



DDCP-YD/ ETD (2016) 18

Budapest, 30 March 2016



Meeting of the Informal Contact Group of the Roma Youth Action Plan

Room 3.2, European Youth Centre Strasbourg
10 – 11 March, 9.30 – 17.00

Meeting report
List of participants

1. Opening, introduction of participants and purpose of the meeting

The meeting of the Informal Contact Group was held as a follow-up of the Roma Youth Conference organised in October 2015, and with the aim to review and finalize the draft *Guidelines for Implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan 2016-2020*, to discuss and propose activities for the period 2016/2017 and onwards and to create possibilities for partnerships among organisations and institutions.

The Guidelines were prepared based on the findings of the RYAP evaluation and the proposals from the Roma youth conference organised by the Council of Europe. Based on the proposals from this ICG meeting the revised Guidelines will be then presented and put for adoption by the Joint Council on Youth¹ at its next session during 21-23 March, as the decision making entity of the Youth Department.

The ICG meeting involved representatives of organisations and institutions that were already familiar with the initiative but also with representatives that have recently showed interest in the RYAP and were willing to learn more and explore the possibilities for cooperation within its framework.

During the brief introductions participants have shared their meeting expectations, pointing out the following:

- To learn about the RYAP and its recent developments
- To seek the possibilities for cooperation
- To support the formulation of priorities and to support the overall development of the RYAP
- To learn more about the informal contact group
- To improve cooperation within the informal contact group
- To learn about the past experiences of the RYAP and the Roma youth conference.

By the time of finalisation of this meeting report the Joint Council on Youth has adopted the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan 2016-2020 document and appointed Ms. Eva Masarova as the Roma Rapporteur of the Joint Council on Youth.

2. Role of Roma youth in the programme and priorities of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe

The strategic priorities for each biannual programme of the youth sector are defined by the Joint Council on Youth, which is the central co-management political body of the youth sector. The RYAP is part of the current strategic priorities² of the Youth Department for 2016-2017, and the RYAP is explicitly stated as part of the third priority:

[Excerpt from youth sector priorities]

...Supporting the promotion of inclusive and peaceful societies, especially through the extended No Hate Speech Movement and the Roma Youth Action Plan.

¹ More about the co-management system of the Youth Department, including the Joint Council on Youth: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Coe_youth/co_management_en.asp

² Priorities of the Council of Europe's Youth Sector 2016-2017 http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Coe_youth/Youth_sector_priorities_2016-2017_en.pdf

Double mainstreaming has been one of the leading principles of work under the RYAP and the secretariat has been working on placing Roma youth issues specifically as part of the programme of the Youth Department but also to other sectors of the Council of Europe. The hope for the future is that the RYAP increases in terms of activities and partnerships and becomes more relevant within and outside of the Council of Europe.

In relation to the other policies on Roma by the Council of Europe, the RYAP in principle should feed into the *Thematic Action Plan for Inclusion of Roma and Travellers*³ which is coordinated by the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Roma Issues and its support team. The communication between the two initiatives is not yet defined at the level of secretariats as both plans have had different status and processes of development and they are yet to or just have been endorsed by the appropriate Council of Europe entities.

The Informal Contact Group remains to be a group with variable membership where all partners interested in issues related to young Roma and in particular the Roma youth action plan can exchange views and coordinate their efforts. The group remains to be of informal character due to the specific co-management system of the Youth Department, but open to all interested organisations with the aim of complementing activities and creating partnerships in support to young Roma.

3. Updates from the partners on their work and perspectives

The partners of the RYAP have briefly presented the work of their organisations and institutions in regards to/with Roma youth. The following are the main activities of partners in 2016:

- Conference on Roma youth political participating by the Forum of European Young Roma People
- International seminar on challenging antigypsyism through voluntary and youth work (Banska Bystrica, Slovakia), International youth conference on antigypsyism focusing on media (Brno, Czech Republic), continuous work on remembrance as a topic together with smaller scale education activities by Phiren Amenca International Voluntary Service Organisation
- Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative will be held on the occasion of 2nd August; Series of civil rights initiatives at national level to be supported together with advocacy support at local level for youth organisations; Innovative educational materials on human rights to be all initiated and organised by ternYpe –International Roma Youth Network
- Educational programme on working with Roma children is the core of the local organisation Romano Centro from Austria
- Summer school on human rights for Roma young people; long terms internships; legal and educational support for Roma youth as one of the activities of the European Roma Rights Centre's strategy in working with young people
- European Youth Event panel on multiple discrimination (in partnership with Phiren Amenca) and Youth Academy as a capacity building activity soon to be promoted by the European Youth Forum
- Roma youth conference in Slovakia co-organised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport and the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, in the framework of the Slovakian Presidency of the European Council
- Conference on housing of Roma in Albania together with assessment of needs for electoral training in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; Support to the process of

³ https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c5a1d

establishment of a national Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion in Ukraine by the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion.

Following the presentations, the discussion focused on some of the key challenges for young Roma and organisations but also on the possible partnerships among organisations present.

Almost 50% of the Travellers community in Ireland is young with an extremely need for support and empowerment. This was observed by the CAHROM Youth Rapporteur on recent thematic visit in Ireland under the committee's work.

The European Youth Forum has offered to facilitate contact with the National Youth Council of Ireland and look into possibilities for support. The Forum also noted that they are in a position of facilitating communication for and supporting national and local level activities.

Enter! – the Council of Europe project on access to social rights for young people is starting a new phase this year and could be an opportunity for the City of Ghent to further explore; also under the same project it could also be explored about the situation of Irish Travellers.

The Forum of European Young Roma is going through an organisation change and restructuring. They are also interested in partnering with organisations that have interest in the topic of Roma youth political participation.

4. Roma Youth Conference and Roma Youth Action Plan evaluation: presentation of the working process and conclusion

The secretariat of the Youth Department explained the process of the RYAP evaluation and presented the main conference conclusions. The conference served among others, as a space to reflect and complement to the draft findings of the evaluation. It has provided advice on the future focus of the RYAP referring to topics of advocacy, capacity building, Roma youth participation and funding as the strongest proposals.

Meeting participants that have participated at the conference have also reflected on both processes pointing out:

- The involvement of participants at the conference that were new to the RYAP gave a new/refreshing perspective to the overall discussion. However, for future reference, the organisers should pay more attention to the level of knowledge and understanding on the current matters and provide adequate supporting materials and preparation.
- The use of institutional language and vocabulary is usually difficult for youth workers and activists. This should be taken into consideration for future communications and events by the RYAP secretariat to try and use more youth friendly language.
- The conference gave a unique opportunity for some organisations and Roma youth programmes to present their activities, learn more about the RYAP and explore the opportunities for future partnerships. It was a rare occasion to see the most relevant international Roma and youth stakeholders at an event discussing and working on Roma youth issues.

5. State of play of the Roma Youth Action Plan: discussion on the main contents and areas for 2017-2020

The meeting participants reflected on the main contents and areas of the draft Guidelines for the implementation of the RYAP 2016-2020 document and identified support measures for the given period. The following are the key points and reflections made:

- Although the proposed document is intended for internal decision making of the Youth Department, it is recommended that the final version is modified and presented in a more youth friendly language
- The new strategic orientation of the RYAP Guidelines should reflect to the increasing situations of extremism within the society by developing appropriate responses
- Explicit reference to economic and labour market integration is missing from priorities
- Support to local start-up initiatives and organisations have been emphasized as important for long term change and development
- Funding of RYAP is a key challenge, therefore fundraising and/or diversifying the sources for funding must be taken into consideration for the future period
- The RYAP should be also promoted as a model that could be applied in/to be connected to national government strategies/practices - as a first step the European Youth Forum is to call the attention of National Youth Councils to the RYAP
- Optionally, it would be important to reformulate the Guidelines so that it also serves as a political statement targeting a variety of stakeholders.

In regards to identification of support measures for Roma youth work and youth policies, the participants discussed more about principles and approaches to be used in the future, mentioning:

- Increasing the coordination of key European stakeholders relevant for Roma youth matters. A particular focus was put on the importance of involvement of key European Union institutions and programmes for coordination and in support of Roma youth.
- Supporting and/or implementing activities that will have a longer impact or follow-up phase that will enable lengthier engagement and support to Roma youth.
- Securing that European activities are properly transmitted/assigned at national and local level with the cooperation and support of public authorities.
- Developing funding schemes for Roma youth initiatives and start-ups.
- Exploring possibilities of integrating the RYAP (as a framework of support) into national youth policies. Coordination with the European Youth Forum and National Youth Councils is important in this regard.
- Creating a RYAP label for all activities organised under the umbrella of the RYAP, similarly to the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres, in order to enhance recognition and strengthen the RYAP as a brand.
- Setting up community action groups on local level with the involvement of Roma youth NGOs and local authorities/consultative bodies and developing on the cooperation with the ROMED/ROMACT projects and structures already established.
- Exploring the possibilities of development of larger-scale common projects initiated by ICG members, including the identification of funding opportunities with the aim of strengthening cooperation within the RYAP.

The groups have also looked into the question of development of evaluation indicators for the RYAP and how/or how to identify them. Participants have shared few examples of experiences of indicator development, such as:

- The European Youth Forum is in the process of indicators development for youth policy.

- The City of Ghent has already been using a methodology for measuring long term change by developing a growth plan.
- The linking of indicators to priorities instead of activities to be considered.

The ICG members agreed that the RYAP Secretariat needs to develop these indicators involving, if needed, experts in evaluation. At the same time, some of the participants raised the point on the importance of evaluation indicators being functional and useful in view of a future evaluation, and not just a time-consuming exercise.

Participants pointed out the following possible indicators:

- number of new organisations joining RYAP activities; development of the RYAP network
- number of young people getting engaged in RYAP, with special regard to new reach-outs
- number of young people getting engaged in RYAP specifically on national level
- the institutional and civil society outreach
- number of young Roma getting in consultative/decision making bodies; or political parties
- level of political involvement and advocacy activity of Roma youth NGOs
- number of activities organised by partners other than the Council of Europe labelled as RYAP programmes
- presence of RYAP in the media/press
- setting guidelines for monitoring of RYAP activities and success rate of monitoring.

Partners will share some information about the process to the RYAP secretariat for reference and inspiration.

6. Roma youth in the wider policies of the Council of Europe on Roma (with Ulrich Bunjes)

Mr. Ulrich Bunjes in the capacity of Special Representative of the Secretary General on Roma Issues has provided a brief overview of the newly adopted *Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers for the period of 2016-2019*⁴. The adoption of the action plan is in line with the political commitment of the Council of Europe and its “Strasbourg Declaration on Roma” from 2010. The major objective of the plan is to help contribute to the inclusion of Roma and Travellers communities by focusing on three major priorities:

- tackling anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination and crimes more effectively
- demonstrating innovative models for inclusive policies for the most vulnerable
- promoting innovative models for local-level solutions.

Roma youth matters fall under the second priority of the thematic action plan in particular by supporting the mainstreaming of youth related matters in all policies dealing with Roma and Travellers issues and in youth policies. An explicit reference within the thematic action plan is made with the RYAP with a specific focus on training and education programme to be set up to support youth leaders, youth workers and human rights educators. In line with the mainstreaming efforts Roma rapporteurs will be nominated in committees of relevance to the inclusion of Roma.

⁴ https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c5a1d

The support team has established a new format for a dialogue between the Council of Europe and Roma and Travellers communities by organising two events per year. It is envisaged that in October 2016 a meeting will be dedicated on Roma youth matters.

The Thematic Action Plan foresees that Roma young professionals are recruited and employed as part of the organisation. It is not yet clear how this will be implemented.

7. Resource mobilisation for the RYAP

This item of the agenda looked into the broader aspects of resource mobilisation and not exclusively financial ones.

The secretariat of the Youth Department informed participants that financially the RYAP has not yet gathered all the resources needed for its implementation, with activities only funded by the Youth Department's budget. A lot of fundraising needs to be done by stimulating voluntary contributions, partnering in programmes and activities (similar to the EEA Norway Grants project in Bulgaria) and also working with the SRSG's team.

The RYAP could also provide support to projects and organisations by providing publications, institutional or educational support, etc. In that regard, the Youth Department can be partner to projects/organisations beyond the fact of available funds or not, similarly to the partnership envisaged for the upcoming Slovakian Roma youth conference.

The non-financial side of partnering could also support the recognition of the work of Roma youth organisations and projects, therefore this type of partnerships and cooperation is encouraged in the future.

The discussion then looked into the available resources and programmes dedicated on Roma youth issues. It was suggested that:

- RYAP secretariat could compile a list of funding sources for Roma youth projects with a regular updates of upcoming calls on the RYAP website; The secretariat to also clearly elaborate the types of support can provide to Roma youth organisations and projects
- Ms. Masarova, committed of opening a discussion with the Erasmus plus in Brussels about the possibility of having more targeted funding for Roma under their funding activities
- An EYF leaflet in Romany about the opportunities of the European Youth Foundations to be prepared and circulated particularly through the youth networks and motivating organisation to make use of the EYF's funding opportunities.

8. Roma youth conference proposal in Bratislava, Slovakia

During 10-11 October a high level Roma youth conference will be organised under the Slovakian Presidency with the European Council of the European Union. The co-organisers of this event, the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities in Slovakia and Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of Slovakia have done a brief presentation of the concept of the conference.

One of the aims of the conference is to develop with conclusions of political nature (format not decided yet) that will call/invite for a higher level of involvement of Roma youth in the overall Roma integration process. The conference results should provide ideas and tools towards EU and member states in regards to Roma youth participation and support.

The Youth Department is invited to support the development of the upcoming programme conference in order to make appropriate connections with the Roma youth conference organised in October, 2015 by the Council of Europe but also to build upon the years of experience from the RYAP.

Ms. Masarova and Mr. Slachta will be presenting the concept of the Roma youth conference at the meeting of the Joint Council on Youth in Budapest.

All interested partners and organisation can support the overall process of this conference by:

- Cooperation with the organizers and support in dissemination of information related to the Roma youth conference
- Cooperation and support in selection of Roma youth conference participants
- Ideas of best practices of projects and activities to be promoted at the conference
- Supporting the programme and facilitation of the conference sessions.
- Nominate to the organizers experienced young Roma facilitators that could support the carrying out the conference sessions and discussions



The presentation of the conference is available at:

9. CAHROM thematic report and its follow-up

Mr. Stanko Baluh, in his capacity as Youth Rapporteur of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues⁵ presented the state of affairs of the committee's work and focused on the conclusions of the experts of the CAHROM thematic group on Roma Youth Empowerment and the Inclusion of a Youth Dimension into National Roma Inclusion Strategies/Policies.

The setting up of the CAHROM thematic group on Roma youth empowerment was initially proposed by Mr. Baluh himself with the purpose of raising awareness of Roma youth matters within the committee but also to support a national level policy development process in Slovenia by benefiting from partner countries' experiences in introducing Roma youth in their respective national Roma integration strategies.

The thematic expert visit was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia during 4-6 June 2015. The draft report of the visit together with the recommendations has been already prepared and will be put for adoption at the next committee session in Bulgaria. All interested stakeholders, including the Youth Department, European Commission, OSCE/ODIHR are invited to coordinate for organising a suitable follow up on the proposed recommendations. The committee will continue to work on mainstreaming and articulating Roma youth matters.



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The draft expert group report is available

⁵ <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cahrom>

10. Activities and possible partnerships for 2016-2017

The programme of activities for 2016 under the RYAP is the following:

- Two national training courses to be implemented in a member state hopefully under a 50-50 partnership with local or other partners
- 1 regional activity to be organised during the second semester of 2016
- A study session co-organised by Phiren Amenca and EUJS networks (October, 2016).

The activities are under development and the Youth Department is open to partnerships and cooperation. Currently, Ukraine is a country of interest and steps are being made for organising the activity there in response to partners needs and also as a follow-up of the support provided in 2015.

Interest in developing and broader partnerships and support:

- Phiren Amenca is interested in broadening their partnerships with all interested organisations in relation to their work in combating antigypsyism and the activities planned in Slovakia (April) and the Czech Republic. They are also interested in cooperation for activities in 2017 in Varna, Bulgaria as the European Youth Capital
- European Roma Rights Centre would like to more explore on the 50/50 model of cooperation especially in the countries of the Western Balkan in terms of expertise, follow-up, dissemination of information and materials, etc. An activity in Ukraine is also being planned by the organisation
- City of Ghent – would like to find ways with partners/organisations to better support Roma organisations in the city and be able to support young Roma get involved in social activities and self-organize
- The Enter! project on access of young people to social rights of the Youth Department is soon to be developed and there are possibilities for cooperation in municipalities and cities. The project will now try to work on the practical implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendations on access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights
- Ternype network is open for cooperation and support for their Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative organized in Krakow, Poland
- The Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion is open for suggestions and support for their activities to be organised in Albania in relation to housing issues and evictions.

11. Evaluation of the meeting

The meeting was closed with a round of evaluations. The participants were overwhelmingly positive about the event and its outcomes and expressed their gratitude to the Youth Department for organizing it. The following points were highlighted:

- feeling of continuity in the work with the group, therefore more effective dialogue
- receiving useful and inspiring information
- motivation to get more committed
- impression of positive trends and developments in the Roma youth field in the last few years
- diverse and partly new composition of the group - local actors have brought a new and positive perspective into the overall discussion
- looking forward to the Roma Youth Conference in Slovakia

The following critical points were mentioned:

- cross sectorial approach needed – in relation to the work on Roma and Roma youth within the Council of Europe entities but also externally with key partners in the field
- some of the issues pointed out with the RYAP evaluation were less discussed during the meetings such as the various dilemmas raised with the evaluation report
- funding has been underlined as a frustrating factor that needs a particular attention and dedication in the future

List of participants

Name	Organisation
Marietta Herfort	Phiren Amenca
Vicente Rodriguez Fernandez	ternYpe - International Roma Youth Network
Cristina Marian	Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP)
Lora Lyubenova	European Youth Forum
George – Konstantinos Charoni	European Youth Forum
Eva Masarova	European Steering Committee on Youth
Irina Spataru	Romano Centro (local Roma youth organisation)
Anja Van den Durpel	City of Gent
Jan Hero	Ministry of Interior of Slovakia, Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities
Michal Slachta	Ministry of Interior of Slovakia, Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities
Stanko Baluh	CAHROM Youth Rapporteur
Atanas Zahariev	European Roma Rights Centre
Anca Sandescu	European Roma Rights Centre
Erzsebet Nemet	EEA and Norway Grants
Excused	
Ramon Flores	Advisory Council on Youth
Marija Kljajic	SALTO Cultural Diversity
Megan Roseblade	SALTO Inclusion Resource Centre
Tanja Peric	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
Doina Bologna	United Nations Population Fund
Michel Vershraegen	European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers, Unit D3 – Non-discrimination policies and Roma

Council of Europe secretariat	
Ulrich Bunjes	Special Representative of the Secretary General on Roma Issues
Matthew Johnson	Director of the Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation
Antje Rothemund	Head of the Youth Department
Rui Gomes	Head of Education and Training Division, Youth

	Department
Mara Georgescu	Educational Advisor, Youth Department
László Milutinovits	Educational Advisor, Youth Department
Denis Durmish	Project Assistant of the Roma Youth Action Plan, Youth Department
Marius Jitea	Programme officer
Thomas Schobesberger	European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion secretariat