/04/europe-time-drop-roma-myths>
- Dukach, Natasha: Media Promote Stereotypes Against Roma People, in: Fair Observer. Make sense of the world. 26 June 2015.
<https://www.fairobserver.com/region/europe/media-promote-stereotypes-against-roma-people-54078/>
- Gökçen, Sinan: ERRC Urges Restraint and Responsible Reporting in Child Removal Cases. Budapest, 22 October 2013.
<http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=4212>
- Gökçen, Sinan: Guilty until proven innocent: injustice, racism and the Roma. European Roma Rights Centre.
<http://www.errc.org/news/guilty-until-proven-innocent-injustice-racism-and-the-roma>
- Jovanovic, Zelico: Maria is Roma – so now she will become invisible once more. In: The Guardian. 28 October 2013.
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/28/maria-roma-invisible>
- ROMEa: Greece: Attorney for Romani couple says they adopted girl with her mother's consent. In: Romea.cz News. 22 October 2013.
<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/greece-attorney-for-romani-couple-says-they-adopted-girl-with-her-mother-s-consent>
- ROMEa: Some charges dropped against Romani couple in Greece who cared for Romani child from Bulgaria. In: Romea.cz News. 12. November 2015.
<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/some-charges-dropped-against-romani-couple-in-greece-who-cared-for-romani-child-from-bulgaria>

Tasks

1. What criticisms of media reporting on the case of 'Maria' do representatives of the Roma community raise?

2. What impact has this reporting had on the Roma community?

M6 Worksheet “Fake news: Examples from Germany”

Social networks such as Facebook frequently act as a channel for fabricated ‘reports’ which spread quickly and widely through ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ and gain considerable attention.

Time after time, the internet, email and social networks act as channels for fabricated ‘reports’ and warnings which users pass on to large numbers of their contacts, often without thinking. These are called ‘hoaxes’, ‘urban myths’ or ‘fake news’. One particular type of fake news, which has been doing the rounds for years in various forms and gathering large numbers of ‘likes’ and shares, relates to alleged child abductions by a putative human organ-trafficking ‘mafia’.

There are two fundamental variations on this theme, each of which is updated and ‘adapted’ to new localities time and again. The first of these consists in a warning of child abductions by a ‘Bulgarian and Romanian organ-trafficking mafia’ with the purpose of harvesting and selling the victims’ organs. The stories generally feature warnings around ‘foreign car number plates’ and ‘gypsies’.

The second type involves warnings of ‘gypsies’, ‘Romanian women’ or ‘Eastern Europeans’ who allegedly loiter in a branch of a major clothing chain (different shops are named depending on locality), drug children, and shave their heads in the shop changing room in order to escape with them unapprehended. The purpose of the ‘abductions’ in this case is likewise said to be organ harvesting.

The police find themselves obliged at regular intervals to deal with the consequences of these stories; for instance, they had calls from worried mothers asking for information about the threat after they or their children had received the following e-mail warning of Bulgarian child abductors:

‘Keep a close eye on your children!!! There are two men about in Bad Nauheim and Friedberg in a white delivery van with a BG (Bulgarian) number plate who are trying to abduct children! They are thought to be part of the organ [trading] mafia! In Butzbach, as well, the police have been searching [for them] all day. Don’t let your children go out alone!’

These messages had been shared many times and forwarded to other users with corresponding comments. Eventually, this ‘warning’ was circulating throughout Germany, with a range of different towns and cities referenced. Similar stories had been doing the rounds previously. While it is always sensible to reserve judgement, this story is a confirmed hoax with no basis in fact. Various sources claim it originated from the fictitious plot of an episode of a popular television detective drama (*Tatort*) broadcast in 2011, as the first stories of this kind appeared after its transmission. The danger of such invented stories is the number of people who believe them.

The police in the German town of Gütersloh was forced on 20 January 2014 to issue the following press release in response to a post based on the ‘drugged and shaved child’ version of the myth:

‘For some months now, rumours have been circulating on the internet, specifically on Facebook, that a child has been abducted from a large supermarket (sometimes the story cites home furnishings superstores or department stores instead) in Gütersloh. The rumours claim that the child was taken to the toilet by a Romanian couple and its head shaved so it could be abducted for organ trafficking. The Gütersloh district police wish to make it clear here that such an event NEVER happened. These are simply scare stories circulating on the internet and have NO basis WHATSOEVER in fact.’

Sources:

Facebook contributions from the years 2014 and 2012, documented from Mimikama.at

<http://www.mimikama.at/allgemein/die-organmafia-in-essen-und-duisburg-ein-fake-verbreitet-angst/#up6>

<http://www.mimikama.at/allgemein/vom-einbrecher-zum-chirurgen-so-etwas-geht-nur-auf-facebook/>

Tasks

1. Describe the shared fears driving the fake news stories.

2. The stories use various terms to describe the alleged criminals. Discuss whether, and to what extent, the terms ‘gypsies’, ‘Eastern Europeans’, ‘Bulgarian’ and ‘Romanian’ are applied to different groups of people and whether they might in fact refer back to the same negative stereotype.

3. Are you aware of similar fake news about your own country shared in social media? Please give details.

4. Do you think there is a connection between this hoax and the reporting around 'Maria'? Explain your view.

5. Give and explain your view on the following statement: ‘These fake news stories are just modern variations on the old prejudice of “gypsies” abducting children.’

M7 Worksheet “Attacks in Italy”

Since 2008, Italy has repeatedly seen antigypsyist incidents involving attacks on Roma people. Some of these incidents took place in Naples.

In the Neapolitan district of Ponticelli, a makeshift settlement populated by the Roma ethnic minority was subjected to violent attacks. The organised nature of the violence led media reports to refer to ‘pogrom-like riots’. Stones were thrown, and youths on mopeds were captured on film by television reporting teams as they launched Molotov cocktails at the huts. The mob that had gathered directed verbal abuse at firefighters attempting to put out the flames. Hundreds of Roma people fled in their vehicles, and 500 were escorted out of the city under police protection. A group of 56 Roma, including 30 children, has been missing since the incident. There were no reports of arrests among the rioters and arsonists.

Around 160,000 Roma people live in Italy, primarily on the fringes of cities. About half of them hold Italian citizenship. Together with the Sinti in the country, they make up a population which official figures put at approximately 342,000. The charitable organisation Caritas believes the true figure to be considerably higher, amounting to a total of 556,000.

An incident in Naples which spoke to the familiar prejudice of ‘child-stealing gypsies’ fuelled popular outrage in the city to boiling point. A 16-year-old Romani girl, who had been arrested since the reported incident, had allegedly, on the weekend before the violent attacks, attempted to abduct a six-month-old baby. Claims such as these surface at regular intervals in the Italian media. Journalists devote considerable column inches to reporting on these purported incidents, thus contributing to a climate of hostility and animosity towards Roma.

As well as the stone-throwing and attacks with incendiary bombs, physical aggression towards individual Roma people occurred; one example was an incident in which two Roma women going shopping were chased from a supermarket. As noted above, no arrests of arsonists or stone-throwers were recorded; the contemporary political class would not have welcomed them, if the ‘partial understanding’ for the mob’s behaviour professed by Rosa Russo Iervolino, Naples’ mayor and a member of the left-wing Democratic Party, is anything to go by.

A few days after the events, the Italian office of the human rights organisation EveryOneGroup published a report which indicated that the account of the incident given by the police and the media could not be accurate. The EveryOneGroup staff believe that Angelica V., the arrested 16-year-old, had been lured into a trap, and that Flora M., the child’s mother, and her father, the child’s grandfather, were part of a group of local residents which had met several times to discuss ways of getting rid of the Romani dwellings in their area. The allegation of child abduction could have served as a catalyst for the subsequent attacks on the Romani residences, which in turn led to their evacuation.

An Italian court sentenced Angelica V. to almost four years in prison on the basis of Flora M.’s statements and without any further reliable evidence. Now released from prison after serving her sentence, Angelica V. continues to assert that she was unjustly accused and convicted and never so much as set eyes on Flora M.’s daughter.

Sources:

Wikinews of 17.05.2008: https://de.wikinews.org/wiki/Ausschreitungen_gegen_Roma_in_Italien

Braun, Michael (2008): Pogrome in Neapel: Molotow-Cocktails auf Roma-Baracken. In: Online edition of taz of 15. Mai 2008. <http://www.taz.de/!5182179/>

EveryOneGroup (2008): Anti-gypsy sentiments out of control in Italy. The truth about the kidnapping in Naples. http://everyonegroup.com/Everyone/MainPage/Entries/2008/5/18_Anti-gypsy_sentiments_out_of_control_in_Italy._The_truth_about_the_kidnapping_in_Naples.html

Manzo, Guiseppe/Viscardi, Alessio (2012): Interview with Angelica Varga: Angelica tona a Ponticelli e racconta la sua verità. <http://www.fanpage.it/angelica-torna-a-ponticelli-e-racconta-la-sua-verita-reportage/>

Tasks

1. Describe the events in Naples.

2. Explain the role played in the events by the assumption that a Roma girl had attempted to abduct a child.

3. Assuming that Angelica V. really did intend to abduct the child, explain why the local residents of the area attacked other Romani and non-Romani Romanians and destroyed their homes.

4. Do you think there is a connection between the Italian events and the fake news around ‘Maria’?

5. Give and explain your view on the following statement: ‘The prejudice about “gypsies” abducting children is dangerous because it can act as a justification for violence against Romani people.’

M8 Worksheet “The Hunchback of Notre Dame”

Many of you will know the love story between the hunchback of Notre Dame and the ‘gypsy girl’ Esmeralda. You may know it through the popular Disney animation released in 1996. The film is based on the novel by the French author Victor Hugo and was written over 180 years ago. Below you will find a description of parts of the story. Read the text carefully and try to work out what is happening. The following questions should guide you:

Is Esmeralda’s mother a ‘gypsy’?

Who brought Esmeralda up?

The novel tells of a French prostitute called Paquette, who yearned to have a child. She gave birth to a beautiful girl, who she named Agnes. One day a group of horsemen came to the town where they lived. They were vagabonds and thieves who were travelling through the country.

The novel describes them as having blackish-brown skin, with curly hair and silver rings in their ears. The faces of the women were even darker and their hair was tied in ponytails. The children were like monkeys. They were all heathens. They were said to be fortune tellers and there were rumours that they stole children and were cannibals.

Paquette wanted to have her beloved daughter’s fortune read and so took her to the ‘gypsies’. They stroked and caressed the girl, but she was scared and began to cry. Great happiness was foretold for the girl, she would become a most beautiful and virtuous queen.

The next morning, when little Agnes was still sleeping, Paquette crept out to visit a neighbour and tell her the good news. But when she returned the door was open and the child had disappeared, the only sign of her being one of her shoes on the floor.

The mother was distraught, nobody had seen anything or could help. After crying for a long time over her daughter’s tiny shoe she screamed in frenzy ‘To the Egyptian camp! To burn the witches!’ But the ‘gypsies’ were gone.

The novel then tells the complicated story of the hunchback and Esmeralda. Paquette, also known as La Chantefleurie, became a religious hermit, a recluse.

At the end of the novel Esmeralda is to be executed. She runs away and is caught by the recluse, who lives in a locked cell. Esmeralda asks what she has done to hurt her. But instead of answering the recluse only mutters ‘Daughter of Egypt! Daughter of Egypt! Daughter of Egypt!’ She then replies by shouting at the alleged Egyptian that she once had a beautiful daughter named Agnes, who had been stolen from her and eaten. Esmeralda replies that she had probably not even been born when it happened. The recluse disagrees and says she must have been with the ‘gypsies’ at that time. Her daughter would have been the same age as Esmeralda. It had been fifteen years since the ‘gypsies’ had stolen her child and eaten her with their teeth.

As the horsemen approached Esmeralda begged for pity, she had never done anything to hurt the recluse. She should release her and have pity, because just as the recluse was searching for her child, Esmeralda was searching for her parents. In desperation the recluse showed Esmeralda the little shoe, whereupon Esmeralda opened the little bag that she wore around her neck and produced the other shoe. They both immediately understood what had happened and their despair changed to unbridled joy.

Sources:

Hugo, Victor (1858): Notre Dame. Oder die Liebfrauenkirche zu Paris. Ein historischer Roman. Band 1. Übersetzt von Friedrich Seybold. Stuttgart. Online verfügbar im Projekt Gutenberg unter <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/notre-dame-4481/19> (18.02.2016).

Hugo, Victor (1858): Notre Dame. Oder die Liebfrauenkirche zu Paris. Ein historischer Roman. Band 2. Übersetzt von Friedrich Seybold. Stuttgart. Online verfügbar im Projekt Gutenberg unter <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/gesammelte-werke-band-2-4473/18> (18.02.2016).

Hugo Victor (1858) The Hunchback of Notre-Dame (Notre-Dame de Paris) Deni ; London, Everyman’s Library Dutton: New York 1973 (Aldine Press, J. Letchworth, Herts for J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd)

<https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.202635/2015.202635.Victor-Hugo-djvu.txt>

Tasks

1. Name the underlying fear or anxiety being experienced here.

2. Explain the reasons for the hatred expressed by the recluse for the group described as ‘gypsies’ and who the words ‘Egyptians’ ‘heathens’ and ‘witches’ refer to.

3. Evaluate the following statement ‘This novel is dangerous because it supports the old preconception that “gypsies” kidnapped children’.

4. The Disney film ‘The Hunchback of Notre Dame’ omits this part of the story. Suggest reasons why.

M9 Background information “The workings of antigypsyist prejudice”

The term ‘antigypsyism’ refers to attitudes and practices hostile to so-called ‘gypsies’ and founded on racist beliefs. It covers a diverse range of phenomena, including tendentious media reporting, arson attacks and the educational difficulties faced by many Romani people.

All animosities towards specific groups and individuals classed as belonging to them need to go through a three-stage process in order to come into being (cf. diagram in materials). The first stage involves the positing of at least two homogeneous groups, the ‘us’ group and the ‘them’ group, whose members all differ from the members of the other group by virtue of an apparent (or allegedly apparent) characteristic constructed as immutable. Such characteristics may include ‘race’, nationality, ethnic origin or a ‘culture’ perceived as existing unchanged in perpetuity. The second stage of the emergence of prejudice entails the attribution of specific characteristics to all members of a particular group, following the assumption that ‘all X are Y’. An example might be ‘All gypsies are lazy layabouts’. The third stage involves the evaluation of these characteristics, which usually results in rejection of the characteristics attributed to the ‘them’ group and valorisation of those ascribed to the ‘us’ group. This three-stage process allows us to understand a number of other related mechanisms, which we will now go on to discuss.

One cause of hostility towards other social groups may be the strengthening effect of such hostility on the ‘us’ group’s cohesion and therefore on the individual members’ self-esteem. A fundamental rule of the images and stereotypes attributed to ‘gypsies’ is that they do not arise from the characteristics or behaviours exhibited by those labelled as ‘gypsies’; we should instead regard antigypsyist prejudices as projections, that is, as outworkings of a type of perception in which members of the ‘us’ group transfer onto another group characteristics and activities which social norms and values deem inappropriate for them. This mechanism fundamentally underlies all profoundly held collective prejudices.

The danger inherent to prejudice resides in its tendency to result in social interactions and practices which severely restrict the life chances of those on their receiving end and may lead to their suffering catastrophic loss or damage to property, health and life. Such social interactions and practices encompass, alongside directly violent acts, structural discrimination in arenas such as education. The subtle yet profound exclusionary mechanisms at work here frequently function at an unconscious level and amount to a lack of sensitivity and critical self-reflection rather than to deliberate hostility.

Animosity towards other social groups, social practices, and the formation of prejudices are all subject to the political and historical contexts in which they emerge and exist; these may prevent antigypsyism from manifesting, encourage its development or, in the best case, inhibit it. People’s motivation to commit discriminatory acts or ostracise others stems from prejudices and stereotypes widespread in the majority culture; however, even where these are present, they are not, per se, sufficient to generate antigypsyist practices, which do not appear until the surrounding context meets and interacts with these prejudices.

Many Europeans grow up with prejudices about ‘gypsies’, usually without ever having interacted – at least not consciously – with a real-life member of the Romani minority. Antigypsyist stereotypes and prejudices occur across all arenas of society and find reproduction and dissemination in books, films, songs, advertising and the media, thus entering into children’s lives and mental landscapes at home and school and in the wider social environment. Most of these prejudices are negative in nature, such as the notion that ‘gypsies’ are ‘lazy’ and ‘workshy’; there are, however, positively connotated stereotypes such as the romantic idea of the carefree ‘gypsy life’.

We will now outline some examples of key, interrelated and interreferential prejudices and associations or attributions which make up the antigypsyist mindset. The notion of ‘non-identity’ is central to antigypsyist constructions, currently occurring most frequently in descriptions of ‘gypsies’ as ‘nomadic’ or ‘without a homeland’; such ascriptions deny Romani people a nationality perceived as fixed and thus label them as not possessing the core characteristic of identity formation as the ‘us’ group understands it. This concept of ‘nationality’ defines it not as citizenship, but rather as the combination of an enduring national tradition, a culture exhibiting fixed elements, a national territory and a nation state. A second key notion in antigypsyist ideology is the attribution to Romani people of a parasitical lifestyle. The most concise and illustrative manifestation of this idea may be the frequently encountered construction of an opposition between the ‘gypsy’ and the

'farmer'. The majority population receives the latter role, that is, the part of those who produce food, while antigypsyist logic assigns to the 'gypsies' the role of those living off the work of the 'farmers' hands. In ascribing to 'gypsies' a lack of assent and adherence to civilisatory principles underlying the distribution of goods, such as property, waged labour and the law, this prejudice constructs their behaviour as archaic, pre-civilisatory and parasitical, and in so doing forms the kernel around which the prejudices and stereotypes referenced above grow.

The third key element of antigypsyist thinking we shall describe here relates to the attribution to 'gypsies' of an attitude to life that is carefree – or reckless - and undisciplined, in contrast to that of the majority society. A diverse range of stereotypes and prejudices act as manifestations of this core belief, including ideas that 'gypsies' are permanently under the influence of drink or drugs or smoke to excess, are sexually unchaste or uninhibited, lend vocal expression to their emotions, and are given to ecstatic and dramatic performances of music and dance.

Antigypsyism is a complex phenomenon which calls for an analysis that takes account of all its diverse dimensions. Educational approaches to the issue should likewise take care to avoid focusing narrowly on one of its aspects and instead seek to do justice to the entire range of factors it encompasses.

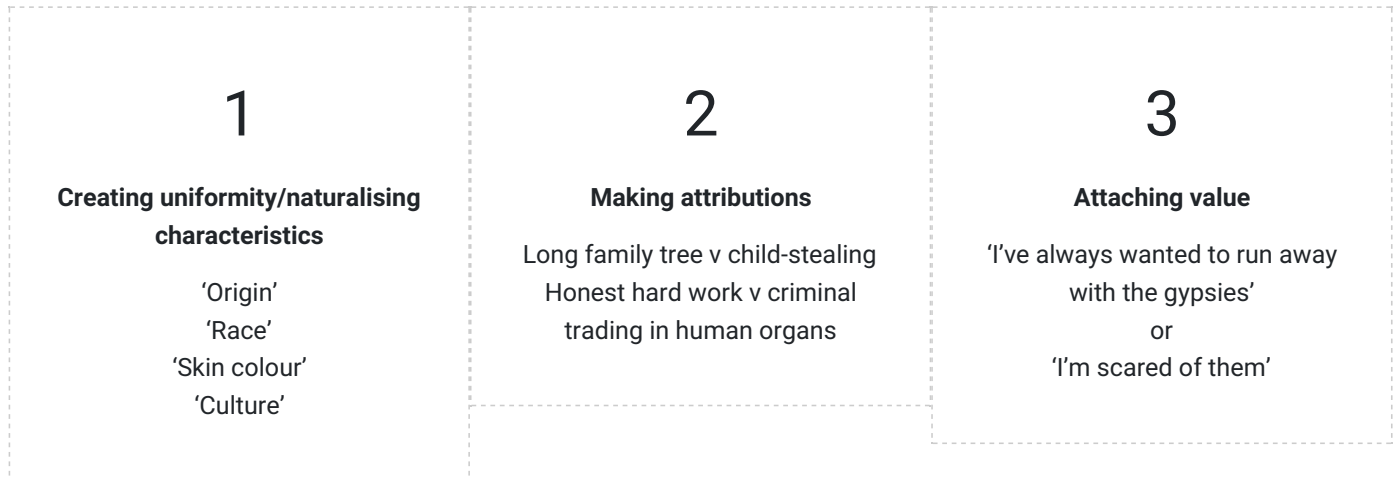
Source:

Abridged from End, Markus (2014): Die Wirkungsweise der antiziganistischen Vorurteilsstruktur. In Alte Feuerwache e.V. Jugendbildungsstätte Kaubstraße (ed.): Methodenhandbuch zum Thema Antiziganismus für die schulische und außerschulische Bildungsarbeit, 2nd edition, Münster, pp. 24-29.

M10 Diagram “How antigypsyist prejudice arises”

in-group

‘The Germans’, ‘the Italians’, ‘Christians’, etc.



out-group

‘The gypsies’, ‘the Roma’, ‘the heathens’, etc.

Source:

Markus End for Georg Eckert Institute / [zwischentoene.info](https://www.zwischentoene.info)