

# Roma Feminist Activism in Europe

Alba Hernández



*Romani*  
*Phen*

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Cover Illustration: **Estera Iordan**



**Romani feminist activism** is characterized by its transgenerational and transnational resilience and power of change. Romani women and their activism has nevertheless largely been researched by non-Roma, and it happens to be one of the most researched minorities by non-Roma in general. In part, this is due to the fact that for a long time both the material and non-material resources of Romani women's own political representation have been limited, thus creating a biased image of them.

Therefore, this research is a step towards the production of Romani feminist knowledge which is based on the voices of professional Romani feminist women activists from different countries. Throughout this qualitative research, an approach to the current situation of Romani feminist activism in Europe has been carried out.

First of all, a European historical background of the Romani women's activist movement from the 1990s to the present has been developed in order to understand the current situation of feminist activism. For this purpose, a bibliographical review has been conducted.

Secondly, a questionnaire was developed and answered by 15 Romani women feminists from 13 European countries and beyond. The purpose of the questionnaire is to analyze the personal and professional perspective of Romani women activists.

As a result, personal and professional motivations for their activism have been found, as well as their limitations within Roma feminist activism itself.

Along the same lines, the activists were asked about their professional backgrounds and the areas in which they work in doing their activism.

Finally, they were asked about their vision of Roma feminist activism within both the mainstream feminist movement and the mainstream Roma movement.

# 1. Introduction

The present research is based on a methodology divided into two sections. On the one hand, a literature review, and qualitative analysis on the other. This approach aims to contribute to the existing literature by providing current qualitative data on the situation of Roma feminism in a number of countries as well as its international connection. A socio-demographic study has been carried out through the creation of a questionnaire which has been filled in by Romani women of different ages, nationalities and countries of residence.

The research is divided into 4 phases:

**Phase 1: Literature review**

- Review of the existing literature on Romani Feminism since the 1990s at the European level

**Phase 2: Fieldwork:**

- Creation of questionnaire
- Selection of participants

**Phase 3: Analysis of the results:**

- Analysis of data obtained during fieldwork

**Phase 4: Final report:**

- Elaboration of the report of results

**Phase 1: Literature Review**

During the first phase of the research, a review of the existing literature on the Roma associative and feminist movement was carried out. This review of the existing literature includes several sources of information such as: academic articles, books, websites and videos.

This review has enabled us to contextualize the beginnings of the Romani women's associative movement in Europe and beyond in a global way without focusing on a specific country.

**Phase 2: Field Work:**

This second phase is divided into 2 sections:

**1. Creation of the questionnaire divided into 3 sections:**

- Section 1. Sociodemographic data. In this section, information about the participants was collected through 4 questions: basic personal information: name, nationality, age and country of residence. This information will allow us to draw a sociographic map of the women participants. At the same time, the first section of the questionnaire collected information about the background of the participants as well as their beginnings as Romani feminist women.

- Section 2. Work: In this section information has been collected on the work situation of the women participants as well as the issues they are working on in relation to Roma women. At the same time, we asked about the different connections that the participants have at the national and international levels with other NGOs, activists and scholars.

- Section 3. Roma feminist activism: In this section of the questionnaire we asked about their perspective on current Roma feminist activism.

**2. Selection of participants:**

The selection of the participants followed certain criteria in order to give a broad vision to the research. First of all, the participants must identify themselves as Roma feminist women. The second criterion was that the participants should be working in the field of Roma, working with Roma women either within an NGO, as an activist or researcher. The third criterion was related to the age and nationality of the participants in order to give a wider view of the current situation of Roma feminist movement. The number of participants is 15 Romani women between the ages of 24 and 56, experts in various academic and work areas. The group of countries is comprised of Romania, Spain, Germany, Hungary, North Macedonia, Turkey, Bulgaria, UK, Italy, France and Slovakia (unfortunately, it was impossible to add the answers of women from Serbia, Sweden, Ukraine, Portugal and Austria at the time of closing the results because they did not arrive on time).

**Phase 3: Analysis of the Results:**

- The third section of the research is the analysis of the data obtained during fieldwork through the narrative qualitative approach. Thus, through the narrative analysis method we have explored how Roma feminism has acted in various contexts across time.



History of Romani women political activism in Europe, achieving spaces for Romani women among the mainstream Roma movement.

Despite the fact that Romani women have achieved leadership positions in a male-dominated Roma movement for a while now, leading political Romani representation across Europe, it was not until 1990 when the first Romani women's movement started up in Spain by the Gitanas movement with a political and social activist approach (Kóczé, 2021). They also inspired the Romani women activism in Central/Eastern Europe which began to advance women's experiences in the Romani rights movement (Schultz & Bitu, 2019). As a consequence, 29 Romani women coming from seven different countries interrupted the "Primer Congreso Gitano de la Unión Europea" (The first European Union Gypsy Congress) in 1994 in Seville, Spain. This was the starting point for Romani women's feminist breakthroughs, defending the need to address women's issues and intersections, adding recommendations, and producing results (Kóczé, 2018; Adelantado, 2008). This political act of rebellion for the rights of Romani women within the Roma movement raised the interest and urgency among Romani women activists to set and begin to define their own agendas (Schultz & Bitu, 2019, p. 29). Their Manifesto was addressed by the Council of Europe (CoE) which organized a hearing of Roma/Gypsy women in Strasbourg, France in 1995. Aside from acknowledging Romani women's rights and introducing the requirements of gender equality and youth in the Roma movement, the need to embed them in the future program's development was also addressed. It should be noted that at this event and the following ones, several Roma feminists participated from Central and Eastern European countries (Kóczé, 2021). They started to articulate the different gender-based oppressions related to the Roma communities (Jovanović, Kóczé & Balogh, 2015) and among them were the Gitanas from Spain connected to the first Romani women's organization, Asociación de Mujeres Gitanas: Romi (Kóczé, 2018).

As a result of this assertion of Romani women's mobilization and activism across Europe, international organizations such as Open Society Foundation (OSF) and Open Society Institute (OSI) began to support the Romani women's movement through an array of programs, for instance, the participation of Romani women in the Open Society Institute's Network Women's Program (NWP) (Schultz, Bitu 2019, p. 29; Jovanović et al., 2015, p. 4; Vincze, 2013, p. 3). The first International Conference of Romani women took place in Budapest, Hungary in 1998 and supported by OSI, with a focus on particular issues related not only to the tradition of Roma culture but also to women's rights and challenging the male-dominated power structures within the Roma movement. (Jovanović et al., 2015, p. 4; Kóczé, 2011). This astonishing event was followed by the creation of the Romani Women's Institute (RWI) which operated from 1999 until 2006 as an international feminist organization working at the local, national and transnational levels. The RWI was created and coordinated by Roma women activists as an informal network that belonged to the Roma movement. Furthermore, they built, designed and opened up the first path for the Romani women's movement across all European countries, supported financially by OSI and NWP (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 30–33; Kóczé, 2011). Briefly, the RWI was focused on building Romani women's leadership and creating opportunities and spaces for Romani women. Through sharing common challenges and finding solutions working together, Romani women created and shaped their own feminist agenda addressing inequalities suffered in both the mainstream Roma movement (anti-racist) and feminist movement (anti-patriarchy) while continuing to work in their own Romani associations and communities in their respective countries (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 32).

## 3. Background Information

Undoubtedly, the RWI was the space where Romani women could discuss, debate, develop strategies, carry out research and knowledge production, policy action, etc. (Schultz & Bitu, 2019, p. 35). It was definitely one of the first political acts carried out by Romani women coming from different parts of Europe, working together in solidarity, building resilience and alliances with a multifaceted agenda, empowering Romani women and mutually reinforcing each other (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 36). Additionally, RWI and NWP engaged alliances to support Romani women's issues at international forums as a part of the discussions in the global anti-racism conferences such as Beijing +5 in New York in 2000 and the UN World Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa in 2001, (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 37) raising the issue of different types of violence suffered by Romani women such as forced sterilization, structural and domestic violence, and abuse (Kóczé, 2011). Following that, in 2002 the next international women's meeting took place in Vienna which resulted in the creation of the International Roma Women Network (IRWN). It was built by Romani women from 18 European countries, setting it up in 2003 as an organization combatting discrimination against Roma (Jovanović & Kóczé & Balogh, et al., 2015 p. 4; Kóczé, 2011). However, unlike RWI its agenda did not have a feminist approach, but rather it was a conservative and traditional network (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 37; Jovanović & Kóczé & Balogh, et al., 2015 p.4; Kóczé, 2011). An example of its positions relates to the identity which claims that those who did not follow their respective 'cultural roles'—not losing their virginity before marriage, for instance—are not “real” Romani women (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 58). Its main focus was on the health field, producing a report in 2003 about the lack of access to public healthcare for Romani women. Though they did not achieve their main goal related to healthcare for Romani women, they did increase the visibility of Romani women's issues in the political sphere (Kóczé, 2011).

In contrast, the RWI carried out different, more progressive initiatives, investing in and developing groups of young women. Relating to the previous example of the IRWN's views concerning virginity, the RWI was, on the contrary, supporting a project to challenge the traditional virginity cult and promoting freedom of sexual choice in the Eastern European countries (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 58). Here we could observe the gap and different approaches within the Roma women's movement during the beginnings of the transnational Roma women's movement. It must be said that despite the differences between RWI and IRWN, both were maintaining the cooperation of networks in national, regional and local groups of women (Jovanović & Kóczé & Balogh, et al., 2015 p. 5). Another way the RWI supported a new generation of Romani feminist women was by creating the unique first Gender Studies Mini-School for Roma women in 2002, and 19 young Romani women from some of the Eastern European countries joined through scholarships and mentor programs, (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 58). While supporting and encouraging Romani youth women in the feminist field, they also continued their work in the international forums supported by the NWP in order to include the Romani agenda in the global feminist framework. One example was the International Forum Re-inventing Globalization in Guadalajara, Mexico in 2002 where more than 2,000 feminists from around the globe listened to four Romani women speak about Romani women's issues such as the invisibility of Romani women within the women's movement, in order to build alliances and put Romani women's issues on global feminist agendas (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 38). This was quite difficult due to the global women's movement's understanding of Europe as a colonizer continent (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 38). However, the strategy of Romani women was to include Romani women's issues based on their status as a colonized group within Europe, but this was not well-accepted nor recognized by the global women's movement as a form of oppression suffered by Romani women across Europe (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 38). At the same time, RWI was maintaining the promotion and the participation of Roma women's issues within the Roma mainstream movement and mainstream women's movement as well.



In 2003 the Roma Women's Forum took place in Budapest, organized by RWI and attended by 100 Roma women activists, donors, human rights leaders and government representatives to promote the Roma women's movement. The goal of this unprecedented event was to include Roma women's issues within Roma rights, policies, and financial investments (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 39). At the same time, the first Roma feminist political agenda was presented, addressing different issues with the aim of creating high-level public policies. Issues that had not previously been addressed in Roma policy, such as early marriage, access to education, virginity, domestic violence, trafficking, forced sterilization, poverty, multiple forms of discrimination and gender policies (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 38). One day after the Roma women's Forum took place, the international Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future conference launched the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015). This is where Nicoleta Bitu presented an overview of the Romani women's Forum agenda helping the targeting of Roma women's policy in the creation of Roma EU policy (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 40). Despite the fact that RWI had set their own feminist and political agenda, the policy of Decade of Roma Inclusion excluded designing and conceptualizing Roma's issues in four particular areas: health, education, and an approach to housing and employment that lacked a gender approach and failed to consider the knowledge-production of Romani women (Schultz & Bitu, et al., 2019, p. 42). Despite the invisibility not only from Roma's mainstream movement but also by the women's movement, RWI continued its work and activism at all levels, and in going one step further internationally to the US. In Washington D.C. and New York, Roma activists from Central and Eastern Europe met with their counterparts in the US as well as with women of color activists.

Finally, in 2006, RWI ceased to operate on a transnational level and to create joint lines of action. Unfortunately, there is no further bibliography on feminist activism at the international level that has operated in the past. The result of the whole Romani women's movement which can be publicly accessed are the international congresses of Romani women created by the European Commission, which are held every 2-3 years. As can be understood, these type of congresses are a form of institutionalization of the activism of Roma women.

However, although not documented through research or published articles, there have been numerous meetings of Roma feminist women from the 1990s to the present day. Some examples include the 1990 Romani women's conference in Köln Germany, where they tried to establish a Roma women's network. Another more recent example that is also not included in the research on Roma women's activism is the first congress of feminist Roma women that took place in Madrid, Spain in 2018 where more than 200 women from different countries participated. The congress was coordinated by the Feminist Roma Women's Association for Diversity (Asociación de Mujeres Gitanas Feministas por la Diversidad). Furthermore, in 2021 a four-day online meeting took place, led by RomaniPhen, a feminist Roma women's NGO based in Berlin, Germany where participants met to exchange views and experiences, creating transnational connections for working together in solidarity.



# Romnja\* Power



RomaniPhen – Berlin

Once the beginnings of the Roma feminist movement have been contextualized through a bibliographic review, this chapter will draft the current situation of the Roma feminist movement. For this purpose, a questionnaire has been developed and answered by 15 Romani feminists from 13 countries. The qualitative sample is made up of a diverse group in terms of the age of the participants, from 24 to 46 years, as well as in their professions and the educations they have acquired. With the purpose of getting to know about the current situation of the Roma feminist activism, the questionnaire is divided into three sections: personal experience, work, and Roma feminist movement.

### **Personal experience**

Regarding academic studies, the group is made up of a variety of professionals from different backgrounds. These include a specialist in Philosophy and expert in Gender Studies, a Master's in Education in English and French, PhD in Economics and Educational Pedagogy, and a Social Worker with a Master's in Sociology. Additional professionals range from experts in Public Policy and Gender Studies to Marketing and Electronic Engineering.

In addition to their professional career, the great majority of the participants are working within the associative movement as part of a Roma women's NGO. In this NGO they work on different topics related to Roma issues and advocating for Roma women, more specifically.

The next block of questions is oriented to their training and activism as Romani feminists. In this case it can be observed that a significant number of participants declare that their personal experience as Roma women has shaped them as feminists. The second most coinciding response was academic background, followed by having contact with another Romani feminist woman.

*["It is a collective process that we all go through. First, we stayed together, it was the Roma women's initiative, basically a group of friends getting to know each other. Each one of us brought a person, a mother, a sister, a friend. There was a point in which we were all sisters or relatives. And also, we were looking for Roma women with different professions who were active to introduce them to the group."]*

Germany, 33.

Therefore, we can observe that their own experiences, the importance of having role models and the access to academic background have a significant influence on their background as feminists.

*["I grew up in a family where I had basically two choices: either to follow the "traditional gendered roles" and to marry, or to study as much as I can and become independent. Fortunately, my family always encouraged me to study since they do not have any education."]*

Hungary, 28.

It is important to highlight that all the participants agree on their main motivations for dedicating themselves to activism and their training as feminists. On the one hand, there is the discrimination suffered by the Roma community, which produces a situation of inequality and violence. And on the other hand is the especially vulnerable situation of Romani women due to gender bias that intersects with ethnicity, among other multiple identities.

## 4. Current Situation



In turn, the vast majority of the participants consider their commitment to fighting for advocacy within feminist Roma activism as their way of helping their community. This includes increasing access to formal education since they are well aware of the denial of access to the education system that Romani women, youth, and girls face in their countries, cities or communities.

*["I don't know if I was motivated by something specific, to be honest I always thought that if I got to have the privileges that other Roma women and girls don't have, like access to education, labor, and information then I should use it in order to fight for my people."]*

Romania, 27.

## **Labor Situation: Work**

In this section we will gain an understanding of the questions related to the work that the activists are doing in their respective fields in the Roma women's domain.

First of all, they have been asked about their direct work that they are doing in relation to Romani women's issues. The most significant approach is through activism in NGOs where they are advocating for Romani women's rights. Yet, the groups possess a variety of approaches as for example: Advisor for Roma Education in the Municipality of North Macedonia, Consultant on Roma children with a focus on girls, and additionally, being part of a political party in Slovakia and specifically in the women's department.

Continuing with the questions related to the work environment, the participants were asked about their connections with other Romani women activists at the national and international levels. It was concluded that, in general both national and international relations occur on an individual basis, and there is no collective or intra-organizational connection. However, we can observe that different networks are starting to be created between NGOs and activists, thus opening a space for them to meet each other, share experiences, projects, and create stable relationships.

*["We are now working on international Romani women networks, so we are also creating this at the moment. We had an international Romani women's conference last year online where we had the opportunity to talk to 25 Romani women around the world. Our main goal is to get in contact and have an exchange about our realities, and to get a deep understanding about where we are and find ways to act together. This is the next step; we are not there yet, but at the moment we are in the networking phase. We are trying to create a stable relationship with people that can lead to actions. Trying to build stability and a structural framework so that things can happen."]*

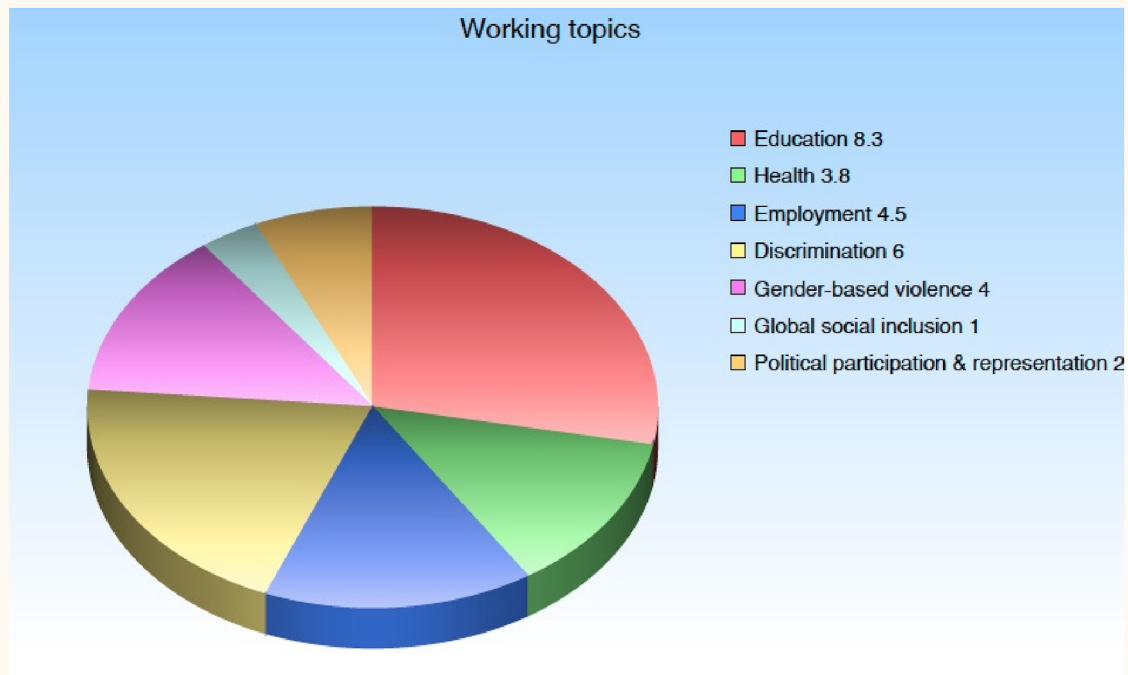
Germany, 33.

Similarly, when we asked about connections with other feminist movements, the participants agreed that they don't have connections with other movements. However, there is an individual connection with certain movements such as black feminists and LGBT. Furthermore, it is interesting to bring the connection that is created through social media to the fore, with social networks being a potential tool for connection and exchange.

In turn, the participants were asked about the topics in which they work with Roma women, such as employment, education, violence, health, etc. See the chart below



### 1. Question: Which topics related to Roma women are you addressing?



Through the chart's analysis, we can observe the variety of the topics in which the participants are working, with the most focused placed on the Education domain. Moreover, the chart demonstrated that their work is significant for Romani women's issues due to their intersectional approach. They are focusing on more than one topic at a time, making the needs of the issues to address visible.

*["We work on three levels: public relations, community, and as an employer. We try to be a feminist employer, to offer childcare and possibilities to Romani women who are not able to get a job or who are not secure in the jobs they have, offering them the possibility to create their own networks and empowering them."]*

Germany, 33.

When asked about the challenges and limits they face as activists and in their jobs, the most common response was the lack of economic resources. But once again, the answer was not singular, but rather referred to a set of intersecting issues that limit the work. The lack of human capacity for the development of the work's activity has also been a recurrent answer as well as the complexity related to the time invested in administrative work.

*["I think the main obstacles are related to funding and the neoliberal mechanisms in which NGOs operate. The constant struggle with human and financial capacities, the huge administrative burdens of doing even small practical things. Much of the work we do is visible and concerns administration and fundraising, so we have less time and energy to do actual work on the ground."]*

Hungary, 36.

*["More talk than taking actual measures; the limited role of women in key discussions concerning women; discrimination towards women and negative attitudes."]*

Romania, 39.

*["Lack of funds, also minorities are not recognized in France, so we do not have specific strategies."]*

France, 31.

*["Roma women are facing many challenges in my country. First of all, we don't have many Romani women who are in positions working in the public sector, even with a university degree they still face discrimination on the job market. The Roma projects and programs are not oriented towards gender most of the time, and there are no long-term funds for projects for Roma women. A very small number of Roma women are active and are participating in political life."]*

Republic of Macedonia, 45.

*["One challenge which we are facing now is that we are the only Romani women feminists in Germany, which leads to a lot of demands from outside. We do not have an issue with getting money, our issue is rather to have time to focus on political work. They give to you money and such as administrative work that you cannot really find any qualitative time to really do political work. It is interesting how bureaucracy is killing a movement."]*

Germany, 33.

## **Roma Feminist Activism**

The following section is focused on investigating the context of Roma feminist activism through the experiences of the participants themselves. Around this theme, we have asked them about their vision or perception on the activism field, also in relation to both the mainstream Roma and mainstream Feminist movements, etc.

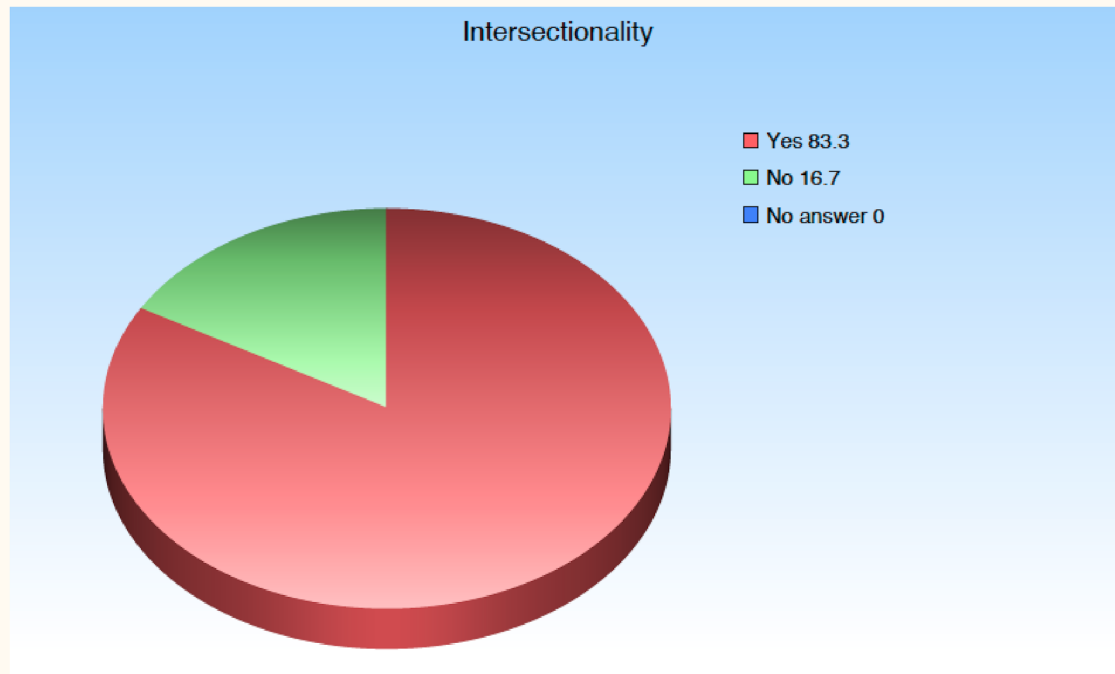
The first question was about how they see or perceive the Roma feminist movement at the national and international levels. The common answer was that it is not possible to speak of a Roma feminist movement because it does not exist as such. However, all the participants stated that although there is no collective movement at either the national and international level, there is strong individual activism. This activism can be represented either individually by each activist or collectively with the NGO.

*["We don't have much of a Roma movement which is feminist. This is a very big problem in Italy when we speak about Roma and Sinti women. We try to organize and to mobilize women, but without any financial support from anybody, it is not possible."]*

Italy, 48.

Continuing with the analysis of Roma feminist activism, we asked if they are using intersectionality as a tool and analytical approach and the answers can be found in the chart below:

2. Question: Approaching the intersectionality perspective taking into consideration the different identities that Romani women could have: class status, religious, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.



Therefore, we point out that intersectionality as an analysis tool is used by Romani women in their activism who are aware of the intersection of different identities that affect Romani women. They position their intersectional activism from a personal and political perspective. We asked them how they see their representation within the mainstream feminist movement. The responses lead us to conclude that the claims of Romani women are not included in the majority of the feminist movement's political agenda in their country. In turn, many of the participants state that there is no mainstream feminist movement as such in their country.

*["I think there is still a long way to go, since the feminist movement that we currently have both in Spain and in the rest of the world does not welcome/involve racialized women, so in most of the cases the reality of Roma women is not shown."]*

Spain, 26.

We also asked about the consequences and limits stemming from this unequal power dynamic between Romani women activists and the mainstream feminist movement. Taking into consideration the socio-political context of each country that plays an important role in both the development of public policies and the access to different public sources, relevant social-political positions, and rights. They claim that there is a lack of access to different political spheres and power in decision making as well as to their self-representation as political actors.



*["Tricky question: in general, I would say no. There is substantial Romani women representation in decision-making processes. However, there are quite a lot of Roma women employed by our government in their offices even in decision-making, but they are puppets and servants of the government's ideologies, rather than feminists. Feminism has become a slur in state discourse."]*

Hungary, 36.

*["At present, the trend of separating different gender attitudes from society of the Christian lobby prevails, therefore attention is not paid to women's issues in gender, not to the status of Roma women. Thanks to the activity of the Roma MP, the issue of illegal sterilization has been raised at the national level and the government has apologized for it, but no compensation has yet been made."]*

Slovakia, 46.

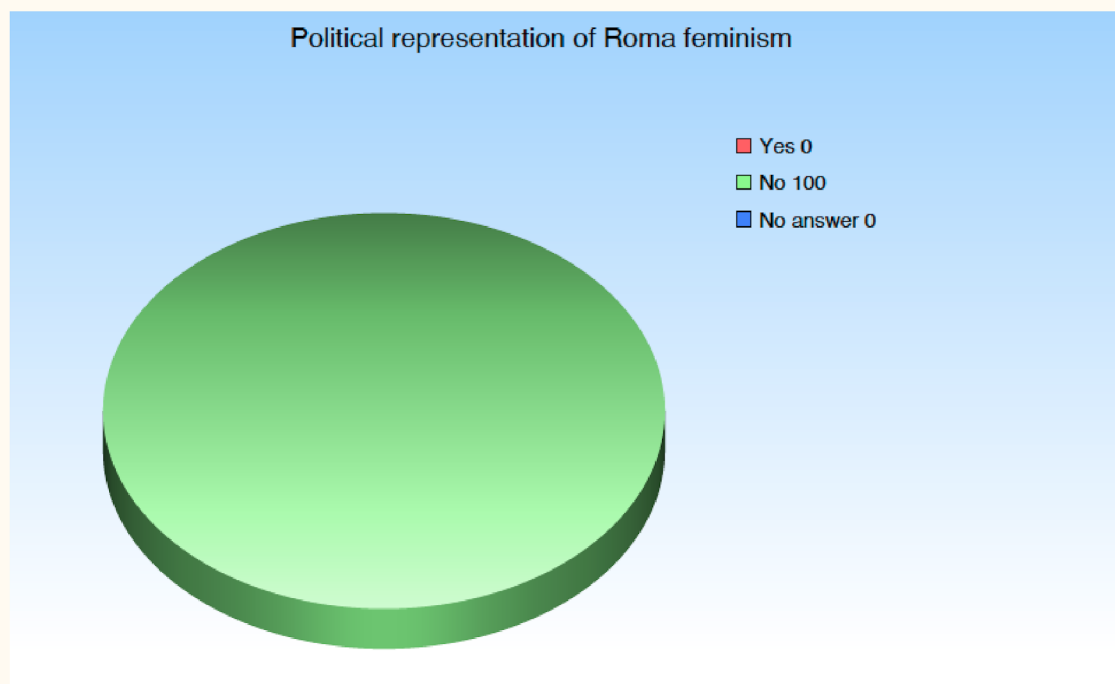
*["I think one of the biggest challenges comes from the racism and the social differences that we have between Hungarian and Roma feminists. Since Hungarians are not faced with racism, that is why usually they do not address this issue while working in the feminist movement."]*

Hungary, 28.

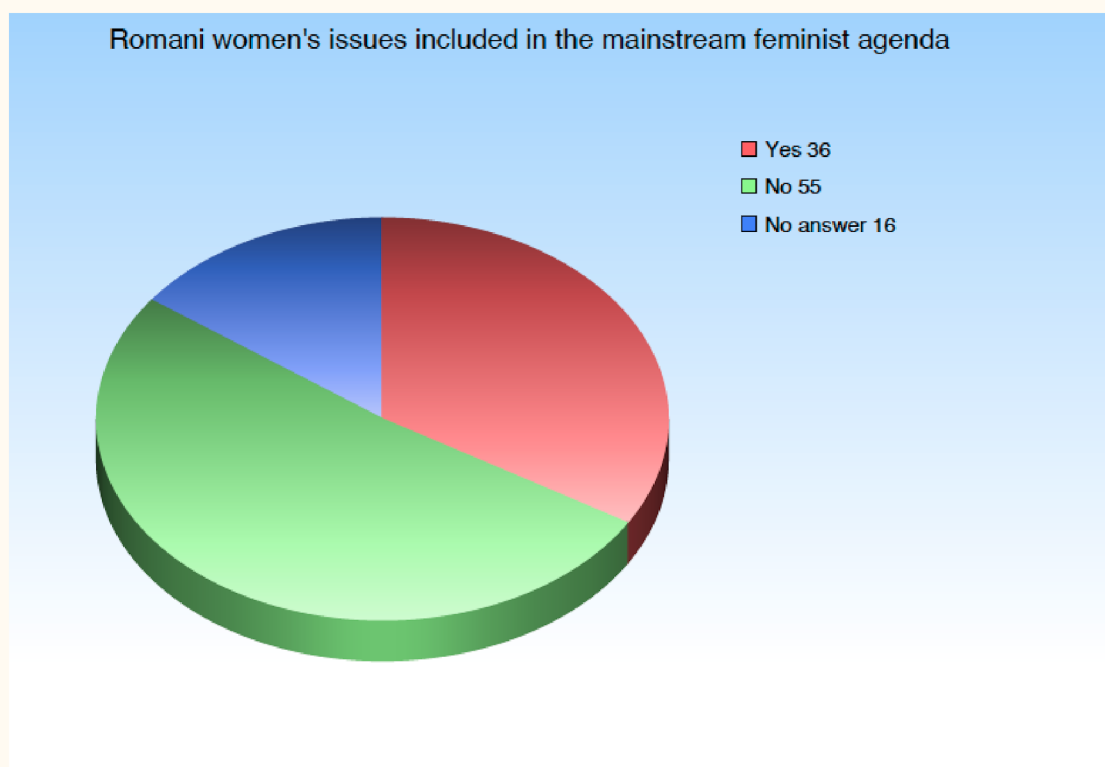
*["The biggest challenge is related to feeling always in between, in between Roma and Gadge, in between women and men, in between the community tradition and our own values and principles, in between being yourself and being like the other would like you to be, in between prioritizing yourself and looking out for others, in between generations, 'in between worlds' "]*

Romania, 27.

### 3. Question: Is there Roma feminist movement political representation in your country?



#### 4. Question: Are Roma women's issues embedded in the feminist agenda in your country?



The lack of access to positions of power and self-representation in all political areas is a barrier to the development and empowerment of Roma feminist activism. After an approach to the situation of Roma feminist activism followed by the political situation within the feminist mainstream movement and its public representation, the participants were asked about the representation of Roma feminism and activism within the mainstream Roma movement.

*["I think women are more and more included in the movement, because we push, fight for it and support each other. However, men still feel that we should choose between being Romani and being women, and put our Romani identity first. Then, once we are done with antigypsyism, we can deal with gender equality. Roma feminists and LGBTQ activists are blamed for "fragmenting the movement". Male leaders do not (want to) understand intersectionality".]*

Hungary, 36.

*["I believe that the Romani woman has been the one who has marked a before and after in the mainstream Romani movement. However, we live in a patriarchal society, so unfortunately men are still given more visibility than women".]*

Spain, 24.

*["Roma mainstream movement? I don't know what there is ...) The Roma are not part of political movements (except OLANO), the Roma political party is not eligible. In Slovakia, we have 1 Roma MP who is a "believer" and does not consider feminism to be progress".]*

Slovakia, 46.

*["The Roma feminist movement is very weak and not visible in relation to the Roma mainstream movement. Roma women are not represented so much in the Roma NGOs because they have to be more active in fighting against prejudice and stereotypes about them."]*

Republic of Macedonia, 45.

*["In Romania there are only a few Roma feminist NGOs. E-Romnja which is the NGO working at a grassroots, national level, and which is also connected to the international level with other Roma feminist NGOs, is part of the mainstream movement and is always contributing to policies and to putting topics related to Roma women on the mainstream feminist agenda, but it would be better if there would be more Roma feminist NGOs taking part and being involved."]*

Romania, 27.

*["Only when you do this Roma movement stuff does your identity become stronger and I think that intersectionality has been there all along and this connection is even more natural because many of us are very isolated and not all of us are in the Roma community all day. IniRomnja was the place for outsiders, because our different identities—black Sinti Roma women, Queer Roma, white passing Roma—were there. Everyone who did not fit into this norm of brown Roma youth who have their own their organization that is patriarchal was in our organization".]*

Germany, 33.



First of all, I will refer to the section on the background of the Romani women's activist movement. Therefore, in my search for literature written about the Romani women's activist movement in order to give a historical perspective to the research, I have encountered several limitations. The first one is the lack of published materials on the subject. There is no extensive database. The information I have been able to collect is focused mostly on Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, there is a historical and bibliographical lack of information on Romani women's activism in Western Europe. Secondly, the bibliographical resources are focused on inter-governmental organizations such as OSI, CoE and OSF and the role that those organizations have played in the Romani women's activist movement, while neglecting or ignoring the political role of women at the grassroots level. As H. Barz from Romaniphen pointed out in our interview:

*“What is happening at the international level is a top-down approach, they are organizing for us, but what is happening in the countries is a grassroots approach. People are organizing themselves, this is why it is much more powerful and has a great foundation because it comes from the people themselves. It is not like putting it on within an agenda from outside, we are creating the agenda.”*

Thus, it can be stated that there is a lack of literature with a global perspective about Romani women's activism and their involvement in each country across Europe. For instance, in 1999 a conference of Romani women took place in Germany which is not documented. In 2011 the First World Congress of Romani Women took place in Granada, Spain, as well as the First Congress of Romani Feminist Women in 2017 in Madrid, Spain, both totally invisible in the literature.

The second part of the conclusions is focused on the section on the current situation of Romani feminist activism.

On the one hand, intersectionality is essential in Romani activism, being a key element not only in their identification as Romani feminists but also in the implementation of it in their everyday work. They are advocating for the rights of Romani women and at the same time against capitalism and political, social and institutional racism. It is important to state the claim regarding the lack of visibility of Romani women referents and the importance of intergenerational support within the Romani women's activist movement.

In relation to both national and international connections, it is clear that the lack of financial resources creates a barrier, limiting the possible networks. However, once again the adaptability of Romani women to create alliances is reflected in the use of social networks as a means of connection.

Thus, the importance of access to public resources and specifically to the educational system for Romani women as a source of empowerment and emancipation has been demonstrated, as well as the elimination of the lack of human capacity within feminist NGOs.

Likewise, there is a clear lack of alliances between Romani feminist activism and mainstream feminism. The blindness of dominant feminism to the intersection of ethnicity for Romani women makes the former a sectarian, classist and racist feminism. As a result, Romani women do not feel represented by public policies nor by feminism itself, leading to a clear lack of political self-representation.

Along the same lines, Romani feminist activism confronts the dominant Roma movement which places the gender perspective in a secondary position by making ethnic identity a priority in the development of different public policies.

## 5. Conclusion

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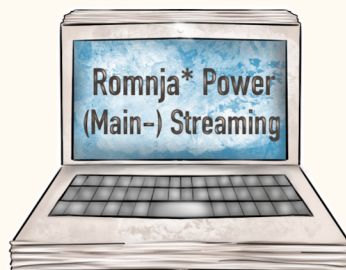
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As part of the project: **Romnja\* Power (Main-) Streaming**



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