Dictionary
on Roma Youth Participation

ternYpe

International Roma Youth Network

Dictionary on Roma Youth Participation

Translating the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma Youth Participation for better understanding and advocacy by young Roma.

Part 1 - Dictionary

Part 2 - Reflective Reading of CM/Rec(2023)4 – Committee of Ministers recommendation to member States on Roma Youth Participation

Preface

This dictionary helps young people, youth workers, educators, Roma youth activists and pro-Roma civil society to understand and use the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma Youth Participation. It translates key terms and concepts from technical policy language into clear, practical explanations supported by everyday-life examples from Roma communities.

The Recommendation on Roma Youth Participation-CM/Rec(2023)4 is a guiding document adopted by the Council of Europe (CoE) in 2023. The Council of Europe is an international human rights organisation, with 46 member states, working to promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law across Europe. Its standard-setting process is one of its core functions and operates through a structured and inclusive mechanism. Among the non-legally binding instruments are the Committee of Ministers Recommendations, which serve as policy guidelines agreed by the member states. These policy frameworks carry a strong political weight and provide standards that governments are recommended to follow.

This particular Recommendation calls on governments, local authorities, and civil society to ensure that Roma young people are fully included in decision-making processes and have equal access to opportunities. It highlights the importance of youth empowerment, anti-discrimination measures, and grassroots participation as key pillars for meaningful inclusion. Building on this, an important development was the adoption of the Roadmap for Roma youth participation by the Joint Council on Youth in 2024. Developed collaboratively with Roma youth representatives and relevant stakeholders, the roadmap serves as a strategic tool to support the effective implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 over a five-year period. It outlines concrete steps for member states and institutions, including setting clear priorities, assigning responsibilities, and launching targeted actions in areas such as capacity building, policy development, and the creation of inclusive platforms. These efforts aim to ensure that young Roma not only have access to opportunities but are also empowered to actively shape the policies and decisions that affect their lives, both at national and European levels.

This dictionary is designed as a training and action tool. Each entry gives a Definition, an example tied to Roma realities and a brief explanation of why it matters. The dictionary can be used as a supportive material in workshops, schools and community programs to spark discussions, encourage action and most importantly, strengthen understanding of the Recommendation.

The dictionary is organised into two distinct sections. The first section provides precise definitions of key terms and concepts associated with the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 on Roma Youth Participation. These definitions have been compiled from the insights of youth workers, community leaders, and educators who engage with young Roma on a daily basis during Dikh He Na Bister 2025. The language employed is intentionally crafted to be accessible and youth-friendly, thereby facilitating a clearer understanding of the Recommendations.

The second section presents the Recommendations themselves, accompanied by reflective contributions of the Roma youth perspective. These reflections were collected during the 15th edition of Dikh He Na Bister as part of the specialised program for group leaders. Collectively, these components not only elucidate the content but also amplify the voices of young Roma, presenting the important discourse of the Roma Youth Perspective.

Acknowledgments

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This work was coordinated by **Mihai Oancea**, together with the **ternYpe team members**.

This dictionary stands as a testament to the strength of Roma youth and their allies, united in remembrance and determined to shape a more just and inclusive future.

Lack of representation

Few

16 structural change

Part 1:
Dictionary

Antigypsyism

Antigypsyism is a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination[1].

Example in Context: In 2009, in Vítkov, Czech Republic, a Roma family became the target of a violent attack by a group of neo-Nazis. During the night while the family was sleeping, Molotov cocktails were thrown, and several members were injured, including a three-year-old girl, who suffered life-threatening burns. The perpetrators were later convicted of racially motivated attempted murder[2]. This tragic event illustrates how antigypsyism can escalate into extreme violence, but it also sparked national and international discussions on the urgent need to protect Roma communities from racism.

Why It Matters: Recognising antigypsyism helps Roma youth and their allies to see how prejudice and stereotypes are embedded in society, often in ways that are invisible. By understanding antigypsyism, Roma youth can protect themselves, challenge discrimination, and build solidarity. It also equips everyone, Roma and non-Roma alike to create fairer, more inclusive communities where diversity is respected and valued.

Capacity

Capacity means having the knowledge, skills and resources needed to achieve something. Building capacity is about empowering individuals, organisations and communities to act effectively.

Example in Context: A Roma youth group wants to start a cultural festival but struggles to find money for equipment, a stage and other expenses. They attend a training on grant writing, which gives them the capacity to secure funding and organize the event.

Why It Matters: Strong capacity enables Roma youth to lead change and create lasting impact in their communities.

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[1] Council of Europe, & European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). (2020, December). ECRI general policy recommendation N°13 - European Commission against racism and intolerance (ECRI)
https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/recommendation-no.13

[2] BBC News, "Czech neo-Nazis Jailed for Roma Attack," October 20, 2010, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11582589.
Anti-Roma racism is another term for antigypsyism, preferred by some actors as it does not include the discriminatory term "gypsy". Another term sometimes used is also Romophobia.

Civil Society

Civil society is made up of organisations and groups created by citizens, not by governments or businesses, to work on issues they care about. It is a collective term for the sum of all non-governmental organisations (hereinafter: NGO).

Example in Context: A Roma women's association creates a mentorship program to support Roma girls in secondary school. As part of civil society, they advocate for educational equality and provide safe spaces for learning.

Why It Matters: Civil society is a key force for positive change. It amplifies Roma youth voices and ensures their issues are not ignored.

Community and Community Engagement

Community is a group of people sharing common characteristics or interests. A community can be either a geographically based group of persons or a group with shared interests or common demographic composition irrespective of their physical location within a country.

Community engagement is a collective effort where community members participate, organise, and take action-even if the immediate result is not achieved. The act of engagement itself builds capacity for future change.

Example in the Context: A Roma settlement lacks clean drinking water, and the local authorities have ignored requests for improvement. Roma youth leaders organise community meetings to gather concerns and ideas from residents. Together, they create a petition and meet with municipal representatives. Although the municipality does not immediately commit to new water taps, the process brings residents together, strengthens youth leadership, and raises the visibility of the issue.

Why It Matters: When Roma communities are genuinely engaged, they gain power over decisions that impact them. It replaces top-down approaches with collaboration and respect.

Decision-Making

Decision-making is the process of choosing what actions to take or policies to create. It happens at every level: from family discussions to city councils to international organisations.

Example in Context: In a small village, the school board decides which after-school programs to fund. In the past, Roma students' voices weren't heard. Now, two Roma youth representatives attend meetings, propose a mentoring program, and successfully secure funding. Their involvement changes the decisions being made.

Why It Matters: Without Roma voices in decision-making, policies risk ignoring or harming Roma communities. Involving young people is key to building integrity and trust.

Discrimination

Discrimination is the unfair treatment of individuals or groups of people based on race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, or disability by excluding them from opportunities or treating them unfairly compared to the others. It can be direct (open mistreatment) or indirect (hidden rules or systems that hurt certain groups).

Example in Context: A young Roma man applies for a job at a café. He is told, "We're not hiring right now" - but later sees the café advertising job openings online. This is discrimination: being denied opportunities based on ethnicity rather than ability.

Why It Matters: Naming and understanding discriminatory cases towards the Roma helps us understand antigypsyism better, while at the same time it raises awareness on the importance of tackling it and demands equality. Fighting discrimination is not only the responsibility of those affected by it, but everyone - affected or not.

Diversity

Diversity refers to the cultural, linguistic and traditional differences that exist within a community such as Roma (having different groups) or among different communities of people in one or more countries. For Roma youth, diversity is a source of strength as it celebrates difference rather than treating it as a problem.

Example in Context: At a local youth festival, Roma teenagers present a dance performance and storytelling session about their history. Non-Roma peers share their own traditions, and the festival becomes a space where everyone learns and respects each other. Diversity here is a source of pride, not division.

Why It Matters: Recognising those differences helps to create safer and open spaces for mutual respect and acceptance, as well as it can build a sense of belonging and pride when within the Roma community, they get to know about having one root but different cultures and traditions.

Effective

Being effective means achieving the results you set out to accomplish. In youth work, it's about turning plans and ideas into meaningful action that creates real change.

Example in Context: A Roma youth organisation ran several awareness campaigns on discrimination but noticed little impact[3]. They switched strategies, focusing on small, community-led storytelling events instead of posters. This approach proved more effective, attitudes began shifting, and local schools started asking for workshops.

Why It Matters: Effectiveness ensures that Roma youth activism and projects create tangible outcomes rather than just "checking boxes."

Empowerment

Empowerment aims to enable people to represent and shape their own interests. Empowerment is a supported process of gaining skills, confidence and control over your life and future. It's about realising your worth and having opportunities to act on it.

Example in Context: A Roma teenager used to stay quiet in class because he feared bullying. After joining a Roma youth leadership camp, he built confidence, learned about their rights, and started leading anti-bullying campaigns at school. This is empowerment in action: personal growth creating change for oneself and others.

Why It Matters: Empowered Roma youth become leaders who inspire their peers and communities, breaking cycles of exclusion.

Equality

Equality means everyone has the same opportunities, resources and rights, regardless of their background. It's about the same treatment and opportunities so no one is left behind.

Example in Context: In a city where Roma children were often excluded from advanced classes, a new education policy ensures all children are evaluated fairly. A Roma girl who once felt invisible now excels in school and becomes a role model for her peers.

Why It Matters: Equality is a foundation for justice. Without it, Roma youth will continue facing barriers in education, jobs and health care.

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[3] Impact refers to the lasting effect or influence that an activity, project, or policy has on individuals, communities, or systems-beyond the immediate outputs and outcomes. Impact reflects meaningful change, whether positive or negative, intended or unintended.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a structured process of reflecting on a project or activity to see what worked, what didn't and how to improve next time. It can be qualitative (asking questions) or quantitative (collecting numbers).

Example in Context: After organising a Roma cultural week, youth leaders hold a feedback session with participants, teachers and community members. They realise they need more outreach to involve non-Roma students. The evaluation helps them plan a bigger, more inclusive event for the next year.

Why It Matters: Evaluation makes Roma youth initiatives stronger and more sustainable. It ensures lessons are learned and voices are heard.

Exclusion

Exclusion is when people are left out, ignored or denied access to opportunities, often because of prejudice or systemic barriers.

Example in Context: A Roma family moves to a new town, and the school does not make any effort to support or involve their children in classroom or extracurricular activities. Over time, the children feel isolated and unwelcome. This is social exclusion in action.

Why It Matters: Exclusion harms self-esteem, limits opportunities and creates mistrust in society. Understanding and addressing it is key to Roma empowerment.

Exercising Rights

Exercising rights means actively using the freedoms and protections guaranteed to you - like speaking out, voting, going to school or practicing your culture.

Example in Context: A Roma teenager knows that their school cannot deny them entry because of their ethnicity. When a teacher tries to bar them from an event, they confidently quote their rights and contact a local youth NGO for support. By exercising their rights, they help stop discrimination.

Why It Matters: Knowing your rights is important but using them changes systems. Roma youth who confidently exercise their rights inspire others to do the same.

Freedoms

Freedoms are the basic liberties that allow every person to live with dignity and independence, like freedom of movement, expression, culture and belief. Freedom means you can make choices about your life without fear of punishment or discrimination.

Example in Context: In some towns, Roma families are afraid to travel outside their settlement because of harassment. A group of Roma youth create a campaign about their freedom to move and travel safely, collecting stories and working with local police to stop harassment. This project shows that freedoms only have value if people feel safe to use them.

Why It Matters: When Roma youth are denied freedoms, it reinforces exclusion. Understanding and defending these liberties is key to equality.

Fulfillment

Fulfilment means achieving your potential and living a meaningful, satisfying life. For Roma youth, fulfillment often involves breaking down barriers that limit education, jobs and opportunities, so they can pursue their dreams.

Example in Context: A Roma girl dreams of becoming a lawyer but faces stereotypes from teachers who discourage her. With mentorship from a Roma women's organisation, she applies to university and wins a scholarship. Her success shows that fulfillment is about creating environments where all young people can thrive.

Why It Matters: Fulfillment helps Roma youth see themselves as capable and deserving of success, challenging cycles of poverty and discrimination.

Identity

Identity is the collection of characteristics, experiences, culture and history that make you who you are. Roma identity is deeply rooted in traditions, language and resilience, but discrimination often pressures Roma youth to hide or change who they are.

Example in Context: A Roma boy stopped speaking Romani at school because classmates mocked him. Later, he joined a Roma cultural group where his language and traditions were celebrated. This safe space helped him reclaim his identity with pride.

Why It Matters: Strong, positive identity builds self-esteem and helps Roma youth resist prejudice. It allows communities to keep their culture alive while participating equally in society.

Impact

Impact is the lasting effect an action, policy, or project has on people's lives. Measuring impact helps communities see whether their work is making a real difference.

Example in Context: A Roma youth centre started a tutoring program for children struggling in school. After one year, teachers reported improved grades and attendance. The impact wasn't just numbers - it meant Roma kids felt capable and confident for the first time.

Why It Matters: Impact shows the value of Roma-led initiatives and helps secure funding or support for future projects.

Implementation

Implementation means putting a plan, policy or decision into action. It's often the second step after creating an idea or plan. It means thinking about practical actions that will work towards the idea.

Example in Context: A city announced an "Inclusive Education Plan" but didn't provide training or resources for teachers. So, Roma students saw no positive difference in their lives. After advocacy from Roma youth, the city allocated funds and started teacher workshops. This showed that only effective implementation turns words into action.

Why It Matters: Without implementation, even the best not only policies fail, but remain empty letters on paper. Roma youth must push for commitments to become reality.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a way of understanding how different types of discrimination overlap. For example, being Roma, a woman and disabled can create unique challenges that aren't explained by just one of these identities alone.

Example in Context: A Roma girl with a disability has to walk a long distance to school because there are no school buses serving her neighbourhood. The walk is difficult and painful for her, but there are no alternatives. Her experience shows how being Roma, a girl, and having a disability creates multiple barriers to accessing her right to education.

Why It Matters: Intersectionality helps communities see the full picture of inequality, ensuring no one is left behind in policies or activism.

Mainstream

Mainstream refers to the dominant culture, norms and practices in a society. When Roma youth are encouraged to "enter the mainstream", it often means accessing the same opportunities as non-Roma peers. However, true inclusion should allow Roma youth to thrive without having to abandon their culture or identity.

Example in Context: A group of Roma youth join a local youth council in their town. At first, they are unsure if their ideas and culture will be accepted. Over time, they propose activities that reflect their community's traditions like organising a storytelling event and are supported by their peers. Their participation enriches the group's work and shows that inclusion doesn't mean changing who you are but being valued for who you are.

Why It Matters: When Roma youth are included in mainstream society while their heritage is celebrated, communities become stronger and more equitable.

Manifestation

Manifestation means a visible expression of an idea, feeling or belief. In activism, it often refers to peaceful public actions like marches, protests or artistic events to raise awareness and demand change.

Example in Context: Roma youth organises a street parade with music and banners to protest housing discrimination. Their joyful manifestation attracts local media, sparking conversations about equal rights.

Why It Matters: Manifestations help Roma youth reclaim public space, challenge negative narratives and show unity.

Mapping

Mapping is the process of collecting and organising information about a community or issue to better understand it. It is a valuable tool for planning advocacy and projects.

Example in Context: Roma youth map all the abandoned buildings in their city and present the data to local leaders, proposing some be turned into affordable housing. Their research-backed map gives them credibility and influence.

Why It Matters: Mapping helps Roma youth identify needs, resources and challenges in a clear, visual way, making advocacy stronger.

Needs

Needs are the essential things people require to live with dignity and thrive like education, housing, safety, health care and opportunities. Identifying the needs of Roma youth ensures that programs and policies are relevant and fair.

Example in Context: A Roma youth group surveys their peers and discovers that most teens want a safe study space because their homes are crowded. They present this data to the municipality and secure funding for a study centre. Listening to needs leads to meaningful change.

Why It Matters: Ignoring Roma youth needs results in ineffective policies. Understanding and meeting real needs creates trust and progress.

Non-Discriminatory

Non-discriminatory means treating all people fairly, regardless of ethnicity, culture, gender or background. A non-discriminatory approach ensures Roma youth have equal access to services, opportunities and respect.

Example in Context: A Roma student applies to a local high school. Instead of being discouraged or tracked into lower-level classes, the school staff assess the student based on their abilities and provide the same support as for all other students.

Why It Matters: Non-discriminatory systems and attitudes are essential for Roma youth to feel safe and included in education, health and public life.

Opportunities

Opportunities are chances to grow, learn and improve your life-such as access to education, jobs, cultural activities or leadership roles. For Roma youth, opportunities often mean breaking barriers created by poverty and discrimination.

Example in Context: A Roma teenager dreams of becoming a teacher but struggles with finding information on university programs and scholarships. When she joins a Roma scholarship program, she gets tutoring, financial support and a mentor. This opportunity changes her life and inspires other Roma students in her community.

Why It Matters: Without equal opportunities, Roma youth are denied their potential.

Participation

Roma Participation means having real power and influence in the decisions that affect their lives, communities, and future. It goes beyond being invited or consulted. It requires creating safe, inclusive, and equitable spaces where Roma voices are respected, heard, and able to shape policies and outcomes. True participation means Roma are not only present, but active decision-makers at all levels.

Example in Context: A Roma youth group campaigns for better bus routes to their neighborhood. They meet with city officials, share their experiences and bring signatures from community members. Their participation leads to a new bus schedule that makes it easier to get to school and work.

Why It Matters: Participation strengthens democracy and ensures Roma youth have power in shaping their future.

Policy

A policy is a plan or set of guidelines created by governments, schools or organisations to make decisions and take action. Policies can help or harm communities depending on how they're written.

Example in Context: A municipality's housing policy once allowed landlords to refuse to rent to Roma families. After Roma youth leaders worked with advocacy groups to highlight this injustice, the city council rewrote the policy to prohibit discrimination in housing.

Why It Matters: Policies shape everyday life. Understanding them helps Roma youth advocate for change and hold decision-makers accountable.

Priorities

Priorities are the most important issues or goals to focus on. Prioritising means sorting something you treat as more important than other things. It helps to concentrate limited resources on tasks and goals that are most important and urgent, leading to greater progress towards your goals.

Example in Context: A municipality planned a youth program focused on sports, but Roma teens said their top priority was access to free school supplies. After listening, the city redirected funds to a school support program, making the initiative much more effective.

Why It Matters: Listening to Roma youth when setting priorities ensures resources are spent where they'll make the biggest difference.

Quality Inclusive Education (QIE)

Quality Inclusive Education means schooling that is fair, inclusive, well-resourced and respectful of every student's background. It goes beyond access to classrooms—it's about teaching that helps all students thrive.

Example in Context: In a town where Roma children were separated into lower-level classes, activists worked with schools to train teachers on inclusive practices, hire Roma teaching assistants, and update educational materials. As a result, Roma students began performing better and feeling valued. This is what quality education looks like.

Why It Matters: Without quality education, Roma youth are trapped in cycles of exclusion. Education is the foundation for participation and equality.

Representation

Representation means having people who share similarities with you like your experiences and identity to be visible in decision-making, media, education and leadership roles.

Example in Context: In a regional youth council, there were no Roma members, even though Roma make up a large part of the population. A young Roma activist campaigned for a seat, won and began bringing the needs and interests of Roma youth to the table. Her presence made other Roma youth feel proud and seen.

Why It Matters: When Roma youth see themselves represented, they feel that their voices matter and decision-making becomes more inclusive and fair.

Rights-Based Approach

A rights-based approach means designing policies and programs around the idea that every person has rights-not privileges or favors-to dignity, equality and justice.

Example in Context: A youth center used to see Roma attendance as a "favor". After training on children's and youth rights, staff shifted their mindset: Roma youth aren't "guests", they have the same right to services and support. This change influenced funding decisions, making programs fairer and more sustainable.

Why It Matters: A rights-based approach ensures Roma youth are respected and supported because of their rights, not charity.

Roma Inclusion

Roma inclusion means addressing the structural and institutional barriers caused by antigypsyism and ongoing stigmatization to ensure the full and equal participation of Roma in all areas of public life. It requires systemic change, not assimilation, and must centre Roma voices, rights, and mechanisms in the design and implementation of policies, rather than simply "including" Roma in decisions made by others.

Example in Context: In a municipality where Roma youth were systematically excluded from local decision-making, a group of young Roma advocates successfully campaigned for the creation of a Roma youth advisory council. This council now works directly with local authorities to review policies affecting education, housing, and employment, ensuring that Roma voices shape the decisions that impact their communities. As a result, the city adopted measures to reduce school dropout rates among Roma students and improve access to vocational training. This is Roma inclusion in action: not just being invited into the room, but actively reshaping the systems that have historically excluded Roma communities.

Why It Matters: For Roma youth, inclusion combats feelings of invisibility and marginalization, building a sense of belonging and community pride.

Roma Youth-Focused

Roma youth-focused initiatives are designed with Roma young people around the lived realities, needs and aspirations of Roma young people, ensuring that they are not only the beneficiaries but also key actors in shaping the priorities, approaches and outcomes.

Example in Context: A city youth centre offers generic after-school programs, but notices Roma youth rarely attend. After consulting with Roma young people, they redesigned activities to include Roma culture, flexible schedules and peer mentors. Participation increases significantly, showing how adapting mainstream services through direct Roma youth input makes them more inclusive and effective for all.

Why It Matters: When initiatives are shaped around the voices and experiences of Roma youth, they become more accessible, meaningful, and impactful. This approach avoids tokenism, strengthens participation, and helps break down barriers without promoting separation or assimilation.

Roma Youth-Led

Roma youth-led means that Roma young people are not only participants but leaders of a project, initiatives organisation. They make decisions, set priorities and take ownership of the work.

Example in Context: A group of Roma young people started a local project to improve access to education in their community. They organised meetings with different stakeholders, led workshops, and invited other youth to join. Over time, it grew into an active network connecting Roma youth from different towns. Because they lead the work themselves, it's not just "for Roma youth", it's Roma youth-led.

Why It Matters: Roma youth-led projects break stereotypes, develop leadership skills and ensure solutions come from those directly affected. It makes sure that the real interests of young Roma are driving the actions taken.

Roma Youth Perspective

A comprehensive approach that integrates young Roma's views, experiences, and participation into all areas of policymaking and institutional work. It treats Roma youth as partners with real say in decisions—from ideas and design to budgeting and follow-up.

Example in Context: When the city starts preparing next year's budget, a group of Roma teens teams up with the local youth council to shape real decisions. They run two quick listening sessions and an Instagram poll to find out what matters most to young people. Two clear ideas rise to the top: safer routes to school and Romani language classes. With support from a youth worker, the group turns these ideas into short proposals with simple costs and a timeline. They meet the deputy mayor, present at the council's education committee, and answer questions. The committee agrees to include a new budget line for "Safe Routes & Romani Classes," funding better street lighting near schools and an after-school Romani course co-taught by a local teacher and a community speaker.

The council vote passes. Two Roma teens are named to the small monitoring group that tracks progress each month. They help choose which streets get lights first, shape the class schedule and materials, and post updates so other young people can see what's happening and suggest tweaks. At the end of the school term, the group shares a short, plain-language report with the council—what was done, what students liked, and what should be improved next.

Why It Matters: This is real influence, not a one-off consultation. It shows that Roma youth can turn ideas into policy, shape budgets, and stay involved as decisions are carried out—strengthening safety, culture, and pride for everyone.

Segregation

Segregation happens when groups of people are separated from others, often by ethnicity, religion or class. It creates unequal access to opportunities and reinforces stereotypes.

Example in Context: In Korça, Albania, the Naim Frashëri school became almost entirely segregated, with Roma and Egyptian children making up nearly all of the student population, despite being a minority in the city. Non-Roma parents had gradually withdrawn their children from the school, leading to de facto segregation. Although this pattern was widely acknowledged, including by Albania's Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, no effective steps were taken by local or national authorities to address it. The case was eventually brought before the European Court of Human Rights, which in 2022 represented by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) X and Others v. Albania that the state had violated anti-discrimination law by failing to take timely action to end segregation. The Court ordered the state to compensate affected families and to implement desegregation measures. However, as of 2025, three years after the ruling, the Albanian state has still not provided the compensation ordered by the Court. This case clearly illustrates how antigypsyism operates through institutional inaction, reinforcing structural inequality under the appearance of neutrality.

Why It Matters: Segregation isolates Roma youth and limits their futures. Challenging it is essential for fairness and inclusion. Naming it empowers communities to confront segregation and advocate for meaningful change.

Solidarity

Solidarity means standing together to support others, especially in times of struggle or injustice. It's about recognising that helping others strengthens the whole community.

Example in Context: When a Roma camp was threatened with forced eviction, non-Roma neighbors joined Roma families in peaceful protests. Youth groups collected supplies and legal aid, preventing the eviction. This act of solidarity-built trust between communities.

Why It Matters: Solidarity breaks down stereotypes and builds bridges, showing Roma youth that they are not alone in their fight for justice.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders are all the people and groups affected by or involved in a project, decision or policy. This includes Roma youth, families, community leaders, schools, NGOs and government officials.

Example in Context:

When planning a youth employment program, a Roma youth group invited stakeholders -employers, teachers and local government officials - to co-design the project. This collaboration ensured Roma youth needs were met, and employers felt ready to support them.

Why It Matters: Identifying and involving all stakeholders creates buy-in, reduces misunderstandings and makes projects more successful.

Target Policies

Target policies are rules or plans created specifically to address the needs of a particular group, like Roma youth. They focus resources and attention where inequality is greatest.

Example in Context: A regional government introduces a target policy to close the education gap for Roma students. It funds scholarships, mentorship programs and anti-bias training for teachers. This focused action helps Roma students feel supported and succeed academically.

Why It Matters: General policies often overlook Roma youth. Targeted policies ensure their specific challenges are addressed and not ignored.

Part 2:
Reflective Reading of CM/Rec(2023)4 – Committee of Ministers recommendation to member States on Roma youth participation

The second part of the Dictionary is dedicated to presenting a comprehensive set of recommendations specifically tailored for young people and the professionals who support them. This section follows a clear and organised structure: each recommendation is stated prominently, accompanied by a concise yet informative text that elaborates on its significance and practical implications. Furthermore, this section includes a series of reflective questions designed to encourage critical thinking and self-reflection among readers. Additionally, it features insights framed through the lens of the Roma Youth Perspective, highlighting the unique cultural context and experiences of Roma youth, ensuring that the recommendations are relevant and resonant for the community.

Recommendation 1:
Participation, Representation and Inclusion

Ensure substantive, fair and systematic participation, representation and inclusion of young Roma people in all spheres of society and decision-making processes and structures that impact their lives at the local, national and international levels;

What This Means

Roma youth should not only be present but actively engaged in **all levels of decision-making** from school councils to parliaments. Participation should be **fair, meaningful, and consistent**, not tokenistic. Inclusion means creating systems where Roma youth can lead, represent their communities, and influence policies that affect their lives.

Reflection Questions

➔ Where do Roma youth currently have a voice in your school, community, or country?

➔ Are Roma youth truly influencing decisions, or are they only symbolically present?

➔ What barriers stop Roma youth from entering leadership roles?

➔ How can schools, NGOs, and local councils create spaces for Roma leadership?

Roma Youth Perspective

There is a **need for long-term investment in Roma youth leadership**:

➔ Civic participation should start early, through **student councils** and **local youth groups**, to build confidence and political skills.

➔ Roma youth need to see role models from their own communities in positions of influence such as local consultants, advocates, and politicians. Representation inspires participation.

➔ Quotas or reserved seats can be helpful, but without proper training and mentorship, they risk becoming symbolic rather than meaningful.

➔ NGOs play a key role in **bridging Roma communities and political structures**, supporting advocacy and civic education.

➔ Building **alliances between Roma and non-Roma** is vital for lasting democratic participation.

➔ Non-formal education spaces, youth centers, and political schools are powerful tools for nurturing active citizenship and political ambition.

➔ Participants compared this to the **African American civil rights movement**, where student clubs and campus activism produced future leaders.

Mainstream Roma Youth Needs and Priorities

Mainstream and include systematically and explicitly the needs and priorities voiced by young Roma people in all policies, standards and programmes that impact them at the local and national levels;

What This Means

Roma youth should not be an afterthought. Their needs and priorities should be **actively included in all policies and programs** - not only in "Roma-focused" initiatives but also in general strategies on education, health, youth, housing and participation. Mainstreaming means that **every government decision-maker and institution** is responsible for Roma youth inclusion, not just specialized bodies.

Reflection Questions

→ How often are Roma youth consulted when policies are designed?

→ Are Roma issues included in mainstream youth strategies or only in separate "Roma strategies"?

→ What would it take for Roma youth voices to shape all areas of decision-making?

→ How can schools, NGOs and youth councils help mainstream Roma priorities?

Roma Youth Perspective

Roma youth are **too often treated as a "special case"**, which isolates their concerns.

→ Roma voices should be **systematically included** in all decision-making, not just Roma-targeted programs.

→ Youth policies, education reforms, housing strategies and anti-discrimination measures must **explicitly reference Roma youth needs**.

→ Mainstreaming requires Roma and non-Roma cooperation - Roma youth should be visible in spaces where all young people's issues are discussed.

→ **Non-formal education and community spaces** are essential platforms for amplifying Roma youth voices and preparing them for these discussions.

Recommendation 3:

Assess and Redesign Policies and Structures

Assess relevant mainstream and targeted policies, as well as democratic structures, in view of mapping and redesigning them to ensure Roma youth's effective participation, representation and inclusion;

What This Means

Governments, NGOs and international institutions should **regularly evaluate and map policies and structures** to check if they are truly inclusive of Roma youth. If they are not, these systems must be **redesigned**. This is not about paperwork but about **making policies work in real life** for Roma youth.

Reflection Questions

→ Who currently evaluates Roma youth policies in your country? Are these evaluations independent?

→ Do youth councils, NGOs or Roma-led groups have a say in how policies are reviewed?

→ What would "effective participation" look like if systems were redesigned?

→ How could mapping networks, allies and organizations help strengthen Roma youth advocacy?

Roma Youth Perspective

→ Evaluations must be **independent and credible.** In some countries, the same institutions that implement programs also evaluate them, leading to biased results. Independent evaluations are needed to create **trust and accountability**.

→ Mapping isn't just about structures; it's about **relationships** - identifying networks, allies and connections between Roma and non-Roma organizations and public institutions.

→ Many countries already produce **valuable reports** (e.g., Roma strategies, UN shadow reports, OSCE assessments). These should be used and built upon instead of reinventing the wheel.

→ Governments, Roma-led NGOs and independent experts should **work together** on mapping and evaluation to ensure a full, realistic picture.

Combat Anti-Roma Racism and Antigypsyism

Combat all forms and manifestations of structural anti-Roma racism and antigypsyism and their impact on Roma youth participation;

What This Means

Roma youth face discrimination not only from individuals but also from **systems and institutions**. This is called **structural anti-Roma racism** or **antigypsyism**. It shows up in schools, housing, media, policing and politics, making it harder for Roma youth to participate equally in society. Combating antigypsyism means **changing attitudes, laws and systems** so that Roma youth can live with dignity and be active citizens.

Reflection Questions

→ Where do Roma youth experience structural racism in your community (e.g., schools, housing, health care, employment)?

→ How does antigypsyism affect Roma youth participation in decision-making spaces?

→ What role can schools, NGOs and government institutions play in fighting antigypsyism?

→ How can Roma youth themselves lead campaigns to challenge racism?

Roma Youth Perspective

Antigypsyism is **deeply rooted** in Europe's history and culture, and tackling it requires education, awareness, and systemic change:

→ Governments should create **state structures dedicated to combating antigypsyism** and hate speech, providing real accountability.

→ Campaigns are essential to raise awareness about antigypsyism and its intergenerational impact; Roma youth should lead these initiatives.

→ Educational tools like **Compass, Compasito** and **Mirrors** (Council of Europe resources) can help teachers and youth workers teach about discrimination and human rights.

→ Platforms like the **Roma Youth Together Seminar** are important spaces for Roma youth to connect, share experiences and strategize on combating racism.

→ Storytelling projects, like the "3 Generations" initiative, help communities understand the long-lasting effects of antigypsyism.

Recommendation 5:

Guarantee Full Access to Human Rights and Freedoms

Ensure young Roma people's full and effective access to and fulfilment of all fundamental human rights and freedoms;

What This Means

Roma youth should enjoy the **same rights and freedoms as everyone else**, not just on paper but in real life. This includes access to quality education, housing, employment and public services without discrimination. True equality requires **structural change**: reforms to systems, targeted programs and proactive efforts to remove barriers that block Roma youth from enjoying their rights.

Reflection Questions

→ Are Roma youth able to fully access their rights to education, housing, work and participation in your community?

→ What barriers (systemic discrimination, poverty, lack of resources) keep these rights from being realized?

→ How could governments and institutions take positive action to guarantee Roma youth equality?

→ What role can schools, NGOs and youth councils play in supporting these rights?

Roma Youth Perspective

Rights must be actively enforced, not just promised:

→ Schools should include **curricula on antigypsyism** and **human rights education** from an early age. Teachers also need specific training on antigypsyism so they can challenge stereotypes in classrooms.

→ Some recommendations in CM/Rec(2023)4 should be **binding on national governments**, not just suggestions, to create real accountability.

→ Positive action programs - such as **paid civil service training placements** for Roma and Traveller youth - show how targeted initiatives can create pathways into stable careers and representation in public institutions.

→ Employment opportunities should be based on **skills and expertise, not background or ethnicity**. Visibility of Roma professionals in diverse roles helps fight stereotypes.

→ **The Ireland model** is an inspiration for extended youth support: financial assistance, rent support, visa stability and education funding for marginalised youth beyond age 18. This approach prevents young people from falling through the gaps when transitioning to adulthood.

Guarantee Free and Non-Discriminatory Access to Education, Training and Employment

Ensure free and non-discriminatory access to quality education, training and employment opportunities for all young Roma people;

What This Means

Education, training and employment are **basic rights, not privileges**. Every Roma young person should have equal access to schools, universities, job training and career opportunities, regardless of their background. This recommendation is about **removing systemic barriers** such as segregation, discrimination and poverty that prevent Roma youth from fulfilling their potential.

Reflection Questions

➜ Are Roma youth in your area receiving the same quality of education and job opportunities as non-Roma youth?

➜ What barriers stop Roma youth from staying in school or finding jobs?

➜ Are schools inclusive and culturally respectful or do they segregate Roma children?

➜ How can communities, teachers and NGOs work together to support Roma youth?

Roma Youth Perspective

Real equality in education and jobs requires **inclusive practices and systemic reform**:

➜ **Free public education** must be guaranteed for all, without hidden costs or barriers that keep Roma children out of school.

➜ After-school programs should be **community-based** to provide homework help and tutoring in spaces where Roma children feel safe and supported.

➜ Parents play a key role: Programs must actively involve them through meaningful consultation, culturally sensitive dialogue, and shared decision-making to build trust, highlight the value of education, and support informed career choices for Roma youth.

➜ Schools should include **Roma history and culture** - including lessons about the Roma genocide - to help Roma students feel valued and to educate non-Roma students about Roma contributions and struggles.

➜ A **good practice example from Ireland**: NGOs and the Ministry of Education co-created a national education strategy for Roma and Travellers. Roma voices shaped the strategy through multiple consultation rounds, proving inclusion works.

➜ **Segregation must be eliminated**. Even "free" schools can harm Roma youth if they are separate or unequal. Inclusive education is essential.

Strengthen Roma Youth Organisations and Cultural Spaces

Support and strengthen the capacity of Roma youth-led organisations, groups and initiatives and Roma youth-focused organisations and youth centres as spaces for exercising citizenship, promoting youth work and non-formal education/learning and for expressing and fostering their cultural identity, language and history;

What This Means

This recommendation focuses on **empowering Roma youth-led organisations** and initiatives so they become vibrant spaces where Roma youth can **learn, lead and celebrate their culture**. These spaces should provide opportunities for citizenship education, non-formal learning, advocacy and intercultural dialogue, while being deeply connected to Roma communities.

Reflection Questions

➜ Are there safe, welcoming youth spaces in your community for Roma youth?

➜ How can Roma-led initiatives receive more funding and recognition?

➜ What role can culture, storytelling and festivals play in promoting equality and visibility?

➜ How can non-Roma organisations and youth groups collaborate with Roma-led initiatives?

Roma Youth Perspective

It is of utmost importance to have **accessible, community-based spaces** for Roma youth to thrive:

➜ Roma youth centres should be **rooted in the community** - designed with and for local Roma families so that they feel safe and supported.

➜ Multicultural festivals are a great way to **celebrate Roma culture** and **foster inclusion**, whether hosted inside Roma communities or in mainstream venues.

➜ Training both Roma and non-Roma youth in **Roma history, identity and culture** helps fight stereotypes and build respect.

➜ **Symbolic activities** like storytelling events, commemorations and art workshops can strengthen Roma pride and mutual understanding.

Partner with Civil Society and Mainstream Youth Structures

Invite civil society, including mainstream youth councils and organisations and other relevant stakeholders, to contribute to the implementation and evaluation of this recommendation;

What This Means

This recommendation highlights that Roma inclusion is **not just the job of governments**, civil society, youth councils, NGOs and Roma-led groups must all be equal partners. It calls for moving away from **top-down decision-making** to a **community development approach** rooted in dignity, autonomy and collective leadership. The vision is for Roma communities to become **self-managed**, with Roma youth leading initiatives and advocating for their own communities.

Reflection Questions

➜ How often are Roma organisations meaningfully involved in designing and evaluating policies?

➜ Are youth councils and NGOs actively including Roma youth voices or are they only symbolic partners?

➜ How can we create more **horizontal decision-making** spaces where Roma youth are equal leaders?

➜ What training or resources would Roma youth need to become community organisers and advocates?

Roma Youth Perspective

There is a need to **shift power to Roma youth**:

➜ Partnerships with mainstream organisations must be **real and equal**, not tokenistic.

➜ Shift power to Roma youth by creating inclusive, youth-led spaces where decisions are made together, not handed down. This empowers Roma youth as leaders, not just as "beneficiaries".

➜ Long-term community development programs should prioritize **training Roma youth as community organisers** who can manage their own initiatives.

➜ The ultimate goal is **self-sufficient Roma communities** that no longer depend on outside organisers for representation.

➜ Non-Roma organisations and allies play a key role but must work in solidarity: **"Nothing about us, without us"**.

Turn Guidelines into Real Policies and Funding

Adopt policies, measures and programmes and allocate adequate funding to implement the guidelines set out in the appendix to this recommendation;

What This Means

It's not enough to have good recommendations on paper - this calls for **real action** through policies, programs and long-term funding. Implementation must be coordinated at all levels - local, national, and European - and address not only inclusion policies but also **basic living conditions** like housing, access to water and poverty reduction. Roma youth need **visible, systemic change** that improves daily life, not just declarations of support.

Reflection Questions

➔ Are these recommendations being implemented in your community or are they only discussed at conferences?

➔ How do governments involve Roma youth in designing and monitoring policies?

➔ What basic needs must be met first to make education and participation possible for Roma youth?

➔ How can Roma youth influence funding priorities at local and national levels?

Roma Youth Perspective

There is a **gap between promises and reality:**

➔ Policies often sound progressive, but **grassroots realities** poverty, hunger, unsafe housing show that inclusion is far from being achieved.

➔ Many Roma communities face **extreme poverty**, which makes education and rights discussions feel distant. Basic needs must come first.

➔ Tokenism is a big issue: young Roma are often **invited for photo opportunities** but not genuinely included in decision-making.

➔ Examples of good practice, like the **French VIA model** (paid placements for young people) or **Ireland's national Roma education strategy**, show that sustainable programs work when **communities are consulted**.

➔ Programs must address **vocational and non-academic youth**, not only those in universities.

➔ Roma communities need to build **self-help networks** and solidarity, similar to how other ethnic groups organize during crises.

➔ Social media and cross-country platforms are key tools for Roma youth advocacy, but activists warned that **change takes time** and requires sustainable support.

➔ Historical reflection: Under communist regimes, Roma had better housing and jobs, while democracy has not yet delivered on its promises of equality. This raised hard questions about **systems failing Roma communities** even in modern Europe.

Address Intersectional Discrimination and Respect Roma Diversity

Ensure that all policies, measures and programmes related to this recommendation respect the diversity of Roma communities addressing, in particular, the intersectional discrimination faced by Roma girls, Roma women, LGBTI+ Roma, Muslim Roma and young Roma people living in isolated and rural communities;

What This Means

Not all Roma youth face discrimination in the same way. Many experience **intersectional discrimination** a combination of barriers based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or geography. For example, a Roma girl in a rural village may face sexism, antigypsyism and poverty all at once. This recommendation calls for **tailored solutions** to support every Roma youth, ensuring that inclusion policies meet **diverse needs** rather than applying a "one size fits all" approach.

Reflection Questions

→ Which Roma youth face the greatest barriers in your community (e.g., girls, LGBTI+ Roma, Muslim Roma, rural youth)?

→ Are there spaces where these young people feel safe, supported and heard?

→ How can policies and programs be adapted to reflect these diverse realities?

→ How can certifications, training and recognition of skills help Roma youth access education and jobs?

Roma Youth Perspective

Specific approaches are needed to create equity:

→ **Non-formal education** is often more effective for marginalized Roma youth because it builds trust, leadership and confidence outside traditional systems.

→ Programs must focus on **Roma girls and women**, offering mentorship, leadership training and paid internships to support their empowerment and visibility.

→ **Intersectional spaces** such as youth groups where Roma and non-Roma, LGBTI+ youth and religious minorities interact can foster understanding and solidarity.

→ Formal recognition of **skills and competencies** from voluntary roles, training programs and activism (like YouthPass or Erasmus+ certification) is essential for gaining jobs and credibility.

→ Visibility matters: certifications and skills gained by Roma youth should be recognized and marketed to employers, making it easier to access opportunities.

→ Online platforms and networks should be developed as **community hubs** for sharing training, resources and opportunities, especially for those in rural areas.

→ The Council of Europe was seen as a **protector of Roma rights** and should help ensure Roma inclusion in decision-making, including at the European Parliament level.

Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation of Roma Youth Policies

Strengthen the mechanisms to monitor and evaluate all policies, programmes and measures concerning Roma youth, ensuring transparency, accountability and meaningful participation of Roma youth in these processes;

What This Means

Policies for Roma youth often sound good on paper, but without proper **monitoring and evaluation**, they risk being ineffective or tokenistic. This recommendation calls for creating strong, independent systems to track progress, measure impact and ensure that Roma youth voices guide improvements. Transparency and accountability are key - **Roma youth should be active partners** in evaluating the policies and programs designed for them.

Reflection Questions

➜ Who currently monitors Roma youth programs in your area? Are these processes independent and trustworthy?

➜ How can Roma youth become more actively involved in evaluations?

➜ Are there systems for holding governments accountable if they fail to meet commitments?

➜ How can NGOs, youth groups and communities contribute data and feedback?

Roma Youth Perspective

➜ In many countries, **evaluations are not independent**: the same agencies that run programs are also tasked with evaluating them. This creates conflicts of interest and hides failures.

➜ Roma youth groups should be **trained and empowered** to participate in monitoring and evaluations, ensuring their realities are represented.

➜ Participants suggested that **NGOs and civil society** should work alongside government evaluators to create a full picture.

➜ Evaluation should go beyond counting "numbers" to measure **real impact on Roma lives** for example, improved access to education, jobs and participation.

➜ Transparency builds trust: if evaluations are public, communities can see what's working and push for changes where needed.

Promote Awareness of Roma History, Culture and Contributions

Promote knowledge, recognition, and respect for Roma history, language, culture and contributions, and ensure this is reflected in education, media and public life;

What This Means

This recommendation is about ensuring Roma heritage and achievements are **visible and celebrated**, not erased or stereotyped. Schools, media and cultural institutions should teach Roma history - including painful truths like the Roma Holocaust - while also highlighting Roma contributions to music, art, literature and society. Recognition combats stereotypes and builds pride among Roma youth.

Reflection Questions

→ What do young people in your community know about Roma history and culture?

→ Are Roma stories represented positively in school materials and the media?

→ How could Roma youth take part in shaping how their history is told?

→ What events or activities could make Roma heritage more visible locally?

Roma Youth Perspective

→ Participants stressed that many schools **do not teach Roma history** and when Roma are mentioned, it's often in a negative or limited context.

→ Cultural pride is a **powerful tool** against discrimination: Roma youth who know their history are more confident in advocating for themselves.

→ Commemorations (like **Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day**) should be organized widely, with Roma youth leading.

→ Art, music and storytelling projects are key ways to share Roma contributions with non-Roma communities.

→ Collaboration with cultural institutions and mainstream media is essential to **change narratives** about Roma people.

ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, 2025