



Phiren Amencia



# PHIREN AMENCA INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT

# 2022

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## Welcome address

Dear friends,

Throughout 2022, we have become and formed a community. Some of us are connected by the hundreds or even thousands of kilometers we have covered together, the many hours of work we have worked through, the common goal, the success or even the task we have to solve. We have had a lot of fun, we have travelled with several of you to 5-6 countries in a year, we have learned, we have grown, and we have taught and sensitized others. There were times when we were puzzled to understand a situation or a problem because although we have seen a lot, the past year has shown us again that we cannot be prepared for everything.

*There are many of you, colleagues, and friends, in Europe and beyond.  
Thank you for your support, for your friendship!*

The Phiren Amenca Team



## Introduction

2022 was definitely a year to remember for many years to come. The war that broke out in February transformed and defined many things, including the lives of many of our friends and colleagues. Like the pandemic, this war has created a new set of values around us.

Although part of our work has been defined by helping refugees fleeing the war, we have been able to fully implement our planned programmes for 2022. We held several international trainings on hate speech, intersectionality and antigypsyism, ran a series of seminars on the Roma Holocaust, and visited former concentration camps in Auschwitz and Buchenwald and one of the biggest Holocaust memorial centers in Yad Vashem, Israel. Together with Roma Active Albania, we organized our So keres, Europa?! Roma youth festival in Tirana with 150 participants, we participated in Roma Week at the European Parliament in Brussels and sent volunteers around the world.

An intense year, with lots of achievements, full of experiences and emotions and with many new allies in our network. We have developed new partnerships with organisations from Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia and we strengthened our co-operations in other countries as well. We have also further strengthened our work with Jewish, Muslim and LGBTIQ organizations, and we have started a joint hate speech monitoring and the development of artificial intelligence for this.

To learn more about our successes, good practices, lessons learnt, volunteers and testimonies of participants, please take a look into this report.

Phiren Amenca - Take a journey with us

## 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.



In the past years, the pandemic cut many of the voluntary service programs, just like ours. Slowly from the end of 2021, we could restart our sending and hosting program and in 2022 volunteers could fully be physically present in their placements.

Most of our volunteers could do international volunteering through our **MySoR project. My Story of Resistance - From exclusion to active participation (MySoR)** is an Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity building project which ran between the spring of 2021 and the end of 2022, with a short COVID-induced break. Involving youth organizations from Hungary, Spain, Italy, Nicaragua and India, it set out to explore and share the struggles of local young people belonging to different minority or vulnerable communities, such as Roma and Gitanos, Indigenous, Dalit and Tribal, as well as migrant groups. Besides discovering the difficulties these different youth groups face, the project also examined the ways they have resisted discrimination and oppression and exchanged storytelling methods for raising awareness. Within MySoR seven volunteers spent 9-9 months at and contributed to the work of the partner organizations, built relationships with the local young people and organized thematic meetings about resistance and storytelling. Two young women from India, Jema and Imlikokla and Aracely from Nicaragua volunteered at placements of CSD Valdese in the region of Torino, Italy and served at social community centers spending time with children, and among them young people with migrant backgrounds. Binu, Dalit young man, spent nine months supporting the work of the Budapest office of Phiren Amenca. Zsuzsa from Hungary travelled to India and took part in the work of the Student Christian Movement of India, organizing activities for university students of Dalit and Tribal background. Milena from Spain and Jessica from Italy were hosted by Marijn Foundation in Bilwi, Nicaragua where they supported the organization's social and charity work with indigenous families and young people.

In addition to the volunteering, a youth exchange was held in Hungary where participants from the five countries shared their communities' storytelling practices and created their own stories of resistance. The team gathered in Hollókő, Hungary and spent five days getting to know each other, sharing the storytelling practices of their sending organizations and their communities with each other, and practicing them. Throughout the days, participants also learned about the different manifestations of discrimination and examined and tried out creative, artistic ways of resisting oppression and making their realities accessible for others, such as filmmaking, poetry, writing songs and using sounds for transmitting emotions, theater, sculpturing, inspirational speaking, and creative writing. They learned how they can structure their stories so that they speak to many, yet remain their very own. Coming from very different cultures and circumstances, by the end of the week they all built empathy, created a safe space for sharing emotional episodes of their lives and developed deeply emotional art products, "their own stories of resistance". The stories are being shared on our social media channels.

In the next pages we share interviews with our volunteers who served in Hungary, Italy, India, and Nicaragua through and besides the MySoR project.

## Interviews with volunteers

**Binu Bill Bright - hosted at the Phiren Amenca coordination office in Budapest through the European Voluntary Service Program (EVS)**

My name is Binu Bill Bright and I am from South India. I am proactive and well-organized with diverse experience both in the corporate and social development sector. I have a versatile skill set and a strong interest in Business Administration and Management, human rights, gender equality, and eco-social justice. I have been able to accomplish a lot with this combined approach. In my free time, I enjoy writing poems, playing different musical instruments, exploring the outdoors, and cooking. I'm passionate about learning, personal growth and strive to be a lifelong learner.

My voluntary service placement in Budapest Hungary was an incredibly enriching and eye-opening experience. Working with Phiren Amenca and the Roma community, I was able to gain insight into a culture and way of life that was completely new to me. I developed a greater understanding of the challenges faced by the Roma people and encountered many in-depth histories and stories while participating in and organizing programs for the Roma youth. Additionally, I was able to gain valuable skills and knowledge in the areas of social work, non-formal education, and cultural exchange, while also making a real impact in the lives of youngsters by empowering them with programs. I even developed my skills in poem writing. Overall, my time in Budapest was an extremely enriching and humbling experience with my fantastic colleagues and the amazing friendships that I made.

One of the most important experiences I had while volunteering in Europe was learning how to work with young people from different cultures. I was engaged with the Roma community in Hungary and had to interact with Roma people from all over Europe while gathering for a program organized by Phiren Amenca. I had to be open and patient in order to understand different points of views and had to be aware of cultural differences. I gained a much better understanding of the importance of respect



and cultural sensitivity. This experience has helped me to be more understanding and tolerant in my daily life, and to have a better understanding of people from other cultures and traditions.

Phiren Amenca's mission is important for me because it stands for the values and beliefs that I hold, which are that everyone should be treated equally and fairly, regardless of their background. Discrimination, stereotypes, and racism create an environment of inequality and injustice that no one in this world should have to endure. By challenging discrimination, stereotypes, and racism, Phiren Amenca helps to create a space for youngsters for a more equal and just society. This mission is important to me because of my previous work with Student Christian Movement of India as both works align with my values and beliefs and is a way for me to actively work towards creating a world where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and given equal opportunity.



I plan to continue to challenge discrimination, stereotypes and racism in all its forms wherever I am designated. I want to create a platform to share stories of people who have been affected by these issues, to raise awareness and to bring about real change. I plan to use my platform to advocate for more inclusive policies, to provide resources to those affected by these issues, and to create opportunities for dialogue and support. I also plan to use my platform to amplify the voices of minorities and to work with organizations and other activists to create positive change in our society. Finally, I plan to use my platform to support and uplift those who are working to make a difference in their communities and to create a more equitable and just future for all.

**Zsuzsa Tóth - hosted at the Student Christian Movement of India in Bangalore through the European Voluntary Service Program (EVS)**

I am Zsuzsa from Hungary. I love travelling, meeting new people, different cultures, and seeing our world from a different perspective. In my opinion, if somebody has the chance to see and learn, has a responsibility to share this experience, so other people can learn from it too. I studied journalism and cultural heritage protection, then worked in a youth club and in a museum. I love to be in nature, kayaking, caving, hiking, and as long as I have some spare time, I love to be a volunteer.

I was volunteering in Bangalore, India at SCMI (Student Christian Movement of India) house. It was interesting to see how in a totally different world different groups of people still face the same social issues. Discrimination, inequality, and political pressure, as a few examples. SCMI works with many different people from different social groups in a very variant world, like India. I could see this country on a way deeper level than, probably, most of the tourists.



I thought I was a very open-minded person, but in my voluntary service, I was faced with my/our European-liberal way of thinking. I mean how we are patient with those people who are a little bit different but do not bother us much, and we still have a hard time accepting others. For me, it was very important to face this and always remind myself that all people have the exact same right to think and act in their way as long as they do not hurt others. Even if it is very different from my point of view, or even if it frustrates me.

Phiren Amenca's mission to challenge discrimination is important to me because I think we cannot live in a world where we don't see each others' values. A world without listening and understanding and seeing each other is just a mess - we cannot build, cannot move forward without everyone participating. We need each other. So, I try to do that in my everyday life: I will not let anyone around me hurt other people because of any idea. And in the more distant future, hopefully, I will start my own NGO to help reconnect people.



## Semran Sulejman - hosted at the Phiren Amenca coordination office in Budapest through the European Solidarity Corps Program (ESC)

My name is Semran Sulejman. I come from the Republic of North Macedonia and I live in Skopje. My education background is in legal studies and I have finished my studies at the Law Faculty Iustinianus Primus. The specific field of interest for me is the area of Human Rights.

I would call my voluntary placement very different from a regular ESC voluntary placement because Phiren Amenca, besides having quite strong connections with the Roma community in Hungary, also has a very international character.

I cannot choose one of the most important learning experiences but I had many. For me voluntary service in Phiren Amenca made me learn to have an approach to thinking outside the box. For sure, in my memory would stay the visit of Auschwitz-Birkenau. As this was my second visit, I learned so much more than during my previous visit to the former concentration camp. The writing process of training session designs with the coordinator of the volunteers was a great experience too. Finally, co-facilitating some of the sessions of training was an excellent exercise for me.

The mission of Phiren Amenca to challenge discrimination, stereotypes, and racism is important to me because of the unique approach that this organization has to tackle these issues. Voluntary service for young Roma is an important tool to create future opportunities for themselves while learning skills that they could possibly not get in other circumstances.



## 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 in European mobility programs such as youth exchanges, seminars, and training courses. Therefore, we reach out to organizations which work with young people on a local, regional, or international level and help them set up volunteering and other programs and provide them assistance in managing quality and participatory ones.

### Exchange of Youth Workers: Combating Antigypsyism in Youth Work in Montenegro

Phiren Amenca brought to Montenegro 30 youth workers from across Europe between August 31 and September 4, 2022. The main goal of the event was to exchange experiences, methodologies, and ideas concerning fighting antigypsyism in everyday life and in youth work. Participants from Belgium, Hungary, Montenegro, Slovakia, and Spain shared their experiences in working with young Roma from their local perspectives. The youth workers discussed the existing publications and guidelines to combat antigypsyism, such as "Mirrors" of the Council of Europe and "Do you step in?" of the Phiren Amenca Network. Furthermore, they focused on new methodologies such as the "Fair Play" equality game developed by the Anne Frank House which is an educational game about dealing with discrimination and confronting young people with their own choices. Throughout the meeting, the youth workers visited the office of the Phiren Amenca-Walk with us, an NGO from Montenegro, in Podgorica and learned from their work with Roma and Egyptian minorities in Montenegro, particularly in the field of media. The meeting was a great occasion to maintain the cooperation between the participating partners: the Association of Young Roma (Slovakia), RGDTs (Hungary), FAGiC (Spain), NVO Phiren Amenca (Montenegro) and the Phiren Amenca Network (Belgium). The exchange was funded by the Flemish National Agency JINT under the Erasmus Plus Programme of the European Commission.



## Phiren Amenca Networking meeting in Prague

The Phiren Amenca Networking Meeting took place in the Czech Republic on 26 October 2022 as a side event of the EU Roma Platform 2022 which brought more than 100 representatives of EU institutions and (pro-) Roma civil society organizations to Prague. Phiren Amenca's Networking event gathered representatives of about 20 Roma and pro-Roma organizations from across Europe that work for the empowerment of Roma youth. Among them, member organizations of the Network from Hungary, Germany, Spain and Belgium as well as partner and ally organizations from Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Finland and Ukraine were present. The meeting started with a round of introductions and a short presentation of the 10-year history of the Network and its activities for empowering young Roma through volunteering, training and advocacy. Participants were familiarized with the 'Roma youth voices: Challenges and Perspectives' Report produced by the network in 2021; the volunteering projects; and the international training events the network provides for young European Roma. After the introduction, participants took part in three working groups aiming at the exchange of knowledge and experience on the topics of volunteering (European Solidarity Corps), Mobility Programmes (Erasmus Plus) and Education (main topics covered by the organizations in their work with young Roma). Representatives of participating organizations managed to present their previous and ongoing projects under the different key actions of the Erasmus Plus, discuss the Quality Label and Erasmus Plus Accreditation, and form partnerships for further applications. The meeting was organized under the Youth Against Antigypsyism project funded by the CERV Programme of the DG Justice, European Commission.



## Education and Training

### Tackling Hate Speech Offline and Online – Training Course in Slovakia



The "Tackling hate speech offline and online" training course was held at a youth center in Valaska, Slovakia run by our member organization, Association of Young Roma. The training involved more than 20 young Roma and non-Roma and aimed at raising the capacity of young people in recognizing and reporting hate speech as an important act in combating antigypsyism. The training took place between June 26-30, 2022. During the seminar, the participants had the opportunity to work on three main themes: offline and online hate speech, commemoration and networking. Since everyday racism is so normalized in our societies, recognizing hate speech is the first step forward to tackling it. As a powerful method, the participants also used debating to discuss and learn from different instances and court cases of hate speech and hate crimes. An exercise was included on identifying and reporting hate speech on various social media platforms: Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube. Since social media is an essential part of youngsters' life, becoming a more conscious consumer and user of these platforms are really important. During the last days they identified several cases of online hate speech, which after discussing they also reported. Moreover, the participants also learnt about different online campaigns and good practices that fight against online hate speech.

On top of the intense training sessions, participants visited the Memorial and the Museum of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) in Banská Bystrica where they laid wreaths and flowers and honored the memory of the Roma who died as victims of the Nazi regime in Slovakia. The commemoration ceremony was led by Juraj Vozar – Chair of the Association of Young Roma, Slovakia and Board Member of Phiren Amenca. Later on, the participants had a networking meeting with representatives of the Center for Community Organizing, Banská Bystrica which took place at the local civil society hub Zahrada.

The training on tackling hate speech offline and online was the first one in a series of trainings under the 'Youth Against Antigypsyism' – YAG project to raise awareness about the phenomenon of antigypsyism and to capacitate young people to combat it. The YAG project is funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme of the European Commission.

## So keres, Europa?! – Roma Youth Social Forum 2022 in Tirana

So keres, Europa?!, a week-long Roma youth social forum and festival, was hosted by Tirana, the capital of Albania. Delegations from 17 European countries - 150 young Roma and non-Roma - were represented at our international event co-organized and hosted by our member organization, Roma Active Albania between July 11-17, 2022.



The Phiren Amenca International Network launched a movement and a series of events in 2014 to raise the voice of Roma youth at the European Youth Capitals, to create space for Roma young people to make visible their challenges and needs but also their potential.

So keres, Europe?! 2022 was opened by Adriatik Hasantari, director of Roma Active Albania; Deneda Seferi, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Affairs; Klenia Kasanai, director of the National Youth Agency; Dafina Peci, head of the European Youth Capital program in Albania and by Marietta Herfort, director of Phiren Amenca. In the week-long forum and festival in Tirana, in addition to thematic discussions, conferences, cultural programs, interactive group works, public awareness campaigns, a public festival was organized. Throughout the week participants worked in different groups such as



Dance and music lead by Romano Glaszo band from Hungary; dance with Ternipe dance group from Italy; Graffiti with Spanish tattoo artist; Theatre with Roma actresses from Hungary; Roma women rights with Romani women's activist from Albania and Memes with an activist from Austria.



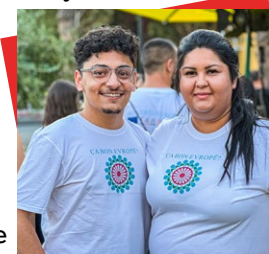
Between the working groups, participants had a discussion with Roma women's

activists from Tirana, they discussed the issues of Roma women and their difficulties in Albania and learned about the Albanian law of National Minorities. On top of that, participants visited the Municipal Council of Tirana. The Mayor's Council was occupied by 150 young Roma and non-Roma, while in the chair of the mayor



was Brisilda Taco, a Romani Women's Activist. Present at the podium was also the Deputy Mayor of Tirana Municipality, Keti Luarasi, who greeted the participants and shared the developments concerning Roma and Egyptians from Tirana and had a questions and answers session with the young people.

On the last day of the Roma youth social forum, the working groups shared what they have prepared during the week at the public festival at the center of Tirana where hundreds of people from the city joined us and got engaged with the amazing and really professional performances.



So keres, Europa?! 2022 showed again that it is not just a simple festival, but a movement that started with the aim of making the issue of Roma youth visible. Roma youth are important components not only in Europe, but also in the Western Balkans, and they took possession of Tirana with the same enthusiasm and efficiency as they did in the previous three cities. So keres, Europa?! was held already in Cluj, in Varna and in Novi Sad, but the 2021 event in Lithuania had to be cancelled due to Covid-19, and moved to a three-day online event. The 2023 So Keres will be in Hungary!

where





## Training for addressing intersectional discrimination among Roma youth: Roma LGBTQ+ and gender equality and Pécs Pride

The training was organized in partnership with Center Amalipe and Phiren Amenca with the aim to tackle the themes of intersectional discrimination and how to be a better ally to LGBTQ+, Roma women and other intersectional movements. The training took place between September 14-18, 2022 in the city of Pécs, Hungary and involved young Roma and non-Roma from different European countries.



Throughout the seminars participants discussed the meaning of the term intersectionality, and explored examples and experiences of intersectional discrimination, discovered intersectional identities and their specific barriers with experts, Joci Márton and Boglárka Fedorkó.

In parallel with the training, Phiren Amenca has been a partner of Diverse Youth Network's week-long Freedom of my identity festival in Pécs and took part together with thousands of young people at the second Pride outside of Budapest, on September 17.



## Trainings on Hate Speech in Budapest

The CHAD - Countering Hate Speech and Hurtful Speech against Diversity: Roma, LGBTIQ, Jewish and Migrant Communities is a multiannual project co-funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) of the DG Justice, European Commission and coordinated by RGDS-Phiren Amenca in partnership with Hungarian NGOs Haver Informal Educational Foundation, Rainbow Mission Foundation and Political Capital and aims at combating online hate speech and hurtful speech directed at Roma, Jewish, LGBTQI+ and Muslim migrant communities. It consists of several elements, such as data collection, creation and dissemination of counter-narratives, training community members and relevant stakeholders, media campaigning, and national and international advocacy. In the initial phase, training events were held for the consortium, members of vulnerable communities and volunteers who would later take part in the monitoring process. These three separate training events were held over the summer of 2022. The events developed participants' knowledge and skills for understanding the legislation of hate speech, identifying hate speech and distinguishing it from hurtful assertions not constituting as incitement for hate. On top of that, they developed knowledge on the effects of judgmental and discriminative speech, both on the affected communities and the general public, and learned about the technicalities and reflected about the psychological effects of monitoring hate speech at online sources using artificial intelligence.

In September 2022 a three-days meeting was organized for the volunteers and colleagues of the participating organizations for learning about the history and present-day situation of Roma, Jewish, LGBTQI+ and Muslim migrant communities; the most common stereotypes, prejudices attached to them and the forms of discrimination they face. This meeting also served as a community- and trust-building event and serves as an important resource for the cooperation.



## Roma Holocaust Education and Remembrance

### Roma Holocaust and Resistance Seminar in Oświęcim

The first of the series of seminars dedicated to the Roma Holocaust took place in the International Youth Meeting Center in the town of Oświęcim, Poland between April 11-16, 2022. More than 40 young people participated in the seminar about the Roma Holocaust and Romani Resistance and visited the former concentration camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau. During the seminar participants learned about the stories of individuals and historical facts connected to the persecution of Roma by the Nazi regime during World War II and 'opened' the topic to the participants by highlighting that the persecution of the Roma had started much earlier than the Nazi regime. Participants learnt about Romani resistance day and about different figures of resistance such as Johann Trollmann-Rukeli, Raymond Gureme, Alfreda Markowska and many more. Ewelina Mysliwiecka from the Auschwitz State Museum led a workshop about the "Steps that led to Auschwitz" asking participants to understand deeper and better grasp the historical and political developments before 1941. Young people mentioned historical events such as the Kristallnacht in 1938 or the adoption of the Nurnberg Laws in 1935 but traced the roots of racism back to colonization and imperialism and the birth of "racial theory" centuries earlier. At the Auschwitz Museum participants had a guided tour and two special workshops were held: one dedicated to the Roma and Sinti Extermination in block 13 where the permanent exhibition is prepared by the Central Council of the German Sinti and Roma, and one reflection-session in block 27 which exhibits the persecutions of European Jews by the Nazi regime prepared by the Yad Vashem Museum from Jerusalem.



As part of the program, participants visited the the Auschwitz II – Birkenau site, where they got to know more about the life of the Roma and the Sinti in the so-called "Gypsy Family Camp" (Zigeunerlager, Section BII-e), visited the ruins of Crematorium V where on the evening of 2nd August more than 4300 Roma and Sinti lost their lives (the extermination of the Zigeunerlager), and held a special Roma youth-led commemoration prepared by the participants themselves. The participants laid flowers, recited poems and sang "Aušvicate hi kher baro".

Besides the past, participants had to reflect about current cases and present stories describing contemporary antigypsyism from their own realities using a method of forum theater and plan future initiatives and follow-up plans, becoming multipliers, and organizing Roma Holocaust Remembrance events back at home. As a closing of the seminar, participants visited the Roma History and Culture Museum in the town of Oświęcim where they remained impressed by the great history and pieces of art exhibited.

### Seminar about the Roma Holocaust in Buchenwald

The second edition of the seminar series dedicated to the Roma Holocaust took place from August 7-10, 2022 at the European Youth Education and Meeting Centre in Weimar and Buchenwald, Germany. More than 40 young people took part in a seminar dedicated to the Roma Holocaust and national perspectives on what happened to Roma in different countries during the Second World War, where they learned from survivor testimonies and visited the former Buchenwald concentration camp.

The activity targeted Roma and non-Roma youth leaders, youth workers, multipliers, educators, trainers, volunteers and activists. Our aim was to constitute a group with diverse experiences, in particular multipliers who work on local, national or international level on issues of remembrance, Holocaust and human rights education. We were looking for participants who are motivated to follow up on the seminar and are actively involved in their organizations or as educators in order to apply the developed skills. The seminar gave the opportunity for participants who were part of the seminar in Auschwitz in April 2022 to reconnect, to get to know new people, to learn about the history of Roma victims in Ravensbrück and in Buchenwald, to have a guided tour in the former concentration camp, hold their own commemoration at the Roma and Sinti Monument located at one of the Roma and Sinti Blocks inside the Buchenwald Camp. Participants had the honor to meet online the Jewish Holocaust Survivor Eva Fahidi. Born in 1925, Eva lost more than 20 relatives and her entire family in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Later, she was deported to work in one of the satellite camps of Buchenwald, Germany. She, together with more than 20 relatives were transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she lost all of her family.





"I remember the Roma children in Auschwitz in front of the barracks. Big eyes. Hungry. No child deserves that. I arrived with my family but at some moment when I looked around, no one was there anymore. I asked where my relatives were and a woman pointed with a finger to the smoke of the chimney. Your family is there, she said. People were going to a house and they were never coming back". Eva finds some of her classmates from Debrecen and she's really happy that she has someone to stick with. After a selection, they are transported to one of the satellite camps of Buchenwald, Germany where they work in a factory for the production of bombs. "One day we didn't go to the factory. It was an extraordinary day. Soldiers came and asked who we were. We told them we are nice, good Hungarian students from Debrecen". Eva was placed with a German family to recover. After she goes home to Debrecen, where she barely recognizes her own house. She knocks on the window, but she's not allowed to enter her own house because it's populated by others. No one from her family is there. Then she finds her uncle in Nove Zamky, Slovakia and it takes her two years to recover. Later she comes back to Debrecen and she gets married. After more than 50 years Eva is back to Krakow and she takes the courage to visit Birkenau again.

"I was scared. This was not the camp I left. I left my family in that camp. There were trees and when I was there, there were no trees". Participants had a lot of questions to ask and the message of Eva was: "Don't forget, tell my story!"

### Seminar about Holocaust Education in the Yad Vashem Memorial Complex

This seminar held between October 10-13, 2022 in Jerusalem, Israel was a closing event of a series of seminars throughout 2022 related to the Roma Holocaust. The aim of the seminar was to offer an opportunity for 40 participants who have been participating at the previous seminars in April in Auschwitz and in August in Buchenwald to learn about the educational work of the Yad Vashem Memorial Complex. The seminar gave the opportunity for our participants to learn about the approaches, practices, strategies



and educational methods of Holocaust and remembrance education at the largest Holocaust archive in the world and could reflect on how to better advocate for the recognition of the Roma Holocaust in such institutions.

The educational programs have been organized at the Yad Vashem Educational Centre. The whole learning process started with the lecture by professor David Deutsch, who talked about the history, the steps which lead to the Holocaust and about current cases of antigypsyism. Participants had a guided tour in the complex and the unique museum and had workshops with the educational coordinators of Yad Vashem, about the educational approaches, methodologies and resources of the museum. Besides the museum, the group visited the Domari Gypsy community in Jerusalem. The number of the Domari people in the Holy Land (as they call it) is 20,000, and in Jordan about 40,000. They keep their language, the Dom language, and their goal is that the currently only spoken language has a written form and that the new generation can speak it with pride. Many people do not reveal their identity due to everyday discrimination, but in the community center, for example, they also work to strengthen and preserve their Domari identity. The seminar was supported by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe.



## Follow-up workshop by participants of the series of seminars about the Roma Holocaust

Participants of the series of the seminars on the Roma Holocaust set out to share their experiences and the knowledge they gained in different ways: some have written and shared articles about the most important things they learned about, and others created videos for their social media channels raising awareness about the Roma victims of the holocaust. Ramon and Elisabeth from Spain decided to organize a workshop of around 60 young Roma from different regions of Spain which was held in November 2022 in Madrid.

They started the event with presenting Phiren Amenca and the seminars they took part in, then ran a quiz about the Roma Holocaust which revealed that young Roma participants had very limited knowledge about the topic. The presentation began by explaining the conceptual differences between Porrajmos, Samudaripen, Holocaust and Roma Genocide, then went on to cover some highlights from the history of Roma in Europe before WWII, such as the romanticized representation of Roma as the other, the registration of Roma in different countries and the concept of eugenics. Elisabeth and Ramon chose a few topics to talk about the fate of the Roma during the holocaust, mentioning the Nuremberg Laws, their deportation to different concentration camps and specifically the "Zigeunerlager" in Auschwitz-Birkenau, of which they showed pictures. Short explanations were given about the situation of Jewish and Roma women in the concentration camps and about the pseudo-medical experiments, and forced sterilizations they had to endure. They concluded their workshop with a discussion about the importance of recognition and memorialization by highlighting the examples of Romani Resistance heroes and heroines, such as Rukeli, Papsza and Raymond Gureme. The main takeaway of the event was that there is a need for much more opportunities for young Roma to learn about our history and how it still influences our perception and situation today.

## Commemoration of the victims of the Roma Holocaust in Budapest



Phiren Amenca and the Hungarian March of the Living paid tribute to the Roma victims of the Holocaust at a joint memorial service on the occasion of August 2 - Roma Holocaust Memorial Day in Budapest's Vasút Historical Park. In his opening speech, Gábor Gordon, President of the Hungarian March of the Living, stressed that the Holocaust, unfortunately, had many victims among our fellow human beings. Jews, Roma, gays, the mentally and physically disabled, as well as people who were sent to concentration camps for political reasons. And all this happened because terrible racist, exclusionist and hateful propaganda wanted it to happen and terrorized the whole of Europe.

On 2 August 1944, more than 4,300 Roma, including women and children, were murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau. On this tragic day, we remember them and the 500,000 to 1.5 million Roma people who were murdered in camps, fields and unmarked trenches in Europe during the Second World War - said Marietta Herfort, Director of Phiren Amenca, continuing the thoughts of Gábor Gordon. She underlined that "we must remember how and why a cruel system, a political ideology, wanted to permanently wipe out, exterminate human groups (races), destroy those who think differently or just because of their origin. It is a personal responsibility and duty of all of us to oppose all ideologies of oppression, exclusion and stigmatization that are still present in our lives today, in 2022".



The commemoration was attended by Mariia Siemak, a Ukrainian-Roma woman, who survived the II. World War and her granddaughter, with whom they fled to Budapest months ago to escape the war which started in February 2022 in Ukraine. In her remembrance speech, she said she was three years old when the war broke out and remembers clearly to this day when her mother had to hide her and their family because they were rounding up Roma in their village and today Ukraine is suffering the same devastation as during World War II. In her conclusion, she added, she wants nothing but peace.

After the commemorative speeches, a Baptist pastor and Evangelical Pastor, a professor from the Baptist Theological Academy, a spokesman and pastor of the National Roma Mission of the Congregation of Faith, and a Chief Rabbi of the Frankel Leó Street Synagogue, gave their thoughts on the commemoration day and prayers according to their religions and faiths.

The joint commemoration was a symbol of our united rejection of racism, anti-Semitism, and any kind of discrimination because together we must warn the present and posterity: never again! We must remember and remind mankind that Jews and Roma have been locked up in death camps, subjected to medical experiments and murdered hundreds of thousands and millions, solely on the basis of race.

## Dikh he Na Bister - Roma youth seminar in Krakow and Auschwitz

Dikh He Na Bister (DHNB) is an initiative that in 2022 commemorated 78 years since 2nd August 1944, the day when almost 4300 Roma prisoners of Auschwitz-Birkenau camp were exterminated by the Nazi Regime. Every year, DHNB gathers young people from all around the world and encourages them to get more educated regarding WWII, civil rights and resistance.

The seminar started on July 29, in Krakow, Poland where 150 young Roma and non-Roma participants from 19 countries gathered to share stories, learn about history, commemorate the atrocities of the past and get empowered to face the challenges of today. For five days, the participants had the chance to learn about the atrocities of WWII, the long suffering of survivors who had to fight for recognition as victims of the Holocaust in their European countries, or how the survivors had to fight to get the Holocaust of Sinti and Roma officially recognized and to get appropriate compensation as victims of Nazism. Throughout the program, participants had the chance to meet with Zijo Ribic, who talked about the Bosnian War in 1992 which he survived as the only one of his family when he was just eight years old. Participants visited the Auschwitz Museum and joined the central commemoration on August 2 in Auschwitz-Birkenau.



## Monitoring online Hate and Hurtful Speech

One of the first elements of the CHAD - Countering Hate Speech and Hurtful Speech against Diversity: Roma, LGBTIQ, Jewish and Migrant Communities project uses and teaches artificial intelligence to identify online content which either constitutes incitement for hatred or has a deteriorating effect on the target groups, but does not qualify as hate speech. As a first step, the participating organizations compiled a list of expressions which express hatred in themselves or are commonly used when talking badly about their communities; and a list of social media channels, news sites and blogs they would like to be monitored. Based on this, a contracted company started to scrape the 70 online pages for contents including the search-terms. As a result, approximately 40 thousand historical and real-time texts were collected into tables. 10 thousand of these quotes have been read one-by-one by our 10 volunteers (all belonging to at least one of the targeted communities) who are categorizing each test into three groups: hate speech, hurtful speech, or none. During the process, the volunteers were offered psychological counseling, and they were asked not to review the categories they belong to in order to minimize the distress along the process. The data will be fed back to the AI algorithm which in turn will be able to recognize hate speech independently. The monitoring process runs until the end of February 2023 and the analysis report will be published in the early spring of 2023.

## Roma Civil Monitor 2022-2025

In the aftermath of the adoption of the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation on 7 October 2020 and at the initiative of the European Parliament, the European Commission has launched a continuation of the Roma Civil Monitor (RCM) initiative for the next four years (2021-2025). The RCM 2021-2025 initiative is implemented by a consortium of highly acknowledged organizations working internationally for Roma equality, participation and inclusion at the international level: Democracy Institute of the Central European University (CEU, project leader), ERGO Network, Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) and European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC). RGDTS in Hungary and Phiren Amenca in Belgium and in the Netherlands took the coordinator role, created a Roma Civil Monitor Consortium of Civil Society Organizations in each of the countries and together with independent experts, developed the first national reports on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation.

The reports in English and in national languages are available at the RCM dedicated website: <https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/>

## Advocacy and Partnerships

### Roma Youth Together Seminar in Strasbourg

Between April 6-8, 2022 in the European Youth Center in Strasbourg took place the Roma Youth Together 2022 seminar organized by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe in partnership with Phiren Amenca International Network, the European Roma Grassroots Organisations - ERGO Network and the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture - ERIAC. The seminar brought together 30 young people, youth leaders and youth workers from Roma and Travellers communities. Its main aim was, in light of the post-Covid epidemic recovery, to reconnect Roma youth leaders with European youth policy processes and exchanges on strategies and priorities for youth empowerment and participation. The motto of the event was: Reconnect, Reflect, Act. Atanas Stoyanov from the Phiren Amenca Team was a co-facilitator of the training. On April 8, International Roma Day, the participants attended the official ceremony of casting flowers over the river with Mr Bjorn Berge, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and guests and staff of the Council of Europe. Bjorn Berge stressed the contribution of Roma communities to cultural life in Europe, while Georgina Laboda, President of the Phiren Amenca Board and Member of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, recalled the centuries of slavery and discrimination of Roma in Europe and expressed her confidence in a better future for Roma women and young people.

### EU Roma Week 2022

As in the previous years, Phirenca Amenca co-organized, together with a number of Roma and pro-Roma civil society organizations, the EU Roma Week: a series of events dedicated to Roma inclusion taking place at the European Parliament in Brussels, hosted by Members of the European Parliament, the European Commission and civil society organizations. In 2022 we decided to organize several meetings under the common title "Roma Youth Dialogue". Between May 15-18, 2022 we brought together 40 young Roma and non-Roma from all over Europe. It allowed the young participants to meet in person with members of the European Parliament, the European Commission and representatives of Roma, pro-Roma and youth civil society



organizations, and offered them a platform for networking and providing opportunities for personal and professional development. After attending the official opening ceremony of the EU Roma Week on May 16, at the European Parliament, participants took part in the “Contemporary Young Roma Heroes” event organized by Phiren Amenca International Network. Within this event, five young Roma speakers: Morena Pedriali (Italy), Mihail Mishev (Bulgaria), Jozsef Marton (Hungary), Noelia Lopes Cortez (Spain) and Shimano Petermann (Germany) presented their inspiring campaigns and initiatives directed at community organizing, remembrance, promoting Roma identity and Roma LGBTQ intersectionality. The event was opened by MEP Romeo Franz followed by a video address by the European Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli and a speech by Marina Csikos, Phiren Amenca Project Assistant. The moderator of the event was Atanas Stoyanov, Phiren Amenca Project Manager. In the afternoon participants met with Mrs Irina Spataru, MEP Assistant at the European Parliament and Mrs Marcela Adamova – Policy officer at the Roma Team of DG Justice of the European Commission. They had the opportunity to hear the inspirational personal stories of two Roma women who are working for the EU institutions and ask them questions concerning their work. On May 17 morning the “Opportunities for young people” session took place. In this



session, different speakers presented their traineeships and other opportunities to encourage participants to apply and raise awareness of the available initiatives. Presentations were given by representatives of the Erasmus Plus, European Solidarity Corps and Discover EU Programs of the European Commission, the Bluebook Traineeship at the European Commission, the traineeship programme of the Committee of the Regions and the special traineeship available for European Roma at the S&D Group Secretariat at the EU Parliament. There were other opportunities as well: the EEA Norway Grants Traineeship and the activities of the German Marshall Fund of the United States – GMF, Brussels. In the afternoon participants had a chance to network with Brussels-based youth organizations which aimed at presenting the work of various youth organizations and seeking opportunities to collaborate and involve young Roma and non-Roma. Presentations were given by representatives of Young European Federalists JEF – Europe, European Youth Forum – YFJ, Diaspora Vote, CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe, European Union of Jewish Students – EUJS and the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations – FEMYSO.

## Policy dialogue between Helena Dalli, European Commissioner, and young people - European Year of Youth 2022

On May 24, 2022. Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality, participated in a policy dialogue on “Strengthening the role of equality bodies” with different youth organizations, including Phiren Amenca, as part of the European Year of Youth 2022. Phiren Amenca shared concerns about how the future of equality bodies should look like when it comes to Roma youth. At the event, various youth CSOs could share their expertise and speak about what the future of equality bodies should look like. It certainly has to be: youth inclusive, intersectional, accessible for marginalized communities, independent from national governments, and prioritize the issues that the most discriminated are faced with.

## 25 % with the European Youth Forum

As part of a joint project with the European Youth Forum, by May 2022, the Phiren Amenca team collected 1006 ideas for a better Europe. These ideas were used at the Conference for the Future of Europe: a series of consultations across the continent aiming to collect ideas for EU reform directly from European citizens. Young people make up 25% of the EU population, so there was no better name for this project than “The 25%”. The project consortium was led by the European Youth Forum. Together with other international youth organizations and national youth councils, we managed to collect a total of 10 000 ideas for a better Europe. We collected ideas in multiple ways and places: by creating a special button on our webpage, personalized QR codes, during our events, through our volunteers, through video encouragement, and finally through announcing a raffle and prizes! We had our three winners selected with a special LIVE on the Phiren Amenca Facebook page winning our three prizes: a flight voucher, a Mil Duqueles voucher and participation at the So Keres Europa 2022?! We collected ideas in places such as the Central European University Residence Center in Budapest, the Pecs Pride, the Youth Educational Center in Auschwitz and the European Youth Event in Strasbourg. And the result is impressive! From the myriad of ideas received, we saw that young Roma care about the environment and climate change, have a passion for human rights and social justice, and think about innovation! Besides the collected ideas, with “The 25%” we have achieved much more: we translated the page of the project in Romani language making sure that everyone can access it, we and our volunteers took part in a number of events in Brussels and online and we delivered series of training on “How to make a change?”. More about the 25 % and its results you can find at the project’s webpage: <https://the25percent.eu/>

## **“Becoming Conference” in Chicago**

The Phiren Amenca coordination team was invited to take part in the “Becoming conference” between August 21-28, organized by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) in Chicago, US. The event brought together 400 people from all around the world, with the aim to strategize and prioritize the work of the ELCA around five core justice topics: Migration Justice, Economic Justice, Racial Justice, Gender Justice, and Environmental Justice. Colleagues of Phiren Amenca had a presentation about antigypsyism, joined panel discussions, working groups and networking meetings.



## **Consultation meeting of Roma and Sinti women in Warsaw**

The “Consultation meeting of Roma and Sinti women: Challenges and perspectives for gender equality and participation”, a two-day event organized by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) took place in Warsaw between November 23-24, 2022.

Throughout the two-day consultation meeting, we were informed on the ODIHR’s mandate and commitment to gender equality, including policies, institutions, women’s participation in politics and electoral processes, gender-based violence, trafficking in human beings, as well as other relevant areas, also with a view to the ODIHR’s gender mainstreaming efforts.

Furthermore, in line with the ODIHR’s mandate, we continue consultation processes with Roma and Sinti civil society, in particular with women activists, on gender equality and women’s issues, in particular the specific problems and challenges currently faced by Roma and Sinti women.

## **“Toward a Feminist Movement” - Roma women’s meeting in Bucharest**

From December 12-14, 2022, Phiren Amenca participated at the conference “Toward a Feminist Movement” in Bucharest, organized by our partner E-Romnja, where Roma activists and feminists from Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Austria, Germany, Hungary, Finland, and Serbia gathered. The meeting provided a safe space to share experiences and discuss all of the contexts in which Roma women and feminist NGOs operate, such as gender-based violence, feminist knowledge production, art, policy making, and beyond.

## **International working group on combating hate speech**

An important part of the project CHAD - Countering Hate Speech and Hurtful Speech against Diversity: Roma, LGBTIQ, Jewish and Migrant Communities is building a strong, capable coalition of migrant, Roma, Jewish and LGBTIQ+ organizations and communities on national and international level. To this end, an international working group of experts, activists and officials engaged in fighting hate speech and hate crimes has been set up to serve as an advisory group, a space for exchanging knowledge, initiatives, and a source of mutual support. The group is planned to have online and offline meetings approximately ten times until the spring of 2024 during which, besides discussing the realities of different countries, communities and organizations, position papers and recommendations will be formulated to relevant stakeholders. Currently, the group consists of 14 organizations, individuals and institutions from different countries (AU, HU, IT, NE, PL, SI, SK, SR, UA, UK). We already had two meetings in 2022 and the group is planning to come together every two months.

The first meeting was held in September, 2022 and laid the basis of its future work: the project and the aims of the working groups were presented, and participants were asked about their motivations for joining and to list the ways it could serve their needs and interests. These inputs are taken into consideration when planning the upcoming meetings.

In December, 2022, during the second gathering, some of the entities, such as Romaversitas (HU), UK Police (UK), World Jewish Congress, and Hättér Society (HU) presented their past experience and ongoing projects related to monitoring hate crime and hate speech and the obstacles they face in tackling or responding to them.

## **Recommendation on Roma Youth Participation**

In 2023 the Recommendation on Roma Youth Participation is scheduled to be adopted by the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers. Phiren Amenca was invited to be in the expert drafting group between May and June 2022 to prepare the recommendation. The urgent need for adopting such a recommendation lies in the fact that Roma young people can face multiple discrimination based on their ethnic origin, age, gender, sexual identity, religion, social condition etc. Roma youth are among the most vulnerable groups (especially Roma girls and LGBTIQ Roma) and they lack access to political and public participation. This recommendation aims to address the diverse needs of Roma youth and provide concrete recommendations to the Council of Europe’s member states to ensure the participation of Roma young people.



## Partnership with the European Commission

The Phiren Amenca Team is a strategic partner of the European Commission in a number of processes concerning Roma inclusion, especially the inclusion and participation of Roma youth, women and Roma LGBT+. Phiren Amenca continued taking regular part in the EU Roma Civil Society Consultations organized by the Roma Team of DG Justice and became part of the Permanent Anti-Racism Civil Society Forum.

### European Capital of Inclusion Award

We had the honor to receive an invitation from the European Commission to become part of the jury for the first-ever European Capital of Inclusion Award. The award was announced in 2022 by the EU Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli as part of the commitment to foster more inclusive and fair societies in Europe. Together with other experts from the European Commission and civil society, Atanas Stoyanov from the Phiren Amenca Team contributed to the selection of Andalucía, Spain, as the gold-winner of the third, Roma-specific category for its Comprehensive Plan for the Inclusion of the Roma Community, followed by Gothenburg, Sweden (silver) and Grădinari, Romania (bronze).

### EU Roma Platform in Prague



Between October 25-27, under the Czech EU Presidency in Prague, was held the EU Roma Platform. The team of Phiren Amenca International Network attended the event dedicated to two main topics: Segregation in housing and in education, another on EU Funding Instruments for Roma inclusion. On October 27, Atanas Stoyanov from the Phiren Amenca team took part in the National Roma Contact Point Meeting. He presented the main points from the discussion with civil society during the EU Roma Platform together with representatives of international Roma civil society.



## 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.  
1013 Budapest, Hungary

Rue de Fiennes 86  
1070 Brussels, Belgium

### Board members

Georgina Laboda, Ana Carballo Mesa, Juraj Vozár

Coordination office: Marietta Herfort (Managing Director), Anna Daróczy (Voluntary Service Coordinator), Atanas Stoyanov (Project Coordinator), Marina Csikos (Project Assistant)

Volunteers, interns: Semran Sulejman, Binu Bill Bright

### 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 center for the volunteers and member organizations in Budapest and has colleagues for representation and advocacy in Brussels.

### 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 Amenca include:

Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme of the DG Justice, European Commission

Erasmus+ Program, European Commission

European Youth Foundation, Council of Europe



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