

# Roma Youth Action Plan

Combating discrimination and supporting the participation of Roma young people



## Roma youth and the Council of Europe

The youth sector of the Council of Europe initiated activities with Roma<sup>1</sup> young people in 1995, with a training course at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg within the framework of the All Different – All Equal European youth campaign against racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and intolerance. In the years that followed, various other activities were carried out to strengthen the capacity of Roma youth organisations and Roma youth leaders in Europe. These have included:

- Study sessions with Roma European youth networks covering human rights education, youth mobilisation, the management of Roma youth organisations, and intercultural dialogue
- Activities where the concerns of Roma young people were particularly relevant, such as young migrants, young women, violence in everyday life or gender equality
- Training courses for youth leaders and youth workers, such as the series of long-term training courses on participation and citizenship of minority youth, human rights and antidiscrimination, the Enter! project on access to social rights for young people
- Support to local pilot projects by the European Youth Foundation.

## The Roma Youth Conference

In September 2011, as a follow-up to the Strasbourg Declaration<sup>2</sup>, the Youth Department invited 60 Roma youth leaders to a conference in Strasbourg to discuss thematic fields, priorities and activities to be included in a ‘Roma youth action plan’.

The Conference was organised in close co-operation with European Roma youth networks and other stakeholders, and was a response to the realisation that the concerns of young Roma were insufficiently addressed in policies concerning Roma.

The participants at the conference exchanged experiences and built on previous results for a common identification of current challenges for Roma young people, and priorities for European youth work and youth policy.

## Promoting real equal opportunities

The Action Plan sets out to:

- Support the creation of an environment where Roma youth can grow up free from discrimination and be confident about their future perspectives, while their history, plural cultural backgrounds, and affiliations as young people, as Roma, as citizens of their countries and as active Europeans is appreciated
- 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 guiding principles of the Roma Youth Action Plan are:

- Involving Roma youth and Roma youth organisations directly, constantly and consistently in the implementation of the Plan with other partners
- Creating synergies among 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.

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1. The term ‘Roma’ used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including people who identify themselves as “Gypsies”.

2. In October 2010, the Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma resulted in the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma (CM(2010)133 final), which has become a guiding document for all the activities that the Council of Europe undertakes regarding Roma people. The High Level meeting agreed to a pan-European effort to respond to the needs of the estimated 12 million Roma living in Europe. This is based on the principles of non-discrimination, citizenship, women’s and children’s rights; social inclusion including education, housing and healthcare; empowerment and better access to justice.



## Empowerment and access to human rights

The Roma Youth Action Plan is articulated around six themes, with specific objectives and activities under each theme.

Strengthening Roma youth identity

Addressing multiple discrimination and recognising plural identities

Building a stronger Roma youth movement

Increasing the capacity of Roma youth organisations to participate in policy making

Human rights and human rights education

Combating discrimination and antigypsyism



### 1. Strengthening Roma youth identity

Supporting the creation of an environment in Europe where Roma young people can grow up free from discrimination and be confident about their identity and future. Recognising and appreciating their history, plural cultural backgrounds and affiliations as young people, as Roma, as citizens of their countries and as active Europeans.

Activities in 2014 include:

- *National and local events, training courses and awareness-raising activities* to be organised on the topic of the Roma Genocide during the Second World War, organised by the Council of Europe and Roma youth networks
- Publishing and promoting the Handbook 'Education for Remembrance of the Roma Genocide', to be carried out by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- A '*Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative*' commemoration ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Remembrance Day (2 August) of the Roma Genocide, organised by ternYpe International Roma Youth Network with the support of OSCE - ODIHR and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- *An educational conference* will take place as part of the Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative, organised by ternYpe International Roma Youth Network.





## 2. Addressing multiple discrimination and recognising plural identities

Empowering groups that experience multiple discrimination, including from within Roma communities, such as young Roma women, LGBT, and migrants.

Activities in 2014 include:

- Study session 'Beyond Roma and Diversity' with Phiren Amenca on issues of diversity, gender, multiple discrimination and intersectionality, was organised in March 2014 in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- Study session 'Roma Women Empowered Women' with the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) on the issues of young Roma women, to be organised in June 2014 in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- Research on life stories of Roma young people facing multiple discrimination, based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and migrant status, conducted by the Council of Europe
- *United for Dignity*, conference on the specific situation of Roma young people affected by multiple discrimination to be organised by the Council of Europe in June 2014.



## 3. Building a stronger Roma youth movement

Facilitating Roma youth alliances within and outside Roma communities, mobilising Roma youth to stake their position in their communities and in the wider European society.

Activities in 2014 include:

- Support local development projects and further learning opportunities for participants of the *Training course on management and development of Roma youth organisations* by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- *National seminar on Roma youth and students' participation* in Portugal, organised by Associação Letras Nômadass – Associação de Investigação e Dinamização das Comunidades Ciganas and the Council of Europe
- *Long-term training activities and capacity building interventions* within the Project on Children and Youth at Risk in Bulgaria in four cities, with mixed Roma and non-Roma communities, to be organised and implemented by the Council of Europe and Bulgarian partners
- A *Report on the specific situation of Roma youth in Europe* was adopted together with a set of recommendations by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in March 2014.

#### 4. Increasing the capacity of Roma youth organisations to participate in policy making

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.

Activities in 2014 include:

- *Research and training activities on Roma youth participation* will be initiated and carried out during 2014 by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- *National Agencies working group meeting* as part of SALTO Cultural Diversity's role on inclusion of Roma communities in the European Commission's new 'Erasmus+' programme, to be held in the autumn of 2014
- *Meetings for developing an integrated inclusion and diversity strategy* (in order to ensure that the Erasmus+ programme is accessible for young people with fewer opportunities), organised by SALTO Inclusion and SALTO Cultural Diversity, together with the European Commission
- *Activities to strategically build a platform* for raising the capacities of the Roma youth organisations and networks to participate and be represented in other youth networks, organised by the European Youth Forum
- *Research on Roma youth policies and Conference in Flanders* to be carried out by the Association of Flemish Youth Services (Vereniging Vlaamse Jeugdendiensten vzw) in co-operation with the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- Thematic group on the empowerment of Roma youth and youth dimension of Roma policies to be hosted by Slovenia as a requesting country under the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues of the Council of Europe in September 2014.

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

Raising awareness of the human rights situation of young Roma and promote a culture of human rights.

Activities in 2014 include:

- *National seminar for Roma youth leaders in Greece*, to be organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and United Societies of Balkans
- *National training course in human rights education for Roma youth leaders in Hungary*, to be organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and Phiren Amenca
- *National seminar for Roma youth leaders in France*, organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and national partners
- *A series of advocacy training courses* on the rights to water, for Roma activists to be organised by European Roma Rights Centre

- *Follow-up activities* for raising the capacities of participants in *the Training Course for Roma youth leaders and activists for human rights against discrimination*, by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

#### 6. Combating discrimination and antigypsyism

Promoting systemic changes to structural forms of discrimination and combating antigypsyism, through supporting the role of youth organisations in this process and promoting human rights education.

Activities in 2014 include:

- *European Action Day for Solidarity with Roma people* was organised on the occasion of 8 April (International Day of Roma) within the No Hate Speech Movement campaign of the Council of Europe



**NO HATE  
SPEECH  
MOVEMENT**

- *Activists' meeting on ways to combat antigypsyism within the No Hate Speech Movement campaign*, was organised in April by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- *Gender fellowship programme for young Roma*, with guidance and mentorship from the European Roma Rights Centre
- *Activities for promoting the Toolkit for youth organisations to combat antigypsyism*, by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe.

#### Publications

- A **Toolkit for youth organisations on combating antigypsyism** has been developed by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- A **Handbook on education for remembrance of the Roma Genocide**, to be published by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- A publication on **Life stories of Roma young people facing multiple discrimination**, based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and migrant status, by the Council of Europe
- A study session report, **'The European Boogie Man Complex: Challenging Antigypsyism through Non-formal Education'**, published by Phiren Amenca and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- Report of the **Training Course for Roma youth leaders on combating discrimination** by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe

The programme is subject to regular changes and updates.





## Roma Youth Action Plan Activities in 2013

- The **Dik I Na Bistar – Look and Don't Forget** youth event was organised in August by ternYpe International Roma Youth Network in Poland. The event brought together around 430 young Roma and non-Roma from over 20 countries where they commemorated the liquidation of the “Gypsy camp” at Auschwitz-Birkenau on 2 August 1944.
- The debate **“The voice of Roma Youth in actual challenges: Identity and Participation”** was organised by the Forum of European Roma Young People on 7 April in Hungary. The debate was organised in respect of 8 April, International Romani Day, to raise awareness and discuss the current issues faced by the young Roma across Europe.
- A **study session, “Creative youth campaigning”**, was organised by ternYpe Roma Youth Network in September 2013 at the European Youth Centre Budapest, Hungary. The study session aimed to prepare a Europe-wide campaign for the recognition of the Roma Genocide through grassroots mobilisation.
- A **Training course on the Management and Development of Roma youth organisations** was organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in November 2013 at the European Youth Centre Budapest, Hungary. The training course aimed to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the Roma youth organisations as a means of voicing the concerns and needs of Roma young people by developing the competences of 28 Roma youth leaders in democratic leadership, youth participation and organisational management.
- The **Summer university of the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ)** was held in August 2013 in Kosice, Slovakia. The Summer University was organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in partnership with the Slovak government on issues related to the Roma Youth Action Plan. Participants developed a better understanding about the Plan, and analysed policies relating to Roma youth at national levels in the participating countries.
- The conference **Roma Youth Activism and Participation** was organised in June 2013 as part of the Croatian presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. A series of recommendations for the national governments were developed during the meeting and presented to the International Steering Committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.
- The seminar **The role of youth policies in supporting Roma youth participation** was organised in November 2013 at the European Youth Centre Budapest.
- The **Training Course for Roma Youth Leaders on Human Rights and on Combating Discrimination** continued throughout 2013. The course trained, for a period of one year, 32 Roma youth activists to take action against discrimination with young people. The course started at the end of 2012, and during 2013 participants carried out local youth projects on fighting discrimination based on human rights education. In December 2013, a five-day second meeting was organised; this allowed for a good balance of building skills, evaluating local projects and planning future actions.



🌐 A **national training course on human rights education with young people** was organised in December 2013 in Romania, with a focus on Roma youth leaders as peer educators.

🌐 A **Roma Rights Summer School**, organised by the European Roma Rights Centre in July 2013, aimed to develop the capacity of a new generation of Romani leaders and human rights activists to be able to analyse issues and situations affecting Roma in their respective countries, based on internationally accepted human rights values and principles. It also aimed at developing the necessary skills to use domestic human rights mechanisms (i.e. national legislation) and international instruments (i.e. United Nations and European human rights systems) to protect and promote the rights of Roma.

🌐 In 2013, the **European Youth Foundation** supported five activities whose aims were related to the objectives of the Roma Youth Action Plan: two international youth events organised by ternType International Roma Youth Network in Poland and Phiren Amenca International Association in Italy, and three local pilot activities organised by Prakisis (Greece), Initiative Group Alpbach Amenca (Italy) and Mladi za razmenu I razumevanje (Serbia): see EYF website <http://eyf.coe.int>.

The Roma Youth Action Plan was introduced on several occasions within the Council of Europe entities and other stakeholders. The vision and activities under this plan were introduced during the activities of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma issues (CAHROM), the ROMED programme, the European Roma and Travellers Forum, the European Youth Forum, and so on. Synergies are built and action will be further developed in fighting discrimination and enabling Roma youth participation.



## Funding and resources

The Roma Youth Action Plan is carried out within the framework of the co-management system of the Youth Department which is responsible for the youth policy of the Council of Europe; this includes the Advisory Council on Youth and the European Steering Committee on Youth. Its programme of activities is funded through the Council of Europe's budget and voluntary contributions.

*The programme of activities of the Roma Youth Action Plan benefits from financial voluntary contributions from the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary.*

### A joint venture for Roma youth empowerment

The Action Plan includes activities of the Youth Department and of other sectors of the Council of Europe, particularly those of the Team of the Special Representatives of the Secretary General on Roma issues, the Directorate of Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination, along with activities proposed by other partners.

An Informal Contact Group co-ordinates the partners in the implementation and evaluation of the programme of activities. The contact group operates within the context of co-management in place at the Youth Department; the Advisory Council on Youth and the European Steering Committee on Youth take an active part in the contact group and, as Joint Council on Youth, carry the political support and responsibility for the plan in the Council of Europe.

The partners of the Roma Youth Action Plan include, first and foremost, youth organisations and platforms:

- **Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP)**
- **ternype – International Roma Youth Network**
- **European Youth Forum**

The Open Society Foundations, the European Roma Rights Centre, SALTO-Youth network and OSCE – ODIHR, and the Secretariat of the Decade of Roma Inclusion take part in the plan. The project is also open to other interested stakeholders.



The Roma Youth Action Plan is a response by the Council of Europe to challenges faced by Roma young people in Europe, particularly in relation to their empowerment, participation in policy decision-making processes and structures at European level and multiple realities of discrimination. The action plan is based on the outcomes of the Roma Youth Conference (2011) and complements the Council of Europe Strasbourg Declaration on Roma by associating Roma youth to its implementation.

This brochure includes the description of the Roma Youth Action Plan and the plan of activities for 2014, as well as a short description of the activities undertaken during 2013.



The Council of Europe has 47 member states, covering virtually the entire continent of Europe. It seeks to develop common democratic and legal principles based on the European Convention of Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals.



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