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Report of the Online Consultative Meeting
Mainstreaming intersectionality in the youth field
in search of a cooperative approach among youth
organisations and other stakeholders
24-26 February 2021

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This report gives an account of various aspects of the consultative meeting. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the rapporteur. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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Introduction to the report

This report summarises the discussions, experiences, and proposals from the consultative meeting “Applying intersectionality in the youth field”. The meeting took place online between 24-26 February 2021. It was organized within the framework and the priorities of the [Youth for Democracy Programme 2020-2021](#), for the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. Within the third priority of the Youth for Democracy Programme 2020-2021, “living together in inclusive and peaceful societies”, the intersectional approach is specifically mentioned regarding combating all forms of discrimination. Youth for democracy program (2020-2021) with a specific focus on social inclusion, active participation, gender equality, and combating all forms of discrimination taking an intersectional approach, has a specific focus on Roma youth and other minority groups, young refugees, young people with disabilities, LGBTQI young people, young women, and girls.

As highlighted by Rui Gomes, in **Chapter 1: Overview of the Consultative Meeting**, this consultative meeting is situated in the intersection between human rights, access to rights, and active participation. It is about responding to the emerging issues that affect young people while understanding young people as a social group that is very diverse in itself. Preserving this diversity is a part of the everyday mission of the Council of Europe’s Youth Department. The consultative meeting aimed to build a common understanding of the role of intersectionality in promoting social inclusion, fostering active participation, and combating discrimination taking an intersectional approach. As noted from the input of Asha Allen, from the European Women’s Lobby (EWL), in a session on the Theoretical Framework of Intersectionality (in **Chapter 2: What is intersectionality**), intersectionality theory emerged from the black feminist theory. It can be understood as an analytical and theoretical framework for understanding the lived experiences of those subjected to multiple discrimination, and how they interact. It is an approach to policy making and analysis, an approach to planning, designing, organisation, implementation, and evaluation of actions, and a learning process that needs to be built in the foundations of social justice mobilisation.

Chapter 2: Intersectionality- An Issue for Youth Organisations, provides examples of intersectional approach in the work of the bodies of the Council of Europe (Roma and Travelers Team, European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Unit, and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration and Refugees (SRSG)). It also provides examples of intersectionality in the policies of the Council of Europe ([Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy \(2018-2023\)](#), [Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025](#), [Council of Europe Disability Strategy \(2017-2023\)](#), [the Action Plan 2017-2019 on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children](#), [Action Plan on the protection of the vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum in Europe, 2021-2025](#), new [Draft Recommendation on migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women](#)).

Chapter 3: Intersectionality in Practice of this report provides examples of the practical application of intersectionality in the activities and projects of the youth organisations. As highlighted by Spyros Papadatos, Bureau member of the Advisory Council on Youth, the Council of Europe and various youth organisations and civil society stakeholders have been putting efforts in recognizing the value of intersectionality and adopting an intersectional approach aiming to tackle multiple forms of discrimination, and striving toward more just and equal societies.

Papadatos provided examples of youth organisations policy papers on intersectionality: [European Youth Forum’s policy paper on Equality and Non-Discrimination](#), [IGLYO’s position paper on Intersectionality](#), [AEGEE’s position paper on Intersectionality and Policy-making](#).

Moreover, during this consultative meeting, participants have shared numerous examples from the youth field regarding applying intersectionality in practice (in youth work, youth policy, and capacity building (training)). Examples of the specific educational activities, tools, and approaches based on the intersectionality that can be applied in youth work and training in the youth field have been shared, and reported in Chapter 3: Intersectionality in practice.

Chapter 4: Applying intersectionality in the youth field provides an overview of the key ideas, conclusions, recommendations and proposals, shared during this consultative meeting, specifically regarding the *areas of application* of intersectionality in the youth field, areas for improvement in further work on applying the intersectional approach, as proposed by the participants of this consultative meeting, as well as a summary of the reflections and answers to the questions posed during breakout group work and the plenary discussions.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the conclusions and recommendations from the meeting. Mainstreaming intersectionality in the youth field is presented as an approach in creating more just youth social justice movements, and ensuring access to human rights, opportunities, and active participation for the marginalised within the marginalised social groups who have been left out by youth organisations’ focus on *single-issue struggles*.

This report was developed with the intention of providing an overview of the main discussions that took place during the meeting, together with the recommendations as proposed by the participants. It does not aim to present a detailed account of the meeting, rather, its main purpose is to highlight examples, issues, and questions which can guide the work on intersectionality, done in the youth field, both by youth organisations, networks, public authorities, and international organisations.

Chapter 1: Overview of the consultative meeting

Background: The rationale of the meeting

Preventing and counteracting discrimination, to allow the democratic participation of all young people, remains central to the Council of Europe's youth policy and a permanent concern of its partners. These are necessary steps to strengthen social cohesion and respect for diversity. The lives of too many young people are still shaped by the persistent forms of structural discrimination combined with prejudice, which impact negatively on the prospect of social inclusion and the well-being of marginalised groups of young people, including young people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, young Roma, refugees and migrants, women and girls, LGBTQI youth, etc.

Youth work and youth organisations reflect the societies in which they are situated. Youth workers and youth leaders can also be the agents of change by recognizing and understanding their role in strengthening the cooperation within and between youth movements, and in reversing patterns of inequity and discrimination. Youth work and non-formal education as practiced and promoted by the Council of Europe are based on human rights values and principles. The human dignity of every person involved in activities is to be respected at all times. A human rights-based approach in youth work and non-formal learning recognizes that achieving equal opportunities remains a common goal and that youth work should recognize existing inequities and barriers to young people's access to rights, participation, and opportunities in society, and provide support to bridge the gaps. The human rights approach offers a framework where differences regarding opinions, beliefs, and lived experiences, can be discussed while remaining respectful and affirming of young people's diverse lived experiences and lived realities.

Intersectionality as a term was coined by a feminist, critical legal and race scholar, and civil rights advocate, Kimberlé Crenshaw, based on her observation and recognition of the interconnectedness of oppression. She shed light on how one's experience of discrimination depends on a person's overlapping identities (such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability, etc.) which define a person's access to rights, opportunities, active participation, in society. For example, a lesbian young woman of colour experiences social oppression in a significantly different way to a white heterosexual woman that does not personally experience racism and homophobia. If the first woman in this example, is also a young refugee and a transgender woman, her lived experiences, access to rights, opportunities, and possibilities for active participation in society are shaped by her multiple (minority) identities, which are situated within the systems of power (xenophobia, racism, transphobia, and homophobia). These systems of power can be systemic and institutionalized in different social contexts to a different extent, and might also co-exist with anti-refugee sentiments and organizing. Therefore, lived experiences of that young woman and her access to opportunities and services in the given society, are shaped by her social position. And her social position is shaped by her multiple minority identities which exist within the hierarchical structures of power.

Many of the Youth Department's partners would argue that an intersectional approach is necessary to combat multiple discrimination, pointing out it is not possible to combat different forms of discrimination separately, on a "single issue/identity" axes. Consequently, by applying

an intersectional approach the youth sector (youth workers, policymakers, leaders, trainers) can more effectively understand, reflect on, and challenge social inequities and injustices, than through focusing exclusively on single-issue struggle axes. Youth minority groups are not homogenous, but rather diverse within themselves (for example, a Roma young person can be an LGBTQI person as well, with disabilities, etc).

The Council of Europe youth sector supports youth organisations and youth workers to combat discrimination by supporting their activities, encouraging them to adopt more inclusive approaches from an anti-discrimination framework, both in the activities supported by the European Youth Foundation and the activities held at the European Youth Centres (EYC) in Budapest and Strasbourg. Council of Europe Youth Department is committed to facilitating awareness-raising on issues relevant to youth and providing educational materials for multipliers. The concepts of multiple discrimination and intersectionality are very close to each other and are in principle easy to understand on the conceptual level. What might be less clear for the practitioners are the practical implications of applying an intersectional approach in their projects and activities: what is the difference between awareness of the multiple discrimination and applying an intersectional approach? Exploring and clarifying some of these practical implications, along with sharing knowledge and experiences on applying intersectionality in the youth field, are necessary so the youth sector can adopt and promote an intersectional approach. It is in this context, Council of Europe organized a consultative meeting on *Applying Intersectionality in Youth Field*, to explore how intersectionality can be further mainstreamed in the youth sector.

The consultative meeting reflected on the following questions:

1. What are the experiences, examples, and expectations from the youth field in applying the theoretical framework of intersectionality into practice (youth work, youth policy, training, research)?
2. What kind of educational activities, tools, and approaches based on intersectionality can be applied in youth work and training in the youth field?
3. What can youth organisations, youth workers, trainers, researchers, and policymakers do to secure that the intersectional approach is applied in their work?
4. How can youth organisations and other stakeholders communicate and cooperate about intersectionality?

To reach this aim, a preparatory team was established to plan, design, organize, facilitate and report on this consultative meeting. The preparatory team consisted of two representatives of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, Spyros Papadatos and Pia Šlogar supported by the Council of Europe's secretariat. The team also relied on the work of Carly Walker Dawson as a facilitator and Ksenija Joksimović as a rapporteur.

Aims and Objectives of the Meeting

The consultative meeting aimed to build a common understanding of the role of intersectionality in promoting social inclusion, fostering active participation, and combating discrimination taking an intersectional approach by:

1. Creating a deeper understanding of intersectionality and its application in the youth sector
2. Identifying experiences, examples, and expectations from the youth field in applying the theoretical framework of intersectionality
3. Proposing examples of educational activities, tools, and approaches based on intersectionality that are applicable and used in youth work and training activities
4. Identifying what the youth sector stakeholders can do to further apply an intersectional approach in their work.

Programme of the Meeting

The online consultative meeting took place between February 24-26, 2021, on the Bluejeans platform, from 10 AM - 4 PM, CET.

The first day of the meeting was focused on the introduction of the topic, sharing participants expectations from the meeting, and getting familiar with the work done by the Council of Europe's Youth Department and bodies such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on the topic of intersectionality. Introduction to the topic of Intersectionality was provided by Asha Allen, European Women's Lobby (EWL) Policy and Campaigns Officer, who engaged participants of the consultative meeting in reflecting on and sharing their understanding of the intersectional approach applied to youth work and youth mobilisation.

The second day of the consultative meeting was focused on realities, practices, and issues faced regarding applying intersectional approach in the youth field. Morning plenary sessions were focused on presentations of the work of the Council of Europe's bodies on addressing discrimination with an intersectional approach, specifically in the work of Roma and Travelers Team, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Unit of the Council of Europe, and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration and Refugees. Afterward, in the parallel sessions, in smaller discussion groups participants discussed and shared examples of good practices regarding applying intersectionality in the youth field. The afternoon sessions were focused on discussions among the participants of the consultative meeting, in the small discussion groups (break-out rooms) on why is intersectionality an issue for the youth organisations, what are the gaps regarding applying intersectional approach practically, and how it is practically applied. All input was shared in the plenary room at the end of the day.

The third day of the consultative meeting was focused on looking forward and developing proposals and recommendations for further work on applying intersectional approach in the youth field. It started with an open space discussion, allowing participants to reflect on experiences and

issues already shared and discussed in the previous days, but also to raise new issues to be further discussed. Afterward, in small discussion groups participants reflected on and shared what are the existing issues and challenges regarding applying an intersectional approach in youth work, specifically focusing on: the local youth work and youth organisations; education and training activities; research and knowledge sharing, and youth policymaking. They were encouraged to think from the perspective of youth organisations, but also member states, local authorities, and institutions. The main points raised in every small group regarding the identified challenges and ways to tackle them were shared in the plenary room at the end of the day, which ended with summarizing the conclusions of the consultative meeting and evaluating the meeting. The main ideas and proposals for further work on applying intersectionality in the youth field are elaborated in more detail in the following chapters in this report.

The final programme of the consultative meeting can be found in the Annex to this report.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe Youth Department's [Moodle platform](#) has a section dedicated to this meeting, where all resources shared by the preparation team, speakers, and the participants, will remain available indefinitely for further work on the topic by the participants.

Finally, this consultative meeting was designed and facilitated based on non-formal education methodology, applied to an online setting. That includes educational activities, such as presentations by the guest-expert speakers, as well as the Council of Europe Youth Department representatives, and the participants representing youth organisations, who shared examples of good practice from their scope of work regarding applying intersectionality in the youth field. Furthermore, discussions were organized both in the plenary room (with all participants present), and in small discussion groups (around 5 participants per group), facilitated each by one member of the Preparation team of this meeting. Each small discussion group had an appointed note-taker, for final report writing. A team of sign language interpreters was present throughout the consultative meeting. Quiet room space was designated on the Moodle platform, as a virtual space that participants could retreat to at any point during the meeting, in case they felt the need to do so. On the second day, after the official program ended the optional workshop lead by an external facilitator on dance, embodiment and mindfulness was offered to the participants, as a virtual space dedicated to well-being after a day dedicated to talking about challenges, barriers, and often sharing personal experiences of living on the intersection of multiple minority identities, while at the same time working on these issues in the youth field.

Profile of the Participants

The consultative meeting brought together a group of experts, representatives of youth organisations working on addressing discrimination and engaging in the promotion of an intersectional approach in the youth field. Some participants represented youth organisations working with Roma youth and other minority groups, young refugees, young people with disabilities, LGBTQI young people, young women and girls, and other young people experiencing discrimination. The participants who attended the meeting were from the following organisations/institutions: Cooperation and Development Network Eastern Europe, OBESSU,

Erasmus Student Network, LYMEC - European Liberal Youth, European Union of the Deaf Youth (BIPOC focus group and EDYoo), Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS), Jugendbildungsstätte Kurt Löwenstein e.V., YMCA Europe, Phiren Amenca International Network AISBL, Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education, Fondazione Istituto dei Sordi di Torino Onlus, World Student Christian Federation, Agenzia per la Promozione dei Giovani, European Federation for Intercultural Learning, EFPSA - European Federation of Psychology Students' Associations, European Free Alliance Youth.

On the behalf of the Council of Europe's Joint Council on Youth and the Advisory Council on Youth, the following representatives were present:

- Spyros Papadatos, Bureau member of the Advisory Council on Youth
- Georgina Laboda, Rapporteur on Roma issues, Joint Council on Youth
- Marijeta Mojašević, Rapporteur on mainstreaming disability issues, Joint Council on Youth
- Marine Kurtanidze, Gender Equality Rapporteur, Joint Council on Youth
- Pia Šlogar, Advisory Council on Youth

Participants' motivation and expectations from this consultative meeting, shared during the first day of the meeting were mainly to learn more on how different youth organisations and stakeholders:

- Understand further intersectionality and its theoretical background
- Share experiences and knowledge on how to apply it practically in their organisational context (LGBTQI, disability rights, anti-racist, Roma, volunteer services, political youth organizing, faith-based youth organisations).
- Personal experience of living on the intersection of identities, while working on human rights issues related to them

[The Council of Europe's Youth Department's work on intersectionality](#)

During the first day of the consultative meeting, Rui Gomes, Head of Education and Training Division of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe provided an introduction to the Council of Europe's Youth Department work. This introductory session included the presentation of the history of the Council of Europe, its values, missions, and functioning (Committee of Ministers, Parliamentary Assembly, Congress of the local and regional authorities, European Court of Human Rights, Human Rights Commissioner, Conference of INGOs, and the Secretary-General).

It was specifically highlighted that the Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation in which the member states keep their full sovereignty and full power, but that there is a commitment towards shared values and principles among the member states. The practical implementation, the respect of, or the violation of these principles are diverse among the member states, and through cooperation and dialogue, all the member states are held responsible to keep up the standards that they agree upon together.

As presented, the Youth Sector of the Council of Europe works directly with the representatives of the youth organisations and the representatives of the governments in the youth policy field.

It has the [Co-Management System](#) (European Steering Committee for Youth and the Advisory Council on Youth), under which the youth organisations and governments have similar power in decision-making. The issues that young people are concerned with are brought to the Advisory Council on Youth. As highlighted both by Rui Gomes and by Spyros Papadatos, Bureau member of the Advisory Council on Youth, this consultative meeting, which started as an initiative from the Joint Council on Youth and the programming committee, fits well in the [Youth Strategy 2030](#), and the priorities of the [Youth for Democracy Programme 2020-2021](#), for the Youth Department. The priorities of the programme are: (1) access to rights of young people, (2) youth participation and youth work, and (3) living together in inclusive and peaceful societies. Within the third priority “living together in inclusive and peaceful societies”, the intersectional approach is specifically mentioned regarding combating all forms of discrimination. Youth for Democracy program (a biannual program 2020-2021) with its specific focus on social inclusion, active participation, gender equality, and combating all forms of discrimination taking an intersectional approach, has a specific focus on Roma youth and other minority groups, young refugees, young people with disabilities, LGBTQI young people, young women, and girls.

As elaborated, the Youth for the Democracy programme is composed of the activities that are run by the young people themselves, through study sessions, training courses, seminars, and consultative meetings. In that way, issues that young people face are brought to the forefront of youth work and youth policy. It was highlighted that this consultative meeting is situated at the intersection between human rights, access to rights, and active participation. It is about responding to the emerging issues that affect young people while understanding young people as a social group that is very diverse in itself. Preserving this diversity is a part of the everyday mission of the Council of Europe’s Youth Department.

Some examples of the work of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe on the issues of multiple discrimination, and/or working with different minority groups:

- Seminar on Islamophobia in 2004
- 2014/2015 work on multiple discrimination of Roma young people (focusing on the age, gender, migration axes). The publication on multiple discrimination was produced: [Barabaripen](#) containing personal stories of young Roma people about multiple discrimination
- Working on the revised edition of “All Different-All Equal”, the first educational resource of the Youth Department to address racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and antisemitism, with examples of intersectionality (in a revised edition), etc.

As highlighted by Rui Gomes, Youth Department does this work by:

- Assessing common issues faced by young people (eg. discrimination, participation, access to rights)
- Giving visibility to issues and challenges (through seminars, study sessions at EYCs)
- Supporting groups and organisations that work with and represent diverse young people (for example, providing awareness-raising and educational materials for multipliers)
- Promoting cooperation and solidarity among them, and
- Recognizing specific needs and issues as well as common matters

During the presentation, the participants – experts were invited to reflect on the following questions throughout the consultative meeting:

- Has the Council of Europe’s Youth Department already been implementing an intersectional approach in the past? If yes, to which extent and what can be done further?
- What practical implications we should pursue and what not? What does it mean to apply intersectionality in practice?

These are specifically elaborated on in the following chapters of this report.

Chapter 2: Intersectionality – an issue for youth organisations?

What is intersectionality

As noted from the input of Asha Allen, European Women’s Lobby (EWL) Policy and Campaigns Officer, in a session on the theoretical framework of intersectionality (building a common understanding), intersectionality theory emerged from the black feminist theory. It originated in the work of black activists and feminists (such as the [Combahee River Collective](#)) and has been used widely in both social justice activist and scholarly work of Latina, post-colonial, queer and Indigenous scholars and activists. The term is coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, a feminist, critical legal and race scholar, and civil rights advocate, in 1989. As highlighted by Asha Allen, Crenshaw was analysing the intersection of race and gender, with a specific focus on the experiences of black women and girls in the education, economic, and prison systems. Intersectionality is approached from many different perspectives and might be understood as a theory, an approach to methodology, a paradigm, lens, or framework that can be applied in different settings: the education system, prison system, the legal system, etc.

Asha Allen presented an understanding of intersectionality as of an:

- analytical and theoretical framework for understanding the lived experiences of those subjected to multiple discrimination, and how they interact.
- approach to policy making and analysis:

“How we decide what and who we will advocate for, how we collect data, do we include in our analysis how political, social, and economic intersections impact the issue we are reviewing and advocating for?”

- approach to planning, designing, organisation, implementation, and evaluation of educational activities
- learning process that needs to be built in the foundations of social justice mobilisation.

Practically, in youth mobilisation, that means understanding and reflecting on the power dynamics between:

- Youth movement & political decision-makers
- Young women & young men movement leaders

- Experiences of ethnic minorities, LGBTQI persons, persons with disabilities, varying migration status, etc.

Key areas to reflect on regarding practical implications of applying an intersectional approach that can be taken from the input of Asha Allen are:

1. **Representation:** who speaks and advocates on the behalf of who? EWL chose to support and work with black women-led organisations and organisations that centre represented demographics. Asha Allen highlighted the importance of analysing data/information gathering: what is included in data gathering. Reflecting on data /information gathering and key recommendations developed based on them for the decision-makers and coalition-building with other organisations, practically means asking the questions: 'Are the diversity of experiences and lived realities included in data collection?', 'Is the data collected in a diverse way: who has contributed to that data collection?'. Moreover, reflecting on how are we going to take into consideration the range of experiences we are reviewing and will advocate for, and how societal, economic, and political intersections compound on that, is what applying intersectional lens requires.
2. **Capacity building.** For example, European Women's Lobby developed a training aimed at politically engaged women, as the research that EWL conducted from an intersectional framework¹ showed that women are disproportionately affected by online bullying and harassment (online gender-based violence), including politically engaged women, and especially politically engaged black women. EWL provided a capacity building in the context of the European elections in 2019. The training targeted specifically young women, who were thinking about becoming politically engaged, or were running for the first time for the elections, but also politically engaged women from a migrant background, or ethnic minority background. The training provided specific resources developed for them, as an additional step of support, because of an understanding of how different factors are compounding to their political engagement, understood from an intersectional perspective.
3. **Communication strategy** requires reflecting on the question: 'Whose voices do we choose to uplift and prioritize in our events/campaigns, etc?'" EWL prioritized key messages on the experiences of young politically engaged women and the impact they have on our democracies, because of the results of the research they conducted on online gender-based violence. This also includes identifying different stakeholders and decision-makers with whom cooperation needs to be established, and this is why an intersectional approach takes time and goes beyond an analysis of multiple minority identities.
4. **Commitment:** Are we committed to applying intersectional analysis in our work? According to Allen, EWL highlights the intersectional perspective in any space/event they participate in, both in terms of a theoretical framework and its application in data/information gathering and analysis, but also in elaborating why they chose to focus on specific demographics.
5. **Ownership:** According to Allen, EWL gave ownership of the campaign to its members whose capacities needed additional support. They specifically supported and worked with

¹ European Women's Lobby (EWL) report ["Mapping the State of Online Violence Against Women & Girls in Europe" \(2017\)](#).

black women lead organisations, and organisations that centre different represented demographics, so that the platform and visibility EWL has as a network, can be used for equal power-sharing and coalition-building, and bringing forward the voices of the organisations EWL chose to work with (black women lead organisations).

6. **Openness to learn:** This means learning to be adaptable and open to improvement. Leaving room to improve and deepen an analysis is important, as applying an intersectional approach is a learning process, which requires openness to challenge ourselves (our privileges, our approaches, methodologies, pre-conceived notions, etc), making sure we are reaching out to many diverse people as possible. That also means recognizing we can't be perfect in our application of intersectionality, but we can be committed to doing better, and recognizing when we didn't have time or resources, or opportunities to do an intersectional analysis to the extent we would like to, or it needed to be done.

How does intersectionality look like practically – an example with Roma communities

As pointed out by Georgina Laboda, Rapporteur on Roma Issues, at the Joint Council on Youth, the Roma community has been understood as a homogenous community in the past century. In reality, the Roma community is a heterogeneous community, and diversity within the community is present regarding languages that are spoken, age (youth is a key population that is often left without strategies), gender diversity (women, including trans women), sexuality diversity (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, etc), faith (Christian, Muslim, etc), (dis)ability, etc.

Roma youth in particular is not accepted as an intersectional community, while in reality, it is a community exposed to multiple discrimination.

As highlighted by Paula Eck-Walters from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), in her presentation on Intersectionality in the work of ECRI, some of the issues faced within Roma communities, particularly regarding Romani women, that ECRI has specifically addressed are:

- access to education of Romani women (due to intersection of gender and poverty, as presented in the Montenegro country report, 2017)
- access to healthcare of Romani women (intersection of ethnicity, gender, and poverty, as presented in Croatia country report, 2018)
- access to employment opportunities,

Moreover, Romani women have been facing diverse issues such as domestic violence, early marriages, forced sterilizations, human trafficking, problematic and stereotypical media representation, lack of political representation, socio-economic inequity (as reported by Oana Taba, from Roma and Travelers Team).

Intersectional invisibility

As highlighted by Oana Taba, from Roma and Travelers Team, there was a reluctance within Roma activism, to tackle issues Roma women face, such as domestic violence. On another side, there was a reluctance for white feminists led organisations to understand why mainstreaming an intersectional approach in strategies regarding Roma women is needed. Romani women were absent from the agenda of the feminist organisations lead by white non-Romani women.

As highlighted by Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit, LGBTQI Romani women have been absent from the agenda of the mainstream LGBTQI organisations across Europe.

Furthermore, speaking about LGBTQI people, Tsetsekou reminded us that LGBTQI people can be: men, women, gender non-binary, transgender, with disabilities, from an ethnic minority background, religious minority group, etc. The result of their intersecting and multiple marginalised identities is different access to rights.

Eleni Tsetsekou highlighted that transgender and gender non-binary people and issues they face can be targeted both by the feminist organisations promoting anti-gender diversity discourses (so-called TERFS: trans-exclusionary radical feminists) and so-called anti "gender ideology" movements which are usually conservative, populist movements.

Furthermore, as pointed by the Marijeta Mojašević, Rapporteur on mainstreaming disability issues, at the Joint Council on Youth, youth with disabilities can be a linguistic minority, persons of color, LGBTQI persons, migrants, refugees, from ethnic minorities, religious minorities, etc.

Faith-based organisations are often Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant). For example World Student Christian Federation- WSCF. They are inclusive of LGBTQI issues. The question posed by the participants working on Roma issues, to illustrate the need for an intersectional understanding of social exclusion, was: "Who do Romani Muslim women can reach out to?". Participants working in faith-based organisations shared that the Forum of Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (Femyso) works specifically with Muslim youth, but the question raised was are they inclusive of Roma women and present in different national and local contexts, therefore what are the sources of support for the marginalised within the marginalised communities.

The issue of intersectional invisibility was highlighted both by the guest speakers and the participants, and can be summed up with 3 reflection questions posed during the 3 days of the consultative meeting:

**Who is included in the decision-making processes regarding minority issues (Roma, LGBTQI, disability rights, refugee issues)?*

**Who is excluded and why?*

**Whose interests the youth organisation in question serves?*

** How are our power and privilege (coming from our social position and fitting in the predominant gender, ethnicity, skin color, dis/ability, faith, sexuality-related norms in the society, as well as roles within the youth organisations) shaping the way we interpret and evaluate the work of our organisation, its mission, vision, advocacy, programmes, events, and activities?*

Critically reflecting on these questions was understood as an aspect of applying the intersectional approach in practice.

Answering the question “Why is intersectionality important?”, Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit pointed that no group should advance at the expense of the other groups. Tsetsekou reminded us that by ignoring the intersectionality of discrimination, we become numbed by the dominant public discourses, mainstream media, and we favor some groups over the others, we perpetuate the hierarchy of discrimination. She also highlighted that it is important to remember we are dealing with the real pain and suffering of people in their real life. Working in the setting of an international organisation, that might be forgotten, according to Tsetsekou. By applying the intersectional approach, we become alert to different forms of discrimination. Practically, it means, she noted, communicating and acting to prevent discrimination of people in multiple fields. “We might have our field of expertise, but we can broaden the scope of our activities, reach out, and collaborate with colleagues, by reaching out from our comfort zone”, she said.

Examples of Intersectional Approach in the Work of the Council of Europe Bodies

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

Paula Eck-Walters from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), presented on Intersectionality in the work of ECRI, providing examples of how intersectionality is approached and understood in their work. ECRI is an independent human rights monitoring body of the Council of Europe in the field of combating racism and intolerance, created in 1993. It specializes in combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, and intolerance, including discrimination and intolerance towards LGBTIQI people. It covers all measures necessary to combat discrimination faced by people or groups of people, on grounds such as “race”, national/ethnic origin, skin colour, citizenship, religion and language, and intolerance (sexual orientation and gender identity are included in intolerance). It has one independent member for each Council of Europe member state and reports to the authorities with recommendations every 5/6 years.

The main activities of ECRI are:

- Country monitoring
- Work on general themes: General Policy Recommendations (GPR)
- Relations with civil society and Equality Bodies to combat racism and discrimination.

ECRI’s Work on General Themes involves the elaboration of General Policy Recommendations (RPGs) for assisting decision-makers in governments, parliaments, and other public bodies in the design and implementation of legislation and policy. General policy recommendations can be regarding: combating sexism, Roma people, Muslim people, antisemitism, hate-speech, migration, etc, and are approached from an intersectional perspective.

Examples of ECRI findings where gender and intersectional dimension were mainstreamed (fifth cycle reports):

NGOs in a country stated that the drop-out rate among Roma girls is higher due to early marriages. ECRI recognized that girls are particularly vulnerable in access to education due to the

intersectionality of gender and poverty and therefore, encouraged the authorities to take effective measures to combat gender stereotypes and prevent early marriages. In this respect, the Roma Strategy envisages a measure to this end (Objective 6.4) which should include gender-disaggregated data ([Montenegro country report, 2017](#)).

Similarly, concerns were expressed about Roma women continuing to face various obstacles in access to health care. Data suggest that 21% of Roma women have never had any health insurance, other than access to public support for expectant mothers. ECRI was informed that early marriages are still a phenomenon among Roma women, which is likely to lead to specific health issues. ECRI affirmed that Roma girls and women are particularly vulnerable to inadequate access to health care due to the intersectionality of ethnicity, gender, and poverty. It encouraged the authorities to place greater focus on these issues ([Croatia country report, 2018](#)).

Regarding the intersection of gender, religion, and migration, particularly referring to Muslim women refugees being subjected to racist violence for wearing visible religious symbols, ECRI's [Romania country report \(2019\)](#) can be consulted.

Roma and Travelers Team

As stated by Oana Taba from Roma and Travelers Team, intersectionality is embedded in the work of the Roma and Travelers Team, particularly regarding gender, ethnicity, age, social and economic status, which altogether come into play when Roma communities are concerned.

Oana Taba highlighted the findings of the [Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey](#) (FRA, 2016), regarding the situation Roma youth faces. As reported, on average, 63 % of Roma youth aged 16-24 were not employed, or in education or training at the time of the survey, compared with the 12 % EU average on the NEET rate for the same age group. For this age group, the results also show a considerable gender gap, with 72 % of young Roma women not employed, in education or training, compared with 55 % of young Roma men.

The Council of Europe contributes to the mainstreaming of Roma and Traveller gender equality issues within the [Council of Europe Strategy for Gender Equality 2018-2023](#). It promotes the empowerment of Roma and Traveller women in all spheres, addresses reproductive rights, domestic violence, early marriages, and human trafficking within Roma and Traveller communities. Practically, the Council of Europe organizes every two years [an International Roma Women's Conference](#) on thematic priorities established in co-operation with Roma and Traveller women's organisations and, where relevant, with the competent authorities of the host country. International Roma Women's conference has been happening since 2007. It presents an opportunity for Roma women to address and present issues affecting them in an international setting. These conferences end up with policy recommendations, which are further used in national contexts, where Roma women are involved with local organisations.

Among the topics raised at these conferences are the following: Romani women's rights, combating trafficking, reproductive rights, forced sterilizations, Roma access to public health care, perceptions of Roma women in the media, early marriages, entrepreneurship, and economic empowerment, access to education for girls, sexual diversity, community mobilisation, active

citizenship, mainstreaming of gender in the national Roma integration strategies, political representation.

Another example of applying intersectionality in the programmatic work, is [Roma Women Access to Justice – JUSTROM3](#), a joint programme between the European Union and the Council of Europe, focusing on addressing multiple discrimination and improving access to justice of Roma women in four different countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy.

The project is a bridge between the Roma communities and existing services and structures. It provides initial support in legal education for Roma women. It aims to have a core group of Roma women community leaders in each JUSTROM location who are in a position to meet, discuss, present their issues and receive advice from representatives of Equality Bodies with the support of representatives of local administration or local civil society.

The objectives of the programme are:

- Empowerment of Roma women through increasing their awareness about discrimination, complaint mechanisms, the justice system, and human rights institutions/equality bodies
- Enhancement of professional resources
- Increasing synergies and partnerships

The first aim, *Empowerment of Roma women*, contains several steps in the empowerment process: mentoring sessions for young Roma women to become community leaders and take initiative to represent their communities; community outreach events and activities organized by Roma women community leaders; info days with municipalities or other local actors; regular meetings between Roma women community leaders and municipality representatives as a platform of exchange to mediate concrete issues Roma women face and further inform both parties. Meetings of Roma women community leaders and Equality bodies - national meetings are held in each country of implementation. Together with other objectives, this programme seeks to increase access to justice for Roma women, by addressing multiple discrimination.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit (SOGI)

According to Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit (SOGI), in 2014 when SOGI Unit was established, intersectionality was a key issue to implement in different activities aiming to promote equality of LGBTQI persons. All young persons can be impacted by discrimination on a SOGIESC basis (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics), from childhood, from stereotyping about toys the child is playing with, onwards. This discrimination is systemic, cumulative, and accompanied by other discriminations regarding gender equality, body shaming, disability, religion, citizenship, ethnic background, etc, according to Tsetsekou.

That is why, as she highlighted, the SOGI unit needs to implement intersectionality in and across all their actions. They started working with Roma issues, specifically Roma women, and Roma LBT women, as it was noticeable that Roma LGBTQI people were absent from the agenda of LGBTQI organisations in Europe, the same way Roma women were absent from the agenda of feminist organisations. Tsetsekou reminded that in the 90s when Roma women were sterilized by the states, feminist organisations remained silent. She concluded that if we don't apply the intersectional approach, these communities are left out and isolated by the mainstream organisations. The same applies to LGBTQI people, according to Tsetsekou. Covid-19 pandemic showed that the pandemic can increase the suffering of LGBTQI people as young LGBTQI people

might be forced to share the household with their families, where they often already suffer violence in the family environment because of being LGBTQI.

Being LGBTQI and belonging to the national, ethnic, religious minority group, and being of another minority status, means there is different access to rights. Due to racism, homophobia, xenophobia, racism. The more closed the community is, the chances are higher that a person with multiple minority identities will be exposed to psychological and emotional violence, even in the family environment. Tsetsekou pointed out that this violence often stays unreported to the public, the mainstream human rights organisations, and the Council of Europe. She concluded the most invisible among the invisible are LGBTQI minorities, and this is the reason why SOGI Unit focuses on working with them, on issues they are facing.

She highlighted that we are facing a dangerous discourse from the anti-gender (diversity) movements, which has implications on policies in member states, and policy recommendations, but also how grassroots organisations see human rights implications. For example, the advocacy efforts of the transgender community to access legal recognition of their gender identity so they can access services in society (employment, education, affirmative healthcare, etc) are hindered by some feminist organisations who perceive this advocacy work of the transgender community as a threat and might organize against it. Tsetsekou concluded that this antagonism that some organisations working on equity have cannot be the acceptable approach anymore, because of the shared cause: human rights affirmation and protection. She concluded that we need to work together, within an intersectional framework.

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration and Refugees

As presented by Janeta Hanganu, from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration and Refugees (SRSG), refugee and migrant children face specific challenges. Migrant and refugee children are first and foremost children, and then the refugees. They may have had experiences involving violence, exploitation, and trauma, and are at the risk of violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. This is especially so for those who are not accompanied or have been separated from their families.

They face specific challenges in comparison with non-migrant children, and also different challenges from adult migrants. Policy makers usually, lawyers as well, compare a young person to a young person, but by calling for an intersectional approach, we can have better understanding how these components interact together, and define access to rights of young refugees.

In this context the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted a Recommendations on supporting young refugees in their transition to adulthood. Young refugees are among the most vulnerable groups, as they may have had experiences involving violence, exploitation and trauma, and the risk of violation of their human rights and fundamental freedoms continues. This is especially so for those who are not accompanied or have been separated from their families. This policy aims at ensuring that young refugees receive additional temporary support after the age of 18 to enable them to access their rights, and at recognising and strengthening the role of youth work and the youth sector in promoting better access to these rights, including through their work to build social cohesion and inclusion. They also invite the governments to give due consideration to the specific needs and situations of young women and of young men in the implementation of the guidelines.

Janeta Hanganu proposed a metaphor for understanding intersectionality as a birdcage: there are many wires, connected in a particular way. If we look at discrimination from the aspect of one wire, we can't understand what is preventing the bird from flying, because the barrier is not only one wire. According to Hanganu, the intersectional approach is inviting us to have this view of the cage and start to dismantle the wires, without believing it is just one wire that is an issue. Examples of Council of Europe's policy documents pertinent to the issue of migration presented by Janeta Hanganu are in the following paragraph on the intersectional approach in the policy field.

Intersectionality in the work of the European Commissioner for Human Rights

The Office of the Commissioner has not addressed intersectionality as a stand alone issue, but it appears as an issue in different position papers, recommendations and documents. The Commissioner's [Position Paper on Fighting school segregation in Europe through inclusive education](#) is useful as a document which can be relevant for building understanding about practical aspects of intersectionality. The [Issue Paper on Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Europe](#) and the [Issue Paper on Protecting the right to health through inclusive and resilient health care for all](#) also address intersectionality in some aspects. Furthermore, there are some examples in country work, e.g. the Commissioner's [Report on Romania \(2019\)](#), which touches upon institutional discrimination against Roma women who are victims of domestic violence. Lastly, although it does not deal in particular with intersectionality, the Commissioner's recommendation "[Unboxing artificial intelligence: 10 steps to protect human rights](#)" could be brought to the participants' attention for their discussions on intersectionality and human rights.

Examples of Intersectional Approach in Policies of the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe has adopted recommendations on supporting young refugees in their transition to adulthood. As presented by Janeta Hanganu, from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration and Refugees, [the Action Plan 2017-2019 on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children](#) focused on the intersection of age and migration status. This action plan advocated for a child-protection approach. The policy guideline is intersectional in regards to the intersection of youth and migration, because it focuses on the specific group of young people, as they face specific challenges in comparison with non-migrant children, and also different challenges from adult migrants. In 2019, the Council of Europe adopted [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2019\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood](#), which are the guidelines for the governments of the member states to support young refugees in their transition to adulthood. These guidelines aim to ensure that young refugees receive additional temporary support after the age of 18 to enable them to access their rights, and to recognise and strengthen the role of youth work and the youth sector in promoting better access to rights, including through their work to build social cohesion and inclusion.

Therefore, as refugee and migrant children face specific challenges, in 2020 a new policy document was developed: [Action Plan on the protection of the vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum in Europe, 2021-2025](#). Janeta Hanganu expressed her hopes that it will be a truly intersectional document to help states identify, screen, and refer migrants and asylum seekers, and have an understanding of their vulnerabilities. The Action Plan is currently discussed within the Committee of Ministers.

Hanganu pointed out that the Gender Equality Commissioner is developing a new [Draft Recommendation on migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking women](#), to address the issues that women face as refugees and migrants.

The [Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy](#) (2018-2023) explicitly affirms an intersectional approach to gender, by stating:

“Intersectional discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, among others, disproportionately marginalises particular groups of women”(p.11).

Marine Kurtanidze, Gender Equality Rapporteur, at the Joint Council on Youth, and Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit have both highlighted that gender needs to be understood beyond the gender binary (man and woman), so that transgender and gender non-binary people can be included in gender mainstreaming on the policy level, in action plans, and strategies, but also on the practical level of planning, designing, organizing, facilitating, and evaluating educational activities in the youth field.

As pointed out by Georgina Laboda, Rapporteur on Roma Issues, at the Joint Council on Youth, strategies have to recognize the different needs of groups within the Roma communities. It is not enough to include Roma youth, they have to be included in the decision-making processes about themselves. Joint Council of Youth has established a [Task force on Roma Youth Participation](#), which produced recommendations for meaningful Roma youth active participation, as well as [Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025](#).

As Marijeta Mojašević, Rapporteur on mainstreaming disability issues, at the Joint Council on Youth stated, the [Council of Europe Disability Strategy \(2017-2023\)](#) approaches disability from an intersectional perspective, stating that (p.15):

“Many persons with disabilities are at risk of multiple and/or intersecting forms of discrimination and segregation from the society due to their specific situations (e.g. financial or educational status, living or housing arrangement, level of assistance needed, disability or combination of multiple disabilities, etc.) or to certain grounds (e.g., race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, birth, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or other status).”

Challenges and Questions regarding applying and mainstreaming intersectionality

During the consultative meeting, both in plenary sessions and in small working groups, participants shared challenges and raised questions regarding applying the intersectional approach, and uncertainty about what it really means, theoretically and practically and how it can be mainstreamed. They were discussed and elaborated by the guest speakers and participants of this consultative meeting representing youth organisations that have been applying the intersectional approach in their work for several years. This section will present the most commonly shared challenges and questions regarding understanding and applying intersectionality and shared responses to them.

Intersectionality is about the hierarchy of discrimination. It perpetuates the competition between the minority groups regarding who suffers more.

As argued by Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit "by ignoring the intersectionality of discrimination, we become numbed by the dominant public discourses, mainstream media, and we favor some groups over the others, we perpetuate the hierarchy of discrimination. No group should advance at the expense of the other. We are dealing with the real pain and suffering of people in their real life. We tend to forget that when we work with international organisations." Furthermore, Janeta Hanganu, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration and Refugees added that "privileged groups have this feeling that intersectionality is stealing something from them. We need to re-affirm that intersectionality is about bringing those who are invisible and excluded...bringing them up."

Intersectionality increases the focus on the singular issues and might prevent solidarity, alliance building, and common work.

Some of the participants shared that the question posed is how can we promote equality while tackling the issue of difference? It is similar to discussing interculturality: and the answer is celebrating differences. So the question is "How can we promote both at the same time?" Furthermore, it was agreed that "intersectional approach means alliance-building, finding common issues, and reaching out to the marginalised within the marginalised communities. By doing that we make space in our work for the marginalised within the marginalised, we are being more inclusive, and we work in solidarity."

Can applying an intersectional approach be counterproductive? It might be dangerous and unsafe for some people to be included and visible? Sometimes people are not ready to include other minorities?

The European Union of the Deaf Youth (EUDY) presented their work explaining that it is important not to label individuals. "We are entitled to label the group we want to identify, work with, and reach out to. It is up to them to decide if and how they want to proceed. We want to make sure that there are people that represent their own identities, ethnicities, experiences. But we don't label whose those issues are. An individual cannot represent the whole community. We must

understand that individuals might belong to a certain minority group, but have different experiences among each other, based on their culture, of where they are coming from. We need to explore these multiple levels, and how they interact: the group level and the individual level.”

Furthermore the participants shared that it is possible to *always find somebody who is ready and to reach out to these people*. As added by Eleni Tsetsekou “Roma LGBTQI people, as we know they are invisible by the mainstream LGBTQI organisations, and also within their Roma communities. Our role was to make this link. I think it is the responsibility of the mainstream organisations, to reach out to the most vulnerable minorities. The feminist, the women’s movement, I think they have the responsibility to what is happening to Roma women, because they closed their eyes. And Roma women would not reach out to them by themselves. They don’t have this capacity.” More on Roma LGBTQI people can be found in Barabaripen, a publication of the Council of Europe’s Youth Sector where Young Roma speak about multiple discrimination.

If we invite other minority groups and make our work inclusive of them, do we still keep the main mission of our organisation?

The answer to such questions can simply be that everyone might have their field of expertise, but it is possible to broaden the scope of their activities, reach out and collaborate with colleagues, by reaching out from their comfort zone. By doing that everyone can make space in their work for the marginalised within the marginalised. Janeta Hanganu further argued that *“when working on migration, people are not their migration status, but migration status determines their life and the ways they are exposed to discrimination. States find it complicated because we are used to thinking in simple terms: if there is a race problem, we should address it, if there is a gender problem, we should address it, but intersectionality is inviting us to open up for nuances.”*

The youth organisations also have different experiences and contributions to share. Dragana Jovanovska from OBESSU explained that for their work “it is crucial to foster collaborations between different organisations working on specific youth and minority issues. We worked with ENIL, for example. It started as an idea of inclusion of young people with disabilities and different abilities in the work of the school student unions, and then the focus shifted to how to make it more visible on the national level with decision-makers. So we collaborated with ENIL, but through communication and collaboration, we became the expert actors on youth issues who participated in policy advocacy.”

Different organisations and movements might understand and apply intersectionality differently. Is it an elusive concept, difficult to apply practically with a shared, common understanding of what it means?

For Eleni Tsetsekou this is not “a matter of conceptual understanding, but taking action, and reaching out to the isolated communities. Having an inclusive approach. Sometimes different groups are working in their own field to promote human rights, without taking into considerations that other minority groups might have similar battles, and if we put them together, we can have a bigger impact.” Further to this, a participant reflected that “if people in different countries and regions call things differently and need different categories, we do not impose a common language on them. We understand this diversity as an asset, as a learning opportunity. We try to make sure everyone can understand them and learn about them, but not to enforce common categories on participants.”

Putting different minority groups together in a conference, training, or a study session can reinforce the stereotypes. I have seen it happening in the past. Intersectionality can be difficult to handle, practically. It might be safer for the participants if we focus on specific issues so that we avoid putting them in uncomfortable positions.

The responses from the participants were quite diverse, and presented a good basis for further work on this question. They identified ENIL's work as an example of good practice. "They have a list of access needs, and when we organize events together we don't assume anyone access needs. We ask people what they need and what should be done in the case of specific access needs. Instead of assuming based on stereotypes and prejudices, we just ask them." Another participant added "when we organize an event and educational activities, our team is comprised of different people, of different identities, and lived experiences, and the trainers team needs to know how to work on issues of diversity. We invite trainers who are trained to tackle diversity issues, facilitate the conversations on challenging topics, and who know how to act and facilitate the group process when emotions are involved, especially uncomfortable emotions that come with understanding one's own privileges. Not all organisations have access to these trainers, especially the trainers who work on advanced issues such as personal and community development. Or to the pools of trainers. This is why capacity building on how to apply intersectionality and deal with uncomfortable topics and emotions is important."

Some other examples shared include:

1. In the programme of our organisation, we have integrated mentoring time. Very often peer educators are not expected to be great experts, we mentor them to become one. We cannot expect the person from the Secretariat to be an expert in everything. We compiled a list of things that can potentially go wrong and answers to them, it is like a go-to manual. Also, we have established a group of contacts, from the pool of trainers, or alumni and they are the ones you can call when the situation happens when you don't know how to react to."
2. We all need internal policies to outline what exactly to pay attention to regarding practically applying intersectionality. For example, the need to have the diverse Board of the organisation, which reflects different parts of our community. It is important that minorities within the minorities are represented at the decision-making table. That way, we don't encounter issues regarding diversity at our events only, these discussions are present at our internal meetings, and embedded in the decision-making processes. Also, it might be useful for a Board to have a coach who coaches the board through different processes."
3. International umbrella organisations need to introduce the topic of intersectionality to the membership. Because if the membership does not have diverse representation in their decision-making bodies and processes, then the umbrella organisation will have only certain people of certain more privileged identities coming to the events. So, as an umbrella organisation, we need to work with our membership so they can understand how is representation in the position of power and decision-making connected to bringing the issues of minority people forward.

Regarding the last point, as highlighted by Berill Baranyai, Youth Rapporteur in Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM), the problem lies in the fact that sometimes marginalised communities don't recognize their situation and discrimination as intersectional discrimination. They often understand that the main issue is, for example, being Roma. Baranyai pointed out the need to involve them actively to combat this intersectional discrimination and its invisibility, not only racial discrimination but to include many different issues Roma communities might face (Roma women, Roma LGBTQI youth, Roma youth of different faith, disabled Roma youth, etc).

These were some of the key questions raised during this consultative meeting around understanding and applying an intersectional approach in the youth field. The following chapter focuses on the examples of good practice from the youth field regarding applying the intersectional approach.

Chapter 3: Intersectionality in practice

Spyros Papadatos, Bureau member of the Advisory Council on Youth highlighted that the Council of Europe and various youth organisations and civil society stakeholders have been putting efforts in recognizing the value of intersectionality and adopting an intersectional approach aiming to tackle multiple forms of discrimination, and striving toward more just and equal societies. Papadatos provided examples of youth organisations policy papers on intersectionality: [European Youth Forum's policy paper on Equality and Non-Discrimination](#), [IGLYO's position paper on Intersectionality](#), [AEGEE's position paper on Intersectionality and Policy-making](#).

Moreover, during this consultative meeting, participants have shared numerous examples from the youth field regarding applying intersectionality in practice (in youth work, youth policy, and capacity building (training)). Examples of the specific educational activities, tools, and approaches based on the intersectionality that can be applied in youth work and training in the youth field have been shared. The following paragraphs outline the main input from the participants regarding this. The list of useful resources developed by youth organisations, such as guidelines, toolkits, manuals, is in Chapter 5.

[European Union of the Deaf Youth \(EUDY\)](#) shared their commitment to applying an intersectional framework in the practice of their organisation's work.

As their representatives elaborated, deaf and hard of hearing youth is a linguistic minority within youth minority. As highlighted by Grace Quinn-Nealon, EUDY is committed to applying an intersectional approach in their work, because deaf and hard of hearing youth are a heterogeneous community that faces barriers to accessing rights in different settings, such as educational settings, and have lesser access to opportunities in society and within the education, specifically. They might face discrimination from the wider society, but also from their families, related to communication. Moreover, as deaf and hard of hearing youth is diverse, because deaf youth can be LGBTQI, of different ethnic backgrounds, different skin color, migration status, etc., the need was identified within EUDY to focus on specific issues that need to be tackled.

Specifically, EUDY wanted to explore and learn more about the barriers deaf youth faces regarding being deaf and LGBTQI, and/or being a person of color, as it is a multiple discrimination

experience. To understand issues better, identify common topics and barriers to accessing rights and opportunities, explore ways of tackling them, and advocate better, EUDY has established two working groups:

- **EDYoo**: LGBTQ+ working group working on tackling barriers regarding being deaf and being LGBTQI, as there are not many associations working on the intersection of being deaf and LGBTQI, and
- **BIPOC**: BIPOC focus group focusing on the intersection of being deaf and a person of color.

As Lydia Mendes from the EUDY BIPOC working group highlighted, being deaf and a person of color living in a predominantly white society, means simultaneously living in two different worlds. Being a deaf person of color, and going to a deaf school in the predominantly white community, means sometimes being the only deaf person of color in that community. For a young person that can furthermore mean, living with a feeling of "not fitting in" in the school environment, in the youth camps, but also deaf community events, because the same way that in the Black community, a young person can be singled out as deaf, in the White community, they can be singled out as deaf and a person of color.

Lydia provided an account of her experience of working with the deaf community, with youth from Africa and Latin America, and realizing they face similar experiences, which are not discussed in their communities. They organized a webinar on the intersection of being deaf and the Black Lives Matter movement. As a result, they set up a BIPOC focus group within EUDY aiming to include the community of deaf youth of color more, find data, and shared lived experiences. As Lydia pointed out, identifying shared experiences increases the confidence of young deaf activists of color, and enables them to identify with each other, with the cause, and to actively engage with their movement. In that sense, intersectionality is also understood as a framework for community organizing.

[Phiren Amenca](#), is an International network of Roma and non-Roma volunteers and voluntary service organisations, working on non-formal education, advocacy on the national and international level, regarding the inclusion of Roma issues in the mainstream policies and as in Roma-specific policies.

Study session "[Volunteering as a Tool for Roma Youth Participation](#)" organized at the EYCB in 2018, was pointed out by the organisation's representative Anna Daroczi present at this consultative meeting, as an example of good practice, as an intersectional approach was an important element of training participants to work with the volunteers.

A concrete example of educational activity during this study session that was designed based on intersectional approach, is a session that used [Barabaripen](#), a publication of the Council of Europe regarding stories of lived experiences of Roma young people who face multiple discrimination. Participants were distributed in groups and asked to read one story per group and dissect it from an intersectional perspective, because these experiences could not be attributed to one category of the identity of the person.

This study session had parallel workshops on children's rights, LGBTQI rights, religious freedoms, women's equality, etc. After the parallel sessions, participants came back together and discussed how people in many of these minority within the minority groups experience power imbalances.

[The European Liberal Youth \(LYMEC\)](#) is a pan-European liberal youth Organisation. An example of good practice shared by the representative of the organisation, Lucasta Bath regarding the intersectionality of gender, is the upcoming event - Young Liberal Women Summit, which is inclusive of trans and gender non-conforming people. The Summit aims to promote diversity and inclusion, along with an intersectional approach, with the focus on overcoming barriers young women and women of all ages are facing in politics.

[World Student Christian Federation- Europe Region](#) (WSCF Europe) is part of a global federation of grassroots Student Christian Movements (SCMs). These local organisations work on campuses and nationally to bring Christian students from all denominations together to work on issues of social justice. It gathers Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic university students together to talk about issues of gender justice; solidarity and advocacy; culture and higher education and theology. As Marta Sappe Griot, a representative of the organisation present at this consultative meeting highlighted, the organisation's way of work creates spaces and empowers people of faith who are at also at the same time feminists or LGBTQIA+ persons. By gathering a diverse range of students and speakers the faith-based organisations such as WSCF are also promoting inclusion and dialogue with and within their membership, through an intersectional approach. An example of good practice they shared regarding the intersection of faith and LGBTQI issues is a study session "[Let's talk about Sexuality: The Explosive Power of Taboo Subjects](#)" organized at the EYCB in 2016.

[Institute for the Deaf of Turin Onlus Foundation \(Istituto dei Sordi di Torino Fondazione Onlus\)](#) shared their work on the intersection on the migration-disability axes. The Institute offers sign language courses for deaf adults mainly aimed at foreign deaf people. Therefore, their beneficiaries are adults, who are deaf, and foreigners, and are exposed to language learning after the end of the critical period for the development of the language.

As Andre K.J. Ebouaney Mbime, a representative of the Institute present at this consultancy meeting shared, the Institute faces many complexities in their work, which are relevant from an intersectional perspective, such as:

- different people might use different sign languages, so there is a need to find a common way to communicate
- cultural conflicts between the deaf migrants coming from different cultures
- lack of the linguistic basis (some people haven't finished formal education in their home countries)
- use of international sign language and ASL
- Bureaucratic issues. For example, in Italy, people receive a certificate that proves they are deaf, in their youth. Migrants don't have this certificate, as their deafness was not proved in Italy, which impacts their access to opportunities and services in Italy.

The Institute provides training activities for the deaf adults who are migrants: Italian language (basic and advance), basic English for tourism and study, and Italian Deaf sign language.

All these examples show that intersectionality both as a concept and an approach, is within the scope of work of the youth organisations working on different minority issues. Although many participants identified the need to learn more about theoretical and practical dimensions of intersectionality, examples provided during this consultancy meeting show there is an experiential basis for that learning, as representatives of the youth sector are already engaged in learning by doing regarding intersectionality. The following chapter will outline the main areas of application of intersectionality in the youth field, as well as the main barriers, and shared identified areas for improvement.

Some other examples mentioned online included the connection with the European Network of Equality Bodies ([Equinet](#)) and for instance, their work on "[Horizontal issues](#)". There are resources available at regional level which address practical issues such as whether the criminal legislation allows national authorities to apply an intersectional approach (e.g. ENAR's [brief](#) published in 2020). At EU level there is also a [Guidance Note](#) (2018) on the application of the Council Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia which requires authorities to "be able to identify the protected characteristic(s) on account of which the crime was perpetrated, including where these may be multiple or intersectional."

Another shared example on gender equality included the UN Women's work on intersectionality, in the Balkans which is summarised in the following publication: [Leaving no one behind | Changingminds \(implementingnormschangingminds.com\)](#)

Chapter 4: Applying intersectionality in the youth field

This chapter provides an overview of the key ideas, conclusions, recommendations and proposals, shared during this consultative meeting, specifically regarding the areas of application of intersectionality in the youth field, areas for improvement in further work on applying the intersectional approach, as proposed by the participants of this consultative meeting, as well as a summary of the reflections and answers to the questions posed during breakout group work and the plenary discussions.

Applying intersectionality in practice – what does it mean?

Discussing the areas of application of the intersectional approach in the youth field, participants of this consultative meeting focused on several areas, such as: the content of capacity building activities; the methodology of non-formal education; representation in decision-making and in the leadership positions; advocacy and communication strategy; transversal application within an organisation, including the organisational regulations, and cooperation among and between youth social justice movements, and stakeholders. Each of these areas is elaborated in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Content of the capacity-building activities

As highlighted by the participants, intersectionality can be applied in terms of the content of the seminars, conferences, training courses, and study sessions, that focus on multiple minority issues that specific youth minorities might face, as detailed in Chapter 3 of this report (for example, focusing on the intersection of being an LGBTQI person, and person of faith). In that sense, intersectionality is understood as an analytical framework for understanding the lived experiences of those subjected to multiple discrimination, and how they interact.

For example, Kurt Löwenstein Education Center usually starts its week-long training courses with an introductory 3 hours session on safer spaces, educational values, acceptance, respect, and intersectionality.

There was a common agreement among the participants regarding the need for capacity-building opportunities on understanding the intersectional approach (training courses, seminars, study sessions). Participants shared the need to learn more about the theoretical, historical background of intersectionality, and ways it can be applied in different youth contexts, so that shared examples of good practice can inspire their work.

They also shared it would be helpful if the formal educational curriculum would be more inclusive and intersectional, so that the non-formal education and youth work could build upon that. Participants stated it would be beneficial if intersectionality as a topic is included in the multicultural education in teachers' education programmes (formal teacher training).

On a practical level, there are many useful guidelines and information available which can inspire the youth field to apply an intersectional approach such as the [manual on promoting Accessibility](#) in the Education and Training programme and the [guidelines on gender equality](#) in intercultural youth activities. A lot of inspiration on addressing multiple discrimination can be found also in the Compass, Manual for Human Rights Education with young people, in Chapter 5: [Human Rights Themes](#), especially the sections on discrimination and intolerance, disability and disablism, gender, migration, and poverty.

The methodology of non-formal education

Intersectionality is also applied as a framework or a lens to review the methodology of non-formal education in all stages of the process of organizing educational activities. Understood as a lens, a framework, it is not seen as a parallel process with what we do, but as the commitment to checking in along the way to make sure everyone is on board, reflecting on the barriers and obstacles to participation, inclusion, and representation, and finding ways to overcome them. This process is learner-centered, based on the dignity of each person, freedom of thought, and respect for others' experiences. Practically, this means asking critical questions at every stage of the process of organizing an educational event, from planning, designing, organisation, and implementation, to evaluation of educational activities.

Regarding the ***planning stage*** of organizing educational activities, the participants shared examples of how they apply intersectional approach though:

- *Call for events* that specifically mention that the event will welcome and be inclusive and affirmative of the experiences of different minority youth groups: youth facing racism and xenophobia, faith-based organisations, LGBTQI people, youth with disabilities, etc.

Participants highlighted that the call for applications needs to explicitly state that these experiences are understood from an intersectional perspective, and the multiple minority groups are welcome to apply, otherwise minority youth groups that are used to experiencing social exclusion and/or stigmatization might not relate to the call, or might not understand the event is for them and is affirmative of their lived experiences and realities.

- *Application forms* that offer the participants the possibility to state their gender identity outside of the gender binary (as an open box answer), ask for access needs of the participants rather than assuming them, asking what should be done regarding them. Moreover, as pointed out application forms shall provide a space for participants to state if they want (optional) their other possible minority identities or barriers they face that impact their access to rights and opportunities, so they can altogether be taken into account when organizing an event.
- *Selection of participants* should be balanced and reflect: gender balance (including outside of the gender binary: trans and gender diverse people), geographical balance, (dis)ability representation and inclusion, minority ethnic, religious representation, etc.
- *The preparation team* of the event should be composed of trainers of different identities who work with different minorities within the communities in question, so that diverse experiences and realities are represented and reflected in the content of the educational activity, advocacy project, or any other activity or event.

In the **event facilitation, organisation** stage, the participants highlighted that the content of the event (study session, training course, conference, advocacy event) should reflect diverse experiences, needs, and take into account the barriers faced by (minority) youth, understood as a heterogeneous community that is present at the event. That means providing examples of the living experiences outside of the normative, and without simplification, and stereotypical representation, for example, talking about issues that hard of hearing and deaf youth faces, especially if they are also persons of colour and LGBTQI; providing examples of non-traditional families (so-called rainbow families), etc.

Participants have highlighted the need for the usage of an inclusive and accessible language that does not stigmatize different minority communities. That includes asking participants for their pronouns at the beginning of the educational activities and in the application forms, along with their access needs. It was also pointed out that academic language is not accessible and relatable to minority groups and the general population. Therefore, they recommended the use of inclusive, accessible language when intersectionality is being discussed.

In the **event evaluation** stage, applying intersectionality can be understood as reflecting and answering critical questions:

"Whom did this event serve?"

"Who was included and who was excluded and why?"

"What can be done in the future so that those who are excluded can be brought forward?"

An *ongoing self-reflection* was understood as a crucial part of applying an intersectional approach practically, according to Asha Allen from the European Women's Lobby. That means understanding that applying intersectionality is a learning process that needs to be built in the foundations of social justice mobilisation. Applying an intersectional approach requires cultivating

the openness to learn: learning to be adaptable and open to improvement, and openness to challenge ourselves (our privileges, our approaches, methodologies, pre-conceived notions, etc). Practically this means reflecting on the question:

“How are our power and privilege (coming from our social position, gender, ethnicity, skin color, dis/ability, faith, sexuality, role within the organisation, etc.) shaping the way we interpret and evaluate the work of our organisation, its mission, vision, advocacy, programmes, events, and activities?”

The participants focused significantly on discussing what intersectionality practically means when applied to designing the content of educational activities, eg. when applied as an **approach to methodology**, a lens through which non-formal education is approached. They shared examples of existing toolkits on applying intersectional lenses in non-formal education (list of resources provided in Chapter 5 of this report), and have identified a lack of resources (toolkits, manuals, guidelines) on the topic as a barrier to mainstreaming intersectionality.

Participants have highlighted several times during the consultative meeting that they identified the need for adapting the existing and specifically creating new **publications**, such as toolkits, and manuals that specifically outline how to design intersectional educational activities, because currently, they are lacking. Moreover so, taking into account that very often in many member states, educational materials, including school books include mostly examples of normative lived experiences (binary gender identities, families with two heterosexual parents of different genders, able-bodied people, white people, etc.), not necessarily reflecting the diversity of the lived experiences. Participants pointed out that educational toolkits and materials in non-formal and human rights education need to provide examples of diverse identities and realities, and to reflect on multiple identities, to fill that gap, therefore providing further learning opportunities.

Participants of this consultative meeting also identified the lack of **accessibility** as a barrier to applying the intersectional approach in the youth field. They pointed out the importance of accessibility, both of facilities and events, but especially in times of the global pandemic, when most of them are facilitated in an online learning environment. Assisted such as providing subtitles and captions (on Zoom for example) are more affordable than hiring interpreters of the sign language (in case the project budget cannot cover the costs of hiring the interpreters). Moreover, participants highlighted that programmes, publications, videos, social media content, and research conducted by the organisation need to be accessible and represent diverse realities of youth that is a heterogeneous and intersectional community.

Regarding the methodology of non-formal and human rights educational activities, participants of this consultative meeting have identified the need for capacity-building opportunities on applying an intersectional lens to designing non-formal educational activities (training courses, seminars). Furthermore, they specifically mentioned the need to improve knowledge, skills, and competencies regarding how to navigate and facilitate the group process when privilege and power dynamics are being discussed, and uncomfortable topics and emotions emerge. They agreed that opening up for an intersectional understanding of oppression, discrimination, and resulting lived experiences of social exclusion, and possible social stigmatization requires specific knowledge, skills, and competencies from the trainers and mentors. This specifically refers to the question of how to affirm different realities and experiences, deal with participants’ triggers regarding the issues of privilege and power dynamics within the youth movement, and facilitate the learning process that holds space for processing uncomfortable emotions and issues that might come up when intersectionality is discussed and applied.

An example regarding the organisation's internal discussion in regards to applying feminist principles when discussing privilege, power, and power-sharing, was shared. Some organisations don't start discussing the power and privilege by tackling right away the unconscious bias. When it comes to power-sharing, as suggested by Asha Allen, it is more important to open up the discussion about feelings, how we feel when we open these discussions. She called it a sharing circle. It is suggested that if we focus first on emotions, validating people's lived experiences and realities, and understanding where power imbalances are coming from, chances are higher that the resistance towards discussing intersectionality will be lower, rather than if we focus on tackling unconscious biases in a capacity-building manner, through training, as a first step. Sharing circle might be a useful exercise in this process, as a power-sharing check-in on an ongoing basis, as well as a conflict resolution exercise.

Representation in the decision-making and leadership positions

"People have to be included in the decision-making on their lives. So instead of a couple of us sitting together and discussing Roma issues relevant for the Roma Integration strategy and Youth Strategy, we invite them to contribute as experts. This is how we approach policy work." Anna Daroczi, Phiren Amencia International Network

The participants of the consultative meeting shared an understanding of applying the intersectional approach as the "Nothing for us without us" approach. They have raised the question "Who speaks on the behalf of whom?", which means being reflective of who (which identities and whose realities) is represented in the organisations' decision-making positions and processes, including the Board, preparation teams of the events, experts invited to speak, etc.

Participants highlighted the need to reflect on the questions: *" Are we diverse enough regarding leadership position, membership, activities? If not, what are the barriers? If the membership of the international organisation is not diverse, why is that so? Who is allowed to speak and whose presence, input, and lived realities are lacking? What can be done about that? "*

With regards to the issue of representation in the decision-making and leadership positions, including youth advocacy, participants have highlighted the importance of including people of different genders (women, non-binary, transgender), different ethnic background, skin color, and abilities, in the preparation team of the educational activities. The participants noted there is a lack of presence of the key populations in the decision-making processes at the event organisation level, policy level, and organisational structural level, more broadly in the decision-making positions within youth organisations and youth movement (executive board, for example). Therefore, they called for active involvement and participation of the demographics whose issues are being discussed in the decision-making processes regarding them, posing a question "Who speaks on the behalf of who?". Participants highlighted that ensuring the diverse array of representation in the Executive Board and preparation teams, is connected to **advocacy** and outreach work. Representation itself will attract the attention of people who identify with one or each member in various ways, which could create a rich pool of experiences and knowledge that can inform and create policies and strategies. They concluded it is difficult to make decisions for people if we don't have their knowledge or experience. *" Diversity is having a seat at the table. Inclusion is having a voice. And belonging is having that voice heard."*

Participants have discussed if an intersectional approach means applying *nothing for us without us*, or *bottom-up* approach always, or if it sometimes needed to take a *top-down* approach regarding applying intersectionality. For example, if the membership of an umbrella organisation does not have diverse representation in their decision-making roles and processes, the umbrella organisation might have only certain people (of certain identities) attending the capacity building and advocacy events. The proposed solution was that umbrella organisation can work with its membership without imposing the top-down approach, but providing opportunities for the membership to learn about intersectionality, so that it can be understood, and it becomes a matter of common, shared knowledge how the issue of representation is connected to bringing the issues of minority people forward.

An example provided was that a Roma woman, especially of multiple marginalised identities, such as Roma LGBTQI woman, might not feel eager to reach out to the Roma community organisation lead by a Roma heterosexual man, due to several social norms regarding gender and sexuality, and power dynamics around them operating within the community. However, if the organisation has diverse decision-making bodies and diverse representation, and is actively reaching out to the marginalised within the marginalised, and works specifically on the issues of intersection between gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, then LGBTQI Romani women might feel that the organisation in question is for them and might address their needs. The representation will draw the attention of people who identify with one or more organisations' members and organisations' activities, as highlighted by the participants.

As proposed by Asha Allen, the issue of representation in decision-making and positions of power discussed by the participants, can be summed up with questions:

- Who speaks and advocates on the behalf of whom?
- Who do the organisation in question choose to work with, support and which represented demographics it centers?

Consequently, as the participants of this meeting have identified, the issue of representation is closely related to the issue of **ownership**. They have shared numerous times during this consultation the question: "*Do members of an international youth organisation feel they own the organisation's campaigns, advocacy, and overall strategic plans and programmes?*", "*Do people spoken for and of, feel ownership of the work of the organisation speaking on their behalf?*".

Participants highlighted the potential danger regarding understanding ownership: ownership does not imply imposing categories on or labeling people. If people in different countries, regions, contexts, and settings use different terminology and need different categories to identify themselves with, the task of the organisation is not to impose a common language on them, but rather to understand this diversity as an asset, as a learning opportunity. The organisation can provide growth opportunities so that their membership and represented demographics can learn and understand different categories, where they come from, and why they exist, without enforcing common frames on participants. Having opportunities to learn *about inclusive and affirmative language* regarding different minority issues was understood as an important aspect of the ownership, as participants might not align themselves with an organisation that is stigmatizing one of their identities.

As highlighted by the representatives of EUDY, youth organisations, their programmes and events must not label individuals, unless the individuals themselves want to be aligned with the movement. The organisation can identify the group they want to reach out to and work with, to make sure that there are people that represent their own identities, ethnicities, experiences, but should not label those whose issues are brought to the front. Finally, an individual cannot represent the whole community, because individuals might belong to a certain minority group(s), but have different experiences among each other, based on their culture, where they are coming from, or various other identities and experiences.

Advocacy and communication strategy

Applying the intersectional approach to advocacy means using personal stories along with data and statistics in advocacy, as a reflection of the *nothing for us without us* approach. Moreover, the intersectional approach to advocacy means making sure that the people doing the advocacy represent their own identities, experiences, and realities, and they come from the demographics they advocate for. When applying the intersectional approach to defining an organisation's communication strategy, it is important to reflect on and strategically decide, whose voices we choose to uplift and prioritize in our events/campaigns, etc? The European Women's Lobby speaker suggested an example of prioritized key messages on experiences of young politically engaged women and the impact they have on the democracies.

Participants of this consultative meeting highlighted that there might not be much understanding from the Council of Europe member states and **institutions** on intersectionality. They highlighted the importance of forming allyships on the institutional level, as finding allies who are willing to discuss intersectionality, legitimizes the debate, and introduces it within the institutions. Participants suggested that for these collaborations to be successful, intersectionality needs to be mainstreamed by the youth organisations and youth sector first. They concluded if it is mainstreamed then it is considered a relevant, legitimate issue, and for it to be mainstreamed, youth organisations working with different youth minority groups need to work together. Participants suggested that decision-makers should be invited to the activities of the youth organisations, to build trusting relationships with decision-makers and to influence policy. Local municipalities and councils, for example, might be invited to the events of the organisation, to familiarize themselves with the organisation's work and youth issues it promotes.

Education and **capacity-building opportunities for people in power (decision-making) and leadership positions**. Participants highlighted that a barrier for applying an intersectional approach might be a lack of will from the people in the positions of power and decision-making, especially if they are of the more privileged identities (not personally affected by multiple discrimination, or by racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, etc), by belonging to predominant social groups. Participants highlighted that it might be challenging for persons of more privileged identities in the positions of leadership and decision making to understand why intersectionality is important, first because they might not experience it personally, and second because the education on the matter is not accessible, especially in the formal education curriculum with exemptions of the specific disciplines, such as gender studies. Moreover, in non-formal educational capacity-building activities, as already stated, specific topics such as intersectionality, power dynamics, privilege, especially in the training of people in leadership positions, are lacking. To create allyship with political leaders, leaders in institutions, and other movements, it is crucial to provide an **access to this type of capacity building, training, and education**. Otherwise, the participants noted the resistance regarding tackling intersectionality from the persons in the positions of decision-making might continue to be

present, due to misunderstanding of what intersectionality is about: not about critiquing a personality, but about tackling the positionality of decision-makers: inviting them to use their position of power and influence, their voice which is considered trustworthy and legitimate, and their institutional platforms to support bringing forward the voices of multiple marginalised communities.

Participants identified the Council of Europe and specifically its Youth Department as the biggest ally in initiating the process of mainstreaming intersectionality, and have named the Youth Sector of the Council of Europe as their biggest institutional ally.

Transversal application of intersectionality

The issue of structurally applying intersectionality, across all organisational activities, was highlighted. Participants agreed this is still lacking within the youth movement, although there are exceptions (youth organisations that are more experienced in applying intersectionality, such as YFJ, IGLYO, etc). Participants proposed that intersectionality is included in internal organisational regulations and documents, as well as in youth organisations' strategic and action plans, strategies, policies, and guidelines, that define the organisation's strategic implementation of intersectionality, and its practical application. An example of the European Youth Forum (YFJ) was shared, as it applies an intersectional approach across its activities. For example, YFJ is said to have a regulation that requires re-opening the Call for the Board members, if they don't reach gender balance for the Board in the first call. Moreover, the need for regulations regarding the selection of Board members, the length of the mandate of the board members, and the organisations' staff members, was identified, so that opportunities for new experiences and representation can be ensured. This also includes application forms and call for events which are affirmative of multiple minority identities and lived realities, policies regarding inclusion and accessibility of the organisation's programmes, advocacy, and events.

Specifically, creating a guidance document on how to make the application process for events more inclusive, and providing capacity-building opportunities for active members and youth workers on inclusion, intersectionality, and privilege, was highlighted as highly needed. It was concluded that by approaching intersectionality transversally starting within an organisation, organisations could more easily mainstream the topic of intersectionality into all areas of youth work rather than approaching it as a tick-box exercise.

Commitment to cooperation among and between youth social justice movements and stakeholders

Applying the intersectional approach is understood as a way for alliance-building, finding common issues between youth organisations focusing on a single identity issue, and reaching out to the marginalised within the marginalised communities. By doing so, the participants stated they can make space in their work for those who are made invisible. Respectively, that means that the youth social justice movements which have their field of expertise, can also broaden the scope of their activities, reach out and collaborate with colleagues, by reaching out from of their comfort zone. Chapter 3 of this report provides examples of practical implementation of intersectionality in the youth field, and collaborations between the stakeholders.

Regarding the **commitment to cooperation** among and between youth social justice movements, and stakeholders, participants proposed establishing cooperation between youth organisations working on different minority issues, state institutions, and academia. For example, some youth organisations are focused on organizing youth exchanges exclusively, but if they partner up with another youth organisation working on specific (multiple) minority issues, they can together organize projects and learn about each other's work and minority issues the partner organisation works on. The same applies to different youth organisations working on specific minority issues (for example LGBTQI, disability, and Roma rights). As a good starting point, participants suggested looking for organisations that are already working on intersectional areas and partnering with them for learning purposes, and bringing the communities together. They highlighted that actively **reaching out** not just between the communities, but within the community, to the more marginalised groups, is necessary for creating an understanding and bring the voices of multiple marginalised groups forward. Inviting them to collaborate without making anyone feel like the token representation, is important for building trust. Participants suggested reaching out to the communities, rather than individuals.

In regards to that, they identified the need to **diversify their network**: take the initiative to reach out to (multiple) marginalised communities, create space for networks to meet and collaborate, create safer spaces both within and between the communities. With that aim, providing platforms to network and share good practices between the organisations is crucial.

Participants pointed that youth organisations are already working with a lot of responsibility and under the pressure, and cannot be solely held accountable for mainstreaming intersectionality. They can, as stated, gather experiences and transfer the knowledge, but the stakeholders and institutions also need to create the space and environment that makes working on intersectionality possible.

Moreover, participants identified the lack of **research** on the topic of intersectionality. They suggested that research needs to be done on the European level on the challenges and needs of young people from an intersectional perspective, including intersectional experiences. Collaboration with academia, and establishing the links with research centers and researchers who have resources to conduct this type of research was proposed as a solution, as there is research being conducted from an intersectional perspective regarding youth in academia. What is missing are the links between academia and international youth organisations and stakeholders. The participants highlighted the need for research on experiences of youth from an intersectional perspective, for advocacy purposes as well: "If we want to advocate for something to change, we need to have the data on it, about the issues, barriers, and needs, and guidelines for areas to focus on in advocacy".

Funding

Participants have identified a lack of funding of the youth sector across Europe, as a hindering factor regarding applying intersectionality in youth work. Funding is also needed to ensure accessibility, possibilities for cooperation, reaching out to the marginalised within the marginalised, organizing joint capacity building events, writing new publications (toolkits, manuals), translating them to different languages, hiring sign language interpreters, etc. Participants proposed an inclusion guidance document to be provided by the institutions, which would encourage youth organisations to make projects more inclusive, diverse, and to cooperate. They highlighted the need for a greater focus on the funding application process.

All the mentioned barriers to applying intersectionality and proposed ways to tackle them, in every field of applying intersectional approach (capacity building, methodology of non-formal education, advocacy and communication strategy, decision-making and representation, cooperation, transversal application, and funding) can be understood in the light of making social justice movements more just. Consequently, that means actively working to increase access to rights, participation, and opportunities for the marginalised within the marginalised.

As Asha Allen highlighted:

“Social justice movements need to recognize different power structures they have within themselves, and those in power have to commit to raising the voices of people who are not in power, who don’t have access to that power position, and to resources, rights, and opportunities. That’s why asking critical questions, and reflecting on power dynamics as individuals (self-criticism and self-awareness), organisations, and movements is important.”

Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

As highlighted at the opening session, the consultative meeting “Applying intersectionality in the youth field”, is situated at the intersection between human rights, access to rights, and active participation. It is about responding to the emerging issues that affect young people while understanding young people as a social group that is very diverse in itself. Preserving this diversity is a part of the everyday mission of the Council of Europe’s Youth Department.

The consultative meeting aimed to build a common understanding of the role of intersectionality in promoting social inclusion, fostering active participation, and combating discrimination taking an intersectional approach. As noted from the input of Asha Allen, European Women’s Lobby (EWL), in a session on the Theoretical Framework of Intersectionality (in **Chapter 2: What is intersectionality**), intersectionality theory emerged from the black feminist theory. It can be understood as an analytical and theoretical framework for understanding the lived experiences of those subjected to multiple discrimination, and how they interact. It is an approach to policy-making and analysis, an approach to planning, designing, organisation, implementation, and evaluation of actions, and a learning process that needs to be built in the foundations of social justice mobilisation.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Georgina Laboda, Rapporteur on Roma Issues, at the Joint Council on Youth, taking an example of the Roma community which has been understood as a homogenous community in the past century, in reality, the Roma community is heterogeneous, and diversity within the community is present regarding languages that are spoken, age (youth is heterogeneous in itself), gender diversity (women, including trans and gender diverse people), sexuality diversity (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, etc), faith (Christian, Muslim, etc), (dis)ability, etc.

The issue of intersectional invisibility has been raised several times during the consultative meeting. As highlighted by Oana Taba, from Roma and Travelers Team, there was a reluctance within Roma activism, to tackle issues Roma women face, such as domestic violence. On another side, there was a reluctance for white feminist organisations to understand why mainstreaming an intersectional approach in strategies regarding Roma women is needed, so the issue of sterilization of Romani women by member states, remained out of the focus of feminist

organisations across Europe. Romani women were absent from the agenda of the feminist organisations lead by white non-Romani women. Similarly, as pointed out by Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit, LGBTQI Romani women have been absent from the agenda of the mainstream LGBTQI organisations across Europe. Similarly, deaf and hard of hearing young people, who are also LGBTQI and/or persons of color, can be excluded from the white communities of deaf youth, as a person of color, and from the LGBTQI youth organisations' work and agendas, for being deaf (and a person of color). Deaf migrants moreover, might be marginalised on the basis of being deaf, being a foreigner (because of racism and xenophobia), and learning a new language after the critical period for language learning, as pointed out by the Institute for the Deaf of Turin Onlus Foundation (Istituto dei Sordi di Torino Fondazione Onlus). LGBTQI youth of Christian faith, might be excluded from the agendas of mainstream LGBTQI organisations because of their faith, but also from their faith community, for being LGBTQI, as pointed out by the World Student Christian Federation – Europe Region.

The issue of intersectional invisibility was explored both by the speakers and the participants, and can be summed up with some reflection questions posed during the 3 days of the consultative meeting:

**Who is included in the decision-making processes regarding minority issues (Roma, LGBTQI, disability rights, refugee issues)?*

**Who is excluded and why?*

**Whose interests the youth organisation in question serves?*

** How are our power and privilege (coming from our social position and fitting in the predominant gender, ethnicity, skin color, dis/ability, faith, sexuality-related norms in the society, as well as roles within the youth organisations) shaping the way we interpret and evaluate the work of our organisation, its mission, vision, advocacy, programmes, events, and activities?*

Critically reflecting on these questions was understood as a critical aspect of applying the intersectional approach in practice.

Answering the question "Why is intersectionality important?", Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit pointed that no group should advance at the expense of the other groups. Tsetsekou reminded us that by ignoring the intersectionality of discrimination, we become numbed by the dominant public discourses, mainstream media, and we favor some groups over the others, we perpetuate the hierarchy of discrimination. She also highlighted that it is important to remember we are dealing with the real pain and suffering of people in their real life. By applying the intersectional approach, we become alert to different forms of discrimination. Practically, it means, communicating and acting to prevent discrimination of people in multiple fields.

"We might have our field of expertise, but we can broaden the scope of our activities, reach out, and collaborate with colleagues, by reaching out from our comfort zone" Eleni Tsetsekou

Key areas where the intersectional approach has been applied by the youth organisations, and the youth sector, were identified during the consultative meeting. These are:

- **Capacity building.** Training, seminars, study sessions on the topic of intersectionality, tackling living on the intersection of multiple minority identities, and bringing forward the lived experiences of the marginalised within the marginalised groups

- **The methodology of non-formal education.** Intersectionality is understood and applied as a framework, a lens applied to the methodology of non-formal and human rights education in all stages of the process of organizing educational activities (planning, designing, organisation, and implementation, and evaluation)
- **Representation in the decision-making and leadership positions,** poses the questions: "Who speaks and advocates on the behalf of who?", Who (which identities and whose realities) is represented in the organisations' decision-making positions and processes, including the Board, preparation teams of the events, and advocacy events?", "Who does the organisation in question choose to work with, support and which represented demographics it centers?"
- **Advocacy and Communication strategy** needs to ensure that people doing the advocacy come from the demographics they advocate for. The question posed was: "Whose voices do we choose to uplift and prioritize in our organisations, communications, and advocacy events/campaigns, etc? "
- **Ownership:** "Does membership of (an international) youth organisation feel it owns the organisation's campaigns, advocacy, and overall strategic plans and programmes?", "Do people spoken for and of feel ownership of the work of the organisation speaking on their behalf?"
- **Commitment:** Are we committed to applying intersectional analysis in our work? Applying the intersectional approach is understood as a way for alliance-building, finding common issues between youth organisations focusing on a single identity issue, and reaching out to the marginalised within the marginalised communities.
- **Transversal application of intersectionality:** structurally applying intersectionality, across all organisational activities (organisations' strategic and action plans, strategies, policies, and guidelines, internal regulations, etc).
- **Openness to learn:** This means learning to be adaptable and open to improvement. Leaving room to improve and deepen an analysis is important, as applying an intersectional approach is a learning process, which requires openness to challenge ourselves (our privileges, our approaches, methodologies, pre-conceived notions, etc)
- Improve the **access to funding** for projects on inclusion and inclusive educational activities by reflecting on funding rules and valuing the work done on ensuring access needs are met.

Reflecting on the participant's expectations, and based on their evaluation, we can conclude that they have been met by the consultative meeting, which has resulted in proposals for further work, outlined in Chapter 4 of this report, specifically regarding the further possibilities for capacity building on the topic of intersectionality, networking to share examples of good practice of applying intersectionality in the youth field, and to establish collaborations within, between and across youth social justice movements, together with the stakeholders.

Mainstreaming intersectionality in the youth field was understood as a necessary factor for creating more just youth social justice movements, and ensuring access to human rights, opportunities, and active participation for the marginalised within the marginalised social groups who have been left out by youth organisations' focus on "single-issue struggles".

It was concluded by the participants that the initiative to mainstream intersectionality in the youth field has to come from the youth field, by establishing strategic collaborations within and across the youth sector and with relevant stakeholders.

The Youth Department of the Council of Europe is seen as the main ally in that process.

Conclusions and proposals from the Consultative Meeting

The consultative meeting "Applying intersectionality in the youth field" took place between 24-26 February, aiming to build a common understanding of the role of intersectionality in promoting social inclusion, fostering active participation, and combating discrimination. The meeting brought together a group of 30 experts from the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe's Youth Department, youth organisations and Human Rights organisations, youth research field, and other stakeholders.

They concluded that:

1. Intersectionality is an analytical and theoretical framework for understanding the lived experiences of those subjected to *multiple discrimination* and how they *interact*. It is a way of analysing realities that cannot be fully understood through conventional mechanisms such as anti-racism, feminism, etc.
2. Intersectionality is important as an approach to policy making and analysis, guiding the decisions on what issues and who is the advocacy for, data collection, analysis of political, social, and economic intersections etc.
3. Intersectionality should be taken into account in the process of planning, designing, organisation, implementation and evaluation of educational activities. In practice, it means asking and analysing along this process, how an activity impacts different sub-groups of young people (young women, youth from minority backgrounds, young people who experience discrimination), and deciding what (if anything) can be done differently to involve and hear the voices of some beneficiaries which are not evident when taking a very broad approach.
4. In youth mobilisation intersectionality means *understanding and reflecting on the power dynamics* between youth movements and decision makers, young women and young men, experiences of ethnic minorities, Roma, LGBTQI youth, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees etc.
5. Intersectionality is applied within the content of an activity by looking into who is/is not present, in the decision-making process, the advocacy strategies, representation, and in transversal ways encompassing all of these issues.
6. Intersectionality provides an added value to the work of human rights youth organisations, by making sure that these movements are open and can outreach to all young people who feel

concerned by the specific topic, but were unable to do so due to different other barriers they are experiencing.

7. Some challenges in applying intersectionality identified from the meeting include:

- The terminology itself (intersectional approach etc.) sounds unrelatable and difficult to understand.
- Resistance due to fear of perceived loss of the status/privilege/mission/visibility
- Lack of capacity building opportunities on applying intersectionality for managers, leaders, trainers etc.
- Lack of educational materials with examples on applying intersectional approach
- Limited diversity in the decision-making at the policy level (issue of representation)
- Organisations often do not know how to acquire and provide responses to the access needs of the participants
- The space for working with other organisations and the possibility to acquire the expertise is limited

8. Some challenges within youth organisations are also possible to be addressed with an intersectional approach such as the work on diversification of the membership, creation of accessible activities, improvement of representation, diversification of leadership etc. Some international youth organisations observe that it seems easier to agree on intersectional approach on an international level, but more difficult to apply this on the local level, in fear of losing focus of the local issues.

9. Youth and Human Rights movements should have better access to research on the experiences of different young people at intersections of discriminations. Furthermore, there is a need for more research on young people's experiences of intersectional discrimination.

10. In policy-making processes, the voices of young people experiencing multiple discrimination should be heard and applying an intersectional approach in policy making ensures that there will be a critical reflection to secure an inclusive process.

11. An intersectional approach also promotes balanced and fair power-sharing. It's not about taking power from someone, but rather making sure everyone has a chance to be heard, represented, and affirmed.

12. Youth organisations should take into account the various access needs, linguistic, technical and social barriers that are encountered by some young people, when planning the funding and human resources needed to run specific activities.

13. On a practical level, there are many useful guidelines and information available which can inspire the youth field to apply an intersectional approach such as the [manual on promoting Accessibility](#) in the Education and Training programme and the [guidelines on gender equality](#) in intercultural youth activities. A lot of inspiration on addressing multiple discrimination can be found also in the Compass, Manual for Human Rights Education with young people, in the Chapter 5: [Human Rights Themes](#), especially the sections on discrimination and intolerance, disability and disablesm, gender, migration and poverty.

Some very simple, yet effective proposals which the participants identified include:

- Reviewing the application forms to ask, and not to assume the issues, barriers, or challenges some participants might be facing.
- Promoting diversity in the preparatory teams of activities and project management teams, such as diversity of different genders, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, skin colour, religion, belief or sexual orientation.
- Reflecting on the privileges by inviting the participants to make sure that those who experience a specific situation of discrimination and exclusion, can also have the space to share and speak on their own behalf.
- Practical ways to invite for the participation of everyone can be (where relevant) to appoint team members to address and discuss if there are issues of oppression or violence experienced by the participants, provision of a quiet room as an access need, stating pronouns as an introduction and other ideas.
- Communicating and providing solutions to access needs such as usage of assisted technologies (subtitles to videos), interpretation when needed, accessibility of venues, and accessibility of activities and methods.
- Presenting examples of diverse identities and realities within educational materials, handouts and case-studies.

Proposals for the youth field regarding applying intersectionality:

1. Mainstreaming intersectionality in the work of youth and human rights movements as well as, the state institutions through an intentional process of checking if the activities, programmes, policies, funding, and research actually outreaches to the different groups of young people including those who experience multiple discrimination.
2. Building capacity of youth leaders, youth workers, trainers, specialists, researchers, and youth policy makers on applying intersectionality in their work, including how to deal with power issues, challenging emotions, and conflicts between and within minority groups.
3. Creation or outlining the existing educational materials, toolkits, and concrete examples of projects and practices where an intersectional approach is applied in the youth field.
4. Motivating an internal organisational or institutional reflection on intersectional approaches in their work and possible adaptation of their internal guidelines, strategies, action plans, work procedures etc.
5. Build capacity of organisers of educational activities to apply an intersectional approach in planning, design, implementation, facilitation and evaluation of educational activities.
6. Build capacity of youth organisations and policy makers to apply an intersectional approach in advocacy and policy making, and to improve the representation and participation in the decision-making.
7. Support more research on the European level on the challenges and needs of young people who are at an intersection of discrimination.
8. Promote intersectional approach within human rights and social justice movements, in order to reach out the marginalised within the marginalised.
9. Promote more possibilities for collaboration between and among youth organisations working on different human rights issues.

10. Improve the access to funding for projects on inclusion and inclusive educational activities by reflecting on funding rules and valuing the work done on ensuring access needs are met.

Appendix:

Input from the participants on available resources:

Council of Europe Youth Department's [resource page](#) contains links for different manuals and resources including [All Equal- All Different Education Pack](#)

Publication on multiple discrimination: [Barabaripen](#): personal stories of young Roma people about multiple discrimination.

[IFM SEI Rainbow Resources: Compasito Companion on Sexuality and Gender](#)

[Salto Youth- embracing Diversity](#)

[European Youth Forum's Diversity and Inclusion Guidelines.](#)

IGLYO's [Intersectionality Toolkit](#) and [Norm Criticism Toolkit](#).

ESN: [Inclusive Communication Manual](#)

Programme of the meeting

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24 February 2021, Strasbourg

Online Consultative Meeting

APPLYING INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE YOUTH FIELD

in search of a cooperative approach among youth organisations and other stakeholders

24-26 February 2021

Programme

Wednesday, 24 February 2021 – Understanding and sharing

09:30-11:00 Welcome and opening of the meeting
Introduction to the programme and the participants
In working groups: sharing expectations and overview of experience on the topic of intersectionality

Break

11:15-12:00 Introduction to the Council of Europe's Youth Department
Addressing discrimination with an intersectional approach – examples from the Youth for Democracy programme input and exchange with Rui Gomes Head of Education and Training Division, Youth Department

Lunch break

13:45-14:45 Building a common understanding: Theoretical framework of intersectionality, expert input, and discussion with Asha Allen, European Women's Lobby
14:45-15:30 Intersectionality in the work of ECRI, input and exchange with Paula ECK-WALTERS, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

Thursday 25 February 2021 – Realities and barriers

10-11:15 The Council of Europe's work on addressing discrimination with an intersectional approach, exchange with:

- Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit
- Janeta Hanganu, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees
- Oana Tabă, Roma and Travellers Team

Break

11:30-12:45 Good practices and examples from the youth field
In parallel workshops

Lunch break

14:30-16:00 Why is intersectionality an issue for youth organisations?
Discussion and mapping of issues and challenges to apply intersectional approach in the youth field especially with:

1. Local youth work and youth organisations
2. Education and Training activities
3. Research and knowledge gathering
4. Youth policy making cycle and youth councils

16:15-17:00 *Optional session on mindfulness and creativity with Rachel Sparks*

Friday, 26 February 2021 – Looking forward

- 10-11:15 Open space discussions
Elements, experiences and issues of intersectionality to be further explored
- Break
- 11:30-13:00 What does it mean to apply intersectionality in practice?
Brainstorming for activities, tools and approaches on the basis of intersectionality which can be applied in the youth field
- Lunch break
- 14:30-15:15 Presentation of the ideas and proposals for further work on applying intersectionality in the youth field by youth organisations, local and national level authorities and the Council of Europe
- 15:15—16:00 Conclusions from the consultative meeting
Evaluation of the activity
Closing of the meeting

Final list of participants

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List of Participants

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