

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 354 (2014)¹ Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels

1. The history of European repression against the Roma, which has taken many forms, goes back several hundred years. This discrimination continues today, and indeed has escalated in recent years.

2. Numerous efforts have been launched at European level which aim to guarantee respect for the human rights of Roma and promote their social inclusion, but it is debatable whether the instruments in force are sufficient to cover the needs and address the problems faced by young Roma in their everyday lives.

3. The Council of Europe Youth Department drew up a Roma Youth Action Plan, based on proposals made by 60 Roma youth leaders during a Roma Youth Conference, to address the difficulties encountered by young Roma and to make proposals for action to overcome these challenges and to empower Roma youth.

4. The Congress's European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion can be instrumental in promoting empowerment of young Roma at local and regional levels.

5. Young Roma face similar challenges to the rest of the Roma community, such as discrimination, anti-Gypsyism and poor access to social rights. However, they also have to cope with the weight of deeply rooted Romani traditions and cultural heritage. In addition, they have to endure the same problems as all young people today: unemployment, social and economic exclusion, difficult transitions to adulthood, and an uncertain future.

6. However, Roma youth are not perceived as priority stakeholders in the programmes designed within the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the National Action Plans of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015). In general, policies at national level do not address the needs of and difficulties faced by Roma youth.

7. In the light of the above, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe recommends that the Committee of Ministers encourage member States to:

a. support local and regional Roma youth policies;

b. include the Roma youth dimension in their youth policies, and develop strategies that focus on Roma youth and reflect the reality of their everyday lives;

c. support research on the situation of Roma youth to enable the development of evidence-based policies;

d. set up national advisory councils on Roma youth issues, run on a co-management basis, to advise on national policies.

8. The Congress also recommends that the Committee of Ministers prolong the Council of Europe Roma Youth Action Plan beyond 2015 to enable its longer term objectives to be achieved.

9. Furthermore, the Congress welcomes the fact that the ROMACT project, the joint ROMED programme ("Intercultural Mediation for Roma Communities") of the Council of Europe and the European Commission and the Open Society Foundation project MERI (Mayors Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Inclusion) will co-ordinate their activities within the framework of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, thus avoiding any duplication of efforts in municipalities' action to promote Roma inclusion. The Congress encourages the three initiatives to cooperate on the development of Roma youth policies.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 26 March 2013, 2nd Sitting (see Document [CG\(26\)8FINAL](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: John Warmisahm, United-Kingdom (L, SOC) and Inger Linge, Sweden (R, EPP/CCE)