

On August 02nd 2010 about 80 young Roma and non-Roma activists met in Auschwitz to commemorate the victims of National Socialism in the so-called "gypsy camp" at Auschwitz / Birkenau. The event under the auspices of the Polish Minister for Equality Elzbieta Radziszewska was organized by the International Roma Youth Network "ternYpe" together with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE and the regional administration of the region "Malopolska".

Aim

The aim of the event and the four-day seminar was to inform young people with different backgrounds about the genocide of Roma. Moreover, the increasing racism, intolerance and exclusion of Roma in Europe was addressed and a key issue of discussion.

August 2nd - Memorial to the murdered Sinti and Roma in Auschwitz

In the night of August 2nd to 3rd 1944 2897 elderly people, women and children, the remaining Sinti and Roma of the so-called "gypsy camp" at Auschwitz-Birkenau, were murdered in the gas chambers. On this day we remember the countless people who were persecuted and murdered as "gypsies" under the Nazi rule. Just in Auschwitz there were approximately 23.000 out of half a million Sinti and Roma who were murdered by the Nazis in Europe. The 2nd of August reminds us of these issues but at the same time it reminds us to intervene and fight the multifaceted and never-ending discrimination of Sinti and Roma.

The international seminar

As part of the commemoration event about 35 young Roma and non-Roma from Albania, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Spain, Italy and Poland were brought together for a four-day seminar. In addition to the interviews of eyewitnesses and a visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial the program included various discussions about the Holocaust, the backgrounds, the mechanisms of exclusion, racism and antigypsyism, with a special focus of its importance for the present. The young people were able to exchange information about the perception and awareness of the Holocaust in different countries. The movies, museum visits and lectures conveyed important background information. Last but not least the seminar tried to raise the critical thinking of young people to strengthen their civic courage, social engagement and responsibility in society.

Result

Even young people who are concerned and have knowledge about the Shoah, know almost nothing about the Nazi genocide on the Sinti and Roma. The current rise of racism against Roma in many European countries, as well as the still existing prejudices and stereotypes in the media, politics and society remind us of the importance of Holocaust and human rights education. With the number of survivors and witnesses steadily declining, the role of the younger generation in remembering the horror of the Holocaust and the genocide against Roma and drawing lessons for the present becomes ever more important. We therefore hope that this international seminar will establish as an annual educational event for young people to engage in the fight against the current intolerance and racism.

ternYpe - International Roma Youth Network

The Youth Summit was organized in the framework of the international youth network "ternYpe" - International Roma Youth Network. We are a network of youth and youth associations, which creates space for young people to become active citizens through empowerment, mobilisation, self-organisation and participation. We believe in the common efforts by creating trust, and mutual respect between Roma and non-Roma youth.

Supporters and Partners

This seminar is an independent initiative of "ternYpe" under the auspices of the Polish Minister for Equality Elzbieta Radziszewska. The project was supported by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the OSCE, especially by the Contact Point for Sinti and Roma, of the regional administration of "Malopolska" region and the American Embassy. Other important partners of the meeting were the Jewish youth organization Czulent, the Jewish Cultural Center, as well as the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Krakow.

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