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## Spain dictionary row: Gypsy 'swindlers' definition clarified as being offensive

Royal Spanish Academy yields to protests but Roma groups say it should have removed the discriminatory reference

A woman looks as on homes are demolished in a Gypsy neighbourhood outside Madrid in 2012. About 750,000 people of Roma heritage live in Spain. Photograph: Susana Vera/Reuters

Associated Press in Madrid

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The Royal Spanish Academy has yielded to protests from Roma groups and modified [a reference in its dictionary](#) describing Gypsies as “swindlers” to specify that the term is offensive or discriminatory.

## Spain's oldest dictionary under fire for equating 'gypsy' with 'cheat'

Roma group calls on Royal Spanish Academy to remove latest definition of the word, saying 'language has consequences'  
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The Gypsy people's state council said on Friday it welcomed the move but will continue to push for the removal of the swindler reference altogether.

The council launched a campaign against the reference last year as part of efforts to raise awareness of discrimination against Gypsies, or Roma.

The reference appeared in the dictionary's 23rd edition following complaints that the previous edition included a reference to “gypsy” – “*gitano*” in Spanish – as one “who deceives or manoeuvres to cheat”.

For the moment, the modification is only in the dictionary's online edition. It is not known when a new printed edition will come out.

Sara Gimenez, a Gypsy council spokeswoman, described the new version as “the lesser of two evils” but was puzzled as to why the opportunity was not taken to completely remove the reference. The academy said it had no immediate plans to do so.

It initially argued that dictionary definitions reflect actual use and are not intended to be derogatory. [Spain](#) has about 750,000 people of Roma heritage in a total population of about 47 million.

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Roxy Freeman

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Although a minority, the ethnic group has always formed an important part of Spanish society and culture, most notably because of its strong links to Spain's emblematic flamenco music. One of the country's most internationally renowned flamenco dancers, Joaquín Cortés, is a Gypsy.

And while giant steps have been made towards greater integration in society, Roma are still often marginalised and discriminated against in the areas of housing, education and jobs.