



YEPP IRC “YEPP” as a Key Approach for Roma Communities

If you are interested in our expertise in youth and community empowerment in Roma communities, please contact us:

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Roma people in Europe

There is an estimated 10-12 million Roma people living in Europe, which makes Roma people the largest ethnic minority in Europe. Despite the fact that discrimination is banned in most European countries, many Roma in Europe are victims of prejudice, racism and social exclusion.

According to a 2011 survey from the UNDP/World Bank/European Commission carried out in 11 Member States of the European Union (EU), one of three Roma people is unemployed, 20% are not covered by health insurance, and 90% are living below national poverty lines. The economic, social and political status of Roma is the lowest of any ethnic group in Europe; reaching from employment, income, education, literacy, access to health care, infant mortality, life span, legal aid and political representation.

There is however also a sense of resilience and many Roma have maintained a strong identity not only through music dance and performing arts, but also through the setting up of unions, parties, cultural and political organizations and the support of human rights movements fighting discrimination against Roma people across Europe.

The “YEPP” approach & methodology as a response to Roma exclusion

YEPP International Resource Centre (YEPP IRC) builds on the expertise of the Youth Empowerment Partnership Programme (YEPP) which was implemented in Europe in 2001-2011 and transformed into YEPP IRC in 2012. The “YEPP” approach and methodology was developed to help disadvantaged groups become empowered in urban and rural areas in Europe. YEPP IRC assists communities in improving their situation with their own hands using the “YEPP” Concept of Change working model, and puts an emphasis on finding solutions WITH young people – and not FOR them.

The YEPP Concept of Change

Through the “YEPP” approach and methodology and the “YEPP” Concept of Change, the following tools and actions are used to foster youth and community empowerment in the Roma communities:

- Building a common ground at local, regional, national and transnational levels through dialogue and advocacy activities
- Strengthening cross-sectorial partnerships of local stakeholders, e.g. municipalities, local foundations, NGOs, residents and young people



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Benefits of “YEPP” for Roma youth and their communities



- More positive local identity, learning to appreciate the local environment, as well as available resources
- Stronger self-confidence through participatory learning methods
- Team-working skills and experience of working hand in hand with local authorities and community stakeholders
- Experience of community-rooted project management through the needs assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of common projects
- Creative and entrepreneurial skills, inspiration to start new projects, local initiatives or businesses which can greatly benefit Roma communities
- Stronger analytical skills due to monitoring and evaluation processes in the group
- Intercultural competence and increased sense of tolerance for and interest in other cultures after YEPP transnational youth meetings and conferences
- Stronger English skills
- Better visibility for local youth work at the European level as a result of joint advocacy work in the YEPP Community Network

- Promoting the participation of young people with fewer opportunities in decision-making processes
- Facilitating non-formal learning of young people and local stakeholders with participatory and interactive methods
- Building capacities of local stakeholders in the field of youth and community empowerment, entrepreneurship, media work and advocacy
- Monitoring and evaluating local activities with participatory methods involving young people
- Training young people in a conscious use of the media and on how to make their voices heard through new technologies

Empowerment of Roma Communities: YEPP Local Site in Kecerovce-Olšava, Slovakia

The YEPP Local Site Kecerovce-Olšava is situated in Eastern Slovakia, 30 km from the city of Košice. It is composed of four villages: Rankovce, Kecerovce, Boliarov and Vtákovce. About 90% of the population is Roma. Since 2011 these communities have been working with the “YEPP” model of community and youth empowerment. The developments which have been observed are that the communities have become organized and active. Three youth clubs have been set up in different villages and many projects have been developed by the local young people. Some of these projects are Wall Painting (young people paint public spaces to embellish their villages), Rocks (young people use the rocks from a local quarry to decorate the facades of the houses in the village), English classes (young people increase their employability skills and exchange with their peers in Europe), Ecobriquettes (a social enterprise produces briquettes for heating), Gypsy Needle (girls design clothes in and launch their fashion line) and a Housing project (alone in 2014, 10 young people built their own house through a microfinance scheme).

Some young people have become part of the village councils and general collaboration with the municipalities and mayors has improved. The enrollment in the primary schools has increased, a new kindergarten and a Study Club for the time after school emerged. Young people have successfully started their own fundraising campaign for school and transport fees to enable some students go to a high school in Košice. In addition, 20 young people have become enrolled in a two-year’s Entrepreneurship Learning Programme in 2015 which will be run in the villages.