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REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF ROMA YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Report

of the consultative meeting to prepare a “roadmap” for the implementation of
Recommendation the Committee of Ministers to member States on Roma
youth participation

24-25 January 2024
European Youth Centre, Strasbourg



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This report was prepared with the professional input and dedication of Simona Torotcoi, consultant, rapporteur of the meeting.

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the reflections of participants about the state of Roma youth participation in Europe and member states, ongoing activities, initiatives and projects, as well as potential synergies between them, notably in connection to the implementation of the CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma youth participation. It also points out recent experiences and concerns affecting Roma youth, their impact, causes and consequences for meaningful Roma youth participation.

It also delves into examples of strategies and practices for the empowerment of Roma youth, Roma communities and Roma civil society, considering the context of the Recommendation.

The report includes specific proposals for the "roadmap" for the implementation of the Recommendation (to be submitted to the Joint Council on Youth in April 2024), and the reflections and proposals of participants on the potential roles of national/public authorities in charge of Roma and Youth affairs, national youth councils, regional associations and youth civil society (particularly the ones in field of Roma youth), in addition to the Council of Europe Youth Department and the Roma and Travellers Team, in the implementation of the Recommendation.

The Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma youth participation

Setting the Scene: The Context of the Recommendation

The meeting started with the opening remarks of Rui Gomes, the Head of the Education and Training Division, Youth Department. It was stated that the intention was to gather the European Roma networks, to gather representatives of the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe, the Advisory Council on Youth, the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) represented by Riccardo Venturini, but also the subcommittee of the Committee on Anti-Discrimination, ADIROM, but also other organizations and movements which are concerned by Roma youth participation, including representatives from local authorities, as a way to bring in the different dimensions of Roma participation from the European to the local level.

The different perspectives should support us to come up with a *roadmap* for the next five years to support member states to implement this recommendation. Beyond this more tangible result, the consultative meeting is an opportunity to pursue other objectives. One of them, as mandated by the Joint Council on Youth, is to also engage in regular consultations that have started a couple of years ago, and the *Task Force of Roma youth participation* which aims at having an informal annual consultation among a variety of stakeholders concerned by Roma youth inclusion and participation.

Knowing what each other is doing in relation to Roma youth projects, priorities, needs in 2024, supports devising or envisaging common approaches and strategies, and specially working on ways to support each other.

The consultative meeting was organised in cooperation with the Roma and Travellers Division of the Council of Europe, with the intention to continue working together, especially in relation to the *Strategic Action Plan on Roma and Travellers*, keeping in mind the opportunity for the meeting to feed into the upcoming strategic plan, the 2024 Roma Youth Together. In addition, there are also several study sessions at the European Youth Centres that are run in cooperation with Roma youth organisations and are very important means for Roma youth participation. These activities illustrate the fact that there are plenty of ways through which one can start to implement this recommendation or this roadmap.

The consultative meeting is organized under the umbrella of the Joint Council on Youth and the *conclusions* of this meeting will be proposed to Joint Council on Youth in April 2024 for adoption, with the expectation is that they will be integrated in the work of the Council, or picked up by participants' organizations and other partners that were not present but are equally concerned.

Rui Gomes also presented an overview of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma Youth Participation, by emphasizing the nature of a recommendation in the context of the Council of Europe as opposed to conventions or treaties (i.e. mutual state obligations). In sum, the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to governments of Member States they are important standard-setting and policy tools and documents, but they are *not binding*. Member States agree that the content of the recommendation is valuable and important, and they want to comply with it, but they are not obliged to! It shows Member states seriousness and their commitment.

Recommendations may also bring along *soft monitoring* – e.g., reviewed every five years or annually. They are also an instrument for *policy development*, especially at the national level. If a government would like to do something in the sense of the Recommendations, it can be a basis for inspiration. Recommendations are also *tools for advocacy* for the civil society

towards their national governments or Member States or local, national or regional authorities. They also reflect the so-called "setting common standards". A recommendation is adopted to respond to a problem, in this case the difficulties, challenges and the discrimination Roma youth face in their effort to be represented and participate in processes affecting them.

When the Roma Youth Action plan was evaluated, the Joint Council on Youth set up a Task Force on Roma youth participation and concluded on the need to develop a Recommendation on Roma youth participation and combating antigypsyism, which was endorsed by the Council of Ministers, which asked to prepare such a recommendation. This led to a working group drafting such a recommendation, a standard text that would reflect the needs of Roma youth. This was taken within the program Youth for Democracy. The drafting group was composed of a diversity of stakeholders, partners and institutions. It was representative and inclusive, drafted with Roma youth. In this process there was a study drafted to analyse the levels, the lacks in participation and reiterated the need for a recommendation.

The recommendation was adopted in April 2023. It takes note that Roma youth are interested motivated and ready to contribute to the progress of our society; it recognizes the double mainstreaming approach, and the Committee of Ministers takes note that these conclusions reflect the demands, priorities and aspirations of Roma youth and Roma youth organizations themselves, and it is a more of a bottom-up and pluralistic approach.

The measures included in the recommendation are specific and for the purpose of this meeting, need to be taken into account because some of them are quite bold, are quite practical, and must be weighed carefully in how we put them into practice.

When elaborating the roadmap participants were encouraged to pick up some of the measures, or highlight some of them, that's more important in the 2024 context, the priorities in three years, or more relevant in some context than in others. The focus is not to develop a new recommendation but to consider what should the starting point: we are going to do first, what we are going to do most, and who's going to do what?

Updates from Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion and the Roma and Travellers Team

The meeting continued with a presentation by Nicolae Radita, the Youth Rapporteur in CD-ADI on the priorities and programmes of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CD-ADI) in relation to Roma youth participation. Here it was stressed that Roma youth are important for the CDI and highlight the forthcoming recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on the equality on women and girls, often subject to multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination, reflected also in the recommendation on Roma youth participation, and also the importance of respecting the diversity of the Roma community in terms of age, as well. In the sector of education, the mandate on the CD ADI also includes a feasibility study on desegregation – which seeks to understand policies in member states and create new recommendations - i.e., early childhood education and care, access and retention in secondary education, representation in curriculum, access to tertiary education.

The Roma and Travellers Team representatives Marina Vasic and Oana Taba shared updates on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan on Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) and the Draft Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers to the Member States on the topic of equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls. They recalled that the Strategic Action Plan has three strategic objectives: combating anti-racism and ensuring equality, implementation and inclusive education, and supporting the democratic governance,

participation, ensuring accountability, and public trust. The last objective is reflected in several cooperation projects dealing with local development, empowering of Roma communities, but also cross-cutting issues such as leaving nobody behind, like Roma women, Roma children, Roma youth. Between 2018-2022 the Roma political schools with the aim of preparing candidates for elections, vote empowerment, etc., whereas in December 2023, the team tested a separate activity, a Roma youth political seminar which also focused on the inclusion of Roma youth or involvement of youth in the local development, targeting Western Balkans and Turkey.

There is also a focus on Roma women, as there is an ongoing work on a recommendation on the equality of the Roma and Traveller women and girls, to be presented to the Committee of Ministers at the end of March 2024.

There's a very rich body of recommendations relevant for Roma, including a recommendation on the participation of national minorities youth adopted and sent to the Committee of Ministers. The draft recommendation on Roma women and girls includes specific recommendations not only for the government but also for political parties, also for media representatives and other relevant stakeholders, to promote and achieve equality for all mind, mind, gender, women and girls, with the particular focus on those topics where they are mostly exposed to intersectional discrimination and violence. If the recommendation is adopted, the following phase would focus on implementation by member states.

In relation to the activities of the Strategic Action Plan on Roma and Traveller Inclusion, Rui Gomes addressed the question on how to connect, in relation to the cooperation programs ROMACTED and the other, and how to identify areas to promote the recommendation on Roma youth participation at the national level and promote some measures, clear ideas. The answer provided by Oana Taba showed that there are several avenues, including through the Roma Political Schools - in the process to reflect how to proceed next; joint programs are focusing on antigypsyism campaigns with Roma youth organizations, looking at a joint program with the European Commission on Roma Holocaust recognition and education, Dikh He Na Bister co-organized with civil society partners.

Needs, Priorities and Challenges for Roma Youth Participation

The ensuing session involved **group work** on the following questions:

- What is your experience with the topic of Roma youth participation and what makes this topic relevant for your work?
- What projects/activities/other are you doing to support Roma youth in your reality?
- How does your work connect to the Recommendation on Roma youth participation?
- How can you support the implementation of the Recommendation on Roma youth participation?

The results showed that *advocacy* for Roma youth is an important component of participants' work for the Roma youth participation and the capacity building of young Roma. Working for the empowerment of Roma, youth, women, girls, helping them to be active as leaders, multipliers, advocates. Substantial efforts are being put to bring the relevant stakeholders on Roma youth at the table at the national and local level, and at the international level advocating to include the *Roma youth as a target group*. In Portugal, for example measures targeting Roma youth are continuously pushed. The representative of Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) gave examples of supporting NGOs to diversify their structures, especially at the leadership level and include young Roma.

Conducting *research* on Roma youth¹ and Roma youth participation, collecting data (i.e., YEN), compiling shadow reporting (i.e., Romalitico), following the implementation of Roma related policies, point out the issues and gaps in implementation.

In terms of *achievements*, for example in North Macedonia, Romalitico and youth movement partners succeeded in the appointment of two advisors on Roma issues at the central level. In Greece, the gender equality plan includes references to Roma youth. Several participants stressed that in their work, they have succeeded to contribute to the National Roma Inclusion Strategies, either through drafting (i.e., Romalitico), or through consultations (i.e., Greece and Portugal), or have been pushing for Roma youth organizations to be part of the mainstream policy-making processes (I.e., YEN).

Specific *activities and projects* reflected the following:

- In Greece, a summer school on antigypsyism was organized with Roma youth, and substantial work has been done on Holocaust awareness, the TRANSFORM program focuses on the non-formal education of young Roma; the provision of scholarships;
- In Portugal, a series of trainings with civil servants took place on the topic on antigypsyism
- In North Macedonia, Romalitico was part of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign, focusing on the violence experience by Roma women and girls; the ROMACTED Summer School focused on the topic of antigypsyism
- At the Council of Europe level, ADI ROM has been developing history teaching materials for the inclusion of Roma in school curricula; the Roma Political Schools; EQUIROM Program² which involve young Roma to design campaigns
- YEN is supporting Roma organizations on regranting schemes how to apply for grants implement, monitor, how to do fundraising; provides physical spaces for young Roma to meet;

In different countries, there are Roma Youth Forums or Roma Youth Conferences organized on a regular basis. There are community campaigns run by Roma organizations or involving young Roma, especially when it comes to addressing antigypsyism.

In terms of identified needs, one of them is the need to develop a possible umbrella organization who bring together all Roma youth initiatives from different member states together. There is also the need to create as sustainable long-term budget for Roma youth organizations and individuals.

Many of the participants also reflected that they could support the implementation of the recommendation with the experience and knowledge they have acquired in the field since many of them come from are local, grassroots organizations.

The last session of the day continued with a group work on the roadmap to implementation of the CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma youth participation by focusing on identifying current needs and priorities for Roma youth participation at national and European level but also what are

¹ See ERGO Network 2023 on incorporating Roma youth in EU youth policies [Incorporating Roma in European Youth Policies: An Assessment of Inclusion Efforts – ERGO Network](#) or Phiren Amenca on Roma youth participation and representation in national youth councils and international nongovernmental youth organizations: [Youth Against Antigypsyism – Roma youth participation in mainstream youth structures research | Phiren Amenca](#)

² See more [Equality and Freedom from Discrimination for Roma "EQUIROM" - Equality and freedom from discrimination for ROMA - EQUIROM \(coe.int\)](#)

the the obstacles/issues faced by Roma youth. The group work was structured based on the four priorities included in the recommendation.

- **Systemic participation**

There is a *need* to identify the presence of Roma youth in certain documents and policies; increase the capacity of Roma youth to in order increase their self – esteem, and at the same time, the need for recognition of the existent capacities of Roma youth to make them participate and address the problems in their communities. There is a need of recognition of the capacity of Roma young people by society and also by young Roma themselves, and by Roma communities and leaders.

As *obstacles*, there are three categories: financial means, wrong needs assessments, tokenism and the low capacity of Roma youth. With respect to the first one, there is no sustainable funding. There is also the issue of job restrictions and no youth sensitive policies; the lack of social capital, lack of social competencies, lack of information, institutional discrimination and the lack of political will and a paternalistic approach.

As *priorities*, the most important one is mainstreaming Roma youth, sustainable funding, equal representation, and creating policies for monitoring these demands.

- **Combating structural antigypsyism and ensuring access to human rights.**

It was revealed that it is crucial to involve Roma experts and youth when designing specific measures tackling antigypsyism i.e., combating stereotypes, combating institutional and internalized racism, promote identity building and strengthening related measures, sharing knowledge, and raising awareness on the effects of antigypsyism.

In terms of *priorities*, it is important to conduct mapping exercises on the key manifestations of antigypsyism among Roma youth, conducting research, clarify if the definition and concept of antigypsyism is clear and recognized among key stakeholders. Another priority is the training of civil servants on antigypsyism as well as the erection of monuments and commemorative sites, promotion of Roma heroes, positive cultural heritage building. Support Roma youth watchdogs through funding, training, mentorship, and paid jobs. With regards to capacity building, a priority should be the development of media guidelines on Roma – together with Roma young experts, targeting people in state media, but also and non-state radio shows, podcasts, etc.

Support youth exchange that tackle the stereotypical representation of Roma in the media, teaching materials and curriculum, focusing on Roma history and culture. Equally important is to counter internalized racism especially among Roma youth, as a way to empower them.

- **Access to quality education and training.**

One of the key *needs* identified is the lack of quality education for many Roma children and the lack of proximity of the school, and the necessary transportation to ensure access. The situation does not differ for different levels of education i.e., primary school, higher education. In addition, in order to ensure quality education, education should be free, segregation needs to be tackled, the quality of the buildings where Roma children and youth study is poor, and therefore are not efficient in attracting Roma children to go. The high percentage of NEETs among Roma youngsters needs to be addressed. Despite the development of frameworks at the European and national level, there is a need at the school level to incorporate Roma history and Roma voices and experts to control the narrative. With regards to the training part,

there is a need for the recognition of non-formal education; students council representation to be inclusive to ensure an effective participation and develop the political participation of young Roma. There is a need for more scholarships with the participation of states, especially social or disadvantage-based scholarships.

Some of the *obstacles* are related to the brain drain phenomenon taking place, lack of parents' involvement. In the Ukrainian context, because of the COVID, a lot of schools have to call for distance education, which means digital education, yet Roma children lacked the devices and infrastructure needed to attend online.

As for *priorities*, desegregation is key. The support of school and community mediators, and parents but also a supportive learning environment.

- **Support to Roma youth-led organizations, engaging national youth councils, and funding to implement the recommendation.**

Some of the identified *needs* refer to structural support, mentoring for young Roma individuals and Roma youth initiatives and organizations, sustainable core funding for Roma youth initiatives capacity building, and a proactive approach to inclusion strategies.

With regards to *obstacles*, one of the biggest ones is still racism including institutional racism. Another obstacle are the *gatekeepers of power*, the lack of knowledge and expertise to apply to international funding, and also the lack of capacities of like human resources, like young Roma who know how to apply, who have the time to apply, and in the best case, who are paid to do this work, to apply and to manage funding. This is always very difficult for small organizations and initiatives without any financial and human resources. Another obstacle is the war in Ukraine. There is a lack of awareness of the precarious situation of Roma youth and their initiatives from the perspective of the donors and funders, which don't know about the situation, they don't know what obstacles Roma youth and Roma youth organizations face, and that's often the case why they don't see why they should specifically support Roma.

As for *priorities*, the most important one is capacity building, what would be also important is a mapping, to find all Roma organizations or Roma youth organizations that work with Roma youth in all the member states. Then another priority is the allocation of budgets, grants, and funds for Roma youth-led initiatives, and the creation of avenues for participation, whenever it's possible. It is very important to make sure that Roma youth are consulted, not only on Roma or youth-related issues but on issues affecting them.

The Roadmap: A Stakeholders Approach

The Importance of a Roadmap

After reviewing the needs, challenges and priorities, the second day delved in establishing priorities for the roadmap. A roadmap is an indication, it is a process that ensure certain steps can be taken and be subject for periodic reviews, or so called soft monitoring. The **roadmap** provides guidelines on what to prioritize and what we expect and what our partners can commit themselves to, especially what the Council of Europe can also do. How do we support member states in doing that?

The Youth Department has several instruments that can be put at the disposal of the current roadmap, including:

- two European youth centres support youth organisations through sessions, seminars and other activities. It also trains youth leaders, multipliers, and trainers in developing competence, organizing campaigns, and leadership projects.
- It is tasked with providing a youth perspective to the rest of the organization, of also sensitizing member states;
- the European Youth Foundation, which provides financial support to youth-led projects and activities.
- Supporting Roma youth and preventing discrimination, promoting inclusion, etc., is part of our Youth for Democracy programme. The roadmap should provide coherence to what is being done because the measures proposed are many, and action is expected in all of them.

In 2025, the Roma and Travellers Team will launch an evaluation of a strategic action plan up to 2025, which will feed into the conceptualization of the new action plan up to 2023. One important deliverable is a handbook on democratic governance, representation, and participation of Roma and Travellers in public and political life. There is also an idea to have a joint program, especially on this topic of Roma youth, since there was no youth-specific cooperation activity, or joint program.

In relation to the Roma and Travellers Strategic Action Plan 2026-2030, the Roma and Travellers Team envisages a consultation with Roma organisations through their regular consultation mechanism and dialogue meeting.

Possible Contributions and the Roles of Different Stakeholders

The roadmap creation process started with a group work on envisioning changes in the next 5 years by proposing three levels of interventions based on the stakeholders that need to be part of this process:

- Roma youth and other civil society organizations;
- National youth councils and mainstream youth organizations;
- National, local and regional public authorities and institutions in charge of Roma youth, or minorities.

The guiding questions were the following:

1. What would we like to achieve in the next 5 years from the recommendation?
2. What can we and our partners do?
3. What should Council of Europe do to support that?
4. What monitoring mechanisms or support should be in place?
5. What synergies with other processes at the European, regional, national level can be calculated?

Roma youth and other civil society organizations

What would we like to achieve in the next 5 years from the recommendation?

The first step is making the most of existing networks, available research, and recommendations. A key priority is mapping of existent Roma youth CSOs and their priorities, mapping the needs and capabilities of the Roma and of Roma youth CSOs, including migrants, refugees and IDPs, and groups facing intersectional discrimination, and mapping the

representation in mainstream youth structures of Roma youth. Such mapping exercises can be utilized as baselines.

A second step is combating antigypsyism through Roma youth participation. This can include:

- Capacity building for Roma youth organisations and activists to address antigypsyism
- Capacity building for Roma youth CSOs to conduct watchdog type of activities (including through mentorships)
- Awareness raising for Roma youth to recognise, understand, report and respond to antigypsyism
- Prepare, support, training Roma youth organizations to become active members of their country based national youth councils, and other international youth organizations
- Ensuring support services for Roma youth facing intersectional discrimination (including those affected by mental health issues) with the ultimate goal to enable their participation
- Support and adequately fund programmes aiming to promote a positive image of young Roma identity and culture and to fight against stereotypes and biases in media, social media, arts and culture, including by incorporating Roma culture and history in school curriculums and textbooks, formal and non-formal education/learning materials, Roma museums, cultural campaigns and arts and media projects that showcase Roma role models, heroes and heroines, Roma resistance, the history and dignity of Roma labour.
- Capacity building of civil servants on antigypsyism (police; in view of the vulnerability of Roma youth to police profiling)
- Support representation of Roma in commemorative initiatives
- Ensuring inclusive education (including through revision of educational curricula to reflect Roma history and culture)

The third step refers to funding. More specifically:

- Providing core funding for Roma youth CSOs (national and international level)
- Co-operating with intergovernmental and international organisations to provide funding and other resources to Roma youth organisations and groups to sustain themselves, their programmes and the participation of their members in international forums and consultation processes;
- Support the establishment of scholarships, paid internships, fellowships, etc. needed for young Roma to get the necessary skills for participation
- Funding schemes targeting Roma youth to be paired with mentorship schemes on fundraising and project management
- Flexibility in funding schemes to allow access of small Roma youth NGOs: allowing sub-granting; increase of administrative and staff costs; allowing costs for equipment; decrease/eliminate co-funding demanded from unexperienced/small Roma youth NGOs
- National Youth Council to raise awareness of programme makers to include funding schemes addressing Roma youth also in topics that are not very obviously directly related to this group (e.g. climate)
- Raise awareness of Roma youth CSOs on available funding schemes that are not very obviously directly related to this group (e.g. climate)

The fourth step focuses on double mainstreaming (*points 4 and 5 from the measures in the Rec*) and combating environmental injustice through Roma youth participation

What can we and our partners do?

- Mapping – Phiren Amenca and other stakeholders
- Co-operate better; joint activities;
- Newsletter on Roma youth developments – TernYpe
- Activities on combating antigypsyism: Romani women informal network (HU); ERRC; Informal movement “Be Panda”; TernYpe;
- Campaigning and raising awareness through non-formal education at local level
- Use of equality bodies and NHRIs to train Roma youth CSOs, university students on how to detect, monitor, report discrimination/various manifestations of antigypsyism
- Fund-raising to private sector
- Tutoring less experienced Roma youth CSOs on fundraising
- Advocacy for Roma youth topic to be mainstreamed (funding)
- Advocacy with institutions and National Youth Council for double mainstreaming
- Synergies with the academic sector

What should the CoE do to support that?

- Mapping – with CSOs in partnership
- Capacity building for Roma youth organisations to address antigypsyism to conduct watchdog type of activities
- Guidelines for media on combating antigypsyism (developed with Roma youth) and the promotion of a positive image of Roma youth
- Training for journalists (combating antigypsyism) – create synergies with the EQUIP project of the CoE
- Work and support Roma influencers
- Capacity building of civil servants on antigypsyism (especially police; social workers), especially with regards to racial profiling, addressing hate-speech and violence
- Support and promote youth involvement with the cultural sector, including by encouraging less elitist approaches
- ERIAC to become more grassroots; support the work of local-level artists; clarify and make more flexible conditions for support given (e.g. sometimes professional portfolios are demanded in the application process, which grassroots Roma (youth) artists don’t have due to lack of financial resources)
- Revision of educational curricula to reflect Roma history and culture
- ROMACT type of support for Roma youth CSOs, especially with regards to funding
- Expert support for Roma youth activities implemented by Roma youth NGOs
- Support Roma youth work through a cross-sectoral funding approach
- Push member states to allocate Roma youth dedicated funding
- Guidelines for National Youth Councils on integrating Roma youth in their work (in the ADI-ROM Handbook)

What monitoring mechanisms of support should be in place?

- Once a year organize a meeting with existing Roma youth organizations; design questionnaires on how the implementation of the recommendation goes.
- Establish a Mixed Task Force – Roma CSOs (European and national level); CoE (Roma and Travellers Team; Youth Depart); National Youth Councils with yearly meetings,

and submit questionnaires to ministries dealing with Roma and youth issues – through the inter-governmental bodies of Council of Europe

- Follow-up to yearly evaluation – adapt the methodology/roadmap if needed earlier than the five-years timeline

What synergies exist with other projects?

- Roma youth CSOs consider the Recommendation when conducting research/mapping, etc.
- ROMACT, EQUIROM, ADI-ROM work on Roma history teaching
- Dikh he na bister
- “Roma youth bring change” – North Macedonia – gamification; and local campaigning
- “Decolonisation of the Memory” – Ukraine

National youth councils and mainstream youth organizations

Proposals for national and international organisations:

1. Raise awareness of the Recommendation back home, and promote it as an advocacy and policy making tool.
2. National youth councils to establish flexible membership criteria for Roma youth organizations, not only as member organizations but in the leadership as well.
3. Establish a coordination committee among Roma youth organizations.
4. Support capacity building of Roma youth civil society producing shadow reports and monitoring the implementation of the Recommendation on national level.
5. Support creation/redesign of youth friendly websites where shadow reports on the Recommendation can be read by young people and youth NGOs.
6. Support national research activities to ensure adequate data collection and informed policy making.
7. Ensure Roma youth involvement in policy making and decision making on the local and national levels in all phases, from conceptualisation to evaluation of policies (not only related to Roma, but all spheres of life).
8. Create advocacy actions towards national parliamentary groups in charge of youth affairs to push for Roma-inclusive policies.
9. Support creating national coalitions of Roma youth and NGOs to ensure representation and participation opportunities for local Roma youth.
10. Support local Roma multipliers and local NGOs with awareness raising and capacity building for increased political, economic and cultural participation (re-granting, workshops and trainings, campaigns, cultural events).
11. Build capacities of journalists to design inclusive campaign and adequately report on Roma youth issues, by promoting Roma identity and pride, to fight antigypsyism (synergy with ERIAC’s regional training with journalists to produce media outlets taken by mainstream media).
12. Enable participation of Roma youth in international cultural events, to promote cultural participation and increase visibility of Roma cultural heritage (e.g. ERIAC)
13. Organise national and local events that promote Roma participation, cultural identity and achievements, and identify further challenges and opportunities for Roma youth in the country.
14. Support our partners in becoming more inclusive to involve Roma youth in their activities and processes.
15. Coordinate national efforts in EU Youth Guarantee implementation to enable access to social rights of young Roma.

Proposals for the Council of Europe:

1. European Youth Foundation should hold a training for local Roma youth NGOs on applying for pilot activities, to promote proposals from Roma youth organisation from the local and national levels.
2. Youth Department should increase cooperation with the Education Department (in the area of history teaching and educational curricula)

National level coordination:

- Institutional body/working group composed of public authorities and civil society, to coordinate implementation efforts on local and national level (meeting at least twice per year)
- Identify Roma youth organisations to be part of the national monitoring mechanism (to feel ownership of the process)

International level coordination:

- Set up a Coordination Task Force (national contact points, Roma international youth organisations, CCJ, CDEJ, YD, RTT) – that would meet at least once per year.
- Organise periodical consultations to assess implementation of the Rec (e.g. host it within the Dialogue meetings of Roma and Travellers Team).

National, local and regional public authorities and institutions in charge of youth, Roma youth, or minorities

What would we like to achieve in the next 5 years from the recommendation?

National, local and regional public authorities and institutions in charge of Roma youth, or minority youth are informed about the Recommendation.

- The Recommendation is known available and used by such institutions; This would imply providing the necessary information to such institutions and ensuring translations of the Recommendation are made available to such national institutions in each Member State. At national level there will be information sessions about the recommendation; To invite Roma and youth bodies to discuss what to do with the recommendation: i.e., a youth state secretary to invite the ombudsman to discuss about it, and associate ADI ROM, CDI-ADI activities at the national level and the steering committee for youth and the advisory council on youth, and other experts from those countries that can support.
- Addressing, involving associations of local and regional authorities and consultative bodies in the National Roma Inclusion Strategies, many of whom have activities/programs with Roma or youth; inform mediators and other programs delivering for the CoE to disseminate this; the people should know what it contains;

Mainstreaming Roma youth in the strategies, create the necessary monitoring of Roma youth in the strategies;

- Coordination of the NRISs with DG JUST and DG NEAR to involved to defend the idea of mainstreaming, to foresee targeted funding at the national local level for Roma youth organizations and groups including in local strategies and actions plans; National Roma Contact Points responsible to monitor/implement the strategy to be made aware and involved on the need to assess how they include a Roma youth perspective in the strategy.

National level youth policy-making institutions

- Are informed about the Recommendation, mobilize civic service for Roma youth leaders
- National level youth policy-making institutions are prepared to provide monitoring input for the first review of the Recommendation

- The role of the mediators for informing about the Recommendation; Include Roma youth with mentorship schemes (with mixed participants) and assess current investments in Roma youth programs,
- To invite other stakeholders to speak about the Recommendation
- Seeks ways of rewarding the inclusion and participation of Roma youth and other stakeholders in key meetings as a way to motivate them, inform them
- Establish affirmative action participation measures for Roma youth, as a way to break the cycle of prejudice

Equality bodies

- Mainstreaming and be reactive to the Roma youth concerns, and the dimensions of Roma and youth inclusion policies
- Engage in information sessions, with the relevant parliamentary committees for Roma
- Strengthen both the intersectional approach and the mainstreaming of Roma youth develop criteria
- Monitoring bodies of the CoE – Framework Convention on National Minorities - to include Roma youth, and include them in the reports of ECRI

Local and Regional Authorities

- Assessing how local and regional authorities include Roma youth and Roma youth priorities in the local action plans;
- Prepare and include Roma youth and children in councils at the school level but not only – the role of affirmative action, the youth involvement and empowerment.
- Establish mechanisms to include all allies and stakeholders to work together with regards to the Recommendation
- Recognize and address existing internal institutional antigypsyist practices
- Advocate for a proper budgeting of local action plans of Roma inclusion

What should Council of Europe do to support that?

- The European Youth Capitals program should add specific provisions about Roma and Roma youth, and work closer with the European Youth Forum
- Encourage national youth organizations and national youth bodies to speak about Roma youth participation and the recommendations around the 8th of April; add it in newsletters, websites, social media, etc.
- International Roma day to be focused on youth.
- Strengthening communication and starting by informing everyone on concrete actions on communication to the national ministries on the 1st year of the recommendation
- Strengthening the capacity of Roma youth organizations to take part in the review;
- Activate the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and other bodies working on anti-discrimination, gender equality with regards to the Recommendation
- Establish an affirmative action within the European Youth Foundation to tackle the Roma youth needs;

- Create synergies with European and international organization – REF, DG NEAR ERIAC, to tackle the youth mainstreaming and other organizations such as the OSCE, the UN, IHRA, to include the youth perspective in their action;
- Provide a youth friendly version of the recommendation to follow easier for different stakeholders – make it available in a year.
- Translation by national authorities online and print a friendlier version of it;
- Establish a coordinating this role with regards to the Recommendation to provide relevant information on its developments and establish a mechanism to inform each on developments.

Next steps: Creating synergies, policy action, joint projects and activities in 2024

The upcoming commitments from the Council of Europe side involve the following:

- Prepare the draft of the recommendation roadmap at the end of February 2024
- In April 2024, the steering committee on youth and the relevant actors will adopt the roadmap
- Work towards securing a coordination of the roadmap in the Council of Europe
- Takes a note on the proposals to have task force monitoring group to yearly meet and assess how the roadmap is being implemented (in 2024)
- The upcoming International Roma Day 5-8 April - Roma Youth Together to be organized with the Roma and Travellers Team. This is envisioned as a participatory event, contributing to the roadmap
- Working with Phiren Amenca, ternYpe and ERGO on a study session series - where CoE will make sure the recommendation and the roadmap will be included
- Next year, 2025 a training course on antigypsyism and RYP
- In 2024 expect to issue a youth friendly version of the recommendation and promote it in more languages
- Provide some tool to member states that they can make use of with regards to the recommendation
- Organize the Roma youth conference with RT division bringing about 30 stakeholders and partners, in 2025
- There are ongoing efforts to make the youth center in Budapest more Roma friendly; Together with the Romanian NYC, there is a plan to have a Roma youth conference of Hungary organized as a permanent feature
- The Roma and Travellers Team reiterated their focus on the Roma Political Schools, their ongoing projects with a Roma youth focus such as EQUIROMA which involves awarding reporting on Roma youth, Roma history teaching. In addition, in the Western Balkans and Turkey it will have a youth focus and support youth hubs until the end of 2024 end.

Participants project ideas open for coordination:

- ternYpe open the invitation for their Dikh he na bistar, and of the advocacy study session in Budapest; reiterated its commitment and put at disposal the potential of their network

- TENET Centre for Social Transformations, Ukraine expressed their focus this year on strengthening Roma youth voices through media
- The Roma representative in the Advisory Council shared about the establishment of the Roma council in the Brno, the developing informal movement Roma youth in Czechia, and the radio show with Roma youth
- In Greece, 8th of April events are being co-organized with Roma youth, and further work will be done with Action Aid on promoting Roma young role models; There are also ongoing efforts to update the local action plan to include Roma youth. The premisses of certain organizations and local institutions are offered to Roma youth organizations.
- ARCA reiterated its focus on Roma youth and culture, and Roma youth influence on policy-making; This year will organize two conferences one in Berlin on the recovery of Ukraine, and another conference in Ukraine with the government of Ukraine, which aims to focus on the participation of Roma in the recovery plan.
- RROMA from North Macedonia shared about their work on antigypsyism and advocacy through creative methods and campaigning, the 2nd phase of Roma youth bring change will take place which includes topics such as gamification, community methods, positive partnerships; It also have a project on commemoration; the Roma mosaic project; together with the Independent Theatre of Hungary, it supports emerging Roma and youth artists and become more visible; More efforts will be put on becoming more active in the National Youth Council and bring in the importance of the Roma youth representatives; at the local level there are steps taken to create a municipal youth council.
- Romalitico from North Macedonia to create synergies with the ROMACTED on the implementation of the recommendation
- Roma Active Albania reiterated its focus on education and employment of Roma youth and strengthening the fight on antigypsyism, especially through campaigning.
- The National Youth Council of Hungary mentioned the Roma Youth Conference and their focus to address Roma youth and establish a task force in Hungary to implement the recommendation
- ERIAC shared that it will increase media component through podcast.
- ERGO expressed their 2024 Roma Youth Academy edition, and the call for 2024 ERGO membership

Appendices

Concept Note

The [Youth Sector Strategy 2030](#) of the Council of Europe aims to create spaces for young people to live together in peaceful and inclusive societies, with special emphasis on allowing young people, including those experiencing any form of discrimination and exclusion, to benefit from opportunities that develop their commitment to and exercise of democratic citizenship. It also emphasises the interest of the Council of Europe youth sector to develop a stronger profile regarding the inclusion of *inter alia* minorities and vulnerable groups, intersectionality, and inclusiveness across its programming.

The Council of Europe Strategic [Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion](#) (2020-2025) concurs in this priority by noting that:

Roma and Travellers, particularly women and youth encounter a variety of social barriers and prejudices that severely impede their capacity to effectively participate in public and political life. They are consequently largely absent from the local or national political arenas and decision-making processes affecting them. This invisibility undermines their potential to reverse embedded marginalisation and discrimination.

The Council of Europe youth sector has been consistently supporting for several decades the participation of Roma young people and combating antigypsyism. This was particularly enhanced with the implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan (2011-2019) which, among others, developed awareness and resources on Roma youth identities and remembrance, multiple discrimination and in involving young Roma as agents of change and human rights defenders.

This work was consolidated in 2020 and onwards with the preparation of a recommendation on Roma youth participation to support and commit member states to competently address discrimination of Roma young people. The process was led under the auspices of the Joint Council on Youth, which was tasked by the Committee of Ministers to prepare the recommendation.

The [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2023\)4 on Roma Youth Participation](#) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 5 April 2023. The Recommendation was adopted because young Roma people face systematic discrimination in their access to social, economic, cultural, political and civil rights, and that structural racism negatively impacts Roma youth's participation in civic and political processes and structures, self-esteem, pride and well-being, their transition to adulthood, their trust in the fairness of institutions, and their readiness to embrace their roots and cultures. The Recommendation reflects the priorities, demands and aspirations established and expressed by young Roma people and Roma youth organisations during consultation processes. It acknowledges the importance and urgency of using a double-mainstreaming approach in youth and Roma policies, as well as mainstream legislation, policies, measures and programmes. The Recommendation asks Governments of the member states to:

- ensure substantive, fair and systematic participation, representation and inclusion of young Roma people in all spheres of society and decision-making processes and structures;
- mainstream and include systematically and explicitly the needs and priorities voiced by young Roma people in all policies, standards and programmes that impact them;
- assess relevant mainstream and targeted policies, as well as democratic structures, in view of mapping and redesigning them to ensure Roma youth's effective participation, representation and inclusion;
- combat all forms and manifestations of structural anti-Roma racism and antigypsyism and their impact on Roma youth participation;

- ensure young Roma people's full and effective access to and fulfilment of all fundamental human rights and freedoms;
- ensure free and non-discriminatory access to quality education, training and employment opportunities for all young Roma people;
- support and strengthen the capacity of Roma youth-led organisations, groups and initiatives and Roma youth-focused organisations and youth centres;
- adopt policies, measures and programmes and allocate adequate funding to implement the guidelines set out as an appendix to the recommendation.

Governments are also asked to invite civil society, including mainstream youth councils and organisations, and other relevant stakeholders, to contribute to the implementation and evaluation of the recommendation.

The Consultative Meeting

Following the adoption of the Recommendation, the Joint Council on Youth has called for the preparation of "roadmap" to support member states and other stakeholders to implement the recommendation and its guidelines in the next five years. Reflecting the participatory approach adopted in the preparation itself, the preparation of the "roadmap" ought to be done with input and proposals from Roma and Youth experts, including Roma young people and representatives of Roma youth organisations.

In addition to preparing the roadmap, the Consultative Meeting *Realising the Potential of Youth Participation* also fulfils the function of the Task Force on Roma Youth Participation, which the Joint Council also decided to hold on a regular basis. The Task Force is an informal coordination mechanism between Roma and Youth stakeholders.

The meeting has thus the following **objectives**:

1. To identify the current needs and priorities related to the participation of Roma young people in the context of the Recommendation and of other initiatives and processes at national and European level;
2. To discuss practical ways and forms of using the Recommendation and its guidelines for advocacy and action purposes
3. To make proposals for implementation of the Recommendation in the next five years, including the specific roles of:
 - a. National/public authorities in charge of Roma and Youth affairs
 - b. National youth councils and mainstream youth organisations
 - c. Roma youth and other civil society organisations
 - d. The Roma and Travellers Team and the Youth Department of the Council of Europe
4. To propose support measures for the implementation of the roadmap
5. To exchange information about current plans and projects of Roma youth organisations and other stakeholders concerned with a view to coordinate calendars and processes where relevant, beyond the scope of the Recommendation.

The results of the meeting will be discussed by the Joint Council on Youth at its April meeting with the view to formally adopt it.

Participants

The consultative meeting brought together some 20 experts representing the key stakeholders involved in, or concerned by, Roma and youth policies, including: Roma youth civil organisations and networks, experts of the European Steering Committee for Youth, of the Advisory Council on Youth and of the European Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion and its subordinate body ADI-ROM, and representatives of European non-governmental youth organisations and national youth councils. All those intending or interested to participate were invited to return a registration form by the 15 December 2023, where they expressed their proposals for the programme of the meeting (optional) and their expectations for the meeting.

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Akaiterina PASCHALIDOU | Municipality of Ampelokipi-Menemeni, Greece |
| Blanka KASZPER | National Youth Council of Hungary |
| Chinara MAJIDOVA | Youth Agency for the Advocacy of Roma Culture (ARCA), Ukraine |
| Deniz SELMANI | Romalitico, North Macedonia |
| Dezdemonia KOVACS | ERGO Network / ternYpe |
| Emilija PANOVSKA | RROMA, North Macedonia |
| Gopalas MICHAILOVSKIS | ERGO Network |
| Irina SPATARU | ternYpe - International Roma Youth Network |
| Magdalini ROUSETTI | Municipality of Ampelokipi-Menemeni, Greece |
| Mihai OANCEA | ternYpe - International Roma Youth Network |
| Olympia DATSI | Action Aid Hellas, Greece |
| Pia ŠLOGAR | Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) |
| Petro RUSANIENKO | European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC) |
| Stelina DUNGAJ | Roma Active Albania |
| Tamas BENCE KOVÁCS | National Youth Council of Hungary |
| Tetiana STOROZHKO | TENET Centre for Social Transformations, Ukraine |
| Simona TOROTCOI | Rapporteur |
| Riccardo VENTURINI | European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) |
| Petr Pavel BANDA | Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) |
| Berill BARANYAI | ADI-ROM, Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues |
| Nicolae RADITA | Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (online) |
| Marcos ANDRADE | Deputy Executive Director of the European Youth Centre Budapest |
| Rui GOMES | Head of the Education and Training Division, Youth Department |
| Mila LUKIĆ | Educational Advisor, Education and Training Division |
| Oana TABA | Roma and Travellers Team |
| Marina VASIĆ | Roma and Travellers Team |

Agenda

Wednesday 24 January

- 09:30 Welcome and opening
 - Introduction to programme and objectives of the meeting
 - Getting to know each other
- 10:00 Presentation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma youth participation, by Rui GOMES, Youth Department, Council of Europe
- 10:45 Priorities and programmes of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CD-ADI) in relation to Roma youth participation, by Nicolae RADITA, Youth Rapporteur in CD-ADI
- 11:30 Updates on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan on Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) and the Draft Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers to the Member States on the topic of equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls
- 14:30 Sharing of relevant initiatives and projects by the participants
 - Discussion and reflection
- 16:30 Roadmap to implementation of the CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma youth participation - identifying current needs and priorities for Roma youth participation at national and European level

Thursday 25 January

- 09:30 Opening of the meeting and review of the previous day
- 10:00 Roadmap to implementation of the CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma youth participation – possible contributions and roles of different stakeholders
- 12:00 Mapping opportunities, challenges and support measures for the implementation of the roadmap
- 14:30 Creating synergies – sharing and exchange about possible next steps: policy action, joint projects and upcoming activities in 2024
- 16:30 Conclusions and evaluation