

TRYAR: Training of Roma Youth on Antigypsyism and Human Rights

Assessment report on TRYAR's training of trainers





About TRYAR

Training of Roma Youth on Antigypsyism and Human Rights

TRYAR project steams from the initiative of two youth groups of Thessaloniki willing to work on human rights awareness-raising within broad youth. The “Lighthouse of the World” together with “ANTIGONE – Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence” youth organizations jointly designed and realized the project’s activities. TRYAR project is supported by the European Youth Foundation (EYF) of the Council of Europe.

This assessment report provides information on TRYAR’s training of trainers and its results with the aim to motivate state and local stakeholders in the fields of youth, education and culture, civil society organizations (CSOs) and professionals as teachers, youth educators etc. promote the use of the project methodologies and practices adapting them to existing contexts and needs. The contribution of the writer to this project was to reach the training to its fullest potential ensuring to the following:

- The use of the appropriate educational tools in the training
- The participatory nature of the training
- The inclusion of all participants in the learning process
- The use of appropriate language, non-biased in any way and easy to comprehend by the participant group

The active participation of the young participants in the training, their zest to get involved in the process and the first positive results of the pilot workshops’ preparation once again prove the contribution of participatory human rights and democracy education in the combat of prejudice and social discrimination. The broad implementation of model, alternative educational tools from youth to youth can empower the establishment of a peaceful, democratic and solid society.

TRYAR’s results are expected to fully emerge with the completion of the pilot workshops that will be coordinated by the young participants who will try their capacity as human rights trainers, as well as with coming activities and initiatives that will be organized by TRYAR’s group of trainees in the near future. The recipient stakeholders of the project’s deliverables (e.g. state and local actors, organisations for youth, education and culture, CSOs, teachers, youth educators etc.) who will have the chance to get informed on TRYAR’s activities and results are also expected to take on the realization of projects and activities in the same field.



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1. Project description

Basic activities:

The project involved the training of a group of 14 young participants of 17-25 years old on the implementation of non-formal education methodology on topics related to human rights, equality and combating dominant stereotypes and discrimination against Roma. In their majority, participants were youngsters of Roma origin however also young people of different origin, background and profile took part in the group. The creation of this mixed youth group per se has been the first significant chance for interaction, communication and inclusion of diversity within the group. The group's training aimed not only to the sensitization and the empowerment of its members, but also to the broader awareness raising and sensitization to more youth groups of Thessaloniki.

Training of youth trainers had a total duration of **30 hours** and was based on experiential and participatory educational methodology. TRYAR project though happened to take place during the pandemic, the quarantine and the recommendations and regulations for social distancing and self-isolation, this is why the four out of the six training workshops were realized online. An extra **toolkit offering guidance on the use of ZOOM** as the most suitable online platform for TRYAR's training of young trainers was also developed under the project so as to respond to the new needs that came up. After the completion of the first part of the training that took place online, the group decided to physically meet at the "Lighthouse of the World" in Dendropotamos Roma community for the two last workshops. As expected, those two last workshops were the most vivid ones as participants were more than keen to interact in real, socialize and work together.

The activities realized during the training together with participants' material and evaluation feedback were collected in an **online training toolkit** addressing initiate youth trainers. The toolkit includes the description of all training activities per day together with the activity sheets for completion, indicative material developed by young participants during the training as well as pictures from the training process. The toolkit is available for free download in ANTIGONE's website www.antigone.gr.

Next phase of TRYAR follows with the realization of **10 pilot workshops** that will be conducted by the young participant trainers. Workshops were designed by participants during the 30-hour training addressing peers, school students and other teenage and youth groups active in the broader region of Thessaloniki related to sports, culture, robotics etc.

Last, in order to better disseminate and multiply project's results, apart from the educational toolkit of TRYAR, an **Action Plan** for beginner trainers and the present **Assessment Report** are to be conducted.



Objectives:

- Combat of anti-Roma stereotypes and racism between adolescents and youth.
- Bring together young Roma and non-Roma, through communication and co-working in workshops.
- Raising awareness and training of young Roma and non-Roma in issues of human rights and social equality.
- Familiarize young Roma with the methodology, techniques and tools of non-formal education.

Target groups:

- Young Roma from the wider Thessaloniki area.
- Young non-Roma from the broader Thessaloniki area.
- Secondary school students.
- Young associations' young volunteers, municipality youth groups etc.

Project duration

The project duration is from March until October 2018 (8 months). Initially, the project was designed to last 6 months, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a 2-month extension.

Partner organizations

The project was designed and implemented by the non-profit organization “ANTIGONE – Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence” in collaboration with the youth group of the “Lighthouse of the World” youth shelter and organization.

ANTIGONE

ANTIGONE is a non-profit organization that was established in 1993. ANTIGONE develops activities on anti-racism and non-discrimination, human rights, social ecology, peace and non-violent conflict resolution. The aim of the organization is the promotion of equal opportunities for all without any discrimination -e.g. on the basis of sex, race, national origin, social/economic/educational status, disability, age, religion etc. Through its activities that are based on solidarity and active participation, ANTIGONE targets to awareness raising and sensitisation of the society on issues of non-discrimination, human rights, ecology, non-violence and interculturality.

On the basis of solidarity and direct activation ANTIGONE attempts to contribute towards the creation of the appropriate social conditions so that every person can take on active role



in the various aspects of social, economic and cultural life. Furthermore, ANTIGONE targets to raising awareness and sensitization of the wider society on non-discrimination issues, human rights, social ecology, non-violence and multiculturalism.

ANTIGONE has been a leader or partner organization in both national and international projects. These projects and initiatives have been funded and supported by many Greek Ministries, the European Commission, Ministry of Germany and other foundations in Germany, the Anna-Lindh Foundation, and a number of national and international donors and networks.

ANTIGONE's staff is composed by competent people involved in social issues and has a long lasting experience in successful implementation of national and EU projects. Political and social scientists, researchers, psychologists, experts in education and social integration, sociologists and project managers make ANTIGONE sufficient and seriously involved in any kind of project dealing with people and the environment. Currently ANTIGONE's team is composed by 13 professionals.

ANTIGONE carries out sensitization activities, events on non-discrimination, non-formal educational workshops on the integration of differentiability conducted via the methodology of non-formal education as well as seminars and vocational training workshops in various thematic sections. It is active in the field for the integration of refugees, permanently works in collaboration with schools and official educational actors on national level as well as runs activities and projects for the integration of Roma population, people with disability, children and youth as well as other vulnerable groups.

To be more specific, ANTIGONE plans, develops and implements national and international partnerships and projects (aiming at the smooth integration of refugees, the fight against discriminations, social economy, de-growth etc.), activities of non-formal education for the rights and democracy (at schools of primary and secondary education; at educational as well as cultural actors etc.), sensitization of society in matters of discrimination (in third age people meeting places, in youth groups etc.), social integration/cope of stigmatization and exclusion (of disabled people), educational workshops and seminars regarding professional training (for imprisoned people, migrants etc.), experiential workshops of mental/emotional empowerment (targeted to women victims of violence etc.), international youth exchanges. The organization participates in events and festivals, conducts the Annual Round Table Discussion on human rights issues, carries out research on racism, migration and inclusion, implementing annual reports, studies etc. It runs publications and interventions (about/for social ecology, localization, nationalism, non-violence, animal rights, mediation, local history etc. and it keeps an updated electronic library (Antigone.gr/gr/library).



The “Lighthouse of the World”

The “Lighthouse of the World” and its activities began in 2004 when father Athenagoras Lukataris was found in Dendropotamos Roma community. The name “Lighthouse” was chosen because the lighthouse illuminates dark places and helps people with their sparkle to find their way and this was its goal. In a short period of time, the first timid step was made, the “Lighthouse of the World” and the dozens of volunteers became known throughout the city, throughout Greece and the world and was shown by the media. The first significant changes in the area, behavior and performance of the children showed that young people were looking for a chance to evolve, they grabbed it and took off. This shown that nothing was impossible or futile. Even to those who did not believe that there could be changes and developments, young people have demonstrated that they could set up structures to study, work and live with dignity.

The greatest success of the organization was when the first children finished high school and entered the University when they travelled to US as the first Robotic Team. Children are the ones that change the history of the place, and now what worries and gives the organization the urge to work is to be able to find jobs to the youth of the area. Today, 16 years later, and after the awards the organization took (indicatively: good practice in the “Council of Europe” and the “State Department”), it continues offering to the children nutrition, help on studying, foreign language lessons, Robotics, health care (vaccination, dental and ophthalmological control of children), afternoon creative employment and sports, theater, painting, dance, handicraft and gardening, robotics, swimming, football etc. The “Lighthouse of the World” is primarily its children; their voices, needs and smiles.

ANTIGONE and the “Lighthouse of the World” have systematically been working together the past years on a voluntary basis co-organizing and running together various educational, cultural, sports and artistic activities. The TRYAR project has been a great first chance for the members of both organizations to jointly design and implement an integrated initiative for the promotion of human rights by youth within youth.

Funding

TRYAR project was carried out with the support of the [European Youth Foundation](#) of the Council of Europe.



2. Implementation

The situation

During the past years, mainly in the school but also in every other social environment a new reality is being developed. Youth in its whole is characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity while social groups with different characteristics coexist within a multicultural society. People with Roma identity never ceased to constitute a stigmatized and socially isolated group deprived of equal access to education and other fields of economic and political life. Adding to the above-mentioned situation, the vast waves of migration to Greece intensified the multicultural character of the Greek society. This transition causes tensions, contradictory public discourse and hate speech as well as disputes that lead to xenophobia and racism on national level but also between the different ethnic and social groups. Indirect and direct discrimination is systematically noted not only against particular diverse groups in terms of nationality, language or culture but also against social position, disability, age, sexual orientation etc.

Education is the most significant field where the promotion of mutual recognition and acceptance, positive interaction, communication and collaboration can flourish. In particular to what it concerns youth, peer education can prove significantly successful so as to develop critical thinking and motivation to take action as active citizens showing respect and tolerance to diversity. Under the project, TRYAR's team of trainers took on the major role to contribute to the sensitization of Thessaloniki's youth towards democracy and peace. The pilot workshops addressing youth aimed to develop a mentality of inclusion and capacity of active communication and social participation away from intolerance, fanaticism and violence. TRYAR, through alternative methods and practices, supports youth achieve to develop a fair society for all without any kind of negative discrimination and social exclusion.

The methodology / innovation

All project's educational activities (30 hours of training of trainers and 20 hours of pilot workshops) were based on the contemporary **methodology of non-formal education**. This methodology included experiential activities that involve in the educational process participants' previous experience promoting mutual collaboration and understanding. The **participatory** nature of the activities encourages the collective effort of youth to clarify terms and analyze social issues within their group. They are requested to compare their knowledge and consider of the real causes and impact of every social situation they examine. The members of the group are motivated to orientate to democratic solutions steaming from own ideas and personal values, to discuss between them and collaborate under equal terms. Non-formal education can be the first step for the preparation of youth



to take on the organization of further awareness-raising and sensitization activities on the human rights field such as youth campaigns, thematic actions, youth conferences etc.

Every activity TRYAR proposes starts (e.g. simulation games, role plays, group activities with cards, pictures, creative writing activities, team quizzes etc.) with an **interactive, fun part** while on their following phase, the team members are encouraged and supported by their trainers to run a **conversation** in the group's circle **on own experiences** relevant to the topics posed by the activities **bringing to the group views and ideas on contemporary social issues of everyday life related to human rights**. Starting with personal experience participants are willing to share, they go on to perceive the significance of issues discussed, the individual and collective liability as well as their potential to take on social action. During the round discussion the group trainers enrich the conversation with information on the theory of human rights, the interrelation between them and their linkage to democracy and peace.

Structured as described above, the workshops aim to the **comprehension** of the meaning and the significance of human rights not only for the team trained but also for the broader society, to the **reinforcement** of critical and analytical thinking on issues of social inequality and to the **motivation** for taking on individual and social action towards the participation in the democratic process and the reinforcement of active citizenship in every aspect of social, economic and cultural life.

The educational material is appropriate for every group of young participants. It is designed in a way that **does not require previous cognitive skills** since it builds on participants' thoughts and experiences brought to the group. The knowledge offered by the training sessions is embodied in participants' previous knowledge, experience and feelings. Through the activities youth fortify relationships between them, cultivate their critical thinking, imagination, creativity and learn how to discover and interact in a free and safe learning environment.

Apart from TRYAR's methodology that is designed to address all learners, ANTIGONE's trainers who coordinate the educational sessions dispose the experience and the capacity to act in an **inclusive way** in the learning environment. Emphasis is given to note participants' reactions and empower everyone to actively participate to the level everyone feels safe to. The language selected is simple, not biased and easy to understand while the significance of peaceful communication is stressed in every step of the learning process. During the training, collaboration and communication in the team precede the individual knowledge.

Every training workshop evolves in a different way since it runs by its vivid core, meaning the different personalities of the participants. Trainers adapt the content of the discussion according to every group so as everybody to feel as an integral part of the whole and better perceive every step of the process they shape.

Trainers encourage equal participation of all without discrimination, let space for everyone to express themselves, fortify active listening and the development of empathy between the team members so as to promote democratic and peaceful communication. With the launch of every workshop every participant is invited to sit in a circle so as to be able to look at each other and discuss on equal terms. With the first interactive games to get to know each other, the atmosphere becomes friendly, participants relax and let themselves to the educational process that follows.

For the preparation of the educational material, the writer and ANTIGONE's experienced trainers conducted two preparatory meetings so as to:

- Share information on their professional experience, preferences, methods and approaches.
- Discuss on the participants' different profiles as well as their particular needs and interests for the best development of the training material.
- Agree on the most appropriate educational tools to introduce in the training.
- Discuss potential risks that could come up during the training process as well as ways for the trainers to deal with them
- Present various tools for the evaluation of the training

With the completion of every training day, ANTIGONE's trainers participated in meetings (3 online and 2 with physical presence) for the evaluation of every session, the progress of the group, the performance of the trainers etc. The writer took part in all the evaluation meetings as a coordinator providing guidance and feedback. For the improvement of the quality of the process, after every training session, the group of trainers and the writer indicated the most and the least successful parts of the training adjusting the program of the coming training day so as to reach its highest potential.

The issues that came up were manageable to address, especially from a group of experienced trainers. Indicatively, some of the issues that came up were related to the low internet connection, the lack of cameras etc. Furthermore, since many young participants were connected only from one PC, there was a lack of constant eye-contact between all participants. Also, this limited the options to work in sub-groups of different composition. Concluding, it comes out –as expected- that the results of the training with physical presence are of incomparable quality in relation to the ones of an online training especially as far it concerns the implementation of a non-formal methodology.

The crucial issue that unfortunately was not achieved to resolve until the completion of the training was the low participation of young female participants. After various efforts, three young women participated in the training, one of which was of Roma origin. While this issue was not resolved partially due to the imposed measures for social distance that made hard any effort for communication, the low participation of Roma girls and women in youth activities is an existing issue in general that raised in TRYAR project as well.



Previous experience that contributed to the successful implementation of TRYAR

TRYAR's implementation builds on ANTIGONE's past experience in the implementation of educational programs of non-formal human rights education adding the experience of a peer-to-peer education model. For eight years now, since the school year 2012-2013, ANTIGONE is in stable collaboration with the local school community (Regional Centers of Educational Planning, Health Education Offices, Sustainable Education Departments, School Councillors, schools, school classes) as well as with University Educational Departments running long and short term educational programs on democracy and peace.

All those programs are structured on an inclusive educational model proposing trainings of teachers, educators and educational stakeholders, trainings for university students, training workshops for students as well as seminars for parents. In every training session that takes place with professional groups, participants are provided with educational material they can further use with the groups they work with. This is how a network of multipliers is set and runs for the promotion of the methodology of non-formal education and the dissemination of its positive results.

The duration and the thematic sections of every educational program vary since they are designer together with the educational institutions that participate in every case according to own needs and interests. Indicatively, it can be noted that ANTIGONE has run educational programs in the following topics: human rights, children rights, gender equality – gender identities, social justice, democratic participation, volunteerism, peer mediation (under the project titled Schools for Change, Heinrich Boell Greece), managing controversy in the school environment (project "Managing Issues of Controversy by Human Rights Education", DISCO program, EU and CoE) and under other programs and initiatives.

ANTIGONE has so far collaborated with more than 200 schools, meaning it has addressed more than 30.000 students and 2.000 teachers. The collaboration that has been set with the local school community offers TRYAR's young trainers the possibility to enrich their experience and knowledge going on as trainers in schools of course with the guidance and the support of ANTIGONE's experienced, certified trainers.



3. Impact

TRYAR project has been a significant first chance to **create a team of young trainers in their vast majority coming from vulnerable social groups being activated to take on initiatives against prejudice and discrimination**. In their evaluation comments, most of the participants noticed that TRYAR project helped them acquire knowledge and skills on the use of non-formal education with groups of peers but also that the project was for them a chance to exchange experience, views and feelings in their team, learn what their peers think about social situations that involve and affect them. The 14 young participants who took part in the first 30-hour training will continue acting as human rights defenders in the region of Thessaloniki. This plan starts with the implementation of the project's pilot workshops with various youth groups of Thessaloniki. Since the majority of the group members have expressed their interest to acquire more skills and competence in non-formal education use, ANTIGONE's trainers team examines the option to involve interested TRYAR's young participants in the organisation's educational activities for the school year 2020-2021. Starting with this project, young trainers stated their interest to continue being trained by ANTIGONE's staff accompanying them to schools and other educational initiatives the organization runs. Next steps of TRYAR's team also include the joint design of more activities towards the promotion of human rights approaching the same goal under various other fields such as sports, intercultural concerts, arts' initiatives etc.

TRYAR also focused on the broad **dissemination of its results** as well as its **sustainability** through various tools that reached the various stakeholders to whom it addressed. The free to download online **Educational Toolkit** offers step-by-step advice on how to run every activity that took place during the TRYAR's 30-hour training. It reaches **teachers, youth and adult educators, psychologists and every professional related to adolescents and youth**. It is an introduction to non-formal education aiming to facilitate anyone interested to attempt her/his first steps as a NFE trainer. The use of the toolkit promotes human rights education and the values of democracy, peace and active participation in education as well as other social sectors.

This **Assessment Report** aims to the mobilization of **state and local educational stakeholders, youth actors in education and culture** as well as **CSOs** towards the insertion of non-formal education on human rights in their **educational policies, scheduling and practices**. Furthermore, TRYAR's **Action Plan** also contributes to the successful communication of the project's activities, the networking with other actors as well as to the capitalization of the experience gained.



4. Sustainability

Apart from the TRYAR's training of young trainers, it is worth summing up the sustainability of the whole project since it forms a good practice that can be further reproduced by more stakeholders of any type. As already mentioned, TRYAR's group created by ANTIGONE and the "Lighthouse of the World" plans to continue its action for the promotion of human rights not only in the field of education but also through sports and culture. Those initiatives are planned to take place under the realization of further projects or on a voluntary basis. The presence of Roma young trainers in the schools ANTIGONE works with during the following school years can constitute a great step for the abolishment of prejudice against Roma people that the majority of teenage students currently reproduces. ANTIGONE's team of trainers will support TRYAR's group to gradually raise independent, further get trained and network with other European and local youth groups. The **Educational Toolkit** and the **Action Plan** of TRYAR were also developed to support TRYAR's team take on further action. With the publication and the broad circulation of TRYAR's dissemination tools (Educational Toolkit, Action Plan, Assessment Report) it is expected that more CSOs and social collectives will be mobilized to fortify their efforts to the accomplishment of TRYAR's goals. It is expected that institutions working for the integration of Roma (municipal and regional authorities responsible for the integration of youth, educational and cultural actors, social integration departments, educational stakeholders etc.) will support the undertaking of inclusive policies and practices. TRYAR's tools can also inspire teachers and other professionals working with youth systematize the use of the methodology proposed with their groups of adolescents and youth. The broad use of TRYAR's methodology and practices can guarantee broad social sensitization towards antigypsyism and gradual social integration on local and national level, not only of the Roma communities but also of other diverse social and cultural groups.