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

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 and 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, governmental and non-governmental.

The Youth Department coordinates 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, cooperating with the Council of Europe and

interested in securing maximum impact of their activities by creating synergies while avoiding duplication.

The RYAP has duration of five years (2016–2020) so as to cover the period of the Thematic Action Plan of the SRSG (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 a more serious disadvantaged 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 work 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”.¹ It addresses the specific challenges and hurdles faced by Roma young people. It is based upon the following principles:

¹ Agenda 2020 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe

- 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. Integration 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;
- 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 aspiration 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 to 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 – coordination and communication

The RYAP is coordinated by the Council of Europe and developed in partnership with European 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 coordination 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 projects. 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 upon 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 cooperation 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, in 2017 the following activities should be considered:

- 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 plan. 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.