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Ciganos/Roma and the Chega Party: voices against far-right populism

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Master in International Studies

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Resumo

Esta dissertação explora principalmente as opiniões e perspetivas de pessoas ciganas portuguesas em relação ao aparecimento e consolidação do partido Chega, nomeadamente face ao crescente anticiganismo e à normalização do discurso racista em Portugal. De forma complementar, este estudo visa comparar e investigar se essa tendência está alinhada com o panorama europeu. Para atingir estes objetivos, mobiliza-se uma estratégia metodológica qualitativa, com recurso à entrevista semiestruturada, para aceder diretamente às perceções das pessoas ciganas sobre a construção de um inimigo externo pelo partido Chega. Acresce que esta pesquisa analisa a paulatina conscientização e resistência por parte das pessoas ciganas face à discriminação racial e étnica no contexto da sociedade portuguesa. Simultaneamente procura-se desmistificar estereótipos sobre a população cigana portuguesa, expondo por um lado a discriminação enfrentada e ampliada com o aparecimento desta nova força político-partidária, e por outro, destacar a ação deste grupo social em combater o anticiganismo e o racismo em Portugal.

Palavras-chave: Ciganos/Roma; Partido Chega; Populismo; Partidos de direita radical; Anticiganismo; Portugal.

Abstract

This dissertation primarily explores the opinions and perspectives of the Ciganos regarding the emergence and consolidation of the Chega party, particularly in the face of growing anti-Ciganos/Roma sentiment and the normalization of racist discourse in Portugal. Additionally, this study aims to compare and investigate whether this trend aligns with the European landscape. To achieve these objectives, a qualitative methodological approach is employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews to directly access the perceptions of Cigano individuals concerning the Chega party's construction of an external enemy. Furthermore, this research analyses the gradual awareness and resistance of Ciganos to racial and ethnic discrimination within Portuguese society. Simultaneously, it seeks to demystify stereotypes about the Ciganos, on one hand exposing the discrimination faced and exacerbated by the emergence of this new political party, and on the other hand, highlighting the actions of this social group in combating antigypsyism and racism in Portugal.

Keywords: Ciganos/Roma; Chega party; Populism; Radical-right parties; Antigypsyism; Portugal.

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Glossary

ACM High Commission for Migration

AfD Alternative for Germany

CICDR Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination

CoE Council of Europe

DF Dansk Folkeparty

ECRI European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

EU European Union

FdL Brothers of Italy

FN Front National

FP Freiheitliche Partei

FRA European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

FrP Framstegpartiet

IMF International Monetary Fund

LN Lega Nord

LPF Lijst Pim Fortuyn

LSNS Party's People Our Slovakia

ND New Democracy

OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PALOP Portuguese-speaking African countries

PNR National Renovator Party

PRR Populist Radical Right (parties)

PSD Social Democratic Party

PVV Party for Freedom

RN Rassemblement National

RP Republikaner Partei

SD Sweden Democrat

VB Vlaams Blok

x

Introduction

There are numerous complex factors contributing to the normalization of racism and related radical ideologies in Europe and beyond. However, the most prevalent and apparent reason, which is often observed, is the strategic resurgence of xenophobia, ethno-nationalism, and nativism; this resurgence has been prompted, legitimized, and made acceptable by the global surge in what is broadly categorized as right-wing populist politics, its rise being especially prominent in Europe (Krzyżanowski, 2020). Violent antigypsyism has been a persistent part of European social history for an extended period, but the current emergence of a form of 'reasonable antigypsyism' is increasingly growing in politics and society at large (Baar, 2014). This form of discrimination often operates under the pretext that Ciganos/Roma frequently engage in undesirable behavior, leading non-Ciganos/Roma to believe that they are justified in treating them differently or acting against them, under the perception that they cause inconvenience, engage in criminal activities, and are generally expected to create problems, suggesting that it is 'them' who violate rights and fail in their societal responsibilities (Baar, 2014).

Ciganos/Roma face significant challenges as they are among the primary targets of racism in Portugal. They also experience socio-economic vulnerability, regularly encountering xenophobic, racist attitudes, and hate speech from members of extreme right-wing political parties, while also being subjected to hate comments on social media platforms (Magano & Mendes, 2021). This systemic and historical racism against Ciganos/Roma is deeply embedded in the social structures of Portuguese society and the resurgence of racist narratives that fuel hatred against the Ciganos/Roma is not only offensive and demeaning but also serves to legitimize structural and institutional inequalities (Marques, 2007). Throughout history, Ciganos/Roma have endured consistent and systemic discrimination deeply ingrained in society and its main institutions, as noted by Mendes (2007). These forms of everyday racism have become deeply rooted in Portuguese society, manifesting in various everyday situations and contexts in the lives of Ciganos/Roma, and nowadays they are often perceived as commonplace, 'normal', and even legitimate, further underscoring the persistence of these harmful attitudes and behaviors (Magano & Mendes, 2021).

While the title of this master dissertation mentions 'Ciganos/Roma', a choice was made to maintain the use of the term 'Ciganos' in the Portuguese language throughout the text to ensure consistency and ease of reading. This choice aligns with the perspective

of the Ciganos/Roma in Portugal. who themselves recognize and use the term 'Ciganos'. However, it's worth noting that in an international context, the term 'Roma' or 'Romani (people)' is more commonly used. This terminology is recommended by organizations such as the Council of Europe, the United Nations, and the International Romani Union and encompasses various groups, including the Roma, Sinti, Calé (including Portuguese ciganos), travelers, and other Eastern European groups like Dom and Lom (CoE, 2012; UN, 2023; IRU, 2019).

The emergence of the right-wing radical party Chega in 2019 marked a significant shift in the Portuguese political landscape and established a link to the anti-Ciganos/Roma sentiment in Europe, particularly prevalent in populist political discourse. Since then, the Ciganos have been more frequently discussed than ever before – what was once an ambivalent and sometimes conflictual relationship of coexistence has evolved into an open assault on the Cigano population, which was already marginalized. As a result, this study aims to gain insights into the perspectives of the Ciganos/Roma regarding this political party and their views on the ongoing normalization of racist rhetoric in Portugal. Furthermore, it seeks to examine whether similar trends are occurring in other European countries.

To add new findings to existing relevant research and fulfil the purpose of the study, the following central research questions have been formulated:

1) What are the perspectives of the Ciganos/Roma on the Chega party?

2) How do these individuals position themselves regarding the potential resurgence of racism and the growing possible normalization of prejudices against the Cigano population in Portugal?

3) Is this trend affecting minorities (both migrants and non-migrants) in line with what is happening in other countries where populism is gaining increasing prominence in the political arena?

The research questions are designed to explore the viewpoints and firsthand experiences of the Ciganos/Roma regarding the Chega party. This research aims to provide insight into the discriminatory circumstances they face and to gain a deeper understanding of antigypsyism in Portugal. including its increasing normalization. Additionally, the research seeks to investigate whether this phenomenon is also occurring

elsewhere in Europe, contributing to a broader understanding of the issue on the European continent.

To accomplish this objective, this dissertation is divided into three chapters. Firstly, it provides an introduction that aims to bring forth an initial context and outline the research questions that will be addressed throughout this dissertation, as well as aligning the objectives it intends to achieve in the process. Next, a contextual framework is presented in Chapter 2, that offers an overview of the rise of populist far-right parties in Europe, discusses essential concepts related to these parties, including their classification, and delves into the concept and structure of populism. Subsequently, the study presents case studies of these parties, with France and Spain selected as examples to illustrate the European context and the Portuguese party Chega is introduced. The discourse of antigypsyism, which is on the rise in Europe, is also explored in this chapter, including an examination of the characterization of the Ciganos/Roma both in Europe and, more specifically, in Portugal. The chapter concludes by discussing the conceptualization of the Ciganos as the 'internal enemy - the other' by the Chega party and its leader, André Ventura. In Chapter 3, a critical methodological approach is employed to establish the structure and procedures for conducting qualitative research. Sixteen interviews were conducted with individuals of Cigano/Roma ethnicity, encompassing a range of ages, backgrounds, educational qualifications, and residential locations. These interviews were designed to elicit responses addressing the research questions presented in this study. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the outcomes of these interviews, with the ultimate objective of directly addressing the research questions and goals. Finally, the conclusions drawn from the dissertation are presented, providing a summary of what has been presented throughout this study, establishing connections between the theoretical context and the achievements of the research questions and goals that were proposed from the beginning.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The rise of populist far-right parties in Europe

The deep political. economic, and social transformations that have swept through Europe in recent decades have increased conflicts between democratic norms and principles and far-right ideologies that thrive in an environment of constant change and rising unease (Halasz, 2009). Recent events, including Brexit, Trump's victory, Bolsonaro's inauguration in Brazil, and the rise of right-wing populist parties throughout Europe as a result of social tensions brought on by the realization that Europe is a continent of migration, have paved the way for a new wave of identity politics and scapegoat ideologies (Halasz, 2009). Right-wing extremism and the broader tendency towards far-right populism are a force that is both present and increasing throughout Europe, and people are voting more and more for parties that advocate nativism, xenophobia, and nationalism, whereas not long ago these parties were only a marginal force in the political landscape (Kattago, 2019).

The normalization and mainstreaming of far-right populist rhetoric is accompanied by their growing electoral success. According to Hainsworth (2008), far-right parties have influenced the 'agendas, programs, and discourse of major political parties and governments', bringing far-right and centre-right parties closer together. These populist right-wing parties have become nearly unavoidable in almost every European country and some of the rising extreme right-wing 'populist' parties include Austria's Freiheitliche Partei (FP), Germany's Republikaner Partei (RP) and Alternative for Germany (AfD), France's Front National (FN), Belgium's Vlaams Block (VB), the Netherlands' Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF), Denmark's Dansk Folkeparty (DF), Norway's Framstegpartiet (FrP) and Sweden Democrat (SD), Finland's Finns Party, Greece's New Democracy (ND), Italy's Lega Nord (LN) and Brothers of Italy (Fdl), Hungary's Fidesz party and Spain's Vox (Tasci, 2019); (RTP Notícias, 2023).

2.2 Far right and populism

According to Mudde (2007), various concepts are used to refer to far-right parties, using 'far-right' as an umbrella concept that includes both the extreme-right and populist radical-right. The extreme-right rejects democracy entirely, whereas the radical-right embraces democracy but rejects liberal democracy, which includes pluralism and minority rights (Mudde, 2007). Far-right parties often adopt a framework to shape their political narratives, that is centred around

the notion of the 'othering', classifying as 'others' anything beyond the state and the nation, including supranational organizations like the European Union (EU), individuals or groups within the state and nation such as economic and political elites often portrayed as corrupt, and immigrants residing within the state but perceived as outsiders (Mudde, 2004). By employing this framework, far-right parties emphasize the preservation of national identity and culture while stigmatizing various groups as potential menaces (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). For example, the current leader of the now Rassemblement National. Marine Le Pen, expressed concerns about the potential transformation of Europe into an Islamic Republic if its civilization is not safeguarded; Geert Wilders, leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, shared a similar viewpoint, perceiving Islam as a significant threat not only to his country but also to the entire continent (Amnesty International , 2012). In Eastern Europe, far-right parties including Bulgaria's National Union Attack, People's Party Our Slovakia (LSNS) and Hungary's Jobbik and Fidesz parties, frequently target minorities like Roma and the prevalence of anti-Ciganos/Roma discourse is especially notable in Eastern Europe, though its intensity has also been increasing in France and Italy (Öner, 2014).

Populism is often characteristic of parties located at the ideological extremes, whether on the left or right. However, a significant body of literature has highlighted that populism is particularly associated with the radical right parties, which have experienced notable success in elections (Abdeslam, 2021). The term 'populism' has become a catch-all phrase that encompasses various political trends in Europe and beyond, and it also signifies a rhetorical approach employed to garner votes (Abdeslam, 2021). Populism sees society as divided into two distinct factions: 'the corrupt elite' and 'the pure people', which are naturally in conflict with each other. The core belief of populism is that politics should reflect the will of the people, often equating it to the desires of the majority (Mudde, 2004). Populist radical right parties (PRR) introduce an additional element of division, framing it as 'us versus them', along with a distinct style of political communication. This approach involves two main aspects: firstly, defining the 'people' as culturally homogeneous and emphasizing shared identity and interests rooted in common sense, while contrasting them with 'others', typically minorities like immigrants, who are portrayed as beneficiaries of corrupt elites (Greven, 2016). Moreover, a particular kind of populism is prevalent across Europe and is closely linked to right-wing parties which is exclusionary populism, that aims to exclude certain groups of people and restrict their access to the privileges and rights enjoyed by the dominant group, and the terms for exclusion often revolve around cultural. religious, or ethnic differences (Golder, 2016). Xenophobia and subtle racism are expressions of a resentful sentiment for the passing of a glorious past, often

described in the discourse of far-right parties, while defining and maintaining the existence of a single national identity, and branding certain social groups as 'foreigners' regardless of whether they are migrants or not (Jaramillo, 2021).

Populist rhetoric frequently relies on a common tool known as scapegoating, that involves singling out a person or a group and unjustly vilifying them, making them the target of blame for a wide range of issues plaguing the country. Scapegoating tends to gain momentum especially in times of economic crises when people are seeking someone to hold responsible (Vieten & Poynting, 2016). Instead of addressing these fundamental issues, right-wing nationalist populism finds an easy target in the 'other' and assigns them the role of the supposed cause of the crisis. By doing so, populist leaders and parties can skilfully exploit fear and resentment, consolidating their support base and diverting attention from the underlying systemic problems that contribute to the crisis (Kattago, 2019). Distrust in national governments carries grave consequences as it exacerbates fears surrounding global trends, leaving citizens apprehensive about potential foreign influences on their government's actions. This apprehension becomes a critical factor that renders the electorate susceptible to the provocative tactics employed by right-wing populist parties. Additionally, populist parties, by their very nature, challenge the established governance structure and install an informal. anti-bureaucratic sentiment (Sobolik, 2019). Paradoxically, these populist leaders often come from elite backgrounds but deceitfully position themselves as advocates for the common people, with figures like Trump, Bolsonaro and Orban serving as notable examples of such demagoguery (Leeuwen & Vega, 2021).

2.3 European cases of the far right: France and Spain

In recent years, there has been a rapid surge in the prominence of populist parties, particularly following the 2008 Financial Crisis, the 2015 Migrant Crisis and more recently the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, along with the subsequent inflation crisis. As of 2023, most European countries now have a far-right populist party either gaining votes, being in the opposition, or even participating in the ruling coalition within their parliaments. The political landscape in Europe has been significantly influenced by the rise of these parties during this period (Kattago, 2019).

For example, France has played a significant role in the history of far-right movements and is often considered the birthplace of ideas, values, and trends that later influenced the rise of fascism and Nazism in neighbouring countries (Benvenisteand & Pingaud, 2016). Radical right

movements have not only manifested as protest demonstrations and street movements but have also found representation in the country through the Front National (FN) party (Kıldiş, 2020). In 2011, Marine Le Pen, the daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen, took over the leadership of the FN with the explicit goal of transforming the party into a mainstream political force with ambitions to govern (Scrinzi, 2017). Emanuel Macron's victory over Marine Le Pen in the 2017 presidential election was seen as a symbolic rejection of her far-right ideology. However, it did not necessarily indicate that French voters had completely abandoned the FN, as the party still achieved historic electoral success with approximately 11 million votes in the second round (Nelson, 2020). Despite attempts to move away from its radical past, Marine Le Pen aimed to present the FN as a more moderate party, as evidenced by the recent name change from le Front National to le Rassemblement National. However, this strategic move was perceived more as an attempt to distance the party from its fascist origins rather than a genuine transformation of its ideology (Nelson, 2020).

The Rassemblement National (RN) serves as a quintessential example of a populist radical right party. Members of this party family share core ideological traits such as authoritarianism, nativism, and populism, which distinguish them from mainstream politics (Paxton & Peace, 2021). Their populist discourses resonate with many voters as they focus on anti-immigration and anti-Islam sentiments in their electoral programs, highlighting perceived economic and cultural threats. In the case of France, the cultural threat is particularly emphasized, implying the Islamization of French culture, fuelling Islamophobic sentiments, and portraying Muslim immigrants as a danger that can only be averted by Le Pen's party (Abdeslam, 2021). The RN, like its predecessors, aims to restore French identity, attributing its decline to the influx of third-world immigrants, which they perceive as endangering French existence – immigration is seen as a catalyst for the introduction of various ideologies and traditions that might supplant French national culture (Benvenisteand & Pingaud, 2016). North African Muslims are viewed as the most concerning immigrant group due to their perceived high fecundity and closed societies (Abdeslam, 2021). Consequently, the RN advocates for the expulsion and ostracization of these immigrants and Muslims, as ostracizing others is a key strategy of populism, and the rejection of Muslim migrants is often justified based on defending women's and LGBTQ+ rights, as they are associated with conservatism regarding gender and sexuality.

Marine Le Pen's 'modernization' strategy within the far-right RN underscores specificities of the French context, particularly the historical significance of secularism as a republican value. Le Pen positions herself as a defender of secularism and the 'republican model of integration', drawing comparisons between public Muslim prayers and the Nazi occupation of

France (Ramalho, 2020). This highlights the party's efforts to present a nationalist and secular facade while perpetuating anti-Muslim sentiments and upholding its populist radical right principles. Despite the change in the party's discourse, the underlying populist tone and character remain evident in how the RN presents its proposals. The party utilizes welfare chauvinism, charismatic leadership, simple and emotionally charged rhetoric, and anti-elitism, making it a prototypical right-wing populist party (Stockemer & Barisione, 2017). The RN's ability to blend these elements into its political platform has contributed to its rise as a significant force in French politics, as during the 2022 elections, Le Pen secured 23.4% of the vote share in the initial rounds, while President Macron obtained 27.6%, qualifying both for the second round. Eventually, Macron emerged victorious with 58.6 % of the votes, while Le Pen trailed with 41.5% (The Guardian, 2022). Nevertheless, this marked a significant milestone for the RN party and represented Marine Le Pen's most successful electoral performance to date.

In the neighbouring country and over the last years, Spain's far-right party Vox has experienced a significant surge in popularity, going from having no representation in the Spanish parliament to securing 52 seats (as before the 2023 elections). Prior to Vox's recent electoral success, Spain was considered relatively immune to far-right influences due to its history under Franco's regime and its generally positive stance towards globalization, the European Union, and immigration, but Vox represents a modernized version of Spain's ultraconservative past, while also being influenced by international neoliberal and authoritarian trends (Xidias, 2020).

Vox employs a populist discourse that revolves around a classic 'us vs. them' rhetoric, creating a divide between Spaniards and groups they view as outsiders, such as migrants and mainstream political elites, challenging fundamental aspects of liberal democracy, like social diversity and minority rights, besides presenting itself as the voice of the people, opposing the political correctness of mainstream politics (Mendes & Dennison, 2020). The party emphasizes 'crime and security' and 'law and order,' advocating for an authoritarian societal vision that upholds traditional gender norms and opposes feminism, even comparing feminism to a violent ideology, referring to it as 'the feminist jihad,' and labelling feminists as 'feminazis' who are part of a 'progressive dictatorship' (Heyne & Manucci, 2021). Furthermore, Vox calls for the reversal of all 'gender ideology' laws, also seeking to eliminate radical feminist organizations and replace gender violence laws with an intra-family violence law that provides equal protection for men, disregarding Spain's history of patriarchy and the existing patriarchal system (Xidias, 2020). These positions underscore Vox's clear emulation of far-right ideologies and policies, which have garnered attention for their controversial and divisive nature.

Vox draws inspiration from Donald Trump's discourses and policies, and shares similarities with Jair Bolsonaro's Aliança pelo Brazil (Alliance for Brazil) including the same disdain towards minorities, indigenous peoples, and social sciences. The party appeals to religious, socially conservative, and wealthier voters with its slogan 'God, family, and homeland', and its neoliberal economic program aims to preserve and expand the privileges that were often acquired during Franco's era and Spain's subsequent transition to democracy, guided by the elite (Xidias, 2020). Vox's 100-point national-Catholic program exhibits anti-feminist, LGBTQ+-phobic, racist, and Islamophobic stances, while advocating for the recentralization of the Spanish state. In the section on immigration, the party advocates for the deportation of all undocumented migrants and legal migrants who commit crimes, as well as stricter requirements for obtaining Spanish nationality; additionally, Vox also proposes constructing an 'impenetrable wall' in Ceuta and Melilla, clearly mirroring Trump's policy in the United States (Xidias, 2020). Consequently, Vox made its initial breakthrough in the Andalusian Parliament in 2018, accounting for 11% of the total vote and resulting in 12 seats; this success was followed by the 2022 elections, where they garnered 14% of the votes, leading to 14 seats in the parliament (Green European Journal, 2022). Situated at one of the southernmost borders of the EU, Andalusia holds a crucial position as an entry point for immigration flows from Africa and this reality has intensified the discussions within Andalusian politics regarding the social perception of immigrant presence (Iglesias-Pascual et al. 2021). A study conducted by Iglesias-Pascual et al. (2021) revealed that a high territorial concentration of Ciganos/Roma lead to a higher percentage of Vox voters in Andalusia, due to the degree of rejection exhibited by the Andalusian population towards Ciganos/Roma, particularly due to their higher concentration in rural areas, where multiculturality has a more pronounced impact on the local population, fostering a sentiment of 'intrusion' despite shared living spaces. Vox's stance against Catalonia's independence and support for centralization of the state significantly contributes to their appeal. as this issue was especially relevant during the 2019 elections, and its prominence likely explains the end of 'Spanish exceptionalism' and the tremendous success the party achieved (Heyne & Manucci, 2021).

2.4 The Portuguese case: the Chega party

With the transition triggered by the April 25th Revolution in 1974, far-right extremism in Portugal faced an extraordinarily adverse context, relegating it to a marginal position in the Portuguese political scene. By the late 1990s, the far-right was fragmented into several groups

without a cohesive political project; it was during this time that a group of militants decided to create a political party that could stand as an electoral alternative, giving rise to the National Renovator Party (Partido Nacional Renovador – PNR) (Setenta e quatro, 2021). Confronted with financial instability, gradual distancing from Salazarist ideals, and increased connections with emerging far-right movements across Europe, the party solidified its ethnocentric characteristics, sharpened its populist rhetoric, and adopted a markedly identity-focused, racialist discourse, aimed to unite the entire far-right movement (Costa, 2011). Simultaneously drawing inspiration from Jean-Marie Le Pen's FN, under the leadership of José Pinto-Coelho the party adopted a communication strategy aimed at gaining media exposure, positioning itself as a credible contender in elections. However, while this increased public visibility allowed the party to step out of obscurity and attain a level of prominence previously unseen for a nationalist entity, its alignment with more radical factions led to a loss of legitimacy and ultimately hindered its political progress (Costa, 2011). The PNR never managed to gain positive prominence in the media or develop a charismatic figure capable of attracting media attention, and as such it never succeeded in electing representatives in the legislative and European elections, nor did it manage to expand beyond the fringes of Portuguese politics.

The political landscape of Portugal underwent significant shifts after the 2008 global financial crisis, and the looming threat of national bankruptcy in countries like Portugal. Spain, and Greece led to the implementation of austerity policies mandated by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). During this period, social democratic parties were perceived as unable to adequately address citizens' needs, creating an opportunity for right-wing populist parties to emerge as an alternative option to the mainstream parties (Caldeira & Machado, 2023). Contrary to other EU countries, Portugal didn't have a far-right populist party with sufficient support to win a seat in parliament. This arrangement shifted in 2019 with the rise of the party Chega (Enough), a party founded by André Ventura. The memory of the long-lasting dictatorship remained vivid in the collective political consciousness of the Portuguese, making it challenging for such parties to attract broad public appeal and making their electoral success limited, explaining the lack of success in Portugal of the far right PNR (Caldeira & Machado, 2023).

The Chega party is largely driven by its leader, André Ventura, a 37-year-old individual who, before establishing the party, had gained some recognition as a football commentator on a national TV channel from 2014 to 2020. Ventura came into the political spotlight during the 2017 local elections when he ran for the position of mayor in the Loures municipality as a representative of the center-right Social Democratic Party (PSD). Employing an agenda that

targeted the Ciganos/Roma, he made claims such as asserting that the Ciganos primarily relied on state subsidies and disregarded the law. This unconventional rhetoric generated significant attention and debate in the public sphere, and despite causing unease within the center-right ranks, the PSD chose not to withdraw its support for Ventura's candidacy. He managed to secure 21.5% of the vote, marking the PSD's best performance in the municipality over the previous two decades. Ventura interpreted these results, along with the unusually high media coverage of his campaign, as indicators that discussing 'taboo topics' in politics could be an effective strategy (Mendes, 2021). Initially attempting to steer his party in this direction, Ventura encountered obstacles and eventually diverged from the PSD in late 2018 to establish the Chega party, receiving assistance from a small group of friends and acquaintances, as well as from networks of support cultivated through social media (Marchi, 2020). When André Ventura ran for mayor of Loures in 2017, the PNR president, Pinto-Coelho, publicly invited him to join his party: 'Come to the PNR and be free', wrote the leader of the extreme right party on Facebook in July 2017, an invitation that the leader of Chega profusely refused (Setenta e quatro, 2021).

In the 2019 legislative Portuguese elections, Chega received only 1.29% of the vote share (electing only one deputy), while running on a program that included ideas like chemical castration for sex offenders, tougher penalties for cases of corruption, and the expulsion of illegal immigrants (Afonso, 2021). However, after a rough beginning, the presidential elections in January 2021 marked a turning point in the country's radical right's history – with 11.9% of the vote share, Ventura placed third, just one point behind centre-left candidate Ana Gomes (Afonso, 2021). Ventura's public figure and online presence, with over 61 thousand followers on Twitter (at the time of the elections), facilitated Chega's ability to gain national attention and traction (Marchi, 2020). In the 2022 legislative elections, Chega achieved significant success by increasing its parliamentary representation to 12 seats, propelling the party to become the third-largest party in the Portuguese parliament. As such, 2019 marked Portugal's turn towards the same trend of rising far-right populism felt in Europe.

Chega has been classified as populist and far right in recent party classifications (Mendes & Dennison, 2020). The party shares common ideologies with other far-right parties, both in Portugal and abroad, including a focus on national identity and anti-immigration sentiments, as well as the use of rhetoric that aims to create a divide between 'the people' and the 'corrupt elites' (Caldeira & Machado, 2023). Relying on Mudde's (2007) typology of the core ideological characteristics of the PRR family, Chega exhibits characteristics that align with nativism, populism, and authoritarianism. In terms of nativism, Chega places considerable importance on concerns related to migration and cultural diversity. The party's emphasis on

safeguarding Portugal's socio-cultural cohesion against the perceived threat of multiculturalism is evident in its programmatic documents, as the party seeks to establish more stringent criteria for obtaining Portuguese nationality, citing the need to preserve the nation's identity (Chega, 2021). The party's engagement with issues related to migration extends to organizing counter-protests during the summer of 2020 against anti-racism rallies inspired by the Black Lives Matter Movement, Ventura, leading under the slogan 'Portugal is not racist', criticizing what he referred to as the 'hypocrisy of racism' and that both the political left and minority groups exploit allegations of racism, emphasizing that while minorities possess rights, they also bear responsibilities (Observador, 2020). This statement was made during a rally organized after the tragic killing of Bruno Candé, a black man who was fatally shot four times by an individual known to have used racially offensive language.

Turning to populism, Chega's leader employs a rhetoric that pits a morally virtuous 'us' against a morally inferior 'them'. This perspective encompasses not only a contrast between hard-working citizens and a corrupt elite but also extends to minorities, criminals, and welfare recipients, as an illustrative example of this is Ventura's declaration during the 2021 presidential campaign that he represents only the morally righteous Portuguese, as encapsulated in the slogan 'Portugueses de bem' (Mendes, 2021). The party's approach taps into the prevailing resentment toward the political elite, as evident in their Founding Political Manifesto, which aims to amplify the voice of discontent and unite those who view politics as being tainted by dishonesty and impropriety (Chega, 2019a).

Regarding authoritarianism, Chega draws from established right-wing ideational traditions, particularly in socio-cultural matters. This involves advocating for traditional norms, values, and morality through a 'law and order' doctrine that supports strict compliance with rules and social control, which can be seen in its classification of abortion and euthanasia as forms of murder in its 2019 party program (Chega, 2019b). Furthermore, Chega promotes a punitive approach toward those perceived as undermining societal moral standards, advocating for harsher sentences for various crimes, the introduction of life imprisonment, and even castration of sex offenders (Chega, 2019b). The party also exhibits a strong affinity for security forces, as evident in their support for the police and a call for respect for the authority of law enforcement agencies.

Furthermore, Chega often takes an anti-feminist stance, portraying feminist efforts for gender equality as a form of 'gender ideology'. In their 2021 political program, Chega presents this as a threat to traditional values and western civilization itself, fostering an environment where sexist ideas can thrive among party members, leading to claims that women should not

be involved in politics, and reinforcing the notion that the political realm is inherently masculine (Caldeira & Machado, 2023; Chega, 2021). Such views were evident in the gendered insults used by Ventura that sparked the #VermelhoEmBelem movement, which disregarded female candidates like Marisa Matias based on criticisms of their appearance. The party's traditional gender ideals also draw upon the ideology of the former Portuguese dictatorship, reflecting its Catholic and conservative background: the dictatorship's core values of 'God, Homeland, and Family' are echoed in Chega's political campaign, albeit with a slight variation of 'God, Homeland, Family, and Work' (SIC Notícias, 2021). Furthermore, Chega vehemently opposes abortion, considering it as tyranny, far as to propose that women who underwent abortions should face a punitive measure of having their ovaries surgically removed (SÁBADO, 2020).

In Chega's Founding Political Manifesto, the party is portrayed as a saviour, one who will safeguard the nation's adherence to 'centennial' national ideals and customs and return it to the Portuguese, asserting that it was founded because Portugal required a political movement that could overthrow the ruling elite and address the alleged security, justice, and immigration issues (Jaramillo, 2021; Chega, 2019a). Chega sees itself as a national. conservative, liberal. and personalist party and claims that all Portuguese people share the same history, culture, language, and linguistic heritage, also sharing the same blood, land, and property (Jaramillo, 2021). Chega stands out from other parties due to its conservative and identity-oriented rhetoric, that emphasizes the importance of the Catholic Church in shaping European and Portuguese civilizations and strongly advocates for a unified and unchanging national identity, engaging in the stigmatization of certain ethnic groups, such as the Ciganos/Roma, by perpetuating negative stereotypes (Madeira et al. 2021).

As a result, Ventura positions himself as the defender of a genuine moral and what can be called a 'political Messiah' (Dias, 2020). A political Messiah is a populist who presents himself as an outsider who will lead his people, the 'good people', towards a new 'nation', free from the sins of different politics, the corruption, and the wicked – the corrupt, the subsidy-dependent and the sexual. religious, ethnic minorities (Dias, 2020). It operates as a narrative of the 'kingdom of God on earth' and the 'chosen people' are those who accept his message's virtues and the 'truths' included in his discourse without hesitation (Dias, 2020). It is in this fertile ground, bathed in Sebastianism, that André Ventura operates, while using his social media to make more allusions to religion.

Chega tries to show that it stands for the Portuguese people's desire to establish a new Republic, what Ventura calls the 'IV Republic'. The traditional parties, social State programs, nations with non-European cultures, diversity and multiculturalism, gender ideology, the

United Nations Global Compact on Migration, and immigration are only a few examples of the opponents of the party that are referenced in its official materials (Jaramillo, 2021). Chega and Ventura have established connections with like-minded parties abroad, as has been customary for other far-right populist parties in Europe, claiming to enjoy good ties with the Vox party in Spain and to receive direct support from Matteo Salvini of the LN in Italy and Marine Le Pen of the RN in France. For example, the leaders of Vox and Chega followed similar political trajectories, as they both started within the mainstream right but eventually decided to form a more radical party. The fact that both leaders have a background in mainstream right-wing parties might have helped them to receive greater visibility and a less stigmatized image from the media (Mendes & Dennison, 2020).

2.5 The antigypsyism discourse in radical-right populist parties in Europe

There is growing evidence that the Ciganos/Roma is being targeted and portrayed as an internal enemy and external threat by the radical populist and nationalist right, placing them outside the boundary of the national group (Ryder et al. 2021). Antigypsyism relies on a clear division of 'us' versus 'them', with those labelled as 'gypsies' considered fundamentally different and excluded from being part of the collective 'we-group' and during the modernization of Western societies, the Ciganos/Roma have been depicted as antithetical to modern values, leading to their exclusion from the concept of a civilized human being (Kapralski, 2016). This vein of populism, however, is not solely confined to the radical right, as governing parties have also invoked similar rhetoric in certain contexts. For instance, Nicolas Sarkozy's language concerning Roma immigrants in France in 2010, referring to 'the problems posed by the behaviour of certain travellers and Roma', exemplifies the spreading of populist discourse in such instances, showing that the use of populist rhetoric to target and marginalize the Ciganos/Roma highlights the broader issue of how populist narratives can perpetuate discrimination and exclusion within society (Surel, 2011). The leader of People's Party Our Slovakia (Slovak far-right political party) Marián Kotleba and his supporters, which secured a place in the Slovak Parliament in 2016, frequently make explicit or subtly insinuate that the Holocaust did not occur or that the Ciganos/Roma are inferior, exploits the social welfare system, and lacks motivation to work (Miskolci et al. 2020). In 2019, Matteo Salvini, the Interior Minister of Italy, faced allegations of racism due to comments he posted on Twitter, made in response to a news report featuring a Cigana woman living in a camp in northern Milan who expressed the opinion that Salvini deserved 'bullets in the head', having Salvini answered:

'But is it normal for a gypsy woman to say: 'Salvini should be shot in the head? Be good, dirty gypsy, be good, for the bulldozer is arriving soon' (Euronews, 2019). Throughout his electoral campaigns and during his time in office, Salvini strategically constructed a discourse that depicted the Ciganos/Roma as the 'other', portraying them as residing in Italy yet in an ostensibly 'abnormal' state, positioning them as a supposed threat to the country's culture, way of life, and economy (Cervi & Tejedor, 2020). Salvini harnessed the dissemination of antigypsyism, effectively making Ciganos/Roma a central focus of his political rhetoric, leading to the institutionalization of events like 'Camp visits' which were transformed into electoral spectacles, amplifying his political messaging (Cervi & Tejedor, 2020).

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe (CoE) defines antigypsyism as a specific form of racism rooted in the ideology of racial superiority, being an ideology that dehumanizes the Ciganos/Roma and is sustained by historical discrimination and institutional racism that manifests in various ways, including violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatization, and blatant discrimination (ECRI , 2011). The hateful rhetoric directed towards the Ciganos/Roma leads to more subtle forms of exclusion, where they are denied access to essential public services like electricity, water, and sanitation. Such hate speech doesn't solely come from elites but seeps into everyday language, becoming commonplace and accepted, especially on social media, creating what is known as 'micro-aggressions', which are seemingly innocent remarks but reveal underlying assumptions and make targeted individuals feel uncomfortable or violated (Ryder et al. 2021).

Across Europe there are disturbing instances of far-right, national populist violence, intimidation, and demonstrations targeting Ciganos/Roma. In Central and Eastern Europe, the rise of radical right and nationalist regimes in countries like Poland and Hungary, coupled with anti-migrant sentiments ignited by the 2015 influx of Syrian refugees into Europe, illustrates the growing strength of radical-right (Ryder et al. 2021). Moreover, some government policies explicitly discriminate against Roma, with the radical right increasingly shaping social policies. An illustrative example is Italy, where Matteo Salvini publicly targeted Ciganos/Roma, calling for their counting and classification and advocating the expulsion of foreign Roma (Kourova & Webb, 2020). The normalization of antigypsyism in Italy was evident through various indicators, including not only the ongoing practices of forcibly evicting and demolishing Roma camps but also the dehumanizing language used in conjunction with threats of expulsion and exclusion directed at the Ciganos/Roma, exemplified by an incident involving Salvini in 2018, when the leader infamously called for a 'mass cleansing street by street, piazza by piazza, neighbourhood by neighbourhood' (ERRC, 2023). Also in Italy, the government under Silvio

Berlusconi declared a 'Nomad Emergency' in May 2008, granting special powers to prefects in certain regions to address the perceived security threat posed by Ciganos/Roma, leading to numerous forced evictions without providing alternative accommodation and without prior consultation and throughout that year, resulting in a record number of attacks on Ciganos/Roma groups and individuals, with mobs physically and verbally attacking them and their settlements were set on fire (Amnesty International , 2021). After experiencing a period spanning fifteen years marked by the anti-Ciganos/Roma policies of Berlusconi and Salvini, Italy's Ciganos/Roma harbors apprehensions about the future, with new prime-minister Georgia Meloni leading a coalition involving both figures (Aljazeera, 2022). Considering Meloni's and her coalition partners' historical track record, there is a legitimate concern that their government will not only persist with anti-Ciganos/Roma policies but may also intensify the prevalence of divisive and racially discriminatory politics in Italy, suggesting a continuation of harmful practices and the amplification of toxic racial dynamics under their leadership (Aljazeera, 2022). Similarly, in July 2010, the French government ordered the eviction and expulsion of Roma living in around 200 unauthorized camps, claiming these camps were associated with illegal activities, deplorable living conditions, and the exploitation of children for begging, prostitution, and criminal activities (Amnesty International, 2021). In Ukraine, there was an alarming incident in April 2018 when a Roma camp in Kyiv's was attacked after dark by members of the far-right nationalist group C14, and one of the group's members openly boasted about the attack on social media, linking it to a celebration of Hitler's birthday (Kourova & Webb, 2020).

Ciganos/Roma, which have already been racially marginalized, are now facing increasing securitization, where they are perceived as a risk and threat to society, being often accused of engaging in anti-social behaviour, relying on welfare, and encroaching on spaces through nomadism or migration (Baar et al. 2019). The response to the Covid-19 pandemic has shed light on the extent of antigypsyism in Europe and how various political actors, including the state, can fuel anti-Ciganos/Roma sentiments. During the pandemic, authorities in Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria imposed additional restrictions on Ciganos/Roma, subjecting them to strict quarantine measures, sometimes enforced by police and military interventions, demonstrating how Roma identities were securitized and portrayed as problematic, making anti-Ciganos/Roma discourses appear 'reasonable' rather than offensive (Baar et al. 2019).

Negative media representation plays a significant role in shaping anti-Ciganos/Roma sentiments, often leading to the creation of 'moral panic' against the Ciganos/Roma, that is fuelled by misleading tropes and inaccurate reporting, generating a form of hysteria (Kroon et

al. 2016). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated this situation, as there were a large number of cases of stigmatisation perpetrated by media outlets and certain political figures that were responsible for propagating unfounded rumours and false narratives that wrongly assigned blame to the Ciganos/Roma for the pandemic and its spread, associated these minority groups with terms like 'infection' and 'danger', further perpetuating negative perceptions, further generating various kinds of hate speech against the Ciganos/Roma (FSG, 2021). Online environments also contribute to spreading anti-Ciganos/Roma sentiments with similar elements to offline hate, including stigmatization based on ethnicity, reinforcement of negative stereotypes, support for prejudices and misconceptions, circulation of hoaxes, and use of insulting and derogatory language, contributing to ostracizing marginalized groups, escalating tensions, and even inciting hatred, violence, and genocide (Pavlova, 2023). The propagation of anti-Ciganos/Roma hate is often linked to accounts affiliated with right-wing extremism and neo-Nazi ideology, with public officials increasingly resorting to openly racist rhetoric, and politicians at both local and national levels associating Roma with poverty, social issues, and crime in their online posts, especially during elections, which leads to the normalization of hateful views in the public discourse contributes to making such sentiments socially acceptable and encourages further online hate, this also being exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic (Pavlova, 2023).

2.6 Ciganos/Roma in Europe

The Ciganos/Roma is Europe's largest ethnic minority, estimated to be around 10 to 12 million in total across Europe, with approximately six million residing in the EU, where most are citizens of an EU Member State (Lucerf, 2023). While there has been a growing discourse about the inclusion of the Ciganos/Roma minority over the past two decades, there remains a range of terms used to describe these groups. The term 'Roma' or 'Romani,' which is a non-derogatory endonym, has gained prevalence and is recommended by the Council of Europe. However, there are still various other terms in use, as for instance, 'Rom', 'Travelers', the 'Yanish', the 'Sinti', and the 'Kalé' (Maestri, 2017). The term 'Gypsy' originated from 'Egyptian', a name given to Ciganos/Roma immigrants upon their arrival in western Europe due to a mistaken assumption that they came from Egypt (Amnesty International. 2021).

Despite being one of Europe's oldest ethnic minorities, the Ciganos/Roma face significant disadvantages and marginalization. The origins of the Ciganos/Roma in Europe have been a subject of debate: historical records indicate that this group arrived in Europe from northern

India during the 9th century, but the exact reasons for their migration remain unknown; by 1300, they had settled in most countries across Europe (Fraser, 1995). Throughout their history in Europe, the Ciganos/Roma have faced diverse experiences depending on the countries they migrated to, but one common thread has been their enduring marginalization and discrimination, as they have been subjected to cultural erasure and faced numerous grand state projects aimed at their assimilation throughout history (Ryder et al. 2021). As far back as the fifteenth century, they were even traded as slaves in certain regions and discriminatory policies were widespread across Europe, with the Hapsburgs viewing the Ciganos/Roma as a group separate from European culture, attempting to assimilate and settle them to be 'civilized' during the Enlightenment era (Ryder et al. 2021). The darkest chapter in the Ciganos/Roma history unfolded during the Nazi era, and just like the persecution faced by the Jewish community, the Ciganos/Roma were subjected to discriminatory laws and met with extermination. Known as the 'Devouring' or Holocaust, this tragic period resulted in the execution and death of approximately half a million Ciganos/Roma across various European countries (Ringold et al. 2005). It was only towards the end of 1979 that the West German Federal Parliament officially recognized the racially driven nature of the Nazi persecution against the Ciganos/Roma. This acknowledgment made it possible for most of them to qualify for seeking reparations for the hardships and damages they endured during the Nazi rule, but nonetheless, during that period, a considerable number of those eligible to receive such compensation had already passed away and the compensations were never attributed (Museum, 2023).

In more recent times, there has been a shift in European and international policies towards minorities, placing greater emphasis on group rights. This approach seeks to empower marginalized groups like the Ciganos/Roma by protecting their cultural identity and promoting collective rights, rather than solely focusing on individual integration. Organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), EU, and the CoE have played essential roles in advocating and establishing minority rights, leading to the development of a 'common European standard' for minority policy, built upon international commitments by European nations (Ringold et al. 2005). However, across the European continent, Ciganos/Roma face routine denial of their rights to fundamental necessities such as housing, healthcare, education, and work, and many experience forced evictions, racist attacks, and ill-treatment by the police, as for example research conducted by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee in 2016 revealed significant disparities in the experience of police violence between Ciganos/Roma and ethnic Bulgarians, indicating that the Ciganos/Roma were twice as likely as their ethnic Bulgarian counterparts to become victims of police violence, and more than two-

thirds of the juvenile defendants who reported instances of police brutality that year were identified as Ciganos/Roma (Amnesty International. 2021; Fair Trials, 2020). According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), approximately 41% of surveyed Ciganos/Roma children resided in households where someone experienced hunger due to financial constraints at least once in the past month; merely one in every four Ciganos/Roma aged 20 to 24 (27%) has successfully completed upper secondary education, while a significant 71% of young Ciganos/Roma aged 18 to 24 prematurely exit the educational system, reflecting no improvement since 2016; one in five Ciganos/Roma households (22%) lacks access to tap water within their residences; additionally, half of the Ciganos/Roma (52%) lives in conditions of housing deprivation, occupying damp and poorly illuminated dwellings, or residing in housing lacking proper sanitation facilities (FRA, 2022). Regrettably, the Ciganos/Roma lags significantly behind the national average in almost every indicator of human development across almost every European country, enduring lower incomes, poorer health, subpar housing conditions, lower literacy rates, and higher unemployment rates compared to the rest of the population, with an alarming 80 per cent of them living below the poverty threshold, and severe housing deprivation remains a pressing issue for the Ciganos/Roma (Amnesty International. 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic laid bare the vulnerability and insecurity faced by marginalized communities, including the Ciganos/Roma since the pandemic intensified their marginalization, particularly during lockdowns that left many without a stable income or access to financial resources, and those who relied on informal and casual work were especially affected, as they had no safety net from savings or formal welfare support from the government (Ringold et al. 2005). In addition to economic hardships, Ciganos/Roma also faced stigma and discrimination during the pandemic, and moral panics and hysteria in countries like Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia disproportionately targeted them, with baseless claims that they were the main carriers of the virus, further exacerbating their marginalization and contributing to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and prejudices against them (Ryder et al. 2021).

2.7 Ciganos in Portugal

The Ciganos population represents about forty to sixty thousand individuals (Mendes et al. 2014). As elsewhere in Europe, it is a highly stigmatized community with high poverty rates, often living in poor housing conditions and with high rates of welfare dependency (Afonso, 2021). For example, according to the FRA, Portugal has lowest rate in Europe of Ciganos/Roma

between the ages of 20 and 24 who have completed upper secondary education, standing at only 10%; additionally, when it comes to employment, the rate of paid work among Ciganos in Portugal is significantly lower compared to the general population; and when it comes to housing instability, 18% of Roma are part of households that were compelled to leave their homes in 2021, representing one of the highest rates in Europe (FRA, 2022). In the context of the Social Insertion Income (RSI) Portuguese program, the Ciganos population constitutes between 3,8% to 6% of its beneficiaries, which is a relatively small proportion within the program's recipients (Polígrafo, 2019). However, when considering the estimated population of Ciganos, they constitute over half (52%), which stands in stark contrast to the small percentage of RSI beneficiaries in comparison to the entire Portuguese population, accounting for just 3.3% (Castro, 2010). Turning to housing, 32% of the Ciganos reside in non-conventional and precarious housing, making up 5% of the total occupants in such housing across the country, highlighting the significant disparity in housing conditions between the broader population and the Ciganos/Roma (IHRU, 2017).

Despite having been a part of Portuguese society for over five centuries, the Ciganos still grapple with societal stigma, discrimination, racism, and the subsequent inequalities (Santos et al. 2009). In fact, prior to the 1974 Carnation Revolution, stringent rules restricted Ciganos/Roma from staying in one place for more than 24 hours. Due to their limited recognition by many Portuguese citizens, they are not regarded as either a national or an ethnic minority, and consequently, they lack rights, assurances and safeguards, while the absence of substantial acknowledgment translates to constraints across various dimensions of life, encompassing social. political. and professional domains, being particularly vulnerable to poverty and exclusion, which is reflected in substandard housing and educational circumstances (Mendes et al. 2014). The societal hurdles imposed upon them compel them to navigate an especially arduous path, often being perceived as 'the others', a parallel to the 'foreigner' concept discussed by Simmel (1986) in which there is a tendency to highlight the aspects that deviate from the norm, ultimately leading to a sense of distance, and leading to their lack of genuine integration as equals by the majority population, perpetuating negative stereotypes and societal perceptions (Mendes et al. 2014).

The lack of social acceptance has led to racist practices and discourses in both the past and today, which have undoubtedly hampered efforts to bring the Ciganos/Roma and the rest of Portuguese citizens closer together (Madeira et al. 2021). The Ciganos population in Portugal is one of the most marginalized and at risk for social marginalization, and they are the subject of several misconceptions and biases (Madeira et al. 2021). The Council of Europe reported

that the Ciganos/Roma continue to be subjected to direct and indirect discrimination and continue to live on the margins of society, at times in very poor housing conditions, with a lower life expectancy than the rest of the population, with a lower school enrolment and educational performance, in particular for Ciganos/Roma girls, as well as with a high level of unemployment (CoE, 2019).

As a result of Portugal's multicultural society, the coexistence of diverse ethnicities and identities has gained new momentum. This is made possible by the resurgence of serious discussion of the situation of the Ciganos/Roma and other ethnic groups in Portuguese society, particularly considering the group's striking vulnerability to poverty, marginalization, and ghettoization (Mendes, 1998). Members of the Ciganos population tend to have a somewhat contentious and problematic inroad into society, which is greatly exacerbated by the generally negative images propagated by the media (Mendes, 1998). It becomes apparent that this group possesses an ethnically and culturally distinct identity and way of life that are mostly ignored, misunderstood, and unrecognized by the society at large, generating prejudice and negative stereotypes (Mendes, 2012). Ciganos frequently react to their sense of prejudice by generating fear in their relationships with non-Ciganos, which contributes to the maintenance of these social barriers, as the racism and marginalization of the Ciganos in Portugal are typically seen as acts of mutual antagonism between them and the 'majority' population (Maeso & Araújo, 2015). Ciganos often withdraw from engaging with the broader public, inadvertently reinforcing the perception that they are excluding themselves, thereby perpetuating stereotypes and fuelling prejudice. These processes of cultural reproduction and production within the ingroup are rational strategies for survival and protection, particularly for a marginalized and minority group within a society that has traditionally been seen as hostile, as society continues to perceive them as both familiar and foreign, striving to maintain a social distance (Casa-Nova, 2009). These dynamics are driven by a collective and individual memory embedded in a cultural heritage, where mutual unfamiliarity becomes the most effective way of perpetuating this perception (Casa-Nova, 2009). Paradoxically, the prejudice against the Ciganos/Roma is legitimized by the notion that they lack the prerequisites for effective participation, implying their 'failure' to engage with mainstream societies; however, the criteria for 'effective participation' are established by the majority population (Beck & Ivasiuc, 2018). The victimhood discourse, which portrays Ciganos/Roma groups as inherently excluded, disadvantaged, and incapable of challenging their status quo, inadvertently justifies, normalizes, and sustains the need for interventions as a form of 'civilizing project': uncritically assuming that mainstream institutions are the only valid ways of existence, these perspectives obscure the

agency of the Ciganos/Roma in opposing, resisting, and implicitly critiquing non-Ciganos/Roma norms and constructs them as a deficient 'other' compared to the unquestioned and implicitly superior majority norm (Beck & Ivasiuc, 2018). In terms of shaping a Ciganos/Roma identity independent of the confines of stigmatization, victimization, and subordination, the Ciganos/Roma activist movement advocates for a positive identity rooted in ethnic pride, aiming to construct narratives that foster self-esteem and empowerment, significantly aligning with grassroots efforts, presenting Ciganos/Roma as a valuable resource and deliberately addressing the divide between established organizations and their constituents, while pioneering novel forms of activism that move away from mere service provision and superficial participation, focusing instead on robust community engagement that nurtures political awareness and more inclusive processes of coalition-building, encompassing not only Ciganos/Roma but also non-Ciganos/Roma (Beck & Ivasiuc, 2018).

Despite statistics from the European Survey (2018–19) indicating the overwhelming sociological dimension of racism in Portugal. a finding that has sparked a great deal of public debate, the official narrative of a post-racial nation contends that racism does not exist generally in Portugal (Dias, 2020). In the realm of studying racism in Portugal. significant attention has been given to research on the biases and attitudes of Portuguese individuals, particularly within the field of Social Psychology (Araújo, 2008). In a broad sense, these investigations consistently reveal that white Portuguese individuals do not stand as the forefront advocates of anti-racism; rather, they demonstrate explicit prejudiced and ethnocentric attitudes (Vala & Torres, 2007). Additionally, the findings also indicate that Portugal experiences a more pronounced level of prejudice, as the country displayed heightened perception of threat from the 'black other', and among the examined European countries which Portuguese people often imagine as more racially biased, exhibiting greater opposition to immigration compared to acceptance (Vala & Torres, 2007). The recurring assertions that Portugal is not a racist country are often heard despite its history of colonization and the presence of diverse peoples and cultures, reflecting a sentiment of a certain idealized notion of effortless 'Lusotropicalist' coexistence and exposes the intentional dismissal of racism in Portugal as a constructed ideological and political stance (Mendes, 2012). It could be assumed that racism in Portugal would manifest differently, possibly less aggressive, violent, or overt, however, this presumption was contradicted by another study conducted by Vala et al. (1999), that concluded that the collective outcomes suggest that Portugal's racist beliefs follow a similar pattern as those in other European countries and the factors underlying these beliefs are not notably distinct from those contributing to subtle or overt racism in other societies, as the prevailing anti-racist norm targets overt racism but

overlooks subtle forms of racial bias (Vala et al., 1999). This mythicized narrative is also present in the words of the Portuguese government, which affirms a tolerant Portugal. internationally renowned for welcoming immigrants, despite the existence of issues that must do either with specific communities or with occasional situations of conflict (Dias, 2020).

Racism and discrimination against Ciganos in Portugal happen both from an institutional and a personal perspective. The concept of 'everyday racism', as defined and employed by Essed (1991, as cited in Mendes, 2007), asserts that racism goes beyond just societal structures and ideologies, as it is primarily viewed as 'a process routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices', which is not limited to impersonal and anonymous interactions but also extends into the institutional realm, enabling its expression both at the micro-level (personal experiences) and the macro-level (institutional and ideological structures), while this interconnectedness contributes to its perception and sustained persistence over time (Mendes, 2007; Magano & Mendes, 2021). This perspective allows for harmonizing the ideological and structural aspects of racism with cognitive elements, as well as attitudes and daily experiences, that involves systematic, recurring, familiar, and ordinary social practices, giving rise to everyday racism as a multi-faceted phenomenon (Mendes, 2007).

Ciganos/Roma have always been perceived as unassimilable, strange bodies that go against an assumed harmony and security of the communities, as the Ciganos are seen as an internal threat that must be removed, not being allowed access to any place in the social system (Marques, 2007). The state and society's tolerance and acceptance of the poverty and marginalization experienced by the Ciganos/Roma are rooted in historical processes of racialization and antigypsyism, to which they are still subjected (Magano & Mendes, 2021). According to the FRA, in 2021, over 60% of Ciganos/Roma in Portugal reported experiencing discrimination, marking the highest percentage among the 12 countries surveyed (FRA, 2022). Furthermore, an additional 28% of respondents in Portugal reported being subjected to at least one form of harassment in the past year, including offensive or threatening comments, threats of violence, offensive gestures, sending offensive or threatening messages or emails, and offensive comments on the internet (FRA, 2022).

A concept with a significant relationship to the Ciganos/Roma is described as institutional racism, which is related to social practices that reflect the brand of racism and include diffuse outlines, hardly perceptible, commonplace, subtle, covert; hence, such practices are frequently discounted and not acknowledged by the victims themselves, because they consider it as socially legitimate (Torres et al. 2014). Ciganos face a distinct form of racism that originates from both historical biases and transformations in Portuguese society, as well as their own

cultural practices, experiencing a specific kind of racism characterized by deeply ingrained prejudices from the past (Marques, 2007). On the other hand, the enduring historical and societal discrimination is linked to a mix of defensive and offensive approaches employed by the Ciganos, that involves emphasizing their own identity while downplaying the significance of other groups (Mendes, 2007). The historical foundations of racism against the Ciganos in Portugal are deeply embedded within the social structures, not being able to be dissociated from the deeply rooted inclination in the dominant society to hold them accountable and suppress them (Mendes, 2007). This discrimination is expressed through various forms of structural and institutional racism – while traditional racism based on biological differences may have waned or become socially unacceptable, these manifestations have given rise to other variants of racism, such as neo-racism, cultural racism, or subtle racism (Marques, 2007). Consequently, the Ciganos are the biggest victims of racism within the country, facing socio-economic vulnerabilities and consistently suffering xenophobic, racist sentiments, and hate speech, making them easy targets for members of extreme right-wing political parties (Magano & Mendes, 2021).

2.8 Ciganos/Roma and the Chega party: the construction of the 'internal enemy- the other'

In 2017, André Ventura became a celebrity in politics when he made comments regarding the Ciganos impunity and claimed that they lived relying nearly entirely on public subsidies, while also claiming that they were frequently the cause of problems, something that the media frequently reports (Madeira et al., 2021). Since then, just like other populist leaders throughout Europe, André Ventura's party chose to target mostly the Ciganos in Portugal. adapting the classic xenophobic discourse of the far-right to the Portuguese context and using Ciganos as a scapegoat (Afonso, 2021). When it comes to the use of populist discourse, Chega articulates a traditional 'us vs. them' rhetoric that divides Portuguese from foreign groups like migrants and mainstream political elites while undermining fundamental elements of liberal democracy like social diversity and respect for minority rights (Mendes & Dennison, 2020). The public discourse may emphasize symbolic borders like race, religion, or nationality to create or characterize similarities and distinctions between majority and immigrant minority groups (Heyne & Manucci, 2021). Far-right politicians argue that since what they say is the 'truth' and 'common sense' so their claims cannot be racist, and André Ventura also attempted several times to flip the 'taboo on racism' and turn it into a 'taboo on minorities', contending that

negative opinions about those who are viewed as different should be freely expressed (Jaramillo, 2021).

In the Portuguese context, the narrative presented by Ventura divides the 'righteous Portuguese' ('os portugueses de bem') from their enemy-others – Ciganos/Roma, Afro-Portuguese people, and anti-fascist protesters are named as enemies and threats to the Portuguese society (Jaramillo, 2021). Ventura used two justifications to portray the Ciganos/Roma as an unwelcome group: first, Ventura frequently characterized Ciganos/Roma as lazy, unwilling to work, living off the effort of others, and reliant on assistance, referring to them as 'the favoured ones' in the nation as a result. The role-reversal in which the criminals became the victims has been a typical rhetorical tactic employed by far-right groups, which also hides the fact that the country has a long history of violating the rights of the Ciganos/Roma (Jaramillo, 2021). For the past 500 years, the Ciganos have endured segregation, dating back to the first complaints that reached the Cortes more than five centuries ago, continuing through various legislative measures and into the implementation of the democratic system, struggling against antigypsyism (Magano & Mendes, 2021). When it comes to the Ciganos/Roma there is an unmistakable and widespread negative perception marked by racism from the majority society, being even possible to find statements indicating a view of them as a threat and a complete refusal of any form of intimacy, as they have been forcibly displaced, persecuted, marginalized, accused of drug-related crimes, fraud, and abusing social welfare programs, while this harsh rejection and allegations are often fueled or initiated by local authorities (Marques, 2007).

Another way Ventura referred to the Ciganos was by linking it with criminals and violent individuals who assault the 'righteous Portuguese' such as the police and himself, mentioning multiple times that the Ciganos were the ones that attacked, pursued, attempted to boycott, and protested against him. Nevertheless, Ventura demonstrated how two Ciganos helped to assist him (one of them later admitted that he was not of Ciganos/Roma ethnicity) characterizing these two as dedicated workers who, in contrast to other Ciganos, pay their taxes (Visão, 2021). During one rally in the city of Braga, Ventura was approached by a Roma woman, who told him that 'she works hard and pay her taxes like other people' and to the leader of Chega 'stopping being so racist towards Ciganos' (Diário de Notícias, 2022).

Minority groups' presence can be the subject of cultural resentment; there are various theories regarding how the presence and size of minority groups can affect support for the radical-right. On the one hand, group contact theory contends that closer relationships between majority and minority groups promote mutual understanding and lessen feelings of group threat,

which in turn reduces support for political candidates who seek to profit on such feelings, but a bigger proportion of ethnic minorities, or changes in that proportion, can, on the other hand, increase sentiments of group threat and the potential of radical-right parties to gain voters (Afonso, 2021). When it comes to ethnic minorities that are highly stigmatized or distinct from the majority in terms of their socioeconomic conditions or lifestyle, like the Ciganos in Portugal. this occurrence is predicted to be more common, and according to this theory, we can anticipate that parts of Portugal where the proportion of the Cigano population is higher will have higher support for the radical right, as this connection can be attributed to André Ventura's focus in the community (Afonso, 2021; Madeira et al. 2021). During the 2021 presidential elections Chega garnered more votes in areas where there was a higher percentage of Ciganos population, with Moura standing out as an extreme example of this connection. The party received more votes in municipalities with a higher number of residents benefiting from social assistance, which could imply that the party's support increases in areas where groups that can be depicted as outsiders are more numerous (Afonso, 2021). During the 2022 general elections, Elvas, along with Moura and Monforte, which all have a substantial presence of Ciganos, recorded the highest percentage of votes for the Chega party. According to Olga Mariano, an activist for the rights of Ciganos and currently the president of the Cigano association Letras Nómadas, André Ventura made the Ciganos as a scapegoat, which was a way to appeal to undecided voters and less educated individuals in rural communities, capitalizing on the limited social benefits received by the Ciganos and claiming that these benefits are being taken from the wages of rural workers, particularly those living far away from major urban centres (Diário do Alentejo, 2021). When compared to voters of other parties in 2019, 63% of Chega voters agreed that 'minorities should adapt to the norms and traditions of Portugal', while 62% said that having Portuguese ancestors is 'extremely important' to being 'truly Portuguese' (compared to 36% among voters of other parties in that same year) (Madeira et al. 2021).

Since 2017, André Ventura has consistently depicted the Ciganos as exploiters of welfare policies, emphasizing a division where he portrays the hardworking and virtuous population as victims of societal neglect, while characterizing the Ciganos as criminals and aggressive, suggesting they pose a perpetual threat to both 'pure Portuguese' citizens and society at large (Garcia-Jaramillo et al. 2023). In 2021, Ventura was acquitted of paying a fine of 3,770 euros imposed by the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination (CICDR) for racial discrimination, related to a comment made on social media in 2017 when he was a councillor in the municipality of Loures, on a news story about assaults at the Beja hospital in which he criticized the media for 'protecting' the Ciganos/Roma ethnicity in reports about these assaults

(JN, 2021). In answer, Ventura commented on Twitter: 'Fines and more fines for saying that it was people of Ciganos/Roma ethnicity who committed a certain crime (when in fact they have!!!)' and 'I'll say it again, no matter how many fines I get, we have a problem in Portugal [referring to Ciganos]!', framing these penalties as infringements on his freedom of expression and arguing that opinions concerning marginalized groups should be allowed to be freely expressed (Garcia-Jaramillo et al. 2023).

Thus, the populist rhetoric of the Chega party and its leader is connected to the broader European movement of far-right populist parties, whose success is associated with an increase in intolerance and the normalization of violence against not only the Ciganos/Roma but also other marginalized groups (Breazu & McGarry, 2023). Populist discourses are nurtured by right-wing political movements throughout Europe that employ the tactic of scapegoating immigrants, like the Muslim population in France and Spain, as well as specific ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities, like the Roma in Portugal and Italy. The persistent assertion by André Ventura that the Ciganos do not fit within the classification of the 'pure Portuguese', it's an attempt like many European others to normalize and legitimize discrimination against those who are considered outside of this invented 'enemy other' category that is shared by a rather large portion of the Portuguese population, that results in antigypsyism being not an exception but rather the prevailing norm in public discourse.

3. Methodology

This chapter aims to review the scientific method behind this study. The methods of the study are explained, including the sources and data collection techniques, leading to the description of how the data was constructed and analysed.

3.1 Methods

This study employs a qualitative methodology, which is particularly suited for research that involves case studies with a limited number of subjects since qualitative methods prioritize understanding, interpretation, and observations in natural settings, aiming for an insider's perspective on the data (Guerra, 2006). Given the nature of this research, which explores personal insights and deals with perceptions, beliefs, ideas, and opinions that are challenging to quantify, a qualitative approach is more appropriate to achieve the research goals. Interviews were chosen as the most suitable technique for delving into personal experiences and individual perspectives, as they not only provide a holistic view, analyse the language used, and capture detailed insights from the participants, but they also allow interviewees to express themselves in their own words and convey their thoughts and emotions authentically (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Furthermore, the use of interviews, like other qualitative approaches in social science research, differs from quantitative methods in that it considers the participants' social context, while also exceling at extracting narrative data, which enables researchers to explore people's perspectives in greater depth (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Additionally, this method was complemented with a bibliographic review, a research methodology that involves systematic retrospective observation, and is oriented towards the selection, analysis, interpretation, and discussion of theoretical concepts and perspectives, results, and conclusions presented in scientific articles, aiming to gain a better understanding of the theoretical aspects through a thorough review of the most relevant literature related to the defined research subject (Ocaña-Fernández & Fuster-Guillén, 2021). Moreover, document analysis was also employed in this study, which involves the systematic review and interpretation of various types of documents, texts, or records to extract meaningful insights and information, being especially valuable for research as it allows to tap into existing information, cross-reference findings, and gain a deeper understanding of complex issues, being particularly useful when combined with other research methods, such as interviews or surveys, to provide a comprehensive view of a topic and reduce potential bias and enhance the overall credibility of the research findings (Bowen, 2009).

As such, 16 in-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out between February and May 2023 with Portuguese people of Ciganos/Roma ethnicity. The choice of the semi-structured interview technique was primarily motivated by the goal of encouraging interviewees to freely express their opinions, as the semi-structured interview strikes a balance between a casual conversation and a highly structured questionnaire, offering the advantage of adjusting the sequence of questions and the extended elaboration of answers by the respondents, rather than being confined to predefined concepts and questions (Guerra, 2006). The interviews were mostly conducted online, through Zoom or Microsoft Teams platforms, although a few were also conducted face-to-face. Given the potentially sensitive nature of the inquiries, prior consent was sought from each interviewee to record the conversations and utilize the shared information for academic purposes. Participants were provided with a clear explanation of how the interview would be conducted and the implications of their participation in this study (the informed consent is attached in Annex A). All interviews were conducted in accordance with ISCTE's Code of Ethical Conduct.

The first draft of the interview script counted with 14 questions on several topics, which encompassed subjects such as the mainstream society's perception of the Ciganos/Roma, various forms of discrimination faced by Ciganos/Roma along with self-exclusion processes, Ciganos/Roma activism and associations in Portugal. the right-wing populist party Chega and its leader André Ventura from multiple angles, as well as the normalization and escalation of discriminatory narratives towards Ciganos in Portugal. along with the determining factors. Three people were questioned in an exploratory phase of information collection, two Ciganos and one non-Cigano. During this phase, the primary focus was on assessing the efficacy of the interview script that had been previously written and if the script was yielding the desired responses and whether they aligned cohesively with the distinct goals of each question. The first interview lasted about 50 minutes and was conducted individually. Due to the availability and restricted time of the interviewees, the second interview was conducted with two people at the same time and lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. The initial interviewees were selected because they work closely with a government institution, have direct contact with Ciganos/Roma associations, and possess an awareness of the national political landscape. All the three interviewees were contacted by email, which was obtained through connections with the governmental institution in question.

The first three interviews were followed by thirteen more, for a total of sixteen interviews and seventeen interviewees, with only one being non-Cigano. For the purpose of this study, the

answers of the non-Cigano interviewee won't be considered. Following the exploratory phase, and upon careful review of the responses gathered during it, the initial interview script was revised based on the responses of the interviewees and the questions were improved accordingly. This revision process aimed at addressing information gaps and rectifying instances where questions had previously failed to elicit clear or relevant responses, in order to obtain richer, relevant, and detailed data on the topics related to the research questions. Upon the refinement of the script, additional themes were incorporated into the final version. In addition to the previously mentioned themes, other topics were included, such as the distinctions between discrimination against Ciganos/Roma and other minority groups, temporal and intensity variations of discrimination levels, profiling of Chega party voters, and an expanded focus on capturing interviewees' personal opinions on diverse subjects to ensure a broader spectrum of responses, with a total of 15 questions (the interview script is attached in Annex B).

3.2 Sources and data collection techniques

This study is founded upon a qualitative methodology that was intricately devised by combining multiple strategies and criteria during the participant selection procedure. In terms of qualitative sample, most interviewees were chosen because of their well-known activism and knowledge of political views, which would allow for more in-depth interviews and well-developed arguments, besides being considered key informants due to their prominent positions within the public sphere and among the Ciganos. These include leaders of Ciganos/Roma associations and other organizations, individuals working in services that directly engage with the Ciganos population, activists, informal leaders, and cultural mediators. Most participants were chosen because they had previously participated in other studies and are part of a network of contacts made available through other projects and teams like the EduCig[1] project, making them more easily accessible and interested in participating in this study. After conducting every interview, the 'snowball' technique was used and participants were asked if they knew anyone who would like or agree to participate in the research, allowing for a larger pool of potential contributors (Naderifar et al., 2017). Most interviewees' contact information was obtained through referrals obtained from individuals familiar with them and from the website of the High Commission for Migration, with contact information regarding mediators and Ciganos/Roma associations, but

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[1] Available in: https://ciencia.iscte-iul.pt/projects/educationalachievementsamong-ciganos-research-action-and-co-design-project/931

some interviewees were also contacted through social media and other forms of communication like via email, to propose and confirm interest in giving an interview. Over 40 individuals were initially reached out to for the purpose of conducting interviews; however, most of them either proved unavailable or did not respond. Given the sensitive nature of the study's subject matter, many individuals who declined the interviews expressed a reluctance to have their opinions and political viewpoints disclosed, even with the assurance of anonymity provided by the study. Notably, the participants who had previously engaged in other research projects were more inclined to participate in the interviews, while others required additional time and persuasion.

Ultimately, the final count ended in just 16 individuals of Ciganos/Roma ethnicity who willingly consented to partake in the interview process. Fifteen interviews were conducted virtually, predominantly utilizing platforms like Microsoft Teams or Zoom, and two were held face-to-face. For virtual meetings, participants were provided with a link to join the session using the same communication channel through which they were initially contacted. The interviews varied in time, ranging from one hour and one hour and forty minutes, depending on how much participants were willing to speak about their experiences and elaborate their personal opinions. All interviews were carried out exclusively in Portuguese and all of them were recorded.

3.3 Data analysis

Thematic analysis stands as a widely embraced qualitative analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Its primary aim is to unearth and elucidate patterns and themes within qualitative data. Unlike quantitative criteria, themes aren't established based on preset quantifiable measures like frequency; rather, they derive from their relevance to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach can be pursued through both deductive (starting with predefined concepts) and inductive (allowing themes to naturally surface) manners. Inductive analysis involves coding data without trying to force-fit it into predetermined categories or personal researcher biases, encouraging an unbiased exploration of data, offering a valuable means of comprehending qualitative information. Themes emerge organically from the data itself, without being influenced by themes previously explored in other studies and are closely tied to the data rather than being guided by the researcher's theoretical inclinations toward the subject. In contrast, the deductive approach is driven by the researcher's perspective, allowing them to examine the data in alignment with their theoretical interest in the studied issues. In this approach, researchers typically commence analysis with themes identified via a literature

review. For the analysis of the data, this study has opted for thematic analysis as the methodological framework and will employ a deductive approach. Considering the project's breadth and the constraints of time, the thematic analysis primarily concentrates on the surface or semantic level, and themes identified directly align with the content explicitly discussed during the interviews. Braun & Clarke (2006) introduced their approach to thematic analysis as accessible qualitative analysis method, presenting a 6-phase guide. This research project adhered to their method (Figure 3.1).
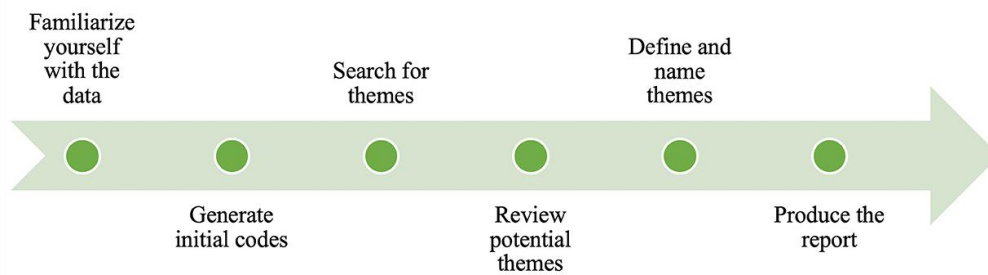

Figure 3.1 – Phases of Thematic Analysis (MAXQDA, adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012)

Following this model, the initial step in acquainting the researcher with the data involves transcription – in this study, all interviews were manually, fully transcribed by the author and thoroughly reviewed multiple times. Subsequently, the initial coding phase ensued using the MAXQDA software was used to categorize data into overarching topics, laying the foundation for the development of pertinent themes. Each interview transcript yielded approximately 35 to 50 distinct codes. The coding was fully conducted by the author, taking into consideration the literature review and the research questions. Following the initial coding, a process of comparison and consolidation of codes took place, resulting in the creation of preliminary themes and subthemes. These initial themes were then meticulously examined, and ultimately, a comprehensive review of the themes was conducted to verify their faithful representation of interview data. To provide a structured overview, a thematic table was shaped to encapsulate all identified themes and subthemes. The interview transcripts yielded a total of 10 primary themes, encompassing 40 sub-themes. It is pertinent to acknowledge that due to constraints of dimension, not all themes and subthemes can be exhaustively addressed within this study. Therefore, focus will be directed towards exploring the themes that directly address the research questions at hand (the thematic table is attached in Annex C).

4. Discussion and data analysis

The rise and growth of Portugal's Chega party have resulted in several changes at the national political level, aligning with the broader European trend. Consequently, there has been a normalization of discriminatory rhetoric in the country, closely associated with the party's leader, André Ventura. The Ciganos in Portugal are one of the main victims of this discourse, serving as the party's primary target, and despite having endured centuries of misconceptions, they are now striving to distance themselves from these stereotypes and combat the resulting prejudices. Therefore, this analysis seeks to illustrate the perspectives of 16 interviewees on these issues, providing firsthand insight into how the Ciganos perceive and position themselves regarding these subjects. This analysis begins with the characterization of the participants, and then focuses on three main themes in the following order: 1) The normalisation of discriminatory discourses: a lasting trend? 2) Views of the Ciganos on the Chega party; and 3) Fighting prejudices.

4.1 Characterization of the Participants

In the table below (Table 4.1), information can be found regarding the sample's sociodemographic composition. With the aim of reflecting a certain internal diversity, individuals with varying ages, experiences, occupations, levels of education, and regions of residence based on NUTS II[2]. To uphold participant anonymity, their respective occupations and places of residence were categorized into broader categories. Participants ranged in age from 20 years old (the youngest) to 59 years old (the oldest), with the majority being male (11 out of 16). Most of them were resident in the Lisbon metropolitan area (9), with the remainder being spread over the remaining regions, such as North (4), Centre (2) and Algarve (1), with Alentejo being the only NUT II not represented by the sample of participants, given that the individuals residing in this area who were approached for interviews either lacked interest in participating in the study or were unavailable.

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[2] NUTS stands for 'Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics', which is a hierarchical system for dividing territories into regions for statistical purposes defined by Eurostat. The nomenclature is subdivided into 3 levels (NUTS I, NUTS II, NUTS III), defined according to population, administrative, and geographical criteria (Pordata - Estatística sobre Portugal e Europa, 2023).

Table 4.1: Sociodemographic characteristics of participants[3]

Interviewee Nr.	Gender	Age	Academic Qualifications	Occupation	Place of residence
1	Male	38	Master	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Algarve
2	Female	33	Bachelor	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon
3	Female	28	Bachelor	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon
4	Male	47	Bachelor	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Centre
5	Female	22	Bachelor	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	North
6	Male	20	High school graduate	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon
7	Male	21	Bachelor	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	North
8	Male	22	Bachelor	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon
9	Female	48	Bachelor	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon
10	Male	20	High school graduate	Retail and service staff	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon
11	Male	24	Bachelor	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Centre
12	Male	55	Incomplete secondary school	Retail and service staff	North
13	Male	30	Bachelor	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon
14	Male	59	Incomplete primary school	Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon
15	Male	32	High school graduate	Unemployed, student	North
16	Female	27	Master	Retail and service staff	Metropolitan Area of Lisbon

(Martins, Ciganos/Ciganos and the Chega Party: voices against far-right populism (2023)).

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[3] Occupations according to the Portuguese Classification of Occupations 2010 (Major groups) and place of residence according to the five Portuguese NUTS II: Algarve, Alentejo, Metropolitan Area of Lisbon, Centre and North.

At the time of the interview, 11 participants had completed higher education, with 3 only having completed high school and the 2 oldest participants having not completed the 1st cyle and secondary school, indicating a trend toward pursuing higher levels of education nowadays. Except for one participant who had recently moved and had not yet found employment, all the interviewees were in a stable professional situation at the time of the interview, with 12 participants being in the major group of Professionals (Specialists in intellectual and scientific professions) and 3 in the major group of Service and sales workers, according to the Portuguese Classification of Occupations (2010)[4].

While not all those interviewed identified themselves as activists, the interviewees are considered reference cases or 'examples' due to the uniqueness of their life trajectories, which serve as models or reference for others Ciganos. Their efforts primarily revolve around inspiring fellow Ciganos, as 11 participants help Cigano students to pursue education and higher studies giving them training, and 13 respondents collaborate closely with governmental services and European institutions. 14 participants also either belonged to or were associated with Ciganos organizations, 7 of which promote cultural mediation in educational services, and 12 initiated and developed various projects, also predominantly in the field of education, making concerted efforts to foster greater integration of the Ciganos within Portugal. The interviewees manifested an understanding of national politics and the parties now represented in the Portuguese parliament, with several claiming to be politically involved and up to date on news and events affecting Ciganos/Roma.

4.2 The normalisation of discriminatory discourses: a lasting trend?

Krzyżanowski (2020) demonstrates that many public discourses, especially in the media and politics, are effectively making radical and unacceptable forms of public expression seem normal. as these expressions are being used as intentional components of right-wing populist political tactics. Racist perceptions and sentiments are expressed not only by certain politicians but also by individuals in society, particularly on social networks, where hate speech tends to

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[4] The Portuguese Classification of Occupations 2010 (CPP/2010) is incorporated into the most recent International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO/2008). The CPP/2010 structure encompasses all levels of occupations, including Major Group, Sub-Major Group, Minor Group, and Unit Group. It serves as a crucial instrument for collecting occupation-related statistics and ensures statistical comparability at both European and international levels (National Statistics Institute, 2011).

escalate, especially for certain groups like the Ciganos/Roma. For instance, a study conducted by Miskolci et al. (2020), which examined hate speech targeting the Ciganos/Roma in Slovakia on Facebook, confirmed that the portrayals of the Ciganos/Roma in social media closely resemble those presented in mainstream media and the broader public, depicting the Ciganos/Roma as deviants and criminals who are noisy, unclean, and willingly reliant on social welfare benefits; a similar study conducted in Italy, this time on Twitter, revealed that out of 410 tweets identified on the platform during 6 months targeting the Ciganos/Roma, an average of 45.6% contained hate speech, confirming the prevalence of antigypsyism in the country (Pasta, 2023). As far-right extremism heavily depends on charismatic figures and media-savvy populism, this becomes especially significant given the growing disinterest of the general public in conventional politics, as extremist populist narratives appear to fill the void left by the public's disillusionment with mainstream political discourse (Wodak & KhosraviNik, 2013). As such, the debate about Ciganos in Portugal has grown exponentially in recent years since previously it was not a much discussed in the political agenda. According to the respondents, this surge was mostly due to the formation of the Chega party and the statements of its leader, André Ventura:

> *In the past, conversations about racism stayed only in the cafés. People would go with their friends to the café and say, 'I don't like Ciganos' and they would talk amongst themselves. Since André Ventura came along, there's someone who embodies these racist conversations.* (man, 20 years old)

According to the interviewees, before the appearance of the party Chega the Portuguese population showed more overt signs of subtle racism (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), that is characterized by perceiving outgroup members as engaging in unacceptable or unnecessary behaviours that contradict traditional values, downplaying cultural differences or exaggerating them through stereotypes, and not openly admitting to harbouring negative feelings toward the outgroup, being masked by seemingly benign justifications or attitudes (Idem). Apart from being a populist ploy to win votes by exploiting minorities, the racist discourse directed at Ciganos employed by the party and its leader further encourages people to engage in more overt, verbal and blatant racism, as blatant prejudice encompasses the belief in the genetic inferiority of an outgroup, rationalizing any disadvantages faced by that group in society, and ultimately denying the existence of discrimination and outgroup's humanity and equal rights (Idem). As such, with the appearance of this party, blatant racism (Idem) has become more

commonplace and recurrent. This encouragement appears since this discourse is now prevalent in Portuguese politics:

> *From the moment the people have a representation, that is, from the moment when individuals have someone who says all the things, they would like to say but can't, they believe they have a free pass to do the same. And even those who do not openly identify as racist, always say 'I agree with André Ventura on this,' sort of like, it's not me who is saying it, it's that politician who is saying it, and I agree with him, even if I'm not saying it myself.* (woman, 28 years old)

Since 2017, André Ventura has made various statements about the Ciganos/Roma in Portugal. many of which have been provocative and unfounded. The leader of Chega was even fined over 400 euros for discriminating against Ciganos in a Facebook post in August 2020, with this penalty being issued by the CICDR, and the subject of a complaint by Letras Nómadas, a Roma association (Público, 2020). André Ventura's discriminatory discourse does not solely target the Ciganos but also extends to other populations, including the Afro-descendant community. In 2021 he faced legal condemnation from the Court of Appeal for insulting a family from the Jamaica neighborhood, predominantly inhabited by families from Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP), whom he referred to as 'criminals' with the intention of belittling and degrading them, while affirming that they weren't 'righteous Portuguese' (Expresso, 2021). The court recognized that these insults had a 'discriminatory aspect based on skin color and the family's socio-economic situation', and Ventura was compelled to issue an apology to the family members (Expresso, 2021). This phenomenon is not limited to Portugal but occurs across Europe. For example, in 2022, Eric Zemmour, the French far-right presidential candidate representing the Reconquête party, was found guilty of engaging in racist hate speech during a televised debate, having made derogatory remarks about child migrants, labeling them as 'thieves, killers, they're rapists. That's all they are. We should send them back', and consequently was imposed a fine of 10,000 euros (France 24, 2022). Similarly, in 2016, Geert Wilders, a far-right politician from the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, was convicted of inciting discrimination during a rally where his supporters chanted for fewer Moroccans in the country, as he responded with 'We're going to take care of that', resulting in numerous complaints and prosecutors asking for a 5,300 euros fine (NPR, 2016). Rather than diminishing support for these leaders and their parties, these trials often have the opposite effect, as they provide populist leaders with two crucial elements that fuel their party's success: a

platform to advance their political agenda and significant media attention. When asked about André Ventura's recurring discourse, one of the interviewees mentions that:

> *The discourse is already starting to being normalized and repetitive, we are already expecting him [André Ventura] to speak about the Ciganos, we are always wondering 'what is he going to say today about us', always knowing that when he speaks about us, he is insulting and racist.* (woman, 48 years old)

André Ventura's utilization of Facebook is not a novel phenomenon, as the interaction between media and populism is a mutually influential one, since not only does the media assist populists in gaining exposure, but populists themselves, as agenda setters, can also bolster populist rhetoric by advocating for media outlets aligned with populist reasoning (Marincea & al, 2021). At the core of the electoral campaigns of all populist leaders lies their strategic use of media communications to promote their agendas and candidacies, and politicians harness a wide array of media platforms, including social media, to boost their public backing. This overarching pattern, termed 'media populism', enables politicians to harness different forms of media to convey their populist narratives to a broad spectrum of political institutions (El-Ibiary & Calfano, 2022). Since the emergence of the Chega party, its leader has been actively utilizing social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, to disseminate a range of opinions and views on various topics. As Silva (2018) demonstrates, social media has therefore been used by right-wing populist parties across Europe to influence citizens in believing in their causes and voting for them. Even though André Ventura has been fined once, he persists in sharing with impunity discriminatory messages against the Ciganos on his social media platforms without any exemplary convictions, thus normalizing discriminatory discourses:

> *Regardless of the statements made, I believe all these are populist phrases aimed solely at gaining votes, particularly because the Ciganos are arguably the most vulnerable group in society. However, he continues to express his views freely, and no action seems to be taken against it, whether on social media, television, or even in the parliament itself. How does he have the freedom to do so?* (man, 30 years old)

In addition to serving as a platform for populist agendas, social media also provides a space for unrestricted hate speech from its users, often with minimal or no moderation, as the combination of anonymous communication, contentious subjects, and the interactive nature of the discourse creates intricate speech events where participants actively shape their own

identities and those of others, often involving expressing extreme viewpoints in discussions that escalate over time (Chovanec, 2021). According to a study conducted by Magano & D'Oliveira, after the release of a 2022 report by the FRA on the state of the Ciganos/Roma in ten European Union countries, including Portugal. a wave of prejudiced and hateful speech sparked on Portuguese social media platforms, with people blaming the Ciganos for their own poverty and exclusion, with some accusing them of choosing not to work due to a lack of will and being wealthy through illicit activities such as theft, drug trafficking, and selling counterfeit goods (Magano & D'Oliveira, 2023). The challenge lies in establishing the threshold at which extremist Internet speech can be accepted within the framework of freedom of speech before concluding that such speech presents an immediate and evident threat, but this poses a complex issue because undue restrictions on free speech are fundamentally incompatible with a democratic society; however, it's equally important to acknowledge that hate speech can have harmful consequences and consequently, the primary concern revolves around striking a balance between the rights of victims and the rights of those expressing their views, although the legal obligation to protect individuals from hate speech takes precedence over the privilege of unrestricted freedom of speech enjoyed by those who participate in social media (Guiora & Park, 2017). All the interviewees emphasized the prevalence of negative comments they encounter under news articles about the Ciganos, whether they are positive or negative:

> *The negative comments have increased significantly, and it seems like we even attract more people. If it's a regular news piece, let's say about a Portuguese company selling shoes in a trendy store in Milan, that article might have around 20 likes and 5 comments. Then you look at the news about the Ciganos, and it's certain to have around 150 furious comments full of hatred, without any filter, even if it's just an ordinary news item.* (man, 30 years old)

As mentioned by all participants, the anonymity provided by the online environment encourages individuals to express whatever they please without any regard for consequences, which contributes to the proliferation of hate speech:

> *These platforms are a very convenient tool for spreading hatred because it's one thing to insult someone face-to-face, as the other person might punch me, but on Facebook, I'm shielded from that. There are no consequences. I can insult, I can say whatever I want, and there's no harm, because I'm here in Lisbon and the other person is in Portimão. So, there's no risk or fear whatsoever.* (man, 24 years old)

Moreover, the interviewees mentioned that currently there are some sensationalist media and television networks that often exploit news related to Ciganos/Roma, as the mass media plays a pivotal role in shaping and maintaining 'everyday racism' (Essed, 1991) and biases against marginalized groups, and tend to depict them in stereotypical ways, often using negative and dehumanizing metaphors and amplifying prejudiced and xenophobic conversations within the larger population (Chovanec, 2021). The participants noted how they are often portrayed by the media:

> *The media has truly been a disaster in the integration of the Ciganos/Roma, it hasn't helped at all. We are a minority in Portugal. if we look at the crime statistics, non-Ciganos/Roma commit crimes every day. However, when a Roma person commits a crime, it's highlighted and labelled in the newspapers. A journalist should be neutral. impartial. and should not label based on ethnicity, religion, and so on, but they make the news worse than the reality, making us appear as if we are only criminals, and they don't help overcome prejudices, they make it sound like we just like to get in trouble and engage in fights.* (woman, 27 years old)

Among the interviewees, there wasn't a unanimous agreement regarding the newspapers' cautiousness when covering sensitive subjects involving Ciganos/Roma. Some mentioned that media outlets exacerbated the issues and that journalists disregarded ethical standards in favor of sparking controversy. On the other hand, some interviewees noted that newspapers are now more cautious with their headlines and attempt to downplay the fact that Ciganos/Roma are central figures in the news. There was also no unanimous agreement among the participants when asked whether the Covid-19 pandemic intensified these discriminatory online discourses – some responded that it remained unchanged, while others believed it had worsened considerably due to people's exhaustion from staying at home and their need for a scapegoat to blame for their problems.

4.3 Views of the Ciganos on the Chega party

As mentioned earlier, André Ventura and his party have been using the Ciganos/Roma in Portugal from the beginning to create an image of an enemy that opposes the 'good Portuguese citizens', frequently emphasizing welfare dependency and other social problems within this community as an electoral campaign argument (Afonso, 2021). Being the target of these discriminatory discourses and lacking an active voice in both digital platforms and politics, the

primary objective of this study is to understand the thoughts and opinions of the Ciganos/Roma interviewees regarding this party that frequently discusses them. Most of the respondents mentioned that they are familiar with some of the ideas advocated by the party in its manifesto and electoral program, although many admitted that they aren't well-acquainted with it exhaustively:

> *No, I'm not familiar with the proposals presented, and I've never read the program. But from what I hear, he hardly has any proposals because the only proposal he has is to say that nobody is good and that everyone in the government is stealing and everything is wrong. But he never has any effective proposals; he only talks. He says what people want to hear.* (woman, 48 years old)

Other interviewees stated that they are well acquainted with the party's proposals and electoral program, which they describe as nothing more than populist texts inspired by movements from around the world. They also believe that the party borrows electoral ideas from other national parties:

> *It's a copy of movements in other European countries and worldwide, like Trump in America and Bolsonaro in Brazil. Somehow, it manages to captivate the discontent of a portion of the Portuguese population. The party itself knows that a significant portion of what they propose doesn't make sense, but the level of political illiteracy among the Portuguese is very high. And in some way, they've managed to stir up the electorate with these issues, firstly with the abolishment of abortions and then with the chemical castration for sex offenders, always with anti-constitutional ideas that they know will never be approved, but they can resonate with the voters.* (man, 47 years old)

> *I believe Chega was influenced by the far-right movements in Europe, such as Salvini's right-wing in Italy, Marine Le Pen in France, Vox in Spain, and in Portugal things always come last. Nevertheless, I think it's a party that goes with the wind. Many measures they present in their party program are basically copies of aspects from other parties, like Iniciativa Liberal. such as the elimination of the Ministry of Education and the privatization of healthcare. And often, they even copy proposals from left-wing parties, completely replicating ideas from the Communist Party or Bloco de Esquerda. I find that quite amusing.* (man, 24 years old)

Although practically all the interviewees don't identify with the party's electoral program, one interviewee admitted to supporting and finding some proposals interesting, in addition to liking one of the party's deputies:

> *Perhaps my answer isn't what you're expecting, but the party itself has some very good ideas. And I agree with certain things they advocate for. There are many positive aspects they support, especially for young people. Rita Matias is a person from the party whom I enjoy hearing speak. I don't know if you've heard any of her speeches, but that's what we need for the country. We need a woman like her.* (woman, 28 years old)

The interviewees mention that the party's targeting of the Ciganos population is nothing more than a way for the party to gather votes, utilized purely as a political and marketing strategy by its leader, following the success he achieved after the statements he made in the 2017 local elections at the municipality of Loures, a city that has a high population of Ciganos:

> *He started focusing on the Ciganos, because he's quite intelligent, isn't he? Let's target a vulnerable minority, unprepared and already disliked by people, whose members are perceived as strange and different. It's the perfect and ideal target to be attacked and build up an entire rhetoric around. Ventura seized this opportunity in 2017, and when he wasn't accepted, it led to the creation of Chega. He played this game with this defenceless group, negatively perceived, misunderstood, poorly integrated, and seen as some sort of savages – the perfect, ideal target to blame for all the societal discontent in Portuguese society. A perfect strategy.* (man, 24 years old)

Furthermore, multiple interviewees also praised the leader of Chega for his persuasive skills, political strategy, and overall intelligence, although they expressed disapproval of his populist tactics:

> *It's a bit strange to say, but he's a genius. He knows how to grab attention to become famous. He understood that populism divides society, and he knew that people would attack those who nobody likes, but no one publicly admits it. He's a very intelligent man. He says what he says because it stirs people up, and knows it because he's a lawyer, a professor; he knows what he's saying and he is aware of his boundaries, and when he crosses them, he is sure that he will increase his voter base.* (woman, 22 years old)

Some interviewees believe that the leader of Chega doesn't genuinely believe in the proposals and what he himself says, largely due to his past and his doctoral dissertation where he criticized penal populism and the stigmatization of minorities (Público, 2019):

> *I think he has the gift of gab. I believe he says things just for show; he's a liar, capable of lying to himself and instilling those lies in others. When he said he would step down if he lost the election to Ana Gomes, I immediately thought, this man won't leave, it's a strategy he's using. People don't see who he truly is; he's a manipulator of minds.* (man, 55 years old)

However, there are other interviewees who believe that the party's leader genuinely harbors negative sentiments toward the Ciganos. Some have even made light of the situation: '*perhaps he had some incident with the Ciganos one day and decided to take revenge, maybe he was very interested in a Cigana woman, but none of them wanted him, and he became resentful*' (woman, 28 years old). Others genuinely believe that André Ventura holds an intense hatred and feel that he would go to great lengths to eliminate them:

> *For me, if he comes to power, he probably has the idea of creating a 'Ciganoland' and throwing us all into a hole with a fence around it, like 'you can all live there and kill each other.' That's what he would like to do to us.* (woman, 54 years old)

The interviewees mentioned that the choice of the Ciganos as a target by André Ventura and his party wasn't random, as Portugal has a long-standing history connected to antigypsyism and historic racism, as Ciganos have endured systematic and structural discrimination deeply ingrained in society and its core institutions (EAPN Portugal et al. 2020; Marques, 2007). The interviewees noted that the Ciganos are still significantly marginalized within the majority society and has low levels of education, making it an easy target for discrimination. Similarly, the interviewees believe that other populations in Portugal. such as Afro-descendants from official Portuguese-speaking countries, aren't as easily vilified due to their larger numbers and level of integration in the country:

> *It would have been difficult for André Ventura to target the Afro-descendant community because, for instance, my family doctor was African until very recently. We see Africans who are engineers, doctors, lawyers. They too face immense racism and discrimination, but generally, they are well integrated and contribute to society. However, people don't perceive us Ciganos in the same way. The African community in Portugal also has*

figures like Mamadou Ba and Cristina Roldão – leaders and educated individuals who can present their arguments clearly and assertively, marking their positions. With the Ciganos, it's still challenging. We have around 40 young Ciganos/Roma in higher education, but many of them are only going to become leaders in the future. (man, 20 years old)

The interviewees observed that while people of African descent are primarily judged based on their skin colour, the Ciganos/Roma face judgment more based on their culture. Additionally, the participants highlighted that they are still treated as if they were an immigrant group. While individuals of African descent and other immigrants might have a country of origin to return to, the Ciganos/Roma do not have such a place. Despite having been part of Portuguese society since the 15th century, Ciganos are still seen as outsiders in their own country, remaining the perpetual 'internal strangers', embodying what Simmel referred to as the quintessential 'stranger' – individuals who are viewed as distant or difficult to connect with (Mendes & Magano, 2022). This characterization often portrays the Ciganos/Roma as 'exaggerated strangers', creating a clear division between them and non-Ciganos/Roma, which in turn makes it easier for stereotypes and exoticization to thrive within the context of the Ciganos/Roma (Mendes & Magano, 2022). For the respondents, the Ciganos are seen as more foreign than other communities in Portugal. This is evident in the fact that the implementation of policies at the central government level that encompass the Ciganos still falls under the jurisdiction of the High Commission for Migration (ACM), an agency is responsible for migration-related matters, including the integration of migrants and minorities, despite not being migrants themselves:

The mass of society sees us as a separate entity, an alien people, as foreigners. This is especially evident when we consider that the Cigano population is overseen by the ACM. This already leaves a message. The Ciganos have been present in Portugal for 500 years, and we are still regarded as migrants within our own country, an external body within a country that has been ours for several generations. This is evident in everything, such as calling prejudice towards the Ciganos of xenophobia, which is the hatred for people from outside, people who don't belong to the country. People see us as something outside of what is being Portuguese. (man, 24 years old)

Many interviewees said that they are continuously invited 'to go back to their country', despite being born and raised in Portugal. just like all their relatives:

You don't have to be tolerant with me. I'm Portuguese, I'm not an outsider. Why are you reducing me? It's my nationality, I was born in this country, I am Portuguese, I feel Portuguese. People always treat us as foreigners in our own country. And that seems to legitimise them treating us badly. This is what happens every day. I'm not going to generalise. It's not all people, alright? We are a country that is structurally racist with people who aren't racist. (man, 47 years old)

Consequently, most of the interviewees believe that a significant reason people vote for the party is due to its constant statements about the Ciganos, as most of the population agree with these statements and view them as parasitic members of society who are unwelcome. For example, when asked about what is important to be 'truly Portuguese', Chega supporters answered that while language proficiency is deemed 'very important' as it is for all other groups, the 'ethnic' component is emphasized more compared to other groups (Cancela & Magalhães, 2022). In an article published in Observador, Marchi (2019) observes that among Chega voters the perception that the 'political elite' is generally 'corrupt' is clearly prevalent, as is the perception that 'politicians are the main problem in Portugal', that 'the majority of politicians only care about the interests of the wealthy and powerful' or that 'the majority of politicians do not care about the people' (Cancela & Magalhães, 2022). Participants mentioned that they believe there are more reasons behind the vote for this party, primarily stemming from the public's discontent with the current state of the country:

Many people are also tired of the Portuguese political system itself, coupled with the fact that we've been in a crisis for many years. Our democratic system, despite being relatively new, is currently showing signs of aging, and politics itself isn't as open to society as it should be. The vote for and rise of Chega are also greatly attributed to the flaws in the current system, and it's a protest vote from the people. I believe that most of the voters are primarily driven by a protest against the current system, and voting for a far-right party is also associated with the lack of political literacy that these individuals have, making them easily susceptible to manipulation, and André Ventura is very manipulative. (man, 22 years old)

The participants characterized Chega party voters as individuals with low political literacy, who are ignorant and dissatisfied with the state of the country. Some of them might have previously voted for other parties but didn't see tangible results, leading them to believe that voting for Chega would solve all their problems:

The Chega voters are typically everyday individuals, often engaged in physically demanding or precarious jobs. Alternatively, they could be figures of authority; for example, law enforcers are often drawn to political extremes, especially towards the far right. These are people who work and pay taxes, frequently earning minimum wage and struggling with long hours of low pay. They are the typical tavern-goers, with a beer and a bowl of lupini beans in front of them, watching CMTV, and often struggling to fully understand many of the events that happen. (man, 24 years old)

Some of the interviewees even went so far as to consider the voters as people who aren't mentally stable. They also believe that a portion of the electorate aligns with the values of fascism, racism, xenophobia, and white supremacy, which they see reflected in the party. However, the majority referred to the voters as individuals from middle- or lower-class backgrounds, who work and don't see policies that would directly improve their financial situation:

These are typically middle-class individuals, often frustrated with their lives. They might have been supporters of the CDU or PCP parties in the past and have now shifted to supporting Chega. They generally have jobs, possibly in public positions, but receive relatively low pay. They probably don't own a home or are still paying off a mortgage if they do. They might drive a Fiat 500 but would prefer to have a Porsche. Generally, they might live close to social housing areas or pass by them regularly. Anthropologically, these are individuals who, from my perspective, lack education. They have always been somewhat isolated from the Cigano population in different contexts and thus haven't had much interaction with them. Overall, these people are frustrated, and due to their limited political and social awareness, they find an outlet for their frustration in targeting the Ciganos. (woman, 27 years old)

Out of curiosity, the interviewees were asked if they knew any Ciganos who had voted for the party. Although most responses were negative, some participants did mention that they were indeed aware of Ciganos who voted for Chega. Some reasons cited for this included a lack of political awareness, the party's Christian values (as it's the only party in the parliament that identifies as religious), and a sense of revenge held by certain individuals. This revenge might stem from distancing themselves from the community and seeing themselves as better off, or from having had issues with family members or other community members. There was some disparity among the interviewees regarding whether the party's voter base will increase in the

upcoming elections or not. Most of the interviewees believe that the number of voters for the party will indeed increase, similar to what has been observed in other European countries, mostly attributed to protest voting and anti-system sentiments:

> *If things continue as they are, I believe so. As I mentioned, I have a great fear about this. Speaking in a general sense, if things continue as they are, I believe there will be an increase; we've seen this happening in other countries, and André Ventura continues to receive a lot of media attention. However, it also depends on the economic and political circumstances of the country. We all know that things can change overnight but looking at the paradigm of the last 45 years, I think there's a tendency for a rightward shift beyond the PSD. Yes, I think so.* (man, 30 years old)

A portion of the interviewees believe that since the party lacks concrete proposals and relies more on populism, people will eventually realize that it's not worth voting for a party that doesn't bring about any real change:

> *I think a lot of people are starting to wake up to the reality because I remember seeing many supporters of Chega who thought highly of André Ventura before. However, as the party started presenting more extremist proposals, I noticed many young people criticizing it on Twitter. In the end, I believe the voters will mainly consist of older people who feel that socialism in Portugal isn't working and may be looking for a party with Christian values, for instance. But I don't think he will gain more votes; people will come to realize that he's nothing more than a populist who won't improve the country in any way.* (man, 20 years old)

During the interviews, participants were shown some iconic statements about Ciganos made by André Ventura over the years, and they were asked to express their opinions about them. All the interviewees mentioned that these statements were nothing more than fallacies and populism, extremely detrimental to members of the community. They saw these statements as generalizations that unfairly grouped all Ciganos together:

> *I am a Cigana woman, and I do not identify with these statements. I work and pay my taxes, I pay rent for a non-social housing unit, and I have a degree. How can he make all these generalizations and say we are all the same, that we don't work and only receive subsidies, while remaining unpunished?* (woman, 33 years old)

One of these statements, in particular, included a proposal put forth by the party and its leader during the Covid-19 pandemic, where André Ventura suggested a specific approach and confinement plan for the Cigano population, while other parties in the parliament accused Chega of persecution for this proposal and seen it as a unconstitutional measure (TSF, 2020). All the interviewees expressed incredulity at this statement by the Chega leader and mentioned being genuinely scared upon hearing such a proposal in the parliament:

When he said that, it just made me fearful from my perspective as a member of an ethnic minority. It makes me afraid due to the historical context of the world, right? When we think about confining a group, I can only think of concentration camps, World War II, and genocide. So, I can say that above all, this statement makes me feel fear. Not to mention that the Cigano population represents a very small percentage of the Portuguese population, so him trying to blame the Ciganos for the spread of the virus is ridiculous. (woman, 33 years old)

Most of the interviewees believe that the Chega party is not necessary in the Portuguese parliament and that it is not important for national democracy, mainly because they do not perceive the party as being democratic:

A party that persecutes people, that pits men against men, a party that expresses hatred against Ciganos in the parliament, which contradicts the Constitution, that humiliates and stigmatizes groups, will never be needed. I think there's room for everything in the parliament, but there can't be room for these idiots. If they become more moderate and form a coalition with the PSD, maybe then I could accept them as a party. But of course, they will lose votes. (man, 47 years old)

Despite this, some interviewees believe that even though they dislike the party and its discriminatory rhetoric, and even though they don't consider its ideology important for national democracy, they think that the presence of the party in parliament has advantages in the sense that being an anti-system party leads to more debates and exchange of ideas within the parliament, which could potentially lead to something positive:

The extremes are never important, but maybe in terms of the plurality of ideas and discourses. I think Chega plays a very important role in democracy, not in terms of political ideology, because Chega doesn't present proposals, and when it does, most of the time they go against human rights, so they lack substance. However, it's important

for different political sectors and for the daily political game. In Portugal. in our Assembly of the Republic, there still aren't clear and obvious ways of arguing to effectively counter these ideas that are often baseless and nonsensical. The last time I saw someone really engaging in an argument with André Ventura was Mariana Mortágua from Bloco de Esquerda. Even during televised debates in the presidential elections, it was embarrassing to watch. So, I hope in the future, the rest of the deputies can counter-argue against Ventura and improve Portuguese politics and debates. (man, 30 years old)

In summary, the opinions of all the interviewees about Chega were quite unanimous in the sense that none of them would vote for or feel drawn to the party's ideology. Two of the male candidates admitted to being involved in Portuguese politics and were able to substantiate their arguments and express themselves better on this issue compared to other interviewees. Furthermore, participants with higher academic qualifications were also better at demonstrating their knowledge of the political landscape in Portugal. with men providing better justifications for their statements than female interviewees. Despite this, they were all able to recognize the populist strategy of its leader and all of them expressed that did not identify with it.

4.4 Fighting prejudices

The interviewees mentioned that they took several actions to combat the populism of André Ventura and his rhetoric of 'otherness', primarily starting with the protest vote against the party. According to 14 participants, a significant portion of the Ciganos in Portugal has limited political literacy and shows little interest in politics. According to Mendes (1998), social exclusion naturally leads to political self-exclusion and is closely related to citizenship, as the status of being 'excluded' cannot be separated from the absence of rights that have already been acquired by the majority of people integrated into society. However, there was a significant mobilization of Ciganos to the voting sites especially during the 2022 presidential elections, a grassroots reaction that was surprising, given the typically low interest that Ciganos/Roma generally show towards electoral moments:

Many Ciganos mobilized to vote when André Ventura ran for President of the Republic, and it was an incredible mobilization effort to support Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. The goal was to demonstrate that we had a voice. I believe this was the first time there was such a significant mobilization among Ciganos to vote, as most of them probably don't

care much about politics or voting. However, this time there was a strong collective effort. Influential members within the community played a role in this mobilization by conducting live streams or going door to door to encourage voting. The message was clear, we needed to show that we could make a difference and that André Ventura couldn't make those statements without facing consequences. (man, 21 years old)

Additionally, there were also several protests against the party leader. For example, during his campaign for the presidential elections, André Ventura was greeted in Serpa by around 50 Ciganos who shouted slogans and honked horns to express their disagreement with Ventura's ideas. In response, Ventura told them to 'go to work' (Diário de Notícias, 2021). One of the protesters, a 12-year-old, stated that the leader of Chega *"is very racist and has been engaging in racism against the Ciganos, and we don't like that. My parents can't stand him, they speak very badly of him, he's like a Hitler!"* (DN/Lusa, 2021). (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 – Ciganos protesting André Ventura in Serpa. DN/Lusa (2021).

The interviewees mentioned several initiatives aimed at combating prejudices and stereotypes about Ciganos/Roma. For instance, a Portuguese presenter, Catarina Furtado, dedicated an episode of her program 'Príncipes do Nada' (Princes of Nothing) to Ciganos, attempting to showcase positive examples and qualified individuals within the community. Additionally, one of the interviewees mentioned that during the pandemic, in response to statements made by André Ventura regarding the Roma, she launched a series of videos to challenge the leader of the Chega party:

Once, we recruited several Ciganos, and each person made a video saying, 'I am person X, and I do this', to demonstrate that I am Cigano but also contribute to society. This video happened to gain traction on the Internet, had a good reach and spread through social media, which is a platform with a significant impact. Since hate is often disseminated on social media, we felt that we could also use these platforms to spread our message and took the opportunity to continue organizing actions. When it comes to the mainstream media, it's a bit challenging because when we are invited, they often distort what we say, so it becomes difficult. Nevertheless, we do our best to ensure that some message is at least minimally conveyed. (woman, 27 years old)

André Ventura also shared an unfounded news article during these elections, claiming that Ciganos associations did not consider him racist and that these associations acknowledged the issue of dependency on subsidies within the community, which was proven to be inaccurate information and quickly debunked by the associations (Observador, 2021). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, through various reports to the CICDR, Ciganos/Roma associations were able to have Ventura fined for discrimination through harassment based on ethnic origin:

There were movements in which we wrote letters accusing him of discriminatory and racist speech, and so he had to pay a fine, it was the Ciganos associations that got together and tried to make pressure so that he would have some consequence, but our strength is still very small and our associations are very small, and we don't have the strength or the size that others have, but because of our insistence he faced some consequences. It was minimal but he did, and just the fact that he was taken to court and required to pay a fine was very important to us. (woman, 48 years old)

The participants lament the lack of support from the State for Ciganos associations, which they identify as crucial in combating discrimination and promoting the inclusion of the community in society. However, they admit that these associations still lack the strength and capacity to make a significant difference, although over the years this mobilization has been increasing:

We still lack a strong grassroots organization, but we do have highly capable associations that have been working on changing mindsets and addressing discrimination. There's still a long way to go, and it will take some time, but we are in a much better place now compared to about 10-15 years ago. However, as you know,

the associative fabric in Portugal is weak in general. Now, imagine the associative network within the Ciganos, which also needs greater visibility. Nonetheless, we do have organized movements of women and men who are fighting for greater equity and have been doing a lot for us. (man, 30 years old)

The participants also note that even though these associations fight and represent the Ciganos, there is still a lack of preparation within them and a shortage of qualified individuals capable of articulating arguments and defending the community, also due to the low levels of education and political literacy within this population. Cigano associativism has primarily focused on other urgent activities such as education, housing, and employment, only recently turning its attention to combating discriminatory discourses, primarily targeting right-wing populist parties. Additionally, Cigano associativism is still highly centered around the personal figure of a leader and their family, making it crucial to nurture association leaders. In this context, it's very important to emphasize the role of the family as a specific identity within the community and select a representative of the families, as this election is essential for effectively working with the Cigano population (Assembleia da República, 2008). However, there is a strong desire among the Ciganos to actively participate in national political life, as they believe they can make a difference. They assert that they must be an integral part of the active life of the country, as they are 'portugueses ciganos e não ciganos portugueses' (Portuguese people of Cigano ethnicity and not Ciganos who have Portuguese nationality) (Correio da Manhã, 2019). The participants express regret that it is necessary for non-Ciganos individuals to defend them, as they want to be able to stand up for themselves:

Unfortunately, we still don't have anyone to stand up for us, and there's a lack of preparation for that kind of defence. That's why we often see the Ciganos being defended by others. Ricardo Quaresma did say something to André Ventura, but it's not enough. The ones who defend us are always non-Ciganos, whether they are parliament members, politically engaged teachers, or researchers. While I appreciate that defence, it's not a positive situation. There's a saying by Machiavelli that goes like 'when a people are defended by external forces, it is bound to be ruined'. I truly believe in that saying because it happens. The Ciganos still lack that preparation, those truly skilled leaders who are educated, well-trained, and capable of defending Ciganos/Roma with strong arguments and good posture. (man, 24 years old)

As such, Cigano activism is crucial for advocating and protecting the basic human rights of the Ciganos, including rights to equality, non-discrimination, education, healthcare, housing, employment, and cultural preservation, while it plays a vital role in challenging and debunking stereotypes and negative perceptions about the Ciganos. Furthermore, it promotes social inclusion and ensures that the Cigano population has equal opportunities to participate fully in society. The National Strategy for the Integration of Ciganos, developed in Portugal. established a crucial framework for fostering dialogue among the public administration, the Cigano population, and civil society organizations working for and with these communities (ACIDI, 2020). However, over time, there has been a recognition that certain adjustments should be made, including redefining the strategy, particularly in terms of clarifying and operationalizing the measures, as well as determining priority areas of intervention, encompassing gender equality, increasing awareness and understanding of the Cigano people, and enhancing their involvement in the implementation of this strategy (Magano & Mendes, 2021).

Conclusions

In this dissertation various themes have been explored, which were related to the Ciganos/Roma, their presence in Europe, specifically in Portugal. and far-right political parties across Europe, particularly the Chega party in Portugal. The phenomenon of using minorities like the Ciganos/Roma to ultimately normalize discriminatory discourse to gain more electoral support has also been examined, as well the potential resurgence of extremisms, racism, and the growing possibility of normalization of prejudices against Ciganos people in Portugal. Thus, three research questions were formulated at the beginning of this study and were answered throughout with the use of a qualitative methodology (based on semi-structured interviews and bibliographical and documentary analysis).

This dissertation centred on the perspective of the Ciganos/Roma regarding the far-right populist party Chega and its leader André Ventura, based on 16 interviews with individuals of Ciganos/Roma ethnicity, having been analysed through a thematic analysis. Apart from providing firsthand insights into how the party's primary target feels in response to its discriminatory discourse, it also explored how Ciganos position themselves concerning the resurgence and reinforcement of racism and the potential normalization of prejudices. The qualitative sample in this study indicates that they do not hold a positive view of the Chega political party, labelling it as fascist and racist, terms that were also used to describe its leader. All the Ciganos interviewed expressed disagreement with the ideology promoted by the party, deeming it unimportant for the nation's democracy, despite its intriguing presence in parliament as an anti-establishment party. The study participants verified that since this party's emergence on the national stage, the pre-existing structural racism deeply rooted in Portuguese society has become more overt and vocal. because members of the majority society view the discourse normalized by the party against the Ciganos as a justification or pretext for expressing their dissatisfaction with them. The interviewed Cigano individuals stand in opposition to the Chega party and the potential rise and normalization of prejudices in Portugal. They actively counter these trends by engaging in and promoting projects at both at the national and European levels and collaborating with governmental bodies and Ciganos/Roma associations, showcasing themselves as positive role models within their community. Additionally, they endeavour to disrupt cycles of self-exclusion and encourage greater openness among their fellow community members. Despite the precarious situation they face in Portugal. their activism and associativism have been yielding results in the fight against generalizations and prejudices, as

they continue to strive to be recognized for who they are: Portuguese citizens who contribute to the development and cultural pluralism of the Portuguese society.

The national context mirrors the international landscape, as in recent years Europe has witnessed a change in political rhetoric characterized by explicit racism and exclusionary ideas. This shift has led to a rise in interethnic violence and hate crimes, disproportionately affecting minorities and vulnerable groups, notably the Ciganos/Roma. Antigypsyism, a deeply ingrained prejudice against Ciganos/Roma, has perpetuated their impoverished conditions, but addressing this issue remains a sensitive subject for the EU and many European nations, as it is historically ingrained in European societies (Baar, 2014). Antigypsyism poses a significant barrier to the equal participation and integration of individuals of Ciganos/Roma ethnicity, and without a comprehensive approach to combat antigypsyism across all aspects of public life, genuine change and successful inclusion efforts cannot be achieved (Ryder et al. 2021). The marginalization, exclusion, and stigmatization faced by ethnic groups like the Ciganos/Roma are rooted in racism, stereotyping, and cultural misrecognition, being further compounded by a lack of access to essential services and resources, known as misdistribution, which deepens the marginalization of these communities (Ryder et al. 2021). In right-wing populist political discourse, the exclusion of Ciganos/Roma often involves de-racialization, downplaying or denying racism, and framing Ciganos/Roma as representing the problems associated with the EU (Breazu & McGarry, 2023). In Portugal. the acceptance of poverty and marginalization of the Ciganos by both the state and society is rooted in historical processes of racialization and antigypsyism (Magano & Mendes, 2021). The Chega party, for instance, constructs a narrative that portrays the Ciganos as the perfect 'other' living among us but in an 'abnormal' way that is deemed a threat to culture, lifestyle, and the economy, as this narrative employs a 'blame-the-victim' strategy, creating an 'us' versus 'them' divide, dehumanizing Ciganos/Roma, and painting them as a perceived threat to civil society and its citizens (Cervi & Tejedor, 2020). As this research has shown, Ciganos/Roma are ostracized and demonized across Europe, with populist parties such as Chega, Lega Nord, Fidesz, Jobbik, or Úsvit exacerbating the situation by using them as scapegoats and encouraging hate speech against them, while the increasing normalization of these discourses has also normalized anti-Ciganos/Roma sentiments and perpetuated the structural racism present in European countries. As such, this trend is affecting minorities (both migrants and non-migrants) in Portugal line with what is happening in other European countries where populism is gaining increasing prominence in the political arena.

This dissertation achieved the goals proposed from the beginning, as it provided insight into the discriminatory circumstances the Ciganos/Roma face both in Portugal and in Europe, as well as it allowed to explore a deeper understanding of antigypsyism in Portugal. including its increasing normalization, also verifying that this phenomenon is occurring elsewhere in Europe, contributing to a broader understanding of the issue on the European continent. Nonetheless, it's important to acknowledge that this study faced several limitations. To start, the sample size of the interviewees was quite small comparing to the size of the Ciganos population in Portugal. which is notably larger. Additionally, it's worth noting that the opinions expressed by these individuals may not necessarily represent the broader Ciganos population, as they reflect individual experiences and perspectives, rather than providing a comprehensive overview of the entire group. Nevertheless, this study holds significant importance as it marks a pioneering effort in Portugal. It has given a voice to a population that often feels marginalized in national discussions and aims to amplify the voices and viewpoints of the participants on sensitive topics. Therefore, this study extends beyond being a mere academic dissertation; it serves as an endeavour to develop more specific policies to combat racism, discrimination, and antigypsyism in Portugal.

Hence, it is strongly advisable to conduct a more extensive study on this subject, involving a larger and more diverse group of participants and delving into a broader spectrum of topics. It would also be advantageous to engage Cigano organizations and associations in the study, and it would be of interest to solicit the viewpoints of certain Chega party members. Moreover, the research could be undertaken by Cigano individuals themselves, allowing them to express their opinions directly and without any intermediaries, obviating the need for Ciganos to convey their own perspectives. This more inclusive and direct approach would ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of Ciganos and contribute to a more reflexive and broad analysis of the political and social dynamics involving them, the Chega party, and the potential normalization of prejudices and discriminatory discourses in Portugal. The Ciganos/Roma have not merely been passive victims; they have shown resistance, resilience and adapted creatively to their challenges, drawing from past experiences to formulate counterstrategies and solutions, and pride in their Ciganos/Roma ethnicity has played a pivotal role in resisting marginalization (Ryder & al, 2021). Hence, there is a belief that in the future, the Ciganos/Roma will persist in their resistance and efforts to combat the social forces that oppose them, with the ultimate expectation that they will eventually achieve an effective inclusion, as well as a deserving public acknowledgment.

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ANNEXES

A. Informed consent

This dissertation, entitled 'Ciganos/Roma and the Chega Party: voices against far-right populism', is part of a research project conducted within the scope of the Master in International Studies at ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon, under the guidance of PhD., Maria Manuela Mendes.

Your collaboration and opinion are highly valuable for a better scientific understanding of this topic!

Your participation in this study will not bring any inconvenience or risk to you. The information collected will be gathered through a questionnaire and/or an interview, which will be recorded to ensure a better understanding of the facts.

Any information you provide will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties or published. All information provided will be anonymized.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time or choose not to participate.

After hearing the explanations mentioned above, I declare that I have been informed and agree to respond to this questionnaire and/or interview and consent to its recording.

Participant

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher

Signature: _____ Date: _____

B. Interview Guide

Introduction

This dissertation, entitled 'Ciganos/Roma and the Chega Party: voices against far-right populism', is part of a research project conducted within the scope of the Master in International Studies at ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon, being authored by student Jéssica Martins and supervised by PhD., Maria Manuela Mendes. This study focuses on the ascent of populist radical right-wing parties and their relationship with the rise in discriminatory news, discourse, and behaviors in Portugal. particularly targeting the Ciganos/Roma. For a better scientific understanding of this topic, your opinion and participation are highly valued and will play a crucial role in this study. I appreciate your collaboration in this project! All information provided during the interview will be anonymized and confidential. as will the anonymity of the participant(s). This interview will be used solely for research purposes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time or choose not to participate.

Questions

1) How do you think most of the society views the Cigano population? In what ways can these perceptions change? What can be done?

2) What are the primary forms of prejudice that affect Cigano individuals in Portugal (e.g., access to justice, education/training, housing, the job market, healthcare)?

3) Who is primarily responsible for these situations, and why do they occur?

4) In general. in your daily life, do you believe that the Ciganos continue to face discrimination and marginalization? Were they more discriminated against 10 years ago? Is the type of discrimination different from what occurs against Afro-descendants or immigrants? Why?

5) Some people say that the Cigano population self-excludes itself. Why do you think this happens?

6) Do you think that since the last presidential elections in Portugal. people have become more openly racist, especially verbally towards Ciganos? Or is there no difference? If yes, why do you think this is happening?

7) What is your overall opinion of the radical right-wing populist party Chega? Are you familiar with its ideology? What do you know about the ideas advocated by this party?

8) What do you think about the most emblematic statements made by André Ventura regarding the Cigano population? What particularly troubles you about these statements?

These are examples of statements made by André Ventura, the leader of the Chega party, regarding Ciganos in Portugal:

"Chega has no problem saying what the majority of Portuguese people think and feel. (...) We have a problem with the Cigano population in Portugal. (...) I will ask in parliament for an end to the impunity of the Ciganos in Portugal."

"Almost 90% of the Cigano population lives off 'other things' rather than their own work. Until we understand that there is a structural problem here, it will continue to grow uncontrollably."

"The teacher brutally attacked by ten Cigana women in Figueira da Foz should shame all of us as citizens, and even more so as politicians. Yes, because we are the ones allowing this climate of barbarism and impunity to persist and worsen every day!"

"Yesterday, in Bragança, we had the support of two members of the local Cigano population because they work, pay taxes, and do not identify with the general behaviour of the community. This is what needs to be shown... and done!"

Note: These statements were retrieved from André Ventura's Twitter account, @AndreCVentura.)

9) Why do people vote for this party? Do you think it will increase its voter base? Why? Do you know of any Ciganos who have voted for Chega?

10) How have Ciganos organized themselves to deal with discriminatory discourses and racist statements against the Cigano population? Have you participated in any actions/organizations/initiatives opposing the ideas of this party? If so, what was your involvement?

11) In your opinion, why does one of André Ventura's main focuses centre on Cigano individuals rather than other minorities and social groups? Does the public success of this party have to do with this systematic attack on the Cigano population? Why?

12) During the pandemic, did these discriminatory attitudes and behaviours increase? How did you perceive the proposal for a special lockdown for Cigano people, as advocated by the leader of this party?

13) Do you consider this party important for national democracy? In what way?

14) Who do you think Chega's voters are? Do you have any idea about the reasons that lead them to vote for this party?

15) Do you think racist messages have increased on digital platforms and channels? Why? Who are the individuals or collectives doing this? Why?

Interviewee's Data:
Age:

Gender:

Educational Background:

Occupation:

Place of Residence:

Service/Company where you work:

How long have you been working at this place:

Are you an activist and/or a member of Romani collectives and associations?

If yes, which one(s)? Since when, and what is your role?

Thank you very much for your collaboration. Would you like to ask any questions or add any information regarding the questions I've presented to you?

C. Analysis grid – Thematic analysis

Themes	Subtopics and dimensions	Domains
Discrimination against the Cigano population	In general	Historical/cultural. generational. housing, education, employment, judicial. access to public places/services, political participation, and social measures
	Differentiation from other minorities	
	Structural racism	Poverty threshold, lack of inclusion, integration within the ACM
	Marginalization/ghettoization	
	Time: before and recently	
Perception of the majority society towards Cigano individuals	View of the Ciganos as foreigners	
	How to change this perception	Education, representation, improved inclusion measures
	Lack of knowledge	
	Parasitic members of society	Subsidy dependence
Responsible parties for discrimination	Dominant society	
	Mass media	
	Portuguese government	
	Others	
	Chega party/André Ventura	
Normalization and increase of discriminatory discourses	Social Media	
	Chega party/André Ventura	
	Mass media	
(Un)familiarity with the Cigano population	Generalization of the Cigano population	
	Degree and type of knowledge	
	Stereotypes associated with the Cigano population	
	Historical reasons	
	Social factors	

Self-exclusion within the Cigano population	Protests	
	Breaking the cycle	
Cigano activism	Regarding Chega	
	Regarding structural racism	
	Poor preparation of Cigano associations and communities in terms of activism	
The Chega party	Opinion about the party	Ideology, policies, importance for national democracy
	Characterization of voters	Cigano voters
	Increase/reduction of the electorate	
	Reasons for voting	
	Relationship with other minorities and comparison with the Cigano population	
	Discriminatory discourse	Cigano people as the "problem" of Portugal
The relationship between Chega and Ciganos	Positioning regarding statements made by their leader	
	Relationship between votes and discrimination against the Cigano population	
	Impact on discrimination levels	
	Positioning regarding the discourse	
	Forms of Cigano resistance	
Pandemic-related discrimination	Opinion on the lockdown for Cigano people advocated by the party	
	Impact on discrimination levels	
	Importance of digital channels	