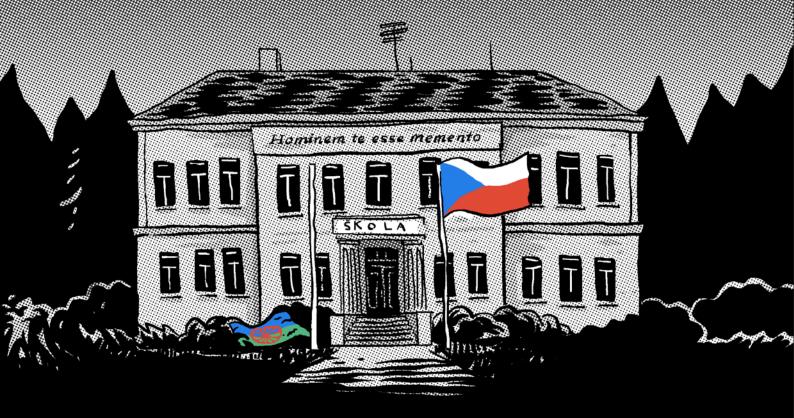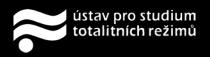# Eliminating Antisemisim and Antigypsyism in Czech Republic

Final Report of Findings and Recommendations

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About the Project

Two institutions conducted the research about the situation in the Czech Republic.

The team from the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes focused on the state of formal education and how programs aimed at the prevention of xenophobia and prejudices against Roma and Jews work, and they created a set of recommendations mainly for organizations that fund these kind of programs. The team from the Sociological Institute worked with the available data about attitudes towards Roma and Jews in Czech society.

The final report, available at www.stereotypy.cz, has the following sections:

- A1) A summary of the information available about the organizations that work on education about Jews and Roma in the Czech Republic
- A2) An outline of the institutional framework in which tolerance education in the Czech school system plays out
- A3) The results of the qualitative research on the organizations and schools and the recommendations based on it
- B) Studies about Czech societal stances towards Roma and Jews

In the first part of the research, the team at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes created a list of organizations concerned with Romani and Jewish issues that at the same time also deal with education. We got ideas about the organizations from public sources — lists of supporting organizations in various places, from regional coordinators for Roma minority issues to recommendations from members of project boards. Out of this basic information, we managed to find 132 organizations, of which only 14 responded to our questionnaire. We did, however, make use of publicly available information on all of them, for example their regional distribution, in our final report.

Extent of influence	Number of organizations
Local	57
Regional	32
Country-wide	38
International	5
Total	132

The low rate of return on the questionnaires could be caused by the organizations' general unwillingness to take part in any survey, but it could also be that they don't want to frame their work as part of the "fight against antigypsyism or anti-Semitism," but instead that they're trying to promote tolerance generally in their local community.

Education Against Prejudice

Educational programs that express a goal of eliminating prejudices against Roma and Jews are widespread. They are either focused on historical education (mainly about the Second World War) or on analyzing the current situation. In the second category, this primarily refers to Roma issues (programs about current anti-Semitism are practically nonexistent), and of course many organizations deal with prejudices against various groups, and they do not single out the Roma.

Furthermore, the prevention of xenophobia and racism is one of the problems that the so-called Prevention of Risky Behavior program deals with in Czech schools. This is a Ministry of Education effort to address these issues through educational systems that deal with problems ranging from drug abuse to racism and bullying. Prevention of Risky Behavior program databases exist, and the programs are certified and offered to schools. The databases include many programs, including those that deal with relations towards Roma and Jews.

An overview of the organizations and their programs constitutes a significant section of the chapter that contains the basic information about the 16 biggest organizations and the programs that they provide. There's not enough data for an evaluation of the individual projects (the organizations collect primarily formal feedback). Our main research method was thus interviews about experiences with instruction that is supposed to lead to getting rid of prejudices against Roma and Jews. We led in-depth interviews with lecturers and other employees at seven organizations and teachers at 12 schools: elementary and high schools, in Prague and other cities.

The interviews focused on the themes of what methods and goals the teachers and lecturers have, how they insert the themes of Roma and Jews into their instruction, and how cooperation between schools and non-profit organizations works. On the basis of the lecturers' and teachers' experiences, experiences that complemented one another, we created a set of recommendations for creating new programs focused on eliminating prejudices.

Any attempt at a qualitative evaluation of work against prejudices in education will run into a lack of research on the given theme and a lack of quality evaluations of the projects.

Recommendation 1: *Donors should collect complex feedback and data about the effectiveness of the projects. Data about the schools' climate and the creation of methodologies that make it possible to pinpoint schools that need help improving their climate is particularly necessary. External entities could collect the feedback so as not to add to the schools' administrative burden. Monitoring the schools' experience in terms of manifestations of xenophobia and racism should then be included into the content of the Czech School Inspection's work.*

Both lecturers and teachers assess the most important moments of their lessons as the moments when students open up and start discussing — and at the same time confronting — their own beliefs. From this, it becomes clear that this situation otherwise isn't common in schools.

Recommendation 2: *Programs for both teachers and students should create a free and safe space for debate and the sharing of ideas. The students who are expected not to be interested or who are expected to hold radical stances should not be excluded.*

Teachers don't extensively use methodologies created by non-profit organizations, and the themes of Roma and Jews often appear in the classes spontaneously. Dealing with these situations in classes at various levels is a theme that teachers also like to share at at teacher trainings.

Recommendation 3: *A very important element of teacher education is the part that is focused on reflection and the mutual sharing of experiences, and on gaining the absolutely necessary ability to recognize, describe, and deal with problematic behavior from individual students and to create a helpful atmosphere in the classroom. These themes should be part of further education for everyone involved in education, including school directors and those who work at educational-psychological advisory centers. It's necessary to financially support a bigger space for the activities of pedagogical advisors in schools.*

The biggest obstacle that teachers and lecturers see to putting multicultural programs into their instruction is the lack of time in a normal school day, where teachers are overloaded with tasks that aren't directly connected to teaching. The majority of the programs are also offered to schools from "the outside," and teachers aren't able to adapt them to the needs of concrete classes.

Recommendation 4: *It's necessary to support projects that help schools practically to put cross-sectional themes into the schools' plans. It's also necessary to support the development of methodological material that can be modularly plugged in to instruction. It's beneficial to equip teachers of all subjects with the tools for teaching to build tolerance.*

All non-profit organizations consider long-term projects to be more effective, as one-time programs have only a limited chance to work with complex issues like prejudices and to change students' attitudes. Project calls, however, prefer a large number of lectures for a large number of students.

Recommendation 5: *Projects should have long-term funding. At the same time, donors should support the projects that are already in motion.*

Recommendation 6: *One-time lectures for big groups of students to replace projects with a deeper impact. Organizations should connect with schools for long-term cooperation or support teachers, so that students continue to actively work in their classes with the themes in the seminars.*

Teachers also agree that racism and xenophobia can often be an expression of deeper, personal problems that young people are having and a part of their search for identity. Programs should therefore also be focused on allowing students to explore and learn about their personalities. These programs can also be more accessible for teachers who are skeptical about openly multicultural programs.

Recommendation 7: *Education to support tolerance should put an emphasis not only on the knowledge of, but also on the recognition of human diversity and uniqueness. It's necessary to emphasize educational goals like personal development and nonviolent communication.*

Teachers and lecturers evaluated the programs where students met with minority representatives, whether historical witnesses or lecturers, or programs where the students met with young people from various groups, as highly effective. Teachers also believe that students from the majority ethnic group don't feel prejudices towards Roma children when they're in the same class with them.

Recommendation 8: *It's necessary to encourage students from various different ethnic and social groups to meet up and spend time together, or for students and representatives of minority groups to meet up.*

We see it as problematic that even when students take part in educational projects about tolerance, this foundation isn't reflected in the school environment — the same behavior that they display towards teachers and directors isn't required when students interact with each other. In order to effectively change the students' attitudes, tolerance must be applied in the school culture and not just in terms of ethnic differences.

Recommendation 9: *Calls for projects and support should be focused on the whole school environments — on communication, the creation of school policies for how to treat cases of xenophobia and racism, and on the education of the whole group of teachers, including administrators. It's necessary to support projects that focus on cooperation with parents or with the local community.*

Non-profit organizations are the most important actor in terms of advancing themes connected with tolerance and multicultural educational programs in schools. The presence of grant programs (short-term, without cooperation with teachers) and the complexity of the Czech school system's problems make their work more complicated. At the same time, some schools avoid the themes of Roma and Jews (for organizational as well as ideological reasons); it's necessary to address these schools with new types of projects, where the themes of tolerance and coexistence are framed in a new way. Nonprofit organizations need to get the opportunity to create programs that will correspond to specific schools, focusing on the schools' entirety, and all who make up its community (teachers, students, administrators) should be actively involved in their creation.

<u>Recommendation 10:</u> *Programs should be created according to the needs of individual schools, and there should be space for mutual consultation in the projects. Teachers, students, and other groups should be actively involved in the projects. Project calls should be flexible, so that recipients can change the content and course of the project depending on continually collected feedback.*

Attitudes towards Roma and Jews in Czech society

The nature of a society is reflected in a way different minority groups are incorporated into its mainstream. To be able to state anything about the position and level of inclusion of Roma and Jews in the Czech society, it seems necessary, apart from other steps, to describe the attitudes towards those minorities.

We are mainly interested in attitudes, as we assume that they somewhat influence actions. However, we realize that the relationship between a declared attitude and action is very dynamic and might be caused by other factors and circumstances. Very strong negative attitudes of an individual, for instance, do not have to be reflected in their actions due to the expected sanctioning of such behavior by the majority.

To describe the general public's attitudes towards Roma and Jews, we mainly use data produced by the Public Opinion Research Center (research conducted after 1989).[1]

These datasets include the following relevant issues:

- sympathy/feelings towards ethnic or national minorities
- social distance, willingness to have minorities as neighbors, family members, etc.
- personal experience or contact, friendship (data available only for Roma here)

Particular questions or sets of questions might be found in various other research projects, but data clusters that would offer a complex view on the issue are rare. Furthermore, there are also just a few data clusters regarding stereotypes against Roma and Jews.

Through the analysis we conducted (based on the newest data for Roma and Jews), we aimed to answer the following two questions: „What is the direction of sympathy or antipathy towards Roma and Jews in mainstream society?" and „What social distances are there between Roma, Jews and members of the mainstream society?".

The results of our analysis could be summed up as follows. Antisemitism, understood as a clear antipathy, seems not to be widespread in society.

This corresponds to the relative position of the Czech Republic in the international ADL survey. [2]. It also seems (though the comparability of data is limited) that since the 1990s, there has been a growth in the number of people who do not sympathize with Jews (currently, around 17% of respondents representing the adult population of the Czech Republic declare that Jews seem not nice to them).[3] Further analysis focused on correlation with other variables shows that relatively, the highest proportion of people with a negative attitude towards Jews could be found among the youngest respondents (age group: 15 to 29). Education, as expected, is an important variable – the higher the completed education, the lower the level of antisemitism. Surprisingly, negative attitudes towards Jews are more common in bigger cities and especially in the capital city of Prague.

Attitudes towards Roma are significantly worse. Negative attitude (antipathy) was recently declared by 76% of respondents. Sociodemographic features are not so closely correlated to attitudes towards Roma – including education. It seems that negative attitudes towards Roma span across the mainstream of society. The strongest factor found is personal contact (in the form of friendship or closer mutual relation) between Roma and Czechs. Those who declare in surveys that they have this kind of acquaintance have better attitudes towards Roma in general (on average). It also turns out that attitudes towards Roma and Jews are related to other attitudes. The better the attitudes, the bigger the trust in public institutions and the smaller the negative attitudes towards other social groups (e.g. foreigners or homosexuals).

Similarly to the attitudes (sympathies and antipathies) towards Roma and Jews, the social distance towards them is structured, indicated by the answer to the question of whether respondents would be willing to live in their neighborhood. Reluctance toward living in a neighborhood of Jews was declared by 7% of the respondents, while reluctance toward living in a neighborhood of Roma by 58%.

Last but not least, we have indicated the possible directions for further analysis and challenges that should be overcome in this field. This analysis presents only part of the problem of interest. To make the picture complete, it is necessary to focus deeper on stereotypes and use a broader spectrum of research methods (especially qualitative

ones) that would indicate, for example through public discourse analysis, the frame within which people create their attitudes.

It would be of value to gain fresh survey data dedicated completely to the issue of stereotypes. This might be attained, for instance, by including a study on stereotypes and employing tools that detect subtle prejudices like the Modern Racism Scale. A thorough analysis should also be more extensive and should not be based solely on surveys. It seems necessary to focus on media analysis as well, and on social media in particular, due to its growing importance in the society. Another challenge for further research is to link the analysis of attitudes to the analysis of actions (discrimination, stereotype-motivated violence).

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[1] Available in Czech Social Science Data Archive (http://archiv.soc.cas.cz/en)

[2] More about the research and its results at http://global100.adl.org/.

[3] Research Our society conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center in March 2017.