

## MISSION

a network of Roma and non-Roma volunteers and voluntary service organizations creating opportunities for **NON-FORMAL EDUCATION, DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT**, in order to **CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES AND RACISM**.

## PRINCIPLES

### VOLUNTEERING AND VOLUNTARY SERVICE

We believe that volunteering is a powerful tool of social change, as volunteers dedicate their time and energy to contribute to society. Based on national and international voluntary service programs, the Phiren Amenca network creates opportunities for young Roma and non-Roma to live and engage in local communities and projects for up to one year. Placement themes may include youth and sport activities, social inclusion, arts and culture, environment and human rights. In exchange for their engagement, the volunteers can benefit from an unforgettable life experience, intercultural learning, non-formal education, and new language skills. Voluntary service organizations in the Phiren Amenca network are European and North American non-profit bodies sending and/or hosting these young adults, and providing support such as mentoring, on-arrival, mid-term and pre-departure seminars, pocket money, room, board and insurance.



### NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The experience of voluntary service can both stimulate & challenge young people through meeting new cultures, languages, people and ideas. This opportunity can enable the volunteers to develop new skills and talents, discover new interests, and make new relationships. Phiren Amenca network wants to support and encourage volunteers in this learning experience through seminars on intercultural learning, conflict-management, Roma history and cultures, civil rights activism, as well as discrimination, mechanisms of exclusion, antigypsyism and extremist movements today.

### DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT

We believe that we need an active dialogue and engagement in society to strengthen trust, mutual understanding and respect between Roma and non-Roma. Phiren Amenca volunteers share a passion to learn and engage for our common mission to challenge stereotypes and racism. Phiren Amenca encourages an open and safe community to share experiences in the dialogue among volunteers, hosting placements, local communities, and network members.

### CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES & RACISM

Stereotypes and racism are the root causes of social exclusion and marginalization of Roma. As Roma and non-Roma we want to create equal opportunities for all young people in our societies, especially through giving equal access to voluntary service.





## KEY EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

### VOLUNTEER SEMINARS

Each spring and fall Phiren Amenca hosts in cooperation with member organizations a one week seminar for current volunteers from around Europe focusing on the exchange of experience and on Roma history, discrimination, stigmatization, xenophobia, identity and culture; globalization and migration; as well as youth engagement and Roma initiatives in Europe.

### ANNUAL PLATFORM MEETING

Each spring Phiren Amenca hosts a 3-4 day "Phiren Amenca Annual Platform Meeting" bringing together member organizations, former volunteers and partner organizations in order to share experiences and practices, and to address annual thematic priorities and quality questions of our work. One day will be dedicated to the General Assembly of Phiren Amenca and to the Platform of Former Volunteers.

### SITE VISITS

The Phiren Amenca coordination office undertakes regularly site visits to its member and partner organizations in order to strengthen the cooperation within the network, giving support and services to both organizations and volunteers directly.

### PLATFORM OF VOLUNTEERS

Phiren Amenca strives to create a platform for volunteers and former volunteers, in order to create further opportunities for dialogue, non-formal education and engagement, and to strengthen their role as multipliers and promoters of voluntary service. Phiren Amenca gives a high priority to youth participation and the rights of volunteers within its own structures and work. The platform will meet in the framework of the annual meeting, including the General Assembly.

### CAPACITY-BUILDING OF ROMA ORGANIZATIONS IN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The 2-year lasting program "Capacity-building of Roma organizations in Voluntary Service" is designed to invest into the capacity-building of new member organizations in the field of voluntary service. Phiren Amenca generally offers a platform of learning and quality development through its tools of the annual network meeting, the volunteer seminars, the mentoring seminars and the coordination office and resource centre based in Budapest. Nevertheless, with the new member organizations we analyzed the need to specifically invest into the management capacity of Roma self-organizations in order to fulfill the standards and professional needs of voluntary service programs. This capacity-building program is based on a philosophy and concept of a "coaching program".

*The most useful thing I've found in the Phiren Amenca seminars is the idea to give the opportunity to young people that work in the same direction to meet, and to exchange with each other, and to have this feeling that we are not alone. This feeling is really great.*

Georgi, Phiren Amenca volunteer



# MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

DIAKONIÅRET, DENMARK  
VISA – L'ANNÉE DIACONALE, FRANCE  
AMARO DROM, GERMANY  
TERNO DROM, GERMANY  
CSD DIACONIA VALDESE, ITALY  
ROMÀ ONLUS, ITALY  
TOGETTHERE, NETHERLANDS  
ROMA EDUCATION CENTRE (OSVETOVÉ CENTRUM RÓMOV), SLOVAKIA  
TOUCH PROJECT CHARITABLE FOUNDATION, UKRAINE

The founding members of Phiren Amenca are voluntary service organizations, representing a diversity of Roma, non-Roma, faith-related and secular, Central and Eastern European and Western European organizations.

## SHORT HISTORY OF PHIREN AMENCA - RGDTs

The **Roma-Gadje Dialogue through Service Initiative** began in September 2000, when five organizations involved in the Ecumenical Diaconal Year Network (EDYN) began placing young adult volunteers in projects with Roma minorities in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine. Over the next 3 years, Roma and non-Roma volunteers from Central & Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and North America served in projects including kindergartens and preschools. They were funded by church-related donor organizations and by the volunteers themselves.

In 2003, the first European Voluntary Service (EVS) approved project of RGDTs was established in Hungary. In that year the first bi-annual seminar supporting RGDTs volunteers was held. The initiative expanded to include volunteers from Romania hosted in a placement in Italy.

In 2004, new partner organizations from Germany joined the initiative, and placement sites were expanded to include the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Russia, and the Netherlands.

In 2005, volunteers served in a variety of placements in Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, and USA. Partner organizations worked intensively during the year to prepare two central applications to the European Commission; Youth in Action programme to expand the initiative both in numbers of volunteers and range of activities. This was approved in July 2006.

From 2007 to 2009, another EVS central grant funded further placements. 18 organisations in 11 countries were involved. During this period short-term volunteering placements were included, especially in Italy, France and Wales.



In May 2009, RGDTs was recognized as one of seven Ambassadors for Democracy and Tolerance by the Alliance for Democracy and Tolerance, a campaign sponsored by the German federal government. In March 2010 RGDTs was one of 21 EU-funded projects selected to be displayed at the conference: "European Union Projects in favour of the Roma Community" held in Brussels.

From 2000 to 2010, RGDTs existed as a network without a legal form of its own. In the fall of 2010 RGDTs was legally organized in Hungary as "RGDTs Non-profit Kft. for Public Benefit" with the coordination office located in Budapest.

The 10+ year history of the RGDTs initiative featured support, energy and dedication from a wide variety of organizations from across the world, reflecting a common motivation to support social change through voluntary service.

## CONTACT US



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