



RoMa Inclusion thRough vocAtioNal eDucAtion

2.2 Engagement Methodology with the Roma People

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Introduction

MIRANDA Roma is an innovative project that aims to promote the social inclusion of Roma and people with fewer opportunities through vocational training. In the framework of this project:

- Stakeholders who can help and play an important role in reaching Roma trainees such as Roma organisations, vocational training organisations, and social inclusion organisations will be identified.
- The needs of trainees and stakeholders will be mapped to fully understand the problems of integration and to improve VET schools by reducing the employment gap of the Roma minority.
- The barriers faced by Roma adults in having opportunities to enter the labour market will be addressed.
- Efforts will be made to create inclusive environments in VET Schools that promote equality and equity in education.

This document entitled: Engagement Methodology with the Roma Community, is part of the WP2: Raising Attractiveness of VET Schools for Roma learners. The methodology outlines the processes and steps that would be taken when engaging with Roma learners, including their ideas and perspectives on VET. The methodology would ensure that the project's engagement with Roma learners is more efficient and effective. It involves developing strategies to overcome

- barriers to effective communication,
- building trust and
- creating a dialogue with community members.



CHAPTER: Effective communication with the Roma Communities



Description of the Chapter: Effective Communication with the Roma Community

Effective and tailored communication of the public services providers is crucial. The way how certain measures and services are communicated to general beneficiaries is a key to ensure that the information is appropriately understood. Sometimes information that is assumed to be useful and clear can be interpreted differently. On the other hand Roma Community struggles to access public services which is in many times due to misunderstanding the conveyed messages, large knowledge how the public service providers functioning and many often Roma Community members have limited experience and capacity to participate. The Roma community face many barriers in communication such as language barriers and low literacy rate.

In general, VET institutions are attracting new students, try to promote their programs and in this regard it is important for all new potential students to be well informed. This chapter is designed to contribute to effective communication and build intercultural competences of the teachers and educational staff while communicating with the potential Roma Community and Roma students.

Communication

Basically, communication takes place between two or more individuals in principle of transmitting a message from the sender on the one hand, and receiving the message from the recipient, on the other hand. After receiving and processing the message from the recipient, the sender in the form of a reply to the message he sends his own message, where he is now the sender, and the other party is the recipient of the message. This kind of communication is taking place in three ways:

- verbal,
- non-verbal,
- extraverbal

VERBAL COMMUNICATION



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Verbal communication for teachers refers to the way educators use spoken language to convey information, ideas, and emotions to their students. It's a critical skill that involves delivering lessons, providing feedback, asking questions, and engaging in two-way dialogues. Effective verbal communication is more than just speaking; it's about ensuring clarity, fostering understanding, and adapting one's language to suit the educational needs of various student groups. It is the foundation of a productive and positive classroom environment



Five Types of Verbal Communication

The type of verbal communication used refers to where and with whom we communicate. Here are five examples:

1. Intrapersonal Verbal Communication

Intrapersonal communication is our internal dialogue. We all do this. Often without realizing it, we talk to ourselves or have conversations with others in our head. This type of verbal communication is also referred to as inner speech, self-talk, internal discourse and inner experience.

2. Interpersonal Verbal Communication

Interpersonal verbal communication involves two parties. Like speaking one-on-one with a friend or colleague. It evolves using spoken words, listening when the other person is talking, understanding what is being said and responding accordingly.

3. Group Verbal Communication

This is where more than three people are involved in a conversation. There may be more people this time but the same rules apply as with interpersonal communication. Each person has a chance to speak, while others listen and respond at the right time.



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4. Public Verbal Communication

Public verbal communication can be anything from speaking aloud at a school assembly to being a keynote speaker at a conference. It's communicating to an audience of people, who have come to hear what you have to say. This form of verbal communication takes some people completely out of their comfort zone. But, developing this communication skill can also open new opportunities.

5. Mass Verbal Communication

This is all about talking to the masses. So, think about a TV show with a panel of experts, or a podcast where thousands of listeners tune in at the same time. Mass verbal communication involves a small group of speakers, who work as a team to share views and ideas with their audience.

2.2 NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION

In addition to verbal communication, signals are very important that the teachers and educational staff are making and the reactions of the Roma members are made with their own movements, posture and facial expression. All those elements belong to the non-verbal communication.



Some features of non-verbal communication are:

- Eye contact
- Body position
- The smile
- Clear signs that the person who speaks, is being followed, active listening
- Nodding



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- Use of silence

We should actively listen to the Roma member's speech and show that we listen, by nodding our heads as well as through eye contact. That implies and occasionally summarizes their thoughts, showing that we have listened. The Roma community member should not be kept at a distance more than one to one and a half meters, but not at less than half a meter, because it can also be misunderstood. Sometimes the use of silence is a very powerful weapon, because both the Roma community members and the education staff and teachers need to summarize impressions and think about. In other words, it would mean: That must be difficult for you to discuss... Silence... I can understand how you feel... Silence again...

In some environments, touch is an understandable way of communication, but in some Roma communities especially with a strong religious identity, might be misunderstood.

EXTRAVERBAL COMMUNICATION

When we talk about extraverbal communication, we first of all think of:

- the color and volume of the voice tone,
- speed of speech,
- the purity of the language, and
- the choice of words

If the teachers and the educational staff speak quietly, the Roma community members will think they are sleepy and not interested in the condition the Roma members are in. If the teachers and educational staff are speaking very loud, some Roma members will think they are being shouted at.

In relation to the purity of the language, it is necessary to speak a literary language without a dialect, a simple language that is understandable to the Roma Community. Regarding the choice of words, they should above all be comprehensible for the Roma Community members, both when asking the questions and when answering them. Teachers and educational staff meet a variety of students and parents, from various social, cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. And they all have their own identities that distinguish them from each other. However, teachers

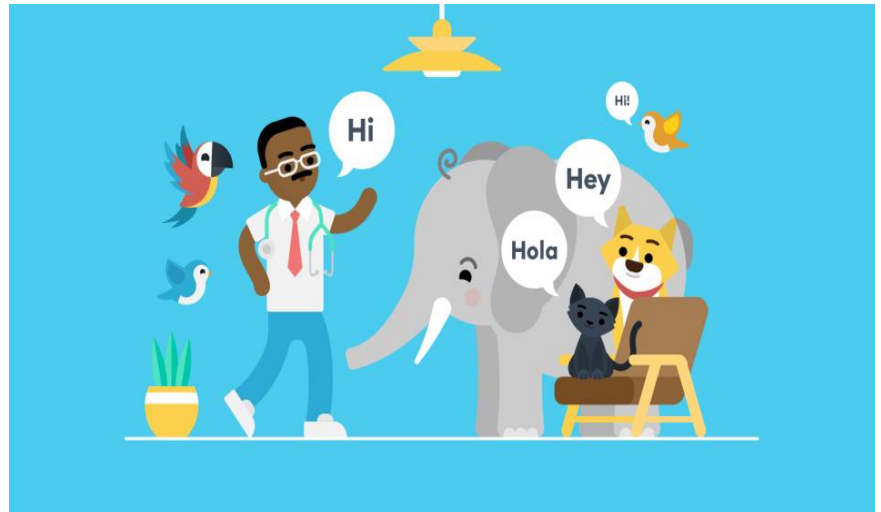


and educational staff have to adjust their vocabulary, behavior and approach, adequate to the social and cultural status of the students and parents.

Basic communication skills

Basic communication skills are:

1. Empathy
2. Active listening
3. Decoding non-verbal messages
4. Asking questions
5. Summarizing the information
6. Use of silence



Empathy

In view of the peculiarities of communication in medical facilities, besides basic communication skills that are universal in all types of communication, a fundamental skill is EMPATHY. There are many definitions of empathy. One of them is that empathy is an act of awareness, understanding, respect for feelings, thoughts and the complaints of the interlocutor now or in the past, but without the influence of one's own feelings, thoughts or potential affect on one's work. Simply put, that it would be, to put it in the doctor's jargon, to put yourself in the shoes of the patient

Since teachers have public personae extending beyond the classroom, it is critical that teachers communicate effectively to multiple community stakeholders who may be invested in local, statewide, or national educational policies and decision-making. There are many social contexts where teachers will be required to communicate and represent themselves, their students, and their schools. This poses a unique challenge to educators as they navigate these disparate communicative contexts.



As representatives for their schools and students, teachers may be asked for opinions on various educational policies. Teachers need to be critically aware that these opinions will not be interpreted as entirely personal opinions, but their opinions could be seen as representing an official school or school board policy.

Teachers may also need assistance from outside agencies, media, and others to build robust educational activities for their students. It is important, then, for teachers to consider the intended audience and purposes for their communication and ensure that the teachers' intentions can be easily discerned and fall within the legal confines of their position

Active listening

This is achieved by following the speaker while he is talking, listening carefully, and making eye contact. In order for the speaker to know that the teachers and educational staff are listening to him, it is necessary from time to time for him to summarize, that is, to paraphrase what the patient said, as well as to show that he is following him by nodding his head. At the same time, the questions asked by the Roma members should be related to the purpose of their education and the frame of the work of the teachers and educational staff.

At the same time, the attitude of the teachers and educational staff towards the Roma community should be open, not discriminatory, with eye contact, they should follow the Roma members thoughts and from time to time ask focused questions to clarify. From time to time he should also throw in a sign of approval and encouragement, such as: "yes, yes, um, I can imagine", nodding, etc.

Understanding of non-verbal messages

A third powerful tool in communication is the ability to decode the speaker's non-verbal messages. It refers primarily to things that the Roma member does not want to share or has an ulterior motive. In that sense, teachers and educational staff should have the ability to decide and assess what is the real reason that the Roma Community faces. Therefore, the decoding of non-verbal messages is of great importance. They are above all avoiding eye contact, as well as tense posture, or uncoordinated movements, keeping hands in pockets or behind the body, visible nervousness, sweating, restlessness, etc.

Posing questions

The fourth communication skill is the power to pose adequate questions. In principle, every communication starts with asking open questions like: "How can I help you"? Or: "What program of our school are you interested in?" "Do





you need further information"?... and so on. Asking open-ended questions should lead to encouraging the speaker to talk openly about the problems that bother him.

During the conversation after several open questions, it is very advisable to ask a focused question that will clarify the Roma community problems. Such focused questions are of the type: "What is the biggest problem during"... Or: "How do you find the curriculum? Closed questions are questions that require a 'yes' or 'no' answer. They are questions that usually start with "Do you...?"

Summarizing the information

This is a very practical tool that breaks down the barriers between teachers and educational professionals and the Roma members. When after a few of the Roma members' thoughts you, as a listener, interpret them briefly and in a language understandable to the Roma members, who will immediately conclude that you have followed them and paid attention to. If at the same time you also mention the Roma student name, which will make it known that you know the student, the Roma member will gain complete trust in the teachers and educational professionals.

Use of silence

The sixth communication skill is the use of silence. Silence in communication sometimes sounds very strong, louder than any shout. At the moment of making a decision, silence is a powerful tool in the hands of teachers and educational professionals. For example, when making a decision: "I think it's the best solution..." Silence... Silence is also used to express empathy, such as: I can imagine how you feel... Silence.

Which and how many of these communication skills the teachers and the educational professionals will use depends a lot on the Roma members, as well as on the problem or interest for which they come. However, in communication, attention must be paid to look and be interested in the problem with which the Roma member comes, he must actively listen, ask questions, be focused on the problem or interest, check how clear what the Roma member is saying, always to show signs of empathy, and if there are negative feelings on the part of the Roma member, even on both sides, to try to neutralize them.

Ways to overcome barriers to effective communication

Here are some ways that you can overcome communication barriers:

- **Be clear.** Before conveying a message, ensure your ideas are clear and consistent. Also, establish the goal of your communication to enable you to clarify the subject.



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- **Choose the best time.** Time your communication to get the most out of the exchange. For instance, you can assess the mood of the receiver to determine the best time to initiate communication
- **Use appropriate language.** Use language that the receiver can easily understand. Technical language, overly complex vocabulary, and idioms may confuse certain listeners.
- **Get feedback.** After conveying a message, you can follow up to ensure the receiver has understood your intended message. Answer their questions and clarify areas again if necessary.
- **Check your body language.** Body language conveys a lot of information, both intended and unintended. Ensure your body language is appropriate and matches your verbal communication.
- **Practise active listening skills.** Listening is an important aspect of effective communication, as it enables you to decipher the content of the message. Practise active listening habits, such as avoiding interrupting others while they are speaking.
- **Develop your cultural competence.** Learning about the different cultures of people you interact with can help you communicate with them more effectively.
- **Avoid giving too much information.** Conveying too much information to the receiver can lead to communication breakdowns. Instead, release only the important information and wait for feedback before sending more.
- **Monitor your emotions.** Evaluate your emotional state before sending or replying to communications. Ensure your emotions don't cause you to misconstrue the message or communicate unclear information.

Defining cultural competencies

Cultural competence is defined as a set of consistent knowledge, behaviors and attitudes that a teacher and educational staff should have, which will enable them to function effectively in a culturally different environment.

Cultural competences enable the teachers and educational staff to develop an appropriate way of working that will meet these challenges, increase confidence and ability to work with ethnic minorities. The ability to explore culture during communication in an effective and respectful manner is something that is challenging for many teachers and educational staff due to the fear and stereotypes. Stereotypes arise due to generalization of things, without being aware of the uniqueness of the individual and the dynamic nature of culture.

Elements of the cultural competences

The basic elements of the cultural competence are defined into three large groups:



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1. Awareness and attitudes
2. Knowledge
3. Skills and behaviour

All three aspects need to be fully developed to build the cultural competence of the teachers and educational staff. It is a complex process that takes time, but all those elements will lead to equal access to educational services, better utilization of the educational potential of the students including the Roma Communities

AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES

If teachers and educational staff want to build cultural competences, first of all, they should know their own culture, values, morals, beliefs and understand how they affect their professional work, how they perceive other people in the process of communication. Teachers and educational staff should recognize and respect the needs of different cultural groups, and promote equal access to educational services. The attitudes of the teachers and educational staff can unconsciously affect the communication with the individual. It is very important for teachers and educational staff to be aware of their own attitudes, prejudices, assumptions and through self-reflection to overcome them, which is crucial for effective interaction with the students from a different cultural group. One of the barriers is the lack of motivation in the implementation of cultural competences. That is why it is necessary to motivate policy makers, educational institutions, and trainers to recognize the importance of cultural competence training.

KNOWLEDGE

It includes knowledge about the local environment in which the Roma students and their family live. To understand the cultural barriers that exist in communicating with Roma students and Roma Community, teachers and educational staff need to be aware that Roma students may be culturally lost in their own beliefs, habits and customs.

Information about Roma cultural context can be obtained from a variety of sources. It can be from the Internet, talking to Roma non-governmental organizations, participating in their specific manifestations, visiting a Roma family in their home.

In that learning process, should be obtain the following knowledge:

- Roma history and origin



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- Roma culture
- Potential problems that the Roma Community face with in the field of education
- Attitudes of the certain Roma family regarding the education

Frequent barriers in obtaining information and knowledge that the teachers and educational staff notice are the language barrier, the inability to obtain knowledge about cultural characteristics, as well as access to appropriate educational programs specific to the local Roma Community. Not having enough knowledge or skills in intercultural communication is an obstacle in the motivation for involvement in communication and challenge for the teachers and educational staff. There comes the need for teachers and educational staff to learn and be trained for intercultural communication competence, especially in the time where Europe is getting more culturally diverse.

SKILLS AND BEHAVIOR

Skills and behavior refer to the cultural sensitization of the entire educational staff, that is, building bridges between cultures and overcoming the barriers that teachers and educational staff have spotted that exist. Important elements to be developed at this stage are respect for diversity, building trust across cultures, effective communication and overcoming language barriers.

Training is needed for all educational personnel who work with Roma students and Community, and in addition, Roma educational mediators can be used, which greatly facilitate access to quality and higher educational performance. When these three elements are strengthened and when the fact is accepted that cultural differences should not be a barrier, but a bridge for building trust, then it can be said that the teachers and educational staffs have acquired CULTURAL COMPETENCES and can deal with all cultural differences and discriminations.

Acquiring communication skills by itself does not mean acquiring cultural competences. Teachers and educational staffs should also acquire skills to recognize and adapt to different cultural students and communities, to build trust with the students and parents. Acquiring cultural competencies will enable them to reliably and effectively explore the student's culture, which will lead to increased mutual understanding.

Cultural characteristic of the Roma

The Roma are an ethnic group of Indian origin (Punjab region), which initiated its migratory movements towards Europe. Their arrival on the European continent involved several consecutive waves between the 9th and the 15th



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centuries. Various theories mention two groups of Roma people, following different itineraries, one penetrating the European territory from the steppes of Central Asia, the other crossing Northern Africa through the Iberian Peninsula.

The first documentation of a Roma community dates back to 1068, during the time of the Byzantine Empire. There are several theories concerning the arrival of the Roma population in Romania, but Roma were first mentioned in a document from 1385.

The Romani language spoken by Roma, related to the Sinhalese language still spoken in Sri Lanka, has thus diverged over time according to the geographical area or Roma community speaking it, to the point where varieties of Romani are sometimes considered languages of their own.

There is a consensus in the international community on using the overarching term “Roma” to refer to the distinct Roma groups and subgroups living in Europe (Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Travellers, Dom, Lom, etc.). Although no official data is available, it is estimated that between 10 and 12 million Roma live in Europe, constituting its largest ethnic minority. It is spread throughout the European continent but is highly concentrated in Central and Eastern Europe, in particular Romania (est. 2 million persons), Bulgaria (est. 700,000), Hungary (est. 500,000), Slovakia (est. 450,000) the Czech Republic (est. 300,000); as well as in the Iberian peninsula (circa 700,000 Roma in Spain, and another 55,000 in Portugal).

Roma Culture and tradition

Roma culture is not unique, universal, due to the fact that they constantly traveled and migrated and thus received cultural values from other peoples, but at the same time exerted influence on them. All Romani speakers are bilingual because they always speak the local language of the country in which they are living. However, many Roma have lost their own language over the course of their long history, primarily as a result of social marginalization and attempts at forced assimilation. It is estimated that roughly three quarters of Roma today speak Romani as their native tongue.

Traditional trades are inseparable from Roma groups, for these traditional trades formed one of the strongest bases of group identity. More important, work, most often in the form of trades are an integral part of the Roma identity. There are several lines of traditional trades among Roma groups: Metal work divided into copper and blacksmiths; Horse-dealing; Music as a trade (not to be mistaken for Roma music!); and Wood and miscellany.

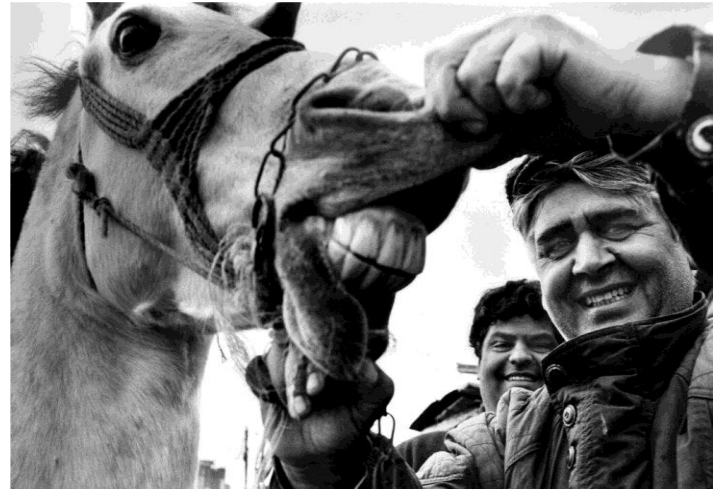


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Horse Trading

In all European countries, Roma were also known as horse-dealers and more generally as specialists in that trade. The best known ones are Northern European Roma. Along this, let us say that the word *grast* (or *graj*) – a horse is not of Indian origins but comes from Armenian. The only words of Indian origin referring to horses and remaining nowadays in Romanes are *khuro/khuri* – a colt.



Hungarian Lovara (Photo Rolf Bauerdick)

Blacksmiths

The profession of smith is one of the oldest among Roma. It used to be the main profession of the Carpathian and Balkan Roma. In those regions, Roma were well known and established blacksmiths, settled in villages. They were also renowned weapon makers. Roma smiths produced the cannons used by the Turks to conquer Europe as well as the ones that were used in its defense.



Slovakian Blacksmiths (Photo Rold Bauerdick)

Such was their renown, that several Hungarian kings actually forbade the nobility to employ Roma smiths without his explicit authorisation! In the Ottoman empire, many were employed as *sabljari*, saber-makers, directly under the Ottoman army jurisdiction. This gave rise to the so-called *Cengene Sancak*, an Ottoman army entity which employed many Roma.



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Coppersmiths

Other work, another profession among Roma, closely related to metalwork, is coppersmithing. Roma coppersmiths in the Balkan, in Romania and in Hungary. The Kalderaša whose name comes from Romanian – caldarar/caldaraș, a coppersmith. The technology and methodology of this profession is similar in all these countries and also involves some basic knowledge in chemicals. This is not what one might think. But these Roma realise it using primitive instruments and move from village to village and thus do not have stationary forges. They carry all their tools with them to each village.

Among Roma – mostly in Romania – one also finds rather primitive silverwork. (Romanian word argintar, a man working with silver). They retrieve the silver from old objects and sell them by the local population.



Coppersmith (Photo Alain Weckmann)

Wood and other Trades

Woodwork is fairly common among Roma. There are basket weavers, for example the French Manouches traditionally have this trade, there are spoon makers, the Romanian Lingurari, and there are sieves-makers, the Čurara in Hungarian lands. Many of these traditional woodworking trades have by now largely vanished.



Basket weaver (Photo Alain Weckmann)

Language Barriers



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When considering Roma people and their relation with other societies, it is important to consider two common kinds of barriers: barriers based on linguistic issues and barriers based on communication issues. While the first item is related to the group composition and cultural heritage, the second one is more related to the communication process between Romani and other cultures. Not all Roma people share a common language or only one dialect, which may complicate the interaction between two different sub-groups and, or, between one group and the rest of the society. For example, a segment of the Roma communities across Europe speaks a dialect of Romani (the traditional language) although usually they also speak, to various degrees, the majority language of the country they live or lived in. Sometimes Romani is confused with the Romanian language, although they are two completely separate languages with different origins.

On the other hand, the communication process between Roma and other cultures may be particularly difficult when approaching professional or specific topics, such as those related to laws, rules, access to the health system, education or legal documents. Relevant information is often written or told in a complex language, which is not easy to understand for people with a low level of education.

A a	B b	C c	Č č	Čh čh	D d	Dž dž	E e
[a]	[b]	[ts]	[tʃ]	[tʃʰ]	[d]	[dʒ]	[e]
F f	G g	H h	I i	J j	K k	Kh kh	L l
[f]	[g]	[h]	[i]	[j]	[k]	[kʰ]	[l]
M m	N n	O o	P p	Ph ph	R r	S s	Š š
[m]	[n]	[o]	[p]	[pʰ]	[r]	[s]	[ʃ]
T t	Th th	U u	V v	X x	Z z	Ž ž	
[t]	[tʰ]	[u]	[v]	[x]	[z]	[ʒ]	

International Romani Union Standard Alphabet *This is the official standard alphabet for Romani. It was standardized in 1990 at the Fourth World Romani Congress in Serock, Poland. This alphabet can be used by all the Romani languages/dialects except Carpathian Romani and Finnish Romani.*

Case Study: Linguistic exclusion of Roma children in Croatia – the subject of a European Court of Human Rights decision



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In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled in favor of Romani students, who claimed that placement in special classes because of purported deficiencies in their Croatian language competency was a violation of their human rights. This case originated in the late 1990s – in the aftermath of the wars with Serbia and Bosnia during which Roma were targets of ethnic violence by Croatian nationalists. . While the data concerning these fourteen students was typically bleak — none of them finished primary school and many were absent from school as much as they were present — the ECtHR decided that unequal treatment had occurred (ECtHR, 2010).

Important here is the context of the linguistic/ethnic history and contemporary situation where the alleged discrimination occurred. The Međimurje region of Croatia is the most culturally and linguistically heterogeneous in the country, historically part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The Slavic language spoken by the people native to this region, including the Roma – called Kajkavian in Croatia and Prekmurian across the river in Slovenia – includes many loan words from German and Hungarian. Roma groups participate in a predominantly oral culture, regardless of the particular language of use, unlike their non-Roma neighbors who are part of a print culture, even when their levels of literacy are not high. The family is the almost exclusive source of knowledge and belief through and beyond early childhood, and the parents are the main “teachers” of their children.

Low Literacy Rates

Literacy is an essential prerequisite to social integration and participation in modern societies. An illiterate person faces problems coping with daily activities and has fewer opportunities to develop a professional career.

On average 20 % of Roma respondents reported that they could neither read nor write in stark contrast to 1 % of non-Roma respondents. The situation is particularly critical in Greece, where more than half of the Roma respondents aged 16 and above cannot read or write. It is also problematic in Portugal (35 %), Romania (31 %) and France (25 %). In the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, however, at most 6 % of the Roma respondents perceived themselves as illiterate. The differences between Roma and non-Roma are statistically significant in all Member States. For non-Roma respondents living nearby Roma, Portugal has the highest proportion of those who cannot read and write (8 %) corresponding to national-level statistical data, indicating that Portugal has the second-highest illiteracy rate among all EU Member States.

In terms of age range, the following data displayed in the graphic brings conclusion that in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia the share of illiterate persons in the oldest age group is less than 20 %. The



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decline in illiteracy in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland is associated with the expansion of education during communism after the Second World War.

The expansion of education for Roma is apparent in all Member States: the percentage of Roma respondents who have never attended school is lowest among the youngest age group. The share of respondents in the oldest age group who report that they have never been in school is highest in Greece (66%), Portugal (57%) and Spain (43%). Portugal and Spain have made particular headway: younger Roma in those two countries are far more likely to have attended school than older Roma. Specifically, the percentage of Roma aged 16–24 who have never attended school dropped to 9% in Portugal and under 1% in Spain compared to 57% and 43% for those aged 45 and over.

Case Study: Bulgarian and Finnish ROMA

The study was conducted in two Roma communities: two different projects for adult Roma literacy in two different parts of Europe – Bulgaria and Sweden, where the same approach for building literacy skills was used – the ecological approach to literacy within the community. The goal of this study is to share ideas and approaches used for literacy among Roma communities in Bulgaria and Sweden. The reason for literacy in the Romani language in those two communities were different. Among the Bulgarian Roma the literacy process was a part of a larger project on early child home literacy in which parents played the role of teachers at home. The role of parents was to train their children who are aged 3–5 and do not attend kindergarten to read and write in the Bulgarian language using the mother tongue instructions as a bridge for better understanding and acquisition of Bulgarian. For this purpose, special courses for parents were organized. During these courses, parents were trained in two directions: 1) how to read and write in Romani and 2) how to teach their children in Bulgarian as a second language using Romani language as an instrument.

The literacy project among the Finnish Roma community in Stockholm was a natural wish of the group of Roma to improve their Romani and to learn to read and write in the Romani language. For this purpose a literacy course was organized with Roma adults.

The ecological approach, used for literacy, suggested the Romani cultural heritage to be used as an instrument for language literacy – songs, fairy tales and poems.



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The results were that during the literacy process, the students were learning Roma songs, fairy tales, and Roma history. Through learning to read and write texts of songs and fairy tales, which are culturally close to them, the participants actually got literate in their mother tongue.

The results of the Bulgarian project were of two types: firstly, the parents learned to read and write in Romani, and secondly, the children got prepared for school.

The result of the Swedish project was that at the end of the year the participants of the literacy course could read and write in Romani. In both projects the adults were aware of the importance of their own culture in the literacy process and, for them, that was the first time they had realized that culture plays an important role in the educational process.

What were the difficulties for both groups of adults learning to read and write in Romani as their mother tongue?

1. The first difficulty came from the introduction of the new Roma alphabet. The Bulgarian Roma are used to reading and writing in the Cyrillic alphabet. The Finnish Roma are literate in Swedish and/or Finnish. Thus, the Romani alphabet with some specific letters (such as kh, ph, čh, th, č, š) and their correct pronunciation caused problems, particularly for the Finnish Roma.
2. The vocabulary: in both groups the participants have forgotten some of the old Romani words and instead they use words that come from contact languages. Learning the meaning of the words and using them in communication is another difficulty for the learners of Romani.
3. The communication: problems with starting the communication in Romani, using the new vocabulary, etiquette forms and correct behavior.

Conclusions

Basically, communication skills are universal and applicable to different social layers, as well as different intellectual, social, ethnic and religious communities. In the Roma ethnic community, the communication skills of teachers and educational professionals are even more important, taking into account the many misconceptions, prejudices, marginalization from society itself towards them, and as a defense mechanism, the marginalization and ghettoization.

Roma community face serious problems and barriers in the field of education. Stereotyping, discrimination, lower performance in school, acknowledge of the language, economic barriers etc. Segregation in the school is an illegal phenomenon that Roma students are placed in schools for students with specific learning needs due to the lower performance. Maintaining the high school is also a challenge especially for many Roma girls due to the patriarchal



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attitudes of the parents. On the other hand, also the vicious circle and having no positive models in the community is a reason that ground the problem in the education of the Roma Community.

In addition, many Roma members are not aware or informed of the potential that the VET education brings. In that sense it is obvious to which extent effective communication with the Roma community is important.

On the other hand, communication is so difficult at the same time. A large part of the Roma community live on the margins of society, neglected, injustice, revolt against the system that they consider it to avoid them, services that are applied to other people but not available to the Roma Community. In such conditions teachers and educational staff face the challenges of connecting with all the frustrations of acquisition, imposed by the social system, through non-provision of rights from educational institutions, health insurance, health care, communal, infrastructural, traffic and a number of other problems.

According to Freire and Macedo (1987), literacy and education are interconnected with the culture. "To be literate is not to be free, it is to be present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future" (p. 11). In the further part, the authors develop the idea that the language is not only the force of knowledge, but also knowledge itself. The idea of critical literacy, which the authors develop, is to make the learners rethink themselves, their position in the educational process, in society and life.

In fact, the Roma involved in these two projects were totally changed at the end of them. This is not only due to the literacy process itself but also owing to education, learning their own history and culture, finding new facts about their past, making them more proud of who and what they are.

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Chapter: Building Trust



Description of the Chapter: Building Trust

As part of this Engagement Methodology, this chapter is focused on the importance and means of building trust with the Roma community. Building trust comes before the actual engagement of Roma learners. It creates the necessary foundation for them to be open to share their ideas and perspectives, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of this project's outputs.

In other words, establishing trust is essential in community engagement, especially with marginalized groups such as the Roma community. Trust serves as the cornerstone of enduring and impactful relationships, fostering effective collaboration and the creation of sustainable solutions. This chapter delineates a methodology for nurturing trust while collaborating with the Roma community, with a focus on respect, empathy, and genuine engagement.

By offering targeted resources and support mechanisms tailored to the specific needs of the Roma community, this chapter aims to address the pervasive mistrust experienced by Roma minorities within the European context. Its goal is to identify and understand the barriers hindering Roma learners' participation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs, ultimately working towards devising strategies to overcome these obstacles.

Understanding Historical Trajectories: The Context of Roma Marginalization

Understanding historical trajectories is crucial for contextualizing the entrenched marginalization experienced by the Roma community, illuminating the enduring impacts of centuries of discrimination and persecution. By examining the historical context, we can gain insights into the systemic challenges that have shaped Roma experiences of marginalization and inform strategies for fostering trust and empowerment within the community.

According to UNICEF, only one in five Roma children are able to complete the primary level of education. This comes in contrast with the 90% of non-Roma children that successfully finish primary school. Among the main reasons that prevent the first from proceeding to secondary education are racism and the inability of schools to meet the needs of this population. In addition to this, the representation of Roma populations in secondary and higher education falls even lower. Only 18% and 1% respectively of the Roma population seek this type of education. At the same time, more often than not, Roma children are sent to schools of people with special needs, in an effort to address their language differences. It is clear that they are unable to receive the same quality of education as their non-peers.

Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Eastern and Central Europe. With a presence in almost all countries, they have a population of over 10 million people. Mainly they are based in the Balkan Area. Nevertheless, their population is expected to double in the next half a century, with the majority being young of age. Adding to this, as a population, Roma are very heterogeneous, due to the nuances of their traditions, language, religion and geographical origin.



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As already mentioned, the educational progress and engagement of Roma in Europe are poor. The vast majority of them do not have access to primary education, and even if they do, certain barriers and challenges lead them to drop out. It is thirty times more likely for them to become dropouts than the rest of the European population. However, for the very few that manage to remain in the educational system, they pursue vocational establishments, which is an industry with a low value of practical qualifications. In addition to the above, the schools do not seem to address the specific needs of this population, leading to Roma students needing to attend school for longer, in order to complete a level of education.

Adding to the poor education achievement of this group, gender-based educational gaps are also present. Only 64% of girls enroll in school, in contrast to 96% in the non-Roma population. Furthermore, 75% of them do not complete their education, while Roma girls overall score lower in literacy than Roma boys.

Having laid out a clear baseline on the current educational situation of the Roma population, it is crucial to increase understanding of the reasons for the poor educational outcomes. One of the main causes seems to be the lack of quality in the educational services targeting the young children. The institutions that support and offer care and education to this target group are either not present or of poor quality. Being treated as voiceless as a population, their needs are overlooked, while institutions do not take into consideration their linguistic background and needs. For the last few years, education still remains quite expensive for this target group, while the deterioration of their economic situation poses a further strain. Schools also lack provisions and are not ready to accommodate Roma children, which reduces their capacity to benefit from primary education.

Another reason is the non-registration of these children at birth. Widespread mistrust in the state, the unwelcoming behavior of medical institutions and the uninsurance of the parents are some of the reasons why Roma children are not registered. Nevertheless, lack of awareness about the need to register is still present in the Roma communities, which leads to these people becoming individuals to the authorities. Not having a birth certificate leads to these children being unprotected by the state legislation in regards to mandatory education and child labour. They can also not be granted access to education or even healthcare.

In addition to the above, social exclusion and poverty greatly hinders their access to education. Families cannot afford to send their children to school. Frequent migration also removes children from school, and families try to find employment and a place to live.

Similarly, remote living locations in crowded yet isolated Roma communities pose further challenges to children who want to reach school. Even if they get access, the poor hygienic situation prevents them from completing basic tasks such as their homework. Early marriage or child birth in the female population also reduces their ability to attend school. Access to basic amenities is also limited to Roma students who might not be even able to buy a textbook or a





pencil to complete their school activities. Not to mention that Roma schools might have to go to school hungry which further reduces the quality of their work and their performance at school.

Another challenge currently faced by the Roma population is segregation. First of all, Roma children are segregated between schools. They attend educational institutions where the Roma population is the majority. However, the teachers are not trained to teach these students who have a different culture and needs. Segregation can also happen within schools. In heterogeneous schools, Roma students are marginalized and placed in remedial classes and rundown settings. The curriculum they follow is also different and leads to higher dropout rates and lower levels of academic achievement. Lastly, segregation is also happening in special schools. As already mentioned, Roma children might be led to special schools if it is perceived that it would be the only way to attend to their specific needs. Therefore, these children become socio-culturally disadvantaged and cannot keep up to speed with their other classmates. For instance, even though being able to count to 20 is a requirement for first graders, Roma children have to face this requirement in the third or fourth grade.

Lastly, there are certain circumstances in the educational environment that lead to the marginalization of the Roma community. These situations regard the teaching methods, the language, the overall school environment, the curricula and the prejudice. Teaching Roma students is considered a job with low prestige and satisfaction for teachers. This leads to the teachers of these schools not being properly qualified to deliver primary education, or even having no degree at all. Apart from no qualification, teachers can also be ill-trained and ill-skilled to deliver multicultural education or handle a classroom with students with diverse needs. Therefore the quality of the teaching and the methods adopted are not suitable for Roma students.

As mentioned above, language is a barrier that Roma students face. They have to attend classes in a language that is not their own or do not know. Therefore, they are placed in a disadvantaged position and unfair comparison with other students who are more fluent. At the same time, they cannot properly socialize with other students, further resulting in an increased marginalization in the educational environment.

Roma students also usually find themselves in schools of low quality in infrastructure. They attend classes in buildings that need repair or near polluted areas. Sanitation facilities might also be scarce while the environment might be particularly uncomfortable in winter or summer seasons.

In addition, the curricula that these children attend are usually not tailored to their needs. There is no mention of their culture, which is considered invisible. Children thus feel excluded and lose interest in the content of education itself. Bilingual learning is also non-existent.

Last but not least, in the educational system there are negative stereotypes and [prejudice about the intellectual capacity of Roma students. These stereotypes are kept by both the teaching staff and other students. Roma students



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are verbally and physically castigated on a more extensive level than other minorities. As a result, these children have lower self-esteem and poorer academic performance. They have a hard time transitioning between educational levels and they have lower retention rates. Parents are thus reluctant to send their children to what they consider a hostile educational environment, leading to high unemployment rates.

Cultural Competence and Engagement: Building Bridges with the Roma Community

So far, the sociological and ethnic aspects of Roma marginalization in the field of education have been analyzed. A better understanding of the various actors and factors that are involved in this phenomenon, from the structure of the state to the perceptions of the parents have been taken into consideration. Their experiences provided a better insight on what are the barriers and challenges that Roma students face when they try to enter the educational system.

In this section, solutions to these challenges will be presented and analyzed in the form of actions to increase trust between the stakeholders.

Starting with the family factor, it is the lack of trust in the system or the lack of awareness on behalf of the parents that prevent students from enrolling to or continuing their path in the educational system. In order to increase trust, a Roma mediator, who has already completed and has experienced the benefits of education, could share their journey with the families. Having a person who speaks in their native language and has a similar upbringing and experiences will ensure that a trusted spokesperson will get the message of the importance of education across. They will also be able to share advice on how to overcome additional barriers that might come in the way. In other words, they will act as a role model.

At the same time, it would be useful to allow parents to see the place and location that their children will attend their classes. Putting a picture to the facts will provide a better piece of mind to the parents that are reluctant.

In both these types of initiatives a representative from the educational community can also be present to showcase the investment of the educational system in cultivating an inclusive environment for the Roma students. They will also be able to address any questions the parents might have. However, it is crucial that this person is aware and culturally sensitive to the specific nuances of the traditions of the Roma population. At the same time, should a student need support for their enrolment in education or the pursuit of additional courses, a spokesperson can provide the necessary guidance and psychological support they need.





Moving on to another barrier, the lack of administrative procedures that ensure that the Roma population is officially registered needs to be addressed. Only after the Roma community is officially integrated into the state can the Roma students enjoy an educational path with minimum challenges. Organizing a structured database or information leaflet where the municipality or ministry of internal affairs has put in all the necessary information that a citizen needs in order to be fully integrated into the society is a must. This information must be easily accessible to the Roma population and they must be made aware that they need to follow the procedures mentioned. Roma people that have already completed these procedures can also act as spokespersons to highlight the importance of being properly registered.

The social background or the academic development of students should not impede their participation in additional educational initiatives. One barrier present in this effort is the language. As already mentioned, Roma students often have to attend courses in a language that either they don't know or are not fluent. As a result, the Roma population does not trust that education can actually be beneficial to them. In an effort to build trust bridges between them and the education system, it is crucial that mixed classes, even with students of different ages, are organized. That way, all the people who share a common language can have the option to attend courses with a teaching delivery that they can understand.

In cases that this is not possible, there is an additional way to decrease the language barriers. In detail, Roma students can be offered to attend English classes. In these classes a Roma representative who already knows English can facilitate the process by providing translations where needed. As a result, students will be better prepared to attend classes in another language, while they will feel like the educational system is making an effort to create an inclusive environment for them. Education is one of the most important tools against poverty. Therefore, ensuring that Roma students have access to inclusive education will improve their financial circumstances.

The last but probably most important step to increase the trust between the Roma communities and education is the provision of emotional guidance. Entering an educational system is already hard for those communities to which the system is tailored to. For the Roma population, there is the additional hurdle that the educational system is not tailored to their needs, cultural traditions, language and heritage. Therefore, apart from the practical support, they also need to feel like their emotional efforts are taken into consideration. Teachers and staff should be able to handle these individuals with professionalism and cultural awareness. They should attend respective workshops or training that would prepare them and equip them with the tools they need to handle a minority group. At the same time, the Roma community might lack the motivation to join the educational system. For this reason, good practices or future opportunities that are made available because of education must be heavily promoted among the Roma population. Real-life examples must be shared in order to build trust that the system works. This can be another role that the



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Roma spokesperson can take over. As a result, students will be motivated to pursue those skills that will lead them to increase their chances at employment and future financial benefits.

Furthermore, multiple students are afraid of discrimination and marginalization in education. For this reason they choose not to participate. Sharing of past examples of people who made it through the system will also be useful. These people can provide their experiences and how they coped with any discriminatory actions they came across. Having a person to support you through tough situations reduces the stress that these communities will feel. Finally, should students feel like they will become isolated in their own community because they will have had an experience that other people did not have is a valid fear that needs to be addressed. An indirect mitigating factor would be to increase the overall number of Roma students that are educated. As a result, there will always be a group within their community that they can connect with.

Similarly, Roma students might also feel inferior to the rest of the student population. For this reason, seminars or training that will empower them based on their cultural heritage and characteristics are crucial. Talks about diversity should be instigated in the community by people who are trusted by the group.

Overall in regards to the activities and actions that need to be considered in order to build bridges of trust are the following:

- Promote cultural diversity as a means of social learning
- Establish learning experiences based on reciprocity, equality, integration and cooperation
- Provide students but also teachers and staff with skills that they will need to cope in a multicultural educational environment
- Educate people against discriminatory actions that lead to marginalization and inequality

Empowerment through Participation: Collaborative Approaches to Trust-Building in VET Programs

There is transformative potential of collaborative engagement within VET programs, emphasizing the active involvement of Roma learners in decision-making processes. By embracing collaborative approaches, VET programs can cultivate trust and empower Roma individuals to shape their educational experiences, fostering a sense of ownership and agency in their learning journey. This transformative potential implies that when Roma learners are actively involved in shaping their educational experiences, it goes beyond mere participation; it becomes a catalyst for personal growth, community empowerment, and institutional change within the VET framework.



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Active involvement of Roma learners implies that they are not just passive recipients of education but are actively engaged in shaping their learning experiences. This involvement can range from participating in curriculum design and program planning to having a voice in policy-making processes related to VET programs. Trust is fundamental in any educational setting. When VET programs prioritize collaborative approaches, they lay the foundation for trust between learners, educators, and educational institutions. This trust is essential for creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment where Roma learners feel valued, respected, and understood.

Empowerment goes beyond providing education; it involves equipping individuals with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to take control of their lives and make informed decisions. Through collaborative approaches, VET programs can empower Roma individuals by acknowledging their expertise, respecting their perspectives, and providing opportunities for them to actively participate in shaping their educational journey. By actively involving Roma learners in decision-making processes, VET programs can foster a sense of ownership and agency among them.

This means that learners feel a sense of responsibility and investment in their education, leading to increased motivation, engagement, and commitment to their learning goals. Overall, the chapter explores how collaborative approaches in VET programs can serve as a powerful tool for building trust, empowering Roma learners, and fostering a sense of ownership and agency in their educational journey. It highlights the importance of recognizing the expertise and contributions of Roma individuals and creating opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making processes within the educational context. To steer clear of depicting Roma as merely recipients of empowerment initiatives, we aim to underscore their active participation in enhancing Roma education processes.

The level of trust among stakeholders significantly impacts the execution of inclusion projects. Strengthening existing relationships is key to effectively engaging with local communities. When communities have trust in the individuals leading projects, they are more inclined to actively participate in project activities and express their viewpoints openly. Consequently, interventions yield more tangible and impactful outcomes. Empowering individuals can challenge the pervasive stereotype of Roma being perpetually cast as victims, encouraging them to assert themselves as equals in advocating for their rightful share of social development and progress.

Community-level projects and integration initiatives often lack adequate time frames to support the necessary processes of participation, trust-building, training, capacity-building, monitoring, and evaluation. Additionally, there's a lack of flexibility to adjust the focus or direction of activities as needed. Allowing more time and flexibility for participatory approaches and cyclical processes can facilitate the revision and re-adjustment of projects, ultimately leading to more sustainable and impactful long-term outcomes.

In the context of vocational education within these communities, trust-building becomes essential for effective engagement and participation. Given the particularized trust dynamics, where trust is predominantly limited to





members of the same ethnic group, educators and facilitators face the challenge of establishing trust with learners who may initially view them as outsiders.

To navigate this challenge, vocational education initiatives should first acknowledge and respect the community's shared practices that uphold a collectivist model. Incorporating elements of these practices into the educational framework can signal a commitment to understanding and valuing the community's cultural heritage.

Furthermore, vocational education programs can leverage community events or cultural activities as opportunities for engagement. By actively participating in these events and demonstrating genuine interest in the community's traditions, educators can begin to bridge the divide between "us" and "them." Intergroup dialogue and collaboration should also be promoted within vocational education settings. Creating platforms for open communication and exchange between learners from different ethnic backgrounds can foster mutual understanding and appreciation for diversity.

Ultimately, building trust in vocational education within these communities requires a patient, empathetic, and culturally sensitive approach. Educators must strive to establish relationships based on mutual respect, understanding, and shared educational goals. Through consistent effort and genuine engagement, vocational education programs can effectively navigate the complexities of particularized trust and contribute to the empowerment and development of all learners, regardless of their ethnic background.

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Chapter: Dialogue with the Roma Community



Description of the Chapter – Dialogue with a Roma Community

The good practice adopted at the methodological level, and used with adaptations in the development of this methodology for the development of dialogue with Roma communities both by official VET training providers, trainers and their representatives and by public authorities involved in VET training, is the methodology of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on "Local engagement for Roma inclusion". This methodology was developed within the LERI (Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion) project. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/content/local-engagement-roma-inclusion>

This methodology can be used with adaptations in the case of our project "MIRANDA roMa Inclusion thRough vocAtioNal eDucAtion". This methodology utilizes both the methods and practices of PAR [[Participatory Action Research](#)] with the participation of Roma individuals working for community inclusion (e.g., Roma mediators, Roma inclusion specialists etc.) and grassroots organizations or services that serve the social and educational inclusion of community members (e.g., Roma-led grassroots organizations, cultural Roma organizations, Roma Community Centers, municipalities and representatives of the municipality, state/public services for the social inclusion of Roma) as well as representatives of municipality and local authorities and their experts in terms of:

- Collecting basic information and data for the community.
- Conducting a comprehensive needs analysis focused on the social and educational challenges of the Roma community under consideration.
- Mediation and outreach between project representatives, VET providers & specialists and Roma community leaders, representatives, and members.
- Organizing and conducting participatory and inclusive open dialogue with the Roma communities focusing on issues of meeting their needs and addressing challenges related to their participation in vocational training.

Preparation - Gathering general information about the community

To organize a constructive and inclusive dialogue with a Roma community, it's essential for organizers to gather basic information about the community. This information and data can be both quantitative and qualitative data, indicators, and general information such as:

- Basic demographic data/elements of the specific Roma community.



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- History of the community and important events concerning it.
- The type of household infrastructure of the Roma community.
- Social issues and challenges faced by the particular Roma community.
- Community leaders and key actors/organisations and groups of the Roma community.
- Degree of social and economic/employment integration of the Roma community in question.

More specifically and based on the above categories, it is advisable for the organisers of the dialogue to collect the following potential data from a number of official proposed official & community-based sources:

Data category	1. Basic demographic data/elements of the specific Roma community
Potential Data to be collected	Total number of community members [resident population], and families [family units], ratio of men to women in the community, ratio of Roma population to non-Roma population in the given area or municipality, ages of members - adults, adolescents, children.
Suggested sources of data	Municipal records - Municipal Authority of the area, State/Public services for Roma social integration, Roma Community Center of the area & Roma mediators in its service, Social Services
Data category	2. History of the community and important events concerning it





Potential Data to be collected	<p>Historical and important moments of the community, when it was created, under what circumstances, whether it is a new or old Roma community, good or bad important moments in its recent history</p> <p>Cultural characteristics of the community [language, population groupings] as Roma are not homogenised communities and may be made up of groupings of people from different Roma subgroups with fairly close but distinct cultural and linguistic characteristics</p>
Suggested sources of data	Roma Community Centers of the area, Roma Mediators Associations, Roma organisations of the area e.g., Cultural Roma organizations, Youth Roma organizations etc.
Data category	3. The type of household infrastructure of the specific Roma community
Potential Data to be collected	Settlement type, basic amenities and household infrastructure (electricity, water, sanitation), access to telephone/ internet, access to technologies
Suggested sources of data	Roma Community Centers of the area, State/Public services for Roma social integration
Data category	4. Social issues and challenges faced by the specific Roma community
Potential Data to be collected	Poverty/income levels, unemployment level, level of hunger/lack of daily access to food, number of NEETs, challenges related to lack of access to employment, lack of access to free means of recreation, challenges related to crime, youth offending, drug use.





Suggested sources of data	Municipal Authority of the area, State/Public services for Roma social integration, Roma Community Center of the area and its Roma Mediators at service, Social Services, Roma organisations of the area
Data category	5. Community leaders and key actors/stakeholders Roma community organisations and groups of the specific Roma community
Potential Data to be collected	Who are the leaders/presidents/leaders or prominent figures of this community. Are there any Roma organizations, associations, cultural clubs in the community? Who are their leaders?
Suggested sources of data	Roma Community Centers of the area, Roma Mediators Associations, Roma organisations in the area
Data category	6. Degree of social and economic/employment integration of the specific Roma community
Potential Data to be collected	Number of unemployed and employed persons, percentage of unemployed and employed persons in relation to the population of the community, average duration of unemployment and types of unemployment, informal and undeclared work, educational level [graduates of all educational levels - primary school, secondary school, high school, post-secondary education, vocational education, university education]. Political participation rates and qualitative data on participation in public life [community's openness to non-Roma, organisation of events, dialogues, festivals, level of cooperation with the municipality and local authorities]
Suggested sources of data	Municipal Authority of the area, State/Public services for the social integration of Roma, Roma Community Center of the area, Social Services, Labour Office, Education Offices/Services, Roma Mediators Associations, Roma organisations of the area





Contacting Roma mediators and the Community Centre and ensuring cooperation with them

It is of utmost importance that dialogue organizers communicate with the Roma Community Center(s) [RCCs] of the intervention area and the Roma Mediators serving in these centers. RCCs rely on the work and intervention of the mediators for communication, coordination and action of the municipal authorities in relation to the community, as well as for linking community members with public services, financial services, health and care services, schools and educational institutions. The Roma Mediators since 2011 are trained and specialized, through the implementation of the large scale projects ROMED1 and ROMED2 and other Capacity Building projects for this professional group, on various issues related to social inclusion, school education and mediation, access of the Roma population to the health system, access of the population to social benefits and public services (social support services, poverty alleviation, tax offices, labor offices, police & judicial services). To contact and engage Roma Mediators please follow the steps below:

- Contact the Roma Community Center in the intervention area, either by email or by phone and speak to the social inclusion officer.
- In parallel, contact the Municipal Authority and inform the Municipal Social Service for Roma or any other Municipal Service responsible for the social integration of the population.
- Present your project, your general plan, and your objectives for the dialogue and for the project to the person in charge of the Roma Social Integration Service.
- Present your project, your general plan, and your objectives for the dialogue and for the project to the person in charge of the Roma Community Center and his/her team.
- Explain to both of them the importance and necessity of their contribution to the dialogue project you want to organize (e.g., you will need data and data collected for your research and needs analysis, e.g., you will need two Roma mediators to communicate with community leaders and organizations to involve them in the organization and planning of the dialogue, e.g. you will need a room in the community, or in the community center, to hold the dialogue, e.g., you will need the help of the facilitators in implementing the dialogue in terms of communication and exchange of views with Roma community leaders, representatives of Roma organizations and community members who want to participate).





- Create a short plan/presentation regarding the costs of organizing the dialogue and present in detail to both the Social Service of the Municipality and the Roma Community Center the costs you undertake to cover. Make sure it is clear from the beginning that you do not want their money but their expertise and a hall so that the Roma community and its representatives are not removed from their home and their area. As it is important that the activities take place within the community.
- Create a short cooperation/action protocol outlining your interventions and clearly define the roles of each person (Roma mediator, municipality representative, etc.) in terms of organization and implementation. This protocol should also specify relevant indicators, instruments, and methodologies.
- Ensure their agreement based on the cooperation/action protocol you have created.

Exploring educational needs of the community

Dialogue Organizers need to conduct a short yet targeted mapping of the educational needs of the community in terms of the VET training. Meeting the needs especially of adult potential trainees and learners is considered in both adult education and the VET sector as one of the most basic and necessary principles of planning and organising, both on a small and short-term as well as on a broad and long-term level, educational interventions and actions and the implementation of educational actions or integrated educational programmes. It is of great importance that this identification of educational needs and the process we choose in this context should be able to cover all 3 general categories of educational needs, in common: **1. Conscious and explicit needs 2. Conscious and non-explicit needs 3. Dying needs that are also not expressed.**

It is also important to consider the diversity of problems and challenges that the target population may face in relation to the education issues under discussion, but also in relation to the social conditions of living conditions and the barriers that Roma adults face in relation to education. In terms of needs assessment i.e. it should:

1. Identify the challenges and problems faced by a target group e.g., difficulty in integrating into the labour market due to lack of qualifications or mismatch of their qualifications with market requirements.
2. Identify the frame of reference in relation to the dimensions of the problems/challenges. For example, in the context of a Roma community with high unemployment and a lack of skills, the frame of reference is labour market entry and vocational training and qualification.
3. Gather specific data on the target population such as:






- **Basic demographic data:** age, gender, marital status, number of children, economic level, employment or unemployment status.
- **Educational level** (level of formal education or initial vocational training).
- **Previous education and experience** related to entering the labour market or working experience.
- **Specific characteristics of the target group:** e.g. Roma, socio-economic background, duration of unemployment, fluency in the language of instruction, need for linguistic and/or intercultural support, etc.

Selection and use of data collection and needs analysis methods

There are many methods of data collection and analysis, usually more than one method or a combination of them are chosen, always taking into account: the basic rules of transparency, scientificity, and ethics of a research, the sampling rules, the type of needs (Conscious and explicit needs, Conscious and non-explicit needs, Dying needs) the characteristics of the target group and the reference context, the limitations of the research due to available time or resources. These methods can be the following:

<p>Questionnaires</p> 	<p>Questionnaires with multiple choice fixed or closed questions are a widespread technique, as they combine the ability to investigate both the views and requests for education of the target group and a significant part of the demographic, social, educational, experiential characteristics of the target group. Also useful data can be obtained through them about the reference context. Questionnaires for Roma adults interested in VET are one of the methods proposed for the MIRANDA Roma VET project. We underline that in the case of Roma populations, simple language is required for the questions and the assistance of Roma facilitators for its completion by interested adults in the community.</p>
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<p>Content Analysis</p>	<p>Content analysis of any type of documents and sources related to the reference context and target population [forms, community reports, governmental data, etc.]. This analysis is often important for a deeper understanding of the dimensions of the problem/challenge we are being asked to address.</p>
<p>Interviews</p>	<p>Interviews can replace the questionnaire but can also be combined with it, or used to focus more on specific issues from the perspective of more experienced or specialised community members. The degree of broadening and focus may vary depending on whether we are talking about structured, unstructured or semi-structured interviews and how many people are involved. In the case of MIRANDA Roma VET, group interviews of Roma mediators and experts in educational and social integration of Roma adults, as well as VET providers & VET programme design specialists are proposed.</p>
<p>Participant observation</p> 	<p>In the case of MIRANDA Roma VET, participant observation is quite challenging and is not recommended as it is chosen to analyse phenomena with an increased degree of complexity or when the target group cannot provide enough data. In our case it would require e.g. to examine the reasons for the low participation of Roma in VET educational processes the systematic observation of processes by qualified researchers.</p>

For the needs of MIRANDA Roma VET it is proposed to combine: i) simple tick-list questionnaires and the assistance of mediators to help the population to fill them in, ii) content analysis of reports from Roma Community Centres and socio-educational integration services, as well as iii) and interviews with Roma mediators and experts in educational and social integration of Roma adults, as well as VET providers & VET programme design specialists. By combining the data from the above methods, triangulation can be achieved and more reliable, stable, and clear results concerning the needs of the Roma community under consideration can be obtained.



Ground rules in a dialogue

At this point we can provide basic guidelines and parameters for organizing a fruitful dialogue with minorities, culturally diversified groups, and disadvantaged groups such as Roma adults and their communities.

1. Identify some of the issues you would definitely like to discuss with the Roma in relation to the challenge you are discussing. There need not be 3 or 4 or more topics to discuss a single discussion question. E.g., what would motivate or push you to engage in VET training activities. This simple question is enough to unfold issues related to the barriers faced by the Roma population, motivation, but also to explain to the population what VET can offer them and how VET providers can help them to integrate into educational programmes and environments.

2. Define your goals, what you want to achieve through the dialogue. Your goals must be clear, measurable, and achievable. E.g., our goal from this dialogue is to discuss for 3 hours the barriers and motivations for Roma adults from Roma community "X" to participate in VET with 50 Roma community members and community leadership and motivate them to participate in training programmes.

3. Choose the type of panel and layout, you can make it in a circle or in the shape of a Greek Π or U to maintain eye contact with the participants and to make all participants feel comfortable to express their views. Choose 3 dialogue facilitators, one person from your organisation, a leader in the Roma community, and one person from the VET providers. These moderators give the floor, set the course of the dialogue, and try to stay on the topic of discussion and the goal of the dialogue without letting the discussion get sidetracked but also making sure that there are no abusive or discriminatory attitudes.

4. Roma mediators will have a central role in the dialogue panel both in terms of linguistic and cultural mediation and in ensuring that there are no interruptions, unnecessary interruptions, interventions and pointless questions or repetitive questions that have already been answered.

5. Set rules for the length of an argument or narrative when someone speaks. E.g., facilitators give the floor for 3-4 minutes to a participant to develop their argument, inform them 1 minute before closing to conclude, comment if needed or wanted, ask for the mediation of Roma mediators if they think it is needed and give the floor to the next participant.





<p>6. Share personal experiences, as well as examples and practices that may have worked and succeeded in similar difficult circumstances</p>
<p>7. Give everyone space to speak and give their opinion if they feel they have something worth hearing and relevant to the subject of the discussion</p>
<p>8. Use inclusive language both at the linguistic & non-linguistic communication with respect to your interlocutors. Frequently remind interlocutors that it is essential to be polite and respectful of others' opinions</p>

Meeting with Roma Community Leaders: Building Trust and Promoting Dialogue

Understanding the Dynamics of Roma Communities in Europe:

Roma Communities in Europe: A Legacy of Resilience and the Fight for Equality Roma communities are a vibrant and diverse cultural group with a long and enduring history in Europe. Their presence stretches back centuries, with roots scattered across the continent. While estimates suggest the largest populations reside in Central and Eastern Europe, with countries like Romania (1.85 million), Bulgaria (750,000), and Greece (2.75 million) hosting significant numbers, Roma communities can be found throughout Europe [1].

Despite their deep historical presence, the Roma experience in Europe has been one of marginalization. For centuries, they have faced discriminatory policies, persecution, and forced assimilation. This historical oppression has had a profound and lasting impact, resulting in persistent disparities in access to education, healthcare, employment, and housing.

This complex story is a testament to the resilience of Roma communities in the face of adversity. It is also a narrative of ongoing struggles for equality and social inclusion. In the following sections, we will delve deeper into the historical context of the Roma experience in Europe. We will then explore the data on Roma populations across the continent, and examine the multifaceted efforts currently underway to create a more inclusive future for Roma communities.





Recognizing the need for a comprehensive strategy, the European Union has established the ambitious EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation by 2030. This framework serves as a roadmap for member states, outlining key areas for action to dismantle barriers and create a more equitable future for Roma communities. National strategies, developed in consultation with Roma representatives, translate the EU framework into concrete actions at the national level. These initiatives offer a beacon of hope for a future where Roma communities can thrive and contribute fully to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of European society.

BUILDING TRUST AND RAPPORT

Building trust and rapport between Roma and non-Roma groups is essential for successful discussion and collaboration. These initiatives have been ongoing throughout Europe and Austria, concentrating on a variety of areas, including child protection. Building trust involves establishing mutual understanding, promoting cultural sensitivity, and addressing historical grudges.

PRESENTING THE THEME AND OBJECTIVES

When meeting with Roma community figures, it's important to explicitly communicate the theme and objectives of the dialogue. This includes:

Introducing yourself and your organization:

- Express your commitment to fostering dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding.
- Share relevant experiences of successful engagement with Roma communities.

Understanding Community Needs:

- Listen actively to the concerns and priorities of the Roma community leaders:
 - Discuss the socio-economic challenges faced by their community, including access to education, healthcare, employment, and housing.
 - Explore potential areas for collaboration and support, focusing on community-led initiatives and solutions.

Presenting Proposed Initiatives:

- Share information about ongoing initiatives and programs aimed at supporting Roma communities:
 - Discuss potential areas for collaboration and joint projects, ensuring that they are culturally sensitive and responsive to community needs.



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- Seek feedback and input from community leaders to ensure that initiatives are relevant and effective.

Establishing a Framework for Continued Dialogue:

- Agree on a plan for regular communication and follow-up meetings:
 - Discuss mechanisms for monitoring progress and evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives.
 - Ensure that the dialogue is inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the community.

Dialogue Objectives and Agenda:

Objective 1: Building Rapport and Trust:

- Introduce yourself and your organization:
 - Express your commitment to fostering dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding.
 - Share relevant experiences of successful engagement with Roma communities.

Objective 2: Understanding Community Needs:

- Listen actively to the concerns and priorities of the Roma community leaders:
 - Discuss the socio-economic challenges faced by their community, including access to education, healthcare, employment, and housing.
 - Explore potential areas for collaboration and support, focusing on community-led initiatives and solutions.

Objective 3: Presenting Proposed Initiatives:

- Share information about ongoing initiatives and programs aimed at supporting Roma communities:
 - Discuss potential areas for collaboration and joint projects, ensuring that they are culturally sensitive and responsive to community needs.
 - Seek feedback and input from community leaders to ensure that initiatives are relevant and effective.

Objective 4: Establishing a Framework for Continued Dialogue:

- Agree on a plan for regular communication and follow-up meetings:
 - Discuss mechanisms for monitoring progress and evaluating the effectiveness of initiatives.
 - Ensure that the dialogue is inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the community.

By establishing trust, understanding community dynamics, and presenting clear goals, we can provide the groundwork for meaningful communication and engagement with Roma community leaders. Together, we can fight to alleviate



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Roma communities' issues while also promoting their social inclusion, empowerment, and well-being throughout Europe and Austria

Organizing a Dialogue: Defining Aims and Techniques

Understanding the Framework: Promoting Roma Integration: The Platform Roma Dialog as a Model of Good Practice in Austria

The European Union's strategic goals for Roma inclusion call for member states to develop national strategies promoting equality, participation, and inclusion by 2030. While the specific challenges and contexts faced by Roma communities differ across the EU, Austria's Roma Dialogplattform (Roma Dialogue Platform) stands out as a successful initiative that can be adapted and implemented in other member states.

A Platform for Dialogue and Action:

Established in 2011, the Roma Dialog platform fosters dialogue between Roma civil society and government representatives. This platform provides a unique space for more than just conversation; it's a collaborative engine that drives progress towards Roma inclusion.

How it Works: The Roma Dialog platform's success lies in its operational mechanisms:

Needs-Based Agenda: Topics for discussion are chosen in collaboration with Roma communities, ensuring the platform addresses their most pressing issues.

Inclusive Participation: Meetings bring together representatives from various levels of government and Roma civil society organizations, fostering a holistic understanding of challenges.

Facilitated Discussions: Trained facilitators guide respectful exchange and ensure productive outcomes.

Actionable Outcomes: Discussions result in documented action steps and recommendations for concrete progress.

Monitoring and Follow-up: The platform tracks progress on the national Roma inclusion strategy, holding authorities accountable for their commitments.



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Benefits for Roma Inclusion:

This collaborative approach offers several advantages:

Sensitization of Authorities: Administrative authorities gain a deeper understanding of Roma-specific challenges, leading to more informed policies and practices.

Empowerment of Roma Communities: Direct participation allows Roma communities to advocate for their needs and priorities.

Improved Strategy Implementation: Monitoring by Roma civil society promotes transparency and accountability, ensuring the national strategy effectively addresses their concerns.

A Model for Success:

The Roma Dialogplattform serves as a strong model for promoting Roma inclusion in Austria. Its focus on dialogue, collaboration, and empowerment paves the way for a more inclusive society and fosters a stronger collaboration between Roma communities and the government. By giving Roma communities a voice and fostering collaborative action, the Roma Dialog platform serves as a powerful example for achieving Roma inclusion across Europe.



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Building Bridges: A Guide to Effective Dialogues for Roma Inclusion

Successful dialogues require clear objectives. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) offers a toolkit to help you define these. Your dialogue's aims should align with the objectives of the Roma-Strategie and the EU's strategic framework for Roma inclusion. Here are some potential goals:

- **Promoting Equality and Inclusion:** This can involve tackling social and economic inequalities and ensuring Roma communities have equal access to education, healthcare, employment, and housing.
- **Fostering Dialogue and Cooperation:** Building trust and understanding between Roma and non-Roma communities is essential for social cohesion.
- **Empowering Roma Communities:** Enhancing participation and representation, especially for Roma youth and women, strengthens the Roma voice in decision-making processes.

Creating an Inclusive Space:

The way you run the dialogue plays a crucial role in its effectiveness. Here are key practices identified by FRA and Equinet:

- **Inclusive Representation:** Invite a diverse range of participants, including representatives from government, civil society, academia, and most importantly, the Roma community.
- **Fostering Mutual Understanding:** Create a safe and inclusive space for open exchange of perspectives and experiences.
- **Utilizing Roma Mediators:** Roma mediators can bridge cultural gaps, facilitate communication, and ensure the voices of the Roma community are heard and understood.

The Power of Roma Mediators:

The experience of Roma health mediation in Romania provides a useful paradigm for incorporating Roma mediators into conversations. These mediators, mostly Roma women with an average level of education, are chosen by their communities and approved by medical professionals. They play an important role in three main areas. First, they bridge cultural divides by knowing Roma culture as well as the institutions with which Roma engage. This enables them to explain complicated subjects in a culturally sensitive manner and communicate concerns among parties. Second, they improve communication by removing language obstacles and ensuring clear communication between Roma and non-Roma parties. Finally, they strengthen Roma communities. By having a trusted representative from their community present, Roma participants feel more comfortable expressing their concerns and advocating for their needs.



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To ensure a productive dialogue, careful planning is essential. Here's a breakdown of the key steps:

Setting the Agenda: Begin by welcoming participants and introducing the dialogue's objectives. Provide an overview of the Roma-Strategie, the EU's strategic framework for Roma inclusion, and the specific aims of your dialogue. Briefly discuss ongoing initiatives and programs aimed at supporting Roma communities.

Facilitating Dialogue: Encourage participants to share their perspectives, concerns, and priorities in an open forum. Next, discuss the challenges faced by Roma communities and explore potential areas for collaboration and support.

Building Partnerships: Following the discussion, agree on concrete action points and areas for collaboration that align with the dialogue's objectives and the Roma-Strategie. Finally, establish a plan for regular communication, follow-up meetings, and ongoing collaboration to ensure lasting progress.

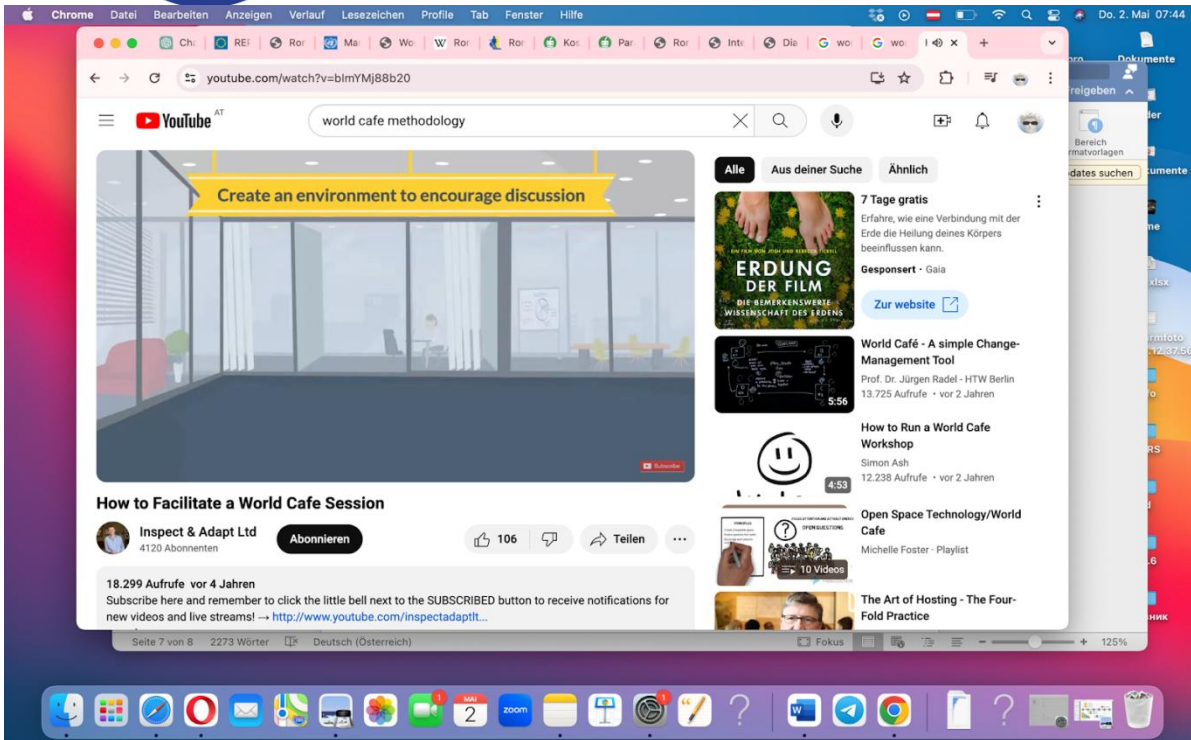
By arranging dialogues that are consistent with the Roma Strategy and the EU's strategic framework for Roma inclusion, we may enhance mutual understanding, create trust, and empower Roma communities to actively participate and be represented. Working together, we can create a more inclusive and cohesive society for everyone.

Implementation - Methods for Greater Participation and Optimized Experience of Members of the Roma Community

In order to ensure greater participation and optimize the experience of members of the Roma community during dialogues, organizers can employ participatory and innovative techniques. These methods aim to foster engagement, build trust, and ensure the fruitful participation of all participants.



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Co-Creation Workshops:

Co-creation workshops aim to engage Roma community members in the joint development of solutions, programs, and policies. These workshops allow participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations while working with stakeholders to develop ideas and projects that directly affect their lives.

Storytelling Sessions:

Storytelling sessions offer a platform for Roma community members to share their personal experiences, challenges, and aspirations. By providing a space for participants to express themselves through personal narratives, these sessions promote empathy, understanding, and connection among participants.

Visual Mapping and Storyboarding:

Visual mapping and storyboarding techniques are used to facilitate the visual representation of ideas, challenges, and solutions. By visually depicting concepts and narratives, these techniques help participants to visualize their ideas, identify patterns, and co-create solutions collaboratively.



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World Café Method:

The World Café method is a structured conversational process designed to foster open dialogue, exchange ideas, and promote collective intelligence. Participants engage in café-style conversations, moving between tables to discuss specific topics, share insights, and generate new ideas collaboratively.

How to Facilitate a World Café Session

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blmYMj88b20>

Participatory Video Workshops:

Participatory video workshops empower Roma community members to tell their own stories through video. Participants learn video production skills and create films that reflect their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations, providing a powerful platform for self-expression and advocacy.

Open Space Technology:

Open Space Technology is a facilitation method that enables self-organizing groups to address complex issues and find solutions collaboratively. Participants propose discussion topics, form groups, and engage in focused conversations on issues of importance to them, driving the dialogue and decision-making process.

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Workshops:

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) workshops focus on identifying and mobilizing the strengths and assets within the Roma community. Participants map community assets, identify local resources, and develop strategies for community-driven development, fostering empowerment and self-reliance.

Empowerment through Arts and Culture:

Arts and culture seminars, concerts, and exhibitions honor Roma culture, encourage self-expression, and promote communal solidarity. These initiatives use the power of arts and culture to empower community members, preserve cultural heritage, and foster intercultural understanding.



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By implementing these participatory and innovative techniques, dialogue organizers can create inclusive, engaging, and empowering spaces in which Roma members can actively participate, contribute their perspectives, and collaborate with stakeholders to co-create solutions and drive positive change.

Khamoro World Roma Festival in Prague, Czech Republic

The Khamoro World Roma Festival in Prague highlights Roma culture through music, dance, theater, and visual arts. This yearly event, produced in conjunction with local and international partners, actively engages Roma communities in its planning and execution. The event allows Roma artists from all over the world to showcase their talents while also celebrating their cultural heritage. It fosters social inclusion and diversity by bringing together Roma and non-Roma groups through cultural performances, exhibitions, seminars, and discussions. The Khamoro Festival, with its broad program of activities that includes live performances, film screenings, art exhibitions, and workshops, promotes cultural pride, social cohesiveness, and intercultural understanding, making it an effective tool for Roma empowerment.



Khamoro Festival Prague

<https://images.app.goo.gl/MxwUqL3L5iPEqb2a7>



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Compiling & Utilizing the Results of the Dialogue

After completing the dialogue sessions with the community, it's essential to compile and effectively utilize the results to serve the project's objectives and engage communities in Vocational Education and Training (VET). Gather all feedback, suggestions, and insights obtained during the dialogue sessions. Organize and categorize the data to identify key themes, concerns, and recommendations.

Create a detailed report summarizing the findings of the dialogue sessions. Clearly outline key themes, concerns, and recommendations identified during the discussions. Include relevant quotes, anecdotes, and data to provide context and support to the findings. Use the compiled results to refine and improve project objectives, strategies, and activities. Ensure that project design meets the needs and expectations of the target audience.

Share the collated results and the action plan that came from them with the community. Show transparency in how feedback has been used to shape the project. Communicate any modifications or updates based on community feedback. Maintain open communication with the community throughout the project's implementation. Regularly examine and reassess project objectives and actions in response to continuing input and changing community requirements. Allow for continual improvement by incorporating community feedback into project changes. By properly compiling and implementing the results of the discourse, project organizers may guarantee that their initiatives are sensitive to community needs, effectively engage community members in VET programs, and eventually accomplish their desired outcomes.

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