

Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller<sup>1</sup> Civil Society

## FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

4<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Strasbourg, 18-19 September 2017  
Room G04, Agora Building

### CONCEPT PAPER

#### INTRODUCTION

Education as a determinant of life chances

It is commonly accepted that the provision of education remains a high priority among support measures for Roma and Travellers because parameters of poor education correlate with poor health, unemployment, social isolation and exclusion.

The results of the 2011 survey in 11 EU Member States<sup>2</sup> and the EU MIDIS 2016 FRA Survey covering 9 EU Member States<sup>3</sup> confirm that largely Roma children are behind in educational achievement and show a considerable gap between Roma and non-Roma children attending schooling. Despite the efforts to expand and improve education for Roma children over the years, as many as 50% of Roma children in Europe fail to complete primary education and only a quarter complete secondary education. Participation in education drops considerably after compulsory education where only 15% of young Roma adults have completed upper-secondary general or vocational education. The levels of illiteracy amongst young Roma remain comparably high for Europe where almost 50% of Roma are illiterate or moderately literate. Without compulsory education completion, many young Roma are unable to meet the basic requirements for vocational education programmes.

These low participation rates in education for Roma and Traveller children and youth are particularly alarming since educational factors have a direct and an acute impact on life chances.

What emerges from the data is that Roma youth are by far the most disadvantaged youth within the EU.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "Roma and Travellers" are used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "*Gens du voyage*", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

<sup>2</sup> Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic and Spain; report and analysis of data available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-results-2011-roma-survey>.

<sup>3</sup> Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic and Spain; report accessible at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings>

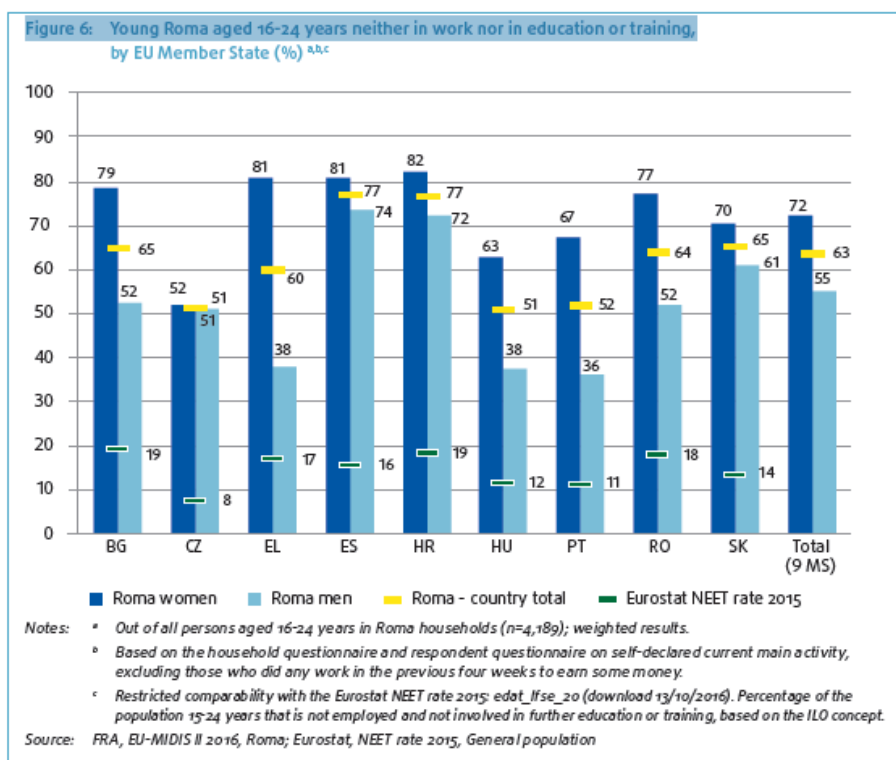
*“In most European societies, Roma young people have a hard time in asserting their rights, affirming their identity and belonging. Other problems faced by Roma communities are reflected in young Roma’s transition to adulthood, namely poverty and lack of opportunities within and outside the community, as well as difficulties in accessing their human rights<sup>4</sup>*

With lower levels of education and literacy skills, they experience limited access to essential goods and services and are less likely to benefit from the same opportunities and chances as other young people. Growing up in segregated neighbourhoods and schools, deprived of being part of mainstream society, often with limited access to vocational training, they are less competitive in the labour market.

### Employment and Roma and Traveller youth

The link between education and unemployment poverty is strong amongst Roma and Traveller communities in Europe. As indicated in many UNDP and FRA studies, unemployment rates for Roma men vary from 16% to 64%, and for Roma women from 35% to 79% in certain countries. Research data also suggests that, even when employed, Roma and Travellers experience disadvantage in the quality of the work itself.

Alarming, the gap in unemployment between Roma and non-Roma seems to be the greatest amongst Roma youth. In the 2016 EU MIDIS II survey, data revealed that the proportion of young Roma aged 16 to 24 years who are not in work, education or further training (NEET) is, on average, 63%. The results also show a substantial gender gap where, on average, 72% of Roma young women aged 16 to 24 years are neither in work nor in education.



<sup>4</sup> See Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2019) at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806926ac>

## BACKGROUND TO THE THEMATIC TOPIC FOR THE 4<sup>th</sup> DIALOGUE AGENDA

In its 2016 report, following its thematic visit to Poland on vocational education and training for Roma<sup>5</sup>, the Council of Europe's Ad Hoc Committee of Expert on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) noted that relatively little focus is put on vocational education and training. Vocational education refers to post-compulsory education that prepares young people to work in the trade, craft and technical professions through specialised technical and vocational schools, colleges and institutes, whereas vocational training refers to skills and competency training for specific jobs.

Vocational education and training are still insufficiently recognised as priorities and solutions which offer possibilities to mobilise and empower Roma and Traveller youth and ensure their economic self-sufficiency. Vocational education can also be seen as a kind of "transmission belt" into the labour market for those who did not continue post-compulsory education and have taken on family responsibilities at an early age.

Greater emphasis should be placed on vocational education and training as a safety net for at-risk Roma and Traveller youth while at the same time examining ways of opening the labour market for Roma and Traveller employment.

### Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society

In recognition of the priority need to address the issue of Roma and Traveller youth and employment capacity-building, the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society will devote its next meeting to the issue of *Roma Youth Employment and Vocational Education and Training*.

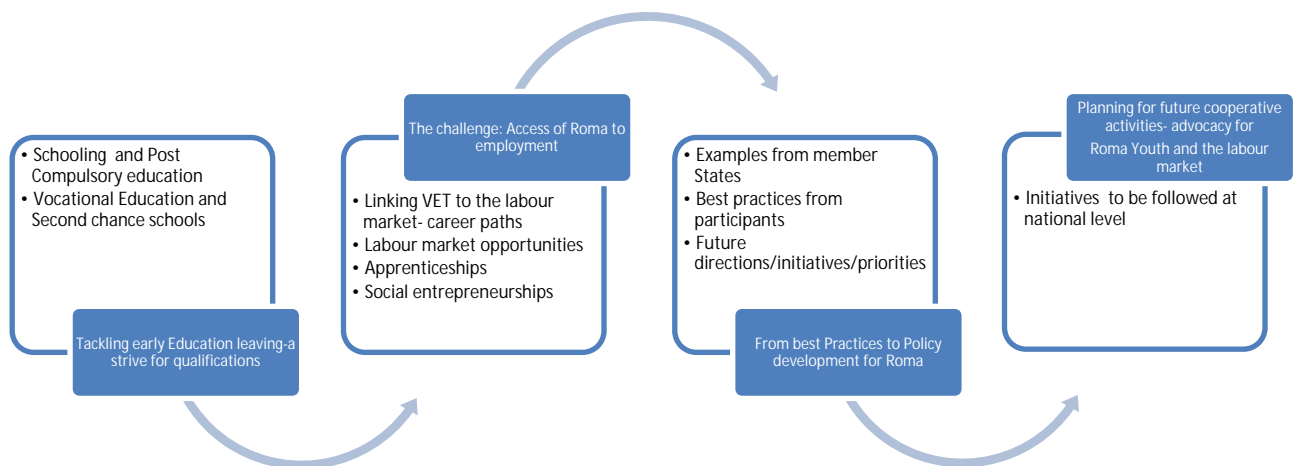
Topics that could be addressed at the meeting could include the following:

- Initiatives and projects related to vocational education and training with a view to combatting unemployment of Roma and Traveller youth;
- Career pathway and choice: linking education and training to labour market needs;
- Second chance educational programmes for those who dropped out of schooling early;
- Social enterprises and job fairs: an opportunity for young Roma and Travellers?;
- How could young Roma and Travellers benefit more from the NEET EU Programme?
- The certification of professional skills for young Roma and Travellers without diplomas;
- Measures to combat school drop-out and early marriages, etc.

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<sup>5</sup> See the Thematic Report on Vocational Education and training for Roma (Poland as requesting/hosting country and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Turkey as partner countries) at <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cahrom> (under "Education")

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE MEETING



## ANTICIPATED THEMATIC OUTCOMES FOR THE 4<sup>TH</sup> DIALOGUE MEETING

It is envisaged that the two-day meeting with Roma and Traveller civil society and key Roma and non-Roma experts in the area of youth, employment and vocational education and training (hereafter “VET”) will put VET at the centre stage of advocacy efforts for increased knowledge and activities regarding the role of VET in:

- the empowerment of Roma and Traveller youth to combat leaving education early;
- the return to education for those who dropped out early (second chance classes);
- the professional skills of young Roma and Travellers without diplomas;
- career pathway and choice – linking education and training to labour market needs.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Dialogue will serve as a forum for Roma and Traveller civil society, the Council of Europe and other stakeholders to improve their knowledge, exchange experiences and share best practices, plan future co-operation activities and identify possibilities for promoting VET and Roma and Traveller youth employment.

## ANTICIPATED DIALOGUE OUTCOMES

Roma integration is a shared responsibility and all actors (member States, European and international institutions and civil society) have a vital role to play in it. Whilst recognising the special responsibility of member States, the Council of Europe has within its objectives the Dialogue and consultation between the Council of Europe and Roma and Traveller civil society, including those working at grassroots level, on policies and practices relevant for the inclusion of Roma and Travellers, as identified in the Council of Europe Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019)

Civil society has the necessary network and knowledge about the situation of Roma and Travellers on the ground and can contribute to help member States and the Council of Europe fulfil their commitments.

The role of Roma and Traveller civil society is to provide support and be the bridge between Roma and decision-taking and policy-making. As complementary actors, they can facilitate the direction of the Council of Europe's actions through constructive and mutual dialogue.

Within the cooperative framework of the consultative Roma networks and with the intention of multiplying the impact of the Dialogue meeting outcomes and conclusions, two designated Dialogue rapporteurs, different for each Dialogue meeting, will be invited on an ad hoc basis to the CAHROM plenary meetings to report and exchange with the CAHROM participants about the outcomes/conclusions/proposals for follow-up resulting from the Dialogue meeting. The travel and subsistence costs of these two Dialogue rapporteurs will be covered by the Council of Europe budget.

## PARTICIPATION

Following the adoption of the revised Dialogue procedures between the Council of Europe and Roma and Traveller civil society organisations at the 13<sup>th</sup> CAHROM Meeting held in Prague, Czech Republic, on 31 May-3 June 2017, and taking into account both the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) and the Roma Youth Action Plan of the Council of Europe which supports the development of leadership and advocacy competencies among Roma Youth leaders and Roma youth organisations, Roma and Traveller individuals and experts from Roma and (non)Roma civil society with expertise in Roma youth, employment and vocational education are encouraged to participate.

*"The Roma Youth Action Plan takes into account the challenges of gaining personal autonomy, which are common to all young people, by promoting equality of opportunities for young people so they may develop "knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society".<sup>6</sup> It also addresses the specific challenges and hurdles faced by Roma young people; starting with the fact they are denied "the right to be young". Council of Europe, Roma Youth Action Plan 2013*

The new concept of the Dialogue<sup>7</sup> reinforces the need to focus on Roma and Traveller issues with the involvement of individual expertise, whether or not they are part of international or national organisations. In order to ensure maximum expert input and sustainable follow-up activities, Roma and Traveller individuals and experts will need to respond to a call for applications through which they should clearly state their motivation to participate in the Dialogue and expertise on the topic.

## THE CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

The Call is open to Roma and Traveller civil society, experts and other key national and international organisations with expertise in Roma and Traveller youth, employment and vocational education and training.

Interested candidates must complete an online Application Form by the deadline of Friday, 25 August 2017, at 18:00 Central European Time.

The online application form is available [here](#).

A maximum of 20 representatives of Roma and Traveller civil society will be selected by the Council of Europe Secretariat to participate in the Dialogue on the basis of their applications while securing a geographical and gender balance, as well as a balance between Roma and Traveller Civil Society representatives and other key stakeholders with expertise on the topic areas.

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<sup>6</sup> Agenda 2020 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe

<sup>7</sup> See the Concept Paper for the Reform of the Dialogue in document CAHROM (2017)13 Written contributions.

Applicants should clearly state in their motivation, their area of competence in the field and indicate in which way their expertise would contribute to reaching pertinent conclusions on the identified topic of the meeting.

## PROFILE OF APPLICANTS

Roma and non-Roma participants should be experts in one of the following areas:

- Roma youth;
- Youth Employment;
- Youth and Entrepreneurship / Apprenticeships;
- Vocational Education and Training (VET);
- Professional skilling of marginalised social groups;
- Second chance programmes;
- Professional skilling for those without diplomas;
- Measures to combat educational drop-outs;
- Youth Not in Education, in Employment or Training (NEET).

Candidates should equally:

- Be in a position to use and promote the outcomes of the Dialogue in their work;
- Be resident in one of the Council of Europe member States;
- Be actively involved in Roma and/or Traveller youth issues, particularly in the area of vocational educational and training,(access to) employment and advocacy of these issues at local, national or European levels;
- Be fluent in one of the Dialogue meeting working languages;
- Be available to attend the Dialogue for its full duration.

Selected participants will be informed by Friday 1 September 2017.

## DATES AND VENUE

The Dialogue will take place in the Council of Europe's Agora Building, Room G04, from 18 September (from 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m) to 19 September 2017(from 9.00 a.m to 1.00 p.m).

The working languages of the Dialogue meeting will be English, French and Romani. It is expected that participants are fluent and able to express themselves clearly in at least one of these working languages.

Accommodation for the Dialogue will be provided at the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre in Strasbourg and paid for by the Council of Europe. Travel costs and visa fees for the event will be reimbursed according to Council of Europe rules.