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Inclusion of young Rom, Sinti and Caminanti: intellectual capital and intercultural strategies

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The plaque in question is located on Via degli Zingari, in the Monti district, and commemorates all the Roma, Sinti, and Travellers who died in the extermination camps. It was placed there by the Municipality of Rome in January 2001 because the street is named Via degli Zingari.



TOPIC 01



The largest European ethnic minority

- Roma populations account for approximately **10–12 million** people in Europe, of whom about **6 million reside in the European Union** (EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020–2030).
- It is estimated that there are between **140,000 and 180,000** people belonging to the communities in Italy >> **Rom, Sinti e Caminanti (RSC)*** (ISTAT-UNAR 2017).

Persistent multidimensional vulnerabilities

- RSC communities continue to experience inequalities in access to education, training, and employment opportunities.
- Discrimination, educational segregation, and manifestations of antigypsyism affect the social inclusion pathways of younger generations.

A European social cohesion challenge

The EU Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Rom 2020-2030 identifies young Roma as a key leverage point for breaking the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage.



The inclusion of young people from Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti communities represents an educational, social, and democratic challenge involving institutions, communities, welfare systems, and - more broadly - public policies.



**In Italy, the Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti are recognized as cultural minorities based on international conventions and European directives that guarantee their protection and inclusion*

TOPIC 02



Reframing the Inclusion of RSC Youth Through Intellectual Capital

1. Analyse the main barriers to educational and training inclusion:

- obstacles related to education systems;
- language barriers;
- stereotypes, discrimination, and antigypsyism; school dropout and intergenerational exclusion.

3. Reflect on guidance and empowerment processes:

- transition from school to work;
- youth empowerment;
- development of capabilities and opportunities.

2. Examine the role of intercultural strategies:

- intercultural education;
- intercultural dialogue;
- recognition of competencies;
- learning communities and local network.

4. Explore the contribution of the European dimension:

- educational mobility;
- intercultural exchange programmes;
- international cooperation and multilevel governance.

Overall objective

To propose a reinterpretation of the inclusion processes of RSC youth through the lens of intellectual capital, moving beyond a perspective focused exclusively on vulnerability, disadvantage, and social exclusion.



TOPIC 03



Methodological Approach

- theoretical-conceptual approach and policy analysis;
- analysis of the main strategic and policy documents adopted at the European and national levels on equality, inclusion, and participation of RSC communities;
- transdisciplinary perspective and interrelational approach integrating contributions from the sociology of education, intercultural studies, the capability approach, and inclusion policies.

Knowledge Limitation

- limited availability of up-to-date statistical data on RSC communities;
- fragmentation of available sources and empirical data;
- heterogeneity of territorial contexts and living conditions within RSC communities; lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation tools.

Contribution Objective

To analyse the policies and processes of inclusion of RSC youth through the lens of intellectual capital, understood as a set of cultural resources, competencies, capacities, relationships, and opportunities for participation that can foster autonomy, active citizenship, and human development.

Intellectual Capital as an Integration of:

- cultural capital (Bourdieu);
- social capital (Coleman);
- capability approach (Sen);
- fundamental capabilities/central capabilities (Nussbaum).

Intellectual capital thus represents an alternative interpretative framework, understood as a combination of::

- cultural resources;
- knowledge and skills;
- relational capacities;
- opportunities for participation and active citizenship.

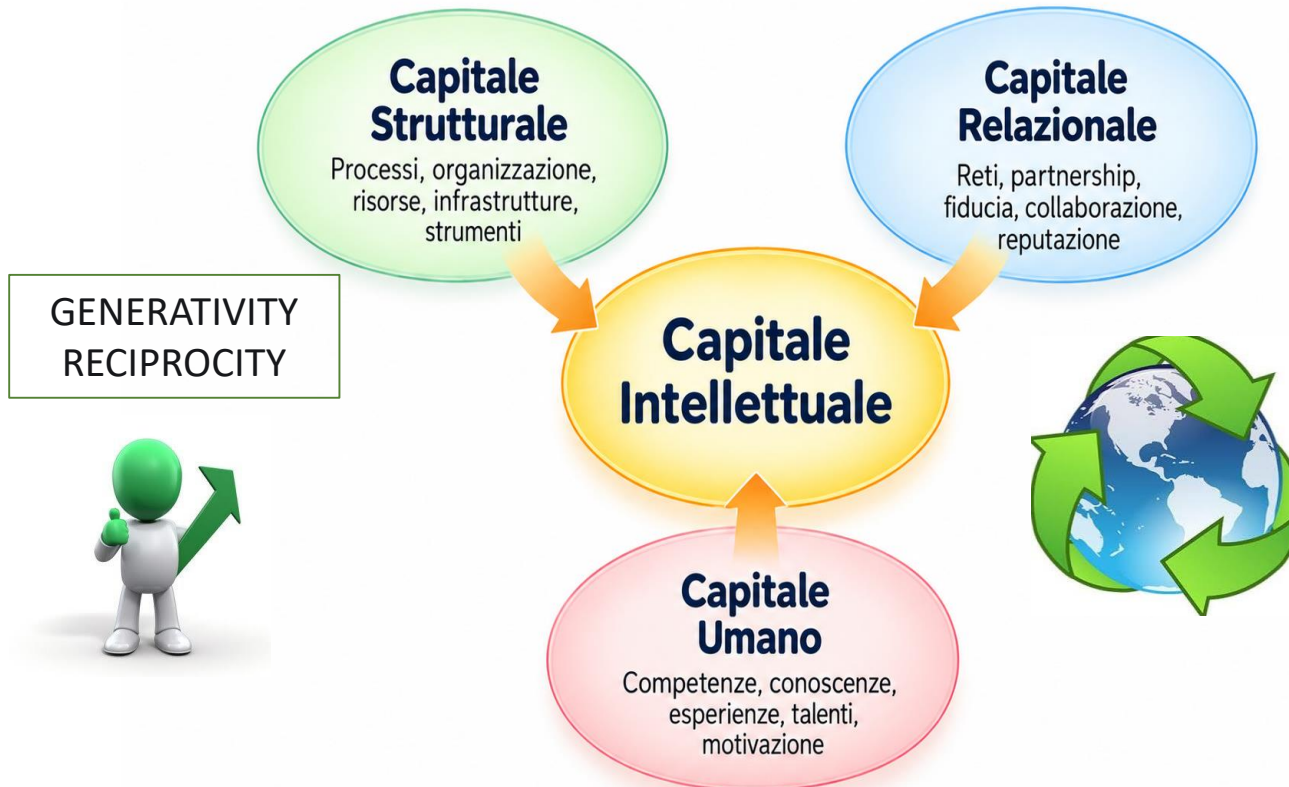
Guiding Idea

From the paradigm of disadvantage to the paradigm of capabilities: valuing the resources, competencies, and opportunities of RSC youth



Definition of Intellectual Capital

The concept of intellectual capital refers to the stock of intangible resources held by individuals, organizations, and communities, encompassing human capital (knowledge and skills), relational capital (networks and social ties), and organizational or structural capital (processes, practices, and institutional capabilities). These resources constitute an essential factor for the development of individual and collective opportunities.



Applying the "conceptualization" of intellectual capital to young Roma, Sinti, and Travellers means shifting the focus from mere conditions of disadvantage to the resources they possess: linguistic and intercultural skills, co-adaptability, family and community networks, informal knowledge, and potential that can be leveraged through educational, training, and participatory pathways.



TOPIC 04

EU Roma Strategy 2020-2030

It updates and expands upon the previous Strategy (2011-2020). Key sectors: education, employment, healthcare, and housing.

Three Cross-Cutting (Horizontal)* Pillars

1. **Equality** >> Combat and prevent antigypsyism and discrimination.
2. **Inclusion** >> Reduce poverty and social exclusion, narrowing the socioeconomic gap between Roma and the rest of the population.
3. **Participation** >> Promote participation through empowerment, cooperation, and trust >> >> European Roma **Platform** (2012-present).

Four Sectoral Pillars (Areas of Intervention)

Increase equal access to inclusive and quality education >> **Education**.

Increase equal access to sustainable and quality employment >> **Work- Employment**.

Improve health and equal access to healthcare and social services >> **Health**.

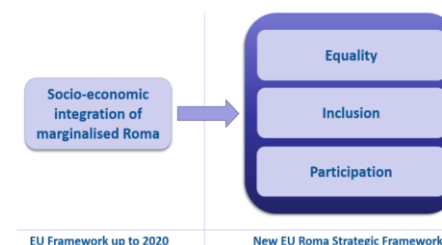
Increase equal access to adequate housing and essential services, while combating residential segregation >> **accommodation/home**.

Complementary Role of the Council of Europe and the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025.

The EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020-2030 has been incorporated and reinforced by the Council Recommendation of 12 March 2021 on equality, inclusion and participation of Roma, which promotes the adoption of national strategies and coordinated actions in the areas of education, employment, housing, health, and social participation.



* * Towards a comprehensive three-pillar approach



* Dal modello settoriale della Strategia UE per l'integrazione dei Rom 2011-2020, incentrato su istruzione, occupazione, salute e alloggio, alloggio) della Steategia al modello basato sui diritti, fondato sui principi di uguaglianza, inclusione e partecipazione.

** Cfr. Uguaglianza, inclusione e partecipazione dei rom nell'UE - Commissione europea – Consultazione 26/08/2026

Italia

- National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Rom and Sinti 2021-2030 (adopted in 2022).
- UNAR Coordination (National Office Against Racial Discrimination) >> Contact point serving as the institutional reference point for policy implementation.
- Local Action Plans for the inclusion of RSC communities (PAL) - promoted by UNAR - have been launched and developed specifically in eight major Italian metropolitan cities.
- National Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti Platform: UNAR coordination body bringing together ministries, regions, municipalities, and representatives of RSC communities.
- Forum of RSC Communities (UNAR).
- National Call for the Inclusion of RSC Children (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies) >> European Social Fund programming.
- Strengthening networks among schools, services, Third Sector Organisations and communities.



Critical Issues

- Strong territorial differentiation.
- Monitoring systems still underdeveloped.
- Lack of evaluation tools.
- Participation of RSC communities not always effective.



Local Action Plan for the city of **Bari**.
Local Action Plan for **Cagliari**.
Local Action Plan for **Catania**.
Local Action Plan for **Genoa**.
Local Action Plan for **Messina**.
Local Action Plan for **Milan**, managed in collaboration with partner organizations, including Casa della Carità.
Local Action Plan for **Naples**.
Local Action Plan for **Rome**, integrated with municipal resolutions aimed at phasing out the camp system.

Presence of the Third Sector in the PAL.



TOPIC 05



Evidence from the literature and European institutions shows that:

- RSC youth continue to experience significant difficulties in accessing education, training, and employment opportunities >> Previous Strategy 2012–2020.
- Economic, residential, and discriminatory vulnerabilities tend to accumulate and shape educational trajectories.
- School dropout and limited access to upper secondary and tertiary education remain recurring concerns in European and national policy documents.
- 65% of Europeans still consider discrimination against Roma communities to be widespread.
- 46% of minor Rom/Traveller (RSC) students attend schools where most students are also Roma.

Source: EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020-2030

These findings suggest that stereotypes, prejudice, and segregation processes continue to shape the educational and social opportunities available to younger generations, limiting their full participation in economic and civic life. In the Italian context, recent studies have further highlighted how antigypsyism, both institutional and interpersonal, remains one of the main drivers of the structural exclusion experienced by RSC communities, contributing to the intergenerational reproduction of inequalities in the fields of education, housing, and social inclusion (Fonović et al., 2025).



Educational inequalities are a multidimensional phenomenon, shaped by the interaction of discrimination, social vulnerabilities, and limited opportunities for participation.



TOPIC 06



Cofinanziato dall'Unione europea



Administrative and Bureaucratic Barriers

- difficulties in accessing services;
- complex administrative procedures;
- limited awareness of available opportunities;
- uneven access to services across different territories.

Language Barriers

- learning difficulties related to language;
- obstacles in educational pathways and learning processes;
- limited recognition and valorisation of multilingualism.

Cultural and Social Barriers

- stereotypes and prejudice;
- discrimination;
- antigypsyism;
- reduced educational expectations.

Cumulative Effect of Barriers

Administrative obstacles + language barriers + discrimination and antigypsyism → educational difficulties → school dropout → fewer educational and employment opportunities → reproduction of exclusion across generations.



Exclusion is not the result of a single factor, but rather of the interaction between social vulnerabilities, institutional barriers, and persistent discrimination.

A multidimensional phenomenon requiring integrated and multi-level policy responses.



TOPIC 07



Intercultural Educationre

- ducing barriers to access to services and educational opportunities;
- promoting intercultural dialogue;
- recognising and valuing cultural diversity;
- challenging stereotypes and prejudice;
- education for human rights and democratic citizenship.

Enhancement of skills

- recognition and valuing of multilingualism;
- development of intercultural and interpersonal skills;
- valuing of formal, non-formal, and informal learning;
- youth participation and active engagement.

Educational community and local networks

- schools;
- families;
- cultural mediators;
- local services;
- Third Sector entities

From barriers to strategies

<i>Barriers</i>	<i>Strategies</i>
Language barriers	Recognition and valorisation of multilingualism
Stereotypes and discrimination	Intercultural education
Social isolation	Learning communities and local networks
Limited opportunities	Empowerment and participation





The intercultural approach moves beyond both assimilationist logic and simple multicultural coexistence, valuing dialogue between cultures and the intellectual capital of young Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti.

<i>Model</i>	<i>View of Cultural Diversity</i>	<i>Implications for young RSC</i>
Assimilation	Cultural differences are considered an obstacle to integration.	Adaptation to dominant cultural models; risk of the marginalization of languages, cultures, and identities.
Multiculturalis	Cultural differences are recognized and protected.	It fosters the recognition of identities but does not necessarily guarantee interaction and participation among different groups.
Interculture	Cultural differences are considered a resource for mutual learning.	It promotes dialogue, participation, the recognition of skills, and educational and social inclusion.

Source: Author's own elaboration based on UNESCO (2006), Banks (2015), Portera (2020), and Catarci (2015)



TOPIC 08



Interculture represents both the starting point and the ultimate goal >> empowerment makes it possible to transform the recognition of differences into concrete educational, training, and employment opportunities

Dimension	Contribution to the Inclusion Process
Interculture	Recognition and valorisation of cultural differences
Partecipazion	Active involvement of RSC youth in educational and social setting.
Empowerment	Strengthening awareness, autonomy, and decision-making capacities
Capability	Development of conditions that enable the transformation of capabilities and aspirations into real opportunities
Guidance	Support throughout educational, training, and professional pathways
Opportunities	Access to education, training, employment, and social participation
Outcome	Autonomy, active citizenship, and social inclusion



TOPIC 09

The capabilities approach highlights that inclusion does not equate to mere access to rights, but rather to the opportunity to participate actively in the processes that shape one's own life.



The most recent European and national strategies promote the direct involvement of Roma, Sinti, and Traveller communities in the design, implementation, and evaluation of inclusion policies, moving beyond exclusively top-down and welfare-oriented approaches.

A paradigm shift



COALIZIONE NAZIONALE
ROM E NON ROM INSIEME SI
PUÒ

From participation to collaborative governance

The ROMNI experience contributed to the creation of the National Roma and Pro-Roma Coalition, which aims to build spaces for dialogue, representation, co-design, and the joint development of proposals regarding rights, education, employment, and combating antigypsyism.

The experience of ROMNI (social promotion association)*

- promoting leadership among Roma women and youth;
- strengthening rights awareness and representation capabilities;
- developing advocacy and participatory skills;
- building networks among associations, institutions, and the third sector;
- involving communities in decision-making processes.



The shift from policies aimed at RSC communities to policies built with RSC communities has begun (?) However, it remains a process still taking shape, conditioned by the persistence of antigypsyism and the limited presence of the issue in public debate at the local level.



1. An interpretation of the results. Analysis of European and national documents reveals that the inclusion RSC youth cannot be viewed merely as a reduction of disadvantage, but rather as a process of recognizing their capabilities. Evidence drawn from EU strategies and existing literature indicates that anti-Gypsyism, school segregation, and structural inequalities continue to hinder human development. In this context, the concept of intellectual capital allows inclusion to be interpreted not as an adaptation to majority models, but as the valorization of the cultural, linguistic, and relational resources possessed by RSC youth.

2. The contribution of this work. It introduces the interpretive framework of intellectual capital as a useful category for analyzing inclusion policies. It integrates cultural capital, social capital, the capability approach, and intercultural perspectives, offering a vision that shifts the focus: - from vulnerabilities to capabilities; - from compensatory measures to empowerment processes; - from integration to autonomy and active citizenship. This approach enables a coherent connection between theory, policy, and educational practice.

3. A critical analysis of the context (based on sources). European sources (FRA, European Commission, Council of Europe, etc.) document the persistence of: - antigypsyism as a specific form of racism; - educational and housing segregation; - low educational expectations; - inequalities in access to education, training, and employment.

4. Future directions and open questions. The strategies highlight the need to: - strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems, which are currently weak; - ensure policy continuity, avoiding sporadic interventions; - consolidate stable local networks linking schools, services, Third Sector entities, and communities; - promote the direct participation of RSC communities in decision-making processes; - integrate the fight against antigypsyism as a structural dimension of educational, social, training, and employment policies. **The question of the operational implementation of these strategies at the local level remains open; the diversity of conditions and contexts naturally requires differentiated interventions.**



5. A connection between theory, policy, and practice. The study demonstrates that the intellectual capital perspective enables a link between:

- the theoretical framework (Bourdieu, Coleman, Sen, Nussbaum);
- European and national policies (EU Strategy 2020–2030, National Strategy 2021–2030);
- educational and social practices (intercultural approaches, educating communities, guidance, and capability building).

This connection highlights that inclusion requires multi-level actions capable of integrating educational, social, cultural, and institutional dimensions.

The inclusion of young(RS) people requires recognizing their capabilities as the foundation of citizenship. The path ahead remains challenging - partly due to the issue's limited presence in public debate and the persistence of antgypsyism - yet the linguistic and intercultural skills of young RSC people represent an asset to society. Intellectual capital offers a perspective focused on real opportunities and participation.

Policy implications

Education

- Combating segregation;
- tutoring and mentoring;
- promoting multilingualism.

School-to-work transition

- Early career guidance;
- internships;
- personalized support.

Governance

- Participation of young people in CSR initiatives;
- strengthening of local networks;
- integration among schools, local authorities, and Third Sector organizations.

Combating antiGypsyism

- Human rights education;
- training of personnel;
- monitoring of discrimination.



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APRE UN
CORRIDOIO PER LA
VITA. DUE LINGUE
TI APRONO TUTTE
LE PORTE LUNGO
IL PERCORSO"
Frank Smith"

THANKS FOR SHARING!

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"Impara tutto quello che
puoi, ogni volta che puoi,
da qualsiasi persona puoi;
verrà sempre il tempo in cui
sarai riconoscente di averlo
fatto"
Sarah Caldwell

*"Tutto può cambiare, ma non
la lingua che ci portiamo
dentro, anzi che ci contiene
dentro di sé come un mondo
più esclusivo e definitivo del
centro materno"*
Italo Calvino

"UNA LINGUA
DIVERSA È UNA
DIVERSA VISIONE
DELLA VITA"
Federico Fellini