



Promoting the integration of Roma women

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PROMA

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Needs-Assessment Report: The Educational Needs of Roma Women and their Formal and Non-Formal Educators from Romania, Spain, Greece and North Macedonia



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Introduction

“PROMA – Promoting the integration of Roma women’ is a 24-month (December 2020 – November 2022) project co-funded by the ‘ERASMUS+ KA2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices’ programme of the European Union (*Project no.: 2020-1-RO01-KA204-080214*). PROMA focuses on adult education with the aim to foster the integration of Roma women in their local communities through education. The project is implemented in 4 countries with dense Roma populations (Romania, Spain, Greece, North Macedonia) and involves two groups of participants:

- Roma women;
- Formal & non formal educators of Roma women.

The specific objectives of the project include:

- a) Utilizing the competitive advantages and social promoting vehicles of the local context in all 4 implementing countries;
- b) Building the capacities of formal & non formal educators of Roma women; and
- c) Design & implementation of local pilot programmes aiming at social inclusion of Roma women through education jointly by educators and Roma women.

The present report is related to ‘Task 1.3: Needs’ assessment’ and involves the identification of areas where the specific needs of each target group (Roma women, formal & non-formal educators of Roma people) will be defined. This will be accomplished by taking a step further the findings of the task 1.1 “Research at national level for identifying the specific country contexts and actual needs of Roma women” & task 1.2 “Identification of best practices at EU level related with the integration of Roma women at local level”, and perform a gap analysis between

the problems that Roma women face in all 4 countries and the desired state reflected in the good practices identified.

In more details, the findings of Task 1.1 have provided useful input about the actual needs of Roma women in terms of:

- access to information;
- educational needs;
- capacity building;
- access to the labour market;
- political participation.

At the same time, based on the good practices of Task 1.2, the desired level of certain skills and competences for educators (formal and non-formal) working with Roma people has been highlighted.

Therefore, the needs analysis report summarizes:

1. the needs of Roma women in the four countries for practical support in relation to access to information, educational needs, capacity building, access to the labour market, political participation, potential personalized support for special cases; and
2. the skills and competences of formal and non-formal educators working with Roma people in the four countries that need to be enhanced.

1. The Romanian context

The needs of Roma women

Although various Romanian governments have endorsed and/or initiated programs in order to improve the situation of Roma population, the measures were general and Roma were rather seen as a homogeneous, indistinctive population.

Roma women face multiple discrimination: not only from other ethnic groups, but from within the larger Roma community, which is still very much traditional and patriarchal. Under this lens, Roma women are subordinate to their parents, in-laws and husband; they marry young, exit the school system young and usually do not access the labour market – or, if they do it, they operate within the informal labour market, with consequences on their pension and other social services. However, the percentage of women in traditional Roma communities is diminishing.

Roma women and girls are particularly affected by gender roles and poverty: they are usually in charge of the household, and they are less encouraged to continue with their education. In fact, there is a problematic threshold for Roma girls, aged 13-14, when many of them drop out of school and do not continue into high-school. This, in spite of existing state and civil society support programs.

The most effective support programs seem to be those that have a community and a personal development component: Roma women and girls get to build their self-esteem and confidence and also to engage in community building – with great impact on their civic engagement. Over the past years, the number of Roma women trained by NGOs and involved in civic participation has grown, which also facilitated their labour and political participation. This is especially important given that Roma women's political participation is currently very low. The

trainings offered by NGOs, some of whom were endorsed by the government, have created new job opportunities for Roma women.

In order to increase the level of employment among Roma women, they need personal development training (optimistic projections of the future, self-esteem), positive role models, mentoring programs, as well as training for basic skills (how to write a CV, a letter of motivation), literacy and remedial classes. Another important need is related to identity classes (so they learn about their culture and history). Roma women and girls need to also learn about gender violence and how to tackle it, and they require financial education, lessons on healthy nutrition and sex education.

Educators' skills enhancement

The main skills and competences of formal and non-formal educators who work with Roma people (and especially women) for which further enhancement is needed are related to the following topics:

- Encouraging self-awareness, empathy and motivation;
- Establishing trust with the communities and families;
- Promoting equality and diversity in the classroom;
- Combating bullying and gender-based violence;
- Teaching of Roma history, culture and identity;
- Raising awareness about the feminist movement and promoting female empowerment;
- Strengthening self-confidence and providing psycho-social support;
- Managing conflict

- Building financial literacy
- Professional/career orientation
- Sexual education, and healthy food
- Activism and community development.

2. The Spanish context

The needs of Roma women

The Roma reality in Spain is at least 600 years old, full of cultural elements, history, language, music and many other features. Today, Spanish Roma have full citizenship, with rights and obligations similar to non-Roma citizens. After the arrival of the democracy in 1978, the situation of Roma has improved in all aspects, although there are still many issues that need to be addressed and improved.

Roma women often suffer a double discrimination because of their gender and ethnic origin in a patriarchal society, although different NGOs, associations, organisations and public bodies work to improve their situation. Regarding the access to education of Roma girls and women, it has greatly improved during the last 40 years, being now almost 100% of Roma children enrolled in education. In addition, more and more young Roma women continue and resume their studies (there is a great dropout rate between the ages 12-14), although the percentage of those who finish compulsory secondary education is 20%. The rate of Roma women pursuing higher studies is now higher than never, with them becoming, mostly, teachers, social educators, psychologists, and lawyers. However, there is a huge gap between the numbers of Roma women graduating from university compared to their non-Roma counterparts.

In relation to capacity building, Roma women tend to be interested in training. However, family responsibilities often can be a barrier, as in order to participate in training they have to manage their time efficiently so that they can spare some to attend trainings. This is also the cause behind them having less access to training than their male counterparts, which have more free time. Roma women have expressed interest in training aimed at improving their literacy and acquiring

the education diploma, in order to help their children in school and to improve their employability. They are also interested in training on ICT and some applied skills, such as sewing.

Regarding the integration of Roma women in the labour market, in the past, they were not allowed to work outside the house, as it would be seen as the man was not providing for the family as he should. However, as the Roma population started to get more integrated into the mainstream society, this idea started to fade. Most Roma women nowadays want to enter the labour market to financially help their family as well as for their personal and professional development. However, the lack of education (in comparison to other candidates) and the racism still present makes it very difficult for them to find a job¹.

In Spain, there is little representation of the Roma population in the political sphere, in state, regional, local and European parliaments, especially of Roma women. Their participation in politics is also not very significant, and even less so in the case of Roma women, who are often reduced to the domestic sphere². It is also worth highlighting that Roma people in the Spanish region of Andalusia show higher levels of participation in the local sphere, including women. Some measures have been taken to improve their participation, such as the creation of the Barcelona Roma Municipal Council in 1998 to improve the welfare and quality of life of Roma citizens³.

Finally, the Roma population in general tends to need personalised support for special cases, due to the different realities they live, especially related to education and labour market integration.

¹ Moro Dalt L. (2009). Guía para la promoción personal de las mujeres gitanas: perspectiva psico-emocional y desarrollo profesional. *Materiales de Trabajo. Serie Mujeres* (Nº 47).

² Aguilera Cortés P. (2000). La participación política y comunicaciones. *El globo* (Nº 1). Available on https://www.gitanos.org/upload/43/92/Rev_1_.04_-_Dossier.pdf

³ You can learn more of this initiative in the following link: <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/consell-municipal-poble-gitano/es>

Educators' skills enhancement

Through the research carried out, it has been concluded that formal and non-formal educators working with Roma people need to improve their skills and abilities to develop trainings and support services that are of interest to Roma women, of which the most important are:

- Motivation, self-esteem and empowerment
- ICT
- History of Roma women activists and their achievements in favour of Roma women
- Prevention of gender violence

Improving employability and employability skills.

3. The Greek context

The needs of Roma women

The Greek Roma community faces persistent inequalities in all aspects of life, including access to education, and to other basic social goods. Despite the lack of reliable data especially for Roma women, it is quite safe to claim that the poor living standards along with the long-existing stereotypes about the Roma people in general and the role of the Roma women in particular, create numerous obstacles that do not facilitate their access to information. Efforts are taking place to alter the situation and positive initiatives have been tested in practice with encouraging results, however more well-designed and inclusive measures are needed to make the access to information for Roma women much more efficient.

Roma women are facing major challenges regarding their access to education. The existing stereotypes and the lack of a functional relationship between the Roma communities and the local societies have resulted to the high illiteracy rates of Roma women. The need to enhance their language and numeracy skills is urgent, not mentioning the lack of microfinancing (basic financial skills and knowledge concerning the use of computers, searching on the web etc.

As far as the labor market integration is concerned, due to the lack of official data, only rough estimations can be made about the participation and the employment characteristics of the Greek Roma. The vast majority of the Roma women are housewives.

Regarding their political participation, Roman women tend to be much less interested in politics than men.

As Roma women are often isolated and illiterate, personalized support for special cases is very important. Another factor that should be taken into consideration is the management of Roma women's health care, including child marriage, perinatal care, contraception, prenatal control and

family planning, domestic relations, child-rearing, etc., aspects that are frequently considered as taboo for the Roma community, either because of ignorance or stereotypical, customary habits and beliefs.

Educators' skills enhancement

The main skills and competences of formal and non-formal educators who work with Roma people (and especially women) for which further enhancement is needed are related to the following topics:

- Communication skills to improve the level of understanding and engagement of the Roma women during the educational process
- Language and numeracy skills
- Knowledge concerning the use of computer / new technologies
- Microfinancing
- Health care issues including child marriage, perinatal care, contraception, prenatal control and family planning, domestic relations, child-rearing,
- Human rights and participation
- Labour market integration.

4. The North Macedonian context

The needs of Roma women

Roma women needs and problems have a number of similarities with other women in the Republic of Macedonia, but at the same time they face specific problems in the gender sphere that are characteristic of the Roma ethnic community. The whole corpus of questions about the position and progress of the Roma community is directly related to the improvement of their position and emancipation. Therefore, the development of gender relations in the Roma community is of primary importance because the assessment that they live in double discrimination both as women and as Roma women is often found.

Based on the findings of the desk and field research it can be concluded that Roma women face a lack of accurate and reliable information and access to information at various levels and in many areas such as health services, education and vocational training, employment opportunities and labor market trends, as well as services and opportunities offered by institutions. This is especially common among Roma women with lower or incomplete education, Roma women from rural areas and Roma women with disabilities.

Regarding the education, the biggest identified challenges are: high illiteracy rate, especially among Roma women, high percentage of adult Roma with incomplete primary and / or secondary education and low level of awareness and use of opportunities for Roma adults for additional training, qualification and retraining for various occupations that would lead to their employment. The low level of education of Roma women prevents them from taking up a profession and as a result their financial situation is often difficult. They often work jobs at the lowest level of the social ladder.

It is important to underline that the great majority of marginalized Roma youth (ages 18-24) were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2017. The reasons for the still high NEET rates among marginalized Roma are not difficult to determine: levels of educational attainment are lower among the marginalized Roma, and they have weaker labor market perspectives. In comparison to males, female NEETs are more likely to be inactive, or out of the labor force, often engaged in domestic and caretaking activities. In contrast, male NEETs are more likely to be unemployed. This gender disparity is more pronounced among the marginalized Roma than among the non-Roma population.

When talking about women's political participation, after the parliamentary elections in 2020, there are 43 women in the Parliament or 35.83% of the total members. Only one is a Roma woman. From the beginning of pluralism in Macedonia until today, only two Roma women have been members of the Parliament. Until now, there is no Roma woman president of the Roma political party. The participation of Roma women in political parties is small.

Educators' skills enhancement

The main skills and competences of formal and non-formal educators who work with Roma people (and especially women) for which further enhancement is needed are related to the following topics:

- Personal coaching and mentoring
- Human rights training
- Non-discrimination, tolerance, multiculturalism
- Training for adult education
- Training for specific issues (domestic violence, human trafficking)

- Financial skills and financial literacy
- Entrepreneurship skills
- Job application process - CV, simulation of interviews
- Strengthening capacities about the decision making processes at local level, budget process at municipal level (how to create a program at municipal level)
- Numerical competence training
- Digital competences
- Strengthening self-confidence and psycho-social support.

5. Conclusions

Roma women throughout Europe, face challenges such as anti-Gypsyism, extreme poverty, exclusion and discrimination which reinforce their disadvantages, according to the report from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (Rights, 2017). Our findings also confirm that Roma women still face multiple discrimination: not only from other ethnic groups, but from within the larger Roma community, which is still very much traditional and patriarchal.

The needs assessment underlines the urgent need for targeted, gender-sensitive measures that allow Roma women to realize their full potential for full inclusion.

Furthermore, empowerment of Roma women seems to be very important, since it can provide the basis for all actions and activities. Empowering women means giving them the capacity to define their own choices in life and to pursue their own goals according to their needs and capacities. “Women’s empowerment considers the power that women acquire to create new possibilities and actions without domination (Rowlands 1997:13), to have decision-making authority, to solve problems, to be creative and enabling (Oxaal and Baden 1997). (Policies, 2013)”.

In addition, our research revealed that formal and non-formal educators who work with Roma people (and especially women) need to further enhance their skills and competences so as to be in a position to effectively support and empower Roma women to realize their full potential.

The table on the next page presents a summarized overview of the main needs of Roma women in terms of empowerment and capacity building, and of the main needs of formal and non-formal educators who work with Roma people in terms of skills development.

Needs of Roma women	Needs of Educators
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge of Roma history, culture and identity 2. Language and numeracy skills, basic financial skills 3. Employability skills (soft skills etc.) 4. Development of self-esteem and confidence 5. Digital skills 6. Knowledge of human rights and advocacy skills 7. Community and civic engagement 8. Knowledge of health care issues incl. child marriage, perinatal care, contraception, prenatal control and family planning, domestic relations, child-rearing, etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Roma history, culture and identity 2. Language and numeracy skills - Financial literacy 3. Labour market integration: Professional/career orientation / Entrepreneurship skills / Job application process / Employability skills 4. Psycho-social support: strengthening self-confidence, motivation, self-esteem and empowerment / personal coaching and mentoring 5. ICT / Digital competences 6. Human rights, equality, inclusivity, diversity, non-discrimination, tolerance 7. Specific Issues (domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual education, healthy food) 8. Adult education methods/techniques

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