

# Annual Report

# 2023



PHIREN AMENCA INTERNATIONAL NETWORK



# Table of Content

Introduction	3
Key programs: volunteering & capacity building	4
Education & Training	
So keres, Europa?! - Roma youth social forum	5
Holocaust education & Remembrance	9
Advocacy & Combating antigypsyism	10
Targeting mainstream youth organizations	
Roma Civil Monitor	14
Donors	15



# Introduction

The aim of this annual report is to guide you through the work of Phiren Amenca in 2023, in a year in which we had amazing events with hundreds of young people and civil society organizations. In a year in which we have created several reports, researches and policy recommendations in order to promote Roma youth participation, identity or mobility.

2023 marked a significant period of professional growth for our network, as we expanded our outreach to new organizations and fostered connections with volunteers and activists across Europe. We are excited to share our journey in this report.



# Key programs: volunteering & capacity building

Phiren Amenca's voluntary service program focuses on combating stereotypes, racism, and antigypsyism, with the goal of involving more young Roma in European mobility programs such as Erasmus Plus and the European Solidarity Corps.

Our diverse member and partner organizations host both Roma and non-Roma volunteers in social justice projects. We support these organizations in enhancing their voluntary service programs and expanding placement sites.

Many volunteers continue their engagement against discrimination after their service, and we provide them with ongoing opportunities to be leaders of our mission.

**“...we can gain knowledge not only about the country we live in but also about ourselves.”**

Phiren Amenca actively facilitates the involvement of Roma and non-Roma organizations in volunteering projects and European mobility programs, such as youth exchanges, seminars, and training courses.

We connect organizations working with young people at local, regional, and international levels, providing support for their volunteering, educational, and advocacy initiatives.



# Education & Training

## Training on Roma history, language and culture



The training took place from March 31 to April 4, 2023, in Sofia, Bulgaria, organized together with Center Amalipe. Participants explored Roma history, the challenges faced by Roma women, internalized antigypsyism, identity formation, and notable Roma figures. Key activities included group discussions about the complexity of identity, a session on Roma celebrities and a presentation on social distances toward Roma followed by further discussions about the need for youth leadership in Roma inclusion.

Participants visited a professional high school and the National Assembly, engaging with students and learning about parliamentary processes. Feedback indicated the training was successful, informative, and engaging.

## Roma youth advocacy training

The training gathered 30 young Roma and non-Roma activists to strengthen their capacity as young advocates and leaders to tackle antigypsyism. The group raised their voices against antigypsyism targeting Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the European Commission. The five-days training run around the “EU Romani Week 2023” in April, organized by the Documentation and Cultural Centre & Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and Phiren Amenca in cooperation with ERGO and ternYpe International Roma Youth networks.





## Strengthening positive Roma narratives



“Strengthening Positive Narratives about Roma”, international training run between June 6 and 10 2023 in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria and offered participants a variety of activities that helped them to expand their knowledge about Roma culture and youth. Participants gained social media skills, developed a script to promote Roma culture, discussed opportunities to create positive campaigns and media understanding.

On top of that participants joined the Roma Children’s Festival “Open Heart”, and as part of the festival, they took part in a march in Veliko Tarnovo, which was organized to draw the attention of the society to the problems faced by Roma children. This training was an important step towards achieving a better understanding and acceptance of Roma culture and youth in society.



**“Our Roma identity is a source of strength and pride; it helps us challenge stereotypes and celebrate our rich culture.”**



## Labor market preparation trainings



As part of the project “Improving Employment Opportunities for Roma Communities in the Hospitality Industry,” in partnership with Minority Rights Group Europe, we conducted labor market preparation trainings. The first three-day training was held in June at the Romano Kher Budapest Roma Cultural House, and then in November at the Hilton Hotel in Budapest (with support from the hotel chain). Our goal was to enhance the knowledge and competencies of participants in the areas of tourism and hospitality, labor law, job searching, and financial planning. Participants learned about the history of tourism and hospitality, the criteria for star ratings of hotels, and labor law cases, including examples of discrimination. They also took part in simulated job interview exercises.

The training revealed that Roma employees often experience discrimination in the workplace or during job searches, making the workshops on employee rights and equal treatment particularly valuable.





# So keres, Europa?! - Roma youth social forum



The Roma Youth Forum 2023, titled “So Keres, Europa?!”, took place in Balatonkenese, Hungary, from August 22 to 28. This international gathering brought together 120 young people from 12 European countries.

The forum was opened by Klara Dobrev, Member of the European Parliament, and Mikulas Lakatos, Young European of the Year 2023.

In their speeches, they both emphasized the vital role of the new generation in public life.

During the youth event, participants took part in lectures and discussions on the rule of law, democracy, and human and minority rights in their countries and Hungary. “So Keres, Europa?!” featured human rights workshops from organizations like the European Roma Rights Centre, Haver Alapítvány, and Budapest Pride. Participants also engaged in artistic sessions to prepare for a public festival on the final day. After a week of preparation, they showcased their work, including dance and singing performances, visual art and meme exhibitions, and theatrical acts honoring the victims of the Roma Holocaust.

**“So keres connects us and forms us into a community.”**





# Holocaust education & Remembrance

50 Roma and non-Roma activists, youth and community leaders from all around Hungary came together in Krakow to develop a network against antigypsyism and to commemorate the Roma Holocaust on August 2 in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Participants had an educational tour at the Kazimierz Jewish Quarter and Former Ghetto in Krakow, at the Auschwitz-Museum.

On the 2nd of August we joined the central commemoration in Auschwitz-Birkenau to pay tribute in front of the Roma victims of the Holocaust, together with the group of the Dikh he na bister initiative, with almost 400 representatives from 50 Roma and non-Roma organizations.



## #RomaRemember

# Advocacy & Combating antigypsyism

## EU Roma Week



The Roma Week began on April 25, 2023 with a working breakfast to build a dialogue between young Roma and non-Roma people and Members of the European Parliament on realities of antigypsyism and current EU policies concerning Roma youth. The Breakfast was hosted by Sándor Rónai (S&D) and besides him, participants had a chance to talk and exchange views with Atidhze Véli from Renew Europe. Later, the "Roma Heroines" roundtable showcased the challenges and contributions of Roma women, featuring inspiring stories. The event aimed to shift narratives around Roma women, promoting their resilience and achievements. The roundtable was hosted by Klára Dobrev MEP (S&D) and Jelena Jovanovic, ARDI.





## European Youth Event (EYE) 2023



EYE 2023, the fifth edition of the event, took place on June 9-10 at the European Parliament Strasbourg, gathering 8500 young people online and offline. With the upcoming 2024 European elections in mind, the program emphasized democracy and youth engagement. Phiren Amenca brought 30 young Roma and non-Roma participants to the event to share their experiences, expand their networks, and raise concerns affecting Roma youth with decision-makers. Throughout the two days, attendees engaged in various interactive sessions, lectures, and debates on topics like improving the labor market for people with disabilities, leveraging social media for social change, and interacting with MEPs to learn about their work in the European Parliament.

**“As a student who attended the EYE 2023 event, I found it to be a valuable platform for engaging in discussions on pressing international issues. The event provided a unique opportunity to network with diplomats, policymakers, and experts from various countries, fostering a deeper understanding of global challenges. The insights gained from the event will undoubtedly shape my future studies.”**

## Policy Recommendations to Tackle Hate Speech

Countering Hate Speech and Hurtful Speech against Diversity: Roma, LGBTIQ, Jewish and Migrant Communities



Hate speech and offensive language are increasingly common in personal interactions, political discourse, and online spaces. We must actively confront this issue to combat its harmful effects. Together with our partner organizations, we have developed proposals for the European Union, Member States, law enforcement, local governments, civil society, the education system, and the media. Implementing these recommendations can significantly reduce prejudice and promote inclusivity.

Recommendations for Hungarian stakeholders and international audiences are available in both Hungarian and English.

**DOWNLOAD** ↓

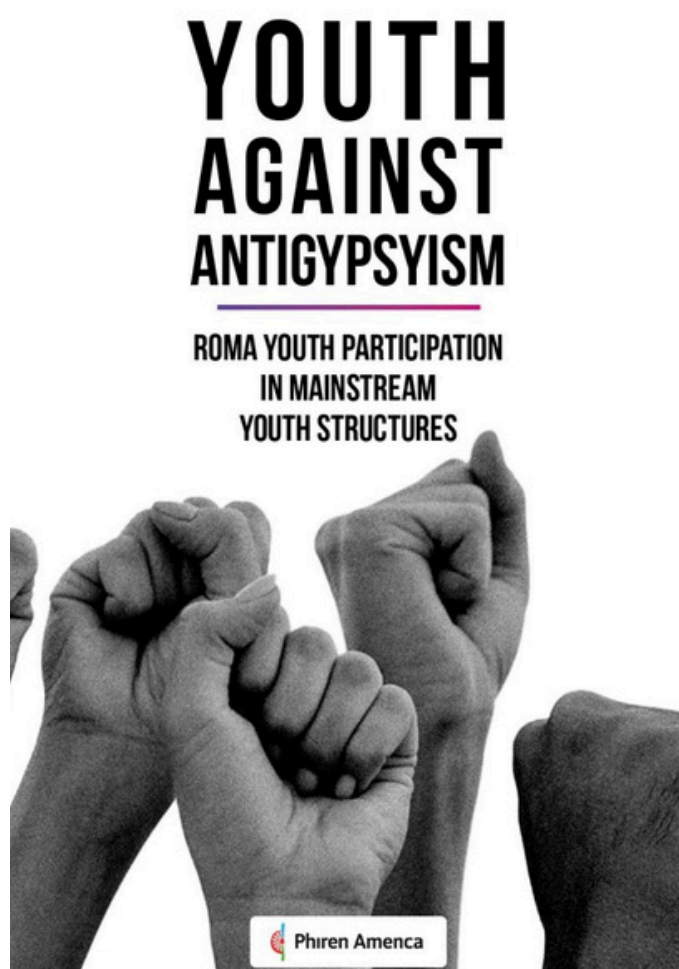
<https://phirenamenca.eu/category/projects/chad/>

Learn more about the „**CHAD – Countering Hate Speech and Hurtful Speech against Diversity: Roma, LGBTIQ, Jewish and Migrant Communities**” project run by Phiren Amenca-RGDTS, Political Capital, Haver Foundation and Rainbow Mission Foundation at the Phiren Amenca website.



# Targeting mainstream youth organizations

The **“Roma Youth Participation in Mainstream Youth Structures”** research developed in 2023, sheds light on the current state of Roma participation in mainstream youth organizations. The research aims to assess whether national youth councils involved Roma youth organizations or individuals among their members, if their activities are involving or focusing on Roma youth and Roma youth issues and, are committed to furthering this cause. Download it from: <https://phirenamenca.eu/>



In November 2023, a training on combating antigypsyism was conducted for members of the European Youth Forum in parallel with their General Assembly in Berlin. 40 representatives from national youth councils and international youth organizations attended. The session aimed to raise awareness about the significant issues of antigypsyism and non-participation affecting Roma youth, plus familiarizing attendees with the findings of the "Roma Youth Participation in Mainstream Youth Structures" research. This initiative was essential for engaging mainstream youth organizations in addressing these critical concerns.

# Roma Civil Monitor 2022-2025

Following the adoption of the EU Roma Strategic Framework for **Equality, Inclusion, and Participation** on October 7, 2020, the European Commission, at the initiative of the European Parliament, has launched the Roma Civil Monitor (RCM) initiative for 2021-2025.

This initiative is led by a consortium of esteemed organizations committed to Roma equality and inclusion, including the Democracy Institute of Central European University (CEU), ERGO Network, Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC). RGDTS in Hungary and Phiren Amenca in Belgium and the Netherlands are coordinating the Roma Civil Monitor. Together with other Roma-organizations and independent experts, they have developed the first national reports on the quality of the national strategic framework for Roma equality, inclusion, and participation. These reports are available in English and national languages on the dedicated RCM website.

<https://romacivilmonitoring.eu/>





# Donors



Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) of the DG Justice, European Commission



European Education and Culture Executive Agency



