

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH (CCJ)

8 April 2021

English only

International Roma Day

On International Roma Day, 8 April, the Advisory Council on Youth sends its warm wishes to Roma and Travellers¹ communities across Europe. International Roma Day recognises and celebrates Romani history and culture but also pays tribute to the work and great achievements of the Roma Movement and Romani activists over the decades.

Fifty years ago, on this day, the Roma Movement held the First World Romani Congress in Orpington, England (UK). The Congress has become a part of Roma history, several significant decisions were made, which have had an identity-forming impact on Roma communities, such as the adoption of the song “Gelem, Gelem” as the official Romani anthem and the creation of a common flag. The choice of the terms “Rom” and “Romani” as official designations was to eliminate old prejudices and help create a new self-confidence.²

The Advisory Council on Youth welcomes the recently adopted [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2020\)2](#) on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials. The recommendation represents a timely agreement among the member states, that Romani history is part of European and national histories and provides an opportunity, for the marginalised Roma communities, to nurture their own culture and values in an institutionalised system. The Advisory Council on Youth invites the Council of Europe member states to commit to the implementation of this recommendation, and to the provision of adequate support to all relevant stakeholders in this process.

Structural discrimination against Roma persists, however, rendering it extremely difficult for young Roma to access their rights, including social and civic rights. In addition, Roma youth are continuously confronted with stereotypes and suffer from anti-Gypsyism throughout their education and formative phase. The Advisory Council on Youth reminds the Council of Europe member states of their responsibility to create the conditions for Roma and Travellers to access rights, thereby contributing to the fulfilment of human rights standards, and to take a firm stance against anti-Gypsyism and any kind of discrimination and racism as stated in the [Council of Europe’s Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025](#) and in the [Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the Rise of Anti-Gypsyism and Racist Violence against Roma in Europe](#).

The Advisory Council on Youth strongly supports the continuation of activities with and for Roma youth. The Joint Council on Youth established a [Task Force](#) on Roma youth participation to follow up on the [Roma Youth Action Plan](#) which ended in 2019. We support the demands of Roma youth for greater

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, Kale/Cale, 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 Roma | History Factsheets on Roma History: Institutionalisation and Emancipation
<https://rm.coe.int/institutionalisation-and-emancipation-factsheets-on-romani-history/16808b1c61>

representation within their own communities and society. Finally, we remain a committed ally of Roma youth movements and support the creation of spaces and opportunities which encourage young Roma to recognise their own voice and assert their positions in communities.

Opre Roma!³

The opinions expressed in this statement are those of the Advisory Council on Youth and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe or its member states.

³ Motto chosen by the First Roma World Congress. Opre Roma! means Up Roma! or Rise Up Roma! It has become a political credo of the Romani Movement over the years.