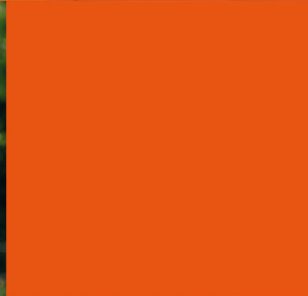
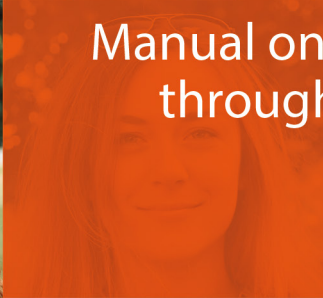




Mirrors

Manual on combating antigypsyism
through human rights education



Roma Youth Action Plan

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Mirrors

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Written by Ellie Keen



www.coe.int/youth/roma

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Preface

Every day Europe's Roma suffer discrimination, humiliation and hatred. Not only is this an affront to our values, it is banned by our laws, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

Yet, in many communities, antigypsyism has become normalised. The problem is compounded by irresponsible statements from public figures and crude stereotypes in the media. Make no mistake: this is racism – and yet in so many instances it still remains unchallenged.

We must therefore use every means at our disposal to tackle this intolerance. The Council of Europe's European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly sanctioned antigypsyism in its various forms and all 47 of the Organisation's member States have clear obligations to punish, prosecute and prevent discrimination. However, while laws are necessary, they cannot alone overcome deep-seated prejudice. We must also lead a culture shift: changing attitudes and fostering tolerance from the bottom up.

To this end, the Council of Europe is supporting Roma young people as they take on the many myths surrounding the Roma way of life and reassert their own, positive identity instead. This manual – part of the Council of Europe's Roma Youth Action Plan – will help educators, youth organisations and individuals challenge antigypsyism and increase awareness of the rights all people have to live free from discrimination. It will help enable young people – Roma and non-Roma – to identify and denounce prejudice wherever they find it. It aims, also, to build empathy and solidarity in the movement to end antigypsyism – for which we all share responsibility.

I hope as many educators and youth organisations will use this manual to spread a simple message: Roma are at home in Europe; antigypsyism is not.

Thorbjørn Jagland

Secretary General of the Council of Europe

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A note on terminology

The term 'Roma' is used throughout this publication to refer to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom). It should be understood to cover the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

The term 'Rom' is also used to refer to a person of Roma origin.

Both 'Roma' and 'Romani' are used as adjectives: a 'Roma(ni) woman', 'Roma(ni) communities'.



1 Introduction

For Gypsies the age of criminal responsibility should be the moment of birth because being born is, in fact, their biggest crime.

*Miroslav Sladek, Politician.
Czech Republican Party*

The difference between Gypsies and cattle is that cattle are subject to veterinary control. Livestock can't behave like Gypsies, but the reverse is allowed. Bovine rights and freedoms have been under serious pressure for years, and during that time the Gypsy woman has given birth to twins again and she's as bloody-minded as a cow yet again.

*Kalin Rumenov, prize-winning
Bulgarian journalist*

I love roast meat Gypsy-style very much, but I'd prefer more meat and fewer Gypsies.

Jan Slota, Slovak National Party

A significant part of the Roma are unfit for co-existence. They are not fit to live among people ... These animals shouldn't be allowed to exist. In any form. That needs to be solved — immediately, and regardless of the method.

*Zsolt Bayer, co-founder of the Fidesz
Party, Hungary*

Residents are ready to start setting the Gypsies' houses on fire, and I want to head this process.

*Russian municipal legislator Sergei
Krivnyuk*

Gypsies are grouped around well known criminals ... there are Gypsies who are born criminals [who] do not know how to do anything other than to commit criminal acts.

*General Mircea Bot, Chief of the
Bucharest Police*

Imagine if the statements above were made about a different group of people, for example, black Africans, Asians or Jews. Such statements would probably not be tolerated in today's society. However, with the Roma population, public figures, including respected journalists, politicians and police officials, are able to make such claims often without even being challenged.

The statements are abusive, based on false assumptions, and they are almost certainly illegal under international law. They are also racist. Why, then, are such beliefs tolerated, and why are they held at all?

This manual addresses the problem of racism towards the Roma. The problem is so well acknowledged and so widespread that it even has a special name: antigypsyism.

There is a severe need to address this problem. The Roma are the single most disadvantaged and abused minority throughout Europe and antigypsyism has been on the rise in recent years. It is becoming more and more “acceptable” to make derogatory statements about the Roma and to blame them for various social ills.



Extremists may feel they have license for their attacks when the message they receive from government activities in other spheres is also that the Roma are a problem.

Gay McDougall, UN Independent Expert on minority issues

The damage and suffering to individual Roma and to the Roma community as a whole is hard to quantify. It is often direct and immediate, for example, when a child is picked on by peers and teachers simply for being Roma. The damage, however, extends beyond the immediate, and beyond those individual Roma who may be victimised or abused. Antigypsyism can also be seen in the way that the whole of society relates to the Roma, including through the laws and policies that shape our possibilities or, supposedly, offer us protection when our rights are threatened.

It is difficult for young people growing up in such an atmosphere to see beyond the widespread prejudice, or to know how they can help to make their own society one in which all individuals are treated fairly, with respect for human rights. We have put this manual together in the belief that educational programmes must begin to recognise a problem which is common to every European country. Through education, we must help young people to see beyond the prejudice and begin to stand up for the rights of Roma people.

We should never forget that those rights are human rights. Roma people have no “special” rights, but they must be entitled to the rights possessed by any other community. This manual places the problems of racism, antigypsyism and Romaphobia firmly within the framework of human rights. Whichever term we use, all three are contrary to the spirit and the letter of the human rights agreements which the whole world has endorsed.

No-one would wish on themselves the kind of attitudes and behaviour which the Roma commonly experience. No-one would tolerate it for their own child. We need to make sure that the “children” of Europe – both Roma and non-Roma – do not grow up thinking that such behaviour is normal, or acceptable. This manual is a step towards that goal.



To condemn an entire people as thieves and bandits, is in itself a criminal act and is a violation of the Geneva Convention and the current EU rules regarding Europe's citizens; namely, that every human being has the right to be treated fairly and judged as an individual on their own merits.

Hans Calderas, Roma artist and activist

The Roma Youth Action Plan of the Council of Europe and combating antigypsyism

This publication was elaborated as part of the Roma Youth Action Plan of the Council of Europe, which was initiated in 2011 in response to the challenges faced by Roma young people in Europe, particularly with regard to their participation and the multiple realities of discrimination that they experience. The Roma Youth Action Plan includes activities of the Youth Department and of other sectors of the Council of Europe, as well as activities by other partners – intergovernmental and non-governmental – co-operating with the Council of Europe, particularly Roma youth organisations and networks.

Human rights education and combating antigypsyism are important priorities of the Roma Youth Action Plan, alongside the strengthening of Roma youth identity, addressing multiple discrimination, building a stronger youth movement and increasing the capacity of Roma youth organisations to participate in policy making.

The youth sector of the Council of Europe, notably through the work of the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest and through the European Youth Foundation, has had a pioneering role in the mainstreaming of human rights education in youth policy and youth work practice. This is most visible in the manuals *Compass* and *Compasito*, for human rights education with young people and with children, respectively, and in awareness-raising campaigns such as All different – All Equal, and the No Hate Speech Movement. Human rights education provides the optimal educational approach and content to understanding human rights as a common asset of all humanity and, conversely, to understanding the violations of the human rights of anyone as a violation of the human rights of all. The Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education stresses this role of human rights education as “equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society”.

Human rights education and combating antigypsyism

Educational work against antigypsyism is part of this mission for a universal culture of human rights. The widespread realities of antigypsyism make it necessary to develop a specific manual to address it, not so much because discrimination against Roma is different from any other form of discrimination, but because reality has shown us that when it is not specifically

addressed, it is very often ignored. The invisibility of antigypsyism in human rights and anti-discrimination education also contributes to furthering antigypsyist attitudes and acts.

As with *Compass* and *Compasito*, this manual is designed for use in both formal and non-formal education settings, even if the vast majority of youth work uses non-formal education values and approaches. Classrooms, however, are also necessary spaces for human rights education to happen and to be discussed.

We would like to stress that the purpose of this manual is to promote human rights and human rights education through the topic of antigypsyism. For the teacher or facilitator of educational processes, it may not be necessary to carry out any of the activities proposed as “activities on antigypsyism”, but simply as activities on or about human rights. Of course the focus of the activity and its debriefing are the situations related to Roma, but the learning outcomes should serve human rights education as a whole.

We stress this because, as educators, we are also influenced by, and exposed to, the same climate of prejudice in which antigypsyism grows, too often with alarming impunity. It may therefore be difficult to choose or to decide to do an activity from this manual because “we do not want to single out one group” (the Roma), or because “we have no Roma in our group”, or because this is “not an issue of concern” in our group, school or community. These are just three of the most often quoted reasons for not taking up matters related to the discrimination of Roma in educational activities. The widespread nature and the multiple forms of discrimination against Roma in virtually all European countries, make the educational work against antigypsyism a valid approach to any work for human rights education, in the same way that promoting the human rights of women benefits all society, men and women alike, and that we should not discuss women’s rights only in the presence of women.

It therefore goes almost without saying that this manual has not been produced for working with young Roma *only*, or *especially*, or *if possible*. The contents and approach of the manual are valuable for any groups of young people anywhere. Tips and advice are provided when the presence of Roma young people in the group may demand or recommend specific actions or approaches. It is also equally recommended that Roma be involved, especially Roma young people, as facilitators, resource people or testimonies in some activities. Empowering Roma young people and supporting their participation in all spheres of society is precisely one of the purposes of the Roma Youth Action Plan and of youth policy in the Council of Europe.

This manual also aims to complement other initiatives of the Council of Europe, particularly its *Dosta!* campaign, and the policy guidelines for combating antigypsyism developed by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.



2 A guide to the manual

We have set our sights high, but the goal is simple: let us ensure that Roma enjoy the same rights and opportunities as anyone else. Roma are no different from anyone else. Give them a chance to study and they will learn. Give them a chance to find a job and they will work

Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, April 2010

Scope of the work

Antigypsyism is a problem of relationships: it is about the way that the non-Roma community and society as a whole relate to the Roma community. In most societies today, this relationship is unequal and predominantly negative: the Roma are seen by much of the non-Roma community as possessing a whole series of fixed characteristics, almost none of which are valued by society.

It is tempting to think that antigypsyism work – or anti-racist education – should concentrate mostly on dispelling racist attitudes among the majority population, or at least, among the members of that population that we work with. While this is certainly important, educational work can also work on the other side of the relationship. In particular, building self-esteem and a better awareness of human rights can help young Roma to deal with instances of discrimination and support them to remove some of the obstacles which society has placed in their way.

This raises a third and important focus of work on antigypsyism. Much of the discrimination faced by Roma communities is deeply embedded in the structures of society. These structural obstacles have arisen as a result of centuries of discrimination and include laws, policies and institutions which fail to treat the Roma fairly, perhaps because the laws are not adequate, and perhaps because racist attitudes persist among people in positions of power.

Across Europe, Roma are disproportionately stopped and searched by police, often for simply being Roma

Whether Romani people are victims of crime or suspects, they rarely receive equal treatment in criminal justice systems. This is a result both of inadequate procedures and guidelines for law enforcement officials, and of a failure to eliminate prejudices among them.

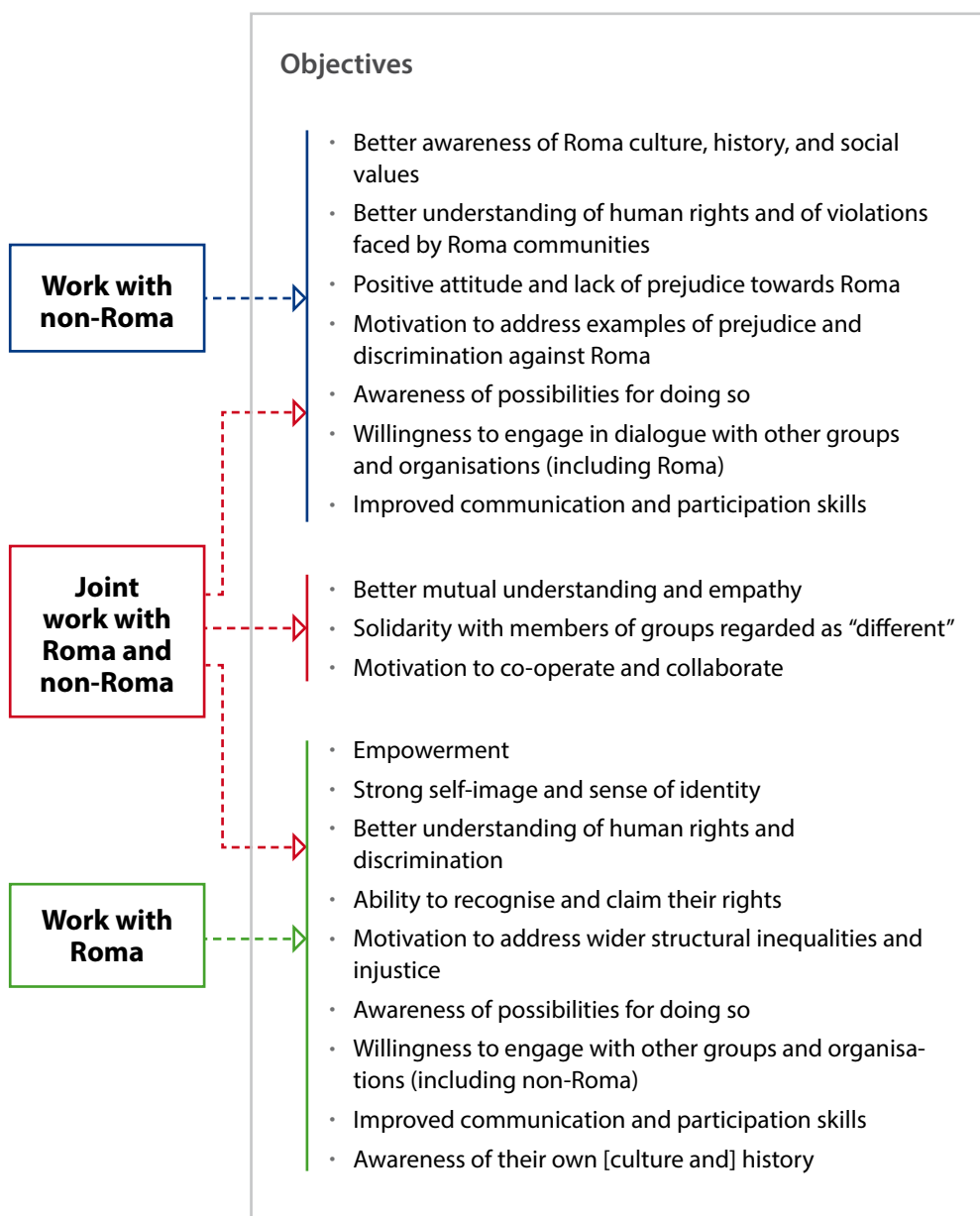
Roma in Europe, Amnesty International

Structural discrimination is often hard to see, and hard to challenge. Nevertheless, if young people do not learn to recognise it, then however positive the attitudes, discrimination will

remain in place. Educational work can help them to understand the deeper causes of unfair policies or practices towards the Roma, it can help them to perceive the impact of these practices on ordinary Roma, and it can also offer ways of working to remove the obstacles.

This manual offers a series of activities which aim to address these different areas. Most of the activities are appropriate for Roma groups, non-Roma groups, or mixed groups, although the focus may be slightly different in each case. Some of the key objectives for different groups are outlined on the next page.

Key objectives for different groups



A human rights approach



Roma politics must be dealt with in relation to general human rights; it must be related to common values and moral codes and must not focus on an exclusively ethnic or national problem.

Nicolae Gheorghe, Roma activist

Human rights offer a system of values and principles where everyone is treated equally and everyone is treated with respect. These values and principles are now part of international law, and they apply in every European country.

This manual uses a human rights framework to look at antigypsyism. Human rights provide a set of universal standards against which participants in the activities of the manual can assess the injustices and examples of mistreatment that many Roma encounter on a daily basis. Nearly all of these examples are illegal under international law, and illegal in the European countries where they exist. Pointing out this fact can send a strong message to participants. It can be particularly reassuring to those who experience discrimination or abuse of their rights.

Human rights can also offer a message of hope. Their mere existence is an affirmation that however society and governments actually behave, in theory and on paper they have acknowledged that the rights of individuals are not to be neglected. That offers a promise and some practical avenues for groups and individuals who see their rights neglected. We and they can use that fact to hold the perpetrators of injustice to account.

Using human rights and human rights education to combat antigypsyism

The activities in this manual look at different aspects of antigypsyism through the lens of human rights. Discrimination, poverty, police brutality, evictions, hate speech and other issues faced by many Roma are presented through this lens. The aim is for participants to see that all these issues are examples of a failure to live up to standards that the whole world has accepted should be universally applied. The aim is also for participants to begin to see that this “acceptance” – and the legal obligations which follow – can be used by them to fight for equal rights for Roma.

Human rights provide a powerful tool for addressing antigypsyism:

- Awareness of human rights is *empowering*
- Human rights provide a *language* for framing challenges or claims
- They offer *mechanisms* for addressing specific violations.

The racism at the heart of antigypsyism is itself a human rights violation but it also almost always leads to other more serious violations. In educational work, we can address the racist attitudes and thereby help to address, or prevent, the other violations; but we can also try to address the violations themselves. Drawing attention to unfair and often illegal practices, such as unequal access to education or employment, or poor housing and police brutality, can focus minds on the racism at the root of such practices. This can help to undermine the attitudes but it can also sometimes bring about removal of the violation.

For young people to be able to stand up against Roma discrimination and take action to improve protection of their rights, they need to be able to recognise human rights violations. That means understanding human rights.

Human rights education

Human rights education is sometimes defined as ‘education *about* human rights, *through* human rights, *for* human rights’. Each activity in this manual embodies this approach:

- Young people are provided with general information about human rights, or with information about specific rights addressed by particular activities.
- You, as facilitators, are encouraged to create a rights-respecting environment when running the activities. See the advice at the end of this chapter for how you can ensure a culture of respect, a safe environment and an atmosphere where everyone feels able to contribute and participate (page 22 onwards).
- Each activity contains suggestions for taking the ideas and learning from the session into the wider community. Together with the Four steps to action, these offer ways for participants to begin to work *for* human rights in their own lives.

Taking action

Effective work on antigypsyism ought to leave non-Roma participants with a clearer understanding of the extent of the problems which many Roma people experience, and it ought to leave them concerned about the issues. However, it is important not to give participants the impression that the problem is too big to solve! For Roma participants, avoiding such a reaction is clearly a high priority.

For this reason, amongst others, all of the activities in this manual include suggestions for follow-up work, often outside the educational environment. These follow-up activities offer ways for young people to influence the issue – to take action against antigypsyism. The last

section in the manual (Four steps to action) explores this idea in more detail, and includes a series of activities which will support participants in planning a public event or action.

The idea of taking action or activism plays an important role in human rights education and an important role throughout this manual. Such an idea can often seem threatening to educators, or at least, it may appear to be an optional extra, to be encouraged if time allows. The following points are important both in emphasising that the idea of ‘action’ does not need to be threatening, and in highlighting the educational – and societal – advantages of including it in your work with young people.

1. Taking action is not necessarily “radical”

Taking action can include anything from making links with other youth groups, inviting members of the community to a performance or exhibition, building a website or social media page, writing a letter to a local representative, monitoring human rights violations, organising a petition etc.

2. Taking action builds on the activities

If your activities have been successful in triggering participants’ interest and concern, they are likely to want to explore the issue further and may feel the need to “do something” about the problem. Facilitating this through a follow-up process can help to build on their interest and consolidate previous learning. In particular, by using the learning in the activities, participants come to see more clearly the relevance of the issues discussed to life in the real world.

3. Taking action reinforces the idea of social responsibility

Many of the activities are designed to encourage reflection on the role that “normal” people play in promoting or enabling antigypsyism. If participants see that there are things that they, and others, can do to address the issues, this will reinforce some of the moral messages. Participants may begin to see that they have some responsibility for the society they live in.



It has always been about human rights, you see. That they should apply to us Roma too. That we should have the same right to make us a decent living like everybody else, with housing, employment and education ... it must be known!

Rosa Taikon, Roma silversmith and activist

4. Taking action is empowering

If participants feel they can make a small contribution to solving the problem, they are less likely to be overwhelmed or discouraged by the issue. Groups can come together and feel a great sense of achievement if they have managed to organise an event or create something of use outside the formal learning environment.