

# ERGO Network



## About ERGO Network

ERGO Network's purpose is to create positive change for Roma communities by ensuring anti-Gypsyism is recognised, tackling the causes for inequality, enabling Roma people to take part in civic life as equal stakeholders, and convincing policy makers to initiate change.

"ERGO Network is guided by a philosophy of active citizenship, shared responsibility and grassroots empowerment," says Policy

and Project Coordinator Mustafa Jakupov, "We achieve this by advocating for better policies, campaigning, research and empowering Roma activists."

Founded in Belgium in 2008 by a collaborative group of NGOs, ERGO Network now has more than 30 member organisations across Europe.

## The impact of Google.org funding

Google.org supports an ERGO Network project called Peer Education to Counter Anti-Gypsy Hate Speech (PECAO). The aim of PECAO is to work with young people across Europe to change attitudes and contribute to a better understanding of Roma people.

"We are doing this in two ways, through peer education and monitoring," says Mustafa, "We use peer education to create a change in the attitudes and actions of young people. And through monitoring, we empower young Roma to identify and report anti-Gypsy hate speech so we have evidence to advocate for anti-discrimination policies."

ERGO Network delivers PECAO through grassroots organisations in 10 European countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Spain, France, Italy, Albania, North Macedonia and Ukraine. The grant is split into work packages allocated among these partners, with peer education work led by Bulgarian partner Integro Association; monitoring and publishing reports, coordinated by Romanian partner Nevo Parudimos; the social media communications campaign led by Spanish partners, the Federation of Catalan Roma Associations (FAGIC); with advocacy spread across all 10 partners.

PECAO had just held its first peer education meeting and presented its first monitoring report when the Covid pandemic struck. While monitoring was able to continue uninterrupted, PECAO had to switch to delivering its peer education activities through video conferencing rather than face-to-face, as well as delivering weekly meetings with mentors.

"In the peer education sessions, we are sharing stories on engaging with hate speech and that can be very devastating for young people. We need to take care of their mental health, so we support them with mentors."

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## Key insights

While monitoring continued through the Covid pandemic, educational activities went virtual.

This switch to online gave them more insight into online trends in hate speech and how it manifests.

The grant enabled PECAO to double the number of partner organisations it works with, increasing reach to 5 additional countries.

The project is on track to create a database of 1500 cases in total, and to achieve a 90% removal rate of any hate speech they discover through monitoring.

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We've really appreciated the help of Google. They've been really understanding in these difficult times.