ERGO Online

To find out more about ERGO’s work, visit:
- www.ergonetwork.org, for detailed information on our approach, advocacy and campaigns
- www.RomaReact.org, an online platform where Roma realities are shared
- Facebook: ERGO Network, RomaReact
- Twitter: @ERGO_Network, @RomaReact
Looking back

2016 was a year of investment into the new vision of ERGO Network. Members and office shaped the new ERGO Strategy and built its substance into the daily activities of the organization. The work with members reached beyond the cooperation of the annual work program “Roma included: Roma recognized as equal stakeholders in the policies targeting them”, which is implemented in the so called “Big Five” Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia; also with the work under the “Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society on the Western Balkans and Turkey” we strengthened once again the relation with our members outside the European Union borders.

ERGO Network was a strong partner in organizing the Roma Week in the European Parliament. We shaped the program with events such as the conference on employment opportunities for young Roma and brought about 75 young Roma activists for an advocacy training to Brussels. Highlight of the Roma Week was a public breakfast used for exchange among young Roma and Members of European Parliament in front of the European Parliament, organised by ERGO Network together with TernYpe. For the first time ERGO organized a Summer Academy, offering an exciting and dynamic space for sharing of knowledge and developing ideas. We discussed important issues such as fighting antigypsyism and supporting Roma youth empowerment; at the same time participants learned about the methodology of participatory leadership and strengthened the relations among ERGO members.

About ERGO

ERGO Network wants to achieve equal opportunities for Roma in their societies and encourages them to take an active role to gain respect for their rights as equal citizens. ERGO Network connects organisations that share the conviction that Roma can and should participate as active citizens in their own societies. To overcome the discrimination and stigmatization that are root obstacles to their equal participation in society, we support civic empowerment, mobilization of Roma at grassroots level and leadership at all levels of society.

We create opportunities for Roma to shape the policies that affect them. For us, combatting the exclusion of Roma is a responsibility that needs to be shared by Roma and non-Roma. ERGO Network therefore promotes active citizenship, which implies participation, self-organisation, common responsibility and dignity. At European level we express our members’ common concerns and bridge the gap between day-to-day reality and policymaking. ERGO Network provides expertise to policy makers and politicians to design and implement more effective Roma inclusion approaches as part of mainstream policies.

The ERGO Network Strategy 2020 with its pillars People, Network and Advocacy was presented and discussed at the ERGO Platform in November. At the Platform a change of leadership was announced. Ruus Dijksterhuis decided to step back and opened a call for the new director who continues the work since April 2017.
2016 saw a great development in ERGO Network that put its work into a more strategic framework and increased the ownership of the members over the platform: In a common effort of the board, the advisory committee, the secretariat and member organisations, ERGO developed a clear strategy for the years 2016-2020, outlining its vision and values, strategic aims, opportunities, and concrete activities for the next four years. The Strategy 2020 is based on three pillars:

- **People**: to invest in the people that can sustain our work, bring the change at different levels and articulate our shared values in the longer term;
- **Network**: to sustain and strengthen the network as a learning collective to operate efficiently and effectively;
- **Advocacy**: to achieve key policy changes that make a difference for the lives of our constituency.

The Strategy 2020 will guide ERGO Network’s work for the next years and will make its aims more transparent to members, partners and funders.

**Board members ERGO Network**
Lili Makaveeva (1st co-chair)  
Adriatik Hasantari (vice-chair)  
Karlien de Ruiter (treasurer)  
Stanislav Daniel (board member)  
Biser Alekov (board member)

**Staff**
Ruus Dijksterhuis (Executive Director)  
Jamen Gabriela Hrabanova (Deputy Director)  
Viviana Galli (Policy Coordinator)  
Matthias Verhelst (Research Coordinator)  
Paolo Ferraresi (Financial Manager)  
Carmen Tanasie (Young Roma Professional, Management Assistant)  
Atanas Stoyanov (Young Roma Professional)
The annual meeting is a space for members to present their work, learn from and inspire each other and develop the network together. The meeting on 28 November 2016 allowed members from over 20 organisations to work together on ERGO’s Strategy 2020, sharing their motivation to be a member of the platform, defining common objectives and discussing how ERGO can be strengthened.

The members agreed that ERGO Network offers its members an effective platform for provision of information and exchange on relevant political and policy developments from different perspectives that can be used at local level. It is a platform for like-minded people, which also serves as a source of motivation and inspiration for more effective grassroots work. For many members, ERGO represents a strong organisation that can bring the grassroots reality to the Brussels fora and advocate for Roma people. Moreover, the members agreed that ERGO needs to keep its focus on network development and engagement of members, because only by working together the voice of Roma can be strengthened.

The meeting was co-facilitated by young people who were trained in facilitation during the ERGO Summer Academy. Through the participatory leadership approach, they engaged everyone in the discussions and made it possible to harvest useful outcomes for the network.
ERGO Network, together with several other civil society organisations and Members of the European Parliament, hosted the 1st EU Roma Week in the European Parliament on 5-6 April 2016 on the occasion of the International Roma Day, commemorating the 45th anniversary of the first Romani World Congress. A number of events took place in the Parliament, aiming to consolidate the commitment of the Parliament and other institutions to fight against antigypsyism and to formulate this commitment into action. It was an occasion to pursue the work to establish the 2nd August as the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day in line with the European Parliament resolution passed in April 2015. The Roma week, bringing together decision-makers with Roma activists and civil society organisations, promoted a positive image and narratives of Roma and their role in the European society at large and celebrated the contribution of Roma to the European history, arts and culture.

Civil society organisations co-hosting the Roma Week:
Open Society European Policy Institute (OSEPI), European Roma Grassroots Organizations (ERGO) Network, European Network Against Racism (ENAR), ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS), Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and European Youth Forum (YFJ)
Young Roma activists

On 6 April, 75 young Roma activists invited European decision makers to a Public Breakfast with MEPs, European Commission and the incoming Slovak EU Presidency on the European Parliament Esplanade.

Many of the young people took part in an advocacy training organised in cooperation with Phiren Amenca and TernYpe International Youth Network prior to the EU Roma Week in order to prepare their inputs and questions to decision-makers. During the breakfast, they discussed antigypsyism, the situation for young Roma in Europe and the role of youth organisations in combatting antigypsyism among others with Soraya Post MEP, Barbara Spinelli MEP, Damian Draghici MEP and Tiina Astola, Director General of DG Justice.

At the same time, policy makers and the general public could visit an open-air photo and art exhibition on the Parliament Esplanade that the young people prepared during the training. It reflected the historical timeline of Roma since their arrival in Europe and highlighted the important moments in the Roma history, promoting a positive image and narratives of Roma and their role in European society at large.

Employment conference

Another highlight of the Roma Week for ERGO was the conference on employment opportunities for young Roma, organised in cooperation with the Youth Intergroup and the Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup of the European Parliament. The conference underlined the urgency to remove structural barriers and create opportunities for young Roma to access the labour market across the EU. While mainstream policy frameworks with significant budget allocations exist for promoting youth employment, reality shows Roma youth hardly benefits from such opportunities.

European young Roma are in a situation of extreme social vulnerability. They must overcome many obstacles: not only the same that most European youngsters face, but also the rejection and discrimination they suffer based on their ethnic origin.

Investing and focusing on young Roma is the most effective way to break the cycle of poverty, discrimination and exclusion that this population group has historically experienced.

The panellists illustrated the difficulties young Roma face when trying to access the labour market and discussed the potential and pitfalls of different interventions such as the Youth Guarantee and Public Work scheme for young Roma across Europe.
On November 29, ERGO Network organised a public event to discuss the ‘Shrinking space of Roma civil society’, co-hosted by MEPs Terry Reintke (Greens/EFA) and Tomáš Zdechovský (EPP) and attended by more than 80 people.

One of the main challenges of Roma inclusion policies is to ensure Roma and Roma organisations are actors in the policy process, not subjects. Weak policy delivery goes hand in hand with the lack of active and independent civil society. There is however a squeeze on available funding for activities that are not strictly oriented to the provision of social services: advocacy, civil monitoring, community empowerment and activism. Shrinking space of civil society is a general trend in Europe affecting all civil society organisations, but hits hard on Roma organisations, as they are scarcely equipped and often struggling for survival.

(Pro) Roma civil society has a huge role to play to hold governments to account and to get involved in policy processes as respected actors. Policy makers need to value the contribution of civil society in the policy dialogue and monitoring. Roma on local level furthermore need to participate in and benefit from social inclusion interventions. EU funding will only be absorbed in a right and just manner, if people targeted are empowered and equipped to access and direct this funding and are included in the evaluation of its impact. ERGO Network therefore asks policy-makers for dedicated and flexible support for watch-dog organisations that can hold institutions accountable, and for building the capacity of Roma organisations to get involved in policy processes.
Alliance against Antigypsyism

The Alliance against Antigypsyism is an occasional coalition of organisations that promote equality of rights for Roma, to advance a better understanding of antigypsyism. The Alliance counts more than hundred members from across Europe and is open to more organisations as well as individual supporters.

ERGO Network together with several other organisations launched the Alliance against Antigypsyism in order to raise awareness of the characteristics and the scope of antigypsyism among a wide circle of policy and decision-makers.

Reference paper

The reference paper defines antigypsyism as the specific racism towards Roma, Sinti, Travellers and others who are stigmatised as ‘gypsies’ in the public imagination. Although the term is finding increasing institutional recognition, there is as yet no common understanding of its nature and implications. Antigypsyism is often used in a narrow sense to indicate anti-Roma attitudes or the expression of negative stereotypes in the public sphere or hate speech. However, antigypsyism gives rise to a much wider spectrum of discriminatory expressions and practices, including many implicit or hidden manifestations. Antigypsyism is not only about what is being said, but also about what is being done and what is not being done. To recognize its full impact, a more precise understanding is crucial.

The Alliance against Antigypsyism proposes a working definition that reflects a systematic conception of antigypsyism. The reference paper sketches its key characteristics, the connections between its different aspects, and its myriad manifestations, which require specific approaches. It wants to encourage policy and decision makers to put into action a coherent, but diverse, set of measures to combat antigypsyism.

The paper is available at www.antigypsyism.eu.

Soraya Post

“Much as last year’s resolution on antigypsyism that I managed to get passed in the European Parliament, this reference paper marks a watershed moment. A rallying cry from European Roma, Sinti and Traveller society, united behind a common viewpoint; letting us politicians know that the Roma issues will haunt us if we do not act”. Soraya Post, Member of the European Parliament.
In 2016 ERGO Network continued to foster strategic partnerships with the relevant stakeholders in the field of Roma inclusion. ERGO Network regularly takes part in civil society consultations of the European Commission Directorates for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL), for Justice and Consumers (JUST), Neighbourhood and Enlargement (NEAR) and Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO), as well as in discussions hosted by Members of the European Parliament and the political groups in the Parliament.

ERGO actively participated for example in the Annual Convention on Inclusive Growth, in stakeholder consultations on the European Youth Guarantee, in the focus group of the European Court of Auditor’s analysis of structural funds for Roma integration and in the regular stakeholder meetings on the EU Roma Framework.

Through open letters and policy papers, ERGO Network furthermore shared its assessment on Roma integration policies with decision-makers and civil society organisations. In 2016, ERGO commented, among other things, on the European Commission assessment of the National Roma Integration Strategies, supporting the urgent call of the European Commission to member states to step up their efforts in implementing their strategies.

10th European Platform for Roma Inclusion
The European Platform for Roma Inclusion took place in Brussels in November and focused on the midterm evaluation of the National Roma Integration Strategies, with the prospect for the Post-2020 period. Civil society organizations are concerned of the poor delivery of national policies. ERGO Network’s message was that (pro) Roma civil society has a huge role to play to hold (local) governments accountable and involve themselves in policy processes as respected actor.
EU coordination of civil society
ERGO Network as a strong advocate for Roma in Brussels is strongly engaged in the cooperation with Roma and pro-Roma civil society. ERGO works in close cooperation with the Open Society Policy Institute, European Network Against Racism, Amnesty International, Fundacion Secretariado Gitano, Central Council for Roma and Sinti and others who are part of the consultation process at the DG Justice.

Fundamental Rights Agency Advisory Board
Since 2014, ERGO Deputy Director Gabriela Hrabanova served as member of the 4th Advisory Panel to the Director of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union. The two-year mandate was extended by one more year due to the restructuring of the FRA. The main focus of the board’s work was to build a new strategic framework for cooperation with civil society – stepping up the Agency’s civil society cooperation through the Fundamental Rights Platform. In this sense, FRAs unique framework promotes continuous involvement of civil society and tackles its shrinking space.

In 2016 ERGO Network became a member of the Social Platform
The Social Platform is the largest platform of European rights and value-based NGOs working in the social sector. Its aims are to promote social justice, equality and participatory democracy by voicing the concerns of member organisations. Through its democratic structure, it aims at the full participation of members in a transparent manner that respects their diversity.
From 7-13 July 2016, ERGO Network organized its first Summer Academy in Greece with 22 participants from Austria, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the UK.

The Academy, organised in a nonformal setting where everyone felt comfortable, provided an excellent open space for peer learning and knowledge exchange on Roma policies and other issues that the young participants identified during the week. They shared experiences from their own practical work, reflected on the biggest challenges of Roma communities in Europe and developed common creative ideas to overcome these challenges and improve the work of Roma activists on local, national and European level.

Above all, the Summer Academy built the capacity and the confidence of young staff member and volunteers of ERGO Network member organisations and empowered them to play a stronger role in the development of their own organisations and ERGO Network as a whole. All participants developed follow-up projects to implement in their own organisations or in partnership with other participants, and all participants are eager to stay involved in ERGO Network. Some of them already facilitated the Annual Members Meeting, making sure that the methods they learned at the academy are used in all areas of ERGO’s work.

ERGO’s Summer Academy is based on the paradigm of Participatory Leadership, based on respect and engagement, harnessing diversity, building community and creating shared responsibility for action. The team of trainers uses nonformal education methodology that puts the participants’ active participation in the centre. Each day’s schedule is adapted to the topic of the day and alternates skills-oriented sessions with theory, debate and (re)creation sessions, with opportunities for informal exchange and discussion, as well as sharing good times. At the beginning of the Academy, the participants re-shape the objectives and define their learning journey. They join the team in developing parts of the programme, so that they can take complete ownership of the Academy as their creative space.
RomaReact

The website www.RomaReact.org with its corresponding social media accounts on facebook and twitter is an important hub for opinion and information sharing among Roma activists across Europe. It is a space for Roma and non-Roma who want to shape the public debate on Roma inclusion, share everyday Roma realities and challenge stereotypes and prejudices. Through RomaReact, more young people are mobilised to actively participate in society, to become agents in their own lives as well as equal and respected citizens.

Everyone can open an account on RomaReact and post their stories in order to change the narrative on Roma inclusion. In 2016, 36 blog posts were published, focusing on diverse issues, from cases of discrimination to cultural events, from the Roma LGTBIQ pride to the commemoration of the Holocaust. All blog posts can also be seen on the Rreact Map that let the reader check posts from specific parts of Europe.

On social media, RomaReact has 2256 likes, with the number increasing every week. On twitter, 1849 individuals and organisations follow RomaReact.

Local policy scorecard

The local policy scorecard is an online tool where local Roma activists can assess their municipality’s performance with regard to Roma integration. The tool awards scores to municipalities across a number of dimensions relevant to Roma integration. The survey is easy and quick to fill in for anyone and provides ERGO Network as well as its members and any interested activist a broadly comparable assessment of municipalities. The survey asks for the commitment of local leaders, the cooperation between authorities and Roma communities, the change perceived in the last five years and the assessment of the general situation of Roma in their municipality. The results can be seen on the Rreact map on www.romareact.org.
Since 2014 ERGO Network is supported by the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) through a Partnership Framework Agreement concluded with European Commission’s Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Thanks to this support, ERGO Network was able to implement a rich annual programme which focused on capacity-building of Roma grassroots organisations, advocacy at national and EU level and research.

In this work programme, ERGO works closely together with its core members in Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Slovakia who, together with the ERGO secretariat in Brussels, build bridges between the EU institutions and the grassroots level. The cooperation focuses on three areas:

- Coalition-building
- Capacity-building
- Evidence-based advocacy

ERGO members set up and coordinate National Roma Working Groups that gather (pro) Roma organisations to exchange experiences and implement joint campaigns and advocacy initiatives. At European level, ERGO set up the European Roma Civil Society Working Group, bringing together representatives of national and local Roma organisations, which regularly meets with the relevant Desk Officers and European Commission officials to share their experiences from the ground and learn more about European processes that they can feed back to their constituencies.

The capacity-building in 2016 focused mainly on empowering local Roma organisations to get involved in Community-Led Local Development, a process that enables local communities to access EU funds for community development. At the same time, ERGO members conducted Quality Audits on the involvement of Roma in the CLLD process, showing that a lot of work still needs to be done to make this tool really effective for inclusion of the most discriminated communities.

The common research work in 2016 took a look at the inclusion of Roma beneficiaries in the evaluation of ESF funded employment projects, pointing out that participative evaluations can contribute to the quality of such programmes, but are so far hardly used by programme providers.
Czech Republic

Under ERGO’s project “Roma Included”, the Czech member Slovo 21 invested into the capacity-building of civil society and amplified their voice by building a strong coalition of Roma NGOs in Czech Republic. Based on an initial meeting that gathered around 15 organizations, the actors focused on shaping the cooperation of organizations on the development of an advocacy plan towards different national institutions. Among others the following organizations are part of the coalition: Romea, IQ Roma Service, Living Together (Vzajemne Souziti), Jekhetane, Khamoro, Drom, Palaestra, Committee for the Redress of the Roma Holocaust, Romano Jasnica.

There have been many attempts to have a coalition of Romani organizations in the past and therefore there is a strong reservation of their representatives to commit to working together unless a clear vision and principles and rules are not in place. Based on the past experiences and failures, this meeting gave the foundation for such cooperation and all participants agreed to develop their cooperation further.

Roma for Slovakia

The Slovak NGO coalition led by ERGO member Roma Advocacy and Research Centre ran a campaign called Red Card to Antigypsyism. Members of the coalition distributed red cards at cultural festivals with more than 1500 visitors. Roma together with non-Roma guests were enjoying the performances of Roma stars and also learned about antigypsyism. The Red card explained the concept in Slovak and Romanes.
Since 2014, our members are very active in promoting Roma inclusion in the Community-led local development (CLLD) by building the capacity of local Roma NGOs to take part in the CLLD process and benefit from the funding.

In Romania for example, our member Nevo Parudimos worked together with the National Federation of Local Action Groups and organised meetings in several regions in order to discuss with Local Action Groups (LAGs) the possibility to include measures for local Roma communities into their next local development strategies (LDS). Nevo Parudimos presented the social, economic and cultural advantages of including Roma in the LDS gave an analysis of Roma inclusion in the previous CLLD period, based on the results of ERGO’s Quality Audit. At a national meeting for LAGs from all over Romania, also the Prime Minister and former EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Ciolos, participated and underlined the necessity of Roma inclusion in the CLLD process.

Possible involvement in the CLLD process
The ‘Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society on the Western Balkans and Turkey’ sets up a supporting structure for (pro) Roma civil society to actively participate in the local and national policy and decision making process. It addresses the generally weak position of civil society organisations (CSOs) aiming at promoting Roma integration or represent the voice of communities, which mostly lack the capacity to make their case effectively and act as a reliable counterpart for public authorities and other stakeholders.

Roma Active Albania (RAA) is the lead applicant and coordinator of the project in cooperation with ERGO Network. The overall aim of the project is to establish a constructive and systematic dialogue between local and national authorities and Roma CSOs in order to improve policies for Roma integration, social inclusion, non-discrimination, interethnic dialogue, socio-economic development and citizens’ rights.

The project’s main activities are implemented by the project partners OTAHARIN - Bosnia I Hercegovina, RROMA - Macedonia, NGO Young Roma - Montenegro, Association of Roma Students (ARS) - Serbia, Zero Discrimination Association (ZDA) - Turkey. They are leading the regional support structure, as they play a key role in their countries and have strong links and networks with organisations at local and national level. They are therefore well placed both to support local CSOs and to bring them together in national coalitions. They contribute to the project with their knowledge of the national context, as well as their expertise on monitoring policies and steering advocacy at local and national level.

ERGO Network has a supporting and advisory role by bringing its expertise of a European network and project implementation and creating the link between the national work and the European arena. Together with RAA, ERGO Network is part of the core-team which coordinates and supervises the other co-applicants and the various activities. All partners are involved in the working meetings and coalitions at regional and European level, where they set up and harmonize strategies and plan joint actions and advocacy.
This paragraph provides a summary of ERGO Network’s Annual Financial Report 2016, namely the balance sheet, the profit and loss account and the auditor’s report, which has been issued by Blömer accountants en advisers B.V.

### SUMMARY BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2016 (IN EUROS)

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Donations awarded in 2016
ERGO Network has received an operating grant of the European Commission’s EaSi programme for the project ”Roma Included”. ERGO Network is a partner of Roma Active Albania in the project ”Joint initiative to empower Roma in Western Balkan and Turkey” awarded by DG Near of the European Commission.
### Auditor’s report

In accordance with your instructions we have compiled the financial statements included in this report 2016 of Stichting ERGO Network, Utrecht, which comprise the balance sheet as at 31 December 2016, the statement of income and expenses for the year then ended and the notes.

### Management’s responsibility

The distinctive feature of a compilation engagement is that we compile financial information based on information provided by the board of directors of the entity. The board of directors is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the information provided and the financial statements based thereon.

### Accountant’s responsibility

Our responsibility as accountant is to perform our engagement in accordance with Dutch Law, including the professional and ethical requirements applying to accountants.

In accordance with the professional standard applicable to compilation engagements, our procedures were limited primarily to gathering, processing, classifying and summarizing financial information. Furthermore we have evaluated the appropriateness of the accounting policies which are used to compile the financial statements, based on the information provided by management. The nature of our procedures does not enable us to express any assurance on the true and fair view of the financial statements.

### Confirmation

Based on the information provided to us, we have compiled the financial statements using the accounting policies as included in Guideline RJ 640: Not for profit organisations.

Blömer accountants en advisers B.V.
On its behalf,
Mr. Dres. J.N. Witteveen RA
Krijtwal 1, 3430 AA Nieuwegein
The Netherlands
In 2017, ERGO together with its partners Central European University (CEU), Roma Education Fund (REF), Fundacion Secretariado Gitano (FSG) and European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) undertakes a great European-wide effort to monitor and shadow-report on the National Roma Integration Strategies. Funded by the European Commission, the consortium will involve 90 (pro) Roma NGOs in 27 EU member states who will receive training in order to be able to effectively monitor the implementation of the NRIS from the view of civil society. For the next two to three years, coalitions of local and national NGOs will publish shadow reports on the efforts undertaken in their countries and therewith push national actors and the EU to increase their efforts for Roma integration.

Mid-term evaluation of the EU Roma Framework

2017 will be an important year for the EU Roma Framework, as the European Commission undertakes its mid-term evaluation of the implementation and achievements so far. The results will be important for designing the Post-2020 EU Roma Framework. ERGO Network will be an important civil society partner in this effort, taking part in consultations and supporting its national members in contributing to consultations on the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies.

Together with ERGO’s civil society partners, ERGO will start the elaboration process of the Post 2020 EU Roma policy and involve key stakeholders in assessing the shortcomings of the current Framework as a basis for sketching an approach to elaborate a new policy as well as Roma specific targets in mainstream policies that take into account antigypsyism as the ultimate source of disadvantages of Roma in Europe.