



Phiren Amenca



PHIREN AMENCA INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Phiren Amenca Family,

I am proud to present you the Annual 2021 Report of the Phiren Amenca International Network. It contains the accomplishments, training, campaigns, and voices of the largest European Roma youth network.

Despite the difficulties related to the Covid-19 pandemic, I dare to say that 2021 was a successful one. A year of transition from the online to the offline environment. A year of stagnation and at the same time awakening, which we managed to embody in the best way. Proof of this is our diverse activities that took place both in front of the screens and physically. For example, 2021 marked the first and, I sincerely hope the last, online edition of the European Roma Youth Social Forum „So Keres Europa?!“, as well as the participation of our group in the renewed EYE - European Youth Forum in October, where physical participation in Strasbourg took over 3000 young people.

And this year, albeit online, we continued our work to bring Roma youth voices closer to politicians and policymakers, leading several meetings with Roma youth from all over Europe and experts on Roma inclusion and youth policies.

We remained a reliable partner in the work on the inclusion of Roma youth of the Council of Europe being members of their Advisory Council on Youth. We marked our first year as members of the largest EU youth umbrella network – the European Youth Forum. We grew our alliance involving into a partnership for the first time with Roma youth from the Baltics and Scandinavia. And we kept our traditional partnership with other minority rights organizations such as the European Union of Jewish Students and the Armenian General Benevolent Union Europe.

Moreover, together with other publications, we published three reports dedicated to the challenges that Roma youth from Europe and the European Quarter and European (pro-) Roma organizations face: “Roma Youth Voices: Challenges and Perspectives” which provide valuable information for everyone interested in working with or on young Roma.

Above all, we continued to work on volunteering despite all the obstacles and hardships the pandemic brought because volunteering for change remains at the very heart of our network.

All this is the result of the efforts of our team, board, partners, volunteers, and founders. These results are ours! Thank you!

You can read about all this in detail in this report.

With best wishes,

Marietta Herfort,

Executive Director of the Phiren Amenca International Network

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INTRODUCTION

In 2021 Phiren Amenca developed national Roma youth platforms in several countries; published Europe-wide research related to Roma youth needs, challenges, and opportunities; developed a joint initiative between Jewish, Roma and Muslim organizations in Hungary and engaged with EU and national level policymakers to promote Roma youth participation.

As an international Roma youth network, we have advocated for more than 2 years that young Roma are included in the new EU Roma Framework for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation 2030. Thanks to the advocacy work of our network and partners, the new EU Roma Framework places a stronger focus on diversity among Roma and it aims to ensure that national strategic frameworks meet the specific needs of different groups, including Roma youth and LGBTQ+. In line with this stronger focus on participation, the EU Roma Strategic Framework aims to promote the empowerment of Roma young people to overcome socio-economic gaps, fully exercise their rights and be active agents of change.

Another success of Phiren Amenca in 2021 is the implementation of National Roma Youth Platforms in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Spain. More than three hundred young Roma took part in these events, providing a dialogue with EU officials, Roma and non-Roma politicians, representatives of the National Roma Contact Points, the National Youth Councils and National Erasmus+ agencies.

Throughout the year, young Roma and non-Roma young people engaged in our activities about antigypsyism, intersectionality, Roma Holocaust, human rights, advocacy and hate speech.



Gap-filling research was conducted about the needs, challenges and opportunities of young Roma in the EU Member States which gives a clear picture for decision-makers and stakeholders with direct recommendations. We have disseminated the research widely, sharing it with Member States, NRCPs, youth ministries, institutions, and civil society.

VOLUNTARY SERVICE WITH PHIREN AMENCA

Phiren Amenca's voluntary service program is built on our mission to challenge stereotypes, racism, and antigypsyism. To reach that goal, we aim to involve more and more young Roma in short and long-term European mobility programs, such as Erasmus Plus and the European Solidarity Corps. Our member and partner organizations represent a diverse range of locations and profiles. Most of them host Roma and non-Roma volunteers to serve together in social justice projects. We, at Phiren Amenca, find it important to support our partners in becoming active hosting organizations and developing the quality of their voluntary service programs. We also assist organizations to open new placement sites and become our partners. Many volunteers remain active in the fight against discrimination and antigypsyism after their service concludes. Together with our member and partner organizations, we invest time and capacity to provide volunteers with opportunities to remain active and engaged in our mission as leaders, trainers, educators, and members of our project teams.

The pandemic affected voluntary service programs; not all our partners could restart their sending or hosting programs in 2021. In October our coordination team in Budapest started to host Semran Sulejman from North Macedonia, who spent nine months with our team.

Nevertheless, in 2021 RGDTS-Phiren Amenca started running a program called MySoR – My Story of Resistance: from exclusion to active participation. The project aims to create relationships and dialogue among diverse groups of marginalized youth and youth organizations: Dalit and tribal minority youth in India; indigenous youth in Nicaragua, Roma and Gitanos in Hungary and Spain, and young migrant people in Italy; share and compare practices to empower disadvantaged youth groups for active participation; use the tools of storytelling to allow these young people and youth workers to develop a positive self-identity by transforming their hardships into stories of resistance, and share these stories with their respective communities as well as with a global audience. Sharing the stories of these young people and drawing a positive picture of themselves not only enhances their skills and encourages them to stand up for their interests but ensures their reach out to audiences who have the power to initiate change as well. The project involves five partner organizations from Hungary, Italy, Spain, India, and Nicaragua to address this topic. From the beginning of 2022, nine volunteers will have the chance to gain and share experiences and tools outside of their countries, and in local communities during the nine months of their service. MySoR is funded by the Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity building for youth program, co-financed by the European Union.

Inspirational stories of former volunteers

“Among us, there is a big number of dedicated young Roma who have all the knowledge and capacities to become our future leaders.”



Phiren Amenca celebrated 8 April 2021 with a series of “Inspirational Stories” made by young Roma about young Roma from Hungary, Slovakia, and Spain. We have shared three interviews from Hungary made with [Sándor Gáspár](#), [Kitti Bayer](#) and [Norbert Hegedűs](#). Sándor at that time was completing his university studies. He shared his experience as the president of the university student government, and the challenges his family faced during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Kitti is studying Korean and Chinese at the university and her dream is to become a translator. She is only in her early twenties, but she stands up whenever she sees discrimination against Roma and Asian people. Norbert shares his vision for Roma youth political participation and his own experiences in politics.

From [Slovakia](#), we interviewed Richard, Adam, Dominik and Janka, who besides introducing themselves and sharing their personal goals, also explain what being Roma means for them.

Besides Hungary and Slovakia, [we shared four inspirational stories from Spain](#), introducing four young Roma people, who want to be reference people for

their communities: Aarón Moreno, Elisabeth Cortés, Vanesa Sánchez, and Paco Vargas shared their personal stories of how they overcome their difficulties to combine education and work since their childhood.

These videos were very successful on social media and we got very positive feedback and requests for continuation. In December 2021, we shared three more videos with two of our former volunteers and with our voluntary service coordinator. [Géza Buzás-Hábel](#) was among our first volunteers who did his voluntary service in Albania. After his voluntary year, he established an NGO called Diverse Youth Network and he organized the first Pride outside of Budapest, in September 2021, in Pécs. [Orbán Oláh](#) did his service in Spain. For him, the voluntary year was life-changing. He shared his experience as a volunteer as well as the way he got into the university, the challenges but also the successes. Our colleague [Anna Daróczy](#) is mostly known for her dedicated work with young people and volunteers. In the video made with her she was asked about the Roma feminist movements and how did she see the Roma political movement in the 90s when she was a child.



I am a student at a Spanish bilingual grammar school in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR ROMA AND VOLUNTARY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

The Phiren Amenca coordination office constantly works on enabling Roma and non-Roma organizations to participate in volunteering projects and involve more and more young people in Phiren Amenca’s mission through volunteering. Therefore, we reach out to organizations which work with young people on a local, regional, or international level and help them set up volunteering programs and provide organizations with established voluntary service programs with assistance in managing quality programs.

Phiren Amenca Networking Meeting – Spring 2021

The annual Phiren Amenca networking meeting was held on 7 May 2021 online where each organizational representative shared updates with the group. The focus of these summaries was coping with the global pandemic and faced challenges; ongoing projects- their types, participants, and locations; plans in terms of project applications; and updates about the European Solidarity Corps Quality Label application/renewal process.

The meeting proved that all member and partner organizations were forced to make changes to their international project plans, especially in terms of dates, because of travel restrictions and general insecurities. Some decided not to partner with organizations outside of the EU in the coming period as obtaining visas and entering Europe have become quite challenging due to the emergency measures.

An important point discussed was whether some organizations could continue their volunteering activities during the lockdown, given that young people could not normally execute their tasks but had to invent online activities. The pandemic has prevented volunteers from building meaningful connections and acquiring intercultural competencies, yet most organizations still managed to involve volunteers in their work meaningfully.

The Phiren Amenca coordination office presented their plans for the near future and assessed the interest in a Quality Label writing workshop for the organizations present. We agreed that in the second half of the year, another two networking meetings will be held focusing on recruitment methods for mobilizing and engaging young people with fewer opportunities in international mobility projects; and on successful methods and cooperation for disseminating project results and successes among the wider public.

An extensive amount of time was spent discussing the organizations’ plans to apply for a quality label, and the rules for the next seven-year period of coordinating and taking part in European Solidarity Corps volunteering projects.

At the end of the meeting, new organizations from within and outside of the European Union presented themselves. In smaller breakout rooms, all representatives could spend time planning future cooperation and sending and hosting volunteers. As a result of these new partnerships, we hope that more and more young people will get the chance to take part in the Network’s life.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

So Keres Europa?! 2021 Online Edition

We've all heard of "So keres Europa?!", haven't we? The Roma Youth Social Forum "What's up Europe?!" is the largest youth event entirely organized by Phiren Amenca, bringing together over 150 participants in various European youth capitals in the years since 2015. At the "So keres Europa?!" events young people participate in various workshops, entirely dedicated to the fight against antigypsyism and the promotion of Roma identity. 2021 was a different year for this initiative. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, „So keres Europa?!" was held online for the first time. And although this has its drawbacks, we have managed to reap several benefits from organizing

So Keres online, enabling many young people from European countries who have

not previously participated in the event, such as Finland, to join for the first time. And much more, contrary to the notion that nothing interesting is happening online, between October 26 and 29, 2021, more than 30 young people took part in the online workshops of „So keres Europa?!". There were four workshops organized in a very interactive way. Young people learned about the Roma History, Language and Culture (with Atanas Stoyanov); about the Roma Heroes (with Morena Pedriali); produced collages, photos and typographic posters using mixed technics Art (with Anna Rabko) and created Poetry and Music (with Lolo B. Jones and Romano Glaszo).



Here you can read the text of the anthem participants wrote together:

Song Lyrics: So Keres

*T'aven Baxtale, Romale,
From Kalderash to Kale,
We are here to stay,
To that, we say „Opre“!*

*From all across the land,
Young Roma take a stand,
For our people, for our Rights,
Not afraid to speak and fight!*

Chorus

*Phiren Amenca, So Keres,
We don't care what anyone says,
We are proud, We are great,
Together we appreciate,
Who we are,
What we do,
So Keres is me and you.*

*When we all join as one,
Learning and having fun,
Battles to be won,
Reaching for the sun,*

*It's time to take up space,
For a change in our own space,
We can sing, we can dance,
Ringing words of 'Te Khelas',*

Chorus



European Youth Event 2021

The European Youth Event – EYE 2021 took place between 8-9 October 2021 in Strasbourg. This was the largest European youth event, taking place physically for the first time after the Covid-19 pandemic breakout and bringing together around 3,000 young people from all over Europe. The Phiren Amenca International Network became an official partner of the event for a fourth consequent time, being part of the EYE organization since 2014. More than 20 young participants – Roma and non-Roma coming from Belgium, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, and Ukraine formed the Phiren Amenca group at the EYE. The group took part in many workshops and events, bookable and free for attendance, inside the European Parliament and outside of it, in the so-called 'EYE village'. This was a great opportunity to raise awareness about the Roma Youth across Europe and the issues they face, particularly the issue of antigypsyism.

To spread additional awareness on the topic, on 8 October, the Phiren Amenca team held a special event named Together Against Antigypsyism. The event took place in the "Ideas Tent" of the EYE Village. Their participants had an interactive quiz to learn more about Roma people, the definition, and examples of antigypsyism, and, most importantly, discuss what politicians, media, civil society

and young people could do to fight and prevent antigypsyism. As part of this session young people were also asked to give their ideas for a better Europe – part of a project of the European Youth Forum where Phiren Amenca is a partner.



RESEARCH, "ROMA YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE: CHALLENGES, NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES"

Phiren Amenca published its research entitled "[Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities](#)". The research seeks to fill in an information gap about the situation of young Roma in the European Union.

The Roma Youth Voices research is published in three different reports reflecting: (1) the perspectives of Roma youth, (2) the youth and (pro)Roma NGOs perspectives and (3) the outcomes of focus groups. Each of them includes specific recommendations based on the outcomes of the surveys and interviews with relevant stakeholders.



ROMA YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE
CHALLENGES, NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES
ROMA YOUTH PERSPECTIVES
A report prepared within the Roma Youth Voices project
2021

The [first report](#) – Roma youth perspectives – presents the findings from an online questionnaire conducted with **290 young Roma** (activists and non-activists, volunteers and students, between 15 and 35 years old) from the EU Member States.

The main aim of the questionnaire was to assess the needs, challenges, and opportunities for Roma youth civic and political participation (volunteering, politics, civil society work, etc.). Additionally, the questionnaire focused on the real and perceived obstacles that Roma youth encounter in their civic and political participation and what would be needed for that participation to be successful and effective.

This report seeks to contribute to addressing the main challenges Roma youth face in exercising their rights and voicing their concerns and elaborates specific recommendations for each of these categories.

The [second report](#) – Youth and (pro)Roma NGOs perspectives – presents the findings from an online questionnaire collected from **33 youth and (pro)Roma civil society organizations** working with, for or on Roma youth issues. The survey was open to youth networks, youth NGOs, and Roma youth NGOs operating at an EU, national or local level.



ROMA YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE
CHALLENGES, NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES
FOCUS GROUPS WITH YOUNG ROMA
A report prepared within the Roma Youth Voices project
2021

This report aims to contribute to the broader discussion of Roma youth participation in civic and political life at the national and European levels from the perspective of Roma and pro-Roma (youth-led) NGOs working with and for Roma youth.

The [third report](#) presents focus group results conducted in EU and non-EU Member States, in the following countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary, Slovakia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Ukraine.

This report – Focus groups with young Roma – starts with



ROMA YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE
CHALLENGES, NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES
YOUTH AND (PRO)ROMA NGOs PERSPECTIVES
A report prepared within the Roma Youth Voices project
2021

a short discussion on the different understandings of participation, as expressed by Roma youth. Based on the focus groups conducted, four main themes of discussion emerged around this topic:

The first theme refers to the **meaning and functions attributed to participation** as perceived by Roma youth. The second theme distinguishes between **different forms of participation**. In the third theme respondents expressed **how** the idea of **participation fosters Roma youth empowerment and agency** about Roma and youth issues. The last theme operationalizes **how participation is manifested in practice**, as experienced by Roma youth.

The research was led by Dr Simona Torotcoi. The reports are a result of the work of several organizations involved in the Roma Youth Voices Project led by the Phiren Amenca International Network between 2019 and 2021.

This research and its publications were realized as part of the Roma Youth Voices Project, coordinated by Phiren Amenca and funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the DG Justice, European Commission.

ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIPS

“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” – Audre Lorde

Online Consultative Meeting in search of a cooperative approach among youth organizations and other stakeholders

Phiren Amenca participated in the Council of Europe’s Consultative meeting between 24-26 February 2021 online as an international organization committed to challenging the discrimination of all people in society. The three-day meeting came as an initiative of the Joint Council on Youth. It focused on the third priority of the Youth Strategy 2030: “living together in inclusive and peaceful societies”, and on the priorities of the Youth for Democracy Programme 2020-2021. More than 30 participants from 28 organizations and institutions took part.

Participants discussed good examples of taking an intersectional approach in youth work, as well as what should be done at different levels for meaningfully applying an intersectional approach in terms of structures and practices; and related expectations from youth organizations, youth councils, local and international institutions, and member states.

Among barriers were mentioned the inaccessibility of the academic language and the discourse about intersectionality; the resistance and fear of minority youth that they would lose status/privilege/mission/visibility if they gave more space for exploring the intersection of different systems of discrimination; the lack of capacity-building opportunities in the topic, the lack of educational materials and resources. However, it became clear that many of the represented organizations already apply some intersectional practices, even if they are not called in that way.

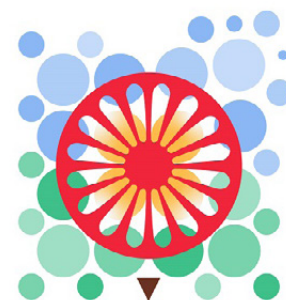
Participants collected a few ideas on what can be done to apply intersectionality: capacity building on intersectionality (including how to deal with power issues, challenging emotions, and conflicts between and within minority groups); creating educational materials, toolkits, with concrete examples of exercises; intersectional approach in organizational management, in activity development and advocacy; more research on the European level on the challenges and needs of people from an intersectional perspective; reflect on our privileges (who speaks on the behalf of who).



International Roma Youth United – 50 years after the first World Romani Congress

“We, Roma youth, are the leading force for the development of our communities through direct community work, volunteering, and various other forms of grassroots activities.”

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the First World Romani Congress, Phiren Amenca has held and partnered in a series of online events to celebrate April 8 – International Roma Day, the achievements of the last five decades of the Roma Movement, and discuss the role of young Roma people in what is still in front of us in the next 50 years. Our online event in the afternoon of April 6, entitled [International Roma Youth United: 50 years after the First World Romani Congress](#) brought together more than 60 young Roma from 38 countries: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Kosovo, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, UK (England and Scotland), USA and Ukraine. The event allowed us to meet each other from all corners of the globe and exchange ideas. Each participant expressed the willingness to continue our work to fight against antigypsyism and to promote Roma youth participation together, globally. This event was a starting point to broaden our Roma youth movement and show the great diversity of our Roma communities.



Roma Youth Together for Emancipation and Empowerment

The role of history in the participation
and inclusion of Roma young people

“Roma Youth: Together for Emancipation and Empowerment”

„It is more dangerous for Roma than it has ever been but Roma people also have more strength than they have ever had.” - Thomas Acton

The conference “Roma Youth: Together for Emancipation and Empowerment” brought together a wide audience of Roma and non-Roma stakeholders in the youth and human rights fields. Almost 200 young Roma and non-Roma people from all around Europe and beyond joined the conference actively between April 7 and 9, 2021. The conference aimed to strengthen the knowledge about Roma and Traveller history, cultures, and identities, discuss past achievements, but also to look into the future and the role of young Roma in our societies.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the First World Romani Congress in 1971, a live discussion was organized with Grattan Puxon and Thomas Action, who have both taken part in the first congress in 1971. They shared background stories of the conference and discussed the role of young Roma in today’s Roma movement.

The conference gave the participants space to send their messages about how they want to see the future of Roma by 2071 and to discuss important topics such as Roma youth participation, antigypsyism, impacts of Covid-19 or intersectionality.

On 8 April a Roma Youth Statement was presented, a document prepared during the conference by the Roma youth networks, youth organizations and participants which includes recommendations on Roma youth to the Council of Europe and its member states. The full statement in English can be found [read here](#):



Youth Statement on the occasion of April 8 - International Roma Day 2021

As young people and representatives of Roma youth organizations and networks, we have met to share our experiences and together celebrate International Roma Day and the 50th anniversary of the first World Romani Congress. While the roots of Romani activism go back to the 19th century, 8 April 1971 constitutes a turning point for Roma communities around the world, when activists moved their struggle to the international arena. We take pride in the achievements of our elders, pioneers, and predecessors of the Roma movement.

We acknowledge the efforts of the Council of Europe and its Youth Department towards Roma youth emancipation and empowerment, active youth participation and in combating antigypsyism. We especially welcome the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the inclusion of the history of Roma and Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials and the preparation of a future recommendation on Roma youth participation.

Roma arts and culture play a central role in restoring Roma's dignity and challenging the predominantly negative image of Roma people among the majority. Roma arts and culture remain greatly under-represented in majority spaces and cultural narratives, both internationally and nationally. This supports dominant discourses and imagery that are negative and stereotypical.

More Roma narratives and representations in public spaces are necessary to challenge antigypsyism. By including Roma arts, culture and history in future Roma-focused policies and measures, the Council of Europe member states will send a message that European and national cultural narratives should highlight Roma belonging, contributions and achievements.

We take pride in our history, arts and culture; their diversity enriches our communities and our societies.

We want Roma youth to have access to their own culture and have tools to enjoy and promote their cultural identity, history and dignity. We want to fight the stigma associated with Roma and prevent antigypsyism with alternative discourses rooted in self-representation and Roma leadership.

We express our concern about the continued neglect of several important aspects by policymakers when it comes to Roma youth inclusion.

We express our deep concern about the rise of antigypsyism, anti-Roma rhetoric and violent attacks against Roma in Europe, which are supported by some political movements, populist politicians and irresponsible media. Antigypsyism remains a greater challenge in today's Europe and for young Roma people in our countries. The most frequent concerns for Roma youth are related to racism and discrimination together with access to education, training and schooling.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, Roma settlements have been cordoned off, water supplies have been partially cut off, and people have been barred from food and medical supplies. Violent attacks by the police and gendarmerie have occurred several times in Roma communities in the past months.

There is still a lack of knowledge among the majority of society about Roma history, culture, antigypsyism and the Roma Genocide that took place during World War II. Until today the Roma Holocaust still does not form part of the canon of European history and remains largely unknown.

In 2015, the European Parliament passed a Resolution declaring 2 August as "European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day" in memory of the at least 500,000 Roma exterminated during the Second World War by the Nazis and other regimes and their allies. Despite this, many governments have not yet officially recognized the historical facts and common historical responsibility. The Council of Europe should ensure that the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the inclusion of the history of Roma and Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials is implemented.

Social and economic exclusion has just been deepened by the Covid-19 pandemic, as many Roma students found themselves unable to access online education, due to absent infrastructure and equipment (the digital divide), while in the long run it still represents the biggest challenge for Roma youth participation and results in political and cultural exclusion as well.

Roma youth are part of the largest and youngest ethnic minority in Europe and strive for economic empowerment and participation. We insist that all necessary measures are taken and funded to encourage their economic and educational efforts and enable them to access national labour markets. We want to see Roma youth entrepreneurship highlighted and promoted as an important aspect that could not only contribute to economic empowerment but also strengthen the path of social inclusion and active citizenship of young Roma.

We call on the Council of Europe member States to seek active dialogue with Roma youth organizations and to ensure lasting mechanisms of empowerment and participation of young Roma. We call on national governments to allocate national and European funding to invest in Roma youth organizations as engines of change.

Many Roma young people experience multiple discrimination that hinders their human rights; this concerns, among others, LGBTQIA+ Roma, Roma girls, Roma migrants and Roma with disabilities. Acknowledging the great vulnerability of these groups, targeting them with special and complex measures and providing mechanisms to empower them and fight inequalities within and outside of Roma communities is an important challenge, which deserves to be addressed in all EU and national mainstream policies. Approaches that take into account intersectional identities are necessary.

We call on the Council of Europe:

- to improve the good practice of Roma youth involvement and expertise in processes of policy making.
- to improve the coordination of policies concerning Roma youth among European institutions and stakeholders and to improve the communication between these institutions.
- to invest in strengthening the capacity and structures of Roma youth organizations.
- to enable the monitoring of policies being implemented by setting up a permanent working group consisting of Roma youth.
- to call on member states to make Roma Youth a priority within National Roma Strategies. Roma youth organizations must be involved in the National Roma Platforms and important consultation mechanisms concerning Roma and youth issues.
- to emphasize the importance of double mainstreaming – including Roma issues in youth policies and youth issues in Roma policies and to encourage the European Youth Forum and National Youth Councils to ensure the meaningful participation of Roma youth individuals and organizations in their mainstream structures.

We demand a return to the values that have enriched Europe. These values such as solidarity, respect for diversity and human rights need to be continuously and consistently respected. European society can only be powerful if it has a strong Roma youth. Therefore, all relevant policy measures must be framed by, with and for Roma Youth in respectful and equal cooperation with non-Roma youth and the majority societies as a whole.

11th meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society on “Combating antigypsyism”

Phiren Amenca once again took part in the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society meeting. The 11th Dialogue took place online on 29-30 April 2021 with a focus on combating antigypsyism. The meeting provided an opportunity for joint reflection between representatives of Council of Europe bodies and members of the Council of Europe Secretariat as well as representatives of Roma and Traveller civil society on the causes, characteristics, historical background and different dimensions of antigypsyism. The event focused on addressing antigypsyism and developing a common framework across Europe to identify, monitor, combat and sanction the phenomenon. Participants were also invited to provide information on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis in this context. Atanas Stoyanov, Advocacy Manager at Phiren Amenca chaired the second session of the Dialogue entitled „Current civil society responses to combating antigypsyism”. In this session presentations were given by Timea Junghaus, Executive Director, European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC), Andrea Spitálszky, Legal Officer, Minority Rights Group Europe, Danjel Hyseni, National Coordinator for Roma Active Albania, Dezső Máté, Roma activist and Zoran Dimov, President of the International Romani Union – IRU, North Macedonia. The meeting was remembered for the homophobic statements of Zoran Dimov, which were immediately addressed by Phiren Amenca in a letter to the Council of Europe.

28 SEPTEMBER, 11.30-13.00 CET



EU Roma Week 2021 - Roma Youth: Challenges and Perspectives Live discussion

On 28 September 2021 took place the online event “Do Roma Youth have a role in the implementation of National Roma Strategies up to 2030”. The event was part of the official agenda of the EU Romani Week 2021 and it was organized by the Phiren Amenca International Network. The discussion, moderated by Atanas Stoyanov from Phiren Amenca, brought together Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the civil society, the European Commission and the national Roma contact points of Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The main points of discussion were at what stage of preparation are the national Roma strategies of the above-mentioned countries; whether young Roma are being included in the texts of the national Roma strategies; whether young Roma are being involved by the national Roma contact points in the National Roma Platforms and other processes; whether young Roma are being employed or given opportunities to take paid positions with the national Roma contact points; whether the upcoming Civil Roma Monitor will place a better focus on young Roma.

The Executive Director of Phiren Amenca – Marietta Herfort opened the discussion by saying that the role of young Roma on the European, also on national levels, is getting more and more attention and is being involved in the agenda of policymakers.

„Since the EU Roma Framework is guiding for the national Roma strategies and it pays a special focus on young Roma, we hope that you can also see the involvement of young Roma in these processes”, addressed the national Roma contact points. „We are also very happy that, again, we are part of the design of the EU Roma Week because this is the opportunity for young Roma to meet with decision-makers in person; a moment when they can informally share their feedback” The Phiren Amenca Director continued

her speech by sharing the testimonies of a few young Roma boys and girls from across Europe shedding light on the everyday issues faced by young Roma: persistent antigypsyism, prejudices and stereotypes from the side of the majority, but also the hardships many young Roma face in supporting their families, thus not having time to effectively take part in youth activism and decision-making processes.



A [special video address](#) for the event was sent by the Romani MEP Peter Pollak from Slovakia: „There are many documents that reconfirm the urgency of involving young Roma in the development of inclusion policies. Many politicians declare their ambitions to support Roma youth in becoming a driving force of the Roma inclusion process. However, reality speaks of something completely different. We still haven’t worked our way from words to deeds. As you know this month the European Commission should receive from EU Member States the strategies for ensuring Roma inclusion, equality, and participation up to 2030. I wish that these strategies promote and support the active participation of Roma youth as a tool of inclusion. I will ask the European Commission how this aspect has been approached in its assessment and steps will be taken following its assessment.

One of the positive signals in this regard could be greater involvement of young educated and competent Roma in the work and activities of National Roma Contact Points”, said in his address MEP Pollak.

MEP Anna Donath, co-host of the EU Roma Week 2021 and Member of the Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup at the European Parliament also welcomed the guests of the event: „We have to highlight that there is an importance to supporting and empowering Roma youth organizations, not just youth organizations. We must work together, and we have to pay attention and highlight the importance of the issues of intersectionality. Let us look at the youth as an unlimited resource of information” MEP Donath said.

Marc Kiwitt from the Roma Team of the European Commission stated that the new EU framework gives a stronger focus to the diversity among Roma and it aims to ensure that national strategic frameworks meet the specific needs of different groups, including Roma women, youth, children, and EU mobile citizens, stateless, LGBTIQ+, older Roma and those living with disabilities. Mr Kiwitt from the European Commission stated that there is also funding available to promote the participation of young Roma under the new Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values – CERV program. At the national level, the National Roma platforms are a very important instrument to promote the participation of Roma including Roma youth in the policy process.

Deyan Kolev – Chair of the Center Amalipe NGO from Bulgaria continued the discussion stating that in the Civil Roma Monitor 2017-2020, the Roma youth was not a specific priority.

Mrs Elena Iordanescu, National Contact Point for Romania shared that the Romanian NRCP succeeded to have young Roma 8 interns for the entire duration of the project – 1-2 interns for 5 months in a length of 20 months. Mrs Iordanescu forwarded the floor to

Alexandru Stan, a 20-years-old Roma student in Law – a current intern at the Romanian NRCP who said that as a young Roma intern at the NRCP he feels empowered and his voice heard. The concluding message Alex was that all Roma across the world speak only one language and this is the language of justice.

Mrs Rositsa Ivanova – the National Roma Contact Point of Bulgaria shared that they are currently implementing a National Roma Platform project funded by the DG Justice for the third time where 10 young Roma are contracted to become community facilitators and to ensure that local Roma strategies take into consideration the real needs of local Roma communities.

Mr Laszlo Ulicska – the Hungarian National Roma Contact Point stated that the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy up to 2030 pays attention to young people by not explicitly targeting Roma and Roma youth. The strategy covers various matters such as tackling poverty, social exclusion, housing, early marriages, birth rate, drug abuse, human trafficking, and prostitution. One of its main targets is to reduce the indicator of households with children living in social and material deprivation by 10% until 2030 compared to 2019. Mr Ulicska highlighted the system of Roma vocational colleges and in this context, support for social organizations for Roma youth.

Mr Martin Kocanda – the Czech National Roma Contact Point said that it is important for young Roma to be part of the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs and various working groups, and thus practically involved in the implementation of the new national Roma strategy.

Marek Chomanic, Director of the Department of Concepts and Analysis from the Office of the National Roma Contact Point, Slovakia said that the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma in Slovakia created an Advisory Body in the field of youth to promote an active approach to involving young Roma currently having 6 Roma young people as members. These young Roma will be also part of the National Roma platform and regional Roma platforms and their task will be to present and explain the new strategy to young Roma from the different regions. The internship program for young Roma is also available at the Slovak NRCP.

Freedom of My Identity Festival and Pécs Pride 2021



Phiren Amenca has been a partner of Diverse Youth Network's week-long Freedom of my identity festival in Pécs, Hungary between 13-19 September 2021, and took part with a big number of young people at the first Pride outside of Budapest, on 18 September 2021 in Pécs. In parallel with the festival an international youth exchange on internationality, Roma and LGBTIQ rights was organized, where our colleagues run educational workshops. Besides our daily presence at the events and public debates of the festival, Marietta Herfort, director of Phiren Amenca, had a speech at the Pride:

The full speech:

Many of us are here today, but many argue that we don't need Pride because of sexual orientation, it's everyone's private affair. Everyone should do it at home, don't make it a public affair. Meanwhile, the current Hungarian government is not only present in our phones, in our computers, but it has sneaked into every scene of our lives. It no longer just tells us what we can think of, it also tells us whom we can love. It tells us what a good family is and what an ideal man or woman is like. Politics made sexual orientation and gender identity a political matter, and that made the LGBTQ community a target. Just as the government has been doing that with the Roma for decades, based on ethnic or social matters.

I believe we are here today, and tens of thousands of us were there at this year's Budapest Pride to show resistance. To show that no matter if we belong to the LGBTQ or any other minority, we do not tolerate oppression, exclusion, and stigmatization. We do not tolerate the everyday discrimination in our communities, and no one more person should fall victim to this hatred that surrounds us. Because today you can hate, but not love.

I am very proud of my friends who organized this Pride despite the constant attacks. They have a dual mission. Their role is not only with the majority society but also with the Roma communities. Their task is not only to sensitize the majority, but also the Roma. As their work so far has shown, this is not impossible.

September 18: let it be here in Pécs and throughout the country a symbol of the people who could not be silenced. Those who were brave enough to face the hardships that had been going on for two years around organizing this event proudly proclaim the universality of human rights and the freedom of identity. Today has shown that tolerance wins over hatred. Showed that minorities can unite, support and accept each other. Showed that diversity is a value that cannot be stopped, but must be celebrated.

We are many and we are different in many, many things. But we certainly agree that we all, at least most of us, love to be respected and valued: whether as friends, employees, or as humans. Be it of any age, gender, or social class. LGBTQ communities, like the Roma, on the other hand, receive neither appreciation nor respect. If so, it's because they're „different” or not so different from others. While all people are destiny, a story. Like me, and you.

Also, those who are stocked in public care orphanages cannot be adopted but there would be many people ready to adopt. Also, those who wear a dress that covers the body as much as possible, because they are not in harmony with themselves, with their identity. Also, those who keep secret that they are not only Roma but even gay. Because then no community would accept them. Also, those who don't sleep at night because their mother and father fight all night. But at least the father is the man, and the mother is the woman. And, those who are waiting abroad for Hungary to finally be a European country with a multicultural spirit. Because then they would finally come home.

I believe that in the end, we will be more to steer this country in such a direction where identity is free, where family is truly a value, and minorities can feel safe.

I know, it's a long way. There has been great destruction in our country in terms of human rights and values. The task is huge, but I feel and see that it has begun with you all already. Big applause for you all!



Fundamental Rights Forum 2021

The Fundamental Rights Forum 2021 was organized in a hybrid format between 11-12 October 2021. It is a unique platform initiated by the Fundamental Rights Agency for dialogue about the most pressing human rights challenges that Europe faces today. As part of the forum, Phiren Amenca together with the European Parliament's Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup organized a discussion on October 12 in Vienna and [live-streamed online](#) with the title "Dismantling racism through amplifying youth voices".

The main question of our discussion was how to dismantle structural racism and access justice in the EU and to find the answer to that, we bring together policymakers and young people committed to the fight against racism in Europe. Speakers of the discussion



were: Romeo Franz, Co-President of the European Parliament's Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup, Evin Incir, Co-President of the European Parliament's Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup, Monica Semedo Vice-President of the European Parliament's Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup, Munira Mohamud, Student at Dokustelle, Ioana Spataru, Activist at Opre Heroes Collective and Anna Daróczy, Project coordinator at Phiren Amenca.

Throughout the conversation, the following recommendations have been formed:

1. There is a need for including racialized youth representatives in all relevant decision-making and consultation bodies and processes at local, regional, national, as well as European levels - in terms of anti-racism and immigration-related bodies and policies, but also other ministries and structures.
2. Racialized and minority youth need to mobilize themselves and be politically active on the national level, especially during elections so that our representative bodies and assemblies reflect the diversity of our societies. For this, space needs to be created and offered by those who are in decision-making positions today.
3. The EU needs to strengthen both their soft measures (such as supporting more exchanges of good practices relevant for the youth) and step up their legislative frameworks (such as coming up with new law proposals in the field of anti-racism).

Council of Europe's Task Force on Roma Youth Participation

The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) set up a Task Force in 2020, as a follow-up on the results of the Roma Youth Action Plan, to prepare proposals for the continuation of the work on Roma youth participation in the 2020-2021 biennium and within the 2030 Youth Strategy of the Council of Europe.

The main role of the task force was the preparation a Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on Roma youth participation, by identifying the possible substance of the recommendations and their relevance for youth (and Roma) policy stakeholders in the Council of Europe Member states. To support this process experts from Roma youth organizations and networks, from the European Youth Forum, the Advisory Council on Youth, the European Steering Committee on Youth, from the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM), from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Education Department of the Council of Europe had thematic working groups to reflect on the gaps for Roma youth participation. In parallel with that, the Youth Department of the Council of Europe run a research project by Margareta Matache, entitled "[Roma Youth Participation and Inclusion in Standards, Policies, and Programmes in Europe](#)" to serve the Youth Department and the Task Force to formulate arguments and suggestions to the CMJ because of preparing the Recommendation. The report was published in early 2021 and includes references to our same-year published report „Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities“.

The Task Force formulated conclusions and proposals throughout its work in 2020 which were sent to the Joint Council on Youth then the CMJ adopted them in March 2021. The Task Force proposed that the Terms of Reference of the Joint Council on Youth for 2022-2023 should include the drafting of a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on promoting Roma youth participation.

MEMBERSHIP IN MAINSTREAM STRUCTURES

Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe

Georgina Laboda, Director of the Phiren Amenca Board, became a member of the Advisory Council on Youth (AC) 2020-2021 of the Council of Europe, responsible for Roma and other autochthonous minorities, together with Pia Slogar from the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN). On top of that, Georgina was elected at the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) as Rapporteur on Roma Issues. Through her mandates, as a young Roma woman, she keeps Roma and Traveller's youth issues high on the agenda of the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe Youth Department's work is based on the co-management system, which is a partnership between non-governmental youth organizations and governments. The co-management system allows the Youth Department to have representatives from non-governmental youth organizations working together with government officials to establish the work priorities of the youth sector and make recommendations for future budgets and programs. Such proposals are then adopted by the Committee of Ministers, the Council of Europe's decision-making body. In this context, the Advisory Council on Youth, the non-governmental partner in the co-management system, also has the task of formulating opinions and proposals regarding youth issues within the Council of Europe.

The Advisory Council is composed of 30 members: 13 representatives of international non-governmental youth organizations (INGYOs); 7 representatives of national youth councils (NYCs) designated by the Committee of Ministers on the proposal of the European Youth Forum and 10 representatives of non-governmental youth organizations or networks not members of the European Youth Forum, designated by the Committee of Ministers on the proposal of the Council of Europe's Secretary General. Phiren Amenca was able to nominate Georgina as a member of the Advisory Council on Youth as a representative of a non-governmental organization and network.

European Youth Forum Membership

Since November 2020 Phiren Amenca became the first international Roma youth organization to officially become a member of the European Youth Forum (YFJ), our joint work with the European Youth Forum continued in 2021. Our representatives participated in many meetings of the Forum, as of utmost importance were the two Council of Members (COMEM) meetings that took place in April and in November. During the spring COMEM which took part online, Phiren Amenca acted as an election observer welcoming the 20 new members to the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe and the National Youth Council of Ukraine – NYCU in the YFJ-family. The autumn COMEM took place near Brussels as a hybrid meeting with one official

delegate from each member organization joining physically. In total 90 member organizations were present. Atanas Stoyanov participated on behalf of Phiren Amenca in person. At this COMEM the first ever Policy Programme was adopted, the budget for 2022 was also adopted and continued with the governance review program, while also celebrating the 25th anniversary of the European Youth Forum.

Furthermore, in 2021 Phiren Amenca actively started the implementation of the „25 %” project – an initiative led by the European Youth Forum in collaboration with 10 international youth organizations and national youth councils aiming at gathering 10 000 youth ideas for a better Europe to be presented at the Conference for the future of Europe. In 2021 we managed to gather ideas from young people during the Pecs Pride and the European Youth Event. We are also proud that we translated the 25% project page into Romani.

The European Youth Forum is an international non-profit association and serves as a platform and advocacy group of the national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organizations in Europe. It strives for youth rights in international institutions such as the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the United Nations. The YFJ works in the fields of youth policy and youth work development and represents the views and opinions of youth organizations in all relevant policy areas and promotes the cross-sectoral nature of youth policy towards a variety of institutional actors.

NATIONAL ROMA YOUTH PLATFORMS

Within the Roma Youth Voices, Phiren Amenca conducted several National Youth Roma Platforms aiming at providing space for young Roma to be heard at the decisive and critical moment of drafting and adopting the new Roma Strategies up to 2030. An objective of the national Roma youth platforms was to bring together policymakers in the face of the National Roma Contact Points, Roma (youth) civil society organizations and other related stakeholders such as National youth councils, Erasmus plus representatives and representatives of relevant ministries and institutions so that the Roma youth needs are taken into consideration in the future strategic documents. While in 2020 we conducted the National Roma Youth Platforms in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, in 2021 we continued this effort spotting the light on Bulgaria and Spain and continued in Hungary. Below, you can learn more about the discussions in these countries and our achievements.

Bulgarian Roma Youth Platform

**НАЦИОНАЛНА РОМСКА
МЛАДЕЖКА ПЛАТФОРМА**
29 ЯНУАРИ 2021, 10:00-11:30 Ч.

f /ROMA YOUTH VOICES

ИМАТ ЛИ МЛАДИТЕ РОМИ И РОМСКИ
МЛАДЕЖКИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ МЯСТО В
ИЗРАБОТВАНЕТО НА НАЦИОНАЛНАТА
РОМСКА СТРАТЕГИЯ?

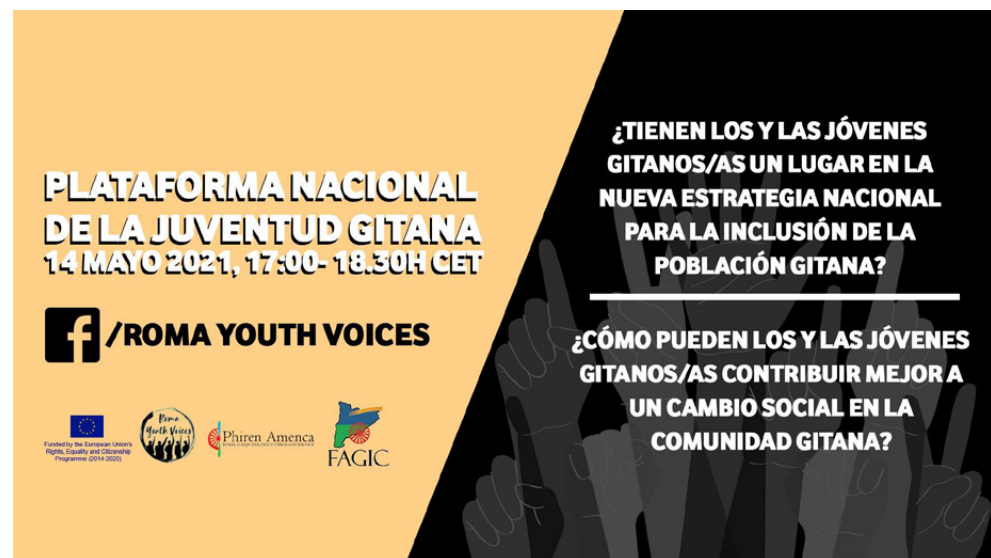
КАК МЛАДИТЕ РОМИ МОГАТ ДА
ДОПРИНЕСАТ ЗА ПРОМЯНА В
ПОЛИТИКИТЕ И СОЦИАЛНА ПРОМЯНА
И КАКВО ИЗИСКВА ТОВА?

Logos: ARETE YOUTH, ПОСТОЯННА РОМСКА КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ, Phiren Amenca, YFJ, tern pe, EYF, COUNCIL OF EUROPE, EUROPEAN UNION, Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

The Bulgarian Roma Youth Platform took place online on January 29, 2021. More than 75 young Roma, high-school and university students took part in the [online meeting](#), organized by Phiren Amenca in partnership with the Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance Amalipe, Arete Youth Foundation and the Standing Roma Conference from Bulgaria. The meeting was opened with a welcome address by the Executive Director of the Phiren Amenca International Network, Marietta Herfort, followed by a presentation in the Bulgarian language by Atanas Stoyanov from Phiren Amenca on the outcomes of the “Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities” report.

The official guest of the meeting was Mrs Rositsa Ivanova, National Roma Contact Point for Bulgaria. Mrs Ivanova welcomed all the participants of the Bulgarian Roma Youth Platform by clarifying the roles of the National Council on Ethnic and Integrational Issues and the National Roma Contact Point. She shared with the participants that since 2015 within the National Council for Ethnic and Integrational Issues there is a Commission to follow the implementation of the National Roma Strategy. Furthermore, was discussed the implementation of the „National Roma Platform” funded by the European Commission and implemented by the Bulgarian Roma Contact Point, aims at having a dialogue with all national and local authorities on Roma inclusion. At the end of her presentation, Mrs Ivanova shared that the draft of the Bulgarian Roma Strategy was uploaded for public consultations and that Roma youth are welcome to present their recommendations. As an immediate response to this meeting, Bulgarian Roma Youth organizations consulted and sent a 7-pages document containing recommendations for Roma youth to be included in the Bulgarian Roma Strategy 2030.

Spanish Roma Youth Platform



The Federation of Roma Associations from Catalonia – FAGiC, in collaboration with the Phiren Amenca International Network, organized the Spanish Roma Youth Platform. The meeting took place on 14 May 2021 in an online format. The platform focused on ensuring the Roma youth voices and participation of young Spanish Roma in the process of designing the updated Spanish Strategy for Roma inclusion.

The event was opened by Pedro Aguilera – Executive Director of FAGiC and Annabel Carballo – FAGiC’s Director of European Projects, followed by a welcome greeting by Marietta Herfort – Executive Director of Phiren Amenca. In the beginning, a short video was presented with Spanish subtitles highlighting the outcomes of the “Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities” conducted by Phiren Amenca and partners, including FAGiC.

The meeting continued with a discussion between four Roma youngsters from four different regions of Spain: Rafael Torosio Vargas – Extremadura, Palmira Dual Jiménez – Basque Country, Lorena Jiménez Jiménez – Madrid, and Paco Vargas Porras – Catalonia, and the National Director of Diverse Families and Social Services who is also the responsible person for the National Roma Contact Point, and the design of the new Strategy for Roma Inclusion, Ms Patricia Bezunarte. The conversation was focused on how to include the voice of Roma youth in the new Spanish Roma strategy.

The second panel included members of the Spanish parliament: Ismael Cortés (Unidas Podemos), Sara Giménez (Ciudadanos) and Maria Dantas (ERC). The deputies stated that on April 28 2021, the Committee on Social Rights of the Spanish Parliament approved the creation of a sub-committee on State Pact against antigypsyism to set the priorities of the Spanish government regarding the new Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma.

The meeting resulted in a better understanding of Roma youth about the participatory process in the design of the new Roma Strategy. They learnt different ways how to participate and also how to make the voice of Roma youth heard. The young Roma participants, as an informal group, decided to follow up and proposed written points to the Spanish National Roma Strategy that better reflects the needs of Roma youth.

Terno Glaso – Youth Voice – Roma Youth Conference in Budapest

The Roma Youth Conference, organized by Phiren Amenca International Network, aimed at providing Roma young people with a platform to discuss their views on political and public issues.



The series of events entitled „Terno Glaso” – Youth Voice is a continuation of the „First National Roma Youth Congress” held in Budapest in September 2019, and over the past two years, we have organized several meetings with young Roma activists and NGOs in different parts of the country.

The main topics of the conference in Budapest between 27 and 28 August were the rights of the minorities, the system of parliamentary representation of minorities in Hungary and Central Europe, the structure and work of minority self-governments, and the opposition parties’ primary elections in Hungary’s from expert and civil perspectives.

Participants from several parts of the country were able to have short discussions in pairs along with questions such as, who is responsible for establishing the political representation of the Roma or what is their role as individuals in shaping the future of the country? After a brief introduction, Péter Kállai, assistant professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Eötvös Lóránd University, gave a lecture on the Hungarian Act 2011/CLXXIX on the rights of nationalities, and its three main pillars: language, school affairs and territorial administration. He also talked about how ethnic parliamentary representation is or is not being implemented in Central Europe: just like in Hungary, for example, in Poland and Romania, minorities can get preferential seats in elections, while in Croatia and Slovenia there are reserved seats for them.

Regarding the situation in Hungary, Péter Kállai pointed out that in parliamentary elections, a nationality can elect only one person to be part of the parliament with a preferential mandate from the list of nationalities (the National Roma Self-Government has the right to have that list), more only if they have reached 5% of the total votes. If the specified number of votes is not reached, but they receive at least one valid vote, they can send a spokesperson to the parliament. However, as the nationality spokesperson does not have the right to vote and can only speak when the Parliament approves, it questioned by the participants whether the spokesperson has real representation and why the nationalities do not simply delegate a spokesperson to the parliament, because we could see, only one vote is enough to get in. Another important issue that arose during the presentation was related to registration: if someone wants to vote on the nationality list, they must first register themselves as a nationality voter, but if that happens, they can no longer vote on party lists. It has been suggested in several cases that although one person is one vote, it must be a serious decision for one's nationality, as voting on the party list is important as a Hungarian, but the nationality list can promote the political representation of minorities.

One of the important conclusions of the discussion was that currently in Hungary no Roma representative – who truly represents the interests of the Roma – enters the parliament with a preferential mandate, from a party list or even from a Roma political party list.

Hidvégi-B. Attila, the editor-in-chief of RomNet spoke about the establishment of Roma self-governments and their work from 1993 to the present, but instead of great successes, we could mostly hear about scandals and internal conflicts. Several participants had not followed the National Gypsy (then Roma) Self-Government (ORÖ) and the issues around the self-government so far, so the presentation, which also included several archival recordings, was useful for all of us, if only because it was reaffirmed that in the national self-government almost the same actors have been fighting with each other for nearly 30 years.

At the end of the day, we asked participants to make a list of what inspires them in their daily work, what causes them difficulties and what their plans are for the next 1-2 years. During the joint discussion, it became clear that the difficulties for most of us are motivating Roma youth and Roma communities to active participation, and creating sustainable financial resources for our work.

The topic of the second day of the conference was the opposition parties' primary election process, which is currently running in Hungary, and in the first half of the morning, we talked to Róbert László, an election expert from Political Capital.

The event was supported by the US Embassy in Budapest.

Roma Youth Conference organized with the National Youth Council Hungary

The Roma Youth Conference, organized in cooperation with Phiren Amencia, the European Youth Center Budapest and the National Youth Council Hungary, took place on 8 November 2021, to strengthen the public participation of young Roma people.

The presentations and panel discussions were combined in a hybrid format, online and offline. For the event almost 100 people pre-registered and more than 60 young Roma and non-Roma, representatives of Roma civil society and participants from international and Hungarian institutions active in the field of youth were present.

The participants were first greeted by Thorsten Afflerbach, Head of the Secretariat for Roma and Travelers of the Council of Europe, Marietta Herfort, Director of the Phiren Amencia International Network, Bálint Molnár, Deputy Director of the European Youth Center Budapest, and Zoltán Hegedüs, President of the National Youth Council. In their opening speeches, they briefly described the key issues, events and strategies affecting or targeting Roma youth and welcomed the organization of the conference as an excellent platform for thinking together, sharing experiences and continuing constructive discourses.

The topic of the first lecture was the presentation of the research entitled „Roma youth participation in Europe: Challenges, needs and opportunities”. Simona Torotcoi, a political science researcher, presented the European-level research of Phiren Amencia International Network and their partners to highlight the challenges, needs and opportunities facing Roma youth in their everyday life but also terms of their civic and political participation. The research included online surveys of Roma youth (290 respondents from 16 European countries) and with Roma youth and NGOs working for Roma youth. The results show that the main and most common concerns of Roma youth are related to racism and discrimination, access to education and training, employment, and participation in public and social life.





About 95% of respondents said they had already faced discriminatory words, behaviour or gestures against Roma, and in fact, they were the victims of them. The researcher identified the lack of participation of Roma youth in public and political life as a further problem, which is particularly spectacular in mainstream youth structures and she drew attention to young people's lack of trust in the state and public institutions. The research is available on the Phiren Amenca website.

The next speaker was Herfort Marietta, director of Phiren Amenca, who spoke to young people about the policies and strategies that can promote their active participation in public life. In this context, she presented the Roma Youth Action Plan of the Council of Europe and the EU Roma Framework for equality, inclusion and participation 2020-2030 of the European Commission. Marietta highlighted that the new EU Framework intends to address Roma inequality within the EU by focusing on equality, inclusion and participation as horizontal objectives with measurable targets and is prioritizing Roma youth and Roma youth issues through a dedicated chapter. She also talked about the launching of the Roma Civil Monitor 2021-2025 run by the Central European University and its partners which is also a way to participate in the monitoring process of the implementations of the national Roma strategies, she also encouraged the participants and their organizations.

In the afternoon two-panel discussions took place followed by smaller working groups on different topics.

Tamás Török, head of the Secretariat of the Deputy Ombudsman for Nationalities, Attila Sztojka, Government Commissioner responsible for Roma relations and Anna Orsós, staff member of the European Roma Rights Center participated in the panel discussion entitled „Equality, access, social inclusion and participation of Roma youth in our country in terms of their basic and civil rights”, moderated by Fruzsina Balogh, a member of the Civil College Foundation.

The panel discussion „Possibilities of involving Roma youth in decision-making processes within the framework of youth and Roma strategies” was moderated by Jóna Bálint (Subjective Values Foundation), with participants Katalin Victor Langerné, Deputy State Secretary for Social Inclusion, Gergely Mohay, Department Responsible for Youth at the Ministry of Human Resources and Judit Ignácz, representative of the UCCU Informal Roma Education Foundation.

ROMA HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE

Words which lead to actions – Interactive Museum about the Roma holocaust

The Phiren Amenca International Network, RomNet, the Uccu Roma Informal Education Foundation and the Civil Council Association commemorated the victims of the Roma Holocaust with an unusual, interactive exhibition on August 2, 2021 in Budapest, Hungary.



The exhibition was entitled „Words which Lead to Actions” besides facts about the Roma Holocaust, showed the centuries-old oppression of Roma that persists today in Hungary but also in the whole of Europe and created space for self-reflection. The content of the museum was developed by the initiative of the previously mentioned organizations. The museum had a big public interest, we estimate that between 9 am and 8 pm on August 2 we had around 200 visitors.

The purpose of the exhibition was to demonstrate that words are born from thoughts and deeds are born from words that once led to the Porajmos. The words led to the murder of more than 4,300 Roma, including women and children, in Auschwitz-Birkenau on 2 August 1944 in a single night.

The museum was built in front of Eötvös Lóránd University and reached a big public interest. The museum was built by our initiative at the square where mostly non-Roma people are living because we wanted to show them and reflect on the hundreds of years of oppression of Roma in Hungary: from the 1700s onwards, including the series of racist attacks against Roma in Hungary between 2008-2009.

During the opening of the museum, the initiative organized a press conference. In her opening remarks, Phiren Amenca's international director, Marietta Herfort, recalled that „it all started with words. Laws were born into words and then, freely interpreted, into deeds. Deeds that brought the darkest era in European history.” She drew attention to the fact that the provisions implementing exclusion were not adopted on the streets, but in the building of the Hungarian Parliament, and although almost 100 years have passed, „oppressive rhetoric and politics are still present in our society today”.

DIKH HE NA BISTER – Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative 2021

As every year since 2011, Phiren Amenca took part at the DIKH HE NA BISTER (Look and don't forget) international Roma youth event in Krakow and Auschwitz around the August 2, International Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day, initiated and run by ternYpe International Roma Youth Network.

After the Dikh He NA Bister's activities were limited to virtual space in 2020, it was possible in 2021 to come together again in a smaller group of around 70 people from 11 countries. In the first days, the group leaders prepared with the young participants a series of educational events about the Holocaust and racism in the past and present.

In the beginning, the young people talked about their expectations and what they already knew about the Holocaust against the Sinti and Roma. Some groups worked with testimonies of survivors and with the biographies of those who were persecuted in Nazi-occupied Europe. Participants had an opportunity to visit the Auschwitz Museum.

Contemporary witness Zijo Ribic from Bosnia and Herzegovina told the participants about the 1992 Bosnian War, which he survived as the only one of his family when he was just eight years old. Following the main commemoration event on August 2, Holocaust survivor and keynote speaker Werner Friedrich joined participants in a talk at the International Youth Meeting Center in Oswiecim. These personal meetings with survivors and witnesses are always particularly impressive and moving. During the workshops and lectures, a series of videos about the Dikh He Na Bister initiative was made.

Over two days, the participants visited the Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum. First, they visited Block 13 with the exhibition on the Holocaust of the Sinti and Roma in smaller guided groups. After visiting the so-called main camp, one of the groups, under the guidance of the artist Gosia Mirga, produced a textile work of art with portraits of surviving Sinti and Roma.

Another group learned more about the work of the museum's tour guides. On the morning of August 2 participants held their small memorial service at Crematorium 5 before joining the main event. A representative of the youth event Irina Spataru spoke on behalf of the Dikh He Na Bister at the official memorial event and said: „I wish that one day my grandchildren can look up to the statues of Ceija, Raymond and Hugo and be proud of the Roma and Sinti, who stood up for remembrance and humanity. I wish that we would all look and never forget.”

ALLIANCE BUILDING

“Ideas and their Consequences: Genocide and International Justice after 1919”

Phiren Amenca – RGDTS was a partner of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), in their project on European Remembrance funded under Europe for Citizens Programme. The project entitled „Ideas and their Consequences: Genocide and International Justice after 1919” and it was kicked off in early 2020. Other project partners were Lepsius Haus in Potsdam and the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS).

As part of the project an [“International Conference Examining 20th Century History from a New Perspective”](#) took place at the European Academy in Berlin between August 28-29, 2021, where Phiren Amenca and partners of this conference and project were dedicated to shedding light on the historical events related to the Armenian Genocide and particularly the developments after the end of World War I.

Promoting Religious Freedom and Combating Anti-Semitism

Phiren Amenca is a partner with other faith-based organizations to promote and protect religious freedom and to combat antisemitism and antigypsyism, coordinated by National Democratic Institute between 2019-2021. The initiative was engaging faith-based organizations, together with human rights, and multicultural and community groups supporting religious freedom, in three sets of integrated, capacity-building activities: interfaith coalitions, issue advocacy, and public dialogue in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.

As part of the initiative, RGDTS-Phiren Amenca formed a smaller coalition with whom developed a project. This project was a joint activity of religious and non-governmental organizations in Hungary, intending to combat online hate speech and to promote dialogue and advocacy to raise awareness about the destructive effects of hate speech.

The coalition which ran a project together and developed a study – [“Combating online hate speech against religious groups and various vulnerable minority groups”](#) - was formed at the end of 2020 with the following organizations: RGDTS (civil society), Organization of Muslims in Hungary (Muslim), Association of Hungarian Women Theologians (interfaith), Szim Salom (Jewish), Ambedkar School (Buddhist Roma), and Eszter Ház Association (Jewish).

Participating organizations have been successful in raising awareness of online hate speech among religious and ethnic minority groups and in providing tools for advocacy groups to respond effectively to hate speech.

The study, mentioned earlier, brings together the lessons learned from the individuals and organizations involved and committed to the topic; also supports the extension of

the concept of hate speech beyond the strictly legal definition to online hurtful speech, as it can quickly spread to the reality of physical life if not curbed in time. The authors examine different aspects of this topic in their essays. The study can be downloaded in English and Hungarian.

STRUCTURES

MEMBERS OF THE PHIREN AMENCA INTERNATIONAL NETWORK:

Amaro Drom, Germany
Association of Young Roma, Slovakia
CSD Diaconia Valdese, Italy
Evangelische Freiwilligendienste (Protestant Voluntary Service), Germany
FAGIC – Federación de Asociaciones Gitanas de Cataluña (Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia), Spain
Nevo Parudimos, Romania
Roma Active Albania, Albania
Roma-Gadje Dialogue Through Service, Hungary
Romano Centro, Austria
TOUCH Project Charitable Foundation, Ukraine
VISA (L'Année diaconale), France

ALLIED MEMBERS AND PARTNERS:

AGBU – Armenian General Benevolent Union, Belgium
Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance, Bulgaria
ARCA - Youth Agency for the Advocacy of Roma Culture, Ukraine
Arete Youth Foundation, Bulgaria
Asociación Chinantlan, Nicaragua
Asociación Juvenil Intercambia, Spain
Diocesan Caritas Ostrava-Opava, Czech Republic
Diverse Youth Network, Hungary
ELCA – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
ERGO Network, Belgium
EUJS – European Union of Jewish Students, Belgium
ERIAC – European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, Germany
Finnish Roma Association, Finland
Fundación Marijn, Nicaragua
NVO Phiren Amenca, Montenegro
Obra Ecumenica Barrio Borro, Uruguay
Residencia El Sol – Asoc. Sumando Voluntades, Argentina
Roma Community Centre, Lithuania
Roma Culture Centre, Latvia
SCMI India
ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, Belgium
YEN – Youth of European Nationalities
Young Adults on Global Mission, Hungary

Phiren Amenca's office in Budapest and address in Belgium:

Attila út 39. IV/5.	Rue de Fiennes 86
1013 Budapest	1070 Brussels
Hungary	Belgium

Board members:

Georgina Laboda, Ana Carballo Mesa, Juraj Vozár

Coordination office: Marietta Herfort (Managing Director), Anna Daróczi (Voluntary Service Coordinator), Atanas Stoyanov (Project Coordinator), Ildikó Csanya (Project Assistant)

Volunteers, interns: Semran Sulejman

General Assembly

Statutory meeting for member organizations, that follows the statutory responsibilities, the election of the board, financial report, approval of the budget, membership questions, and strategic decisions.

Networking Meeting:

Each spring Phiren Amenca hosts a three-day „Phiren Amenca Networking Meeting” bringing together member organizations, former volunteers and partner organizations to share experiences and practices, and to address annual thematic priorities and quality questions of our work.

Board

The board has currently three members representing the equal partnership between Roma and non-Roma and striving for gender balance and participation of former volunteers. The Board is entitled to set up a coordination office to carry out the ongoing business of the association. The Board is responsible for all matters of the association not specifically assigned by law or the statutes of the association to the General Assembly.

Coordination Office

Phiren Amenca maintains a coordination office and resource centre for the volunteers and member organizations in Budapest (which is currently the home of RGDTs Nonprofit Kft.).

Platform of former volunteers

The volunteers are encouraged to continue their engagement even after the service in the platform of volunteers. The self-organized platform of volunteers and former volunteers creates further opportunities for non-formal education, dialogue, and engagement, and strengthens the role of the volunteers as multipliers and promoters of voluntary service. Phiren Amenca builds the capacity of young Roma and non-Roma former volunteers to become trainers of human rights education in its structures. Phiren Amenca gives a high priority to youth participation and the rights of volunteers within its structures and work. The platform will meet in the framework of the annual meeting, including the General Assembly.

DONORS

Current donors and supporters of Phiren Amencia include:

Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the DG Justice, European Commission

Erasmus+ Program, European Commission

European Youth Foundation, Council of Europe (including an Annual Work Plan and a Structural Grant for 2020-2021)

Tempus Közalapítvány

US Embassy Budapest, Hungary

Otto per Mille

National Democratic Institute

and private donors

Audit

Phiren Amencia uses the services of a registered accounting service in Belgium. The company Comfisgest conducts the aisbl professional audit. The auditor's report is submitted in September of each year.

In Hungary Flexcont BT, Kovács Imre keeps the accountancy and conducts a professional audit, which is submitted in May of each year.



Erasmus+



Funded by the European Union's
Rights, Equality and Citizenship
Programme (2014-2020)