

ENGAGE - USING CONTACT INTERVENTIONS TO PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT
AND MOBILISATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



Analysis of examples of best practices of intergroup contact, anti-Gypsyism and mobilization for social change of Roma and non-Roma in Hungary

Best Practice Selection Report (WP2)

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Summary

This report offers a selection of the three best practices aimed at reducing antigypsyism and mobilizing Roma and non-Roma people (as allies) for social change in Hungary. During the selection of the practices, related scientific literatures, a methodology of qualitative research based on interviews with involved agents (professionals, Roma participants and Roma activists) and the analysis of documents from the institutions implementing the best practices were used. The selected three best practices come from the following organizations: the Uccu Roma Informal Educational Foundation, the Phiren Amenca and the Independent Theatre Hungary. These best practices target both directly and indirectly the intergroup and aim to increase knowledge about the Roma history and culture thereby reducing the stereotypes and associated prejudices and making inequality visible as well as reinforcing the positive group identity of Roma and their opportunities for social participation and politics.

Introduction and goals

Despite the great advances derived from decades of scientific research in the development of effective methods for the reduction of prejudice and the resolution of conflicts, and in spite of the EU policies and mandates that promote the inclusion of Roma, we can conclude that there is no substantial change in the socio-structural position of the Roma population in Europe or in the levels of awareness and mobilization of European citizens (Roma and non-Roma) to promote the defense of Roma rights.

In the ENGAGE project, social psychologists, sociologists and social intervention professionals who work in the field of antigypsyism and Roma empowerment belonging to three European countries (Hungary, Slovakia and Spain), meet with the objective and the commitment to contribute so that the different involved agents (stakeholders) can successfully deal with antigypsyism, as well as understand and promote the factors involved in raising awareness and mobilization of Roma people and non-Roma as allies for the achievement of a more egalitarian social change.

This commitment is based on a concern about growing discrimination, an increase in anti-Roma hate speech, a segregation of Roma people across Europe in different contexts (educational, cultural, work or housing) and/or an indifference towards the situation of the Roma population by the majority group members. All of these issues hamper efforts for social inclusion and equality. The ENGAGE project tries to understand what factors are involved in the lack of socio-political participation of Roma and non-Roma people for the promotion of socioeconomic equality, as well as to study the positive and negative effects that can derive from contact experiences between Roma and non-Roma people. The ultimate goal is to understand which intervention strategies can effectively change the existing intergroup relations and reduce social inequalities.

There is broad psychosocial evidence that positive intergroup contact improves intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). It has been shown how the experiences of contact (direct or indirect) with members of disadvantaged social groups are related to less prejudice and negative emotions towards the members of these groups, as well as, in some cases, with greater support for egalitarian policies (e.g., Pettigrew et al., 2011). These contact experiences can be direct, interacting face-to-face with members of a group other than their own, or indirect contact, without the need for that face-to-face contact, but through vicarious contact or through the

visualization of materials with the presence of disadvantaged group members or on their perspective and experiences.

Recent research shows that, while positive contact can improve attitudes, it can also reduce the commitment and mobilization of minority groups to defend their rights (Becker, Wright, Lubensky, & Zhou, 2013; Hässler et al., 2020; Wright & Lubensky, 2009), so it is vitally important to know what effects intergroup contact interventions have for members of disadvantaged groups.

The main **OBJECTIVES** of this analysis are to present a description of different interventions for the inclusion of the Roma population in Hungary, justifying in each case why it should be considered an example of good practice for:

1. Addressing the problem of antigypsyism and the indifference of the non-Roma majority.
2. Promoting the empowerment of Roma identity and/or the social and political participation of Roma people.
3. Raising awareness about inequality and/or mobilize non-Roma people as allies for social change.

Method

Best practice examples cannot always be identified from the study of their direct impact through scientific research, but rather by using a combination of different forms of evaluation, which were the ones that determined the method used for this analysis. They are as follows:

- To identify the psychological processes to which the intervention is directed and to connect them with the theoretical foundations and the corresponding experimental results existing in the previous literature about these processes.
- Carrying out a qualitative evaluation of the interventions from the perspective of the main involved agents. To this end, we interviewed the professionals in charge of implementing these best practice examples, participants of these interventions (trying to capture the perspective of Roma participants as long as they were part of the target population) and the perspective of the main Roma activists of the country.
- To critically assess whether the methodology used in each practice is appropriate to reduce antigypsyism and to promote Roma empowerment and participation in social change.

To achieve the objective of selecting examples of best practices, the team of researchers and social intervention professionals worked in a coordinated manner following these guidelines:

1. To search through formal means as for example websites, public reports of social intervention activities and the main accessible documentation of the entities that work in Hungary to promote equality for Roma.
2. Establishment of the **PRE-SELECTION CRITERIA FOR EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES:**
 - They are based on experiences of contact (direct or indirect) between Roma and non-Roma people.
 - Their goal is to reduce negative attitudes towards the Roma.
 - They promote social equality of the Roma population through strategies that promote cultural recognition, identity empowerment, awareness of the existing social inequalities, social and political participation of Roma or pro-Roma social activism.
3. Pre-selection of among five to ten examples of best practices based on intergroup contact of Roma and non-Roma in each country.
4. Discussion and selection of the three best practice examples in each country that reflect better the pre-established criteria.
5. Carrying out and analyzing the interviews with the agents involved in the best practices (1 professional from each example, 1 participant from each example and 10 Roma activists) in each country.
6. In-depth analysis and description of the selected best practices supported by prior theoretical and experimental knowledge.

Results



**UCCU ROMA INFORMAL EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION, HUNGARY**

<https://www.uccualapitvany.hu/en/>

<https://www.uccusetak.hu/en/>

<https://www.facebook.com/uccuromainformalisoktatasialapitvany/>

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

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 non-formal educational methods, the usage of their personal narratives for storytelling and managing discriminative, racist situations. These Roma youth are actively included in the creation and implementation of the main activities of Uccu: the workshops and walks provided for the 2nd target group: non-Roma youth and adults. The activities explore the subjects of Roma identity, 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.



THE UCCU WORKSHOP

NAME	TARGET	CONTACT	PURPOSE	IMPACT	SCOPE	PERIOD
Uccu Workshop https://www.uccu.alapitvan.hu/en/	Roma and non-Roma	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dialogue between Roma and non-Roma without taboos - Challenge and reduce stereotypes - Empower Roma - Sharing factual knowledge about Roma 	Strengthened debate culture, critical thinking, more open way of thinking and behavior, better understanding of inequalities experienced by Roma	National Local	2010 - now

The Uccu workshop offered for educational institutions is unique and gap filling in Hungary due to its target, aim and method. The workshops are designed and led by the Roma volunteers of the organization, who are dedicated, enthusiastic and well prepared of non-formal educational methods acquired during their continuous trainings. Through dialogue and direct contact with the Roma youth, non-Roma participants receive a credible, authentic, first-hand experience, which can assist in combatting their prejudices and stereotypes.

Target: the main direct target of this best practice is non-Roma youth, young adults, but it also addresses Roma youth due to the issue of internalized stereotypes. Besides, the workshop indirectly affects the educational institutions, teachers, professions, the parents, friends and relatives of the participants.

Scope: Uccu has average of 35 volunteers. The Uccu workshop is a national initiative, which is mainly implemented locally in Hungary. Generally, Uccu reaches approximately 1500-2000 students per year through its workshops and 1000 adults by its walks.

Aim: The workshop aims to create a safe and interactive space without taboos where participants can freely share their opinions, experience and ask their Roma related questions that they never dared or could not ask, even if it is stereotypical and prejudiced. The workshop highlights that everyone possesses prejudices and helps to admit and deal with it. Additionally, the aim of the workshop is to introduce the diversity of Roma society to the students to challenge their stereotypes, misconceptions, and attitudes towards the Roma by sharing real knowledge and

information about Roma identity, culture and history. Telling personal stories of experienced discriminatory and racist practices, atrocities by the Roma facilitator empowers them and assist participants in understanding the inequality experienced by Roma.

Method: During the 90-minute workshop, non-formal educational methods, interactive games are used to provide an opportunity for open discussion and genuine dialogue with the young Roma volunteer who is leading the workshop. Historical and cultural facts of Roma and personal stories are also being shared. The workshop initiates a strengthened debate culture, critical thinking, more open attitudes and behavior, more tolerant way of thinking.

Limitations of the best practice consist of the time shortage of the workshop and that the return to the same class and students is not guaranteed, thus long-term work with the participants is limited.

Why is it considered to be a best practice: This workshop reduces antigypsyism by providing non-Roma with real knowledge and information about Roma. This best practice assists its participants to freely talk about their perceptions of Roma and points out that everyone has prejudices. Also, during the workshop the encountering Roma youth and their personal stories, and discussing Roma related questions assist non-Roma to be more socially sensitive, have more empathy and see the bigger picture. This best practice empowers Roma youth as well and increase their social engagement by offering them knowledge and awareness of the Roma culture and identity, providing them social capital and opportunities to be active and encourage them to stand up and raise their voices in regards of different social and structural inequalities. In terms of impact on the Roma, this practice contributes to empowering them, being proud of their origins and culture, and strengthening their identity.

Participants said:

"I wish we talked more often about this topic because it's very important"

"I've learnt a lot of new things about Roma"



PHIREN AMENCA NETWORK, HUNGARY, EUROPE

<https://phirenamenca.eu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/PhirenAmencia>

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Phiren Amencia 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 Amencia 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 Amencia follow a strong mission to create opportunities for non-formal education, dialogue and engagement in order to challenge stereotypes and racism.

SO KERES EUROPA? WHAT'S UP EUROPE? SEMINAR

NAME	TARGET	CONTACT	PURPOSE	IMPACT	SCOPE	PERIOD
So Keres Europa?! https://phirenamenca.eu/	Roma and non-Roma	Direct	-Amplify Roma youth voices -Strengthen activism of Roma youth -Call to action of decision and policy makers	Strengthened Roma youth movement and collective actions, capacity of Roma organizations	International European	2015 2017 2019 2022 -

The So keres, Europa?! - Roma Youth Social Forum is organized every 2nd year by Phiren Amencia and its members and takes the actual European Youth Capital as an opportunity to destroy negative images about Roma in Europe and to bring international attention to the raising antigypsyism. It is promoting the importance of the recognition of challenging antigypsyism by education and by activities and initiatives lead by young people. Phiren Amencia organized its first "So keres, Europa?! event in 2015 in Cluj-Napoca, Romania - a European Youth Capital.

Target: The direct target and participants of So keres Europa are Roma, but the target audience of the seminar are non-Roma as well. The event indirectly targets the European citizens, MEP, decision and policy makers.

Scope: The one-week event takes place in the European Youth Capital program series, organized internationally mainly including 10-12 countries and 150-500 participants.

Aim: The project aimed to raise the voice of Roma youth on a European level, to create debate, reflection and common engagement of Roma and non-Roma youth activists, to strengthen an international structure of volunteers, and to raise the visibility of Roma youth self-organization among youth organizations. The event aims to contribute to the Roma Youth Action Plan by strengthening the Roma youth movement and activism, and building the capacity of Roma youth organizations.

Method: Workshops are led by experts and activist about human rights education



and community activism, remembrance education and showcased educational tools and presented best practices. Participants enlivened the European Youth Capital with community actions, flash mobs, exhibitions and cultural events organized in order to build bridges between Roma and non-Roma communities. The closing festival

where international music bands and dance groups performed in front of hundreds of local people, invited guests and participants. Besides the performances an advocacy group formulates and shares recommendations and suggestions that they sent to the European Parliament and to EU member state governments.

Limitations: The working language of the event is English. Although translation is provided during the event, limited accessibility can occur due to possible language barriers.

Why is it considered to be a best practice: The seminar promotes the engagement on collective action of Roma people and call to action for allyship from decision and policy makers through the policy recommendations and action plans written by Roma youth. The event reduces antigypsyism and structural inequalities by amplifying the voices of Roma youth strengthening their skills, self-confidence, holding workshop about Human Rights, stereotypes and prejudices and raising awareness of social issues by collective actions and events within the Roma and non-Roma community. This best practice educates and sensitizes the majority society to break down stereotypes and makes them aware of the inequalities and discrimination suffered by the Roma.

Participants said:

"Raising our voices and making actions together with my Roma peers against racism gave me strength"

"We can all be changemakers together"



**independent
theater**

INDEPENDENT THEATER HUNGARY, HUNGARY

<https://independenttheater.hu/en/about-us/>

<https://www.facebook.com/IndependentTheaterHungary>

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Independent Theater Hungary has been operating since 2007. Their aim is to start a conversation about social issues affecting Roma, this way drawing attention to personal responsibility: what individuals can do to improve the current situation. Their mission is to help underprivileged Roma and non-Roma people become successful artists, trainers, or professionals in whichever field they work but first and foremost: help them become active citizens. Independent Theater Hungary wants that different groups can understand and accept each-other and can create values together so that the young people in the future can find authentic pieces of art about today's society. It's important for them to show how colorful the Roma theatre is, how many different topics are covered and what a wide range of genres are combined in it. They aim at creating pieces of art that reflect on social challenges and educate and support underprivileged young people so that they can become successful professionals and active citizens. To realize this mission, they are working on the implementation of new and people-oriented artistic initiatives that respond to social issues and include underprivileged people.

ROMA HEROES WORKSHOP

NAME	TARGET	CONTACT	PURPOSE	IMPACT	SCOPE	PERIOD
Roma Heroes Workshop https://independenttheater.hu/en/about-us/	Roma and non-Roma	Direct	-Making Roma and non-Roma youth aware of their personal responsibilities -Strengthen personality, identity and capacity of Roma youth -Assisting Roma youth to become successful artists, trainers, or professionals	Strengthened self-consciousness, pride and Roma identity, self-aware trained, and empowered Roma youth	National European	2017, online from 2020 -

Roma Heroes Workshop was created based the selection of Roma monodrama volumes collected after the world's only international Roma theater festival, which was organized by the Independent Theatre Hungary since 2017. The workshop is available online from 20th March 2020. It helps young people to get to know and discuss the variegation, challenges and values of Roma plays, Roma dramatic heroes and communities. Furthermore, it helps discover the hero in themselves and in their environment by introducing their own stories with creative tools.

Target: Main target is Roma youth who can be active shapers of the world in which they live. The non-Roma is also a target of the best practice, so they encounter activism and a narrative of responsibility.

Scope: National and European. They have respectively reached out to 1,800 participants from approximately 100 high school, Roma university groups in Hungary and abroad.

Aim: The "hero" and the "heroism" carry positive narratives, while many people think of Roma people and communities as victims. Hence, the aim of the best practice is to shape this perception and attitudes of Roma and non-Roma youth, to empower Roma youth and to draw the attention of non-Roma youth to their personal responsibilities when it comes to inequalities.

Method: The discussion is about heroes in general: who can be a hero and why. Then



the participants get acquainted with four Roma plays, which were written by Roma people, are addressed to the Roma but not only to them. The youth get to know the heroes and analyze them. Then, the focus shifts to the participants' own heroes and hero stories and are processed through the creation of creative tools, theatre scenes, fine arts, which are presented and reflected on by

the group.

Limitations: This best practice is considered to be new, thus possible lessons learnt for further improvements cannot be fully identified yet.

Why is it considered to be a best practice: The workshop increases the engagement of Roma, by empowering them and enabling young people to identify their own heroes living in their environment and to articulate their own heroic deeds in the form of creative products. It also reduces antigypsyism by discussing and raising awareness of social issues that affect Roma through drama pedagogy working with Roma youth, Roma actors and actresses and developing educational materials as well. This best practice raises awareness of different social issues that Roma people still face and experience and make them more visible and understandable for non-Roma audience.

Participants said:

"Everyone can be the hero of their own lives."

"We can be inspired by everyday stories in everyday life."

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Antigypsyism is greatest obstacle that Roma face on everyday basis in every field of their life: education, housing, health and employment. The above-mentioned best practices by strengthening the identity, self-consciousness and awareness of Roma can assist them to deal with discriminative and racist practices.
- Focusing on increasing empathy among the majority population with Roma people, making them understand their own prejudices and the complexity of social issues multiply affecting Roma people may be one of the most effective tools to fight antigypsyism.
- Policies regarding the Roma need to directly target Roma and the issues they face, as well as include Roma in the planning, designing and implementation phase.
- Interventions can be effective for some individuals, but not for others. Furthermore, some interventions can be effective in some contexts, but not in others. Some interventions aim to increase empathy, some to draw attention to individual responsibility and others to encourage taking actions. Sensitization is considered to be the first step, encouraging engagement and highlighting the active role of individual and social responsibility are on next level, they can only come after a certain understanding is achieved. Therefore, the expectation of an intervention that targets all the above-mentioned points at the same extent is non-viable.
- During the selection of the best practices, it was highly important to find interventions that are design and implemented by Roma targeting Roma and non-Roma in order to give these best practices and the existing socioeconomic inequality experienced by Roma more visibility. Including Roma professionals in the interventions, both in design and implementation can generate a positive group identity and a more successful intervention.
- As further conclusions drawn from the best practices, it is highly important to ensure the continuity of interventions over time and to guarantee equality of power and spaces for participation and implementation of the intervention.
- This selection of good practices can be useful for the different stakeholders involved working with the Roma and non-Roma in educational and community centers with the aim of reducing discrimination and promoting egalitarian social change, such as professionals, psychologists, social workers, educators or mediators in social services, NGOs or other social entities, as well as for decision and policy makers and other actors involved in public policies.

For more information about the project visit <https://polrom.eu/engage/>

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