



**SHORTLISTED 1**

## **MARIA ATANASOVA**

### **VOLUNTEER AND ADVOCATE FOR INTEGRATION OF ROMA YOUTH**

Maria Atanasova is a young Roma from Bulgaria and a volunteer with Arete Youth Foundation, a Romani non-profit organisation working with Roma communities in Bulgaria. The organisation supports the development and integration of Roma youth via mentorship programmes. Maria mentors students, organises initiatives in the Roma community and represents Arete Youth Foundation at conferences, events and institutions. She is also a volunteer coordinator at The Social Teahouse - Varna, a social enterprise offering mentorship and entrepreneurship programmes with the aim of supporting children without parental care. Atanasova organises activities for the children from these institutions, participates in the communication between institutions and volunteers, mentors young people in The Social Teahouse, recruits volunteers and coordinates a group of 20 volunteers. Maria won the Young European of the Year 2020 by Schwarzkopf Foundation; the prize for volunteering, mentorship and activism.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** YOUTH PARTICIPATION; ROMA COMMUNITY; BULGARIA

**SHORTLISTED 2**

## **YNAÉE BENABEN**

### **CO-FOUNDER OF EN AVANT TOUTE(S)**

After having worked for UN Women in Brazil, Ynaée decided to create and set up her own project: In 2013, at the age of 22, she launched En avant toute(s), an association that fights for gender equality and the end of violence against young women. En avant toute(s) is recognised by French associative and institutional actors and occupies a prominent place in the French landscape of feminist movements. It is committed to always valuing social, associative and network work. One of the key initiatives of En avant toute(s) is the commentonsaime.fr website which is aimed at young people who have questions about their relationship, their sexuality and/or their identity. The website is supported by a chat where young people can be put in touch with professionals who listen and offer advice or point them towards those structures that can. En avant toute(s) has brought France a nationwide system allowing young people to express themselves and seek advice in a non-judgmental environment.

**HIGHLIGHTS:** GENDER EQUALITY; VIOLENCE AGAINST YOUNG WOMEN

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**SHORTLISTED 3**

**IRYNA YARMOLENKO**

**FOUNDER OF THE NGO CENTER FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION**

Iryna Yarmolenko has been active for several years in local politics in Ukraine, heading up the Group for Equal Opportunities of Zhytomyr City. She is also the founder of the NGO Center for Social Communication which creates and organises public events on environment, gender and social issues: Gender Month, Climate Ambition Forum, She Week. Her activism and advocacy in favour of the 'European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life' in Ukraine since 2018 has contributed to the rapid increase in the number of Ukrainian signatory cities. She is also an active member of the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality since April 2020. Following her recent move to Bucha, where she will stand for regional city council elections in October, she is starting to develop community activities to raise awareness about ecology and sports for adults and children. As city councillor of Zhytomyr, Iryna involved youth in drafting an appeal that the national government should spend money efficiently on Covid-19 prevention, and that Ukrainian city councils should work closely with local youths to raise awareness on this topic.

**HIGHLIGHTS: UKRAINE; YOUTH PARTICIPATION; ENVIRONMENT; EDUCATION**