



ADVISORY COUNCIL ON YOUTH

Wednesday, 8 April 2020

English only

On this International Roma Day, let us not only celebrate this nation of survivors but learn from their defiance, compassion, and humanity that they have preserved throughout the shameful history of injustices.

We have come a long way, yet, Romani communities across the world are still under threat – even more so today, when the enduring hate and violence towards Roma and Travellers,* who are exploited and discrimination has reached new dimensions in the light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, further deterring the access to rights of young Roma and Travellers.

The Advisory Council on Youth reminds the Council of Europe member states of their responsibility to create conditions for access to social rights for Roma and Travellers, thereby contributing to the fulfilment of human rights standards and taking a firm stance against any kind of institutional racism.

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The Advisory Council on Youth underlines that education is not a privilege but a fundamental human right, and access to health care is not an entitlement of the rich, both liberties need to be legally guaranteed without discrimination. In endeavours to mitigate the immediate impact of school closures, we urge the authorities to take into consideration particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged youth when facilitating the continuity of education through remote learning.

The Advisory Council on Youth recognizes the importance of local and regional authorities in fighting this pandemic and calls for (re)commitment to the Council of Europe values of human rights, democracy, and rule of law. We cannot claim to uphold these values while leaving millions of Roma and Travellers at the margins of society without the support of the social system.

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The Advisory Council on Youth condemns any kind of vilification of Roma and Travellers in the public discourse and invites all Council of Europe member states and public authorities to create a climate in which the Roma rights and Romani culture are respected and celebrated at all times.

In this vein, even though the Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP) initiated in 2011 by the Council of Europe, has formally come to an end, the Advisory Council on Youth is strongly committed to continue breaking the barriers of deep-rooted prejudices and stereotypes. At the same time, we will keep promoting and supporting the strengthening of Roma voices and the participation of young Roma by creating spaces for empowerment through numerous activities by, with and for young Roma.

The Advisory Council on Youth encourages and supports young Roma to build a strong sense of their identity and remains committed to supporting meaningful participation and self-representation of Roma youth in the Council of Europe member states.

The opinions expressed in this statement are those of the Advisory Council on Youth and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe or its member states.

* The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Kale/Cale, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.