

REGIONAL ROMA EDUCATIONAL YOUTH ASSOCIATION



ANALYSIS OF PEER EDUCATION ON ANTIGYPSYISM

A CASE STUDY

Analysis of peer education on antigypsyism - a case study

This material was created in the framework of the project “Roma Youth Bring Change” (2021-2-HU01-KA210-YOU-000048113) supported by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union. The project brought together Autonomia Foundation (Hungary), RRoma (North-Macedonia) and ERGO Network to develop and disseminate the methodology of community detective and community campaigns games focusing on social issues – planned and implemented by and targeting Roma and non-Roma young people. We have trained young people in Hungary and North Macedonia as game facilitators and campaign promoters in order to inform their peers and shape their attitudes related to issues relevant to the young people.

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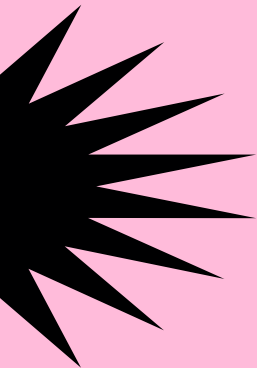
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INTRODUCTION



From the beginning of human existence until today, discrimination and racism have played a destructive role in humanity. At some point every single person has experienced an act of discrimination or racism. These beliefs or processes can take many shapes and forms depending on the surrounding and the individuals included. In this case study the main focus is racism towards Roma people, also known as “antigypsyism”. Roma people are the biggest ethnic minority in Europe and in North Macedonia; considering that antigypsyism is the most accepted forms of racism in Europe, this community is facing this phenomenon on a daily basis.

The organization Regional Roma Educational Youth Association (RROMA) was established in 2007, primarily as network which concentrates on youth empowerment and mobilization through creativity, trainings and campaigns. Throughout the years it expanded its field of action to a broader level, partnering with national and international organizations and joining networks who share a similar vision and acknowledge that countering antigypsyism must be one of the top priorities of the Roma community. Throughout the work of this organization to combat antigypsyism, campaigning and advocacy was seen as one of the most effective and functional tools.

TERMINOLOGY AND BACKGROUND

On account of this experience, we can conclude that it is crucial to know the historical origins of antigypsyism, and that, in order to counter antigypsyism, the most effective tool is to promote positive values along with the rich history and culture of the Roma community.

The word “**antigypsyism**” is not well known or accepted among the people of North Macedonia. Macedonians are not aware that the word “*cigan*” is a pejorative term and may be insulting to the Roma community.

“Cigan” and “Roma” are not synonyms; this is supported by the historical background of the words:

- “**Cigan**” derives from the Greek word “athínganos” which used to address a sect of heretic clairvoyants and fortune tellers in the Byzantine Empire in the 11th century. It carries the meaning of “untouchable”.
- “**Roma**” derives from the Romani word “rom” which means “man”.

Even though the term “Roma” was officially adopted at the First World Roma Congress in London in 1971, and is since used in official documents, books and by institutions, the term “Cigan” it’s still very commonly used in everyday life, both online and offline in North Macedonia and abroad. Some members/groups of the Roma community refer to themselves as “cigani” but that does not give the same right to others.

GENERAL DISTINCTION OF ANTIGYPSYISM

The terminology itself is not the only manifestation of antigypsyism. It as a multifaceted phenomenon of racism and can take many shapes and forms.

Structural antigypsyism is when this form of racism becomes part of our daily life; when the whole system, which should be preventing antigypsyism, does the contrary. When the media portrays the negative, stereotypical image of the Roma community depicting people begging and living in segregated areas, when the school is segregating the Roma from the non-Roma, when the community has limited access to healthcare and the institutions in general... and the list goes on. In simple terms, structural antigypsyism is the type of antigypsyism that is incorporated in the sole structure of the system. While structural antigypsyism can be found inside institutions it can be also seen among society in the form of hate speech, hate crime, stereotypes, and prejudices.

When the people affected by antigypsyism start to have an identity and cultural crisis and do not want to be associated with the history or culture of the Roma under the influence of the hate speech and racism they face on a daily basis, we can see a manifestation of **Internalized antigypsyism**. Internalized antigypsyism can be also towards community members not only to hide their identity but also to stray away from the community.

Antigypsyism can be divided into more manifestations, but the ways of preventing it remain the same: Youth work, work with the media, advocacy and campaigning for policy change and research are some of the tools mostly used when taking action against antigypsyism. Throughout this case study we will analyse our experience of raising awareness about antigypsyism through community campaigning and advocacy and of adopting the good practice of using detective games to address this issue with the support of our Hungarian partners 'Detectivity' and 'Autonomia Foundation'.

COMMUNITY DECISIONS

We recruited the young peer educators involved in the detective game and campaigning through a call for applications disseminated on RROMA's social media profiles. All young Roma and non-Roma between 15-25, from all genders and backgrounds were encouraged to apply, as long as they were interested and willing to make a change in the community. After the selection, we divided the young people into one group of 4 dedicated to the planning and realization of the detective game, and another group of 4 peers who would organize a community campaign. The power of decision making throughout the implementation of this project was mainly in the hands of the young people, along with the guidance and facilitation of the organization's representatives. Every youngster was given the possibility to decide which group they would be more comfortable working in. The division of groups was mostly guided by the following standards:



Skills: Based on the skills you have, in which group can you better contribute?



Experience: Do you have an experience in organizing, facilitating games or campaigns?



Interest: Which topic is more interesting for you?

With both groups together we discussed what issue they would like to address with the two different methods.

After the training in Hungary, having experienced a detective game and having seen how a campaign can be created, the young people were determined that they wanted to focus on the topic of antigypsyism.

Motivated and spurred from the working environment during the training course, the group brainstormed and drafted ideas that might be useful throughout the local and national implementation and planning of the detective game and community campaign. Examples of the ideas and the process of evaluating and dissecting them will be explained in the following chapters of the case study.

COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

PLANNING AND TRAINING OF PEERS

The group of 4 peer educators willing to contribute to creating a community campaign was established and the process of planning began as the national peer training unfolded. As the rights and responsibilities of each person were clarified and all the technicalities were worked out, the drafting phase started.

The idea of the group was to raise awareness of antigypsyism as a form of racism present in daily life and of ways to recognize and counter it. The group emphasized the importance of having online as well as offline presence during the campaign, since hate speech today is found in both spheres.

After discussing antigypsyism more thoroughly, the group concluded that antigypsyism is mostly present because of a lack of knowledge in majority society about Roma culture and history. They concluded that 'teaching" and sharing information about Roma history and culture will be crucial for the success of the campaign.

The draft plan of the community campaign consisted of 4 gradual activities:

1

Informative sessions in schools:

All unclear terms will be explained with examples so everyone can understand the essence of the presentation. This will be followed by a presentation, that can also be shared on social and online platforms. We wanted to collaborate with schools because the school curricula does not provide enough information about these topics. The group wanted to make an effort to put this topic into the curricula and to use a formal way of presentation in order to convey the gravity and danger of antigypsyism.

2

Online video campaign and quiz:

A short, fun quiz about the content of the presentation published online. In addition, the most important thing is to be short and clear with concise questions so that the topic of the project itself can get closer to them. Through the quiz, we would also like to receive feedback on whether the audience received the desired information and message.

3

Flashmob

The most fun part of the campaign for the young people will be a flashmob game called "Wall of prejudices". We will place a cardboard wall with the writing: "learn more about the Roma/antigypsyism..."; whoever comes to the wall will receive a message to pick up a brick. Under the brick they will find some information about the topic. This will continue until the wall is broken, and finally the following message will be visible: "Congratulations, you have successfully broadened and enriched your point of view about the Roma, and at the same time you have broken down your walls."

4

Flyers:

We will distribute flyers with a QR code that will lead people to presentation about antigypsyism.

The group agreed that since each of them has different skills and interests, two of them would be in charge of the online campaign (presentation, flyers and quiz) and two of them of the handicraft (preparing the walls for the flash mob, painting the bricks and creating other materials).

Based on the demand of the young people, the national training was mostly done online. The meetings were scheduled regularly and the communication was frequent but as time passed by, some issues arose concerning the group dynamics:



Miscommunication and conflict: 2 peers had a personal conflict and did not want to collaborate, communicate and share responsibilities.



Lack of motivation: At some point some peers didn't have motivation to proceed with the activities.



Social loafing: We noticed a change in the participants before and after putting them in the group. Before they exhibited more efforts during the activities and now the effort declined.

However, the change of dynamics was noticed before it could damage the outcomes and it was resolved through discussion with the representatives from the organization and also among the peers themselves.

We noticed an interesting change of attitude and activity when we mentioned the financial compensation that the peers will receive once the final activities would be delivered. Even though the sum is symbolic, it was enough to motivate the young students to invest their interest and time in the activities to come.

EXACT TASKS, MODULES OF THE PEER TRAINING

The training of the four peers in charge of creating the community campaign took mostly place online, but we also had some face to face meetings to ensure better group dynamics and commitment of the peers. We used different approaches and methods for this purpose, but in the end the power of decision making was in the hands of the young people. We adopted and used the methods they were most comfortable with. Since some of the peers in the group of community campaigning already had experience in creating or participating in a campaign, the organization's representative encouraged them to share their knowledge. Naturally, some young peers agreed and some not as presenting or facilitating is not in everyone's comfort zone. Throughout the training some methods were adapted or discarded as the process of creating the community campaign advanced. Here are few learning modules and tasks used during the training:

1

In-depth learning about the topic

The first meeting with the participants after creating the groups was dedicated to learning about antigypsyism. Only one person had previous experience working on this topic; the other three knew only a simplified definition. It was therefore crucial to organise a workshop focusing on the definition, manifestations and examples of antigypsyism in our everyday lives. The workshops were interactive: the peers could do their own research and were provided with materials and presentations from the organization. By the end of the workshop, the young people reflected that they had to continue learning about cases of antigypsyism for them to have a direction on which to put their focus and to ensure the success of the campaign.

2

Brainstorming and drafting:

Clarifying that there is no right and wrong answer is very important, as some peers had anxiety to share their opinions in front of the group. This encouraged the peers to start a fruitful brainstorming of how antigypsyism could be presented through the campaign. All participants felt free to share their ideas, and all ideas were great. They also watched videos of different campaigns to get inspired. After agreeing on the most captivating elements, they started drafting the first plan. It was ambitious, but as the other stages of planning took place, the peers started to amend the plan to a more realistic perspective. It is important not to put pressure on the peers and remind them that their words are not set in stone. Planning is a process that takes time and energy and can be morphed to a point where the plan is nothing like the commencing idea. Once target group, message, locations, time and concept of the campaign was agreed, we started to prepare the materials.

3

Self-direction:

The peers had the autonomy to hold meetings of their own will and preference in their subgroups. However, their presence in the regular meetings with the group responsible for the detective game and the organization's representatives was compulsory. The group decided to set up an Instagram group where they held meetings in pairs and with all four of them to ease their communication. Whenever they needed assistance, they asked the representatives to join their call. The representatives did not join the Instagram group because they did not want to make the peers feel restricted to express themselves. One of the peers exhibited impressive leadership skills and was really pushing the rest of the peers to have regular meetings and setting deadlines to motivate them to get their tasks done in a timely manner. Within the mutual group training with the group of the detective game, the group said that being able to manage their time and tasks was a big relief for them and made their tasks easier.

4

Role play:

One of the methods used in this group was the method of role-playing. Throughout the planning of the game, the peers were more absorbed with their role as facilitators, so they forgot to pay attention to how the target groups would feel and understand the concept. The organization's representative suggested to pretend that they were already running this campaign and had to hold the info-sessions with presentations, reflection, evaluation, prepare the wall, etc. As they role-played, they realized that they might have terminology that part of the target group might not understand. They were asked to formulate questions or conclusions from the perspective of the target group.






Here are examples taken from the group:

- Are these words understandable to me and fit the vocabulary of my age?
- The presentation is too formal.
- I don't feel that I am participating in the campaign.
- Is it my memory or this is a lot of information to process in a short time?

The participants then used the conclusion from these points and questions and tried to adapt the campaign so that it would feel closer to the target group.

DESCRIPTION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

Following the previously mentioned draft plan for community campaign, the youngsters used it as a basis and upgraded it in a way that the campaign would be more effective and closer to the target group. The peers lingered on the following key elements when creating the campaign:

-  Social media presence
-  Establishing cooperation with relevant stakeholders
-  Preparation of materials
-  Sending a clear message
-  Creating wider and bigger impact

From learning about community campaigning and analyzing successful examples, the youngsters knew that sending a clear and concise message was a crucial part of campaigning. After a round of brainstorming they produced the simple solution of “Antigypsyism?”. They chose this message because of the confusion of terminology that the word “gypsy” or “cigan” carries in the mainstream society. Most people don’t know that “antigypsyism” as a form of racism exists or haven’t even heard the word. One youngster explained this message based on his experience talking to someone and mentioning antigypsyism: the other person reacted with “anti-what?”; “is that a real word?”. This situation had happened to him several times. Putting a question mark after antigypsyism symbolizes the moment when somebody hears the word and repeats it, making sure that they heard the word correctly.

Because the four peers were from different cities, they agreed that they wanted to information about the campaign in their local areas and run the campaigns in Kratovo, Prilep and Skopje for the sake of larger impact. The peers defined the target group as Roma and non-Roma youngsters between 13-30. The best way to attract this age group is through social media. For that reason, the peers created a post with QR code that would lead the youngsters to the basic information about the campaign activities, such as time, place, and title.

The youngsters proposed to collaborate with the local high schools and youth councils. Some peers were already active in the youth and school councils, so they managed to establish communication which led to collaboration. They agreed that the school would provide the peers with the premises for the campaign and spread the word of it. The youth councils already had youngsters interested in taking part in the community campaign and the detective game.

The group prepared the materials as planned with the division of roles. Nonetheless, one face to face meeting was held to finish the craftwork: specially building the “brick wall” with facts about Roma history and culture. They created the presentations about antigypsyism and the flyers and printed them. The peers also worked out how to present while making the activity interactive at the same time. The peers also created a statement game in which the target groups could share their experience and opinions.

Finally, the campaign was implemented in Skopje, Prilep and Kratovo with youth councils and local high schools and supported by RROMA. The young people managed to successfully implement the campaign and spread the message about antigypsyism.

Skopje – Wall of prejudices – Antigypsyism?

The first and the most interesting part of the campaign took place in Skopje. The group agreed to organize the flash mob “Wall of stereotypes” only in Skopje, since transferring the materials from one city to another was difficult. Skopje as a capital is the most accessible and biggest city so the “Wall” really picked up the interest of the audience.

The wall was set in Skopje’s most crowded and busy street near the main square. One peer was giving out the flyers, one was standing behind the wall and the others were taking pictures and videos (with consent!). At first bystanders were reluctant to approach, but then a group of tourists came to the peers and was curious to see what was happening - and managed to break down their walls! After the group, more people started to approach the wall, asked questions and discovered facts about the Roma community.

Skopje: Second workshop

The second workshop as part of the community campaign was implemented in the Roma municipality of Skopje -Shuto Orizari, within the premises of a school and with the help of a teacher who is also an activist for Roma rights. The teacher organized an info session about antigypsyism with his students and, as a Roma activist himself, he actively participated in the session, encouraging the students to ask questions and share their opinions.

Kratovo: Two workshops

Within the premises of the high school in Kratovo, the young people organised two workshops in two classes in the form of info sessions. The peers presented the concept of antigypsyism and played the statement game with the youngsters to encourage them to freely share their opinions and experiences. Afterwards the youngsters shared how they felt during the workshop, what their level of knowledge about antigypsyism was before and after the workshop, and whether they were now motivated to act against this form of racism.

Prilep: One workshop

The group held workshops in the high school of one of the peers, supported by the school and the youth council. In Prilep the approach was more formal since the school did not allow interactive activities during the regular school hours. After the presentation about antigypsyism, a reflection took place and flyers were handed out to the students with more information about this phenomenon and the possibility to assess their knowledge about it.

FEEDBACK, IMPACT AND EVALUATION

After the implementation of the campaign workshops, previously designed follow-up activities took place.

Each workshop ended with a debriefing, evaluation, and discussion of follow up activities within the present groups. The focus was to increase motivation among the youngsters to participate in similar projects. The aim was to create pro-active citizens who acknowledge the existence of antigypsyism and act against it.




The process initially started with a reflection on how the youngsters felt throughout the activity and to go through how they felt during the activities and information they have received. In each workshop there was a similar scenery with a couple of youngsters sharing their feelings and part of the group being timid and hesitant but still good listeners. Most participants said that they really liked the activities and the approach.

Some preferred the presentations; others preferred the statement game and the activities including more movement and involvement of the audience. 90% had never heard about antigypsyism until now, and the rest had heard the term, but didn't know anything specific. During the reflection it turned out that most knew about antigypsyism in a certain way, but they were not aware how to name it or that it could be articulated as a type of racism.

After the reflection, the young people discussed follow up activities by brainstorming on how to act against antigypsyism. Most students wanted to actively participate in combating antigypsyism in their free time and some groups were willing to make free time.

Of course, there were the silent listeners who needed a small push to share their thoughts. In Kratovo the present members from the local youth council agreed that they could include antigypsyism in the workshops that they would conduct in the future about racism and discrimination.

The evaluation was initially planned to be online after participants had taken the quiz about antigypsyism created by the community campaign group. Everyone could have filled an online evaluation questionnaire after the workshops and the campaign. However, after the first workshop the peers noticed that nearly no one filled the evaluation forms, so they decided that the evaluation would take place right after the workshops following the concept of "I liked"; "I didn't like" ; "I would change..." The answers were mostly short and simple, with the most common responses:

-  **I liked:** the campaign, the way of explaining, asking questions, the game, simple explanations, the examples, the presentation, the opportunity to share my opinion, the quiz, the information I gained about the Roma history and genocide...
-  **I didn't like:** the limited time, that I didn't have previous knowledge about antigypsyism, antigypsyism, technical problems...
-  **I would change:** nothing, me to be part of organizing such activities next time, the presentation (to include more videos and information about the Roma genocide), organize activity about this topic...

CONCLUSION

Overall, the flow of the project in the community campaign part was smooth and the expected positive impact among the peers and the target group was achieved. Along the way of the project implementation a few abovementioned obstacles were encountered, but all of them were overcome through mutual communication and understanding.

The effort of the peers was remarkable; they really put a lot of work into emphasizing the importance of countering antigypsyism. The observation of the target groups led to the conclusion that the campaign was understandable and interesting for them, given the fact that most of them claimed their wish to participate in organizing such events and activities in the future. By the end of the campaign, we have reached 120 youngsters who paid attention and initiated their will to learn more about antigypsyism. This can be considered a success as mentioned by the peers themselves. Here is advice and lessons learned by the peers during the evaluation of the community campaign experience:

1

Get to know all team members and respect their boundaries: Every person is different and has many interests and skills. It is important to recognize how each member functions and what their comfort zone is when dividing roles and responsibilities.

2

Separate private and professional relations: Young people will easily bond outside the project. During this project two participants had a misunderstanding about private matters, and it affected their productivity and participation. Be sure to acknowledge that communication and collaboration throughout the project must be done regardless of their private matters.

- 3 Always have a Plan B and C:** Take into consideration that not everything works out as predicted, so based on the most common risks, prepare other scenarios. You may not always need them, but there will be times when they will come very handy.
- 4 Clear, concise, and consistent:** These are the three fundamentals of planning a good community campaign. You need to have clear vision and concise targets and aims. Even though you will sometimes face difficulties along the way, it is very important to stay consistent and motivated until the end.
- 5 Learn from each other:** Nobody is Mr. Know-It-All, even if we sometimes feel like it. Understand that you can learn from everyone around you. The target audience will state their opinions and perspectives and even if you may not agree with some of them, it is important to learn about other points of view and learn from them what can be changed and what cannot.
- 6 Be patient:** Changes do not happen overnight. It takes years and centuries to eradicate toxic mindsets, but this does not mean you are failing. Sometimes it takes many small steps to achieve a big change; the process may be time-consuming or at times even seem hopeless, but it is very important to trust the process and stay patient.

The peers were very satisfied with how the entire process went, and also noticed that they obtained and improved some skills that are very valuable for youth work.

Here are some of their impressions:

Edis: I really enjoyed the whole project and I believe that we are making a change step by step by raising consciousness about antigypsyism.

Marija: As someone who didn't have any knowledge about antigypsyism, this was a very enlightening and educational experience for me, and I am glad to share this with other people.

Katerina: Antigypsyism is dangerous, and our job is to do whatever is in our power to act against it.

Glorija: Being part of this group made me realize that most people do not know what antigypsyism is. That is why such campaigns are really needed.

DETECTIVE GAMES

PLANNING AND TRAINING OF PEERS

We selected the detective game peer group based on the same principle as the community campaigning group. The group was selected according to their skills, interest, and past experience. The power of decision-making was given to the peers, and they specified their tasks and responsibilities with guidance from the organization's coordinator.

The peers agreed that they wanted to focus on the historical perspective of antigypsyism. Today there are a lot of stereotypes and prejudices about Roma communities which go across generations without people knowing their origin and the real story behind them. The team researched and discussed Roma history and found out a lot of information that they had never heard of before. They discussed certain events and periods and decided to focus on the 18th century and the ruling of the Austro-Hungarian empress Maria Theresa.

We held the training of the peers online with some face-to-face meetings. The group held regular monthly meetings in which they learned about detective games based on the methodology prepared by Autonomia and Detectivity. In the meetings they also discussed facts about antigypsyism and Roma history as crucial elements to preparing the detective game.

The group of four was well coordinated and they managed to distribute tasks fairly among themselves and attended frequent meetings.

Initially the young people wanted to create a murder mystery in which the main suspect would be Roma and they would show the contrary in the plot twist, that the suspect actually intended to protect the victim. However, considering cases of hate crime that happened in real life at the same time, they later rejected this sensitive topic not to cause too much discomfort. The group then decided to base the game on a step-by-step module, with each step leading to another in order to find the lost decrees issued by Maria Theresa.

The group agreed that the detective game would take place in Skopje, Berovo, Kratovo and Prilep. For each location the peers had to modify the game according to the locations.

Skopje: Search for the Decree of Maria Theresa

The goal of the detective game is to find the decree of the Austrian Queen Maria Theresa, which contains important decisions for the Roma population in 18th century Austria. The decree included appalling decisions such as a complete ban of all Romani culture in Austria, stealing Romani male children to make them soldiers and then forcing them to execute people from their own nation or close family.

The players will have to search for this decree to display it in a museum. The authorities cannot find it, knowing that it was already brought to Skopje before, but the decree will mysteriously disappear, while the thief leaves strange letters behind.

Therefore, a special detective team will be called for help to solve the case. An actor (who will actually be the thief) will appear before the target group (the detectives) and will present himself as a long-time employee of the museum. He will lie to them that he is sorry for the disappearance of the decree and that he wants to find it as soon as possible. The actor will be with the detective team all the time to direct them and at some moments confuse them. The game will consist of 4 points: the detectives will be oriented by the

objects, letters and signs that will be placed in the selected locations. Along with the thief himself, another person from the facilitators will accompany the target group and give them subtle hints if needed. The clues are in the form of letters and different tools, such as scarves, pins, secret boxes, and riddles are used.

The group dynamics while planning the games were good. Some issues that were noticed in the group were:

1

Reluctance to take criticism: The group had a lot of plans and creativity. However, when they analyzed ideas and someone pointed out flaws, the group was not eager to accept the changes.

2

Challenges during online meetings: Planning a detective game requires being on the field and getting to know the territory and locations of the game. However, the peers were all from different cities and each of them searched in their local area to find fitting locations. This made it difficult for the rest of the group to plan the script and scenario when they did not know the exact surroundings.

3

Lack of back-up plans: The detective games took place in an open area so there were a lot of unknown factors (weather, traffic etc.) that made planning difficult. Even though during the online training this aspect was thoroughly discussed, the group was not on-spot prepared for the worst-case scenarios.

The main reason for these challenges was the lack of practical experience with developing and implementing detective games. As a new tool for the organization and for the peers it was a challenge to convert the theoretical into practical knowledge at certain times. In any case, each game was better than the previous one as we learned about the mistakes and lapses and tried to avoid repeating them in every game to come.

EXACT TASKS AND MODULES OF THE TRAINING

Considering that detective games were a new tool for all of us, and we so far mostly had theoretical knowledge with practically no experience, the modules and tasks given to the peers were mostly made based on the methodology and the knowledge gathered in a training given by Autonomia Foundation in Hungary. The tasks were simple and easy for all to understand and execute.

Here are examples of the modules and tasks during the training of the peers for the detective game:

1 Research and consultation:

With the lack of practical experience, the research and consultation with the partner organization was a crucial element for creating the detective game. The methodology and examples provided by the partner organization were among the most helpful tools that the peers used as a guide. Research and consultation were also important for the factual nature of the historical period the detective game was designed in. The organization's coordinator provided the peers with adequate materials and encouraged them to research on their own. They also consulted a teacher about Roma culture and history.

2 Creating a safe space:

Thinking about how the target group will feel during the detective game is essential, therefore speaking about this topic is important. This led to rejecting the murder mystery idea. As the target group was predicted to be 15-28 years Roma and non-Roma it was concluded that even though the message in the end was positive, with recent hate crime incidents the game could trigger some participants to feel disturbed. This idea was swapped with developing a treasure-hunt-like game that is inclusive on more levels and addresses the issue of antigypsyism without causing negative feelings.

3

Fair distribution of tasks and preparation of materials:

This was a key task for both groups. However, in this group it was difficult to divide tasks clearly because everyone had the same task. The aim was therefore for everyone to contribute equally and fairly. All the four peers played a key role when creating the detective game, as every single one of them had to participate in the research, drafting, brainstorming, and also investigating the local area and providing the other peers with information, establishing contacts with target groups, schools, local youth councils etc. During the preparation of materials all participated equally because everyone had to modify and adapt the clues according to the locations and surroundings in their own local area.

4

Team coordination:

This group worked with the method of chain reaction, so coordination was an important part of the functionality of the group. Overall the group was well coordinated and had frequent and productive communication and interaction. They created a private chat group in which they had frequent communication. The group faced challenges due to the lack of face-to-face meetings, especially when needing details about the four distinct locations for the detective game, but they overcame the challenge by managing to acquire the needed information and disseminate it properly.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DETECTIVE GAME

The detective games for the smaller cities were created based on the draft version conducted in Skopje but modified accordingly to the change of locations and surroundings. The context and the aim of the game remained the same. Below is a detailed description of the detective game that was implemented in Kratovo:

Name

The lost decree of Maria Theresa

Method

Clue-to-clue

Aim

Raise awareness of antigypsyism and Roma history in the school curricula

Duration

90 minutes

Location

Kratovo

Target group

Young Roma and non-Roma in high school

Tasks & Materials

Maps, riddles, padlocks, secret box, secret letters, etc.

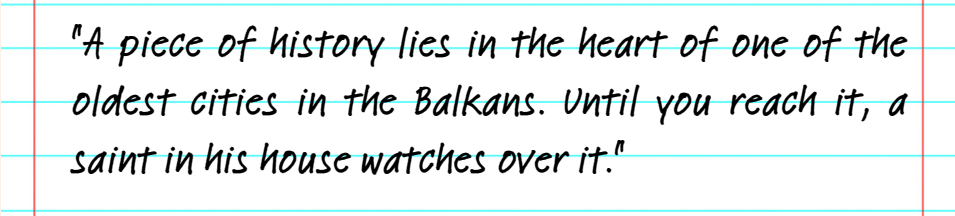
DESCRIPTION OF THE GAME

POINT 1: school

A museum employee will appear and inform the group that the decree issued by Maria Teresa has been lost and needs to be retrieved for further remembrance of this historical period. The students are informed that they are the detectives, who must find the decree and must be careful during the investigation. The museum employee informs them that the last place the decree was seen was this classroom and that there must be some trace of its disappearance.

Students will go looking for the first clue: a letter taped under a desk. The letter will appear blank, but there will be a pen next to the paper (the pen is invisible until you use the light on the LED pen cap and only then can you see what is written).

The first letter will say:

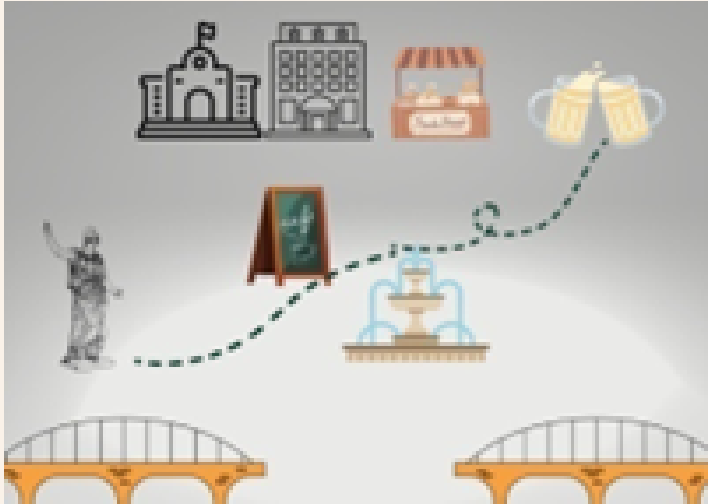


"A piece of history lies in the heart of one of the oldest cities in the Balkans. Until you reach it, a saint in his house watches over it."

This implies that a part of the decree is in the center of the city, guarded by a saint, meaning that it is guarded by some statue of a saint. Here the text in the letter can be changed and written in relevance to the city and location.

POINT 2: Statue of St. George Kratovski

At the place of the statue of Saint George Kratovski they will find an envelope with a torn part of the decree with information about Maria Theresa, and another envelope with torn parts of the map and a letter attached to the key.



The letter attached to the key says:

"The box contains the secret you are looking for. The keeper of the box is a man in black, and only if you ask him to take a picture of you, he will be able to hand over the box to you".



POINT 3: PUB

This leads them to the Kratov pub, where they will meet an actor (the waiter) dressed in black. The group should ask him to take their picture. He will do so and give them the box that is locked with a chain and padlock. They will open the box with the key and find the second part of the lost decree together with a coded message. It is written in the Macedonian alphabet, and each letter represents a number that they will have to figure out.

А	Б	В	Г	Д	Ѓ	Е	Ж	З	С	И	Ј	К	Л	Љ	М	Н	Њ	О	П	Р	С	Т	Ќ	У	Ф	Х	Ц	Ч	Џ	Ш

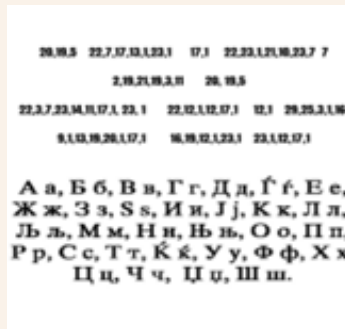
A represents the number 1, Ш the number 31..

The encrypted message will be:

20,19,5 22,7,17,13,1,23,1 17,122,23,1,21,10,23,7 2,19,21,19,3,11 20, 19,5
 22,3,7,23,1 4,11,17,1 23, 1 22,12,1,12,17,1 12,1 29,25,3,1,16 9,1,13,19,20,1,17,1
 16,19,12,1,23,1 23,1,12,17,1

Под сенката на старите борови, под светлината сјајна ја чувам закопана мојата тајна

Under the shadow of the old pines, in the daylight, lies my secret buried.

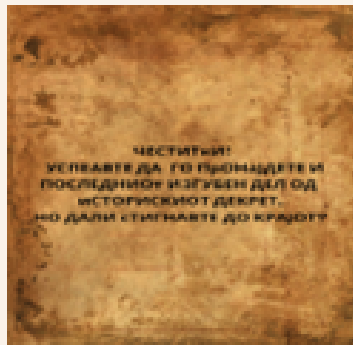


POINT 4: Old pines

This will lead them to the old pine trees in Kratovo, where they will find a small digging hole with a shovel stuck in it. There, in a box, they will find the fourth and final part of the decree and a small message saying:

ЧЕСТИТКИ! УСПЕАВТЕ ДА ГО
ПРОНАЈДЕТЕ И ПОСЛЕДНИОТ
ИЗГУБЕН ДЕЛ ОД ИСТОРИСКИОТ
ДЕКРЕТ, НО ДАЛИ СТИГНАВТЕ ДО
КРАЈОТ?

Once they discover that the lowercase letters together make the word **Kratiss**, they will discover the final location or point and head there.



POINT 5: Kratis (hotel restaurant)

The group will go to the restaurant, where "detective certificates" will be waiting for them on the table. The whole story of Maria Theresa will be explained, they will analyse the full decree and the discussion can continue.

All other detective games were modified according to the different location and venues but were implemented with the same concept and methods.

After each game, the participants were treated with a drink (non-alcoholic) and with certificates about their successful mission of being detectives. They then discussed antigypsyism and Roma history. The participants reflected on the game, highlighting their favorite parts, but also the parts that confused them. Most participants had not heard about antigypsyism previously and didn't know what it meant, so the peers facilitated a discussion about this topic in order to increase their knowledge.

FEEDBACK, IMPACT AND EVALUATION

The aim of the game was to raise awareness about Roma history and about why it is important to learn about it from their teachers. Today, there is a general lack of information about the Roma genocide, forced assimilations, mass murders, segregation, and enforced laws against the Roma community. This knowledge deficit is one of the main reasons for the occurrence of antigypsyism. With this detective game we intended to break the stereotypes about the Roma community, but also to strengthen the cultural identity of the Roma by learning about their own history. A startling fact was that many Roma young people did not know about their history. Especially younger participants still used the word “cigan” and were not aware of its meaning.

The detective game on Empress Maria Theresa's decrees and the forced assimilation of the Roma community served as a catalyst for important discussions about the need to incorporate Roma history into the school curricula. The students' experience underscored the value of a diverse and inclusive educational approach that embraces the histories and experiences of all communities, fostering empathy, understanding, and unity among students and future generations.

Throughout the detective game, at least one teacher in each school contributed to the discussion about the importance of history remembrance, especially through educational institutions. We emphasized dates important for the Roma community: International Roma Day, day of the Romani language, Remembrance Day of the Roma Genocide, Romani resistance day, etc. We agreed that on one of these dates in the future in collaboration with the schools we should organize informative activities. The detective game provided students with a platform to challenge stereotypes about the Roma community. They realized the importance of dispelling myths and promoting a more accurate and nuanced understanding of this diverse culture.

Initially, the goal was to give importance to the topic and include it in the school curricula, which happened in some way. The detective games started on the school premises and many teachers showed their curiosity about it, bringing attention to the topic of antigypsyism. The fact that the schools offered their collaboration considering future activities covering this topic is also an indicator of the impact we achieved. The peers created a group discussion where everyone could evaluate their experience: "I liked, I didn't like, I would change...."

The outcome of the evaluation was that everyone was having fun and a great time, gaining knowledge along the way. They expressed their interest in participating again in this kind of game. Nearly all impressions were positive, and the participants felt much closer to their community and the non-Roma to the Roma community. because by learning their history they felt they were breaking invisible barriers in their minds.

CONCLUSION

Using detective games as tools for tackling social problems was a novelty for our organization and for the peers as well. The impact achieved during the implementation of the detective games highlighted that detectivity is a powerful tool that is compelling and eye-catching for a younger audience. The interactive nature of the concept of detectivity and the opportunity to use your observing and operative skills proved to be an effective way of learning and raising awareness about the issue you strive to address. Although throughout the games and training we encountered challenges, some were successfully overcome and others remained lessons learned. Thus, based on the experience of the young peers and the flow of implementing the games, here are tips on how to keep your focus when developing detective games.

1 Plan A, B, C

Think about the worst-case scenario even though it may not come true. It is always better to be prepared. In the night before our first game, it rained heavily and the game mainly took place outside. The locations were already set up, and it was impossible to improvise one day before the activity. Thankfully, the next day, the weather was in our favor. You should also always have two samples of your clues. It may happen that one clue is destroyed or missing.

2 Improvise

When something does not go according to plan, improvise, and pretend that it is part of the plan. If the group is finding the clues faster than predicted, you can make it harder for them. Give them confusing statements or ideas. This should buy you time and make it more challenging for them.

3 Leave your expectations behind

You tried hard, planned everything to make positive changes in the mindsets of the group. But some youngsters are only there for fun, or only because their teachers told them to, and they wanted that extra credit (in this case). This is fine because the few ones who genuinely care about the issue will make you feel worthy of creating the game.

4 Group discussion and cooperation

When participants are withdrawn, encourage them and break the ice. Detective games are all about teamwork, so observe the group dynamics and step in if needed.

The entire process of creating and implementing the game was a positive experience based on the evaluation with the peers. They believe that this tool will be of significant use in the future when addressing social issues. Our organization is also adopting this new aspect of countering antigypsyism and we are certain that this will give a much different and more interesting perspective to young people and also a refreshment to the mature audience when tackling racism and discrimination.



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