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UNREPRESENTED VOICES:

PROMOTING INCLUSION, POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING IN ROMA AND EGYPTIAN ADOLESCENT MINORITIES IN ALBANIA

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<i>Project leader</i>	Diana Miconi
<i>Authors</i>	Eglantina Dervishi, Diana Miconi, Nora Wium
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Project Coordinator

Eglantina Dervishi, Associate Professor

University of Tirana

Department of Pedagogy and

Psychology

Address: Bulevardi “Gjergj Fishta”,
Tirana, Albania

Email: egladervishi@gmail.com

Project leader responsible

Diana Miconi, Phd

University of Montreal

Département of Psychopedagogy and

Andragogy

Université de Montréal, Pavillon

Marie-Victorin, C-345 90 Vincent

D'Indy Ave, Outremont, Quebec H2V
2S9

Email: diana.miconi@umontreal.com



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ALBANIA
- ORGANIZATION OF YOUTH ROMA AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITY, BERAT, ALBANIA
- CENTER OF EGYPTIAN AND ROMA COMMUNITY, SHKODRA, ALBANIA
- CENTER OF COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES, SHKODRA, ALBANIA
- UNIVERSITY COLLEGE "WISDOM", TIRANA, ALBANIA
- "BAJRAM CURRI" SCHOOL, TIRANA, ALBANIA

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1. Summary

This “Dissemination report” is a deliverable of five work activities aimed at the dissemination of results of the project “Unrepresented voices: Promoting inclusion, positive youth development (PYD) and well-being in Roma and Egyptian youth minorities in Albania”. The document presents dissemination activities that constitute a key area of effort within PYD of Roma and Egyptian youth minorities.

The dissemination work activities were coordinated by Associate Professor Eglantina Dervishi, a researcher at University of Tirana, Albania. Dr Diana Miconi of the Department of Psycho-Pedagogy and Andragogy, Université de Montréal, Canada, secured funding for the research project, from the Quebec Population Health Research Network and Associate Professor Nora Wiium, Principal Investigator of “The Cross-National Project on Positive Youth Development (CN-PYD), University of Bergen, Norway, provided guidance during the project implementation in all its phases. Each partner was responsible for dissemination in their respective countries.

This research project adopted an innovative approach to the dissemination of interactive activities with community leaders of Roma and Egyptian minorities, community organizations working with Roma and Egyptian minorities, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, State Agency for the Children Rights and Protection, Municipality of Tirana, Ministry of Health and Social Protection. As part of the project, a round table, as well as sport and interaction activities were also conducted, all aimed to engage young people in activities that can promote their positive developmental assets.

The objective of this report is to ensure effective dissemination of the project’s results by documenting activities conducted with youth, family, and school as well as activities using communication tools such as radio, social network, and online reports. The specific objective of this report is to disseminate the results and proposed solutions and implications of our findings.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of this document

Dissemination activities have a central role in this project on “unrepresented voices” of Roma and Egyptian youth minorities in Albania, and aim to:

- a- inform all local, regional, and national stakeholders about the results of the project and the implications the results may have for inclusive policy and services, organisations, institution and community services and users.
- b- communicate knowledge about PYD assets and experiences of Roma and Egyptian minority youth in Albania during the present pandemic.
- c- highlight the urgent needs of these minority groups, especially during the pandemic, and offer important insights on ways to move forward to support the positive development of these youth during and in the aftermath of COVID-19.

This document contains all dissemination activities of the PYD project. A large amount of document and materials were produced, all of which we are not able to include in this document. However, we have provided an ample detailed description of all the dissemination activities performed. All the materials that have been referenced but not included in this report can be accessed by request.

2.2 Structure of the deliverable

The dissemination matrix presented below in the dissemination plan reflects how activities were structured. In section 3, we describe the activities that were organized with stakeholders, project partners and other institutions that have a role in ensuring equal chance and opportunity for Roma and Egyptian minority youth. The section starts with information regarding participation in a large conference and a workshop. This is followed by a round table that includes participation of school, community leaders of Roma and Egyptian minorities, organization of Roma and Egyptian minority, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, State Agency for the Children Rights and Protection, Municipality of Tirana, Ministry of Health and Social Protection. The section ends with information on event organized for several target groups. In sections 4, 5 and 6, we present information on future directions, project report and good practice.

2.3 Dissemination activities by partners

The various partner organizations engaged in different dissemination activities. Some organizations and institutions used their extensive social media relations to disseminate information about the PYD project in the news. Other partners used their links with other organizations to spread information about the project at different highly profile events. Another group of partners engaged in dissemination activities mainly at the local level to have a strong effect on the local communities. Whatever their capabilities and experiences, all partners used their resources to effectively disseminate project information to local, regional, and national stakeholders.

Table 1.1. Dissemination plan of the PYD project on Roma and Egyptian minority in Albania: audience, message, and communication method.

Audience	Message	Communication Method
Organization of minority/ community leaders	Existence and details of the project	1. Personal contact 2. Community leaders meeting 3. Social media 4. Phone calls 5. Zoom meeting
Parents of participating youth		1. Parents meetings 2. Community leaders meeting
Target minority		1. Community leader information 2. Phone calls 3. Personal contact by community leaders
Government bodies		1. Personal contact 2. Social media
Volunteering sector		1. Social media 2. Personal contact from minority organizations
Media		1. National Radio 2. Social-media
Other international organizations		1. Forums 2. Workshop 3. Email
Participating youth	Benefits of the project and opportunities for participation	1. Focus groups discussion 2. Out-door meetings 3. Socialization with other peers 4. Lunch with peers and other adults

Local minority organizations	Benefits of the project	Round table
Schools		Sport activities with youth
Parents of participating youth		Activities with youth and parents
Organization of Roma and Egyptian minority	Results of the project	1.Round table 2. Groups discussion 3. Social media 4. Publication papers 5. Email
Community leaders		1.Round table 2. Groups discussion 3. Social media 4. Publication papers 5. Email
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports		1.Round table 2. Groups discussion 3. Social media 4. Publication papers 5. Email
State Agency for the Children Rights and Protection		1. Round table 2. Groups discussion 3. Social media 4. Publication papers 5. Email
Municipality of Tirana		1.Round table 2. Groups discussion 3. Social media 4. Publication papers 5. Email
Ministry of Health and Social Protection		1.Round table 2. Groups discussion 3. Social media 4. Publication papers 5. Email

3. Events

There were three major events, a round table and two activities with youth from Roma and Egyptian minorities, that also involved the project partners as well as several external organization and stakeholders.

Apart from the planned project events, there were a number of social events aimed at members of our target groups. The events provided us with a variety of ways to engage our target audience in face-to-face meetings, online meeting, and presentations.

Project partners shared events organized during the PYD project with their press contacts to create awareness for the project. A list of our relevant media appearances is included in this section.

3.1 Conferences/ workshop/ publications

For the dissemination of the results of the project, the article, “Underrepresented voices: Egyptian and Roma minority adolescents’ perspectives on their developmental assets in Albania during the COVID-19 pandemic” was published in an indexed journal with high impact factor “Journal of Research on Adolescence” in September 2021. The paper was selected by the journal as “Monday read” and promoted via social media (e.g., twitter).

To increase the visibility of our findings, other sources of information were used, like sharing publication with research partners in Albanian, as well as international researchers using website, such as ResearchGate.

Participations in a Symposium at an international virtual conference « Entre violence et créativité » organized by Dr. Yann Zoldan. 88ème Congrès de l’ACFAS, in Sherbrooke, Canada also helped the project to gain visibility.

In addition, project findings were presented at the international virtual conference of the 2021 Biennial Meeting of the Society for the Research on Child Development (SRCD) that was held in April 2021. A presentation entitled: “Navigating the COVID-19 Storm: Roma and Egyptian Adolescent Minorities’ Developmental Assets in Albania”, was made in a paper symposium on “Underrepresented Voices: Positive Youth Development among Vulnerable Minority Children and Youth in Times of Pandemic” that was organized by Dr. Miconi as the Chair and Dr Nora Wiium as the Discussant.

At an invited talk at the 2020 virtual workshop of the Corss-National project on PYD, that was organized by the University of Bergen Dr. Dervishi presented a paper on Positive youth development in Albanian minority youth. The workshop offered a great opportunity for the meeting and exchange of views among cross-national PYD partners.

Below are links to the different disseminations:

1. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354162748_Egyptian_and_Roma_Adolescents'_Perspectives_on_Their_Developmental_Assets_in_Albania_During_the_COVID-19_Pandemic
2. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jora.12665>
3. https://www.s-r-a.org/index.php?option=com_dailyplanetblog&view=entry&year=2021&month=07&day=25&id=100:underrepresented-voices-positive-youth-development-among-roma-and-egyptian-youth-in-times-of-pandemic

4. <https://www.acfas.ca/evenements/congres/programme/88/600/622/c>
5. https://iums.ac.ir/files/tip/files/Workshop_Programme_-_Cross-national_PYD_10-11_Nov2020-1.pdf
6. <https://www.uib.no/en/rg/sipa/pydcrossnational>

3.2 Roundtable

A round table was organized in Tirana, on September 30, 2021,

The main goal of the roundtable was:

- to present the general findings of the project on the developmental assets of Roma and Egyptian Minority Youth in Albania During Covid-19”, with a focus on both quantitative and qualitative data.
- to discuss proposed solution to promote developmental assets among Roma and Egyptian minority youth
- to build a bridge between local and government institution, as well as schools and Roma and Egyptian organizations
- Discuss directions for future intervention for the two marginalized minority groups



Keynote speakers were representatives of different public and Non-profit organizations that focus on Roma and Egyptian minorities; they had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss project findings in a roundtable with other stakeholders.



The roundtable involved institutions that focus on youth from Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania. They included University of Tirana, Wisdom University College, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Municipality of Tirana, “Bajram Curri” Primary school, "Egyptian and Roma Youth Movement" Elbasan, National Association for Life Education, "Egyptian and Roma Movement" Berat, Association of Roma and Egyptians, Shkodra. Discussion and feedback from representatives of the various institutions that participated in the round table helped to create new contacts and networks to share new point of views to address the needs of minority youth.

The round table was advertised beforehand, and some reports have appeared in the media afterward.

Below is a short collection of the media appearances.

1. <https://www.wisdom.edu.al/rreth-nesh>
2. <https://www.facebook.com/universitetiwisdomofficial/>
3. <https://m.facebook.com/shkollabajram.curri.31>
4. https://m.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002308178689&ref=content_filter

3.3 Event organized for target groups

3.3.1. “Teatime with mums and daughters”

A project meeting was held on October 2, 2021, in Elbasan City with female participants and their mothers from Roma and Egyptian minority communities. The activity was entitled “Teatime with mums and daughters”.

The aim of this meeting was:

- to send a message of solidarity and support to the communities
- to thank them for allowing their children to take part in our project
- to share our findings and the implications regarding how parents’ social-economic situation can affect their children
- to discuss how important, it is for their daughters to have an education and to become independent
- and to discuss how this educational investment can also benefit parents in the future

The meeting was held in a comfortable and informal environment that incorporated their daily routine. The importance of education was mainly what all the mothers talked about in the meeting. This open speech was a good opportunity to thank the parents for supporting our project, by allowing their youth to take part in it, and to send to them a message on the importance of education to empower their children and eventually, their family. A message that was already shared by many of these families was “Education empower youth” - in line with our research findings from focus group discussions with youth.

Event	Photo
Meeting with mums and daughters in Elbasan City	



3.3.2 Sport activity “I Am and I Can”

On October 19, 2021, in Tirana city, a sport activity called: “**I AM AND I CAN**” was held at “Bajram Curri” school, a primary and lower secondary education, a school with a large proportion of Roma and Egyptian minority students.

The aim of this meeting was:

- to send a message across that youth are good in sports: “I am a good player” and that the energy and spirit that they invest in sports can also be directed to opportunities that can enable them to build a better future for themselves: “I can change my life for better”
- and to promote PYD through sports

Event	Photo
Sport activity with boys in “Bajram Curri” Basic Education , Tirana, Albania	
	
	



This sport activity was different from the other activities because these youth were enrolled in school and appeared more integrated compared to the other youth that were involved in our project (who had often dropped out of school). However, the youth still talked about several problems and family difficulties they were facing. The school needs to have some support to arrange after school activities to engage students in schoolwork as well as sport activities. The school did not have physical environments suitable for sports activities.

3.3.3 Radio talk show meeting

To increase visibility for our findings, project partners took part in a radio night show “Youth for Youth” that was organized by Radio Tirana International (RTI; known in Albanian as Radio Tirana Internacional; and abroad as Radio Tirana). RTI is the international radio program of the Albanian radio company “Radio Televizioni Shqiptar” and features programs dedicated to youth and professionals who work with or carry out projects that involve youth. The moderator of the radio show asked about the project, the participating partners, findings and interventions plans and recommendations. A youth representative, who was also present in the radio show, was given the opportunity to ask questions about the findings and to send a message to all the youth from the two minority groups.



A full report has been compiled on all three events organized for the target groups. These reports are not part of the current dissemination report but can be requested individually from either the project partners or the Cross-national project on PYD partners that are responsible for dissemination.

The following table contains some selected media appearances that were related to the activities organized for the target groups.

1. <https://www.facebook.com/universitetiwisdomofficial/>
2. <https://m.facebook.com/shkollabajram.curri.31>
3. https://m.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100002308178689&ref=content_filter

4. Future directions

Adolescents from Roma and Egyptian minority face increasingly complex social, cultural and economic environments with growing challenges, lack of education, increases in forced displacement, migration, unstable families, income inequalities, rising levels of mental health problems and violence. Issues such as poverty, conflict, community violence, forced migration, gender inequality and humanitarian emergencies constitute a range of adverse experiences for

minority youth. For youth from Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania, problems such as early and forced marriage, gender-based violence, adolescent pregnancy, poor nutrition, noncommunicable and infectious diseases as well as dropping out of school are prevalent. These factors can predispose individuals to mental health conditions and negative development.

Based on the results of the project future planned intervention should be focused on:

- Psychosocial interventions that aim to support the positive development of these adolescents during and in the aftermath the pandemic, to prevent drop out on compulsory education.
- Psychosocial interventions to empower minority youth and actively involve them in research initiatives and intervention, to prevent the widening of inequalities between minority and majority groups during and in the aftermath of the pandemic and build a more equal world.
- Psychosocial interventions for a more comprehensive approach that tackles discriminatory practices and prejudice in the mainstream society and institutions as well as the spatial stigmatization and violence in the neighborhoods where these communities live.
- Psychosocial interventions that are provided for all adolescents, to promote positive mental health, as well as prevent and reduce suicidal behavior, mental disorders (such as depression and anxiety), aggressive, disruptive, and oppositional behaviors, and substance use.
- Psychosocial interventions that are established for pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents, particularly to promote positive mental health (mental functioning and mental well-being) and improve school attendance.
- Indicated psychosocial interventions provided for adolescents with disruptive/oppositional behaviors. These interventions reduce aggressive, disruptive, and oppositional behaviors, prevent mental disorders (depression and anxiety) and promote positive mental health.

5. Project reports

There is a wealth of experience collected within the project, especially during the different project activities. While most of the dissemination activities focus on some aspects of the project, there are comprehensive materials that are compiled into project reports. These reports can be made available upon request.

6. Good practice

The current report presents examples of outputs of a project that reflect good practice, as well as the experiences of national and international project partners. The good practice guide will provide an easily accessible document for institutions, stakeholders and organizations with an interest in promoting the course of minority youth in particular, and youth in general. When ready, the document will be shared on the Cross-National Project on PYD platform, and all partner websites and social media.