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## **Task Force** ROMA YOUTH PARTICIPATION

# **Roma Youth Participation and Inclusion in Standards, Policies, and Programmes in Europe**

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The views expressed in this study do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Council of Europe.

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## Executive Summary

*Roma Youth Participation and Inclusion in Standards, Policies, and Programmes in Europe* is a research project undertaken by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe. The report aims to identify, outline, and reflect on Roma and youth related standards, policies, and programmes at the national and European levels in view of identifying key strengths, gaps, and strategic ways forward regarding Roma youth participation.

The report serves the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and the Task Force on Roma Youth Participation (Task Force) established in 2020 to formulate arguments and suggestions to the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) in view of preparing a **Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on Roma youth participation in member states** (the Recommendation).

To write this report, we used various sources of information, starting with a review of existing Council of Europe's Roma youth-related standards, policy, and projects and also looked into the work of other intergovernmental organisations. We also conducted key informant interviews with representatives of Roma and pro-Roma international youth organisations. We relied on the data collected and analysed by Simona Torotcoi in the study *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*. And in addition, we used data collected by Phiren Amenca International Network for this report through focus groups with Roma young people in Albania, Kosovo,<sup>1</sup> North Macedonia, and Serbia. We sent out short surveys to the members/affiliate organisations of national youth councils (NYCs), international non-governmental youth organisations, the Advisory Council of Youth (CCJ), the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM). The report also incorporates the response that we received from the Roma team constituted within DG Justice at the European Commission.

In this study, we conclude that in Europe, policies have yet to mention and address systematically and continuously the needs of Roma youth. To date, targeted policies, standards, and programmes specific for and with Roma youth have almost never been developed and implemented at the local, national, and European levels. Also, mainstream or double mainstream approaches inclusive of Roma youth have not been systematically employed in policy design at the national and European levels.

National and European institutions have avoided or neglected recognising and including the specific history, needs, and challenges of Roma youth in mainstream policies and measures. This neutral, "one fits all" approach in policies and recommendations targeting a very diverse spectrum of European young people has ignored and denied the reality of racism and historical and structural inequalities faced by Roma youth and other racialized young peoples. And, most often, the inadequate length, quality, and consistency of programmes, involving but not targeting or double mainstreaming Roma youth, have made it impossible to meet the needs of the significant number of Roma young people across Europe, especially the most marginalised ones.

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<sup>1</sup>\* All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Participation and inclusion are critical pillars of democratic societies. However, Roma youth and their specific needs and asks have been neglected or misunderstood in mainstream youth policy circles as well as in Roma related policies. Some policy documents aimed to include specific measures for Roma youth, but ended up stamping young people as a “vulnerable” group or a cross-cutting topic. That approach often led to a lack of action or a lack of focus on issues seen as relevant by the young people themselves, including participation or active citizenship. Therefore, to ensure inclusive policies, Roma young people must be included in youth and Roma policies and programmes in all stages, from design to evaluation. Moreover, to be effective and trustworthy, policies, including youth policy ought to incorporate anti-racist and social inclusion measures.

There is nearly no reference to Roma youth in most youth and Roma related standards. Yet, Roma youth have a pivotal, but unacknowledged, role to bring about change in our societies. Roma youth have lived experiences of discrimination or stigmatization and understand the urgency of justice and human rights. And Roma youth are also motivated, committed, and competent to contribute to the change that Europe urgently needs. Thus, European societies and institutions need and have to include Roma youth’s expertise and ideas to truly ensure human rights, justice, and social cohesion. And the initiatives mentioned in this report stand as evidence for it. But most importantly, Roma youth have a right to participate in policy matters that impact their lives. Thus, this report concludes, immediate and structural change is required.

Intergovernmental organisations play an important but distinct role from the one of the governments in setting standards and norms aiming to ensure equality and justice, including for Roma youth. To date, the international instruments adopted by intergovernmental organisations have already proven very useful specifically in at least four areas: setting standards and recommendations for governments; ensuring some funding for policy interventions and pilot projects; assessing implementation of policy measures at the national level; and facilitating the exchange of information and good practices between governmental institutions.

In the past three decades, the Council of Europe (CoE) has had a distinct and critical leadership role in working with Roma youth. Several decision-making bodies and departments have developed a body of specific Roma youth-related work and mainstream youth policies, including resolutions and recommendations, to guide policies and programmes within CoE and at the national and local levels. For instance, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has been a leader in engaging with targeting approaches to address the needs of Roma youth in their work.

Across the Council of Europe, but also other European and national institutions, it is the Youth Department’ Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP) that stands as an exception and a good practice of targeted measure: the only action plans in Europe that targeted Roma youth, and that involved intentional, continuous, and strategic investment in strengthening the capacity of Roma youth networks and organisations and facilitated alliances and partnerships with non-Roma partners and authorities. However, the RYAP did not have the necessary capacity and power to influence the work of local and national governments with Roma youth. But the Committee of Ministers (CM) holds such power. To date, however, as this report shows, no

Committee of Ministers' recommendation has targeted and addressed the specific needs and priorities of Roma youth. But there is precedent created by the Committee of Ministers in targeting and prioritising the needs of particular groups of marginalised young people.

As a result of the work within the Task Force, research, interviews, and consultations with Roma young people and allies realised for the purpose of this paper, we reaffirm that a Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers would support Roma young people and their allies in their demands for participation, equality, inclusion, and anti-racism. The added value of a potential Recommendation includes the following:

- The Recommendation would expand its reach to Roma young people in 47 countries.
- The Recommendation would become the first intergovernmental recommendation to guide national and local governments towards ensuring substantive participation, leadership, and inclusion of Roma young people in processes, policies, and programmes.
- The Recommendation would provide institutions with standards on how anti-racism, justice, and inclusion can be ensured and supported. And although the Recommendation would not be legally binding, it would still have the power to recommend governments to ensure that Roma youth receive justice, including economic and reparatory justice, and benefit indiscriminately from fundamental human rights.
- The Recommendation would direct national governments on the importance of targeting and addressing Roma youth's specific needs, history, challenges, and demands in youth and Roma related policies.
- The Recommendation would guide governments on revising the existing models of inclusion, including by addressing intersectional discrimination and ensuring double mainstreaming.
- The Recommendation would also guide and support youth organisations and leaders at the local, national, regional, and European levels to seriously address the lack of representation of Roma youth in their structures and programmes and the limited attention in hearing their voices and tackling their needs.
- The Recommendation would help Roma youth organisations to advocate governments at the national and local levels to take into account Roma youth, their specific needs, and human rights when designing policies for youth and Roma.
- The Recommendation would send a signal to Roma young people that the Committee of Ministers is hearing their challenges and needs and that Roma youth do benefit from the same attention as any other groups of young people in Europe.
- The Recommendation would build on, and therefore ensure continuity of, previous targeted and double mainstreamed work conducted by the Council of Europe with Roma youth, including the Roma Youth Action Plan, and could serve as a compendium of knowledge in the field of Roma youth participation.
- The Recommendation would continue to create links and synergies with the work of other intergovernmental organisations.

Finally, a Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on Roma youth participation would bring added value by expanding Roma youth-related work at the level of institutions. It would also

represent a unique and pioneering text and advocacy tool across European national and intergovernmental institutions.

And of course it would be a major contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Strategy of the youth sector of the Council of Europe.

“an instrument specifically setting guidelines in the area of Roma youth participation and prepared through a process where young Roma are actively involved and consulted.”

## Introduction

In September 2019, the participants at *Roma Youth Participation: What now?* – a seminar organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe (CoE) - examined the Roma Youth Action Plan 2016-2019 and discussed its external evaluation report. The participants also looked ahead and foresaw potential new frameworks, actions, and tactics that can better benefit Roma youth and their needs.

Roma youth-related objectives, measures and developments outside of, but coordinated with the Youth Department, both targeted and mainstream, have occasionally emerged in various CoE structures as well as in the work of other intergovernmental organisations and governments. But the Roma young people and allies who participated in the 2019 seminar concluded that this was not enough. The participants called for better and strategic frameworks and more opportunities to boost the participation, leadership, and representation of Roma youth and ensure double mainstreaming at the local, national, and European levels. Also, the participants - primarily representatives of Roma and ally youth organisations - suggested that the Committee of Ministers adopts a **Recommendation on promoting Roma youth participation in member states and combating anti-Roma racism** (the Recommendation). The Joint Council on Youth,<sup>2</sup> who also had representatives participating in the seminar, took act of the proposal for the Recommendation. Subsequently, the Joint Council on Youth set up a Task Force on Roma Youth Participation (the Task Force) to work towards concrete actions.

The main purpose of the Task Force is to assess the opportunity and feasibility of preparing the Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers by identifying the possible substance of the Recommendations and its relevance for youth (and Roma) policy stakeholders in Member states. The Task Force's members include representatives of Roma youth organisations at the national and European levels, other Roma organisations, Roma scholars, mainstream youth organisations, the Joint Council on Youth, the Advisory Council of Youth, the European Steering Committee for Youth, ADI-ROM, and various divisions of the Council of Europe (full composition in appendix). We are very grateful for their time, efforts, and contributions in writing this report.

This report supports the work of the Task Force by identifying, summarising, and reflecting on existing CoE standards, policies, and programmes in view of identifying key strengths, gaps, and strategic ways forward for Roma youth. In line with the double mainstreaming framework set up by the Youth Department in its previous Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP), the report does not discuss the work of the CoE Youth Department in isolation. On the contrary, it takes a relational approach, exploring the work conducted or planned by other CoE bodies, intergovernmental and international organisations, and governments with or about Roma youth.

To write this report, we used various sources of information. First, we conducted a review of existing Council of Europe's Roma youth-related standards, policy, and projects and also

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<sup>2</sup> More information about the Joint Council on Youth can be found here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/joint-council-on-youth>

looked into the work of other intergovernmental organisations. We also conducted six key informant interviews with representatives of Roma and pro-Roma international youth organisations. We also relied on the data collected and analysed by Simona Torotcoi in the *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities* study, a result of the research project conducted by Phiren Amenca International Network and ternYpe International Roma Youth Network in 2019-2020. Additionally, Phiren Amenca International Network collected data for this report through four focus groups with Roma young people in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia. We sent out short surveys to the members/affiliate organisations of national youth councils (NYCs), international non-governmental youth organisations, the Advisory Council of Youth (CCJ), the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM). We based our analysis on the surveys filled out by three NYCs, four members of the Advisory Council on Youth, 11 members of CDEJ, eight representatives in ADI-ROM, and six international non-governmental youth organisations. We also sent questions via email to the European Commission (EC) DG Justice, Roma team; the OSCE-ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues; and international non-governmental Roma organisations. The report also incorporates the response that we received from the Roma team constituted within DG Justice at the European Commission. We are very grateful to all of them.

This study has several limitations. Only a small number of organisations and committees involved in the CoE Roma related work responded to our surveys. But a majority of them stressed the need for a Recommendation and more consistent participation of Roma young people in Europe. However, their responses cannot be regarded as representative of the work of youth organisations, governments, and CoE committees. Yet, the limited number of responses received may point out at a limited interest, understanding, or involvement of youth organization in work with Roma youth.

In writing this report, we analysed more in-depth the work of the Youth Department, given the fact that we had access to external evaluations and reports of several participatory convenings. However, similar data regarding the work with Roma youth by other intergovernmental organisations were not available to us, which may be related to a lack of coordination, strategic planning, and evaluation of targeted and mainstream policies and measures that impact Roma youth. To explore the work of the EC and the OSCE, we engaged with publicly available reports and programmes information, but additional information may have led to more comprehensive analysis and conclusions. We also relied on the written response from the EC to our interview questions. Finally, we also used the data collected by Phiren Amenca to point out at opinions expressed by Roma young people vis-s-vis some of the EU work. However, the summaries of the OSCE and the EC work can only be regarded as brief snapshots of these programmes, not as substantive research.

This study takes account of Roma young people's voices. Roma youth ask and remind national and European institutions and organisations that our societies face a moral duty and a real-world need to work with Roma youth and their organisations and groups toward targeted and double mainstream responses to new and old threats and challenges facing Roma youth.



## Policies and Standards with or about Roma Youth in the Council of Europe

In the past three decades, the Council of Europe has had a distinct and essential role in working with Roma youth. Several decision-making bodies and CoE departments have developed specific Roma youth work and mainstream youth documents, including resolutions and recommendations, to guide policies and programmes within CoE and at the national and local levels within CoE's member states. However, that can't be considered a continuous and general practice, as Roma youth were left out from CoE Roma or youth related texts. For example, in the 2010 Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, members states agreed on a list of priorities to "serve as guidance for more focused and more consistent efforts at all levels," but the list did not include Roma youth.<sup>3</sup> In the following, we will look at the inclusion of Roma youth in documents and initiatives of various CoE bodies.

### The Committee of Ministers (CM)

The Committee of Ministers (CM) is the CoE's decision-making body, and thus, its work and documents on Roma youth have a more substantial impact and power than the work of other CoE bodies. Since 1975, the Committee has adopted 15 targeted recommendations on Roma, including the recent *Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials*.<sup>4</sup> Four of the Roma related documents adopted by the Committee make sporadic references to Roma youth. *Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)10 on improving access to justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe* mentions Roma youth once in recommending governments to pay particular attention to "the situation of women and girls, young people..." in access to justice.<sup>5</sup> Also, in 2020, the CM adopted the *Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025)*, which includes reference to Roma youth. The CM *Recommendation Rec(2001)17 on improving the economic and employment situation of Roma/Gypsies and Travellers in Europe* also mentions Roma youth in recommending governments to "introduce positive incentives such as grants and mentoring support to encourage young Roma/Gypsies to complete their secondary education and to attend higher education institutions or take up apprenticeships." It also advises governments to "set up qualification programmes targeting young Roma/Gypsies in the field of new technologies and knowledge."<sup>6</sup> *Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)5 on policies for Roma and/or Travellers in Europe* also underlines that governments should ensure youth participation and in policy and strategy development.<sup>7</sup>

The CM has also adopted several targeted recommendations on youth, including *Recommendation Rec(2006)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on citizenship and participation of young people in public life*, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 on young people's access to rights*, and *Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 on youth work*.

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<sup>3</sup> Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma, Strasbourg, 20 October 2010, "The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma" < [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805ce1de](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805ce1de) >

<sup>4</sup> [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016809ee48c](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016809ee48c)

<sup>5</sup> [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=090000168075f2aa](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=090000168075f2aa)

<sup>6</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/09000016805e2958>

<sup>7</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/09000016805d3e1c>

Only the 2015 *Enter! Recommendation - CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights*<sup>8</sup> mentioned Roma youth specifically. *CM/Rec(2015)3* included references to the health risks of Roma youth experiencing multiple forms of exclusion, emphasising the challenges of young Roma women. That was not enough, and that was not the only challenge faced by Roma youth.

To date, however, no Committee of Ministers' recommendation targeted and addressed the specific needs and priorities of Roma youth. But there is precedent created by the Committee of Ministers in targeting and prioritizing the needs of particular groups of marginalised young people. For instance, the CM did adopt recommendations on supporting other marginalised and discriminated against youth groups, including young refugees (Recommendation *CM/Rec(2019)4*) and young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Moreover, in January 2020, the Committee of Ministers adopted *The Youth Sector Strategy 2030* under the Resolution (2020)2<sup>9</sup>, which does not recognise or address the specific needs of Roma young people. In its introduction, the Resolution mentions the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019). The Resolution states that the priorities of CoE should also put emphasis on “allowing young people, including those experiencing any form of discrimination and exclusion, to benefit from opportunities that develop their commitment to and exercise of democratic citizenship.” But the thematic priorities and all the other sections of Resolution (2020)2 do not mention Roma youth and any other youth groups directly exposed to discrimination and exclusion.

### **The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) includes 324 members drawn from the national parliaments of the Council of Europe's member states. They generally meet four times a year for week-long plenary sessions in Strasbourg. The Parliamentary Assembly sets its own agenda, but its debates and reports are primarily focused on the Council of Europe's three core statutory aims: defending human rights, promoting democracy, and upholding the rule of law.

PACE has an critical role within CoE, as it is the body which holds governments accountable for human rights issues, watches over the fulfilment of democratic standards, proposes innovative ideas, and generates momentum for reform. As stated by PACE, the “*Members of the Parliamentary Assembly and national parliamentarians play a crucial role for Roma inclusion. The Assembly should promote examples of efficient Roma inclusion which will contribute to combating prejudice, stereotyping and hatred against Roma in Europe.*”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe, Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2015\)3](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c46f7) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights <[https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c46f7](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c46f7)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, Resolution *CM/Res(2020)2* on the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030 (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 22 January 2020 at the 1365th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies) <<https://rm.coe.int/0900001680998935>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Parliament Assembly Doc. 13576 04 July 2014 Promoting Roma inclusion at the local level Motion for a resolution tabled by Ms Guguli MAGRADZE and other members of the Assembly

Several PACE Resolutions are relevant for the Roma minority across the member states. *Resolution 2153 (2017) on Promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers*<sup>11</sup> addressed the situation of Roma and Travellers on education and includes issues such as discrimination and segregation in education, access to pre-school, improving access to education, and reducing drop out of Roma children from school. Resolution 2153 also refers to access to return-to education, retraining and vocational education programmes, and underlines that individuals who have not completed their compulsory schooling should not be excluded from such programmes, but instead, given additional support in order to make these programmes accessible to them. While the Resolution does not address the needs of Roma youth in detail, it does contain a recommendation to member states: (5.1.) *incorporate measures to fight anti-Gypsyism and combat prejudice and stereotypes as an integral part of all efforts to promote the inclusion of Roma and Travellers, and promote a positive sense of Roma and Traveller identity as well as Roma and Traveller role models with whom younger generations can identify*. It also refers shortly to the young Roma girls (5.7.) - *contribute to the visibility and recognition of women and girls in Roma and Traveller communities as central to the development of their communities*.

Other resolutions adopted by PACE could potentially be used to impact the situation of Roma youth, but these documents do not mention Roma youth. For example, *Resolution 2014 (2014) Raising the status of vocational education and training*<sup>12</sup> (VET) referring to the significant role of VET in addressing the shortage of technical skills as well as in raising employability and, particularly, young people's access to employment. *Resolution 1993 (2014) on Decent work for all*<sup>13</sup> also addresses the situation of young people by drawing attention to the extremely high levels of unemployment among young people within some member states, which together with the high number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) poses a threat for social cohesion. Recommendations for a better use of funding and project opportunities available through the Council of Europe Development Bank *for targeted support to improve employment offers for young people, minorities and the disabled* are previewed. A resolution for addressing the discrimination against Roma children - *Resolution 1927 (2013) Ending discrimination against Roma children*<sup>14</sup> was also adopted by PACE.

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<<https://pace.coe.int/pdf/6f8de2bee32e7efc8320f7645903e22e01feb31f3326667a8259ffe25682ae848428feba12/doc.%2013576.pdf>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>11</sup>Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2153 (2017)1 Promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers <<http://semantic-pace.net/tools/pdf.aspx?doc=aHR0cDovL2Fzc2VtYmx5LmNvZS5pbmQvbnVveG1sL1hSZWYvWDJILURXLWV4dHIuYXNwP2ZpbGVpZD0yMzQ5MCZsYW5nPUVO&xsl=aHR0cDovL3NlbWFudGljcGFjZS5uZXQvWHNsdC9QZGYvWFJlZi1XRClBVC1YTUwYUERGlnhzbA==&xslparams=ZmlsZWlkPTIzNDkw>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>12</sup>Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2014 (2014)1 Final version Raising the status of vocational education and training <<http://semantic-pace.net/tools/pdf.aspx?doc=aHR0cDovL2Fzc2VtYmx5LmNvZS5pbmQvbnVveG1sL1hSZWYvWDJILURXLWV4dHIuYXNwP2ZpbGVpZD0yMTIzMCZsYW5nPUVO&xsl=aHR0cDovL3NlbWFudGljcGFjZS5uZXQvWHNsdC9QZGYvWFJlZi1XRClBVC1YTUwYUERGlnhzbA==&xslparams=ZmlsZWlkPTIwMjMw>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>13</sup>Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1993 (2014)1 Final version Decent work for all <<http://semantic-pace.net/tools/pdf.aspx?doc=aHR0cDovL2Fzc2VtYmx5LmNvZS5pbmQvbnVveG1sL1hSZWYvWDJILURXLWV4dHIuYXNwP2ZpbGVpZD0yMDg5MCZsYW5nPUVO&xsl=aHR0cDovL3NlbWFudGljcGFjZS5uZXQvWHNsdC9QZGYvWFJlZi1XRClBVC1YTUwYUERGlnhzbA==&xslparams=ZmlsZWlkPTIwODkw>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>14</sup>Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1927 (2013)1 Final version Ending discrimination against Roma children <<https://pace.coe.int/pdf/499fce1fc164c913620526990206f033425b65bd3326667a8259ffe25682ae848428feba12/resolution%201927.pdf>> accessed 16 November 2020.

Acknowledging that youngsters should be supported in their development between childhood and adulthood as this is “a crucial time for the development of individuals as fulfilled and responsible members of society,” PACE has worked *Towards a European framework convention on youth rights*.<sup>15</sup> PACE invited Member states to examine the possibility of drafting a framework convention on youth rights. In this report, under the point (10.8) *Non-discrimination* the PACE explicitly addresses the issue of discrimination of young Roma and under point “4. *Youth rights in danger?*”, where young Roma are mentioned as one of the ‘vulnerable groups’ who risk multiple discrimination. The recommendation of elaborating a framework convention on youth rights however did not find further echo, as the reply received was that “The Committee of Ministers considers that in the present situation priority should be given to the effective implementation of existing instruments.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Roma youth and their situation are included and mentioned briefly across the different reports or documents of PACE addressing either Roma inclusion specifically or the situation of youth in general. However, PACE is yet to adopt a document dedicated to the situation of Roma youth specifically, similar to those dedicated to other groups, such as the *Recommendation 1652 (2004) on education of refugees and internally displaced persons*, for example.

### **The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has been a leader within the Council of Europe, in engaging with targeting approaches to address the needs of Roma youth in their work. In 2014, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 366, *Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels*.<sup>17</sup> The 2014 Resolution drew attention to the issue of anti-Gypsyism [anti-Roma racism]<sup>18</sup> against Roma youth and underlined that the phenomenon had increased in recent years. It recommended local and regional authorities to implement explicit but not exclusive Roma youth measures. It also asked them to:

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<sup>15</sup>Committee on Culture, Science and Education Doc. 12629 06 June 2011 Towards a European framework convention on youth rights Report  
<<https://pace.coe.int/pdf/861e29d0814e68b94b7ec7650e60673223f854dc3326667a8259ffe25682ae848428feba12/doc.%2012629.pdf>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>16</sup>Doc. 12890 05 April 2012 Towards a European framework convention on youth rights Reply to Recommendation1: Recommendation 1978 (2011) Committee of Ministers  
<<https://pace.coe.int/pdf/bd60eb2143677305a788c47e9c9d01e491a4726a3326667a8259ffe25682ae848428feba12/doc.%2012890.pdf>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, *Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels*, 26<sup>th</sup> SESSION Strasbourg, 25-27 March 2014, CG(26)8 FINAL 26 March 2014 <<https://rm.coe.int/168071950b>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Note of the author: In my scholarship, I don’t use but rather place a critic of the use of “anti-Gypsyism” as a concept. Along with other Roma scholars and activists, I argue that find the G-word and any iteration thereof to be derogatory, offensive, and demeaning. As many are aware, the G-word has a fraught history: it is an exonym that was superimposed onto Roma, used to dominate and was rallied against as an epithet on domestic and international stages in the 1910s and 1970s with activist pleas to “call us Roma.” Its shortcomings are fatal and are not overcome by attaching a prefix (“anti”) and a suffix (“ism”). See more in Written Comments to the European Commission’s Background paper “ISSUE PAPER for sessions three and four - antigypsyism, participation, diversity,” available at <http://shortenerlink.com/FWYvC>. Therefore, in the report, where possible, I will use the term “anti-Roma racism” as opposed to “anyG/gypsyism” as a reflection of my own views or antigypsyism/anti-Roma racism as a comprise to reflect some of the various opinions regarding this form of racism.

combat discrimination and anti-Gypsism by providing grants or in-kind support to projects which strengthen young Roma people's understanding of the critical concepts of human rights, discrimination and anti-Gypsism, or informing on these concepts in schools and other institutions; organising events which bring together Roma and non-Roma youth to promote intercultural dialogue and learning to help break down prejudices and stereotypes and build trust;

In 2014, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities also adopted Recommendation 354, *Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels*. Notably, the recommendation also encouraged the member States to support local and regional Roma youth policies and to include Roma youth in mainstream youth policies. Its Explanatory Memorandum<sup>19</sup> formulated concrete recommendations for local and regional authorities in five key areas: access to social rights; combating anti-Gypsism and discrimination; empowering Roma youth; promoting active citizenship; and building a stronger Roma youth movement. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities also commended the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion<sup>20</sup> to consider those recommendations in their future work.

While setting up priorities, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities also pointed out at three critical barriers for Roma youth: limited participation, antigypsism, and structural inequalities. And indeed, it remains a failure of governments not to ensure equal access to rights, representation, leadership, and participation of Roma youth in decision-making fora. The 2019 evaluation of the CoE Roma Youth Action Plan pointed out at the structural nature of this challenge:

Structural factors continue to hinder the participation of Roma youth in not only in decision-making bodies but also in other areas that are relevant to them.

As the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Recommendation 354 also underlined, an even more foundational challenge, is anti-Roma racism/antigypsyism, which continues to impact and be a barrier for Roma youth in all areas of life. It became more evident in the conversations during the 2019 RYAP seminar that prejudice, discrimination, stigmatisation, and other manifestations of racism not only create and maintain structural inequalities but also triggers for fear and distress among Roma youth, who hide or deny their ethnic background. Roma youth experience racial discrimination in all areas of life, from access to education to job opportunities.

Some of the CoE activities and documents, including the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities resolutions and recommendations, aim to support and guide local and national authorities to fight against discriminate on and ensure access of Roma to social rights. However, CoE does not have a mandate, power, and human and financial resources to make successful recommendations and activities to scale at the national level. That is primarily the role of the

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<sup>19</sup> Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, *Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels*, 26<sup>th</sup> SESSION Strasbourg, 25-27 March 2014, CG(26)8 FINAL 26 March 2014 <<https://rm.coe.int/168071950b>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>20</sup> In the Framework of the Strasbourg Declaration, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe organised a Summit of Mayors, where participants committed to setting up a European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion. The Alliance, with 120 participating municipalities and regions, was launched in March 2013.

member states to put in place and implement laws and policies and to enforce them to prevent, confront, and combat structural racism. And this challenge needs a rigorous anti-racist strategy and radical reform, as Roma youth continue to face distinct and deep-seated structural inequalities and anti-Roma racism. As a young Roma participant in the focus group in North Macedonia concluded,

[Our] biggest obstacle is discrimination. If a Roma person comes out on TV and says something right away, the reaction of the people is ‘come on; you are Roma; you are not educated.’ I think that discrimination and lack of appreciation [of Roma] are the biggest problems.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, expanding on the guidelines of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities’ resolution and recommendation on Roma youth participation, a Committee of Ministers’ Roma Youth Recommendation could guide governments and European institutions towards targeted engagement and actions in recognising and addressing the structural nature of racism against Roma youth and its manifestations.

### **The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**

ECRI<sup>22</sup> is a unique human rights monitoring body which specialises in questions relating to the fight against racism, discrimination (on grounds of “race,” ethnic/national origin, colour, citizenship, religion, language, sexual orientation and gender identity), xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in Europe.

ECRI conducts country monitoring in each of the member states of CoE, by organising field visits. The analysis following these visits is used to formulate recommendations for addressing problems related to racism and intolerance. The situation of Roma is one of the topics followed during these visits, and although there is no mechanism that focuses on the Roma youth, they are included in the analysis by ECRI. For example, following a visit to Albania, ECRI recommends in the country monitoring report from 2020<sup>23</sup> that the authorities work on anti-bullying activities and to develop and *implement “group-specific modules against bullying of members of vulnerable communities, such as Roma and/or LGBTI children and young people.”* A monitoring report on Romania from 2019<sup>24</sup> underlined that 64% of young Roma (16-24 years old) were not included neither in employment nor in education (compared to 17% of the general population). In its previous report on Romania, ECRI also noted a serious cause of concern regarding Roma children living in the urban slum of Ferentari (Bucharest), where they were victims in trafficking and young girls were exposed to increasingly HIV positive rates or

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<sup>21</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca and Sumnal in North Macedonia with five Roma young people: a teacher, two university students, one high school student, and one educational mediator, September 18, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> European Commission against Racism and Intolerance leaflet <<https://rm.coe.int/leaflet-ecri-2019/168094b101>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>23</sup> ECRI Sixth report on Albania (adopted on 7 April 2020 / published on 2 June 2020) <<https://rm.coe.int/report-on-albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>24</sup> ECRI REPORT ON ROMANIA (fifth monitoring cycle) Adopted on 3 April 2019 Published on 5 June 2019 <<http://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-romania/168094c9e5>> accessed 16 November 2020.

early pregnancies.<sup>25</sup> The monitoring report on Bulgaria from 2008<sup>26</sup> underlined the high rate of unemployment in the Roma community (70 to 80%), with the situation of women and young people giving particular cause for concern. ECRI recommended Bulgarian authorities to take measures focusing on young Roma, and to better monitor the situation of Roma in the field.

On the situation of Roma in Hungary,<sup>27</sup> the ECRI monitoring report from 2015 flagged early school leaving and a low level of participation in tertiary education: 51% of Roma dropped out while still in compulsory school, and barely 20% of Roma pupils took the secondary school final examinations. ECRI signalled that reducing the compulsory school leaving age (from 18 to 16) would contribute to legitimising early school leaving for Roma pupils and increasing the number of young Roma without qualifications and with even fewer chances in the labour market.

ECRI also issues General Policy Recommendations (GPRs) addressed to the governments of all member states. These recommendations provide guidelines which policy-makers are invited to use when drawing up national strategies and policies. For example, *General Policy Recommendation No.3 Combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies* (1998)<sup>28</sup> was pioneering in recognising that Roma/Gypsies suffer throughout Europe from persisting prejudices, are victims of a racism which is deeply-rooted in society, are the target of violent demonstrations of racism and intolerance, and their fundamental rights are regularly violated or threatened. This text aimed to encourage the adoption of a series of measures to combat manifestations of racism and intolerance and discriminatory practices against Roma/Gypsies. Also, in 2011, ECRI issued *General Policy Recommendation No. 13 Combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma*.<sup>29</sup> In this recommendation, ECRI called on member States to adopt no less than 90 measures: on the one hand, to ensure the access of Roma to education, employment, and other goods and services; and, on the other hand, to combat hate speech, racist crimes and violence against Roma, through both the application of criminal law provisions and preventive and awareness-raising measures. Finally, it emphasised that only a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to Roma issues, involving Roma representatives at all levels of policy-making (conception, development, implementation and evaluation) can enhance mutual trust and contribute to the fight against antigypsyism.

While both recommendations addressed the issues of combating antigypsyism and segregation in the field of education, introducing information on the history and culture of Roma/Gypsies in the curricula and the access to education of Roma children in general, they did not approach

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<sup>25</sup> ECRI REPORT ON ROMANIA (fourth monitoring cycle) Adopted on 19 March 2014 Published on 3 June 2014 <<https://rm.coe.int/fourth-report-on-romania/168094d771>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>26</sup> ECRI REPORT ON BULGARIA (fourth monitoring cycle) Adopted on 20 June 2008 Published on 24 February 2009 <<https://rm.coe.int/fourth-report-on-bulgaria/16808b55d5>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>27</sup> ECRI REPORT ON HUNGARY (fifth monitoring cycle) Adopted on 19 March 2015 Published on 9 June 2015 <<https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-hungary/16808b57e8>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>28</sup> ECRI GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATION No. 3 ON COMBATING RACISM AND INTOLERANCE AGAINST ROMA/GYPSIES ADOPTED ON 6 MARCH 1998 <<https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-3-on-combating-racism-and-intole/16808b5a3a>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>29</sup> ECRI GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATION NO.13 ON COMBATING ANTI-GYPSYISM AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA ADOPTED ON 24 JUNE 2011 <<https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-13-on-combating-anti-gypsyism-an/16808b5aee>> accessed 16 November 2020.

the situation of Roma youth particularly and did not make recommendations to tackle their specific needs.

In establishing its priority areas of work with civil society,<sup>30</sup> ECRI has prioritised working with the Youth sector of the Council of Europe, given the vital role of this sector for any action aimed at involving civil society in the fight against racism and intolerance. In this context, looking forward, involving Roma youth NGOs in ECRI's work could be an add value on fighting against anti-Roma racism. A first step was also made during the Roma Youth Conference, which was hosted between September 26-30th 2011 by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg where ECRI provided with a presentation on HR dimension and discrimination of Roma youth.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM)**

The Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues functioned as the “the only international inter-governmental committee in Europe (probably in the World) dealing specifically with Roma and Traveller issues.”<sup>32</sup>

From 2018 to 2019, CAHROM appointed a rapporteur on Roma youth.<sup>33</sup> The rapporteur attended informal coordination meetings on the implementation of RYAP and contributed to thematic reports on Roma youth. Furthermore, in line with a double mainstreaming approach, CAHROM and the Advisory Council on Youth communicated regularly on issues related to Roma, young Roma people, and the RYAP.<sup>34</sup> Some of the thematic visits of CAHROM focused on “Roma women and youth empowerment.”<sup>35</sup> However, none of three thematic reports listed under the “women and youth” category on the CAHROM website focused on youth participation, leadership, or representation. The focus of the CAHROM reports was predominantly early and forced marriages, which affect some Roma youth, but it is not the only issue Roma youth face and want to address.

Notably, nevertheless, in 2014, Slovenia proposed to form a CAHROM thematic group on Roma youth empowerment and inclusion of Roma youth dimension of national Roma inclusion strategies. While the group of experts highlighted the need to activate and encourage the participation of Roma young people in local and national processes, CAHROM also recommended<sup>36</sup> that

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<sup>30</sup> ECRI's Programme of action on relations with civil society (adopted on 20 March 2002) <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/relations-with-civil-society>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Roma Youth Conference – Critical Resume by ternYpe <<https://ternype.eu/roma-youth-conference-%E2%80%93-critical-resume-ternype>> accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>32</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/cahrom-information-document-en-12-03-18/1680792d9c>

<sup>33</sup> Council of Europe Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM), Information document prepared by the Secretariat, 2018 <<https://rm.coe.int/cahrom-information-document-en-12-03-18/1680792d9c>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>34</sup> See more information about CAHROM meetings here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/cahrom>.

<sup>35</sup> Council of Europe Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM), Information document prepared by the Secretariat, 2018 <<https://rm.coe.int/cahrom-information-document-en-12-03-18/1680792d9c>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Council of Europe Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM), Draft Thematic Report by the Experts of the CAHROM Thematic Group on Roma Youth Empowerment and the Inclusion of a Youth Dimension



national Roma integration strategies should include, where possible, a specific chapter on Roma youth with specific goals, whilst also mainstream the Roma dimension throughout the strategy. For those member States that do not follow a targeted strategy approach, the group of experts would recommend finding ways that Roma youth concerns are being taken into consideration in the mainstreaming approach.

**A new Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM)** adopted by the Committee of Ministers' Deputies in November 2019 replaced CAHROM. According to the Terms of References, ADI-ROM should also appoint a Roma Youth Rapporteur from amongst its members.<sup>37</sup> All Member States of the Council of Europe appoint representatives – a member and a substitute member - in ADI-ROM. However, according to the ADI-ROM website,<sup>38</sup> only 35 countries listed their representative members and some also listed substitute members. Of the nine members of ADI-ROM who responded to our survey, only four governments count Roma among its representatives to ADI-ROM, respectively Croatia, Finland, Hungary, and Slovakia. Austria, Cyprus, Norway, and Poland have representatives in ADRI-ROM, but they are not Roma. North Macedonia did not respond to the question.

Looking forward, to overcome such limitations, in the new ADI-ROM structure and its processes, ensuring space for the input, participation, and leadership of Roma and Roma young people is mandatory. Also, the recommendations of the CAHROM thematic group on Roma youth must be revisited and pushed forward.

### **The Division of the Roma and Travellers Team**

The main role of the Roma and Travellers team is to support the member states of the Council of Europe to adopt and implement documents that guarantee human rights and Roma inclusion standards. The work of the team is “based on strategic orientations agreed by the Committee of Ministers,” which transpires in action plans and other programmes.

From 2016- to 2019, the work of Roma and Travellers team was conducted under the umbrella of the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (the Thematic Action Plan) 2016-2019. The Thematic Action Plan was adopted to strengthen the actions initiated by European governments and stakeholders under the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted by CoE in 2010. It had three key priority areas: a) tackling anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination and crimes (“anti-Gypsyism”), b) demonstrating innovative models for inclusive policies for the most vulnerable, and c) promoting innovative models for local-level solutions.

The Thematic Action Plan included a specific objective on strengthening the participation and the self-organisation of Roma youth young Roma and Travellers. That objective was part of a larger CoE effort to double mainstream Roma youth. In that respect, the Roma and Travellers

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into National Roma Inclusion Strategies/Policies, following the CAHROM thematic visit to Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 4-6 June 2015 <<https://rm.coe.int/09000016808cbca5>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Council of Europe, Terms of Reference Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (Adi-Rom), 2019 <<https://rm.coe.int/adi-rom-2020-1-adi-rom-tor-en-26-11-19/16809e41eb>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Council of Europe, Terms of Reference Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (Adi-Rom), Members, 2019 <[https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/specific-tasks#{%2264450843%22:\[0\],\[0\]2264450854%22:\[0\],\[0\]2264450895%22:\[0\]}](https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/specific-tasks#{%2264450843%22:[0],[0]2264450854%22:[0],[0]2264450895%22:[0]})> accessed on October 14, 2020.

Team also contributed to the Council of Europe Roma Youth Action Plan implemented by the Youth Department.<sup>39</sup> And the team also addressed the situation of young Roma and Traveller LGBTI in collaborative initiatives with the Youth Department and the SOGI Unit.<sup>40</sup>

The Thematic Action Plan also prioritised activities that could empower Roma and Traveller women and girls. Empowerment and participation activities were included under the joint programmes of the EU/Council of Europe - ROMED, ROMACT, and ROMACTED.

Amongst the main achieved results<sup>41</sup> of the Thematic Action Plan was *Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)10 on improving access to justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe*, and the preparation of a draft *CM Recommendation on Roma and Traveller history teaching*, the provision of peer reviews through the thematic work, and reports of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM). Further, other activities which focused on co-operation and capacity-building were implemented in the framework of Joint Programmes with the European Commission, including “Inclusive Schools – Making a Difference for Roma Children (INSCHOOL)”,<sup>42</sup> “Roma and Traveller Women’s Access to Justice (JUSTROM)”,<sup>43</sup> “Building capacity at local level for the integration of Roma (ROMACT)”,<sup>44</sup> and “Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED)”,<sup>45</sup> and the establishment of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERiac)<sup>46</sup> in Berlin.

Building upon the Thematic Action Plan, the Roma and Travellers team developed a new Strategic Action Plan, which was adopted by the CM for the period from 2020 to 2025. The objectives of the Strategic Action Plan are: to promote and protect the human rights of Roma and Travellers; to combat antigypsyism and discrimination; and to foster inclusion in society.<sup>47</sup> A declared aim of the Strategic Action Plan is to pay attention to the issue of multiple discrimination and to the “intersectional needs of specific groups of Roma and Travellers who are particularly vulnerable.” To this end, support for Roma youth is included under several priorities of the plan, such as priority area *5.1. Combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination and supporting real and effective equality* where specific empowerment for particular groups, such as **Roma women and youth** is established.

The Strategic Action Plan does no longer include specific objectives regarding Roma youth. But as Aurora Ailincăi, Deputy Head of Division of the Roma and Travellers Team, told us, “when the Roma Youth Action Plan came to an end, the Youth Department asked us to take it over. Indeed, we looked into the objectives of the Roma Youth Action Plan and took some parts of it. But we could not take over everything. The Roma Youth Action Plan could not be completely absorbed by the Strategic Action Plan, as we had already had three priorities and

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<sup>39</sup> Expert Interview, Aurora Ailincăi, November 13, 2020.

<sup>40</sup> To read more about the initiative < <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi> > accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Implementation of the Roma and Traveller Action Plan (2016-2019) < <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/-/implementation-of-the-roma-and-traveller-action-plan-2016-2019->> > accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>42</sup> <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/inclusive-education-for-roma-children>

<sup>43</sup> <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/access-of-roma-and-traveller-women-to-justice>

<sup>44</sup> <http://coe-romact.org/>

<sup>45</sup> <https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/roma-local-governance/home>

<sup>46</sup> <https://eriac.org/>

<sup>47</sup> Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) < <https://rm.coe.int/coe-strategic-action-plan-for-roma-and-traveller-inclusion-en/16809fe0d0> > accessed 16 November 2020.

included Roma young people as beneficiaries in the three objectives of the Strategic Action Plan. Thus, we do not mention a specific objective on Roma youth, but in all the activities of the Strategic Action Plan we have indicators related to young people, and we target Roma young people.”<sup>48</sup>

The Strategic Action Plan aims to pay special attention to **Roma and Traveller women and youth** and their active participation in public or political life at the local and national levels. Priority 5.2. *Supporting democratic participation and promoting public trust and accountability* emphasizes that “Evidence has shown that Roma and Travellers, particularly women and youth, encounter a variety of social barriers and prejudices that severely impede their capacity to effectively participate in public and political life. (...) It is essential to enhance their political participation and representation to bring Roma citizens closer to local, national and European decision-making bodies and improve their active participation and interaction with public administration and their presence in the public sphere.”

Also, Roma youth are included in the area concerning (5.3.) *Supporting access to inclusive quality education and training*. The text recognizes that the need of support for the transition from education to employment as the number of young Roma who are “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (NEET) is extraordinarily high and that Roma youth, and particularly the NEETs, are by far the most disadvantaged youth within the EU and probably throughout the CoE.<sup>49</sup>

Specific projects implemented by the Roma and Travellers team have also paid attention to Roma youth participation. As Aurora Ailincăi described, “in our projects, especially in our big projects implemented in partnership with the European Commission, we look at the community actions composition, and we request gender balance and that Roma young people participate in the activities. We also organize Roma Political Schools and ensure that at least half the participants are women and half of more people are young. We work a lot on the empowerment of the young people. Sometimes, we have ad-hoc activities targeting youth, such as our summer schools for young people in North Macedonia or in Bosnia.”<sup>50</sup>

The Strategic Action Plan could serve as guidance for all member states of CoE in developing Roma youth policies and is meant to be a “toolbox” for the implementation of relevant initiatives. To ensure participation of the Roma youth in the Strategic Action Plan, the Council of Europe’s Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society may play a key role in involving more intentionally Roma and Traveller youth organisations and individuals.

Other elements in the work of the Roma and Traveller team are worth mentioning although they are not specifically included in the action plans, and thus, as Aurora Ailincăi also noted, “it is hard to see them, given that they are not mentioned in the objectives of the Strategic Action Plan.” In the past few years, the Roma and Traveller team has partnered with Central European University (CEU) in creating an internship programme for Roma young people. According to Ailincăi, the initiative aims to “increase the participation of Roma young people

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<sup>48</sup> Expert Interview, Aurora Ailincăi, November 13, 2020.

<sup>49</sup> Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) < <https://rm.coe.int/coe-strategic-action-plan-for-roma-and-traveller-inclusion-en/16809fe0d0> > accessed 16 November 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Expert Interview, Aurora Ailincăi, November 13, 2020.

in organisations and institutions, with a focus on ourselves, the Council of Europe.” Roma young people have been involved in an one year paid internship in various CoE departments, depending on their experience, including ECRI or the Youth Department.

At the same time, the Roma and Travellers team’s temporary contracts (three or six months) also included Roma young people. In fact, the Roma and Travellers team proactively promoted such opportunities using available data bases of Roma youth. Such temporary contracts helped interns to gain experience and be able to pass the exams to remain employed by the Council of Europe. “We do have now colleagues of Roma origins in the Council of Europe, not only in the Roma and Travellers team but also in other departments, including Distribution, ECRI, Minority Program...some months ago, I counted 13 Roma people in the Council of Europe,” told us Aurora Ailincăi.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Joint Council on Youth**

The Joint Council on Youth is the decision and policy-making body on the youth sector’s priorities, objectives, budgets, and mainstreaming youth policies across CoE, that “brings together the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ).”<sup>52</sup> Georgina Laboda of Phiren Amenca acts as the Roma rapporteur in the Joint Council on Youth.

Not only that the Joint Council on Youth plays a central role in moving forward the Roma Youth Recommendation, but it also has the power to include and budget targeted measures and mainstream Roma youth activities in its new Youth Sector Strategy mentioned above. Among the four thematic priorities of the Joint Council on Youth background document for the 2020-2030 strategy are access to rights and living together in peaceful and inclusive societies, which could involve and benefit more directly Roma youth. The priority on inclusive societies briefly mentions Roma youth:

This priority covers the Council of Europe youth sector’s well-established work on appreciation of diversity, peace building, combating all forms of racism and intolerance, intercultural dialogue and learning, and specific work with communities of young people structurally and disproportionately affected by such phenomena (Roma, refugees, LGBTQI, young people disabled by society).

And although the background document mentions Roma youth in relation to the priority on inclusive society,<sup>53</sup> *The Youth Sector Strategy 2030* developed by the Joint Council on Youth and adopted by the Committee of Ministers does not. By taking a race/ethnicity neutral approach in its core policy document, and thus, not recognising and including the specific inequalities and needs of marginalised youth groups, including Roma youth, the Joint Council on Youth and the CM may also contribute to reproducing racial disparities.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> For more information on the The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ): <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/joint-council-on-youth>

<sup>53</sup> Background document to the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030, January 2020 <<https://rm.coe.int/16809f69de>> accessed 18 August 2020.

## The European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ)

The work of the European Steering Committee for Youth<sup>54, 55</sup> is also relevant for Roma youth. CDEJ works in close cooperation with the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) within the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) to prioritise the work of CoE in the youth sector. Among the responsibilities of CDEJ, formed by representations of ministries or bodies responsible for youth matters, are the following: elaborate youth policy standards and instruments; advise governments on their youth policy; implement the youth-related elements of the thematic and country-specific Council of Europe action plans; take due account of a gender perspective, building cohesive societies, and promoting and protecting rights of persons with disabilities in the performance of its tasks.<sup>56</sup> Thus, as the CDEJ plays a relevant role in advising governments on their youth policy, it may recommend more attention to the specific Roma youth needs in developing such mainstream policies at the national level.

The CDEJ members should in principle ensure a mainstreaming approach and a link between the activities of the Roma Youth Action Plans and the national and European youth-policy stakeholders in the Council of Europe. CDEJ was asked to provide input on the needs and situation of Roma youth as well as to promote the inclusion of Roma youth in policies in countries where structural inequalities and anti-Romani discrimination and unequal access to education persist.<sup>57</sup> It was also involved in actions to empower Roma youth and encourage their participation in the decisional processes concerning young people. And in this sense, a few events have been organised with CDEJ's partnership, including the "Roma Youth – Building Bridges" study session in 2015 in Budapest and the 2019 "Roma Youth Participation: What Now?" seminar.

## The Advisory Council on Youth

The Advisory Council on Youth is the non-governmental partner in the co-management structure of Council of Europe's youth sector. As Pia Slogar, member of the Advisory Council on behalf of Youth of European Nationalities, described it, "the role of the Advisory Council is to bring youth perspectives, youth voices, voices from the ground at the policy level. We are trying to bring these youth perspectives into the Joint Council on Youth, but also to push and mainstream youth issues in cooperation with different bodies of the Council of Europe."<sup>58</sup>

Together with CDEJ, the Advisory is tasked to connect the Roma Youth Action Plans with the national and European youth-policy stakeholders in the Council of Europe. The Advisory Council on Youth has responsibilities to support Roma youth movements. It takes the role of

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<sup>54</sup> CDEJ was established by the Committee of Ministers under Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and in accordance with Resolution [CM/Res\(2011\)24](#).

<sup>55</sup> CDEJ was established by the Committee of Ministers under Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and in accordance with Resolution [CM/Res\(2011\)24](#).

<sup>56</sup> European Steering Committee For Youth (CDEJ), Resolution CM/Res(2011)24 on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods <<https://rm.coe.int/cdej-terms-of-reference-2020-2021-en/16809961fd>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>57</sup> European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), Youth Policy in Romania. Report by an international group of experts appointed by the Council of Europe, 2000 <[https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Romania\\_2001\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Review.pdf](https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Romania_2001_Youth_Policy_Review.pdf)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>58</sup> Expert Interview with Pia Slogar, September 29, 2020.

raising awareness on the need for political and financial actions for initiatives that focus on further capacity-building of young Roma and their organisations.<sup>59</sup>

The Advisory Council on Youth has long pointed out at the lack of participation, representation, and leadership of Roma youth in policies and youth structures. Notably, in a 2015 statement, the Advisory Council on Youth called upon European regional and local authorities and youth structures “to support the efforts of young Roma to improve European youth and Roma policies, and to initiate pilot programmes and initiatives by creating spaces, means and tools for participation of young Roma as full citizens.” The Advisory Council on Youth also encouraged the European Youth Forum and National Youth Councils “to further explore possibilities of enabling Roma youth participation in their activities and structures in order to truly reflect the needs of all young people at European and national level.”<sup>60</sup>

Occasionally, the Advisory Youth Council made public statements in support of Roma youth and their advocacy work. For instance, on May 16, 2020, to mark Roma Resistance Day, the Advisory Youth Council’s statement noted that:

Today, we commemorate the dreadful events that took place during the Nazi regime. The present, however, shows that the mechanisms that create and reinforce stereotypes, anti-Roma structural racism, and the enforced criminalisation of marginalised communities are just some of the continuing phenomena in contemporary society.<sup>61</sup>

The Advisory Council on Youth has included Roma youth organisations in several mandates. And in the past, the Committee of Ministers also invited FERYP (e.g., Ramiza Sakip, Adem Ademi) to sit in the Advisory Council before the Parliamentary Assembly. A recent gain in the participation of Roma youth and their representative organisations in CoE’s mainstream work is the election of Georgina Laboda, a Roma young leader representing Roma youth organisation Phiren Amenca, in the Advisory Council on Youth. Phiren Amenca became a member of the Advisory Council on Youth in 2020, and early in the process, Georgina Laboda understands the weight of paving the way forward as the first and the only Roma voice in the Advisory Youth Council. As she describes her work,

I focus on Roma youth, but I also work with the other members on other youth-related topics. I always try to find opportunities to include Roma youth in mainstream youth initiatives and policies. I see my participation in the Advisory Council as a great opportunity. The other members of the Advisory Council ask questions and are interested to learn more about Roma youth and engage with topics related to their needs.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See statements of the Advisory Council on Youth regarding the situation of Roma and Roma youth: 2015 <<https://rm.coe.int/0900001680707df3>>, 2017 <<https://rm.coe.int/1680707dbd>>, 2019 <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/-/international-roma-day-statement-by-the-advisory-council-on-youth>>, 2020 <<https://rm.coe.int/romani-resistance-day-16-may/16809e4ece>>, <<https://rm.coe.int/2020-04-08-international-roma-day/16809e3391>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>60</sup> Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth, Statement on Roma Youth, 2015 <<https://rm.coe.int/0900001680707df3>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>61</sup> Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth, Statement on Romani Resistance Day, 16 May 2020 <<https://rm.coe.int/romani-resistance-day-16-may/16809e4ece>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>62</sup> Expert Interview with Georgina Laboda, October 14, 2020.

In addition, Pia Slogar, who shares the portfolio on Roma and other autochthonous minorities in the Advisory Council of youth with Georgina Laboda, explained how in their joined work, they try to underline that young people are not a heterogeneous group, but rather “an extremely diverse group of young people and that the different experiences, especially lived experiences of young people need to be recognised and underlined in youth and other general policies. And Georgina and I are trying to make sure that the Roma youth-related issues are also mainstreamed.”<sup>63</sup>

Generally, some important steps forward have been taken in mainstreaming or double mainstreaming Roma youth and their needs within CoE. As the 2016 evaluation of the RYAP highlighted,<sup>64</sup> some milestones have been achieved through participation and double mainstreaming: passing of a Resolution by the CLRAE; appointment of a CAHROM special rapporteur on Youth; organising a CDEJ Summer University; a CAHROM Thematic Study visit on Roma youth to Slovenia and the Roma youth meeting in Ukraine. And as noted by the 2019 evaluation of RYAP, “one of the most important impacts had been making Roma youth issues visible and bringing them onto the agenda of programmes and policy of European organisations and the Council of Europe member states.”<sup>65</sup>

However, more is needed to target and double mainstream the needs of Roma youth within the CoE structures. Throughout the implementation of the RYAP, CoE, the evaluators and young people identified deficiencies related to CoE’s double mainstreaming approach. For instance, Roma youth experts remain rarely included as educators and trainers of service providers on Roma history, anti-Roma racism, discrimination, and human rights. Moreover, Roma topics are yet to be intentionally and structurally included in the Council of Europe mainstream work, including in training courses or seminars on human rights and democracy, and other activities and standards. And finally, the specific needs and challenges of Roma youth are rarely included in mainstream CoE youth documents.

A Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation on Roma youth participation would help guide CoE structures and other intergovernmental organisations to target and double mainstream Roma youth in their policy documents and programmes.

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<sup>63</sup> Expert Interview with Pia Slogar, September 29, 2020.

<sup>64</sup> Yael Ohana and Marija Bulat, Evaluation of the Council of Europe’s Roma Youth Action Plan, Council of Europe, 2016 <<https://rm.coe.int/16805a9ad7>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>65</sup> Mayte Martin and Lisa Rose, Study on the results and impact of the Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2019), Council of Europe, 2019 <<https://rm.coe.int/study-on-impact-of-roma-youth-action-plan/16809ca31d>> accessed 18 August 2020.

## The CoE Youth Department Work with Roma Youth

Within the Directorate of Democratic Participation, the Youth Department works towards strengthening the capacity of young people to access their human rights, “facilitating their autonomy and participation and help member states develop the requisite youth policies.” It supports “young people who are active in civil society and work with them on how to combat discrimination and exclusion.”<sup>66</sup>

In the intergovernmental context, given its direct focus on youth, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe has had a unique position, vision, and expertise in engaging with Roma and Traveller youth towards strengthening their voices, participation, leadership, representation, and skills. As the *Youth Sector Strategy 2030* report underlines,<sup>67</sup>

... the Council of Europe youth sector was the first European institution working with (rather than about), *inter alia* young Roma

Furthermore, the CoE’s Youth Department not only that it engaged in distinctive Roma youth activities and programmes, but it also contributed to advancing the topic in other sectors of the Council of Europe, within national youth councils as well as international and national youth organisations. It has engaged in both targeting and double mainstreaming the needs of Roma youth.

The primary sign of normality in CoE’s work with Roma youth is that it has involved Roma youth and Roma youth networks not only as beneficiaries of training courses, strategies, action plans but also as leaders or contributors in the development and the evaluation of its programmes. That is rarely the case in Roma or Roma youth work by European or national institutions. Throughout the past three decades, the Youth Department has applied several methods to support Roma youth.

## Capacity Strengthening of Roma Youth Organisations

In the early 1990s, the Youth Department’s initiatives with Roma youth comprised primarily in training courses, such as *Young Roma, Gypsies and Travellers in Europe: Situation and Perspectives of Young People from Roma/Gypsy and Travellers Backgrounds in Europe*.<sup>68</sup> In those early stages, Roma youth leaders from various parts of Europe strengthened their leadership skills. Roma youth leaders started to make their way into decision-making processes and in the Roma movement. Most importantly, Roma youth leaders began to create youth networks and initiatives.

The training courses organised by CoE on discrimination, anti-Roma racism/ anti-Gypsyism or social rights have been of great value for Roma and non-Roma youth alike, as highlighted by the evaluation reports. For instance, from 2016 to 2019, the RYAP included 13 training activities: around 193 young Roma and Roma activists participated in training of trainers and

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<sup>66</sup> The internal mission of the Youth Department.

<sup>67</sup> Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030 <<https://rm.coe.int/16809991a4>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>68</sup> Held at the European Youth Centre from Strasbourg, 1995.



training of facilitators conducted by the Youth Department. These events encouraged solidarity among Roma people and their allies. As Zalina Dabla, Estonian Roma activist affirmed,

Having been involved in civil society for ten years, I've seen how much it helped me to benefit from human rights education and other activities implemented by the Council of Europe. It gave me the power to become involved more meaningfully in work for my communities.<sup>69</sup>

The 2016 evaluation report underlined that the Youth Department's work, including the RYAP, has contributed to the establishment of Roma youth networks and organisations and the facilitation of their cooperation, trust-building, and networking.<sup>70</sup> And indeed, alongside other organisations and initiatives, CoE nudged the establishment of new European Roma youth organisations, such as the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) and the creation of national youth organisations (e.g., the Roma Student Association in Romania). Eventually, some of the training courses and activities of the Youth Department were organised in partnership with FERYP and other partners. Furthermore, in recent decades, Roma youth organisations, such as the International Roma Youth Network - TernYpe<sup>71</sup> and Phiren Amenca,<sup>72</sup> have been established by Roma leaders supported throughout the RYAPs. These organisations also mobilised young Roma at the national level and implemented campaigns or events: Position Paper of the Roma Youth Networks on the Post-2020 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies;<sup>73</sup> So keres Europa?! – Roma Youth Social Forum 2019.<sup>74</sup>

The 2016 evaluation quantified 19 activities with educational objectives that aimed to strengthen the capacity of Roma youth and their organisations or other stakeholders engaged in work with/for Roma.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, as shown in the 2019 evaluation, RYAP provided financial and operational support to several Roma youth NGOs and networks.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, to boost the growth and impact of Roma individuals, networks, and organisations, the RYAP also implemented several long term projects and activities on hate speech, anti-Roma racism/anti-Gypsyism, multiple/intersectional discrimination, the Roma Holocaust, or Roma identity and culture.

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<sup>69</sup> Expert Interview with Zalina Dabla, September 25, 2019 in Strasbourg, France.

<sup>70</sup> Yael Ohana and Marija Bulat, Evaluation of the Council of Europe's Roma Youth Action Plan, Council of Europe, 2016 <<https://rm.coe.int/16805a9ad7>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>71</sup> The ternYpe International Roma Youth Network webpage <<http://www.ternype.eu/>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>72</sup> The Phiren Amenca International Network webpage <<https://phirenamenca.eu/>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>73</sup> Phiren Amenca, Position Paper of the Roma Youth Networks on the Post-2020 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, 2019

<<https://phirenamenca.eu/position-paper-of-the-roma-youth-networks-on-the-post-2020-eu-framework-for-national-roma-integration-strategies/>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>74</sup> Phiren Amenca, So keres Europa?! – Roma Youth Social Forum 2019 campaign description, <<https://phirenamenca.eu/so-keres-europa-roma-youth-social-forum-2019/>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>75</sup> Yael Ohana and Marija Bulat, Evaluation of the Council of Europe's Roma Youth Action Plan, Council of Europe, 2016 <<https://rm.coe.int/16805a9ad7>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Mayte Martin and Lisa Rose, Study on the results and impact of the Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2019), Council of Europe, 2019 <<https://rm.coe.int/study-on-impact-of-roma-youth-action-plan/16809ca31d>> accessed 18 August 2020.

However, the work of the Youth Department was not enough as it could only include a limited number of young people. And the voices of Roma young people in Europe remain rarely heard in policy-making processes at the EU level and the national levels. Their participation in civic, political, and policy processes is met by a variety of challenges, including organisational capacity and resources. For instance, as concluded during the 2019 seminar, in some countries, there were only a few Roma youth organisations or none.

### **Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP)**

Another step in the work of the Youth Department was to add, alongside training courses and capacity strengthening, some other concrete programmes, in particular, the Roma Youth Action Plan implemented in two phases in 2011-2015 and 2016-2019. Recognising the specific challenges faced by Roma youth, as a result of past and present structural inequalities and racism, the Youth Department took a more targeted approach in developing strategic plans of action and programmes to benefit Roma youngsters. The RYAP and the programmes also included activities implemented by other sectors of the CoE and intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations.

Across CoE member States, Roma young leaders participated in processes aiming to reflect on their needs and establish priorities. In the past decade, three events of the Youth Department of CoE, in particular, were essential in setting the Roma youth framework for action.

The 2011 Roma Youth Conference, “*Voicing the Aspirations and Projects of Roma Youth in the Council of Europe*,”<sup>77</sup> gathered 60 young Roma leaders. The participants reflected on the challenges of Roma youth in their countries and proposed solutions. Their proposals were reflected in the soon to be adopted *Roma Youth Action Plan*,<sup>78</sup> implemented between 2011-2015. This innovative document emphasised the urgency of “re-placing youth on the map of youth policy and Roma policies.”<sup>79</sup> It also pointed out at a critical challenge: because of severe poverty and the responsibilities that come with this burden, many Roma young children enter into adulthood without going through an entire youth period. The 2011-2015 RYAP served as a basis for working on issues such as strengthening participation and identity of Roma youth, combating discrimination, human rights education, as well as for mainstreaming Roma youth matters in youth policy and programmes for Roma. Participants at the 2011 conference underscored a fundamental expectation: “the Roma Youth Action Plan will not be different unless it is put into practice.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ivan Ivanov, The Right to Be Young. Conference Report, Roma Youth Conference: Voicing the Aspirations and Projects of Roma Youth in the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2011

<<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046d029>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>78</sup> Council of Europe, The Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP), 2015

<[https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806abde5#:~:text=The%20Roma%20Youth%20Action%20Plan%20\(RYAP\)%20is%20a%20project%20of%20Roma%20young%20people%20in%20Europe.&text=The%20Roma%20Youth%20Action%20Plan%20was%20initiated%20in%202011%20to%202010%20Strasbourg%20Declaration%20on%20Roma](https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806abde5#:~:text=The%20Roma%20Youth%20Action%20Plan%20(RYAP)%20is%20a%20project%20of%20Roma%20young%20people%20in%20Europe.&text=The%20Roma%20Youth%20Action%20Plan%20was%20initiated%20in%202011%20to%202010%20Strasbourg%20Declaration%20on%20Roma)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>79</sup> Roma Youth Conference 2015, Presentation, Programme, List of participants, Report of the conference, Conclusions of the Conference, Guidelines for Implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan 2016-2020

<<https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/roma-youth-conference-2015>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>80</sup> Ivan Ivanov, The Right to Be Young. Conference Report, Roma Youth Conference: Voicing the Aspirations and Projects of Roma Youth in the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2011

The 2015 Roma Youth Conference, “*Issues and future policy orientations for the participation and inclusion of Roma youth*,” brought together 100 participants from 30 countries. The young leaders attending the conference reflected on the implementation of the first phase of the RYAP and discussed “youth policies that reflect and include the needs and aspirations of young Roma.” Based on input from the participants, the second phase of RYAP was also developed. As a follow-up, the Joint Council on Youth adopted the “*Guidelines for the implementation of the RYAP 2016-2020*.”<sup>81</sup> The approach agreed was to engage with policymakers through advocacy, while continuing to support capacity building, youth participation, and double mainstreaming.<sup>82</sup> Another important outcome of the 2015 Roma youth conference was *The Declaration of the Roma Youth*, which underlined the continuous neglect by policymakers of issues related to Roma youth:

The European society can only be powerful if it has a strong Roma youth. Therefore, all relevant policy measures have to be done, by, with and for the Roma Youth in respectful and equal cooperation with the majority society.

The 2019 Roma Youth Seminar, *Roma Youth Participation: What now?* brought together thirty participants. The first part of the seminar was dedicated to discussing the challenges, results, and achievements of the *Roma Youth Action Plan 2016 - 2019*. In the second part of the agenda, the participants identified and reflected on current realities, needs, and policy gaps relating to Roma youth participation and inclusion. The participants also shared information about recent activities and priorities of civil society organisations working with Roma youth. These conversations helped the participants prioritise recommendations and conclusions for the future work and standards of the Council of Europe, member States, and civil society organisations. The participants concluded CoE needed to develop a new action plan/programme as well as a Recommendation on Roma youth participation and countering anti-Roma racism/anti-Gypsyism.

The Roma Youth Actions Plan of the Youth Departments implemented from 2011 onwards included other concrete initiatives. For instance, according to the 2016 evaluation, the 2011-2015 RYAP had “2300 direct participants participating in 31 different activities out of which some were first of their kind for the Roma and youth fields, representing important innovations.”<sup>83</sup> Additionally, the 2019 evaluation mentions another 1589 participants in the 2016-2019 RYAP activities.<sup>84</sup> Also, the participants at the 2019 *Roma Youth Participation: What now?* Seminar found positive and useful all the opportunities and spaces young Roma people had in fostering their identity and ability to reflect and react to encounters of injustice.

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<<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046d029>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>81</sup> Council of Europe, Guidelines for implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan 2016 – 2020

<<https://rm.coe.int/16806926ac>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>82</sup> Defined as the inclusion of youth issues in Council of Europe’s Roma policies and programmes, and the inclusion of Roma youth issues in the Council of Europe’s youth policies.

<sup>83</sup> Yael Ohana and Marija Bulat, Evaluation of the Council of Europe’s Roma Youth Action Plan, Council of Europe, 2016 <<https://rm.coe.int/16805a9ad7>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>84</sup> Mayte Martin and Lisa Rose, Study on the results and impact of the Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2019), Council of Europe, 2019 <<https://rm.coe.int/study-on-impact-of-roma-youth-action-plan/16809ca31d>> accessed 18 August 2020.

The materials produced and the activities organised within RYAP to commemorate the Roma victims of the Holocaust have been assessed by Roma youth as some of the most successful ones. As showed in the 2016 evaluation of RYAP, the commemoration events for the Roma Holocaust Day brought together more than a thousand young people each year. *Dikh He Na Bister* also powerfully took leadership in the Roma movement and created a tradition to commemorate the Roma victims of the Holocaust (August 2) and the Roma Resistance (May 16).

The “*Right to Remember. A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide*”<sup>85</sup> was published in two editions: 2014 and 2017. Its primary purpose was to provide information about the Roma Holocaust. Nevertheless, it also succeeded to create understanding about the current struggle of Roma communities, thought the teaching of the past. The handbook was addressed to teachers, NGOs, and youth organisations. The 2019 evaluation also highlighted the critical role of RYAP in the commemoration of the Roma Holocaust and its educational and awareness function through the *Right to Remember* manual:

The manual *Right to Remember* as well as the rest of the handbooks developed by the Council of Europe and their translations have been regarded as important educational tools which will have a lifetime beyond the RYAP project and will continue being useful.<sup>86</sup>

The participants at the 2019 seminar not only backed up the relevance of commemoration events supported by CoE but also welcomed the few existing official opportunities at the European, national, and local levels to commemorate and memorialise critical moments in Roma history. However, as underlined in the 2016 evaluation, most of these activities were organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and by Roma youth networks, and rarely by or with support from governments or National Youth Councils.<sup>87</sup> Also, as the Roma young people emphasised during the 2019 seminar, some European countries do not even recognise and commemorate the Roma victims of the Holocaust. Moreover, some government representatives refuse to support commemoration events and neglect to include the Roma Holocaust in history books at the national level.

And it is in the context of such challenging realities that the Committee of Ministers adopted its *Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2*, which calls on member States to include the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials.<sup>88</sup> And in that context, the Youth Department may expand its memorialization work to other instances of state-sponsored injustices, such as the enslavement in Romania or the *Great Gypsy Round-up* in Spain, which also need more awareness, materials, recognition, and commemorative events. In addition,

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<sup>85</sup> Ellie Keen, *Right to Remember. A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide*, Council of Europe, 2017 <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/right-to-remember>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>86</sup> Mayte Martin and Lisa Rose, *Study on the results and impact of the Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2019)*, Council of Europe, 2019 <<https://rm.coe.int/study-on-impact-of-roma-youth-action-plan/16809ca31d>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>87</sup> Yael Ohana and Marija Bulat, *Evaluation of the Council of Europe’s Roma Youth Action Plan*, Council of Europe, 2016 <<https://rm.coe.int/16805a9ad7>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>88</sup> *Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials*, July 1, 2020 <[https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016809ee48c](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016809ee48c)> accessed 18 August 2020.

Roma and non-Roma youth need more and diverse formal and non-formal opportunities to learn about Roma history.

The RYAP (2011-2015 & 2016-2019) also involved the development of resources and educational materials aiming to contribute to strengthening Roma youth identity as well as their skills and tactics to fight against discrimination, including through human rights education. The publications were created as tools for non-formal education, as awareness-raising materials, and even as resources to serve formal education.

The educational manuals produced within the RYAP, and more so their translation in various languages represented necessary and pioneering tools for combating racism and intersectional discrimination. A relevant and impactful resource is the “*Mirrors. Manual on combating antigypsyism through human rights education*,”<sup>89</sup> published in 2015. The purpose of the manual was to “enable young people – Roma and non-Roma – to identify and denounce prejudice wherever they find it” and “to build empathy and solidarity in the movement to end antigypsyism.” But what was distinctive about the resource was that it also targeted formal educational programmes, providing teachers and students with materials to engage both Roma and non-Roma in activities. Its benefit also stayed in consolidating knowledge in society about Roma history.

The “*Barabaripen. Young Roma speak about multiple discrimination*”<sup>90</sup> publication shed light on personal stories of young Roma people in dealing with multiple discrimination. Additionally, it included an overview of the international and European human rights standards addressing multiple discrimination and explanations on the concept. Identified as a need by the Roma youth at the 2011 Conference, this 2014 publication was a result of cooperation between the youth and the LGBT sectors of the Council of Europe.

The “*Roma Youth Participation in Action Roma youth participation: good practices, from the local to the European level*,”<sup>91</sup> published in 2015, collected successful examples of Roma youth participation across Europe.<sup>92</sup> The publication offered evidence for further development of youth policies, while also called for support for Roma youth at the national and European levels.

Several campaigns also contributed significantly at the national or European level in raising awareness about anti-Roma discrimination and the history of Roma: *Dosta! Campaign*,<sup>93</sup> which was launched as a joint programme with the European Commission in 2006 and was opened to all member States since 2008; and *Dikh He Na Bister* events, which have been

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<sup>89</sup> Ellie Keen, *Mirrors Manual on combating antigypsyism through human rights education*, Council of Europe, 2015 <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/mirrors>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>90</sup> Lucie Fremlova, Mara Georgescu (Eds.), *Barabaripen Young Roma speak about multiple discrimination*, Council of Europe, 2014 <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/barabaripen>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>91</sup> Nik Paddison, Mara Georgescu (Eds.), *Roma youth participation: good practices, from the local to the European level*, Council of Europe, 2015 <<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806438da>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>92</sup> Including countries such as Germany, Romania, Macedonia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal, the UK.

<sup>93</sup> The Dosta! campaign webpage <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/dosta-campaign>> accessed 18 August 2020.

organised annually and brought together up to 1000 young people to commemorate the Roma victims of the Holocaust and the Roma resistance.

Finally, two evaluation reports were prepared at the end of each cycle of implementation of the RYAPs: “*Evaluation and the impact of the Roma Youth Action Plan 2011 – 2015*”<sup>94</sup> and the “*Study on the results and impact of the Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2019)*.”<sup>95</sup> And along with the 2011, 2015, and 2019 conferences, these reports collected feedback from Roma young people themselves on how the RYAPs were implemented and what was needed further.

Overall, the work of the Youth Department with Roma young people in the past 30 years, and in particular the RYAP, has substantively support Roma youth and boosted participation. In addition, in drafted and implementing the RYAP, The Youth Department consulted with the Informal Contact Group set up in 2011.<sup>96</sup> The Informal Contact Group involved Roma youth organisations and platforms as well as representatives of other organisations and intergovernmental bodies, including OSCE, the Open Society Foundations, the European Roma Rights Centre, the Roma Education Fund, the European Youth Forum. The role of the Informal contact Groups was to coordinate and promote “communication among the partners thus building synergies and securing maximum impact of their activities.”<sup>97</sup>

The Joint Council on Youth’s Background Document enumerated the RYAP amongst a list of CoE youth sector’s “striking professional legacy of achievement.”<sup>98</sup> As Matic Germovšek Žnidaršič, CMJ Rapporteur on Roma Issues, recommended during the 41st meeting of CMJ on 15-16 October 2019:

It shall be of the highest priority of the Joint Council on Youth to follow up on the Roma Youth Action Plan 2014-2019 in order to ensure that Roma Youth participation remains in the programmes of the Youth Department of the CoE. Knowing that Roma youth is one of the most unrepresented, marginalised and discriminated minority groups, it should be CMJ’s common responsibility to promote and protect Roma youth interests.... Two proposals in particular require specific attention by the Joint Council on Youth: The creation by/within the Youth Department of a Roma Youth portfolio or Contact point to ensure the inclusion of the Roma youth in standards, commitments and processes; The preparation of a Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers to the member states of the Council of Europe on measures to support the Roma youth participation and inclusion. Such a document would be also of great value in the advocacy efforts by youth organisations. It could be prepared jointly with the CAHROM or its successor body.

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<sup>94</sup> Yael Ohana and Marija Bulat, Evaluation of the Council of Europe’s Roma Youth Action Plan, Council of Europe, 2016 <<https://rm.coe.int/16805a9ad7>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>95</sup> Dr. Mayte Martin and Lisa Rose, Study on the results and impact of the Roma Youth Action Plan (2016-2019), Council of Europe, 2019 <<https://rm.coe.int/study-on-impact-of-roma-youth-action-plan/16809ca31d>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>96</sup> <http://coe-romact.org/sites/default/files/leaflets/RYP%20Evaluation%20CFEI.pdf>

<sup>97</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/16806abde5>

<sup>98</sup> Background document to the Council of Europe youth sector strategy 2030, January 2020 <<https://rm.coe.int/16809f69de>> accessed 18 August 2020.

## Roma Youth in the Work of Other Intergovernmental Organisations

To discuss the work of the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, we mostly engaged with available reports and programme information publicly available. Thus, the summaries below can only be regarded as brief snapshots of these programmes, as substantive research is needed to understand their strengths, limitations, and impact on Roma youth.

### The European Union

The European Union (EU) has acknowledged that it holds the responsibility to develop policies and work with the Member States (MS) to ensure that the values of the Charter of Fundamental Rights also apply to the Roma. To this end, in the past few decades, a series of targeted policies, programmes, and funding were made available through the European Commission to the MSs to work toward improving the situation of Roma in each country. At the same time, the European Parliament has also adopted several targeted resolutions on Roma rights, the commemoration of the Roma victims of the Holocaust, or on the assessment of the EU Roma Framework. Yet, the mainstream policies of the EU have been reluctant in recognising the specific needs of Roma and Roma youth, engaging in a more racial/ethnicity neutral approach. And therefore, as a 2018 evaluation report concludes, 88.9% of the respondents in an open public consultation concluded that “the lack of effective mainstreaming of Roma integration in policy as one of the main challenges at EU level in the 2011-2016 period.”<sup>99</sup>

### Targeted EU policies

#### The Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies

The Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies was the EU’s first targeted Roma policy. In 2011, the EU adopted this document around four key areas: education, employment, healthcare, and housing.<sup>100</sup> The Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions asked MSs to develop national Roma strategies. The Roma Framework took a targeted approach:

To achieve significant progress towards Roma integration, it is now crucial to step up a gear and ensure that national, regional and local integration policies focus on Roma in a clear and specific way, and address the needs of Roma with explicit measures to prevent and compensate for disadvantages they face.

However, Roma youth were minimally mentioned in the EU Framework. And overall, the approach on youth has been weak and insubstantial. The document narrowly focused on supporting Roma children’s participation in primary education and ‘encouraging’ Roma youth

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<sup>99</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document. Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, Brussels, 2018 <[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/swd\\_2018\\_480\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/swd_2018_480_1.pdf)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>100</sup> European Commission, COM(2011) 173 final \*/ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1444910104414&uri=CELEX:52011DC0173>> accessed 18 August 2020.

to enrol in high schools and universities. There was no close similarity and correspondence between the EU Roma Framework and the EU's Europe 2020 Strategy when it comes to the objectives, hopes, expectations, and benchmarks for higher education and employment opportunities for young people. For instance, the EU Roma Framework aimed to ensure that all Roma children have access "at least" to primary school, but yet, it only "encourage[d]" the Roma to "also" participate in secondary and tertiary education. In contrast, Europe 2020's goal was to increase "the share of the population aged 30–34 having completed higher education from 31% to at least 40% in 2020." False assumptions about Roma culture as one that exhibits disinterest in education may have informed not only the EU Roma Framework but also policies at the national level, which also formulated low goals and expectations regarding the education of Romani children and youth.<sup>101</sup>

A 2020 EC evaluation of the EU Roma Framework showed that the framework did not consider the specific needs of Roma youth in employment, too. And, as the assessment emphasises, there is "**an increase in the level of Roma youth (aged 16 to 24) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) from 56 % in 2011 to 63 % in 2016.**"<sup>102</sup> The evaluation report also underlined as well that at the national level "only a small number of countries include[e] references to the needs or special situation of young Roma in their NRIS [National Roma Integration Strategies]."<sup>103</sup>

The participation of Roma youth in the implementation and the evaluation of the EU Roma Framework and the respective Roma National Strategies was also poorly addressed. The EU and national consultation processes concerning the EU Roma Framework did not adequately present and address the needs of Roma youth.<sup>104</sup> And as Mustafa Jakupov concluded,<sup>105</sup>

The needs of Roma youth, as much as the needs of Roma women or LGBT+, are too often cross-cutting as opposed to being targeted and tackled through intersectional approaches.

In October 2020, the European Commission has launched a new "EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation."<sup>106</sup> According to the interview with the EC DG Justice,

In view of its post-2020 initiative on Roma, the European Commission plans to target Roma youth both horizontally and explicitly. In doing so, a specific EU headline target will be established aiming to ensure for example that by 2030 the majority of Roma youth

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<sup>101</sup> Margareta Matache in *Biased Elites, Unfit Policies: Reflections on the Lacunae of Roma Integration Strategies*, European Review Journal. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

<sup>102</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document. Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, Brussels, 2018 <[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/swd\\_2018\\_480\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/swd_2018_480_1.pdf)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>103</sup> European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document. Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, Brussels, 2018 <[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/swd\\_2018\\_480\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/swd_2018_480_1.pdf)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>104</sup> Simona Torotcoi, *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*, Phiren Amenca International Network, 2020.

<sup>105</sup> Expert Interview with Mustafa Jakupov, July 17, 2020.

<sup>106</sup> European Commission, The new EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation (full package), 07 October 2020 <[https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/new-eu-roma-strategic-framework-equality-inclusion-and-participation-full-package\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/new-eu-roma-strategic-framework-equality-inclusion-and-participation-full-package_en)> accessed 18 August 2020.



complete at least upper secondary education, or to ensure that by 2030 less than one in three Roma youth is in education, employment or training.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, since participation and empowerment will be among the main pillars of the new initiatives, the Commission is foreseeing a wide range of activities both at the European and at the national level meant to boost the active participation of Roma youth in the national and European structures.<sup>108</sup>

The new framework proposes seven objectives to enhance Roma equality, inclusion, and participation at the European and national levels. The post-2020 framework maintains the four sectorial objectives which focus, similarly to the previous framework, on education, employment, housing and health, to which it adds three horizontal objectives in the areas of equality, inclusion, and participation.

Recognising that in the previous ten years “the share of Roma youth not in employment, education or training has even increased,” the new EU framework addresses the needs of Roma youth in two of the sectorial objectives, respectively education and employment. The framework sets as an EU target to “[r]educe the gap in upper secondary completion by at least one third” and to “[c]ut the gap in NEET rate by at least half.” The minimum goal is to ensure that by 2030 the majority of Roma youth complete at least upper secondary education and that less one in three Roma youth is not in education, employment, or training.

EU action and support are also envisioned in the new framework to promote Roma participation, inclusion and diversity through the following measures: “[t]o encourage the active engagement of Roma, particularly women and youth, a platform representative should be elected to ensure transnational networking between national and European Roma platforms, **while Roma youth should be offered dedicated traineeships or junior positions in national structures linked to the implementation of national Roma platforms.**”

Importantly, the EC also makes recommendations for the national strategies to be developed by member States until September 2021, and recommends as a minimum to elaborate **targets and measures for specific groups, young people included**. It also invites the Member States with significant Roma populations to commit to more ambitious goals to “ensure national consultation and dialogue empowering Roma (in particular young people and women).” To promote and support equality and fight antigypsyism [anti-Roma racism], the Commission states that will also empower and highlight Roma young people and women as role models in diverse communities.

The new framework promises to be consistent in actions with other EU policies, and thus to mainstream Roma issues. In the case of young Roma people, possible measures to increase access and readiness for the job market could be available by utilizing the reinforced youth guarantee - ‘Youth Employment Support: a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation.’<sup>109</sup> Further possibilities of support for youth employment measures will also be available as part of the

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<sup>107</sup> The 2016 [EU MIDS II](#) finds, found that 63% of Roma, aged 16-24, were not employed in education and training, at the time of the survey.

<sup>108</sup> Written response received from the EC DG Justice Roma Team (Lavinia Banu) on September 17, 2020.

<sup>109</sup> Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on A Bridge to Jobs - Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee {SWD(2020) 124 final} <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0277&from=EN>> accessed 18 August 2020.

Recovery Plan for Europe, Next Generation EU,<sup>110</sup> through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (EUR 560 billion proposed) and REACT-EU (EUR 55 billion proposed). However, as underlined in this report, these mainstream mechanisms have very weak references, if any, to Roma youth expressly and no indicators are set for the inclusion of Roma young people in these policies, which makes their possibilities of accessing these funds dependent on the will and availability of the Members States.

Also, the new EU Framework has little ambitions regarding the access of Roma youth to higher education and the necessary conditions to get there. As the ERRC pointed out the framework “does little to address the persistent segregation of Romani school children.”<sup>111</sup>

### Mainstream EU policies

Within the mainstream policies and programmes of the EU regarding youth, there can be identified various levels of explicit inclusion of Roma youth. As the EC DG Justice Roma team stated in our interview, there have been implemented several measures targeting Roma youth: “over the years, the European Commission aimed to empower Roma youth through various initiatives, such as the EU wide campaign *For Roma with Roma*,<sup>112</sup> which promoted the concept of young Roma ambassadors, especially concerning media coverage on Roma across the Member States.”<sup>113</sup>

As early as 1999, before countries with large Roma population, such as Romania or Bulgaria, joined the European community, the EU assisted Central and Eastern European countries through the Phare programme.

**The Phare programme** supported, among other issues, Roma related projects in the candidate countries. Some Roma young people participated in several “Phare 1999” and “The Youth programmes of the European Community” projects in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia. The EC aimed at implementing activities, such as youth exchanges, involving Roma youth; Roma youth leader training projects; transnational information projects involving Roma youth media and Roma youth workers involved in non-Roma media. Among other events, the first European Congress of Roma Youth was held in Barcelona in November 1997. Also, among results, we could mention the creation, in 1998, of Euroternet, the first European platform of Roma Youth Organisations.<sup>114</sup> However, no systematic assessment is available regarding the full dimension of participation and the impact of this programme on European Roma youth.

**The European Youth Guarantee** (complemented in 2013 by a financial instrument, the Youth Employment Initiative scheme) was adopted by all Member States who committed “to ensure

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<sup>110</sup> Communication “Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation”, COM (2020) 456 final <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2020:456:FIN>> and Communication “The EU budget powering the recovery plan for Europe”, COM(2020) 442 final <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM:2020:442:FIN>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>111</sup> European Roma Rights Center, *New Eu Roma Framework Falls Short On Police Brutality, Justice, & Segregation*, October 12, 2020. Accessed on October 17, 2020 <<http://www.errc.org/press-releases/new-eu-roma-framework-falls-short-on-police-brutality-justice--segregation>>.

<sup>112</sup> The European Commission, Media Seminars - Stopping discrimination against Roma, 15 February - 30 June 2016 <[http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=30548](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=30548)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>113</sup> Written response received from the EC DG Justice Roma Team (Lavinia Banu) on September 17, 2020

<sup>114</sup> European Commission, EU support for Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe, 1999 <<http://aei.pitt.edu/39014/1/A3900.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

that all young people under the age of 25 years old receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.”<sup>115</sup> The document did not mention Roma youth at all, and governments have rarely targeted Roma young people in the implementation of the program at the national level.<sup>116</sup>

**The Youth in Action programme** was the main instrument of the EU in supporting young people. This programme had two main objectives: a) to ensure the accessibility of the Youth in Action programme for young people with fewer opportunities; b) to stimulate the use of the Youth in Action programme as a tool to enhance social inclusion, active citizenship and employability of young people with fewer opportunities and to contribute to social cohesion at large.<sup>117</sup>

The Youth in Action programme paid particular attention to Roma youth by addressing issues such as overcoming prejudices and breaking down stereotypes and encouraging inclusion, participation, and citizenship for all young people in Europe, including those from Roma communities.<sup>118</sup> Roma youth have been mentioned in all five actions of the Youth in Action program, namely Action 1 Youth for Europe (Youth Exchanges, Youth Democracy Projects), Action 2 European Voluntary Service, Action 3 Youth in the World, Action 4 Youth Workers and Support Systems Training and Networking and Action 5 Meetings of young people and those responsible for youth policy.

Under various initiatives of the Youth in Action programme, young people from marginalised communities, Roma included, have been part of some projects and activities promoting inclusion and empowerment of youngsters. In North Macedonia, as Mustafa Jakupov recalled,

the Regional Roma Educational Youth Association was the first Roma youth organisation to have engaged in implementing Youth in Action projects for Roma youth. Then, we entered in ERASMUS+ projects, and we are pioneering sending Roma youth in mobility initiatives.<sup>119</sup>

Other Roma young people, such as the participants in a focus group in Serbia emphasised the importance of ERASMUS+ and more broadly, youth exchanges and travels:

I really didn't know I could volunteer in another country, and if I don't know the language of that country, I'll learn it.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Council of the European Union (2013), Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01), 22 April 2013 <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:120:0001:0006:EN:PDF>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>116</sup> Expert Interview with Carmen Tanasie, September 16, 2020.

<sup>117</sup> European Commission Salto Youth Cultural Diversity Resource Centre, Youth in Action and the Roma Community. Inclusion of diversity, 2009 <<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1799/Booklet%20Youth%20in%20Action%20and%20the%20Roma%20Community.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>118</sup> European Commission Press release, Commission launches Youth Employment Support: a bridge to jobs for the next generation, July 2020, <[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1193](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1193)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>119</sup> Expert Interview with Mustafa Jakupov, July 17, 2020.

<sup>120</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca in Serbia with six Roma young people in September 2020.

or

While I was in school, I did not know about scholarships and the affirmative measure, and today I work in an organisation. Youth exchanges should be organised more often, not only for travelling and meeting new people, but you can hear something new there, state your opinion, see where you might be wrong and change it, see what your benefits are, in such activities you need to include as many young Roma as possible, and not just to send the same people over and over again to youth exchanges within the Erasmus program.<sup>121</sup>

However, one of the Youth in Action actions, namely the European Voluntary Service was evaluated as having been poorly available to and known by Roma youth. Even Roma youth who have access to networks, the internet, and NGO world use the programme at a low level. As Torotcoi's study shows, **only 14% of the Roma young people involved in her research were beneficiary of this programme. And 40% of them have never heard of this opportunity.**<sup>122</sup> In addition, discussing the ERASMUS programme, Carmen Tanasie underlined,<sup>123</sup>

When it comes to ERASMUS, we had a big challenge. Roma could not easily access such platforms. Those grants provided by the programme do not cover all costs and depending on the country young people choose, they may need financial support from their own families. Thus, sometimes Roma young people do not have anyone to support them financially; on the contrary, Roma youth try to support their families financially as much as they can. Thus, in my view, these are elitist programmes, dedicated to the ones with a certain social and economic background and financial power.

Similar to other EC initiatives, there is no available systematic evaluation regarding the impact of the five actions of the Youth in Action programme on Roma youth.

**SALTO Cultural Diversity & SALTO Inclusion Resource Centres**, as support structures of the European Commission's Training Strategy within the Youth in Action Program, affirmed that it particularly promoted the inclusion of Roma youth in international youth projects and provided with training, resources on diversity, experience exchange, and awareness-raising activities.<sup>124</sup> Interculturality, diversity, and inclusion have been crosscutting issues in the activities that SALTO YOUTH implements. Through SALTO Cultural Diversity, the EC has promised to strive to include Roma youth in Erasmus+ better.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Paper Position Paper of the Roma Youth Networks on the Post-2020 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, Phiren Amencia International Network and ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, September 14, 2019 <<https://phirenamenca.eu/position-paper-of-the-roma-youth-networks-on-the-post-2020-eu-framework-for-national-roma-integration-strategies/>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>123</sup> Expert Interview with Carmen Tanasie, September 16, 2020.

<sup>124</sup> SALTO-YOUTH stands for Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities for Youth. For more on their work on inclusion & diversity training, publications or resources for international youth work with young people with fewer opportunities, including Roma, check their webpage <[www.salto-youth.net/diversity](http://www.salto-youth.net/diversity)> and the Inclusion and Diversity strategy in the field of youth <<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3103/InclusionAndDiversityStrategy.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

SALTO Cultural Diversity provided with online resources for and about Roma, making available ideas and examples of successful initiatives implemented with and by Roma youth<sup>125</sup> while emphasising that there was no set recipe to work with a particular culture and that communication and awareness of interculturality are vital aspects.

To mark the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008, SALTO Cultural Diversity chose to have a particular focus on Roma. Among the activities organised with and for Roma youth were promotion meetings to present the possibilities within the Youth in Action Programme and to encourage the participation of Roma youth, to create better cooperation between the structures, institutions, and Roma NGOs. Non-formal learning activities were also organised in Slovakia, for example, as a tool for inclusion of Roma youngsters with fewer opportunities. Among the resources prepared by SALTO, a booklet was translated to Romani to promote the Youth in Action Programme and to increase the participation of Roma youth in the programme. However, no systematic assessment is available to understand the actual impact of SALTO on Roma youth.

**The EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation - EaSI (2014 - 2020)** specified that it had supported Roma inclusion under the action “Roma Included in Social Europe 2020.”<sup>126</sup> The programme promised to ensure that the EU social policies work for Roma, by raising awareness on the situation of young Roma on the labour market and motivating employers to create an inclusive workspace and building capacity for young Roma on advocacy and EU processes.

The 9<sup>th</sup> report on the implementation of the EASI programme from 2018 shows that some funds have been accessed by Roma and pro-Roma NGOs to implement different initiatives across the EU.<sup>127</sup> For example, in Bulgaria, awareness-raising activities on the Youth Guarantee implementation among young people were organised under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria. This project involved Roma mediators, while contributing to the activation of inactive young people and the employment and training of young people. In Greece, the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Social Solidarity of the Hellenic Republic used EASI funding to implement the *Youth Guarantee: Three steps to finding a job* project, which involved three outreach teams for targeted engagement with vulnerable youth, especially Muslim and Roma youngsters. Roma young people benefited from group counselling and personal guidance. Roma young people who were within the formal education system were further supported in their educational process. But systematic evaluation is not available to understand the actual impact of EaSI on Roma youth either. And less Roma are not in education, employment, or training, as the 2020 EC report shows.

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<sup>125</sup> SALTO-YOUTH Roma Resources. Find out more about Roma culture, Roma organisations, and Roma projects that were implemented within the Youth in Action programme (2007-2013) here <<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/about/topics/roma/roma-resources/>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>126</sup> European Commission, EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation - EaSI (2014 - 2020), Action title: Roma Included in Social Europe 2020 <<https://www.developmentaid.org/#!/organisations/awards/view/161086/roma-included-in-social-europe-2020>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>127</sup>Hedvika Janečková, Kristupas Pribušis and Orestas Strauka, Projects and organisations funded by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), European Commission, 2018 <<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8184&furtherPubs=yes>> accessed 18 August 2020.

**More recently, the EU Youth Strategy** was adopted through the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018.<sup>128</sup> It sets the framework for EU youth policy cooperation for 2019-2027 to obtain the most of youth policy's potential and to encourage youth participation in democratic life. Despite the focus on youth who are marginalised based on ethnic origin, the Resolution does not mention Roma youth explicitly, which could lead to a limited responsibility of the national authorities in this area.

**Also, the Youth Employment Support: The European Commission launched a Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation** in July 2020. The document has the ambition to finance youth employment in MSs with at least €22 billion from EU funding. As the promoter of the programme, the Commission “urges Member States to step up youth employment support through NextGenerationEU and the future EU budget.”<sup>129</sup> By strengthening the Youth Guarantee, the Bridge to Jobs initiative will be “more inclusive to avoid any forms of discrimination, with a wider outreach to more vulnerable groups, such as youth of racial and ethnic minorities, young people with disabilities, or young people living in some rural, remote or disadvantaged urban areas.”<sup>130</sup> The new EC plan to support youth in employment claims to promote diversity and inclusion as core values. However, Roma youth are not explicitly mentioned as a target group; consequently, their needs are not sufficiently addressed in this initiative, considering the specific challenges that young people of Roma background face on the labour market.

Nevertheless, in our interview, the EC reported that ‘Bridge to jobs,’ which reinforces the Youth Guarantee programme, extends outreach to a broader target group, for increased inclusiveness: “Many young people, often from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (e.g. those with low skills, living in rural or remote areas, from migrant backgrounds or belonging to racial and ethnic minorities, in particular Roma) do not have access to quality education and training, or face barriers in the transition from school to work. The aim is to make sure that nobody is left behind. the EC wrote. This will be done by improved, more targeted outreach and awareness-raising, addressing *inter alia* the challenges of living in rural or more remote areas. ‘Bridge to jobs’ is based on individualised action plans with more targeted preparation tailored to the young person’s preferences and motivation, barriers and disadvantages, including reasons for being unemployed or inactive.”<sup>131</sup> Finally, according to the EC,

In terms of active participation and empowerment of Roma youth, the European Commission together with the SK Presidency jointly organised in 2016 the High-level event in Bratislava “Empowerment of Roma Youth as a Driving Force behind Change.”

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<sup>128</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027

<<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>129</sup> European Commission, Youth Employment Support. A Bridge to Jobs for the Next Generation, 2020

<<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=22829&langId=en>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>130</sup> European Commission Press release, Commission launches Youth Employment Support: a bridge to jobs for the next generation, July 2020 <[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1193](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1193)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>131</sup> Commission Staff Working Document, Analytical document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Brussels, 7.10.2020 SWD(2020) 530 final

<[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission\\_staff\\_working\\_document\\_analytical\\_document\\_accompanying\\_the\\_eu\\_roma\\_strategic\\_framework\\_for\\_equality\\_inclusion\\_and\\_participation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission_staff_working_document_analytical_document_accompanying_the_eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_en.pdf)> accessed 29 October 2020.

As a follow-up, the European Commission encouraged Member States to pro-actively step-up their efforts in promoting Roma youth and their active participation in the decision making process and recruitment of young Roma either in internships or junior professional positions, for instance through the National Roma Platforms or by direct funding opportunities accessible to Member States and any other interested parties. Additionally, in 2017 the European Commission devoted the European Platform for Roma Inclusion to engage in a dialogue with the Member States and other relevant stakeholders on the topic of “Transition of Roma Youth from education to employment” [Transition from education to employment.]<sup>132</sup> The European Commission has managed to link the empowerment of Roma youth also in connection to the Roma Holocaust Remembrance<sup>133</sup> as a matter of educational component, societal awareness raising, and moral duty.<sup>134</sup>

Participation in all these EC programmes can be very empowering for Roma and non-Roma young people, and as Mustafa Jakupov concluded, “it is a mutual process of empowerment; it has an intercultural dimension. And everyone gets motivated to go back to their communities and do something.”<sup>135</sup> But to reach results, the EC programmes designed to ensure the exchange of experiences, mobility, training courses, job opportunities should purposefully and continuously target and double mainstream the needs of Roma young people.

### **The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE-ODIHR)**

Over the years, the OSCE-ODIHR included some needs and priorities of Roma youth in Roma and youth-related documents and activities as well as in specific Roma youth projects.

The OSCE has addressed youth inclusion since its foundation through the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. The participating States committed “to further the development of contacts and exchanges among young people.”<sup>136</sup> The commitment for youth support was reiterated in the 2014 Basel Ministerial Council *Declaration on Youth*;<sup>137</sup> in 2015, through the Ministerial Council *Declaration on Youth and Security*,<sup>138</sup> the importance of implementing the OSCE commitments on youth was also underlined. In 2018, the *Declaration on the Role of Youth in Contributing to Peace and Security Efforts* acknowledged that “youth are an important part of society and the role that they can play in supporting participating States in the implementation

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<sup>132</sup> European Platform for Roma Inclusion 2017: “Transition from education to employment”, Report from the meeting in Brussels, 27-28 November 2017 <[http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=607095](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=607095)> accessed 29 October 2020.

<sup>133</sup> “DIKH HE NA BISTER!” International Youth Remembrance Event the Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative mobilizes each year thousands of young Roma and non-Roma all over Europe on the occasion of the 2 August – the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day <<https://www.roma-sinti-holocaust-memorial-day.eu/education/dikh-he-na-bister-international-youth-remembrance-event/>> accessed 29 October 2020.

<sup>134</sup> Written response received from the EC DG Justice Roma Team (Lavinia Banu) on September 17, 2020

<sup>135</sup> Expert Interview with Mustafa Jakupov, July 17, 2020.

<sup>136</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe, Final Act, Helsinki, 1975 <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>137</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Ministerial Council’s Declaration on Youth, Basel 2014 <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/c/130536.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>138</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Ministerial Council’s Declaration on Youth and Security, Belgrade 2015 <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/7/207266.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

of commitments in all three dimensions.”<sup>139</sup> The OSCE has also created a position which holds the responsibility to ensure advocacy for systematic youth participation and the positive role youth can play throughout the whole conflict cycle and in protracted conflicts. The Chairperson-in-Office Special Representative on Youth and Security represents a youth voice within the OSCE and advises the Chairperson-in-Office on youth policy issues.<sup>140</sup> However, none of these documents mentioned Roma youth.

Nevertheless, the OSCE ODIHR mentioned Roma and Sinti youth in some of its mainstream documents. In 2019, the organisation put together an extensive set of commitments built during the years regarding Youth and Security Education.<sup>141</sup> The Compilation includes the specific decisions regarding the situation of Roma in the OSCE region, including Decision No. 4/13 *Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children*.

Regarding the situation of the Roma and Sinti youth, OSCE-ODIHR the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues issued recommendations addressing specific youth needs in the 2003 Action Plan for Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area.<sup>142</sup> The Plan recommended participating states to ensure scholarship programmes for Roma students and support their participation in existing scholarship programmes. The OSCE also suggested participating States to “develop policies and programmes, including vocational training, to improve the marketable skills and employability of Roma and Sinti people, particularly young people and women.”

The needs of Roma youth have also been reiterated through the Ministerial Council Decision 4/13 on “Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children” enforced in December 2013. The Decision addressed issues related to the secondary education of young Roma, especially girls, calling upon participating States to take action to increase participation of Roma and Sinti youth in higher levels of education, build the capacities of Roma and Sinti youth organisations, and ensure equal access to secondary education.<sup>143</sup>

Also, the OSCE underlined the importance of working in this area with the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Action Plan, when a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of the

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<sup>139</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Ministerial Council’s Declaration on the Role of Youth in Contributing to Peace and Security Efforts, Milan 2018 <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/7/406436.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>140</sup> For more information <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/410414> and <https://www.osce.org/node/458812>

<sup>141</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Youth and Security Education. Compilation of OSCE Commitments, Austria 2019 <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/6/455512.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>142</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Ministerial Council’s Decision No. 3/03. Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area (MC.DEC/3/03), 2003 <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/8/17554.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>143</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Ministerial Council’s Decision No. 4/13 *Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area, With a Particular Focus on Roma And Sinti Women, Youth and Children*, 2013 <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/1/109340.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.



OSCE included a session on the issue of “Integration of Roma and Sinti with a particular focus on women, youth and children: Best practices and ways forward.”<sup>144</sup>

Notably, the OSCE-ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues has also engaged in ensuring participation and supporting the professional development of Roma youth in their own office. In the past few years, the Contact Point has worked with a few junior experts in both Roma youth-specific and broader projects. In this process, “the junior experts become familiar with the work of an intergovernmental organisation and gain relevant knowledge and practical skills.”<sup>145</sup> Roma youth representatives were also invited to participate in the annual Human Dimension meetings.

The Contact Point has offered support to several Roma youth and their organisations. As part of their support actions for Roma and Sinti youth, in 2013 OSCE-ODIHR implemented the *Roma and Sinti Youth Initiative*, which was a small grant-giving scheme for Roma and Sinti youth organisations. The Contact Point also contributed financially to the “Dik I Na Bistar” Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative. Furthermore, between 2012 and 2014, ODIHR supported the *Roma Young Professionals* programme which led to support for 25 young Roma women and men from across the Western Balkans to undertake traineeships in public institutions and OSCE field operations and to participate in policymaking and advocacy activities.

In 2014, OSCE-ODIHR organised the *Roma and Sinti Youth Conference: Activism, Participation, Security* conference. The event was held in Belgrade with the purpose to provide a discussion space for the youth to analyse the challenges they confronted with within public and political participation and reflect on the situation of the young Roma women and men from a broader human security perspective. The activities of the conference were summarized in a report which “aims to give voice to Roma and Sinti youth by highlighting the key conclusions and recommendations to OSCE participating States made at the Belgrade conference and presenting research on Roma and Sinti activism, participation and security conducted by young scholars.”<sup>146</sup>

The reflections on the participation of Roma and Sinti youth in public and political life and their civic engagement continued at the OSCE-ODIHR annual human rights conferences, such as the ones from 2017, when “Good practices in promoting Roma and Sinti youth participation”<sup>147</sup> were discussed and from 2019, when Roma and Sinti youth were presented as

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<sup>144</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti (dedicated to the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the 2003 OSCE Action Plan) 7-8 November 2013 Hofburg, Vienna, Agenda of the meeting <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/1/106282.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>145</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Participation of Roma and Sinti Youth <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/b/377284.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>146</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Activism, Participation and Security among Roma and Sinti Youth, Report of the conference Roma and Sinti Youth: Activism, Participation, Security Belgrade, 8 and 9 December 2014 <<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/8/187861.pdf>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>147</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017, event on the topic of Good practices in promoting Roma and Sinti youth participation <<https://www.osce.org/odihr/342166>> accessed 18 August 2020.

agents of change.<sup>148</sup> However, to date, the OSCE has not issued any standards, action plans, or programmes designed specifically to address the needs of Roma youth. And the OSCE's role in ensuring the participation of Roma youth in public life has been minimal.

To conclude, intergovernmental organisations, particularly the EC, play an important role in raising awareness and providing guidelines to governments on the needs of European youth. And at the very least, so far, intergovernmental organisations have recognised that Roma youth meet specific structural inequalities and challenges, which require both targeted and mainstream interventions. It has been the CoE that engaged in developing and implementing targeted actions plans for Roma youth and strived to promote double mainstreaming within the organisation. But there is a need for all intergovernmental organisations to strategically and purposefully target and double mainstream Roma youth in their documents, standards, policies, and measures.

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<sup>148</sup> The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2019, event on the topic of Roma and Sinti youth as agents of change in spotlight at ODIHR <<https://www.osce.org/odihr/432941>> accessed 18 August 2020.

## Roma Youth in National Roma and Youth Programmes and Institutions

National and local governments have a central role in developing, implementing, and monitoring policies and programmes with and for Roma youth. However, Roma youth are most often neglected by both Roma and youth policies.

This section does not evaluate Roma and youth policies at the national level. Instead, it discusses opinions and examples offered by the nine representatives of national governments in ADI-ROM and CDEJ who responded to our surveys to questions regarding the inclusion of Roma youth in national policies and programmes. It also offers us an overview of the approaches taken in relation to the inclusion of Roma youth in mainstream youth policies at the national level.

First, we asked the ministries/agencies that responded to our survey and are represented in ADI-ROM if their institutions have any specific project, activity, or policy addressing the needs of Roma young people. Their work varied from grants dedicated to Roma children and youth clubs (Norway) to scholarship and mentorship programs (Hungary) and national Roma strategies that include objectives related to empowerment of Roma children and youth (Austria).

A few governments represented in ADI-ROM mentioned mainstream laws and policies related to education or youth that aim to address the specific needs of Roma youth. For instance, according to the response received from the Hungarian representatives in ADI-ROM, the Hungarian Higher Education Act Roma includes measures and budgets for a programme ambiguously entitled Roma Special Colleges, but which is essentially conceptualized based on the Romaversitas model designed in 1996 by Angela Kocze and Romaversitas.<sup>149</sup> The Roma Special Colleges programme offers housing and study (mentoring) support, in addition to a scholarship scheme and community events, mainly to disadvantaged and/or Roma full-time students.<sup>150</sup> Also, the government of North Macedonia listed the Youth Guarantee Plan, as a programme that also addresses the needs of Roma youth.<sup>151</sup> And the government of Croatia stated that their government office “addresses Roma youth from the activity to policy level, including organising trainings for Roma youth (sometimes in cooperation with CoE).”<sup>152</sup>

Slovakia took a more clear double mainstreaming approach, as several mainstream and targeted Roma related institutions work with Roma youth. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities has implemented a series of training courses entitled “Starter for Young Roma Leaders.” As a practical component of these courses, the participants led consultative meetings with other Roma young peers called “Workshops of the Future,” which aimed to map the needs and expectations of Roma young people in the field of youth policy. These findings, the response of the government states, are communicated to policy-makers. So far, young people have organised 55 workshops in different locations in Slovakia, with over 980 Roma young people taking part in the activities.

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<sup>149</sup> Website of the organisation Romaversitas < <https://romaversitas.hu/about-us/> > accessed October 14, 2020.

<sup>150</sup> Online Survey: Response received from the representatives of the Hungarian government in ADI-ROM.

<sup>151</sup> Online Survey: Response received from the representatives of the North Macedonian government in ADI-ROM.

<sup>152</sup> Online Survey: Response received from the representatives of the Croatian government in ADI-ROM.

Besides, from 2014 to 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic provided subsidies to non-governmental organisations that actively work with youth. In 2019, in the sub-programme PRIORITY / D / 1/2019, the organisation Divé maky, o. z. was supported to organise a summer camp for gifted Roma children (the response from the government did not specify if Roma youth were also involved) from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Finally, according to the government's response, IUVENTA - The Slovak Youth Institute, which implements the state policy towards children and youth, include Roma young people in policy documents "as a target group with specific needs that needs to be addressed, but are included in strategic priorities in the general framework of (social) inclusion and support for disadvantaged youth groups."<sup>153</sup>

In the responses we received from governments represented in ADI-ROM, the NRISs have also been listed as the main policies that include needs and challenges of Roma youth. For instance, the Polish government responded that "within Polish strategies for Roma community, conducting in Poland since 2001, there was no special activities tailored to Roma youth as such. Nonetheless, young Roma did participate in all activities taken within those strategies. There is a scholarships system devoted to Roma pupils, including tertiary Roma students. Addressing the specific needs of Roma youth in the new Roma integration strategy, planned for years 2021-2030, Roma youth are the one of the focus groups (among Roma school assistants, Roma children and Roma women and girls)."<sup>154</sup>

Also, the Austrian government responded that their NRIS emphasises the empowerment of Roma children and youth, along with the four key areas (education, employment, housing, health). In this context, they wrote, "one Roma Dialogue platform and three expert workshops were held in 2019/20. The objectives achieved were the analysis of the status quo, barriers and resources of Roma Youth work in Austria and notably the establishment of network possibilities with representatives from Austrian administration, other youth networks and academia."<sup>155</sup> Moreover, Finland also reported that the National Roma Policy 2018–2022 (ROMPO2) includes specific projects, activities, or policies addressing the needs of Roma young people.<sup>156</sup> Finally, other governments, such as Cyprus, responded that they do not have any specific project, activity, or policy addressing the needs of Roma young people.<sup>157</sup>

Second, the 11 national members of the CDEJ who responded to our survey included representatives of mainstream ministries or national agencies, including institutions focusing on youth, education, sports, culture, social protection, or international youth mobility.

Seven mainstream youth institutions who responded to our survey do not target Roma youth specifically in their work. In Bulgaria, the Ministry of Youth and Sports responded that they do not have any specific project, activity, or policy addressing the needs of Roma young people. But instead, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has a measure included in the Action

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<sup>153</sup> Online Survey: Response received from the representatives of the Slovakian government in ADI-ROM.

<sup>154</sup> Online Survey: Response received from the representatives of the Polish government in ADI-ROM.

<sup>155</sup> Online Survey: Response received from the representatives of the Austrian government in ADI-ROM.

<sup>156</sup> Online Survey: Response received from the representatives of the Finnish government in ADI-ROM.

<sup>157</sup> Online Survey: Response received from the representatives of the Cypriot government in ADI-ROM.

Plan for the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy targeting Roma young people. They also reported a race/ethnicity neutral approach in implementing youth policies and measures. “All young people, irrespective of their ethnic origin, are eligible to participate in the two youth programmes implemented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports,” responded the Bulgarian Ministry of Youth and Sports. Other youth-related ministries or national agencies pointed out at the National Roma Strategies as the core policies dealing with Roma, including Roma youth. “Currently, there is no specific policy addressing the needs of Roma young people. The needs of Roma young people are dealt with in the National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma People,” reported the Spanish Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030. These two patterns - race/ethnicity neutral policies and placing the responsibility for Roma youth solely on Roma related agencies and strategies - can be regarded as tactics of avoidance, which deny the specific needs of Roma young people and deprive Roma youth of parts of their identities, either as Roma or youth.

Some national members of the European Steering Committee for Youth reported specific measures or grants addressing the needs of Roma young people. For instance, in the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports reported having implemented a grant programme entitled “Supporting integration of Roma minority,” which targeted Roma children, pupils and young people, teachers and youth workers directly through projects of NGOs.

Two responses from the national ministries or departments confirmed specific projects, activities, or policies addressing the needs of Roma young people. The Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth responded that they conducted youth-specific activities in the implementation of the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities. The National Plan for Youth comprised several measures, including a) improving efficiency in the implementation of National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities and reinforce knowledge about Roma people; and b) promoting inclusive and non-discrimination citizenship, through civic, political, cultural and associative participation, and volunteering by Roma people. Also, according to the response received, the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth has also hosted or supported several activities implemented by other organisations and institutions. Some institutions supported Roma youth directly; the Lisbon Youth Centre of the Portuguese Institute of Youth and Sports established a partnership with the Opré Chavalé Project, that aimed the integration of Roma youth in higher education and was promoted by the Portuguese Platform for Women’s Rights in collaboration with the Letras Nómadas Roma association. Other institutions, trained employees on cultural diversity; in 2016, employees of the five regional directorates of the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth received training on Roma culture, facilitated by the mediators of the Opré Chavalé Project.

Also, the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland reported its membership to the National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, which focus on housing and education, cultural affairs, employment, and information. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Advisory Board works towards preventing work-related discrimination and improving employment. Also, the national youth work and youth policy programme (VANUPO) 2020-

2023, coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, includes measures related to Roma youth. As the Ministry of Education and Culture underlines, in 2020, four to six regional training workshops will be organised for Roma youths, the purpose of which will be to increase their awareness of their rights as well as improve their capabilities for acting in situations involving discrimination and promoting non-discrimination. The Ministry of Education and Culture also reported having financially supported since 2014 a long term project of the Finnish Roma Association that aims to promote inclusion of Roma young people.

Thus, the Roma youth-related work as reported by members of the CDEJ reflects all these differences, tensions, and specificities in approaches, understanding, and choices made at the national level.

The responses of the government members of ADI-ROM or CDEJ can help us understand and point out at policy gaps regarding Roma youth at the national level as well as the dynamics and tactics taken by ADI-ROM and CDEJ in relation to Roma youth. Unfortunately, their approaches don't aim towards targeting and double mainstreaming Roma youth.

## Mainstream Youth Organisations

Across Europe, youth organisations and young people engage in programmes and projects aiming to ensure exchange of ideas, capacity strengthening, skill building of young people. Some organisations and individuals also participate or demand to participate in policy processes regarding young people. And to ensure participation and tackle the specific needs of young people, intergovernmental organisations, including the European Commission and the Council of Europe, sometimes upon consultation with young people, have adopted strategies and created bodies to address their needs. Thus, at the European and national levels, several organisations and youth councils have been organising themselves, received support, training, and information, and worked towards ensure youth participation and rights.

Oftentimes, Roma youth are missing from these processes, along with other young people belonging to other oppressed and marginalized groups. To better understand the place of Roma youth in such spaces, we sent out surveys to national youth councils and international youth organisations involved in the work of the Council of Europe. A small number of national youth councils and international youth organisations responded to our call, so the discussion below only reflects on those specific cases.

**The European Youth Forum (EYF)**, is an organisation that brings together over 100 youth organisations in Europe. EYF has recently adopted its 2020-2023 Strategic Plan,<sup>158</sup> which includes three main pillars of change: 1) youth-friendly world; 2) enabling environment for youth organisations; and 3) a thriving platform. The priorities of the pillars 1 and 3 include topics such as inclusion and diversity concerning marginalised and vulnerable communities, both to be mainstreamed within the platform and better reflected in the European societies. However, the EYF strategic plan does not explicitly mention Roma youth at all.

The EYF has a full membership of 41 international non-governmental youth organisations and 40 national youth Councils (NYCs), one in each country.<sup>159</sup> Among the international members, there has been no Roma representative until recently. Nevertheless, according to Mustafa Jakupov,

the European Youth Forum is very eager to have a Roma youth network and Roma youth organisations taking part in their activities. TernYpe was approached many times by the EYF, but because of some internal challenges, we could not go through the process to join. But now, Phiren Amenca is in the process of joining EYF, and most probably, they will become the first Roma youth network to join the YFJ.<sup>160</sup>

And indeed, in November of 2020, Phiren Amenca has become a Candidate Member in the European Youth Forum.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> European Youth Forum, Council of Members // Extraordinary General Assembly, STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023 <[https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0125-19\\_COMEM-II-19\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2020-2023\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.youthforum.org/sites/default/files/publication-pdfs/0125-19_COMEM-II-19_Strategic_Plan_2020-2023_FINAL.pdf)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>159</sup> Only one NYC shall be accepted as a member in each European State, unless otherwise agreed by the General Assembly. More about the membership here < <https://www.youthforum.org/our-members>>.

<sup>160</sup> Expert Interview with Mustafa Jakupov, July 17, 2020.

<sup>161</sup> [https://phirenamenca.eu/phiren-amenca-became-member-of-the-european-youth-forum/?fbclid=IwAR2Es8LslZB9kV9vsb0pC3v1tpSWBxmOhhU6\\_nnG6eCDOAn5752FWxWsrjU](https://phirenamenca.eu/phiren-amenca-became-member-of-the-european-youth-forum/?fbclid=IwAR2Es8LslZB9kV9vsb0pC3v1tpSWBxmOhhU6_nnG6eCDOAn5752FWxWsrjU)

At the national level, the NYCs strive to empower youth and represent youth organisations in their respective countries in national and international decision-making processes. However, Roma youth participation and representation are often minimal or non-existent in NYCs, as the NYC lack proactive measures and intentional goals to include Roma substantively. For example, in Romania, a country with a large Roma minority, the NYC does not have a representative of the Roma Youth NGOs in their competence, as reflected on their website.<sup>162</sup> Also, outside the NYC context, Roma young people are not involved in youth processes. The participants in the focus group in Serbia<sup>163</sup> underlined that

Young Roma do not participate in the work of the youth sector. They are not invited or are not recognised. And if they do participate, they have a passive role.

Thus, it is unrealistic to expect that those who are not part of such youth spaces at the local or national levels will be able to participate and have opportunities at the European level.

But there are also some steps forward taken by NYCs. In Spain, according to Annabel Carballo, the NYC involved in their events and work with the youth departments of two Roma/pro-Roma organisations – Union Romani and Fundacion Secretariado Gitano (FSG), though not with Roma youth organisations per se. But recently, a young Roma woman from Madrid has participated in the meetings of the NYC, and FSG has been involved in a task force of the NYC.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, the Catalonia Youth Council does not include Roma youth.

At the same time, some Roma young people in Spain also feel that these spaces of youth power are not safe and welcoming enough. For instance, in 2017, at a national Roma youth meeting, a representative of the Spanish NYC who spoke incited the participants to join the NYC. However, as Annabel Carballo stated,

Roma youth don't feel good in those spaces. In fact, those who went to meetings felt terrible because the discussions focused on topics that were not priorities for Roma. What is a priority for non-Roma is not always a priority for Roma youth. There are such significant structural inequalities between Roma and non-Roma youth, but non-Roma youth leaders don't take them into consideration. Roma youth often do not even have access to fundamental rights and needs, so their fight and needs are much different. Yet, youth leaders focused on the topics prioritized by non-Roma youth. Thus, Roma youth don't feel heard in these meeting, but they really want to participate and be active.<sup>165</sup>

Also, as Annabel Carballo noted, Roma young people face different economic challenges rooted in structural inequalities as well as a need to provide for their families while at the same time going to university. And frequently, these very same pressures make it difficult for them also to find time to engage with youth activism.

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<sup>162</sup> The Youth Council of Romania webpage: <<https://ctr.ro/en/members/>>.

<sup>163</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca in Serbia with six Roma young people in September 2020.

<sup>164</sup> Expert Interview with Annabel Carballo, July 23, 2020.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.



Nevertheless, as some participants at the 2019 seminar underlined, the concept of mainstreaming was applied more intentionally in some instances at the national level. For example, a few Roma youth organisations succeeded in becoming members of National Youth Councils (NYCs), thus bringing different perspectives in the work of NYCs, and indirectly, sensitising NYCs members to minority related topics and Roma. Others mentioned having formed alliances with different youth organisations to increase solidarity and empathy.

Only three of the NYCs, members of the European Youth Forum, responded to our survey, respectively the NYCs of Ireland, Austria, and North Macedonia. And all of them include Roma organisations or representatives amongst their members. They also shared some positive practices and approaches. However, the this lack of response from more than 90% of the NYCs should also be regarded as red flags by the European Youth Forum in relation to their aims and work for inclusion and participation of Roma youth.

In North Macedonia, Roma young leaders participate in mainstream youth initiatives. The survey we conducted with NYCs shows that six out of 48 member organisations represent Roma young people in the NYC as members or affiliates. According to the Macedonian NYC,

Roma young people actively take part in the work of the National Youth Council of Macedonia through our internal procedures and mechanisms for participation. Having this in mind, for the governing board 2015-2017, a Roma young woman was elected by the Assembly. For the governing board 2019-2021, a Roma young person was a candidate, but he withdrew his application because of personal reasons. A Roma young person is also included in our Membership commission. For the future, we are planning to translate all documents and social media outputs in Roma language so we can reach even more young people to include even Roma people that know only their mother language. Additionally, our governing board meetings are open and transparent, so every member organisation can participate and submit policy proposals that are concerning their constituents. Furthermore, through yearly individual meetings between our membership coordinator and our members, we are creating space and additional mechanism for every member to express their opinion, needs and views.<sup>166</sup>

The NYC in North Macedonia does not have specific projects and activities regarding the participation of Roma young people. Nevertheless, as they stated in their response to our survey, the NYC supports the participation of young people, including Roma people. And as they underlined,

We are aware that in our work with different groups of young people, we need to develop different approaches and tailor made techniques of work. Having this in mind, this year, we have prepared a few project applications focused on local youth councils, youth work and youth clerks in partnership with our member organisations that are working with Roma young people.<sup>167</sup>

The fact that some Roma young people had already been active as volunteers and leaders in mainstream youth movements since their early stages has contributed to ensuring space and a

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<sup>166</sup> Online Survey: response received from the NYC of North Macedonia.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

voice for Roma youth organisations to join the NYC. Roma young leaders, such as Mustafa Jakupov, and their organisations contributed to the establishment of the NYC in North Macedonia.

I was part of a group that aimed to create the first national umbrella organisation of youth organisations, which later became the National Youth Council of Macedonia. And through our organisation [The Regional Roma Educational Youth Association], we became founding members of the NYC. Also, through work and personal dedication, we actually have the first Roma young woman voted as a member of the board of the NYC. We try to bring in Roma youth topics into the national youth policies but also bring what is happening in the national youth policies back to what we were doing as Roma young people.<sup>168</sup>

Further, in Ireland, according to the response provided by the NYC to our survey, three of the 52 members of the NYC represent Roma young people. According to the survey, the NYC in Ireland is intentional and proactive in involving Roma and Traveller youth in their activities:

We have a dedicated Equality and Intercultural Programme in the National Youth Council of Ireland which keeps Roma young people central to all it does. We have not run a specific Roma project or named Roma specifically in our policies. We do highlight Roma specific initiatives as much as possible.<sup>169</sup>

Alex Petrovic, is a Roma youth leader who works with the Ferns Diocesan Youth Service, an NGO, which is a member of the NYC. But according to him, no Roma youth-led organisation exists in Ireland.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, there are some youth Traveller organisations, who are also involved in the work of the NYC. Thus, perhaps, the response we received from the NYC reflects that diversity.

And Roma young people participate in some activities of the NYC: “our involvement from the Roma side in the NYC of Ireland is through different projects that we are involved in, and that is only when there is a specific focus on migrants, interculturalism, or social inclusion. So we participated in different projects and consultations with young people... The NYC also visited us here on-site when they heard that there was a large Roma community here in this area, and the community and the young people are active...And since then, now and then, we get involved in different activities - training courses, events.”<sup>171</sup>

Also, amongst the NYC Ireland activities, in 2019, they gathered opinions from young people to support the national consultation for the Irish report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination of the United Nations. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, responsible for the report, engaged in the consultation process different groups, including young people, people with disabilities, and Roma and Travellers.

The NYC really wanted to get the Roma's voice heard in that consultation, so they invited us to take part in the consultation meeting. They also asked a few young people from our

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<sup>168</sup> Expert Interview with Mustafa Jakupov, July 17, 2020.

<sup>169</sup> Online Survey: response received from the NYC of Ireland.

<sup>170</sup> Expert Interview with Alex Petrovics, July 13, 2020.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

community to involve more before the meeting. So, they provided a training course for young people, including Roma to explain to them why they needed such a report, what will happen in the consultation process, and [why] it's important for Roma youth to take part in the process. They also gave a task to the trained participants for the day of the consultation to deliver their message. Thus, it was good that prior to the meeting, the young people benefited from more insights into the process.<sup>172</sup>

Such events seem particularly beneficial. As Alex Petrovic highlighted, “our Roma young people have actually seen that so many young people from different background have similar needs and want similar things. They also met with the head of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission who listened to their concerns.”<sup>173</sup>

When we applied the survey to NYCs, we also learned that in Austria, all national minorities are represented in the NYC. A representative of Roma youth from the Board of Romano Centro was also elected as a NYC board member. In that capacity, they are involved in advocacy and policymaking. The NYC does not implement any specific project or activities regarding the participation of Roma young people. But, according to the NYC, “Roma and other minorities/vulnerable groups are addressed in the thematic focus of the actual mandate under the title “Compass for a just society.”<sup>174</sup>

We do not have information from other NYCs. But based on the surveys and interviews we conducted, we learned that indeed, across the board, membership within the NYCs can offer not only access to spaces of power but also regular information about training courses, events, funding for youth programmes, guidance regarding youth programmes and needs, networks with other youth organisations, collaborations, youth exchanges. Moreover, the NYCs function de facto as the first point of contact from an international point of view and members can receive information about European initiatives, training courses, funding. And the members of the NYCs receive direct information from the European Youth Forum, too.<sup>175</sup> Thus, Roma youth must have membership and access to such spaces to be able to have access to information at least about some opportunities. As a participant at the focus group in North Macedonia concluded,<sup>176</sup>

It's very important to discuss and get the youth Roma into the youth movements as if they don't get involved, they will not get represented, and their interests will not be represented.

**The members of the Advisory Council on Youth** were also invited to participate in our survey. Four of the 30 members the Advisory Council on Youth responded to our survey, respectively Youth Peace Ambassadors Network, FEMYSO - the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations, AEGEE- European Students' Forum, and the National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations. The National Council of Swedish Youth

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<sup>172</sup> Expert Interview with Alex Petrovics, July 13, 2020.

<sup>173</sup> Expert Interview with Alex Petrovics, July 13, 2020.

<sup>174</sup> Online Survey: response received from the NYC of Austria.

<sup>175</sup> Expert Interview with Alex Petrovics, July 13, 2020.

<sup>176</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca and Sumnal in North Macedonia with five Roma young people: a teacher, two university students, one high school student, and one educational mediator, September 18, 2020.

Organisations reported having one Roma youth organisation amongst its 83 members. The Youth Peace Ambassadors Network (8 member organisations) and FEMYSO (33 member organisations ) did not report Roma youth organisations amongst their members. And AEGEE (150 member organisations) did not respond to that question in the survey. All four organisations either did not report Roma individual members or did not respond to the question about Roma individual members at all.

When it comes to specific projects or activities regarding Roma young people, Youth Peace Ambassadors Network reported having organised training of trainers, which also involved youth from underrepresented communities, including Roma. The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations said that their projects do not target any minority group in particular, but member organisations conduct such initiatives. The other two organisations did not answer the question. Broadly, these members the Advisory Council on Youth, too, take a race/ethnicity neutral approach, at least concerning the needs of Roma youth.

Twenty-six of the 30 members the Advisory Council on Youth did not respond to our survey. Further steps are needed to raise awareness, identify, prioritise, and implement actions regarding the participation and representation of Roma youth within the Advisory Council on Youth membership. Also, strategies and plans are necessary to ensure that its membership involves more intentionally and robustly with targeted projects or activities that address the needs of Roma youth and anti-Roma racism.

Along with the member organisations of the European Youth Forum and the Advisory Youth Council, we also asked international non-governmental youth organisations working with the Council of Europe to fill out our survey. We received six responses (although two of them came from national organisations or networks in Sweden and Finland and should be regarded as such), as follows: Youth Express Network, RIS- Stockholm.se, European Playwork Association, EYNCRIN - European Youth Network for Creativity and Innovation, WSCF Europe - World Student Christian Federation Europe, and Finnish Romany Association.

WSCF Europe was the only organisation that reported that they did not count among its 20 members, affiliates or observers, organisations representing or working with Roma young people. The Youth Express Network reported that of 34 members/affiliates/observers, three were organisations representing or working with Roma young people. European Playwork Association reported having seven Roma/Roma youth organisations out of 40 members/affiliates/observers. EYNCRIN reported 47 Roma/Roma youth organisations out of 73 members/affiliates/observers. And the national organisations provided the following information: the Finnish Romany Association reported 5 Roma/Roma youth organisations out of 250 members/affiliates/observers and RIS-Stockholm.se said they had 700 Roma/Roma youth organisations out of 1500 members/affiliates/observers.

These international non-governmental youth organisations implement a variety of activities with Roma youth. European Playwork Association responded that their actions are designed “not only for Roma young people but always together with other minority groups: youth exchanges and seminar to human rights topics.” The Youth Express Network has implemented training courses on how to work and involve Roma youth in European youth work and developed a toolkit about it. EYNCRIN reported that approximately 30% of their

projects are focused on Roma young people in Europe. WSCF Europe did not report specific Roma youth-related projects or activities, but they said having provided input on projects run by other organisations, which were focused on Roma issues. For instance, WSCF Europe wrote,

in March this year, we have contributed to a conference on Roma people and the Church, which was led by the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe. The meeting took place in Budapest, and we represented the voice of Roma young people. We ensured that the programme included a reflection of the position of Roma youth in society and that examples of best practice in working with Roma young people were disseminated and discussed by participants (many of whom were leaders of different churches and other ecumenical organisations).

Regarding the national organisations who participated in this survey, RIS-Stockholm.se did not respond to that question. And the Finnish Romany Association reported an ongoing initiative, Au mensa - Come. The project, Finnish Romany Association reported, "aims to strengthen the Roma youths capacity and the possibility to influence in the society decision making by offering training, doing surveys, organisation meetings with authorities or giving voice to youth needs in the different arenas. Au mensa has formed the Finnish Roma Youth Network, which aims to work also with the European Roma youth NGOs."

Also, in our interview with Pia Slogar, the current Vice-President for External Relations of the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN), we learned that YEN, too, includes member organisations that are involved in Roma related issues.

Our activities are inclusive, and we also collaborate with Roma youth organisations, such as Phiren Amenca or TernYpe. We also included Roma youth in our 2014 White Paper, and we engage in advocacy for Roma youth, too, primarily through my work in the Advisory Council on Youth.<sup>177</sup>

The responses received from some of the international non-governmental youth organisations and NYCs are encouraging both in terms of Roma membership and activities. However, extensive research is needed to understand the levels of participation and representation of Roma youth as members and/or beneficiaries of projects. Also, NYCs and international non-governmental youth organisations need guidance and support to increase the participation and representation of Roma youth in their work.

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<sup>177</sup> Expert Interview with Pia Slogar, September 29, 2020.

## Roma Youth Voices: Leaders and Organisations

Roma young people participating in CoE consultations, our interviews, and research have underlined several challenges and priorities, including two interrelated issues: manifestations of anti-Roma racism and a lack of participation.

According to the 2020 Phiren Amenca study, “the main concerns for Roma youth are related to racism and discrimination (73% of the respondents), access to education, training and schooling, employment, participation in public and social life and combating hate-speech and hate-crime.”<sup>178</sup>

### Anti-Roma Racism

In Europe, the rights of Roma young people are not fulfilled equally with non-Roma youth. Roma youth’ access to fundamental rights is racialized, and the development and the implementation of targeted and mainstream policy measures are shallow and lagging behind. Roma youth are stranded in a vicious closed circle of past and present racism, a history of oppression, lack of power and voices, and racialised poverty. In many instances, discrimination and segregation in schools lead to poor quality education or no education, which leads to low-paid jobs or no jobs.

Roma youth experience discrimination in all areas of life, from access to education to health, employment, housing, or in some cases, even in obtaining identity papers. A higher education diploma does not guarantee Roma young people a job, as discrimination persists in the labor market. Thus, it is not surprising that Roma young people in various countries emphasised employment as a very specific and key priority. For example, in Ireland, as Alex Petrovics stressed,

The biggest need that the Roma young people said they had, especially from the age of 16 onwards, was employment. And they get very low paid jobs, sometimes even without benefits and contracts, but they are forced to work also to support their families.<sup>179</sup>

In Albania and other countries, Roma young people also mentioned employment as one of their biggest challenges: “one of the needs is also employment. We have many Roma young people who have a graduation and who find it very hard to find a job, and instead of becoming a good role model for the others they become a ‘bad model’ because the other Roma say to them, you see you studied and you don’t have a job now.”<sup>180</sup>

Roma young people experience and are exposed constantly to many more manifestations of anti-Roma racism, from overt discrimination to covert racism, including everyday discrimination. As the *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities* study showed, **95% of the Roma young people who participated in an online**

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<sup>178</sup> Simona Torotcoi, *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*, Phiren Amenca International Network, 2020.

<sup>179</sup> Expert Interview with Alex Petrovics, July 13, 2020.

<sup>180</sup> Focus group organised in Albania by Phiren Amenca International Network, ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, and Roma Active Albania with eight Roma young people (students, social workers, peer educators, members of city councils involved with various Roma organisations) on September 16, 2020.

**survey “observed or encountered discriminatory words, behaviours or gestures directed at Roma.”<sup>181</sup>**

Anti-Roma racism also manifests through a lack and a denial of cultural and political representation. Roma history is often neglected in history books, school curricula, and educational and cultural spaces. Thus, young Roma people lack opportunities and spaces to foster their identity and ability to reflect and react to encounters of injustice. As Elvis Beriša, Montenegrin Roma activist, noted, “some still believe that we should not talk about the past, but they don’t understand that this was our history, it is part of who we are, and we need to know it.”<sup>182</sup>

Yet, local, national, and international institutions lack policies, tools, knowledge, and interest to conduct targeted work towards combating discrimination and ensuring equal access of Roma youth to fundamental rights, including quality education and indiscriminatory access to jobs, and strengthening the capacity of Roma youth to claim their rights across Europe. ‘One fit all’ youth policies, both at the national and European levels, can deepen further the structural inequalities of Roma youth. For example, as the 2020 Phiren Amenca study shows, “it became clear that Roma youth do not benefit from the EU programs targeting youth.”<sup>183</sup>

Further, stakeholders are often reluctant to acknowledge and address structural racism; yet, racism remains the main root of the social, political, economic, and cultural challenges faced by Roma youth today. As a participant in our focus group in Albania underlined, “One of the challenges I faced during my work with the Roma community to defend their rights was antigypsyism. Many people have often told me ‘why do you work for those people; they will never change; leave them as they are.’ When I told to them that I am from the Roma community they said ‘Well, you are not like them. you are different.’”<sup>184</sup> In 2019, Roma youth leader Senada Ramovski also confirmed that concern: “In Italy, school participation is hampered by racism, which is so hard, especially for Roma youth living in camps, as they are constantly marginalised and denied social rights.”<sup>185</sup> And this was also one of the most challenging shortcomings mentioned by the participants in the 2019 *Roma Youth Participation: What now?* Coe seminar, who also highlighted a lack of power, tools, and means to advance systemic change and challenge anti-Roma racism.

To combat structural racism and increase Roma young people’s access to fundamental rights requires a commitment to and implementation of structural changes in policies and laws at the national and European levels. Addressing anti-Roma racism and bigotry in all their forms also require time, expertise, reparations, and a genuine commitment from national states. It also requires Roma participation and leadership, including of Roma young people.

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<sup>181</sup> Simona Torotcoi, *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*, Phiren Amenca International Network, 2020.

<sup>182</sup> Expert Interview with Elvis Beriša, September 25, 2019 in Strasbourg, France

<sup>183</sup> Simona Torotcoi, *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*, Phiren Amenca International Network, 2020.

<sup>184</sup> Focus group organised in Albania by Phiren Amenca International Network, ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, and Roma Active Albania with eight Roma young people (students, social workers, peer educators, members of city councils involved with various Roma organisations) on September 16, 2020.

<sup>185</sup> Expert Interview with Senada Ramovski conducted by Margareta Matache on September 25, 2019 in Strasbourg, France.

## Roma Youth Participation

The relevance of the participation of young people, including Roma young people in policy, political, and civic life does not need to be debated and justified. As a matter of rights, young people must be involved in processes, both targeted and mainstream, that impact their lives.

Yet, participation is far from being a reality for Roma youth. Roma youth participation, leadership, and representation in decision-making processes regarding youth or Roma policies and standards are not a practice, neither at the European nor the national level. The Roma young people who participated in the 2020 Phiren Amenca online survey identified as the top two barriers in their participation in public and political life, namely the lack of trust by young people in state and public institutions and the lack of space for Roma youth in mainstream youth structures.

As we have shown throughout this report, to date, the standards, policies, and interventions of national bodies, both targeted and mainstream, have been scarce in regard to ensuring Roma youth participation, even in terms of their presence in such fora. For instance, as the 2019 *Paper Position Paper of the Roma Youth Networks on the Post-2020 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies* issued by Phiren Amenca International Network and ternYpe International Roma Youth Network underlined, **Roma young people were “rather missing from the structures of the current National Roma Contact Points and National Roma Platforms.”**<sup>186</sup> And as Carmen Tanasie concluded in 2019,

Many Roma youth leaders face disempowerment and are being silenced. For instance, the Roma youth organisations and leaders were not even consulted in the development of national Roma strategies. And many Roma young people do not feel that they have a voice, even when they are part of state institutions or civil society, as they are often used as token voices.<sup>187</sup>

Lack of participation goes beyond NRISs. At the national level in particular, as a Roma young person participating in our focus group in Kosovo put it, “it doesn’t matter how good we are, or how educated we are. Our only option is working with NGOs; there is no place for us in state institutions.”<sup>188</sup> And as the participants in the second meeting of the CoE Task Force described it, “at the moment governments do not see the relevance of having space for Roma youth within youth policies and Roma inclusion policies. Roma youth are seen as beneficiaries of these policies as there are no obstacles for them to take part, but they are not active contributors to shaping these policies.”<sup>189</sup>

At the European level, too, the participation of Roma youth in consultative councils and bodies is sporadic and sometimes exceptional. Intergovernmental organisations are yet to include

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<sup>186</sup> *Paper Position Paper of the Roma Youth Networks on the Post-2020 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*, Phiren Amenca International Network and ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, September 14, 2019 <<https://phirenamenca.eu/position-paper-of-the-roma-youth-networks-on-the-post-2020-eu-framework-for-national-roma-integration-strategies/>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>187</sup> Expert Interview with Carmen Tanasie, September 25, 2019 in Strasbourg, France.

<sup>188</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca and ternYpe International Roma Youth Network in Kosovo with seven Roma young people (students, interns, unemployed, state officials) in September 2020.

<sup>189</sup> Working group of Roma youth organisations participating in the second CoE Task Force meeting in September 2020.



fairly, purposely, or proactively Roma youth in consultations, projects, policy processes, and jobs. As a group of Roma young people wrote in 2020, “The European Commission and other EU institutions should be more open, democratic, inclusive and transparent with regards to the Roma youth individuals and Roma youth civil society organizations invited to contribute to the different stages of the policy making process targeting Roma youth.”<sup>190</sup> And as Alex Petrovic, a Roma youth worker from Ireland, concluded:

Policy makers should check and understand what Roma youth actually need. Policymakers should empower and engage Roma youth in decision-making processes and consultations so that they can decide for themselves.<sup>191</sup>

Thus, in the absence of Roma youth related policy consultations, participation, leadership as well as targeted policy measures and results, the lack of trust of Roma young people in state and public institutions is justified.

Roma youth also experience and perceive a lack of space for Roma youth in mainstream youth structures. The participants in the 2020 Phiren Amenca survey noted that “Roma youth are excluded from transnational and national youth structures (i.e., in Romanian Youth Council) and are downsized in Roma representation related structures and civil society organizations.”<sup>192</sup> Also, as the report of the 2019 CoE *Roma Youth Participation: What now?* seminar concluded, international organisations are yet to purposely and proactively involve Roma youth in projects, consultation processes, seminars, training courses, etc. Roma youth organisations lack access to consultative councils at the local and national levels, too. Other participants at the 2019 seminar also felt intrigued by the narrative about the Roma youth’s “lack of interest” in youth movements and pointed out the fragmented relations with non-Roma youth organisations as well as the disempowerment of Roma youth in non-Roma youth spaces, seminars, and initiatives.<sup>193</sup> And a Roma young person participating in our focus group in Albania also added,<sup>194</sup>

There is a need for participation of Roma young in any kind of activities related to young people in general, so we don’t have our voice there. I see only a few young Roma participating in young activities that are for young people. Most often, Roma young people participate in activities that are only related to Roma issues. There’s a need also the young organisations to have the voice of young Roma. When institutions have activities about young people should not forget to include Roma young to participate and give their contribution. Also, European institutions need to include young Roma when it comes to activities for young people, also to include Albania, we have seen that in different activities we cannot apply because Albania is not an eligible country to participate. There is a need

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<sup>190</sup> Expert contribution, Written comments to the background paper on Diversity and Participation presented during the Workshop on future policies for Roma on 1st October 2019 - The future of EU Roma youth policies <[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/multiple\\_expert\\_contribution\\_-\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_eu\\_roma\\_youth\\_policies.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/multiple_expert_contribution_-_the_future_of_eu_roma_youth_policies.pdf)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>191</sup> Expert Interview with Alex Petrovics, July 13, 2020.

<sup>192</sup> Simona Torotcoi, *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*, Phiren Amenca International Network, 2020.

<sup>193</sup> Margareta Matache, *The Urgency of Now: Post-2020 Priorities for Roma Youth in the Council of Europe*, 2019.

<sup>194</sup> Focus group organised in Albania by Phiren Amenca International Network, ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, and Roma Active Albania with eight Roma young people (students, social workers, peer educators, members of city councils involved with various Roma organisations) on September 16, 2020.

to have the voice of young Roma in different strategies or action plans related to young people in general. There is a need to involve the youth Roma voice in documents, action plans, strategies related to Roma.”

Roma young women, in particular, face a disproportionate lack of voices and representation in both state and youth spaces. **“There is a lack of women representation. Women are double discriminated, for their gender and their ethnicity. Their empowerment is essential for the community,”** concluded the participants at a focus group in Kosovo.<sup>195</sup> Thus, intersectional discrimination should be addressed both as a stand-alone priority and a crosscutting theme across work and policy development regarding young people.

Yet, when benefiting from access and opportunities, Roma young people have engaged in public life. As the Phiren Amenca 2020 survey concluded,

Roma youth are active citizens, highly involved in the civic and political lives of their communities. The most frequent activities relate to participation in various workshops, seminars, events on Roma related topics, voting (e.g. at the European, national, local level), organising and signing petitions and organising and attending protests against certain practices or for changing/supporting some specific pieces of legislation, followed by civil society work.<sup>196</sup>

And Roma young people share the same common purpose of wanting to be treated with dignity and respect. Such purpose may help Roma youth leaders build a youth movement, not only setting up an NGO to address an important topic. As Georgina Laboda put it,

We need to build strong local and national Roma youth leadership to raise their voices for themselves and their close communities. Roma youth activists should decide together and can stand up together in solidarity for the problems in each of their communities.<sup>197</sup>

Roma young people make it clear that they can represent themselves and want and demand participation. The participants in the Phiren Amenca 2020 survey felt strongly motivated to participate. And their motivation often rose from their personal experience with racism as well as “a thirst for social justice.”<sup>198</sup> Also, during a focus group organised by Phiren Amenca and Sumnal in North Macedonia, one Roma young person stated that “it’s a must to have a population that can represent itself. At the moment, **there is some critical mass among the Roma that can represent the Roma and address the needs, problems and requests.**”<sup>199</sup> Another participant emphasised the importance of recognising the interest of Roma young people in participation:

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<sup>195</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca and ternYpe International Roma Youth Network in Kosovo with seven Roma young people (students, interns, unemployed, state officials) in September 2020.

<sup>196</sup> Simona Torotcoi, *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*, Phiren Amenca International Network, 2020.

<sup>197</sup> Expert Interview with Georgina Laboda, September 25, 2019 in Strasbourg, France

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca and Sumnal in North Macedonia with five Roma young people: a teacher, two university students, one high school student, and one educational mediator, September 18, 2020.

It's very important, as many people think that we the young just hang on the mobiles and do nothing and are not interested. But that's not true as we are. I'm glad that there are organisations where we can get involved and become active and discuss.<sup>200</sup>

Roma young people specifically demand participation in policy-making processes. An October 2020 position paper issued by Phiren Amenca emphasized that “Roma youth, and respectively Roma youth civil society, should be invited, consulted and given decision-making power in discussions concerning the post-2020 EU Framework of NRISs. They should also be involved in the design and public discussions of the NRISs. And requiring the participation of Roma youth in this public consultation process will ensure that the Roma youth perspective is reflected in policies and young Roma are not left out.”<sup>201</sup> And referring specifically to the EC, Marietta Herfort underscored at the *Digital high-level conference 'EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation'* that

The European Commission and the Member States must guarantee that Roma youth have a major say in the design and implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies. Member States should include “Roma youth” as a specific target group under their Roma and mainstream strategies and develop specific measures targeting the needs of young Roma people. Topics, such as education, employment, healthcare, housing, and equal treatment have to be a discussion involving young Roma.

Real participation and social inclusion will only be achieved if Roma youth are given a role at all levels of society and can play a role in decision-making. We always hear that Roma youth are the future of Europe, but now we want to see that Roma youth have a voice in the European future.

### **What do Roma young people say about existing policies and programmes?**

Targeted Roma policies at the national and European levels have been critiqued by Roma young people. The EU Roma Framework for Roma Integration which came to an end in 2020 lacked interest in the specific needs of Roma youth, as shown in a 2019 Phiren Amenca study.<sup>202</sup> Consequently or related, the NRISs adopted and implemented at the national level did not address enough the needs of Roma youth either. As a group of Roma young people – scholars, activists, students – underlined in their comments sent to the EC in 2019, upon the evaluation of its EU Roma Framework:

Youth as a target group has not been addressed in the EU Roma Framework and NRIS as Roma youth think they should have been; even in the consultation processes at the EU and national level youth needs are not presented adequately... The framework (COM (2011) 173) mentions 4 times the word young whereas children 25 times.

A brief look at the national level reveals that out of 22 NRIS, just a quarter of them use the term youth or young in a frequent way, with Finland, Sweden, Croatia, Hungary,

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<sup>200</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca and Sumnal in North Macedonia with five Roma young people: a teacher, two university students, one high school student, and one educational mediator, September 18, 2020.

<sup>201</sup> <https://phirenamenca.eu/position-paper-of-the-roma-youth-networks-on-the-post-2020-eu-framework-for-national-roma-integration-strategies/>

<sup>202</sup> Simona Torotcoi, *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*, Phiren Amenca International Network, 2020.

Germany, Italy, and to a certain extent Romania, mentioning youth and young between 22 to 120 times in their national strategies – and most of the times in relation to education. The laggards in this respect are countries like Slovakia or Bulgaria – with a rather high percentage of Roma - which use the term youth or young less than 10 times in their national strategies.<sup>203</sup>

Roma young people expressed concerns about the mainstream youth policies, too. And the pattern of neglecting Roma youth is observed even more pronouncedly in mainstream youth policies at the national level. For instance, as Annabel Carballo exemplified using the case of Spain,

none of the existing youth policies in Spain, Catalunya, or Barcelona specifically mention Roma. You can't even read about youth belonging to minority groups.<sup>204</sup>

Roma young people also highlight that the existing key European mainstream youth policies and programmes, which generally do not mention Roma youth specifically, rarely reach and impact Roma youth. As Carmen Tanasie emphasised, the EU mainstream policies have often superficially included or not included at all Roma youth:

If you ask policymakers from the EU about Roma youth in mainstream EU policies, they would say that the needs of youth and Roma youth are mainstreamed in EU programmes and policies. But that is not true. It is not enough to have the words youth and vulnerable groups superficially mentioned in some mainstream policies without actually giving specific attention to them in practice. The EU often adds in its texts 'and youth from marginalised communities, such as Roma.' And they end it there. They do not include any objectives, indicators and measurements, and paths forward regarding the ways in which the needs of Roma would or should be targeted, addressed, and monitored.<sup>205</sup>

Also, Simona Torotcoi's 2020 study shows that of the 290 Roma young people from Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Spain who opted to fill out an online questionnaire, only 4% were beneficiaries of the European Youth Guarantee programme and 5% of the Youth Employment Initiative. And it is important to underline that the Phiren Amenca study included voices of those who self-selected to participate, including employed, students, or volunteers and Roma young people with access to the Internet. Thus, to assess the participation of other categories and groups of Romani young people, more research is needed. Still, we can hypostasize that the numbers would be much lower amongst different categories, given that many of those involved in Torotcoi's study had access to NGO and student networks and online communities. But even amongst Torotcoi's respondents, **65% never heard of the European Youth Guarantee programme, and 58% never heard of the Youth Employment Initiative.**

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<sup>203</sup> Expert contribution, Written comments to the background paper on Diversity and Participation presented during the Workshop on future policies for Roma on 1st October 2019 - The future of EU Roma youth policies <[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/multiple\\_expert\\_contribution\\_-\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_eu\\_roma\\_youth\\_policies.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/multiple_expert_contribution_-_the_future_of_eu_roma_youth_policies.pdf)> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>204</sup> Expert Interview with Annabel Carballo, July 23, 2020.

<sup>205</sup> Expert Interview with Carmen Tanasie, September 16, 2020.

In our interview with Carmen Tanasie, she also stressed the lack of implementation of the Youth Guarantee programme, especially at the national level:

When the Youth Guarantee scheme was provided to the Member States, some of them implemented the program, but they forgot or neglected the programme's component on Roma youth. Some said that they employed members of vulnerable groups, or others said that they did not employ at all youth belonging to vulnerable groups, as in the case of Romania. We can't expect programmes without specific targets and objectives on how to reach those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods or young Roma to be effective for those specific people.<sup>206</sup>

And equally important, the voices of Roma young people are missing in implementing and evaluating national and European policies and measures are neglected, too.

Thus, Roma young people demand more support from the international community. Close to 1/5 of the respondents in Simona Torotcoi's 2020 study agree that the European community, including the Council of Europe, "should do more to support Roma youth get publicly engaged."<sup>207</sup>

### **What do Roma young people mean by participation?**

Several foundational elements are relevant in ensuring substantive participation of Roma youth. Policy makers and other stakeholders need to adequately and strategically invest resources in creating the premises for substantive participation of Roma youth: quality education, skill development, capacity strengthening, access to information, access to spaces of power, funding, unbiased, safe, and anti-racist spaces.

The participants in the focus group organized by Phiren Amenca and Sumnal in North Macedonia specifically mentioned capacity strengthening programmes as a premises for participation. They also underlined the need for more and diverse participation of Roma:

strengthening the personal capacities of the young Roma is very important as only if we have strong capacities and persons full of technical knowledge, the community can fight for all privileges. The capacities have to be built from the NGOs as those are the ones that move everything forward. The Council of Europe...needs to invest in strengthening the capacities because the ones that are activists face subsistence issues. With time we are lost in looking for subsistence, and then the activism is lost. Because we don't come from rich families where we will be able to provide more time to activism. We need to exist too.<sup>208</sup>

Additionally, across Europe, only a limited number of Roma youth grassroots leaders, informal groups, and organisations exist. Funding is scarce, primarily for grassroots organisations and informal youth groups, as many donors choose to engage with and fund visible national and international organisations. But funding has also proven to be a challenge for Roma youth

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<sup>206</sup> Expert Interview with Carmen Tanasie, September 16, 2020.

<sup>207</sup> Simona Torotcoi, *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*, Phiren Amenca International Network, 2020.

<sup>208</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca and Sumnal in North Macedonia with five Roma young people: a teacher, two university students, one high school student, and one educational mediator, September 18, 2020.

organisations working at the European and national levels. Elvis Beriša suggested intergovernmental organisations put more effort in providing support with spaces, travel costs, accommodation, and trainers.<sup>209</sup> In addition, co-financing and pre-financing requirements much limit the participation of small organisations in application processes. And only a few projects involve Roma youth at the grassroots level and organise seminars and training courses in Roma neighbourhoods. As Carmen Tanasie concluded in 2019,

We need to empower Roma youth at the local level, and spread the skills and knowledge from neighbourhoods to cities, countries, but start at the grassroots.<sup>210</sup>

Thus, it is essential that policymakers and other stakeholders ensure that Roma youth, especially those who live in rural and isolated areas, benefit equally with non-Roma youth from access to information about youth initiatives, volunteering opportunities, and possibilities for active participation in policy, political, and civic processes.

Policymakers and other stakeholders need to purposefully and proactively involve Roma youth in policy design, projects, consultation processes, seminars, training courses. Representation needs to be ensured at all levels in fora of decision making processes from the local to the national, regional, and international levels. Also, when Roma youth presence in those spaces of power is ensured, policymakers and other stakeholders should no longer use Roma young people, and any other Roma leaders for that matter, as tokens in such decision-making processes, by dismissing and disrespecting them, but instead hearing, respecting, and taking account of Roma voices. Too often, Roma, including Roma youth, have been used and disrespected in such processes. And young people are aware of those humiliating experiences. As a Roma young person participating in our focus group in Albania noted,<sup>211</sup>

In the job where I work, one of the challenges I faced was that many times when I wanted to raise awareness about issues that Roma community face, people said to me to shut up not to speak, or sometimes, they were ignoring Roma, they were saying ‘leave the Roma; let’s talk about something else.’ People in the institution where I work were full of stereotypes regarding Roma. It took me two years to show them my skills and to break their stereotypes.

Other Roma young people expressed similar opinions. The 2020 online survey by Phiren Amenca listed negative social attitudes towards Roma young people as a critical barrier in their participation in public and political life.<sup>212</sup> Also, as Annabel Carballo also underlined,

Frequently, when Roma young people participate in events and consultation processes, including in European programmes, they feel Roma young people don’t participate on an equal basis. To overcome barriers, organisers should take into consideration all kinds

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<sup>209</sup> Expert Interview with Elvis Beriša, September 25, 2019 in Strasbourg, France

<sup>210</sup> Interview with Carmen Tanasie conducted by Margareta Matache on September 25, 2019 in Strasbourg, France

<sup>211</sup> Focus group organised in Albania by Phiren Amenca International Network, ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, and Roma Active Albania with eight Roma young people (students, social workers, peer educators, members of city councils involved with various Roma organisations) on September 16, 2020.

<sup>212</sup> Simona Torotcoi, *Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities*, Phiren Amenca International Network, 2020.

of issues from how they set up the agenda and ensure diverse voices to practising cultural sensitivity throughout such processes.<sup>213</sup>

Thus, participation does not solely mean presence; it also means that young people are being heard, respected, and trusted.

Policymakers, and other stakeholders need to purposefully aim for ensuring substantive participation of Roma youth in mainstream and targeted policy-making, political life, and civil society. Thus, to put in practice substantive participation, policymakers and other stakeholders should ensure at least four other interconnected elements: access, representation, leadership, and power-sharing. In that sense, European young people and youth organisations also need to be ready and proactive in sharing resources and power with their Roma peers. Non-Roma allies could contribute to lifting Roma voices and ensuring movement growth by sharing connections, resources, and power with Roma youth whenever possible. Also, Roma young leaders need support to create a more robust and cohesive Roma youth movement across organisations and countries –which establishes strong networks and cooperation amongst Roma youth organisations, informal groups, and individuals- that might be able to push that agenda further and create a shared vision and dialogue with stakeholders.

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<sup>213</sup> Expert Interview with Annabel Carballo, July 23, 2020.

## **The Added Value of a Coe Recommendation on Roma Youth Participation**

In 2014, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe's Resolution 366 *Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels*<sup>214</sup> inquired whether intergovernmental instruments “are sufficient to cover the needs and address the problems faced by young Roma in their everyday lives.”<sup>215</sup> And of course, the answer is no, as governments hold responsibility, mandate, and power to ensure equal participation and equal rights for Roma youth. Intergovernmental organisations cannot replace the role of governments.

Yet, intergovernmental organisations play a distinct role, different from the role of the governments, in setting standards and norms for institutions to work towards ensuring equality, including for Roma youth. For instance, the international instruments adopted by intergovernmental organisations have already proven very useful, specifically in at least four areas: setting standards and recommendations for governments; ensuring some funding for policy interventions and pilot projects; assessing implementation at the national level; and facilitating the exchange of information and good practices between governmental institutions.

At the European level, if we were to take the example of the CoE, we can say that the work of the Youth Department with Roma youth can be regarded as a model of targeted measures putting into practice Roma youth participation and capacity strengthening. Its RYAP stands out as the only action plans that targeted, designed, implemented, and evaluated measures with and for Roma youth at the European level.

However, while the Youth Department can implement its own activities with Roma youth, it does not have power over governments to influence and impact their policies and standards regarding Roma young people and their needs. It is the Committee of Ministers who can involve in processes that can guide governments to develop, implement, budget, and evaluate policies and standards for and with Roma youth at the national and local levels. While other CoE bodies have invested more into supporting Roma youth, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is yet to recognise the specific needs and challenges faced by Roma young people, as it did with other marginalised groups, when it adopted its recommendations addressing the needs of refugees as well as young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

### **What is the added value of a Committee of Ministers Recommendation on Roma youth participation?**

As a matter of geography and membership, the Council of Europe works with a larger pool of governments than other European intergovernmental organisations, including regions, such as the Balkans, or countries, such as Ukraine, where Roma and specifically Roma young people face both urgent and structural challenges. In that sense, a Committee of Ministers' Recommendation could include the needs of Roma young people beyond the EU. As Carmen Tanasie argued, “this is the right moment for such a Recommendation... The Committee of Ministers would bring an extra value by adopting a Recommendation with a reach beyond the

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<sup>214</sup> Council of Europe, The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, 26<sup>th</sup> SESSION Strasbourg, 25-27 March 2014 CG(26)8FINAL 26 March 2014, *Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels* <<https://rm.coe.int/168071950b>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid 86.



EU and complementary to the EU Roma Framework and the national strategies for Roma. The Recommendation would be designed for 47 countries. It's not anymore only about 27 countries.”<sup>216</sup>

A Committee of Ministers' Recommendation participation could also become the first and the only intergovernmental text to guide national and local governments towards ensuring substantive participation, leadership, and inclusion of Roma young people in processes, policies, and programmes. As we have shown in this report, up to now, governments have not prioritised and ensured space, participation, and targeted measures for Roma youth in youth policies and Roma inclusion policies. Thus, primarily, this Recommendation would guide member States to commit towards participation and inclusion of Roma youth and work together with Roma youth on identifying needs and implementing measures.

As the participants in the second CoE Task Force meeting in September underlined, the Recommendation would provide compelling concrete examples and set standards on how Roma youth participation, anti-racism, and inclusion can be ensured and supported.<sup>217</sup> As Pia Slogar emphasised, the Recommendation can be regarded as an end in itself:

the Recommendation is connected with a manual – very concrete and specific guidelines for national and local governments but also youth organisations and young activists.<sup>218</sup>

Such a Recommendation would be followed by the development of Guidelines for its implementation, which could serve as the basis for the member states on how to understand and appropriately develop measures to address the needs of the Roma young people.<sup>219</sup>

Thus, the Recommendation could help and guide governments to set up basic standards not only for Roma youth participation but also for preventing and combating anti-Roma racism, which Roma young people experience in all aspects of their lives, from access to job and higher education to police violence and everyday discrimination. There is a strong need, as the participants in the second CoE Task Force meeting also emphasised, to recognise and address all the visible and invisible manifestations of racism at the institutional, cultural, and societal levels, and “not to be indifferent to certain dimensions of it.” And although the Recommendation would not be legally binding, it would still have the power to recommend governments to ensure that Roma youth receive justice, including economic and reparatory justice, and benefit indiscriminately from fundamental human rights. Having such points mentioned in a Committee of Ministers text would help Roma youth organisations to advocate governments at the national and local levels to take into account Roma youth, their specific needs, and human rights.

As we have shown throughout the report, targeting and double mainstreaming Roma youth are fundamental in ensuring Roma participations. To date, however, the existing mainstream youth policies and structures have not been inclusive of Roma youth, but relatively neutral: they did

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<sup>216</sup> Expert Interview with Carmen Tanasie, September 16, 2020.

<sup>217</sup> Working group of Roma youth organisations participating in the second CoE Task Force meeting in September 2020.

<sup>218</sup> Expert Interview with Pia Slogar, September 29, 2020.

<sup>219</sup> Working group: Statutory bodies (CCJ, CDEJ, ADI-ROM) and partners (YFJ) participating in the second CoE Task Force meeting in September 2020.

not exclude Roma youth, but at the same time, they did not acknowledge or address specific needs rooted in a history of anti-Roma racism and exclusion.<sup>220</sup> As the participants in the second CoE Task Force meeting emphasised,

Mainstreaming is not automatic. There is a need for an effort to move from non-exclusion to actual inclusion.

The specific life experiences of Roma youth, as well as their history and circumstances, requires that governments create targeted policy measures for Roma youth and that youth and Roma related policies and programmes include and ensure dedicated attention and efforts for Roma youth. Thus, the Recommendation would direct national governments on the importance of including and addressing Roma youth's specific needs, history, challenges, and demands in youth and Roma related policies.<sup>221</sup> It would also call for specific policy measures addressing the needs of Roma youth in a more participatory and effective way. The Recommendation could guide governments on revising the existing models of inclusion, including by addressing intersectional discrimination and ensuring double mainstreaming.

The Committee of Ministers' Recommendation could also guide and support youth organisations and leaders at the local, national, regional, and European levels to seriously address the lack of representation of Roma youth in their structures and programmes and the limited attention in hearing their voices and tackling their needs. A Committee of Ministers' Recommendation could invite and guide NYCs and other structures dealing with youth matters to take steps towards full inclusion of Roma youth in their leadership, membership, and activities and pay attention to all factors that could hinder it, including language barriers, biases, or funding.<sup>222</sup>

Simply put, a Recommendation on Roma youth participation would give a push to youth movements and organisations to mainstream the needs of Roma young people. As Roma young people participating in the focus group in Albania said:

We encourage you to be more open to creating space for young Roma, don't forget to include the Roma voice when it comes to activities related to young people.<sup>223</sup>

The Recommendation would also send a signal to Roma young people that the Committee is hearing their challenges and needs of Ministers and that Roma youth benefit from the same attention as any other groups of young people in Europe. The Committee of Ministers can send that message to Roma youth by adopting, along with all the other recommendations adopted already, a recommendation addressing their needs. A Committee of Ministers' Recommendation can also help Roma young people to gain access to more learning opportunities. As one participant in a focus group in North Macedonia concluded, "these [policies/principles/guidelines targeting the participation of Roma youth] all give us guidelines

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<sup>220</sup> Working group of Roma youth organisations participating in the second CoE Task Force meeting in September 2020.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Working group: Statutory bodies (CCJ, CDEJ, ADI-ROM) and partners (YFJ) participating in the second CoE Task Force meeting in September 2020.

<sup>223</sup> Focus group organised in Albania by Phiren Amenca International Network, ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, and Roma Active Albania with eight Roma young people (students, social workers, peer educators, members of city councils involved with various Roma organisations) on September 16, 2020.

to educate ourselves and to further educate our peers and have more benefits of the participation.”<sup>224</sup>

The Recommendation would provide Roma young people in Europe with a unique, singular, and robust advocacy tool. As Georgina Laboda emphasised,<sup>225</sup>

It is extremely important to have a CM document that we can use as a source in the work of the Advisory Council on Youth but also in the work of Roma youth organisations, such as Phiren Amenca. Most importantly, national and local Roma youth organisations can use the Recommendation to advocate for themselves in their countries. It’s powerful to have a Recommendation which the national government signed and agreed to and use it in advocacy work. Usually, Roma youth are mentioned in policy documents, mostly in relation to measures regarding people not in education, employment, and training.

The Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation would also build on, and therefore ensure continuity of, previous targeted and double mainstreamed work conducted by the Council of Europe with Roma youth, including the Roma youth Action Plans, and could serve as a compendium of knowledge in the field of Roma youth participation.<sup>226</sup> It’s mandatory to underline and address, as also Georgina Laboda stated, the fact that

Since the RYAP ended, in Europe, we have not had any specific document to highlight the needs of Roma young people. There are Roma or youth-related strategies, such as CoE’s 2020-2025 Youth Strategy, but Roma youth are mentioned in one-two sentences or not at all. It is extremely important to have a CM document that builds on and continues the work in the Roma youth Action Plans.<sup>227</sup>

It could also continue to create links and synergies with the work of other intergovernmental organisations. As the EC DG Justice underlined in its written response to our interview,

The Commission welcomes and seeks synergies with other EU, national or international initiatives. An explicit recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe aiming to support participation and inclusion of Roma young people in the EU Member States and beyond would definitely strengthen the international arena into reducing the impact of negative stereotypes and prejudice for more genuine inclusion of young Roma people.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Focus group organised by Phiren Amenca and Sumnal in North Macedonia with five Roma young people: a teacher, two university students, one high school student, and one educational mediator, September 18, 2020

<sup>224</sup> Expert Interview with Mustafa Jakupov, July 17, 2020.

<sup>225</sup> Expert Interview with Georgina Laboda, October 14, 2020.

<sup>226</sup> Working group: Statutory bodies (CCJ, CDEJ, ADI-ROM) and partners (YFJ) participating in the second CoE Task Force meeting in September 2020.

<sup>227</sup> Expert Interview with Georgina Laboda, October 14, 2020.

<sup>228</sup> Written response received from the EC DG Justice Roma Team (Lavinia Banu) on September 17, 2020

## What topics should the Recommendations include?

The Roma and ally youth leaders participating in the Coe Task Force highlighted the following topics:

- The Recommendation should acknowledge the diversity of Roma youth, their experiences and struggles, and call on stakeholders to be aware of that diversity when developing policies.
- The Recommendation should address the participation of Roma young people in Roma, youth, and other related policies that impact their lives. Roma youth should have meaningful roles in designing programmes and policies related to their lives, so they can prioritise, make decisions, and participate in activities. The Recommendation should call for policies, measures, and activities *for* and *with* Roma young people. As Georgina Laboda put it,

It's important to have Roma youth included in a document created with and by Roma youth, which highlights the participation and involvement of Roma youth in institutions and structures at all levels. Roma youth are ready and are asking and waiting for recognition, participation, and involvement.<sup>229</sup>

- The Recommendation should call on governments to ensure the structural premises for participation (e.g., quality education, anti-racist practices, economic and reparatory justice) and prepare, strengthen capacity, and connect Roma youth to claim space and raise their voices.
- The Recommendation should call on governments to address structural inequalities faced by Roma youth. Being poor, not having access to education, or providing for their family should not deprive Roma youth of enjoying education, culture, leisure, housing, healthcare, political and civic engagement, and other opportunities.
- The Recommendation should address anti-Roma racism/ antiGypsyism, which affects Roma young people.
- The Recommendation should address the lack of political participation of young Roma. For instance, political parties should work with Roma youth leaders to identify ways to support Roma youth to be included in political processes. And the Recommendation should also call for the inclusion of Roma youth in sports, education, arts and cultural life.
- The Recommendation should call on governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental stakeholders to ensure access of Roma youth to education for democratic citizenship to strengthen their capacity to advocate for their rights.
- The Recommendation should call on public services to be proactive in their outreach and support to Roma youth, including through mentoring activities.
- The Recommendation should urge governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental stakeholders to put an end to tokenism, abuse, and humiliations of Roma youth and make sure Roma youth participate in a meaningful way while being respected

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<sup>229</sup> Expert Interview with Georgina Laboda, October 14, 2020.

and heard. There is a need to raise the commitment of public authorities to Roma youth participation and needs.

- The Recommendation should counter the biased narrative that Roma youth do not have the motivation to join, as most often, engagement is blocked by experiences of discrimination and systemic abuse.
- The Recommendation should address the lack of access, participation, representation, and leadership of Roma young people in spaces created for and by young people, including national youth councils. These mechanisms should be more pro-active in their outreach, preparation, and decision making processes to ensure that Roma youth are substantively represented and included.
- The Recommendation should address the issues of capacity strengthening of Roma youth to organise themselves. It should also acknowledge that Roma youth do not organise themselves only as youth organisations, but also as informal groups, associated or not with Roma organisations; therefore, it is important to identify ways for such informal groups to gain space in youth councils and other structures.

Roma youth organisations who participated in the second meeting of the CoE Task Force on Roma youth participation also mentioned that they expected the Recommendation to call for an increase and a revised way of funding/support / involve youth by CoE and EC and other governmental, intergovernmental, and NGO structures. As the participants concluded, “the Recommendation should call upon the existing funding and operational programmes which do not have any actions or indicators that secure the inclusion of Roma youth directly in their implementation.”<sup>230</sup>

Besides, the EC DG Justice suggested the Recommendation seek alignment and complementarity with other existing EU tools and initiatives. In this sense, the recommendation should take note of the post 2020 EU initiative on Roma, and increase the active participation of Roma youth in programmes and measures targeting young people; ensure funding to support the plurality and independence of Roma and pro-Roma civil society, including Roma youth organisations, thus enabling them to report on and monitor the implementation of national Roma strategic frameworks, as independent watchdog organisations, and to reinforce their administrative capacity; promote capacity building and leadership in Roma civil society, including youth organisations, to enable the bodies and organisations concerned to participate in all stages of the policy cycle and in public life in general; empower and support full access of Roma youth quality inclusive mainstream education and training to sustainable quality employment; and promote awareness-raising programs that challenge discrimination and stereotypes against young Roma people by promoting role models and young Roma ambassadors.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Working group of Roma youth organisations participating in the second CoE Task Force meeting in September 2020.

<sup>231</sup> Written response received from the EC DG Justice Roma Team (Lavinia Banu) on September 17, 2020.

## Conclusion

Policies and policymakers have yet to address systematically and continuously the needs of Roma youth in Europe. To date, the Roma policies and mainstream youth policies implemented at the national and European levels scarcely or never mentioned Roma youth or addressed their needs. Targeted policies and standards specific for and with Roma youth have not yet been developed and implemented at the local, national, and European levels. Thus, when it comes to Roma youth, neither targeted nor double mainstream approaches, as Mustafa Jakupov underlined, have been systematically employed in policy design at the national and the European level.<sup>232</sup>

National and European institutions have avoided to recognise and include the specific history, needs, and challenges of Roma youth in mainstream policies and measures. However, this neutral, “one fit all” approach in policies and recommendations targeting a very diverse spectrum of European young people ignored and denied the reality of racialization, racism, and historical and structural inequalities faced by Roma youth and other racialised young peoples. Thus, most often, the inadequate length, quality, and consistency of programmes involving but not targeting or double mainstreaming Roma youth made it impossible to meet the needs of the significant number of Roma young people, especially the most marginalised ones.

Participation and inclusion are critical pillars of democratic societies. However, Roma youth and their specific needs and asks have been neglected or misunderstood in mainstream youth policy circles as well as in Roma related policies. Some policy documents aimed to include specific measures for Roma youth, but ended up stamping young people as a “vulnerable” group or a cross-cutting topic. That approach often led to a lack of action or a lack of focus on issues seen as relevant by the young people themselves, including participation or active citizenship. Therefore, to ensure inclusive policies, Roma young people must be included in youth and Roma policies and programmes in all stages, from design to evaluation. Moreover, to be effective and trustworthy, policies, including youth policy ought to incorporate anti-racist and social inclusion measures.

Roma youth have a pivotal, but unacknowledged, role to bring about change in our societies. Roma youth have lived experiences of discrimination or stigmatization and understand the urgency of justice and human rights. And Roma youth are also motivated, committed, and competent to contribute to the change that Europe urgently needs. Thus, European societies and institutions need Roma youth’s expertise and ideas to truly ensure human rights, justice, and social cohesion. And the initiatives mentioned in this report stand as evidence for it.

The Youth Department’ RYAPs stands as an exception and a good practice: the only action plan in Europe that targeted Roma youth and that involved intentional, continuous, and strategic investment in strengthening the capacity of Roma youth networks and organisations and facilitating alliances and partnerships with non-Roma partners and authorities. However, the RYAPs did not have the ability and power to influence the work of local and national governments with Roma youth.

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<sup>232</sup> Expert Interview with Mustafa Jakupov, July 17, 2020.

Therefore, in this context, the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation would bring added value by expanding Roma youth-related work at the level of institutions. It would also represent a unique and pioneering text across European national and intergovernmental institutions: "an instrument specifically setting guidelines in the area of Roma youth participation and prepared through a process where young Roma are actively involved and consulted."<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Working group of Statutory bodies (CCJ, CDEJ, ADI-ROM) and partners (YFJ) participating in the second CoE Task Force meeting in September 2020.

## Acknowledgements

This report is one outcome of the thorough and ongoing pursuit of Roma youth leaders in Europe for justice, equality, and participation. And we are tremendously grateful to the Roma youth leaders and allies who agreed to be interviewed for this report.

We are extremely grateful to all those who contributed to the Task Force meetings (full composition in appendix), identified priorities and specific responsibilities for the youth sector, and assessed the opportunity and feasibility of preparing a recommendation on Roma youth participation by the Committee of Ministers. We would also like to acknowledge the role of all rapporteurs of the working groups during the Task Force meetings who volunteered to summarise the discussions, which served as the primary source for several sections of this report.

Special thanks go to Phiren Amenca International Network who kindly agree to share with us the data collected for the 2019 *Paper Position Paper of the Roma Youth Networks on the Post-2020 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*. In addition, Phiren Amenca was contracted by the Council of Europe to conduct four focus groups with Roma young people in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia to serve this report. We are very grateful for their efforts and support.



## Appendix:

### Members of the Task Force Roma Youth Participation

GEORGINA LABODA	Roma rapporteur in the Joint Council on Youth
BERIL BARANYAI	Youth rapporteur in ADI-ROM
PIA SLOGAR	Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ)
IRINA BELYAEVA	European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ)
JUOZAS MELDZUKAS	CDEJ
MUSTAFA JAKUPOV	European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO)
CARMEN TANASIE	ERGO
MARIETTA HERFORT	Phiren Amenca
SIMONA TOROTCOI	Phiren Amenca
VIVIAN ISBERG	TernYpe – International Roma Youth Network
ALEX PETROVICS	European Youth Forum (National Youth Council of Ireland)
ANNA CARBALLO	Federación de Asociaciones Gitanas de Catalunya
ALEXANDRA RAYKOVA	Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP)
JOHN WARMISHAM	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
MARGARETA MATACHE	Consultant with the Council of Europe

#### *Council of Europe secretariat*

ANTONELLA CRICHIGNO	Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
THORSTEN AFFLERBACH	Head of Roma and Travellers Team
AURORA ALINCAI	Roma and Travellers Team
HENNA HUTTU	Roma and Travellers Team
TUDOREL TABBA	Roma and Travellers Team
STEFAN MANEVSKI	Educational advisor, Youth Department
LÁSZLÓ MILUTINOVITS	Educational advisor, Youth Department
MARIYA ANGELOVA	Programme Officer, Youth Department
MIRJAM HAGMAN	Trainee, Youth Department
RUI GOMES	Head of Division Education and Training, Youth Department

## **Appendix: Surveys and Interview Questions**

### **Survey Members of Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM)**

1. Which country do you represent?
2. How many representatives does your government send to ADI-ROM?
3. Does your government count Roma among its representatives to ADI-ROM?
4. Does the ministry/agency that you represent have any specific project, activity, or policy addressing the needs of Roma young people? Please briefly describe.
5. Do Roma young people participate in the design and implementation of policies and projects for Roma communities/people in your country? Please briefly describe.
6. What are the main obstacles to equal participation of Roma young people in youth and Roma policy measures and programmes in your country?
7. Would a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe be helpful to support participation and inclusion of Roma young people in your country? What measures should be proposed?

### **Survey Members of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ)**

1. What institution do you represent? (also please list the country)
2. Does your ministry or department have any specific project, activity, or policy addressing the needs of Roma young people? Please briefly describe.
3. Do Roma young people participate in the design and implementation of policies and projects for Roma communities/people in your country? Please briefly describe.
4. What are the main obstacles to equal participation of Roma young people in youth and Roma policy measures and programmes in your country?
5. Would a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe be helpful to support participation and inclusion of Roma young people in your country? What measures should be proposed?

### **Survey Members of the Advisory Council on Youth**

1. What kind of organisation do you represent?
2. What is the name of your organisation?
3. How many member organisations (if applicable) does your organisation have?
4. Does your organisation count Roma youth organisations (if applicable) among its members? How many?
5. How many individual members (if applicable) does your organisation have?
6. Does your organisation count Roma young people (if applicable) among its members? How many?
7. Does your organisation have any specific project, activity, or policy regarding Roma young people? Please briefly describe.
8. What are the main obstacles to equal participation of Roma young people in youth and Roma policy measures and programmes in your country?
9. Would a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe be helpful to support participation and inclusion of Roma young people in member states? What measures should be proposed?

### **Survey international non-governmental youth organisations**

1. What is the name of your organisation?
2. How many members, affiliates or observers, does your organisation have?
3. Does your organisation count among its members, affiliates or observers, organisations representing or working with Roma young people? How many?
4. Have you implemented any Roma youth related project or activity? Please briefly describe.
5. Do Roma young people participate in the design and implementation of policies and projects for Roma communities/people in your country?
6. What are the main obstacles to equal participation of Roma young people in youth and Roma policy measures and programmes in your country?
7. Would a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe be helpful to support participation and inclusion of Roma young people? What measures should be proposed?

### **Survey National Youth Councils**

1. How many youth organisations are members or affiliates of your national youth council?
2. What youth organisation / national youth council do you represent?
3. How many organisations representing Roma young people does your youth council have as members or affiliates?
4. How (if) are the points of view of Roma young people taken into account by your national youth council?
5. Does your youth council have any specific project, activity, or policy regarding the participation of Roma young people?
6. What are the main obstacles to equal participation of Roma young people in youth and Roma policy measures and programmes in your country?
7. Would a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe be helpful to support participation and inclusion of Roma young people in your country? What measures should be proposed?

### **Interview Questions European Commission DG Justice, Roma Team**

1. Has the work of the EC DG Justice included principles, standards, policies or action plans focusing on the needs of Roma young people? Please briefly describe.
2. What are the main obstacles to equal participation of Roma young people in youth and Roma policy measures and programmes at the national and regional levels?
3. Would a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe be helpful to support participation and inclusion of Roma young people? What measures should be proposed?

### **Interview Questions OSCE ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues**

1. Has the work of the OSCE ODIHR included principles, standards, policies or action plans focusing on the needs of Roma young people? Please briefly describe.

2. What are the main obstacles to equal participation of Roma young people in youth and Roma policy measures and programmes at the national and regional levels?
3. Would a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe be helpful to support participation and inclusion of Roma young people? What measures should be proposed?

#### **Interview Questions International Roma NGOs**

1. Has the work of ...(organization) included principles, standards, policies or action plans focusing on the needs of Roma young people? Please briefly describe.
2. What are the main obstacles to equal participation of Roma young people in youth and Roma policy measures and programmes at the national and regional levels?
3. Would a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe be helpful to support participation and inclusion of Roma young people? What measures should be proposed?