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PRESS RELEASE

How many Roma people do you know? The “Let’s connect” campaign has been launched

A campaign by the Foundation Towards Dialogue reveals that 72% of Poles do not personally know anyone from the Roma community. The organization, which supports the Roma community in Poland, has launched a social campaign called “Let’s connect”. The primary aim of this campaign is to enhance the visibility of Roma individuals and combat stereotypes about them. This initiative is groundbreaking as it is the first in Poland to allow Roma people to speak for themselves and share their stories on their own terms.

The Roma community is one of four ethnic minorities living in Poland. Despite being the largest ethnic minority in Europe, Romani people have been marginalized for centuries, remaining largely invisible and often facing rejection. This is in stark contrast to the significant contributions they have made to Polish culture. To address this, the Foundation Towards Dialogue has launched the “Let’s connect” campaign. This groundbreaking initiative is the first in Poland to allow Roma individuals to share their stories and perspectives on their own terms.

The Roma are coming out of the shadows

According to recent research, 72% of Poles do not know a single person from the Roma community*. The lack of direct contact is a breeding ground for prejudice. That is why, in its latest campaign, the Foundation Towards Dialogue put seven people of Roma origin in the spotlight: artist and lecturer Krzysztof Gil, saleswoman Lucyna Styrkacz, filmmaker Delfin Łakatosz, social organization employee Rada Sorochynska, Monika Paloma Adler and Dawid Huczko, active in the humanitarian sector, and a poet and dancer Agata Róża Łakatosz. These individuals, representing different ages, professions, and regions of Poland, all share a common heritage as members of the Roma community. *Through our campaign, we aim to reveal the true essence of the Roma community—diverse, proud of its rich culture and traditions, and open to dialogue. By confronting stereotypes and inviting Roma people to share their stories, we seek to foster understanding and inclusion,* explains Cecylia Jakubczak, the campaign's creator from the Foundation Towards Dialogue.

ABC about the Roma Community

On the “Let’s connect” campaign website, in addition to the main video, six individual videos feature the campaign’s participants answering a series of questions. We discover what they are proud of, what they like about their appearance, what makes them happy, and what they fear. We also learn Romani words and hear about people from their community whom

FOUNDATION TOWARDS DIALOGUE

they admire. They share what they appreciate about Roma culture and traditions. Additionally, the website www.poznajmysie.eu includes an "ABC about the Roma Community" section, featuring the 12 most frequently asked questions by the Poles about the Roma community, complete with answers. You can also download and print campaign posters from the website. The role of allies in building a society open to minorities is invaluable. By downloading and displaying these posters in visible places, you can support the fight against stereotypes about the Roma. The Foundation Towards Dialogue encourages everyone to get involved and help foster understanding and inclusion.

April is Roma Month

The timing of the campaign launch is significant. April 8th marks the International Day of the Roma Community, one of the most important holidays in the Roma calendar. This year, thanks to the initiative of the Foundation Towards Dialogue, the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw was illuminated in the colours of the Roma flag for the first time in Poland's history (see the video here). The "Let's Connect" campaign is another step by the foundation to increase the social visibility of Roma individuals. The efforts won't stop in April. The foundation plans to host a series of meetings with the campaign's participants at the Roma Community Center in Warsaw. These meetings aim to foster dialogue between Roma individuals and those outside the community, highlighting commonalities and exploring Roma culture and traditions. *We want to show how much we have in common while also revealing the world of Roma culture and tradition. We believe that direct contact and open conversation are effective tools for combating stereotypes, say the organizers.*

Official website of the campaign: www.poznajmysie.eu

* Bulska, D., Winiewski, M., Bilewicz, M. (eds.). (2024). *Uprzedzenia w Polsce. Postawy a ideologia polityczna.* (Prejudices in Poland. Attitudes and political ideology). Liberi Libri Publishing House

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