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WORKSHOP ON EDUCATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN LITHUANIA ABOUT THE ROMA GENOCIDE

6-8 November 2018

Vilnius, Lithuania

Presentation of the training workshop



Background

The Roma Youth Action Plan (hereafter [RYAP](#)) is a project by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe which aims to support the participation and inclusion of Roma youth across Europe. Initiated in 2011, the project is a response of the Council of Europe to the challenges faced by Roma¹ young people in Europe, particularly in relation to empowerment, participation in policy and decision-making processes and structures, and to the multiple realities of discrimination they are confronted. Capacity-building and the development of competencies of young Roma, organisations and networks has been a central part of the work of the Youth Department in relation to Roma youth. The project gives particular attention to human rights, intercultural dialogue and youth work as responses to discrimination and antigypsyism.

Roma youth and organisations taking part in the elaboration of the Roma Youth Action Plan project identified the strengthening of Roma youth identity as the first priority of the project. The work on identity was perceived by them as necessary, in view of creating an environment where “Roma young people can grow free from discrimination and confident about their identity and future perspectives while appreciating their history, plural cultural backgrounds and affiliations as young people, as Roma, as citizens of their countries and as active Europeans”.

The Roma Genocide occurred before and during the Second World War and remains largely unrecognised in European history; the death and sufferings of thousands of Roma is seldom acknowledged, taught or commemorated in most European societies. Roma were targeted by the Nazi regime and their allies with the intention to eliminate an entire population. It is commonly believed that the Roma² population in Europe at the time was reduced by as much as 80%. The personal need to understand one’s past and history is understandably very important in the case of a community, the Roma, whose history is largely ignored and generally side-lined by mainstream history.

Following the country’s occupation by Nazi Germany mass detentions and arrests were made with large number Roma transported to concentration camps outside of Lithuania. Roma have been also liquidated in the territory of Lithuania with estimate of around 500 killed, or roughly every third Lithuanian Roma. Information about the Lithuanian Roma Genocide is unavailable due to lack of research done on the topic and because of the little documentation, reporting and testimonials about the atrocities among the Roma community. Roma young people today have expressed the need to better understand the Roma Genocide and the mechanisms that have led to such devastations.

The Youth Department of the Council of Europe, under the Roma Youth Action Plan, has published [Right to Remember – Handbook for education with young people on the Roma Genocide](#) with the purpose to promote deeper awareness of the Roma Genocide and combat discrimination. The handbook is designed to serve both teachers as well as NGOs and youth organisations to work with

¹ The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

² An accurate estimate of Roma affected by the Genocide is relatively difficult to be presented for various reasons, such as lack research and studies conducted on the topic, incomplete records, etc. There are also researchers that believe that the number of Roma affected is larger than half a million, but the debate over numbers should not cloud the real message behind the Roma Genocide which was the intention to eliminate the entire Roma population.

young people on the remembrance of the Roma Genocide. It is based on the principles of human rights education and places remembrance as an aspect of learning about, through and for human rights. The handbook itself includes educational activities, detailed explanations of how to prepare and run them, as well as commemoration events and information about the Genocide and its relevance to the situation of the Roma people today.

The Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania decided to translate the handbook Right to Remember with the purpose to promote education about the Roma Genocide among educators, civil society and the Roma community within the Lithuania context. The Department, among other, is responsible for the coordination of the Roma integration measures at national level and to raise awareness among civil society, Roma, educators about Roma genocide and antigypsyism.

The need for education for remembrance is seen as both a tool for strengthening the identity of the Roma young people and a tool for combating antigypsyism on the basis of universal human rights. Moreover, the need for these educational tools can also be seen in the growing amount of hate speech towards Roma people, much of which refers also to the Genocide.

Education for remembrance is therefore fully pertinent to the work on empowerment of young people and in facilitating the access of vulnerable youth groups to their rights. Involving young people, including Roma youth, in researching, discussing and discovering the meanings of the Roma Genocide before 1945 and today is also a way to involve them as agents and actors in their own understanding of human rights and of history.

The training workshop is organized for youth leaders and human rights activists from Lithuania as part of the Roma Youth Action Plan project of the Council of Europe in partnership with the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and Roma Community Centre.

The training workshop

The workshop will develop the competences and motivation of 25 youth leaders and human rights activists in organising non-formal educational activities with Lithuanian young people about the Roma Genocide on the basis of the Right to Remember handbook. The specific objectives are:

- To prepare 25 participants to run initiatives and activities with young people in Lithuania about the Roma Genocide within the human rights framework
- To introduce participants the Roma Genocide and to learn about the mechanisms of antigypsyism in today's challenging context of growing nationalism, racism, discrimination and hate speech
- To enable participants and their respective organizations and institutions to use and disseminate the Lithuanian version of the Right to Remember handbook
- To support the exchange of practices and networking among participants particularly among young Roma and human rights activists and organizations in Lithuania.

Competences to be developed during the training workshop

- Information about the Roma Genocide with an overview of the context of Lithuania and its Roma communities
- Information about the current conditions and challenges of Roma communities in Lithuania
- Knowledge about key concepts of remembrance, human rights and human rights education
- Knowledge about antigypsyism (concept, manifestations and mechanisms)
- Skills in planning, running and evaluating educational activities with young people about the Roma Genocide based on non-formal education framework
- Knowledge and skills to use human rights education approaches with young people
- Knowledge about relevant projects and initiatives supporting Roma rights in Lithuania
- Knowledge about the Council of Europe work and resources on Roma and Youth
- Motivation and confidence to act as a human rights defenders

Methodology

The training workshop will provide participants with the opportunity to experience and reflect upon activities that are central to human rights, human rights education, education for remembrance, and based on experiential learning. The workshop will introduce key and relevant information about the Roma Genocide and will not intend to enter into deep historical perspective and overview of events. It will also aim to examine the current condition of young Roma living in Lithuania and develop appropriate responses from human rights perspective. The training workshop is designed as a learning space for participants to share their understanding and build upon their own experiences.

Profile of participants

The workshop is organised for youth leaders and human rights activists residing in Lithuania and are:

- Involved or interested in human rights, human rights and education for remembrance
- Active in working with young people, Roma communities or other minority groups and are particularly related human rights in Lithuania
- Interested in developing their competences as human rights educator with a focus on remembrance education, Roma Genocide and antigypsyism
- Motivated and in a position to follow-up the training workshop with initiatives and activities about the Roma Genocide
- Aged 18-30 (exceptions are possible)
- Committed to attend the full duration of the workshop
- Are able to work in Lithuanian.

The Council of Europe welcomes applications from all candidates who fulfill the specific profile of the activities, irrespective of gender, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, colour, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

Practical information and financial conditions

Working languages

The workshop will be held in Lithuanian.

Travel and accommodation

The travel expenses of participants, accommodation and meals will be covered by the organisers of the event and paid for by the Council of Europe.

Dates

Participants must arrive at the training venue on the **5th November (in the afternoon) and leave on the 8th November (in the afternoon)**. The training workshop will be held during 6-8 November.

Participants are expected to attend the full duration of the event.

Further information and contact

For further information about the training course, the application procedure and financial and practical conditions please refer to: Svetlana Novopolskaja, (in Lithuanian), sn713@hotmail.com or to Denis Durmish (in English), denis.durmish@coe.int.