



# United for Dignity

Conference on the specific situation of Roma young people  
affected by multiple discrimination

24 – 26 June 2014, European Youth Centre Strasbourg

Conference Report

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by Barbara Giovanna Bello

*Organised by the Youth Department, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit and the Support Team of the  
Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues of the Council of Europe*

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## INTRODUCTION

From 24 to 26 June 2014, the Council of Europe's Youth Centre in Strasbourg hosted a conference under the heading "United for Dignity". The conference, part of the Roma Youth Action Plan, gathered more than 60 activists from a variety of organisations working to combat discrimination on a variety of grounds, civil society representatives, research, Roma young people and representatives of governmental institutions and the Council of Europe. The conference was intended as a forum to raise awareness of and to explore and formulate responses to situations of multiple discrimination affecting young Roma.

This report summarises the conference's input, discussions and conclusions and is intended as a tool to explore multiple discrimination affecting Roma young people and the steps that need to be taken at different levels (local, national, international, institutional and in the civic society) to tackle it effectively.

### Roma, young, and ... is someone missing from the story?

In the Nineties, the particular experiences of 'Roma young people' started to make their appearance in the agenda of various social actors and institutions, also due to the Roma youth movements and organisations which came into being. These Roma youth groups quickly have become an engine for change both within their communities and in the society at large. Their increasing engagement had the positive effect to galvanize public and institutional attention on Roma youth-related issues and to help Roma young people build their sense of identity and belongingness across Europe. Until that moment, the 'voices' and stances of Roma young people were hardly visible for local and European institutions and policy makers: in the best cases, they had been represented either by Roma adults or by non-Roma young and adult people (practitioners, teachers, mediators, social assistants, youth workers, etc.). In the worst cases, they had been completely disregarded. They had been missing also from the public and institutional debate, since Roma-related initiatives had been mainly ethnicity-based and obscured the role played by age. In the same way, for a long time youth-related initiatives were just based on age, leaving no or little room to other identity features or discrimination grounds.

In more recent years, though, it has become increasingly clear that 'someone' was still missing in the story of Roma rights. In fact, if raising the issue of Roma young people's particular rights and needs can be considered an important step forward, it does not mean *per se* (and indeed it did not mean right up until very recent times) to take into consideration other grounds than ethnicity and age, sex (the condition of Roma women and girls) being the only exception increasingly envisaged. The voices of many Roma young people, namely LGBT, HIV positive, young people with disabilities, migrants, ex-offenders, etc., still remained unspoken and unheard. These young people may experience oppression and discrimination both inside their communities, as well as in their relation to non-Roma.

Moreover, looking at the bigger picture, multiple discrimination has been sporadically addressed by international human rights organisations and governments. The importance and usefulness of the concept has to become increasingly recognized in different international human rights fora, both governmental and non-governmental. Despite the complexity of the issue, with its various definitions, distinctions and implications, what should be recognized is that multiple discrimination is a social reality that affects the daily experiences of individuals in very concrete ways. The main challenge is to offer the possibility for the victim of discrimination to address exactly the type of treatment of which this person has been subjected. Since cases of multiple discrimination cannot be challenged on the basis of individual grounds, victims of multiple discrimination may remain without protection. The problem is that antidiscrimination laws are mostly based on the assumption that protected grounds are objectively identifiable, mutually exclusive and internally homogenous. This has an impact on the effectiveness of remedies and legal systems should give the possibility to courts to consider also combinations of grounds. While the current legislative framework may not adequately address multiple discrimination, there are practical steps that can be taken in this

regard by both civil society and governmental actors in their policy-development and activities. Initiatives aimed at addressing multiple discrimination can be effective if they consider how the intersectionality of identity and experiences of discrimination play into real-life and day-to-day situations. LGBT Roma young people, for example, which is often a group even more invisible than Roma women and Roma migrants, conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity out of fear of negative reactions, discrimination, harassment, rejection or violence at school, work, in their neighbourhood or in their family. For many Roma homosexuals fighting against multiple discrimination has been more a personal battle so far. Roma LGBT people are the most vulnerable group and face triple discrimination: firstly as Roma, secondly as LGBT people, and thirdly as LGBT people in the Roma community. In the case of young Roma LGBT living in ghettos, there is a fourth ground for discrimination: exclusion.

## Background to the Conference “United for Dignity”

The Conference ‘United in Dignity’ has brought up many topics that are at the core of the work of different sectors and departments of the Council of Europe. This is visible in the cross-sectorial cooperation (among the Youth Department, the SOGI Unit and the support team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues) from which this event stems.

The need to move multiple discrimination from the margin to the centre of its priorities was clearly expressed at the Roma Youth Conference held in Strasbourg in 2011, during which Roma young participants drafted the Guidelines for a European Roma Youth Action Plan<sup>1</sup>. This document identifies ‘external’ and ‘internal’ challenges confronting particularly vulnerable groups within the Roma communities (e.g. youth women, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender youth, HIV infected, migrants and undocumented young people) and pointed out the need for a better understanding of the multiple forms of discrimination affecting so defined ‘minorities within the Roma communities’ both within their communities and outside them and for empowering different groups including Roma young women, LGBT, religious, migrant and other groups. The Guidelines also call on the Council of Europe to “raise awareness and disseminate information about the concept of multiple discrimination” (Ibid., p. 9). On the basis of these guidelines, the Roma Youth Action Plan<sup>2</sup> was developed. It includes a specific objective related to multiple discrimination, namely “to empower groups that suffer discrimination within Roma communities, including young women, LGBT, religious, migrant and other minority groups”. Among the expected outcomes are raising awareness of the history of and diversity among young Roma, as well as of multiple discrimination among young Roma, particularly in relation to the situation of young women and LGBT groups; networking between Roma and non-Roma youth networks and organisations on specific human rights and diversity matters affecting minorities within Roma communities; research on the diversity within Roma communities, on perceptions of Roma about diversity within the community, and on access to basic rights.

The Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit (SOGI Unit, hereinafter), partner in the organisation of this Conference, is the focal point within the Council of Europe for the work on sexual orientation and gender identity issues and works for the implementation of the Recommendation 5/2010 on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Thirdly, the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues has also had outstanding work both on the policy development levels, through the work of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Roma Issues, CAHROM, as well as through initiatives aiming to empower Roma

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<sup>1</sup> The Guidelines for a European Roma Youth Action Plan are available at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/News&Calls/2011\\_Guidelines\\_Roma\\_Youth\\_Action\\_Plan\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/News&Calls/2011_Guidelines_Roma_Youth_Action_Plan_en.pdf) (last accessed 15 January 2013).

<sup>2</sup> More about the Roma Youth Action Plan: [www.coe.int/youth/roma](http://www.coe.int/youth/roma)

communities, such as ROMED. Several areas of work are concerned with the situation of Roma migration, the specific situation and empowerment of Roma women and combating antigypsyism. Moreover, CAHROM has developed reports and recommendations concerning the human rights of the Roma, which can serve as a basis for further policy development in this respect.

In 2013, the SOGI Unit and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe united their forces in running a joint project whose aim was to produce a study on the specific situation of Roma young people affected by multiple discrimination, with a particular regard to young Roma women, young Roma migrants, young Roma LGBT. This project led to the study called *Barabaripen: Young Roma Speak about Multiple Discrimination* which is an awareness raising tool on multiple discrimination affecting Roma young people. The study includes life stories narrated by Roma young people themselves, about how multiple discrimination happens in their everyday life and what strategies they enact to counter discrimination. The Conference was organised with the specific objective of launching this study and promoting it to the audiences which are most likely to use it.

### The Conference in brief

The Conference “United for Dignity. Conference on the specific situation of Roma young people affected by multiple discrimination”, held in Strasbourg on 23-26 June 2014, results from the cross-sectorial cooperation within the Council of Europe, namely among the Youth Department, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Unit and the support team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues.

This event brought together Roma and non Roma young activists in the field of Roma rights, LGBT rights, women’s rights, migrants’ rights or general human rights. Coming from different fields of expertise, this youth event offered to participants a safe place to explore the particular intersections where Roma women, Roma migrants and Roma LGBTIQ are located. In response to the wish expressed by various Roma fora, networks and NGOs, the Conference offered the opportunity to understand better the situation of multiple discrimination experienced by Roma people; to provide youth organisations and other partners with a room to discuss about including in their work with and for young people facing discrimination a specific concern on multiple discrimination; and to draft concrete proposals on future work on this topic, at different levels and by the partners involved.

The specific objectives of the Conference were:

- To promote the study *Barabaripen: Young Roma Speak about Multiple Discrimination* and discuss its usability in the work of the stakeholders involved;
- To create a better understanding of what multiple discrimination is and how it affects Roma young people;
- To reflect on the role of civil society in tackling multiple discrimination, particularly through making coalitions and addressing the issues of Roma youth in a multi-perspective way;
- To raise awareness about the specific situation of young Roma people affected by multiple discrimination;
- To propose ways in which policy makers together with the Roma young people can address issues of multiple discrimination at institutional level;
- To create a space for networking among organisations;
- To make proposals for future actions by the Roma Youth Action Plan and the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit to address multiple discrimination.

The Conference brought together about 60 Roma and non-Roma youth leaders and activists from civil society who work on different human rights- related issues and with different approaches, researchers, experts and representatives of different sectors of the Council of Europe. Some of the Conference participants’ NGOs deal with discrimination and human rights in general, whereas others focus on specific

target groups (Roma rights, LGBT rights). Some NGOs have already adopted an intersectional approach in their initiatives, while others concentrate on one ground only (e.g. on sexual orientation, on ethnic origin, gender). Just to give an idea of the diversity of expertise within the groups of participants, they are actively involved in NGOs dealing with Roma rights, the specific situation of Roma young people or Roma women, with LGBT-related issues. Some NGOs specifically deal with diversity within Roma communities, while others come from general youth NGOs and general human rights NGOs. Researchers, representatives of human rights law bodies and human rights monitoring bodies, partners of the Roma Youth Action Plan and some of the young people involved in the study Barabaripen also participated in the Conference.

Participants benefited from the diversity of experience and expertise in the group. The idea of bringing together young activists focused on different target groups and adopting a variety of approaches (intersectional, single ground, multiple discrimination) proved to be a powerful way to stimulate in-depth discussions and future cooperation among people who otherwise would not easily get together. Participants worked together intensively and their cross-community sharing enabled them to analyse, concretely and in context, the intersections that shape young Roma people's identities and multiple discrimination occurring their life (see the learning outcomes in chapter V. par.1). Looking at these topics from different angles helped them find useful intersections also in their own work and build on them for future networking. This richness was brought up in the forward-looking statements, proposals and recommendations drafted by participants.

Participants also explored the study Barabaripen and understood its value for future actions, as an awareness-raising and educational tool.

Participants also deepened their knowledge about multiple discrimination and discussed its strengths and pitfalls from different perspectives.

## About this report

This report aims to represent the vivid discussions, proposals and outcomes of the conference "United for Dignity". The structure does not mirror the daily programme developed during the days of the Conference and the sessions are described in different themed chapters of the report.

Chapter I includes my reflections as General Rapporteur on the Conference, where I try to integrate the topics discussed by participants with some critical observations and food for thoughts for further work on multiple discrimination.

Chapter II includes the main outcomes of the Conference and the list of concrete proposals for further action that resulted from participants' discussions.

Chapter III explores the main concepts explained and discussed during the Conference (identity and multiple discrimination/intersectional discriminations), and adds to the what was discussed in the conference, on the basis of my experience.

Chapters IV to VI describe the rich debates and discussions during the Conference and the practices participants shared and learnt from. They analyse Roma young people's life stories, the complexity of Roma young people's identity and how they cope with discrimination inside and outside their communities, the challenges, gaps and potentialities encountered when working with multiple discrimination issues as well as of the existing initiatives to tackle them.

The Appendices to the report include series of resources and tools to learn more about multiple discrimination and the Conference.



## CHAPTER I. General rapporteur' reflections on the Conference: how to navigate the archipelagos of discrimination?

*"No man [Note of the Author: nor woman, nor others!] is an island entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent a part of the main" (John Donne)*

### "Archipelagos"

Turning the common structure of reports upside down, my reflections as rapporteur of the whole Conference precede the main body of the report instead of following it, in order to accompany the reader through the next chapters.

This Conference was a unique event that went directly to the heart of the vulnerability experienced by minorities within the Roma minorities. This initiative summed up and put together in an innovative way the work of many people – activists, practitioners, youth workers, researchers and trainers– who have been trying to navigate the archipelagos of discriminations in the last decades. In doing so, the Conference can be rightly considered a step forward to overcome the long-lasting approach to tackle discriminations as mutually exclusive and isolated islands (in separated groups, policies, pieces of law, different advocacy groups pursuing their own battles and agendas at the local, European, international level). The separation and even competition between different advocacy groups and policies have proved to nullify the particular stances of most vulnerable ones with each group. This is what Kimberly Crenshaw calls 'political intersectionality', that *"highlights the fact that women of colour (Author's Note: the same can be told of Roma women, Roma LGBT, etc. within the Roma communities) are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas"* (Crenshaw, K.W., 1991, p. 1252).

During the Conference, I had the privilege to witness how participants and representatives of the institutions tried to navigate across these islands of advocacy and to build bridges, recognizing that individuals and groups are not, indeed, isolated: under the surface, below the Sea, we are all interconnected.

Concerning the Roma rights, a particular attention has developed in the last two decades in order to interrogate 'age' within the Roma communities: children and youth face particular challenges that are specific in respect to both non-Roma children and youngsters as well as to Roma adults. Many young Roma activists, boys and girls, started to raise awareness on what means to be a Roma pupil and student in a special school, in a segregated class as well as in mainstream schools. They started questioning the paternalistic approach towards them adopted by both their parents and other adults in the communities and, at the same time, by non- Roma. The motto "nothing for the Roma without the Roma" was very vivid during the Conference for discussing the Roma Youth Action Plan and during the Conference described in this report as well. They also questioned the stigma attached to them from non-Roma and the patriarchal tradition as well as taboos within their own communities. Diversity within the Roma minority was overlooked for many years and the voices of many Roma people were missing. 'Age', together with 'gender' (and the work done by many Roma women), has become a 'place' for coalition that triggered many other new and intersecting 'places': gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national status were those particularly explored in this Conference.

Starting to speak about 'minorities within minorities' is an on-going and bottom-up process that started long before the Conference and will not finish there, but the Conference offered the **unprecedented opportunity** to bring different groups together (Roma young people and activists, LGBT young people, migrants and intersections among them) and to support them to cross the boundaries of their groups, to work cross-culturally and to explore how different structures of oppression are intersecting. It also marks the valuable commitment by the Council of Europe to join efforts and foster cross-sectorial work to support Roma young people located at very vulnerable crossroads: for example, Roma LGBT. The study Barabaripen and the participants taking part in the Conference confirmed how vulnerable many Roma LGBT are, when they are rejected by mainstream LGBT associations and services because of their ethnic origin and, at the same time, when they are ostracized by their own families or communities because of their gender identity

or sexual orientation. In some cases they face domestic violence and forced marriages. In some others they flee home and run the risk to fall into prostitution or drug traps.

When I was appointed by the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Union in the field of youth in early 2012 to draft a Framework Paper on marginalized youth groups within the Roma communities (Bello, B.G. 2012), I emphasized the lack of data, research and initiatives about the specific conditions of Roma LGBT and the fact that the acronym 'LGBTIQ' is also not a monolith. One of the few pieces of information available in the internet concerned Jacob, a young Roma transvestite from Slovakia<sup>3</sup>. By doing the same research on Roma LGBT today, one can easily retrieve at least information on a study supported by the European Roma Rights Centre (Kurtic, V., 2013), the initiatives promoted by the LGBT activist David Tiser and the study Barabaripen, as well as the Conference described in this report, both supported by the Council of Europe as an answer to the requests done by Roma young activists during the Conference that led to the Roma Youth Action Plan in 2011.

The intersection 'Roma LGBT' was not the only one addressed in the Conference, but for sure this under-theorized and barely explored topic raised the interest of many participants also due to the joint participation of representatives from Roma NGOs and LGBT NGOs fostered by the cross-sectorial cooperation within the Council of Europe. Roma young women and the situation of Roma young migrants belong also to the three main thematic areas of the Conference. Roma women were the first to challenge the precarious balance between the preservation of Roma identity by communities and the violation of the rights claimed by 'minorities' within the Roma communities. Also, the issues of Roma women have gone much beyond the initial ones, including now sensitive issues like domestic violence and early marriages. Migration and mobility have major implications for Roma young people in general and even more for Roma women and Roma LGBT.

The Conference offered the opportunity to discuss how youth activists and NGOs can move from one-ground approach to an intersectional approach and why we should do this move. This is an important point because there are some sceptical attitudes towards integrating intersectionality when tackling equality and discrimination. One argument of detractors is that, by "going intersectionally", single-group instances would lose their importance. Though, there are at least three purposes that rethinking Roma youth rights intersectionally may serve:

1) The first one is reaching **substantive equality** in a Europe where "*some are still more equal than others*" (Değirmencioğlu, S.M. (Ed.), 2011). Incorporating diversity within minorities means to holistically understand subordination, privilege and human rights, removing the specific obstacles that prevent people to enjoy their rights. It also means to pay attention to vulnerable people's specific stories based on their identities, rather than on aprioristic assumptions.

2) The second one is to help safeguarding "the minimum core of human dignity" (McCrudden, C., 2008, p. 679) that encompasses three elements: "*The first is that every human being possesses **an intrinsic worth**, merely by being human. The second is that this **intrinsic worth should be recognized and respected by others, and some forms of treatment by others are inconsistent with, or required by, respect for this intrinsic worth.**[...] [R]ecognising the intrinsic worth of the individual requires that **the state should be seen to exist for the sake of the individual human being, and not vice versa**" (Ibid.).*

Being all equal is not enough, because we could all be equally slave, oppressed or invisible. Dignity, that appears also in the title of the Conference detailed here, helps setting a minimum standard of life and respect for human beings.

3) The third one is to provide everyone with fundamental freedoms and to be sure that everyone has the adequate array of instruments to enjoy these freedoms.

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<sup>3</sup> Lepage, C. 2011. Roma, gay, transvestite: his name Jakob. Available at: <http://emajmagazine.com/2011/07/11/roma-gay-transvestite-his-name-is-jakob/> (Accessed 28 May 2012).

During the Conference participants tried their best to do what Mari Matsuda calls “to ask the other question”. This author says: “The way I try to understand the interconnection of all forms of subordination is through a method I call ‘ask the other question’. When I see something that looks racist, I ask ‘Where is the patriarchy in this?’ When I see something that looks sexist, I ask ‘Where is the heterosexism in this?’” (Matsuda, M., 1991)

Participants looked at ethnicity and race in the LGBT groups and at heteronormativism in the Roma communities, helped by the experience of Roma women in questioning patriarchy and racism in the last decades. Many situations of discriminations that had been hidden came to the surface. They also discussed how to rethink the language in a way that is careful, sensitive and inclusive as well as how to rewrite the narratives of Roma young people.

They also faced the challenges to build what I like to call ‘an intersectionality state of mind’, something that recalled to my mind an excerpt from “The Alchemist” of Paulo Coelho that tells about the wisest man in the world, who asked a young visitor to his marvellous palace to carry a teaspoon that held two drops of oil during the visit. Upon the boy’s return, the wise man asked him what he had seen, but the boy had been so much focused on not spilling the oil that he had not admired the castle. The second time, he managed to admire the castle, but forgot the drops of oil. The wisest man of the world told the boy: “Well, there is only one piece of advice I can give you,” said the wisest of wise men. “The secret is to see all the marvels of the world, and never to forget the drops of oil on the spoon.” (Coelho, P., 1988) Working intersectionally is a bit like walking with the teaspoon: it means remembering about sexual orientation when dealing with ethnicity, keeping in mind gender identity when delving into disability and so on with the whole open-ended list of possibilities.

When navigating the archipelagos, one can find several ‘sharks’, i.e. the challenges, but also treasures and resources that need to be taken into consideration in order to tackle effectively multiple discrimination.

### “Sharks”

Participants in the Conference discussed many barriers, both inside and outside the Roma communities, that they encounter in their own daily life when trying to tackle multiple discrimination. The first one is **the lack of or low theoretical and practical knowledge about concepts like ‘discrimination’, ‘harassment’, multiple/intersectional discrimination and intersectionality**. Many Roma young people at the local level do not know which cases of discrimination are relevant before the law and which ones are rather just perceived as discrimination. Besides, bias is so internalized that they even do not dare to look for help when their rights are denied. But Roma young people are not the only ones who ignore these concepts. Institutions, legal practitioners, members of the national courts, NGOs that act as paralegals as well need to delve into how discrimination works and how to tackle it. All in all, there is a need to strengthen and disseminate knowledge with the help of experts and practitioners who have been researching, litigating and promoting advocacy tools to tackle discrimination and more precisely multiple discrimination. There is also the need to include Roma young people who are not involved in youth or other NGOs or live in isolated areas, who can have less access to information. During the Conference participants urged the **harmonisation of antidiscrimination law** as an indispensable and essential condition to tackle multiple discrimination. At the same time, they stressed that individual rights protection based on claims before the courts is not enough to tackle discrimination (including multiple discrimination), because it is expensive and can take a long time, during which victims of discrimination are at risk of being further discriminated against. Litigating rights is but one of many instruments that need to be put in place to tackle multiple discrimination. Among other options, a broader **advocacy strategy**<sup>4</sup> was out-pointed by some participants as a sustainable activity in which Roma and non-Roma youth NGOs can get engaged and build cross-community cooperation that integrates the stances of ‘minorities within minorities’.

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<sup>4</sup> In the NGOs framework advocacy has been defined as “a systematic, democratic, and organised effort by NGOs to change, influence, or initiate policies, laws, practices, and behaviour so that disadvantaged citizens in particular or all citizens in general will be benefited” (Holloway, R., 1998)

This cooperation could also serve the purpose of avoiding the harmful risk, that is embedded in the advocacy initiatives addressing the needs of ‘minorities within minorities’, to perpetuate or even strengthen the stereotyped idea of the mainstream society that certain practices (like early marriages) are culture-specific and that certain ethnic and religious minorities are particularly oppressive and violent towards their members who do not fall in the ‘norm’ established by these communities (see among others Crenshaw, K.W., 1991). These arguments have been easily used by populist politics to attack and stigmatise whole communities, rising different kinds of ‘Others-phobic’ sentiments (insightful on this Cohen, J., Howard, M. and Nussbaum, M.C. (Eds.), 1999). As far as Roma people are concerned, I quote an excerpt of Angela Kocze and Maria Popa Raluca’s well-known publication “Missing Intersectionality. Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Current Research and Policies on Romani Women in Europe” (Kocze, A. and Raluca, M.P., 2009; see also [European Roma and Travellers Forum and the Romani Women Informal Platform ‘Phenjali’, 2013](#)) where the authors explain that as Romani women try to question intra-groups structures, they face *“the danger of further stigmatizing the group by exposing intra-group hierarchies. For example, the discussion of early marriages in Roma communities can easily fuel majority biased representations of Roma culture as “oppressive” and “backward”. Opening up the debate about gender inequalities becomes, then, an issue of loyalty to the larger Roma community. Some male leaders go as far as claiming that “Romani women are going to choose between their ethnicity and their gender”.*

To sum up on this point, structural barriers within Roma communities (e.g. traditional practices, patriarchal institutions leading to domestic violence (not only against women) and outside them (prejudice and hatred against Roma people, discrimination, marginalisation, economic recession and populist discourse) need to be tackled jointly in order to provide a “safe place” where victims of multiple odds can land.

Another challenge emerged in the Conference is to overcome narrow definitions of identity. If people are pushed to pick up just one feature to describe who they are, all other characteristics disappear. This approach has harmful consequences: not only it separates people by making them believe that they are more different than they actually are, but it also drives (national, local, etc.) institutions or NGOs when they design and implement advocacy strategies and services for certain “categories” of vulnerable people, failing to accommodate the specific needs of people ‘at the crossroads’.

When dealing with identity, intersectionality and antidiscrimination law/policy, the issue of ‘categories’ is central and it was raised also by some participants who note that they cage people in stereotyped and fixed boxes (see also chapter III). So the questions are how to research situations of discrimination of ‘minorities within minorities’ without essentialising human beings and how to fight against discriminations in a way that the law/policy have not the paradoxical effect to perpetuate categories (establishing, for example, who is ‘Roma’ and who is not; who is young and who is ‘not’; who falls into the category ‘gender’ and who doesn’t, etc.).

Language plays also its own role in building up inclusive or exclusive narratives: the study Barabaripen and this Conference are important steps to support minorities within the Roma minorities to have their say in the process of re-writing the narratives concerning their rights.

## Resources

After describing the amount of challenges that still exist when tackling multiple discrimination, it is important to mention the existing resources, i.e. the theoretical and practical knowledge and expertise on antidiscrimination, intersectionality, Roma rights, Roma women rights, and LGBT rights, migration and other topics. In this perspective, the Conference itself was a great peer-to-peer learning experience. Participants shared valuable good practices that they implemented within their NGOs (chapter IV). They are not all necessarily related to the specific intersections at the core of the Conference (Roma young LGBT, Roma young women and Roma young migrants), but they can offer an instructive platform to further develop interventions targeting needs of Roma LGBT and other under-researched intersections within the Roma communities, such as Roma people with disabilities, Roma young ex-offenders or at risk of offending

(Rubikon, 2013), Roma young drug-addicted (Marcu, O, and Marani, P., 2012), Roma with HIV (UNICEF carried out some studies), etc. Obviously, good practices shall be updated and adapted to each specific context and topic, but some lessons can be learned. The step further is then to link the expertise emerged during the Conference with the whole ongoing debate on intersectionality and multiple discrimination. Multiple discriminations affecting Roma young people are topics that also many local, national and international institutions need to familiarize with. In this respect, institutions and NGOs that want to engage with intersectionality and multiple discrimination could benefit from the impressive amount of legal and sociological research, manuals and training modules; from practitioners' efforts as well as youth and adult initiatives that have tried to integrate an intersectional approach and to tackle multiple discrimination; from the outcomes, pitfalls and developments occurred in the scientific and practitioners' communities on these topics since the early Nineties, embracing also the criticisms raised against these concepts. This can help to avoid a too simplistic or uncritical use of intersectionality and multiple discrimination, that were indeed born as very critical ideas and stances. The risk of de-politicization of the intersectional project has already been noted by some scholars, above all by women of colour (among others, Bilge 2013): intersectionality came into being as a bottom-up movement that questioned social structures of inequalities and sought to build up coalitions of resistance and rights advocacy. This means that people located at invisible intersections, rather than being just victims of discrimination, also have their personal agency to confront and deconstruct barriers. Many participants in the Conference provided telling examples of how they organise to tackle multiple discrimination at the local level. When institutionalising intersectionality and multiple discrimination, institutions should to avoid a top-down and prescriptive use of intersectionality.

The Conference was a key moment for reflecting on all the aforesaid topics and many others as well. Also, it will not be the last one. The plethora of recommendations drafted by participants and presented on the last day (Chapter 5) show that everyone (participants; civil society at large; local, and national and European institutions) has its own homework now, in order to ensure that 'all' voices of Roma young people will be heard and listened to.

## CHAPTER II. Outcomes and steps for further action

### Learning outcomes and networking

The Conference brought together young participants with a wide variety of experience and expertise and created a space for peer sharing and learning that was highly appreciated by all participants. The input sessions on multiple discrimination helped participants acquire a deeper understanding on multiple discrimination. For example, the life stories contained in the study *Barabaripen* provided participants with concrete cases explaining how multiple discrimination occurs in Roma young people's everyday experience. Most participants considered them a powerful method to become familiar with cases of multiple discrimination and to recognize them. In this sense, this youth event was an eye-opening experience for many participants who hadn't been aware of the specific experience of discrimination faced by many Roma young people, within and outside their communities, on the basis of their ethnic origin, sexual orientation, migration background and gender.

The situation of young Roma LGBT in different countries particularly captured participants' attention because it is less known and under-researched if compared with the living conditions of young Roma women and young Roma migrants. LGBT activists got more knowledge on the specific challenges of Roma LGBT and, in turn, Roma activists gained new perspectives on sexual orientation and, any less, on gender identity.

Participants drew new ideas and inspirations from the good practices presented on the second day of the Conference or during the working groups, implemented by NGOs already working with the issues of multiple discrimination and intersectionality. Furthermore, participants gained insights during the networking session, organised in the form of an organisations market, during which participants got to know the work done day-by-day by other activists and explored possibilities for cooperation. The opportunity to meet and network with so many engaged young people working on different grounds (LGBT rights, Roma rights, migrant rights and intersections among them) was particularly cherished, because NGOs working on a single-ground are often sealed off from those working on other grounds and do not easily meet each other. This 'intersection' of NGOs stimulated solidarity among participants with different agendas, which plan to cooperate to tackle discrimination experienced by 'minorities within minorities'. One example of this cooperation was the roundtable on racial and ethnic identities organised by IGLYO as a follow-up to the Conference, where several participants in the Conference were invited to participate. This event offered space for a focused discussion on the internal diversity of the LGBTQ movement, movements for racial equality, and the youth movement. Another example is the Survey on multiple discrimination launched by European Youth Forum and presented at the Conference that participants were invited to join.

Apart from networking with their peers, many participants also appreciated the possibility to get to know the work of the Council of Europe and the representatives of the different team working on the topic of discrimination and Roma issues.

### Proposals for future actions

One of the specific objectives of the Conference was to provide participants with a place for drafting proposals both for the dissemination of the study *Barabaripen* as well as for tackling the problem of multiple discrimination. Participants looked at specific actions to be undertaken by different actors, namely:

- civil society;
- Roma communities;
- local and national authorities;
- the Council of Europe (e.g. the Roma Youth Action Plan, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit, the Youth Department, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues).

Recommendations span from broader statements to very specific and concrete suggestions. All together, they express the following ideas:

- *Acquisition and dissemination of knowledge on multiple discrimination and intersectionality.* There is a need to understand what multiple discrimination is and how it works for almost all stakeholders and institutions. Specific trainings should be provided for a wide range of social actors. The Study on multiple discrimination should be disseminated to all relevant stakeholders.
- *Incorporate multiple discrimination in the European/national legislation.* There is the need to set up a consistent body of legislation/policy to tackle multiple discrimination
- *Research.* In-depth research should be fostered in order to gather data on multiple discrimination affecting Roma young people, in order to design effective initiatives to prevent and tackle this problem
- *Involvement of the Roma communities.* The Roma communities should gain knowledge on their rights and should be involved in the advocacy initiatives on multiple discrimination regarding them.
- *Cross-sectoral cooperation,* to be further encouraged both within the institutions and within the civic society.

## **1. Proposals concerning the promotion and dissemination of the study *Barabaripen***

- Translate the study at least into Romanes
- Distribute the study through NGOs, relevant national bodies and partners such as ministries for equality/human rights and education to train key officials and practitioners and make sure that the study reaches both Roma and non-Roma organisations
- Disseminate the study during different types of festivals and other events like the Gay Pride and the Roma pride in order to raise awareness on multiple discrimination/intersectionality of young Roma
- Disseminate the study through newsletters, social networks, through the network of Living Libraries and through links on relevant websites as e.g. ECRI website
- Collect feedback from Roma community (through civil society organisations) on the relevance of the study for their work
- Put the study online and launch an interactive and ongoing project, to which other stories of Roma people who overcame experiences of discrimination and positive examples of resistance to discrimination, can be added. A short video about the content of the study should be also posted online, in order to make the research more accessible
- Revise, improve, follow-up on the study, as to include particular country inputs
- Develop educational modules based on the stories covered by the study. These modules could be used as part of future trainings on multiple discrimination
- Each organisation present at the Conference should contact the authorities to make them aware about the existence of the study and organise the training session for them to raise awareness on the issue of multiple discrimination of Roma young people

## **2. Proposals concerning civil society (particularly NGOs) and the actions it can take for combating multiple discrimination**

- Advocate for the recognition of multiple discrimination within the third sector and in the national legislation



- Build cross-community and intersectional coalitions, alliances, networks and partnerships among organisations and community groups of Roma, Roma women, youth, LGBTIQ, migrants, disabled, etc. within civil society, in order to:
  - develop awareness of barriers and challenges confronting each of these groups;
  - overcome potential internal prejudices based on misunderstanding within, and lack of information about each of them;
  - carry out ad-hoc initiatives on young Roma LGBTIQ, including campaigns, letters of concern, petitions etc.
- Include modules on multiple discrimination within human rights education programmes and develop concrete tools to fight discrimination
- Support initiative aimed at identifying, tackling and redressing multiple discrimination, including in accessing provision such as healthcare and mental health services
- Undertake specific training initiatives to raise awareness of all types of multiple discrimination with a focus on Roma for: mediators, journalists, state actors at local and municipal level, including of police officers and chief of police, school teachers, representatives of ministries of Education responsible for curriculum, legal professionals and other local authorities, social workers, youth workers, young people. The aims of these training activities are to: multiply knowledge on multiple discrimination, to foster protection of victims of multiple discrimination and to raise awareness of multiple grounds of discrimination faced by Roma young people, particularly young women, LGBTIQ people, (undocumented) migrants, HIV-positive people, etc.; to enhance awareness on various topics like human rights, national legal framework, enforcement bodies, public services and existing (human) resources for accessing services and pursuing legal action (including Roma mediators, NGOs, local Roma experts working at municipality level)
- Undertake specific training for civil society as well as Roma and non-Roma communities, in order to improve and maximise their advocacy efforts to organise campaigns, engage in mobilisation, writing advocacy briefs, papers, letters of concern, conducting research, monitoring, media and communication and networking
- Create platforms for cooperation with the police in order to prevent police abuses
- Mainstream social vulnerability factors (although they are not Roma specific issues) that impact Roma young LGBTIQ people within both Roma and LGBTIQ advocacy organisations' work, with a particular focus on ethnic and gender discrimination, structural poverty and social exclusion, low levels of education, high levels of unemployment, growing up in state care, usury, human trafficking and exploitation.
- Gather data that include an intersectional approach
- Encourage the Equality bodies to take a more proactive approach on Roma and multiple discrimination, including through increasing Roma representation within them
- Include the issue of multiple discrimination of Roma young people in the local events, such as Week against Racism, etc.

### **3. Proposals addressing the involvement of the Roma communities in combating multiple discrimination**

- Get engaged in specific training in order to improve advocacy efforts to organise campaigns, engage in mobilisation, writing advocacy briefs, papers, letters of concern, conducting research, monitoring, media and communication and networking
- Discuss and organise initiatives to represent correctly the role of Roma women in history and to better understand the Roma history in general
- Organise meetings and discussions about the Roma culture aimed at discussing the risk of essentialising the Roma culture and the diversity within the Roma community
- Carry out specific youth work programmes and initiatives within the Roma communities, to support competently young people in cases of discrimination and, generally, in their transition to adulthood

### **4. Proposal aimed at local and national authorities**



- Establish and commit more resources for local and national support centres in order to provide information, social, legal and other type of assistance for victims of discrimination, particularly multiple discrimination, including referral to specialised/complaints institutions. Ensure that staff of the aforesaid centres are properly trained and sensitised to work with issues of multiple discrimination
- Fund initiatives aimed at identifying, tackling and redressing multiple discrimination, including in accessing provision such as healthcare and mental health services
- Develop effective national anti-discrimination legislation and protection mechanisms tackling multiple discrimination/intersectional discrimination that include sexual orientation and gender identity or, even better, reflect an open list of grounds and all the spheres of life.
- Ensure that the realities of multiple discrimination are adequately embedded in legislation and adopt relevant legislation that can help tackling multiple discrimination
- Ensure that public services under the responsibility of local or regional administration are well equipped to respond to the needs of Roma young people, and within this group, to the needs of Roma young girls, Roma young LGBTIQ and Roma young migrants. Ensure that the staff involved in public services has adequate human rights training and intercultural competences.
- Provide trainings for police officers, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, ombudspersons staff working in mediation services, or public services or anti-discrimination bodies and other enforcement officials, on human rights and vulnerability factors confronting young Roma in relation to multiple discrimination, anti-discrimination and equality, so that they are enabled to cover all facets of multiple discrimination (such as Roma youth, Roma women, Roma LGBTIQ and Roma undocumented migrants) when tackling cases of discrimination.
- Support prevention initiatives, youth work initiatives and peer education initiatives by which young people themselves can learn about how to access their rights and how they can claim their rights
- Advocate for the establishment of specialised police units on multiple discrimination and antigypsyism, support the cooperation between the police and civil society and involve police officers coming from minorities
- Undertake in-depth national research on multiple discrimination and how it impacts on Roma young people, including Roma women, Roma LGBTIQ and Roma (undocumented) migrants, focused on the link between discrimination, multiple discrimination, poverty and antigypsyism
- Collect disaggregated data that allow a better insight into multiple discrimination aspects affecting young people and, more in general, an effective legal protection
- Develop, support, efficiently implement and monitor educational programmes on multiple discrimination and ways to tackle and remedy it
- Develop cross-sectorial and multi-agency cooperation in order to tackle multiple discrimination
- Develop tools for assessing policies taking into account of multiple discrimination
- Set up ethical standards and practice-related standards for public services dealing with situations of discrimination and use them for the purpose of regular monitoring
- Support programmes in schools of human rights education that have as topic diversity Include in the school curricula information about the Roma (history, culture etc.)
- Include the issue of multiple discrimination of Roma young people in the local events, such as Week against Racism, etc.

## **5. Proposals for the further action of Council of Europe**

- Set up a thematic visits by CAHROM on multiple discrimination
- Include different aspects of multiple discrimination ways to address it in the ROMED curriculum
- Develop effective legislation on multiple discrimination, including intersectional discrimination, that reflect an open list of grounds and all the spheres of life
- Provide trainings for judges and lawyers, Ombudspersons, Roma mediators and activists (including LGBTIQ activists, women's movements), state institutions' officers and police officers, staff working in public services or anti-discrimination bodies, on such topics as human rights and vulnerability

factors confronting young Roma in relation to multiple discrimination, anti-discrimination and equality in order for them to identify and tackle multiple discrimination on multiple discrimination of Roma young people

- Research about and promote understanding of the link between discrimination, multiple discrimination, poverty and antigypsyism
- Research effective protection mechanisms and legal responses to situation of multiple discrimination
- Collect disaggregated data that allows a better insight into multiple discrimination aspects affecting young people
- Develop tools for assessing policies taking account of multiple discrimination
- Commit more financial and other resources for developing and constantly improving provision to victims of multiple discrimination, including Roma youth, Roma women, Roma LGBTIQ and Roma undocumented migrants
- Set up ethical standards and practice-related standards for public services dealing with situations of discrimination and use them for the purpose of regular monitoring
- Ensure that complaint mechanisms for victims of discrimination are established and implemented, and that they take into account situations of multiple discrimination
- Increase the cooperation and transversality on multiple discrimination and Roma related issues
- Organise specific and separate educational activities on each of the following topics: Roma young LGBTIQ, young Roma migrants and other groups. The aim is to tackle multiple discrimination in depth
- The Commissioner for Human Rights should include the issue of multiple discrimination in his reports and ECRI should monitor and identify the problems related to multiple discrimination and put pressure on governments to have proper responses to them
- Organise meetings with participants that represent “minorities within minorities” with the aim to learn about mechanisms of refusal and oppression within minorities and strategies for fighting it
- Fund projects involving young people that represent “minorities within minorities” and specifically projects initiated and run by Roma young people (for example, via the European Youth Foundation) and set “tackling multiple discrimination of Roma young people” as a priority - criterion for the international youth organisations and the networks applying to organise study sessions in the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- Facilitate meetings for youth organizations working on different grounds of discrimination to develop a common discourse about multiple discrimination
- Promote and enhance the co-operation between Roma organisations and LGBTIQ, women and migrants organisation in order to tackle multiple discrimination in a cohesive way. Identity politics based on single category (e.g. women politics) fails to grasp or even ignores intra-group differences and it deny the existence of other intersecting dimensions which concur to shape each person’s identity (e.g. gender, race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, religion, marital status, etc.).



## CHAPTER III. Identity and multiple discrimination: learning a new lexicon

The term ‘multiple discrimination’ itself is often contested and replaced by ‘intersectional discrimination’, while a wealth of legal literature in Europe accept a wider concept of ‘multiple discrimination’ encompassing also compound and intersectional discrimination (Makkonen, T., 2002). This broader meaning has been adopted also in the study *Barabaripen* and in the Conference. In this chapter, I will recall some basic concepts, drawing from the presentation provided during the Conference, European scholarly and non-scholarly literature, as well as my own research. I will also synthesize the outcomes of the exercises on identity and multiple discrimination carried out during the Conference.

### Steps out of the box: identity vs. identities

It is common knowledge that each person’s identity is a unique, multifaceted, and complex combination of many features. Despite that, individuals and groups are often defined by just one particular characteristic at a time as well as perceived as homogenous and ‘one-dimensional’ human beings. For instance, one person can be considered either ‘young’, or ‘Roma’ or ‘woman’. Similarly, social groups, to which each person belongs, are often defined on the basis of just one shared element (e.g. the youngsters, women groups, Roma communities, etc.), be it physical feature (colour of the skin, sex, physical appearance, etc.), belief (religion, political belief, belonging to subcultures, etc.) or status (nationality, legal residence) or other grounds.

The situation exacerbates when the person belongs to a stigmatized minority group, as Roma people are in many countries, because all other characteristics (being a woman, LGBT person, disable, etc.) disappear in the eyes of the members of the ‘majority’. On the other hand, it can also happen that particular sub-groups within certain ‘visible minorities’ (in terms of colour of the skin and physical appearances) have to bear an additional burden of prejudice and discrimination or are more targeted than others.

Why is the complexity of identity something that one needs to discuss when dealing with multiple discrimination? Why do we need to deal with identity in the human rights-talk? First of all, looking at all the aspects of one’s identity helps to better fight for their rights. For example, most anti-discrimination laws look at the human person as being discriminated just because one ground or aspect of their identity, while often this is not the case. In these cases, people’s specific situations are not well dealt with by the law and many cases of discrimination remain undealt with. Based on the findings in the study *Barabaripen*, one of the difficulties is for the young people to pin down their identity and realize how their multiple faceted identities enter into play in cases of discrimination. During the conference, participants were offered the opportunity to reflect on their own identity, on their belonging to their communities and other groups in society. Self-reflections on various aspects that make up identity and group discussions helped participants understand how discrimination occurs and what particular challenges confront different young people.

Identity is a very complex thing, we have many different parts. We share the biggest part of these things with others but what the society/people in general like is that you pick up only one identity and they define you just by one identity. This is very dangerous: when you are only Roma, what are the other parts? When you are only Muslim, what are the other parts? This is the first step for fanatic behaviours and exclusion, because we may think that people are much more different than they are... (**Demetrio** from Spain, participant in the Conference)

The activity “Understanding my own identity”, contained in the study *Barabaripen* was the tool used to provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their own identity, what defines it and what conditions need to be ensured to fully express it. The exercise allowed participants to reflect on both the unique features of their identities and on the interrelatedness between their identity and expectations/needs, which are mutually influencing. It also triggered discussions on the idea that identity is

multiple and context-related while, at the same time, making participants discover commonalities with other young people living in very different places and situations.

Recurrent symbols participants used for the various aspects of their identities were family, love, friendship, the organizations where participants work or volunteer as well as their activist role. For most Roma participants, their ethnic belonging and the fact of living within Roma communities emerged as important aspects of their identity and, in some cases, even as the most important one.

Some participants looked at their identity as an ongoing process, either because they feel too young or they consider themselves in a constant state of becoming.

One relevant discussion was raised regarding sexual orientation and gender identity as well as defining oneself as male or female.

Participants identified expectations and needs from society such as freedom and humanity, legislation/legal protection, policy, respect, understanding, equality and overcoming hierarchical systems of discrimination.

In my group we had so many common things that we want from the world actually. When I put them on the paper myself, I was thinking they are things I want to get... but when we discussed in the group I saw that other people wrote the same things and want them too. And these are **simple things like understanding, support...** And then I asked **“Do we really get it?”** And the answer was **“ NOT at the moment...and what difference would make it if we really get it?!”** (Sam from the UK, participant in the Conference)

Participants discussed also the relations between self-perception and the ways in which people in the society perceive or define others (for example through fixed categories). The need for having categories for defining people was also questioned. For example, a participant suggested to go beyond categories, because very often people automatically place others in ascribed categories and groups that are based on stereotyped perceptions. These categories are then internalized by individuals and become like cages from which they cannot escape.

The exercise highlighted many relevant aspects which prepared the ground for further discussions about experiences of multiple discrimination confronting Roma young people. Most participants shared some common areas of interests and values (such as ethnic belonging, family, engagement in NGOs) as well as the need to question power relations implied in social structures and ‘normativisms’ preventing Roma young people from taking part on equal foot in society. Heterogeneity among participants raised central issues related to gender roles and identities, national and residence status, sexual orientation and social status impacting on Roma young people’ experiences within and outside their communities: being perceived as member of a particular social group or ethnic/religious/etc. communities or identifying (or not identifying) oneself with more than one groups/communities may result in multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination along the lines of gender, social status, race/ethnicity, sexuality, national status, disability and so on.



## Rethinking identity through intersectionality

“Ignoring differences *within* groups frequently contributes to tension *among* groups” (Crenshaw, K., 1991, p. 1242)

Intersectionality belongs to the attempts to grasp individuals’ identity and the diversity within minorities/groups/communities. The term ‘intersectionality’ was coined by Kimberlè Crenshaw in 1989 to address the specific situation of discrimination experienced by Black women (Crenshaw, K., 1989), whose location at the intersection of ‘race’ and ‘sex’ made their experiences structurally and “*qualitatively different*” (Crenshaw, K., 1991, p. 1245) than that of ‘White middle-class women’ and ‘Black men’ because **sex**, **race** and **class** are inextricably bound together. The problem is that the intersection of these grounds made Black women **invisible** and **marginalized** both in the instances of Black movements (mainly represented by Black men) and in the feminist groups (mainly represented by White middle-class women) (ibid.). A couple of years later, the same author used this concept to delve into the experience of domestic violence of Black women and the legal protection against it (ibid.). The idea of “intersectionality” tries to make the experience of oppression of Black women **visible** and seeks to capture both the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more forms of discrimination or systems of subordination. Crenshaw illustrates this concept through the well-known “Traffic Intersection Metaphor”:

*“Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction and may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by car travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from **sex** discrimination or **race** discrimination”* (Crenshaw, K., 1989, p. 149).

If ‘intersectionality’ can be considered a neologism coined in the late Eighties by Crenshaw, the concept expressed by this term is deeply rooted back in the history of Black women in the U.S., in the “*continuous life and death struggle for survival and liberation*” (Combahee River Collective, 1977) of such Afro-American women as Sojourner Truth.

During the Conference in Strasbourg, the importance to learn from other rights movements was voiced by some Roma activists. The idea of naming the Roma women’s platform and network ‘Phenjalipe’, that is the Romani term for ‘Sisterhood’, seems to echo the debates on sisterhood between US Black women and white feminists in the late Seventies and early Eighties (Lorde, A., 1984). Some participants affirmed that similarly to the Black women, Roma women engaged with ‘intersectional matters’ before other vulnerable groups within their communities and helped raising awareness on ‘other’ diversities within them. In this way, they helped prepare a fertile terrain for ‘others’ to stand up for their rights within their communities.

Once arrived in Europe from the U.S at the beginning of the Nineties, the concept of intersectionality (and multiple discrimination) has been slowly but increasingly applied in the analysis of Roma women conditions within and outside their communities, also due to involvement of some outstanding Roma researcher and/or activists (Nicoleta Bitu, Ostalinda Maja, Angela Kocze, just to give some examples) in international NGOs, meetings, and research initiatives where some of them got to know the intersectionality approach. Kurtic, who writes on the experience of Roma lesbians, states (2013):

*“Women of colour have made progress in their fight for inclusion and equal representation in the mainstream Western liberal feminist movement, but also politically. Because of their continuing efforts, these women have greatly influenced the Romani women’s rights movement, in terms of both theory and activism”*.

In 2009, Angela Kocze a Roma researcher and activist, claimed that intersectionality was ‘missing’ when analysing the situation of Roma women and called for specific measures to address intersectional



discrimination (Kocze, A. and Raluca, M.P., 2009). In 2010, Alexandra Oprea, also a Roma researcher, responded to the critique “that intersectionality privileges Romani women and girls and marginalises Romani men in European policy discourses” moved by some non-Roma women (Oprea, A. 2010). Recently, intersectionality has also been used to explore the specific conditions of Roma lesbians (Kurtic, V., 2013).

Quite often intersectionality and multiple discrimination are analysed jointly. In this report, multiple discrimination will be described below.

### Do we need categories?

During the Conference, some participants raised the question whether identity categories/grounds of discrimination like gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, are needed, useful and even desirable, when dealing with identity and discriminations. One participant pointed out that problems begin “when people start defining others from a certain point of view and ascribe others in already existing and fixed identities”. She says: “*I am probably perceived as young woman, I would prefer not to have categories and then, based on the interaction, define myself. I would prefer to go beyond categories ....*”

In other words, ‘categories’ and ‘categorization’ (in German language: Baer, S., Bittner. M. and Göttsche, A.L., 2010) are themselves an exercise of power. This is very striking when social stigma (Goffman, E., 1986; see also Solanke, I., 2009) is associated to particular categories in a given context, as it happens to many Roma people in many European countries. Crenshaw suggests to look at this process as a multilateral process, in which everyone plays a role (both oppressors and oppressed). She argues that:

*“subordinated people can and do participate, sometimes even subverting the naming process in empowering ways. One needs only think about the historical subversion of the category ‘Black’ or the current transformation of ‘queer’ to understand that categorization is not a one way street. Clearly, there is unequal power, but there is nonetheless some degree of agency that people can and do exert in the politics of naming. And it is important to note that identity continues to be a site of resistance for members of different subordinated groups”* (Crenshaw, K.W., 1991, p.1297).

Whereas intersectionality scholars and practitioners agree on the fact that each category is merely descriptive and socially constructed, they have taken different stances towards categories in their research and initiatives. The following systematization of the approaches adopted towards intersectional complexity may help the readers to think of different ways in which categories can be addressed and used (or not) (McCall, L., 2005):

- ✓ The first approach (‘anticategorical’ approach), rejects fixed categories and seeks to deconstruct them. It gives room to the fluidity of identity and social life. This approach has been used very much, among others, in ethnography, philosophy and discourse analysis and for questioning the original dichotomies (women/men; straights/gay; Black/White, etc.), while it is difficult to apply it to the legal context.

The other two approaches do not deny the use of analytical categories.

- ✓ The second approach (‘intracategorical’ approach) is taken by scholars and activists who “focus on particular social groups at neglected points of intersection” (e.g. Roma women) (McCall, L., 2005., p. 1775) reflecting just one dimension of each intersecting category and disregarding others. For instance, when one inquires discrimination against ‘Roma young women’, ‘young’ (rather than adult or old) is the dimension within the category ‘age’ that is at the centre of the analysis and ‘woman’ (rather than men other gender identities) is the dimension picked up within the category ‘gender’. Many Black Feminist scholars and also many studies on Roma women in Europe can be located in this second approach. I would locate the study Barabaripen in this strand.
- ✓ The third approach (‘intercategorical’ approach) focuses simultaneously on different dimensions within each category of analysis and relationships of inequality within social groups. This approach compares each group within a given category (‘men’ and ‘women’ within ‘gender’; ‘young’ and ‘adult’ within ‘age’; Roma and non-Roma).

This short overview suggests that categories are an instrument to analyse inequalities. It is not the only one and it is not *per se* negative or positive. Of course, using categories pose several questions: who does take part in the process of setting categories and defining identities? What values, meaning or stigma are attached to different categories? Besides, can identity categories (e.g. Roma ethnic origin, LGBT, etc.) and identity groups (e.g. Roma people, etc.) organized on these categories be “*coalitions, or at least potential coalitions waiting to be formed*” (Carastathis, A., 2013, p. 945; Crenshaw, K.W., 1991, p. 1299)? Going back once more to Crenshaw’s work that inspired some Roma activists, this author admit that this might be the case and that the Black women’s goal should be “*to empty such categories of any social significance*” (Crenshaw, K.W., 1991, Op. cit., p.1242), of any disvalue attached to them.



## Multiple discrimination in a nutshell

In brief, discrimination means any distinction based on any ground (sex, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, etc.) not relevant to the issue in question (for a given job, for renting a flat) and that causes harm<sup>5</sup>. Amnesty International defines discrimination as the “*the systematic denial of certain peoples’ or groups’ full human rights because of who they are or what they believe*”<sup>6</sup>. Non-discrimination is a cross-cutting principle in international human rights law, in many treaties of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, as well as in European Union’s Directives. Under human rights law, discrimination is a form of human rights violation and abuse.

In the following paragraphs, I will provide just a snapshot of multiple discrimination, recalling some of the key concepts.

In the European literature, it is common to use ‘multiple discrimination’ as an umbrella term referring to a tripartition covering ‘multiple discrimination’, ‘additive’ (or ‘compound’) and ‘intersectional’ discrimination (Burri and Schiek, 2009; Makkonen, 2002). It is important to distinguish between these different ways in

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<sup>5</sup> Definition elaborated on the basis of definitions found in several sources, such as Cashmore, E., 1996; European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, 2011; and the Glossary in Council of Europe, 2012. Compass Manual.

<sup>6</sup> See at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/discrimination>

which multiple discrimination occurs, because they have very different legal implications in practice. Here are some of the definitions and important distinctions to make:

- Someone experiences discrimination on different protected grounds on separate occasions. This is multiple discrimination in its narrower sense.
- Someone experiences discrimination on more grounds which add to each other at the same time. The role of the different grounds can still be distinguished. This is also referred to as additive discrimination
- Someone experiences discrimination on more than one ground, where the influence of various grounds cannot be disentangled and generate specific forms of discrimination. This is usually referred to as intersectional discrimination.

It is important to reaffirm here that multiple discrimination, however it happens (multiple, additive or intersectional discrimination), is first of all discrimination (on more than one ground) and can take place concretely in the same way as discrimination on one ground occurs. This means, for instance, that one person may suffer from multiple direct discrimination, or additive indirect discrimination, or intersectional harassment and so on.

For this reason the following definitions provided for by the EU antidiscrimination Directives should be also recalled:

- **Direct discrimination** occurs when one person is treated less favourably than another **is, has been** or **would be** treated in a **comparable situation** on protected grounds (racial or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, age, sexual orientation, disability).
- **Indirect discrimination** occurs when an **apparently neutral** provision, criterion or practice would put persons of **at a particular disadvantage compared with** other persons on the basis of one protected ground (racial or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, age, sexual orientation, disability), unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

Both direct and indirect discriminations imply a comparison and a comparator. For example: a woman was treated *less favourably than* a man is during a job interview. Or, in the case of indirect discrimination, an apparently neutral provision put Roma people at a particular disadvantage *respect to* non-Roma. The need for a comparator challenges the possibility to litigate cases of intersectional discrimination. For example, in order to establish whether a Roma woman was discriminated against or not, who is the suitable comparator? If one chooses the one-ground approach, would compare the situation of a Roma woman separately with Roma men (comparison based on gender) and with non-Roma women (comparison based on ethnic origin)

Gay Moon (2009) represents this situation with the following diagram:

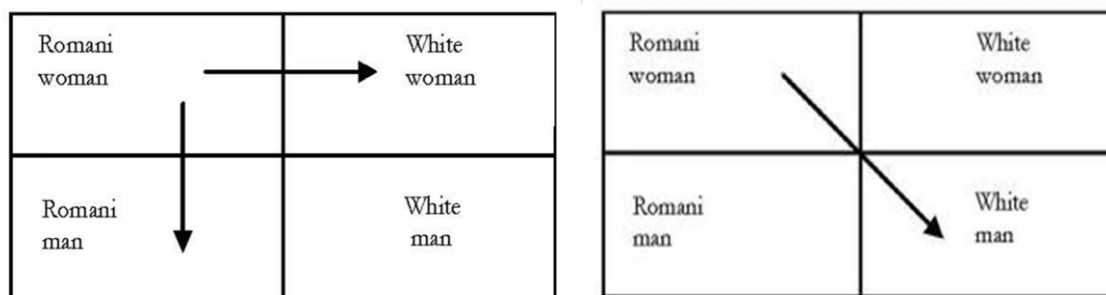


Fig. (Moon, G., 2009)

This approach has proven to be unsatisfactory because Roma women are often discriminated against because of the particular intersection of gender and ethnic origin that makes their specific experience of discrimination unique and different from both Roma men and non-Roma women. Therefore, the



intersection of both grounds should be taken into consideration when comparing the situation of a Roma woman. Gay Moon (2009) suggests adopting an intersectional approach when looking for a comparator, according to which the situation of Roma women should be compared with that of non-Roma men (taking into consideration simultaneously both ethnicity and gender).

Farkas, an outstanding Hungarian lawyer, argues that the suitable comparator for Roma people might also be the member of another minority for which the law provides positive measures (e.g. concerning language) (Farkas, L., 2007, p. 20).

The problem of finding the proper comparator does not exist in the case of harassment, because no comparison is implied in the definition. This might ease the possibility to litigate harassment on more than one ground. In fact, according to current EU secondary legislation, **harassment** shall be deemed to be discrimination, when an unwanted conduct related to racial or ethnic origin takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Antidiscrimination directives also mention instruction to discriminate against persons on grounds covered by law and victimisation.

**Instruction to discriminate** is not defined by the antidiscrimination directives, but it is deemed to occur, e.g. when an employer expresses “preference or an encouragement to treat individuals less favourably due to one of the protected grounds” (European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, 2011. Op. cit, p. 33)

**Victimization/retaliation** occurs when a person is treated adversely as a reaction to a complaint or to legal proceedings aimed at enforcing compliance with the principle of equal treatment.

During the Conference, also ‘institutional discrimination’ has been mentioned as adding up to individual discriminatory acts in the life of many Roma young people across Europe. School and housing segregation are the two most overt forms of institutional discrimination affecting Roma people across Europe.

### Multiple discrimination in the Council of Europe’s human rights framework

Within the Council of Europe, no binding document mentions multiple discrimination. Art. 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights<sup>7</sup> bans discrimination on a non-exhaustive list of grounds (sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status) in relation to the rights and freedoms provided for in the Convention (e.g. right to liberty and security, right to fair trial, freedom of expression, etc.). The extensive and open-ended list of prohibited grounds sets the condition to take into consideration multiple discrimination. Besides, Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>8</sup> extends the protection from discrimination to the enjoyment of any right set forth by law. This Convention does not define discrimination, therefore the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (not to be confused with the Court of Justice of the European Union based in Luxembourg) has played a major role in developing definitions. For the aim of this report, it is worth mentioning that in 2010 the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers adopted a Recommendation to member States on Measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity (Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5)<sup>9</sup>, that encourages the states “to take measures to ensure that legal provisions in national

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<sup>7</sup> Council of Europe, 1950. Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Available at: <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/005.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe, 2000. Protocol No. 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 177). Available at: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Reports/Html/177.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 31 March 2010 at the 1081st meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies). Available at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/lgbt/documents/reccm2010\\_5\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/lgbt/documents/reccm2010_5_EN.asp)

*law prohibiting or preventing discrimination also protect against discrimination on multiple grounds, including on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity; national human rights structures should have a broad mandate to enable them to tackle such issues” (Art.46).*

The Istanbul Convention<sup>10</sup> on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which considers ‘violence against women’ as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women, does not mention explicitly multiple discrimination. Its Explanatory report, though, emphasizes that “migrant and refugee women may also be excluded from support services because of their residence status. It is important to point out that women tend to experience multiple forms of discrimination as may be the case of women with disabilities and/or women of ethnic minorities, Roma, or women with HIV/Aids, to name but a few. This is not different when they become victims of gender-based violence” (p.10).

Another relevant body of the Council of Europe dealing with discrimination is the ECRI – European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, which monitors problems of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination on grounds such as “race”, ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion and language (racial discrimination) and which has recently opened up the mandate on LGBT issues. Its main activities include country visits, General Policy Recommendations to the governments and relations with civil society. Two of ECRI’s general policy recommendations concern Roma communities: ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.3 on Combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies and ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.13 on Combating Antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma.

### **Multiple discrimination in the EU legal framework and context**

Multiple discrimination has entered the European scenario in occasion of the adoption of the new antidiscrimination Directives of 2000, namely Directive 2000/43/EC – Racial Equality Directive, that prohibit discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin in the labour market, education, membership of and involvement in an organization of workers or employers, or any organization whose members carry on a particular profession, social protection, including social security and healthcare, social advantages; access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing; and Directive 2000/78/EC – Employment Equality Directive, that establishes a framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, on the grounds of **religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation**.

The Preambles of both Directives (respectively Recitals 14 and 3), that entails non-binding provisions, mention that in implementing the principle of equal treatment irrespective of the grounds covered by antidiscrimination law, the European Union “should aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality between men and women, especially since women are often the victims of multiple discrimination”. None of them, though, provides with a definition of multiple discrimination.

Discrimination based on **gender** is banned by the ‘Gender Directives’, namely Directive 2004/113/EC – Gender Directive establishing a framework for equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services and Gender Recast Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. These Directives are interpreted as covering also ‘gender identity’ in line with the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice, such as case C-13/94 P v S and Cornwall County Council, where the Court held that “the right not to be discriminated against on grounds of sex cannot be confined simply to discrimination based on the fact that a person is of one or other sex, and may include discrimination arising from the gender reassignment of a person”. Even none of these Directives mentions multiple discrimination.

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<sup>10</sup> Council of Europe, 2011. Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Available at: <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/convention/Convention%20210%20English.pdf>

Some attempts to define multiple discrimination, or explain how it occurs, have been done during the preparatory work for the so defined Horizontal Directive<sup>11</sup> aiming at filling in some of the existing gaps in the current EU antidiscrimination law, extending the antidiscrimination legal protection beyond employment and occupation and harmonizing the objective scope of the two Directives of 2000.

It is worth mentioning that antidiscrimination protection on the grounds covered by the aforesaid Directives applies also to non- EU nationals who are in the territory of the European Union. For example, a person from Kosovo working or on holiday in one EU country is protected from discrimination on racial or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. On the other hand, the same person is not protected from discrimination on the basis of the Kosovarian nationality, because 'Third-Country nationality' does not belong to the grounds covered by the EU law (some national legislations provide protection to a certain extent). During the Conference, many questions were raised on the relevance of discrimination based on residence status under the EU law. At the moment, non-EU nationals holding the **status of long-term resident** (Council Directive 2003/109/EC) enjoy equal treatment with nationals in the access to employment and self-employed activity, education and vocational training, recognition of professional diplomas, certificates and other qualifications, in accordance with the relevant national procedures; social security, social assistance and social protection; tax benefits; access to goods and services and the supply of goods and services made available to the public and to procedures for obtaining housing; freedom of association and affiliation and membership of an organization representing workers or employers or of any organization whose members are engaged in a specific.

One question might pop in the reader's head at this point: why is it still difficult to take multiple discrimination cases to court? There are several reasons for that, but the main are: the lack of awareness among law practitioners of multiple discrimination; law practitioners' choice to litigate cases on the discrimination ground having more chances to 'win'; gaps of protection in the legislation; and closed number of antidiscrimination grounds within the EU secondary legislation and national legislation, that cannot be extended to cover other characteristics or used to create 'super-remedies'(see DeGraffenreid vs. General Motors, in Crenshaw, K., 1989, p. 141).

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<sup>11</sup> European Commission, 2008. Proposal for a Council Directive on Implementing the Principle of equal Treatment between Persons irrespective of Religion or Belief, Disability, Age or sexual Orientation, SEC(2008) 2180. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0426:FIN:EN:PDF>

## CHAPTER IV. Exploring multiple discrimination during the Conference

One of the main learning goals of the Conference was to help participants understand how multiple discrimination actually works in Roma young people's everyday life, its roots and consequences. Since the first day participants had the chance to explore and deepen the concept of multiple discrimination. They also explored how the adoption of a single-ground approach to discrimination can have the effect of obscuring the complexity of people's identity and their particular disadvantage in the society. Life stories contained in this publication were used as a tool to move from the theory about multiple discrimination to how it works in practice. This offered also the opportunity to familiarize participants with the Study, in which young Roma interviewees speak about their experiences of multiple discrimination. Then participants worked on three specific intersections, namely **young Roma LGBT**, **young Roma women**, and **young Roma migrants**. During the whole Conference, enough space was provided to know practices about multiple discrimination and intersectionality implemented at the local and European level, both through the voice of their peers directly involved and through video.

Participants were divided into groups and each group analysed a life story from the study Barabaripen. The stories showcase almost all types of discrimination (direct, indirect, harassment, discrimination by association, multiple/compound/intersectional discrimination). The common patterns emerging from these stories are the lack of equality experienced by Roma young people since their early age as well as discrimination/harassment both within the communities and outside them (in education, employment, access to public services and healthcare).

It also emerged that very good levels of education do not guarantee the access to the labour market on equal foot with their non-Roma peers in many countries and this lead to despair.

From some of the stories resulted that residential segregation based on ethnicity and other experiences of discrimination dramatically impact the life of many Roma youngsters.

The stories of most girls elicit that they suffer from gender discrimination within their families and communities and, outside them, ethnical as well intersectional discrimination based on gender and ethnicity (Roma women are supposed to have many children). In the same way, the fact of being or being perceived as a Roma gay, lesbian or bisexual proves in most stories to be leading to discrimination and assaults from both the Roma community (on the basis of sexual identity) and from the LGBT community, from the police and/or from the society at large, because of the Roma ethnicity.

The support from families, a higher level of education, proactive initiatives to respond to discrimination are key success factors to actively confront discrimination. However, these support mechanisms remain an exception.

From the life histories analysed, practices like virginity tests, early marriages and household bearing for Roma girls as well as domestic violence against both Roma girls and Roma LGBT emerged as urgent and sensitive issues to be addressed.

Many stories show that Roma young people can be trapped in a vicious circle of exclusion even when they move/migrate abroad and look for better life conditions. In fact, being a Roma migrant from East European countries exposes Roma youngsters to discrimination, policing and ethnic profiling.

Some stories also show that many Roma youngsters felt defeated by antigypsyism and multiple discrimination, while others manage to resist them. The De La Negra boys found their way by rapping against antigypsyism and neo-Nazi marches in the Czech Republic; Roma LGBT activist David Tiser tries to react against racism and multiple discrimination through his movies and NGO.

After analysing these life stories, the participants in the Conference drew the following conclusions:

- **All grounds, levels and kinds of discrimination need to be explored jointly and holistically, taking into consideration the context**

Participants concluded that discrimination is deeply rooted at different levels of society and that it can be based on one or on more than one ground. These grounds can be covered or not by the law and can be more or less visible. Discriminations are interrelated and can reinforce each other, raising new and unique issues that need to be addressed specifically, instead of being generalised. Institutional discrimination tends to have a 'snowball' effect. For instance, in one of the stories, a young Roma man is denied access to employment due to his ethnicity and as a consequence, he is less able to lift himself out of a poverty situation, further leading to him being labelled' as poor, work-shy and scapegoated.

Participants also out-pointed the issue of '**double patriarchy**', meaning that patriarchy exists both within ethnic minorities and outside them. In both cases it plays a crucial role when discussing gender discrimination: for example, a Roma woman might suffer from "double-discrimination" firstly because she is seen inferior to men within her Roma community, and secondly because the society where the Roma community is based might discriminate against women (both Roma and non-Roma) even more. Therefore, each and all grounds, kinds and levels of discrimination both inside and outside the Roma communities need to be approached jointly and holistically in anti-discrimination strategies in order to break the vicious circle of exclusion in which may Roma young people are trapped.

According to some participants it clearly appears that the **larger the number of intersections the person has and the more complex multiple discrimination is, the greater the individual distance from "power" is**. Discrimination resides in maintaining power structures. Poverty and social status are often among the main factors preventing Roma young people to access to quality education and facilities. Some participants also explained that the experience of discrimination is very complex and depends on both the context/social environment (country, available services, perception of a given minority in the context, etc.) and on the individual identity. The perception of one's identity is relative, contextualized and strongly shaped by what characteristic is more visible within a certain group: for example, within an LGBT group, race might be more striking, whereas within a Roma group, LGBT people might have this effect.

- **In-group relations are important to consider when looking at multiple discrimination**

'Minorities within minorities' are at the core of the life stories analysed in this session and elicit that also within the Roma communities can be found roots (e.g. patriarchy) of the social exclusion of Roma young people, above all of Roma young women and Roma LGBT. Among others, traditional gender roles and expectations placed upon girls and boys differ enormously. Being a woman in the Roma community, for many girls, means to be caged in very traditional and stereotyped box. Also being a Roma LGBT put Roma young people at risk of violence and exclusion from other Roma people.

According to participants, within many Roma communities no one is truly independent. The individual - community relations are still very tight and community members exert a high social control on each other. While people are free to act in their own way, consequences from the family or from the community might come for those who do not respect the norms set within the community. Besides, the identity of resistance, in which the Roma minority struggles to secure a sense of being and belonging in the society might promote, at the same time, rejection and persecution of people who do not correspond to the traditional norms established by the Roma minority itself. Therefore these dynamics have to be taken into consideration when engaging with any meaningful initiative of change and promotion of Roma rights 'intersectionally'.

One last note concerns the role played by the Roma people who are considered 'gatekeepers' of their community. It was noted that in those cases in which they perpetuate the portrayal of Roma as inferior than others, they contribute to maintain the discriminatory *status quo*.

- **Out-groups relations and structural barriers in the society are key to understanding discrimination**

Participants agreed that local and national authorities have precise obligations to protect victims from discrimination and to prevent discriminatory acts. Despite that, institutional discrimination examples are widely described in many life stories analysed. For example, in the city where De la Negra live, local authorities banned gatherings on steps and sitting on corner stones, except on benches in the main square. Since most benches in one area in question were removed and the square converted into a parking space, this resulted in Roma people not being able to informally meet in such public spaces and contributed to young Roma not having a communal space. The absence of any community activities in the area consequently increased their exclusion and disempowerment.

Some participants shared the perception that racism and prejudice is rampant in states where there is a lack of diversity, often due to past governments' efforts to create homogenous nation-states (e.g. Czech Republic). The most cited example was bullying of Roma children occurring at school. Participants agreed on the fact that school is a public institution, in which teachers, as representatives of the state, have authority and positive obligation to protect rights of pupils, including their dignity. Consequently, the fact of being mocked, teased, bullied by non-Roma kids in school should be categorized as 'discrimination *per se*', since discrimination is a violation of human rights which works on the state-individual line.

During the Conference, the co-editors of *Barabaripen* explained that their fieldwork shows how Roma young people experience discrimination from early childhood on an almost daily basis mainly because of their Roma ethnicity. They are denied both the right to experience a serene childhood and also a better future (Save the Children, 2001). When they enter pre-school and school, they are often called 'gipsy' by teachers and classmates, are marginalized or segregated and teachers have often low expectations about their success rate. The vicious circle of exclusion of many Roma youngsters often starts at school, when they internalize the sense of failure and do not get access to quality education. Participants agreed that education as a tool of advancement in society and to contrast individual and community's chain of poverty and unemployment. They emphasized that both the single individual and the whole community would be damaged without the opportunity for Roma people to advance in society and prove themselves and society the value of their heritage.

Moreover, many Roma people fall into informal economy because they do not manage to enter the mainstream labour market. This has a twofold effect that should be further explored: on the one hand, some people, who otherwise would stay without job, gain a livelihood and in some cases even advance in society; on the other hand, people involved in informal economy are at risk of getting in touch or being exploited by criminal groups, of pervasive police controls and getting an unclean criminal records. Another highly debated issue was whether there is an interrelation between economic crisis (and unemployment) and the rates of discrimination, especially in those parts of Europe that have been affected by it most. Participants' perception is that in times of crisis people from minority communities are often scapegoated and discrimination is often more visible, whereas measures to tackle it become more invisible.

- **Resilience, coping and raising awareness are some of the responses to discrimination**

Life stories show that victims react very differently to multiple discrimination: some of them stand up for their rights and display resilience against discrimination, while others fall into devastation and unbreakable chains of discrimination that are difficult to overcome. The internalization and incorporation of the experiences of discrimination occur especially at an early age (for instance, while in education). In fact, most participants agree that the vicious circle of exclusion of Roma young people starts in their childhood, when many of them internalize the sense of failure or low self-esteem.

Unjust and unequal treatment or punishment lead to the expectation of further ill treatment, which is then internalized as justified and even accepted. The low expectations and discrimination upon Roma children activate the so defined Pygmalion Syndrome and Golem effect, i.e. the self-fulfilling prophecy, in which low



expectations lead to a decrease in performance. This internalization can happen both on the part of victims and perpetrators of discrimination. Also the perpetrator may internalize negative portrayals of a certain group since an early age at school and then generalize them to discriminate against members of such groups.

Participants agreed that school bullies probably emulate their parents and other adults.

These reflections led participants to discuss about the role played by the perception in the discriminatory process. They wondered whether multiple discrimination is generated by the perception that the perpetrator may have of targeted people, or it is more about how alleged victims of discrimination perceive it.

The main problem is that multiple discrimination can be so deeply rooted in the family history (intergenerational chain of discrimination), in the society, inside victims of discrimination, in the whole education system, that anti-Roma behaviours are often not even perceived as 'discrimination' and are just accepted and justified both by victims and by non-Roma.

Many stakeholders bear the responsibility for this situation, namely governments, authorities, school system, family, and NGO addressing wrongly identified problems. To conclude with, there is a need to raise awareness of and recognize discrimination, both on the side and victims and perpetrators, in order to change the system in which it is embedded.

- **The role of legislation and policies**

Many participants stressed the need to understand what discrimination is and how it works. In particular, some found it difficult to subsume single discriminatory facts into the right type of discrimination defined by law (direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, multiple discrimination, etc.). Another doubt was whether the 'residence status' and 'neighbourhood' (dominated by ethnic minorities) can be considered as discriminatory grounds when they hinder Roma people's access to job and facilities on equal foot. It also emerged that multiple discrimination should be further researched and that the antidiscrimination law should be harmonized across Europe, filling in the legislative gaps that prevent from tackling it.



It also emerged that multiple discrimination should be further researched and that the antidiscrimination law should be harmonized across Europe, filling in the legislative gaps that prevent from tackling it.

Life stories also elicit that Roma victims/or at risk of discrimination should be provided with legal-aid and with a better link with institutions. In fact, the **dis/trust in the police and institutions was also raised in the comments to the life stories as a barrier to fight against discrimination**. The lack of adequate and lawful protection from the police towards the Roma community creates destructive relationships between members of this minority and institutions. It also results in lack of cooperation and a harmonious environment.

There is the need that institutions actively support the Roma community and culture in a long-term perspective (rather than by means of emergency measures), by engaging with an extensive and overt process of cultural education for service providers and support agencies. The lack of punishment and effective remedy against anti-Roma and homophobic discrimination may be perceived by non-Roma and straight people as a sign that state/authorities allow or even support discrimination against Roma and

LGBT. For example, in some life stories, there was lack of anti-bullying rules at school. Besides, in order to tackle multiple discrimination, support measures and monitoring system on the enforcement of the law should be structured in a long-term perspective. Assistance should be tailored to meet the needs and expectations of victims of discrimination. In the life stories analysed, there is low access to justice and redress for victims of discrimination. Indeed, in the De la Negra's story there are some meaningful examples showing how access to justice is *de facto* denied to vulnerable groups (abuse from the police of the young lesbian woman; fear that the police would automatically punish Roma men). According to some participants, though, the individual rights approach is not always helpful and other alternative solutions to complaints should be explored and supported (policy measures, positive measures, etc.).



## CHAPTER V. Understanding the specific situations of people ‘at the crossroads’: Roma young women, Roma young LGBT, Roma young migrants

During the second day of the Conference, participants were divided into three thematic working groups, each focused on some specific intersections emphasized also in the Roma Youth Action Plan: **young Roma LGBT**, **young Roma women**, and **young Roma migrants**. Each group was moderated by one or two team members, who had the task to facilitate the discussions in depth and, if needed, to help participants to think ‘intersectionally’ and out of the box: for instance, participants were stimulated to consider other grounds of discrimination than those directly targeted in each group and e.g. reflect on how religion affects Roma LGBT, or gender affects migration and vice versa.

The main aims of the working groups were:

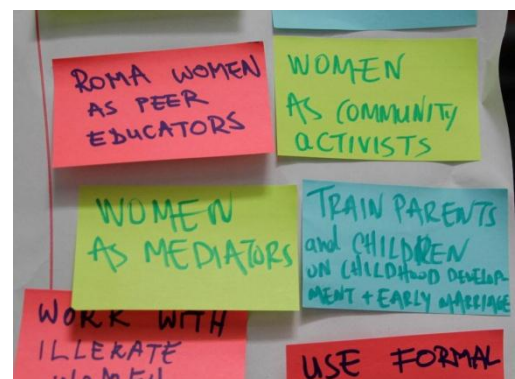
- To map civil society activism and engagement on the issues of multiple discrimination and intersectionality;
- To know what gaps persist and what is still needed to effectively tackle multiple discriminations against Roma young people;
- To get a better insight on challenges and opportunities for action

The structure and focus in each working group was slightly different and determined by the interaction among participants. Hereinafter the main outcomes of the discussions will be presented.

### Young Roma women

The situation of young Roma women has been high on the agenda of international and European institutions and Roma organisations/movements for many years. Roma women (activists and/or researchers or both) have played a key role in raising awareness on multiple discrimination faced by Roma women within and outside their communities. As for other ‘minorities within minorities’, their task has been not an easy one, because they started to challenge patriarchal structures within the Roma communities, while at the same time seeking to avoid fuelling the stereotypes about Roma people spread in the society. (Kocze, A. and Raluca, M.P., 2009; Oprea, A, 2010).

During the working group, participants discussed many examples of discrimination and violence faced by Roma women inside and outside the Roma communities, amounting to human rights violations. They also reflected on how within-group and out-group barriers mutually strengthen each other and how it is difficult to win over communities and societies reluctant to consider Roma women issues. According to some participants, the sporadic or lacking representation of Roma women in institutions, politics and boards does not ease their inclusion process. Roma women’s lack of self-confidence is generated and strengthened by a plethora of reasons: just to mention some of them, their position in the family and expectations related to their gender roles; their social status and economic situation; their lack of education; the fear from non-Roma people outside community. Within the Roma communities, inequality between men and women is often accepted as an unwritten norm. This leads, among others, to the acceptance of women’s subordination and traditional practices like early marriage which follow early and multiple pregnancies. The situation is exacerbated by the indigence and marginalization in which many Roma people live. This particularly impacts on Roma girls’ chances to access and stay in the education system. Domestic violence is another sensitive issue that needs to be tackled from both within and outside the Roma communities. In fact, family violence is not Roma-specific, but the patriarchal structures and poverty within the communities combine with the anti-Roma resentment in most European societies, to multiply the obstacles that Roma women encounter when trying to flee an abusive relation. In fact, in many cases they lack knowledge of the language of the country where they live as



well as of the legal and other instruments to defend themselves; life in 'ghettos' hinders their access to healthcare, shelter projects, housing for single mothers; pervasive antigypsyism in different areas of society and distrust in local/national authorities prevent Roma women to look for help outside the communities; fear of violence against Roma women in health structures (e.g. based on the practice of 'forced' sterilization of Roma women occurred in some countries in a not too remote past); and lack of documents. Besides, entering and staying on the labour market has also its own thick barriers: whereas Roma women need to emancipate from gender role pressures within the communities (according to which women do not work outside and bear the household), non- Roma employers do not welcome them either finding, for instance, that they have low skills and low education, they usually have many children, they don't conform to the dress code of the working place. During the working group, it was also stressed that the fact of being discriminated on several grounds in a wide range of fields further exposes Roma women to trafficking (see also European Roma Rights Centre, 2011, p. 48) and to sex work, complicating even more discriminations suffered by Roma women: "Romani women involved in prostitution/sex work may face multiple discrimination, based on ethnicity and their engagement in activities viewed very negatively by society" (*Ibid.* p. 67).

Among existing initiatives shared in this group, the following ones were mentioned:

- The **4th International Romani Women's Conference** in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Finnish Government. It gathered together about 100 Roma women who contributed to the development of a *Strategy on the advancement of Romani women and girls in Europe, 2014-2020*. The aim of this document is to promote Roma women's participation, raise awareness on multiple discrimination, mainstream Roma women's related issues, and empower Roma women. It can be considered the voice of Roma women in the world. The specific objectives are: to combat antigypsyism and gender stereotypes; to fight violence against Roma women; to access to rights/public services; to empower Roma women, to mainstream Roma women- related issues in most relevant policies. Besides, a platform initiative called Phenjalipe (Sisterhood) was launched at the conference with the aim to support the implementation of the Strategy.
- **IDEA Rom**, a Roma grassroots NGO based in Torino (Italy) carried out a project to fill the gap left by local and national authorities. Roma women mediators were trained to attend school with children, in order to improve their attendance and parents' involvement. The Roma women mediators are more independent now. They are paid for their job and one was hired by IDEA.
- The **European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) and the Romani Women Informal Platform Phenjalipe** produced the report "Making early marriage in Roma communities a global concern" (European Roma and Travellers Forum and the Romani Women Informal Platform 'Phenjali', 2013) to warn the Committee of Experts on Roma Issues of the Council of Europe (CAHROM) about tackling early marriage issue only in relation with human trafficking. The report, indeed, identifies many different reasons why Roma women face early marriage such as poverty, lack of perspective, governments' institutionalized discrimination and lack of answer from the state to Roma needs. ERTF also prepares an analysis of the National Roma Integration Strategies<sup>12</sup> taking into consideration gender, youth and antidiscrimination, in order to then advocate with the national authorities.
- The **Romedia Foundation** organised a journalism training program called BUVERO, for young literate Roma women between 16 and 24 years of age. The course used digital technology for the empowerment of Roma women. It aimed to fight vulnerability and create best practice by giving Roma women tools to create their own media and become the creators of the news within their communities (video with phone, online media, writing blog entries).

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<sup>12</sup> The list of the National Strategies is available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/eu-framework/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/eu-framework/index_en.htm)

- The organization **IMPREUNA** from Romania organises a Gala event on 8 March to encourage the visibility of Roma women, spread a positive image and develop their self-confidence. It is an award ceremony for different Roma women, dedicated to a thematic focus on which the NGO wants to raise awareness.
- **AIRE** provides legal advocacy, legal empowerment and awareness raising of legal framework and rights for Roma migrants, trains NGOs on EU law and issues info sheets for NGOs and individuals. For example, it provides written advice to organizations working with Roma migrants and assists with appeals of negative social protection decisions to enable Roma migrants in the UK to access their rights under the EU Free Movement Directive.
- In Greece, the **PRAKSIS NGO** started the project titled Young Roma Health Mediators. The course aims to train about 20 young (female and male) Roma Health Mediators. It was difficult for the NGO to find and actively involve Rom girls Rom boys in the course encouraged them to take active part in it.
- **The Bulgarian Commission for the Protection against Discrimination** carries out independent investigations and researches. It also takes administrative measures against discrimination and does prevention work through seminar and trainings for police, lawyers, teachers, media, NGOs on stereotypes, hate speech, hate crime. Many cases of gender discrimination are not even reported because people do not consider them discriminatory acts. In order to sort out issues and reach out, regional representatives are partners for local NGOs and there are open hearings at the local level in different communities.



Many ideas for changing the situation of Roma women were shared, most of them can be used both by the civil society and state authorities. This group made the following proposals to improve Roma women's situation:

- Create space to meet directly Roma women and for them to express their needs and be listened to, and do not take their needs for granted
- Provide Roma women (especially illiterate ones) with info about their rights, especially
- Promote a positive image of Roma women
- Foster the involvement of Roma women in formal education from early childhood;
- Foster the role of Roma women as peer educators;

- Build capacity for Roma women (e.g. in the field of journalism);
- Involve boys/men to support Roma women's empowerment;
- Foster a more active role of Equality bodies in Roma women's related issues;
- Use human rights education approaches to combat discrimination that affects Roma women
- Provide Roma women with free legal aid so that they can use legal remedies;
- Use legal advocacy in order to holistically approach Roma women's situation;
- Use awards for Roma women and organize initiatives that give visibility to them and their work in the communities and also their role in community cohesion and the fight against discrimination;
- Organise initiatives for Roma women on every 8 March (Women's Day);
- Integrate a gender dimension in all National Roma Integration Strategy;
- Collect disaggregated data to advocate and campaign for Roma women's rights;
- Raise awareness about early/forced marriages;
- Raise awareness on Roma women-related issues through door-to-door reach out and social events.

## Young LGBT Roma

Young LGBT Roma people have been among the most invisible individuals in the Roma and other communities. Roma identity, gender identity and sexual orientation are all parts that shape people's identity but many Roma young people have to hide one or more of these features out of fear. This topic was given much space during the Conference, that was indeed a unique opportunity for Roma and non-Roma young people coming from Roma and LGBT NGOs to jointly look at the intersections occurring in Roma LGBT's life, together with representatives of different directorates of the Council of Europe.

Due to the fear of Romaphobic and transphobic reactions, many Roma LGBT individuals hide their identity both within and outside their communities. The Roma Youth Action Plan repeatedly stresses the need to shed light on young Roma LGBT's invisibility and multiple discrimination.

During the working groups, participants went back to the life stories from *Barabaripen* that illustrate some of the struggles and coping mechanisms put in place by young Roma lesbian and gay people in order to reconcile their sexual orientation and such factors as traditions, religion, internal discrimination, and wider discrimination in the society. Life stories and the movies screened during the Conference gave evidence that in the case of young LGBT Roma, the importance of the family is at the foreground. In fact, above all, in small Roma communities living in segregated areas there is strong social control on and reactions against people's attitudes deviating from the established 'norm'. Various mechanisms of excluding young Roma LGBT are also at play, i.e. family may exert control over young people's identity, either by verbally or physically abusing them, or putting pressure on them to hide their sexuality, to marry a heterosexual partner and have children with him/her. Participants discussed also the role played by the different cultural and/or geographical contexts and influences on how sexual orientation and gender identity are constructed, internalized and responded to by young LGBT Roma. For instance, in the cases in which 'passive' is associated with submissive and female characteristics and the 'active' role with male features, being gay might be associated with female (rather than male elements); in the case of transgender people, transitioning from female to male can be seen as an 'upgrade' from 'passive' to 'active'.

According to one participant, youth NGOs can also contribute to establish norms, to 'dictate' and impose a certain version of diversity (taking as norm e.g. well-educated and middle class representatives). This is what he calls "normative diversity". He also stressed the interrelatedness between individuals, recalling the African concept of 'Ubuntu' means that '*A person is a person through other people*' (Eze, M.O. 2010., pp. 190–191) and the change brought about by this philosophy in human relations.

**Ubuntu: 'A person is a person through other people'** strikes an affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of an 'other' in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative inter-subjective formation in which the 'other' becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity

is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our creations: we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. The 'I am' is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance. (Eze, M.O. 2010., pp. 190–191)

Participants identified several challenges when working with young LGBT Roma, both inside and outside the Roma communities, namely:

- the lack of a current framework that systematically and strategically tackles multiple discrimination affecting young Roma LGBT
- the lack of an exhaustive legal protection and holistic approaches in legislation
- lack of a holistic approach both in the organisations that usually operate pursuing separate agendas based on single and fixed categories
- the lack of funding and human resources to support young Roma LGBT, particularly in rural areas
- the lack of agreement within Roma LGBT organisations on the one hand, and the hostility from members or the general public, on the other hand, which both lead to fragmentation
- Romaphobia and antigypsyism which make Roma communities become even more closed in themselves and develop an 'identity of resistance' out of their resentment and fear towards non-Roma
- lack of trust relations
- the risk of burn out for youth workers and activists working with youth Roma LGBT.

Linked to the **challenges** encountered when working with young Roma LGBT are also a number of **needs** that have to be taken into consideration, when tackling multiple discrimination. They span from providing young Roma LGBT with psychological support and safe places where they can feel protected from harmful situations, to the need for role models and mediators. Among Roma LGBT, participants maintained that lesbian women and trans should be given more visibility than they have.

On the basis of the challenges and needs, participants reflected on adequate **strategies** that should be put in place to support young Roma LGBT. The guiding principle that should inspire each strategy is "Nothing for Roma LGBT without the Roma LGBT", participants suggest, echoing the general slogan "Nothing about us without us" adopted by the Decade of Roma Inclusion<sup>13</sup> and opposing traditional paternalistic approaches that see Roma only as receivers, rather than actors. Strategies tackling multiple discrimination against Roma LGBT should also be based on inter-organizational, cross-community and cross-sectorial work and on a diversity-based approach including also other grounds than 'Roma LGBT'. Adequate strategies should also reach out and provide service providers with practical specific resources Roma LGBT as well as contribute to increase visibility (including through education) of Roma LGBT-related issues.

## Young Roma migrants

Roma young people differ from one other also in terms of their national and residence status and migration/ EU mobility trajectories. Many Roma young people fled alone or with their families from unemployment after the collapse of Communist regimes in 1990s, from ethnic-based persecution, and from wars in the Former Yugoslavia. Others moved as EU nationals after the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007. Even if it is unknown exactly how many Roma moved to countries like France, Italy and, more recently, Germany and the UK (which applied transitional employment restrictions on nationals from Bulgaria and Romania until 1 January 2014), these streams have been described as "invasion" (Osservazione, 2008) or "mass exodus" of central and east European Roma (Govanhill Law Centre, 2011) accused of exploiting the

<sup>13</sup> See at: <http://www.romadecade.org/decade-documents-civil-society-monitoring> (15 July 2014).



welfare systems and rising crime rates in urban areas. A wealth of research confirms that EU Roma people do not enjoy free mobility in the same way as other EU nationals (European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, 2009). The situation exacerbates for Roma young people who are undocumented, asylum seekers or 'tolerated'.

The working group on young Roma migration benefitted from the knowledge and experience of participants who were directly involved or have a background in a wide variety of subjects, such as migration, intercultural dialogue and youth political participation. They agreed that it is crucial to make a clear distinction between different migration types, such as economic migrants, political migrants and asylum seekers.

More concretely, for the specific situation of Roma migrants, they decided to focus on one main aspect, namely the right to freedom of movement, which is currently a very relevant topic in Europe. They agreed that freedom of movement (or the violation of it) triggers and determines many other forms of discrimination. They looked at freedom of movement in Europe from two different points of view: in EU member states (EU mobility) and in non-EU member states. They focused on the need for a clear distinction between these two situations for their legal and political implications (e.g. EU members do not need a visa to travel within the EU). Their EU national status, though, does not prevent them from being discriminated. In fact, also within the European Union, young Roma are discriminated on ground of nationality, ethnic origin, marital status and/or gender (i.e. a young married Roma woman is more prone to be denied a job because she is expected to supposedly get pregnant soon). The location/address, i.e. neighbourhoods with predominant Roma population, and the prejudices that come along also impact on Roma young people chances to access the labour market. Another important concern raised during the discussion in this working group was that freedom of movement could have the effect to facilitate human trafficking, as it provides a sort of shortcut: trafficked people can cross the borders without needing a visa and can work (even legally) in the new country.

Participants pointed out that there is a lack of:

- data for assessing the impact and negative consequences of human trafficking in Europe,
- capacity to follow up on the human trafficking issue, and,
- a strong reaction from public institutions against human trafficking, as there has been an increasing trend in number of Roma girls and young women that are being trafficked across Europe.



As far as non-EU countries are concerned, some participants mentioned cases of obstruction of freedom of movement, for example in the case of Roma people (and people perceived as Roma) from the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” who try to cross national borders. Tefik, one participant from this country, explains that Roma people are classified as ‘false asylum seekers’ and are not allowed to exit the country under national measures aiming to prevent abuse of the visa-free travel within the Schengen area. This situation has two aspects, that one should consider to understand the burden on many Roma young people’s life: the first one is ethnic profiling of Roma people by border guards; the second one is the regulation on travel documents, that sets forth passport revocation/confiscation of people who were found responsible for violating the regulation on entry and stay in another country and therefore were forcibly returned to the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. In this case, if the returnee already had a passport, it will be confiscated for a period of one year. If the returnee hadn’t already a passport, the issue of a new one is denied.

Participants agreed that people migrate with different expectations and are often willing to compromise for something that is even remotely better than what they were experiencing in their country of origin. One needs to take into account the push and pull factors triggering migration, and make an effort to understand the difference between economic migrants and asylum seekers and grasp their complexity.

Participants also noted that Roma mainly migrate out of fear for their safety in the country of origin and because of their desire to create a better future for their children. Despite that, the problem of Roma migration is portrayed in a negative way by the media on a daily basis in some EU countries. Some participants were particularly interested in the current situation in the UK, where they live and where Roma assumed by local media to migrate only to benefit from the British welfare. Although in the UK migrants from other continents outnumber those from Europe, Roma are an easy target for the media, because, unlike other communities, they are less educated and don’t stand up to defend themselves. They maintain that organisations in the UK which are in charge of raising awareness of Roma people and generally supporting their cause are perceived as transforming their projects into a business making good initiatives backfire. This perception of NGOs impacts on the trust of Roma people in service providers and associations. As a consequence, on the one hand, there is a need for reliable, responsible social workers that get informed and inform about the Roma culture(s) and, on the other hand, Roma communities should get involved in these projects in order to avoid the spreading of false information about them and their culture(s).

Another major issue identified by this working group was the problem of Roma living in segregated camps. Marginalization of Roma communities (including migrant ones) from the rest of the society has an overall bad impact on their interaction with public institutions as well as with service providers because they are denied access to information and consequently the opportunity to exercise their rights. Summing up, the main challenges faced by Roma migrants detected in this group are:

Roma lack information about their rights (i.e. they are denied residence permit); Roma are denied registration in schools; Roma lack health insurance. They are often denied to get one because they are not registered as residents; housing conditions and evictions impact Roma people’s life; Roma enjoy low or no interactions with police and with public institutions; discriminatory legislation and racial profiling against Roma people.

Altogether these circumstances create a vicious circle which is hard to escape from.

In order to support the Roma community, many needs were identified by participants:

- need for advocacy on a national and international level;
- need for clear indicators of what is happening in the Roma communities and in their interactions with the “outside”;
- need for case studies, roundtables, attracting media’s attention on discrimination against Roma;

- involving international organizations, Roma politicians, Roma NGOs and Roma activists, general human rights experts that have expertise on international human rights.

The strategies identified by this working group encompass a wide variety of tools, for example:

- drafting letters and sending them to all relevant European and national authorities in different countries;
- putting countries on the spot
- determining governments to enforce non-discriminatory legislation
- bringing more concrete examples like the stories contained in the study Barabaripen
- offering protection to the discriminated persons first, to provide them with psychological and physical aid, rather than to address institutions immediately and ask for an immediate legal intervention.

Participants also shared existing practices supporting a better inclusion of Roma migrants. They include:

- flash mobs, press releases, protests, seminars;
- reaching out to the media in order to change public opinion
- mediation and restorative justice;
- reports about the situation of Roma migrants or moving within the European Union, e.g. in the UK reports like “Unequal and unlawful treatment of Roma” (Govanhill Law Centre, 2011) and “From segregation to inclusion”(Equality, 2011)
- situation testing, which is a method aiming to establish discrimination “on the spot” and bring to light practices whereby a person who possesses a particular characteristic is treated less favourably than another person who does not possess this characteristic in a comparable situation” (Rorive, I., 2009)
- The “Human Rights friendly school” project, launched by Amnesty International was also mentioned as a good practice in Ireland and in many other countries around the world. It promotes and supports a culture of human rights by empowering young people, teachers and school staff to create human rights friendly school communities<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> More about the project at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/projects-initiatives/rfsp>



## CHAPTER VI. Learning from each other: videos and projects

Participants presented several videos and documentaries from their work. During the conference, space was offered to those who had developed practices and projects specifically on multiple discrimination. Three videos are described here, as well as the work of several organisations present in the conference.

### Challenging antigypsyism – De la Negra

This video concerned a demonstration taking place in the area near Krupka (Czech Republic), where the De La Negra youngsters come from. They are an anti-racist rap group made up of five young Roma (Pavel, Radek G., Denis, Radek K. and Karol) aged between 17 and 19. The rap of De la Negra is their reaction against antigypsyism in their country. Their texts speak about ethnic-motivated violence and discrimination. They performed at the opening and the closing of the Conference and their life stories are described in Barabaripen. Since 2009, the extremist Workers' Party for Social Justice and other neo-Nazi and racist movements have organized anti-Roma and neo-Nazi marches in Krupka. Many of these racist facts have media coverage and get un-noticed. Lies or half-truths are spread online against Roma communities that create panic in non-Roma neighbors. Similar facts happen in Bulgaria, Slovakia and Hungary. In this last country, where there was a rise of right-wing parties, several killings of young Roma took place. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the violence is on the rise. Hatred against Roma in these countries has very historical roots and was blatant already in the past. For example in Slovakia, Roma women were forcibly sterilized. The danger that such facts might happen also in other countries with a longer democratic tradition should not underestimate. Just to mention some examples: the expulsions of Roma people from France have dramatic consequences; ethnic control of the Roma families in Sweden; the repatriation of Roma to Kosovo. Initiatives taken in other countries (e.g. Italy) to tackle anti-Roma assaults were shared, together with the possibility to replicate them in other countries.

Hereafter the text (translated into English) of two hits performed by the De La Negra at the Conference.

#### Racism

Why is this happening, why is someone laughing, / Nazis in the streets you don't know what's going on  
Gypsies, poor guys, homeless and all that / They stupefy the gypsies, I just stood there

**This can't go on, / The pain is too much,** / So if anything / Konexe will help us

It's no fun, / **We never have work, / We went to special school / Now we're on the dole**

Laki and I plan / To sleep in our van

I rap about love, sometimes about beauty / And when she goes to work I ask around,

**Who wants us? No one, / Because – you know why?**

Come here - who am I, what am I? / An ordinary gyppo, / Come here - who am I, what am I?

Do you want truth or mercy?

Come here - who am I, what am I? / An ordinary gyppo, / Come here - who am I, what am I?

Enough of this

It doesn't mean I am a Rom, / So work won't come to me / It doesn't mean I'm a gypsy so I'll be on the dole

I don't know why everyone believes that / If they don't believe us, they'll find out for themselves

**We are ordinary people, nothing more / We just want you to meet us halfway**

I hear the DSSS on the news every day / **But I'm a human being,**

I'm not a dog, / That's why I'm stressed out and I wrote this rap, / About how they treat us

How I should get respect

**Life is a Test**

**Peace rules the day,** / Pressure rules the day

We rule the scene, / Not the Counter-facts

**You rule yourself / Fear doesn't rule you**

You go there for us / We're not dragging any wrecks



I pull down the blinds, / I'm getting angry now  
 You're the victim again, / No, who would have said it?  
 You've got the luck / To find a place  
 I'm a son of vice / I follow all the clues  
 The ones who bring me down the most / Are those who  
 change their tune  
 And I see through them. / Stupid trainers, mainly that  
 they're leather  
 When my people see that, / I'll encourage them to do it  
 You create your own luck, / What do I care about them?  
 I had to get that off my chest, / Everyone has a dream  
 I live in drought, / In rain whether by night, / Or day  
 I live without exaggerating / Life as it is  
 My brother said / I have the sticks / So how's it going to  
 be?  
 We don't do intrigues, / I'm not a politician  
**All I want is for people / In this republic**  
**To follow their own habits, / To keep track of their own**  
**bees,**  
**Don't do intrigues / Do the right thing**

## Roma boys

The movie "Roma boys" (2009) was produced by David Tiser, a Roma LGBT activist, whose story is shared in the study Barabaripen. He also set up the organisation ARA ART that provides counselling for Roma LGBT people who can contact the organization through the website [www.romalgbt.info](http://www.romalgbt.info). The organisation does relevant work to show the complexity of responses that civil society needs to provide to Roma LGBT life conditions. Tiser also organised the first LGBT meeting ever in Prague in May 2014.

The movie showcases the obstacles and domestic violence confronting two Roma gays who fought to live their love story. This movie is very touching and mirrors the situation experienced by many Roma LGBT in Europe. According to some participants, when young LGBT Roma people 'come out' (i.e. publicly acknowledging their sexual orientation or gender identity), Roma families usually react very badly and this stems from the structure, hierarchy and expectations. Moreover, some participants believe that in non-Roma families, which are often nuclear and are perceived by them as having less close relations, a gay person may have to come out only once or twice (to his or her mother or father or both); on the contrary, in Roma families, which are generally extended and close-knit, a gay person may have to come out to every member (parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents). Roma LGBT people may choose to avoid the risk of social isolation, stigmatization and rejection by their community by hiding their sexuality. Sometimes they even prefer to leave their families. In the Czech Republic for example, many move to Prague. Since many of them are quite inexperienced, can end up providing sex work or becoming addicted to drug. Much of the work done by ARA ART is catching these young Roma even before they arrive in Prague to support them.

The movie is available at: <http://vimeo.com/25854654>

## Intersectional Project – Equality Network

Sam Rankin, a participant from the UK, presented one documentary as part of the initiative "Intersectional Project". The DVD is part of this project and shows the experiences of different activists who face multiple challenges due to the intersection of different grounds, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, health conditions, and ethnicity/race. The Equality Network (<http://www.equality-network.org>) works for equality and human rights for LGBT people in Scotland. Including LGBT people from minority ethnic backgrounds

and LGBT people who are disabled is a key area of their work. They are mainly funded by the Scottish Government Equality Unit. They therefore have a full time Intersectional Equalities Coordinator who works exclusively on this. They do research on minority ethnic and disabled LGBT people and their specific needs; create resources and provide training to assist organizations to make their services more inclusive of LGBT intersectional people; have networks and host events for organizations to exchange knowledge and strategies for including intersectional LGBT people; and provide one-to-one support for intersectional LGBT activists. To do all of this work, they work in close partnership with various race and disability equality organizations as well as public sector organizations. For more information and to download their resources: <http://www.equality-network.org/our-work/intersectional/>. They have also participated in Beyond Borders, a two year project that focused on including culturally diverse LGBT people in five European countries. More information about this project can be found at: <http://beyondbordersproject.wordpress.com/>.

## LGBT Pavee (Ireland)

LGBT Pavee was founded in 2009, after a series of suicides happened, as a queer support group for LGBT indigenous Irish Travellers. There are around 48,000 Pavee Travellers and 10,000 Roma in Ireland. These are just rough estimates because ethnic groups in Ireland fall within the social groups. LGBT members within the Irish Travelling community are estimated to be over 3,600. LGBT nomadic issues had been on the table for many years, but were not discussed in a significant and interactive way, because other issues were prioritized. In this context, LGBT Pavee strives to:

- Unite those of any age and gender who identify as being Gay, lesbian, Bisexual or Transgender, especially within the Travelling and Romani community
- Provide support for those questioning their sexuality, also creating a safe space for those in need
- Provide impartial and up-to-date information on LGBT issues from as diverse a point of view as possible.
- Facilitate discussions via the upcoming forum of issues affecting the LGBT community.
- Provide a platform from which Romani and Traveller LGBT persons can express their views publicly, either through the medium of the group, or by hosting and organizing events, workshops

The organisation is committed to maintain an environment of safety, fairness and freedom of expression, following three main lines:

- No meeting should ever take place without an authentic involvement of LGBT people
- Policy and direction are guided by members themselves
- All training and information events have to be provided by LGBT Roma.

## Local initiatives in Strasbourg regarding LGBT young people

**Café Linkuistique** (<https://www.facebook.com/cafe.linkuistique>)

This is a monthly event taking place at La Station, the LGBTI Centre of Strasbourg. The concept is to come to the LGBT Center and talk, practice and/or learn the languages you know or wish to speak. The LGBT Center has seen many people, from many walks of life come and share their language.

On this occasion, the LGBT Center transforms into a cultural centre where differences do not matter and where tolerance and respect are the prime rules.

This activity also allows people who are too afraid to come on their own to the LGBT Centre to make the first step and enter the LGBT Centre. It is very hard for LGBT people who haven't yet affirmed themselves as LGBT to enter anything that is LGBT related, thus the existence of this kind of activity helps them find an excuse to enter.

Finally, the Café Linkuistique provides a shelter and a safe space for everyone. It is a place of not just learning about difference but celebrating it.

**IMS: School Interventions** are another way to fight stereotypes and perceived ideas in a concrete direct way. The Movement of Affirmation of Young LGBT (MAG Jeunes LGBT) carries such interventions since 2002 to fight sexism and homophobia. The interventions take usually two hours managed by two speakers in front of a class-room. To make the debate interactive the MAG has two supports: a video and a theater scene. After watching the video the students talk about their reactions and the questions they have. After defining some terms, the debate has multiple themes (discovering that you are homosexual, the discriminatory acts and their consequences, the “choice question” frequently asked by students etc.). Those interventions are for most students their first meeting with an LGBT person and even if they had perceived ideas at the beginning they discover that an LGBT person is a person like all others. The MAG report of 2014 shows that 73% of the students see a great need to fight against homophobia, sexism and in general discrimination.

Of course those interventions could be not only about sexism and LGBTphobia, but also about discriminations against the Roma, the Muslims, the Indians etc. depending on which country they take place. It’s important to destroy the stereotypes that young people have and fight discrimination in the first place where it can be lived for young people: schools.

The Report of the MAG: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/227910952/Rapport-IMS-du-MAG-Jeunes-LGBT-2014-pdf>

### **La Station, the LGBTI Centre Strasbourg / Alsace**

Opened since the 15th October 2011, La Station is a unique place in Strasbourg. It is an association with the following main missions:

- ❖ Welcome, listen, support and guide all persons sensitive to LGBTI issues.
- ❖ Assure health and social prevention
- ❖ Militate against LGBTI discriminations.

To achieve them, La Station works by activity departments (health, legal, culture) to develop projects and events in collaboration of partners and specialised volunteers. The projects aim to raise awareness and/or to propose efficient tools to different public (social workers, teachers, police forces, teenagers) to improve their practice concerning the LGBTI (crossed with sexism and racism) issues. La Station is also a meeting place (with its café) and safe space with cultural events. The safe space is defined by the welcoming, the guidance according to the need and by offering psychological support and the competences of all diverse associations’ partners.

[www.lastation-lgbti.eu](http://www.lastation-lgbti.eu)

### **European Youth Forum: research on multiple discrimination**

In March 2014 the European Youth Forum launched an exploratory online survey on multiple discrimination affecting young people in Europe. Two researchers (Barbara Giovanna Bello - University of Milano and Dunja Potocnik - Institute for Social Research in Zagreb) were appointed to design the survey integrating the intersectional approach and to analyse the data consistently. The questionnaire set up was very in-depth and answering the questions took between 40 and 60 minutes. All answers were processed in an anonymous way. Everyone aged between 18 and 35 years old living in one of the countries of the Council of could join the survey.

The aim of the survey is to plan more consistent advocacy actions to lobby against discrimination and develop relevant policies. The survey answers to the need to collect information at both European and national levels about discrimination based on age and interlinked to other forms of discrimination such as

that based on race, ethnicity, nationality, sex and sexuality. The European Youth Forum together with several other NGOs particularly calls for MEPs to adopt a Horizontal Anti-Discrimination Directive, covering all grounds of discrimination. The online collection of data was complemented by a focus group carried out by Barbara Segatto and Alessio Surian of the University of Padova (Italy) and by a few in depth interviews with participants in the survey who expressed their availability to discuss some of the survey results. The Survey has some constraints of which the team of researchers is wary: quantitative methods don't leave much space to people's narration; the questionnaire was available only in English and only online, cutting out illiterate young people; the questionnaire length could discourage some respondents. Despite these shortcomings, 500 young people took part in the online survey, six of them were involved in the interviews and about 15 took part in the focus group exercise carried out at the University of Padova. The data analysis will be ready in autumn 2014.

See more at: <http://www.youthforum.org/latest-news/stop-discrimination-against-young-people/#sthash.E4XQbTKI.dpuf>

### **IGLYO series on intersectionality**

IGLYO, the International LGBTQ Youth & Student Organization, has recently been mandated by its members to work in the area of intersectionality. This work area builds upon IGLYO's work on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, and takes a positive approach to the multiple layers of identity of LGBTQ young people. To develop this work on intersectionality, IGLYO has held four thematic roundtables that have focused on socioeconomic status, disability, ethnicity, and gender. The roundtables have helped establish the key issues regarding each topic, and the content will contribute to IGLYO's forthcoming position paper on intersectionality. The position paper will help guide the work of this NGO in the area, and empower their member organizations across Europe to work with an intersectional approach.

Additionally, IGLYO recently held the conference 'Crossing Paths: Exploring Intersections within the Diversity of LGBTQ Communities.' Over forty activists gathered in Bologna, Italy, with the objectives of:

- Gaining a better understanding of intersectionality as a methodological tool in life/activism
- Exploring the specific themes of socio-economic statuses, genders, (dis)abilities, and racial and ethnic identities to become more aware of diverse experiences
- Critically reflecting on their own and organization's practices to increase inclusion
- Developing work plans / tools tailored to the need of their organisation/context/peers

2014 marks the beginning of IGLYO's work on intersectionality and multiple discrimination. In the future IGLYO will continue to develop this position, incorporating perspectives from LGBTQ young people to ensure that representation and participation are enjoyed by everyone.

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## Appendix II Toolbox

### A. Training resources. Exercises and training modules

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### **C. Multiple discrimination, intersectionality and the Roma communities**

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### **D. Multiple discrimination, intersectionality and the law**

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## Appendix III. List of Participants

<b>Albania</b>	
<b>Karoli Artan</b>	PINK Embassy / LGBT Pro Albania
<b>Belgium</b>	
<b>Del Rizzo Cathy</b>	European Peer Training Organisation (EPTO)
<b>Jordan Long</b>	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Youth and Student Organization (IGLYO)
<b>Marlies Poschl</b>	Editorial team Coyote magazine
<b>Bulgaria</b>	
<b>Strashimirova Ana</b>	Commission for protection against discrimination
<b>Borisova Maryana</b>	Commission for protection against discrimination
<b>Croatia</b>	
<b>Zagar Danijela</b>	Ombudsman for Children of the Republic of Croatia
<b>Czech Republic</b>	
<b>Denis Drevenak</b>	De La Negra Group
<b>Radek Grajcar</b>	De La Negra Group
<b>Pavel Nistor</b>	De La Negra Group
<b>Miroslav Broz</b>	De La Negra Group and Organisation CONEXE
<b>Denmark</b>	
<b>Peter Emil Neilsen</b>	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Youth and Student Organization (IGLYO)
<b>France</b>	
<b>Aasmundsen Jakob Semb</b>	Amnesty International
<b>Grigoras Costel</b>	GEMASS - Paris Sorbonne University
<b>Mark Taylor</b>	Editor of Coyote magazine
<b>Charlotte Laburthe</b>	Le Refuge Strasbourg
<b>Lydia Djarane</b>	La Station - Centre LGBTI Strasbourg/Alsace
<b>Omar DIDI</b>	MAG Alsace
<b>Germany</b>	
<b>Portnowa Julia</b>	Youth of European Nationalities (YEN)
<b>Panait Cristiana</b>	European Educational Exchanges - Youth For Understanding (EEE-YFU)
<b>Mos Barbara</b>	Association Europe4Youth
<b>Greece</b>	
<b>Petraki Ioanna</b>	United Societies of Balkans
<b>Hungary</b>	
<b>Bahor Alexandra Anamaria</b>	Phiren Amenca
<b>Cristina Bangau</b>	Romedia Foundation
<b>Gabor Hera</b>	Foresee Research Group
<b>Tefik Mahmut</b>	European Roma Rights Centre
<b>Ireland</b>	
<b>DeBhairduin Oein</b>	Pavee Point/ LGBT Pavee sha Roma

<b>Italy</b>	
<b>Violeta Krstic</b>	Idea Rom ONLUS
<b>Lithuania</b>	
<b>Evaldas Rupkus</b>	Lithuanian Youth Council and European Youth Forum
<b>Republic of Moldova</b>	
<b>Victoria Luca</b>	Phenaljipe
<b>Poland</b>	
<b>David Mark</b>	OSCE ODIHR, Office for Roma and Sinti Issues
<b>“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”</b>	
<b>Jashari Redzep</b>	Association for organizing and strengthening the Roma community - 'Romano Avazi'
<b>Idrizi Selma</b>	Association for Democratic Development of Roma “SONCE”
<b>Romania</b>	
<b>Radoi Cristina</b>	FRONT Association
<b>Serbia</b>	
<b>Peric Milosh</b>	Asocijacija Duga/Association Rainbow
<b>Radosavljevic Dragan</b>	NGO Minority voice
<b>Slovakia</b>	
<b>Makova Jana</b>	Association of Young Roma, Banská Bystrica
<b>Michal Slachta</b>	Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities
<b>Spain</b>	
<b>Gomez Avila Demetrio</b>	VERVERIPEN, Roms for the Diversity
<b>United Kingdom</b>	
<b>Blus Anna</b>	The AIRE Centre London
<b>Psenickova Denisa</b>	The Aire Centre Leicester
<b>Marcela Ademova</b>	
<b>Karina Kristofova</b>	
<b>Sam Rankin</b>	Equality Network

#### **Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

<b>Robert Biedron</b>	PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination
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#### **Advisory Council on Youth, Council of Europe**

<b>Paulo Pinheiro</b>	
<b>Roh Petas</b>	
<b>Marine Manucharyan</b>	

#### **Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma issues (CAHROM), Council of Europe**

<b>Ian Naysmith</b>	CAHROM Chairperson
<b>Nicolae Radita</b>	CAHROM Youth rapporteur

#### **Preparatory team**

<b>Lucie Fremlova</b>	Facilitator
<b>Orhan Usein</b>	Facilitator



<b>Dariusz Grezemny</b>	Facilitator
<b>Barbara Giovanna Bello</b>	General rapporteur
<b>Mara Georgescu</b>	Educational Advisor, Education and Training Division, Youth Department
<b>Denis Durmis</b>	Roma Youth Action Plan Project Assistant, Youth Department
<b>Bastiaan Winkel</b>	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit
<b>Isabela Mihalache</b>	Support team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues

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

<b>Tina Mulcahy</b>	Ad interim head of the Youth Department
<b>Mara Georgescu</b>	Educational Advisor, Education and Training Division, Youth Department
<b>Denis Durmis</b>	Roma Youth Action Plan Project Assistant, Youth Department
<b>Nina Kapoor</b>	Programme Support Assistant, Youth Department
<b>Marta Medlinska</b>	Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth
<b>Michael Guet</b>	Secretary of CAHROM, Support team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues
<b>Isabela Mihalache</b>	Support team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues
<b>Eleni Tsetsekou</b>	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit
<b>Bastiaan Winkel</b>	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit
<b>Wolfram Bechtel</b>	ECRI – European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
<b>Clémentine Trolong-Bailly</b>	European Roma and Travellers Forum Secretariat
<b>Emma Hellyer</b>	Communications adviser
<b>Nigel Smith</b>	Communication officer

## Appendix IV. Programme of the Conference

### 23 June

*Arrival of participants*

19.00 Dinner

20.00 Welcome activities

### 24 June

9.30 Conference opening, with:

De la Negra

Paulho Pineiro, Chairperson of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe

Ian Naysmith, Chairperson of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM)

Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit of the Council of Europe

10.00 Introduction to the programme of the meeting, methodology and expected outcomes

10.20 Getting to know each other

*11.00 Break*

11.30 Introduction to the Study Barabaripen, the life stories and the concepts of multiple discrimination

*13.00 Lunch break*

14.30 Understanding realities of multiple discrimination and exploring the life stories of Roma young people affected by multiple discrimination (I)

16.00 Break

16.30 Understanding realities of multiple discrimination and exploring the life stories of Roma young people affected by multiple discrimination (II)

17.30 Closing of the first day programme

*19.00 Dinner*

20.00 Film screening

### 25 June

9.30 Sharing examples of working to combat multiple discrimination and discussion

*11.00 Break*

11.30 Thematic working groups (I)

*13.00 Lunch break*

14.30 Thematic working groups (II)

15.30 Presentations of the thematic working groups' results in plenary

*16.30 Break*

17.00 Networking session

18.00 Closing of the second day programme

*19.00 Dinner*

Free evening

## **26 June**

9.30 Introduction to the work of the Council of Europe and future orientations

10.30 Steps to future actions: introduction (I)

*11.00 Break*

11.30 Steps to future actions: working groups (II)

*13.00 Lunch break*

14.30 Steps to future actions: working groups and presentations in plenary (III)

*16.00 Break*

16.30 Conclusions and closing of the Conference, with  
Barbara Giovanna Bello, conference rapporteur  
Robert Biedron, PACE rapporteur of the Equality and Non-discrimination Committee  
Jean Cristoph Bas, Director of Democratic Citizenship and Participation, Council of Europe  
Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit of the Council of Europe

17.30 Closing of the third day programme

*19.00 Dinner and barbecue*

## **27 June**

Departure of participants

## Appendix V. Media, visibility and communication 2.0 regarding the Conference

During the Conference some addresses (@coe and @bastianwinkel -member of the preparatory team) and hashtags (# sogi, # Romastories, # multipliediscrimination, # nohatespeech) were advertised for participants who wanted to 'tweet' the information, comments and suggestions inspired by the debates, to disseminate the information about the Conference as well as to raise awareness on ongoing debates on the themes at the core of this event.

An official video was develop during the Conference:

<http://www.humanrightseurope.org/2014/06/video-united-for-dignity-young-roma-and-the-fight-against-multiple-discrimination/>

One participant from the Aire Centre sent the link to the briefing produced straight away after for her NGO (available at: <http://www.airecentre.org/pages/briefing-roma-united-for-dignity-conference-strasbourg.html>).

Additionally, some members of the Editorial Team of the Coyote Magazine (see at: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/web/youth-partnership>) joined the Conference in order to get fresh impressions on this event and contributions from participants wanting to part-take in the Issue 22 of the Coyote magazine dedicated to multiple discrimination.