



2021-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000029489

## RESTORE

# PROVIDE SOCIAL PATHWAYS FOR ROMA PEOPLE

**PR1: IDENTIFICATION OF CIVIC EDUCATIONAL MODELS FOR DEMOCRATIC  
PARTICIPATION OF ROMA ADULTS**

**NATIONAL REPORT – HUNGARY**

Erasmus+ Programme

KA220-ADU - Cooperation partnerships in adult education

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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## 1. Desk Research

### 1.1 The context and state of the art civic engagement of Roma adults in the country

The most comprehensive research on Roma in Hungary in recent years was carried out under the auspices of the University of Debrecen in 2017 (János et al, 2018). According to its findings, Roma represent approximately 9 % of the Hungarian population today, which is about 876,000 individuals, as opposed to the results of the population census in 2011, where only 315,583 individuals stated that they belong to the Roma community (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2011). Research in recent years has shown that Roma in Hungary experience severe discrimination in all spheres of their daily life. The exclusion faced by Roma women and children are particularly severe, given that they are among the most vulnerable and the targets of most human rights violations within the community.

The right to participation in public affairs and the right to vote have limitations for Roma people. The Minority Self-government System has still not been able to fulfill its mission and does not provide real political presentation. In Hungary, there are 1100 settlements where Minority Roma Self-governments are working (Civil society monitoring report, 2018), but these bodies do not replace the effective parliamentary political representation of Roma. The system still contributes to the exclusion of Roma from local governmental bodies.

### 1.2 Barriers to political participation and representation of Roma in Hungary.

The current legislation (Act No CCIII of 2011) makes it impossible in practice to win preferential nationality mandates from the nationality list. According to the Act, voters who register as members of a nationality may ask for their nationality registration to be extended to the parliamentary elections when submitting their registration. However, if they do so, they can only vote on a nationality list, and not a party list in addition to the vote given on an individual representative (Civil society monitoring report, 2018, p 12).



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Before the 2014 national elections, Roma organizations protested against registration, which led to general non-attendance and non-registration. If the nationality does not win the preferential nationality mandate, it is represented by a nationality advocate. The institution of advocate is not able to provide real political representation, since the advocate had no vote, and can only speak before/after the agenda, in special cases when the agenda item affects the interests and rights of the nationalities (Act No XXXVI of 2012 on the Parliament, 29. § (2)). The Roma advocate had 3 contributions between 2014-2018, and 20 contributions between 2018-2020. Although based on his contributions so far, it is questionable how effective and impartial is the representation that the Roma advocate provides. For instance, in 2018 in connection with the Sargentini Report's (Sargentini, 2018) concerns on Roma rights, he defended the government and claimed that Roma has never received more protection than during the current government (Farkas, 2018).

Deeply rooted anti-Roma sentiment and hate speech are still present in Hungary, discouraging Roma from participating in civic society, and thus many are excluded from participating in their local communities' decision-making, from knowing their rights and from representing themselves and their communities as citizens. The study of the Pew Research Centre in 2017 on religious belief and national belonging shows that 54 % of respondents in Hungary would not be willing to accept Roma as members of their family, 44 % as neighbors, and 27 % as citizens of their country (Pew Research Center, 2017). According to a report by the Committee against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), hate speech is not restricted to extremist parties and groups but occurs across the political spectrum (ECRI report on Hungary (fifth monitoring cycle), 2015).

### **1.3 The educational obstacles and skill gaps of Roma in Hungary regarding their political rights and civic participation.**



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In addition to widespread hateful discourses the other area where Roma children suffer the most is school segregation. In segregated schools — besides the fact that the mere existence of purely Roma classes, let alone schools, is discriminatory — the required staffing and resources are not available, either. The chances of children receiving education in these schools to progress on to further education are extremely low, which then adversely affects future generations on the labour market. Furthermore, participation in segregated education leads to lacking knowledge about one's rights, decreased levels of political participation in society and in the local community.

Although the government has not done any thorough investigation in more than 10 years on school segregation despite its well-known extension, smaller civil research shows the potential size of the problem. For instance, it was established in 2016 that in one of the sub-regions (Mátészalka), 11 out of 20 state funded public schools were segregated institutions (Zolnay, 2016).

Roma children are also overrepresented when it comes to interventions relating to social services, with disproportionate numbers taken from their families into foster care; reinstating them in their home is challenging, long-drawn-out and often overlooked by government stakeholders.

The last 10 years were the most devastating period for Romani students since the political change in the Hungarian education system. After the lowering of the mandatory school age, close to 15 per cent of 17-year old students dropped out of public education by 2017. Approximately two thirds of Roma young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are early school leavers, which contributes to the fact that Roma youths who are neither students nor employed is more than four times higher than for non-Roma youths (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2018). The Hungarian educational system today is not only not able to compensate for the disadvantages arising from a child's social background, but it is actually reinforcing them



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through the selection and segregation mechanisms present at all levels of public education (Civil society monitoring report, 2018).

In disadvantaged regions of the country the only opportunity to work is through public employment programmes, where Roma are also overrepresented. Given that public employment programmes are organized by local governments, instances of discrimination experienced in this area are often not reported by the victims, for fear of losing their benefits. Roma women are discriminated against across a range of situations, from employment to healthcare, both for being females and for belonging to the Roma community. Finally, housing discrimination, from segregated villages to ghettoized settlements in cities which do not meet even the most basic living standards, underscores many other discriminatory practices and contributes to a lack of opportunities of participating in local decision-making.

While the National Roma Strategy (Magyar Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkózási Stratégia 2030) dedicates a chapter to Roma identity, community building, attitude-shaping and rights enforcement, the strategy did not mention the importance of civic education, rather, it focuses on the preservation of identity, languages and culture. Although it mentions support provided to Roma NGOs, it neglects the fact that the programs realised from this financing never aim at increasing civic competences among Roma.

## **2. Summary of results from Online questionnaires for Roma adults**

The online survey was conducted using an online questionnaire with the contribution of the Romaversitas alumni in the period May-June 2022. A total of seven (7) Roma participants who stated from the beginning that they are interested in the community responded to the questionnaire, 4 of them women, 3 of them men, all between 25-39, having completed university, all of them currently employed.



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- out of 7, 3 knew about and participated in civic training programs.
- all 7 would like to participate in civic training programs.
- the most popular interest for participating in civic engagement programmes is to get better employment.
- all showed an interest for participating in civic engagement programmes and agreed that these increase Roma people involvement in democratic, cultural and community activities.
- no one has taken any online training courses before.
- only 2 stated that use of technology for training will add value to the level of civic engagement training to Roma people.
- civic engagement was very valuable to all, the contribution of civic engagement programmes to your sense of community also proved very valuable to all.
- training organisations that aim at (re)integrating the Roma people and enhancing their civic engagement mentioned: UCCU, Phiren Amenca, Diverse Youth Network.
- Roma people's civic engagement was regarded as low by all 7 participants.

### **3. Summary of results from Online questionnaires for professionals**

The online questionnaire survey was administered online to 10 professionals working with the Roma population (not exclusively) in Hungary, during the period May-June 2022. All of them were Hungarian nationals, 8 participants were women, 2 men, 8 participants belonged



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to the age category 25-39 years old, while 2 participants belonged to the age category 40-60 years old. All of them finished university education.

- the educators trained or supported the Roma people in the following areas: skills training (6), psychological support (5), democratic and inclusion support (4)
- 8 out of 10 educators engaged with training Roma for more than 7 years
- all 10 were aware of any civic training programmes in their community
- all agreed that there is a need for civic training programmes for the Roma people
- 5 thought civic training programmes are valuable in enhancing civic education outcomes, while 5 of some value
- all thought they are adequately trained to support Roma with education, information or citizen support
- all have been able to access training resources for the Roma people
- 7 thought educational resources are valuable for their work as a civic engagement trainer, 2 said they are of some value
- 6 used technology based civic engagement instruction before
- 6 stated that the use of technology for training add value to the level of civic engagement training, 4 didn't know
- all 10 stated they face no language barrier
- 5 stated they provide information about the social, cultural & diversity services available to Roma
- 2 update themselves with the civic education training models in the EU, 8 less often





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- any training organisations that aim at reintegrating the Roma people and enhancing their civic engagement mentioned: Romaversitas, Roma Residential College Network, Autonomia Foundation, UCCU, Phiren Amenca
- all respondents classified Roma people's civic engagement as low
- How often do you create awareness about democratic participation among the Roma?  
more often answered by 8, less often answered by 2
- 3 evaluate their civic training program for the Roma, 7 don't
- main barrier of Roma people participation in civic engagement activities: lack of compensation for their time mentioned 5 times

#### **4. Summary of results from Organized focus group / interviews with Roma adults**

The participating university students are all involved in some volunteer activities. They study sociology, social work and German teaching. All of them come from the countryside and currently live in a residential hall. Maintaining contact with their parents is troublesome, they pay them monthly visits. Parents have a low educational qualification, they are divorced or passed away. From the participants, two have two Roma parents, while the third only has a Roma father. Parents of all three students live in poverty, with health problems. Two of them speak Romani, but they use Hungarian at home and in the wider community. All three of them learnt the Romani language.

Participants agreed that they define civic participation as volunteering, and all of them recently participated in various campaigns and activities, e.g. vaccination campaign targeting Roma population, discussions in high schools about stereotypes and discrimination, participation in youth programs of Phiren Amenca and Political Capital, volunteering at SOS



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Children Villages. Two participants were mainly active in their local community, while the third was in Budapest, in his host city.

The main barrier to civic participation in all participants' views is the lack of time. Despite this barrier, they join the activities of civil society groups offering Roma-related programs (e.g. city walks in the 8th district, Roma history, Roma Holocaust). Occasionally, they are politically active as well, for instance they took part in the pre-selection phase of the elections, represented political parties abroad, organised an LGBT-seminar. All participants also work in study halls, where they mentor disadvantaged youth.

They emphasise once again that the biggest barrier to participation in the work of NGOs is the lack of available time, as many study and work as well.

When asked about disadvantages experienced in accessing rights, all of them mention education, specifically high school teachers steering them away from a high-level high school exam and entering higher education. In most cases, their choice of university course was not met with the support of their teachers. Also, they recount the experience of not being provided extra help in preparation for these university courses.

During high school, participants also emphasised that they received a very negative Roma image (especially during history lessons and spirituality education). One participant mentioned that he received offensive words when he made friends with other Roma students. Those who were proud of being Roma faced bullying and isolation, e.g. being called filthy, Roma music was mocked.

Belonging to the EU manifests in the strong national Hungarian identity and local community values, especially typical Hungarian dishes. Being Hungarian makes participants proud and compensates the discrimination suffered. Participants emphasised Roma values, including dancing, culture and arts, which all contribute to the wholeness of being Hungarian and builds the prestige of the country.



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European values mentioned were the following: democracy, democratic rights, striving for equality, equal treatment, the creation and maintaining of democratic principles.

Role models within the Roma community were mentioned in connection to civil society organisations, such as Integrom, Uccu, Phiren Amenca, Romaversitas, SOS Children Villages, Romani Design, Political Capital. During these programs, many of them met role models who gave them a confidence boost and also helped them realise that they can reach for an academic degree.

Challenges experienced in an upskilling civic education program in their community included lacking motivation and finances, lessening the dissatisfaction of participants with their lives.

## **5. Summary of results from Organized focus group / interviews with professionals**

The focus group was conducted with three trainers in the field of civic education, two of whom graduated in social work, one of them in cultural anthropology and sociology. All three of the participants extensively work with Roma adults.

Participants highlighted that the general level of civic competencies are relatively low in the country, and this applies to the Roma population as well, however, the young generation is more equipped with skills and knowledge with regards to civic participation. According to the participants, the lack of civic participation is specific to people living in poverty and experiencing exclusion. People living in extreme poverty are often totally powerless and lack sufficient resources to enforce their rights, but at the same time many develop special survival techniques and do whatever is in their capacity to stand up for themselves. Also, some have a high level of agency and determination in one sphere in their lives, while lack the same agility in others. In sum, the poorer someone is the less quality education they



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access, including civic education. In the 1990s, many programs focused on civic participation, today this has a decreasing tendency.

It is important to distinguish 3 levels of basic competences: 1) information gained primarily through education 2) skills which need practice and 3) attitudes. This latter is the hardest to obtain as many young people feel powerless even to imagine that they have rights and access to these rights. Changing attitudes is also often blocked by transgenerational patterns, thus educators in the field of civic participation need to consider the whole community. Anger coming from belonging to multiple marginalised groups can also catalyse action. Thinking in community is also essential as there is a risk of becoming „lonely warriors“.

Important skills that were highlighted for civic education are the following:

- believing that the trained persons are capable to develop skills and grow
- authenticity: to walk the talk and being an active citizen, „education is authentic co-living“
- being a role model in the community
- knowledge on the community of the trained persons
- bridge function: connecting people and initiatives
- mirror function: mirroring back where the person is at and what feasibility their development has
- ability to listen.

Challenges occurring in civic education include time, which is needed to shape attitudes. Often there is no sufficient time and resources, including financing for longer training programs and follow-up. Trainers often also lack the skills, commitment and proactivity to plan for the long-term and accompany projects born in training programs. Another skill that trainers should have but often lack is the adaptation of information to the group/community's needs and understanding of participants' personal journey.



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Participants mentioned Council of Europe Youth Department training materials, including SALTO training manuals and toolkits, Compass, All Equal All Different. In Hungary, a debating methodology from DIA Association is available. There are several forum theater methodologies available for conflict resolution and debating.

Challenges related to working with members of the Roma community include the necessity to adapt materials to their language used, especially with people coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds or younger groups. When trainers are Roma themselves, the group often see being Roma and a facilitator at the same time as conflictous roles.

Participants do not extensively use EU training materials. Innovative training methods that participants used in their work and could be adopted to improve Roma civic engagement includes drama pedagogy, simulation and improvisation. Underprivileged groups tend to have difficulties verbalising problems, thus drama-based methods, e.g. Forum Theatre by Augusto Boal are excellent tools. It is also preferred by participants to run sessions that focus on Roma identity and in which participants get the chance to meet other generations of Roma as well, including role models. Organising free time activities that participants usually do not have access to, e.g. exhibitions or theater visits, are also regarded as very important and can deepen the knowledge gained during the trainings. Participants also emphasised the importance of incubating small projects. In sum, the wider the spectrum of the training is the more successful it will be.

## **6. Conclusions and recommendations: Skills gaps and needs identification**

### **Gaps:**

- lack of systemic programming in the field of civic education, especially for Roma target groups by NGOs due to funding constraints, even when these are organised, participants don't get their time compensated
- lack of systemic training programs for civic participation educators



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- civic education is not an initiative mentioned in the National Roma Inclusion Strategy 2030
- no participatory civic education sessions built in the state curriculum

**Recommendations:**

- Skills building programs for Roma activists and local elected representatives so they can communicate with and engage citizens, advocate for priority issues, and develop realistic legislative and policy options. This will require more projects to enhance the skills of grassroots activists as well as broad-based civic education. NGOs must train and cultivate young Roma leaders and conduct local civic education projects for Roma.
- Financial and other resources to help activists educate and mobilize Roma through public awareness and information programs, advocacy campaigns and community development projects.
- Access to elected office, most notably through mainstream political parties that must not only open the door to Roma but actively invite them in. Parties must have better outreach strategies and designated liaisons to Roma communities and NGOs. They must publicly and meaningfully address the situation of Roma through platforms, policy proposals and legislation.



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## 7. List of Best practices

### No 1.

<b>Name of Best Practice:</b>	<b>Pécs Pride by Diverse Youth Network</b>
<b>Country:</b>	Hungary
<b>Short Description: (300 words max)</b>	<p>Diverse Youth Network builds connections between people and communities to articulate diversity and versatility, and to inspire joint co-operations and initiatives among youth. Different groups of society share the following core values to generate increase levels in resources, synergies and capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- stand up against inequality, stigmatization and all means of discrimination</li> <li>- contribute to empowerment by strengthening active citizenship and encouraging community participation</li> <li>- determined and open-minded about changing general attitudes and shaping positive public opinions</li> <li>- prioritize their communities` culture and tradition that create values</li> <li>- committed to preserve and strengthen individual and community identity.</li> </ul> <p>Since 2021, Diverse Youth Network has organised a Human Rights Festival in Pécs, Hungary, connected with the holding of Pécs Pride, the first Pride Festival in the country outside of Budapest. The organisers involve young Roma adults in all phases of the event, from conceptualisation to realisation. During this experience, participants increase their skills in active citizenship, community building, online and offline organising. Besides developing these skills, the event also promotes a culture of dialogue between Roma and non-Roma communities who have the chance to work together to build capacity, synergies and cooperation in local communities.</p>
<b>Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice (250 words max)</b>	<p>A young Roma-led group that organises roundtables, community events with the participation of youth on a variety of issues, e.g. on the situation of Roma women, LGBT rights, intersectionality, etc. The project contributes to awareness raising for Roma, local communities, and local authorities on a variety of human rights issues, exploring opportunities for cooperation and peaceful coexistence.</p>

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<b>How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred (250 words max)</b>	All their actions are underlined by the principle of intersectionality and youth participation, which could be an important theme for other self-organising initiatives as well.
<b>Website link:</b>	<a href="http://diverseyouthnetwork.eu/">http://diverseyouthnetwork.eu/</a>
<b>More info:</b>	NA

## No2.

<b>Name of Best Practice:</b>	<b>Walking tours in Budapest by UCCU Roma Informal Educational Foundation</b>
<b>Country:</b>	Hungary
<b>Short Description: (300 words max)</b>	<p>Roma-related stereotypes and prejudices are wide-spread and general in Hungary. Due to the school- and residential segregation and the socioeconomic differences, besides the media-shown distortions, the internet-spread hate campaigns and other non-credible sources, an average non-Roma has little chance to gain factual knowledge about Roma. Uccu Roma Informal Educational Foundation (Uccu), a Hungarian Roma led civil society organization works in the field of nonformal education, social dialogue, volunteerism, and community building since 2010. Uccu is present in 4 cities of Hungary: Budapest, Pécs, Miskolc-Ózd. The mission of Uccu is to combat prejudices and stereotypes related to Roma thus contributing to a more tolerant and open society. Therefore, the organization has a double target group focusing on the community and leadership building of young Roma volunteers by offering them a supportive and safe environment, strengthening their identity, providing a sense of belonging and personal development. Roma youth learn nonformal educational methods, the usage of their personal narratives for storytelling and managing discriminative, racist situations.</p> <p>These Roma youth are actively included in the creation and implementation of walking tours in district 8 of Budapest, a district with high Roma population in the capital, provided for mainly non-Roma youth and adults. The guided tour explores the subjects of Roma identity,</p>





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	culture, and history by offering real knowledge, personal stories, and first-hand experiences to launch a platform for meeting and engaging in a meaningful conversation.
<b>Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice (250 words max)</b>	Innovative methods used, such as city tours that are attractive to non-Roma audiences and direct empowerment of Roma young adults in their activities.
<b>How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred (250 words max)</b>	Their methodology of including Roma youth and training them to run sensitization workshops and guided tours is to be used potentially in other contexts as well.
<b>Website link:</b>	<a href="https://www.uccualapitvany.hu/en/">https://www.uccualapitvany.hu/en/</a>
<b>More info:</b>	NA

**No3.**

<b>Name of Best Practice:</b>	<b>Holocaust Remembrance trainings by Phiren Amenca Network</b>
<b>Country:</b>	Hungary
<b>Short Description: (300 words max)</b>	<p>Phiren Amenca is a network of Roma and non-Roma volunteers and voluntary service organizations creating opportunities for non-formal education, dialogue, and engagement, in order to challenge stereotypes and racism. Phiren Amenca network creates opportunities for young Roma and non-Roma to live and engage in local communities and projects for up to one year. Placement themes may include youth and sport activities, social inclusion, arts and culture, environment, and human rights. In exchange for their engagement, the volunteers can benefit from an unforgettable life experience, intercultural learning, non-formal education, and new language skills. The members and partners of Phiren Amenca follow a strong mission to create opportunities for non-formal education, dialogue, and engagement to challenge stereotypes and racism.</p> <p>Phiren Amenca regularly organises training sessions in Auschwitz, Poland to educate young Roma from all across Europe and the world on the Roma Holocaust, its historical legacy and equip participants with skills</p>



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	and knowledge to raise awareness on the impact of the genocide in their local communities.
<b>Trends and Potential Benefits from this Best Practice (250 words max)</b>	International operation connecting young Roma and non-Roma across countries. Its international dimension is exemplary in fostering cross-country and European solidarity of various Roma groups.
<b>How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred (250 words max)</b>	Its non-formal education methods and focus on the often underdiscussed parts of Roma history could be transferred to other civic education projects as well.
<b>Website link:</b>	<a href="https://phirenamenca.eu/">https://phirenamenca.eu/</a>
<b>More info:</b>	NA

**No4.**

<b>Name of Best Practice:</b>	<b>Holocaust Remembrance trainings by Phiren Amenca Network</b>
<b>Country:</b>	Hungary
<b>Short Description: (300 words max)</b>	<p>Phiren Amenca is a network of Roma and non-Roma volunteers and voluntary service organizations creating opportunities for non-formal education, dialogue, and engagement, in order to challenge stereotypes and racism. Phiren Amenca network creates opportunities for young Roma and non-Roma to live and engage in local communities and projects for up to one year. Placement themes may include youth and sport activities, social inclusion, arts and culture, environment, and human rights. In exchange for their engagement, the volunteers can benefit from an unforgettable life experience, intercultural learning, non-formal education, and new language skills. The members and partners of Phiren Amenca follow a strong mission to create opportunities for non-formal education, dialogue, and engagement to challenge stereotypes and racism.</p> <p>Phiren Amenca regularly organises training sessions in Auschwitz, Poland to educate young Roma from all across Europe and the world on the Roma Holocaust, its historical legacy and equip participants with skills</p>



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<b>How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred (250 words max)</b>	Its non-formal education methods and focus on the often underdiscussed parts of Roma history could be transferred to other civic education projects as well.
<b>Website link:</b>	<a href="https://phirenamenca.eu/">https://phirenamenca.eu/</a>
<b>More info:</b>	NA

**No5.**

<b>Name of Best Practice:</b>	<b>Awareness raising through fashion by Romani Design</b>
<b>Country:</b>	Hungary
<b>Short Description: (300 words max)</b>	<p>Romani Design is a Roma-founded, Roma-led, community-based fashion label, with complementary educational activities targeting Roma young people, especially women. In addition to designing a unique brand of clothing and accessories influenced by Romani wear traditions, Romani Design is also dedicated to providing local education by hosting creative classes for disadvantaged children and youth and editing and publishing Glinda, a Roma youth magazine.</p> <p>In its talent support program, participants receive mentoring to develop their own visual storytelling projects, through which they can influence their local communities, including non-Roma members, by showcasing their cultural heritage in modern interpretations. Participants have realised various photo shoots, community events and social media campaigns to this date.</p>
<b>Trends and Potential Benefits from</b>	<p>Fashion is a very core part of cultural identity, and its use can show how rich Roma traditions are to both Roma and non-Roma communities.</p> <p>Many young Romani people are interested in fashion, thus creative storytelling activities attract a lot of interest from the Roma community.</p>

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<b>this Best Practice (250 words max)</b>	
<b>How this Best Practice could be used/ transferred (250 words max)</b>	Several youth/educational Roma organisations could use the Romani-method: storytelling through arts and design.
<b>Website link:</b>	<a href="https://romani.hu/en">https://romani.hu/en</a>
<b>More info:</b>	NA



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