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IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT OF THE ROMA YOUTH VOICES PROJECT

The Roma Youth Voices project was running between November 2018 and June 2021 carried out by Phiren Amenca International Network, ternYpe International Roma Youth Network and RGDS in cooperation with national partner organizations and youth groups from France, Spain, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary and Romania. The project is supported under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the DG Justice, European Commission.

The general aim of this project was to develop the capacities of Roma youth organizations at the local and national level through participation at international and European processes, mobilization and participation of Roma youth at relevant policy related process, as well as through strengthening the role of young people and organizations in the context of National Roma Integration Strategies.

Roma Youth Voices opened up new perspectives and fields in the work of Phiren Amenca, RGDS and ternYpe. Besides volunteering and non-formal education, advocacy became a central, and visible, element in all our activities. Throughout the first one and a half years, we have implemented international events for young Roma and non-Roma such as a conference on antigypsyism in Hungary; networking meetings; and continuing our capacity-building program for grassroots youth organizations. 2019 was also a year for our large-scale event, "So keres, Europa?! –Roma Youth Social Forum" - this activity brought together 150 young Roma and non-Roma from all around Europe to the European Youth Capital for 2019: Novi Sad, Serbia.

In addition to international programs, we implemented activities and actions on a national and local level with partners in Hungary, Slovakia, Spain, Romania, France and Austria. It became a priority to promote the active participation of Roma youth not just in voluntary services and youth work but also in political and public life.

In order to better understand the impact of antigypsyism on Roma youth participation (volunteering, politics, civil society work), the concerns, needs and obstacles faced by young Roma people, in 2019 we have kicked-off research entitled "Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities" targeting young Roma people from EU member states, and its results were published in early 2021.

Thanks to this project, Phiren Amenca, RGDS and ternYpe have strengthened their work and capacities; both Phiren Amenca and ternYpe had their first full time employees.

Although there were difficulties during the first phase of the project, the pandemic break-out in March 2020 made the realization of the planned activities even harder. . Throughout 2020 little went as was planned, and we had to change dates, locations and formats of all of the activities because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The most challenging elements were the local campaigns. Unfortunately, together with the national partners, we could not implement more than 30 local campaign actions in total in the six countries and beyond as originally planned, due to the lockdowns in each of the countries.

In early March 2020, when whole Europe was shut down, it became clear that during the first half of the year, offline events are not possible at all. We have considered to move all activities online but in the beginning of the year we were still optimistic to run the activities as we planned, we thought we

just have to postpone the dates and find new locations, which are more safe or easy to reach. On the one hand, the pandemic did bring financial difficulties: we booked and paid all flights, working rooms and accommodation for our events as part of the EU Roma Week 2020 taking place in March 2020. Consequently, we had to spend weeks canceling the flights, which was possible, but most of the time we received only partial reimbursements back. The accommodation costs for ternYpe for this concrete activity was never paid back because the hotel has filed bankruptcy. On the other hand, online events did not require that high budgets, so for ternYpe was not possible to spend the whole project budget. The summer did bring a bit of a hope for implementing international activities and the local actions without problems offline or in a hybrid format. The advocacy training which was planned to be held in March 2020 in Brussels was moved to September 2020 in Budapest. Another big challenge was to secure the diversity of participants: to have participants from diverse countries offline was not possible, therefore we combined online and offline participation. We also wanted to create space for participation to those who could not travel because of travel restrictions.

Just as importantly, we have to mention that the Covid-19 pandemic made the situation of Roma communities extremely difficult and for many young Roma people it was quite challenging to follow online activities, for instance. Throughout 2020, Roma people were especially exposed to the severe consequences of a COVID-19 infection and precarious Romani settlements were at risk of becoming hot spots of the pandemic. Roma people came under general suspicion of spreading the virus, settlements were cordoned off, water supplies have been partially cut off, and people have been barred from food and medicine supplies. Violent attacks by the police and gendarmerie have occurred several times in Roma communities in the past months. The residents of settlements in Bulgaria, Romania, North Macedonia, and Slovakia have been particularly badly affected, with similar cases being increasingly reported in other parts of Europe, including in Hungary, Kosovo, Serbia, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Many of our local and national partners and activists have been working hard on solving these problems caused by the pandemic.

One of the biggest challenges with international activities was to secure the diversity of countries and to involve participants from at least 10-15 different countries.

Hybrid, online and offline participation was also challenging as we were not taking into consideration this opportunity previously but this was a good learning process. We have also realized how important preparatory meetings are, so in the future our organizations will run online preparatory meetings of each activity and will give tasks to prepare before the events, so participants will engage more from the beginning.

We spent lots of time and energy reorganizing and replanning several activities in the last months but all in all we believe we achieved their objectives.





IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF SELECTED ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL ROMA YOUTH PLATFORMS

Between June 2020 and March 2021 were held, for the very first time, national Roma youth platforms organized by the project partners offline and online (due to the Covid-pandemics) in the EU countries with most significant Roma population – [Bulgaria](#), [Romania](#), [Slovakia](#), Hungary and [Spain](#). The main objective of these meetings was to raise awareness about the issues Roma young people face before the relevant stakeholders – national Erasmus plus agencies, representative of the National Youth Councils and most importantly – representatives of the National Roma Contact Points and the European Commission.

As a short-term effect these meetings led to the submission of written proposals by youth organizations to the drafts of the European Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation and the National Roma Strategic Documents in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Spain.

A long-term impact is the inclusion of Roma youth in the above-mentioned strategic documents with a horizon up to 2030. More precisely, Roma youth were addressed for the very first time in the European Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation, particularly when talking about youth in NEETS, as well as in the fields of education and employment. Another long-term impact of these meeting is the focus at Roma youth at national level, namely including 'Roma youth' in the national Roma strategic documents up to 2030 and providing training or job opportunities for them (Romania, Slovakia), involving them in decision-making structures (Slovakia, Bulgaria, Czechia) or funding mechanisms that help deliberately Roma students (Hungary).

Another long-term impact is the relations created between local Roma youth organizations and the relevant national and European stakeholders. In Romania, the local partner, E-Romnja managed to become the unified voice of young Roma and submitted proposals for Roma youth to the National Roma Agency. At the same time, contacts with the Romanian Youth Council were established. In Slovakia, the Association of young Roma managed to advocate for the creation of a special Roma youth advisory body consisting of five young Roma from different corners of the country, as well as for training opportunities at the office of the Plenipotentiary. In Bulgaria young Roma were included in the implementation of the National Roma Platforms in 2021 with a horizon of further inclusion of future decision-making processes. In Spain, Roma youth from different corners of the country mobilized and asked for texts at the National Roma Strategy to ensure that young Roma will be also prioritized among other groups.

ROMA YOUTH VOICES: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVE REPORT

The project created [three reports](#), that for the very first time assess the needs and challenges of young Roma individuals and organizations across Europe, as well as reflect on the views collected via focus-groups in the countries of the Western Balkans and Ukraine.

The 'Roma Youth Voices: Challenges and perspectives' short-term effect was to [raise awareness](#) before the relevant stakeholders: [representatives](#) of the European Commission (DG EAC and DG Justice), the European Youth Forum, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and other relevant stakeholders – European Commissioner on Equality – Helena Dalli and MEPs.

A long-term effect is the taking on board the recommendations produced by the reports in the work of the Council of Europe, the European Commission and other stakeholders, as this is the first and unique report series on Roma youth challenges and perspectives.

CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR ROMA YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Capacitating local Roma youth organizations through mentorship and funding of local activities. Through the project a number of local Roma youth organizations were capacitated and empowered with mentorship and small funding to realize important for the local Roma youth activities.

A long-term effect is the empowerment of Roma youth organizations to seek for funding and alliances among the established network of Roma youth organizations.

MEMBERSHIP AT THE EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

As a short-term effect, as a result of the networking and advocacy component of this project, the leading partner – the Phiren Amenca International Network became a member of the [European Youth Forum](#) becoming the first ever Roma youth network represented at the Forum.

As a long-term impact can be considered the adoption of the “Resolution on Combating Antigypsyism and the Inclusion and Equal Participation of Roma Youth” by the European Youth Forum which needs to be followed in the coming years and observed by all the membership of the Youth Forum.

SO KERES, EUROPA!? – ROMA YOUTH SOCIAL FORUM

The “So keres, Europa?!” youth event created space for dialogue among Roma and non-Roma young people and youth organizations. Young people improved their learning process and facilitation skills related to topics such as human rights, racism, antigypsyism, Roma Holocaust, gender, multiple discrimination and intersectionality. The participants of the activities had the platform to debate, reflect on new ideas and exchange individual and organizational good practices. They were able to share new tools and methods what organizations could take back to their everyday work. Besides our members and partners, we involved new national, local and grassroots organizations and we gave space to and worked together in all activities with the Roma communities.

So keres, Europa provided the platform for Roma and non-Roma youth to engage in communication and brainstorming about changing the narrative of Roma. We were able to bring international attention to the existing and growing work of the minority and majority young people, because they were present on the local and international level from different organizations. Our successful closing event also had an impact in generating new connections between the Roma and non-Roma youth and also between the diverse organizations presented in the event.

We chose Serbia to be the host of the So keres, Europa?! -Roma Youth Festival because our aim was the promotion of the fundamental values of the European Union with the neighboring countries. We had a strong focus on human rights protection and promotion and we encouraged the participants to be part of youth exchanges in non-EU countries, because we believe that this can enhance the mutual respect between the EU and non-EU countries.





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