

**First meeting of the National Working Group
BULGARIA
31 July 2012, Regional Inspectorate of Education, Veliko Turnovo**

After selecting the National working group the project team in Bulgaria sent preliminary information to all members and invited them for the first meeting of the group. The first meeting was hosted by the Regional Inspectorate of Education in Veliko Turnovo and was organized with the support of Milka Mihajlova, expert in RIO – Veliko Turnovo.

We have invited for the meeting also some other people – members of Amalipe team in order to see in the discussion how the successful educational practices identified within the project could be replicated and incorporated also in other Amalipe initiatives. Although it was the peak of the summer month most of the members of the working group participated in the meeting. Few of the members had other engagements and were not able to physically participate in the meeting but had an additional meeting with them afterwards to get them acquainted with the project and to get their feedback and comments as well.

The meeting started with presentation of the participants and their background. Yet during this presentation the participants shared that this project provides great opportunity to sum in one room people with different background to discuss successful educational practices.

After this Teodora Krumova and Gabriela Danailova presented the project, its main goals and activities. They presented the major concept of the project for “successful educational practice”, the criteria for selecting these practices and the practices themselves:

Decisive family/community participation - SPAIN

Decisive family and community participation is a Successful Educational Action implemented in Schools as Learning Communities in Spain. Learning Communities project is developed in more than 150 schools, from pre-school education to primary and secondary education and adult education. In those Schools as Learning Communities with high percentage of Roma students the educational success includes the reduction of drop-out and early school leaving being a success for all.

Roma students meetings - SPAIN

A action being developed in the context of the Integrated Plan of the Roma People of Catalonia, are **Roma students meetings** organised by the Roma Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen. The goal is to increase the presence of Roma girls and women in training activities both **encouraging young girls to stay in education through high school and university but also to promote training for adult Roma women**. As it is presented here education is being a key element to increase their social participation, contributing to overcome the situation of social exclusion of the Roma community.

Family and Community Education - SPAIN

It refers to the participation of parents and community members in learning activities offered at the school and addressed to them. In the following, the elements of participation that have contributed

ROM-UP! The inclusion of Roma through quality successful educational experiences

Project number: 375568-LLP-1-2011-ES-KA1-KA1NWR

to the success of these types of participation as well as the improvements obtained are presented. In the first place, it is noteworthy that the activities of family and community education correspond to the demands of the families and the community members (literacy, numeracy, ICT, etc.).

Decreasing the drop-out rate among Roma children - BULGARIA

The project "*Decreasing the Dropout Rate of Roma Children from School*" is a three-year program implemented by Center Amalipe - Bulgaria with grant support from "*America for Bulgaria*" Foundation. Its main target is to reduce the dropout rate of Roma children liable to school attendance. The project activities aim also at handling the issue of school absences, dissatisfactory school marks, the relatively low percentage of Roma who continue their education at secondary schools (high schools), the carelessness of Roma parents about school life and school management structures.

Roma culture classes in state school curriculum -BULGARIA

The inclusion of Roma culture classes into the curriculum of state schools in Bulgaria is a program which has been established and developed by Center Amalipe (Bulgaria) since 2002. The core of the program is the introducing of the subject "Folklore of the ethnoi in Bulgaria - Roma Folklore" (Roma culture classes). It is an elective course included in the curriculum of state schools. The classes are divided according to the age differences into 2nd to 4th grade and 5th to 8th grade.

The aim of the program is: 1. Preventing the dropout of Roma children by bringing the school close to the Roma family (through including elements of Roma culture in school curriculum); 2. Strengthening the identity of Roma children and raising their motivation for higher school achievements; 3. Making children of non-Roma origin familiar with Roma culture and thus help them overcome prejudices and accept Roma kids.

Socio-Medical Centers for Romas (Women's Place in Aliveri)- GREECE

This action was developed during the operation of **Socio-Medical centre (Roma Support Office)** in Aliveri of Nea Ionia in Volos, and has been providing services to Roma residents since 1998. The activity was initially funded by the Community Initiative Integra, programme Multi Roma Action Hellas (1998-2001), the Greek Ministry of Interior under the National Plan for Romas in Greece (2000-2004), the Greek Operational Programme of the third community support framework with 75% co-financing from the ESF (2005-2009) and by national funding combined with resources of local authorities until today (2009-2012). For the period 2012-2014 the programme is co-financed from the Greek NSRF.

Interactive Groups: Heterogeneous ability classrooms with reorganization of resources - SPAIN

Interactive Groups is a Successful Educational Action which is carried out in ever more schools. This action is developed in School as Learning Communities. Interactive Groups are achieving educative success among all children, including those for the most vulnerable groups such as Roma children.

ROM-UP! The inclusion of Roma through quality successful educational experiences

Project number: 375568-LLP-1-2011-ES-KA1-KA1NWR

Interactive groups are a form of classrooms organization that promotes both increased academic results and better social cohesion. It consists of **grouping students in small heterogeneous groups** (in terms of gender, culture, academic attainment, special needs, etc.) **and incorporating into the classroom human resources** that already exist in the school and in the community but that are in many cases misused. This resource means families, volunteers, support teachers, etc. Several activities are proposed by the teacher and every small group work on them with the help of a family member or a volunteer who become part of the group. This additional adult in each group has the function of motivating learning interactions among students.

Dialogic Literary Gatherings - SPAIN

Gatherings are organized in schools other organizations with mothers, fathers, other members of the community and children. At these sessions, people share the reading of classic works of literature, from writers such as Kafka, Joyce, Dostoyevsky, García Lorca, and Cervantes. Through engaging in dialogue about the literature, participants deepen their understanding of language and engage in debates based on their own life experience. It is ultimately a very empowering experience.

In the Gatherings, participants choose the classic work of literature they want to read and how many pages they are going to read in each session. Participants read the agreed pages at home and choose a paragraph they want to share with the others. Once together in the Gathering, people who have chosen a paragraph make a request to take the floor to the moderator. It is the moderator who gives the floor. Then the person reads his paragraph and explains why he has chosen it. Then, the floor is open to those people who want to give their opinion about the same paragraph, and the process goes on till the end of the paragraphs.

Roma Families Learning (RoFaL) Comenius Regio Project - IRELAND

The Importance of parental involvement in children's education

The *RoFaL project* is a *Comenius Regio project* funded by the European Union. The project looked at encouraging parental involvement in children's education through supporting families to help their children learn, increasing parent and child interaction time on literacy based activities and supporting parents own numeracy and literacy needs. Over the course of two years the project supported more than 55 parents to engage in Family Learning Classes.

A Good Start in school - ROMANIA

'A Good Start' project is funded by the European Union. It supported more than 4,000 children from ages zero to six to access early childhood education and care services in 16 locations across four countries (Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia). Although the project mainly targets Roma it also supports non-Roma children and families.

A Good Start (pre-school) - ROMANIA

“A Good Start” project is funded by the European Union. It supported more than 4,000 children from ages zero to six to access early childhood education and care services in 16 locations across four countries (Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia). Although the project mainly targets Roma it also supports non-Roma children and families.

Participants in the meeting were teachers, school principals, educational experts, members of the Roma community, including Roma community moderators, representatives of public institutions. They were very impressed by the experience and educational system in the other countries, especially the experience in Spain and the educational policies towards Travellers in Ireland. The participants discussed which of these practices or elements of them could be included in the educational system in Bulgaria. They welcomed very much the literature clubs and the heterogeneous groups, as well some other practices. They recognized some of the practices being implemented in a slightly different way but following the same concept. We can sum up the discussion and the comments and suggestions of the participants in the following lines.

- Parents to attend classes with their children
- Children to have a livelier learning by incorporating interactive learning games and methods
- Teachers to receive training on how to work with children from minority groups.
- To have better communication between different institutions
- To monitor students for dropping out of school or leaving a school and move to another, and leaving the country as well
- To try to change the attitudes of the community
- To create social educational medical centers using the methodology established by Center Amalipe in building community development center
- Parents to attend evening schools; at the same time the participants highlighted the problem of traveling teachers because - most of the traveling teachers, in small towns have difficulty using public transport. Another difficulty is that Romani women could hardly be absent from home in the late hours and outside the city where they live. This prevents adults to attend school in other places.
- Parents should have confidence that after training will have the opportunity to work.
- It was pointed out that the problem is to form groups of different literacy classes of adults because in smaller settlements it happens so that the first class has two to three people in the second grade is 5 -6 persons and so can not form a class of parents - students.
- The work of field workers should be directed to motivating parents to get enrolled in trainings and taking part in Roma integration activities.
- To establish parent clubs - where people can be informed about the different types of courses to be included in the various events, meetings, campaigns.
- It is a problem that the training of parents continues for a long time - four years. Many people for four years may begin regular work that will prevent regular attendance of classes, also for those four years a person can go abroad, which is also an obstacle to the continuation of the learning process. Participants in the meeting suggested that if possible the learning process to be shortened to six months a year
- After completing professional course, where parents receive a degree qualification, they should have also the opportunity to apply these skills into practices and receive a job (builders, tailors, hairdressers, etc.).

Participants in the meeting:

1. Adriana Ilieva – Roma community moderator – village of Stambolovo, Pavlikeni municipality, Veliko Turnovo district
2. Iskra Nikolova – Roma community moderator – town of Gorna Oryahovitsa, Veliko Turnovo district
3. Aneta Shikova – Roma community moderator – village of Ledenik, Veliko Turnovo municipality
4. Teodora Vasileva – Roma community moderator – Roma community development center, Veliko Turnovo municipality
5. Milka Mihajlova – expert responsible about educational integration in the Regional Inspectorate of Education – Veliko Turnovo. She has participated in a number of projects implemented by Center Amalipe. In addition, she is trainer of teachers in the field of multicultural education
6. Pepi Stefanova Obretenova – Head of Social and Humanitarian activities department in the Municipality of Pavlikeni
7. Katya Dimitrova – chief expert social and educational activities in the Municipality of Pavlikeni
8. Eftim Malev – school principal of Nikolay Raynov Primary school of Kessarevo. The school is a village school with predominantly Roma children. The teachers in the school have been teaching Roma culture classes since 2004.
9. Valentin Vasilev – a young Roma who had been acting as a Roma teacher assistant in the primary school in the village of Batak. At present he is a university student in Social pedagogy.
10. Neli Raykova, teacher in St.St.Cyril and Methodius Secondary school in Zlataritsa. The school has equal shares of Roma, Bulgarian and Turkish children
11. Kunka Petkova – secretary of the Kindergarten in the village of Vodoley, Veliko Turnovo municipality. The kindergarten has predominantly Roma children. Mrs. Petkova is a Roma herself
12. Maria Stoyanova – a Roma teachers in the primary school in Vinograd village, Strazhitsa municipality
13. Tania Vanova – educational expert in Center Amalipe
14. Gabriela Danailova – field worker in Center Amalipe
15. Silvia Boyanova – Coordinator, Roma community development centers
16. Teodora Krumova, project coordinator, Center Amalipe