

DRT0(2020)4

Strasbourg, 4 December 2020

**9<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
DIALOGUE WITH ROMA AND TRAVELLER<sup>1</sup> CIVIL SOCIETY**

*Strasbourg, 29-30 October 2020*  
*Online meeting – KUDO Platform*

**Council of Europe  
Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025)  
Presentation – Implementation – Follow-up**

**WORKING TOGETHER IS THE WAY FORWARD**

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Roma and Travellers" is 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. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

## MEETING OVERVIEW

The 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society focused on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025), which was approved by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (CoE) on 22 January 2020 and will guide the Council of Europe's Roma and Traveller-related activities for the next 5 years. During the online encounter organised in the context of the COVID-pandemic, civil society representatives, members of the Council of Europe Secretariat and different stakeholders of the European Commission/Council of Europe Joint Programmes discussed the advancement of the situation of Roma and Travellers in Europe through the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan pursuing its main goals:

- combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination and supporting real and effective equality;
- supporting democratic participation and promoting public trust and accountability;
- supporting access to inclusive quality education and training.

The main questions underlying all presentations and discussions of the meeting were *How to make the most of the new Action Plan, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what role can Roma and Traveller civil society play in its promotion and implementation?*

The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted Roma and Traveller communities all over Europe. It revealed existing societal deficits, shortfalls of Roma integration policies, and areas of urgent need for improvement, highlighting the importance of solidarity and co-operation among stakeholders. To address the situation and the humanitarian crisis, programmes implemented by the Council of Europe were quickly refocused and the related budgets were adapted. Developing a structured approach towards the elaboration and implementation of efficient coordinated measures to overcome the long-term consequences of this and other crises requires joint efforts, constructive dialogue, and strategic planning. Addressing the crisis as a structural challenge and seeking models beyond the specific examples is the approach that would enable our societies to respond adequately to non-existing or dysfunctional infrastructures, threatening pandemics and natural disasters in the future. The cross-cutting line of the 9<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting was the question of how the Strategic Action Plan could be an efficient instrument not only for advancing the situation of Roma and Traveller communities but also for fostering the establishment of more equal and inclusive societies demonstrating increased levels of solidarity. Therefore, taking note of the statements made by the representatives of the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) and GATIEF, it is regrettable that the two organisations decided to abstain from participating in the Dialogue meeting dedicated to discussing approaches to address the current situation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) (hereafter: SAP) relies on the active participation of civil society and particularly of representatives from the Roma and Traveller communities in all its lines of action. An essential element of the implementation of the SAP activities, cross-cut by the horizontal goal of fighting multiple and intersectional discrimination, are the processes of dissemination, promotion, implementation, follow-up and review, in which civil society is expected to play a key role, e.g. through active and constructive participation in Council of Europe calls, projects, events, dialogue meetings, and crisis mitigation efforts.

### **Participation**

Co-operation between authorities, civil society and other stakeholders is crucial for mitigating the negative implications of a crisis. The mobilisation and involvement of civil society in the development of solutions and measures is essential. Therefore, the establishment of networks and platforms, with the active involvement of Roma and Traveller communities, are of importance for the identification of specific needs and for joining forces

to address them. Partnerships between authorities and communities is necessary to break the circle of patronizing interventions, which may reconfirm dependency and exclusion of the communities. Investments in community capacity building is therefore needed to enable stakeholders to become active participants and equal partners in the process. The methodology of the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme “ROMACTED” offers a systematic approach in stimulating processes of community change and engagement of local stakeholders in constructive dialogue. Since 2017, targeted efforts in the Western Balkans have resulted in the establishment and training of more than 700 Community Action Groups (CAGs) and Institutional Working groups (with more than 500 municipal staff coached on identified needs of the communities in question). As a result, more than 43 plans were developed and agreed on, 200 concrete actions were prepared, and about 120 projects were funded and implemented through the programme. Facilitating the dialogue between local authorities and the CAGs, the ROMED programme in Portugal fostered the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making processes. Since the establishment of the Roma Political School programme (2013), 40 young Roma were trained and supported to develop activities and to join national political parties. In 2017, a participant was elected for a parish council assembly, and several others were included in party lists. It is expected that in the local elections in 2021, graduates from the Roma Political School programme will have a real chance to be elected.

The active involvement of stakeholders in the processes of standard setting and implementation, known as community development method approach, allows them to become co-designers of (local) policies and to bring in positive changes. The National Traveller Health Strategy (2010) and the recognition of the Traveller ethnicity (2017) in Ireland, as well as the development of local action plans in 7 municipalities in Albania, financed subsequently by local budgets and implemented jointly by stakeholders and local authorities within the Joint Programme “ROMACTED” are such examples. Having pioneered this approach, the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme “ROMACT” in Bulgaria and Romania has focused on enhancing the capacity of municipalities and of community representatives in 46 and 80 localities, respectively, to develop local strategies, to design and implement projects, and to apply for EU and/or mainstream funding. These applications were highly successful, and the project funding created significant financial leverage to the practical integration measures at the grassroots level.

Enabling individuals and groups belonging to Roma and Traveller Youth, Women and LGHTQI+ to become actively involved in the processes of decision-making is among the SAP priorities. Barriers to their participation exist not only because of lack of resources for the implementation of initiatives but mainly due to lack of trust based on persisting negative attitudes and discriminatory practices outside and inside Roma communities.

### ***Human Rights & Equality***

Structural barriers impede access to justice. They need to be addressed jointly, with the active involvement of communities. Protection of human rights requires co-operation among stakeholders and their organisation, self-organisation, and advocacy. Civil society plays an important role in identifying and reporting discrimination, providing mediation and support to both communities and Equality ombudsmen. An active civil society aware of the existing mechanisms and tools for protecting and combating human rights violations can bring such cases to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which on its turn can render governments accountable. Before the Court, governments need to justify their actions providing proof that there is no racism involved. Court rulings and proper execution of judgements help tackling systemic problems. However, cases of gender-based discrimination (e.g. domestic violence) and ethnic bias are among the most difficult to assess. Awareness raising, transfer and multiplication of knowledge and long-term commitments of all sides would enable the efficient protection of human rights of Roma and Travellers. Building capacities of civil society and establishment of structures such as intra- and interorganisational Task Force groups would ensure sustainability of change. The European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme “JUSTROM” had a particularly positive impact on Roma

women empowerment, facilitating their access to justice through awareness raising events, provision of information and legal support. An important achievement of the programme was the successful training of lawyers, judges, and police officers in non-discrimination, gender equality and Roma issues. Among the major achievements of the programme in Greece was the provision of free legal aid to stateless persons and the amendment of the law regarding mothers without registration. This kind of work with communities, provision of legal information and co-operation with institutions are among the project priorities of JUSTROM 3 in Greece.

Intersectional issues need to be addressed to achieve equality and human rights for Roma and Travellers. Although the intersectional approach is still not fully developed in policy documents, it is positive that the SAP recognizes and outlines it. It is still a question how the intersectional perspective can be taken into account in practice since laws to provide protection from multiple discrimination do not yet exist in all member states (however, such legislation is currently under preparation, e.g. in Romania). Synergies and cross-sectoral co-operation are crucial for addressing issues of intersectionality and multiple discrimination. The double mainstreaming approach needs to be developed further as a mechanism to fight multiple discrimination.

Roma women, Roma youth, Roma LGBTQI+, poor Roma living in rural and remote areas and Roma children often face multiple and intersectional discrimination. LGBTQI+ dimensions are still missing from many equality strategies and legislation of the member states. The Roma LGBTQI+ community is often 'invisible' to both institutions and mainstream civil society actors. The lines of separation between mainstream LGBTQI+ and gender equality activists, and activists from Roma and Traveller communities highlight the existing 'shortage' of solidarity. Roma women from rural and remote areas experience additional challenges to access healthcare both due to the remoteness and due to the lack of health insurance. Preventive prenatal care is far too often still inaccessible to Roma and Traveller women and therefore pregnant women are not under proper medical supervision. Discriminatory attitudes are also an impediment to the access to healthcare. The new law in Poland on abortions is regarded as a violation of vulnerable women's rights. Roma women and girls are also exposed to violence, sexism, trafficking, early/child/forced marriages, compliance with ascribed gender roles and patriarchal traditions that violate their human rights. Increasing awareness can help to address the situation. Although recognised as a violation of human and child rights, early and child marriages remain a problem that calls for targeted policy efforts at national and international level.

Traveller communities in Europe lack visibility, as reported by representatives from Ireland and Belgium, and their inclusion is to be fostered. Recognition of caravans as a legal type of housing, provision of suitable areas for temporary and permanent halting of caravans and of access to culturally appropriate health care and services, as well as prevention of school segregation are among the measures with a potentially positive impact.

### ***Anti-Gypsyism***

Promoting and teaching Roma and Traveller culture, history, and language can enable the development of positive images and understanding of Traveller issues. Remembrance work is also important for increasing awareness about communities. The information, however, should reach not only the stakeholders but also mainstream society. Therefore, it needs to be delivered in a format and language that would enable understanding. Teaching Roma and Traveller history and culture can have a positive impact on both Roma and Traveller students fostering their identity and self-respect and on the process of inclusion, as well as on mainstream society increasing respect for Roma and Travellers and combating anti-Gypsyism.

Anti-Gypsyism is an especially persistent, violent, recurrent, and commonplace form of racism. It is an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination (ECRI GPR No. 13, 2011). Actions to combat anti-Gypsyism need to be planned

and implemented in all fields of life and especially in the policy areas of education, employment, housing, healthcare, media, and public services and police. Measures also need to address racist violence and crimes against Roma and Travellers. Hate-speech negatively affects both children as well as adults. Fighting hate-speech is an area in need for structured and efficient co-operation between civil society actors and authorities.

Only a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to Roma and Traveller issues, involving Roma and Traveller representatives at all levels of policymaking (conception, development, implementation, and evaluation) can enhance mutual trust and contribute to the fight against anti-Gypsyism. Anti-Gypsyism has been an area of targeted CoE efforts since 2005. It has been addressed by instruments such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM). Collection of official disaggregated data by gender, age and ethnicity and adding the ‘bias against Roma and Travellers’ in the hate crime national statistics can provide a basis for more targeted measures against anti-Gypsyism and what some Travellers call anti-nomadism. The upcoming 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meetings will particularly focus on the issues of combating hate speech and anti-Gypsyism.

### **Education**

“The right to education as a fundamental human right can only be fully exercised if the education is of adequate quality”, noted the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers (CM) in 2012 (CM/Rec(2012)13). Delivering quality education must become a priority and a standard for national governments regardless of the type of school and the ethnic background of the students. Segregation sometimes occurs due to structural factors – e.g. compact settlements. “Roma schools” must not be deprived of the possibility to offer quality education. To achieve this goal, it is needed not only that qualified teachers are appointed but qualified teachers who speak the Romani language.

Promoting and protecting legal standards and protection against discrimination, ensured by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), are of importance also in the field of education. Governments need to ensure that the agreed standards are respected in both teacher training and recruitment, and in awareness raising and fostering inclusion. Equity needs to become the key principle of inclusive education so that equality of learning environments and educational outcomes is facilitated. Ensuring true educational equity requires provision of additional learning support, adaptation of both school infrastructure and content, and development of alternative teaching instruments and approaches.

To foster the development of inclusive and cohesive societies, schools need to welcome Roma and Traveller children to a positive environment, where they feel supported by teachers and peers. The complex measures that can enable the achievement of this goal include: capacity building of public officials to implement policies and to manage diversity, provision of support to education professionals to adopt the whole-school approach and to enable the development of learning communities, fostering of democratic school governance, opening of learning support centres and upgrading of teaching programmes. Educational integration can be achieved only if efforts are synchronised and coordinated. The SAP encourages national governments to find sustainable solutions to individual aspects of inclusive education and to raise awareness about its importance among majority communities. It is important, however, that all stakeholders are aware that integration is not assimilation. Inclusive education is a process of school development that requires the involvement of all parties - teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, parents, and other local stakeholders. An individual Inclusive School Development Plan, led by inclusive values (e.g. as outlined in the “Index for Inclusion”), is one flexible tool that allows schools to advance on their own pace and define priorities with respect to local contexts. This inclusive whole school approach adopted by the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Project “INSCHOOL” accounted for significant achievements also with respect to the educational integration of Roma students. It revealed that when inclusive values of the whole school community, instead of focusing only on Roma children, are in the focus

of the activities all stakeholders feel motivated to contribute to the establishment of an integrative environment. What is crucial for ensuring sustainability of achieved positive changes is the training of teachers and the active co-operation with public authorities.

The Community Learning Centres, established by the civil society in Kosovo<sup>\*</sup>, proved to be an efficient mechanism to foster the educational integration of Roma children because they respond to the specific needs of the stakeholders. In compactly living communities, such centres can also become engaged in awareness raising about human and citizens' rights.

Scholarship schemes are an efficient mechanism to attract Roma individuals to university education. The EU/CoE joint project "INCLUDE" accounts for such a positive trend over the past years in Kosovo<sup>\*</sup>. In Portugal, the ROMED programme has also accounted for a significant success in the field of education. Apart from the 15 university graduates – beneficiaries of the scholarship scheme – the programme has inspired the Portuguese government, which is now providing scholarships to young Roma to attend schools. Political commitment and coordination between stakeholders are of importance for advancing the educational and the labour-market integration of Roma and Travellers.

### ***The COVID-19 Challenge***

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified all issues that Roma and Traveller communities face under "normal" circumstances and revealed aspects that call for immediate analysis and further strategic planning. It emphasised the vulnerability of the stakeholders throughout Europe, exposed policy shortfalls and gaps, and indicated the need for planning specific measures to address imminent and potential future challenges. Apart from the disadvantages associated with poverty, Roma and Traveller communities and individuals have disproportionately been affected by limited access to healthcare and public services, an increase in cases of human rights violations, targeted discrimination and reduced educational opportunities. Limited skills in national languages appeared to add an additional aspect to Roma and Traveller vulnerability.

Roma and Travellers are among the groups particularly hard hit by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic not only because of their limited access to basic services, but also due to the increased exposure to hate speech and violence. ECRI has raised alarm already in May 2020 that when and wherever restrictions are being implemented, it is the duty of governments to ensure that these restrictions are lawful, strictly necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory. ECRI also called on member states to ensure that public policies designed to address the current challenges posed by the pandemic and its economic consequences are not based solely on public health and economic considerations but rely on strong human rights considerations as well. The impact of the pandemic and related government measures is also one of the issues which is and will continue to be addressed in ECRI's sixth monitoring cycle of CoE member States. The Council of Europe is currently preparing Guidelines to support national governments to adequately address the COVID-19 related issues and their consequences on Roma communities, based on a study commissioned by the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), which endorsed the findings at its first meeting in September 2020.

The crisis revealed that systemic responses to educational needs of Roma and Travellers are required in order to ensure that emerging challenges can be faced adequately. According to some estimates, the pandemic left more than 30% of Roma children throughout Europe with no access to education for several months, not only due to

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<sup>\*</sup> All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

the lack of electronic equipment but also due to the lack of capacity of their parents to provide the needed educational support. Furthermore, 3 out of 4 children from poor households and from rural areas remained uncovered by the educational arrangements in their states. Nevertheless, until the end of October 2020, no education-related cases have been reported to the ECtHR. It is noteworthy that without information provided by civil society and active case litigation work, the ECtHR cannot react to this kind of educational injustice. Increasing child poverty is another negative impact that can be expected from the COVID-19 crisis. Nevertheless, little attention is currently being paid to that issue.

The situation shows the urgent need for synchronization and advancement of both humanitarian and human rights measures. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that when local authorities, international actors and stakeholders have established efficient channels and mechanisms for co-operation and support, emergencies and crises can quickly and adequately be addressed. Activities can be efficiently adapted and redirected, and the Roma and Traveller Team can not only identify the need for urgent humanitarian interventions but can also mobilise support and get actively involved in the aid delivery. In times of crisis, programmes focused on capacity building, trainings and project-related work need to change direction to provide humanitarian relief to the target groups, as needed. If there are functioning platforms for dialogue and co-operation, challenges can be met as they come. Participants in the 9<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting, representing programmes and organisations (including civil society structures) reported about the implementation of adapted measures addressing the emerging needs:

- In pursue of the programme's objectives, the EU/CoE Joint Programme "JUSTROM 3" activities were reshaped to include direct participation in local and national emergency campaigns, dissemination of information and distribution of hygiene products, material, and food, to facilitate access of non-Roma actors leading prevention and/or emergency actions (municipalities, NGOs, Red Cross, Civil protection, etc., depending on the context) to Roma communities, to assist Roma women community leaders involved in or initiating activities in the community to prevent, mitigate and/or overcome the negative impact of the COVID-19, and to organising online legal consultations. The lockdowns and the measures implemented in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift of the immediate focus and change the modalities of work of the JUSTROM 3 joint project, currently being implemented in 9 locations in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Romania, caused delays in project activities, which could impact negatively the of handover of ownership of project-related achievements and processes to the stakeholders.
- The EU/CoE Joint Programme "Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED)" addressed the real needs of the Roma community through a bottom-up approach as well as identification and targeting of priorities. Being close to stakeholders and involving them in active dialogue with institutions and authorities, it was adapted quickly and developed measures to address the pandemic and other emerging issues. The COVID-19 related responses became an additional component of the Programme in the form of a top-up to the small grants scheme projects in 48 municipalities. In Montenegro, the COVID-related top-up to the grant provided to the NGO Young Roma was used to support the Roma and Egyptian communities at local level with more than 6500 kg of flour, 4400 kg of food packages, and 1800 kg of hygiene products – in total value of 8540 EUR.
- Provision and distribution of hygiene products and food was also organised by the state funded ROMED programme in Portugal. During the first wave of the pandemic, the direct support to stakeholders was delivered with the active involvement of the Community Action Groups.
- The joint programme ROMACT adapted its activities on the ground and involved the local communities in the implementation of a series of support initiatives targeting the most vulnerable. The Small Grants Scheme used joint programme funding and resources mobilized by the Council of Europe's Roma and

Travellers Team through voluntary contributions by member states. The municipalities, schools and community based organisations who have been implementing the actions at local level focus on raising awareness and protection against the virus but also on addressing emergency needs especially for hygiene, sanitation, subsistence and support of the educational process for the most in need during the pandemic. To date, almost 50,000 beneficiaries have been reached through 42 grants provided in Bulgaria and 31 in Romania.

- Implementation of the second INSCHOOL cycle was stalled by the COVID-19 lockdown. To address the emerging needs and to reduce the negative impact on schools (and respectively teachers, parents and children) participating in the project, small grants were offered to support the digitalisation of education and the adaptation to online teaching and learning. Advancing the use of new learning technology among Roma and Traveller communities needs to become an integral part of all projects concerning the quality of education and educational support services. One adaptation made in order to respond to the changed project environment, was taking on the role of a mediator between individual schools and respective Ministries. Through this action the project managed to secure resources for the purchasing of equipment, training of teachers and development of measures to prevent drop-out of children in the most disadvantaged countries and locations covered by the programme.
- Although the challenges the educational systems in Europe faced in Spring 2020 had a direct negative impact on all children, parents, and teachers, the low-income and marginalised groups were affected most and the crisis revealed that it is not only the financial aspects that are crucial for ensuring equal access to online education and quality of distant learning. Involvement of parents and improvement of digital skills of both parents and children appeared to be essential factors as well. With the help of a Council of Europe small grants scheme, schools in Romania were able to organise counselling activities for students, parents, and teachers, which resulted in their better involvement in the online schooling. Schools in co-operation with local authorities, developed measures to support the educational reintegration of students heavily affected by the online learning. Apart from the initiated digitalisation of the teaching and learning processes, additional teacher support and peer-to-peer learning support was offered to students to reduce the attainment gaps. In this respect, the crisis had a positive impact on fostering solidarity and inclusiveness in the field of education. However, the risk of increased drop-out rates resulting from the educational challenges experienced during the pandemic has still not been addressed by all national governments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To the Council of Europe

1. Integration strategies are not end-documents but frames. They should be context-related and sensitive to the changing environment. Regional differences in terms of specific issues and needs should be addressed accordingly. Development and budgeting of adequate public policies targeting integration of Roma and Traveller depends on collection of data disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, age, etc. Data collection should be conducted with respect to the human rights standards. A more sensitive approach to addressing different people's identities should be adopted. Respect to human dignity and to the right to multiple identities should be the leading aspects in all policies and strategic documents. Strategies therefore should consider adopting the concept of 'groups exposed to vulnerability', elaborating on the identified specific challenges and planning of respective targeted measures, involving the representatives of the concrete target groups in the processes. The Council of Europe should provide guidelines how the SAP can be transposed to local contexts.



2. Mechanisms for structured dialogue and co-operation among Roma and Traveller communities, civil society, public authorities, and international organisations should be enhanced for increasing capacities of societies to overcome crises and their negative impacts. Coordination between all actors should be improved to foster the implementation of Roma integration programmes. The Council of Europe should therefore invite the governments of the member states to designate or establish a position or entity to coordinate and support the implementation of the SAP, maintaining active contact with stakeholders, gathering information, monitoring and reporting progress both to the national government and to the Council of Europe. Reporting on progress of the SAP implementation should become a part of the second (autumn) Dialogue meeting every year, regardless of the specific topic of that meeting.
3. Local and national authorities should become aware of the importance of involving Roma and Traveller in the decision-making processes and in implementation of programmes and initiatives. The Council of Europe should therefore direct additional efforts in training public officials and equipping them with knowledge and skills for reaching out to stakeholders and for establishing local level dialogue mechanisms. To facilitate interaction between public authorities and communities, promoting the involvement of Roma-mediators in local administrations and offering opportunities to Roma and Traveller to become community representatives at public and political level should be considered. Training should be provided to legal experts, lawyers, and law enforcement structures such as police, to increase their capacities to recognise and address efficiently cases of intersectionality and multiple discrimination. Awareness raising activities at the level of civil society at large and stakeholders should be conducted alongside the training of professionals.
4. To foster the participation of civil society in public and political processes and to increase the involvement of representatives of Roma and Traveller communities, capacity building at the level of civil society should be fostered. This would enable that deficits in civic culture and lack of experience in self-organisation are overcome. Leaders actively involved in Roma and Traveller community work should be identified and trained so that they can become drivers of positive changes. The SAP should particularly focus on fostering the active involvement in public and political processes at local and national level of underrepresented groups such as Roma and Traveller youth, women and LGBTQI+ people.
5. To address multiple discrimination and intersectionality adequately, synergies and co-operation across different administrative levels and between different kinds of actors should further be developed and enhanced. Access to justice should be ensured, which also entails the establishment of advisory centres within courts, removing language barriers, and raising awareness of stakeholders about intersectionality. Protection of the rights of LGBTQI+ communities should be included in general equality strategies of member states and in strategies targeting Roma inclusion. Roma women organisations should be actively involved in international and national policy initiatives and public debates.
6. To achieve a positive and sustainable change, educational and/or awareness raising programmes targeting non-Roma (majority population and other minorities) should be developed and supported by governments. Mainstreaming efforts should be enhanced as a tool for combating anti-Gypsyism and fostering integration and social cohesion. Raising awareness about Roma and Traveller communities, their culture, historical experience, and current problems should reach out not only to stakeholders but also to society in general. Therefore, targeted messages should be developed and delivered in respective languages and formats.
7. The gender mainstreaming approach should be crosscutting all activities, projects and initiatives targeting Roma and Travellers. Protection of the rights of Roma and Traveller women requires inter and intra community mainstreaming efforts.

8. The Council of Europe should draw the attention of national governments to the risk of increased drop-out rates of Roma and Traveller students as a result of the educational challenges experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Special measures supported by allocated additional funds should be designed to address the situation. Special attention should be paid on the prevention of the drop-out of Roma and Traveller girls.
9. Before finalising and launching the new Children's Rights Strategy, consultations with Roma and Traveller stakeholders should be organised by the Council of Europe. The views and suggestions of Roma and Traveller representatives should be reflected in the new Strategy. A strong stand against child-labour and other forms of exploitation should be taken. Measures are needed to reduce the expected negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis on child poverty.

#### **To Roma and Traveller Civil Society**

1. Civil society should become integrated and not divided between *mainstream* civil society and *Roma and Traveller* civil society. The gap should be bridged. Roma and non-Roma activists protecting LGBTQI+, women, children rights, etc., should join forces. Mainstream civil society organisations should provide opportunities to Roma and Traveller individuals belonging to underrepresented groups such as youth, women and LGBTQI+ people to get involved in their activities and to become visible.
2. Efficient combating of anti-Gypsyism in all fields of life requires the active involvement of civil society as well as the adoption of targeted measures and their projections in the national strategies/plans on Roma. To ensure sustainability and continuity of (positive) changes and to foster the implementation of existing laws, civil society should develop its capacities to render governments accountable. Roma and Traveller stakeholders should become actively involved, taking responsibility for controlling and advancing the processes. Equality bodies should be attracted as partners of Roma and Traveller communities in their efforts to combat discrimination and racism.
3. Small schools in remote areas or in compact Roma communities should not be closed being classified as 'segregated' since this would challenge even more the access of Roma children to education. Quality education should also become available there – delivered by teachers who speak the Romani language. Civil society should therefore make governments aware of the need to invest in (Romani) language training of qualified teachers and not only in the training of teachers of Roma ethnic origin.
4. In times of crises, public funding priorities should be adjusted to address the emerging needs of the most vulnerable groups. General measures should be lawful, non-discriminatory, and strictly necessary – developed with respect to the human rights framework. Civil society should participate in the design and implementation of such measures.

Efficient dialogue and co-operation which occur simultaneously at various levels – local, regional, international, grassroot – can bring real and sustainable positive change. The intersection of different perspectives and the active involvement of all actors are the mechanisms to bring societies together and to enhance their capacity to address emerging challenges and crisis situations. Working together is the only way forward.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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DRT0(2020)4

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