



ROMED
Médiation
pour les Roms Mediation
for Roma



Roma youth meeting on youth participation and youth policy development

Kiev, 29 – 30 May 2015

MEETING REPORT

Introduction

On 29 and 30 May 2015 a meeting of Roma young people from Ukraine was organised by the International Charitable Organization "Roma women fund "Chiricli" and the League of interns of the Parliament of Ukraine with the aim to gather Roma young people in order to develop their competence to participate and interact with a variety of organisations and institutions on Roma youth issues. The meeting was organised in co-operation with the Council of Europe, as part of the Roma Youth Action Plan and the ROMED programme. Both programmes aim to support the participation of Roma young people in all matters that concern them. The meeting was organised also in co-operation with national level partners from Ukraine, the League of Interns of the Parliament of Ukraine, the Committee of the Youth and Family policy of the Parliament of Ukraine, the State Institute of the Youth and Family policy in Ukraine.

Most of the Roma youth in Ukraine is not integrated into the mainstream education or other public services. In the same time in Ukraine, Roma youth is not sufficiently participating in associations or NGOs: despite the presence of a growing number of young Roma people willing to promote initiatives for their community, there is a general lack of skills, knowledge, necessary information and support.

The aim of the meeting was to develop participants' competences in enhancing Roma youth and participation in Ukraine and to stimulate co-operation between different actors in the youth field in Ukraine for youth policy development and implementation.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

- explore the meaning of youth participation and its different forms and to discuss the ways it can be promoted and fostered
- familiarize participants with the Council of Europe's approaches to youth participation and principles of youth policy development and implementation
- promote and develop Roma youth participation in Ukraine
- develop participants' understanding of youth policy and ways of implementing youth policies at national and local levels in co-operation with the organisations, local and national institutions
- develop personal and social competences of the participants for youth participation
- explore possibilities for networking and planning future cooperation projects /activities between the participants and other partners
- find out more about resources which might be useful in fostering Roma youth participation.

Participants and guests

The participants of the meeting were 20 Roma youth activists from Roma NGOs and Roma students, from different parts of Ukraine: Odessa, Transcarpathia, Kharkiv, Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhie, Kiev, aged from 17 to 28 years, as well as representatives of the partner organisation the League of Interns of the Parliament of Ukraine.

Official representatives were also invited to address the meeting.

Iryna Bieliaieva, Head of Youth Policy Department of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, opened the meeting and presented the ways in which Roma youth can take part in the process of elaboration and implementation of youth policy in Ukraine.

Marcos Andrade, Project Manager ROMED, Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues, presented Council of Europe's approaches to youth participation and youth policy, including the Roma Youth Action Plan.

Nataliya Tilikina, Vice-head of the State Institute of Family and Youth Policy, described the objectives of the Institute and its role in supporting of evidence-based Ukrainian youth policy.

Aleksandr Shvaiun, Scholarship program coordinator, International Renaissance Foundation (Ukraine) described opportunities regarding the support for Roma youth to access university studies.

Nataliya Zinevych, Ph.D., senior researcher of the Institute of Ukrainian Archeology and Source Studies held an interactive book exhibition on "Roma of Ukraine: traditions and culture".

Main programme sessions and main discussions

The programme combines both presentations aiming to inform participants about youth policies and opportunities, and working group sessions, with a more training oriented focus, in relation to youth participation.

Participants learnt about the tools they can use in fostering and promoting Roma youth participation and possibilities to be engaged in the process of elaboration of youth policy in Ukraine. They also learnt about the actions of the Council of Europe in relation to Roma issues, mainly about the ROMED programme and the Roma Youth Action Plan.

During the second day of the programme, participants made links between their daily realities and Roma youth participation. One of the sessions focused on the "Charter on Youth Participation in Local and Regional Life", and participants were introduced to the understanding of Roma youth participation and also they learnt more about the instruments and forms of youth participation. As a result, participants considered some tools for improving their opportunities to participate, particularly revising the concept of the State programme "Youth of Ukraine 2016-2020", introduction themselves to regional departments for youth, local youth councils and putting Roma youth issues on the youth policy agenda. For example, it was mentioned that fostering Roma youth participation can be done by cooperating with regional partners or by joining youth councils. The League of Interns of the Parliament of Ukraine can be seen as one of the partners. Another way to build this cooperation is to ensure the implementation of the "Strategy for the Protection and Integration of Roma National Minority into Ukrainian Society up to 2020" involving regional youth organizations into this process.

Participants also reflected on ideas for action in their communities, as follows:

- organising a training for Roma activists on Roma identity and remembrance issues involving resources of the National Historical Memorial Preserve "Babyn Yar" (Maksim & Artur)
- opening an online platform for communication of Ukrainian Roma activists (Denis)
- organising seminars on non-discrimination on regional level (Yana & Vita)
- Involving Roma young people and kids in sport activities (Yura)
- organising seminars on Roma rights and responsibilities (Greta)
- engaging young Roma into "Football against racism" FARE project (Fedor)
- developing a centre for human rights education (Fedor)
- developing a music record studio (Fedor & Aleksandr)
- establishing connections with political parties to ensure Roma participation in regional political life (Aleksey)
- supporting internships of Roma young people in local government institutions (Ivan & Alina)
- collecting Roma fairy tales from different regions of Ukraine.

A more general discussion followed about the need of "consolidating" the networking among young Roma activists in Ukraine. This was a first step discussion to be followed upon in future meetings.

Finally, participants learn about the programmes and resources useful for participants, such as the Council of Europe's Youth Department's activities, the European Youth Foundation, the campaign "No hate speech movement", the "Youth Worker" programme in Ukraine and Ukrainian resources for NGO activists (www.gurt.org.ua and www.civicua.org).

Participants noted that the engagement of Roma youth activists in the youth movement in Ukraine could facilitate the promotion of Roma youth issues on political level and practical activities.

Main results of the meeting

Generally, the meeting was successful and promising for future steps.

The meeting results were the following:

- participants learnt more about the approaches to youth participation reflected in the “Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life”;
- participants learnt more about the ROMED programme tools;
- participants received information about concrete tools to foster Roma youth participation at local, regional and national level in Ukraine. They also got acquainted with potential partners from Ukrainian government institutions. They joined to the process of drafting the concept of youth policy in Ukraine (State programme Youth of Ukraine 2016-2020);
- participants learnt about the resources available in Ukraine for self-development and for the improvement of the capacities of their organisations;
- participants reflected on ideas for action and the needed support;
- participants showed commitment to act towards improving Roma youth participation in their regions involving regional youth departments and youth councils;
- some participants showed interest in applying for an internship in the Parliament of Ukraine.

Follow up of the meeting

Participants agreed to keep in touch through a Facebook group called “Informational platform for Roma youth” (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/428822700561472>). The group serves as a space for sharing and updating each other.

Participants are also ready for supporting the Ukrainian national Roma Youth Action Plan based on the Council of Europe’s model.

Participants also expressed what kind of support would be beneficial for their activities:

- mapping of donors organisations for Roma issues in Ukraine;
- a platform/resource for “newcomers” Roma NGOs (with clear defining of resources, donors, partners, etc.).

The support that the Council of Europe could provide is related to:

- co-organising and facilitating an activity on establishing of a coalition or network of Ukrainian young Roma activists;
- facilitating the youth policy processes of putting Roma youth issues into the national youth policy agenda;
- giving expertise and feedback on already implemented or ongoing projects of Roma organisations, dissemination and sharing best practices;
- organising educational activities/training courses to build the capacity of Roma youth organisations, on the following topics: communication with governmental institutions, human rights and hate speech online (reactions on violation), international mechanisms for defending human rights, project management and fundraising;
- keeping a close connection with national partners on Roma youth issues to ensure the realisation of the commitment taken;
- informing Roma youth activists about youth activities in Ukraine;
- encourage Roma youth activists to participate in trainings and seminars in the context of the Ukrainian youth policy development;
- to facilitate the process of the Roma Youth Action Plan adaptation to the Ukrainian reality (with the help of the ROMED programme and of experts from the Youth Department of the Council of Europe);
- to organise community action groups with Roma youth in the municipalities involved in the ROMED 2 programme of the Council of Europe.