

PERSECUTION AND MIGRATION

Romani have been subject to persecution since they left India around 11th-14th Century. This has led to waves of migration which can be divided as follows¹:

First wave of migration:

- The debate regarding the origins of Romani before their arrival in Europe is still open. The sources are elusive and give birth to more hypothesis and assumptions.
- Arrival in Europe: It is not known the exact moment when Romani arrived in Europe, but their presence is attested from the 14th Century onwards. The first experiences of discrimination were registered between the 15th and 17th Century, in the Ottoman Empire and Central Europe (selfdom and slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia).
- “Enlightenment” is characterized by new forms of discrimination:
 - Spain - internment
 - Austro- Hungarian Empire- forced assimilation
 - Exception: Russia- civil rights as equal subjects of the Tsar

Second wave of migration- the 19th century:

- Migration of Romani from East and Central Europe and to other parts as well, mainly due to the abolition of Slavery in the Romanian principalities and emerging industrialization
- Intensification of the discrimination especially in the regions as part of the Austro- Hungarian Empire (bans on travelling, settling by force, deportation, expulsion and repression).
- Abolishment of the Romani slavery in the 1860 in the Romanian principalities
- The “Samudaripen” or the Romani holocaust: between 400,000 and 500,000 Romani people died. During the Nuremberg Trial this genocide was not mentioned, nor was any compensation given to Romani survivors.

Third wave of migration:

- Migration towards Western Europe, but also to the United States, Canada and Australia, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- Balkan wars in the 1990’s- loss of lives, expulsion and little protection in the countries of destination.
- The increasing international “awareness” about the Romani raised questions about their problems and lead to the recognition of Romani and their rights².

Council of Europe, “The Council of Europe: Protecting the Rights of Roma”,
http://www.coe.int/AboutCoe/media/interface/publications/roms_en.pdf

University of Graz; Factsheets on Roma: Factsheets on Roma History: General Introduction, <http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/index.php/history/general-introduction/general-introduction>