

SUCCESSFUL
EDUCATIONAL
EXPERIENCE:
DECREASING THE
DROPOUT RATE OF
ROMA CHILDREN
FROM SCHOOL

VIABILITY STRATEGY FOR ITS
IMPLEMENTATION IN
ROMANIA



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

ROMANI CRISS – Roma Center for
Social Intervention and Studies

Successful educational experience: Heterogeneous groups: interactive groups, other inclusive and interactive actions”

INTRODUCTION

In order to achieve the objectives set and for elaborating the national strategies to carry out successful actions in the participating countries, within the Rom Up! project we have organized two national working groups for presenting and debating the successful educational experiences selected within the project. The national working groups have been formed of representatives of the Roma community, together with representatives from the authorities in the field of education (schools, School Inspectorates, Ministry of education) and also members of the social society, NGOs working in the field of education.

At the first meeting of the working group, the project was presented and the successful experiences were discussed insisting on identifying the ones that could be adapted and transferred in the communities from Romania. Each experience was discussed and the members of the working group analyzed the elements that were common with the initiatives already implemented in Romania. Many of the elements proposed by the educational experiences have been recognized as familiar to the participants. After the experiences have been analyzed and the participants identified the pros and contras for each of them, it was agreed that most viable and interesting to transfer experience would be the ***Heterogeneous groups: interactive groups, other inclusive and interactive actions***. Also, during the discussions, as viable experience has also been proposed the actions on pre-school education (“A Good Start” and “A Good Start to school”) since they were identified to be responding at a need that the Roma community has at the present in Romania, the improvement of the access to pre-school education. However, in the following we will focus on the action related to ***Heterogeneous groups***.

After the first analysis of the ***Heterogeneous groups: interactive groups, other inclusive and interactive actions*** the members of the national working groups drafted a strategy, developing the next phases and elements to be considered for the implementation of the action.

1. Necessary steps for the implementation of the successful educational experience

“Heterogeneous groups: interactive groups, other inclusive and interactive actions” in Romania

- 1.1. Information campaign addressed to schools, teachers and educational agents
- 1.2. Information campaign addressed to the Roma community and other organizations, institutions working for and with the Roma
- 1.3. Implementation of *“Heterogeneous groups: interactive groups, other inclusive and interactive actions”* and necessary resources

2. Sustainability

3. Needed commitments for its implementation

1. Necessary steps for the implementation of the successful educational experience “Heterogeneous groups: interactive groups, other inclusive and interactive actions” in Romania

1.1. Information campaign addressed to schools, teachers and educational agents

How is required for every new activity when preparing its implementation, for our successful experience we will need to carry out in the first phase activities for informing the main stakeholders about the activity and what this involves. A presentation of the action is needed.

In this sense letters will be sent to the main actors, with the presentation of our proposal, starting from the School Inspectorates to the headmasters of the schools from the communities where the number of Roma is high. Preferably, a written agreement will be signed, after the information campaign, where responsibilities and activities will be introduced.

Meetings will have to be organized within the school for the teachers and the other educational agents, in order to familiarize them with the concept of *heterogeneous groups* and to try to establish together a plan of action, for each subject, so that they would start to have these types of activities in each class, for all the subjects they teach.

In order to ensure their involvement and to convince them of the utility of this action, we will have to present them the results that can be achieved and the changes this action can introduce in the academic activity of the children, but also in the relation of the family with the school. Examples will be provided from the experiences already documented.

The objective of this step is to raise the interest of the educational stakeholders and to obtain their agreement that they will get involved in the implementation of the action proposed. In this way, we can be sure that the actors will be committed to our initiative and we can start working on the development of the *heterogeneous groups* within the schools and preparing their implementation: training teachers for understanding better the activities, working on the methodology, discussions about how to attract the parents and the volunteers and involving them in the activities, establishing the program, etc.

1.2. Information campaign addressed to the Roma community and other organizations, institutions working for and with the Roma

Taking into account that it's an action where the participation of the community, parents in particular, but also other volunteers, is very important for the achievement of the positive results, it is clear that we need to have an activity where the parents are informed about the importance of this new action that will be implemented and where them and their children will have to take part.

The information in the community will be done by involving the teachers and the auxiliary staff, such as school mediators or other educational actors. It is very important for them to be part of the process, because they will be the one to work with the children and the parents, so they

have to be known by these persons so that they can build a mutual trust from the beginning.

Also, the information campaign will have two components, the information activities organized in the school and the second, visits made from the team of the school (teachers, volunteers, school mediators, etc.). For the organization of the information activities in school, invitations will be sent to the community and the parents will be invited to take part in the informative sessions – in addition, the school mediator will announce these meetings during his/her visits in the community.

For the visits in the community, discussions will be carried out previously with the leader from the community or/and with the health mediator, in order to inform them and to work together for achieving a good degree of involvement of the parents in the implementation of the activity.

Where possible, other institutional or organizations working with and for the Roma will be involved in the activities, which means that they are to be informed also, from the beginning of the program.

During the information campaign we will provide evidence to the parents regarding the results of the proposed activities and discuss the methodology of the action, so that they will be aware of their responsibilities. Also, they will be consulted for the program of the activities, giving them the possibility to choose in accordance to their own schedule, when they can come to the school.

1.3. Implementation of “Heterogeneous groups: interactive groups, other inclusive and interactive actions” and necessary resources

The implementation of an activity needs to be well planned before starting actually to develop activities within the community. At the same time it is important to have a responsible that will coordinate the activities and ensure that every necessary resource is available for the good implementation.

In this sense, a **group of coordination** must be created, bringing together teachers, parents and representatives of the Roma community (school mediator, health mediator, leaders etc.). The teachers will be responsible of making the activity plans and discuss with the parents and the volunteers in order to prepare the schedule, so that they ensure a good participation and involvement in the implementation of activities.

The representatives of the community need to be involved since the beginning, from the part of campaigning in the community. They will be the ones to make the connection between parents and school and to help get the parents involved in the planning and implementing of the activities.

Finally, **parents** are responsible of preparing together with the teachers and the mediators/leaders, etc., the list of activities, of interest for their children, and to bring the cultural contributions in the implementation of the activities. Also, they need to be involved from the phase of planning the activities, because they have to establish together with the teachers, when they can come to school and be part at the activities.

All of the persons involved in the *Heterogeneous groups* will have to understand the main objectives of the activity and how it's supposed to be implemented. For this reason, several meetings will be organized with the different groups of persons involved (teachers, parents, other volunteers, etc.) in order to establish a methodology and a common understanding of the action.

An important resource to be involved in the project is the one of the **volunteers**. As an additional support for teachers and children within the classroom, volunteers help with the implementation of the works established to be done in the class. Volunteers can be involved from the community (Roma students, other resource persons or members of the community that can help) or from the Universities close to schools (students that are interested in volunteering or that are learning to become teachers).

2. Sustainability

The implementation of the selected action to be adapted and implemented in Romania it's highly to have a long term sustainability since it's an activity done in the schools, by teachers together with parents and volunteers, so it can be easily organized after the end of the Rom UP project, but also it can be transferred to other classes, schools or teachers.

The fact that the activity doesn't require a high cost for its implementation is also contributing to the implementation with success on a long term of the *Heterogeneous groups*. Teachers can introduce them as a technique in their class and involve as many as possible parents and volunteers. The volunteers or the parents will also help bringing contributions on how to work and what themes to approach for the children to be interested and also, attract more persons that can be part at the activities.

The parents can also contribute to ensuring the sustainability of the action, by promoting the activity in the community and encouraging other persons to get involved.

If the activity has a good feedback and good results at local level it can also be taken into consideration to advocate for adopting the action at institutional level by the authorities in the field.

3. Needed commitments for its implementation

For ensuring the successful implementation of the *Heterogeneous groups*, commitments must be obtained from the main important actors that take part in the organization of the action.

The schools involved need to commit to the introduction of the action within the classes and to offer all the conditions for a proper implementation (adequate space, materials, participation of the teachers, etc.). The authorities in the field of education are also important, because they are the ones' that have to facilitate and promote the implementation of the action in all schools.

The program can influence the local policies by involving the local authorities and determining them to adopt methods and techniques that we used in our program.

The commitment from teachers to implement the action is a very important one, since they are the ones to make the connection between the school and the community, the family. They have to believe in the activities, first, but also to be available to reach the community and establish a good relation with the parents, so that they can feel they are needed for the activity and comfortable, so they get involved.

The parents are the key factor, and they need also to commit for the good implementation of the action. They need to be opened and available, since their involvement it's a very important factor for obtaining the success.

The engagement of families and other members and representatives of the community, is also important, since they are involved in the developments of the activity, and in promoting it within the community, so that a large number of persons get involved and by so, ensuring the success of the action.

The Roma and non-roma NGOs are also important in the implementation of the project, so the local associations will also be attracted to the new activities.

***National strategy for the implementation of
the successful experiences selected in the
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