



DDCP-YD/ETD (2018) 85

Strasbourg, 03 September 2018

# **The role of Roma youth in policy and decision-making bodies and structures**

19-20 November 2018

European Youth Centre Strasbourg



## **Draft presentation of the seminar and Call for participants**

**(Deadline for applying: 7 October 2018)**

## Background

Youth policy development is an important part of the mission of the Council of Europe in the field of youth. The aim of the Council of Europe youth policy is to provide young people with equal opportunities and experience which enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and competences to play a full part in all aspects of society.

The Council of Europe has paid a particular attention to the specific situations and challenges faced by young people with fewer opportunities which are facing barriers to their participation and enjoyment of their human rights. Some of the instruments of the organisation to support policies for social inclusion and integration of young people include training programmes, policy recommendations, thematic guidelines, educational resources, etc. The Committee of Ministers Recommendation on Young People's Access to Rights recalls that "unhindered and full access of young people to rights is an essential element of a culture of human rights, democracy and rule of law" ([CM/Rec\(2016\)7](#)).

The work of the Council of Europe on Roma has been guided by "The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma"<sup>1</sup> from 2010 which was agreed during the High Level Meeting on Roma, as a joint response of member states to the needs and challenges faced by 12 million Roma living in Europe. The "Strasbourg Declaration" includes a list of non-exhaustive priorities that should serve as guidance for effective protection of human rights, social and economic inclusion and participation of Roma in society. In 2015, the Council of Europe reaffirmed its political commitment and adopted the "Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers"<sup>2</sup>, which provides political, logical and budgetary framework of the organisations work until 2019. The thematic action plan is focusing on three major priorities among which a due attention is given to the most vulnerable, including Roma youth, specifically by *strengthening the self-organisation of young Roma and Travellers and their participation in society*.

Initiated in 2011 by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, the Roma Youth Action Plan (hereafter [RYAP](#)) aims to support the participation and inclusion of Roma youth across Europe. The project is a response of the Council of Europe to the challenges faced by Roma young people in Europe, particularly in relation to empowerment, participation in policy and decision-making processes and structures, and to the multiple realities of discrimination they are confronted. The project gives priority to human rights and intercultural dialogue as responses to discrimination and antigypsyism, together with the development and capacity building of Roma youth organisations and movements. A great emphasis within the project is placed on promoting *double mainstreaming* of Roma youth issues, which involves the inclusion of youth issues in Roma policies and programmes, and, on the other hand, that of Roma youth issues into youth policies and programmes. Regional and national level initiatives have had particular attention and support under the project in various countries and regions, so as to bring together Roma and youth policy stakeholders and create policy opportunities for young Roma.

Even though in recent years there have been positive developments in relation to Roma policy making, Roma youth still remain insufficiently present in European and national level policies

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<sup>1</sup> CM(2010)133 final available at the following [link](#)

<sup>2</sup> SG/Inf(2015)38 final, available at the following [link](#)

including within decision-making and coordination structures. Only few member states include a specific chapter about Roma youth in their National Roma Integration Strategies and action plans. On the general youth policy side, Roma youth are largely unrecognised or invisible as a target group and usually fall under the category of “socially marginalised” groups with neither measures nor opportunities to address the specific needs and support. Roma young people and organisations are not involved in relevant coordination structures and mechanisms where they can express their needs, concern and aspirations due to their absence of large umbrella organisations and representative bodies. Lack of data on the conditions and particularities of young Roma as a group together with structural discrimination of Roma hinders the effectiveness of the existing inclusion strategies as they often fail to neither reach nor take into consideration the challenges, problems and needs of the large and diverse communities of European young Roma.

The Council of Europe in recent years developed a good number of initiatives that aimed to promote the idea and importance of Roma youth participation in policy and decision making which resulted with increased awareness and understanding among key stakeholders. Some of the available policy initiatives, tools and mechanisms included:

- The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: [Agenda 2020](#)
- [The Thematic Action Plan](#) for the Inclusion of Roma and Traveller Issues (2016-2019)
- The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities’ [Resolution](#) 366 (2014) on Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels
- The [Guidelines](#) for the Implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan 2016 – 2019 of Youth Department of the Council of Europe
- The Roma Youth Participation In Action [study](#)
- The Dialogue with Roma and Travellers Civil Society [Recommendations](#) for the transition of Roma youth from education to employment
- The thematic recommendations and conclusions of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues
- Committee of Ministers [Recommendations](#) on young people’s access to social rights, youth work, youth policy, youth participation, etc.
- Educational, training and policy tools available through the different sectors of the Council of Europe.

In this context, the role of the seminar is to assess the current resources and explore ways and opportunities to further support and strengthen the position and role of around 4 million European young Roma in policies, decision-making and coordination structures at all levels.

### **The Seminar**

The seminar will explore the role of mainstream youth and Roma integration policies in supporting Roma young peoples’ development and their participation in social and political life, and to create a dialogue among policy makers and young people about the possibilities of integration of Roma youth issues in relevant policies and programmes at European, national and local levels.

The specific objectives of the seminar are:

- To understand the current policy framework and coordination structures relevant for young Roma at European, national and local levels
- To understand how youth and Roma policies tackle issues that are of relevance to young Roma, particularly in relation to discrimination, access to social rights and youth participation
- To create networking opportunities for relevant stakeholders interested to promote and advance Roma youth participation in policies and decision making structures
- To develop guidelines for policy-makers to include Roma youth issues into youth and Roma policies at all levels, including for the Council of Europe as whole
- To associate participants with the Council of Europe standards and mechanisms supporting youth policy development

### **Participants' profile**

The seminar will bring together 25 participants concerned by Roma youth participation:

- Elected officials or civil servants working in the youth field
- Elected officials or civil servants working in the Roma and/or social inclusion field
- Representatives or member organisations of national youth councils
- Member of National Roma Platforms or coordination structures supporting Roma integration
- Youth activist, leaders or representatives of Roma and youth organisations interested or working to support and advocate for Roma youth participation in decision making
- European networks and organisations interested in promoting the inclusion and participation of Roma youth issues in policy and programmes

The Council of Europe welcomes applications from all candidates who fulfil the specific profile of the activities, irrespective of gender, disability, marital or parental status, racial, ethnic or social origin, colour, religion, belief or sexual orientation.

### **Application, procedure and selection of participants**

All candidates must apply online, completing the application form through the following link: <https://youthapplications.coe.int/Application-forms> All candidates must apply online and send their application forms by **7 October 2018 at 14:00 CET**.

The Council of Europe will select up to 25 participants for the seminar on the basis of their experience, learning and networking needs, motivation and the possibilities for follow-up. A waiting list may be established.

### **Financial and practical conditions**

The seminar will be held during 19 and 20 November at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg. Selected participants are requested to attend and participate for the entire duration of the seminar. The arrivals to Strasbourg should be planned for 18 November and departure for 21 November 2018 in the morning.

The working language of the training seminar will be in English. It is expected from participants to be able to express themselves in English.

Accommodation and meals for the event will be provided at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg and paid for by the Council of Europe. Travel costs and visa fees for the seminar will be fully reimbursed according to Council of Europe rules.

**Further information and contact**

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