SECOND MEETING OF THE NATIONAL WORKING GROUP
MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Date: October 18th 2012
Start time: 17.00h
End time: 19.00h
Location: Aula Mirador del Edifici de Llevant del Campus Mundet de la Universitat de Barcelona
(Viewpoint Classroom of the West Building of the Campus Mundet of the University of Barcelona)

Attendees:
- David Cortes Cortes, Roma man, president of the Roma association of Youth, Equality and Progress
- Miguel Angel Gomez Gomez, Roma man, secretary of the Roma association of Youth, Equality and Progress
- Marcos Castro Sandu, teacher of physical education in secondary schools
- Carlos Herrero Cebrian, secondary school teacher
- Julio Vargas Claveria, Roma sociologist and civic and community mediator
- Xavier Cubells, Director of the Civil Rights Programme of the Social Equity Services Directorate of the Barcelona City Council
- Neus Vergés, head of the Service to support educative community, from the Education Department of the Catalonia Government
- Fernando Macias, CREA researcher at the University of Barcelona
- Ana Contreras Fernandez, president of the Romani Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen
- Natalia Fernández Alcalá, technical coordinator of the ROM-UP Project

Excused:
- Dolores Santiago Santiago, Roma woman from Cambrils
- Luisa Rugu, Romanian Roma woman who has lived in Barcelona for a few years
- Maria Santiago Santiago, Roma woman from Sabadell, president of the Parents' Association of her children's school
- Montse Garcia, Roma woman, currently promoting school as a mediator in the district of Sant Roc of Badalona
- Marc Viñas, Director of the Social Cooperation and Volunteering General Sub Directorate from the Welfare and Family Department of the Catalonia Government
- Carmen Ortoll Grífols, Head of the Service for Innovation and Training in Pre-Primary and Primary Schools from the Education Department of the Catalonia Government

Firstly, the results from the previous meeting are presented to all the participants, and also all the contributions from the members received about the implementation of all the successful educational experiences. We decide to work together in order to define the strategy for the implementation of the Familiy Education experiences.

The agreements related to it are next:

1. NECESSARY STEPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN CATALONIA

1.1. AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ADDRESSED TO SCHOOLS, TEACHING STAFF, TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL AGENTS

In order to overcome the potential resistances that might exist on the part of teachers and educational agents towards the implementation of family education, the first step would be to launch an awareness campaign addressed to teaching staff and other educational agents regarding family and community education.

Schools have to be aware in order to achieve the commitment and involvement of the teaching staff, it will be necessary to talk to teachers, to the school board and other educational agents to explain them what family and community education is, what results its implementation is giving and what the results of research regarding the implementation are, etc.

To carry out this awareness campaign and ensure its success it is very important to take into consideration the people of reference for teachers and education agents. In the case of Catalonia, it would be positive to establish a previous contact with the Department of Education and school inspection in order to present them the project and, if appropriate, plan jointly the actions for raising awareness that need to be carried out.

This way, in this first phase, one of the objectives would be to reach an agreement with the educational authorities so that they will support the project. Once this commitment is achieved, the awareness campaign and training would focus on teaching staff and other educational agents, explaining them the methodology, benefits and other aspects of the successful educational action: "Family and community education"

1.2. AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ADDRESSED TO ROMA FAMILIES, THE COMMUNITY, ROMA AND OTHER SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS, CHURCHES WERE ROMA GO TO AND OTHER REFERENT SPACES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

In order to raise awareness among families it is important to contact them and explain them the evidences of success of family education; and the fact that research proves that, if families are part of a learning process, this improves the academic results of their children.

In order to get in touch with families, we must find new ways of communication, as those that have been used so far, have been proven not to work; we have to go from traditional methods of communication (notes being sent from school to families, letters, etc.) to new ones that have proven effective.

This way and so that the awareness campaign may be successful, it is very important to take into account the people of reference in the neighbourhood where we want to implement family education, combining this with an expert in education that may be able to explain the evidences and results of family education. We have to keep in mind that in every neighbourhood there are various people of reference, and it is through these that we have to reach families and give them the necessary information, so that they are present in all the major phases of implementation and success is achieved.

Examples of people of reference that we may find in neighbourhoods are: the church pastor, academic Roma people that are respected by the community, other Roma people of respect for the community, school promoters or Roma mediators in the neighbourhood, etc.

Thus, we have to take into consideration all Roma, educational, or social organizations in the neighbourhood, so that most of these institutions also collaborate in the organization and implementation of family education, as well as in bringing the information to the people.

Given the implementation of other previous projects that have been done so far in several regions, such as Learning Communities, the involvement of organizations in the neighbourhood is key to achieving success in the implementation of family education in schools, as well as in the involvement of families in the different processes.

In the raising awareness phase, we have to take into consideration the availability of families, so that they are the ones to define the schedules. This will ensure the success of participation in assemblies and meetings that will take place to explain the family education implementation proposal.

The aim of this second phase would be to inform the community and Roma families about family education through assemblies in the neighbourhood, presenting it as a successful educational action.

1.3. IMPLEMENTATION OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Once the awareness campaign has been addressed to all members of the community (teaching staff and educational agents/ Roma families/ organizations and other institutions in the neighbourhood, church, etc.), we must be aware of what everyone is able to do or willing to do for the implementation of family education in one or various schools in the neighbourhood, and what commitments everyone accepts.

A useful way to organize the implementation, given the previous experience in other areas, is to use mixed working committees which involve people who represent all groups in the community, and who have been democratically elected.

Thus, each committee would be responsible for a necessary part of the implementation. Examples of committees to organize the implementation of family education are:
- **Volunteer committee** to find volunteers that provide training, stay with the children if a nursery space is needed, etc.
- **Evaluation and monitoring committee** to follow and evaluate the whole process
- **Promotion and registrations committee** to see what Roma families are interested in the training
- **Content committee** to work with families to define the content of training and other related aspects
- etc.

Along these lines, each neighbourhoods must decide which are the committees required to organize and ensure the implementation of family education.

We have to keep in mind that for the implementation of family education in Catalonia, we do not need a pilot action to test the experience and have a model to implement family education in other schools, as this successful educational experience is already being implemented and has already been carried out in other Spanish and Catalan territories for enough time, with Roma population and other excluded groups, with considerable academic improvement for children. Specifically in Spain there are 125 schools that are Learning Communities and carry out family education, and others that also carry it out without being Learning Communities (adult schools, private and public schools...). Some include Roma community and other don't, but they act as a benchmark for the implementation of the experience in new neighbourhoods, focusing on Roma community.

We have to keep in mind that in order to ensure a successful implementation of family education in Catalonia, it is essential that the following criteria are met, as the previous experiences back up:
- Family education will be organized with **volunteers** from the community or from outside the community, that are able to conduct these classes, so that the training doesn't involve a high economic cost, which would hinder its implementation
- Family education has to be based on **instrumental learning** and families must decide what and how they want to learn, in order for it to have an impact in improving the academic results of Roma children, as research shows.
- Family education must respond to **the real needs and interests of families**.
- **Families have to choose schedules** for the training, and other relevant issues, through mixed committees, to ensure the success in participation and its compatibility with work and family responsibilities.

Regarding family education, we must underline the importance of trying to offer, whenever possible and depending on the demand of the families, some sort of official certification that recognizes the training; i.e, in those cases where it is possible, training will be oriented to achieving formal qualifications (obligatory secondary education degree, driving license, preparation of tests for university access, etc.) which will also improve the educational and occupational inclusion of families.

Finally, we highlight the fact that, although the implementation strategy of this successful educational experience is aimed at Roma families, it will be beneficial for the process of implementation for other non-Roma families in the same school to participate, improving the social cohesion of the school and the community.

1.4. NECESSARY RESOURCES FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

On the one hand, as for the needed resources to implement family education, we should benefit as far as we can of the existing resources in Catalonia , as well as of the spaces and classrooms in schools and other neighbourhood associations, to carry out trainings and the meetings of the mixed committees.

On the other hand, with regard to human resources for the implementation of family education, we propose to carry it out with the work of volunteers (families themselves, people in the neighbourhood, students, associations and neighbourhood organizations, etc.), to minimize the cost of the activity.

As for the volunteers and in the case of Catalonia, it is important to benefit from those projects and resources that already exist and are promoted by the different administrations. Specifically the following:

Environment education plans. They are managed with shared co responsibility of city councils and the Department of Education. These plans promote network work and learning and currently reach one-third of students in Catalonia. There are working groups that already exist in the framework of these plans (family groups, dynamization groups from parent associations, etc.) that are interprofessional and include representatives of parents, youth, etc., not just teachers. It would be a resource, a network to take into consideration both in the awareness campaign and in the implementation of family education.

Learning methodology - service. It is a methodology also promoted by the Department of Education, that is being carried out from universities and high schools. It relies on students learning at the same time that they do a service for the community and the neighbourhood. There are already examples of high school students that volunteer in the afternoons by giving computer or other technology classes (such as help classes on the use of cell phones) to parents and grandparents. This resource has a 0 cost. First of all, the student takes training classes to be able to volunteer. Afterwards, he/she will be evaluated on the content, and this will be recognized as part of his or her training. It is addressed to university, high school, and vocational training students. It aims at students to volunteer in their neighbourhood or other places, and that this volunteer work is recognized as part of their training. This would be a good tool to find volunteers for the implementation of family education in Catalonia.

"Family – School, together for education" software. This is a software application created by the Department of Education, in which each school may evaluate in what point they find themselves in their relationship with families and may guide their actions to improve the existing relationship. This application could be useful at some point in the initial implementation.

Schools Network for Human Rights: This project is being started now in pilot format by the Direction of Women and Civil Rights of the Barcelona City Council and focuses on four areas: gender, sexual orientation, racism / xenophobia and religious diversity. Some of the ROM-UP selected successful experiences may fit in the framework of this project.

2. SUSTAINABILITY

The proposed viability strategy for the implementation of family education in Catalonia is sustainable in the short and long term, as has been explained throughout the strategy.

The implementation will be based, on the one hand, on the existing resources from the different administrations and, on other hand, on the existing resources in the neighbourhoods and communities. Thus, its implementation will have a low economic cost which ensures its viability and sustainability over time.

At the same time, the previous implementation of family education in other territories ensures the success, the need, and the sustainability of the project in the long-term.

3. NEEDED COMMITMENTS FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Prior to the awareness campaign addressed to teachers, teaching staff and educational agents, it would be important to count on the commitment of the Department of Education to plan and promote the implementation of this successful educational experience in the schools of Catalonia. At the same time, it is important to have the commitment of the administration to facilitate and promote the implementation of family education in several schools.

The commitment from teachers to implement family education in schools through the perspective posed herein, and with the aim of improving academic results of Roma children, is one of the key pieces to the successful implementation, as it is to their implication in the mixed working committees.

The engagement of families in the spaces of discussion, decision and participation, as well as in family education itself is essential, and is ensured from the moment they become active agents in the whole process and make decisions related to training contents, schedules, etc.

The commitment of Roma associations and other social organizations in the neighbourhood is very important to search for positive people of reference in the community, as well as to ensure their participation in the implementation of family education, through their participation in mixed committees and their support in organizing the training (search for volunteers, or other existing resources in the community, etc.).

Finally, we propose that it would be a major commitment on behalf of the school coordinators, and the dean of the university, to promote learning methodology - service so that university students can do volunteer work that is recognized as elective credits. That way, the research for volunteers would be even easier.