

COUNTERING RACISM AND INVISIBLE RACISM AMONG YOUTH

RESEARCH REPORT: BULGARIA

2018

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

As a member of the European Union and the Council of Europe, Bulgaria has committed to following basic standards for protection of fundamental rights and fighting racism – it is bound by the European Convention for Human Rights and the Charter for Fundamental Rights, along with several other key international documents in the field. However, the country still lags in embracing comprehensive policies to tackle hate crime and other manifestations of racism. For example, racist crime falls under the scope of the Bulgarian Criminal Code under article 162: its first paragraph criminalises incitement to hatred, discrimination or violence based on race, national or ethnic origin; the second criminalises the use of violence against another person because of his/her race, national or ethnic origin, religion or political opinion; the third covers the leadership of an organisation willing to commit the acts foreseen by the article. Furthermore, article 163 punishes those who participate in a group attack on the population, individuals or their properties because of their national, ethnic or racial affiliation. These two articles do not include religion, skin colour, language, citizenship, sexual orientation or gender identity as grounds (ENAR, 2015).

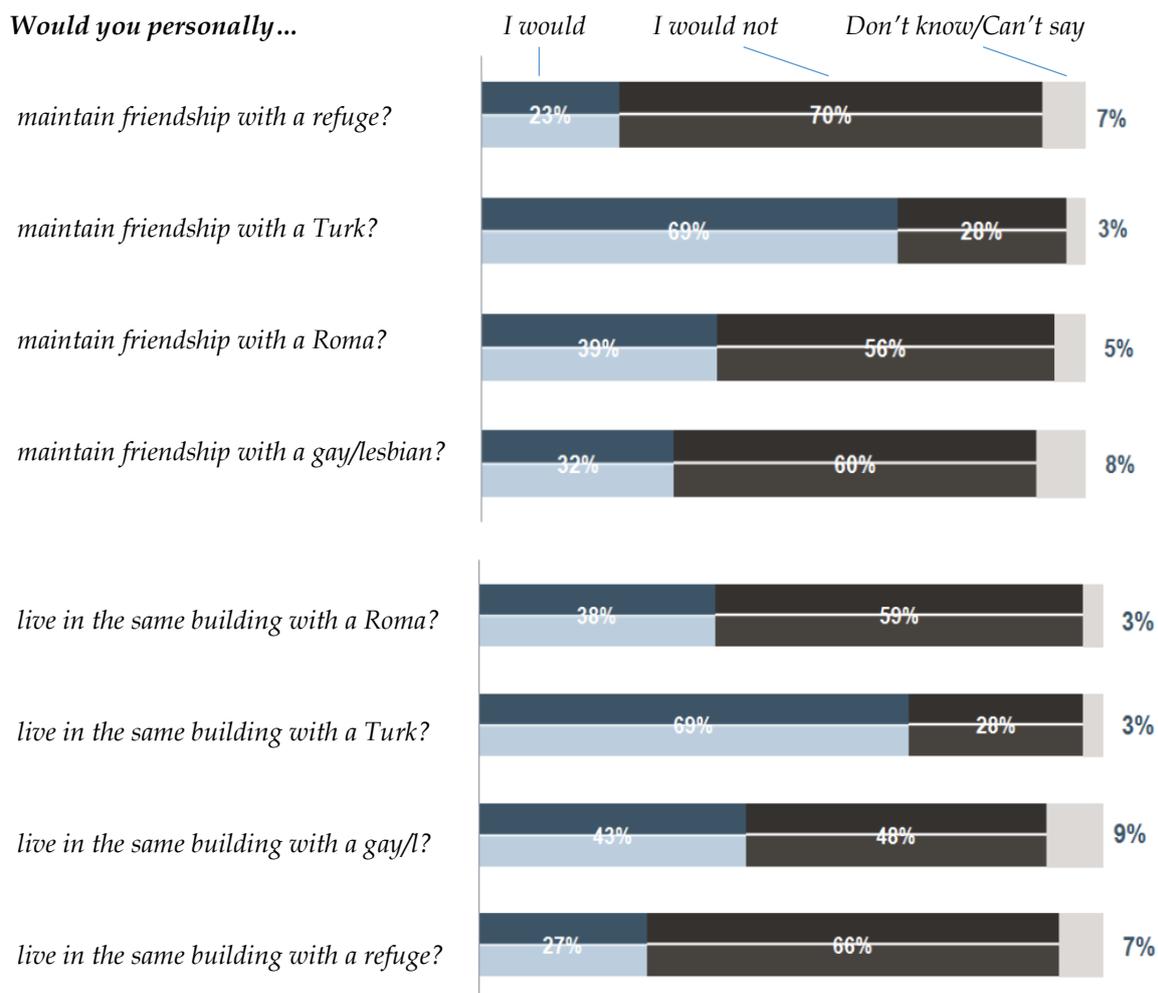
What is more alarming is the tendency of leading political figures to take clearly racist stands, including politicians who are in power. As of May 2017, the governing coalition includes the nationalistic block ‘United Patriots’ who run on anti-Roma, anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic platforms. The block has installed two deputy-prime ministers, one of which – Valeri Simeonov – is on record describing Roma people as “arrogant, presumptuous and ferocious-like humans” and comparing Roma women’s instincts to those of “street dogs”. The remarks were made in 2014 from the National Parliament’s podium and has led to a court case, in which the court found Simeonov guilty of breaking anti-discrimination laws and described

his speech as harassment (he is appealing). In 2017 Simeonov was named chair of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues – a Council of Ministries body set to coordinate policies – which has resulted in a number of Roma civil society organisations leaving the body in sign of protest. Simeonov’s rise to power, despite of the racist remarks he and his coalition partners have made throughout the years, is a symbolic sign for normalising racist speaking in the public discourse.

In 2018 however, the public debate was taken over by the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (as of hereafter ‘the Istanbul Convention’). In January 3rd the Council of Ministers failed to approve the ratification of the Convention, missing votes from both the junior nationalistic party and the leading centre-right governing party GERB. The issue was taken on by the media and became a ‘hot topic’ for months to come. In the process, the president, the Orthodox Church, the major opposition player – Bulgarian Socialist Party, all came out with positions against the ratification, usually with baseless, but homophobic, transphobic and anti-immigrant arguments. After an unproductive public debate on January 25th, under the pressure of public opinion, GERB announced they will postpone the ratification and members of the parliament took the issue to the Constitutional Court. On July 27th, the Constitutional Court announced that the Convention introduces concepts which are unclear (referring to gender) and is thus in breach with the principle of ‘rule of law’, which completely blocked the ratification. The divisive public debate was especially harmful to the LGBTI community in Bulgaria and has led to using the term ‘gender’ (which was widely unknown before that), transliterated to Cyrillic, as a pejorative term to describe anybody that doesn’t fit traditional gender roles – especially the LGBTI community. ‘Gender’ is currently in sustainable use in the Bulgarian cultural context as an insult. Yet, who lost the most out of this development, are women and especially women in situation or risk of violence, whose experiences have been neglected.

These developments, although quite specific, are important, as they paint a wider picture: the pushback against progressive policies and shared European values which can be seen in different countries in Europe and around the world recently – is particularly strong in Bulgaria. The narrative has become more conservative, blocking the way for political development and has worsening the experiences of traditionally excluded groups and allies.

The predominantly conservative attitudes towards diversity are also visible in quantitative research. According to Sofia-based Trend Research Centre, 84% of the population thinks Bulgaria should not let in its territories refugees from the Middle East (10% positive answers and 6% could not say) with similar rates when it comes to letting economical immigrants in. The same research sees 75% opposition to same-sex marriage in the country. The results are alarming when related to the personal space and everyday life of the respondents:



Data and adapted diagrams: Trend, 2017

Although the personal negative perceptions towards refugees and immigrants are extremely high, it needs to be noted that the topic of immigration has somewhat faded in the public and media discourse, especially compared to 2015 and 2016, when media panic and political fear-mongering were at very high levels. This could be explained with the low number of new

arrivals, as well as with the small number of refugees and asylum seekers, who stayed in Bulgaria, in residential facilities or outside. Even if the topic has left the media focus, it seems it stayed rooted in people's minds, with a negative connotation.

The topic of Roma however re-surfaces frequently, most often in relation to crimes, committed by Roma, which tend to spark social outrage. This is perpetuated by some major political figures who consistently promote the term 'Gypsy crime', which stigmatises the community as prone to breaking the law as compared to the majority. One such case in 2018 has resulted in calls for extending the scope of 'self-defence' in case of house break-in, effectively asking for prioritising property over human life (such discussions happen mainly when the perpetrator is Roma and can be seen as devaluing the life of Roma). Other Roma-related issues which appear in media and social media with subtle or clear racist sentiment include social benefits (e.g. mythology about Roma people, and women in particular, 'draining' the social system) and Roma housing. In general, the traditional negligence towards Roma on behalf of institution, media and general society, has its deep roots and racist dimensions.

In conclusion, the context in Bulgaria remains problematic, with racist statements and sentiments well embedded in social relations and perpetuated, rather than effectively opposed, by those in power.

MAIN FINDINGS

Please, summarise the main findings, in relation to the aim of the research which is to identify what is young people's experience, understanding and perception of racism and invisible racism including their needs to tackle it (demand) and what are the existing practices in the local contexts that are there to address these needs (supply). At the end, comparing the mismatch between supply and demand, the partners will be able to identify gaps that should be filled by the deliverables of the STAR project.

USED METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this research relies on qualitative research tools and includes:

- **Desk research** – review of existing research, most of which on attitudes towards diversity and overall acceptance. No specific research is identified to clearly tackle the link between young people and the issue of racism.
- **Desk research** – review in online forums and social networks, particularly among: a) media profiles and interaction with the audience in relation to news and other stories, which tend to spark controversy and racist sentiments; b) profiles and posts from organisations working against racism and other forms of intolerance;
- **Focus groups** – organised as part of other trainings and events: engaging 42 young Roma (in 3 events) and 12 young gay and lesbian young people (in 2 events). The focus groups were mainly used to capture the experience of young people from marginalised groups, but also to identify their own needs in terms of understanding racism and invisible racism in particular.
- **Observations** in direct work with young people (e.g. trainings, workshops and events outside the scope of marginalised groups). Within the scope of the research, the research has interacted with more than 150 young people, who have been challenged to express opinions on topics, related to racism and invisible racism.

TARGET GROUPS

The main target groups of the research includes:

- **Young Roma people**

The group has been selected for the following reasons: 1) Roma are among the most stigmatised minorities in Bulgaria and suffer both consistent societal stereotypes and direct acts of discriminatory and hate speech (and in some cases crime); 2) Roma people are possibly the biggest ethnic minority population in Bulgaria even if this is not confirmed by official data; furthermore, the Roma communities have comparatively high natural growth, even if the birth rate is considerably slowing down. That means that the percentage of Roma young people is bigger than the percentage of Roma within adults. 3) Roma people face severe economical, political and social exclusion, which is widely caused and/or sustained by widely spread societal racism. The young Roma people who have contributed to the research are relatively well educated and are better integrated in societies as compared to some of their peers who live in extreme poverty. However, they cannot be considered only coming from 'elites', as many of them still live in segregated neighbourhoods with limited access to services and/or study in segregated schools. As they were involved in the research through other events around social issues, which they have voluntarily attended, it needs to be noted they have already shown signs for active citizenship and civic stands on various issues, including (but not limited to) racism.

- **Young LGBTI people**

The group has been selected for the following reasons: 1) Like the Roma, LGBTI people are among the most stigmatised groups in Bulgaria and suffer both consistent societal stereotypes and direct acts of discriminatory and hate speech (and in some cases crime). In addition, legal analysis have proven that the current legislation openly puts the LGBTI people in disadvantaged position (e.g. lack of any recognition of same-sex couple and the benefits connected to this legal institute). 2) LGBTI people from younger generations are as a rule more likely to be open about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity as a percentage of the population, when compared to the previous generation. That means young people are more likely to face LGBTI people

in their surroundings in comparison with their parents. The young LGBTI people who have contributed to the research are as a rule well-educated and outspoken, although not necessarily coming from wealthy families. As they were involved in the research through other LGBTI-related events, in most of the cases they are out (i.e. indifferent to other people knowing about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity). Their participation in such events also speak about developed or forming civil stand on LGBTI-related issues.

- **Young people from the majority**

This group includes ethnic Bulgarians (or people perceived as such), who are assumed to be cis gender and heterosexual. Like with the other groups, the young people who have contributed to the research, have already been involved in some kind of voluntarily activities on different social issues, regardless of whether or not it is strictly related to racism. While this does not have a clear link with their stand on racism (many young people, engaged in youth work sustain racist attitudes and/or narratives), it does speak to their willingness to learn and work for social change.

RACISM AND INVISIBLE RACISM

According to our research, young people – both coming from the majority and from excluded communities – **struggle to define racism** in an abstract way. They can hardly formulate a definition that is comprehensive and encompassing different manifestations of racism, if they even manage to formulate any definition. Instead, they would usually resort to giving examples of what a racist act would be, usually relating to “discriminating black people”.

The examples that young people would give to describe racism are more often related to something that racist people *do*, rather than something racist people *think*. Racism is thus more often imagined by young people when it has a manifestation, related to a specific and harmful act, and is less common related to a certain mindset, ideological

construct or way of thinking. At the same time, young people recognise that racism has to do with emotional response to the world, as the word 'hate' is often used to describe racism.

Our respondents and groups of observations as a rule fail to distinguish visible from invisible racism. Many admit they have never heard of invisible racism and some even question its existence: "if it is invisible, then it doesn't exist"; "racism that is invisible... it is probably not a bad thing. No one can see it, then no one knows about it, then it is harmless, I guess". Even after the understanding of invisible racism within the STAR project is being shortly explained, young people still struggle with the concept and tend to give examples which would rather remain in the sphere of visible racism. In one case it was imagined as a physical characteristic of a person, which is not very obvious and thus not easily recognisable; in other instances example of racism were given, which – although somewhat normalised in Bulgarian context – would remain openly racist (i.e. "When we say all Roma are criminal".)

As an abstract concept, racism is in general perceived as bad, although some young people are not afraid to identify as racist – sometimes half-jokingly and sometimes – fully serious. "You have to be racist, because otherwise they (Roma) are going to really start doing whatever they want". Still, these are more of exception and the word racism is in general regarded as morally unacceptable or at least undesirable. There is an understanding that racist acts are bad acts. However, when put into a framework of specific cases and/or related to specific groups, this 'general' rejection of racism find its 'specific' exceptions. The harmful stereotypes about the Roma community manifest themselves openly in these conversations and among majority young people it seems acceptable to dislike the whole community. In such instances, the notion that the majority can suffer racism from the minority has also been articulated: "they only talk about the rights of the Gypsies, what about our rights?". Particularly in relation to Roma the racist sentiment is very much normalised even for the same people who have denounced racism as bad and unacceptable. In other words, there seem to be a consensus that racism is bad, but not a consensus around what racism is/includes.

In relation to the rest, there is also an existing narrative among some young people, particularly such with more nationalistic inclination, that racism is an ‘import concept’ from the U.S. and it does not exist beyond its borders. While this narrative is more of an exception, it is an interesting one, as it also serves to justify negative attitudes towards minorities in Bulgaria. This narrative also states that since Bulgarian minorities (Roma in particular) have not endured slavery like the black population in the U.S., racism did not and does not exist here. It fails to name the local phenomena but implies that it is not ‘as bad as racism’.

In general, racism is seen in its narrow meaning by young people and in such it is connected to the notion of race. Race is understood by young people almost exclusively as skin colour and is often limited to the dichotomy “black/white”. Some young people from the majority tend to use this as a reason to claim that harmful attitudes against Roma are not racist per se, because they are not really from a different (i.e. they are not “black enough” to speak about racism). For others however, since the skin colour is the key concept of racism, the anti-Roma discourse qualifies as racist (although this disregards the negative attitudes towards Roma with fair completion and Turks, who are also predominantly white-skinned). Young Roma are more certain that they group is in principle targeted by racism and some of them clearly talk about their experience as being marked by racism. For LGBTI young people racism is something which in general does not concern them and their personal experience. They talk about homophobia, but fail to fully relate it to racism, considering they both have identical mechanism of forming and sustaining.

What needs to be noted that some young people from minorities, Roma in particular, have internalized some racist sentiment about their own group. This tends to be true for young Roma in university, where they need to navigate in predominantly non-Roma environment. Stereotyping one’s own group in a negative connotation is seen as an attempt to be accepted in an environment, which has normalized negative perceptions towards a whole minority group. This is indicative of how hostile the mainstream environment is, particularly in relation to Roma. Similar tendencies can

be seen among some LGBTI young people, which seem to bear shame about some of the stereotypes about their community, including Pride. They echo the mainstream narrative that sexual orientation is an issue of the private sphere and should not be 'paraded' with it.

In relation to that, young people in general hardly make the connection between different types of oppression, which have identical mechanism and lay within the same mindset of some groups of people being 'more' and some 'less than'. While Roma young people relate their situation and experiences with black people and people of colour more generally, they – as a rule – fail to relate to practices of homophobia, sexism, ableism and even xenophobia. Some more politically aware LGBTI youth are better equipped to make the links between different oppressions, but in terms of the bigger picture of the community, in their own words, that seem to be an exception rather than the rule. This serves to support the conclusion that racism is seen more as an act, rather than a mindset, which is problematic, as it doesn't tackle the roots of the problem (way of thinking), but its symptoms (way of acting, based on the way of thinking). For this reason, an educational paradigm on racism should always include exploring the relation between racism (in the narrow sense) with other types of oppressive mindset, which follow the same mechanism.

The question of the line between visible and invisible racism is what kind of ideas, expressions, actions and inactions are considered acceptable (normalised) and what – unacceptable. Taking into consideration that they all come from one and the same (racist) mindset, exploring the **limits of acceptable and unacceptable** is important for building educational and awareness raising activities that uncover invisible racism for what it is – racism after all.

There is a shared agreement among young people from all researched groups that physical violence is not acceptable. This is even among those young people, who claimed racist identity: when asked straight away about people being physically

attacked because of their background, they felt the pressure to denounce that. The same applies for bullying – on the street or in school environment, which is in general terms denounced as unacceptable from everyone.

On the other hand, generalising and stereotyping statements for specific groups are considered acceptable. This is especially true for statement concerning the Roma community where the normalised narrative is so strong, it surpasses other scapegoated groups like LGBTI people. ‘Most often, they are true’ and ‘I realise these are stereotypes, but stereotypes also start from true stories’ are two quotes that explain the mechanism that justify generalisation and harmful stereotyping. This is sometimes supported by the ‘free speech’ argument, where some people feel they are being policed way too much on what they can and they cannot say. Some even mention ‘political correctness’, where the person mentioning it goes on: ‘To all the time think what you say so that someone will get offended... that is too much, I don’t like that’. There seems to also be a big gap between general statements for your own group and general statements for other groups, where young people can’t seem to immediately make the link between these two. Stereotypes about ‘us’ are always stereotypes, but stereotypes about ‘others’ are just true, at least most of the time. General statements are considered rather acceptable – ‘most often they are true’.

There is, at the same time, a divergence between hypothetical situation and/or generalisations and personal experiences. For example, some young people which tend to agree with harmful statements about the Roma community, acknowledge that they had/have a Roma classmate who doesn’t fit the stereotype in question. This person is a rule would be excluded from the stereotyping statement, i.e. ‘They all are... except this one’. Many respondents actually have personal experiences which disprove the general statements they are used to, but instead of subverting them, they just exist next to them, often in dissonance. A good educational and/or awareness raising strategy would find a way to tap on these positive personal experiences and magnify them in a way that they would undermine the general statement, rather than solidifying it.

In general terms, young people – both from the majority and from minority groups – don't think about racism in terms of power and power relation. They don't mention power when they try to define racism, or when they are asked to analyse it. Furthermore, they can't explore the link between these two even when they are specifically asked to do so. This applies also to the most open-minded and politically active young people, which contributed to the research. The narrative around racism (invisible and visible) does not include power and power relations within itself.

On the other hand, some young people from minority groups can determine unfair balance of power they suffer from. One Roma young person says: 'It is the mayor, it is his responsibility. They did construction on so many streets in the centre, but here in the neighbourhood – nothing'. And while he clearly feels the bad impact of power relationships, he does not identify this as racism. This is even more visible when Roma youth talk about job search, as many of their family and friends have been rejected jobs because of origin; in these cases, the power the employer has to take the decision on a racist ground is very obvious. The same applies for LGBTI young people who complain about legal framework that does not guarantee full package of rights as straight/cis-gender people, particularly in relation to same-sex couple recognition. In other words, because of personal experiences, young people from minority groups seem to be much better positioned to understand and recognise that racism can only work in a relationship of power.

This is definitely not the case with young people from the majority. Failing to recognise their privileges, they fail to recognise that racism can only be sustained in a system where there is imbalance of power. What this leads them to believe is that 'reverse racism' is possible and it is even common: according to them 'Roma are even more racist than Bulgarians' and 'How come there is no parade for straight people' (as of 2018, there actually is). These notions can only be targeted by an educational paradigm that explains how racism works in relation to power and how only groups

who have the power can be in position to practice racism on a large-scale level. If this is not done, anti-racist actions will keep seeing the fight against racism as ‘groups coming together on equal terms’ as opposed to recognising their terms are not equal and one largely benefits from the privilege it created for itself, because it holds the power.

Finally, and connected to that, young people from majority have in general terms shared agreement that racism must be countered, but definitely don’t see an urgency in this. Even those of them who have been part of anti-racist activities or are part of such even now, think of anti-racist society as ‘nice to have’. They fail to see how racism limits access to basic human rights for some groups of people. The consequences of racism thus need to be explored in any educational paradigm that will address the issue, to make sure young people understand that racism is not just unpleasant, but prevents people from enjoying basic human rights, including sometimes right to life.

In this perspective, it is very important to **voice the experiences of young people who suffer from manifestations of racism**. What is important to note, that even if they can’t recognise/differentiate invisible racism, some of their experiences would certainly qualify as such. In the case of Roma these experiences include:

- Normalized negative discourse on behalf of media and politicians – young Roma recognise this as painful and suffer from being scapegoated by media and politicians, especially in cases of crimes or other wrongdoing by one or few members of their community, which is projected into them;
- Bullying out of schools – some of the young Roma that contributed to the research have attempted to studying in mainstream schools (i.e. schools outside the neighbourhood with traditionally small, if any, Roma students, which often adhere higher educational standards). Yet, they suffered bullying from classmates and sometimes even from teachers and finally left the school to

come back to schools with traditionally bigger Roma populations (and lower educational standards). This phenomenon seem to be more typical for some regions than others.

- Refusal of access to spaces and services – this experience is extremely widespread by almost every Roma young person that was included in the research. This includes restricted access to cafés, clubs and swimming pools, often under false pretext – most often claiming that there is a private party. Needs noting that this happens more often when a group of Roma youths attempts to access such places and is less common (but still happens) when it concern individual visit or a very small group, or a mixed group of Roma and non-Roma.
- Any problems Roma face are their own fault – this narrative is recognised by many young Roma as hurtful and is repeated in media and society. It puts the blame on the community for ‘not wanting to integrate’ rather than acknowledging that there is a system that fails to provide equal opportunities. This concerns statements like ‘they don’t want to study’, ‘they don’t want to work’, ‘it is their choice to be poor’. It needs to be noted that this is one of the narratives, which some Roma themselves have internalised, as mentioned above.
- ‘You are not like the rest of your community’ – whenever an educated and successful young Roma engages with non-Roma environment, they are often told this sentence. While it sounds like a compliment, this statement remains deeply offensive as it still demonises a whole community, while singling out one ‘good’ member. A couple of Roma youth mention this experience, which can be highlighted as a classical manifestation of invisible racism.

In the case of LGBTI young people, these experiences include:

- Physical and online threads for young activists, well organised opposition – openly gay/bi young people who participate in public discussions on the rights of LGBTI people often receive threads online or offline. While in some cases they are less intense, in other (as reported by one research participants) they also include death threats like ‘The good faggot is the death faggot’. It needs to be noted that gay-associated behaviour (e.g. feminine manners, particular walk or talk, way of dressing) is more tolerated as long as the person does not come out officially, which seems to spark more serious reactions. (Similar is situation with some Roma in university settings, which would not be treated badly – even if darker-skinned – until they share about their Roma background).
- Personal acceptance, but community rejection – some LGBTI youth share that they are accepted as such by friends and other people in their social circles for who they are, but this does not immediately change the views on the community as such. From one perspective, people would still use ‘fags’ or ‘gays’ as an offense (not directed to the LGBTI person) or tell normalised homophobic jokes; on another – the circle might accept the person, but oppose the fight for equality of the LGBTI community under the narrative of ‘parading’, etc.
- General statements – ‘sick’, ‘pervasive’, ‘predatory’, ‘immoral’ – remain to be normalised on social media and even in some media. These are hurtful to young LGBTI persons even if they are not personally directed to them, but are used to describe the group they come from.

Finally, we need to note that young people that don’t belong to minorities, but are allies and stand up for their peers’ rights in one way or another, also face negative consequences. Their experiences as allies includes:

- Some young people has internalized the narratives about ‘foreign powers’ promoting diversity as anti-Bulgarian doctrine; in this narrative allies are

‘traitors’ who work to undermine ‘the Bulgarian national identity’ and ‘the Bulgarian interests’.

- There is a shared opinion that allies embracing diversity are more vocal in the past years, but so are racist experiences;
- When allies stand up to homophobes, they are labelled as ‘faggots’ themselves;
- Allies sometimes not fully supported/accepted by minority groups.

Drawing on all of these findings and experiences the following **educational/awareness raising needs** have been identified for young people in general, so that they can be better prepared to recognise and counter racism in their environment and more broadly on social level:

- Understanding racism as closely linked to power and privilege;
- Understanding similarities in the oppression of similar groups;
- Skills for cross-community alliances and support;
- Support for overcoming internalized anti-Gypsism, homophobia and other intolerances; pride over shame;
- Institutional allies – supporting the mindset that somebody is on ‘your side’;
- Skills for situation analysis and reaction strategies when victim or witness of racism;
- Support for making peace between artificially conflicted identities – e.g. national identity;
- Courage, including balancing courage with safety;
- Commitment for change and action;

- Skills to mobilise support from own community.
- Skills to deal with cultural differences without looking down on people;

EXISTING POLICIES AND BEST PRACTICES

The work on anti-racism with young people has its policy framework, but remains poorly developed. The School and Pre-School Education Act for examples sets among the main objectives of school and pre-school education ‘forming tolerance and respect towards the ethnic, national, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of every citizen’ (art. 5). This is further developed in Ordinance 13/2016 of the minister of education and science on civic, health, ecological and intercultural education, which specifically sets as an expected result of education ‘understands different forms of racism, as well as successful practices of overcoming them’ (Annex 1). Yet, young people share that in general school is not properly tackling the issue of racism. The formal education is so far failing to provide a meaningful contribution in the fight against racism, especially considering the needs identified in the previous chapter of this report.

The youth work on the other hand with its focus on non-formal education, is better equipped with tools to meaningfully tackle the needs in relation to countering and prevention racism. However, it needs to be noted that: 1) youth work in general is still not fully recognised as a serious sphere of work; 2) the policy level in this regard is still weak with the Strategy for youth (2016-2020) putting insufficient focus on the topic of racism: its provisions in this direction are related to encouraging intercultural dialogue, which neglects the problems of racism connected to power, oppression and privilege; 3) the youth work remains widely smaller in scope when compared to the formal education system.

There are however some good practices in the field, even if obviously insufficient to tackle the issue in a meaningful way. These include:

Youth Centres created in Cooperation with the Council of Europe

Under the EEA Grants the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, municipalities and the Council of Europe created 4 Youth Centres with the Council of Europe Quality Label have been established and promoted the priorities of the Council of Europe's youth sector by actively addressing human rights education, intercultural learning, youth participation, active democratic citizenship and social inclusion of young people in its activities, as well as implementing working practices and infrastructure in line with the CoE priorities. A range of services related to the acquisition of new skills, culture and sports activities, motivation for personal development, as well as outreach activities directed towards Roma children and youth will be promoted in the Youth Centres.

sTEBup campaign

Ran by C.E.G.A. Foundation, the campaign against intolerance is considered a good practice, due to the involvement of young people from minority background and the majority to collectively work on the campaign and its products. This is in breach with the usual practice where people from the majority create campaigns for other people from the majority, without considering the needs and the participation of minority members. Minority members should have a voice and place in any anti-racist movement.

No hate speech movement in Bulgaria

This is considered rather a lesson learnt than a good practice. The No Hate Speech initiative in Bulgaria, as a part of the efforts of the Council of Europe on local level, failed to attract public attention. It also stayed on superficial level talking about no hate in general terms, rather than addressing hate speech towards the groups that suffer the most from hate speech. Issues like this should be directly addressed, even if

they could cause controversy, otherwise campaigns – even if big in scope – would not achieve more in impact.

Teachers' trainings

A lot of institutions and non-governmental organisations are providing trainings for teachers on topic like intercultural dialogue, tolerance and anti-racism. Although sometimes with high quality, these trainings cannot always bring the needed impact for a couple of reasons: 1) teachers are anyway pre-occupied with their school programs and the standards they need to follow and even if they have the willingness and the skills to run effective educational processes with young people, they rarely have the time and the space to do so; 2) not all actors in the field provide comprehensive quality trainings, especially such that would address the needs and issues described in this report.

CHARM project

This is a project for training youth workers with the aim of equipping them to counter exclusion practices within their own youth organisations. The project has developed a meaningful corpus of resources that can be used, but felt short in supporting organisations to move to pro-active measures to counter and prevent racism among young people. On the other hand, among its strengths, is the fact that it took a broad approach on racism and tackled it in line with sexism, homophobia, ableism, etc.

In conclusion, the landscape currently does not provide a good infrastructure and environment to address the issues of racism in a comprehensive way and in answering the needs of both young people from minority and majority background. There are however pieces of efforts that can be used as learning points and that can be built on,



adapted and enrich, to support the STAR project in offering a comprehensive approach in the field.

SOURCES

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