



# Phiren Amenca

**International Network**

*<https://phirenamenca.eu/>*

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## **Strategic Plan**

# **2026 — 2030**

***Roma youth leading change  
in a just and inclusive world.***

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*A living strategy — to be reviewed and adapted as we go.*

## Strategy at a glance

Phiren Amenca is a transnational Roma youth network. For more than 25 years we have created trusted spaces where Roma young people can lead, learn and shape the decisions that affect their lives. This Strategic Plan sets out our direction from 2026 to 2030.

<h1>11</h1> <p>MEMBER ORGANISATIONS</p>	<h1>27+</h1> <p>COUNTRIES REACHED</p>	<h1>300+</h1> <p>YOUNG PEOPLE / YEAR involved in key activities</p>	<h1>25+</h1> <p>YEARS OF WORK</p>
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### Our mission

Phiren Amenca connects, empowers and amplifies Roma youth voices across Europe by creating trusted spaces for learning, identity, solidarity and leadership. Through mobility, advocacy and dialogue between Roma and non-Roma communities, we build the skills, confidence and networks that Roma young people need to challenge antigypsyism, participate in civic life, and access the spaces where decisions about their futures are made.

### Our vision

**A world where Roma youth lead change, shape decisions that affect their lives, and are recognised as powerful agents of justice and knowledge.**

### Our four strategic goals 2026–2030

- **Goal 1. Root and grow Roma youth leadership** — from local participation to European influence.
- **Goal 2. Build spaces of belonging and identity** — where diverse Roma youth find community and pride.
- **Goal 3. Turn participation into systems change** — connecting grassroots voice to policy influence.
- **Goal 4. Expand mobility, skills and economic futures** — opening pathways into employment and entrepreneurship.

**A living strategy.** This plan is designed to evolve. We will review and update it openly with our members, partners and the Roma youth we work with — the direction is firm, the route is flexible.

## Who we are

Phiren Amenca — “walk with us” in Romani — is a transnational Roma youth network working across Europe to support Roma young people to lead change and build the futures they deserve.

We create trusted spaces where Roma youth connect, learn and grow as leaders, advocates and knowledge producers. Through dialogue, mobility and collective action, we bring Roma and non-Roma communities together to challenge antigypsyism and racism, strengthen solidarity, and open pathways to participation in civic life, employment, political decision-making and digital futures.

Grounded in Roma identity, history and community, we honour the resilience of past generations and invest in the next generation of Roma youth leadership — committed to amplifying diverse and underrepresented voices, including young Roma women, LGBTQI+ people, and those from rural and marginalised communities.

<b>Founded as a network</b>	Roma–Gadje Dialogue through Service (RGDTS), 2000 — formally Phiren Amenca from 2010
<b>Registered seat</b>	International non-profit, 1070 Brussels, Rue des Fiennes 86, Belgium
<b>Members</b>	11 member organisations from 10 European countries — Roma and non-Roma, faith-based and secular, East and West
<b>Reach</b>	Around 100–200 young people participate in our programmes each year, with a wider network of alumni and partners across Europe
<b>Status</b>	First Roma international organisation to become a member of the European Youth Forum (2021), permanent member of the EU’s Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030 Civil Society Forum

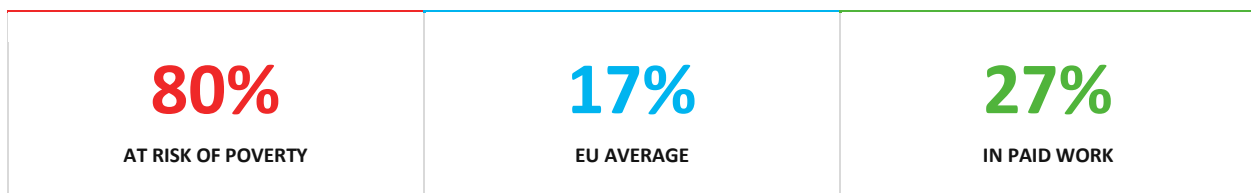
### A short history

Phiren Amenca grew out of the Roma–Gadje Dialogue through Service (RGDTS) Initiative, launched in 2000 when five organisations from the Ecumenical Diaconal Year Network placed young volunteers in projects supporting Roma communities in Transcarpathia, Ukraine. Over the following decade more than 250 young people took part, building a movement of Roma–non-Roma cooperation, service and dialogue.

RGDTS was named one of seven Ambassadors for Democracy and Tolerance by the German federal Alliance for Democracy and Tolerance in 2009, and was selected among 21 EU-funded projects showcased at the European Commission’s 2010 conference on EU projects for Roma communities in Brussels. The coordination office was established in Budapest in 2010, and Phiren Amenca has been a registered international non-profit association based in Brussels since 2014.

## The challenge

Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe — estimated at around 10–12 million people, roughly 6 million of them in the European Union. Young Roma make up a particularly large share of this population. They are organising, building networks, and entering institutions in growing numbers. At the same time, structural antigypsyism and entrenched inequality continue to block the pathways Roma youth deserve. The data below sets the context — not to define Roma youth by disadvantage, but to make clear what needs to change and why Roma youth voice in decision-making is not optional.



Data from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA Roma Survey 2021, covering 10 European countries) paints a clear picture:

- **Poverty.** 80% of Roma live below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold of their country — compared with an EU average of 17%.
- **Employment.** Only 27% of Roma aged 20–64 are in paid work, compared to an EU employment rate of around 72%.
- **Education.** Only 44% of Roma children attend early childhood education, far below their non-Roma peers. School segregation has worsened, with 52% of Roma children in 6–15 education attending schools where all or most pupils are Roma.
- **Young Roma NEET.** Around 60% of young Roma aged 16–24 are not in employment, education or training (NEET) — roughly four times the EU average. The gap is even wider for young Roma women.
- **Discrimination.** In a single year, around 1 in 4 Roma report experiencing discrimination because of being Roma, in everyday life — looking for work, at work, in housing, healthcare and education.

**Why this matters for our strategy.** These numbers are the daily reality of the young people we work with. They shape what skills, networks, confidence and platforms Roma youth need. Our four strategic goals respond directly to this picture.

## What we've achieved

Over 25 years, Phiren Amenca has grown from a small voluntary-service initiative into a recognised European Roma youth network with a track record of moving young people from local participation into European-level influence.

### Recognition and milestones

- More than 400 Roma and non-Roma volunteers sent, received and coordinated across Europe since the network was established.
- Named one of seven Ambassadors for Democracy and Tolerance by the German federal Alliance for Democracy and Tolerance (2009).
- Selected as one of 21 EU-funded projects showcased at the European Commission's 2010 Brussels conference on EU projects in favour of the Roma community.
- Became the first Roma international organisation to be admitted as a member of the European Youth Forum (2021), alongside the adoption of a Forum-wide Resolution on Combating Antigypsyism and Roma Youth Participation.
- Permanent Member of the European Commission's Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030 Civil Society Forum
- Established partner of the Council of Europe's Youth Department and Roma and Travellers Team.

### Programmes that have shaped the network

Examples of work delivered with our members and partners:

#### PROJECT IN FOCUS

### So Keres, Europa?! Roma Youth Forum

A flagship European gathering bringing together young Roma from across the continent — most recently 120 young people from 12 countries (Balatonkenese, 2023), and earlier editions in Cluj-Napoca (European Youth Capital, 2015), Varna (European Youth Capital, 2017), and Novi Sad (European Roma Youth Capital, 2019), each reaching around 150 participants.

What it builds: solidarity, Roma identity and pride, a shared European Roma youth agenda — and the political skills to take that agenda into institutions.

#### PROJECT IN FOCUS

### Roma Youth Together (with the Council of Europe)

A long-running annual seminar co-organised with the Council of Europe's Youth Department and Roma and Travellers Team, together with ternYpe, ERGO Network and ERIAC. The 2026 edition focuses on participation and empowerment, with strong emphasis on Roma girls and women, young Roma LGBTI people and Roma migrants.

What it builds: a recognised entry point for young Roma into Council of Europe processes, and a sustained pipeline of Roma youth leaders engaging with European institutions.

#### PROJECT IN FOCUS

### Artivism and creative advocacy

Art-based activism projects in which young Roma use theatre, visual art, music and digital media to challenge stereotypes, claim public space, and reach audiences who would not be reached by policy briefings alone.

What it builds: confidence, voice and a different language for advocacy — one that puts Roma young people in the role of authors, not subjects.

#### PROJECT IN FOCUS

### Roma Genocide remembrance and human rights education

Year-round work on the memory of the Roma Holocaust — supporting young Roma to take part in commemorations on 2 August, in school-based remembrance work, and in intergenerational dialogue with survivor communities.

What it builds: collective memory, identity grounded in history, and a clear moral basis for the fight against contemporary antigypsyism.

#### PROJECT IN FOCUS

### Advocacy, research and policy work

Participatory research with Roma youth (including the network's Roma Youth Voices research and ongoing work on Roma youth participation in mainstream youth structures), the Resolution on Combating Antigypsyism adopted by the European Youth Forum, and regular contributions to EU Roma Week, the European Platform for Roma Inclusion and Council of Europe policy processes.

What it builds: evidence, recognition, and direct routes between Roma youth experience and the institutions whose decisions shape Roma lives.

#### PROJECT IN FOCUS

### Best Roma Youth Project Awards

Recognition of Roma youth globally initiated in 2020, focused on empowering young Roma (between 16-30 years old). Projects/initiatives should run by or for youth and promote Roma youth participation and self-organization; dialogue with Roma communities, active citizenship or to foster their identity. Most recently, the most impactful and empowering Roma youth project were recognized on 9 December 2025 in Brussels.

## Our vision

### **Roma youth leading change in a just and inclusive world.**

*A world where Roma youth lead change, shape decisions that affect their lives, and are recognised as powerful agents of justice and knowledge.*

#### **A future where:**

- **Roma youth lead change** in their communities, countries and across Europe.
- **Roma youth are recognised as knowledge producers and change-makers** — shaping policies, narratives and solutions.
- **Roma youth have access to platforms and decision-making spaces** that affect their lives.
- **Roma identity, history and experience are valued** — strengthening pride, belonging and collective memory.
- **Diverse Roma and non-Roma young people work together in solidarity** to challenge antigypsyism, racism and exclusion.
- **Just and inclusive societies emerge** where Roma youth thrive, participate fully and shape the future.

## Our strategic goals 2026–2030

Four interlocking goals shape our work for the next five years. Each describes what we want to be true at the end of the period — and how we will work to get there. The goals overlap by design: leadership grows in spaces of belonging; advocacy is more powerful when grounded in identity; and mobility opens economic futures while also widening civic participation. Progress in one goal reinforces the others — and we track them together, not in isolation.

### **GOAL 1 Root and grow Roma youth leadership**

Develop a new generation of Roma youth leaders, equipped to advocate for their communities — supported by strong mentoring, peer learning, and structured pathways from local participation to European and global influence.

#### **How we will work**

- Run structured mentoring and peer-learning programmes that pair emerging Roma youth leaders with experienced advocates inside and beyond the network.
- Equip young Roma with political skills — public speaking, policy literacy, campaigning, working with media — to operate confidently from community level to European institutions.
- Create clear pathways from local volunteering and community work into national, European and international Roma youth representation.
- Strengthen the Phiren Amenca alumni community as a long-term leadership infrastructure.

### **GOAL 2 Build spaces of belonging and identity**

Strengthen Phiren Amenca as a trusted, inclusive and accessible transnational network — where diverse Roma youth from the grassroots find community, develop pride in their identity, and engage with the historical and contemporary realities of antigypsyism.

#### **How we will work**

- Deepen the network’s engagement with Roma history, culture and the memory of the Roma Holocaust through intergenerational education and remembrance work.
- Make our spaces genuinely inclusive of underrepresented voices — Roma women and girls, LGBTQI+ young Roma, rural and migrant Roma, and young Roma with disabilities — and ensure these voices help shape network priorities.
- Use creative and cultural expression — theatre, music, visual art, storytelling and digital media — as tools for identity, pride and confidence-building.

- Run regular convenings, exchanges and online spaces that allow Roma young people to find each other across borders.

### **GOAL 3 Turn participation into systems change**

Scale Roma youth voice from grassroots action to institutional advocacy — connecting participatory research, campaigning, art-based activism and digital organising into coherent efforts that shift policies and challenge antigypsyism at national and European levels.

#### **How we will work**

- Strengthen participatory, youth-led research that documents Roma youth realities and feeds directly into advocacy.
- Build campaigning capacity — including digital organising, hate-speech monitoring and art-based activism — alongside policy advocacy at EU, Council of Europe and national levels.
- Maintain and expand Roma youth representation in mainstream youth structures and policy processes (European Youth Forum, Council of Europe Roma Youth Action Plan, EU Roma Strategic Framework on equality, inclusion and participation).
- Work in coalition with allied Roma and youth networks — ternYpe, ERGO Network, ERIAC and others — to multiply impact.

### **GOAL 4 Expand mobility, skills and economic futures**

Economic marginalisation and civic exclusion reinforce each other. Dignified, Roma-designed pathways into work, skills and entrepreneurship are not just economic interventions — they are a form of systems change. This goal expands inclusive mobility and employment opportunities for Roma youth, creating routes into civic and economic life that are built with Roma communities, on Roma communities' own terms.

#### **How we will work**

- Reimagine European volunteering and mobility (European Solidarity Corps, Erasmus+, exchanges and study visits) as genuinely accessible routes for Roma youth — including those without prior international experience.
- Co-design skills, vocational and employment programmes with Roma communities, focused on real, sustainable work — not short-term or precarious placements.
- Support Roma youth entrepreneurship, social economy initiatives, and pathways into careers in civic, policy, cultural and digital sectors.
- Use mobility and skills work as platforms for the wider strategy — building leadership (Goal 1), strengthening identity (Goal 2) and feeding advocacy with lived experience (Goal 3).

## Focus areas

Cutting across the four goals, five focus areas describe the substance of our work. Where the goals describe what we want to achieve, the focus areas describe how we work day to day — the themes that run through our programmes, partnerships and advocacy across all four goals. Digital tools, AI and online spaces are woven through all of them — they are how Roma young people increasingly learn, organise, build identity and confront antigypsyism, and our work reflects that.

### 1. Identity, history and antigypsyism

In cooperation with our partners, we deepen Roma youth’s understanding of their own history and culture — and of the ongoing reality of antigypsyism — through intergenerational education, Roma Holocaust remembrance, and work that builds pride, resilience and a shared sense of identity.

### 2. Leadership, mentoring and political skills

We grow the next generation of Roma youth leaders through structured mentoring, peer support, networking and the political skills needed to operate confidently from community level to European institutions.

### 3. Advocacy, activism and systems change

We connect Roma youth voice to real influence — through participatory research, campaigning, art-based activism and engagement with policy processes that challenge discrimination and drive change at national and European levels.

### 4. Inclusive mobility and economic futures

We reimagine volunteering and mobility as genuinely accessible pathways for Roma youth — building skills, opening economic opportunities and creating routes into employment and entrepreneurship on Roma communities’ own terms.

### 5. Cultural expression and climate justice

We support Roma youth to engage creatively with art, music, theatre and storytelling as forms of cultural expression and advocacy; and we connect Roma youth with the environmental and climate justice movements, recognising that Roma communities are often disproportionately affected by environmental harm and that Roma youth have a distinctive voice in shaping responses. Climate justice is an emerging priority for the network; we will develop this work further with members during 2026–27, building on existing connections to environmental movements and documenting Roma youth’s distinctive relationship to land, environment and ecological harm.

**Digital, woven through.** Rather than treating ‘digital futures’ as a separate theme, we embed it into every focus area: digital tools for community-building and identity, AI literacy and online safety for leadership and advocacy, digital organising and hate-speech monitoring for systems change, and digital skills as pathways into employment.

## Indicative targets 2026–2030

Phiren Amenca is a small network with deep reach. Our targets are indicative — they signal direction and ambition, and will be reviewed annually with members and partners as funding, capacity and context evolve.

Indicator	Baseline (2025)	Target by 2030
Member organisations across Europe	11 in 10 countries	<b>15+ in 13+ countries</b>
Young people participating directly each year	100–200	<b>250–300</b>
Roma youth in formal Council of Europe and EU advisory roles via the network	Established presence	<b>Sustained pipeline of 8–10 per year</b>
Alumni network actively connected	Informal	<b>Structured community of 500+</b>
Participatory research outputs produced with Roma youth	Occasional	<b>At least one major output per year</b>
Member organisations led by, or with significant leadership of, young Roma women, LGBTQI+ Roma, and rural Roma	Partial	<b>Majority</b>
Mobility / volunteer placements involving Roma youth per year	Limited	<b>Doubled, with stronger employment follow-up</b>
Advocacy outcomes — policy documents or formal positions incorporating Roma youth input, attributed to network advocacy	Not tracked systematically	<b>At least 2 per year</b>

### Learning and adapting

This is a living strategy. Each year we will publicly review progress with our members, our board and the Roma young people we work with; revise targets where reality requires it; and openly document what we are learning. The version of this document on our website will be updated as the strategy evolves. Our funding framework for 2026–2030 will be developed and published separately as part of this living document.

## Who we work with

Phiren Amenca’s strength comes from its members — Roma and non-Roma youth and voluntary service organisations across Europe — and from the wider ecosystem of allies, institutions and funders that share our commitment to Roma youth participation.

### Our member organisations and partners

We work with Roma and non-Roma organisations across Central, Eastern and Western Europe — including FAGiC in Spain, Amaro Drom in Germany, Nevo Parudimos and Roma TEAM in Romania, the Association of Young Roma in Slovakia, RGDTs in Hungary, Phiren Amenca - Walk with us in Montenegro, Minority Voice in Serbia, Jaw Dikh in Poland, and others. Together our members work in education, employment, advocacy, remembrance, media and community development.

### Our institutional partners

- Council of Europe — Youth Department, Roma and Travellers Team, European Youth Foundation (EYF) and European Youth Centres.
- European Commission — DG Justice and Consumers, the EU Roma Strategic Framework on equality, inclusion and participation, the European Platform for Roma Inclusion (EPRI), and the CERV programme.
- European Parliament — through EU Roma Week and ongoing engagement with MEPs.
- European Youth Forum — Phiren Amenca is the first Roma international organisation to hold member status.
- ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, ERGO Network and ERIAC (European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture) — long-standing partners in Roma youth work, advocacy and culture.
- National Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps agencies, including JINT (Flanders), and a range of national youth and Roma policy bodies.

### Thank you to our funders

Phiren Amenca’s work is made possible by the continued trust and support of public funders, foundations and partners — past and present — who have invested in Roma youth participation and Roma–non-Roma solidarity over many years. We particularly recognise the European Commission (including DG JUST, the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, and the CERV programme), the Council of Europe (Youth Department and European Youth Foundation), national agencies that have supported our members’ work, and the church-related, philanthropic and individual donors who have stood with the network since its earliest days as RGDTs.

***Without this combined support — institutional, philanthropic and grassroots — the trusted spaces, leadership opportunities and advocacy described in this plan would not be possible. Thank you.***

## How we work

Five principles run through everything we do:

- **Roma-led.** Roma young people set the direction, sit on our board, lead our programmes, and represent the network externally. This means a Roma majority on the board, Roma youth involved in programme design and delivery, and Roma staff and alumni in leadership roles across the network. Roma-led is a structural commitment, not just a value.
- **Inclusive.** We deliberately make space for diverse and underrepresented voices — including young Roma women, LGBTQI+ Roma, and rural and marginalised communities.
- **In coalition.** We work in partnership with other Roma and youth networks, not in competition. Joint convening with ternYpe, ERGO Network, ERIAC and the European Youth Forum is a defining feature of our work.
- **Evidence-informed.** We base advocacy on lived experience and on participatory research carried out with Roma young people.
- **Adaptive.** We treat strategy as a living tool — to be reviewed, contested and adjusted by the community it serves.



# Phiren Amenca

*“Walk with us.”*

Strategic Plan 2026–2030 — a living document.