

Roma Youth – European Citizenship³

An overview of the Project

This project forms part of the European Commission's 2000-2006 Youth Programme³.

The project's aim is to promote capacity building of Roma youth in the exercise of their citizenship at European level. It seeks to inform and train Roma youth in European processes and dynamics with a view to putting them on an equal footing with the rest of Europe's young citizens. Full and responsible participation will only be achieved once the target group has been made aware of all of the possibilities and opportunities Europe has to offer.



"Roma Youth - European Citizenship" is an initiative which was carried out from 15 December 2006 to 15 December 2008 in the following countries: Spain, Slovakia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Romania.

The main innovation⁴ introduced in this project is the development of initiatives on European citizenship targeting a transnational population (the Roma community), many members of which are in risk or actually immersed in a situation of social exclusion specifically affecting Roma youth who find themselves in an especially vulnerable situation but upon whom potential subsequent impact is particularly high.

Another innovative aspect of this project is coordinated work with the administrations responsible for youth issues at the local, regional and national levels and which have participated as collaborating entities and/or co-funding agencies. As a result of this collaboration, action models will be disseminated enabling the implementation

³ The programme currently in force is "Youth in Action" running from 2007 to 2013. For further information see: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm

⁴ This project was presented under line 5 of programme actions: "Accompaniment Measures" in the Innovative Cooperation, Training and Information Projects category.

of measures, plans and programmes whose objective is to foster active citizenship among youth in general and Roma youth in particular in all of the participating countries, especially those with the most experience in working with government bodies in this way.

Since one of the major obstacles standing in the way to the exercise of full citizenship is the lack of information, an aspect common to the majority of the Roma youth residing in the participating countries, the project will focus on reinforcing learning processes of the young Roma beneficiaries in the realm of informal education, on motivating young people to learn more about Europe and, at the same time, on empowering them to foster these same objectives with other young Roma within their communities.

The target population of this project was Young Roma men and women between the ages of 18 and 25, creating a stable group of young people in each country coordinated by each partner organisation and having a multiplier effect for other young people between the ages of 15 and 25.

The Roma youth taking part in the project played an active role in the planning, design and implementation of the different activities as well as in project follow-up and evaluation which is ongoing and gradual. In fact, some of the project coordinators in the partner organisations are Roma young people thus guaranteeing the latter's participation in the definition of objectives and design of actions.

Focusing activities on a group of young people who already play a role as empowerers of other youth facilitates the desired multiplier effect.

Project launching coincided with the Europe Day 2007 celebration. Then the first two training courses were given: "Values and Identity of Europe" and "Structure and Makeup of the European Union", concluding the first year of the project with a study visit to Strasbourg. In 2008 the training course entitled "The bodies comprising the European Union" was given followed by the 2008 Europe Day celebration. The last actions included the fourth and last course entitled "European Construction" and the project ended with the study visit to Brussels.

Simultaneously we engaged in the actions envisaged in the dissemination chapter such as the brochure which was translated into seven languages (English, Spanish, Romanian, Bulgarian, Slovakian, Czech and Romy), posters (also translated), Website design and the project logo.

Partners

“Roma Youth - European Citizenship”, led by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, the organisation responsible for the implementation of the project, was carried out in five countries: Spain, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania.

The large Roma population living in these countries was the main reason for designing this project and collaborating with organisations in these countries in order to encourage young Roma women and men to learn more about and participate in Europe.

Following are some details about the organisations which have taken part in *“Roma Youth - European Citizenship”*:



Name: Fundación Secretariado Gitano

Country: Spain

Founded in: Intercultural Organisation established in the 1960's and constituted as a Foundation in 2001.

Mission: Comprehensive advancement of the Roma community through respect for its cultural identity.

Sphere of Action:

- Education
- Employment
- Housing
- Equal treatment and non-discrimination
- Health
- Youth
- Women
- International cooperation



Name: Athinganoi

Country: The Czech Republic

Founded in: 1999

Information: 21 members (Roma university students and graduates).

Objectives: Advancement of Roma identity through the dissemination of culture and educational projects.



"Impreuna"
Agency for Community Development

Name: IMPREUNA Agency for Community Development

Country: Romania

Founded in: Non-profit organisation founded in 1999

Sphere of Action:

- Citizen Participation
- Employment
- Education
- Institutional strengthening
- Networking
- Youth

Information: 11 workers, 30 collaborators and volunteers



Name: Romani Baht Foundation

Country: Bulgaria

Information: Mainly works in the Fakulteta District, a ghetto of Sophia where nearly 35,000 Roma reside.

Sphere of Action:

- Fight against discrimination – legal assistance
- Youth and political leadership
- Education
- Networking



Name: Open Society Foundation

Country: Slovakia

Founded in: Established in 1992 as a foundation

Mission: To promote an open society supporting legislative change, favouring the principles of good governance and checking compliance with human rights. Provides funding support for other professional NGOs.