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## Roma Youth Action Plan

Updated on 21 February 2013

Improving the participation of Roma youth  
in European policies on Roma and youth to  
counter the effects of discrimination on  
young Roma

Based on the guidelines proposed by the participants in  
the Roma Youth Conference (September 2011)

## Introduction

The Roma Youth Action Plan (hereinafter the Action Plan) is a response of the Council of Europe to the challenges faced by Roma young people in Europe, particularly in relation to their empowerment, participation in policy and decision-making processes and structures at European level, and the realities of discrimination, particularly Anti-gypsyism, with which they are confronted.

The Action Plan takes into account the results of the Roma Youth Conference, co-organised by the team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Roma issues and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in September 2011, and the guidelines and proposals drawn up by the participants who represented Roma young people and youth organisations.

The Action Plan has been prepared and will be implemented in the spirit of the Council of Europe Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, which it complements by associating Roma youth, and will take into account the challenges faced by young Roma and their priorities. The major rationale for the Action Plan is the marked absence of Roma youth issues and concerns in policies and programmes addressing the Roma communities.

The Council of Europe Youth Department is coordinating the implementation of the Action Plan in accordance with the principles of youth participation and agency of young people in youth policy, of which the co-management system of the Council of Europe youth sector is the key stone. The Youth Department will ensure Roma youth organisations and the various Council of Europe sectors working on Roma and youth policy issues are involved in the definition and coordination of the Action Plan and its activities.

An Informal Contact Group on Roma Youth (ICG) was set up following the Conference in September 2011. FERYP – Forum of European Roma Young People, ternYpe – International Roma Youth Network, the Open Society Foundations, the European Roma Rights Centre, the European Youth Forum and other relevant stakeholders are part of the informal group together with different sectors from the Council of Europe. The role of the ICG is to promote communication and coordination among the various partners and stakeholders, as well as ownership of the Action Plan by Roma young people and the Roma civil society.

The Joint Council on Youth, as the co-management body of the Youth Department, is responsible for including the Action Plan in the Youth Department's programme and for its evaluation. Members of the Advisory Council on Youth and of the European Steering Committee on Youth take part in the ICG's meetings.

The Action Plan includes activities of the Youth Department and of other sectors of the Council of Europe as well as activities proposed by other partners, both intergovernmental and non-governmental, cooperating with the Council of Europe and interested in securing the maximum impact of their activities by creating synergies while avoiding duplication. The activities are complementary to other national and European initiatives which play a fundamental role in addressing and overcoming the structural forms of discrimination and social exclusion affecting Roma across Europe.

The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated regularly and potentially expand beyond the first biennial budget and programme of the Council of Europe (2012-2013).

## Principles of action

The Action Plan has been prepared and developed within the framework of the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma and of the youth policy of the Council of Europe. It takes into account the challenges of gaining personal autonomy, which are common to all young people, by promoting equality of opportunities for young people so they may develop “knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society”.<sup>1</sup> It also addresses the specific challenges and hurdles faced by Roma young people, starting with the fact they are denied “the right to be young”.

In most European societies, Roma young people have a hard time in asserting their rights, affirming their identity and belonging. Other problems faced by Roma communities are reflected in young Roma’s transition to adulthood, namely poverty and lack of opportunities within and outside the community, as well as difficulties in accessing their human rights.

The situation can be considerably worse for Roma girls and young women and for invisible groups among Roma youth such as young people with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transsexual persons; and migrants and undocumented young people.

With all this in mind, the Action Plan sets out to:

- a) support the creation in Europe of an environment where Roma youth can grow up free from discrimination, confident about their future perspectives and appreciate their plural cultural backgrounds and affiliations as young people, as Roma, as citizens of their countries and as active Europeans;
- b) change prejudices and stereotypical attitudes against Roma;
- c) support and develop the participation and autonomy of Roma youth at European, national and local levels;
- d) defend the human rights of Roma by preventing future violations and by empowering young Roma through human rights education;
- e) promote real equal opportunities for Roma young people in all aspects of life, including education, employment, health and housing;
- f) promote the de-segregation of Roma schools and settlements;
- g) adopt an integrated approach to all Roma youth related policies;
- h) promote the respect and development of a Roma identity, culture and language.

The Roma Youth Action plan is based upon the following principles and values:

- a) Participation and consultation of Roma youth and Roma youth organisations, including their involvement in youth policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- b) Linking Roma youth projects to the situation of Roma communities in Europe and the need for systemic changes to address structural forms of discrimination.
- c) Integration of a gender equality dimension, including the prevention of domestic violence and gender-based discrimination.
- d) Human-rights based approaches to the challenges faced by young Roma and the empowerment of Roma young people in addressing and finding responses to them.

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<sup>1</sup> Agenda 2020 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe

- e) Explicit but not exclusive targeting of the Roma. It focus on Roma youth as a target group but not to the exclusion of other young people who share similar realities and without prejudice to broader policy initiatives which also impact on Roma youth.
- f) Motivating Roma youth to take part in mainstream youth programmes as well as in decision-making processes of youth policies.
- g) Encouraging member states of the Council of Europe to adopt positive duty policies, where national and local authorities will be responsible for the monitoring, implementation and reporting on the Roma youth actions and the Roma organisations should be equal partners.
- h) Capacity-building activities such as training for trainers as well as training in management, advocacy and fundraising, using information and communication technologies, etc.
- i) Ensuring that Roma youth issues are placed in the agenda of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Roma (CAHROM) and that Roma youth networks are invited to their meetings.
- j) Involvement of all active stakeholders who are not members of the Informal Contact Group in the implementation of the action plan.

### **Objectives and expected results**

The overall objectives of the Action Plan are to improve the participation of Roma youth in European youth and Roma policies, and to initiate pilot programmes and initiatives to combat discrimination against young Roma. The expected results are:

1. The Action Plan is set up with input and contributions from various stakeholders; an informal Roma youth contact group is established and facilitated; Roma youth issues are mainstreamed in the Council of Europe's programme of activities.
2. Roma youth leaders and activists are trained in human rights, anti-discrimination and active youth participation. Projects on anti-discrimination and human rights are initiated and the participation of young Roma at local, national and international levels is improved.
3. Awareness is raised of the history of and diversity within Roma communities, as well as of the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by Roma women and migrants, LGBT persons and religious minorities.
4. Successful projects and initiatives are implemented based on the Action Plan's objectives and guiding principles.
5. Strategies for creating a Roma youth fund in order to ensure the sustainability of the Action Plan are developed and sustainable funds for local Roma youth structures are sought; resources are mobilised for the Action Plan, including a coordinator (who should be a Roma young person). This result is dependent on the allocation of sufficient resources.

### **Means and resources**

Resources for the implementation of the Action Plan are being mobilised by the various partners; advocacy and mobilisation strategies which aim to bring in other partners and funders are being devised jointly by the Youth Department and the Roma youth networks. The

European Youth Foundation has a particular role to play, notably through its regular support to European activities with Roma youth and to local pilot projects.

A fundraising strategy is also to be developed with the support of the Informal Contact Group.

Working groups may be set up for specific Action Plan objectives and activities (with the commitment and participation of Roma youth networks).

## **Thematic areas**

At its first meeting (EYC Budapest, March 2012), the Informal Contact Group identified and prioritised several thematic areas and specific objectives and outcomes for each. While the implementation of the proposals depends on stakeholders' support, all six areas are of equal relevance to the Action Plan.

### **1. Strengthening Roma youth identity**

The specific objective is to support the creation in Europe of an environment where Roma young people can grow up free from discrimination, confident about their identity and future perspectives, and appreciate their history, plural cultural backgrounds and affiliations as young people, as Roma, as citizens of their countries and as active Europeans.

The expected outcomes relevant to this objective are:

- knowledge about Roma history and language is promoted among young people, both within and outside Roma communities. Specific events, for example International Roma Day (8 April), and Roma and Sinti Genocide Remembrance Day (2 August), are used to strengthen Roma identity and raise awareness of Roma history and language;
- good practices and positive examples of initiatives and policies that support Roma identity are promoted to trigger other initiatives, through exchanges of practices;
- non-formal educational approaches are used more widely in youth activities to foster Roma identity and to overcome discrimination.

### **2. Diversity within the Roma community**

The specific objective is to empower groups that suffer discrimination within Roma communities, including young women, LGBT, religious, migrant and other minority groups.

The expected outcomes relevant to this objective are:

- awareness is raised of multiple discrimination and diversity among young Roma, particularly in relation to the situation of young women and LGBT groups;
- networking with non-Roma youth networks and organisations on specific human rights and diversity matters affecting minorities within Roma communities is reinforced;
- research on the diversity within Roma communities, on perceptions of Roma about diversity within the community, and on access to basic rights is regularly developed.

### **3. Building a strong Roma youth movement**

The specific objective is to facilitate and enable Roma youth alliances within and outside Roma communities, through existing and new structures, to mobilize Roma youth, make their voice heard and stake their position in their communities and in European society at large.

The expected outcomes relevant to this objective are:

- Roma young people participate as equals in society and in the development, monitoring and evaluation of all programmes related to them;
- cooperation and networking with non Roma youth structures, organisations, institutions and population in general is stronger;
- mechanisms are developed and capacity of local Roma youth structures is strengthened in order to ensure their sustainability and promote cooperation and networking;
- positive role models at the local level are promoted in order to change existing stereotypes about Roma people in society, thus the Roma youth movement promotes the Roma identity;
- cooperation with existing youth structures is ensured and new structures are created, whenever needed, so young Roma can be and have the space to be active citizens, especially at the grassroots level.

#### **4. Policies and programmes**

The specific objective is to build on existing programmes and schemes so as to achieve active Roma youth participation, as partners, in decision-making processes in order to mainstream Roma issues in youth policies, and youth issues in Roma policies and programmes.

The expected outcomes particularly relevant to this objective are:

- youth issues are mainstreamed into Roma policies and Roma youth issues are mainstreamed into youth policies;
- participation of young Roma and Roma youth organisations as equal partners at the decision-making table is ensured;
- capacity building with regard to policy making and knowledge of youth policies that respond to the needs of Roma youth and Roma youth organisations is ensured.

#### **5. Human rights and human rights education**

The specific objectives are to raise awareness of the human rights situation of young Roma and to promote a culture of human rights. In this respect, NGOs, institutions and young people promote, initiate, implement and monitor local, regional, national and international actions to fight and prevent human rights violations that affect young Roma.

The expected outcomes relevant to this objective are:

- young people are able to react to human rights violations and become human rights defenders;
- Roma and non-Roma youth organisations are in a position to use a rights-based approach to human rights violations affecting young people;
- the measures and actions implemented are continuously monitored to ensure Roma young people have access to their human rights;
- capacity building efforts for youth organisations, policy-makers and the wider public regarding human rights are continued to enable individuals and groups to react to human rights violations thus promoting a culture of human rights.

## **6. Fighting discrimination and Anti-gypsyism**

The specific objectives are to initiate and promote systemic changes to structural forms of discrimination and to combat Anti-gypsyism through initiatives at all levels of society by enforcing existing anti-discrimination norms and human rights education.

The expected outcomes relevant to this objective are:

- awareness is raised of discrimination against Roma within and outside Roma communities and Roma make use of the existing anti-discrimination legislation;
- young people youth organisations and institutions, both Roma and non-Roma, develop and carry out actions which aim to combat discrimination and antigypsyism;
- serious, sustainable, accountable and realistic policies combating discrimination against young Roma are adopted by policy-makers and anti-discrimination measures are implemented.

### **Implemented activities in 2012**

At its second meeting in December 2012, the Informal Contact Group reviewed the activities in the Roma Youth Action Plan that took place in 2012 and the foreseen activities in 2013.

#### **1. Ongoing awareness-raising on identity**

- Commemoration of 2 August. TernYpe has carried out its Roma Genocide project, in cooperation with the OSCE ODIHR.
- *Barvalipe Camp* was organised by the Open Society Foundations Roma Initiative for 30 youngsters from different countries on the topic of Roma identity.

#### **2. Diversity and multiple discrimination**

- *Research on the situation of LGBT young people in Roma communities* was started by the ERRC.
- A preliminary study on forms of multiple discrimination affecting Roma young people was carried out by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

#### **3. Building a strong Roma youth movement**

- *A study session on strategies for inclusion of young Roma*, organised by the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, took place in April 2012 at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg. The main results were action plans which participants will implement in their local realities seeking cooperation with local authorities and other partners;
- *A Report on the situation of Roma youth* was initiated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. A meeting between representatives of Roma youth and members of the Congress working on the report was organised in November 2012, in co-operation between the Congress and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

#### **4. Building capacities of Roma youth organisations to influence policies and programmes and participate on an equal footing in decision making processes**

- Two networking platform meetings were organised by ternYpe on the empowerment and mobilization of Roma youth, one in Albania and one in Brussels.



## **5. Human rights and human rights education**

- *A training course for Roma youth leaders on fighting discrimination and promoting human rights was initiated in October 2012 by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. The main results are 30 local youth projects which will be implemented by participants until the end of 2013.*
- *Roma Rights Summer School, was organised by an ERRC with the aim to increase and strengthen the core competences of Romani activists working to promote equality for Roma in Europe.*

## **6. Discrimination and antigypsyism**

- *A seminar on the role of youth work in fighting segregation in school environments was organised by the Youth Department in November, with the aim of mapping forms of segregation and making proposals for future activities in this area. One of the core topics tackled was the situation of segregation in schools affecting Roma children and young people.*
- *A study session on fighting anti-gypsyism was organised in October by the network Phiren Amenca in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. The main result of the activity is main results is a toolbox of methods and information regarding how to combat Anti-gypsyism.*

2 meetings of the Informal Contact Group were organised in 2012, one in March, supported by the Open Society Foundations and one in December, supported by the Youth Department, to review and make proposals regarding the Roma Youth Action Plan and the working methods among partners.

The *European Youth Foundation* has had throughout 2012 a priority for pilot projects related to discrimination affecting Roma youth.

In terms of mobilising resources, besides the budget of the youth centres of the Council of Europe, the Roma Youth Action Plan has mobilised until now *Voluntary Contributions*, one from Finland (12.000 €) and one from the Flanders (100.000 €).

## **Draft plan of activities for 2013**

### **1. Ongoing awareness-raising on identity**

- *OSCE ODIHR will include in its working priorities for Roma issues in 2013 a youth priority. This includes having a youth event in the framework of the Human Dimension Conference in 2013, September.*
- *TernYpe will implement its project on the Comemoration of the Roma Genocide, with youth events around the date of 2 August.*
- *FERYP will include identity and empowerment in their 2013 priority areas. For instance, the 8 April will be used as an occasion for organising debates with young people on identity and empowerment.*

### **2. Diversity and multiple discrimination**

- *A study of life-stories on multiple discrimination against young Roma, especially including gender-based discrimination will be carried out by the Youth Department in co-operation with the Directorate of Human Rights and Antidiscrimination of the Council of Europe in the first half of 2013.*



- *A Conference on multiple discrimination affecting Roma youth*, will be organised in June 2013, by the Youth Department in cooperation with the Directorate of Human Rights and Antidiscrimination of the Council of Europe.
- *A youth event* will be organised on the occasion of the International Roma Women's Conference in Helsinki, in September by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.
- *A national seminar* on the specific situation of Roma youth will be organised in Portugal, by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

### **3. Building a strong Roma youth movement**

- *A training course on the management of Roma youth organisations* will be organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in November 2013.
- *The Report on the specific situation of Roma youth* will be finalised and proposed for adoption by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in June 2013.
- A national level seminar will be organised in Flandres, on topics relevant for Roma youth and Roma youth organisations, in the second half of 2013, by Flemish authorities in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

### **4. Building capacities of Roma youth organisations to influence policies and programmes and participate on an equal footing in decision making processes**

- *OSCE ODIHR* will have a youth priority for its annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in September.
- *A seminar on the role of youth policy in the support of social inclusion of young Roma* will be organised in Budapest by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

### **5. Human rights and human rights education**

- *Publication into Romani of Compasito*, the manual for human rights education with children, will be initiated in 2013.
- *The training course for Roma youth leaders on fighting discrimination and promoting human rights* will continue throughout 2013 and participants will implement their local youth project.
- *A seminar in the integration of Roma children and young people through combined actions of formal and non-formal education* will be organised in the second half of 2013, in Bulgaria, by the Youth Department, in co-operation with Bulgarian authorities.
- The ERRC will carry out its *Roma Rights Summer School*, in July 2013, a 10 day training course aimed to develop the capacity of a new generation of Romani leaders and human rights activists.

### **6. Discrimination and antigypsyism**

- *TernYpe*, in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, will organise a study session on creative campaigning and fighting anti-gypsyism in the second half of 2013.
- *A training course for Roma youth mediators against discrimination and segregation affecting Roma young people* will be organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- *European campaign against discrimination and antigypsyism*. The activity is to be started in 2013, with the leadership of the Roma youth networks.
- *A training course for young online activists against hate speech online* will be organised in April by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe

- Development of a *Tool-Kit for campaigning against discrimination against Roma youth*, to be supported by the Council of Europe.

#### **Activities for 2014 and 2015**

The programme of activities for 2014 and 2015 will be planned on the basis of the 2012 and 2013 programme and its results. The Informal Contact Group will make proposals in this respect.