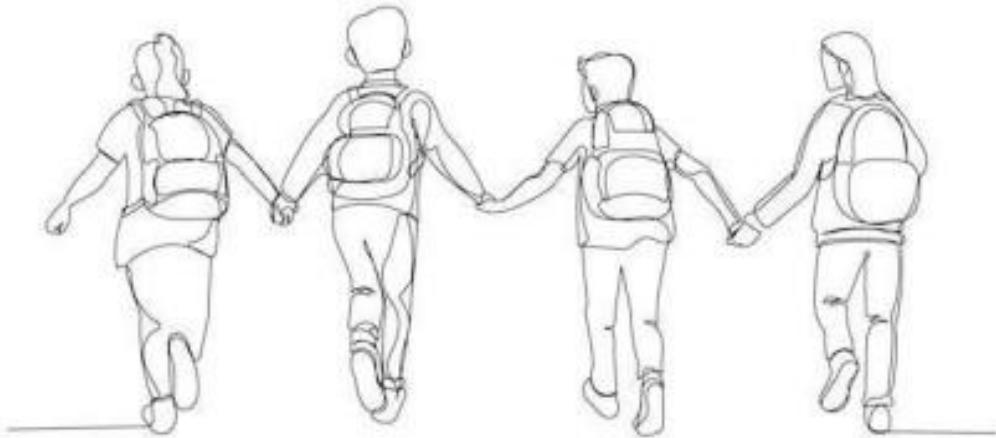




## MODULE 0

# HISTORY OF THE ROMA





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The Roma community originated in India and, after an Islamic invasion, migrated to the Middle East and Europe. In Europe, this community, especially during the war period, was subject to various persecutions, motivated by their cultural, linguistic, and religious peculiarities.

The presence of the Roma people in Portugal, coming from Spain, dates back to the second half of the 20th century, around the year 1512.

Between the 16th and 19th centuries, the Roma community was the target of successive repressive policies aimed at both their partial or total eradication and their forced sedentarization and cultural assimilation. In addition to these policies, these people were also subjected to a wide range of sanctions, including public flogging, the condemnation of men to forced labor, and the sending of individuals and families to colonies in Brazil and Africa. Furthermore, severe restrictions were imposed, such as the prohibition of the Roma language, their distinctive dress, and their traditional cultural practices, as well as the institutionalization of children for formal education. Although applied only in rare exceptions, the death penalty was also part of the repertoire of punishments for this people, which highlighted the extent of the institutional violence exercised against this ethnic group.

Regarding the right to citizenship, Roma people were only recognized as full Portuguese citizens from 1822 onwards. Although they arrived in Portugal in the 15th century and were subject to persecution and laws prohibiting them from remaining in the country from the 16th century onwards, their inclusion as citizens occurred in 1822. Despite the right to Portuguese citizenship, repressive laws still existed targeting Roma communities.

Roma constitute the largest ethnic minority in Europe and, at the same time, the one that has historically been the target of the most persecution, prejudice, discrimination, and various forms of violence. The negative stereotypes that still persist today stem largely from the repressive practices to which they have been subjected over the centuries. Prejudice against Roma is often associated with their professional activities, as well as their forced nomadism, characteristics that have repeatedly been used as a basis for distrust and marginalization of the Roma community.

Today, discrimination and exclusion remain notorious within the Roma community, starting from a very early age. Roma face numerous difficulties and limited access to various human rights, such as education, access to quality healthcare, and adequate housing. Integration into the labor market [BM4] [BM5] is also difficult, which ultimately leads to greater poverty and social exclusion. (European Parliament, 2022).

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## **Labor exclusion as the main barrier to the inclusion of the Roma community in Portugal.**

According to the testimony of many Portuguese Roma, the biggest obstacle to their social inclusion is not a lack of education, but rather systematic exclusion from the labor market. Regardless of the level of education or acquired skills, the repeated experience is the same: the doors to employment remain closed.

A young Roma person who completes compulsory schooling—or even secondary education—faces, in practice, the same difficulties in accessing work as someone without education. This reality is so common that the communities themselves recognize it as a fact.

Therefore, school is sometimes perceived as "useless drudgery." Not because education isn't valued, but because, in lived experience, a diploma doesn't translate into real opportunities. This perception isn't prejudice against school: it's a practical observation of persistent exclusion

### **Data confirming this reality**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Unemployment rate (2021)</b>
Roma population (15-64 years old)	63 %
Non-Roma population (same age)	9%

(Source: RAOS 2021, cited in the Observatory of Roma Communities (2022))

### **Education does not significantly reduce Roma unemployment:**

Roma with 12th grade completed	→	43% unemployed
Non-Roma with 12th grade completed	→	11% unemployed

Source: Institute of Housing and Urban Rehabilitation (IHRU), National Report on Roma Communities 2021(RAOS 2021).

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## Curiosity:

Direct discrimination in recruitment: An experimental study (2020) sent 1,200 fictitious CVs for job offers in Lisbon and Porto.

- CVs with a name and photograph associated with Roma identity had 68% fewer calls for interviews than identical CVs with a non-Roma name and photograph.
- The effect was identical for Roma women.

[Source: "Ethnic Discrimination in Access to Employment in Portugal", Pedro C. Vicente, Nova SBE & NOVAFRICA, 2021.]

**Official statement:** The Office of the High Commissioner for Migration (2022) states: "Employment discrimination is the main factor in the exclusion of Roma communities, even surpassing education."

**Summary in one sentence:** Having completed 12th grade reduces the risk of unemployment for a non-Roma young person by about 60%, but for a Roma young person this protection is almost non-existent.

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**According to information published by the European Parliament and the Roma Integration Strategies 2019 report, 68% of young Roma drop out of school early.** In addition furthermore, only 18% of Roma children manage to progress to higher levels of education, while 63% of young people do not attend any type of education, employment, or vocational training. In the labor market, only 43% work as salaried workers. (European Parliament, 2022)

This educational and labor exclusion means that 80% of Roma remain below the poverty line. Thus, it can be seen that social and economic marginalization is largely a direct consequence of the structural barriers faced from a young age, perpetuating inequalities and reinforcing discrimination.

These data help us understand a phenomenon frequently reported by the communities themselves: the perception that, even with education, employment opportunities continue to be denied. For many young Roma, practical experience shows that education alone does not guarantee access to work. Thus, school is often seen not as something useless in itself, but as an effort that does not translate into practical results, which undermines the value placed on formal education.

This perception is not the result of a lack of interest in learning, but rather a response to persistent structural barriers that keep unemployment high and reinforce cycles of social and economic exclusion.