

Echoes of Remembrance: Empowering International Roma Youth Leaders in Commemorating the Roma Genocide

Report of the study session held by
[ternype](#) - International Roma Youth Network

in co-operation with the
European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest
4-8 March 2024

This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

1. Executive summary

The “Echoes of Remembrance: Empowering International Roma Youth Leaders in Commemorating the Roma Genocide” Study Session, organised by ternYpe - International Roma Youth Network in collaboration with the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe, aimed to empower young leaders in advocating for the recognition and remembrance of the Roma Genocide. This session, held at the European Youth Centre Budapest, focused on equipping participants with the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to lead local and regional commemorations while also addressing broader advocacy efforts.

The study session achieved its objectives by deepening participants’ understanding of the Roma Genocide, enhancing their leadership abilities, and exploring effective advocacy tools. Through the study session, participants analysed historical and contemporary challenges faced by Roma communities, developed advocacy plans, and engaged with key experts. Notably, the session provided a platform for participants to present their advocacy strategies through a simulation exercise, where they prepared and pitched policy letters and public hearing presentations.

Follow-up activities from the session include innovative projects such as podcasts, news outlets, and artistic expressions like theatre and art exhibitions aimed at raising awareness and educating the public about the Roma Genocide. Additionally, participants plan to involve local communities through commemorative events. As a follow-up event, ternYpe is organising a significant youth commemoration at Auschwitz-Birkenau, marking the 80th anniversary of the extermination of the imprisoned Roma and Sinti in the “Gypsy Family Camp,” which will provide further opportunities for young people to engage with political and international stakeholders. Several participants from the study session will join as participants, facilitators, or group leaders.

Overall, the study session successfully fostered a supportive network among participants, empowering them to drive meaningful change and enhance the visibility and recognition of the Roma Genocide both locally and internationally.

2. Introduction

The report provides an overview of the “Echoes of Remembrance: Empowering International Roma Youth Leaders in Commemorating the Roma Genocide” Study Session which was held by ternYpe - International Roma Youth Network in co-operation with the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe.

The report starts with an Executive Summary that highlights the most important facts, issues, conclusions and recommendations of the study session. It includes an Introduction outlining the study session’s background, aim and objectives, participant profiles, organisational context, and its connection to the Council of Europe. The Results and Conclusions section summarises outcomes, findings, and future recommendations, emphasising the session’s relevance to Romani youth and to Europe. The Programme section details the thematic content and discussions, highlighting significant ideas and proposals. Follow-up Activities outline future initiatives by participants and organisers. Appendices provide supplementary materials such as the final programme, participant list, and visibility links.

ternYpe - International Roma Youth Organisation was founded as an informal network in January 2010 by different Roma youth organisations from Albania, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Slovakia, Spain and Poland. It formally registered as an international organisation in 2014 in Belgium. TernYpe’s mission is to create spaces for young

people to become active citizens through empowerment, mobilisation, self-organisation and participation.

ternYpe founded the 'Dikh He Na Bister' - Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative. The initiative began in 2010 and is organised annually, aims to raise awareness among young Europeans, civil society, political stakeholders and decision-makers about the Roma Genocide, the mechanisms of stereotypes, antigypsyism, and current challenges of racism, hate speech and extremism in Europe.

The 80th anniversary of 2 August - Roma and Sinti Holocaust Remembrance Day is the focus of Ternype's activities in 2024. The study session "Echoes of Remembrance: Empowering International Roma Youth Leaders in Commemorating the Roma Genocide" organised in the European Youth Centre Budapest contributed to ternYpe's annual goal to empower young Roma and non-Roma activists to become leaders in organising local and regional commemorations to honour the memory of the 500,000 Sinti and Roma victims and to raise awareness of the 'forgotten' Holocaust.

The study session aimed to empower Roma and non-Roma youth leaders to advocate for the recognition and remembrance of the Roma Genocide on a local and national level and act as multipliers in their communities.

The trainer team identified 5 objectives for the study session:

1. to increase the level of understanding of the Roma Genocide, fostering awareness of the historical persecution and its implications on contemporary Roma communities
2. to develop leadership competencies to motivate and mobilise their peers for local remembrance initiatives
3. to exchange advocacy tools, standards and mechanisms on the recognition and remembrance of the Roma Genocide including the Council of Europe standards such as the Recommendation on Roma Youth Participation
4. to analyse participants' contexts and identify key stakeholders for advocacy
5. to support participants in planning local, national and international follow-up activities on Roma Genocide recognition and remembrance

The participants of the study session were mostly youth workers with experience in civil society backgrounds. Out of 30 selected participants, 28 attended the study session, representing 17 countries. The countries included Germany, Spain, United Kingdom, Romania, Montenegro, Italy, Austria, France, Albania, Finland, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, North Macedonia, Finland, Hungary, and Montenegro.

The Roma Genocide, often referred to as the "Porajmos," is a significant tragedy experienced by the Romani communities that demands attention and discussion. During World War II, the Roma people faced systematic extermination by the Nazis and their collaborators, with hundreds of thousands perishing in concentration camps and through mass executions. Despite the enormity of this tragedy, it has been largely overshadowed in historical discourse. Acknowledging and discussing the Roma Genocide is vital for honouring the victims and ensuring that their suffering is not erased from collective memory. Looking back at the past serves to educate future generations about the dangers of racism and antigypsyism, reinforcing the importance of resilience, community building and empowerment.

The session is connected to the Council of Europe's missions. The Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 urges member States to include the history of Roma and Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials. This recommendation underscores the importance of teaching about the suffering of the Romani people during the Holocaust. It calls on governments to integrate activities related to the remembrance of the Roma Genocide into both formal and non-formal education, particularly in connection with the European Roma

Holocaust Memorial Day on 2 August. This initiative is further supported by resources like the Council of Europe's Youth Department publication, "Right to Remember. A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide," which provides educational tools to raise awareness among young people. Additionally, the Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma Youth Participation, adopted in 2023 by the Committee of Ministers, is also mentioned among the recommended measures to 'organise and fund commemorative events led by young Roma people and organisations.' Through these efforts, the Council of Europe seeks to ensure that the atrocities faced by the Roma community are remembered and that their history is acknowledged and integrated into broader educational narratives.

3. Results and conclusions

The study session significantly contributed to the empowerment of participants, enabling them to take initiative on the topic of the Roma Genocide. Participants encouraged and supported each other in planning follow-up activities, fostering a sense of community and mutual assistance.

Several participants were first-time visitors to the European Youth Centre Budapest and had their first experience with activities supported by the Council of Europe. This engagement shows the way for their active participation in future events and initiatives.

Lack of Available Knowledge and Resources:

Participants highlighted a significant problem: the lack of available knowledge, publications, and materials about the suffering of Romani communities during the Holocaust. While several resources are available in English, these materials are rarely translated, therefore not reaching the local communities. Several of the materials are not widely known, only reaching small circles as they have no sources or efforts to expand their reach. This gap in resources hinders awareness and education efforts. Participants found the publications related to Roma communities created by the Council of Europe useful, considering them valuable for their personal learning and advocacy efforts.

Recognition of Roma Holocaust Memorial Day: Through the sessions, it became visible to the participants that several European states do not officially recognise August 2nd as Roma and Sinti Holocaust Memorial Day. The participants expressed their concerns about the connection between the lack of recognition and how it reflects these states' stance on the importance of commemorating victims of the Roma Genocide or their approach of the Romani communities contemporary challenges.

Main Findings and Conclusions:

- There is an urgent need to increase the availability of educational materials on the Roma Genocide.
- Recognition of Roma Holocaust Memorial Day by all European states is crucial for honouring the memory of Roma victims and fostering awareness.
- The discussions underscored the necessity for targeted advocacy to ensure proper recognition and remembrance.

Overall, the study session succeeded in empowering participants to implement their own initiatives on the Roma Genocide and fostered a supportive network for follow-up activities.

4. Programme – inputs and discussions

The first working day, the group had two entry sessions. The first session focused on "getting to know each other", and the second was dedicated to "team-building".

The first afternoon started with a session to explore significant historical elements from the Roma communities' experience. Participants explored the origins and migration of the Roma, cultural and identity elements, antigypsyism, and the Holocaust in working groups. This session aimed to introduce the topic and provide an opportunity for the trainers to assess the group's level of knowledge on different topics.

The last session of the day began with a session created and designed specifically for working with Romani survivors' testimonies in a non-formal education framework. This was part of Dikh He Na Bister's toolkit created with the support of the Council of Europe and the European Youth Foundation in 2023. "Dikh He Na Bister" (Look and Don't Forget) Roma Genocide initiatives are a one-week-long educational programme created by ternYpe - International Roma Youth Organisation. An important element of the week is to invite Roma Holocaust survivors to share their testimonies. In recent years, we have recognised the importance of continuing to preserve survivors' firsthand experiences, as 80 years have passed since the extermination of the Roma in the "Gypsy Family Camp" in Auschwitz-Birkenau. We have had increasing difficulty engaging survivors in person at the event. TernYpe's educational team developed a toolkit to continue this legacy and create a learning methodology involving these testimonies.

The session supported the exploration of the experiences of the Roma before, during, and after the Holocaust through the testimonies of six Roma survivors. It provided participants with an overview to understand the nature of racially targeted policies' effects on Roma before the Holocaust, their suffering during the Holocaust, and the difficulties they faced after the Second World War due to the lack of recognition and acknowledgement of the Roma victims.

The second day of the study session started with a lecture by Milovan Pissarri from the Institute of Philosophy and Social Theory, Centre for Public History, Belgrade. The title of the presentation was "The Genocide of the Roma and Sinti: History and Memory." Participants received an overview of the Roma Genocide and the targeted policies and mass executions of Roma communities. The presentation focused on the Balkans, which is generally a lesser-known aspect of the suffering of Romani communities during the Second World War. The participants had the opportunity to address questions to Mr. Pissarri, leading to a moderated discussion between the lecturer and the participants. The openness of Mr. Pissarri and his dedication to his research topic were appreciated by the participants, some of whom revealed the lack of information they had previously received in educational institutions.

After our invited guest session, the participants delved deeper into exploring the Civil Rights Movement and the fight for recognition, with a particular focus on the example of Germany. They built a timeline from 1945 to the present day on two levels: important events (both positive and negative) towards the recognition of the Roma Genocide and the activities of the Civil Rights Movement. This exercise helped illustrate the progress and setbacks in the long struggle for recognition, highlighting key moments and efforts that have shaped the journey towards justice and acknowledgement for the Roma communities.

On the second afternoon, our team developed a session specifically on advocacy, aligning with the third objective of the study session, "to exchange about advocacy tools, standards and mechanisms on the recognition and remembrance of the Roma Genocide, including the Council of Europe standards such as the Recommendation on Roma Youth Participation," and the fourth objective, "to analyse participants' contexts and identify key stakeholders for advocacy." The session began by addressing the fundamental question: What is advocacy? Participants were divided into small groups for a step-by-step exploration. In the first step, each group discussed their understanding of advocacy. In the second step, each group received a specific definition of advocacy to analyse. The main points from these definitions were then brought together in a plenary session to establish a comprehensive understanding. The Compass of the Council of Europe's definition of 'Advocacy: to publicly support or suggest an

idea, a development, or a way of doing something'; the definition from 'Advocacy (public lobbying, civil intercession, civil representation, representation, and protection of citizens' rights, advocacy) is a method and process of influencing decision-makers and public opinion about issues of concern. It is intended to mobilise public action to resolve social problems' from the Academy of Civil Participation, in partnership with the Council of Europe in Civil Participation: Policy Analysis, Advocacy, Bringing About Change Handbook, 2019 , and the definition of the European Youth Forum's Advocacy Handbook (2022): 'Advocacy is the encompassing term for all actions and activities carried out by civil society, business, or other stakeholders, influencing those who have the power to make decisions about developing, changing, and implementing policies,' were also used during the session.

The session continued with an introduction to various tools and mechanisms of advocacy, also for the recognition of the Roma Genocide. Participants engaged in detailed discussions about effective advocacy strategies they or their organisation used or were aware of as good advocacy strategies. The focus afterwards was on applying these insights at the national and local levels. For the preparation of a gallery walk, participants were grouped by nationality and tasked with collecting information about advocacy work and the recognition of the Roma Genocide in their countries. Each group prepared an informative poster, showcasing their findings and strategies, facilitating a shared learning experience through visual presentations. The collection of ongoing and previous advocacy work and the current situation regarding the recognition of the Roma Genocide proved beneficial for the participants. By exploring the policies and actions of different countries, participants gained valuable insights and formed connections with each other. This exchange of information and experiences not only fostered a sense of solidarity but also provided mutual support for their advocacy efforts, enhancing their capacity to drive change within their own contexts.

On the third day, Marcos Andrade, Deputy Director of the European Youth Centre Budapest, joined our participants for a moderated discussion. The main focus of the discussion was on the tools and measures of the Council of Europe. Mr Andrade presented the recent developments and efforts of the Council of Europe for the Roma community and Romani youth. The participants also had the opportunity to briefly present themselves and their work related to youth and the recognition of the Roma Genocide. This interaction provided a platform for participants to share their experiences, learn about the Council of Europe's initiatives, and explore how these tools and measures can support their advocacy efforts in the future.

The second invited lecturer of the study session was Marietta Herfort, Executive Director of Phiren Amenca International Network. Ms Herfort presented the advocacy work of Phiren Amenca as a good practice example. She discussed their international advocacy efforts, particularly their collaborations with the Council of Europe, the European Union, and the European Youth Forum. Her insights provided participants with a concrete example of effective advocacy and the impact of coordinated efforts at multiple levels. As a founding member of ternYpe - International Roma Youth Network, Marietta Herfort also presented the "Dikh He Na Bister" initiative to the participants, focusing specifically on the impact of the 2014 event. In that year, approximately 1,000 young Roma and non-Roma people took part in a commemoration event at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Through this event, ternYpe and "Dikh He Na Bister" made a significant contribution to the visibility of the Roma Genocide and played a crucial role in advancing the recognition by the European Parliament of 2nd August as Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The final two days of the study session were carefully planned to provide a comprehensive and engaging experience for the participants.

The sessions about advocacy were designed to be a simulation. Participants were tasked with identifying advocacy aims and addressing issues and challenges within their own communities. They focused on key topics such as education, health, employment, and housing. Each group

analysed the specific issues and challenges related to their assigned topic and developed clear advocacy goals. They also identified the relevant stakeholders who could influence or be impacted by their advocacy efforts, ensuring they could effectively target the right individuals and organisations to drive meaningful change. Our team provided input on the general steps of advocacy, guiding participants through the process of creating effective advocacy strategies. The importance of clearly defining advocacy goals, identifying key stakeholders, and crafting compelling messages was emphasised.

Additionally, the trainers directed the groups on how to structure and draft a policy letter, ensuring that each group's advocacy plan was well-formulated and actionable.

Following this, each group prepared and submitted their own policy letter, addressed to a specific stakeholder. Participants then received notifications for a public hearing, which prompted them to prepare their presentations and elevator pitches, with guidance from 'public speaking coaches', who prepared them to communicate with stakeholders. Finally, each group presented their 3-minute elevator pitch, showcasing their advocacy topic and directly addressing the stakeholder during the simulation activity.

Preparing young leaders for advocacy activities is crucial for empowering them to drive positive change not only within their own communities but also at national and international levels. By equipping them with essential skills and knowledge, we enable them to effectively tackle local issues while in the longer term also influencing broader social and political decisions.

On the final day, participants shifted their focus from broader advocacy strategies to specifically advocating for the recognition of the Roma Genocide. Trainers provided valuable input on key considerations for planning impactful activities and events. They emphasised the importance of defining clear aims and objectives, determining the content and format of the event, and identifying the target audience. Additionally, trainers guided participants in planning the timing and logistics of their activities, managing budgets and resources, developing effective promotion strategies, and establishing methods for evaluation and feedback. This focused guidance helped participants create well-structured and effective advocacy plans tailored to their own communities.

5. Follow-up activities

Most participants developed concrete ideas and implementation plans for follow-up activities. Many expressed intentions to carry out these initiatives through the organisations they are employed by or members of, while others showed interest in pursuing individual projects. This diverse approach reflects a strong commitment to advancing the recognition of the Roma Genocide, with participants ready to leverage both organisational and personal efforts to drive meaningful change.

Among the ideas generated were several innovative efforts to create podcasts and news outlets, as well as information sheets highlighting the suffering of the Roma during the Holocaust. These initiatives aim to raise awareness and educate a broader audience about the Roma Genocide, using various media formats to ensure the stories and historical injustices faced by the Roma are widely shared and understood.

Some participants expressed a desire to focus on artistic expressions, such as theatre productions and art exhibitions, as part of their follow-up activities. These creative approaches aim to use the power of the arts to convey the stories and experiences of the Roma during the Holocaust, fostering greater empathy and understanding through impactful presentations.

The third type of follow-up activities focused on involving local communities through commemorative events. These activities aim to engage Roma and non-Roma people in

meaningful remembrance, fostering a deeper connection to the history and significance of the Roma Genocide to the Romani communities. By organising local commemorations, participants seek to raise awareness and promote community involvement in honouring the Roma victims and preserving their memory, and also to reflect the current difficulties and the ongoing antigypsyism.

TernYPE, as the organiser of the study session, is planning a youth commemoration event involving 400 young people at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This commemoration will be held at Crematorium V, where participants will have the opportunity to pay their respects and reflect on the historical significance of the site. The event is part of the one-week educational programme, Dikh He Na Bister - Roma Genocide remembrance initiative, organised in Krakow, Poland. Additionally, the commemoration will mark the significant 80th anniversary of the extermination of the so-called "Gypsy Family Camp" at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The youth will also join the official commemoration, where they will engage with stakeholders including political representatives, international institutions, and embassies.

Appendix

1. List of Participants

Participants

Albania / Albanie

Ledi Xhambazi - [Roma Active Albania](#)

Bosnia and Herzegovina / Bosnie-Herzegovine

Almir Hidanović - [“Otaharin” Center for Interactive Inclusion of Roma and Roma Women](#)

Czech Republic / Republique Tcheque

Jenifer Kovacova - [Connecting Roma C.I.C.](#)

Sára Tatayová - [Romea](#)

Finland / Finlande

Sofia Schwartz - [Finnish Roma Association](#)

Katja Thesslund - [Finnish Roma Association](#)

France

Dylan Schutt - [La Voix des Rroms](#)

Germany / Allemagne

Jasar Dzemailovski - [Internationaler Kultur- und Sportverein der Roma - Carmen e.V.](#)

David Paraschiv - [Roma Trial e.V.](#)

Leon Berisa - [Internationaler Kultur- und Sportverein der Roma - Carmen e.V.](#)

Leah Rajchlin - [Hinenu e.V.](#) and [YEN](#)

David Rosenberg - [Landesverband Deutscher Sinti und Roma Rheinland-Pfalz](#) and [Jewish Student Union Hinenu of Rheinland-Pfalz and Saarland](#)

Hungary / Hongrie

László Rostás - [Phiren Amenca International Network](#)

Italy / Italie

Swami Della Garen - [Ternype Dance Informal Group](#)

India

Debarati Ganguly

Kosovo / Kosovo

Rubija Redzeqi - Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR)

Fatlum Kryezi - [Roma Versitas Kosovo](#)

Montenegro / Montenegro

Violeta Hajrizaj - [Roma Youth Organization 'Walk With Us - Phiren Amenca'](#)

Serđan Baftijari - [Roma Youth Organization 'Walk With Us - Phiren Amenca'](#)

North Macedonia / Macédoine du Nord

Ragmi Asanovski - [National Roma Centrum](#)

Pakistan

Marium Farooq - [University of Debrecen](#)

Poland / Pologne

Kamila Burchart - [New Place at Centre for Science and Culture Rother's Mills](#)

Romania / Roumanie

Ninel Stefan Stanciu - [Roma Team](#)

Narcisa-Denisa Constantin - [Nevo Parudimos](#)

Serbia / Serbie

Adrian Radosta - [Studierendenverband Deutscher Sinti und Roma](#)

Spain / Espagne

Patrcia Julian - [FAGIC Federación de Asociaciones Gitanas de Cataluña](#)

Ukraine

Volodymyr Shcherbakov - [TENET- Center for Social Transformations](#)

Yanush Panchenko - YNGO "Romano Than"

Preparatory team

Rebecca Fisch

Büsra Akdogan Pamfil

Klaudia Veizaj

Mihai Oancea

Georgina Laboda

Lecturers

Marietta Herfort Phiren Amenca International Network, Brussels, Belgium

Milovan Pisarri Institute of Philosophy and Social Theory, Centre for Public History,
Belgrade

Course director

Georgina Laboda

Educational advisor

Sulkhani Chargeishvili

2. Daily Programme of the study session

Sunday, 3 March 2024

Arrival of participants
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Welcome evening

Monday, 4 March 2024

09:30 Opening with Introduction to Study Session,
Intro of aims & objectives of the Study Session / Expectations & programme
11:00 Break
11:30 Team Building activity – *to get to know each other*
13:00 Lunch
14:30 Entering the topic: A journey through Roma history & antigypsyism
16:00 Break
16:30 The History of the Roma Genocide
18:00 Reflection group
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Evening programme

Tuesday, 5 March 2024

09:30 The Genocide of the Roma and Sinti: History and Memory (guest: Milovan Pisarri, Institute of Philosophy and Social Theory, Centre for Public History, Belgrade)
11:00 Break
11:30 The Civil rights movement and the fight for recognition
13:00 Lunch break
14:30 Advocacy 1: policies, tools, mechanisms
16:00 Break
16:30 Advocacy 2: language of advocacy
18:00 Reflection group
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Evening program

Wednesday, 6 March 2024

09:30 The Council of Europe: Tools & recommendations (guest: Marcos Andrade - Deputy Executive Director, European Youth Centre Budapest, Council of Europe)
11:00 Break
11:30 International Roma Networks' history in advocacy for recognition and remembrance (guest: Marietta Herfort, Phiren Amenca International Network)
13:00 Lunch break
14:30 Free afternoon

Thursday, 7 March 2024

09:30 Leadership skills I: communication & negotiating
11:00 Break

11:30 Leadership skills II: critical thinking & problem-solving
13:00 Lunch
14:30 Leadership skills III: pitching ideas & strategic planning
16:00 Break
16:30 Dikh He Na Bister - the Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative presentation
18:00 Reflection group
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Evening programme

Friday, 8 March 2024

09:30 Mapping remembrance: From international to local context
11:00 Break
11:30 Take Action! (1)
13:00 Lunch
14:30 Take Action! (2)
16:00 Break
16:30 Evaluation and closing of the event
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Farwell evening

Saturday, 9 March 2024

Departure of participants