

IRCA ANNUAL REPORT

Year 2025

Supporting vulnerable communities and promoting inclusivity goes beyond compassion—it forms the very foundation of a fair and equitable society, where every individual has the opportunity to succeed and flourish.

IRCA remains committed to driving meaningful change, empowering communities, and championing the principles of equality and inclusion.

Introduction to IRCA's 2025 Annual Plan

The 2025 Annual Plan of the Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) highlights the organization's strategic objectives, key initiatives, accomplishments, and emerging priorities. The year 2025 marked a period of significant progress, innovation, and transformative impact across multiple sectors, from social inclusion and youth empowerment to environmental sustainability and democratic participation.

This document provides a comprehensive overview of IRCA's efforts to empower Roma and marginalized communities, safeguard human rights, strengthen civic engagement, and promote cultural heritage in Albania. Throughout 2025, IRCA maintained its commitment to fostering equality, supporting vulnerable groups, advancing gender equality, and enhancing inclusive governance. By building on the successes and lessons of previous years, this plan outlines the organization's approach to addressing new challenges, scaling successful initiatives, and reinforcing its mission to build a fairer, more inclusive society.

Letter from the Executive Director of IRCA

Dear Donors, Partners, Staff, Community Members, and Central and Local Institutions,

As we reflect on the achievements of 2025, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all who have contributed to the mission of the Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA). Together, we have made remarkable strides in empowering the Roma community and supporting vulnerable populations, demonstrating that meaningful change is possible through collaboration, dedication, and shared vision.

This year, IRCA implemented a diverse set of initiatives addressing key priorities: promoting social inclusion, strengthening democratic participation, advancing environmental sustainability, enhancing youth education and employability, improving social care services, and supporting gender equality. Each project reflects our commitment to ensuring that every voice is heard and that marginalized communities have the tools, knowledge, and opportunities to thrive.

To our donors, your continued support has been vital in turning our vision into tangible results. Your commitment has enabled us to reach new communities, expand programs, and provide essential services to those who need them most. To our central and local partners, your collaboration has been invaluable, amplifying the impact of our initiatives and fostering sustainable change across Albania.

To the dedicated IRCA staff and volunteers, your tireless work, resilience, and passion remain the backbone of everything we achieve. Your dedication transforms challenges into opportunities and inspires the communities we serve. Most importantly, I want to thank the Roma and vulnerable communities who motivate our mission every day. Your courage, perseverance, and engagement are at the heart of our work and remind us why IRCA exists.

Looking ahead, IRCA will continue to expand opportunities for Roma youth, strengthen civic participation, advocate for human rights, enhance environmental and gender justice, and ensure inclusive and equitable access to education, employment, and social services. While new challenges will arise, the steadfast trust and collaboration of our donors, partners, staff, and communities give us confidence to keep driving meaningful change.

Together, we are building a future where Roma communities and all vulnerable groups in Albania can fully participate, thrive, and contribute to society. Thank you for being an essential part of this journey.

Sincerely,

Bledar Taho

Executive Director

Institute of Romani Culture in Albania

Introduction and Mission Statement

IRCA was founded on July 1, 2011, drawing inspiration from advocacy services provided by institutions such as the Italian Institute of Culture in Albania, the Goethe Institute, the British Council, the American Corner, as well as research and documentation centers at universities across Europe and North America, many of which the founders of IRCA have personally engaged with.

Vision:

External Vision (for beneficiaries): Roma communities are empowered, with meaningful access, engagement, representation, and participation in civic life and public decision-making at all levels.

Internal Vision (for the organization): IRCA strives to be a leading organization that advocates for a multi-ethnic, inclusive society, grounded in the universal values of human rights and equality.

Mission:

IRCA is committed to fostering the equal and sustainable development of Roma communities by promoting advocacy, mobilization, empowerment, collaboration, policy-focused research, and participatory action. The organization works to ensure equal participation in democratic processes, fair access to rights and services, and the preservation and promotion of Roma culture and identity.

Through a combination of volunteer advocacy, educational services, and recreational activities, IRCA has established three key youth networks: the Romani Students' Network, the Romani Corps of Volunteers, and the Romani Youth Parliament Forum. Additionally, much of IRCA's work is broadcast through its online radio station, "Capitol"-Radio, which highlights and amplifies the organization's activities.

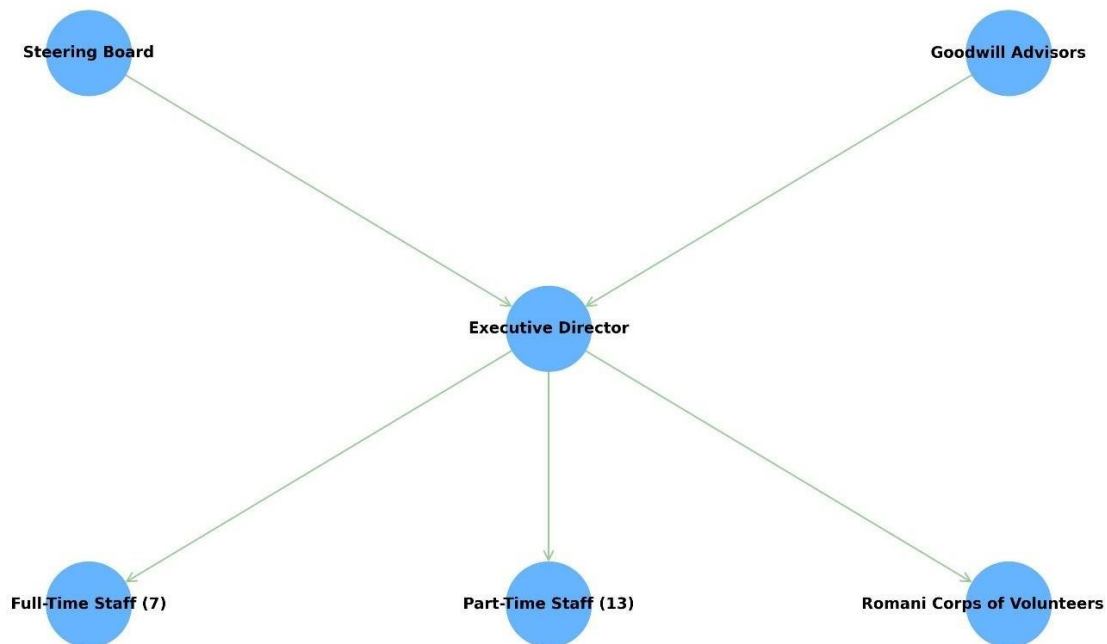
Work

Impact of IRCA's work fall in 4 main categories:

- a) *Intercultural dialogue:*
- b) *Youth Empowerment:*
- c) *Advocacy and Participation*
- d) *Institutional Development and Partnership Building*

The organizational structure of IRCA includes the Steering Board, Goodwill Advisors, the Executive Director, and a team of 30 staff members, consisting of 7 full-time and 3 part-time employees. Additionally, IRCA has established the Romani Corps of Volunteers, which comprises over 210 members, including both Roma and non-Roma students and graduates. Since 2011, IRCA has also directed the Body of Actors, Visual Artists, and Musicians, which has performed and organized more than 85 activities in the field of arts and culture.

Organizational Structure Organogram



Throughout 2025, the Institute of Romani Culture in Albania has focused its efforts on:

Institutional Strengthening

Building the capacity of IRCA's staff in areas such as project coordination, management, monitoring and evaluation, fundraising, and the creation of internal policies and procedures. These efforts aim to enhance the organization's overall efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

Intercultural Engagement

Fostering an inclusive environment that encourages collaboration and mutual understanding among people from diverse cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. IRCA promotes respect for diversity and values differences in ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, abilities, language, and social status, creating a supportive space where all voices are heard and respected.

Youth Empowerment

Providing young people with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to drive positive change within their communities. This includes developing leadership abilities, critical thinking, creative expression, and civic engagement, enabling youth to become active agents of transformation.

Advocacy and Civic Participation

Designing and implementing programs that strengthen the ability of Roma communities to influence public policies and decision-making processes. This work emphasizes community empowerment, transparency in governance, accountability of public institutions, and active citizen participation to ensure that government actions are responsive to the needs of marginalized groups.

Executive Summary

In 2025, the Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) successfully implemented a diverse portfolio of initiatives aimed at promoting **transparency, inclusion, and empowerment** of Roma and marginalized communities across Albania and the Western Balkans. Through strategic partnerships with local authorities, international organizations, and civil society networks, IRCA advanced its mission to strengthen human rights, democratic participation, social inclusion, and economic empowerment.

Key achievements include:

- Enhanced **transparency and accountability** in public fund usage for housing, employment, and empowerment measures under the National Action Plan for Roma and Egyptians 2021–2025.
- Strengthened **democratic participation** by engaging Roma youth and communities in the 2025 Parliamentary Elections.
- Promoted **youth empowerment and inclusion** through storytelling, drama, digital media, and creative arts.
- Advanced **environmental sustainability** and green entrepreneurship among Roma micro-entrepreneurs.
- Improved **social care services** and psychosocial support for vulnerable groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities.
- Promoted **gender equality and anti-discrimination** awareness through campaigns, exhibitions, and dialogue initiatives.
- Enhanced **media professionalism** and digital storytelling capacities to ensure inclusive and ethical representation of marginalized communities.

This Annual Report highlights the implementation of IRCA's projects, key results, success stories, and overall impact during 2025.

- *A Journey Through IRCA's 2025 Projects*

Transparency and Accountability in National Action Plan Implementation



With the support of IDM and funding from the European Union, IRCA implemented the project “Transparency and Accountability in the Implementation and Reporting of Budgetary Expenditures under the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of Roma and Egyptians 2021–2025.” The project aimed to enhance transparency and accountability in the implementation and budgeting of housing, employment, and empowerment measures outlined in the National Action Plan. IRCA monitored the allocation and use of public funds related to key strategic objectives, while also strengthening the capacity of civil society actors and Roma and Egyptian communities to actively engage in monitoring and reporting processes.



As part of the project, a monitoring application has been designed, enabling users not only to access information about the progress of the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025 but also to actively engage by sharing comments, suggestions, challenges, and positive practices across Albania. For more information, visit the platform: [Monitoring Platform](http://www.monitorimi.irca.al)



✦ Supporting the Participation of Roma and Vulnerable Groups in the 2025 Elections

IRCA implemented this project to **strengthen democratic participation** among Roma communities and other vulnerable groups in Albania during the 2025 Parliamentary Elections. The initiative focused on empowering citizens with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage meaningfully in electoral processes, while ensuring that marginalized communities could exercise their voting rights without barriers.

Objectives:

- Increase civic awareness and understanding of democratic rights among Roma and vulnerable populations.
- Promote equitable participation in electoral processes, ensuring inclusivity and protection of voting rights.
- Strengthen collaboration between communities, civil society, and electoral institutions to foster transparent and accountable elections.

Key Activities:

1. Capacity-Building Sessions:

- Organized workshops and training sessions for Roma community members and local leaders to enhance understanding of electoral rights, procedures, and civic responsibilities.
- Developed tailored materials in accessible language to reach participants with varying levels of literacy.

2. Awareness Campaigns:

- Conducted community outreach through local events, social media, and informational sessions to raise awareness about the importance of participation in elections.
- Emphasized the value of every vote and the impact of civic engagement on community development.

3. Collaboration with Electoral Institutions:

- Engaged with local and national electoral bodies to ensure smooth coordination and facilitate inclusive participation.
- Advocated for measures to reduce administrative and social barriers that may hinder Roma and vulnerable groups from voting.

4. Monitoring and Support:

- Provided on-the-ground assistance during the election period to guide citizens through voting procedures.
- Monitored participation rates and documented challenges to inform future advocacy and interventions.

Impact:

- A large number of Roma and vulnerable community members were trained and actively informed about their electoral rights.
- Increased visibility and engagement of marginalized groups in the democratic process.
- Strengthened trust and collaboration between communities, civil society, and electoral authorities.
- Contributed to more transparent, inclusive, and participatory elections, setting a precedent for future civic engagement initiatives.

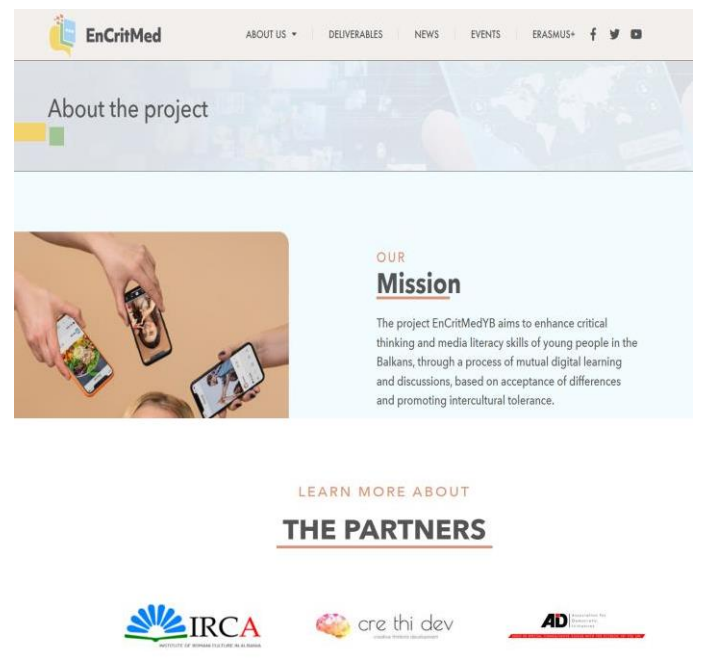
❖ **Erasmus+ project "EnCritMedYB (2023-2025)**

IRCA was a partner in the Erasmus+ project "EnCritMedYB," funded by the European Union. The project aimed to strengthen critical thinking and media literacy skills among young people across the Balkans. Through digital learning activities, interactive discussions, and collaborative exercises, participants were encouraged to explore diverse perspectives, challenge misinformation, and engage constructively with media content. The initiative also promoted intercultural understanding and tolerance, helping youth develop greater acceptance of differences in culture, ethnicity, and social background.

Read more on the project website: [Enritmed](https://www.enritmed.eu)



☞ To achieve its objectives, the project **developed and shared educational materials** on media literacy, critical thinking, and intercultural dialogue across North Macedonia, Albania, Greece, and Kosovo. It **organized 30 regional digital events** that engaged youth, strengthened their critical thinking and media literacy skills, and promoted **intercultural dialogue, mutual learning, and tolerance.**



We Empower the Roma Minority to Exercise Democratic Rights

IRCA implemented the project to **increase democratic participation and civic engagement** among Roma communities in Albania, particularly in the context of the 2025 Parliamentary Elections. The initiative **focused on empowering citizens with knowledge, skills, and confidence** to exercise their electoral rights and engage actively in democratic processes.

Key Activities Conducted:

- **Outreach and Educational Campaigns:** IRCA conducted awareness-raising sessions, workshops, and community visits in **10 municipalities**, targeting Roma citizens and local leaders to provide comprehensive information on electoral procedures, rights, and responsibilities.
- **Capacity-Building for Community Members:** Participants received tailored training and guidance on **voter registration, legal rights, and complaint mechanisms**, ensuring they could participate in elections fully and confidently.
- **Engagement and Mobilization:** Through interactive discussions, public forums, and local events, the project encouraged **active participation of Roma communities** in the 2025 Parliamentary Elections.
- **Collaboration with Local Authorities:** IRCA coordinated with municipal officials and electoral institutions to ensure smooth communication, accessibility, and inclusivity during election-related activities.

Outcomes and Impact:

- Roma communities in the targeted municipalities gained **enhanced awareness of their democratic rights** and the electoral process.
- Increased **voter engagement and participation** among marginalized communities.
- Strengthened **trust and collaboration** between Roma citizens, civil society, and local authorities.
- Contributed to a more **inclusive, accountable, and participatory electoral process**, providing a model for future civic engagement initiatives.

AGORA

The project titled “*Advancing Gender Equality through Oversight and Reporting in Albania*” (AGORA), funded by the **EU**, is implemented by the Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) in collaboration with the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) as the lead applicant and Together for Life (TFL). The project aims to empower diverse women’s civil society organizations (WCSOs) and grassroots groups, including Roma and LGBTQI+ communities, to monitor and hold institutions accountable for implementing the legal framework on gender equality and addressing gender-based violence (GE&GBV). Targeted municipalities include Tiranë, Korçë, Lezhë, Kukës, Fier, and Elbasan. The initiative focuses on women and girls, particularly survivors of GBV, Roma women and girls, and LGBTQI+ individuals, alongside WCSOs, primary health care centers and practitioners, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, municipal authorities (mayors, GBV coordinators, and referral mechanisms), the Parliament of Albania, and media representatives. By involving these stakeholders, the project seeks to enhance institutional accountability and strengthen efforts to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence in Albania.



Beyond Barriers: Roma Resilience in the Western Balkans

The Institute of Roma Culture in Albania (IRCA) is a key implementing partner in the regional project “*Beyond Barriers: Roma Resilience in the Western Balkans*”, led by the Romalitico Institute for Research and Policy Analysis and supported by the European Union. Running from December 2, 2024, to October 1, 2027, the project aims to enhance Roma inclusion in the Western Balkans by addressing economic disparities, combating anti-Roma discrimination, and promoting social integration.

Implemented in Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kosovo, it brings together key partners, including JURUM Center in Serbia, KALI SARA Roma Information Center in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romaversitas in Kosovo, and INSOK Initiative for Social Change in North Macedonia.

The project focuses on three main components: strengthening Roma advocacy through the establishment of a Regional Roma Network that will monitor policies, promote sectoral reforms, and create a donor coordination platform; advancing economic inclusion by providing vocational training, supporting social enterprises and startups, conducting labor market research, and facilitating partnerships with businesses to increase Roma employment opportunities; and combating anti-Roma discrimination by advocating for legal reforms, identifying legislative gaps, and ensuring the protection of Roma rights through targeted policy initiatives.

Through these interventions, the project seeks to create a coordinated and unified Regional Roma Network, implement economic initiatives that improve Roma livelihoods, and develop a stronger regional advocacy framework to combat anti-Roma discrimination.

National Conference -Taking Action Against Antigypsyism

IRCA **organized the National Conference “Taking Action Against Antigypsyism”** as part of the regional project **“Beyond Barriers: Roma Resilience in the Western Balkans,”** funded by the European Union and implemented across Western Balkan countries. The conference aimed to foster a comprehensive dialogue between public institutions, academia, and civil society to strengthen institutional and societal responses to antigypsyism and promote the protection of Roma rights.

The event **sought to achieve several objectives**, including encouraging institutional commitment to preventing and addressing antigypsyism, publicly launching the “Beyond Barriers” project and presenting its regional approach and commitments, strengthening cross-sectoral dialogue on effective practices and experiences, and identifying concrete recommendations for action in the fields of education, employment, and anti-discrimination protection.

The **target audience** included representatives from ministries and local institutions, academic experts and university lecturers, civil society actors including Roma community members, representatives of international organizations and donors, media representatives, and students.

During the conference, participants **engaged in intensive discussions and knowledge-sharing sessions**, resulting in a **shared understanding of the current state of antigypsyism and its challenges**. The “Beyond Barriers” project was publicly launched, highlighting commitments, planned activities, and partnerships across the region. Additionally, the conference produced **draft recommendations for institutional and cross-sectoral action**, promoting collaboration between government, academia, and civil society. The event also **strengthened awareness** and built networks of stakeholders dedicated to combating antigypsyism at both local and regional levels, fostering sustainable strategies for social inclusion and the protection of Roma communities.

✚ Roma Youth Ambassadors of a Corruption-Free Society



With the support of the Albanian Helsinki Committee, IRCA implemented the project “Roma Youth Ambassadors of a Corruption-Free Society.” The project aimed to strengthen anti-corruption awareness among Roma youth through education, campaigns, and legal awareness activities. Youth participants gained knowledge on their rights and complaint mechanisms, while partnerships with local authorities were strengthened to promote transparency and equal access to public services.

Funded by the European Union

IRCA

BEST PRACTICES IN ENGAGING YOUTH IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

- Include youth in policymaking processes to ensure greater transparency!
- Provide leadership training that empowers young people to stand against corruption!
- Choose Integrity!
- Develop educational materials to increase awareness about corruption!
- Integrate integrity and ethics into early education curricula!
- Highlight role models who get with integrity!
- Empower Youth!
- Teach youth to consider moral dimensions and consequences!
- Small wins—awareness, referrals, joint action—build long-term change!
- Reject Corruption!
- Host informal activities that encourage youth to discuss societal issues!
- Inspire Change!

STUDY VISITS

- Office of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination
- Ministry of State for Youth and Children
- Ministry of Justice
- Committee of National Morality

Funded by the European Union

IRCA

THE PRODUCTION OF VIDEOCASTS

- Elena Bano, Director, Directorate of Integration and Negotiation and Negotiation**
Challenging corruption as a key strategy toward European Union membership!
- Erinda Skendaj, Executive Director, Albanian Helsinki Committee**
The importance of integrated support for young people!
- Kristina Vito, Assistant Secretary to the Commissioner**
Corruption through a psychological lens!
- Skendi Zahaj, Lecturer, University of Tirana, Faculty of Social Sciences**
The importance of the legal framework in challenging the apathy created toward corruption!
- Arben Durruti, Director, Transparency International**
Advocacy for rights as a tool to challenge corruption!
- Lirion Kraimiri, Co-Executive Director, Gerecht**
The diaspora and positive practices for challenging corruption!
- Shirvan Haxhi, Youth Ambassador**
The role of young people in challenging corruption!
- Tana Ataj, Program Manager, IRCA**
Presentation of good practices from the project!

Corruption thrives where conscience is silent and self-interest finds a voice.

Partnership with Unicef

During 2025, we are pleased to share the news of our partnership with UNICEF. IRCA has been awarded two projects under the major programme EU4SocialCare!

In partnership with the Municipality of Gjirokastrë, Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) is currently implementing the project **“Enhancing the Capacities of the Community Social Center ‘Zinxhira’.”**

This ongoing initiative is focused on strengthening the operational, technical, and professional capacities of the Community Social Center “Zinxhira” to ensure the delivery of high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable social care services. The project is actively improving access to essential services for vulnerable and marginalized groups, including Roma and Egyptian communities, women and girls, children and youth, and persons with disabilities, who often face barriers to accessing institutional support.

As part of the implementation, IRCA is providing comprehensive, multidisciplinary services such as psychological counseling to support mental health and emotional well-being, physiotherapy services to improve physical health and functional independence, and legal information and guidance to empower beneficiaries in understanding and exercising their rights. In parallel, the project is delivering targeted capacity-building activities for social workers, caregivers, and service providers, including training, mentoring, and practical support to enhance their professional competencies and ensure a more responsive and inclusive approach to social care.

Through these ongoing efforts, the project is contributing to strengthening local social service systems, promoting social inclusion, improving the quality of life of beneficiaries, and fostering greater community resilience and equal access to care for all.

Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) is currently implementing the project **“EMBRACE BALASHE,”** in partnership with the Municipality of Elbasan.

This ongoing project focuses on strengthening and expanding access to inclusive, community-based social care services, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups, including Roma and Egyptian communities, women, children, youth, and persons with disabilities. A key component of the project is the provision of mobile outreach services, which enable IRCA’s multidisciplinary team to reach beneficiaries directly in their communities, especially those who face geographical, economic, or social barriers to accessing institutional support.

Through its current implementation, the project is delivering a comprehensive package of integrated social services, including psychological counseling to support emotional well-being and mental health, legal counseling and information to empower beneficiaries to understand and exercise their rights, and physiotherapy services to improve physical health and functional capacity. These services are designed to respond to the individual needs of beneficiaries and to promote their dignity, independence, and social inclusion.

In parallel, IRCA is conducting ongoing capacity-building activities for social service providers, municipal staff, and community-based professionals. These activities include training sessions, mentoring, and practical guidance aimed at strengthening their technical skills, improving service quality, and promoting inclusive, rights-based, and sustainable approaches to social care delivery.

DD – Diversity Drama

IRCA implemented the project “**DD – Diversity Drama: Empowering Roma and Non-Roma Youth for Diversity, Inclusion, and Human Rights,**” funded by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe. The project **aimed to empower Roma and non-Roma youth** by equipping them with the tools and skills needed to address sensitive social issues through creative and informal education methods, including drama, art, and interactive discussions. Through these approaches, the project **fostered critical thinking, intercultural dialogue, and active youth participation in promoting human rights and social change.**

Implemented over a **10-month period (March – December 2025)** in Albania, the project engaged marginalized youth and created opportunities for creative expression and advocacy. The project **began with an official launch and an open call for applications**, followed by the selection of **10 Roma and non-Roma participants**, who formed a working group responsible for developing and performing a drama production focused on diversity and inclusion.

Participants **took part in three structured training sessions**, where they developed skills in theater performance, scriptwriting, and the use of artistic expression as a tool for human rights advocacy. Following the training phase, the group **collaboratively developed the script and conducted rehearsals**, preparing for public performances designed to raise awareness and encourage dialogue.

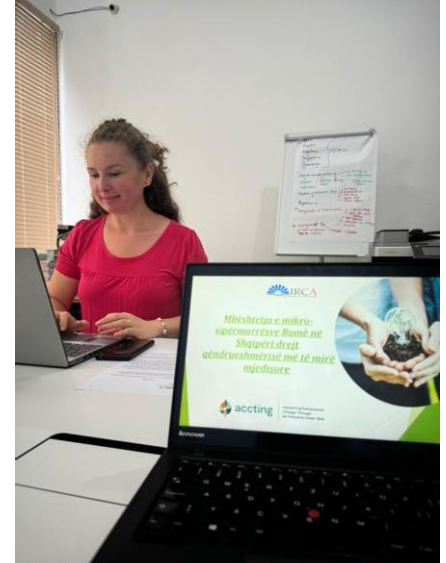
The project culminated in **two major drama performances**, held in **Tirana and Elbasan**, each engaging approximately **500 audience members**, including youth, community members, civil society representatives, and local stakeholders. These performances created a platform for dialogue on diversity, antigypsyism, discrimination, and social inclusion.

In addition, a **final workshop was organized** to reflect on the project’s impact and facilitate discussions between participants and stakeholders. To further expand outreach and visibility, **three podcasts were produced**, amplifying the project’s message and reaching a broader audience of over **50,000 people** through digital platforms.

By combining **art, education, and advocacy**, the project **contributed to combating antigypsyism, promoting intercultural understanding, and empowering young people to become active agents of change** within their communities and beyond.

❖ *Support for Roma Micro-Entrepreneurs in Albania
Towards Better Environmental Sustainability*

IRCA implemented the project “Support for Roma Micro-Entrepreneurs in Albania Towards Better Environmental Sustainability,” funded by the European Science Foundation (ESF) under the ACCTING project. The initiative aimed to promote environmentally sustainable business practices among Roma micro-entrepreneurs. At least 60 participants benefited from awareness sessions on sustainability, while 20 entrepreneurs received professional training on green business practices. Additionally, 10 selected entrepreneurs received individualized expert support and material assistance. The project also facilitated networking and established the Coalition of Green Roma Micro-Entrepreneurs, alongside an online platform for collaboration and knowledge sharing. The initiative contributed to environmental protection, climate awareness, and the economic empowerment of marginalized entrepreneurs.



Voices of Change: The Power of Digital Narrative

The project “**Voices of Change: The Power of the Digital Narrative**” was implemented to address the persistent negative portrayal and underrepresentation of marginalized communities, particularly Roma and Egyptian groups, in digital and online media. Recognizing the influential role of media in shaping public opinion and social attitudes, the project focused on promoting ethical journalism, improving media professionalism, and fostering inclusive and responsible reporting practices.

The project aimed to **strengthen the technical, editorial, and professional capacities of journalists, youth, and media actors**, enabling them to produce accurate, balanced, and ethical content. Special attention was given to improving the quality of reporting on human rights issues, discrimination, and social inclusion, while ensuring that the voices and perspectives of marginalized communities were represented with dignity and respect.

Through a series of **capacity-building activities, training sessions, and mentoring opportunities**, the project supported journalists and young media creators in developing skills in digital storytelling, ethical reporting, fact-checking, and multimedia content production. Participants were equipped with practical tools and methodologies to identify misinformation, challenge harmful narratives, and create impactful stories that highlight the realities, challenges, and achievements of Roma, Egyptian, and other vulnerable communities.

In addition, the project **promoted gender-sensitive and human rights-based journalism**, encouraging media professionals to adopt inclusive approaches that respect diversity and avoid stereotypes. By strengthening collaboration between civil society organizations, journalists, and media platforms, the initiative contributed to building a more accountable and socially responsible media environment.

The project also **supported the creation and dissemination of digital content**, including stories, video narratives, and online campaigns, amplifying underrepresented voices and fostering greater public awareness. These efforts contributed to improving media representation and encouraging more informed, inclusive public discourse.

For more information- [Communityvoices](#)

Ambassadors Against Corruption – Roma Youth Promote a Free and Equal Society

As part of the **SELDI Small Grants Programme – “Financial Support for Grassroots and Youth CSOs with Outreach to Citizens,”** financially supported by the European Union, IRCA implemented the project **“Ambassadors Against Corruption – Roma Youth Promote a Free and Equal Society”** in the municipalities of Tirana and Elbasan. The project aimed to promote an anti-corruption culture among Roma youth and their communities, while strengthening cooperation between young people, civil society, and local authorities to ensure equal access to public services and transparent governance.

To achieve these objectives, IRCA organized a series of youth training sessions and capacity-building activities, equipping participants with knowledge on anti-corruption principles, civic engagement, and accountability mechanisms. These activities helped young participants better understand their rights, the impact of corruption on marginalized communities, and the importance of active civic participation in promoting transparency and integrity.

The project also implemented innovative awareness-raising initiatives, including *“Cinema Travel”* screenings, podcast production, and targeted social media campaigns. These activities provided accessible and engaging platforms to educate youth and the wider community about corruption, its consequences, and the importance of ethical behavior and responsible citizenship. Through storytelling, dialogue, and digital outreach, the project reached a broader audience and amplified youth voices in anti-corruption advocacy.

A key component of the project included conducting interviews and organizing workshops with representatives of public institutions and stakeholders involved in anti-corruption efforts. These engagements facilitated meaningful dialogue between youth and institutional representatives, provided valuable insights into existing anti-corruption policies and practices, and strengthened mutual understanding and trust. The activities also contributed to identifying challenges and opportunities for improving transparency and accountability at the local level.

Through this initiative, IRCA empowered Roma youth to become active agents of change, strengthening their capacity to advocate for integrity, equality, and accountability. The project contributed to raising awareness, fostering civic responsibility, and promoting a culture of transparency and equal access to public services, while reinforcing collaboration between communities and public institutions.

The infographic is titled "10 STEPS TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST CORRUPTION: BY YOUTH, FOR YOUTH!". It features logos for the European Union, SELDI.net, and IRCA at the top. The steps are listed as follows:

- STEP 1: LEARN
- STEP 2: CHOOSE A FOCUS
- STEP 3: ADAPT TO YOUR CONTEXT
- STEP 4: PLAN YOUR INITIATIVE
- STEP 5: USE CREATIVITY
- STEP 6: BUILD PARTNERSHIPS
- STEP 7: ENSURE INCLUSIVITY
- STEP 8: STAY SAFE
- STEP 9: SHARE KNOWLEDGE
- STEP 10: TAKE ACTION!

Below the steps, there are several images and text boxes illustrating best practices:

- Involve youth in decision-making and public policy for transparency!** (Image of a meeting)
- Offer leadership training to empower youth against corruption!** (Image of a group of people)
- Choose Integrity!** (Image of a group of people)
- Highlight role models who act with integrity!** (Image of a group of people)
- Empower Youth!** (Image of a group of people)
- Reject Corruption!** (Image of a group of people)
- Host 'integrity cafes' for youth discussions on societal issues!** (Image of a group of people)
- Inspire Change!** (Image of a group of people)
- Teach youth to consider moral dilemmas and consequences!** (Image of a group of people)
- Small wins—awareness, reforms, joint action—build long-term change!** (Image of a group of people)

Erasmus Plus project "Mitigating Migration Challenges in the Western Balkans: Bridging the Skills Gap for Social Care Providers via Curricula Enhancement and Micro-Credential Development" (WB-Edu4Migration)

On November 1, 2024, IRCA joined the three-year Erasmus Plus project **"Mitigating Migration Challenges in the Western Balkans: Bridging the Skills Gap for Social Care Providers via Curricula Enhancement and Micro-Credential Development" (WB-Edu4Migration)**. This collaborative initiative involves universities and civil society organizations from Kosovo, Albania, Austria, Italy, and Denmark, working together to address the complex challenges posed by migration in the region.

The project focuses on empowering social workers and improving the academic framework in Albania and Kosovo by revising and updating relevant academic literature and curricula. By incorporating modern methodologies and creating micro-credential opportunities, the project aims to equip social care providers with the necessary skills and knowledge to respond effectively to migration-related issues.

A key objective is to bridge the existing skills gap in the social care sector, ensuring service providers are well-prepared to support migrants and their families. This effort includes capacity-building initiatives, cross-border collaboration, and the development of innovative training modules that reflect the evolving needs of migration-affected communities. Through these measures, the project seeks to contribute to sustainable solutions for migration challenges in the Western Balkans.

For more information about the project, visit the website: Wbedu4mig



Safe Spaces and Resilience for Youth

The Institute of Roma Culture in Albania (IRCA) is implementing the project “*Safe Spaces and Resilience for Youth!*” as part of the sub-granting scheme within the framework of the project “Empowering Local Structures and Government Institutions to Prevent Violent Extremism and Support the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Process in Albania,” funded by GCERF and implemented by Nisma-ARSIS in full coordination with the Coordination Center Against Violent Extremism (CVE) and ACPD. The project aims to address the prevention of violent extremism in Albania, particularly among marginalized youth. Factors such as unemployment, lack of education, discrimination, and social exclusion are among the main drivers of this phenomenon. Through project activities, we aim to promote values of peace, tolerance, and active inclusion among young people. The main goal of the project is to empower youth through methods of non-formal education, art, theatre, and digital media to foster critical thinking, resilience against extremist narratives, and the creation of a culture of peace and inclusion. Psychological support is a central component, with a clear focus on children and adolescents, strengthening resilience, critical thinking, and emotional well-being as a preventive measure against violent extremism.

+ Education and Employment to Overcome Poverty and Stigmatization – Establishment of the Professional Academy for Roma Youth

With the support of the Credins Foundation, IRCA is implementing the project “*Education and Employment to Overcome Poverty and Stigmatization – Establishment of the Professional Academy for Roma Youth.*” This 10-month project is being implemented in five municipalities across Albania (Tirana, Durrës, Vlorë, Gjirokastrër, and Korçë). The initiative, titled “The Professional Academy – A Strategy for Employability Skills for Roma Youth,” focuses on young individuals from the Roma minority in Albania who are interested in benefiting from IRCA’s career development program. As part of the project, IRCA aims to establish an academy that will not only provide professional skills training but also offer career guidance and job orientation, in close collaboration with job seekers and employers. One of the project’s key innovations is the introduction of a

career orientation program based on individual skills assessments and the development of personal profiles for each participant. The project integrates psychological support and career-oriented counseling for Roma adolescents and youth, addressing self-esteem, motivation, and psychosocial barriers to employment. Through IRCA's support, young Roma will not only gain a better position in the labor market but will also serve as agents and positive role models of change and integration within the Roma community. Through this project, IRCA aims to address several pressing social issues faced by the Roma community—such as unemployment, low levels of education, social exclusion, and stigmatization—while promoting youth leadership and community empowerment.

Words Matter – Words Hurt! Words Heal!

Words Matter – Words Hurt! Words Heal! is a project implemented by IRCA with the support of World Vision and funding from the European Union. It serves as an important initiative to address the ongoing challenges of gender-based violence, discrimination, and the underrepresentation of women and girls in public and community life in Elbasan and Librazhd, Albania. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms, combined with a lack of awareness and limited representation of women's voices, create significant barriers to achieving gender equality and empowerment at the local level. This project is crucial in highlighting the resilience, leadership, and contributions of women and girls, particularly those from marginalized communities. Through creative and participatory activities, it seeks to promote their stories, foster community dialogue, and inspire behavioral change, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society. The project's overarching goal is to empower women and girls and raise public awareness of gender-based discrimination, using storytelling, public dialogue, and artistic expression as its primary tools. It will document and publicly present the life stories of 30 local women and girls who have faced and overcome diverse challenges. These narratives will be shared through art exhibitions, podcasts, and a TED Talk-style public event designed to spark conversation and inspire change.

Overall Impact in 2025

During 2025, IRCA successfully implemented a diverse portfolio of national and regional initiatives that addressed critical social, civic, and development priorities, contributing to the advancement of equality, inclusion, and sustainable community development. These initiatives were strategically designed to respond to the needs of marginalized communities—particularly Roma youth and women—while strengthening democratic values and social cohesion.

Key areas of focus included:

- **Promotion of Roma inclusion and empowerment:** IRCA implemented targeted programs aimed at increasing the social inclusion, civic participation, and leadership of Roma youth and community members. These initiatives provided capacity-building opportunities, mentorship, and platforms for dialogue, enabling Roma individuals to actively participate in decision-making processes and advocate for their rights.
- **Strengthening democratic participation and civic engagement:** Through trainings, workshops, and public awareness activities, IRCA encouraged active citizenship, especially among young people. The organization promoted democratic values, transparency, and community engagement, empowering participants to contribute meaningfully to local governance and public life.
- **Combating corruption and discrimination:** IRCA carried out awareness campaigns, educational sessions, and advocacy initiatives focused on promoting integrity, accountability, and equal treatment. These activities helped raise awareness about the harmful impact of corruption and discrimination, particularly on vulnerable groups, and encouraged greater transparency and institutional responsibility.
- **Supporting youth empowerment, employment, and education:** The organization implemented programs that enhanced the skills, employability, and professional development of young people. Through vocational guidance, training sessions, mentoring, and practical learning opportunities, IRCA supported youth in accessing education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- **Improving social care services and psychosocial support:** IRCA worked closely with communities and service providers to strengthen access to inclusive and quality social care services. The organization provided psychosocial support activities, awareness sessions, and capacity-building for professionals, contributing to improved wellbeing and social integration of vulnerable individuals.
- **Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment:** IRCA implemented initiatives aimed at empowering women and girls, promoting gender equality, and strengthening women's participation in social and economic life. These activities included awareness campaigns, capacity-building workshops, and leadership development opportunities.
- **Advancing environmental sustainability and green entrepreneurship:** Recognizing the importance of environmental protection, IRCA promoted sustainable practices and green innovation through awareness campaigns, youth engagement, and support for environmentally responsible initiatives and entrepreneurship.
- **Strengthening media professionalism and digital storytelling:** IRCA supported journalists, youth, and community members in developing digital communication skills, ethical reporting practices, and storytelling

capacities. Through trainings, videocasts, podcasts, and digital campaigns, the organization contributed to strengthening independent media, amplifying marginalized voices, and promoting accurate and responsible information.

Through the successful implementation of these initiatives, IRCA significantly strengthened its institutional capacity and reinforced its position as a leading civil society organization advocating for human rights, social inclusion, democratic values, and equal opportunities in Albania and across the Western Balkans. The organization's work contributed to empowering communities, fostering civic engagement, and promoting sustainable and inclusive development.

Our Team

IRCA extends heartfelt gratitude to its dedicated staff, experts, and volunteers who work tirelessly every day to advance our shared causes. Their unwavering commitment, passion, and expertise are the driving forces behind our success in creating meaningful change for Roma and vulnerable communities across Albania.

*We invite you to get to know our core team,
whose efforts make a significant impact:*

Executive Director: Bledar Taho

Program Manager: Marsela Isaku

Program Manager: Tana Aliaj

Project Coordinator: Egida Delibashi

Project Coordinator: Brisilda Taço

Project Coordinator: Sebastjan Hamzaj

Finance Officer: Klaudja Hamiti

Strategic Focus Areas for 2026

Looking ahead, IRCA has identified a set of strategic priorities that will guide its work throughout 2026, with a strong emphasis on expanding its impact and ensuring long-term, sustainable empowerment for Roma and other vulnerable communities. A key focus will be the expansion of social and economic empowerment initiatives, particularly those designed to support women and young people. IRCA will scale up its programs aimed at strengthening women's entrepreneurship by providing tailored mentoring, business development support, and access to vocational training opportunities aligned with labor market needs. These efforts will contribute to increasing economic independence, enhancing income-generation opportunities, and strengthening the long-term resilience of marginalized families and communities.

Strengthening digital literacy will also remain a central pillar of IRCA's strategic agenda. The organization will implement structured and inclusive digital skills training programs designed to reach individuals across different age groups, including youth, adults, and elderly community members. These trainings will focus on building practical digital competencies, improving access to online services, and promoting safe and responsible internet use. By addressing the digital divide, IRCA aims to improve access to education, employment opportunities, digital entrepreneurship, and civic participation, ensuring that vulnerable communities are not left behind in an increasingly digital society.

In parallel, IRCA will continue to prioritize the promotion and preservation of Roma cultural heritage as a fundamental component of community empowerment and identity strengthening. The organization will support cultural initiatives that celebrate Roma traditions, language, and artistic expression through public cultural events, youth-led creative activities, language preservation workshops, and artistic productions. These initiatives will foster community pride, strengthen cultural identity, and contribute to greater recognition and appreciation of Roma culture within broader society.

Addressing emerging and critical social challenges will also be an important focus area. In 2026, IRCA will expand its interventions to include targeted actions aimed at preventing and combating human trafficking, particularly among vulnerable youth and women. This will include awareness-raising campaigns, educational workshops, and collaboration with relevant institutions and civil society actors. IRCA will also contribute to

prevention efforts, support protective mechanisms, and promote access to information and services for individuals at risk or affected.

Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing will represent another key priority. IRCA will implement awareness campaigns and support programs designed to reduce stigma, promote mental health education, and improve access to psychosocial support services. Special attention will be given to vulnerable individuals facing social exclusion, discrimination, or economic hardship, ensuring they receive appropriate support to improve their wellbeing and social integration.

In response to growing environmental challenges, IRCA will integrate climate change awareness and environmental sustainability across its programs. The organization will promote environmental education, green skills development, and community-based initiatives aimed at encouraging sustainable practices. These activities will empower communities to better understand environmental risks and actively contribute to climate resilience and environmental protection.

Youth empowerment will continue to remain at the core of IRCA's mission. The organization will implement leadership development programs, mentoring initiatives, and civic engagement opportunities that encourage young people to become active contributors to their communities. These programs will focus on strengthening leadership skills, critical thinking, confidence, and social responsibility, while fostering a new generation of engaged and empowered young leaders.

Gender equality and human rights will be integrated as cross-cutting principles throughout all IRCA initiatives. The organization will continue to promote equal opportunities, strengthen women's participation in social and economic life, and advocate for inclusive policies that protect the rights of marginalized groups. Through its work, IRCA will actively contribute to reducing inequalities and advancing social justice.

Employment and economic inclusion will also remain a strategic priority. IRCA will work to create pathways to employment by providing vocational training, career guidance, and skills development opportunities tailored to the needs of vulnerable individuals. The organization will also promote inclusive employment practices and strengthen cooperation with employers and institutions to facilitate access to sustainable livelihoods.

Furthermore, IRCA will continue strengthening its partnerships and collaborations at the national, regional, and international levels. By working closely with civil society organizations, public institutions, donors, and regional networks, IRCA will contribute to knowledge exchange, joint initiatives, and coordinated efforts aimed at advancing Roma inclusion, human rights, and sustainable development across the Western Balkans.

Overall, IRCA’s strategic priorities for 2026 reflect a comprehensive and integrated approach to community empowerment, combining direct support services, capacity-building initiatives, advocacy, and cultural promotion. These efforts are fully aligned with IRCA’s mission to promote equality, inclusion, and sustainable development, while empowering Roma and vulnerable communities to build more secure, independent, and dignified futures.

In conclusion, IRCA would like to express its sincere gratitude to all donors, partners, and collaborators who have supported and contributed to its work. Your continued trust, cooperation, and commitment have been essential in enabling IRCA to achieve meaningful and lasting impact. We look forward to continuing this collaboration and welcome your ongoing support, ideas, and engagement as we work together toward building a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient society.

In conclusion, IRCA extends its heartfelt thanks for being part of this journey. Your support and collaboration have been invaluable in driving positive change and empowering Roma and vulnerable communities.

We are honored to share with you the ways you can reach us:

- **Website:** Stay updated on our initiatives, projects, and events by visiting our official website: [Web](#)
- **Email:** For inquiries, partnerships, or feedback, feel free to contact us at institute.irca@gmail.com
- **Social Media:** Follow us on our social media platforms to stay connected with our latest news, stories, and opportunities to get involved.

[Youtube Facebook Instagram](#)

- **Office:** Visit us at our office in Tirana, where our team is always ready to welcome you and discuss ways we can work together.

We warmly invite you to connect with us, share your ideas, and join us in building an inclusive and equitable future for all. Thank you for being an essential part of IRCA's mission and vision!

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