



THE RIGHT TO BE YOUNG

Roma Youth Conference Report



26-30 September 2011
European Youth Centre Strasbourg



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**Voicing the Aspirations and Projects of Roma Youth
in the Council of Europe**

**26-30 September 2011
European Youth Centre Strasbourg**

Conference rapporteur: ivan ivanov

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Preface

About a Roma.Youth.Action. Plan

Four words which resonate strongly in the minds of anyone working with or working for Roma in Europe.

The key word is of course “Youth”. Youth because of the future, because of the rupture between young people and their elders, youth for the rebellious, for justice and youth, for not surrendering. Youth used to be a synonym of dynamism, change, progress and, indeed, hope. Youth is still all this. But it is also, in many European societies that are getting older and shaken by financial and social crises, an increasing source of concern, if not fear. The concerns are greater than the fears: concerns about social inclusion, employability, sustainability of the social state that has been the reference model for many European countries. In the end, young people will probably have to accommodate to contradictory expectations and define their way out of the crisis.

Youth is what this report is about. About young people whose youth is sometimes missing. Whose road to autonomy – learning, self-development, participation – is very narrow and very short because they jump from being children to having the responsibilities of adults, as adults. Re-placing youth on the map of youth policy and Roma policies has been the work of the Council of Europe in its youth sector and was the main aim of the conference reported on here.

The second most important word is Roma. The largest minority in Europe and the true test of our societies’ capacity to overcome racism and discrimination, to overcome the past and to integrate all their citizens. Roma, also as the ghost that is revived by politicians when they are short of ideas and popularity. There are many activities and programmes for Roma – or at least we are told that this is so – but not so many for Roma youth. Roma, also as a very diverse minority – in this sense, also the “true Europeans” in the words of Günter Grass – with as many internal contradictions and tensions as any other community or society. A community of communities that is shaped as much by internal diversity and invisible networks as it is by the perceptions and conditions imposed on them by the various societies that rarely consider them full citizens. Working



with Roma youth is truly rewarding because it is also a way of reclaiming and restating the irreplaceable role of human rights, justice and empowerment. And acknowledging that Roma young people are also young people: they have the right to reinvent things their own way and claim as success what adults see as failures. Such is the reality of youth work everywhere. It should not be different with Roma. Should it?

Action. A sense of urgency, growing frustrations, impatience or fear call for action. But life is about action, and neither the Council of Europe nor Roma youth have been inactive. The Council of Europe has been active for decades in associating Roma communities, and Roma youth organisations in particular, with its work, as testified by the programme of the European Youth Centres and the membership of the Advisory Council on Youth. And Roma youth and their youth organisations have been super-active in organising themselves, running projects in their communities, creating forms of mutual support and defending their rights – the list of Roma organisations and the projects they presented at the conference is truly impressive and should be a source of reflection for all those concerned by the “low levels” of Roma participation and inclusion. Nothing is new, therefore, about the action in this plan. Nothing apart from stating the obvious: we need more action and less talk; we need to make action visible and valued. And, indeed, action is about mobilisation, as was demonstrated during the conference. Action is what the participants wanted: so they organised, themselves, demonstrations about hate crimes in Bulgaria, wrote their own manifesto and statement, and invited their leaders and speakers. That was action.

Plans do not change anything, a participant said. The Roma Youth Action Plan will not be different unless it is put into practice. The conference was a necessary step towards action and concerted policy for the rights of Roma youth to enjoy the same equality of opportunities promised to anyone else. But the hard work needs to be continued and deepened: mainstreaming Roma youth matters in youth policy and in programmes for Roma (especially in national action plans and national strategies), strengthening participation, combating internal and external discrimination, combating discrimination and violence. And, above all, surviving with confidence. It is true that this plan remains to be implemented for the most part; it is an open and long-term plan, but it is certainly worth it in order to make sure that Roma youth are not the forgotten ones.

A report can never describe everything that happened in a conference. The work of Ivan Ivanov during the conference went far beyond taking notes and writing this report: he was a resource person, an advocate, a role model, an expert, a friend and a mentor for many of the participants. His report and conclusions are a true reflection of the richness and paradoxes of the conference and its participants: satisfaction and frustration, joy and sadness, courage and indignation. Emotions cannot easily be written down, just like it is not possible



to describe the feelings evoked by the beauty and depth of Kansuela's singing. That song, in itself, represents everything that the conference was about, for and with.

Thank you!

To all the participants, facilitators, rapporteurs, speakers and guests; to Ivan, for his report and multitasking.

To FERYP and ternYpe for their support in the preparatory process and to the Open Society Foundations (Roma and Youth Initiatives) for their support and guidance.

And to Ana Rozanova and Sami Mustafa, trainees at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg, for their tireless support and professional care for the documentation and filming of the conference.

Rui Gomes, Youth Department of the Council of Europe





introduction to the report

The experience of bringing together young people to generate ideas, talk about young people's problems and propose ways forward during the four days of the Roma Youth Conference is difficult to express in words, and no single vision or report will ever succeed in reflecting all its angles and facets. This report seeks to capture through the written word something that goes way beyond that: while the outcomes of the conference will become clearer to the reader, the process is often harder to grasp.

The conference gathered 60 young Roma youth leaders from different European countries for four days, to set priorities and guidelines for a Roma Youth Action Plan.


The conference has represented a crossroads for the Council of Europe, where one needs to stop, question the situation today and listen to what young people have to say. This consultation has hence been as rich in visions and expectations as it has been productive in terms of outcomes. The process itself has demanded a lot of attention, and has definitely been as important as the outcome itself. It is always so with youth participation.

The report is organised around different chapters, covering:

- the context of the conference, with a stress on the political European framework;
- the profile of the conference, from the specific perspective of its general rapporteur;
- reflections regarding the situation of Roma youth, the main challenges as well as some of the lessons learnt;
- guidelines elaborated with the contribution of participants
- the programme of the conference.

More information about the conference and the work of the Council of Europe with young Roma people is provided, as well as a background framework for the conference. The reflections of participants complement the report.





Background

The adoption of the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma by the Council of Europe in 2010, the equality directives and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies of the European Commission, and the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe constitute a significant step towards guaranteeing respect for the human rights and social inclusion of Roma people in Europe. The challenge facing these institutions today is how to translate these formal guarantees into practice. From the Roma youth perspective the question would be: “Are these instruments sufficient to cover the needs and problems young Roma people face in their everyday life?”

Most efforts to ensure equality for Roma in Europe so far have failed to bring about any significant improvement. The high level of discrimination and exclusion, extreme poverty and segregation remain a great challenge for any impact as a result of these efforts. Another reason for the poor progress is the lack of political will and commitment.

In the last three years, the Council of Europe and the European Commission have provided new opportunities in this regard, and their actions indicate that they are seeking more effective ways of implementing their equal treatment and social inclusion policies and legislation. There is also a growing recognition that national authorities should take into consideration the lessons learnt and that a strong focus should be given to the implementation of actions at local level. At a different level, Roma non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been making efforts to better articulate the needs and problems of specific target groups within the Roma communities – children, youth, women, disabled, elderly as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals – and either advocate for provisions for specific groups in the existing general policies concerning Roma, or advocate for specific policies concerning specific groups. It is already recognised by Roma communities that this is how policies will become more comprehensive.

In this regard young Roma in Europe need a European Roma Youth Action Plan which will be complementary to the general policies on the equal treatment and



integration of Roma adopted so far at European level. Young Roma have always been advocating for a youth plan, which however has rarely been mentioned in policy documents due to the assumption of policy makers that general Roma-related policies are sufficient to cover Roma youth problems.

The idea of a Roma Youth Action Plan was the topic of the Roma Youth Conference held in September 2011 in Strasbourg. The idea of adopting such a document comes not only because Roma civil society representatives have generated momentum for it, but also because there is a pressing need to combat persisting levels of discrimination against young Roma, the denial of access to rights, goods and services for Roma, and the substandard conditions they are forced to live in their home countries and as migrants in host countries.

To achieve full and effective equality in this respect, young Roma should provoke a public debate and call upon responsible authorities and institutions to strengthen and implement vigorously anti-discrimination and social inclusion legislation and policies. Moreover, the Roma youth movement, along with the issue of their rights, is now in a position to be the driving force for the whole Council of Europe and European Union human rights and equality agenda.

Institutions should evaluate their Roma youth-related work to date and seek ways to eliminate any paternalistic approaches to “mainstreaming” the Roma youth issue that imply young Roma are passive recipients of policy benefits. Rather, Roma youth actors should be called upon to take responsibility and leadership in a broader European human rights and equality agenda that would benefit not only young Roma but everyone.

Roma disadvantages in Europe have both social and identity aspects. Policies or action plans should avoid reducing the Roma issue, or its root causes, to either a purely socio-economic issue, or a purely ethno-cultural one. Policy should combine related goals and respect for Roma identity. The fulfilment of Roma rights is only possible by understanding these as two sides of the same coin.

Despite these extensive supra-national efforts, improvements at national, regional or local level are not present on a wide scale. Statistical data on the situation of Roma in key sectors remains of limited scope and availability, as well as of poor quality. Without comprehensive and long-term data disaggregated by ethnicity to inform policy development, implementation and monitoring, and without the fair use by public authorities of such data in particular respecting data protection systems, it is virtually impossible to assess the effectiveness of measures taken or progress achieved. In this situation, securing durable advances in the human rights situation of Roma and Travellers becomes all the more difficult.

(Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012)



The general purpose stated above – full and effective equality for young Roma – can be spelled out as including:

- effective protection of the fundamental civil rights of young Roma including the right to non-discrimination;
- equal access to quality education;
- equal access to employment and self-employment opportunities;
- equal access to facilities, goods and services, particularly health care and housing;
- full participation, on an equal basis with others, in economic, social, political and cultural life.

Policy priorities for the Roma Youth Action Plan should be key issues, selected in a way to ensure leverage on a whole range of related issues. Each of these priority themes should be approached in a comprehensive way, as regards the stakeholders, key actors, beneficiaries and expected impact. The involvement of multiple actors is crucial, ensuring that all those persons and institutions affecting Roma youth socialisation are targeted in a comprehensive policy reform.



Participants in working groups during the Conference

Actions related to fighting anti-Roma stereotypes should focus on treating Roma as equals in terms of their dignity and rights, rather than on counteracting the negative perceptions with folkloric approaches which urge the public to appreciate aspects of Romani cultures.

One may wonder why this report has the title “The right to be young”. In the given climate throughout Europe, due to internal and external challenges faced by the Roma communities, young Roma find themselves in a position where the period of their youth is less and less visible. Some jump from childhood



directly to being expected to behave as responsible adults. Some do not have access to the several modes of being young experienced by other people their age. On the other hand, the right to be young also refers here to the question of empowerment of young Roma, so that they are recognised as equal partners in discussions concerning them. “Nothing for them without them” was one of the slogans heard several times during the conference. The right to be young is thus the entitlement to enjoy a period in one’s life with the full potential and richness of youth, combined with responsibility and having a say regarding one’s present. It is the possibility of growing up free from discrimination and being empowered in making use of the full potential of being young.

The year 2011 was quite dynamic in terms of Roma policy development. The European Commission adopted the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies in April and requested all EU member states to present their national strategies by the end of the year. In this way the debate moved to the national level.

The Council of Europe continued its debate on the Strasbourg Declaration and along these lines held a Summit of Mayors on Roma in September 2011. In October 2010, a High Level Meeting on Roma was organised and the outcome, the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma (CM(2010)133 final), has become a guiding document for all the activities the Council of Europe undertakes regarding Roma people. The High Level Meeting agreed to a joint effort and pan-European response to meet the needs of the estimated 12 million Roma living in Europe.

The Strasbourg Declaration includes guiding principles and priorities in the actions to be taken, such as:

- non-discrimination, citizenship, women and children’s rights;
- social inclusion including education, housing and health care;
- empowerment and better access to justice.

Among the key points in the declaration, of particular interest is the call to promote “effective participation of Roma in social, political and civic life, including active participation of representatives of Roma in decision-making mechanisms affecting them”.

As a result of this meeting, the Council of Europe has initiated the process of re-organising resources in a transversal manner within the Council of Europe Secretariat with the task of further developing co-operation with national, regional and local authorities and international organisations, providing practical assistance in the implementation of new policy initiatives, especially at the local level, and supporting access to training, capacity building and educational material.

In the follow-up to the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma held in October 2010, the youth sector of the Council of Europe has consulted with the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues on transversal co-operation.



In addition to the need to implement a youth dimension to the Strasbourg Declaration, the youth sector of the Council of Europe was driven by the need to refresh its approach on working with young Roma in view of the biannual programme of activities for 2012-13. A Roma Youth Action Plan was considered an adapted means to provide a strategic approach to the youth policy of the Council of Europe regarding Roma youth by pooling resources and initiatives and by linking individual activities with medium-term goals and with the initiatives of strategic partners. The involvement of Roma young people in discussing and preparing the priorities and approaches of such a Roma Youth Action Plan was crucial to its relevance and success.

We, Roma youth, we are here to fight discrimination and make sure that the Council of Europe is going to take measures if our countries are not respecting our human rights.

(Participant from the United Kingdom)

The Roma Youth Conference was organised in September 2011 by the youth sector of the Council of Europe, together with the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues. It was prepared in co-operation with European Roma youth networks (FERYP, Forum of European Roma Young People and ternYpe, the International Roma Youth Network) with the participation of the Advisory Council on Youth and the European Steering Committee on Youth, the two bodies of co-management in the Council of Europe youth sector. The European Youth Forum, representing youth organisations, was associated to the preparatory group, as well as the Roma and Youth Initiatives of the Open Society Foundations and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR).





Lessons learned

There have been many projects and programmes aiming at equal rights and the improvement of the human rights and socio-economic situation of Roma but there are a number of fundamental factors which have limited progress.

It was identified that many of these programmes have not been strategically focused but were implemented on a pilot-project based approach. What was lacking was an objective linking these projects with government policy and budgets to ensure sustainability.

Another reason identified for the failure of these programmes is the lack of evaluation. Often projects were begun, completed and then repeated without any assessment of what lessons were learnt and how implementation could be improved further.

Poor co-ordination is another factor behind unsuccessful initiatives. Often projects with the same goals and objectives, in the same field, and with the same geographical scope have been carried out in isolation from each other, with a lack of information on achievements and mistakes. They have repeated the same mistakes, something that could have been avoided if they had been done in co-ordination with each other and if there had been a successful exchange of information on their implementation.

The problem that exists in Macedonia is indirect discrimination. There is also direct discrimination, but the indirect form is really strong.

(Participant from "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia")

They have to go to school; they don't know why they have to go to school, their families don't understand, so there is no dialogue between schools and families.

(Participant from Spain)

Low levels of Roma involvement have also led to ineffectiveness of programmes and policies. Initiatives and policies where Roma have not taken part in design, implementation and evaluation have had no or low impact.



Strategies aimed at the inclusion of Roma and Travellers should be implemented with the participation of the communities themselves in the development, implementation and evaluation of these policies. There will not be any improvement in these areas without the participation of Roma and Travellers in decision-making processes.

(Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012)

A lack of integrated approaches has reduced the impact of the outcomes. The issues Roma face are multi-sectoral and linked to each other. In many instances policies have focused on one sector without taking into consideration the interlinkage of issues. A focus on solutions to one sector without seeking change in closely linked sectors has made it difficult to achieve any progress in the Roma situation today.

The absence of an objective towards equality in practice is another factor. Most initiatives in this regard, even the legislation on equality, promote formal equality. Fighting against prejudices and discrimination should be aiming at equal treatment but also at equal opportunities for Roma.

In general, there has been a lack of positive measures. Measures to compensate for past discrimination and eliminate current and future discrimination will ensure any Roma-related policy is more successful. Even the most effective and well-designed programmes for integration will not work when Roma continue to be subjected to discrimination by society and by institutions.

Lack of political will is another key issue. European-level policies will not make any difference if they are not followed by concrete actions that will translate policy commitments into practice. The fear of negative political consequences often means decision makers hesitate to commit to the social inclusion of Roma.

Finally, the lack of funding is a great obstacle for the implementation of any policy. In addition to the political and legislative decisions to be made, new structures need to be put in place, and established ways of working need to be reformed. Roma programmes should be linked to government budgets as well as to EU structural funds for the realisation of which clear benchmarks and indicators are necessary.

In this regard, the Roma Youth Action Plan should be based on results, taking into consideration all these aspects and elements to ensure its multi-dimensionality and effective implementation.

It should also, in addition to the problems listed above, take a serious look at the challenges within Roma communities themselves and how to address them. Not because Roma communities are to blame, but because change also has to be promoted from within – this is what empowerment is about.





Conference outcomes and conclusions

Neither Martin Luther King nor Malcolm X had a youth action plan. The change will not happen all of a sudden.

(Participant from Germany)

In addition to the learning outcomes and networking among the participants and institutional representatives, the conference resulted in:

- guidelines and input for the Roma Youth Action Plan;
- a better understanding of the situation of Roma youth in Europe;
- more awareness on the Strasbourg Declaration and how it can support the work with Roma youth;
- concrete recommendations on how to improve the situation of Roma youth and what international NGOs can do in this regard;
- a sense of trust and communication for a more co-ordinated approach with NGOs on Roma youth issues.

The four-day conference in Strasbourg provided a good platform and space for discussion among Roma youth. Coming from different parts of Europe, bringing perspectives on the different, specific problems young Roma face in their countries, they came together to discuss the needs, the structure and the potential of a Roma Youth Action Plan.

Getting to know the needs of Roma youth from the participants who are here and also trying to find ways together – we think that we can put together a really concrete and hopefully realistic action plan which will be implemented.

(Participant from Poland)

Participants worked in thematic groups, according to themes they themselves identified, and this was a good opportunity to discuss specific issues. Plenary debates were also very useful and productive. The participants discussed the problems young Roma face today and came up with proposals of how to overcome them.



At the beginning of the conference, we noticed that participants were rather more enthusiastic in describing issues than formulating proposals to solve them. At a later stage of the discussion many of them presented what should be achieved, but they were not always clear regarding how things should be done. With the help of the working group facilitators, participants were able to come to conclusions and formulate recommendations. The long list of suggestions indicates that many of the participants have the potential to be true actors of change.

Each working group identified specific challenges, the expected impact of their recommendations and ways to achieve the results hoped for. From the participants' input, the preparatory group extracted guidelines that serve as the basis for the Roma Youth Action Plan. The guidelines are included in Appendix 1 to this report.

Participants also included in their outcomes from the working groups what they expect the Council of Europe to do. They hope the institution will:

- offer (political) support for Roma self-organisation at European level;
- invite Roma youth to be represented in the Council of Europe's actions and structures;
- develop long-term training programmes for Roma youth leaders/mediators and project leaders;
- try to obtain financial support from international sources for Roma youth activities;
- ensure financial support from the European Youth Foundation for Roma youth projects;
- promote the establishment of a European Roma youth fund to be used for Roma youth issues and activities at local and international level;
- systematically consider a youth dimension in all Roma issues (by involving Roma youth organisations);
- support special projects on Roma access to higher education in western Europe;
- involve Roma youth in the Roma mediators' programme evaluation;
- consider the Roma youth situation in youth policy reviews/plans;
- promote positive action for Roma higher education in all member states, for example quotas for Roma in universities in all Council of Europe member states;
- sustain voluntary Roma youth mobility schemes, much like the Erasmus Programme;
- facilitate Roma youth and non-Roma youth interaction through exchange programmes;



- suggest to governments the adoption of integration policies (rather than assimilation) that promote Roma culture, with special training for implementation at national and local level;
- support the youth movement by including administrative support to organisations;
- ensure that the follow-up to the Strasbourg Declaration includes specific youth actions;
- promote support for Roma entrepreneurship and access to employment to counter discrimination.

Comparing the discussions in the present-day Roma youth movement and that of 15 years ago, the rapporteur could not help but notice that today, young Roma have a wider perspective on their problems and the solutions to them.

In the past the main focus of the debate was human rights in general. The disrespect and violation of fundamental rights of the Roma was a matter of concern at that time. The focus was not so much on what was going on in particular policy fields, rather more on human rights violations as a result of police brutality, mob attacks by members of the non-Roma majority and Nazi-oriented extreme nationalistic groups. Of course, times have changed in Europe, and the Roma rights issue has been well articulated and put on the political agenda of intergovernmental institutions such as the Council of Europe, the European Union and the OSCE. This has created a reasonable recognition of Roma issues and attracted the attention of different stakeholders and experts. Unfortunately, this does not apply so much to national governments.



Participants organising a protest in front of the European Parliament asking for a reaction to hate crimes against Roma people



Many young Roma have participated in these developments and gained knowledge and experience in formulating policy recommendations. In the past, most Roma organisations, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe, were human rights NGOs. Nowadays, most act as advocacy NGOs and deal with social aspects of the issues related to education, employment, health, housing and culture. Today, they recognise the need for monitoring and evaluation, and indicators and benchmarks for the success of a policy. They have realised that participation at all stages is crucial. There are elements present today that young Roma in the past were unable to propose or understand as a necessary part of policy structure.

During the conference, although different working groups tried to address different issues, there was a repetition of the challenges listed and proposals made to overcome these challenges. This shows that discrimination and denial of access to services, barriers to quality education, lack of information, and lack of participation are identified as issues by most of the working groups.

It was also interesting to witness the optimism and belief of the young Roma participants that a Roma Youth Action Plan co-ordinated by the Council of Europe can address the issues they have listed. It was clear that they would contribute and participate in the implementation of the Action Plan.

The fact that participants from several working groups recommended working with non-Roma youth organisations, and saw the need to benefit from mainstream youth policies, is a good indicator of the political maturity of the participants. They understand the risk of ethnicising and segregating youth Roma issues in specific and isolated policies or plans, something which would work against social cohesion. Of course, during the discussion there was a clear line between mainstreaming and targeting and the need to combine both approaches in the future Roma Youth Action Plan. It was clear to all participants that acting together with members of the general youth movement will ensure much more power to the messages young Roma will address to the authorities and the initiatives they will take to stand for their rights and promote their identity and culture.

When we speak about diversity within diversity, we speak for women, for LGBT, we speak too for Roma migrants.

(Participant from Spain)

Early marriages and capacity building are two issues young Roma participants have listed as an issue. The fact that young Roma have identified early marriages as an issue indicates that they have realised such practices in some Roma communities prevent young people, especially young girls, from exercising their basic rights and having access to education and thus to more opportunities. Participants in the conference openly criticised these practices, which is something that many Roma could not do until recently, such as the hold of tradition.



Capacity building was stressed in all working groups as the first and most urgent task for the Roma Youth Action Plan. Participants made logical links between having the necessary knowledge and skills and participation, formulating policy messages, advocacy actions, evaluation, and so on. For all this, Roma youth need capacity.

The issue of Roma migration, which has become more and more of a concern to EU member states, was not sufficiently discussed. A few participants from the western Balkan countries mentioned it, but participants did not go deeper into the issue.

In the recommendations, the Internet was not strongly proposed as an instrument for awareness raising, networking, co-ordination and education. It was mentioned rather as a means for young Roma to inform each other of their activities.

All participants agreed that a Roma Youth Action Plan at European level is necessary. Now the challenge for young Roma in Europe is to find answers and solutions to the following questions:

- how will the Roma Youth Action Plan be considered by national governments?
- what can be done to link the Roma Youth Action Plan with already adopted action plans by national authorities, such as the recently adopted EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, the Roma Decade Action Plans, and the OSCE/ODIHR Roma Action Plan?
- how will the Roma Youth Action Plan be funded at national level?
- how will the distribution of responsibilities and co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation be organised?
- if the Council of Europe member states do not follow the Roma Youth Action Plan, what will be the consequences, if any, for these states?

They are kids and then suddenly they are adults. And they don't really have the time in between. And what's the difficulty? In the time in between, you develop your capacity, you develop your personality and personality is something crucial.

(Participant from Germany)



Conference aim and objectives

The Roma Youth Conference brought together Roma youth organisations, representatives of the Council of Europe and young Roma to set the priorities for an action plan for Roma youth.

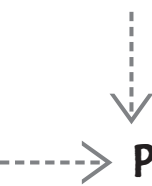


The main objectives of the conference were to:

- explore the situation of Roma young people in Europe, particularly in relation to discrimination and access to human rights;
- discuss the meaning and relevance of the Strasbourg Declaration for young Roma today and ways to contribute to its implementation;
- identify possible responses to the situation of Roma young people today, particularly at European level;
- identify key areas of action and priorities for activities involving Roma youth and youth organisations in the Council of Europe's youth sector and beyond;

- involve civil society actors, particularly Roma youth organisations, in the process of consultation for the Roma Youth Action Plan of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe;
- bring together and facilitate dialogue between different stakeholders on Roma youth issues;
- enhance the participation of Roma youth NGOs in the activities of the Council of Europe.





Participants

In total, 143 applications were received for participation in the conference, 55% male and 45% female; this balance was also preserved during the conference. The majority of participants were between 20 and 30 years of age. The geographical background of the applicants covered most European countries, and was taken into account during the selection process.

The selection process involved all the members of the preparatory team, which means that the participants were selected jointly by the Council of Europe's youth sector, the Support Team to the Special Representative to the Secretary General for Roma Issues, FERYP and ternYpe.

The selected participants were 45 young Roma actively involved in local and/or international work with the Roma communities. The participants were given the opportunity to work in English or Romani, and around five participants were actively using Romani as their main working language. Though not all the participants were proficient in the language, more than half were able to understand the Romani speakers.

The Roma youth networks which participated in the preparatory process – FERYP and ternYpe – were represented during the conference. Eight places were allocated for the representatives of each network, and the networks' members were also encouraged to apply for the rest of the available places. Pakiv was also represented by two participants.

Though the majority of the participants came from organisations working with Roma youth, several young people came from media organisations (Slovo 21 in the Czech Republic), international organisations (Open Society Foundations, European Roma Grassroots Organisation Network, European Roma Information Office), cultural organisations (Gipsy Eye in Romania) and others. The Traveller community was also represented by a participant from the Irish Traveller Movement.



↓

→ **Expectations**

Participants were invited to share their expectations via the online application forms and in plenary on the first day of the conference. A number of participants expressed their wish to learn more about the situation of Roma in different parts of Europe and share their knowledge of the communities they are working with, “to obtain a new working knowledge and share my gained experience and knowledge”, as one participant put it.

A number of young people also noted that they would like to improve their knowledge on youth policies and the activities of the Council of Europe and other international organisations. Several people expressed their wish to learn in detail about the Strasbourg Declaration and “define how Roma youth could contribute to its implementation.”



Participants at the opening of the conference

Participants were also looking forward to contributing to the preparation of the ambitious yet realistic Action Plan, which would improve the co-operation



between youth NGOs, networks and international organisations. They spoke about the importance of networking, “establishing new partnerships with other Roma NGOs” and learning more about existing Roma youth networks and meeting in person “the people behind the networks”.

The young people present at the conference also emphasised the importance of having a space where they can express their concerns and ideas and be heard.





Structure of the conference

The conference was designed as a multi-stakeholder and non-formal intercultural learning situation, where participants could exchange their experiences and build upon previous results for a common identification of the main priorities to be taken to a policy level.

The conference included input sessions from experts and Council of Europe representatives. After each presentation participants were given the possibility to ask questions. Participants were invited to plenary discussion sessions to share their questions, concerns and recommendations. As a result of these discussions the priority fields to be discussed in working groups were identified. Plenary presentations of the working groups and discussions followed each working group session. Seven groups were set up on the identified priority topics by participants. These included:

- youth policies and activities;
- empowerment and participation;
- building up a Roma youth movement;
- non-formal and formal education;
- human rights and human rights education;
- fighting discrimination and racism;
- diversity within Roma communities (women, disabled, LGBT, young offenders, etc.)

Each working group had to discuss its vision for the overall goal of the Roma Youth Action Plan and find answers to questions such as:

- what should they achieve with the Roma Action Plan?
- what should be different for Roma youth in 5 to 10 years?
- what should the Action Plan change?
- what should the Action Plan seek to improve with regards to the specific themes of the working groups?



On the first day, participants were asked to identify in their working groups the “challenges and barriers” that placed Roma youth in a disadvantaged position and the needs that the Roma Youth Action Plan could address. The challenges were divided into two groups, internal and external.

On the second day, participants were asked to come up with the objectives and expected impact of the Roma Youth Action Plan, and on the third day they had to come up with concrete proposals to achieve these objectives through the Action Plan.

Expert speakers and institutional representatives also addressed participants during the conference, providing more input for the participants’ work on the guidelines for the Action Plan.



Expert and institutional input to the conference

Ralf-René Weingärtner (Director of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe at the time of the conference) welcomed all participants and began his speech with some facts about Council of Europe activities related to Roma youth. He recalled the initiation of Roma-related events by the Council of Europe 16 years previously, comparing it to the situation today:

About 16 years ago for the first time a training for Roma young leaders was organised under the first youth campaign against racism and intolerance. The first training was in 1995 with Roma involved in Roma rights organisations. At that time, the discussion was mainly on racism, Roma houses burned and violent attacks. Today we see that little has changed, even worsened. The Roma situation is unacceptable and there is no place in Europe for such a situation. ... As Council of Europe we could do more for Roma. Youth participation is more than a dialogue. We need examples of successful practices. The number of Roma organisations represented at this conference is evidence the youth movement is developing. You are not alone... The results of the conference are important for the Council of Europe.

Jeroen Schokkenbroek (Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues, Council of Europe) stressed that, in order to have real change, social inclusion policies should go together with human rights and anti-discrimination policies. He outlined the major events and programmes that the Council of Europe has organised in the last two years as well as the main instruments available to the Council of Europe to challenge social and human rights problems:

A year ago the Council of Europe had tensed discussions on the French expulsion of Roma from Romania and Bulgaria from France. The Council of Europe used the momentum and organised a European-level conference and adopted the Strasbourg Declaration. The whole issue is a matter of social inclusion and fighting poverty but also to have strong human rights initiatives, because the best social inclusion policies would not work without human rights policies. The Social Charter, the European Convention on Human Rights are strong instruments which address these issues. With last year's Strasbourg Declaration the Secretary General decided to have more action-oriented approaches. The first goal is mobilisation. There was a meeting recently with mayors around Europe where more effective approaches to



implement Roma-related policies were discussed. The mayors' mobilisation effort and other European alliances are needed. There is also a need to increase capacity and learn from mistakes. Good examples have to be collected for Roma integration. Why this conference? Mobilisation of local authorities and Roma as well is very important. There is a momentum to be maintained and Roma organisations have an important role to play, Roma youth as well. The world is changing with globalisation but being Roma is a challenge. Integration could be achieved while maintaining Roma identity. How are Roma policies implemented? If not effective, how do you address this issue? The challenge remains. Many Roma are not educated. There should be responsibility for bringing change. Stick to your identity, protect your language. You are the best ambassadors for multiculturalism. Children should go to school and parents should be encouraged to send their children to school. The mediators' programme will help in this regard. The Council of Europe is trying to bring change with these programmes. To join forces for justice the Council of Europe has organised a training programme for human rights lawyers to address the Social Charter and the European Convention on Human Rights to the Strasbourg Court.

Sixto Molina (Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues) underlined the need for Roma to be involved in the processes by occupying positions in the administration. He explained that there is a large spectrum of issues where Roma should take on responsibilities, starting with education, employment housing and the problems asylum seekers face:

We need to find what can be done to solve the problem. For the implementation of the Strasbourg Declaration you have an important role as leaders. You have to make sure that you have responsibilities in this process. Recently in Kosovo¹ I was surprised: young people like you complained that they don't have access to the power. The authorities responded that there are three job positions available that have not been taken by Roma. Often Roma are not interested in taking public jobs. Roma should be represented at all levels and be part of the processes.

Anita Danka (Officer on Roma and Sinti Issues, OSCE/ODIHR) brought to the attention of the participants the Roma Action Plan of OSCE/ODIHR adopted several years ago and described in brief what her institution could do to support Roma youth in Europe:

I commend the Council of Europe for the participatory approach regarding the process of drafting the Roma Youth Action Plan and would encourage keeping this practice up as it should be a guiding principle of Roma policy development work for all international, intergovernmental organisations ... There are already many relevant policy documents existing even if not with a youth focus in particular – such as the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area adopted in 2003 – and the Roma Youth Action Plan should take note of these documents and it is crucial that its provisions do not derogate from the already existing commitments. What can ODIHR do? Continue to support Roma youth projects and initiatives, creation of Roma youth networks; support the active

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participation of Roma youth at the OSCE human dimension events: annual human dimension implementation meeting in Warsaw, relevant supplementary human dimension meetings in order – among others – to give opportunities to establish relations between Roma youth organisations and OSCE participating states; support the active participation of Roma youth at relevant events of other international/ intergovernmental organisations, that is EU Roma Summits; include representatives of Roma youth organisations in ODIHR/CPRSI's Roma consultation meetings and therefore give them opportunities to express their needs and influence the work priorities of the Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues; remain open to being an advocacy forum of Roma youth to address emerging trends and challenges relevant for their sustainable integration; during the periodic assessment of the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan and other relevant commitments by the participating states ODIHR/CPRSI can pay special attention to how states respond to the needs and concerns of Roma youth.

Nicolae Radita represented the work and mandate of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) of the Council of Europe, a group of governmental experts dealing with Roma issues:

Governmental experts in CAHROM meet to exchange positive practices and experience. Members develop recommendations to the Committee of Ministers. They regularly review the Roma situation, develop methods to approach Roma problems. How we can benefit from the work of CAHROM? We need to be well informed, to know the procedures and institutions. We can present the Roma Youth Action Plan at the next CAHROM meeting and see how we can contribute to the process.

Violeta Naydenova from the Open Society Foundations described the impact of the organisation on Roma youth life. She listed actions undertaken to contribute to the personal development of young Roma:

The European Commission Internship for Young Roma has existed since 2005 and has supported more than 50 young Roma graduates so far from Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Romania and Serbia ... the Roma Youth Leadership Programme was launched in 2009 and supported 18 young Roma graduates and students from Serbia ... the Intensive English Language Training for Young Roma University Graduates aiming to improve the personal development of prominent young Roma from Central and Eastern Europe through developing their English language skills ... the Debate Training for Roma youth leaders aiming to assist young Roma from Bulgaria in developing debating skills, along with strengthening their advocacy and negotiation skills ... the Roma Policy Research Fellowship intended to attract recent graduates of BA, MA and PhD programmes in economics, international relations and European integration studies, legal studies, political science, public policy and administration, social work and sociology and give them the opportunity to gain first-hand research experience in the policy areas listed above. The 1st Roma Pride Summer Camp is a new idea which will target OSI's Roma youth beneficiaries from some of the abovementioned programmes (including the Roma Access Programme) through empowerment, building a sense of pride and commitment. OSI continues to address Roma youth issues and needs through its Roma youth strategy, aiming to invest, empower, and build the commitment of Roma youth towards their communities and at the same time instil Roma pride.





Ramiza Sakip (representing the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe) provided participants with some insights on the Council of Europe's youth structures and documents, and stressed the importance of young Roma and national governments being familiar with these documents:

The Advisory Council on Youth is a statutory body providing input to policies concerning youth issues. The Advisory Council supports the questions raised by youth in the Council of Europe. ... We the young people we are the voice of the Roma. We have the capacity to help our people. Local organisations can help the community and we need and should prepare an action plan for young Roma in Europe.

Anca Sandescu (European Roma Rights Centre) presented the importance of the rights-based approach in developing policies:

What is the difference between rights and needs? Human rights are about entitlements, people are born with rights, which is always legitimate. Needs are inspirations, about satisfaction. We need to rely on the rights based on the needs. Another principle out of the rights-based approach is empowerment. Each of us should be actively included in the process of empowerment.

Rui Gomes (Head of Education and Training Unit, Council of Europe), who has followed the Roma youth movement since its beginning and trained the first Roma youth leaders and activists, described the role of Council of Europe in supporting the youth movement in general and the Roma youth movement in particular:

What has the Council of Europe done with young people? What is special for today? What is the Council of Europe? This is a body with 47 member states. The Council of Europe has several instruments, like the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and in Budapest to train and facilitate the work of the young people and organisations in Europe. Some Roma organisations have benefited from this.

What have we undertaken with Roma? Starting in 1995 with the youth campaign "All Different, All Equal", the Council of Europe started to work with groups targeted by



racism. Within this campaign we sought to provide more visibility for young Roma and help them for self-mobilisation. One of the first activities was the training for young Roma leaders. The intention was to work only with leaders but also with those who had the potential to be youth leaders. For no one is born a youth leader, you become a youth leader through your peers and young people, through the actions and the support you receive from other young people. No one is born a youth leader. Everyone can become a youth leader, and help others to do the same.

The Council of Europe has developed its approach towards Roma youth in working closely with European Roma youth organisations and networks, including FERYP, Pakiv and others. The European Youth Foundation has a specific focus on Roma youth in its pilot projects. It also provides support for European-level Roma youth organisations.

The Strasbourg Declaration shows what should be done. We follow the philosophy not only for but with Roma when it comes to design and implementation of policies and programmes. Possibly from 2012 to 2013 the Roma Youth Action Plan will be functioning. It should be supported with funds. But the main question is what we want to change? Roma youth organisations should encourage more active participation.

Aline Usanase (ECRI, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Council of Europe) presented the mandate and work of ECRI. She talked about the discrimination and racism Roma children and young people face and the general recommendations ECRI has adopted concerning these issues:

ECRI was established in 1993. It is a monitoring body on racism and intolerance which has a country-to-country approach. ECRI develops general recommendations to member states and every five years comes with a monitoring report. Normally it monitors 10 countries per year. In 1998 ECRI adopted recommendations about racism against Roma people. Recently ECRI adopted general recommendations against anti-Gypsyism. Roma children face discrimination and prejudices in schools, very often they are attending segregated schooling. There are many cases where children are insulted by the school staff. School authorities need cultural sensitivity training. School regulations should provide sanctions for non-Roma children and school staff who offend Roma children. The problems in education are very serious. Disproportionate placement in schools, low quality of education, discrimination and harassment and poverty are often responsible for a high number of dropouts. Lack of ID documents also could be a reason. ECRI is aware of the issues Roma youth face in their everyday life and when we monitor the situation in the countries and develop reports we take this into consideration.

Manfred Zentner (youth researcher) made a comparative analysis of the work of the European Commission and the Council of Europe in their social inclusion and human rights work:

There are different approaches to youth. Generally, youth policies should not address only youth issues but all sectors and youth. In different countries this is narrowed down to only youth issues. European youth policy seems a success story. The European Union and the Council of Europe have successful history in the development of youth policy, but the two institutions have different histories. The Council of Europe started with youth policies about 20 years earlier than the EU. Youth organisations were involved in the policy development. The European Youth



Foundation has been funding their youth activities in order for them to have their say in policy making. The EU policy tried to integrate young people since the beginning. They are involved in the policy making, but here is the question...were they involved or were their opinions involved? It is different. The Council of Europe had a human rights approach and the EU had economic criteria. Evidence-based policy was the idea to involve youth in research and come up with evidence to base policy on. The EU brought youth policy to another level. It brought education and employment into the policy of flexicurity and flexibility and how to get youth into the labour market. This approach has an economic aspect. There was criticism that it is not as the traditional youth policies with a human rights approach, but that it is centred on the economy. The policy makers have the policy, civil society has the evidence. The influence could be from NGOs, research and other lobby groups. Where do Roma find themselves in the system to better integrate? Are there youth policies, youth budgets, youth information projects ... The new development, Agenda 2020 of the Council of Europe, has three priorities:

- human rights and democracy;
- the right to live in a society with equal opportunities;
- social inclusion.

The methods used by the Council of Europe are intergovernmental co-operation, promoting youth work, intercultural learning. The EU approach is in empowerment, for youth focus in education, employment, integration in the labour market, fostering entrepreneurship, health, participation. Youth policies should be not for but with young people ... Youth policy has been always a national responsibility, to be implemented at national level. Here is the question of how youth and Roma could be involved in policy making. If Roma want to have targeted policy, they need data.

Alexis Ridde, vice chair of the Joint Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, addressed participants with concrete recommendations on how to influence and lobby the statutory bodies, to build the capacity of young Roma, to work in networks, and co-ordinate effectively. He stated that an evidence-based approach needs to be supported with research. Young people should know where, why and how.

Gabriella Battani-Dragoni (Director General for Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe) stated:

Roma youth will be active in the implementation of the Strasbourg strategy. You have your own representatives in the Advisory Council. Other Roma should be involved in other projects and structures. The youth centres are concerned and the European Youth Foundation is involved in Roma youth issues. We should make sure funds are accessible. You have to work together. Access to human rights is an issue. As the Council of Europe works for human rights and democracy, we have to facilitate access to human rights from the European Court of Human Rights down to the local authorities. You can join other youth initiatives ... If you walk alone you walk fast but short, if you walk with friend you walk slow but you go far.





List of participants

Participant	Organisation
Belgium	
Chloé Ballif	Bureau International Jeunesse
Bulgaria	
Ginka Bogdanova	Pakiv European Network
Maryana Borisova	Association “Youth Network for Development”
Angel Ivanov	FERYP
Emil Metodiev	Pakiv European Network
Czech Republic	
Martin Grinvalsky	Slovo 21
Renata Berkyova	Open Society Foundations (Prague)
Gabriela Hrabanova	ERGO Network
Michal Miko	Slovo 21
Finland	
Samuel Florin	Fintiko Romano Forum JyväsRoma
Tino Lindgren	(Roma youth of Jyväskylä)
France	
Ionut Stan	Secours Catholique
Slavka Stefanova	L’association “Amença”
Germany	
Hamze Bytyci	Amaro Drom.e.V.
Greece	
Georgia Kostopoulou	NGO Antirropon
Evangelia Zerpini	

Hungary	
Jonathan Mack	ternYpe
Karoly Herfort	Romaversitas Alapitvany
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Ireland	
Owen Ward	Irish Traveller movement
Italy	
Graziano Halilovic	Romà Onlus
Kosovo²	
Mimoza Gavrani	Kosovo Foundation for Open Society – KFOS
Lithuania	
Kansuela Maciuleviciute	Roma Community Centre
Norway	
Djulja Spatalaj	Selfhelp for Immigrants and Refugees SEIF
Poland	
Agnieszka Caban	Radomskie Stowarzyszenie Romów “Romano Waść” (Pomocna Dłoń) Roma Association in Radom “Romano Waść” (Helping Hand)
Karolina Mirga	ternYpe Harangos
Marek Isztok	The Roma People Association in Poland
Romania	
Craciun Ioan Lacatus	Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities
Larisa Nicoleta Mark	Association Parudimos
Mariana Nicoletta Bengoi	Gipsy Eye
Serbia	
Igor Kostic	Serbian Roma Youth Association
Slovakia	
Milos Ondrasik	Osvetove Centrum Romov (Roma Education Centre)
Beata Olahova Bislim	FERYP

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Spain	
Ramon Flores	FERYP
Demetrio Gómez Ávila	FERYP
Balint Abel Beremenyi	Ternikalo 21 Association
Pedro Casermeiro	Romane Siklovne (Association of young Roma students)

Sweden	
Emilia Domurat	Romano Pasos Research Centre

“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	
Elez Bislim	Association of Citizens Sumnal
Sebijan Fejzula	Roma Association for Integration
Mustafa Jakupov	Regional Roma Educational Youth Association
Dehran Bislim	FERYP
Anife Sabedinovska	Roma Youth Centre

Turkey	
Figen Kelemer	Edirne Roma Association (EDROM)

United Kingdom	
Rostas Terezia	Gypsy council/Euroma

Preparatory Group	
Alexandra Raykova	FERYP
Ramiza Sakip	Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe
Shaqir (Adriatik) Hasantari	Roma Active Albania
Violeta Naydenova	Open Society Foundations Roma Initiatives
Mara Georgescu	Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe
Rui Gomes	Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe

Film crew	
Sami Mustafa	Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe
Gonzalo Escuder	Open Society Foundations
Pau Castejon	Open Society Foundations
Mite Kuzevski	Open Society Foundations

Rapporteur	
Ivan Ivanov	



Guest Speakers and Facilitators	
Manfred Zentner	Youth Policy Researcher jugendkultur.at
Anca Sandescu	European Roma Rights Centre
Anita DankA	OSCE
Gyorgy Lissauer	Open Society Foundations (Budapest) Youth Initiative
Robert Rustem	European Roma and Travellers Forum
Merziha Idrizi	Roma Education Fund
Council of Europe Secretariat	
Aline Usanase	ECRI
Nicolae Radita	CAHROM
Nigel Smith	Directorate of Communication
Ralf Rene Weingärtner	Director of Youth and Sport
Rui Gomes	Head of the Education and Training Unit, Directorate of Youth and Sport
Mara Georgescu	Educational Advisor, Directorate of Youth and Sport
Nina Kapoor	Directorate of Youth and Sport
Ana Rozanova	Directorate of Youth and Sport
Jeroen Schokkenbroek	Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues
Sixto Molina	Head of the Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Roma Issues
Eleni Tsetsekou	Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues
Michael Guet	Secretary, CAHROM





Appendix 1. Guidelines for the Roma Youth Action Plan

These guidelines are, in essence, the result of working groups and plenary discussions during the conference and reflect the aspirations of the Roma youth representatives and young people attending the conference. Although initially conceived of as a two-year framework, these guidelines reflect long and medium-term aims and objectives and, as such, should be regularly reviewed and updated.

The Roma Youth Action Plan referred to here should reflect the practical commitments of the Council of Europe and of other partners interested in contributing to the implementation of the plan. The plan should thus be reviewed and updated annually and potentially expanded beyond the first biannual budget and programme of the Council of Europe (2012-13).

These guidelines were developed as a result of the needs and challenges experienced by young Roma in Europe today and are an expression of their legitimate aspirations as citizens and holders of universal human rights. They should be understood within the framework of human rights instruments, including the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The guidelines, and the resulting plan of action, are also understood as contributing to the application, to Roma young people, of the principles and objectives of, *inter alia*:

- the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma;
- the Final Declaration of the Council of Europe Summit of Mayors on Roma;
- Agenda 2020 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe;
- Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area;
- the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion of the European Commission;



- the EU directives on non-discrimination (Racial Equality Directive 2000/43/EC and the Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC);
- the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

1. Concerns and issues

Growing up in Europe today is, for many young people, a difficult process. Adding to the natural challenges of gaining personal autonomy which are common to many young people, most societies in Europe experience financial and economic crises which have a particular effect on young people and their opportunities for developing “knowledge, skills and competencies to play a full part in all aspects of society”.³ Roma youth face additional hurdles, starting with being denied “the right to be young”. Caught in between the expectations of their families and communities and stigmatisation from mainstream society, Roma youth have a hard time asserting their rights, their identity and belonging, and their lives.

The situation can be worse for Roma girls and young women and for invisible groups among Roma youth like, as discussed in the conference, young people with disabilities, LGBT individuals, migrants and undocumented young people.

In a context where many European societies are becoming more closed rather than open, the room for diversity and difference is narrowing and “the Other” is increasingly considered a threat rather than a fellow citizen and human being. This is the context in which Romaphobia and anti-Gypsyism breed, and where children and young people learn prejudice and ethnocentrism.

This is intolerable for Roma youth and the societies of which they are citizens. Democracy cannot be built on discrimination and exclusion. Roma youth also have a contribution to make towards the development of their societies. They ought to be part of the solution, not the problem.

2. Specific issues the Action Plan should respond to

External challenges

Roma youth face a number of external challenges, including:

- limited access to political participation and absence from relevant decision-making bodies and processes;
- limited or no participation in mainstream youth events and initiatives;
- a lack of political will for mainstream youth programmes that are more inclusive of Roma youth;
- an absence of Roma youth issues from related mainstream legislation and policies at national and international level;

3. Agenda 2020 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe.



- a lack of solid (or any) funding for youth activities – where they exist they often exclude Roma youth organisations due to their weakness and specificities;
- an absence of effective positive measures towards equality of opportunities;
- a lack of disaggregated data and statistics, rendering Roma youth doubly invisible;
- a preponderance of pilot project-based activities for Roma youth which lack strategic focus to link to sustainable policies;
- high levels of discrimination, which have a deep impact on self-esteem and self-confidence and lead to further stigmatisation and exclusion of Roma youth and their families;
- a lack of access to essential goods and services, as well as the same opportunities as other young people;
- the reality of growing up in segregated neighbourhoods and schools, which prevents Roma youth from being part of mainstream society;
- multiple forms of discrimination (including intra-community discrimination) of particularly vulnerable groups such as women, LGBT youth, HIV-positive individuals, migrants and undocumented young people;
- a generally negative portrayal of Roma in mainstream media, which reinforces prejudices, stereotypes and racialised attitudes;
- a lack of information in the media, in school textbooks or other sources of educational information concerning Roma culture and the lives of young Roma;
- significant barriers to accessing quality education, often even to education at all;
- the widespread practice of placing disproportionate numbers of Roma children and young people in special schools for mentally disabled people;
- low levels of education and training among Roma youth, leading to their being uncompetitive in the labour market;
- low levels of access to high school, and even lower levels to university-level education;
- the high levels of poverty which Roma children and young people experience as they grow up;
- a lack of birth certificates, identity documents and citizenship status, meaning that Roma are often invisible to the administration and are denied the possibility of exerting their rights.



Internal challenges

Internal challenges include:

- weak Roma youth organisations and a lack of Roma youth structures;
- poor co-ordination and communication among existing structures (e.g. Roma and non-Roma youth; Roma youth and general Roma movements, organisations and responsible authorities);
- a lack of information and education about human rights and citizenship rights;
- low levels of mobilisation, making Roma youth movements invisible;
- low levels of Roma youth voluntarism and participation in mainstream youth organisations and projects;
- a limited capacity to manage and apply for project funding;
- self-loathing and self-segregation as a result of discrimination and exclusion, leading young Roma to hide their ethnic and cultural identity;
- early and arranged marriages, which pose barriers for young people and young women in particular to continuing education or pursuing a professional carrier;
- disproportionate placement of Roma children and youngsters in care institutions, where many of them lose their ethnic identity;
- domestic violence affecting young girls and women;
- difficult relations between Roma youth and elder Roma leaders;
- tensions between different Roma groups and communities which limit co-operation between youth organisations;
- a lack of youth role models in Roma communities.

3. Purpose and values underlying the Roma Youth Action Plan

The Roma Youth Action Plan aims to:

- support the creation in Europe of an environment for Roma children and youth to grow up free from discrimination, confident about their future, and appreciative of their plural cultural backgrounds and affiliations as young people, as Roma, as citizens of their countries, and as active Europeans;
- change prejudices and stereotypical attitudes against Roma;
- support and develop the participation and autonomy of Roma youth at European and national level;
- defend the human rights of Roma by preventing future violations and by empowering young Roma through human rights education;
- promote measures for real equal opportunities for Roma youth in all aspects of life, including education, employment, health and housing;
- promote the desegregation of Roma schools and settlements;

- promote an integrated approach for policies related to Roma youth;
- promote the respect and development of Roma identity and culture;
- support active citizenship and participation of young Roma in all aspects of society.

4. implementation principles

The Roma Youth Action Plan should be understood as a framework or platform of action within which various stakeholders and actors at European and national level – including Roma youth organisations and networks, international organisations and initiatives – place their respective activities, projects and programmes with, for and by Roma youth for the purposes outlined above.

The implementation of the Roma Youth Action plan and its activities should be based on certain principles and values, including:

- participation and consultation of Roma youth and Roma youth organisations;
- Roma youth involvement in youth policy design, implementation and evaluation;
- comprehensive multi-sectoral approaches respecting the role of each partner;
- transparency in the planning, delivery and evaluation of results;
- regular monitoring and evaluation;
- integration of a gender equality dimension, including the prevention of domestic violence, and gender-based discrimination;
- respect for and promotion of Roma identity, culture and language;
- ensuring that Roma youth projects are linked to the situation of Roma communities in Europe, and to the need for systemic changes to address structural forms of discrimination;
- human-rights based approaches to the challenges faced by young Roma and the empowerment of Roma youth leaders in addressing and finding responses to them (including human rights education as part of capacity-building projects).

While the Roma Youth Action Plan is explicit in its strong focus on Roma, it should not exclude non-Roma who face similar situations. Therefore it should incorporate:

- an anti-discrimination approach to eradicate ongoing discrimination, compensate for past discrimination and eliminate future discrimination;
- disaggregated data by ethnicity to use in the planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes.



5. Objectives and key activities

Overall objectives and activities

Overall, the Roma Youth Action Plan seeks to:

- provide political support for Roma towards self-organisation at European and national level;
- actively promote Roma youth representation in structures at all levels;
- ensure Roma youth participation in mainstream youth policy making and implementation;
- promote positive action for Roma in education, employment and other sectors, including the promotion of positive duties on the part of responsible authorities at national and local level;
- sensitise politicians and local authorities on issues specific to Roma youth;
- sensitise the mainstream media about discrimination against Roma;
- promote training on cultural sensitivity (intercultural learning) in all institutions working for or dealing with Roma matters;
- empower the political participation of Roma youth;
- strengthen networking and co-operation between Roma youth and non-Roma youth networks;
- promote equal treatment and non-discrimination campaigns, notably through a new All Different, All Equal campaign;
- ensure monitoring and impact assessment in all fields concerning Roma youth;
- involve Roma youth organisations in the evaluation of the Strasbourg Declaration's implementation.

Specific objectives and activities

Youth policies and activities

More specifically:

- policies should encourage Roma youth to be part of mainstream youth programmes;
- youth policies should ensure sustainability of projects and target young Roma in all activities;
- a Roma youth fund should be created by the Council of Europe;
- affirmative action policies and measures for Roma youth should be undertaken by the Council of Europe and its member states;
- the Council of Europe should encourage member states to adopt positive duty policies where national and local authorities will be



responsible for monitoring, implementation and reporting on Roma youth actions;

- Roma youth-specific actions should be included in the follow-up to the Strasbourg Declaration;
- the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) should ensure that Roma youth matters form part of its agenda, as well as that of the Council of Europe's member states;
- the Council of Europe's youth policy should include regular monitoring and evaluation of the Roma Youth Action Plan by a body to be set up for that purpose;
- systems and tools to share information among young Roma people should be created;
- access for young Roma to the decision-making process of youth policies should be ensured;
- policy measures for sustainable co-funding from national and local authorities should be advocated for;
- Roma youth's participation should be included in the criteria for the national youth policy reviews of the Council of Europe;
- programmes should be developed that strengthen the cultural identity of Roma youth.

Empowerment and participation

The involvement of young Roma is key to the success of the Roma Youth Action Plan. Policies and activities should seek to:

- build the capacity of young Roma with professionally oriented training and appropriate internship and fellowship programmes;
- train young Roma in management and organisational skills;
- train Roma youth activists to work with media including the use of new technologies for Roma and non-Roma;
- ensure participation at all levels and all structures related to youth issues;
- ensure a platform for the exchange of information and experience;
- provide training for trainers for Roma youth leaders and activists;
- initiate activities which will generate and increase mutual trust between Roma and state institutions;
- consider the setting up of a Roma youth mediators project as part of the ROMED programme.



Building up a Roma youth movement

Roma youth unity can be built up by:

- strengthening Roma cultural identity through formal and non-formal education;
- promoting voluntarism among young Roma;
- ensuring the continuation of capacity-building activities such as training for trainers, training in management, advocacy and fundraising;
- creating platforms for co-operation and exchange of information;
- ensuring transparency in the participation and consultation processes;
- organising a Roma youth congress and setting up a budget for Roma youth movements;
- ensuring the necessary financial and human resources for the Roma Youth Action Plan, whose co-ordinator should be a young Roma;
- initiating activities and processes aiming at co-ordination with other international stakeholders such as the European Commission and other EU bodies, the OSCE/ODIHR, UN agencies, etc.

Non-formal education and formal education

Educational activities should include:

- initiating networking activities at local, national and European level;
- establishing Roma youth centres at all levels;
- initiating training activities such as topical training, after-school activities and language training;
- promoting positive measures in education including after-school activities and preparatory classes for entering university;
- raising awareness of Roma culture through media, networks and festivals;
- promoting co-operation between Roma and non-Roma activities through exchange of experience and successful practices;
- ensuring ongoing monitoring of Roma access and participation in formal education;
- challenging segregation (by denouncing it, preventing it, or conducting research about it) in normal and special schools;
- ensuring equal opportunities for Roma to quality education and ensuring successful transfers to higher education;
- ensuring collaboration with local authorities and schools;
- promoting Roma youth participation at all levels of the education system;



- advocating for culturally designed school curricula which include information about Roma culture and traditions;
- providing intercultural training for teachers and intercultural education in schools;
- developing education programmes that work with and involve families of Roma children and young people;
- ensuring access to vocational training opportunities for young Roma.

Human rights and human rights education

Both Roma and non-Roma should be aware of their rights.

Activities should:

- raise awareness about the human rights situation of young Roma;
- promote and initiate activities by young people to fight and prevent discrimination and racism;
- develop campaigns or competitions for schools and other institutions with a tolerant and non-discriminatory approach (e.g. the DOSTA award for municipalities);
- empower Roma youth to take legal action in cases of human rights abuse and discrimination;
- develop and hold anti-Gypsyism and anti-racism campaigns similar to the All Different, All Equal youth campaign;
- ensure monitoring of the media and effective tools to fight hate speech and the misrepresentation of Roma in the media;
- train Roma youth multipliers and include them in all human rights activities of the Council of Europe (notably those concerning education and youth);
- push government to provide disaggregated data on Roma youth and human rights cases;
- encourage networking on human rights issues at national and international level.

Diversity

It is as important to encourage tolerance of diversity among Roma as it is among non-Roma. Policies and activities should:

- promote the empowerment of different groups including young women, LGBT, religious, migrant and other groups that are minorities within Roma communities;
- raise awareness about the diversity among young Roma and the history of Roma women and LGBT movements;
- organise activities and campaigns to promote diversity in the work of youth organisations;



- promote networking with non-Roma youth networks and organisations on specific issues of human rights and diversity;
- initiate public discussions among Roma communities and youth activists concerning gender issues, religion, early marriages, HIV-positive individuals, drug users and victims of human trafficking;
- ensure legal protection and recovery centres for victims of violence;
- provide information and sources of knowledge for health protection;
- raise awareness and disseminate information about the concept of multiple discrimination;
- provide training for diversity in schools and in the Roma communities;
- initiate research on diversity in the Roma communities, as well as on perceptions and access to basic rights;
- produce media on diversity in the Roma communities, as well as other publications on human rights;
- create a website and Internet forum for the sharing of information and knowledge on a range of Roma and non-Roma groups.





Appendix 2. Conference programme

26 September 2011

Arrival of participants

19:00 Dinner

21:00 Welcome activities in the European Youth Centre

27 September 2011

9:15 Official opening of the meeting

Ralf-René Weingärtner, Director of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe

Jeroen Schokkenbroek, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Roma Issues

Ramiza Sakip, representative of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe

10:00 Introduction of participants and presentation of the aim and objectives of the meeting

Getting to know each other; sharing expectations

11:00 *Break*

11:30 Introduction to the Council of Europe's action with Roma in the youth field

Rui Gomes, Head of the Education and Training Division, Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe

12:00 Panel discussion on experiences and challenges with participation of Roma youth at the European level, with:

Alexandra Raykova, Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP)

Jonathan Mack, TernYpe – International Roma Youth Network



Emil Metodiev, Pakiv European Network

Gabriela Hrabanova, ERGO

Violeta Naydenova, Open Society Foundations

- 13:00 *Lunch*
- 14:30 Current challenges faced by Roma youth in Europe, introductions by:
Aline Usanase, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
Anca Sandescu, European Roma Rights Centre
- 15:00 Working groups about needs and challenges faced by Roma youth in Europe today (I)
- 16:00 *Break*
- 16:30 Working groups about needs and challenges faced by Roma youth in Europe today (II)
- 17:45 Plenary presentation of the conclusions the working groups
- 18:30 Summing up and closing of the day
- 19:00 *Dinner*
- 20:30 Informal information session about organisations and programmes

28 September 2011

- 9:15 Introduction to the day
- 9:30 The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma and its relevance for Roma youth, by **Sixto Molina**, Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Roma Issues
- 9:50 Questions and answers
- 10:30 *Break*
- 11:00 The youth policy of the Council of Europe and its role with issues and need of Roma youth, by **Manfred Zentner**, youth researcher
- 12:30 Introduction to the Roma Youth Action Plan
- 13:00 *Lunch*
- 14:30 Roma youth action plan – introduction and division in working groups
- 16:00 *Break*
- 17:30 Plenary on the priorities regarding the Roma youth action plan
- 19:00 *Dinner*
- 20:30 Social, educational, cultural evening



29 September 2011

- 9:15 Working groups on guidelines for a Roma Youth Action Plan
- 11:00 *Break*
- 11:30 Working groups on guidelines for a Roma Youth Action Plan
- 13:00 *Lunch*
- 14:30 **Nicolae Radita**, Council of Europe Ad-Hoc Committee on Roma
- 15:00 Working groups on guidelines for a Roma Youth Action Plan (conclusion)
- 16:00 Free time
- 20:00 *Dinner in town*

30 September 2011

- 9:15 Presentation and debate of the conclusions of the working groups on the Roma Youth Action Plan
- 10:30 Working groups on the follow-up to the Conference
- 11:30 *Break*
- 12:00 Plenary discussion on the follow-up of the Conference
- 13:00 Evaluation of the Conference
- 13:15 Conclusions by **Ivan Ivanov**, general rapporteur of the conference
- 13:30 Closing of the conference, with
Alexis Ridde, Vice-Chair of the Joint Council on Youth
Eleni Tsetsekou, Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Roma Issues
Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Director General for Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport at the Council of Europe
- 14:00 *Lunch*
Departure of participants





Appendix 3. Evaluation of the conference

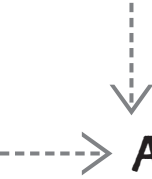
The evaluation of the conference was carried out in two main ways: via anonymous questionnaires, which were distributed to the participants on the last day of the conference, and an open plenary, where the participants were invited to express their opinions about various aspects of the conference. Twenty-three participants returned completed questionnaires. Although the majority of the participants expressed their general satisfaction with having taken part in the conference (the average satisfaction noted in the questionnaires was around 80%), several comments were made regarding possible improvements for future events.

Participants were specifically interested in having a space where they can learn about others and their communities. Several young people commented that they needed more time for this kind of sharing than was available in the programme. Although most participants agreed that the presentations on the activities of the Council of Europe and other institutions and networks were useful and interesting, some felt that they would have prioritised the more formal and informal discussions about good practices, the situation in different communities and future projects.

In addition, some participants wanted more time to ask the speakers questions, to enter into dialogue with stakeholders, and to have an opportunity to react to and challenge the presentations. Several participants also preferred to have more space to discuss current local and international issues, such as the anti-Roma demonstrations in Bulgaria. Several participants also expressed a preference for more structured facilitation of the group work as well as stricter time management of the working group sessions and the conference as a whole. Another suggestion for the future was to involve non-Roma networks and organisations, which would allow participants to build effective alliances.

Generally, participants were satisfied with their contribution to the conference and happy to have touched upon new, challenging topics, such as diversity and discrimination within the Roma community (e.g. people with disabilities, LGBT individuals) and specific issues which matter to young people such as the quality of education and working with general and social media.





Appendix 4. Overview of Council of Europe activities with Roma youth

The first activity of the youth sector of the Council of Europe organised with a focus on young Roma was the training course Situation and Perspectives of Young People from Roma/Gypsy and Travellers Backgrounds in Europe, which took place at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg from 18 to 27 April 1995. The purpose of this course was to be a first step in overcoming the structural barriers preventing young Roma from having equal access to Europe, and in raising the awareness of member states of the Council of Europe and NGOs regarding the problems of Roma youth. The course was also meant to support the organisation of a Roma youth movement.

In September 1996, a study session was organised at the European Youth Centre Budapest on the initiative of a participant of the training course mentioned above. This established the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) as an international Roma youth network.

Following the 1995 training course, the Council of Europe decided to fund, in 1997, a long-term training course as part of the Youth Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Intolerance, the International Training Course for Roma/Gypsy Youth Leaders. The course was aimed at developing Roma youth associations at European and local level, by encouraging and supporting the growth of Roma/Gypsy associations, and the development of youth projects. The first phase of this long-term training course was organised from October to November 1997, and the second phase took place in March 1999. During the course, which was carried out in English, French, Spanish and Romani, participants had the opportunity to acquire skills in community involvement via project work and gain a better understanding of local and European-level youth participation.

Between 2000 and 2001, the European Youth Centres in both Strasbourg and Budapest organised several seminars, which among other topics specifically tackled the situation of Roma youth.

From 3 to 7 June 2000, the seminar Human Rights – Tools for Stability focused on the current challenges to and perspectives on developing a culture of human



rights in south-eastern Europe, using examples from the Roma community. The seminar was placed within the current debates and evolution of human rights in Europe – particularly in south-eastern Europe – and as a main aim, served to review existing challenges and perspectives for the development of human rights in south-eastern Europe from a civil society perspective.

From 7 to 12 November 2000, a Human Rights Education Forum was held at the European Youth Centre Budapest. It gave participants insight into human rights issues, focusing among other topics on social exclusion, prevention of trafficking and violence, children’s rights and gender equality. Discussions related to Roma youth focused mostly on the questions of integration, Roma rights and identification of the main problems the community currently faces. Some good practices in the field were presented.

The seminar Violence Against Young Women In Europe, held at the European Youth Centre Budapest from 21 to 27 May 2001 within the framework of the Human Rights Education Youth Programme, targeted young Romani women as a highly vulnerable group. The seminar aimed to share experiences and approaches in dealing with violence against young women across Europe, identify educational and social strategies to address the issue at European level, and highlight the need to combat these persisting violations of human dignity through legal and educational means.



Participants organising a protest in front of the European Parliament asking for a reaction to hate crimes against Roma people

The seminar Youth against Violence, organised in partnership with the European Youth Forum, took place at the European Youth Centre Budapest from 15 to 21 October 2001. During the seminar, 62 participants from 34 countries shared their ideas about violence prevention, also among Roma, and developed joint project ideas and follow-up activities.



Other seminars on the topic of violence affecting young people were organised in the following years by the youth sector of the Council of Europe.

In 2002, a study session in co-operation with the Hungarian Foundation for Self-Reliance (HFSR) and the Pakiv European Roma Fund was organised at the European Youth Centre Budapest, on the topic of programme implementation and regional networking among Roma youth, titled Roma Youth Training on Program Implementation and Regional Networking. Through this activity, participants were supported in assessing their projects in respect to the Roma communities, and networked for future plans. Participants also analysed the possibilities of transferring their skills to their communities and gained a better understanding of the development and consolidation of the Pakiv European Roma Fund and of its national branches.

In addition to these activities, other youth sector activities, while not focused exclusively on Roma youth, touched upon issues affecting them. The seminar on Islamophobia and its Consequences on Young People, held from 1 to 6 June 2004 at the European Youth Centre Budapest, is one example. The seminar was a contribution to the fight against Islamophobia, exploring political and educational action aimed at increasing understanding and respect for religious diversity among young people in Europe. It also tackled the problem of Romaphobia, as a form of discrimination.

A long-term training course titled Diversity and Cohesion – a Training Course based on Projects for Minority Youth Participation and Social Cohesion at Local Level started in March 2004 and ended in April 2005, as part of the Human Rights Education Youth Programme of the Council of Europe. The course took place in three phases, with an initial training seminar (March 2004), a project implementation phase and an evaluation and consolidation seminar (April 2005). The course was designed as an open learning process based on experience and exchange among the participants, complemented by inputs and proposals from the team and invited experts. The aim of the course was to train and empower minority youth leaders and youth workers to develop local youth projects and associative strategies aimed at promoting social cohesion and respect for cultural diversity across Europe.

During the course, several participants presented projects, which focused particularly on the empowerment of Roma youth, helping young Roma build networks and maintain contact with each other and other groups in their regions and countries, and providing them with entrepreneurial education.

Several study sessions were organised in co-operation with international Roma youth networks. Activities organised in co-operation with FERYP included the:

- training course Development of the European Roma/Gypsy Youth Movement, European Youth Centre Strasbourg, 1998;
- training course Training of Roma/Gypsy Young Multipliers, European Youth Centre Strasbourg, 1999;



- seminar Young Roma beyond 2000: between Tradition and Modern Society, 2000;
- training on project management, European Youth Centre Strasbourg, 2001;
- study session Roma Communities and Leadership Concepts, European Youth Centre Strasbourg, 2003.

The aims were to support young Roma activists in strengthening their leadership capacities and promote their role as social actors for change. Participants had an opportunity to share realities about Roma communities in their countries, discuss the roles and the qualities of youth leaders with a special focus on female leaders, and discuss the role of Roma NGOs and political parties. They also participated in role-plays and workshops on leadership and Roma rights. During the NGO Market, participants had the opportunity to learn about each other's activities, communities and organisations. Further activities included the meetings:

- Young Roma and Alternatives to Migration, European Youth Centre Budapest, 2004;
- Situation and Perspectives of Young Roma People in Europe – Ten Years After the RAXI Campaign, European Youth Centre Budapest, 2005.

The latter session was timed to mark the 10th anniversary of the RAXI (Racism, anti-Semitism, Xenophobia and Intolerance) campaign, All Different, All Equal, as well as the first European training for young Roma leaders and activists. The session aimed to promote the visibility of Roma youth concerns and recall the value of the RAXI campaign while taking stock of developments in the past decade.

During the study session, participants attended non-formal activities, organised a round table with important stakeholders from various international Roma and non-Roma organisations, and participated in a demonstration to raise awareness about Roma youth issues in the city of Strasbourg. The session succeeded in developing the capacity and motivation of participants, preparing a set of recommendations on Roma youth participation, and increasing the visibility of Roma youth concerns on the agenda of policy makers.

In 2006, Roma youth issues were advanced through:

- Romaphobia and Anti-Gypsyism – Old Phenomena and New Challenges in Europe, a conference at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg, 2006;
- Human Rights Education as an Approach to Work on Roma Youth issues, European Youth Centre Budapest, 2006.

The latter session aimed at defining quality criteria for human rights education with young Roma people in order to enable participants to apply them in their contexts. The participants developed a set of quality criteria for human rights education with young Roma and developed concrete project proposals on



human rights education to be developed within the framework of FERYP. The following year, campaigning was discussed during the session:

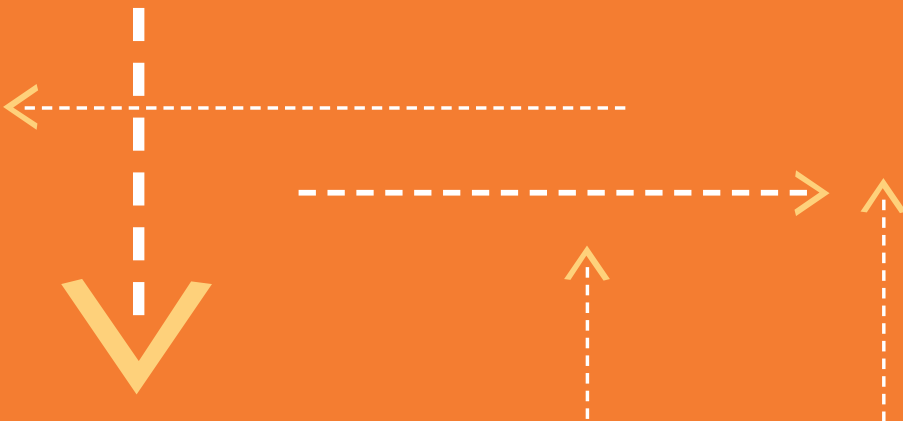
- Campaigning for Roma Rights and Equality of Opportunities, European Youth Centre Strasbourg, 2007.

This activity provided space to members and associates of FERYP to develop concrete local projects and initiatives within the All Different, All Equal and the DOSTA!⁴ campaigns. Finally, in the last couple of years, FERYP has organised the sessions:

- Roma Youth Participation – The Way Forward, 2008;
- Diversity with and Diversity in the Roma Community, European Youth Centre Budapest, 2009.

4. DOSTA! is a Council of Europe campaign aimed at combating stereotypes and prejudices against Roma in some countries in south-eastern Europe.





In the follow-up to the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, the youth sector of the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma issues, organised in September 2011 an international Roma youth conference.

The conference brought together 60 Roma youth organisations, representatives of the Council of Europe and young Roma to consult and set priorities on the main areas of action for a Roma youth action plan to be developed for the following years.

The conference was designed as a multi-stakeholder and non-formal intercultural learning situation, where participants exchanged their experiences and built upon previous results to identify current challenges for young Roma and key areas for European youth work and youth policy in relation to the specific situation of young Roma.

This report includes the main outcomes of the conference, and provides reflections related to the context of the conference, with emphasis on the political European framework and the situation of Roma youth in Europe.

The Council of Europe has 47 member states, covering virtually the entire continent of Europe. It seeks to develop common democratic and legal principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals. Ever since it was founded in 1949, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Council of Europe has symbolised reconciliation.

www.coe.int/youth/roma