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ROMA YOUTH ACADEMY

Supporting the emergence of a new generation of Roma youth leaders and for strengthening Roma youth participation and the sustainability of Roma youth organisations

DRAFT CONCEPT PAPER

Prepared by the secretariat of the Youth
Department



THE ROMA YOUTH ACTION PLAN

The Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP) is a project of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe initiated in 2011 as a response to the challenges faced by Roma young people in Europe, particularly related to their inclusion, participation in decision making processes, and the rampant degree of discrimination and antigypsyism they face on a daily basis in multiple aspects of their lives. Over the five years of implementation, the project reached out to over 4500 participants through series of activities organised and developed with and for Roma and other youth organisations and other stakeholders.

A first evaluation of the Action Plan was carried out in 2015, and its findings informed the outcomes of the second Roma Youth Conference held in Budapest in 2015. In March 2016, the Joint Council on Youth confirmed the continuation of the project and adopted the [Guidelines for its implementation for the period of 2016-2020](#). The Action Plan addresses the following priorities:

- Strengthening Roma youth identity
- Roma youth participation and building a stronger Roma youth movement
- Human rights and human rights education
- Combating structural discrimination and antigypsyism
- Supporting Roma young people's access to social rights and their transition to autonomy and work life
- Addressing multiple discrimination and fostering gender equality.

The plan is implemented in the framework of co-management as practiced in the Council of Europe youth sector and in close cooperation with Roma youth organisations and networks. The close involvement and participation of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and of the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) ensure a strong link between the activities of the RYAP and the national and European youth-policy stakeholders in the Council of Europe.

An Informal Contact Group brings together the different partners in the Roma Youth Action Plan, first and foremost Roma youth organisations and platforms. It is a co-ordination body and promotes communication among the partners thus building synergies and securing maximum impact of their activities.

The project is based on “double mainstreaming” to ensure, on the one hand, the inclusion of youth issues in Roma policies and programmes and, on the other, that of Roma youth issues into youth policies. This process is indispensable in order to make sure that Roma-youth-specific issues are effectively considered by all actors concerned. The creation of a thematic group on youth in CAHROM, or the involvement of national youth policy authorities in Roma youth seminars in Portugal and Ukraine, are only some of the examples of double mainstreaming in practice.

The Roma Youth Action Plan is implemented by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in close co-operation with the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues. It is complementary with other actions and programmes, notably the RoMed programme, with which synergies are also sought.

THE ROMA YOUTH ACADEMY

The concept of the Roma Youth Academy was first developed for, and is part of, the Council of Europe [Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers](#), specifically for the objective of strengthening the self-organisation of young Roma and Travellers and their participation in society.

The Roma Youth Academy is a consolidated response to support the development and sustainability of Roma youth organisations and Roma youth work, combating and overcoming the consequences of antigypsyism and promoting the participation and social inclusion of young Roma. The academy is envisaged as a multiyear **educational and support programme** for young Roma who could become mobilisers of other young people in their communities, bridging the gap between training of multipliers and community actors in Roma communities at the local level.

The Roma Youth Academy is a response also to:

- the need for linking Roma youth participation from the European to the local levels and back and the need to connect Roma youth mobilisation with youth policy;
- the need to sustainably contribute to Roma youth mobilisation through adequate support for Roma youth leaders to act on the local level and to network when needed with relevant actors;
- the need to form and accompany Roma youth leaders to take a qualitative step in their work and upgrade their local actions;
- the need for Roma young people to learn about Roma culture, history and language.

Aims and objectives of the academy

The academy is set to enhance the role of Roma youth leaders in democratic leadership processes, self-organisation of communities and to support the next generation of youth leaders to be more confident and in tune with their cultural, linguistic and historical backgrounds. It has the following objectives:

- To strengthen the role and sustainability of Roma youth organisations by training and supporting Roma youth leaders and multipliers
- To strengthen the role of Roma youth leaders and youth workers as agents of community and social change at the local and national levels
- To support anti-discrimination work with particular focus on combating antigypsyism
- To enhance the visibility of Roma youth issues in national youth policies and structures, especially in countries where Roma youth is less present.

Methodology and features

The academy consists of a multidisciplinary training programme that covers Roma youth, democratic participation and leadership, human rights, organisational management, project management and community work. The training is based on the model of the Council of Europe Youth Department's long-term training courses which combine individual and group learning in residential seminars, e-learning modules, and project work based in local communities. This will be strengthened by modular training offers to respond to individual learning needs and of the participants and the specific realities and concerns of Roma young

people in all their diversity. The practice phase will be further enriched by experiential modules that include internships in other youth organisations and institutions, mentoring, job shadowing, and the elaboration of personal learning plans.

Monitoring and evaluation will be an integral part of the training cycle and cover individual learning, organisational development and impact at the community level. *Sustainability* and *reproducibility* of the actions will be key criteria in the selection of participants and organisations and in the implementation of the projects. The academy will also make use of the “double mainstreaming” approach and in complementarity with other projects and activities of the Council of Europe, as well as those of other Roma and youth partners. Double mainstreaming is one of the main approaches used and applied under the Roma Youth Action Plan, which encompasses the inclusion of youth issues into Roma policies and programme and those of Roma youth issues into youth policies.

The Roma Youth Academy is thought as an incubator of ideas and actions, whose success is measured against their results in the local communities from where participants come.

The educational approaches of the academy are based on experiential learning and on the practices of non-formal education. Participants-centredness in learning and learning from experience will be valued, as well as personal commitment of the learners. The participants will receive a certificate of their participation that will reflect their actual achievements, experiences and learning progress. Post-course support will be provided by mentors and coaches; the creation of a group of alumni can be envisaged at a later stage.

Participants in the academy are expected to take part in the following features of the academy:

Personal self-assessment of competences and learning needs

This will be initiated after the selection process of the participants with the support of trainers/mentors. It will be used as the starting point for personal learning plans and will be reviewed periodically to record progress and adjust the individual learning plan.-

E-learning

E-learning modules will be put into place throughout the whole academy to provide essential information and knowledge on the programme of the academy and complement the learning process of the seminars. Collaborative learning modules will be used to support dialogical processes of learning, group work and common projects.

Residential seminars

Three residential training seminars are foreseen: the introduction seminar will bring together the participants, trainers and mentors for the first time. The methodology and features of the academy will be understood and the grounds for the main learning areas will be set, including the criteria and typology for the projects. The seminar will have a duration of 12 days and be held at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, hence allowing for interaction with other actors and sectors of the Council of Europe.

A practice seminar will be held half-way through the process to share experiences and challenges met and foster cooperation projects among participants. It will also allow for a review of progress in individual and group learning and to trouble shoot on difficulties. The participants will also identify and prepare actions for intervention in local communities

prioritising Roma youth. The seminar should be held in a youth or community centre serving (also) Roma people.

An evaluation seminar will be held at the end of the training cycle to take stock of achievements and results, review individual learning and identify remaining needs and measures for the sustainability of the projects and organisations. Individual participants may also be proposed further learning and practice possibilities to consolidate their experience, notably with external partners associated with the academy. The evaluation seminar should be held at the European Youth Centre in Budapest.

Mentoring

A group of mentors will follow the participants in the preparation of their learning and development plans and will also advise them regarding the preparation and implementation of their projects and during the job shadowing and internship experiences.

Internships

Participants will be provided the possibility of internships lasting between 3 and 8 weeks in other organisations, Roma or non-Roma, that can support their personal learning and their project.

Job shadowing

Working together for a limited period of time with peers or with other professionals will enable participants to experience other ways of working and of receiving feedback on their own work. Job shadowing will be organised according to learning plans and follow specific learning objectives tailored to each participant.

Project development and implementation

Each participant will prepare and implement a community-based project with young Roma. The project must address the thematic priorities of the academy, notably youth participation and inclusion, antigypsyism and youth work with Roma. The project will have a double function of enabling experience as a source of learning and of bringing about tangible changes and results in local communities. Financial and administrative support to the projects will be considered. Their sustainability and contribution to the emergence of a Roma youth movement will be highly valued.

Complementary modules

Besides the e-learning modules, participants will be proposed with the possibility to attend specific thematic modules put into place by other sectors of the Council of Europe and partners in the academy, such as on combating hate speech, human rights education, gender equality, youth work, etc. These modules will be optional and proposed only to participants that will apply the learning in their projects or organisations.

THE TARGET GROUP

The potential academy participants should:

- Young Roma with a proven record and capacity for community leadership and activism and with the potential to access university level education
- Possess a clear vision of an anticipated social change they want to see or achieve
- Practice social and political activism
- Have language competencies at least on operational level of English
- Have an organisational background or some formal support structure at the local level
- Possess relevant skill and experience as activists and informal/formal leaders with Roma youth
- Be very motivated to take part in the learning process and make use of the full set of features of the academy
- Be fully available for all the seminars and be able to dedicate at least 75% of their time for the full duration of the academy (between 16 and 18 months).

IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

The Academy will be prepared on the basis of a 2-year cycle, involving a group of 30-35 learners.

A **pilot phase** of the academy will be run in 2017 and 2018 and will serve as the basis to fine-tune the concept.

A **feasibility study** is currently being conducted to better identify all the conditions and requirements of the academy.

A **consultative meeting** to review concept and prepare the pilot phase will be held in Budapest on 21 and 22 November.