



DFD-YD/ETD (2025) 26

Budapest, January 10, 2025

# **Improving the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Roma Women and Roma LGBTQ+ Communities**

Report of the study session held by  
Phiren Amenca International Network AISBL

in co-operation with the  
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest  
17-23 November, 2024

This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

# Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Background .....	4
Overview .....	5
Results .....	6
Inputs and Discussions.....	7
Highlights:.....	8
Plans for Follow-up.....	12
Appendix 1: Final Programme, as executed .....	15
Appendix 2: List of participants.....	15
Appendix 3: Communications .....	22
Appendix 4: Recommendations Developed during the Study Session.....	23

# Executive Summary

The study session "Improving the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Roma Women and Roma LGBTQ+ Communities" brought together 22 participants representing both Roma and LGBTQ+ communities to address critical issues at the intersection of sexual health, minority rights, and healthcare access. The session emerged from Phiren Amenca's sustained work on Roma women's rights and the recognized need to move beyond theoretical discussions to practical solutions for healthcare access barriers. This was the first time for Phiren Amenca to organize an event related to this specific topic, so it can be seen as a pilot activity with its successes and lessons for the future.

The five-day program aimed to create a safer space for participants to freely discuss sensitive topics while gaining practical skills and knowledge, and exchange experiences and ideas free of judgement. It placed emphasis on trauma awareness, human rights education, antigypsyism in healthcare, comprehensive sexual education, and intersectional discrimination. The session produced several concrete outcomes, including detailed recommendations for improving sexual education, addressing stigmatization, preventing forced marriages, and enhancing healthcare access for marginalized communities.

Notably, participants developed five specific follow-up projects: an Early Marriage Prevention Program in Tirana, Albania; an International Sex Worker Stories Publication involving five countries; a Roma Women's Health Support Services initiative in Slovakia; a Sexual Harassment Awareness Campaign across five Bulgarian towns; and a coordinated International Sex Education Day Campaign in Turkey and Hungary. These projects demonstrate the session's success in translating theoretical discussions into practical community action.

The session made significant contributions to the Council of Europe's youth program priorities by addressing access to rights and fostering inclusive societies. Recommendations emphasized the need for comprehensive, culturally sensitive approaches to sexual health education and healthcare delivery, with particular attention to intersectional discrimination and community involvement in policy development.

Most importantly, it provided the opportunity for some participants to talk about issues which are taboos in their cultures for the first time with "strangers", compare their experiences, learn about the struggles of others, and build relationships – both professional and personal.

Anna Daróczy

Course Director, Project Manager-Phiren Amenca International Network



# Introduction

This report includes the outcomes and proceedings of a study session titled "Improving the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Roma Women and Roma LGBTQ+ Communities," held at the European Youth Centre Budapest from November 17-23, 2024. The session was organized by the Phiren Amenca International Network and its partners in cooperation with the Council of Europe's Youth Department. In the next pages, a comprehensive overview of the session's background, objectives, and achievements, including detailed accounts of the daily activities, methodological approaches, and concrete outcomes can be found. The report contains sections on participant demographics, partner organizations' contributions, key discussions and learning points, as well as specific recommendations developed during the session. It concludes with appendices providing the full program schedule, participant list, online visibility links, and detailed recommendations for various stakeholders. This document serves both as a record of the event and as a resource for organizations working on similar initiatives in the future.

## Background

The study session came from Phiren Amenca's sustained work with Roma women's rights and empowerment across Europe. Through strategic initiatives, like the "So Keres, Europa?!" summer events in Novi Sad (2019) and Balatonkenese (2022), Phiren Amenca has actively worked to promote awareness of challenges faced by Roma women. These events produced impactful presentations highlighting issues Roma women encounter both within their communities and at policy levels. The organization's involvement in key forums, such as the "Towards a Roma Feminist Movement across Europe" conference in Romania (2022) and the EU Roma Week roundtable discussion in Brussels (2023), "Roma Heroines", provided crucial insights from Roma women activists from Finland, Hungary, North-Macedonia, and Romania. Additionally, Phiren Amenca's participation in the 15th Meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society reinforced its commitment to advancing equality for Roma women and girls.

Through these extensive engagements, a critical gap became apparent: while there is widespread recognition of intersectional discrimination affecting Roma girls and LGBTQ+ people, discussions on the topic often remain theoretical without yielding any practical solutions. Despite existing policy frameworks, concrete implementation is hindered by limited representation and cultural taboos. This is particularly evident in healthcare access, where antigypsyism creates significant barriers, especially for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The study session was therefore conceived as a practical response to bridge this implementation gap, focusing specifically on sexual and reproductive health rights.

The study session's primary aim was to promote the sexual and reproductive health rights of Roma women and Roma LGBTQ+ people, supported by several objectives. These objectives encompassed creating a safe environment for knowledge-sharing and personal support among community members, while deepening participants' understanding of sexual and reproductive services through a human rights lens. The study session sought to facilitate discussions about experiences of antigypsyism in healthcare settings and identify successful practices at local, national, and European levels in sexual health education. Additionally, participants worked to develop actionable recommendations addressing specific sexual health challenges, with a clear focus on implementing these recommendations in their communities.

## Overview

The session brought together a diverse group of 22 participants, with strong representation of both Roma and LGBTQ+ communities. Most participants (16) identified as Roma, and eight participants identified as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, ensuring authentic voices from the communities most affected by the issues being addressed. The participants represented a balanced mix of professional backgrounds, with half being employed professionals and half being students at various educational levels –, from final-year secondary school to university studies who are actively involved in the lives and work of their organisations and/or communities. Language proficiency varied among the group, with half of the participants demonstrating advanced English skills, four requiring occasional linguistic support, and seven needing consistent translation assistance.

The study session was organized in a collaboration led by the Phiren Amenca International Network, which creates opportunities for Roma and non-Roma volunteers to challenge stereotypes and racism through non-formal education and dialogue. The network operates through several key member organizations, including RGDTs Nonprofit LLC, which implements Roma youth activities in Hungary, and Roma Active Albania, which has earned European Commission recognition for its targeted work in Roma women's empowerment and Roma community mobilization across the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The international partners each brought specialized expertise in working with Roma and marginalized communities. ARAART uniquely combines artistic expression with activism, specifically supporting the Roma LGBTQ+ community and addressing multiple discrimination issues in the Czech Republic and in Europe. Bulgaria's Arete Youth Foundation focuses on Roma youth development, providing mentorship and creating professional opportunities for young Roma students and professionals. Romani Godi, established in Turkey in 2022, specializes in preserving Roma cultural heritage while advocating for Roma rights. Ternipe, operating in Slovakia and Hungary, dedicates its work to Roma youth through educational initiatives, including tutoring centres and scholarship programs. The Hungarian Roma Women's Network focuses exclusively on advocating for Roma women's rights and interests, working toward their empowerment and self-realization at a national level. Háttér Society, while serving the broader LGBTQ+ community in Hungary, brought crucial expertise in addressing intersectional discrimination and providing targeted support services for LGBTQ+ individuals, including those from minority communities.

The session explored critical issues at the intersection of Roma rights, gender, sexuality, and healthcare access. The core focus was sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), examined through multiple lenses including human rights frameworks and antigypsyism. Key issues discussed included the systemic barriers Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals face in accessing healthcare services. Participants examined specific human rights violations in healthcare settings, including the forced sterilization of Roma women, which has been documented in several European countries. The discussion of intersectional discrimination highlighted how Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals often face complex challenges due to their overlapping identities.

Sexual education emerged as a crucial topic, with participants analysing the significant gaps in current educational approaches and political decisions. This included examining both the general inadequacy of sexual education in many settings and the specific lack of culturally sensitive and inclusive content for Roma communities. The issue of early and forced marriages was explored in the context of both traditional practices and human rights, while discussions also addressed the stigmatization of sex workers within and outside Roma communities. Best practices and successful initiatives were shared, including community-based approaches like

doula programs for Roma women, LGBTQ+-inclusive sexual education methods, and legal advocacy strategies using international human rights mechanisms.

The session maintained strong links with the Council of Europe (CoE) at multiple levels - institutional, methodological, and strategic. On the institutional level, the session was hosted at the European Youth Centre Budapest, with the Deputy Director providing insights into the CoE's work, particularly regarding Roma and Traveller communities. The Advisory Council on Youth's involvement highlighted the CoE's policy work, specifically focusing on the Recommendations on Roma Youth Participation. The session directly contributed to the CoE's Youth for Democracy and Human Rights program by addressing access to rights for disadvantaged youth and fostering inclusive societies. Using CoE methodologies and resources, including European Youth Foundation grant information, the session created a comprehensive framework for addressing the specific challenges faced by Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals while contributing to broader goals of youth participation and social inclusion.

## Results

One of the session's most notable achievements was creating a safe space where participants could openly discuss sexuality and share personal experiences in an intercultural setting, many for the first time in their lives. The session produced several immediate concrete outcomes, including comprehensive recommendations for improving sexual education approaches in Eastern European countries. These recommendations reflected deep understanding of cultural sensitivities and practical implementation challenges. Participants developed specific follow-up actions targeting various aspects of sexual and reproductive health rights, ranging from grassroots community interventions to international advocacy initiatives.

At the community level, several targeted projects emerged. In Tirana, Albania, participants developed an intervention focusing on preventing early and forced marriages through workshops engaging both parents and children in Roma neighborhoods. This cross-generational approach recognized the importance of community-wide involvement in addressing traditional practices. In Slovakia, participants planned a community doula service and helpline specifically designed to support Roma women and prevent involuntary sterilization, addressing urgent healthcare access issues while building community support systems.

Educational initiatives formed another key outcome, with a comprehensive programme targeting five Bulgarian towns, focusing on consent and sexual harassment awareness in schools. This initiative aims to create sustainable change through education. Participants from Turkey and Hungary designed a coordinated campaign for International Sex Education Day, combining practical support through free menstrual product distribution with educational workshops in open schools. On the international level, participants initiated a publication project collecting memoirs and short stories from sex workers across Belgium, Moldova, Romania, Germany, and Turkey, with the goal of challenging stigma through personal narratives.

The participants also developed policy recommendations addressing several critical areas. They emphasized the need for systemic reform in educational approaches across Europe, advocating for comprehensive, science-based education that begins in kindergarten and continues through high school, ensuring age-appropriate content throughout a young person's development. The recommendations stressed the importance of making such education both inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities and culturally responsive to Roma traditions, while maintaining scientific accuracy and emotional sensitivity.



The recommendations also identified urgent policy priorities including addressing forced and early marriages in Roma communities, combating stigmatization of women in sex work, tackling sexual harassment among Roma youth, and improving access to sexual and reproductive health services. Emphasis was placed on youth participation in policy development and implementation, highlighting the importance of involving young Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals in designing and monitoring health-related policies that affect their communities. (See appendices)

For the Council of Europe, participants suggested expanding support for study sessions addressing intersectional discrimination, developing culturally sensitive educational resources, and establishing permanent platforms for dialogue on these issues.

Participants gained crucial learning outcomes on multiple levels. They developed practical skills in creating safer spaces for sensitive discussions, deepened their understanding of human rights frameworks, and learned to recognize how antigypsyism intersects with gender and LGBTQ+ identity in healthcare settings. They acquired practical advocacy skills through stakeholder mapping and campaign planning, while also learning about available resources and support mechanisms.

Participants worked on specific project plans in small groups and each project group was paired with a dedicated team member who will continue offering support throughout the implementation phase. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for early 2025 to assess progress and address challenges, ensuring continuity from planning to implementation while providing participants with access to expertise and resources as needed.

Overall, the study session successfully met its objectives by creating a transformative space where participants could openly discuss and address sexual and reproductive health rights issues affecting their communities. The session was effective in increasing understanding of human rights frameworks, developing plans for community projects, and establishing support networks for ongoing implementation. The intersectional approach, combining attention to antigypsyism, LGBTQ+ rights, and gender equality, proved particularly valuable in addressing complex discrimination issues.

The session made significant contributions to the Youth Department's programme priorities, particularly in advancing young people's access to rights and fostering peaceful and inclusive societies. By connecting individual empowerment with community action and policy advocacy, the session contributed to both immediate learning and long-term systemic change in line with the Council of Europe's youth programme priorities.

## Inputs and Discussions

The study session followed a carefully structured flow over five days, building from foundational concepts to concrete action planning. The first day established a safe and supportive environment through team building, establishing safer space guidelines, and discussions about trauma mindfulness and minority stress. This foundation enabled participants to engage with increasingly challenging topics in subsequent days. The programme then progressed through human rights education, healthcare discrimination, and antigypsyism on day two, before diving into specific issues around sex education and problem mapping on day three. The second half of the session shifted toward practical application, with day four featuring presentations from expert NGOs and focusing on campaign-planning. The final full day was dedicated to future planning, including discussions of funding resources, development of stakeholder recommendations, and follow-up planning, concluding with evaluation and celebration.

Throughout this progression, daily mindfulness exercises helped maintain participant wellbeing. Evening activities like the intercultural evening, and the networking night fostered

community building. Regular reflection groups provided space for processing the day's learning. The structure effectively moved from creating safety and building knowledge to practical application and future planning, culminating in concrete recommendations and action plans.

### Highlights:

We took considerable amount of time with attempting to create a safer space for the group for the week. We called it “safer” instead of safe, because we acknowledge that no space can ever be 100% safe for all people because everyone's requirements to feel safe are different. However, a guideline was created by the team before the session, which was shared with all participants ahead of time, and we also had a session on the first day to go through it. The main “rules” concerned:

- respecting physical and emotional boundaries
- respecting different identities and backgrounds
- avoiding assumptions
- honouring privacy
- being aware of unintended impact
- practicing listening and sharing equitably
- assuming positive intent, but addressing harm
- accepting making mistakes
- taking care of our own safety
- reporting harmful behaviour
- cultural sensitivity and physical contact
- jokes and humour
- taking pictures
- pronouncing names correctly



We appointed two safeguarding persons, both psychologists, from the team, participants could report any concerns to, and who were available to provide support throughout the event. Additionally, we set up a confidential suggestion box where anyone could submit any issues anonymously. Finally, with the group we decided on a hand signal to ensure that everyone felt comfortable speaking up during workshops and discussions: participants could use it if they felt something offensive had been said and needed addressing immediately. After going through each of the guidelines in small groups, in plenary we checked if we all understood each point similarly.

Discussing sexual and reproductive health necessarily involves being faced with tough personal stories which might trigger some participants and bring feelings of discomfort. However, it is necessary to be aware of these experiences and stories, so the team wanted to make sure that participants have the tools to deal with these situations. That is why we introduced a separate session on boundaries, trauma mindfulness and minority stress, where a thorough presentation was given about “factors affecting our mental health, and methods to take better care of ourselves and each other”.

The facilitator opened the session by exploring the relationship between trauma and stress, explaining that while all traumatic experiences are stressful, not all stressors are traumatic. They defined trauma as a deeply distressing experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, leading to lasting psychological, emotional, and physical effects, and emphasized its manifestation at both individual and collective levels. The discussion then introduced the concept of triggers - specific and personal stimuli that can cause individuals to re-experience past trauma - and explored how activists and advocates are particularly vulnerable to these due to their frequent exposure to systems of oppression and injustice.



The session then delved into minority stress, defined as the increased stress levels experienced by members of stigmatized minority groups, examining both external factors like discrimination and internal factors related to identity. Particular attention was paid to intersectionality, highlighting how individuals with multiple marginalized identities face heightened risks of chronic stress due to increased stigmatization, social exclusion, and limited access to mental health care. The workshop concluded with practical approaches to building resilience, emphasizing community-based methods such as connecting with one's community history and engaging in activism, alongside specific coping strategies including boundary-setting techniques and mindfulness practices like grounding exercises and deep breathing. Throughout the session, the facilitator maintained emphasis on creating a safe space where participants could freely express their feelings and thoughts and receive appropriate support. We also planned short mindfulness exercises for each morning, so participants could practice the methods for self-soothing.



The second day was planned as the “main input day”, but before we started, participants asked us to spend a bit more time with the vocabulary given in the safer space guidelines. This discussion was planned to be a few minutes long, but ended up taking up half of the first session, as some misunderstandings and disagreements came up around some of the terms. The team adopted an open interpretation to what terms to be used when referring to Roma communities, as in some countries some communities do not identify with the term Roma, but with other words, which have derogatory connotations in other countries. We wanted everyone to feel free to use the term they identify with, and ask the others to be accepting with this, so it needed to be discussed in length. The other term which incited a debate was racism. When we discussed race theory being debunked, and that there is one human race, some participants had dissonance with what they learned at school, so it was necessary to have a discussion of race being a social construct.

The workshop's second day continued with an interactive session called "FlowerPower," exploring the connection between human needs and human rights. Participants created personal flower drawings with petals representing fundamental needs (from basic needs to personal fulfillment), added leaves symbolizing conditions necessary for their flourishing, and then linked these elements to actual human rights documents. This was followed by a session on sexual and reproductive health rights, which included a careful discussion of rights violations through case studies, with participants working in small groups to create awareness-raising posters about specific cases.



The day continued with a workshop on antigypsyism, where participants first worked in groups to define the concept before analyzing real-life stories of discrimination. One powerful case study presented was Elena's story, which detailed the forced sterilization of a Roma woman during childbirth in 1990, highlighting the systemic discrimination faced by Roma communities in healthcare settings.

The programme concluded with a session on intersectionality, where participants explored multiple case studies of individuals facing barriers in healthcare due to their intersecting identities. A notable example was the "Gay Cake" case, which examined the complex intersection of religious freedom and LGBTQ+ rights, where a Christian-owned bakery refused to create a cake supporting gay marriage, sparking a discussion about discrimination and competing rights. Through these case studies, participants analyzed rights violations and the multifaceted nature of discrimination, particularly focusing on how different aspects of identity can compound barriers to accessing services and rights.



The third day began with an interactive reflection on participants' personal experiences with sexual education in their schools. Through a series of statements that participants responded to by standing up, the activity revealed common patterns in traditional sex education, highlighting that while topics like STIs and basic anatomy were commonly covered, discussions about consent, pleasure, LGBTQ+ identities, gender diversity, and cultural aspects of sexuality were largely absent from most participants' educational experiences. The facilitator used this

exercise to demonstrate how sexual education often focuses on risk prevention while neglecting aspects that support personal autonomy and connection.

The group then worked collaboratively to envision what comprehensive and inclusive sexual education should look like, first in small groups and then in plenary. Their recommendations emphasized the need for a science-based, culturally responsive curriculum that starts early and continues throughout school years, covering a wide range of topics from anatomy to emotional well-being. The resulting framework stresses the importance of frequent, engaging sessions delivered by competent educators, with particular emphasis on LGBTQ+ inclusivity, emotional education, and cultural responsiveness, including attention to Roma cultures and traditions. The participants highlighted that comprehensive sexual education should go beyond risk prevention to foster understanding, acceptance, and healthy relationship skills.



Before the free afternoon, a session introduced participants to the problem tree analysis and stakeholder mapping as tools for understanding complex social issues, particularly in healthcare access and rights. After a brief introduction explaining how problem trees work (with roots representing causes, trunk showing the main problem, branches depicting consequences, and fruits/leaves illustrating the ideal solution), participants were shown an example using early school dropout as a case study. The participants then divided into groups to analyse specific healthcare access issues, choosing from topics such as language barriers, forced sterilization, discriminative practices, access to gender-affirming care, and period poverty. From this time on, they worked in the same small groups on the topics chosen at this point. Each group created their own problem tree and stakeholder analysis on flipchart paper, presented their findings to the larger group, and discussed the insights gained and challenges encountered. The exercise concluded with a reflection on how these analytical tools could be applied to their advocacy work.



The remaining part of the study session was about practice: For the participants to get some inspiration and ideas, we invited different institutions and NGOs to talk about their best practices: EMMA Association talked about the community doula program in Roma communities; Háttér Society gave participants an insight into their sexual education initiatives for educators, or family members of LGBTQ+ persons; the Municipality of the 8<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest presented an idea of a Roma women's community house, which is part of their Roma strategic plan; the European Roma Rights Centre explained the cases they have represented in court related to the sexual and reproductive health rights of Roma women; one of the team members gave participants tips on how to start a 'career' as an activist, and how to get involved in the work of CSOs; and Petr Banda from the Advisory Council on Youth explained the process of developing the Recommendations on Roma Youth Participation, and the plans to use the document for advocacy. Participants also had the chance to present their own past advocacy campaigns and give ideas to the others.





Based on the topical-groups, participants were asked to practice imagination activism, where they envisioned an ideal world where the issue they are working on is no longer an issue, and start planning actions based on that vision in several steps: they identified the main stakeholders, brainstormed about possible actions, then finally created their plans for implementation.

## Plans for Follow-up

Planned Projects and Initiatives:

### 1. Early Marriage Prevention Program (Albania)

- **Location:** Roma neighborhood in Tirana
- **Focus:** Workshop series addressing both parents and children
- **Aim:** Preventing early and forced marriages through community engagement and education

In Albania, participants are developing a workshop series in a Roma neighbourhood in Tirana, focusing on preventing early and forced marriages through engagement with both parents and children. This community-based approach recognizes the importance of intergenerational dialogue in addressing traditional practices.

### 2. International Sex Worker Stories Publication

- **Scope:** Cross-border collaboration including Belgium, Moldova, Romania, Germany, and Turkey
- **Format:** Collection of memoirs and personal narratives
- **Purpose:** Humanizing experiences and challenging stigma through storytelling

An ambitious international publication project will collect memoirs and personal narratives from sex workers across Belgium, Moldova, Romania, Germany, and Turkey, aiming to humanize experiences and challenge stigma through storytelling. This cross-border collaboration demonstrates the session's success in fostering international cooperation on sensitive issues.



### 3. Roma Women's Health Support Services (Slovakia)

- **Two main components:**
  - i. Community doula service establishment
  - ii. Helpline creation to prevent involuntary sterilization
- **Focus:** Improving healthcare access and providing community-based support

In Slovakia, participants are establishing two interconnected services: a community doula program for Roma women and a helpline focused on preventing involuntary sterilization. These initiatives directly address healthcare access barriers identified during the session while providing practical community-based support.



### 4. Sexual Harassment Awareness Campaign (Bulgaria)

- **Scope:** Educational program across five towns
- **Target:** School communities
- **Content:** Focus on consent education and sexual harassment prevention

The Bulgarian project focuses on educational outreach, with a comprehensive program on consent and sexual harassment prevention planned across five towns. This school-based initiative aims to create sustainable change through systematic education and awareness-raising.



### 5. International Sex Education Day Campaign (Turkey and Hungary)

- **Timing:** February 2nd
- **Activities:**
  - Workshops in open schools
  - Distribution of free period products
  - Educational sessions on sexual health

In Turkey and Hungary, participants are planning coordinated activities for International Sex Education Day (February 2nd), combining practical support through free period product distribution with educational workshops in open schools, demonstrating how immediate needs can be addressed alongside longer-term educational goals.



Participants are encouraged to implement the safer space guidelines and vocabulary developed during the session in their local projects, ensuring culturally sensitive approaches,

inclusive communication strategies, appropriate handling of sensitive topics and respect for diverse identities and experiences.





# Appendix 1: Programme of the Study Session



Ref number: *DFD-YD/ETD (2024) 258*

October 8 2024, Budapest

## Study session

**“Study Session on Improving the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Roma Women and Roma LGBTQ+ Communities”**

Study session organised within the [Youth for Democracy programme](#)  
in cooperation with the Phiren Amenca International Network AISBL  
([www.phirenamenca.eu](http://www.phirenamenca.eu))

European Youth Centre Budapest room A  
-17-23 November, 2024

## Programme

## **Sunday, 17 November 2024**

Arrival of participants  
19:00 Dinner  
21:00 Welcome evening

## **Monday, 18 November 2024**

09:30 Opening with Introduction to Study Session,  
Intro of the Study Session / Expectations  
11:00 Break  
11:30 Introduction program - Aim and objectives, Setting Rules, Sharing Safer  
Space Guidelines; Discussing Vocabulary  
  
13:00 Lunch  
14:30 Getting to know each other- team building- Personal introduction  
16:00 Break  
16:30 Boundaries ; Trauma Mindfulness; Minority Stressin - Creating a safer space  
18:00 Reflection group  
19:00 Dinner  
21:00 Intercultural Evening

## **Tuesday, 19 November 2024**

09:30 Mindfulness exercise  
9:40 Introduction to Human Rights on a Personal level  
11:00 Break  
11:30 SRHR- HR Violations- Case Studies  
13:00 Lunch break  
14:30 Antigypsyism in general and in the healthcare system  
16:00 Break  
16:30 Identity-Intersectionality access to healthcare  
18:00 Reflection Groups  
19:00 Dinner  
21:00 Movie night - Intersectionality

## **Wednesday, 20 November 2024**

09:30 Mindfulness  
09:40 What is and what is missing from sex education?  
11:00 Break  
11:30 Problem mapping - sharing experiences  
13:00 Lunch break  
14:30 Free time  
16:00 Free Time  
16:30 Free time  
18:00 Free time  
19:00 Dinner Out

## **Thursday, 21 November 2024**

09:30 Mindfulness

09:40 Best Practices with invited experts/NGOs (sex education, social media campaigns, legal remedies, etc.)

11:40 Break

12:00 Stakeholder mapping: who makes decisions where

13:00 Lunch

14:30 What may work in my country? - How to plan campaigns?

16:00 Break

16:30 Protection: creating safe communities

18:00 Reflection Groups.

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Networking night

## **Friday, 22 November 2024**

09:30 Mindfulness

09:40 Resource moment : Funding/Grants, Helping each other; manuals, guidelines, existing policies

11:00 Break

11:30 Developing Recommendations to different stakeholders

13:00 Lunch

14:30 Follow-up Planning

16:00 Break

16:30 Evaluation and Closing

18:00 Final reflections

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Goodbye Party

## **Saturday 23 November 2024**

Departure of participants

## **Aim and objectives of the study session “*Title of study session*”**

The aim of the Study Session is to promote the sexual and reproductive health rights of Roma women and the Roma LGBTQI+ people.

### **Objectives:**

- To create a safer space for knowledge exchange and personal support for Roma women and Roma LGBTQI+ people;
- To explore and understand sexual and reproductive services from a human rights perspective;
- To exchange experiences of antigypsyism in dealing with the sexual and reproductive health of Roma women and Roma LGBTQI+ people;
- To identify best practices on local, national, and European levels in terms of sexual and health education;
- To develop recommendations addressing the issues related to the sexual health of Roma women and Roma LGBTQI+ people identified; and to make plans for the implementation of these recommendations.

## Appendix 2: List of participants



Ref number: DFD-YD/ETD (2024) 258

Budapest, 14 November 2024

### Study session

### **“Study session on Improving the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Roma Women and Roma LGBTQ+ Communities”**

Study session organised within the [Youth for Democracy programme](#)  
in cooperation with the [Phiren Amenca International Network AISBL](#)

European Youth Centre Budapest, room A  
*18-22 November 2024*

List of Participants

## ***Participants***

### **Albania**

Ledi Xhambazi  
Anxhelina Sherifi  
Artenis Furtuna  
Migena Kodra

Roma Active Albania  
Roma Active Albania  
Roma Active Albania  
Roma Active Albania

### **Belgium**

Armelle Defrise  
Milena Gavriilidu

Phiren Amenca  
Violett

### **Bulgaria**

Natalia Mitkova  
Yuri Chakurov  
Zlatka Dimitrova  
Spas Spasov  
Slavka Andreeva

Arete Youth Foundation  
Arete Youth Foundation  
Arete Youth Foundation  
Arete Youth Foundation  
Arete Youth Foundation

### **Czech Republic**

Sára Gilíková  
Sebastian Adam

Abortion Support Alliance Prague  
Ara Art

### **Germany**

Irem Tatlican

Romani Godi

### **Republic of Moldova**

Vasile Micleusanu

Bangbang

### **Slovak Republic**

Diana Filepova  
Stefan Ikri  
Iveta Rác  
Veronika Hegedűs

Ternipe - association for roma youth in  
Slovakia and Hungary  
Ternipe - association for roma youth in  
Slovakia and Hungary  
Ternipe - association for roma youth in  
Slovakia and Hungary  
Ternipe - association for roma youth in  
Slovakia and Hungary

### **Türkiye**

Nazar Zengi  
Irem Sahutoglu  
Kader Akşahan

Romani Godi  
Queer Cyprus Association, Sexual Health  
Initiative  
Romani Godi



### ***Preparatory team***

Ondrej Radič  
Fatoş Kaytan  
Fanni Iváncsik  
Emese Alter

### ***Course director***

Anna Daróczy

### ***Lecturers***

Anna Orsós  
Dorottya Kutassy  
Júlianna Kupcsok

European Roma Rights Centre  
Háttér Society  
EMMA Association

### ***Advisory Council, Council of Europe***

Petr Banda

### ***Council of Europe***

Marcos Andrade  
Ida Kreutzma  
John Muir  
Rosalie Levenslicht  
Tavares Ferreira

Deputy Executive Director  
Educational Advisor  
Educational Advisor  
Programme Assistant  
Trainee

## Appendix 3: Communications

**List of links where information about the study session was posted online to ensure visibility**

Every day, a summary of the events were shared with pictures on the social media of Phiren Amenca, partner organisations and some participants.

[\(3\) Phiren Amenca - After a week of intense programming, the study... | Facebook](#)

[\(3\) Phiren Amenca - 🌐 Day 4 started with a world café of best practices... | Facebook](#)

[\(3\) Phiren Amenca - 🗣️ The second day of our Study Session on Improving... | Facebook](#)

[\(3\) Phiren Amenca - 🗣️ A Study Session on Improving the Sexual and... | Facebook](#)

Social media posts were also created on the CoE channels: [Council of Europe Youth \(@coe\\_youth\)](#) • [Instagram photos and videos](#)

Additionally, an article was published on the Council of Europe website: [Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights of Roma Women and Roma LGBTQ+ Communities - Youth](#)

## Appendix 4: Recommendations Developed during the Study Session

### Recommendations for Adequate Sex Education:

- **Make It Comprehensive**  
Ensure the curriculum covers a wide range of topics, including anatomy, relationships, consent, sexual health, emotional well-being, and communication skills.
- **Provide Frequent Education**  
Deliver sex education consistently over time rather than in isolated sessions, allowing students to build knowledge incrementally and reinforce important concepts.
- **Include LGBTQ+ Identities**  
Ensure the curriculum is inclusive and addresses diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, fostering understanding and acceptance for all students.
- **Start Early and Continue Through High School**  
Begin sex education in kindergarten with age-appropriate content and continue throughout a student's school years, ensuring they receive relevant information at each stage of development.
- **Make It Engaging and Interesting**  
Use interactive teaching methods, real-life examples, and engaging materials to capture students' attention and make the learning process enjoyable.
- **Ensure Educators Are Competent**  
Employ well-trained and knowledgeable staff who are comfortable discussing sensitive topics and equipped to handle students' questions with empathy and expertise.
- **Base It on Science**  
Ground the curriculum in evidence-based knowledge, ensuring accuracy and reliability, while integrating emotional and relational aspects alongside factual content.
- **Support Emotional Education**  
Create space to address emotions, relationships, and self-awareness, helping students navigate the complexities of their feelings and interactions.
- **Be Culturally Responsive**  
Adapt the content to respect and reflect the cultural backgrounds of the students, with special attention to Roma cultures and traditions, ensuring inclusivity and relatability for diverse audiences.

## Recommendations to Address Stigmatization Towards Women<sup>1</sup> in Sex Work

### For Government

- **Regulate Sex Work**  
Develop legal frameworks to regulate sex work, ensuring women in sex work have access to labor rights, social protections, and legal safety.
- **Implement Anti-Discrimination Policies**  
Create and enforce policies to protect sex workers from discrimination in healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities.
- **Invest in Public Education Campaigns**  
Fund initiatives that educate the public on the realities of sex work, dismantling myths, religious biases, and patriarchal stereotypes.

### For Police

- **Train Law Enforcement on Human Rights**  
Provide mandatory sensitivity and anti-bias training to ensure fair and respectful treatment of women in sex work.
- **Focus on Protecting, Not Punishing**  
Shift the focus from penalizing sex workers to protecting them from violence, trafficking, and exploitation.

### For Healthcare Providers (Hospitals)

- **Ensure Access to Non-Judgmental Care**  
Train medical staff to provide stigma-free, inclusive, and culturally responsive healthcare to sex workers.
- **Improve Access to Healthcare**  
Implement outreach programs to make sexual and reproductive health services accessible and affordable for women in sex work.

### For Civil Society

- **Challenge Social Bias**  
Promote discussions in media, schools, and community programs to normalize conversations about sex work and confront societal biases.
- **Support Inclusion and Dignity**  
Advocate for the recognition of sex work as legitimate labor and support policies that promote dignity and rights for sex workers.
- **Create Support Networks**  
Establish peer-led support groups where sex workers can share experiences, build solidarity, and access resources.
- **Advocate for Their Rights**  
Empower women in sex work to participate in advocacy and policy-making processes that directly affect their lives.

---

<sup>1</sup> The world “women” refers to both cis women and other people who identify as women.

## **Recommendations to Address Forced/Early Marriages in Roma Communities**

### **For Government and Policymakers**

- **Strengthen and Enforce Laws Against Early Marriages**  
Ensure strict enforcement of existing laws against forced and early marriages, with penalties for violations, while also increasing awareness of these laws within Roma communities.
- **Provide Economic Support Programs**  
Introduce targeted poverty alleviation programs, including scholarships, financial incentives, and vocational training, to reduce the economic pressures that lead to early marriages.
- **Support Education Initiatives**  
Invest in inclusive education systems, ensuring Roma children, especially girls, have equal access to schools and opportunities for continued education.

### **For Child Care Institutions**

- **Implement Awareness Programs**  
Conduct workshops and programs that educate children, parents, and community leaders about the dangers of early marriage, focusing on health risks, education loss, and long-term impacts on poverty.
- **Provide Safe Spaces for At-Risk Children**  
Establish shelters or safe environments for children at risk of being forced into early marriage, offering them emotional, legal, and financial support.

### **For NGOs and Civil Society Organizations**

- **Promote Alternative Solutions**  
Educate families about the benefits of delaying marriage, such as better economic prospects and stronger family health, and provide resources to help them manage social and economic pressures. Work with community leaders to initiate family-focused discussions on gender equality, education, and child rights, emphasizing long-term benefits over short-term cultural traditions.
- **Reevaluate Harmful Traditions**  
Encourage community leaders to publicly advocate for change, framing the abandonment of early marriage as a step toward improving the community's overall well-being.
- **Empower Women and Girls**  
Provide mentorship and empowerment programs for Roma girls to boost self-esteem and help them envision a future beyond early marriage.

### **For Educators and Schools**

- **Keep Girls in School**  
Offer incentives for Roma families to keep their daughters in school, such as free meals, school supplies, and transportation.
- **Provide Culturally Sensitive Education**  
Develop curriculum and teaching methods that respect Roma traditions while promoting gender equality and the value of education for all children.

## **Recommendations to Address Ineffective Sexual Education for Roma Women and Roma LGBTQ+**

### **For the Ministry of Education**

- **Incorporate Comprehensive Sex Education in Schools**  
Ensure that the national curriculum includes comprehensive and culturally sensitive sexual education that addresses the needs of Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Provide Early and Continuous Education**  
Start age-appropriate sex education in early grades and continue through secondary school, covering topics like reproductive health, consent, boundaries, and LGBTQ+ inclusivity.
- **Train Teachers on Inclusive Practices**  
Train educators to address sexual health topics in a way that is non-judgmental, inclusive of marginalized groups, and sensitive to cultural differences.

### **For the Ministry of Health**

- **Combat Racism in Healthcare**  
Develop anti-racism and sensitivity training for healthcare providers to ensure Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals receive equitable, non-discriminatory care.
- **Ensure Access to Contraception and Counseling**  
Expand access to affordable contraception, sexual health services, and confidential counseling in Roma communities.

### **For Local Governments**

- **Support Local Outreach Programs**  
Partner with Roma-led organizations to design outreach initiatives that address the specific sexual health needs of Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Create Safe Spaces for Dialogue**  
Establish safe, judgment-free spaces where Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals can learn, share experiences, and access resources.
- **Address Early School Dropouts**  
Implement policies to reduce school dropout rates, such as financial assistance for families and flexible education programs.

### **For the European Union (EU)**

- **Fund Education and Health Initiatives**  
Provide funding for projects that deliver sexual education and healthcare services to marginalized Roma communities, with a focus on women and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Monitor and Support Member States**  
Hold member states accountable for implementing inclusive policies and ensuring equal access to education and healthcare for Roma communities.



## **For NGOs and Civil Society Organizations**

- **Offer Community-Based Workshops**  
Provide free, community-centered workshops tailored for Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals to educate them on reproductive health, boundaries, and self-advocacy.
- **Empower Through Advocacy**  
Support grassroots efforts to empower Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals to advocate for their rights and demand better education and healthcare.
- **Establish Peer Support Networks**  
Create peer-led groups where Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals can share knowledge, resources, and strategies to address discrimination and stigma.
- **Develop Targeted Programs**  
Design programs focused on educating Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals about their bodies, rights, and boundaries, while addressing cultural sensitivities.

## **Recommendations to Address the Lack of Knowledge on Sexual Harassment Among Young Roma Girls and Boys**

### **For the Government and Policymakers**

- **Introduce Comprehensive Sexual Education**  
Mandate the inclusion of sexual education in school curricula, focusing on defining sexual harassment, understanding boundaries, and recognizing abusive behaviors.
- **Launch Public Awareness Campaigns**  
Fund campaigns aimed at educating Roma communities about sexual harassment, addressing cultural taboos, and promoting open dialogue.
- **Regulate Social Media and Access to**  
Strengthen regulations to prevent minors' access to explicit online content, and collaborate with tech platforms to remove harmful content that perpetuates sexist or harmful behaviors.

### **For Teachers and Educational Institutions**

- **Provide Training on Harassment Awareness**  
Train teachers to recognize signs of harassment and equip them to educate students on consent, boundaries, and respectful behavior.
- **Establish Confidential Support Services**  
Provide accessible and confidential counseling for young people who experience harassment, addressing both mental and physical effects.
- **Create a Safe School Environment**  
Establish clear policies and reporting mechanisms to address harassment in schools, ensuring students feel safe and supported.
- **Provide Parenting Support**  
Offer workshops for parents on how to navigate conversations about harassment and support their children if issues arise.

### **For Institutions (Healthcare, Social Services, and Police)**

- **Establish Confidential Support Services**  
Provide accessible and confidential counseling, legal assistance, and healthcare for young people who experience harassment, addressing both mental and physical effects.
- **Train Professionals on Victim Sensitivity**  
Train healthcare providers, social workers, and law enforcement on handling harassment cases with sensitivity, avoiding victim-blaming attitudes.

### **For NGOs and Civil Society Organizations**

- **Develop Awareness Workshops**  
Design workshops for Roma youth that teach them to recognize harassment, assert boundaries, and seek help when needed.
- **Empower Through Peer Education**  
Develop peer-led programs where Roma youth can discuss their experiences, learn from each other, and build awareness about harassment in a safe environment.
- **Encourage Self-Advocacy**  
Teach young people how to stand up for themselves, report harassment, and seek support when their boundaries are violated.
- **Combat Victim-Blaming Culture**  
Use media, workshops, and educational campaigns to shift societal attitudes away from blaming victims and toward holding harassers accountable.

### **For Social Media Platforms**

- **Promote Digital Literacy**  
Collaborate with schools and NGOs to provide digital literacy training, teaching Roma youth how to navigate social media responsibly and avoid harmful content.
- **Implement Stronger Moderation Policies**  
Enforce stricter measures to remove content that normalizes harassment or perpetuates sexist and harmful stereotypes.

### **Recommendation on Roma Youth Participation**

#### **Ensure Equal Access to Healthcare:**

Provide free, non-discriminatory access to sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception, screenings, and vaccinations, especially for Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals in isolated communities.

#### **Combat Period Poverty:**

Distribute free menstrual hygiene products and ensure access to facilities for Roma women and girls in both urban and rural areas.

#### **Educate on Sexual and Reproductive Rights:**

Implement community-driven educational programs on sexual and reproductive health tailored to Roma cultural contexts, addressing stigma and misconceptions.

#### **Promote Anti-Racist and Gender-Sensitive Training:**

Train healthcare professionals to prevent unconscious bias and ensure respectful and

inclusive treatment of Roma patients, particularly those from marginalized groups like LGBTQ+ individuals.

**Combat Forced Sterilizations and Abuse:**

Investigate and sanction any reported cases of forced sterilizations or medical abuse, ensuring justice for survivors and preventative measures in healthcare systems.

**Facilitate Participation in Policy-Making:**

Involve Roma women and LGBTQ+ individuals in the design, implementation, and monitoring of health-related policies and programs that directly impact their lives.

**Establish Safe Spaces:**

Create culturally sensitive, safe spaces for Roma LGBTQ+ people and women to discuss and address health issues, supported by professional counseling services.