



ROMA YOUTH, BUILDING BRIDGES!

Report of the study session held by
FERYP and USB

In co-operation with the
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest
21 – 27 June, 2015



This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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Acknowledgements

FERYP and USB greatly appreciate the engagement of the members who participated as a part of the team in the design and implementation of this study session, as well as for accepting this challenging project by sharing their experiences with Roma youth and mobility programmes; also to lecturers for their interesting inputs.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Menno Ettema, Educational Advisor of the European Youth Centre in Budapest for his support during the study session and for his patience and advices during the preparation process.

Special thanks to the motivated participants, for their contributions and for sharing valuable suggestions which have helped in improving the content and to make this activity an unforgettable experience.

Many thanks!

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Executive Summary

The Study Session **“Roma youth, building bridges”** at the European Youth Centre in Budapest organised by the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) and United Societies of Balkans (USB) in cooperation with the Youth Department of the Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation of the Council of Europe, took place from the 21st of June to the 27th of June 2015. This report provides the reader with an overview of this activity and marks its ending, yet the recommendations made and planned during the Study Session by participants will develop and carry out in the future as a future collaboration between participants and organizers.

The aim of the Study Session was to facilitate the dialogue and participation between Roma and non Roma on the future of European youth programmes that promotes learning about European diversity and to enhance participation of young Roma people through mobility programs.

Participants came to build a strategy to motivate young Roma and non-Roma to be part of youth mobility projects by empowering youth organizations in dealing with intercultural differences and manage conflicts in creating a positive multicultural environment. During the five-day activity, participants outlined the role of youth leaders, mediators and mentors in youth mobility projects. Participants and organizers were discussing potential follow-up and implementation of Roma youth mobility programmes by analysing the obstacles and needs and defining the strategies in mainstreaming Roma youth participation in European youth projects. For this purpose, participants worked during the week in creating a guideline for young Roma and organizations on how to promote and to mainstream Roma participation in youth mobility programs.

Organizers

FERYP & USB are two youth organizations working on promoting youth participation, especially with young people with fewer opportunities such as Roma, LGBT, immigrants, through local and international activities, EVS, seminars and study sessions in Europe. In this regard, FERYP and USB have decided to merge efforts. After some collaboration between the two organizations, came as a need to strengthening cooperation between Roma/non-Roma youth organizations and came up an action plan with several activities. One of them was this Study Session. FERYP is very well known international Roma youth network with great experience and quality outcomes. FERYP is also present in the Advisory Council on Youth and one of the main stakeholders of the Roma Youth Action Plan. From the other part, United Societies of Balkans is an organization which deals with youth programmes since 2008 and until now has implemented many national and international activities on youth mobility programmes, being also part of the Anna Lindh Foundation and it has large partners among Europe. In this regard, since we aim to break the walls among mainstream society and vulnerable groups, we consider that this was the best way to start mainstreaming Roma issues in youth work and to open the space for non-Roma to contact Roma groups and to start collaborating together.

Guidelines for Roma's access to mobility programmes

Roma Youth, Building Bridges through Mobility programmes

We, the participants in the Study Session 'Roma Youth, Building Bridges', explored the opportunities and the challenges of including Roma youth in European Mobility programmes, between 22 and 26 June 2015 at the European Youth Centre Budapest.

We call for Youth NGO's, youth workers and leaders, Roma mediators, and institutional partners working for Youth mobility to ensure mobility programmes are inclusive, and encourage you specifically to involve Roma Youth because:

Through mobility programs for young people we contribute to creating a network between European youngsters from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Through active interaction, participants have the chance to share their culture, experience and break stereotypes and prejudices.

The purpose of such mobility programs is to bring together a very diverse public: working in diversity for diversity.

Young people are the engine who creates our future society, empowering and educating youngsters lead to positive role models for a better future.

Involving Roma youngsters in mobility programs means bridging the gap between the majority and the minority society and creates an open dialogue between Roma and non Roma.

Roma participants have the opportunity to learn and gain new skills and knowledge and contribute to their communities as youth workers, activists, volunteers, mentors or mediators.

Mobility programs give Roma people the chance to represent themselves on a European level, promote their rights and raise their political voice.

The Roma community is the most fragile and disadvantaged group in Europe, Roma youth empowerment and intercultural dialogue can change the situation

During our one week meeting we have identified challenges encountered when organising inclusive mobility initiatives, specifically for Roma youth, but also identified practices and opportunities that can help overcome such challenges.

Ensuring the participation of Young Roma depends on:

- Access and clear information about mobility programmes
- Working with the family of the Youth and the wider Roma community
- Addressing financial challenges
- Addressing administrative and legal challenges such as passports and visa requirements.
- Overcoming language barriers
- Providing emotional guidance to the Young Roma participating in the programme
- Addressing stereotypes and potential expressions of discrimination.

Let us explain:

Challenges

Opportunities to overcome them

INFORMATION

There is the Lack of information about mobility programmes among Roma settlements

- The NGO can organize local seminars and trainings with the Roma youth to make them understand the advantages of Youth Mobility Program.
- Organising media, street, on-line campaigns, workshops, public speech, organising Roma Cultural Festivals.
- More publicity, presenting of programs at community centres, blogs, social media.

No access to the info related to mobility programs.	- Motivation and convincing of the young Roma by good examples of Roma activists.
Attending Advanced level of education (also abroad)	- Helping youth in applying in different scholarships, connect them with sources.
FAMILY	
Family block the mobility programmes: Roma families do not trust mobility programs and they don't want their youngsters to go out of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roma mediator (Roma language) - Build trust between parents and NGO. gain their confidence - Organize a parents meeting (clear approach, address fears...) - have a role model (another Roma young person who already has participated in this initiative) - show the parents the place (accommodation), the way of travel... in order for them to see that their son or daughter will be in a safe environment - explain to the families the benefits of this initiative - A Roma Youth that has participated in other mobility programme should visit the family and introduce them on what he/she learned and what experiences he/she gained or how life was improved through this participation - Explain them that she/he will be accompanied with another person (e.g. Youth Mentor, Roma Mediator Representative of NGO etc.) that will be Roma - Tell them this is not a reason for losing the young's values and traditions as a Roma.
Roma Women (They are discriminated against also in their own communities, so they don't have the same rights than men.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gain the family confidence - Show the families their participation in this initiative won't compromise their future as Roma women. - Show their families that this is a door for their future (Role model) - A Roma Youth that has participated in other mobility programme should visit the family and introduce them on what he/she learned and what experiences he/she gained or how life was improved through this participation - Explain them that she/he will be accompanied with another person (e.g. Youth Mentor, Roma Mediator Representative of NGO etc.) that will be Roma
Young Roma's husband doesn't trust the organization/mobility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet, gain the confidence - Explain them that she/he will be accompanied with another person (e.g. Youth Mentor, Roma Mediator Representative of NGO etc.) that will be Roma - Tell them this is not a reason for losing the values and traditions as a Roma.
The old generation is afraid of the assimilation, of the young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give information about the programs, what are the benefits of the program, which skills and opportunities bring. - Explaining the older that if the youngsters take part in that kind of activities will develop new skills, promote Roma culture, language and history.
Young Roma has to take care of the family (e.g. sick mother, younger brother)	- Approach other organisations that could support the family member for this short period (e.g. Red Cross, Medical- Social Centre, social worker etc.)
FINANCIAL BARRIERS	
Poor economic situation of the Young person	- The NGO should make sure that all needs of the participants

and family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for this initiative will be provided for, for example by the correct institution, (other NGO's, the council of Europe.....) - Sometimes in more difficult situations, the NGO must be in charge of providing the youngster with basic needs such as clothes, shoes...
Participants don't go abroad because they don't have money to pay for tickets in advance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host organization need to find a secure financial way to provide the participants with a ticket in advance - When providing tickets work out a Statement /agreement/contract that provide safety to both sides, youth and youth worker and NGO. Such an agreement and advancement of the money for the tickets builds trust.
Young Roma has to go to work and earn his/her living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advice him/her that through such programs he/she will gain more skills that it could be used in daily basis and long-terminally could be turned into opportunity to have a job e.g. in a local Roma NGO as youth mediator, volunteer etc. - Mediator talks to his boss to tell him that they want to involve the youngster in a programme, propose that he works weekends, negotiate time off

ADMINISTRATION- DOCUMENTS – PAPERS - VISA

Huge amount of the Roma youth with refugee status, or legal invisible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - get in touch with Ministry of internal affairs which can help us to provide the documents that we need
Lack of information on how to get documents needed for mobility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing training courses for a mediators, Roma leaders, Roma Youth workers, so they can spread information on how to get relevant documents that you need for mobility and allow them to inform other Roma people.
Young Roma does not have the appropriate identification official papers (ID, visa etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide information to him/her and make it easier to access proper documentation without losing time - The NGO must be a link between Roma youngsters and the Social Services in order to get their documents. During the process, the NGO should be monitoring, mentoring and supporting this young participant.

LANGUAGE

In general we believe the academic development of youngsters or social background should not affect participation in Inclusion programs and mobility opportunities

High level of illiteracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organising the mixed classes by different ages - Promoting the education as the best way to overcome the poverty.
Language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organising the courses for English, or Romanes for all participant in a mobility programme - providing the translation and interpretation to participants (for example by youth leaders/workers or even better by specific volunteers with the needed skills) - Trainings for group leaders for Youth exchanges to be prepared to provide simulation translation and language support for their participants.
Education in general and for language specifically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organising the mixed classes by different ages. - Promoting the education as the best way to overcome the poverty - Helping them applying for scholarships, connect them with the sources

EMOTIONAL GUIDANCE TO PARTICIPANTS

Lack of professionalism/experience by youth workers/leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Trainings, workshops, field activities, voluntarism, courses.
Lack of motivation to participate by young Roma	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Presenting of opportunities, good practices and real life examples.- Introduce other young Roma who have participated in this initiative in order them to see is a safe environment (role model)- Motivation about all skills and benefits the youngster can gain in his future in a non Roma environment.
Hodophobia/ fear of traveling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Support through whole process abroad, staying close to them, assisting them in foreign country.- -Explain her/him that she/he will be accompanied with another person (e.g. Youth Mentor) and they will be together during the whole travel.
Young Roma hesitates to leave for abroad/ Young Roma is homesick	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Explain her/him how the training will be and the stricture and the fact that she/he will get back home safety and with more skills and experiences to help his/her community and that he/she will have the chance to enrich his/her skills.
Young Roma afraid to be discriminated/ Young Roma is afraid that he/she will not be accepted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Explain her and show her examples that other Roma participated / how was the experience and how people accepted her/him e.g. Through Skype meeting if there is no participants near
Young Roma is afraid that when he/she will go back in the community he/she will be isolated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Support her/him to organise activities and share the experiences after the mobility project so that she/he inspire other youth / motivate them to take part in such programs. In that way he/she will be like an "idol" –example to them
Young Roma afraid that he/she will get lost in the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide him/her with maps and maybe Mobile Application (if there is Smartphone) and with a list of emergency call numbers- Explain her/him that she/he will be accompanied with another person (e.g. Youth Mentor, Roma Mediator Representative of Ngo etc.) and they will be together

DEALING WITH DISCRIMINATION

The youngster feels segregated/ social exclusion from the majority society	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Introduce other young Roma who have participated in this initiative in order them to see is a safe environment (role model)- Motivation about all skills and benefits the youngster can gain in his future in a non Roma environment.- Provide the participant translation in his native language or ask the organisation to provide him/her a translator during the training.
Shame of being Roma (feeling inferior than the majority society)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Empower the youngsters in seminars and trainings about their culture (flag, language, history)- Talk about the diversity of Roma community.- Using role models but in this case famous Roma people in order them to feel proud of their identity.
Lack of inclusion in education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide social standards in order to send the child in school

Background of the Activity

As a part of the FERYP & USB Strategy, one of the main objectives is to increase the capacities of Roma youth organizations and youth workers by supporting them in organizing youth mobility projects in order to give space to interact and collaborate with non-Roma youth organizations through youth exchanges, international training courses, voluntary service and so on.

However, we found many difficulties in dealing with these issues since usually, there is a big lack of information about specific programs and projects related youth among Roma communities. It is usual among Roma organizations to run projects only with and by Roma youth, with no significant collaborations with other youth organizations. At the same time, the lack of opportunities offered to Roma youth because of their background is a big obstacle to interact and to work in a real multicultural environment.

The existing stereotypes about the Roma people and its culture, as well as the fear of failure from the part of non Roma organizations, are the reasons why they do not motivate, encourage and involve Roma youth in their activities and especially to youth mobility activities. The study session will have as well a follow-up activity in participants' communities, based on the priorities of the Roma Youth Action Plan of the Council of Europe and our strategy, with the purpose to mainstream intercultural interactions between young Roma and non-Roma in Europe. Participants took part of the study session in order to gain new skills and developed their competences on how to include youngsters from vulnerable groups in international youth mobility projects, to adapt methods and tools of multiculturalism in their strategy of inclusion of youngsters from groups with fewer opportunities in order to improve quality learning outcomes that will influence on the local reality.

Profile of participants

The participants were selected by the preparatory team on the basis of an application form that was circulated with the call for participants. Additionally, the applicants were asked to write briefly their experience or their lack of on youth mobility programmes and work with Roma youth and what are the potential solutions for empowering young Roma and youth organizations. The selection was done according to the criteria mentioned in this call for participants, but also seeking to ensure geographical and gender balances, different types of experiences, backgrounds, organizations and mainly on the basis of participants' motivation.

The open call for participants was posted on a [temporary website](#) created for this purpose and all of the organisations' mailing lists were used. Also, the open call was posted on the Roma Virtual Network and the main social networks. We received around 170 applications, which were more than enough to make a good and diverse selection of participants.

The general profile of participants was defined as follows:

- Youth leaders/workers/mentors coming from organization dealing with vulnerable groups Roma or non Roma.
- Working with vulnerable groups or Roma youth.
- Coming from organizations with or without knowledge on international youth mobility programmes.
- Interesting to carry out youth mobility projects under the current European youth programmes.
- Motivated to initiative follow-up of the session and to act as multipliers on its topic.
- Aged between 18 -30 (with exceptions).

Methodology

The relevant information, skills and competencies were introduced through methods of non-formal education, such as experiential learning and learning from each other. Practical exercises, working groups and work in project groups were combined with reflection and transfer of course contents to real life practice. Intercultural learning formed an integral part of the study session.

The programme was structured in three phases. The first phase aimed to set the background for the study session, create a feeling for the group and the participants' different realities and experiences and introduce the socio-political context of the session.

It included the introductions (to the study session, programme, team and participants and the participants' expectations), an exercise to start building the group, an exhibition of the participants' organisations and countries and working sessions dealing with the participants' understanding of, and experiences with Roma youth and mobility projects.

The second phase focused on the issue of Roma Identity and culture and its importance when working with Roma communities and youth in new challenges such as volunteering services, international projects and intercultural competences. Practical exercises were introduced allowing participants to build on their previous experiences and relate them to the philosophy of the Study Session. Additionally, a series of workshops and information sessions were run to clarify outstanding questions about opportunities for mobility for Roma youth.

Phase three was designed to prepare the participants for passing on the experience of the training and supporting the implementation of EVS and other mobility opportunities in their working environment. Participants developed a multiplying activity in teams, such as an EVS information session or training activity with an interactive journey for a person who will start an EVS abroad. Discussions of concrete plans for follow-up and future networking among the participants and a final evaluation of the study session concluded the training.

IMPUTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The setting, the content and the methodology of the study session were focused on participation, active involvement, sharing of thoughts and feelings and learning by doing. We used methods specific to non-formal education and learning, both individual and group methods, taking into consideration participants' learning needs, such as group building activities, working groups, debates and discussions, open space methodology, reflections, presentations etc.

Official Presentation

Team building

In the beginning and after the official presentation done by the responsible ones from USB and FERYP, we prepare 4 corners where participants, grouped in 5-6 persons, can visit them to know more about FERYP, USB, CoE and the Roma Youth Action Plan.

Team building exercises helped participants to open discussions and reflections about participants' styles, attitudes towards the group, due to the fact that the group had to live in the same building during one week and we considered that these kinds of exercises would reinforce in individuals the sense of belonging to the whole group. The task given to participants was simple, but with some complicating factors. Mine Field it was a teambuilding activity involving trust and teamwork. They had to cross a 'mine camp' (marked with masking tape on the floor), where we placed some 'mines', the route was not given, so the participants had to discover the route to cross the camp by themselves. An extra complication was added by the participants not being allowed to speak.



In the group, a few leaders appeared, trying to find an efficient solution. They started placing some papers to mark the route in order to avoid the mines and after many attempts, the group was able to cross the camp.

During the debriefing we concentrated on the reflection on how our approach to the tasks was. Participants said that the first steps were hard to take, and so it was hard to start. It was also hard to think the same as a united group and to work as a team. In the beginning was not a good communication because only a few people were communicating together but after a while it was better. Not everyone was participating at the same level but participants said that it is up to each person to create group cooperation and to make it work. They mentioned that leaders are necessary to find and some others just started to follow. They also compared the cooperation for this activity with the daily life. In every moment, a captain is needed; she/he gathers the comments also trying to listen and to accept suggestions.

As a final conclusion, participants clearly expressed that you should not miss a step if you want to make it to the end, going step by step. In the end the whole group agreed to the 'coloured-papers method' to mark the path, but this also led them to mistakes, creating confusion. Participants also mentioned that the activity was also based on making mistakes in order to understand better by learning from them. Finally it was the group who realised the need to build a strategy.

ROMA IDENTITY

Why Roma youth? Exploring the Barvalipe Concept

To learn more about the importance of including Roma youth we wanted to get the participants reflect on the aspects of their identity, of their individual perception of identity and to learn about the layers of identity.



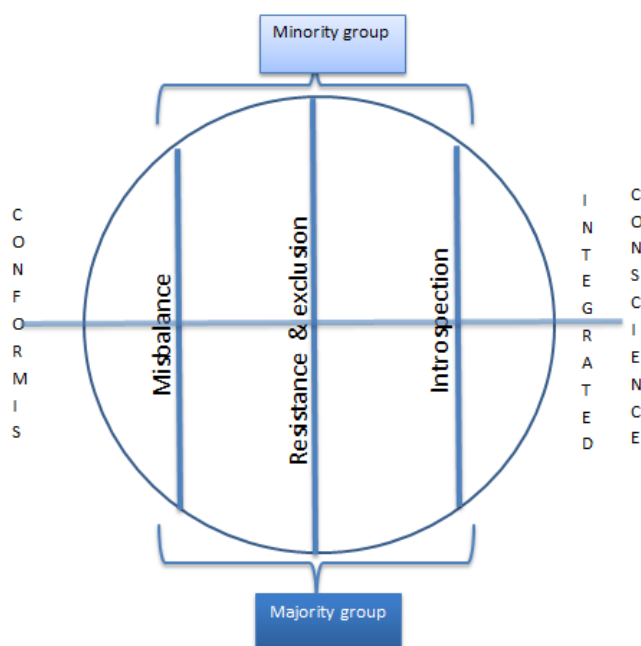
For this session we counted with the collaboration of an external expert and FERYP member, *Marina Vasic*. She holds a Master degree of Political Science at the Central European University in Budapest. She is currently working at the ROMED program of the Council of Europe and she was one of the coordinators of the Barvalipe Summer School in Montenegro in 2013, organized by former participants. Her intervention was focused on Roma Identity and the concept of Barvalipe. Barvalipe was about building Roma identity; encouraging commitment by Roma for Roma and also for letting non-Roma know about Roma culture in order to forging ties between

tomorrow's leaders by nurturing civic duty and social responsibility;

We intended to deliver this session in order to discovering more in details the importance of including Roma youth in mobility programmes, but trying to discover for the non-Roma participants aspects of the Roma identity/culture that usually are hidden for the mainstream society.

During the session of Ms. Vasic a lot of participants actually recognized some of the aspects that she discussed during her intervention. They voiced out the concern regarding the barriers encountered when trying to connect with the people in community and mobilize them because of the lack of information and commitment. The team believed that the session of Ms Vasic could be structured in the first day to ensure more space for understanding the importance of Roma identity, culture and realities in order to develop more in details a strategy on how to promote their participation in mobility programmes. To know Roma cultures in order to better understand the issues faced by Roma youth.

In this regard during this session participants named the characteristics of personal and group and identity by listing the layers of identity. During the exercise, they analysed the similarities and differences between young Roma from different countries, emphasizing in



the importance of respecting Roma diversity, showing openness, tolerance in communication and relationship with them.

At the end of the session, we wanted to demonstrate understanding that despite all differences there are certain common features that unites them as Roma by their openness to discuss about it and reaching a common conclusion.

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES FOR ROMA MOBILITY

Building bridges in the community

Raising the qualifications of people who work in multi-ethnic educational environments, developing intercultural competences is still a challenge for Roma and non-Roma youth.

Roma mediators, workers, volunteers are supposed to be experts of equal opportunities, acting as a bridge between Roma communities and institutions, facilitating the availability of different services or information.

Usually, they do this by encouraging interaction between and providing information for, the Roma communities and the societies where they live, as well as by managing conflicts.

Yet, when talking about youth opportunities, a clear understanding about this it continues failing to prevail.

To discover how difficult is to reach a mutual understanding, we organized a role playing with participants where they were divided into two groups, adopting the role of a typical Roma family from one side and a group of mediators from the other one.

During this exercise, the participants had to develop a scene where Roma and non-Roma workers, had to talk to a Roma family to tell them about the advantages for one of their members to participate in a mobility program, doing volunteering work outside the city and their community.

In this exercise we wanted to highlight the difficulties and obstacles that are often found by youth and Roma and non-Roma organizations regarding youth participation in mobility programs, while highlighting the importance of the figure of Roma mediators and their knowledge of the context in which they work.

At the end of the role play, during the debriefing participants raised several interesting questions regarding the figure of Roma mediators, and the difference of their role from social workers. During the discussions, were raised that positive perceptions towards Roma community, make contact with its members more fluid, longer in time and covers more areas. This type of contacts generated on the one hand, the inevitable conflicts and misunderstandings of any relationship between people with different cultural codes and it was a very clear example the intercultural shock between social workers, get used to engaged non-Roma participants in mobility programs, and the difference of including Roma participants, not only because of a different background, but also because of the lack of knowledge of Roma culture.

The main focus was how we manage our multicultural reality. There is not one recipe; there is no real theory on how to respond to multicultural circumstances. Often it happens and has happened that the dominant response is to deny, delete or hide multiculturalism and to ignore important aspect of the minority culture, in this case Roma culture. And it happens that, despite the prejudices and negative stereotypes, earn credit increasingly the way to manage cannot be any of that if we are consistent with the principles of respect for human rights and diversity, which require intercultural

understanding in the framework of maximum freedom, maximum respect for pluralism, consistent with those principles.

As a resource and mode of conflict resolution, mediation should be used in many areas and to meet different needs. In multicultural contexts in Europe, the use of mediation should take a significant role when interacting with Roma youth and their adaptation to a new space for participation as is mobility for young Europeans.

But at the same time, discussions and arguments came together to a common point which is that mediators are necessary for a good process of the inclusion of young Roma in mobility programs but we cannot forget that mediators are not superheroes.

It is clear that mediation has many limitations: regarding mediator whose skills have little or not well trained, the impartiality since the mediator is a member of a family or group, confidentiality for scarce professional development of the mediator, the limited availability of the mediator to do a voluntary task.

These limitations and increasing needs make Roma NGOs bet for the professionalization of the Intercultural Mediation as a necessary resource. This commitment is translating into increased presence of Intercultural Mediation and training of Roma mediators, and another reflection is the incorporation of mediators to different employment services that can greatly facilitate the Roma presence in mobility programs.

As main conclusions participants agreed that a good mediation process shall include:

- Organize socialization experiences based on values of equality, reciprocity, cooperation, integration.
- Use cultural diversity as an instrument of social learning.
- Provide skills of analysis, evaluation and critique of culture for future mediators.
- Educate the commitment against the use of difference and diversity as factors of discrimination and /or inequality.

Acquiring competences

When talking about intercultural competences, we talk about the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behaviour and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions. But when talking about intercultural competences for Roma mobility we need to talk about something else.

This part of the study session examined and developed further learning possibilities in order to make it possible to combine new opportunities for mobility with work and family life. Special attention was put into the main obstacle for youngsters with Roma background.



Learning process of each participant was needed to be incorporated with their work so that intercultural competence can be used as a tool to understand and solve critical situations in real work life. Therefore the expected learning results had two levels: 1) Increase of intercultural competence at individual level, and 2) Increase of intercultural awareness and competence at organization's level.

For this, we wanted to analyse the learning potential of existing platforms and other tools and resources such as opportunities for individuals with EVS program of the Erasmus Plus programme and opportunities for organizations with the programs of the European Youth Foundation. But first, we needed to explore the needs, realities, challenges and opportunities that Roma youth face when starting a new phase in their professional life. To achieve this, participants worked in group and prepared a front page like a newspaper where they explore the needs, realities and challenges. They did the presentations in small working groups; (newspaper exercise) in order to see the needs and expectations of the participants. This activity aimed to measure how involved were participants in their local community; to understand the expectation of them and which skills they want to develop through the training to create a link between their local reality and the European context. The participants replied to questions such as:

- what are the needs of your local community
- which area of human rights or social right is important for you
- what is your role in your local community
- what you want to achieve from this training
- what are your weak and your strong skill

At the end they presented it to the plenary and we have to discuss on that, to analyse it and to prepare them for the following days. The exercise was useful for us to start checking personal competences in the group and to confront realities that participants face in their communities and the reality that they can explore in a mobility program.

BRACE YOURSELF FOR MOBILITY

YOUTH MOBILITY; Why for? What for?

At this stage of the Study Session, we checked with participants all the elements related with Roma culture and identity and what are the main challenges that they can face when participating in a mobility activity. Then, we needed to go deeper with more information about current possibilities with mobility programmes.

First of all, the educational advisor gave an important input about the funding opportunities for youth organizations provided by the European Youth Forum, explaining how, when and in which areas the EYF works.

One of the major objective of the study session was to go deepen in participants' understanding of the philosophy of mobility programmes and then, we went more specific in the European Voluntary Service where we explored different elements such as definitions of EVS, personal development, partnerships between hosting organizations and volunteers, main values of the program and specific aspect to prepare a potential volunteer for a first time participating in such program.

The definition of the aims of the EVS was provided by the team and by external expert from *Phiren Amença*, a pro-Roma organization working in EVS projects with Roma youth in Europe.

During this session, we explained the proper importance to the “educational journey” that an EVS means for a young person, and the opportunities that the program provides directly involving young people in activities designed to meet the needs of society in a wide range of fields.

The fundamental aspects of the program were explained as follow:

- Providing intercultural learning experience, by encouraging their social transformation, active participation, increasing their employability and the possibility to show solidarity with people with different backgrounds.
- To bring a new support for local development in their communities.
- To explore possibilities for new partnerships and to exchange experiences and good practices.

Participants had the possibility to explore the EVS philosophy through an open discussion where several questions were raised.

From one side, participants asked about benefits for a volunteers in participating in a project abroad with a hosting organization and from the other side, was explained the advantage of serve as a hosting organization to receive new volunteers and to incorporate a voluntary program in their daily activities.

We tried to bring out in form of a debate that these two notions can influence around the motivation and benefits of all actors involved in a project and the basic justification of EVS, but that ideally they should be complimentary to each other.

During the debriefing we introduced also some questions for participants for helping them to reflect such as:

- Why do you want to be a volunteer abroad?
- What can you expect?
- How can you adapt yourself into this new situation?

Basically, participants raised their concerns regarding these questions, mentioning that the volunteer's own motivation for participating in a project is essential to avoid misunderstandings from the very beginning. It is equally important to raise the volunteer's awareness of the motivation the hosting organisation has in receiving a volunteer from abroad. The participants in a project do not necessarily realise that they are 'volunteers', they have found a possibility to go to another place to do something equally useful with another activity in their country or in their organization.



At the same time, all the actors involve (volunteers and organizations) need to make sure to provide all the information necessary to have an idea of the project itself, the host organisation, skills of volunteers and the technical aspects of the stay and the country where the projects takes place.

Finally, we realized that participants needed to see 'on the spot' a real example of a person going abroad for an EVS for the first time.

Then, we prepared an *interactive journey* where we 'used' a team member as a volunteer, and participants had to prepared all the things related to prepare the journey.

- We initiated a role play with a candidate between 18 and 30, and would like to work abroad as volunteer, and have found a sending organization that is willing to prepare him/her.
- Then, the organization and the candidate, found an international partner with whom they can cooperate in an EVS project. From that moment, there is a triangle where there is the sending organization, the hosting organization and the candidate. With this partnership, the three of them agreed on several related issues such as:
 - ✓ Accommodation, meals.
 - ✓ Tasks, responsibilities in the volunteer work, free time possibilities.
 - ✓ Pocket money.
 - ✓ Language learning and on-arrival training.

- ✓ Integration in the local community.
 - ✓ Coaching and guidance during the project.
 - ✓ Possibilities for a follow up project after the EVS.
 - ✓ From the side of the volunteer, no financial input is expected.
- One of the organizations involved (mostly the host organization) will compile the application form to get the funding. This organization will coordinate the complete EVS project, and prepare together with the volunteer and the sending organization, the application form.
 - The hosting organization is providing the volunteer with the necessary language training, and with the support of a mentor, who will help the volunteer to integrate him/her in the local community, and then it's possible to start with working on the project like agreed upon in the application form.
 - After the EVS, the volunteer will return with a certificate, in which is described what he/she has learned and which competences has gained during the project.

Building a strategy for Roma youth mobility

Initiating the third block of the study session, after the first one focused on team building and to create connections between participants to better knowing each other, the second one on Roma identity, challenges and opportunities, the third block came as a summary of the whole study session, trying to use all the knowledge and to summarize all the work done during the week.

Based on this, we proposed to identify, together with participants, specific measures that should be taken into account when initiating a mobility project.



To achieve this goals, participants started working in a Strategic Document on Roma mobility¹ to be used in the future for participants in their communities, collecting all the tips and inputs from the study session and at the same time, how participants can benefit of the FERYP and USB structures for networking and also to define the potential role of our organizations as potential partners/stakeholders.

By dividing the whole group in small groups, participants were asked to prepare a small document collecting all the challenges and opportunities to overcome them including relevant information as follow:

- Access and clear information about mobility programmes
- Working with the family of the Youth and the wider Roma community
- Addressing financial challenges

¹ The strategic Document for Roma Mobility is included in appendix.

- Addressing administrative and legal challenges such as passports and visa requirements.
- Overcoming language barriers
- Providing emotional guidance to the Young Roma participating in the programme
- Addressing stereotypes and potential expressions of discrimination.

The aim of having this document is to use as guidelines for potential candidates in participating in mobility projects that can be accessible online in FERYP and USB websites.

Evaluation and closing

At the end of the last day, and after presenting the final document with the Strategic Plan for Roma Mobility, the closing of the Study Session was run by the team, summarising the main topics discussed during the week and checking with participants



their expectations that they wrote during the first day, comparing if these expectations were achieved.

In terms of methodology, a questionnaire that contained brief structured questions on all aspects of the session was circulated to the participants before the conclusion of the Study Session. Most of the questions were closed-ended and made up of balanced scales.

The evaluation questionnaire aimed to find out which sessions/presentations

of the Study Session were of most/least value in meeting the needs of participants and which sessions were of the highest/lowest quality.

Generally, the participants rated the sessions conducted at the meeting as relevant or very relevant.

The general satisfaction of participants in regard to the sessions were very good, they indicated the usefulness of the sessions in terms of learned content, skills and the possibility to cooperate as a follow-up of the study session.

Overall, participants reflected that some of the sessions were very funny and they discover for the first time the non-formal education, by having fun and learning important issues.

At the same time, the inputs from the external lecturer were received satisfactory, expecting maybe more time allotted to discuss about the topic.

Also one of the weakest points was the occurred problems with the time management.

On the other hand some participants faced some difficulties because of the language barriers due to the low level of English of some of them.

The participants made the following recommendations:

- Including Romanes as a working language with simultaneous interpretation as it was in previous Study Sessions organized by FERYP.

On the basis of the responses from the questionnaires, the Study Session has been very well rated especially with regards to the relevance of the inputs, their quality and discussions as well as the methodology.

In sum, the evaluation of the Study Session shows that FERYP and USB delivered a well-planned, well-executed and high quality Study Session. It also provides the effectiveness of the follow-up of the FERYP and USB Strategy which could be turn into real actions, also with the collaboration of the Youth department of the Council of Europe. In this respect, there can be organized some activities in the framework of the Roma Youth Action Plan.

Main outcomes

During the first part of the study session, we wanted to set the context of Roma identity and culture and its impact in the interactions with the mainstream society, clarifying concepts and ways of discrimination directly affecting young Roma when taking part of programmes about youth mobility. The participants developed a set of recommendations for Roma youth organizations within the following frame: What and how? And what follow-up should be considered when planning Mobility projects for young Roma.

Among the conclusions, the participants mentioned that they need concrete information and tools in order to take action for mainstreaming mobility programmes in their daily work and to clarify what should be the role of the local Roma NGO's and the role of young Roma leaders, mentors and mediators.

One of the main aims of the Study Session was to increase the capacities of Roma youth organizations and youth workers by supporting them in organizing youth mobility projects in order to give space to interact and collaborate with non-Roma youth organizations through youth exchanges, international training courses, voluntary service and so on.

During the Study Session we wanted to focus on specific actions to inspire and to encourage participants to take action in their local communities, showing participants very practical example of what can be done by using mobility programmes, and how effective and efficient the work via these programmes can be.

During the whole week, the participants were asked to reflect on the causes and consequences of lack of participation in mobility programmes within Roma communities and in the interaction with the mainstream society based on their long and varied experience. They also had to identify important issues faced by young Roma while dealing with the fact of starting a project with young people from grassroots.

The main aspect participants learned from this study session was the specificity of engaging Roma youth facing obstacles in the path to their inclusion and better participation. Not all of the participants had similar experience of working with Roma youth. Thus, a learning point for some of the participants was the ideas and activities which work when addressing the issues of Roma youth and what are the challenges which should be taken into consideration in this respect.

This study session also offered participants the chance to identify common values with other young Roma from different countries despite their cultural differences. 5 days of activities gave participants the time and the tools for overcoming prejudices about "the others" and to face also their own prejudices on stereotypes among Roma communities and to foster the feeling of belonging to the Roma community but also as a part of the Society.

Participants understood the importance of unity among Roma youth and now they can be promoters of mutual understanding and cultural diversity among the young population in their communities. In order to spread the results, participants should act as multipliers within their communities and organizations.

Another learning point is that the issues faced by young Roma are not homogenous, thus the local aspects or context should be analysed and taken into consideration when an action or strategy is planned to work with the respective groups.

There are a lot of tools, ideas to be used to address the issues faced by Roma youth and a united force is necessary to take action in different countries at the same time in order to promote a better role for young Roma in their communities.

Empowerment of young Roma is a tool to motivate other youngsters to be the change in their communities and that even living in an oppressed community, young Roma can change their life by discovering new opportunities for having a say.

Researching the roots of the problem of lack of participation of young Roma, participants can start addressing the problem not only within the Roma communities but also in the interaction with the mainstream society by using youth mobility programmes. A learning point is that collaboration with Roma and non-Roma peers is necessary for sharing realities, exchanging good practices and identifying ways to improve the situation on young Roma.



FERYP and USB in the Follow-up

Follow-up was discussed in the last sessions in order to facilitate, share and exchange good practices and new ideas of potential actions in order to improve participants' work on the topic and how to offer guidance and support; to inform participants about the support for themselves and their projects; and to discuss future steps of the activity.

After the inputs on funding opportunities and during the whole week during the working groups, participants were asked to prepare guidelines for individuals and Roma youth organizations on how to promote Roma participation in youth mobility programmes. On the other hand, participants discussed about how to do networking among them in order to implement specific actions in their local communities with the support of FERYP and USB.

The participants were asked to present concrete proposals in order to implement specific actions in their local communities to mainstream Roma presence in youth mobility programmes in their daily work, engaging young people in the process.

One of the main questions from participants was the possibility of further cooperation with FERYP and USB in implementing such initiatives, by asking questions about the EVS programme.

FERYP and USB are planning to set a series of working groups with participants divided by regions in order to facilitate the cooperation among participants for networking and implementation of joint activities.

FERYP and USB can facilitate the process by providing educational and institutional support to local NGO's in implementing specific activities related to young Roma participation and to influence by lobbying the local and regional authorities to take into consideration the role of youth in the decision-making processes among Roma organizations.

As a part of the FERYP & USB Strategy, one of the main objectives is to increase the capacities of Roma youth organizations and youth workers by supporting them in organizing youth mobility projects in order to give space to interact and collaborate with non-Roma youth organizations through youth exchanges, international training courses, voluntary service and so on. However, we found many difficulties in dealing with these issues since usually, there is a big lack of information about specific programs and projects related youth among Roma communities. It is usual among Roma organizations to run projects only with and by Roma youth, with no significant collaborations with other youth organizations. At the same time, the lack of opportunities offered to Roma youth because of their background is a big obstacle to interact and to work in a real multicultural environment. The existing stereotypes about the Roma people and its culture, as well as the fear of failure from the part of non Roma organizations, are the reasons why they do not motivate, encourage and involve Roma youth in their activities and especially to youth mobility activities. The study session should have a follow-up activity in participants' communities, based on the priorities of the Roma Youth Action Plan and our strategy, with the purpose to mainstream intercultural interactions between young Roma and non-Roma in Europe. In this regard, since this was a double study session organized by two youth organizations the reinforcement of the two organizations is a clear result of this activity.

Conclusions and recommendations

At the end of the study session, the participants created guidelines as recommendations in order to set a context on how to promote Roma participation in youth mobility. At the same time, we wanted to provide an opportunity for participants in the Study Session as potential members and beneficiaries of those programmes, to find out more about the existing funding opportunities on Council of Europe and European Commission, through the European Youth Foundation, Erasmus Plus Programme and the European Voluntary Service in order to implement specific actions on youth engagement in Roma movement by using mobility and to count on the support of FERYP and USB.

As part of the Roma youth Action Plan, the topic of the session was very relevant for creating the space for Roma youth to discuss their role in the future of youth mobility programmes in Europe.

One of the priorities that FERYP and USB have followed with the work of the Council of Europe has been to promote the participation of young Roma in decision-making processes, highlighting the importance of young people in the process for creating recommendations to local Roma organizations in order to offer real equal opportunities for Roma young people in all aspects of life, together with the development and capacity building of Roma youth organizations and movements.

At the same time, one of the priorities was matched with the funding opportunities provided by the European Youth Foundation, Erasmus Plus and European Voluntary Service to run specific actions to involve young Roma from grassroots, which were introduced to the participants.



Appendixes

1. Daily Program
2. List of participants

FERYP&USB STUDY SESSION: ROMA YOUTH, BUILDING BRIDGES!! 21 June- 27th June, 2015

Budapest, Hungary

21 JUNE Sun	TIME LINE	22 JUNE Mon	23 June Tue	24 June Wed	25 JUNE Thu	26 JUNE Fri	27 JUNE Sat
ARRIVALS	7.30 – 8.30	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	DEPARTURES
	9.30 – 11.00	OFFICIAL OPENING	INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE Competences	MENTORSHIP AND LEADERSHIP in youth work	YOUTH MOBILITY What for? Why for?	PRESENTING THE STRATEGY. Next steps	
	11.00 - 11.30	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	Coffee Break	
	11.30 – 13.00	COMMON EXPECTATIONS Getting to know each other	INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE Sharing experiences	PERSONAL EXPERIENCES. Good practices in youth work	YOUTH MOBILITY Who is there? Where are Roma youth?	STRATEGY ON ROMA YOUTH AND MOBILITY How to do it?	
	13.00 – 14.30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
	14.30 – 16.00	BARVALIPE CONCEPT I Why Roma youth?	CITIZENSHIP AND MOBILITY Human Rights and Roma. Links	FREE TIME AND DINNER IN THE CITY	BUILDING STRATEGY I Promoting Roma in youth mobility	PRESENTING THE GUIDELINES Follow-up	
	16.00 – 16.30	Coffee Break	Coffee Break		Coffee Break	Coffee Break	
	16.30 – 18.00	BARVALIPE CONCEPT I I Why Roma youth?	EXPLORING NEEDS, REALITIES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES		BUILDING STRATEGY I I Promoting Roma in youth mobility	EVALUATION AND CLOSING	
	18.00 – 18.20	Working Groups – Why Roma?	Working Groups – Why mobility?		Working Groups - Shaping the Guidelines		
	Dinner Welcome drink at 20.30 and short introduction	19.00	Dinner		Dinner	Dinner	
	20.30	Social committee	NGO Bazaar		Social committee	Farewell Party!!	

Eglantina Mataj	Albania
Xhenson Çela	Albania
Erich Richter	Czech Republic
Simina Balan	France
Panagiotis Emmanouilidis	Greece
Theofano Papakonstantinou	Greece
Giannhs Piperis	Greece
Nikiforos Tsakiris	Greece
Fridon Lala	Kosovo ²
Kansuela Maciuleviciute	Lithuania
Frosina Kiprijanovska	“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”
Merita Mustafi	“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”
Martina Asanovska	“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”
Denis Ademov	“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”
Olivera Stojkovska	“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”
Ivana Sekulic	Montenegro
Nikola Jovanovic	Montenegro
Vesna Savic	Portugal
Vuk Raičević	Serbia
Tanja Djordjevic	Serbia
Daliborka Uzelac	Serbia
Ana Segovia	Spain
Maria Santiago	Spain
Viola Popenko	Ukraine
Fedir Kondur	Ukraine
Aris Paraschou – Trainer	Greece
Olympia Datsi – Trainer	Greece
Filaretos Vurkos – Trainer	Cyprus
Ramiza Sakip – Trainer	the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
J. Ramon Flores – Course Director	Spain
Menno Ettema – Educational Advisor	The Netherlands
Marie Cucurella – Trainee	France

² 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.

