



DDCP-YD/ETD (2016) 46

Budapest, 4 May 2016



ROMA YOUTH CONFERENCE 2015

Issues and future policy orientations for the participation and inclusion of Roma youth

REPORT

19-22 October 2015, European Youth Centre Budapest

Organised by the Youth Department and the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues of the Council of Europe

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Acknowledgments

This report was compiled by Orhan Usein, the conference general rapporteur, whose vast experience and expertise was helpful in following and framing the conference discussions, information and proposals, and amalgamating them into a single comprehensive report.

The valuable feedback and input by Rui Gomes, Mara Georgescu, and Denis Durmis from the Youth Department Secretariat, also proved to be indispensable in producing the final conference report.

We would like to also express our gratitude to all those who supported the Conference and helped with the production of this report, with their suggestions and feedback, in particular:

- the participants of the second Roma Youth Conference held in Budapest in October 2015, for their invaluable contribution in making the Conference a creative hub of exchange of knowledge, information and proposals for the future Roma youth agenda
- the resource people, workshop facilitators and their respective organisations for sharing their experience and knowledge with others and making the Conference a learning and networking opportunity for all participants
- Alexandra Raykova and Nik Paddison, who acted as conference facilitators, and who created a constructive and friendly space for sharing and discussing Roma youth issues
- the preparatory team of the Conference for their enormous commitment in the planning, preparation and support of the realisation of the conference programme: Marietta Herfort (Phiren Amenca), Ramon Flores (Forum of European Roma Young People), Karolina Mirga (ternYpe), Lora Lyubenova (European Youth Forum), Lilit Chilingaryan (Advisory Council on Youth) and Marius Jitea (Romed-Romact Programmes)
- the European youth networks: Forum of European Roma Young People, Phiren Amenca, ternYpe and European Youth Forum, for their overall support and commitment throughout the whole process of preparing and carrying out the Conference and this report
- the Joint Council on Youth for their support to Roma youth participation and inclusion and endorsement of the conference conclusions
- the Romed project of the Council of Europe for their financial support.

Preface

In times when Europe's Roma suffer discrimination, hatred and exclusion every day, many Roma young people find it difficult to reach their full potential and play a full part in society. An increasing number of Roma youth activists, leaders and organisations working with and for young Roma are claiming their rights, as Roma, as young people and as citizens of Europe. This situation is of concern for the values of the Council of Europe and for its youth policy.

The Council of Europe has been working with Roma youth for more than two decades now. In 2011, a Roma Youth Action Plan was adopted to support the efforts of European young Roma in overcoming discrimination and furthering participation in all spheres of society. In the last five years, an extensive programme of educational activities and policy processes has been implemented by the Council of Europe and its partners to support the affirmation of Roma young people's role in society.

In order to remain connected with the needs and aspirations of Roma young people and in order to ensure that Roma youth issues are discussed with Roma young people first of all, we organised, in October 2015, the second Roma Youth Conference, involving over 100 young Roma activists and leaders. In addition, we also benefited from the participation of other international organisations for whom Roma youth issues are a priority. The Conference was an opportunity to take stock of what had been done, to listen to the voices of Roma young people and to think about what future steps should be taken to ensure that Roma young people are provided with equal opportunities and experience which enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and competences to play a full part in all aspects of society.

This report gathers and reflects the content and discussions of the Conference. It also offers guidance on what the participants of the Conference consider to be important for any future work on Roma youth issues. As such, the report includes a call for action by all interested actors working on Roma youth issues, to ensure the inclusion and participation of Roma young people in all matters that concern them.

I hope that all those present at the Roma Youth Conference and all those interested in promoting the human rights of Roma young people will find valuable guidance in this report.

Antje Rothemund

Head of the Youth Department, Council of Europe

Foreword by International Roma youth networks

The Forum of European Roma Young People, Phiren Amenca – International Network of Volunteers and Voluntary Service Organisations, and ternYpe – International Roma Youth Network actively promote Roma youth as agents of change in our communities. These networks actively engage Roma and non-Roma youth at local, regional and European levels in issues connected with youth and Roma policy, non-formal education and voluntarism, Roma history and Remembrance and active citizenship. We have been actively fighting for the recognition of the Roma youth issues by international and national institutions, and since the very beginning have engaged with the Council of Europe on the creation and implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan.

Roma youth face structural discrimination and marginalisation and are not accepted as equal citizens, hardly having a voice in public decision making within and outside of their communities. We observe a strong self-stigmatising mechanism; thus many young Roma feel forced to deny their identity. Roma youth-led organisations have not developed their potential and Roma are often perceived as ‘receivers’ of service-providing programmes, which, without any empowerment strategy, will only increase their dependency.

Despite some examples of progress, for the most part decision makers fail to recognise the value of young people’s contributions to programme development and policy making affecting Roma. The lack of Roma youth participation continues to prevail.

The role of the Roma youth networks in the Roma Youth Action Plan is to create a new awareness towards the role of young Roma and to build solid structures and long-term programmes based on the strengthening of Roma identity, as well as boosting their visibility in other youth movements. We supported the Roma Youth Conference as an important milestone in ensuring that Roma youth in Europe will have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

We believe that in order to include the voice of Roma young people in youth policies, Roma and non-Roma youth leaders, activists, trainers and multipliers need to establish strong networks and co-operation amongst them, to create a common vision, and develop dialogue with NGOs, institutions and decision makers at a national and European level. For the effectiveness of the dialogue between these groups, knowledge and skills on active citizenship, advocacy and youth policy have to be enhanced, and regular meetings have to be arranged where experiences and knowledge can be exchanged. For these aspects, we believe the Roma Youth Conference gave space and time to young Roma people to discuss and articulate their voices, needs and recommendations. It is of huge importance that these meetings should not stop at that but should continue by trying to bring local and national issues faced by Roma youth to the forefront of the policy agenda of the Council of Europe and relevant stakeholders.

In the long term, the involvement of Roma youth leaders in decision-making processes is one of the key aspects of our networks' agenda. We will continue our participation and contribution as part of the Informal Contact Group of the Roma Youth Action Plan and we will continue to articulate and voice the needs and aspirations of Roma young people towards the Council of Europe structures, including the Advisory Council on Youth, the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues and others, with the aim of increasing the participation and involvement of Roma young people in youth policy and programmes.

We invite all interested organisations and relevant national and local stakeholders to read carefully the proposals developed and articulated within this report and engage in constructive partnerships that will secure the realisation of the potential of all young Roma.

We invite our European allies and partners, such as the European Commission, OSCE/ODIHR and others, to follow up appropriately on the proposals made.

This Conference has proved the great commitment, awareness and expertise of young Roma themselves on the issues regarding them and their communities.

We hope this report, gathering voices of over 100 young Roma activists, can serve as a valuable tool in the wider discussion on the Roma youth in Europe both by policy makers and youth organisations.

TernYpe International Roma Youth Network

Phiren Amenca International Network

Forum of European Roma Young People

Introduction

The second Roma Youth Conference, organised from 19 to 22 October 2015 by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in Budapest, Hungary, gathered 100 Roma youth representatives from 28 European countries, out of which around 70 were Roma youth leaders and members of Roma youth organisations and 30 were institutional representatives. The Conference took stock and drew lessons learnt from the last years' implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan and set the basis for a future Roma youth agenda at the local, national and European level, while associating more partners to the Roma youth double mainstreaming process.¹ The Conference was structured to assess the challenges and needs of young Roma and to provide proposals for actions in line with the ongoing initiatives and efforts of international organisations, national and local governments and institutions, as well as Roma and (pro)Roma NGOs in their work to target the social exclusion of Roma in Europe.

The marginalisation issues faced by many Roma have deep-rooted reasons, requiring complex policy approaches, which numerous initiatives in the past decade have been trying to establish by providing a coherent approach to Roma integration.² Nevertheless, recent findings outlined in the Roma Inclusion Index 2015, published by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat, and measuring the gaps between Roma and non-Roma during the period 2005-2015 in Central and South-Eastern Europe, point to limited improvements (and in some cases drawbacks) in providing equal access to education, employment, health care and housing for Roma.³ This indicates that more efforts are needed to arrive at an integrated approach to Roma inclusion policies.

The extensive work of the Council of Europe on Roma integration in the past years has been guided by the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma⁴, adopted at a high level meeting in October 2010. The Strasbourg Declaration represents the joint efforts of the member states of the Council of Europe to meet the needs of the Roma living in Europe based on principles such as the following:

- non-discrimination and citizenship, including women's and children's rights
- social inclusion including education, housing, health care, language and culture
- international co-operation between member states and organisations at local, national and European level.

¹ Double mainstreaming in this report refers to promoting the inclusion of youth-related matters in policies and programmes dealing with Roma issues and promoting the inclusion of Roma youth and related issues in youth policies and programmes.

² Examples include the Action Plan for improving the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area, the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 inter-governmental initiative, and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies of the European Commission.

³ Roma Inclusion Index 2015, (Budapest: Decade Secretariat, 2015), available at:

www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9810_file1_roma-inclusion-index-2015-s.pdf

⁴ Council of Europe, Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, (Strasbourg: Committee of Ministers, 2010), available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1691607>

As a result of this, the Council of Europe has provided innovative tools to deal with Roma inclusion and has further developed co-operation with national, regional and local authorities and international organisations, providing practical assistance in the implementation of new policy initiatives, and supported access to training, capacity building and educational material. Several initiatives have been strengthened and established by the Council of Europe on Roma since the adoption of the Strasbourg Declaration:

- The *Ad-hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues* (CAHROM) for analysing and evaluating the implementation of national policies and thematic exchanges of experience and good practices⁵
- The Joint Programme with the European Commission *ROMACT* for strengthening the capacity of local and regional authorities (targeting both elected officials and senior civil servants) to develop and implement plans and projects for Roma inclusion⁶
- *The European Training Programme for Roma Mediators* (ROMED) for reinforcing mediators' skills in facilitating communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions, especially in schools, health services and employment offices⁷
- The *Alliance of cities and regions for Roma inclusion* for promoting the exchange of know-how and good practices on Roma inclusion among participating cities and regions and providing a platform for advocating on issues concerning Roma inclusion at local and regional levels⁸
- The *International Review conference for Roma women* for empowerment, social inclusion and protection of Roma women rights⁹
- The *Roma Youth Action Plan* for supporting youth participation, promoting equality of opportunities to participate, and counter the effects of discrimination on young Roma.¹⁰

Additionally, the Council of Europe has provided training courses for legal professionals to defend the rights of Roma; they have been running the Dosta! Campaign,¹¹ have extensively advocated for the teaching of the history of Roma in education, including the Roma Holocaust, and have promoted Roma youth empowerment.

In the follow-up to the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, the youth sector of the Council of Europe organised the first Roma Youth Conference in September 2011, offering a strategic approach to the youth policy of the Council of Europe regarding Roma youth, which resulted in

⁵ On 16 February 2011, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the Terms of Reference for a new Committee of Experts, CAHROM, replacing the MG-S-ROM – Council of Europe Group of Specialists on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers: For more information on the work of the CAHROM please visit: www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cahrom

⁶ For more information on the ROMACT programme please visit: <http://coe-romact.org/>

⁷ For more information on the ROMED programme please visit: <http://romed.coe-romact.org/>

⁸ For more information on the work of the Alliance of cities and regions for Roma integration please visit: www.roma-alliance.org/en/

⁹ For more information on the work of the Council of Europe on Roma women please visit: www.coe.int/en/web/portal/roma-women

¹⁰ For more information on the work of the Roma Youth Action Plan please visit: www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma

¹¹ For more information on the Dosta! campaign please visit: www.dosta.org/en

the adoption of the Roma Youth Action Plan to respond to the challenges and needs of young Roma.

The Roma Youth Action Plan provided directions for the work of the Youth Department on Roma in the last four years. However, it is worth mentioning that the year 2015 marked 20 years since the Council of Europe had initiated activities with young Roma and embarked on a journey to fight discrimination and promote active participation and citizenship of Roma youth in Europe. Since then, it has been continuously working with youth organisations and youth policy makers on the particular situation and problems affecting young Roma. The Youth Department of the Council of Europe has hosted numerous study sessions in co-operation with youth organisations, it has run training courses and seminars to equip young Roma, through non-formal education, with the appropriate skills and knowledge for multiplying human rights education, and more recently, has started to work on youth policies that reflect and include the needs and aspirations of young Roma.

This report presents the discussions, outcomes and proposals of the second Roma Youth Conference, reflecting on the past, present and future of a European Roma youth agenda. The report should be understood as a matching resource to the overall efforts of various stakeholders dealing with Roma issues, providing perspectives on the needs and challenges of young Roma.

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 focuses on the political context of Roma issues at international level and the place of the Roma Youth Action Plan within this discourse.
- Chapter 2 describes the content of the Conference, including its aims, the working methods, the participants' profile and their expectations from the conference.
- Chapter 3 presents the Declaration of the Roma Youth Conference written and adopted by the participants of the Conference.
- Chapter 4 elaborates the main issues affecting young Roma in Europe today.
- Chapter 5 outlines the good practices and lessons learnt from Roma youth initiatives, including mapping of Roma youth initiatives and funding opportunities.
- Chapter 6 offers an overview of the evaluation of the implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan, including proposals from participants on the future of the Roma Youth Action Plan.
- Chapter 7 summarises the presentations and visions of international organisations and institutions, relevant to the future Roma youth agenda.
- Finally, chapter 8 provides a detailed presentation of the main input and proposals of the participants for the future Roma youth agenda.

The reflections of participants throughout the report illustrate their perspective about the conference.

Background to the Conference

The past years' work on Roma integration and Roma rights advocacy has been partly characterised by a growing trend of recognition of the needs and challenges faced by young Roma people. Many initiatives conducted by international organisations, including the Council of Europe, the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), and the Open Society Foundations (OSF) are seeking ways how to enable policies affecting Roma, as well as youth policies, to target also those belonging to the Roma youth category. This goes in line with the data showing that overall the Roma population in the EU is a relatively young population, with an average age of 25 years, compared to non-Roma peers, where the average age is 40.¹²

Using research and findings from a survey conducted in 2011 by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the European Commission, a background paper published within the recent 2015 conference report by the OSCE/ODIHR, 'Activism, Participation and Security among Roma and Sinti Youth', provides data and conclusions on the situation of Roma youth, namely, how much they are considerably disadvantaged compared to non-Roma in terms of their socio-economic status. In particular, the article notes the following:

Roma are less likely to possess personal documents, in particular passports... . [L]iteracy rates among young Roma are lower than among non-Roma youth, particularly among young Roma women, while the educational achievements of Roma youth lag behind those of non-Roma youth... . Roma youth are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to non-Roma youth... . [E]arly marriages are still common among Roma youth, particularly among young Roma women and girls... . In terms of solutions to these issues, the survey results suggest that Roma youth believe that state institutions should do more to help them financially... . [A]wareness about anti-discrimination laws in their countries is low.¹³

Having said this, one should keep in mind that although there are significant gaps between young Roma and non-Roma, there is a common denominator affecting all young people throughout Europe, caused increasingly due to the 2008 economic crisis. As explicitly outlined in the 'EU Youth Report' 2015, despite improvements in the level of competences, skills and educational achievements, many young Europeans are marginalised in the labour market, confronted with deterioration in living conditions, and challenged to social integration and political participation

¹² *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, (Brussels: European Commission, 2011), page 2, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173&from=en>

¹³ Ermira Kamberi, *The Position of Roma Youth in Central and South-eastern Europe: Results from the Regional Roma Survey 2011*, published within the OSCE/ODIHR 2015 Conference report 'Activism, Participation and Security among Roma and Sinti Youth' (Warsaw: ODIHR, 2015), p. 53-54, available at: www.osce.org/odihr/187861?download=true

providing serious threats to young people with fewer opportunities in Europe today.¹⁴ It is likely to be correct to say that this type of social and economic disadvantage affects young Roma disproportionately, given also the widespread antigypsism in Europe.¹⁵

Within mainstream youth policies, attention has been paid to developing efficient mechanisms to target the needs of the youth population. In particular, the EU has developed several mechanisms to target the youth, most notably the EU Youth Strategy 2009-2020, the EU Structured dialogue with youth representatives, as well as funding programmes such as the Youth Guarantee programme and the Erasmus+ programme.

The Council of Europe's youth policies and actions, on the other hand, have been guided by Agenda 2020¹⁶, a Committee of Ministers' resolution focusing on the importance of human rights and democracy, intercultural dialogue and social inclusion of young people. The Resolution highlights the importance of youth work, as well as education and training, a pioneering feature of the Council of Europe. It also sets objectives in combating social exclusion and combating racism and discrimination.

The Council of Europe has a partnership agreement with the European Commission in the field of youth which focuses on areas such as quality and recognition of youth work and training, better understanding and knowledge of youth, and youth policy development.

The European Youth Foundation (EYF) and the European Youth Centres (EYCs) play a vital role in implementing many of the programmes and activities of the youth sector of the Council of Europe. The EYF provides financial support for youth activities and for administration and development of youth NGOs and networks. It supports activities organised by youth NGOs, networks and initiatives in line with the youth sector's priorities. The EYCs in Strasbourg and Budapest also have a team of educational advisors providing educational and technical assistance in the preparation, running and follow-up of youth activities.

Finally, the Council of Europe has established a well-functioning co-management system whereby representatives from youth NGOs (Advisory Council on Youth) and government officials (European Steering Committee on Youth) work together on the priorities for the youth sector and make recommendations for future budgets and programmes.

Within the Council of Europe, Roma youth issues have been prioritised explicitly since 2011, while previously they were included within the priorities related to social inclusion and participation. Having acknowledged the specific situation of young Roma, and the international

¹⁴ European Commission, *Situation of Young People in the EU*, (Brussels: European Commission, 2015), p.5, available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:d4b27e70-5b8a-11e5-afbf-01aa75ed71a1.0001.05/DOC_1&format=PDF

¹⁵ FRA/UNDP/WB, *The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States – Survey Results at a Glance*, (Vienna: FRA, 2012), available at: http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf; See also: FRA Brief, *Data on discrimination of Roma and anti-Roma crimes*, available at: www.statewatch.org/news/2013/mar/eu-roma-fra-briefing.pdf

¹⁶ Resolution CM/Res(2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg: Committee of Ministers, 2008), available at: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/IG_Coop/Documents/CM_Res_08_youth_policy_en.pdf

initiatives aiming for full inclusion of Roma (chiefly the Strasbourg Declaration of the Council of Europe on Roma), the Council of Europe Youth Department organised the first Roma Youth Conference in 2011 and set the Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP) to complement the general policies and programmes on inclusion of Roma at a European level. The Conference was a response to the realisation that the concerns of young Roma were insufficiently addressed in policies concerning Roma.

The outcomes of the 2011 Roma Youth Conference¹⁷ provided for the guiding principles of the RYAP:

- Direct, constant and consistent involvement of Roma youth and Roma youth organisations in the implementation of the Plan with other partners
- Creating synergies between initiatives in order to respond to the need for systemic changes in structural forms of discrimination
- Adopting human-rights based approaches to the challenges faced by young Roma, including a concern for gender equality
- Mainstreaming Roma issues in youth policy and mainstreaming youth issues in Roma-related policies
- Encouraging change and action at the local and national level.

The Conference was organised in close co-operation with the European youth networks and other stakeholders, where over 60 Roma youth leaders came together to discuss the challenges of Roma young people and priorities for a European youth work and youth policy agenda. The Roma Youth Action Plan gave priority to human rights and intercultural dialogue as responses to discrimination and antigypsyism, together with the development and capacity building of Roma youth organisations and movements. It also paid specific attention to strengthening Roma identity in its diverse, plural forms.

Since 2011, the Roma Youth Action Plan has included a wide variety of activities, training courses, the development of expertise related to the situation of Roma youth, educational manuals, study sessions in co-operation with international youth organisations, study visits at the national level, support and funding to Roma youth projects, as well as policy advising activities. The implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan is led by the Youth Department in close co-operation with Roma youth organisations and networks, and other European stakeholders on Roma and youth policies.

The Action Plan set out to:

¹⁷ For detailed information about the 2011 Roma Youth Conference please visit: www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/roma-youth-conference-2011

- Support the creation of an environment where Roma youth can grow up free from discrimination, and confident about their future perspectives, while appreciating their plural cultural backgrounds and affiliations as young people, as Roma, as citizens of their countries, and as active Europeans
- Change prejudices and stereotypical attitudes against Roma
- Support and develop the participation and autonomy of Roma youth at European, national, and local levels
- Defend the human rights of Roma by empowering young Roma through human rights education
- Promote real equal opportunities for Roma young people in all aspects of life, notably education, employment, health, and housing
- Combat the segregation of Roma schools and settlements
- Support an integrated approach to all Roma youth-related policies
- Value and promote Roma identity, culture, and language.

The action plan included activities of the Youth Department and of other sectors of the Council of Europe, as well as activities by international Roma youth networks and other partners – intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations – co-operating with the Council of Europe. The overall plan followed an approach of ‘double mainstreaming’ within and beyond the Council of Europe: promoting the inclusion of youth-related matters in policies and programmes dealing with Roma issues, and promoting the inclusion of Roma youth and related issues in youth policies and programmes.

In the Council of Europe structures, the process of double mainstreaming resulted in a number of consequences, including the following: appointing a CAHROM Roma youth rapporteur, whereby the committee has taken youth issues into their discussions and activities; adopting the Resolution of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on empowering Roma youth through participation¹⁸; co-operation among the Youth Department, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit and the support team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues in organising a conference on multiple discrimination and diversity within Roma communities.

Beyond the Council of Europe, the process of double mainstreaming had various positive impacts. For example, during the Croatian Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, Roma youth issues became a priority within the initiative. This resulted in organising an international conference on Roma youth activism and participation, bringing together Roma Youth representatives and National Youth Council representatives from each Decade Participating

¹⁸ Council of Europe, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Resolution 366(2014), Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional level, available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2177949&Site=Congress>

Country¹⁹ to discuss how double mainstreaming can be implemented at national level and to formulate recommendations to the national governments for providing opportunities for active participation of young Roma.²⁰

¹⁹ The Decade of Roma Inclusion Initiative: <http://www.romadecade.org/>

²⁰ Decade of Roma Inclusion Initiative, *Recommendations to the Decade Participating Countries from the International Conference on Roma Youth Activism and Participation*, (Zagreb: Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat, 2013) available at: www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9282_file1_reccommendations-roma-youth.pdf

The Conference in brief

The three-and-a-half-day Conference on Roma Youth was held in Budapest, Hungary from 19 to 22 October 2015. The Youth Department of the Council of Europe organised the Conference in co-operation with the three Roma youth networks (FERYP – Forum of European Roma Young People, ternYpe – International Roma Youth Network, and Phiren Amenca – network of Roma and non-Roma volunteers and voluntary service organisations), the European Youth Forum and the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe. Its overall objective was to take stock and draw lessons from the last four years of implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan, to update the content and orientation of the Roma youth agenda, and to look forward to its future.

The main aims of the conference were the following:

- to discuss, promote and learn from the Roma Youth Action Plan experiences and practices
- to promote and enable the participation of young Roma in policy-making processes at all levels
- to emphasise the role of Roma youth in fighting antigypsyism
- to enhance the inclusion of youth matters in policies and programmes dealing with Roma issues and promoting the inclusion of Roma youth issues in youth policies and programmes within the Council of Europe and to all relevant stakeholders
- to shape the future of the Roma Youth Action Plan in co-ordination with young people in relation to the Council of Europe's policies and programmes and other relevant Roma and youth stakeholders
- to analyse the current place of Roma youth issues with regards to the national Roma inclusion policies, such as the National Roma Integration Strategies and other relevant policies.

The Conference enabled participants to reassess the needs and challenges of young Roma in Europe, to learn more about ongoing and implemented Roma youth initiatives and draw lessons from them, and to hear about the evaluation of the RYAP and about the international organisations' visions for the future. On this basis, participants were able formulate proposals for action and recommendations that would match the ongoing efforts of all partners involved in the Roma youth agenda. In many discussions, there was space for questioning existing approaches and for making proposals.

At the beginning of the Conference, participants had the chance to introduce each other through different activities in small groups, become familiar with the work of the Roma youth networks, the Advisory Council on Youth and the Roma Youth Action Plan, go through the overall programme, share their expectations from the Conference and hear from the head of the Youth

Department of the Council of Europe about the role of the Conference in the youth policy of the Council of Europe.

The programme continued with an analysis of the main challenges of young Roma as perceived by the Roma youth representatives, through the prism of priorities of the Roma Youth Action Plan and the overall youth policy of the Council of Europe. Participants were able to select their preferred working groups to discuss the realities and main issues affecting young Roma in Europe today through non-formal activities from the education materials developed within the RYAP (*Right to Remember, Barabaripen and Mirrors*). Their concerns and recommendations for future actions are elaborated in chapter 4.

To ensure a solid understanding of the implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan, including its relevance to the current problems of young Roma in Europe, time was devoted to the findings of the evaluation of the Roma Youth Action Plan, including the achievements, shortfalls, impact and dilemmas related to its implementation. Participants were then asked to work in small groups and discuss proposals related to a future Roma Youth Action Plan. The summary of the evaluators' presentation and the participants' proposals are outlined in chapter 6.

Participants were then given the possibility to select various working groups where they could learn more about Roma youth initiatives, best practices from existing projects and programmes, and gather information useful for their work in the future. The summaries of the discussions which took place within these groups, and the conclusions, are presented in chapter 5.

On the third day, particular attention was paid to the process of double mainstreaming and its relevance for any future Roma youth agenda. For this purpose, numerous international organisations and institutions were asked to focus their interventions on a number of issues; these included: whether or not Roma youth forms part of their current strategy; what connections in their work they see to the Roma Youth Action Plan; what their working approaches are in practice. The summaries of their presentations are outlined in chapter 7. Following the short interventions, participants had the chance for networking with the representatives: they were able to discuss with the representatives their every day work, their future actions and strategies on Roma youth, including lessons learnt so far, and any partnership-building opportunities.

Finally, the last day was devoted to the future Roma youth agenda. Participants were randomly divided into five working groups, keeping in mind their geographic background and expertise. They were asked to come up with proposals for the following five questions:

- Based on your direct experience of working with Roma young people, what would the priority areas be for meeting the needs of Roma young people?
- What should be happening at a local level to meet the needs of Roma young people?
- What should be happening at a national level to meet the needs of Roma young people?

- How can the European Union level support the local and national levels, and what kind of interventions should there be?
- How would you and your organisation want to be involved?

These proposals are summarised in the last chapter of the report (chapter 8), which also offers a summary of the Informal Contact Group²¹ discussion that took place simultaneously on the third day.

The working methods of the Conference applied participatory approaches, allowing for participants to be active and engaged in various working groups in line with their interests and expertise. The working languages of the Conference were English and Romani, thus enabling the participation of more grass-roots Roma youth leaders. Participants worked together intensively and benefited from the diversity of experience and expertise in the group, in stimulating in-depth discussions. This diversity was brought up in the proposals and recommendations drafted by participants.

The conference participants also expressed their concern in a Declaration adopted on the last day of the Conference; this can be read in chapter 3.

The Conference gathered around 100 participants in a non-formal intercultural learning space representing Roma youth networks, grass-roots level organisations, and national institutions as well as international organisation representatives supporting Roma issues. The participants were mainly young Roma actively involved at European, national and local levels with initiatives and programmes promoting Roma inclusion. They came with a different understanding of the RYAP: many had already been involved in activities implemented within the RYAP, while some were not so familiar with it and this was their first engagement in a Council of Europe activity. Participants came from 28 member states of the Council of Europe, covering a wide geographic region in terms of Roma youth representation.

The majority of youth leaders (precisely 62) represented 51 youth NGOs active in the fields of education, human rights, arts and culture, media, social developments, volunteerism, women, LGBT and the Traveller community. Additionally, five participants represented national governments and institutions, including two members from the European Steering Committee on Youth (from Serbia and Finland), a representative from the Hungarian Ministry of Human Capacities, and two from institutions implementing EEA Grants in Slovakia and Romania.

The Conference was also attended by many guests who represented international organisations and institutions active in the field of Roma Youth, bringing important perspectives to the

²¹ The informal contact group co-ordinates the synergies and activities implemented within the Roma Youth Action Plan. Besides the various units of the Council of Europe, the ICG also includes the partners of the RYAP: the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP), and ternYpe – International Roma Youth Network, Phiren Amenca - network of Roma and non-Roma volunteers and voluntary service organisations, SALTO Youth and the European Youth Forum; the Open Society Foundations, the European Roma Rights Centre, the Roma Education Fund, and OSCE/ODIHR.

discussions from their fields of work (including opportunities for funding, mobility, advocacy and co-operation). For a full list of participants, please see Annex 3.

Participants were invited to share their expectations in plenary on the first day of the Conference. Although participants came from different backgrounds, with varying degrees of expertise, knowledge and levels of actions, their expectations did not differ significantly. The majority of participants attended the Conference to learn and share good practices with other organisations active in the youth field on youth empowerment and engagement. In line with this, networking and possible partnerships for co-operation were also mentioned in the expectations.

Almost all participants mentioned that their expectations are related to the implementation of the RYAP and the future, and in particular the following:

- to find new ideas on how to implement the RYAP at a local level
- to define the role of national governments in the RYAP
- to hear about the evaluation and implementation of the first RYAP
- to develop clear actions and activities for the local level
- to discuss possibilities for the funding of activities to be implemented within the framework of the RYAP
- to create strong and concrete activities and recommendations for the new RYAP, including realistic measures with sustainable results
- to discuss the right methodology to implement the RYAP.

Participants were also invited to evaluate the Conference. Their impressions are summarised in Annex 1.

In short, the Conference was an interesting learning and networking experience for Roma youth and about Roma youth issues. It resulted in the following:

- A better understanding of the current situation of Roma youth in Europe
- More visibility for Roma youth activities and policy efforts
- Greater awareness about Roma youth issues (policies, organisations, agenda, etc.) and proposals on how to address Roma youth issues at national, regional and local levels
- Revised orientations for the Roma Youth Action Plan in the future
- More networking, engagement and co-ordination among RYAP partners
- A declaration by the participants at the Conference.

Declaration of the Roma Youth Conference 2015

To the Council of Europe – Youth Department

To the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues

Declaration of the Roma Youth Conference 2015

We, more than 100 Roma and non-Roma participants from 30 countries, representing Roma youth organisations, stakeholders and networks at the 2nd Roma Youth Conference (19-22 October 2015 in Budapest), acknowledge the efforts of the Council of Europe and its Youth Department towards Roma youth empowerment, active youth participation and towards combating antigypsyism by creating the first Roma Youth Action Plan in 2011. We also acknowledge the investment of time and funds that went into creating a number of comprehensive tools for that purpose, such as the publications *Mirrors*, *Right to Remember* and *Barabaripen*.

During the Conference, we evaluated its positive impact, although as participants we express our continued concern about the neglect of a number of important aspects by policy makers when it comes to Roma youth inclusion.

Antigypsyism remains and is an even greater challenge in today's Europe. We express our deep concern about the rise of antigypsyism, the anti-Roma rhetoric and the violent attacks against Roma in Europe. The recent riots of far-right activists in Germany, the forced evictions of Roma in France, laws supporting a segregated school system in Hungary, discriminative legislation, and Holocaust denial are all symptoms of rising racism throughout Europe. This is not only among the general population but also at the national and international levels of administration. There is a lack of knowledge among the majority of society about Roma history, culture, antigypsyism, and the Roma Genocide that took place during the Second World War. This lack of knowledge needs to be identified and recognised as an important reason for these recent developments. Following the recognition of 2 August as European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, on 15 April 2015 we call upon the member states of the Council of Europe to adopt the resolution of the European Parliament.

We therefore demand the inclusion of these topics into educational curricula. We also wish to see the recognition of the advocacy work being done in this field by Roma youth organisations and the important role they have at the local, national and international level, in order to achieve societal change.

The increasing wealth divide and exclusion of the poor as a result of the European economic crisis have worsened the situation for Roma. **Social and economic exclusion** still represents the

biggest challenge for Roma youth participation and results in political and cultural exclusion as well. This in turn leads to marginalisation and discrimination in all fields of society. Roma youth are the youngest minority in Europe and strive for economic empowerment and participation. We insist that all necessary measures are taken and funded in order to encourage their economic and educational efforts and enable their transition into national labour markets. We want to see Roma youth entrepreneurship highlighted and promoted as an important aspect that could not only contribute to economic empowerment but also strengthen the path of social inclusion and active citizenship of young Roma. Studies have shown that diversity enhances productivity and innovation, and thus also improves the national economy.

It is still evident that many Roma young people are suffering from **multiple discrimination**, which hinders their participation as citizens of their countries and members of their societies; this concerns LGBTQIA+²² Roma, Roma girls, Roma migrants and Roma with disabilities. They are still being ignored by both national and international policy makers. As an example, we recommend taking into account the recently published Prague Declaration which names important aspects and offers relevant expertise on the question of Roma LGBTQIA+ across Europe.

We call on the Council of Europe, its Youth Department and the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues to do the following:

- Improve the **good practice of Roma youth involvement** in processes of policy making
- Improve the co-ordination of policies concerning Roma youth among European institutions and stakeholders and improve the communication between these institutions
- Integrate Roma youth expertise into decision-making structures
- Invest in strengthening the capacity and structures of Roma youth organisations
- Enable the monitoring of policies being implemented by setting up a permanent working group consisting of Roma youth and evaluating the measures of the Roma Youth Action Plan
- Call upon the European Union and its member states to put Roma Youth as a priority into the National Roma Integration Strategies, as well as call all European institutions to fight against antigypsyism and end discrimination against Roma.

We encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues and the Joint Council on Youth to emphasise the importance of **double mainstreaming**, including Roma issues in youth policies and youth issues in Roma policies. We also ask for assurance that the needs and demands of Roma Youth are the core criteria for all measures of the next Roma Youth Action Plan. Under these conditions it will be our responsibility as Roma youth to ensure that the Roma Youth Action Plan creates a visible impact.

²² Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and other sexualities, sexes and genders.

We demand the return to the values that have enriched Europe. These values such as **solidarity, respect for diversity and human rights** need to be continuously and consistently respected. European society can only be powerful if it has a strong Roma youth. Therefore, all relevant policy measures have to be done, by, with and for the Roma Youth in respectful and equal co-operation with the majority society.

Budapest, 22 October 2015

On behalf of the participants of the 2nd Roma Youth Conference:

ternYpe International Roma Youth Network

Phiren Amenca International Network

FERYP – Forum of European Roma Young People

Main issues affecting young Roma today

This chapter focuses on the needs and challenges of young Roma in Europe today as identified by the Roma youth representatives. Participants were asked to sign up for workshops to discuss the realities of young Roma in Europe using the themes and tools developed within the RYAP (*Mirrors* – manual on combating antigypsyism through human rights education²³; *Barabaripen* – Young Roma speak about multiple discrimination²⁴ and *Right to Remember* – A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide²⁵). Each working group had to discuss challenges and barriers that placed Roma youth in a disadvantaged position, and the aspirations of young Roma regarding the given theme. A resource person sharing good practices from their own organisation and lessons learnt was present in each group. The outcomes of these discussions served to map the realities of young Roma and help participants to think about the type of activities that could best match the needs on the ground. Participants were organised into the following working groups:

- Identity
- Roma youth participation
- Combating antigypsyism
- Multiple discrimination
- Roma youth issues in policies affecting Roma and youth
- Combating hate speech affecting Roma

In each working group an activity from the training manuals was run and gave space to the resource person to present a good example implemented by their organisation. The discussions allowed for participants to learn from each other and learn more about the situation of young Roma in different countries.

This chapter summarises the main issues discussed within the working groups, including proposals for further actions.

Roma Identity

Roma identity has been one of the priorities within the RYAP. The RYAP aimed at supporting the creation of an environment where Roma young people can grow up free from discrimination and confident about their identity and future perspectives while appreciating their history, multiple cultural backgrounds, and affiliations as young people, as Roma, as citizens of their countries, and as active Europeans.

²³ Council of Europe training manual available at:

www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/2015_MIRRORS_combat_antigypsyism_thru_HRE.pdf

²⁴ Council of Europe training manual available at: <http://enter.coe.int/fre/content/download/10018/84822/file/barabaripen.pdf>

²⁵ Council of Europe training manual available at: www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/right-to-remember

The Roma youth representatives considered the following:

- There is a lack of knowledge on the history of Roma in the communities.
- There are limited options for learning Romani language, which is a necessary identity-forming element.
- In a number of Roma communities, the belief of history and heritage of Roma is still based on myths and legends.
- There are limited mechanisms for promoting Roma culture, history and identity in formal and non-formal education.
- Young people living below the poverty line associate Roma identity with social and economic marginalisation. As such, they tend to deny and dissociate themselves from identifying as Roma.
- There is a lack in promoting positive role models who could tackle prejudices against Roma.

The representatives formulated the following proposals for promoting and strengthening Roma identity:

- More international and regional meetings for young Roma on topics related to history and culture should be organised.
- The self-esteem of young Roma should be developed by introducing Roma role models.
- Roma identity and culture should be taken as a transversal issue in programmes and projects on Roma youth.
- Forum theatre and pop-culture activities should be used with young people.
- Roma and non-Roma dialogue should be encouraged.
- Innovative and new forms of educational materials should be created for young people to learn, share and explore issues of Roma culture and identity.
- The educational curricula on Roma history and culture should be enriched.

Roma Youth Participation

With these objectives, the Roma Youth Action Plan aimed to facilitate and enable Roma youth alliances within and outside Roma communities, mobilise Roma youth, and stake their position in their communities and in European society at large.

The limitations with which young Roma are confronted lie primarily at the local and national levels, placing a significant responsibility on the local and national authorities. A participant from Serbia noted that,

Somehow the recognition of the challenges of young Roma as a group facing multiple disadvantage has stayed at the international level and we seem not to be able to find appropriate mechanisms on how to transfer the

political will to the local governments. There is a big gap between what political actors should do and what they want to do. Although the roles and responsibilities of many stakeholders are clearly defined, it all comes down to the political will of the officials, rather than the actual needs of the constituents. Roma are lacking a voice in the policy structures on youth issues.

The working group discussion was based on the following:

- Raising opportunities for participation at the local level is crucial for the development of entire communities and this is where there are least opportunities for young people to get engaged.
- To inspire the participation at the local level, a tailored approach based on the interest of the youngsters is needed (these needs are not always connected to political issues or policy making).
- There is a lack of information or access to information about youth initiatives, volunteering opportunities and possibilities for participation.
- Another challenge, especially at the local level, is the limited motivation of young Roma in disadvantaged communities to get involved actively, making it harder for youth organisations to work with youngsters.
- Negative examples in the disadvantaged communities are also seen as an obstacle. Many young people who come from these neighbourhoods perceive people dealing with illegal businesses as having the major influence in their communities.
- Some youth organisations lack good promotion skills, resulting in weak abilities to “sell” their work to the wider public.

The participants identified the following opportunities and specific areas to help improve youth participation:

- As a principle, Roma youth participation must be based on the process of double mainstreaming following a human rights-based approach.
- Promotion of positive Roma role models in the communities should be used to inspire participation.
- Much more support is needed for youth structures (in particular, support to grass-roots organisations through funding and training courses) to be able to advocate for Roma youth participation. Without such support, young people often do not know how to engage in active participation. Youth structures can serve as a first point of contact for information sharing.
- Youth communication strategies should be further developed to promote Roma youth work and the work of Roma youth organisation.
- Genuine political participation of Roma youth, including education about political participation, should be more emphasised in Roma youth-orientated programmes. Policy making regarding Roma youth should, on principle, include dialogue and

- consultations with Roma youth, especially with regard to the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies.
- Social and business entrepreneurship should be encouraged among Roma youth through specific start-up projects and training courses, including micro financing.

Multiple Discrimination

Multiple discrimination affecting Roma is connected to the issues of plural identities and diversity within Roma communities. The RYAP aimed to empower groups that experience multiple discrimination, including those from within Roma communities, such as young women, LGBT Roma, migrants and religious or linguistic groups.

The issues raised in participants' introductions concerned multiple identities, the challenges within the Roma communities and the question of Roma being seen as a homogeneous group, without acknowledging sufficiently the diversity within the Roma community.

The areas identified by participants in relation to what can be done to tackle multiple discrimination were as follows:

- Mapping relevant institutional and civil society stakeholders who can contribute to changing the situation for the better in terms of policy, administrative and social aspects
- Providing information, training and support to families of young people affected by multiple discrimination, particularly young LGBTQIA+: raising family awareness
- Supporting the build-up of self-esteem of young Roma, and giving training on rights
- Reforming the role of education, including human rights education, in building young people's values and influencing their behaviours, to be inclusive and respect all diversities
- Recognising voices in the communities that can influence the mentality of the community when it comes to specific vulnerable groups
- Provision, by local authorities and NGOs, of safe spaces for meeting among people with similar situations when they are affected by discrimination (e.g. the LGBT Pavee project offers this possibility as a way to combat isolation of young LGBT)
- Advocating, as a civil society, for public services to adopt non-discriminatory behaviours.

The group proposed that the future RYAP focus on young Roma LGBTQIA+, Roma women, Roma people with disabilities, Roma migrants and Roma people experiencing social exclusion.

The proposals for the future include the following:

- Research at the national and local levels to understand the needs of Roma people suffering from multiple discrimination should be reinforced.
- National institutions must promote inclusive services for Roma people affected by multiple discrimination in the areas of education, health, housing, social inclusion and employment.
- The Council of Europe and the RYAP should fund and organise capacity-building activities at national and local level on multiple discrimination that will also appropriately incorporate a follow-up phase.
- The Council of Europe has a role to urge national governments to apply human rights standards, with a perspective of the multiple disadvantages produced through multiple discrimination.
- The European institution should include, in their monitoring of national strategies, a chapter on multiple discrimination.

With regard to the specific needs of the groups, participants proposed:

- Addressing the theme of mental health of people suffering from multiple discrimination
- Addressing poverty reduction among Roma
- Including sexual education themes in the education system
- Providing spaces and opportunities for Roma people with disabilities to be more visible and have a voice.

Combating Antigypsyism

Within this priority, the RYAP promoted systemic changes to structural forms of discrimination and combating antigypsyism through enforcing existing anti-discrimination norms and promoting human rights education.

The participants were introduced to the work of European Network against Racism (ENAR), whose representative talked about the importance of equality data collection, which would ascertain measuring discrimination in particular on the grounds of ethnic origin and religion. Part of ENAR's work is to ensure that European countries collect comparable sets of equality data, in respect of fundamental rights and data protection standards, so that governments can plan inclusive public policies and monitor their implementation.²⁶ This on the other hand, would allow civil society activists to engage in community-organising campaigns against discrimination, as well as clearly defined advocacy strategies to combat antigypsyism.

²⁶ For more information on the equality data collection please check the following link: www.enar-eu.org/Equality-data-collection-151

The discussion continued with the participants' proposals for fighting antigypsyism:

- Antigypsyism should be targeted through formal and non-formal education at each level of education, from kindergarten to university.
- Non-Roma should be trained on how to combat antigypsyism by using non-formal education.
- Support should be provided to empower Roma and non-Roma to fight antigypsyism through training courses about community mobilisation and campaigning.
- It should be obligatory to work closely with the media, as they are the main actors reinforcing negative stereotypes against Roma.
- Participation of Roma in decision making must be encouraged, as this will assist in elaborating policies on how to combat antigypsyism.

Roma Youth Issues in Policies Affecting Roma and Youth

Another priority of the RYAP was supporting active Roma youth participation in decision-making processes in order to mainstream Roma issues in youth policies, and youth issues in Roma policies and programmes. The main barriers related to this process are the following:

- Roma youth are not included as a priority or target group within the existing National Roma Integration Strategies, diminishing the importance of Roma youth issues within the general Roma inclusion discourse. (Roma youth are invisible in Roma-related policies as a specific group.)
- There is limited political will to work with Roma youth organisations.
- There is a lack of trust and co-operation between younger and older generations within Roma communities.
- Roma youth NGOs are neither included, nor are engaged in communication by the National Youth Councils

The participants' proposals to improve the promotion of youth issues in Roma policies and vice versa include the following:

- National Roma Youth Councils should be established and supported by international organisations and national governments to ensure a coherent approach to advocacy and the promotion of the double mainstreaming process. These councils should function as platforms for co-operation among Roma youth NGOs and gather young people for networking and to formulate common positions on Roma and youth issues.
- An e-platform should be established for information sharing that would cover the possibilities for networking, advocacy, funding opportunities, project co-operation, and the evaluation of Roma youth policy situation at the international level.

- The empowerment of Roma women is needed to ensure equal participation and opportunities for this vulnerable category.
- Supporting capacity-building training courses about advocacy and policy making are relevant topics that would enhance young Roma's skills in promoting the process of double mainstreaming.

Hate Speech Affecting Roma

Hate speech affecting Roma has not been a specific priority within the RYAP. However, the youth sector of the Council of Europe has been running the No Hate Speech Movement youth campaign since 2013 in order to combat hate speech as expressed online. One of the most extreme forms of hate speech, and probably one of the most “acceptable”, is hate speech targeting Roma. Associating young Roma to a process of combating hate speech seemed, to the RYAP, to be one suitable approach for empowerment and mobilisation.

Participants discussed that a lack of information creates stereotypes and prejudices, and ends up with discrimination towards individuals or groups of people. Sometimes this even ends in physical violence and hatred that causes pain to the “victim”. Participants expressed concerns over the rising hate speech online, and the lack of capacities among young Roma to recognise hate speech and distinguish the thin line between freedom of expression and hate speech, which is often crossed when it comes to Roma.

Within this working group participants identified the following issues:

- Human rights must be respected as they also exist on the Internet.
- Online hate speech very often turns into offline hate actions towards Roma, leading, in the most extreme cases, to hate crimes. Therefore, innovative and creative solutions on addressing such issues in a cross-sectoral approach, while co-operating with various stakeholders, is also essential.
- Low levels of awareness among young Roma about their human rights affects their abilities to identify and report hate speech and take legal actions.
- Advocacy is needed for changes in the national legislation covering such actions.

Learning Points from Roma Youth Initiatives

The second day of the Conference placed a significant focus on youth initiatives implemented by different Roma and non-Roma youth organisations, illustrating how civil society and policy makers can enhance Roma youth initiatives and can tackle the needs and aspirations of young Roma. Participants were given the choice to sign up for numerous learning spaces, where several resource people were able to share practices and lessons learnt from initiatives, ongoing activities and opportunities for funding. The following learning spaces were offered:

- Roma youth for the recognition and remembrance of the Roma Genocide
- Roma youth actions regarding minorities within minorities
- Roma youth activism and local participation
- Advocacy for Roma youth issues in policies
- Funding for Roma youth initiatives
- Learning mobility and Roma youth
- Setting up Roma youth organisations
- Local youth centres developing intercultural actions
- Human rights education projects
- Social inclusion of young Roma

The objectives of the learning spaces were to provide participants with an opportunity to discover good practices, possibilities for multiplying activities in their own communities, gain new information and contacts relevant to their everyday work, and give visibility to projects and programmes which could tackle the needs of young Roma.

The learning spaces were structured to provoke debate on the main points elaborated by the resource people, and for participants to come up with conclusions on how the lessons learnt could be further reproduced in their communities.

Roma youth activism and local participation

The issues discussed within this group ranged from how to make youth participation at the local level more attractive, to who should be held accountable for making youth participation possible at the local level, and the transferability of practices from international to the local level.

Participants concluded that local level participation is important for the following reasons:

- trust building among community members
- building sustainable partnerships with Roma communities and relevant local authorities
- the importance when working in this field of giving value to the specificities of the activism among Roma.

While acting at a local level, Roma young people can be motivated by the following:

- team-building activities
- the challenge of working with Roma and non-Roma young people
- sharing among individuals from the same community
- direct contact with young people
- being supported and encouraged by the Roma community
- being the “message carriers” for the community
- “knowing” the inside of the community
- “delivering” based on identified needs of young people
- the desire of breaking stereotypes against Roma
- being part of the decision-making process and having a shared responsibility.

The discussion on *who should be held accountable for making Roma youth participation possible at the local level* implied the following:

- Roma communities themselves
- local authorities
- Roma and non-Roma NGOs
- educational institutions at national level
- European institutions.

The instruments to be used by Roma communities and Roma NGOs to enhance Roma youth participation at local level includes:

- Training and capacity building of young Roma leaders for political participation
- Involving young Roma in political campaigns
- Raising awareness about the importance of voting
- Focusing on advertising success stories / role models
- Sharing experiences and learning points with other Roma activists from the communities and also with other local stakeholders
- Providing continuous support to Roma youth NGOs by local administrations.

Advocacy for Roma youth issues

Advocacy for Roma youth issues is a crucial point for ensuring political priority and visibility of the challenges and concerns of young Roma people. However, doing advocacy requires good skills, and as a participant noted, this is missing in many organisations:

We see improvements in the field of Roma youth engagement and participation within the wider political scene at international and national

level. A few years ago, our focus was on writing small-scale projects which would run in line with the wider political discourse on Roma, without thinking about the sustainability of the project, or the issues of double mainstreaming, i.e. how the project fits the youth dimension. Now the improvements have gone further by incorporating different actors to start youth thinking. In that process, however, we skipped an important step – that is, we know how to write projects, we know how to connect them to the Roma issues and to the youth issues, but we don't know how to properly advocate for the goals of our projects.

Participant from Spain

As stated in the concluding summary of this working group, it is of crucial importance to engage young Roma people as staff members in institutions, especially the ones working exclusively with Roma issues. These young people could become advocating agents who push further the implementation of Roma strategies in all countries, including the promotion of double mainstreaming. Furthermore, engaging young Roma as an internal part of these institutions leads towards creating role models for other youngsters.

Another important tool that would facilitate the process of advocacy is strong co-operation with the media. Having the media as allies can help create collective opinions, raise awareness and pressurise governments and relevant stakeholders to be focused on improving the situation of young Roma.

The use of data and evidence is another way to strengthen advocacy. By presenting accurate data to policy makers, young Roma can highlight their vulnerability and contextualise it to the priorities of governments.

As for the future, there is a need for more capacity-building activities of young Roma on advocacy skills and creating agents that would know how, where and what to advocate for.

Funding for Roma youth initiatives

The absorption of available funding has been categorised by the evaluators of the Roma Youth Action Plan as a problem for Roma youth organisations, further posing significant barriers for taking an active part in issues at local, national and European level. However, as discussed within this group, there are funding opportunities from which Roma youth NGOs could substantially benefit. The crucial problem, however, is access to these funds and the required capacities for absorption. Several organisations presented opportunities for funding for young Roma.

The **Erasmus+** National Hungarian Agency presented the new programme of Erasmus+ adopted in 2014, which combines all previous schemes for education, training and youth and sports. The Erasmus+ programme aims to boost skills and employability, as well as provide opportunities for over 4 million European young people to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad. The seven-year programme has a budget of EUR 14.7 billion.

Among many areas of support provided within the Erasmus+ programme, the following is of great importance to the objectives of the RYAP:

- Mobility for young people and youth workers promoting youth exchanges and European Voluntary Service
- Capacity-building projects in the field of youth promoting co-operation and mobility activities that have a positive impact on the qualitative development of youth work, youth policies and youth systems, as well as on the recognition of non-formal education
- The involvement of young people and youth organisations in youth-structured dialogue through their participation in international meetings, conferences and events that promote dialogue between young people and decision makers.²⁷

The Erasmus+ opportunities are available to youth organisations based in the EU and outside the EU as well as to public bodies at the local level, and young people aged between 13 and 30.

The **Roma Education Fund** (REF) presented the possibilities for scholarship funding for Roma pursuing higher education. As explained by the resource person, REF offers around 1,500 annual scholarships for students enrolled in universities across central, eastern and south-eastern Europe. Besides scholarships, REF also offers grants to organisations aiming to improve access to education at all levels – pre-school, primary, general and vocational secondary and tertiary, and adult education, including grants for policy development. The focus areas of the grants are as follows:

- Helping develop or reform education policies
- Raising awareness and conducting advocacy campaigns
- Piloting and testing Roma educational interventions that can be scaled up, and have the potential to influence policies
- Promoting the cross-fertilisation of experiences and cross-regional knowledge sharing
- Providing technical assistance and capacity building to civil society organisations to help access EU and other international donor funds
- Providing capacity building to NGOs and local governments implementing REF projects.²⁸

²⁷ For more information on the Erasmus+ programme, including the Programme Guide, please visit the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

²⁸ For more information on the support offered by the REF, please visit the following link: www.romaeducationfund.hu/program

Finally, the **Open Society Foundation – Roma Initiatives Office** presented the three main areas of support offered to young Roma:

- *Barvalipe* (which means “pride” in Romanes) which supports the emergence of a confident new generation of Roma advocates
- *Zoralipe* (“strength”) which supports the institutional growth of Roma organisations
- *Paruvipe* (“change”) which supports advocacy campaigns aimed at influencing public decision making and service delivery.

The Roma Initiatives Office main focus area is building capacities among an emerging generation of young Roma men and women to take a leadership role by involving them in voter-education and community-mobilisation campaigns, and providing training that gives Roma activists the skills and confidence to be a force for social change.²⁹

Having heard the presentations of the resource people, participants had various reactions and ideas on how the Council of Europe can help Roma youth organisations in accessing available funds. A participant from Greece pointed out the following:

Certain countries are definitely more in the focus of international organisations than other countries or regions. Unfortunately, this only decreases the political will of decision makers to work with young Roma, which in turn limits the possibilities for advocacy.

Considering the above and the fact that grass-roots organisations lack information on funding opportunities, the participants proposed the following:

- The RYAP should take a role in the co-ordination and development of partnerships among relevant stakeholders to improve facilitation of these opportunities.
- The RYAP should focus its work where fewer opportunities are available, such as in western European countries.
- The RYAP should become a hub of information for funding and learning opportunities for young Roma.

Learning mobility and Roma youth

Learning mobility provides opportunities for young people to experience and develop interpersonal skills and improve employment prospects through training and networking

²⁹ For more information on the work of the Open Society Foundations Roma Initiative office please visit the following link: www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/roma-initiatives-office

opportunities in Europe and beyond. Mobility contributes to active dialogue and engagement in society, and strengthens trust, mutual understanding and respect between Roma and non-Roma.

Representatives from SALTO served as resource people within this group. Established in 2000, SALTO-YOUTH is a network of eight resource centres working on European priority areas within the youth field. SALTO-YOUTH provides non-formal learning resources for youth workers and youth leaders, and organises training and contact-making activities to support organisations within the framework of the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme.

SALTO Cultural Diversity, in co-operation with National Agencies, has implemented a series of activities for youth workers and Roma organisations. SALTO Cultural Diversity aims to be a bridge between the Erasmus+ programme and Roma young people / those working with Roma young people. The organised activities have kept National Agencies and youth workers involved in the topic of Roma youth and provided for networking with European Roma youth organisations.³⁰

Participants in this working group were also introduced to the European Voluntary Service (EVS) database³¹ and the European Training Calendar³², which lists training opportunities offered by SALTO, the National Agencies for Youth and NGOs.

Another resource person, an EVS volunteer, presented his work with Phiren Amenca, where he was able to develop a programme specific to his needs.

The discussion concluded that there are many opportunities that young Roma can benefit from with regards to mobility and volunteering. The main obstacles seem to be related to the limited access to information of young Roma, as well as limited motivation among young Roma related to the inability to perceive the added values of such programmes. The participants concluded that more work needs to be done in promoting these programmes by closely working with people from disadvantaged communities.

Local youth centres developing intercultural actions

Within this working group, participants were able to share successful local projects aimed at establishing youth centres as well as the challenges they encountered in their work.

The first project emphasised the work of youth workers in the youth centres of the Bulgarian Municipality of Stara Zagora, established and funded through the EEA grants programme in

³⁰ For detailed activities implemented by SALTO on Roma youth please visit the following link: www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/topics/roma/roma-activities/archive

³¹ For details, please visit the following link: http://europa.eu/youth/evs_database_en

³² For details, please visit the following link: www.salto-youth.net/tools/european-training-calendar

Bulgaria, 'Children and Youth at Risk'. The centre's main aim was to connect young people with decision makers.

The main activities of the youth centre are as follows:

- Educational activities, debates and exchange of experiences for young people
- Intercultural dialogue
- Non-formal education
- Human rights
- Social inclusion, active citizenship
- A healthy lifestyle.

The second presentation emphasised the work of the youth centre in the Bulgarian municipality of Dobrich, also established and funded through the EEA grants programme, as above. At this youth centre, young people have the possibility of receiving comprehensive information about job applications, university applications, different scholarships and competitions, including guidance for applying. The work of the centre is focused on implementing local youth policies and creating conditions for the training and development of youth talents in the areas of science, education, culture and art.³³

The third presentation focused on the work of the Club of Roma Activists in Slovakia. This is a community centre for the entire local community, including Roma. As a relatively new centre, it has already established good collaboration with schools, the police and social field workers. The centre is currently working on creating a local youth parliament, which should function as an advisory body to the local authorities. The centre provides social counselling, support to students (via tutoring) and unemployed people (mediator for finding jobs), and organises leisure activities.

A common challenge among the three youth centres is the uncertainty and sustainability of the centres due to funding. Participants indicated that local governments are not always inclined to provide funding for such centres, limiting the opportunities for opening spaces for young people to organise themselves.

The EEA Grants have provided funding for the youth centres in Bulgaria.³⁴ Taking this into consideration, participants concluded that they should explore possibilities for available start-up

³³ For more details on the work of the youth center in Dobrich please visit the following link: <http://ycd.bg>

³⁴ For more information about the EEA/Norway Grants, including application procedures please visit the following link: <http://eeagrants.org/What-we-do/Programme-areas/Human-and-social-development/Children-and-youth-at-risk>

funding. Such funds could help civil society to help mobilise citizens to voice their concerns and actively engage in social development.

Human rights education

Human rights offer a system of values and principles for equal treatment and opportunities. They provide a set of standards against which young Roma can stand up against discrimination and fight mistreatment. To be able to do this, young Roma need to know how to recognise human rights violations, and one mechanism to achieve this is through human rights education.

This working group discussed the importance of human rights education and the rights-based approach for tackling the inclusion of Roma. The resource people from the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) emphasised that through human rights education,

- 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
- measures and actions implemented are continuously monitored to ensure Roma young people have access to their human rights.

In line with this, the ERRC offers internship opportunities each year to both Roma and non-Roma, to expand their knowledge on human rights. Additionally, the ERRC conducts numerous training workshops each year to increase and strengthen the core of Roma activists working to promote equality for Roma in Europe. ERRC training programmes also aim to capacitate Roma to engage in joint actions with the ERRC.

The workshop concluded that most of the organisations present at the Conference do not use a human rights-based approach, but rather a social needs assessment approach, and work with cultural and identity elements. Nevertheless, participants were happy to learn more about the impact and measures used in human rights education, and those which could be considered appropriate to their work in the future.

Evaluation and the impact of the Roma Youth Action Plan

At the beginning of 2015, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe commissioned tasked an independent evaluation of the implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan, with the following aims:

- Determine the overall worth and specific added value of the RYAP project within today's European context and as a response to the Roma youth needs and aspirations
- Identify the main results and achievements of the RYAP, especially in relation to its objectives and double mainstreaming approach
- Support the development of future programmes and policies for and with Roma youth
- Review the process of implementing the RYAP, and review its management
- Learn more about the challenges of Roma young people and their situation.

The evaluation looked at 31 activities implemented between 2011 and 2015 at European, national and local level, initiated, organised or funded by the Council of Europe. It provides viewpoints to assess the relevance, achievements and shortcomings, impact and added value of the RYAP, including perspectives for a future RYAP.

Given the absence of a baseline study prior to the start of the RYAP, as well as gaps in information, it is difficult to provide an accurate impact of the RYAP. Nevertheless, there are findings which serve as a good starting point to sum up the result of the first phase of implementation of the RYAP.

Below is a summary of the main points presented by the evaluators to the conference participants. This presentation helped further the participants' understanding of the added value of the RYAP within the overall Roma integration efforts, provoking them to think about improvements needed for the new RYAP, as well as the overall Roma youth agenda. Their proposals for the new action plan are summarised at the end of the chapter.

Achievements

As pointed out by the evaluators, the relevant scope of the RYAP has initiated many "first" achievements – which have geographic, contextual and strategic importance. It was through the RYAP that young Roma were able to come together and discuss the issue of multiple discrimination and plural identity affecting Roma, a topic which is quite controversial for many traditional, patriarchal Roma communities. The RYAP has also been the leading mechanism to develop training manuals such as *Mirrors* – the manual on how to combat antigypsyism, and *Barabaripen* – the study where young Roma speak about multiple discrimination, as well as the *Right to Remember* – A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide in the Second World War. These issues were largely neglected by the international community before the adoption of the RYAP.

Through the many conferences, training courses, debates, commemoration events, study sessions and national meetings, the RYAP has facilitated access to countries which have received less visibility on Roma inclusion in the past years, such as Portugal (Training for youth workers and educational practitioners on de-segregation of schools and settlements) and the Ukraine (inclusion of Roma youth-related recommendations in a national youth policy development process).³⁵

The training courses and study sessions implemented within the framework of the RYAP have served to multiply non-formal education approaches to increasing the participation and autonomy of youth at the international level. In other words, competence development of young Roma and non-Roma on human rights, human rights education, anti-discrimination, combating antigypsyism, multiple discrimination, project management, organisational development, and engagement with policy have all provided for increased capacities of Roma youth (organisations) in addressing their challenges at local and national level.

The RYAP has also pioneered the promotion of double mainstreaming – promoting the inclusion of youth-related matters in policies and programmes dealing with Roma issues, and promoting the inclusion of Roma youth and related issues in youth policies and programmes. There are also positive experiences of inter-sectoral co-operation between the Youth Department and other departments and programmes of the Council of Europe concerned with Roma youth issues (the ROMED and ROMACT Programmes, the Secretary General Special Representative on Roma Issues team, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity unit, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities). There is greater awareness for Roma youth issues within the Council of Europe supporting an integrated approach to all Roma and youth-related initiatives. This includes the appointment of a CAHROM (Ad-hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Inclusion) Special Rapporteur on Youth, the organisation of a Summer University by the European Steering Committee on Youth, a CAHROM Thematic Study Visit on Roma Youth, as well as the development of a youth dimension in the ROMED programme.

The adoption of the Resolution Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels in 2014 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is a significant step further pointing to the increased visibility of Roma youth issues. As stated in the resolution, the Congress decided to examine what strategies and policies local and regional authorities could implement to address the difficulties encountered by Roma youth, as explicitly mentioned in the RYAP.³⁶

Finally, the creation and function of the Informal Contact Group (ICG) on the implementation of the RYAP is seen as a positive development. It expanded the possibility for creating a platform

³⁵ For details, please check the Roma Youth Action Plan dedicated website at: <http://enter.coe.int/roma/Roma-Youth-Action-Plan/Overview-of-activities>

³⁶ Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, *Resolution 366 Empowering Roma Youth Through Participation: Effective Policy Design at Local and Regional Levels*, (Strasbourg: CoE, 2014), available at <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2177949&Site=Congress>

for international organisations, partners of the RYAP, to gather, co-ordinate and discuss the implementation of activities for young Roma, including follow-up activities and upcoming events. This, in turn, contributed to trust and confidence building among Roma youth and their allies, notably among the Roma youth networks themselves, as well as between institutions and organisations. It also went in line with promoting double mainstreaming within and beyond the Council of Europe.

Shortcomings

As with any other initiatives, the RYAP has faced many challenges and shortcomings. Given the absence of sustainable funding, the RYAP was destined to lack both human and financial resources, guaranteeing its smooth implementation. The extremely limited funding for activities within the RYAP came from voluntary contributions from national governments, member states of the Council of Europe. Unfortunately, only four governments provided such contributions, pointing to the fact that commitments to work with young Roma are high at the European level, though not so at the national or local level.

The implementation of activities at the European level did not necessarily reach the national and local level or the level of reach was not thoroughly identified. This is partially due to the fact that the Council of Europe has no mandate to engage with local and national authorities, limiting its scope of intervention. Additionally, there is no functioning mechanism to ensure a proper follow-up of activities to be undertaken by participants in conferences, study sessions, training courses and other events. Even if such activities were conducted, it is difficult to measure their impact and success. In other words, it is difficult to track multiplication effects, changes in the situation of young Roma as a result of activities, as well as improvements in participation and representation of young Roma in RYAP and other Council of Europe activities. There is also the lack of a baseline study on the situation of Roma youth in relation to the core objectives of the RYAP from which to evaluate and monitor progress. Finally, there are not enough dedicated staff for such tasks. These issues, unfortunately, undermine the sustainability of activities, the institutionalisation of good practices, as well as the work required for securing the political will needed among decision makers.

As noted by the evaluators, the Roma youth organisations, the main partners of the RYAP, faced weak organisational capacities in conducting activities and absorbing available funding, hindering transversal functions related to the visibility and co-ordination of the RYAP. Additionally, this was accompanied by differing ideas among all ICG partners on the expectations, added values, and the roles and responsibilities of the RYAP, all resulting from a limited effective co-ordination of efforts.

With regards to the overall political context of Roma inclusion, evaluators' findings suggest that it was difficult to secure RYAP results into the large Roma rights frameworks, given the limited political will from inside and outside the Council of Europe. There is poor representation of Roma youth in decision making and no genuine participation of young Roma in the development

of key policy documents (with the exception of one Roma representative within the Advisory Council on Youth in the Council of Europe). It seems that there is some challenge addressing the *transmission of leaderships* – from the older to the younger generation of leaders, leaving Roma youth representatives out of discussions affecting Roma.

In short, the RYAP set coined long-term aims but with short-term interventions. As one participant from Serbia pointed out:

I believe that many young Roma had high expectations concerning the objectives and goals that the RYAP should deliver. Unfortunately, as the evaluation showed, we can't expect, from such an action plan, to be able to solve all the problems and challenges of young Roma. There have been many barriers hindering a bigger impact of the RYAP, but the responsibilities for its achievements and failures should not fall only under the Council of Europe framework, but have to be appropriately shared with the Roma Youth networks, the international stakeholders as well as the young Roma themselves.

The way ahead

The evaluation brought with itself many comments and dilemmas for the future. It triggered different perceptions amongst participants:

The evaluation highlighted the importance of having a unified Roma Youth movement across organisations and countries.

Participant from the UK

The entire evaluation shows lack of capacities among Roma youth organisations and others to deal with the RYAP. There is also no baseline data and no indicators allowing us to conduct a proper impact evaluation.

Participant from The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

It also provided space for reconsidering the direction of the new Roma Youth Action Plan. Participants were asked to work in small groups and provide proposals for a future RYAP. The following proposals refer to the methodology and framework of a new RYAP:

- The new RYAP must have a clearly-defined budget for its activities.
- Given the two-year time frame of prioritisation for Roma Youth, the activities should be short-term interventions with long-term objectives; in other words, realistic and feasible.
- The new plan must define objectives and indicators, including a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation.
- The new plan should promote usage of EU Funds for its activities: this would require strong and synchronised co-operation between youth NGOs and municipalities and national authorities.
- The roles and responsibilities of the youth NGOs within the new RYAP must be clearly clarified.
- The new RYAP should clearly define a mechanism on how to promote the European Youth Foundation and its possibilities for funding.
- The Council of Europe should consider appropriate mechanism on linking the new RYAP with the general Action Plan on Roma of the Council of Europe.
- The Council of Europe should ensure greater co-operation and partnership with the European Commission for the implementation of the new RYAP.
- The Council of Europe should further define its expectations from the different international partners in terms of co-ordination and systematic work together, namely, how to engage in an action plan together.
- The Council of Europe should establish working groups for each specific priority to guide and monitor the developments within each area.
- Given the absence of a link with the local level, any new intervention within the RYAP, should consider the current situation of participation of young people in the target country / region.
- The new RYAP should be based on the principles of double mainstreaming, ensuring proper involvement of various stakeholders.
- The new RYAP should be translated into national languages to expand the outreach and visibility.
- The Roma Youth networks and the Council of Europe should encourage national authorities to take responsibility and a greater stance within the new RYAP.
- The Roma Youth networks should establish stronger information sharing mechanisms for promoting the new RYAP among its members at local level.

International organisations' and institutions' input for the future Roma youth agenda

The third day of the Conference brought together a number of international organisations and institutions who shared their plans with regards to working on Roma youth issues, as well as their opinions and views on the future Roma youth agenda. The objective was to introduce participants to the diverse work of international organisations and institutions dealing with Roma issues, and discover possibilities for building partnerships, targeting advocacy strategies, and creating concrete proposals in line with their future work. This chapter summarises the work to be undertaken by the Council of Europe, the United Nations Population Fund, the OSF, the European Youth Forum, the OSCE/ODIHR and the European Commission.

The **Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) of the Council of Europe for Roma issues**, Mr. Ulrich Bunjes, reminded the participants of the importance of the Strasbourg Declaration for the Council of Europe work on Roma inclusion, which, although left out the specific challenges affecting young Roma, did not prevent the Council of Europe from working on empowering them to become multipliers of knowledge and best practices. The SRSG outlined the Roma Action Plan for the period of 2016-2020, which will guide his unit in the upcoming period. The Roma Action Plan is based on three priority areas, namely:

- ensuring a more efficient approach to tackling anti-Roma sentiments
- demonstrating innovative models for the inclusion of the most vulnerable among Roma (Roma women, children and youth)
- promoting advanced inclusion at the local level.

Within the first priority, ensuring a more efficient approach to tackling anti-Roma sentiments, the SRSG highlighted the setting up a new institution in partnership with the OSF – the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, which will provide a platform at the European level for spreading greater understanding of Roma culture and challenging stereotypes. Also within this priority, the unit will work on advocating for mainstreaming Roma history in general education, including the Roma genocide.

Within the second priority, inclusion of the most vulnerable among Roma, the SRSG stated that the unit will establish a new programme for Roma women for capacity building on better access to justice. With regards to young Roma, the unit will work on providing training to the emerging generations of young Roma to strengthen their participation in society and to strengthen the democratic leadership of youth organisations.

Finally, within the third priority, local level engagement, the SRSG emphasised the work of the Alliance of cities and regions for Roma Inclusion, set up by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which currently includes around 50 cities and regions committed to working on Roma issues. He further elaborated on the programmes of ROMED and ROMACT. The SRSG

highlighted that the Council of Europe has undertaken to award local level authorities a sign of recognition of achievements on Roma inclusion.

The SRSG stressed that the new RYAP will be integrated into the second component of the general Roma Action Plan, in the form of capacity building and support to youth organisations. He also underlined that his unit will provide support to the youth sector for the implementation of the RYAP, ensuring the process of double mainstreaming.

The Special Representative concluded his presentation by introducing the new consultation dialogue mechanism with Roma NGOs, which will be organised twice a year to look at specific challenges and problems that Roma face within Council of Europe member states. The specific issues to be discussed within this process, for the time being, are hate speech, forced evictions, relationships between Roma and the police, as well as segregation in education. The Roma youth network FERYP is part of this dialogue mechanism.

Numerous questions from the audience were directed to the SRSG, tackling mostly the issue of genuine participation of young Roma beyond the youth sector of the Council of Europe. These included: how to ensure that the importance of the RYAP will not get lost in the overall Action Plan on Roma of the Council of Europe; how to guarantee the ownership and involvement of young Roma in decision-making issues related to the general Action Plan on Roma; how the consultation mechanism with civil society on Roma issues will be further developed to ensure a greater participation of young Roma.

The SRSG responded that the place of the new RYAP is guaranteed within the general Action Plan on Roma. However, this guarantee does not imply financial support, which will require fundraising to be done by the sector concerned, the youth department, although the SRSG's unit is ready to assist where needed. On the question of consultations with civil society on Roma issues, the SRSG reminded the audience that Action Plan on Roma is work in progress and that civil society has been and will continue to be involved in a dialogue related to the priorities of the Action Plan. The SRSG underlined that Roma issues in the Council of Europe are one of the few areas where extensive dialogue with civil society is conducted, although stressing that within inter-governmental organisations, the last word remains with governments.

The SRSG emphasised the importance of collaboration and co-ordination with other international organisations for ensuring a coherent approach to Roma inclusion. He mentioned the recent practice of organising a side event during the CAHROM meeting, gathering international partners to discuss opportunities for co-operation and common actions, a space where double mainstreaming for Roma youth could be further developed.

Finally, with regards to the involvement of Roma youth organisations in the new initiative – the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture – the SRSG mentioned that the institute will function as a foundation whereby interested organisations can become members and take an active part in its activities.

While concluding this session, the facilitator recalled the fact that young Roma constitute more than half of the total Roma population in Europe. With this in mind, she asked the SRSB and the participants to consider drafting proposals asking that any budget for Roma inclusion projects and programmes be proportionately devoted to young Roma as well, arguing in favour of increasing the new RYAP budget.

The session continued with interventions from other international organisations and institutions.

The **United Nations Population Fund**³⁷ (UNFPA) representative, Ms. Doina Bologna, introduced the participants to the mission and work of UNFPA. She explained that UNFPA advocates for the rights of young people, including the right to accurate information and services related to sexuality and reproductive health. Empowered with knowledge and skills to protect themselves and make informed decisions, young people can realise their full potential and contribute to economic and social transformation. UNFPA expands the possibilities for women and young people to lead healthy and productive lives. Ms. Bologna reaffirmed that youth policies should be carried out in a participatory way, whereby the needs are appropriately addressed and taken into consideration by decision makers.

The **Open Society Foundations** representative, Ms. Edlira Majko, underlined that OSF will continue to provide support for young Roma through its three strategic priorities: *Barvalipe*, *Zoralipe* and *Paruvipe*. In particular, it will support:

- the emergence of a confident new generation of Roma advocates
- the institutional growth of Roma organisations
- advocacy campaigns aimed at influencing public decision making and service delivery.

She also reminded participants of the opportunities offered through the Roma Access programme of the Central European University, where young Roma could enrol to improve their academic skills necessary for conducting post-graduate studies.

The **OSCE/ODIHR representative**, Ms. Tatjana Peric, reaffirmed that the active participation of Roma and Sinti civil society is a priority in the organisation's capacity-building mandate under the Action Plan for Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, adopted in 2003. In line with the Ministerial Council Decision No. 4/13 on the enhancing OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area, With a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children, of December 2013, ODIHR hosted a Roma and Sinti Youth Conference in Belgrade in December 2014. The conference provided a platform for Roma and Sinti youth to speak about the issues that concern them in three thematic areas: the empowerment and social inclusion of Roma and Sinti communities through youth activism; the participation of Roma and Sinti youth in politics

³⁷ For more information on the work of the UNFPA on youth leadership and participation please visit: www.unfpa.org/youth-participation-leadership

and democratic processes; and Roma and Sinti youth and security. Ms. Peric also introduced participants to the conference report, ‘Activism, Participation and Security among Roma and Sinti Youth’.³⁸

In 2016, ODIHR plans to fundraise for an extra-budgetary project proposal to continue its Roma and Sinti Youth Initiative, via a grant-making scheme for Roma and Sinti youth organisations, a traineeship scheme for young Roma and Sinti at ODIHR, and the participation of Roma and Sinti youth in OSCE’s human dimension events.

The **European Youth Forum** (YFJ) representative, Ms. Lora Lyubenova, introduced the work of the YFJ. She stressed that the Youth Forum works to empower young people to participate actively in society by representing and advocating their needs and interest. It brings together tens of millions of young people from all over Europe. On many occasions, YFJ has stressed the need for membership of a Roma youth network in its structure and mentioned that it is working currently with ternYpe, the International Roma Youth Network, on putting this into practice. This will enable young Roma to become part of the advocacy work of the YFJ, which strives to become an agenda-setter on youth affairs, empower member organisations to maximise the impact of their expertise, and enforce a human rights-based approach in all that it does.

The **European Commission DG Justice and Consumers, Non-Discrimination and Roma Unit** representative, Mr. Michel Verschraegen, introduced the current priorities of his unit, which, besides fighting discrimination and encouraging trans-national co-operation, also includes work with Roma women, children and youth. He underlined that the National Roma Contact Points affirmed that they would like to see more youth organisations being involved in the process of implementing the National Roma Integration Strategies. The Commission can intervene with its member states in three manners:

- *Legal* – launching infringement procedures against member states when there are breaches of EU Law
- *Policy* – through the EU Framework and the annual EU Platform meetings, gathering governments, international organisations and civil society representatives to stimulate co-operation and exchange of experiences
- *Financial* – member states are obliged to follow the country-specific recommendations on Roma inclusion before applying for funds.

He continued to reflect on the current developments within the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and their relevance for youth organisations. Following the adoption of the new conditionality on efficient use of EU Funds, EU member states must follow the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) adopted by the Council related to Roma inclusion to identify funding priorities. The conditionality requires, among others, that member states prove they have efficiently co-operated with civil society.

³⁸ Available at: www.osce.org/odihr/187861

Finally, the representative of the **Youth Department of the Council of Europe**, Mr. Rui Gomes, elaborated on the priorities of the youth department for the upcoming years and the place of the new RYAP in those priorities:

- Participation in policy making and development of innovative forms of participation
- Access to rights and helping young people on their way to autonomy; preparation for working life; integration
- Social cohesion, peace building and intercultural dialogue.

The Youth Department will continue to work on antigypsyism, supporting youth movements, capacity-building training courses and funding projects at the national level, such as the emergence and visibility of Roma youth in countries where they are mostly invisible.

Beyond the youth department of the Council of Europe, the Action Plan on Roma is the primary target for ensuring complementarity. The Youth Department has already placed ideas within the SRSG's unit on local youth participation as well as set up a Roma Youth Academy (where youth leaders and organisations would be trained, contributing to a stronger Roma youth movement). Additionally, continuous work with CAHROM and with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will be ensured. Finally, with regards to the National Action Plans of the Council of Europe member states, the Youth Department has already proposed activities with young Roma in the action plans of Albania, the Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In other words, the double mainstreaming is implemented in any rising opportunity.

Beyond the Council of Europe, the horizon is very much open to any ideas that would come from participants. This refers to all the issues that could be carried out in co-operation between the Council of Europe and all the stakeholders present at this Conference. This layer relies heavily on the participants' proposals on what should be done, with whom and how.

Mr. Gomes emphasised the meaning of the RYAP – a platform for action and co-operation within which various actors and stakeholders should place their activities, projects and programmes and where each partner, within its mandate, provides available resources and commits to working on Roma youth inclusion. He reminded the participants that within any new plan, the youth department's mandate would not be able to go beyond providing space, support and opportunities for capacity building, training, learning and sharing opportunities for youngsters.

He recalled that the priorities of the Youth Department are jointly decided in a co-management system by government representatives and representatives of youth organisations and networks. Currently, Roma youth issues have been secured for the next two years as priority issues, although more advocacy efforts are needed from Roma youth organisations to ensure that the prioritisation goes beyond 2017.

Finally, Mr. Gomes highlighted a very important feature – the need to mainstream ourselves – referring to the many Council of Europe activities related to issues which do not necessarily target Roma, although young Roma could substantially benefit from them. These include the No Hate Speech Movement, where much more involvement and ownership of young Roma is expected, as well as the recently adopted recommendations of access of young people to social rights, targeting all young people from disadvantaged communities³⁹.

Conclusions

Having elaborated on the international partners and stakeholders presentations, it is of extreme importance to reflect on the open questions related to future co-operation. With regards to the ownership of the RYAP, the question still remains on how to create an *inclusive ownership and shared leadership* that would give mandate to other partners and organisations to promote the values of the RYAP and increase its visibility. Taking into consideration the different geographical and strategic scope of the partners, shared leadership should imply creating common goals that match the needs of all beneficiaries.

The presence of various international organisations and institutions offered the possibility for trust building and strengthening the dialogue among stakeholders. It furthered the idea of double mainstreaming, by implying that resources should be brought together for a common Roma youth agenda, based on principles of empowerment, support, education, training and the participation of youngsters, using a human rights approach.

There are still puzzles linked to how double mainstreaming will be ensured within the Council of Europe and beyond the Council of Europe. Ignoring this question runs the risk of having an isolation problem, whereby Roma youth issues will be promoted exclusively by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. If rightfully implemented, double mainstreaming can serve as an answer to many questions raised throughout the Conference, such as complementarity of efforts, funding, monitoring and evaluation.

Any future Roma youth agenda should aim towards creating safe spaces for young Roma to gather, learn, share and experience the values of fundamental rights and freedoms. In line with this, Roma youth networks would have to clearly define how their visions can be incorporated into such a diverse agenda, while also following the working priorities of the international organisations to ensure such support.

Dealing with a European Roma youth agenda involves constant political will from local and national governments. Despite having excellent standards set in place, in the case of absence of political will, the chances are low that major improvements could be expected. Here the role of

³⁹ Resolution CM/Res(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights (Strasbourg: Committee of Ministers, 2015), available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2282497&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383>

international organisations is of extreme importance in promoting an inclusive political climate in which Roma youth would stay high on the list of priorities of the governments.

Lastly, but not least, Roma youth participation in decision making is still largely missing. The matters discussed in this report require an increased participation of young and empowered Roma. Stakeholders must value the fact that the majority of the entire Roma population constitutes young Roma. Hence, the final beneficiaries of the policies and programmes implemented are in fact young Roma. Without having appropriate consultation mechanisms in place to involve young Roma people in the design of such policies and programmes, we cannot expect to make a significant impact. As noted by one conference participant:

We still miss a concrete co-operation mechanism that would take more seriously into consideration the issues of double mainstreaming. This also affects the Council of Europe's priorities on Roma, which should have been discussed with young people as well. In fact, although double mainstreaming is promoted, at the end of the day, Roma youth is engaged only in consultations related to youth issues, and neglected in consultations related to Roma issues. Youth participation should be a principle promoted by all Council of Europe's structures, not only by the Youth Department.

Participant from Greece

Proposals for a future Roma Youth Action Plan and the Roma youth agenda

The following proposals are the result of the discussions of the Roma youth representatives covering a wide range of activities to be undertaken by the new phase of the Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP) in the next four years. The proposals are a response to the perceived challenges and needs of young Roma throughout Europe, and are based on the principles of inclusive and non-discriminatory societies. They aim to provide young Roma with the same equal opportunities as their non-Roma peers, and to become active citizens in their communities. Additionally, as many participants have recalled during the Conference, they represent the legitimate necessities for which democratic countries stand, all within the framework of international human rights standards as well as the ongoing commitments of the Council of Europe's member states to achieve full inclusion of the Roma.

Many proposals for the future Roma youth agenda fall into the same priorities already covered in the 2011-2015. This aspect reaffirms the narrative that it would be too naïve to expect so many long-term changes in such a short time. It also confirms the deeply marginalised status of young Roma vis-à-vis the amount of effort and co-ordination needed to lift the barriers of access to social rights. Hence, these proposals should be understood as re-confirmation of commitments among stakeholders and beneficiaries, all in line with the largely neglected fact that many Roma should enjoy the right to be young.

The proposals are based on concerns that were discussed thoroughly during the Conference; these include:

- *discrimination* (including multiple discrimination) in various fields of life
- *limited capacities* among youngsters for community organising, leadership, fundraising, and genuine political participation
- a growing tendency of antigypsyism, the main route for discrimination against young Roma, which hinders their access to quality education, lucrative employment, affordable housing as well as access to quality health care services
- the political discourse among a growing number of decision makers, which tends to fall on the side of hate speech, increasing hate crimes against young Roma
- poor *transferability* of knowledge, skills, resources and information from the international to the local level: some participants argued that the motivation of young Roma to work for their communities is extremely low; others expressed concerns over the limited political will of government officials as well as available funds at local and national level to work with and for young Roma
- the need for co-ordination and information sharing: the increased attention that Roma youth as a specific target group has received among international stakeholders in recent years requires a much stronger co-ordination and information-sharing mechanism, by complementing each other's efforts and avoiding any duplication of activities.

Given the short-term timeframe foreseen for the RYAP (four years), the participants' proposals should build on the existing achievements, updated in accordance with the lessons learnt from the implementation of the first phase, explicitly outlined in the evaluation report.

In a nutshell, participants were asked to elaborate proposals based on their direct experience of working with Roma young people, reassess the priority areas of interventions needed, and discuss the changes needed at local and national level to meet the needs of Roma young people, as well as the type of support and interventions needed from the European level. While discussing that, participants had to reflect on their visions of how they see themselves and their organisations being engaged in the implementation of the future RYAP.

Priority Areas

Given the diverse background of participants, including their experiences and expectations, the working groups came up with various priority areas for a future Roma youth agenda. Participants had also different opinions about which area should deserve more attention:

Antigypsyism should be the number one priority included in the RYAP. This is a cross-cutting issue connecting many other relevant priorities, including social exclusion of young Roma, segregated education and challenging stereotypes. We should aim for stronger dialogue and co-operation between Roma and non-Roma youth organisations, finding methods of how to effectively to combat antigypsyism. This encompasses in itself a lot of work on raising awareness among the mainstream population about challenges that young Roma face, as well as among the institutions and civil servants.

Participant from Serbia

We have an increased number of highly educated young Roma, who face challenges in integrating in the labour market. This requires that we go beyond employability of Roma in NGOs on small projects, but think about long-term, sustainable solutions for employment in the other sectors as well. Business-incubator initiatives are needed to facilitate the transition of young Roma from education to employment.

Participant from "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

The priority areas identified within all the five working groups were:

- Combating antigypsyism and encouraging intercultural dialogue (including raising awareness among non-Roma, enhancing co-operation between Roma and non-Roma, promoting positive images of Roma in the media)
- Promoting employability and entrepreneurship among young Roma
- Strengthening Roma youth identity (strengthening confidence, pride and self-esteem)
- Addressing multiple discrimination
- Reinforcing Roma youth participation, especially through youth leadership and advocacy training programmes
- Ensuring gender equality
- Building a stronger Roma youth movement
- Providing education for political participation and human rights education
- Supporting access to social rights (employment, housing, health and education, including sexual and reproductive health education).

Local and National Interventions

Participants had to identify the interventions needed at local and national levels to meet the needs of the young Roma. Based on the numerous proposals collected, the rapporteur divided these into three categories for easy reading:

- Interventions for human rights education, for combating antigypsyism and for addressing multiple discrimination
- Interventions for greater activism and participation of young Roma, boosting leadership skills as well as creating a stronger Roma youth movement
- Interventions for access to social rights and services.

In terms of human rights education, combating antigypsyism and addressing multiple discrimination, the following interventions are needed:

- Roma youth should be empowered through human rights education to take legal action in cases of human rights abuses and discrimination
- More awareness-raising programmes should be implemented on the importance of human rights among young Roma
- Local and national authorities should support programmes for co-operation among Roma and non-Roma NGOs through explicit but not exclusive targeted funds
- Intercultural dialogue among Roma and non-Roma should be strengthened, especially at the local level
- Continuous monitoring of the media is needed to fight misrepresentation of Roma

- Governments and civil society should work on raising awareness about diversity among Roma communities and the challenges faced, especially those related to Roma women and Roma LGBT
- Safe spaces for Roma affected by multiple discrimination should be created
- Targeted education programmes for teachers about Roma culture and history should be promoted
- Increased networking among Roma and non-Roma youth organisations dealing with human rights and diversity.

Interventions needed for greater activism and participation of young Roma, boosting leadership skills as well as creating a stronger Roma youth movement, included the following:

- A budget line for Roma youth initiatives at local and regional level should be guaranteed, to provide support for starting Roma youth local initiatives and get the youngsters motivated and active at the local level.
- Roma Youth NGOs must start mainstreaming themselves in the general youth discourse; they must be able to analyse strategically youth and Roma matters simultaneously.
- National governments should endorse National Roma Youth Strategies, further stipulating prioritisation of Roma youth issues and accountability among decision makers.
- Roma youth should have opportunities to be involved in local and national political processes, through the drafting of local and national action plans on Roma, and the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies.
- Local and national authorities should support establishing community centres to mediate relationships between Roma communities and the municipalities.
- The objectives and activities of the new RYAP must be adapted to the local needs of young Roma.
- There is a need to design appropriate methods for transferring practices and knowledge from the European to the local level.
- Greater co-operation and networking between national and local youth councils and Roma youth organisations is needed.
- More capacity-building training courses on advocacy and lobbying should be organised.

Interventions related to access to social rights and services:

- Governments should support programmes providing access to quality education and affordable housing.
- Entrepreneurship skills among young Roma must be strengthened.

- Roma Business Incubator should be piloted.
- Governments should provide subsidies for employing young Roma.
- Governments and NGOs should promote education for a healthy lifestyle.
- Governments should set up programmes for sexual and reproductive health education.
- Governments and NGOs should focus on the prevention of drug abuse and work with abusers, as well as develop special Roma youth approaches for addressing human trafficking and prostitution.

European Level Support

Regarding what participants expect from the European or international levels, they mentioned:

- Support spaces and mechanisms for Roma youth issues to be advocated at the international level.
- Support exchange of good practices on Roma youth issues.
- Ensure that European youth programmes are accessible to Roma youth projects (European Youth Foundation, Erasmus+).
- Encourage national authorities to support the mainstreaming of Roma youth issues in the National Roma Integration Strategies.
- Organise social media campaigns.
- Organise and orientate the funding and support to the national level more strategically, responding to the needs of individual countries.
- Consult and co-ordinate with Roma youth organisations on any Roma youth-related process or programme, and ensure appropriate follow-up.
- Provide institutional and financial support to current and emerging Roma youth networks at national and European level.
- Promote access to quality education, and publicly condemn segregation in education.
- Support national capacity-building training courses for Roma youth leaders on issues such as leadership and management of NGOs.
- Organise training courses for efficient political participation and policy design.
- Deliver training courses on Roma culture, language and history to teachers and students.
- Provide training courses to Roma youth NGOs on absorption and usage of available funds for Roma inclusion programmes and initiatives.
- Run capacity-building training courses for advocacy skills.
- Ensure follow-up of training courses, study sessions and seminars and appropriate selection of participations with the right knowledge and motivation to transfer their skills at the local level.
- Promote best practices of stimulating and engaging young Roma to work for their communities.
- Raise awareness about the importance of human rights among young Roma.

Input about the implementation of the Roma youth action plan

International organisations and partners of the RYAP have their adopted strategies which guide them through their work. Many have explicitly announced that Roma youth will stay on their priority agendas. Double mainstreaming is required to ensure that Roma youth issues do not get isolated into the youth sector of the Council of Europe only, and that each stakeholder takes a specific role in the new phase of the RYAP.

In order for a future Roma youth agenda (including a Roma Youth Action Plan) to have credibility and chances for success, the following aspects should be ensured:

- a budget, clear indicators, visibility, a monitoring mechanism and a promotion strategy
- a co-ordination team with an allocated budget to follow the implementation of the RYAP and communication with international partners
- an online database portal for sharing information and upcoming calls for proposals, projects, and training courses
- a strong co-ordination mechanism to avoid duplication of efforts
- target the European Commission to become a partner of the RYAP, and to enable a mainstreaming approach for the efficient implementation of the new RYAP
- promote double mainstreaming within and beyond the Council of Europe's structures, notably by reinforcing co-operation with CAHROM
- include Roma youth in the monitoring of the Roma Action Plan of the Council of Europe
- provide support to Roma youth networks to create National Contact Points for the implementation of the new RYAP
- promote the translations and usage of *the manuals produced by the RYAP (Right to Remember, Barabariopen, Mirrors)* in formal and non-formal education (including to schools, institutions and activists).

Summary of the Informal Contact Group Meeting

The Youth Department of the Council of Europe conveyed a meeting of the Informal Contact Group during the third day of the Roma Youth Conference to discuss the possibilities for future co-operation and co-ordination, and to agree on the next steps necessary to be undertaken after the Conference among the partners and institutions involved in the RYAP.

The meeting was attended by the three Roma youth networks – ternYpe, Phiren Amenca and FERYP –, the European Youth Forum, the Salto Cultural Diversity and Salto Resource Centre, the OSCE/ODIHR, the European Roma Rights Centre, the Roma Education Fund, the Open Society Foundations Roma Initiatives Office, the Support team of the SRSG for Roma issues, the Advisory Council on Youth, and the European Steering Committee on Youth representative from Finland.

Representatives briefly presented their focus on Roma youth and shared issues of concern, proposals for co-operation and development, and some specific actions for future follow-up.

The main issues of concern were related to the following areas:

- There is lack of information about the status and involvement of young Roma at the local level.
- The visibility of the RYAP has to be improved, as many local youth organisations are not aware or fully informed about it.
- The opportunities for funding at national level are very often not fully utilised by Roma youth organisations.
- The issue of planning and budgeting for the RYAP has not yet been clarified. The question is still open for how many years the plan will be applicable.
- There does not seem to be a very clear understanding relating to the expectations, role, participation and co-operation among ICG members, whose profile has been changing over the past years of working with the RYAP
- An open question remains on how the ICG members can use the feedback and information from the local level
- It seems that the issue of Roma youth is not equally and adequately represented within the Council of Europe bodies. Although this area has seen major improvements in the past, and in particular within the implementation of the RYAP, there are still parts requiring improvement.
- The co-ordination among stakeholders for activities and support at national and local level must be strengthened.

The following proposals relate to the follow-up, co-operation and development of a Roma youth agenda:

- Mapping the status of Roma youth issues at national and local level will improve the planning and budgeting development of the RYAP and wider.
- Creating reliable indicators to measure the impact of any future Roma youth initiative will provide for reasonable input to adapt such initiatives to the needs of young Roma and strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of such an initiative.
- The Roma Youth Networks have strongly argued for the need to work on advocacy on policy making related to Roma youth issues.
- International organisations and institutions should continue promoting and advocating for local participation of young Roma, including active citizenship and mobility.
- The RYAP website could be further developed as a platform for sharing and learning about local Roma youth initiatives and practices.

- The advocacy efforts of the RYAP have to be strengthened within the Council of Europe entities and structures and beyond through co-operation with the European Commission.
- A stronger and more specific involvement by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, CAHROM, and the Council of Europe monitoring bodies, through using their tools and resources, is needed to improve the impact of the new RYAP.
- The possibility for joint co-operation around capacity-building activities with the Youth Department and SALTO was mentioned. SALTO could also support the better use of increasing funding opportunities by the European Commission youth programmes, the Erasmus + in specific in the future.

In line with the future Roma Youth Action Plan, and based on the proposals and concerns raised during the meeting, the future of work of the Informal Contact Group can be concentrated around the topics of *Capacity building, Co-ordination, Advocacy for policy making and mainstreaming of the Roma youth issues* (within the Council of Europe and beyond).

ICG Members were also reminded that regular consultations and communication are needed to ensure that there is no duplication of efforts and activities, as well as the need to build on existing initiatives where lessons learnt could further be developed, in other words, how previous work of some organisations could fit into the new work being undertaken.

The Youth Department together with the Roma youth networks will consolidate the proposals from the Roma Youth Conference into an integral document portraying the future of the RYAP that will be discussed with the Informal Contact Group at the next meeting, tentatively scheduled for spring 2016.

ANNEX 1: Evaluation of the Roma Youth Conference

The evaluation of the Conference was carried out in two ways: by filling in an anonymous online questionnaire which was distributed after the end of the conference programme to all participants, and in an open plenary session, where participants were invited to express their opinion about various aspects of the Conference.

Less than half of the participants submitted their answers to the online questionnaire by providing feedback on six open questions related to the Conference. The general impression of the respondents was very positive as the Conference has inspired and motivated many among the participants. The Conference was a very good place for extending participants' network of contacts and building new partnerships with organisations and institutions. The preparatory team of the Conference, together with the secretariat of the Youth Department, was recognised for its commitment to preparing and carrying out an appealing programme of activities.

The organisation of workshops and learning spaces on various topics of relevance to young Roma people provided many with a unique opportunity to learn and exchange information on current and innovative initiatives. It was noted by the majority of respondents that they had had a very rare opportunity to meet and learn about the current EU programmes and projects on Roma and Roma youth issues. The session dedicated to the evaluation of the Roma Youth Action Plan provided many with very important information about the overall action plan but also inspired ideas for the up-coming period.

Although the majority of participants considered the programme of the Conference to be well structured, a few others thought that there were many questions related to how the Roma Youth Action Plan would actually be carried out. Given the current changes within the Council of Europe, it was noted by a few participants that they could not understand clearly what the future focuses of the Council of Europe on Roma youth issues would be.

Regarding the proposals made towards the Roma Youth Action Plan, many participants expressed their satisfaction from the whole participatory process and the opportunity to shape the next Roma Youth Action Plan of the Council of Europe. They also believe that the Youth Department will continue with its efforts to place Roma youth issues more on the agenda of Roma issues of the Council of Europe.

The Declaration of the Roma Youth Conference for the majority of participants is a very well structured document with highly relevant information and points made, although this does not necessarily mean that the situation will improve based on the proposals developed. It is suggested that all stakeholders from various levels of interventions continue working to deliver the change and improvements of the status of young Roma.

ANNEX 2: Guidelines for the implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2020)

The Guidelines are developed based on the proposals made by participants during the second Roma youth conference, the experience from the first cycle of implementation (2012-2015), and proposals from the RYAP evaluation, as well as from partners and organisations of the Informal Contact Group.

The following Guidelines were adopted by the Joint Council on Youth⁴⁰ during its 34th meeting in March 2016 in Budapest, and also incorporate the proposals made for the Thematic Action Plan for Inclusion of Roma and Travellers by the Committee of Ministers in March 2016. The Action Plan includes activities of the Youth Department and of other sectors of the Council of Europe, and may include activities proposed by other partners.

⁴⁰ More about the co-management system of the Youth Department, including the Joint Council on Youth: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe_youth/co_management_en.asp and Priorities of the Council of Europe's Youth Sector 2016-2017: www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Coe_youth/Youth_sector_priorities_2016-2017_en.pdf

Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2020) Guidelines for implementation

Strasbourg, 11 March 2016 CMJ(2016)4

JOINT COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CMJ) 34th meeting

Budapest, 21-23 March 2016, European Youth Centre

Item 8.3 on the agenda for information

Secretariat memorandum prepared by the Youth Department
Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation 2 CMJ(2016)4

Background information

The Roma Youth Action Plan (hereinafter RYAP) was developed on the basis of the results of the first Roma Youth Conference, organised in 2011 by the Youth Department and the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues, and on the proposals drawn by participants who represented young Roma people and youth organisations.

The RYAP is a response of the Council of Europe to the challenges faced by Roma young people in Europe, particularly their lack of participation in policy and decision-making processes and structures at European level, and the realities of discrimination, particularly antigypsyism, with which they are confronted.

The RYAP has been prepared and implemented in the spirit of the Council of Europe Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, which it complements by associating Roma youth and taking into account the challenges faced by young Roma as well as their priorities. The action plan has included activities of the Youth Department and of the other sectors of the Council of Europe, as well as activities proposed by other partners, both governmental and non-governmental.

The Youth Department co-ordinates the implementation of the RYAP in accordance with the principles of youth participation and agency of young people in youth policy.

The second Roma youth conference

The Council of Europe organised a second Roma youth conference from 19 to 22 October 2015 at the European Youth Centre Budapest where more than 100 participants contributed to draw lessons from the first four years of the RYAP and provided input to the future Roma youth agenda at local, national and European level. The conclusions of the conference are the basis for the development of guidelines for the RYAP in 2016-2020.

The evaluation of the Roma Youth Action Plan

An external evaluation of the RYAP was carried out in 2015 in order to assess the achievements and challenges of the four years of RYAP implementation and to provide input for its future. The evaluation outcomes were presented and discussed during the Roma Youth Conference in

October 2015. They also inform significantly the guidelines for the future development of the RYAP.

Guidelines for the implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2020)

The continuation of the Roma Youth Action Plan builds on the experience from the first cycle of implementation (2012-2015), the proposals from the RYAP 2015 evaluation, the proposals made by participants during the second Roma youth conference and the proposals from partners and organisations of the Informal Contact Group. It also incorporates the proposals made for the Thematic Action Plan for Inclusion of Roma and Travellers, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in March 2016. The Action Plan includes activities of the Youth Department and of other sectors of the Council of Europe and may include activities proposed by other partners, both governmental and non-governmental, co-operating with the Council of Europe and interested in securing maximum impact of their activities by creating synergies while avoiding duplication. The RYAP has a duration of five years (2016-2020) so as to cover the period of the Thematic Action Plan of the SRSB (2016-2019) and the term of the Agenda 2020 on youth policy. It will be reviewed and updated regularly and reflect the future orientations of the Joint Council on Youth for the programme of the Youth Department.

1. Thematic priorities

In most European societies, Roma young people have a hard time in asserting their rights and 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. This situation puts specific groups of Roma young people at even more serious disadvantages due to multiple discrimination. During the Roma Youth Conference 2015 the young people emphasised the following issues:

- Continued discrimination of Roma young people in various fields of public and private life.
- Deeply rooted societal antigypsyism; extreme and constant exposure to hate speech, in particular by public and political representatives. This is aggravated by the rise of far right and aggressive nationalist movements.
- Inability to access social rights.
- Lack of spaces and opportunities for young Roma to learn about their own culture, history and language.
- Limited capacity and sustainability of Roma youth organisations to be engines of community organising, leadership and youth participation.

Based on this, the thematic issues to tackle in the RYAP for 2016-2020 are:

- 1.1. Strengthening Roma youth identity;
- 1.2. Roma youth participation and building a stronger Roma youth movement;
- 1.3. Human rights and human rights education;

- 1.4. Combating structural discrimination and antigypsyism;
- 1.5. Supporting Roma young people's access to social rights and their transition to autonomy and working life;
- 1.6. Addressing multiple discrimination and fostering gender equality.

2. Principles of action

The Action Plan has been prepared within the frameworks 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 so that young people may develop “knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society”.⁴¹ It addresses the specific challenges and hurdles faced by Roma young people. It is based upon the following principles:

- 2.1. Participation and consultation of Roma youth and Roma youth organisations, from the local to the European level, including their involvement in policy advocacy;
- 2.2. Linking Roma youth projects to the situation of Roma communities in Europe and the need for systemic changes to address discrimination;
- 2.3. Integrating the principles of youth participation, intercultural dialogue, gender equality and human rights-based approaches;
- 2.4. Encouraging member states to adopt policies with the involvement of local authorities; Roma youth organisations should be considered as equal partners in those policies and their independence as NGOs should be preserved;
- 2.5. Including measures for capacity building of Roma youth leaders and organisations and support to emerging youth organisations;
- 2.6. Taking stock of the policy reports of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) and of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities;
- 2.7. Using and disseminating the educational tools developed within the RYAP, namely Barabaripen, Mirrors and Right to Remember.

3. Aim and objectives

The RYAP supports young Roma to advocate for their rights and inclusion. Its objectives are:

- 3.1. To support the development of leadership and advocacy competences among Roma youth leaders and Roma youth organisations;
- 3.2. To support and facilitate advocacy processes, based on the approach of “double mainstreaming” of Roma youth issues in Roma and youth policies at all levels;

⁴¹ Agenda 2020 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe

- 3.3. To facilitate the setting up of Roma youth organisations and their access to programmes and funding schemes that will enhance their capacity and sustainability;
- 3.4. To develop the competences of those working with Roma youth to carry out human rights education through strategic national or regional training activities;
- 3.5. To steer the experiences of the RYAP partners in developing coherent responses and support mechanisms regarding the concerns and aspirations of Roma youth.

4. Approaches for implementation

“Double mainstreaming” and engagement with policy through advocacy

The RYAP will emphasise the centrality of the needs and concerns of Roma young people in policy agendas related to Roma issues and in youth policies. This approach refers also to steering the political work in order to improve long-term initiatives. National youth councils in particular can have an important role to play.

Capacity building and support measures for Roma youth work and youth policy

Capacity building measures for all relevant actors to improve their ability to advocate for Roma youth. This includes a concern for human rights education and facilitating processes of awareness-raising, intercultural learning and anti-discrimination.

Youth participation, from the local to the European level

The RYAP will continue advocating for the involvement of Roma youth in all matters that concern them, including the RYAP. In this respect, promoting youth participation on the local and national level through “50/50” training courses is envisaged.

5. Partners – co-ordination and communication

The RYAP is co-ordinated by the Council of Europe and developed in partnership with European Roma youth organisations and other stakeholders gathered in an Informal Contact Group. The Joint Council on Youth is responsible for including the Action Plan in the Youth Department’s programme and for its evaluation and monitoring.

Members of the CCJ and of the CDEJ will take part in the Informal Contact Group. The Informal Contact Group will continue supporting co-ordination and communication among partners with the purpose of building synergies and securing maximum impact of their activities and programmes. Other stakeholders and partners, such as the European Commission or the EEA Norway Grants, will be invited to support the action plan or some of its specific dimensions.

6. Resource mobilisation

The main activities of the RYAP are included in the programme of the Youth Department; 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 activities. Funding through the Thematic Action Plan for the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers is under discussion.

The mobilisation of extra-budgetary resources is vital to achieve RYAP's real potential.

7. Activities

The proposals included in this programme of activities are to be reviewed with the Joint Council on Youth and the Programming Committee on Youth, as part of the programming cycle of the Youth Department.

The current proposals build on the proposals of the Youth Department to the Thematic Action Plan for Roma Inclusion, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in March 2016. The state of resource mobilisation for the RYAP is very low.

In 2016, the programme of the Youth Department includes the following activities:

- A meeting of the Informal Contact Group
- A study session addressing Roma inclusion - in co-operation with Phiren Amenca and European Union of Jewish Students
- Two national/regional level activities supporting Roma youth participation and double mainstreaming with youth policy, a "50/50" model and possibly including an introduction to "Mirrors", to be realised in co-operation with national partners
- A regional training course for the dissemination of "Mirrors - manual on combating antigypsyism through human rights education", to be co-organised with national or international partners.

According to the programme Youth for Democracy, the following activities should be considered in 2017:

- A meeting of the Informal Contact Group
- Study sessions with a thematic focus on Roma youth participation and inclusion
- A training course on intercultural dialogue and minority-majority relations, including Roma, refugees, migrants, ethnic minorities
- "Roma, young, European": a youth forum on identity and belonging in the Roma communities and the role of remembrance of the Roma Genocide
- Assistance to 2 member states to develop Roma youth participation measures.

8. Activities beyond the programme Youth for Democracy 2016–2017

The programme for 2018 and 2019 will be planned on the basis of the evaluation of the 2016-2017 programme and of the priorities to be set by the Joint Council on Youth. A global evaluation of the RYAP should be carried out in 2020. The list below is an indication of the possibilities being currently considered.

Roma Youth Academy

This is the backbone of the programme of activities submitted to the Thematic Action Plan for Roma Inclusion. This a comprehensive project for capacity development of democratic leadership of Roma youth organisations and the emergence of Roma youth leaders. The participants in the Academy will be youth multipliers, either Roma or working for Roma rights, active in a variety of settings: local politics, youth organisations, young activists working for Roma rights, young Roma social entrepreneurs, young Roma scholars, young Roma trainers or community mediators, etc. The Academy will build on their experiences to and support changes in Roma communities through democratic leadership. The Academy aims to train 250 Roma youth leaders.

Education programmes to act against antigypsyism

- Translation of Mirrors in non-official languages
- Training of and support to 90 multipliers for dissemination in school and out-of-school activities
- Setting up a group of 12 activists for the No Hate Speech Movement campaign focusing on hate speech targeting Roma in national campaigns
- National level youth events to celebrate Roma youth identity and activism against antigypsyism, linked with the commemoration of the Roma genocide

Assistance and support for youth policies and youth work to ensure the “double mainstreaming” of Roma youth issues

- Support for the development of Roma youth networks at European level (“package” of coaching for strategic planning and organisational management, job shadowing in other European youth structures, study visits, meetings of Roma youth networks)
- “Making links”: a seminar on the role of mediation and youth work in Roma youth empowerment processes (building on the expertise from the ROMED and the Rome Youth Action Plan), reinforcing the youth dimension of ROMED / ROMACT
- Assistance to 4 member states to develop support measures in their policies for Roma youth participation, as a follow-up to the CAHROM report on Roma youth in countries such as Ukraine, Portugal, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece...
- Guidelines for youth work and youth services on how to work with the most vulnerable Roma young people while addressing multiple discrimination

In addition to this, resources will be mobilised to ensure staffing and communication materials for the RYAP.

ANNEX 3: Programme of the conference

18 October 2015

Arrival of participants

20:00 Welcome evening for participants (informal getting-to-know-each-other)

19 October 2015

09:15 Introduction of participants and ice-breaking activity

10:10 Conference opening and welcome

Juan Ramon Flores, Karolina Mirga and Marietta Hervort, Representatives of Roma youth networks

Lilit Chilingaryan, Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe

10:30 The role of the Conference in the youth policy of the Council of Europe

Antje Rothemund, Head of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe

11:00 Break

11:30 Exploring participants' expectations

12:15 The Roma Youth Action Plan in brief (introduction to the Roma Youth Action Plan)

Facilitated by the members of the Informal Contact Group of the Roma Youth Action Plan

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Workshops on exploring realities of Roma young people in Europe using the tools developed in the Roma Youth Action Plan

Workshop 1: Identity

- *Facilitated by Denis Durmis*
- *With Iulius Rostas, Alliance for the European Roma Institute*

Workshop 2: Roma youth participation

- *Facilitated by Karolina Mirga*
- *With Nicholas Paddison, editor of a publication on good practice of Roma youth participation*

Workshop 3: Combating antigypsyism

- *Facilitated by Alexandra Raykova*
- *With Marcell Lorincz, European Network Against Racism*

Workshop 4: Multiple discrimination

- *Facilitated by Mara Georgescu*
- *With Oein DeBhairduin, LGBT Pavee*

Workshop 5: Roma youth issues in policies

- *Facilitated by Lilit Chilingaryan*
- *Bojana Perovic, Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Serbia*

Workshop 6: Combating hate speech affecting Roma

- *Facilitated by Mustafa Jakupov*
- *With Dragan Radosavljevic, Minority voice*

18:00 End of the day's programme

19:00 Dinner

Informal programme

20 October 2015

09:15 Review of the first day of the Conference

09:45 The Roma Youth Action Plan's evaluation findings and discussion (exploring the outcomes and results of the last four years of implementation, in view of planning the future)

Yael Ohana and Marija Bulat, evaluators of the Roma Youth Action Plan

11:00 Break

11:30 Discussion on the relevance of the Roma Youth Action Plan evaluation findings for the future

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Learning more about Roma youth activities and projects in view of planning the future of Roma youth programmes

Learning spaces moderated by Roma youth organisations and practitioners involved in Roma youth issues:

Learning space 1: Roma youth activism and local participation

- *With Amaro Foro*

Learning space 2: Advocacy for Roma youth issues in policies

- *With OSCE/ODIHR*

Learning space 3: Funding for Roma youth initiatives

- *With representatives of the Erasmus+ Youth National Agency from Hungary, the Roma Education Fund and the Open Society Foundations*

Learning space 4: Learning mobility and Roma youth

- *With SALTO Cultural Diversity, SALTO Inclusion and Phiren Amenca*

Learning space 5: Local youth centres developing intercultural actions

- *With the EEA Norway grants programme on "Children and youth at risk in Bulgaria"*

Learning space 6: Human rights education projects

- *With the European Roma Rights Centre*

18:00 End of the daily programme

19:00 Dinner

Informal programme at the community centre Aurora

21 October 2015

09:15 Recap of the previous day's discussions

09:30 The Council of Europe's agenda on Roma issues

Ulrich Bunjes, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues

11:00 Break

11:30 Programmes for Roma youth: lessons learnt, strategic networking and partnership building

Input and discussion spaces with institutions and organisations supporting Roma youth issues

- *The European Youth Forum*
- *EEA Norway grants*
- *SIDA*
- *DG Justice of the European Commission*
- *UNFPA Regional Office in Istanbul*
- *Fundamental Rights Agency*
- *OSCE/ODIHR*
- *Roma Education Fund*
- *Open Society Foundations*

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Planning the future of the Roma Youth Action Plan: introduction to the context

Rui Gomes, Head of the Education and Training Division, Youth Department, Council of Europe

15:00 Working groups on planning the future of the Roma Youth Action Plan – priorities, partners, co-ordination, roles

18:00 End of the day's programme

19:00 Dinner

22 October 2015

09:30 Recap of the previous day's discussions

10:00 Input for the future of the Roma Youth Action Plan and follow-up

11:00 Break

11:30 The Conference in the participants' views: Conference Declaration

The Conference through the eyes of the rapporteur

13:00 Evaluation and closing of the Conference

13:30 End of the conference programme

ANNEX 4: List of Participants

Albania

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⁴² All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

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