

>>> The need for a safe place: Roma, Gypsy and Traveller LGBTIQ people online

Since early 2013, the group has started promoting the idea of Roma participation at various European pride events. Thus far, the members have not been able to participate in pride events as a group, mainly due to financial constraints and the geographic dispersal of the members. However, individual members have participated in pride events in their respective countries, encouraging and providing one another with ideas with regard to participation at events such as Paris, Bratislava and Prague Pride parades, and have been seeking allies among other ethnic minority LGBTIQ groups. The group plans to step up these efforts over time.

LGBTIQ Roma has been promoting Roma LGBTIQ-related events such as the May 2014 IGLYO and Transgender Europe (TGEU) study session “Equality in action: mobilising LGBTIQ youth around the Council of Europe Recommendation on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity”, or the June 2014 Council of Europe United for Dignity conference, or other Roma LGBTIQ groups and their activities, such as the Spanish “Ververipen – Roma for Diversity” or the Czech “ARA ART” in an attempt to make sure that our virtual initiatives are translated directly into the real world and grounded in reality. ARA ART is possibly one of the most dynamic LGBTIQ associations, represented by Czech Roma LGBTIQ activist and the Czech Green Party candidate David Tišer, whose life story is featured in the recent publication *Barabaripen/Equality: young Roma speak about multiple discrimination*. At the beginning of May 2014, ARA ART held the first ever Roma LGBTIQ event in central and eastern Europe. It brought together over 20 participants from across the Czech and Slovak Republics. The group is currently preparing events and activities for Prague Pride 2014, which will feature a Roma-themed and Roma-led vehicle for the first time in the history of Czech pride marches. Several members of the group LGBTIQ Roma are planning on attending as well. ARA ART envisages holding an international Roma LGBTIQ conference in spring 2015, which is currently in preparation.

The reader may wonder why the activities of other organisations are being mentioned here in detail although they are not organised by the group LGBTIQ Roma. The reason for doing so lies in the nature of and the freedom afforded by the virtual space, as well as in the fact that even though members of minority groups communicate and even form new groupings through the Internet, while living lives plagued by homophobia, transphobia and/or anti-Gypsyism, we rely on each other's solidarity and support in our struggle to achieve equality.

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DAVID TISER



Work in progress: youth work addressing multiple discrimination

By Mara Georgescu

Thanks to its mission and underlining values, youth work can have an important role in helping young people become aware of the forces that influence their lives and in working for their equality and access to a dignified life, therefore combating multiple discrimination.

What follows are some questions and hints for youth workers regarding how to deal with this problem of multiple discrimination, as well as some suggestions for action.

Your personal views about the various groups that young people belong to

What are your views about these groups?
What is your level of knowledge about their background and the problems they face?
How often do you discuss this with your colleagues and the young people themselves?

Ignorance, bias and prejudice are strong factors that can lead to reproducing discrimination towards young people or to not taking any action when discrimination affects young people. What should you do? Find information about these groups; look for their history, characteristics, etc. Ask the young people themselves. Create moments where young people can learn about given groups their peers may belong to (ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, etc.).

Your awareness of discrimination and racism

How much do you know about discrimination, which groups are victims, how it happens, legislation against it? Which groups of young people are seen as the “bad and the ugly” in the media, or in your neighbourhood? How much do you know about the agencies or organisations fighting discrimination? How much time do you spend talking with young people about these agencies and organisations or services that can support them in case of discrimination?

What should you do? Get training for yourself and your organisation on this topic and encourage young people to do the same! If you change your practice as a result of the training, then make sure to review its effects with young people and your colleagues.



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Your views about what you want to achieve with young people

How do you set your objectives with young people? What is the role of non-discrimination in your objectives with young people? The purpose of the educational or youth work you do with young people shapes very much the way you will deal with issues of discrimination. It is important to be aware of your role in shaping how young people themselves deal with discrimination.



What should you do? If you do not (yet) have the skills for fighting discrimination, then what you could do if young people raise this issue is to put them in contact with other organisations or agencies dealing with it.

Young people's identities and needs

What information do you collect from the young people and how do you deal with privacy? How do you collect information about aspects of a person's identity that are not visible? How do you work with other agencies that work with young people and also collect their information? How do you find out about young people's needs: do you guess, ask them, ask others, etc.? Do you associate any part of someone's identity with needs without checking? How much time do you dedicate to listening to young people's stories? How are conversations about young people's lives seen in your work? How prepared are you to ask questions about sensitive aspects of someone's life (for example, about experiencing violence)?



What should you do? Get informed about young people's rights to privacy and confidentiality. How much information are you really allowed to share with others?

Sexual orientation and gender identity

What questions do you ask about their gender identity and sexual orientation? What are the expectations from young girls? How much do you assume about young people's sexual orientation and gender identity?



What should you do? Get training about sexual orientation and gender identity, and once you feel confident, be ready to address this with young people in conversations.

Preventative youth work

When working with young people, how much time do you invest in preventing discrimination or social exclusion problems that may affect them? How much time do you invest in developing skills, supporting their self-esteem and personal development, their connection with other people, their access to services and rights or their resilience to discriminatory attitudes? What should you do?



Review the time spent with young people on their development and check with your organisation if more could be done in this area.

Human rights education

How much time do you dedicate to exploring with young people the nature of power and multiple discrimination, human rights and access to them, different value frameworks that exist in society and their influence on young people's lives? How much time do you spend with young people with the purpose of developing their attitudes towards others so that they do not discriminate?



What should you do? Get training if needed and invest some time in conversations with young people about this.



Connection and community

How much do you commit to connecting the young people you work with and other young people with whom they share one (or more) aspect(s) of their identity? How do you support young people's relationship and affective connection with their families? What should you do?



Invest some time in mapping relevant organisations and agencies and try to learn what they are doing that could be relevant for your young people. Encourage young people to discover these organisations and even volunteer in their activities.

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Working with young people when they express racist views, jokes, teasing, bullying or violence

What do you do if young people insult another one because of one (or more) aspect(s) of their identity? How do you engage with young people who hold discriminatory beliefs about other young people, if you do at all? How do you respond to racist remarks from the young people? How much do you work with the young people to develop non-discriminatory attitudes? What should you do?

Define what is acceptable and what is not with the young people and do not ignore discriminatory remarks. Be sensitive on how to address them and do not panic!

Long-term youth work and educational processes

How willing and ready are you and your organisation to engage in long-term youth work with young people who have been affected by discrimination? What access to supervision do you and your colleagues have? What should you do?

Review in your organisation what type of work you do with young people and the possibility to invest in long-term processes with them. In case this is not possible, try to connect young people who have suffered from discrimination with organisations that could provide them with support.

Mental well-being of young people

Being discriminated against can have strong effects on young people's self-esteem and does have a role in young people's mental health. How do you deal with this? How do you know how well the young people you work with are in their heads and heart? How do you find out? What should you do?

Learn more about mental well-being and try to be vigilant about how young people behave. Discuss this with young people in sensitive ways and provide them with information regarding agencies or organisations that could support them in case of mental health problems.

The accessibility of your work for the most vulnerable young people

How do you know you reach the young people who have the least access to services? How do you monitor this? If you work in a youth centre or another type of facility, how accessible is it? Can everyone feel welcome there? How do you approach young people in a supportive and inclusive way? How do you build trust and work with confidentiality and honesty? What should you do?

Start mapping the characteristics of the young people you reach and invest more time in outreach work. Review the first contact with young people to make sure it is respectful and builds trust. Reform the spaces you work in (get gender-neutral toilets for example).

Influencing (youth) policies and partnerships

How often do you inform policy makers, for example the municipality services dealing with youth, about new youth issues they should consider or problems for which they need to fund projects or initiatives? How much do you invest in networking with organisations that work on antidiscrimination and/or with specific youth groups? What should you do?

Get informed about the opportunities to discuss with the institutions or non-governmental organisations that do relevant work for young people.

This is not an exhaustive list. Adapt this list to your own issues, but most importantly do not turn a blind eye to discrimination! You have probably asked yourself most of these questions implicitly so do not panic that there are so many. Most of them fall in the realm of youth work practice. And if you got to this point of the article, it means you have a genuine interest to go on questioning yourself and improving your work, so cherish this!

Policies for hiring youth workers or educators in your organisation

How inclusive are the contractual policies in your organisation? How do you make sure the team of youth workers or educators team is balanced and diverse and it is also representative in terms of identities, while not only symbolically hiring people belonging to given groups? What should you do?

Review this for future initiatives so that your staff also reflects the diversity of the young people with whom you work.

The power of humanity

Do you have celebrations with the young people, just for the sake of celebrating their being young together? This kind of event can create a strong human bond and reinforce young people's self-esteem. What should you do?

Just do it!