



Youth Agency for the Advocacy of Roma Culture “ARCA”

2025 Annual Report



Opening Remarks by the Director

Dear friends, partners, and colleagues,

The team of the Youth Agency for the Advocacy of Roma Culture (ARCA) experienced 2025 alongside the rest of Ukraine—in the midst of a full-scale war, facing daily challenges, losses, and the ongoing struggle for our future.

In times like these, issues of human rights, cultural diversity, and the inclusion of vulnerable communities are often pushed into the background. Yet it is precisely in such moments that it becomes especially important to prevent the silence, stigmatisation, or exclusion of entire peoples and cultures from public life.

Throughout the year, we continued to advocate for the rights of Roma communities as an integral part of universal human rights. Our work focused on addressing discrimination and antigypsyism, improving access to education, promoting cultural visibility, and strengthening the participation of Roma people in social and civic life.

At the same time, it was important for us to speak not only about the challenges Roma communities face, but also about their contribution to Ukrainian society—their culture, history, memory, and contemporary experiences in Ukraine.

We are deeply grateful to our partners, friends, event participants, and everyone who supports our work. It is through these shared efforts that we are able to continue raising awareness of important issues, preserving historical memory, supporting Roma culture, and contributing to a society where diverse voices are heard, valued, and included.



Volodymyr Yakovenko
Executive Director



Table of Contents



Projects and Initiatives	04
Commemoration	06
Culture	10
Educational Programs and Youth Outreach	11
Humanitarian Projects	13
International Activities	15
Events	18
Financial Report	19
Donors and Partners	20



Projects and Initiatives



The Youth Agency for the Advocacy of Roma Culture (ARCA) is a Roma youth-led civil society organisation that has been working in Ukraine's civil society sector since 2018. Its mission is to foster the development of the Roma youth movement, preserve and promote Roma history and culture, and strengthen intercultural dialogue in Ukraine.

In 2025, the ARCA team continued its work across several key areas: human rights advocacy, preservation of historical memory, promotion of Roma culture, community support, and international cooperation.

Throughout the year, the team worked on documenting the oral history of Roma in Ukraine, including testimonies related to the Roma genocide during World War II. ARCA also contributed to the development of educational and public initiatives dedicated to preserving the memory of the Roma community and increasing its visibility within Ukrainian society.

An important part of this work was the thematic and narrative exhibition *Invisible. Resilience: The Past and Present of Roma People*, developed in partnership with the National Historical and Memorial Preserve Babyn Yar and the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies.



Projects and Initiatives



An important part of ARCA's advocacy work in 2025 included public discussions, awareness-raising campaigns, and informational materials aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue and combating stereotypes. As part of the project Strengthening the Capacity of the Roma Community in Ukraine, the team supported Roma communities in the Poltava and Dnipropetrovsk regions, worked with Roma youth and women, and helped strengthen local initiatives and promote the participation of Roma people in social and civic processes.

In 2025, ARCA co-organised the international Summer School on Roma History, Remembering Together, in Berlin. Participants from different countries explored the history of Roma and Sinti communities, the memory of the Roma genocide, and contemporary challenges related to discrimination and human rights.

The team also took part in international conferences and discussions dedicated to the rights of Roma communities, support for Ukraine, and issues of inclusion during wartime.

Through the Džanes media platform, public interviews, video projects, and information campaigns, the team shared the stories of Roma service members, volunteers, activists, and civilians, while working to strengthen the visibility of Roma culture within Ukraine's information space.

Each of these areas of work contributed to a shared goal: ensuring that the Roma community in Ukraine is visible, heard, and meaningfully included in social processes—not through stereotypes, but through real stories, lived experiences, and partnership.



Commemoration

One of the key areas of work for the ARCA Youth Agency for the Advocacy of Romani Culture remained the commemoration of Romani victims of the Nazi genocide, as well as fostering a culture of remembrance for the Romani community in Ukraine.

Our organisation continued its work on fostering a culture of remembrance of the Roma genocide and integrating Roma history into broader Ukrainian and European historical narratives. The key principles guiding this work remained historical accuracy, respect for the memory of the victims, the visibility of Roma voices, and consideration of the cultural specificities of Roma communities in commemorative practices.

The central commemorative event of the year took place on 2 August at the National Historical and Memorial Preserve Babyn Yar to mark the International Roma Genocide Remembrance Day.

The commemorative events brought together representatives of Roma communities, government institutions, international organisations, the diplomatic corps, researchers, and human rights advocates. Participants took part in a memorial procession to the Roma Wagon memorial at Babyn Yar.

The ARCA team also emphasised the importance of holding commemorative events in different regions of Ukraine. Mass killings of Roma people during the Nazi occupation took place throughout the country. Therefore, the culture of remembrance of the Roma genocide should not be confined to symbolic locations or commemorative dates alone. It is essential to integrate this history into local memory practices, make Roma history visible at the community level, and foster an understanding that the tragedy of the Roma people is an integral part of Ukraine's history.





An important part of the commemoration was the combination of memorial and educational elements. As part of the events, an exhibition titled “The Invisible: Resilience—The Past and Present of the Roma” was opened, created in partnership with the Babyn Yar National Historical and Memorial Reserve and the Ukrainian Center for Holocaust Studies. The project focused on overcoming the historical invisibility of the Roma, documenting the experience of genocide, and presenting the contemporary Roma voice in Ukrainian society.



The exhibition “The Invisible: Resilience—The Past and Present of the Roma” was conceived as a thematic and narrative project focused on restoring the visibility of the Roma—in memory, culture, and public space. Its central idea was to explore Romani identity as a form of resistance: from persecution and genocide during World War II to contemporary civic engagement, cultural presence, and the Romani people’s participation in the defense of Ukraine. The exhibition combined historical materials, art, and contemporary stories to portray the Romani community beyond stereotypes and the image of an “invisible” minority.

Structurally, the exhibition consisted of several thematic sections. The historical section featured archival documents, photographs, maps of sites of mass killings of Roma, eyewitness accounts, and stories of genocide survivors. A separate art section was dedicated to the works of contemporary Romani artists—representatives of the second and third generations following the genocide—who use visual art to explore intergenerational trauma, loss of identity, and memory. The final section of the exhibition featured contemporary Romani military personnel, activists, artists, and public figures—as an example of the new visibility of the Romani community in Ukraine.





Culture

The Earth Breathed was one of ARCA's key projects in 2025. It is a documentary graphic novel based on the testimonies of Roma survivors of the genocide during World War II. The project combines documentary storytelling with graphic narrative to make this complex and traumatic subject more accessible to a wider audience, particularly young people. Through the personal stories of individuals who lost family members, were forced into hiding, and struggled to survive Nazi persecution, the book restores the Roma experience to Ukraine's historical memory. Particular attention was paid to presenting the Roma genocide not merely as a historical fact or statistical record, but through human voices and lived experiences. The publication was released in Ukrainian, English, and Romani.

Another important cultural and documentary project of the year was Bahtalo. Stories of Ukrainian Roma by Yeva Raiska, a journalist at the Džanes media project. The book brings together literary reportage on contemporary Roma communities in Ukraine, placing the stories of individuals at its centre. It portrays Roma people beyond stereotypes—as service members, activists, artists, workers, parents, young people, and individuals with diverse experiences and perspectives. Through the genre of literary reportage, the author explores themes of stigmatisation, identity, poverty, and discrimination, while also highlighting the humanity, dignity, and resilience of Roma communities. One of the project's key objectives was to contribute to a more nuanced and multifaceted representation of contemporary Ukrainian Roma in the public sphere.





Educational Programs and Youth Outreach

In 2025, ARCA continued to develop its international educational program as one of the key tools for advocating for Romani culture and fostering new generations of custodians and researchers of Romani memory. The focus is on creating safe learning and exchange spaces for young people, where historical education, critical reflection on the past, identity work, and the development of cultural mediation skills are combined.





One of the programme's central components was the Remembering Together Summer School on Roma History. The educational initiative brought together Roma and non-Roma youth from Ukraine and across Europe to explore the tragedy of Roma and Sinti communities in the twentieth century, with a particular focus on the period of World War II.

Over the course of several days, participants examined lesser-known historical narratives related to the persecution of Roma and Sinti communities and engaged in discussions on memory politics and historical remembrance.

The Summer School was organised by the Youth Agency for the Advocacy of Roma Culture (ARCA) in partnership with the Society for Threatened Peoples and was implemented with the financial support of the German Foundation EVZ (Remembrance, Responsibility and Future).

The programme combined academic learning with personal reflection. Participants attended lectures on the history of Roma communities during the interwar period, watched the documentary *Forgotten Genocide*, discussed anti-Roma legislation in 1930s Germany, visited the Ravensbrück concentration camp memorial site, and worked with personal narratives by documenting their reflections in journals, which they presented at the end of the programme.







Representatives of vulnerable households—including large families, military personnel and veterans, elderly survivors of the Roma genocide during World War II, single mothers, persons with disabilities, and individuals facing difficult life circumstances—received grocery vouchers worth UAH 1,000 per month for four months.

An important component of the project was expanding educational and professional opportunities for Roma youth and women. The programme funded vocational and professional training for participants seeking to acquire new skills or improve their qualifications.

The following areas of study were available to participants:

- Service sector professions (hairdresser, nail technician, cosmetologist, barista, cook);
- Office-based professions (accountant, HR manager, administrative assistant);
- Digital professions (SMM specialist, graphic designer, computer operator);
- Technical professions (driver's licence training, equipment repair);
- Language courses (English, German, and others).
-

The maximum amount of financial support for tuition was UAH 20,000 per participant. Tuition fees were paid directly to the educational institution, and participants received an official certificate upon successful completion of their training.





International Activities



In March 2025, ARCA representative Nataliia Tomenko—Co-Chair of the Ukrainian Roma Advocacy Alliance (AURA) and Deputy Director of the organisation—participated in the 69th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) in New York.

The session focused on reviewing and assessing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the outcomes of the 23rd Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The event brought together representatives of UN Member States, international organisations, civil society organisations, and women's initiatives from around the world.

During the session, Nataliia Tomenko advocated for the needs and rights of Roma women and girls in Ukraine, including those who have been forcibly displaced abroad as a result of the war. Particular attention was given to issues of access to education, labour market opportunities, and the promotion of women's leadership in times of war.



International Activities

In 2025, ARCA participated in Café Kyiv, an annual international public forum held in Berlin that brings together Ukrainian and international partners, representatives of civil society, experts, cultural institutions, and media professionals to discuss Ukraine's recovery, democratic processes, and the role of culture in social transformation.

As part of the forum, ARCA contributed to discussions on:

- the inclusion and visibility of vulnerable groups in Ukraine's recovery process;
- the role of culture and historical memory in shaping contemporary Ukrainian identity;
- combating discrimination and strengthening the participation of Roma communities in public life;
- the importance of intercultural dialogue in the context of war and post-war reconstruction.





The international roundtable Roma Inclusion in Focus: Strengthening Partnerships between Ukraine and Germany was organised by the Youth Agency for the Advocacy of Roma Culture (ARCA) in cooperation with the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, in partnership with the Society for Threatened Peoples, the Ukrainian Roma Advocacy Alliance (AURA), and the Evangelical Academy in Berlin. The event was supported by the German Federal Foreign Office and the Ukrainian Women's Fund.

The roundtable focused on Roma inclusion in Ukraine and the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine residing in Germany. Discussions centred on:

- ensuring the equal participation of Roma communities in public life;
- combating antigypsyism and discriminatory practices;
- improving Roma communities' access to support programmes and social services;
- strengthening sustainable partnerships between Ukrainian and German institutions.



Events marking the fifth anniversary of the EVZ Foundation's Young People Remember programme took place in Berlin. The programme brings together young people, activists, and educators from across Europe to engage with issues of historical memory, human rights, and civic education.

The Youth Agency for the Advocacy of Roma Culture (ARCA) was represented by Chinara Majidova, who participated in discussions and thematic sessions focused on the role of historical memory in contemporary society and the challenges of civic education in the context of digital transformation.



Events of 2025

Throughout the year, we participated in events, campaigns, panel discussions, roundtables, and various other public gatherings. All of this was done to consistently increase the visibility of the Romani community in the public sphere and to include its voice in broader social and political discussions.

Another important outcome was the expansion of our partnerships and the engagement of new audiences—ranging from local communities to international institutions.

A lecture was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to mark the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of the Roma Genocide

A representative of “ARCA” took part in the OSCE human rights conference

Presented at the roundtable discussion Babyn Yar and the Thousands of Ravines of Memory Across Ukraine.

Presented The Earth Breathed, a documentary graphic novel on the Roma genocide, at the Book Arsenal International Festival.



Financial Report

SOURCES OF FUNDING



87 grants from international foundations

3 revenue from private donors

10 contributions from partner organizations



Donors and Partners

ERAC
EUROPEAN ROMA
INSTITUTE FOR ARTS
AND CULTURE

**CENTRAL
COUNCIL**
[of German
Sinti & Roma]

Foundation
ewz
Remembrance
Responsibility
Future



CROWN AGENTS
ACCELERATING SELF-SUFFICIENCY & PROSPERITY



In 2025, ARCA remained committed to strengthening the visibility of Roma communities, advancing inclusive approaches in the humanitarian and educational sectors, and expanding the participation of Roma women and youth in social processes at both the national and international levels.

ARCA will continue to develop advocacy, educational, and cultural initiatives aimed at transforming perceptions of Roma communities, amplifying Roma voices in the public sphere, and promoting equal participation in all areas of public life.

We are grateful to all our partners, donors, and communities who supported our work throughout the year and continue to contribute to this shared process of change. By building on these partnerships, we strive to foster a more inclusive society in which the rights, dignity, and opportunities of every person are recognised as an integral part of social development.



CONTACT INFORMATION:



yngo.arca@gmail.com



<https://arca.org.ua>

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



facebook.com/YNGO.ARCA
facebook.com/djanes.media



instagram.com/arca_org
instagram.com/djanes.media



youtube.com/@yngoarca7631
youtube.com/@djanes_media