

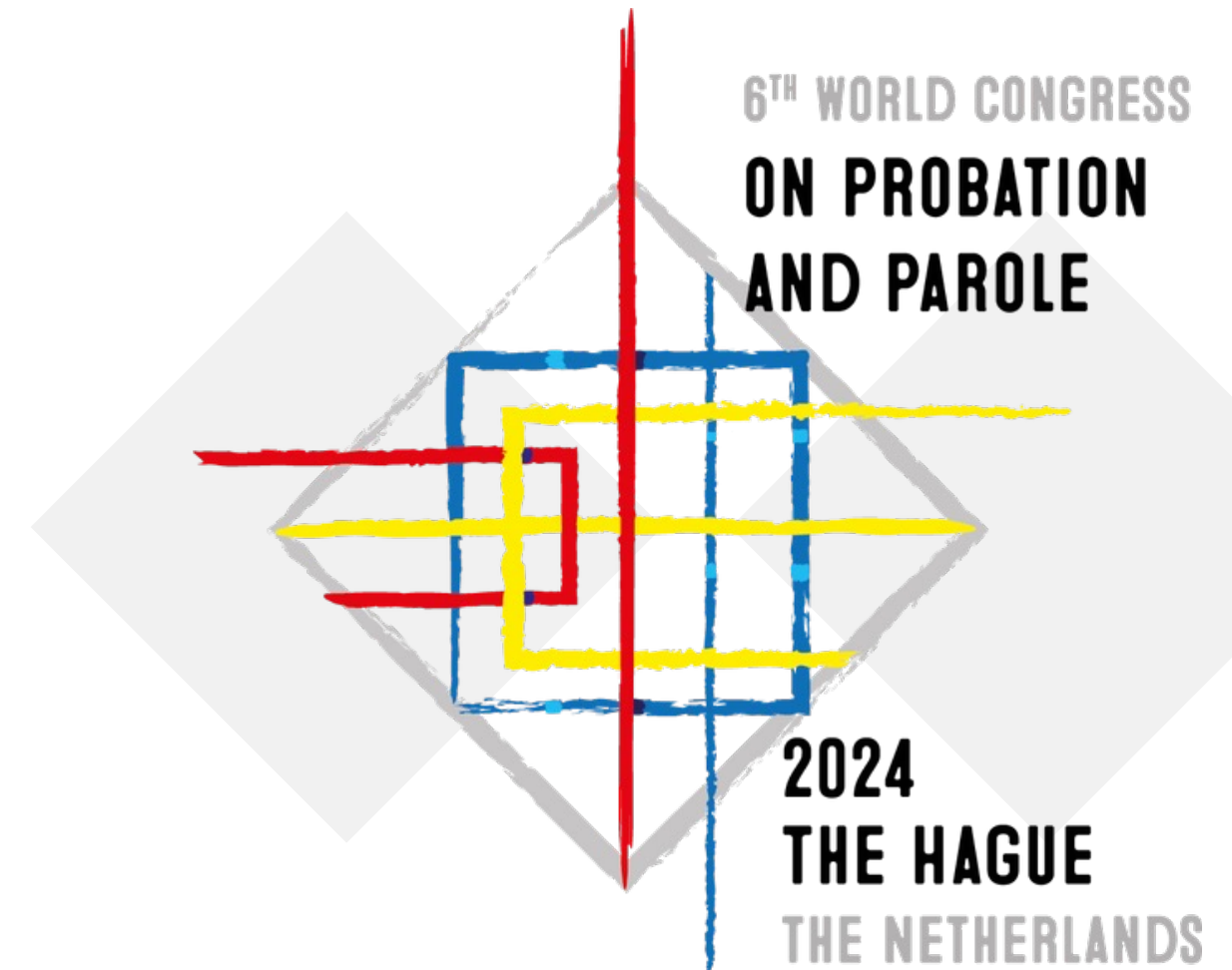


MINISTERUL JUSTIȚIEI
DIRECȚIA NAȚIONALĂ DE PROBAȚIUNE

Designing culturally sensitive strategies to reduce recidivism for Roma probationers

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What do people generally think a Roma ethnic has done to become an offender sanctioned by the criminal justice system?

What we
have
seen



What we
have
heard



What we
have
experienced



What we
have read



Theft

Substance abuse

Begging

Burglary

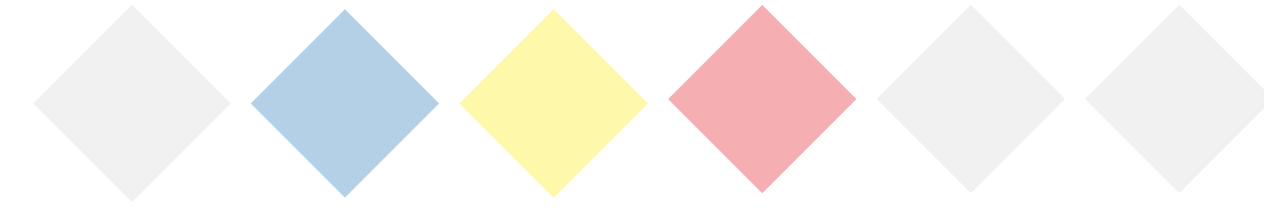
**Human
exploitation**

**Hate
crimes**





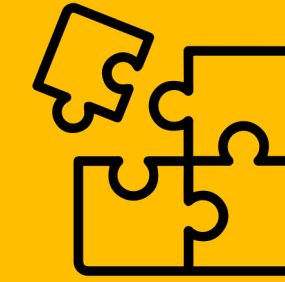
Our Steps



Input

In the beginning - General perspective

Visibility on the streets
Media
Myths
Scarce personal encounters



Process

>10 years in probation - Personal/ professional experiences
Research from 2022

Subculture vs. counterculture

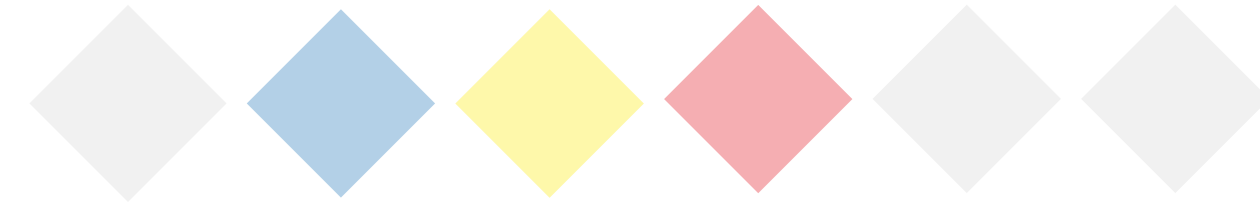
Cultural identity & practices vs. Culture & resistance to assimilation

Changing perspective - **craftsmen**, art performers, **sportsmen**,
intellectuals, **strong family ties**, **successful**.

Strong and consolidated community



Our Steps



Output

**Gradual interest - Culture - critical factor in understanding an individual
(background, values, needs)**

**Reintegration of Roma probationers contributes to the development of the general
society.**

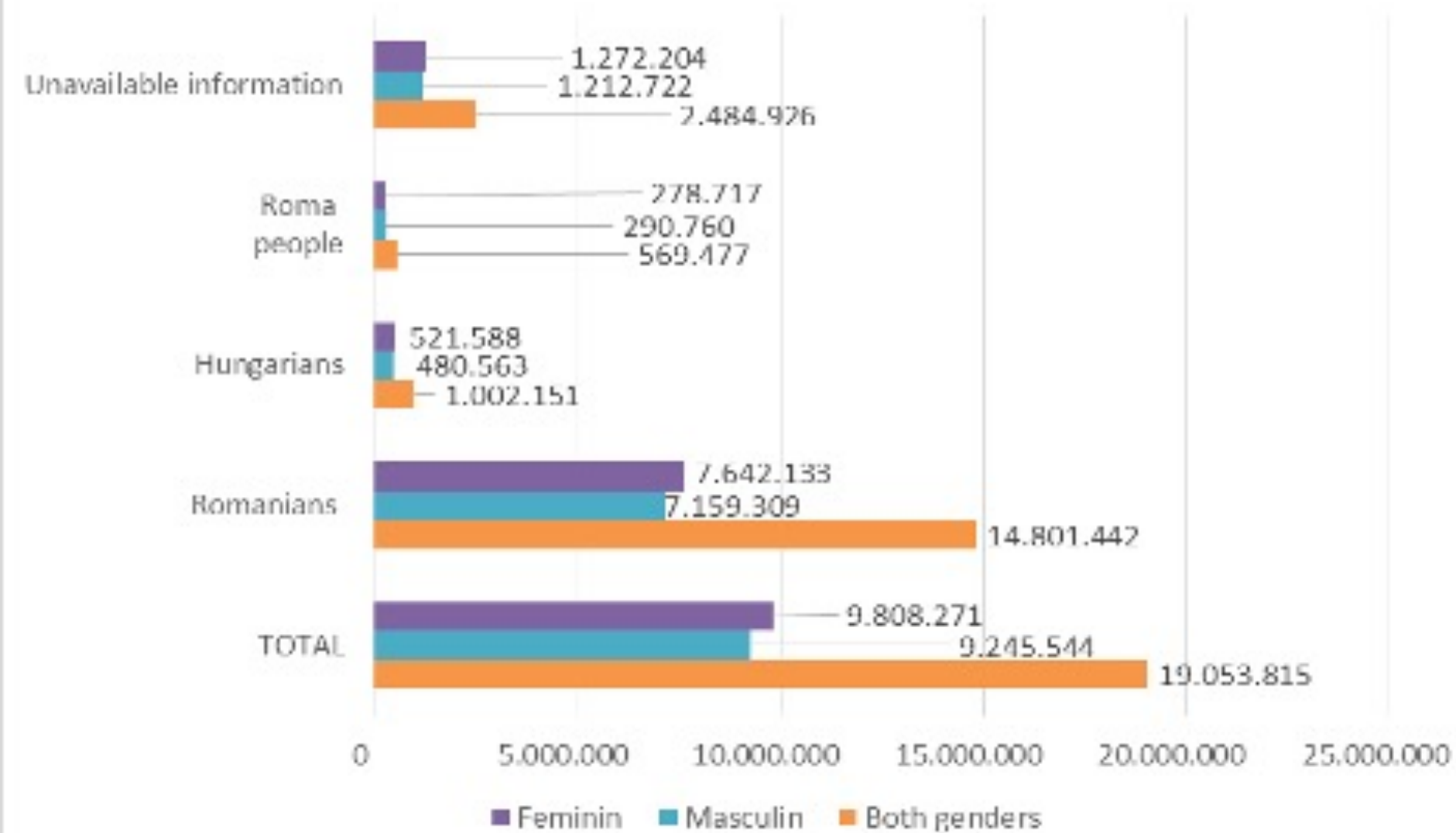
**Considerate respect, moral obligation, human rights, professional obligation with
significant benefits for the country's economic development and social cohesion.**

... Still working



Roma ethnics Romanian national statistics

Romania - Ethnicity



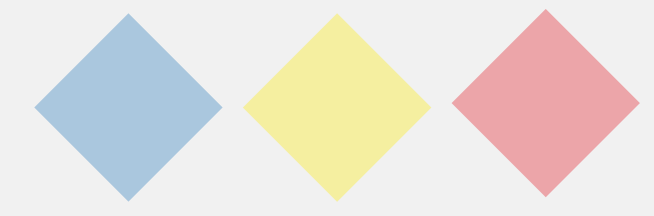
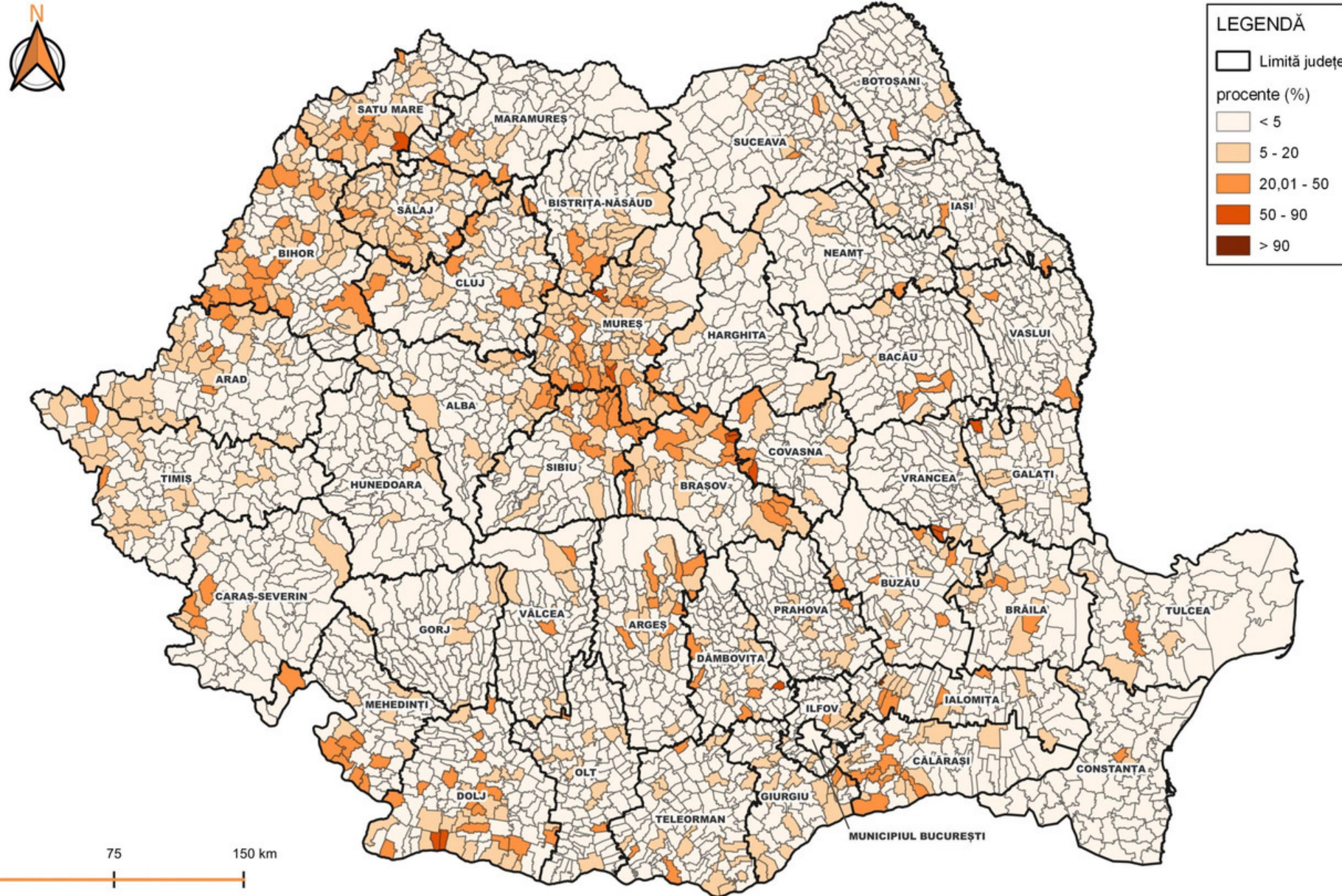
Source: INS, 2021 Population and Housing Census, provisional data

A significant part of the total Romanian population (approx. **3%** according to the 2021 National Census).

The third ethnic entity in Romania, maybe even the second.



Pondere a populației de etnie romă, la nivel de Unitate Administrativ Teritorială, conform RPL 2021



Roma ethnics Romanian national statistics

The percentage of 3%, Roma population, as resulted from the 2021 National Romanian Census is somehow **controversial**, being considered too small compared to reality.

Source: INS, 2021, Representation of Roma ethnic density through Romania



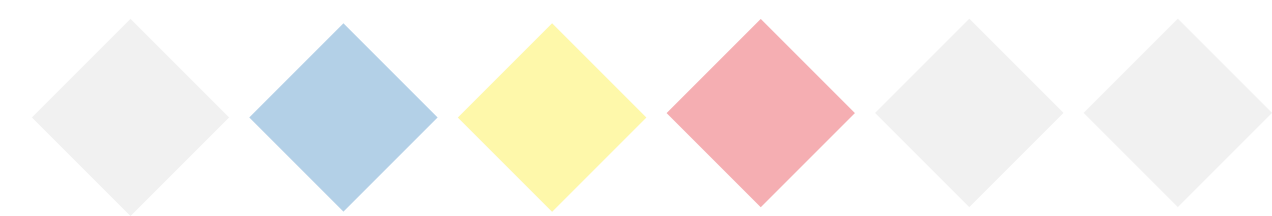
3%
Census

Limited research and information on Roma ethnics representation and experiences in the criminal justice system and probation services.

The largest minority ethnic and cultural group that Romanian Probation Services work with.

8%
RNPD
Research

Relative
Over-
representation



Vulnerability

Poverty

Discrimination

Sentencing and non-custodial sentencing

Criminal justice services - Probation

Equity

Respect

Nondiscrimination and inclusion

taking into account cultural characteristics



Recognizing and responding to cultural diversity will support relationships and allow effective interventions – removing barriers



2022

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Residential mobility

Occupational mobility

Educational mobility

Responsiveness

Interviews with 74 Roma probationers

Two types of Roma communities in Romania:

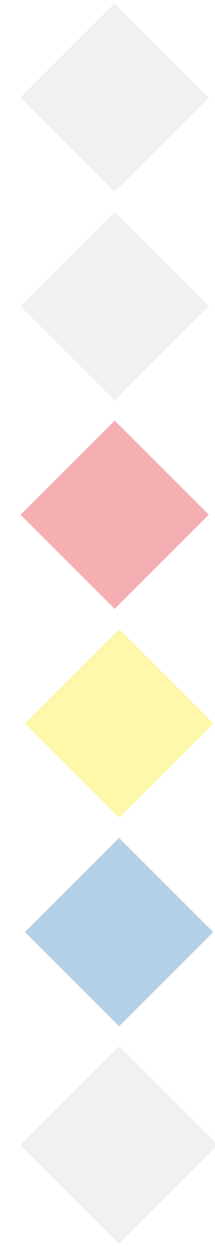
- **mixed (multi-ethnic)**
usually located on the margins of the respective localities
- **compact**
mainly populated by Roma people, they have their households spread over the entire area of the locality

Challenging to study



Interviews with 74 Roma probationers

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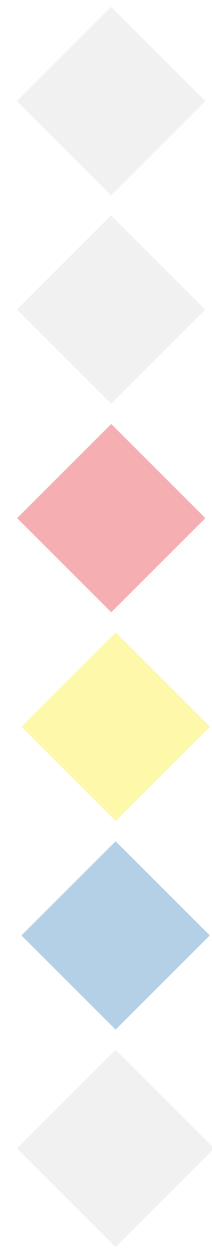
Residential mobility

- Precarious living conditions
- Lack of "well paid" workplaces
- Better accessibility to social support/children allowances
- Family members and friends living abroad



Interviews with 74 Roma probationers

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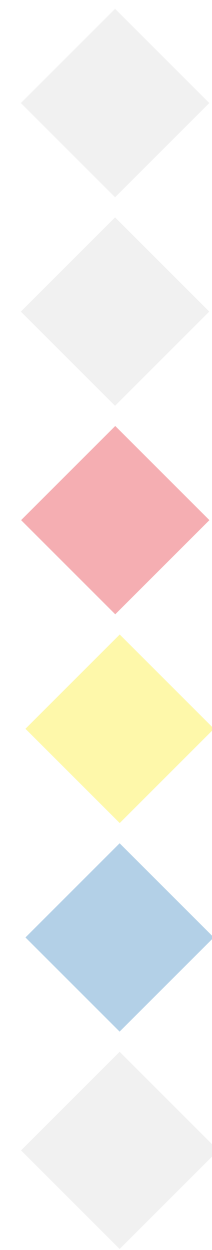
Occupational mobility

- Crafts - in compact communities
- Mostly without legal papers
- Usually poorly skilled jobs
- Higher income, better living conditions, good employment prospects, increased individual freedom, formalized jobs.
- Someone was waiting for them
- Begging or other illegal activities



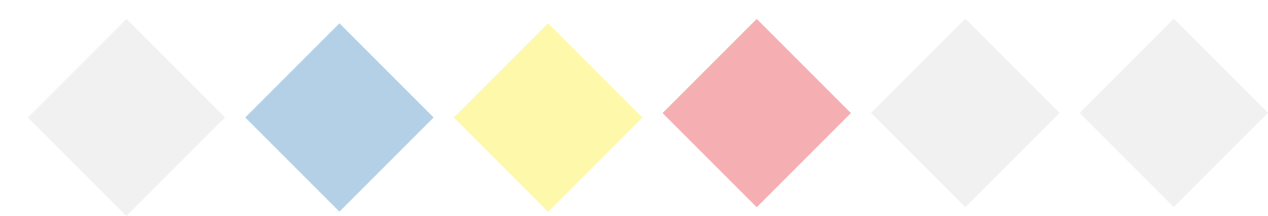
Interviews with 74 Roma probationers

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Educational mobility

- Low or non-existent level of education
- Main skills: writing and reading
- Utility of the school: acquisition of a driver's license / car mechanics knowledge
- Would like to go to school or go back to school, but they are ashamed, because of their current older age
- Social support and ~occidental values~
- Due to residential mobility



Discrimination and marginalization

Intra-ethnic discrimination

- exacerbates social divisions
- undermines solidarity within Roma communities

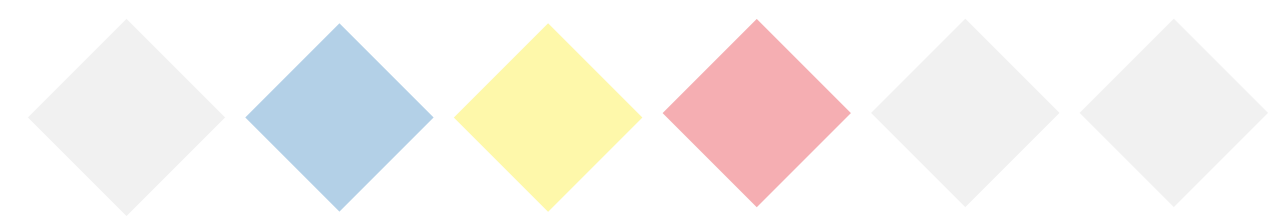
FACTORS:

- **regional origin**
- **socioeconomic status**
- **level of education**
- **adherence to cultural norms and traditions**

FORMS:

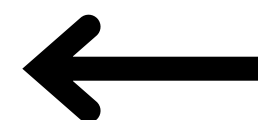
- "looking down" upon disadvantaged
- exclusion from social networks
- unequal access to resources
- derogatory attitudes in schools toward individuals perceived as "lower class"





Discrimination and marginalization

Intra-ethnic discrimination



Internalized stigma

Negative stereotypes & beliefs

INDIVIDUALS

- may distance themselves from aspects of their cultural identity
- may discriminate against others within their own community as a way of coping



Stigmatization is a social process

- Stigma attached to:**
- ethnic identity
 - cultural practices
 - socioeconomic status
 - perceived associations with criminality

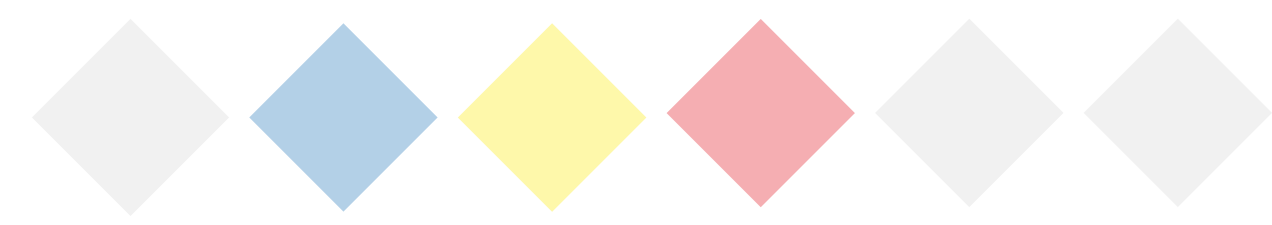
TACTICS

- concealing their ethnic background
- downplaying cultural markers in certain contexts

INTERNALIZE stereotypes
EXPERIENCE shame, inferiority, alienation

ENCOUNTER prejudice, discrimination, microaggressions





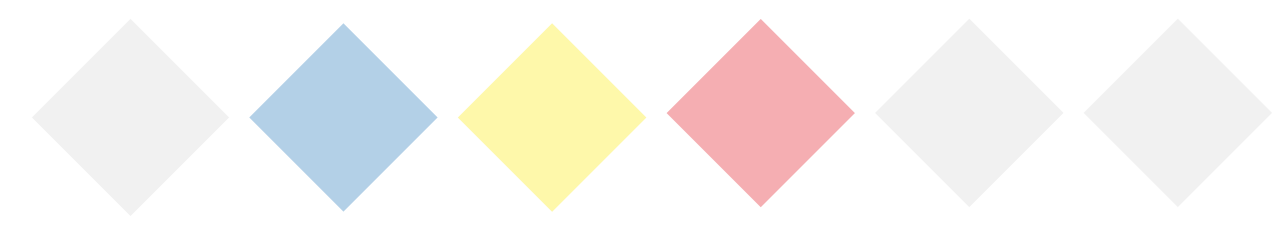
Discrimination and marginalization

Inferiority complex

A pervasive sense of inadequacy or inferiority that arises from **early experiences of perceived or actual inferiority**

Roma may internalize negative stereotypes, experiences of discrimination, and societal attitudes that devalue their ethnic identity

To what extent do Roma probationers exhibit obedience towards the sanction and the probation counsellor, as a result of internalized feelings of inferiority due to societal attitudes and systemic inequalities?



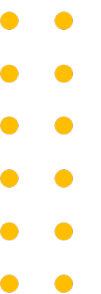
Discrimination and marginalization

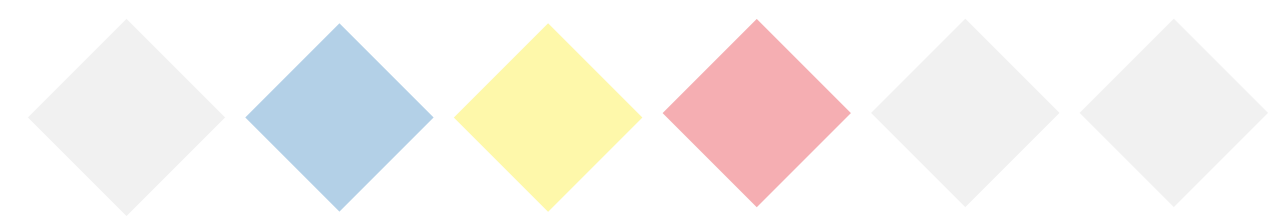
Inferiority complex

Direct observation in practice

Roma probationers demonstrate **resilience** and a **strong desire to succeed, striving for superiority** in their efforts to navigate the probation system and improve their circumstances.

By fostering a sense of **belonging, mutual respect, and solidarity** within the probation system, we can support Roma probationers in overcoming feelings of inferiority and developing a positive sense of self-worth and social connection.





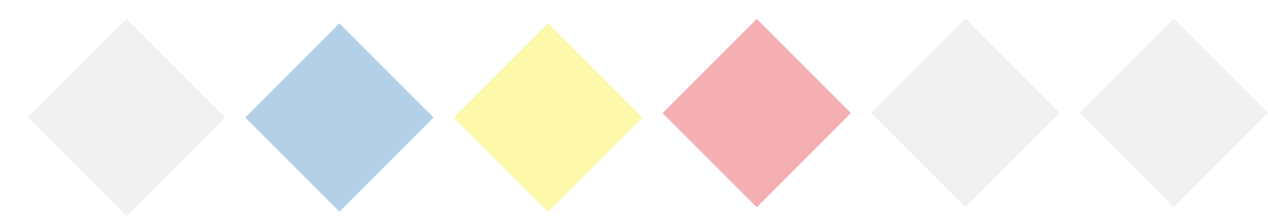
Need for a holistic approach

Considering the individual within the context of their social, familial, and cultural environment

Culturally sensitive and strengths-based approach, recognizing the unique strengths, challenges, and aspirations of Roma probationers.

The probation environment can no longer be conceived outside the knowledge of cultural conditioning on people's behaviors, attitudes and values.





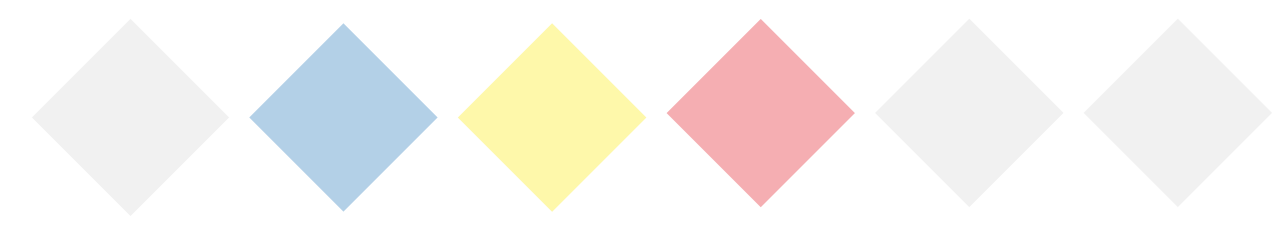
Need for a holistic approach

Considering the individual within the context of their social, familial, and cultural environment

Recognizing the intersecting influences of race, ethnicity, culture, and social identity in shaping the experiences within the probation.

Addressing systemic inequalities, promoting social inclusion, fostering a supportive and empowering environment, to help Roma probationers overcome feelings of inferiority and achieve positive outcomes in their rehabilitation and reintegration journey.





Focus on developing a positive criminology perspective in working with Roma probationers

Strengths

Resilience

**Opportunities
for growth**

Key objectives

Strengths-Based Assessment

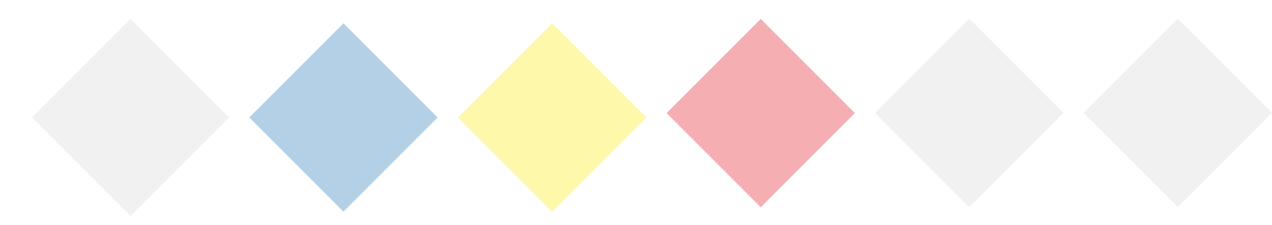
Cultural Competence

Strength-Based Programs

Trauma-Informed Approaches

Collaborative Approach

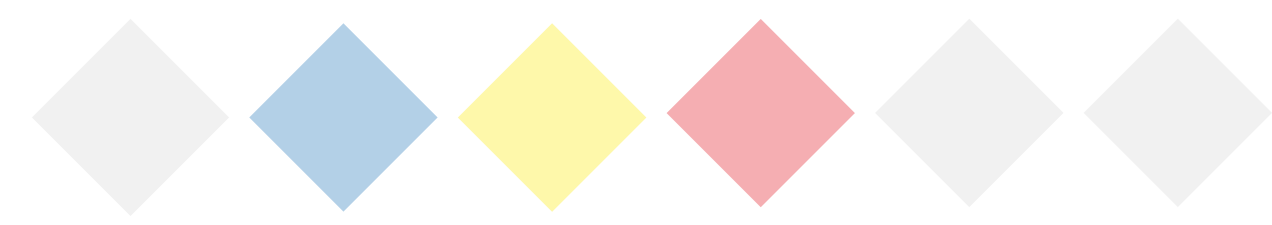




Strengths-Based Assessment

Assessments that highlight the strengths and assets of Roma probationers, instead of solely focusing on deficits and risk factors

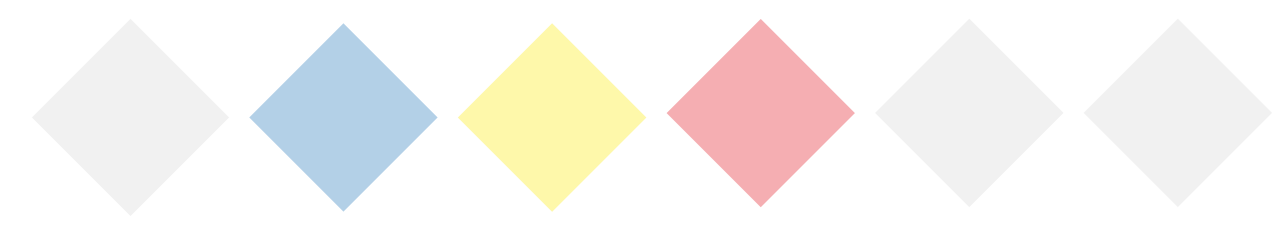
- **exploring their cultural heritage, family support systems, community ties, and personal skills**
- **we can value their capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential**
- **does not mean ignoring challenges, or spinning struggles into strengths**



Cultural Competence

The development of culturally responsive skills of probation counsellors is vital to the effectiveness of probation interaction

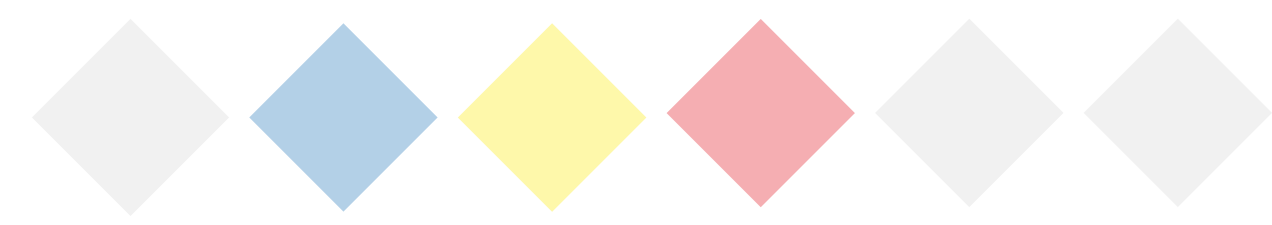
- **can improve - probationers' engagement in services and the relationships with probation counsellors**
 - **probation system's sustainability** by reinforcing the value of diversity, flexibility, and responsiveness
- **In time - gaining knowledge, through research, for understanding and respecting the cultural background of Roma ethnics**
- **training probation counsellors to effectively engage with Roma probationers, building trust and rapport**
 - **values that should not be judged based on a priori ethnocentric criteria, but valued through their contribution**
 - **understanding of the complex processes of socialization and construction of world visions, of attitudes, values and norms of individuals**



Cultural Competence

The development of culturally responsive skills of probation counsellors is vital to the effectiveness of probation interaction

- **intercultural competence through communication**
- **cultural competence is not acquired in a limited time frame or by learning a set of facts, the Roma culture being also diverse and continuously evolving**
- **ongoing process**
 - **cultural awareness as a commitment to understanding the role that culture plays in correctional settings**
 - **cultivating the willingness and ability to acquire knowledge of the Roma probationers' cultures for assessment and supervision process**

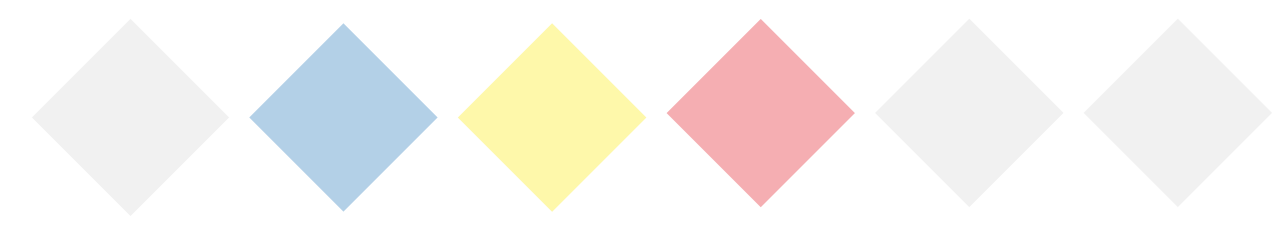


Cultural Competence

The development of culturally responsive skills of probation counsellors is vital to the effectiveness of probation interaction

Principles underlying a good relationship with the Roma ethnicity probationer refer to:

- **Establishing a climate of acceptance**
- **Promoting a positive self-image**
- **Awareness of the barriers that Roma ethics face**
- **The group represents a source of learning for everyone (mixed groups/interactions valued in real life)**

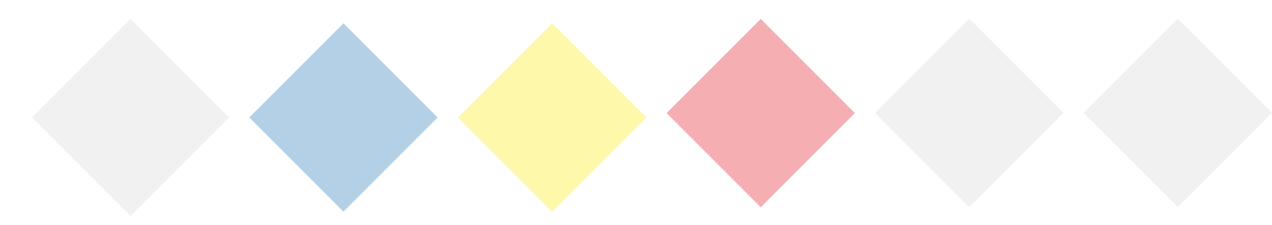


Strength-Based Programs

Tailored interventions should be developed, in order to address the specific needs and circumstances of Roma individuals



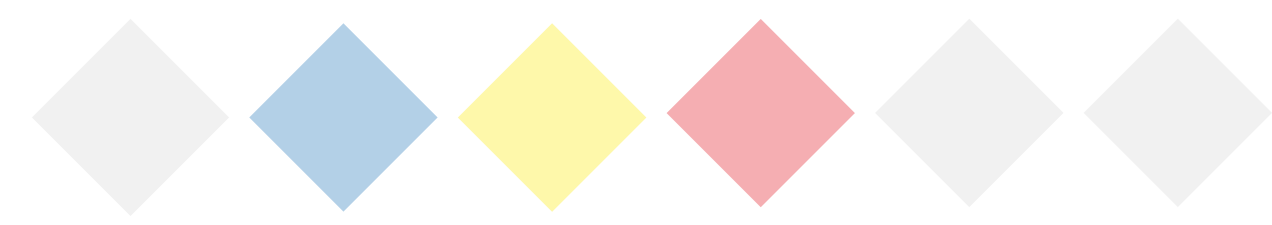
- **a stronger orientation towards visual messages, while others are more open to audio-tactile stimulation**
- **relying on art, like theater, traditional music and dance classes, or cultural awareness workshops, for fostering a sense of pride and belonging among Roma probationers and promote positive social connections**
- **skills training, education programs and employment support to address systemic barriers to employment, housing, education, and healthcare, advocating for their rights and access to services**
- **soliciting feedback**



Trauma-Informed Approaches

Many Roma ethnics have experienced trauma, discrimination, and marginalization, which can impact their behavior and well-being.

- **recognizing and addressing trauma experiences with sensitivity and compassion.**



Collaborative Approach

Working closely with Roma community leaders, organizations, families and individuals

- **To build trust and understanding**
- **Valuable insights and resources to support the reintegration, reduce recidivism of Roma probationers and address systemic issues affecting the Roma community.**

Implementing culturally sensitive approaches and strategies can work towards reducing recidivism, while respecting cultural identity.



2024

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Longitudinal study

Interviews with 100 Roma probationers, in order to explore individual narratives, challenges, and aspirations.

Reasons for migration, housing conditions, document employment status, types of jobs, income levels, career aspirations, educational attainment, barriers to education, and aspirations for further education.

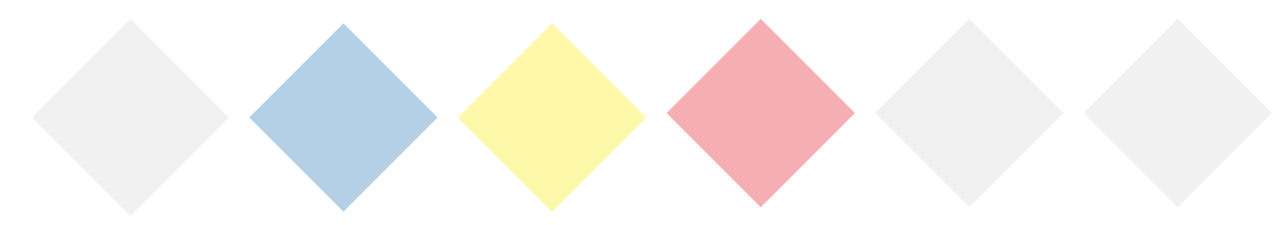


Residential history

Occupational trajectories

Educational experiences

Migration patterns





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Thank You

For Your Attention

**"In every adversity, there is opportunity.
In every challenge, there is strength."**

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