



Good Practices on Educational Integration of Vulnerable Groups: Bulgaria, Republic of Northern Macedonia and Spain (March-Dec. 2019) *Guidebook*



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Guidebook

Erasmus + Programme on *Ethnic Minority Integration School Hub*
March – December 2019



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1 - Background Information	3
Chapter 2 - Methodology	6
Chapter 3 - Good Practices from Bulgaria	7
Chapter 4 - Good Practices from Spain	20
Chapter 5 - Good Practices from Republic of Northern Macedonia	35
List of Participants	57

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This guidebook of practices on access to good quality education and integration of vulnerable groups is the result of an exchange programme called *Ethnic Minority Integration School Hub* funded by Erasmus + within the project CA2 "Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices". The programme was a partnership between three countries – Bulgaria (BG), Spain (ES) and Republic of Northern Macedonia (RNM). Representatives of Ministries of Education, municipalities, schools and NGOs paid 3 visits to each other to explore, study and share their experiences in primary, secondary and high schooling for vulnerable groups. This programme entails collecting and developing a good practices handbook on educational integration and inclusion of Roma and migrants in Bulgaria, Republic of Northern Macedonia and Spain. The final goal is to exchange ideas and experiences on good means, tools and methods on Roma integration through access to good quality education and to secure a peer-to-peer learning environment for the 3 countries' educational and policy experts.

The programme is managed by the *Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities*, COIDUEM based in Sofia, BG.

The first exchange took place in March 2019 in Sofia where around 10 participants from RNM, BG and ES met with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, the Swiss Programme on Roma Integration and a number of schools in Sofia and in Stolipinovo, the Roma neighbourhood in Plovdiv. The topics covered mainly educational policies and the need for special attention to Roma integration and access to better quality education, prevention of dropping-out, student retention, school mediation, training of teachers and the role of school leadership and municipalities in implementing change. The exchange group had to focus on reviewing some basic policies and cases available from the 3 countries.

The second exchange took place in Skopje between 27.06-02.07.2019. The purpose of the RNM visit was to select "The Best of the Best" of the innovative pedagogical practices presented in the March visit in Sofia. The sessions in RNM were attended by 13 representatives of the hosts and 10 colleagues from Bulgaria and 10 from Spain (Ministries of Education, school representatives, NGOs).

Three best practices were identified from each of the 3 countries. Later on, a decision was made to broaden the case scope and present 5 cases from each participating country. Each country's 3 cases were discussed in working groups and then presented to all with a view to the fact that they need to correspond to more specific indicators (see next chapter).

In RNM, a meeting with Mrs. Lidija Dimova, Director of the National Agency for European Education Programmes and Mobility was organized. She presented the main priorities of the program - prevention of early drop-out, social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, early childhood development and digitalization. A visit was also made to one of the largest Roma elementary schools, not only in Macedonia, but also in the region, located in the district of Shuto Orizari in Skopje (with almost 2000 pupils from 1 to 9 grade) where 99% of the pupils are Roma. The teaching language is Macedonian, but students have the opportunity as an optional subject to learn Roma Language and Culture of Roma twice a week. On a general note in North Macedonia, non-attendance is penalized with fines that

can reach 2000 euros, but this happens rarely, as the school and the municipalities take care to explain these rigid measures to the pupils, students and their parents. Each student must attend school regularly. Educational Roma mediators are facilitators of this process—a link between the schools and the Roma community, they are selected and funded directly by the RNM Ministry of Education) and they identify the children (the non-attending and the drop-out students) and support their return to the school.

In view of the forthcoming third visit to Madrid, Spain between 18-23 September, a plan was prepared for the project work and the preparation of this meeting, which will focus on the policies of each country on integration of vulnerable groups.

The third visit was in Madrid in the period 18-23.09.2019 with the purpose to observe the Spanish experience in educational and migrants integration and to see how this experience could be transferred to other countries. The visit completed with an overall summary on how to feed the specific information into educational policy making. The group met with the Spanish Ministry of Education Territorial Directorate for Madrid to discuss policies for foreign students' integration in the educational system through language training. Another meeting was in the district Villaverde (with a number of vulnerable groups) with the Head of the Education Department where prevention and control of absenteeism was discussed; and also in the same district, a meeting was held with the psychology service for the treatment of students with learning difficulties. The discussion with the Foundation Secretariat Hitano focused on a variety of measures they use to integrate Roma – through education, employment, housing and social services. The group visited 2 schools: CEIP Manuel Núñez de Arenas and CEIP San Carlos. In both schools, a variety of measures were demonstrated on how to keep students motivated, how to make programmes customized to children's needs, how to attract parents to school life and finally, how to really make diversity work. A very exciting visit was made to a school and a special children's community, *CEMA* for parentless children and orphans where a variety of approaches were demonstrated to witness the social solidarity and equal treatment of all children.

A final meeting between COIDUEM, the CEIP San Carlos School and the EUROTHINK Macedonian partner was held in Sofia in December 6-8. The purpose of this meeting was to finalize the guidebook and to further discuss lessons learned for educational policies for Roma. A discussion on the transfer of practices was held whereby participants focused on the following cases, they would like "to bring home with them":

Macedonia:

The Macedonian group was impressed by the practice of the CEIP Manuel Núñez de Arenas School which had very flexible and adapted curricula to Roma children, providing them with an environment that was very stimulating of their art and nature skills. They were particularly impressed by the very active engagement and participation of parents who could come to school at any time, meet teachers and take part also in some school activities, especially with the smaller children. Some of the Macedonian colleagues mentioned that think that such parents participation in school is very relevant for the younger children in primary school. They were ready to pass this experience to the Macedonian MES.

From the Bulgarian practices, the Macedonian colleagues, liked the opportunity for peer-to-peer learning presented by Rosen Bogomilov from Grigory Tsamblak School, Sofia. Motivating students to learn what they were interested in and with the help of their peers was noted as a good practice. Macedonian colleagues were also impressed by the CEIP San Carlos engagement of parents in after school programmes and by the lively intercultural environment in the school.

Spain:

The Spanish group would like to transfer some of the teaching methods applied in Grigory Tsamblak School, where teachers were trained in flexible methods by the Teach for BG organization. This method means a departure from the traditional system of teaching and uses team work, individual skills encouragement, learning focused on students' interests. Spanish colleagues, also thought that it is difficult to engage Roma parents in the life of schools and the idea of mediators was a good one and worth a possible transfer. The good mediation practices were manifested both in BG and in North Macedonia.

Bulgaria

The Bulgarian group appreciated the flexibility of the curricula and teaching methods used in the CEIP Manuel Núñez de Arenas School and the variety of afterschool support offered by outside psychologists and the municipality. From the Macedonian practices, they found impressive that they had a wide variety of professional skills taught in the Brakja Ramiz-Hamid School in Shuto Orizari and that students had the option of learning Romani language. In the 2 visited countries, there were elements that were transferrable and these will definitely be fed into central level policy making and into practice.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

An overview of the best practices presented in the first mobility in Bulgaria was carried out and 5 cases from each of the 3 countries were selected. The practices had to meet the following main criteria:

- They should be in line with the policies of the respective country;
- They should be tailored to the target groups and topics;
- Practices need to be applicable and transferrable to other countries;
- The results need to be visible, pragmatic and impactful.

The main theme of the good practices was "Prevention of Early School Dropout" and the following indicators were discussed as delineating a good practice:

- Ensuring good quality of teaching;
- Learning material and extracurricular activities adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups and immigrants;
- Well-trained staff;
- Inclusion of the community and mediation provided;
- Motivation of parents;

Need for resources and supportive environment

Based on the above, the following indicators were designed to capture the key principles of a good practice and to be used in each case presented in this guidebook:

- Quality of intervention: innovations, adaptation of teaching and curricular to vulnerable groups/migrants
- Participation, outreach and representation of vulnerable groups/migrants
- Availability of extra-curricular classes – languages, arts, catch-up classes, developing social skills, etc.
- Availability of other social and cultural activities targeting educational integration of vulnerable groups/migrants
- Mobilization and participation of parents in the school process, extracurricular work and social events
- Engaging mediators and social workers to prevent early school leaving
- Supportive environment for the educational process – community, availability of funding and special programmes
- Sustainability – political will, financial and human resources
- Could the case be multiplied?
- What could be the lessons learned?
- What could be the policy recommendations?

Finally, a proper format and writing guidance was provided to all participants when preparing their cases. An editor was contributing with reviewing all cases.

GOOD PRACTICE WRITING GUIDANCE

Background

In this section, please provide the following:

- ✓ Information about your location – city, school,
- ✓ Numbers/percentage of citizens and minorities
- ✓ Numbers/percentage of different ethnic groups in the school; Staff of the school
- ✓ If you describe a specific Project – the name, the years of implementation, why you selected this Project.
- ✓ Mention any reasons why you chose this specific case

Case Description

There is a difference between a case description and a Project that was successful. Usually a whole Project entails many aspects and actions. In the case presentation, we provide the very best example of how something worked in reality out of many other aspects. And we look at why this became a good practice.

Describe here the following:

- ✓ What were the activities
- ✓ Who were the actors
- ✓ Who were the partners
- ✓ Who benefited from this and how
- ✓ When did this happen
- ✓ Why you think this is a good practice

Goals

- ✓ These are usually the ones which were very specific for the case
- ✓ If you wish you could also mention the longer-term goals when/if they relate to the specific ones.

Results

- ✓ Only highlight the ones relevant for the described case
- ✓ Please also provide a short reasoning of how it became possible to achieve these results
- ✓ What was their impact in more general sense

Challenges

Describe here the following:

- ✓ The problem areas that were systemic
- ✓ The problems that appeared in the process of the practice implementation
- ✓ How you tried/managed to overcome them

Sustainability

How was your case sustained – financially, as human resources, and as an institutional practice

Multiplication of the Practice

- ✓ Please describe who, how, when, why and where – picked up or scaled up your practice?
- ✓ What was the effect
- ✓ How did you advocate for that multiplication

Policy Recommendations

- ✓ What will you recommend as important to be used for policy development or change – in the school, in the region, at central levels?
- ✓ Why – what will be the value of this new/changed policy

CHAPTER 3: GOOD PRACTICES FROM BULGARIA

1. Celebrating Cultural Diversity in the Village of *Ablanitsa* Blagoevgrad Region

Background

The *Saint Paisii Hilendarski* School in the village of Ablanitsa is the biggest school in the municipality of Hadzidimovo, in Blagoevgrad region. The schools in the municipality of Hadzidimovo have a total of 820 students: 30% belong to the Turkish ethnicity, 20% are Roma and 50% are Bulgarian. This diverse ethnic composition is a good prerequisite for exciting cultural activities, especially during the holidays. In 2017/2018, the school hosted 352 students in grades 1 to 12, divided into 18 classes. From 2014/2015 school year, a new open-air leisure corner, as well as a recreational center were open for extra-curricular activities. The school provides good English and French language training. The pedagogical staff numbers 39 people - there is 1 main teacher, 29 Senior Teachers and teachers, 4 teachers in the centre for education, 2 Deputy Directors, 1 pedagogical advisor, 1 psychologist and the Director. The school is also well-equipped technically – with 4 computer rooms, conference rooms, gym, music room, and open air learning center, interactive boards and a doctor's office.

Case Description

The methodology of all extracurricular activities is linked to the principles of empathy, unconditional acceptance of the other, self-initiative and dedication on the basis of interactive educational models, supporting children`s rights and equality to participate through teamwork in multicultural dialogue.

The presented practices deal with the diversification of extracurricular work and wide participation of students in community life in this municipality. The initiatives were based on the realization that there was a lack of students` motivation to participate in after school classes and activities, as well as because such innovative extracurricular activities were simply missing. A number of teachers, the Director and Assistant Director developed their new programmes along the following priorities:

1. **Overcoming aggression.**
2. **Appropriate communication with children with Special Education Needs (SEN) .**
3. **Developing ethnic literacy, tolerance, and multicultural dialogue.**

The school worked with all students from the 1st to 12th grade from different ethnic groups - Christians, Muslims and Roma, as well as other students and groups from the villages of Ablanitsa, Koprivlen, Lyaski, Blatska, and Beslen. School staff was aware that it had to cater to a variety of problems: diverse ethnic composition, students with divergent behavioural reactions, dropping-out and non-attendance, a tendency to aggression not only among boys, but also among girls, violent leadership self-expressions with destructive actions. And the school team developed activities which encouraged sharing of experiences, activating self-initiative and allowed for expressing creativity of young talents.

Starting from the general idea of activity in a spirit of tolerance and multicultural dialogue, a survey with students, parents, and teachers was conducted on some of the following areas of interest:

To Students:

- ✓ Would you approve of a learning-educational environment in a spirit of tolerance?
- ✓ Would you support an extra-curricular activity (club, free-optional preparation) that respects the principles of tolerance?
- ✓ Would you approve your child's participation in joint celebrations, school events for different ethnic groups?
- ✓ Would you like to participate in joint inter-ethnic celebrations at school?
- ✓ Do you think that a learning process in a spirit of tolerance will contribute to a better atmosphere in school and to harmonizing student relationships?

To Parents:

- ✓ Is it pertinent, in your view, to know and respect the customs of other ethnic groups?
- ✓ Would you like to participate in an extra-curricular activity (club, free-optional preparation) in which you study the different ethnic groups` holidays and customs?
- ✓ Would you join joint inter-ethnic celebrations at school?
- ✓ Do you think that a learning process in a spirit of tolerance will contribute to a better atmosphere in school and to harmonizing the relationship between you and your students?
- ✓ What club would you like to be set in your school so you could get involved in it?

1. A series of activities were implemented under the first priority: *how to overcome aggression:*

- ✓ Two Clubs were set up: 1. "In Europe without tobacco, smoke, alcohol and drugs" and 2. "Children of Ablanitsa with gratitude to Veronika Guerin," with the Municipal Council on Drugs - Blagoevgrad and the Irish Embassy. The Club learned about the ideas of many international foundations and the UN Convention on Childrens` Rights. It engaged students to conduct an imaginary journey to the European Union. Many students visited the

European Parliament in Brussels and the training seminars in Varna – a cooperation which continues till now.

- ✓ Under the principle “children train children”, a " Prevention from violence and conflict resolution " class was held for students; teachers were trained on overcoming stress from teaching;
- ✓ A number of local festivals and traditions of tolerance took place. Joseph Herbert - a volunteer from the Peace Corps, worked in the school and presented aspects of American culture implementing extracurricular activities, leaving lasting traces in the history of the school.

The activities on how to communicate with children with Special Educational Needs were as follows: A group of students from Ablanitsa visited, with a small gift of songs and dances, the children from the Center for Children with Disabilities in Gotse Delchev. Some children visited back the school in Ablanitsa for celebration of Planet Earth - organized by the " Survivor" club and with the special participation of scientists from the Bulgarian Academy of Science, Sofia.

2. **On the third priority - how to cultivate tolerance by knowing the cultural traditions of different ethnicities**, the school initially, organized events separately for each holiday and ethnic group in community centres - for the holidays St. George, Christmas, Ramadan Bayram , and Bango Vassilii. However, the school realized that just one local holiday, common for students from the 3 ethnic groups can unite students and teachers. This joint activity called "We live together, we celebrate diversity" on St. George's day, is held in the past 2 years and is a triumph of diversity and tolerance.

Challenges

The school was aware that it had to cater to a variety of problems: diverse ethnic composition, students with divergent behavioural reactions, dropping-out and non-attendance, a tendency to aggression not only among boys, but also among girls, leadership self-expressions with destructive actions. These difficulties were overcome with the staff's good will and creativity.

Results

A measure for good results is the students' and parents' satisfaction with participating in joint activities and teamwork. Students and parents demonstrated their diversity and creativity, celebrating holidays together, they improved their understanding of the multicultural environment they live in. The innovative initiative on the holiday of St. George's Day was carried out under the slogan: "Three Ethnic Celebrate One and the Same Holiday" to create a feeling of community-based, multi-cultural St. George's Day dialogue. In a municipality like this one, it is much needed to educate through traditions, self-initiatives, faith and creativity. The festive atmosphere is created in the common for all three ethnic groups folk dances and it confirms the power of the said: "We are strong because we are together". There were different accents in the 2013 "Bouquet" festival on the traditional cultures of minorities in Bulgaria, on self-knowledge and manifestations of identity, and acceptance of the "other" ethnic group.

In conclusion, there were gradual changes in two directions - an increase in the number of those who wished to be engaged in extracurricular initiatives and of those who wished to change attitudes. Participating students and parents not only joined willingly, but also overcame the alienation and lack of interest in the School in Ablanitsa. Most generally, people improved their self-consciousness, responsibility, self-esteem and desire for new involvement in joint events.

Sustainability and Multiplication of the Practice

Since 2011, every year, a municipality holiday in the town of Hadjidimovo is being held: St. George's Day - the patron of Christians, Muslims and Roma people. This festivity is supported by the municipality, with the active participation of citizens from all ethnic groups in town. All the extracurricular activities could be applied in many schools where students from diverse ethnic groups learn and live together. These activities can now be funded by additional national funding and donors' projects.

Policy Recommendations

Such innovative models of extracurricular activities and multicultural community actions could be replicated and become policy requirements for truly diverse and innovative ways of addressing multicultural ethnic communities.

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2. Learning English in a Fun Way - the Case of *Hristo Botrev School, Dolni Tsibar Village, Region of Montana*

Background

The *Hristo Botrev School* (grades 1-10) is located in the village of *Dolni Tsibar*, in the region of Montana, one of the poorest regions in Bulgaria (north-west). *Dolni Tsibar* is located on the Danube, and out of 1600 citizens only 20-30 are Bulgarian, the rest being Roma. 200 students attend the *Hristo Botev School* grouped in 11 classes. 19 teachers are dedicated to the advancement of their children and many of them use innovations in their practices. The school provides a unique opportunity for Roma students to complete high school along with a professional training. This is a positive step and allows Roma to be prepared for the job market.

The School Director and staff are committed to Roma integration (students are 100% Roma). The school development strategy envisions a focus on teaching Bulgarian, motivating students to attend school and keeping them in school by a variety of measures: innovations in new after school programmes and intense work with parents. In the school, 15 clubs are functioning to engage children in a variety of after school programmes – such as theatre, music, ecology, food and cooking, Roma folklore and traditions.

Case Description

The good practice concerns the introduction of an innovative method of teaching English to 2nd and 3rd grade student in the timeframe Dec. 2017 – May 2018. By using the interactive board, game and role-play methods, and team work, the teacher *Anatoly Georgiev* set up a good example of how traditional methods, like using textbooks and homework writing may not necessarily best results. The key goal was to create a genuine interest and motivation in students to learn a foreign language efficiently, quickly and in a fun way without any textbooks and supporting that interest by innovative approaches.

The language classroom is equipped with a modern interactive board and multimedia equipment which is a great help for the teacher who could use a variety of methods to visualize, interpret, and use interactive ways and approaches for teaching. Most students love to attend these classes and demonstrate enthusiasm to learn in such conditions. The teacher, *Mr. Georgiev*, adapted the current practice to the Bulgarian context from good international practices of teaching English. He aimed at

opening up the horizons of children beyond language learning, building up their self-esteem and developing their aesthetic sensitivity. The overall new model, placed different students in a variety of roles, and in a new environment, where they were not limited by their own thinking – which helped develop their creative thinking and learning potential.

Challenges:

The key problem in the teaching of foreign languages in that school is that most of the children come to school without any skills in the Bulgarian language. Many of them do not learn the language well by grade 2 and this is also the time when they start learning a foreign language on the basis of Bulgarian. This is a great challenge for them, which hinders their further foreign language education.

The teacher used the following planning stages:

- **Stage 1:** Selection of the most suitable didactic tools for the practice – a series of games, visual images, programmes for the interactive board, stories, role play and questions
- **Stage 2:** Conceptualizing the practice and developing its content – preparation of stories, team work, participatory techniques, series of questions and tasks
- **Stage 3:** The practice engaged the 2nd and 3rd grade students in creating a team of more advanced students and disadvantaged students. They found a good way of cooperation and participated in an equal footing as a team. This definitely improved social integration and equal treatment of all children.
- **Stage 4:** Using in practice the new innovative methods in the classroom

Results

Students definitely display a higher level of motivation during the learning process and desire more such classes and practices. Students and their parents shared that:

- The learning process was much more exciting and the level of participation and interest increased many times
- Students learned the foreign language vocabulary and grammar in a much more relaxed way
- Students also learnt more about the Bulgarian language
- Team work improved
- Many students raised their self-esteem and confidence
- By working in a team as equal partners, students could socialize much better
- The innovation guaranteed an equal access to language learning
- Improving skills that relate to cross-subjects was a result of the practice as well
- Learning how to help each other, be responsible and disciplined added to all the other results

Sustainability

The municipality, the regional education authorities and the Ministry of Education, MES should support such innovative language learning models introducing new methods and approaches in many other schools in the country where disadvantaged and Roma students study. The practice does not cost money. But well-trained teachers of foreign languages need to be in place. They also need to have the will and passion to use the experience from this practice. In addition, the model can definitely be used for teaching other subjects – simply by combining a variety of adapted to children techniques such as games, team work, participatory and visual methods and role-play.

Lessons Learned

The proposed practice is a combination of interactive work, participatory and game methods, project development and team building applied to learning a foreign language. This is definitely an

innovation for Roma schools and moreover for a school in a small village from the north-west of Bulgaria. The advantages are obvious and lessons are numerous:

- Students feel full of enthusiasm and desire to learn new things, they also feel fulfilled and see the results of their efforts
- They become responsible for the advancement and development of their school as a whole.
- Students were approaching the new learning with caution and sometimes even fear; they also felt a bit insecure at the start of the process. The new knowledge they acquired built up their confidence and made them proud and happy.
- The practice was presented to the whole school and this allowed students to positively assert themselves, build their presentation skills and promote the practice as the “owners” of this new way of learning

Multiplication of the Practice

The regional offices of MES (Regional Educational Management Units) could definitely play a role in the promotion and multiplication of this practice – mainly in the north-west region. The MES could multiply this practice through its national networks as well.

Policy Recommendations

Such innovative models of language teaching need to be adopted as national policies on language teaching and innovations. More foreign language teachers should be trained to use such methods. Additionally, teaching other subjects could make use of these techniques and methodology.

Contacts for the good practice:

Hristo Botrev School, Dolni Tsibar Village, Region of Montana

The teacher: Anatoly Rosenov Georgiev: rosenov88@abv.bg;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PR6T5HIASNs>

3. Fulfilling the Learning Potential of Roma Students - the Case of *Grigory Tsamblak* School, Sofia

Background

The good practice implemented in the primary school *Grigorii Tsamblak*, in the vicinity of the Roma community *Hristo Botev* in Sofia, was about securing equal access and good quality education to Roma children (1-7th grades). More specifically, the school uses US-based approaches and methods, developed by the 50-member-countries network *Teach for All*. The key principles are developing student and teachers' leadership skills and engaging parents and community in the educational process. *Teach for All* network partners are developing leadership in classrooms and communities to ensure all children can fulfil their potential. Through ongoing training and development, these teachers become strong classroom leaders and determined advocates for their students, who understand the complex challenges facing economically disadvantaged communities and believe that overcoming these obstacles is possible. The training of teachers on these methods in Bulgaria is organized and delivered by the Foundation *Teach for Bulgaria*.

Case description

The school *Grigorii Tsamblak*, in the vicinity of the Roma community *Hristo Botev* in Sofia has introduced an innovative method of teaching and organizing the study process which is adapted

from the community and leadership approaches developed by the *Teach for All Network* and introduced by the Foundation *Teach for Bulgaria*. The school hosts 168 children, mostly of Roma origin, from 1st to 7th grades. The pedagogical staff consists of 20 teachers who pass the training of the *Teach for All Summer Academy* to apply community and leadership methods in teaching a variety of subjects.

The key principles of this method are: student's education and development are at the center of schooling and teachers are simply facilitators of the process.

The goals of this approach are:

- ✓ To create a sense of belonging and community within the school
- ✓ To improve the motivation for studying and for continuing schooling beyond primary education
- ✓ To create important social and communication skills such as: team work, critical thinking and analysis, project work, etc.
- ✓ To prevent aggression and misbehaviour and also school leaving.

The classroom teacher Rosen Bogomilov was trained in the Summer Academy for Leadership and as an alumnus continues to use the resources of *Teach for All*. Rosen was the leading teacher bringing in this method to the school and slowly reforming the educational process from within. He is now being followed by all 20 teachers who will undergo similar training and teach using these methods.

The innovative method was applied to 24 students from 5-7th grades and the main principles are as follows:

- The classroom teacher acts as a mentor and supports the development of a community of students with common values and interests
- He provides guidance as to how to improve social behaviour in class and prevent any aggressive patterns, immoral deeds, refusal to study
- The class decides on the rules for managing the study process. Students also decide on their roles and assign tasks for each other themselves. These rules are created together by all the students and they are carefully phrased to carry a positive meaning
- The class celebrates together holidays, festivities and traditions
- The class develops its own symbols securing a special and unique standing of the class and a sense of belonging (for example a song, an emblem, etc.)
- The above approaches develop a sense of trust, responsibility, sharing and a sense of community among students. These approaches prepare students to not only study well, but to also develop social and life skills.

The major part of the educational approach is the work with parents and their participation in a variety of extracurricular work. Parents pass special trainings so that they learn how to motivate their children, how to talk to them and support them, how to deal with their internal world. As a result of this intense work with parents, more than 90 parents are now enrolled in individual education to complete their own primary schooling.

In addition to this training, parents are kept abreast of the progress of their children – every month, the classroom teacher provides report cards to parents and discusses any possible issues and ideas of importance related to the students of each parent. Families are also active participants in celebrating traditions, sports events and holidays.

Another principle is motivating students to engage and participate in after school work – they are empowered to take personal responsibility for their participation in these classes; classes are selected based on assessment of needs and interests; these are jointly discussed with the teacher. The choice of classes is made based on the active involvement of students and their preferences.

Results: 100% of the students taught by this method continue their high school education or go to professional schools. The class of Mr. Bogomilov started its 5th grade with an average rate of 2.20 (the lowest rate being 2.00) and as a result of the different approach, their average rate in the 7th grade was 5,38 (the highest rate being 6,00). As a result of the active work with parents, the improved quality and methods of teaching, school leaving was drastically reduced. The school also hired a Roma mediator and with her help 8 students returned to school.

Challenges

Challenges are related to keeping all the children in school and securing their continued education. In the pilot practice described above, only 24 children were taught by these methods. There is a need to engage the rest of the students and their parents in regular school attendance and to train all 20 teachers to use these approaches. However, MES approved a grant for the school teachers to attend the Summer Academy of *Teach for All* starting in September, 2019. In addition, the enrolment of more than 90 parents in individual programmes to complete their primary school is definitely a great success and a result of the innovations. This work needs to still be multiplied in other schools.

Sustainability

MES should continue its support for such trainings and introducing such new methods and approaches in many other schools in the country where disadvantaged students study. With the MES EU OP funds for the new programming period for 2020 – 2027, such programmes should definitely have a chance to be multiplied.

Lessons Learned

The above methods and approaches have been already tested and approved in more than 50 countries around the world. In Bulgaria the above programme, also proved great results. The MES needs to use this approach for its achievement of a mental shift in the pedagogical process whereby students are the key focus and teachers are guides who support students' development. Engagement of parents in education should be carried out not just by educational mediators and social workers but also by teachers and school directors. The quality of teaching and the adapting of the educational process require a serious reform and mentality shift among Bulgarian teachers.

Multiplication of the practice

The existing instructional resources of the Foundation *Teach for Bulgaria* and the adapted to Bulgaria methods of *Teach for All* are ready to be used for the multiplication of this excellent innovation for Bulgarian vulnerable schools. More funding should be channelled for training and mentoring of teachers and more schools should be exposed to a different type of thinking and pedagogy. It is the responsibility of MES to fund and promote such programmes that lead to shifts and change in the oftentimes dated pedagogy in Bulgaria.

Policy Recommendations

Teach for All methods could become part of the regular requirements for accreditation and certification of teachers. For that purpose it needs to be accredited and adopted by the MES. A possible MES-driven ToT using these methods could also be developed.

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4. The Case of *Nadezhda* Neighbourhood – Access to Education and Healthcare in Sliven

Background

This case of the *Nadezhda* multifunctional building, ensuring education and health access to the Roma community in Sliven is part of the Swiss Bulgarian Programme on *Social Inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable group, ZOV*. An integrated approach, secured sustainability and working with and through central and local institutions are the main principles of ZOV Programme. ZOV activities are pragmatic and customized, responding to specific needs of Roma and other vulnerable groups, with the understanding that education and health are the two major pillars of social inclusion. ZOV is implemented in 6 large municipal centers: Burgas, Montana, Ruse, Sliven, Plovdiv and Shumen, with the main ambition to improve access of Roma and other vulnerable groups to good quality education in kindergarten and primary schools, as well as to good quality primary healthcare, reproductive, maternal and child health services. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) is the major partner from the Bulgarian side; the Ministries of Education and Health are also contributing to ZOV. The total amount of the Programme is 13, 750, 450 leva, of which 11, 764, 000 leva is the Swiss support.

The Roma community in *Nadezhda*, with more than 25,000 Roma, is socially isolated and faces serious problems: bad quality housing, high rates of unemployment, lack of access to quality health, education and social services. 2, 305 is the total number of children in *Nadezhda*, born between 2011 and 2018, according to official data. According to local mapping, the children in *Nadezhda* under the age of 18 are about twice as much - 5,000. According to the same data, one half of women in *Nadezhda*, who visited a gynaecologist, have a gynaecological problem (2017). Only 40% of Roma women are aware of the right to a free medical checkup which is valid also for uninsured women - during the period of their pregnancy. 33 % of the respondents (141) are uninsured, which means 5,000 of the 12,000 inhabitants in *Nadezhda* have no insurance.

Nadezhda neighbourhood never had access to its own nursery and kindergarten, and medical services there are also non-existent. There is hardly any space available for cultural activities in the community. ZOV programme provided for the first time, a possibility for Roma citizens to have access to primary healthcare and early education by building a complex hosting a nursery, kindergarten, health and cultural centers, hiring mediators and teachers, supporting screenings and health awareness events on reproductive health and family planning.

Case Description

Located near the Municipal Center for Administrative Services in *Nadezhda*, the modern building is closely accessible to the whole community. It is the first of its kind facility with integrated services for health, education and culture for Roma. In addition to the nursery and the kindergarten, the new building hosts a Health Center with three medical offices, as well as a Centre for Culture and Education, so far lacking in the neighborhood. Being one of a kind, this multi-purpose complex is very important for the ongoing integration and inclusion efforts of Sliven Municipality. The project's budget amounts to 2, 791, 985 leva (1, 642, 344), of which 85% is the Swiss contribution (CHF 1, 395, 993) and the rest is national co-financing. The budget for the construction of the Complex amounts to nearly 1, 5 million leva, of which 10 % is the contribution of Sliven Municipality.

The complex officially opened doors on November, 22, 2018. The capacity of the educational facility is for 30 kids (0-2) - two nursery groups, and 120 children (3-6 years) - 4 kindergarten groups. The facility has playrooms and sleeping rooms, a music hall and a gym, halls for parents' meetings and events and festivities. As the new facility in *Nadezhda* is municipal, the municipality is responsible for applying the regular procedures for selecting children to be enrolled in the nursery and the

kindergarten. It has attempted to enrol the neediest children, striking a balance between less and most needy parents. In the fall of 2018, more than 100 children were enrolled and the number is expected to gradually increase to 150, its full capacity. The municipality appointed a new Director who in turn has appointed its new staff - 4 pedagogical and 4 support professionals.

The Healthcare Center in the new multifunctional building hosts 3 medical offices and 4 doctors – a gynaecologist, a paediatrician and 2 general practitioners. 4 health mediators are also involved at the Center. Since the project's start in 2015, representatives of the local branch of the French "Doctors of the World" Association and the "Roma Health" Foundation are actively working in Sliven. The two organizations and their mediators are supported by ZOV in their work with uninsured and pregnant Roma women, as well as in their prevention activities on early marriages and pregnancies. Nearly 1500 people from *Nadezhda* visited the Information Center of "Doctors of the World" to attend discussions on family planning and reproductive health. More than 4,000 individual consultations on this topic were provided and 300 gynaecological exams were carried out since the start of the project. A team of health mediators and a nurse is engaged in improving awareness on family planning. Round tables on the topics of risky behaviour, family planning and unwanted pregnancy with the participation of religious leaders and Roma community leaders from the neighbourhood are regularly held. The access to free contraception (pills, coils, condoms) will help women avoid unwanted pregnancies and plan their families.

In the new Culture center, Bulgarian language classes and other catch up classes are carried out by a newly appointed extra-curricular teacher. These classes are for students from 1-6th grades and aim at compensational work to support them catch up on their schooling in the nearby schools, which do not provide these services. The plans for the cultural centre are to develop a regular schedule of activities for culture events and meetings with Roma parents to motivate them to send their kids to school regularly.

Key Positive Achievements

- ✓ The integrated approach – educational and health infrastructure, education and health measures for children and parents, engaging health and educational mediators
- ✓ Working through the main local institution which guarantees the easy passing of the facilities onto delegated budgets
- ✓ Building capacities of the municipal team, and the newly hired teachers and school director

Key Challenges

- ✓ Rather long time spend on municipal procurement and construction work vis-à-vis the soft educational and health measures; not enough time left to develop the soft measures
- ✓ Prolonged administrative procedures to register the educational, healthcare and culture centres
- ✓ Lack of capacities of Sliven municipality to manage large scale international programmes
- ✓ Lack of precise data on Roma which precludes the precise assessment of needs

Sustainability

- ✓ The educational facility will be further funded by a state delegated budget and by additional national budget provided to vulnerable schools.
- ✓ The medical screenings and check-ups will be funded through the national insurance fund, and a small fund on family planning for the uninsured Roma.

Lessons Learned

- ✓ Any kind of donor programme should pay special attention to building local capacities at all levels: municipal, NGOs, mediation, social service workers before they enter into the project implementation phase.

- ✓ More time should be allocated to programmes involving infrastructure. Projects should stretch to at least 6 years.
- ✓ Municipalities should collect data on Roma and use it for programme needs assessments to create viable and realistic projects
- ✓ More sensitivity to Roma should be nurtured at municipal levels
- ✓ Roma should be directly engaged in the project at the very start
- ✓ Central authorities should actively participate in understanding local needs
- ✓ Monitoring should not have a penalty function, it should be adjusted to the capacities of local institutions and should support and nurture the development of their skills.

Multiplication of the Practice

This practice is ready to be multiplied in many other big urban ghettos where access to education and medical facilities is non-existent within the communities. It should be noted that provision of services in the communities should not be seen as a segregation effort – rather this is access to ONLY primary schooling and to ONLY primary healthcare. Municipalities are equipped to carry on such programmes based on this model.

Policy Recommendations

The Ministries of Education and of Health should allocate funds under their operational programmes for the multiplication of the integrated approach and should learn from the lessons of the Swiss Programme, ZOV.

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5. Integrating Education, Health, and Infrastructure to Secure Better Living Conditions for Roma – the Case of *Pobeda* Neighborhood Burgas

Background

The Swiss-Bulgarian integrated project for *Social Inclusion of Roma and Other Vulnerable Groups* in Burgas (part of the Swiss-Bulgarian ZOV programme) focuses on improving living conditions of Roma and other vulnerable groups from Burgas (*Pobeda* neighbourhood), and the neighboring Sredets and Malko Tarnovo by providing easier access to better quality educational and health services. The overall budget of the programme is CHF 1'537'379 or 2 613 544 BGN. According to the last census of 2011, Roma residents in the three municipalities were 6363 but their actual number is much larger, amounting to at least 30,000, according to the estimates of experts and NGOs. The major issues of local Roma are: early marriages and dropping out of the educational system; deficiency of suitably trained specialists to work with Roma parents to keep their children in school; extracurricular activities are carried out as part of projects and are discontinued with the closing of projects. Unemployment in *Pobeda* is estimated at around 90%. In all of *Pobeda*, there is only one GP who sees her patients twice a week. A large number of pregnant Roma women are below legal age and do not see the doctor for maternity checkups. *Pobeda* has only one primary school *Hristo Botev* (grades 1-8) with 700 pupils, of whom 75% are Roma. Going to school is important for those

students, as it is their only chance to learn Bulgarian and get some basic education. No kindergarten or pre-school existed in *Pobeda* till 2015 and the school also did not have sufficient capacity to organize full-day activities for all pupils. The school gym has been closed since 1997/1998 school year; there was no sufficient space to host parents' meetings, and cultural events. Many children (about 20%) did not attend classes regularly and 8 – 10% drop out after the 4th grade.

Case Description

The ZOV project focused its efforts on building an additional to the *Hristo Botev* school facility for 150 children aged 5-6 and 40 children from the first school grades (from 1st to 4th), altogether 200 new students and the provision of access to good quality schooling and basic healthcare for its children. In addition, these children and their parents needed support with regular attendance and the *Roma Union* NGO working in *Pobeda* provided education and health mediation. Some of the children from the new facility also had access to new afterschool classes in the adjacent Community Center which was partially repaired by ZOV project. As a result, the school reports 100% attendance after 2015.

Under the programme a large number of innovative educational and pedagogical methods were used:

- ✓ Drafting of individual programmes for personal development of the children in preschool age;
- ✓ Development of parenting skills and counselling of parents, whose children attend kindergarten by setting up „Active Parents“ clubs in the School.
- ✓ Provision of additional classes in all-day groups, extracurricular education and interest-oriented groups as well as individual and group work for pupils in grades 1-4;
- ✓ Introducing interactive boards in all pre-school classes and improving the interactive teaching
- ✓ Better preparation in computer literacy and foreign languages in pre-school and primary school classes
- ✓ Training of teachers on new methods of teaching: team work, using game methods, interactive techniques, project development tools, computer-based teaching, etc.

Results of the school work between 2016- 2018:

- ✓ 569 new children aged 3-6 were engaged educational activities (mainly additional BG language)
- ✓ 372 new students in grades 1-4 were engaged in educational activities (mainly additional BG language)
- ✓ 1268 students aged 5-10 participated in cult./sport events
- ✓ 1911 students took part in out-of- school activities
- ✓ 2927 meetings and consultations were carried out with parents to motivate them
- ✓ 22 new interest clubs were created for the students aged 5-14 on civic education, health education, ecology, applied arts, theater and sports.
- ✓ A psychologist, a nurse and a speech therapist were hired and will continue to work in the school
- ✓ Five new teachers were hired for teaching BG and some other extracurricular classes.

Lessons learned by the school

- ✓ Teachers focused on children and their training and good health and not on administration
- ✓ The innovative methods taught during teacher trainings could be applied immediately in class
- ✓ Team work among teachers is key for efficiency and provision of good quality teaching
- ✓ Project work allows you to think out of the box and assess your problem areas and improve

Challenges

- ✓ The need for kindergarten and for primary school facilities is greater than the provided one under ZOV; a new kindergarten needs to be built there; as well as the primary school *Hristo Botev* could be expanded to become a high school and its class capacities could be enlarged to host more children
- ✓ The School Director is not willing to hire Roma mediators, claiming that teachers can do the work as well, but it seems that mediation entails more efforts and division of roles. So, it could be advisable to hire mediators.
- ✓ Some difficulties in getting the needed feedback from parents and difficulties in collecting them for school meetings

Sustainability

The additional preschool facility and its teaching staff and activities set up under ZOV are already sustained by delegated budgets and by the additional national funds for vulnerable schools. The BG language teaching and most of the extracurricular classes will also be sustained. Health mediators are now hired on health delegated budgets and the educational mediators could be hired by other donors' programmes when they become available.

Lessons Learned

These relate mostly to the factors of success, which indeed made possible the setting up of this practice:

- ✓ Clear understanding of the needs of the *Pobeda* children by the school and Burgas Municipality and a clear vision of what needs to be done
- ✓ Compared to other locations, clearer assessment of local data by the school and the municipality
- ✓ Good communication, support and team work between municipal team and the school, community center and *Roma Union* in *Pobeda*
- ✓ Willingness for change and success and good mobilization of all partners
- ✓ Efficiency with procurement and construction procedures which allowed for enough time to complete the educational activities
- ✓ Excellent human capacities in place of school director, teachers and mediators as well as the municipal team
- ✓ Supportive supervisory work all along the project
- ✓ Flexibility and adjustment to the dynamics of the local needs demonstrated by the Swiss programme
- ✓ Strategies and planning of activities should be done by all stakeholders – school, municipality, parents, mediators and NGOs – and much in advance to allow for a careful consideration of all risks and challenges.

Multiplication of the Practice

The practice is ready for multiplication anywhere in large urban ghettos where a mix of Roma and Turks reside and where a new educational facility is needed to provide access to kindergarten and primary school education. All donors and EU OPs could learn from the programme's good results and practices.

Policy Recommendations

The MES could upscale the practice and fund it through its national and EC OP programmes as well as through its Norway grant mechanism.

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CHAPTER 4: GOOD PRACTICES FROM SPAIN

1. I LEARN TO READ IN A FUN WAY

Background

San Carlos Infant and Primary School is located in Villaverde Alto, south of Madrid and provides schooling for a total of 420 children from 3 to 12 years of age from more than 25 different nationalities (especially from Morocco, Eastern Europe and South America). The socio-economic level of families is low and so is their involvement in the education of their children. The increase in the number of immigrant students, ethnic minorities and families with difficulties of socio-cultural integration, causes great limitations in reading and writing and poor results in all subjects of the curriculum.

Case description

The difficulty of being able to attend to these students individually in the process of initiation to reading, forces us to look for other alternatives. We try to resolve this difficulty with double sessions and reinforcement of reading-writing, but when it comes to a large number of students, the real time of work with each of them continues to be very limited in each class session. Our practice tries to reproduce the learning system of reading in Spanish, based on syllabic and repetitive learning, using digital devices (in our case personal computers) simultaneously with several students, increasing the effective working time with each student. The mechanical process of pointing to a syllable and pronouncing it so that the student repeats it is carried out through videos, where each syllable of the student's reading card is successively illuminated, with the sound of the teacher's voice pronouncing each syllable. These videos include fun animations to motivate students and avoid loss of attention. At the end of the videos there is an evaluation test that, in a playful way, allows student to see what s/he has really learned, being able to see results, mistakes and successes, repeat the test or compare them with other students, at the same, a copy of his results reaches the teacher's e-mail. In this good educational practice, **the key competences** according to the European Framework for lifelong learning are the following:

- ✓ Competence in Linguistic Communication (C1)
- ✓ Digital Competence (C3)
- ✓ Learning to learn (C4)

The main pedagogical goals pursued:

- ✓ To reach a reading level in new students that allows them to have normal access to the minimum contents of all areas of curriculum, optimizing work time in the reading support sessions.
- ✓ To achieve a high level of motivation and interest in reading.
- ✓ To increase their skills in the use of computers and digital devices.
- ✓ To favour their autonomy in carrying out small self-learning tasks.

This innovative activity was applied with all students from 6-7 years old, in the following way:

*After the evaluation of the reading level of each student by his tutor, it is determined which are the students with greater difficulties in reading-writing.

*Groups of students with similar levels of reader-writing are created, of up to 12 students belonging to the two first-year classrooms with, which is the number of personal computers available in the computer room. each student works individually in the computer room, with his personal computer and headphones, watching several videos and repeating what he hears, so that the teacher can distribute his attention to several students, supervising their activity and helping those who need it. In a traditional process, the specific reading time is reduced to the minutes each student spends reading with the teacher, which in the case of number groups is very scarce since the teacher must distribute his time to read with one student at a time, while the rest carry out other tasks.

*Email accounts are created for each student associated to the Center to facilitate the processes of access to the activities and enable a better evaluation of results.

*These groups leave their classroom with the reading support teacher, up to three hours a week, to carry out the reading activity in the computer room.

*Based on the results obtained, the composition of the reading groups is modified, combining its members, including new students with difficulties or ceasing to carry out the activity with those students who reach a good level of reading and writing and can work with their class group.

*At the end of the videos, each student takes an evaluation test on the Quizziz page. He identifies himself with the name of his user account, and begins to perform the test, being able to check directly on his screen his score after each question and his position with respect to the other students. At the end of the test students see a summary of their mistakes and successes and the possibility of repeating the test, while results are automatically sent to the account of the teacher who can download them in an Excel sheet.

The main indicators or strengths covered by the innovative practice presented are as follows:

- ✓ This is an educational innovation to adapt the curriculum of students with reading and writing difficulties belonging mainly to immigrant families and ethnic minorities. However, the technique can also be applied to other subjects that require individualized repetition of content by the student (such as learning multiplication tables).
- ✓ It can be used for extracurricular learning, that is, parents can help their children at home and supervise their learning in a simple way.

Among the results obtained, it is worth highlighting:

*Direct observation and individual reading with students shows a marked improvement in reading at the mechanical level. The realization of association tests of images and texts and questions asked to the student on the read texts shows important progress in his reading comprehension. All this has made it possible to readjust the reading support groups in the second trimester in order to develop other types of tasks in more advanced groups.

*The novelty of the work with the computer and the realization of test online have obtained an important motivation and interest of the student towards the reading. The realization of groups outside the class group to work with the students is not always welcomed by the students, in this case all students have participated with satisfaction. As progress has been made this interest has been observed not only in this work but in the work with the traditional primer.

*Through the activity of access to the personal computer, search for reading videos, access to self-assessment tests, modifications of image size or volume in the videos, repetition of videos, etc. an improvement in the skill in the use of the computer has been achieved.

*In the process of developing the activity (moving to the computer room, individual work of the student, care and order of the material, remembering activities and tasks, etc.) has achieved a significant autonomy of the student and responsibility for their own work that can be extrapolated to other skills and other learning processes.

*In spite of being an individual activity, the fact that it is carried out outside the classroom and its playful character favours the interaction of all the students during the displacements and in certain moments of the task, enriching and improving their personal relations.

Challenges

The main challenge of the educational practice presented is a rapid literacy of all students so that they can participate with all the activities of their group, without the difficulties in reading and writing can limit their academic progress and, above all, do not interfere in the relations that can be established with their classmates, being able to participate actively in any group task. The optimisation of work time, the ease of supervising the individual work of each student and the motivation of the students in multimedia work are the most relevant aspects of this practice, and the teachers in charge of carrying out the activity should review the progress and difficulties observed in adapting reading tasks to the level of students and correcting any problems detected.

The school should encourage participation of families since they can facilitate the work of students outside the school with the viewing and reading of videos, either online from the school page or as materials downloaded on any computer or mobile device, which significantly accelerates the progress of students and allows them to do school activities at home and with their parents in a playful way. Progress in reading is a fundamental element in primary education and should be based on an optimization of work time and motivation of the student, generate the desire to read and give the time to do so. A much better use of class time is achieved than can be obtained in a traditional class, regardless of the number of students in the group.

This practice produces a significant progress with respect to previous courses in which a traditional method of working in small groups was used, allowing these students to access another type of more advanced group work months in advance. The motivation of the students is much higher than that achieved in a traditional process. The use of digital media and the possibility of being the person who leads the activity increase their interest in work. The use of tests, so visually attractive to the student, adds an extra point of motivation in the desire to perform the task as well as possible. Being an individual and curricular activity, not of a social nature and coexistence, the form of working in a small group generates the relationship of the students sharing their progress and collaborating among them. The possibility of extending this work of reading to the hours outside the school, in a very simple way and with the collaboration of the families, increases the positive results and is oriented to the promotion of the participation of the families in the life of the Center.

Sustainability

The good practice presented is sustainable over time. The possibility of including these videos in the school's website and blog is a cheaper means of access to reading than the acquisition of complementary material, both for the school and for families. The creation of the material implies a greater time of dedication of the teaching staff and it's necessary a certain level of mastery of image and video editors, but with a simple orientation and some training to the responsible teachers, in the schedule specifically designed for it, these materials can be designed without great difficulties, being able to be used later during many years.

Multiplication of the practice

The practice presented "I learn in a fun way" can be used in any school in our environment to compensate for the difficulties in reading and writing students of any educational level without greater difficulty than the direct download of videos to proceed to their viewing, the provision of email accounts associated with each student to perform the tasks of monitoring and evaluating the

work and progress of the student, and minimal knowledge of image editing and video to design new materials.

The possibility of applying this practice in other contexts is conditioned by the characteristics of the language. Spanish is a language where each syllable has the same pronunciation independently of the previous and subsequent syllables, which motivates the learning to be syllabic and repetitive. In other languages it would be necessary to evaluate their characteristics and their way of learning in order to assess whether the exact repetition of this model is feasible or whether it is necessary to carry out this technique with complete sentences. From here it is a perfectly feasible process both in other contexts that simply have the digital resources described above. And also useful for other contents, in which, with certain modifications, we are already working such as calligraphy, orthography and initiation to calculation.

Policy recommendations

It is important to look for innovative methods to solve some of the important problems we encounter in schools. It is necessary to facilitate innovation projects that include information and communication technologies in an effective and motivating way and that are simple for teachers. It is necessary to promote the training of teachers in the creation of activities of this type, without involving large investments of time and resources.

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2. “LOVE AND MUSIC FOR JOINING CULTURES” – EMOTIONS AND FRIENDSHIP AS A MEETING AND APPROACH BETWEEN CULTURES

Background

At infant age, children from different cultures are integrated into the school. At *San Carlos* School, there is a great diversity of nationalities - some of them are vulnerable groups. It is necessary to create a warm atmosphere of respect and friendship so that there is cohesion among all of them, thus avoiding conflicts due to diverse cultures. There are difficulties, especially in higher grades for these reasons, so it is necessary to begin to place students of different ethnicities in common activities and learning. For these reasons, this practice consists of carrying out an activity based on movement, and contact with peers. It is about using these elements to work out emotions, friendship, to meet each other, to start interacting and to break down cultural and linguistic barriers, creating a warm and affectionate atmosphere. In addition, due to the problems that exist at higher levels, it is also necessary to carry out this type of activities to prevent discrimination, violence and inequality.

The early years are basic, because it is then that a child really begins to learn the most important values, to overcome any kind of isolation or discrimination on ethnic grounds. It is when values such as respect, love, affection or friendship begin to be absorbed and put into practice. It was detected in higher levels confrontations between students of different ethnicities; therefore, the measure was taken to increase in lower levels the deeper work of tolerance, friendship, respect and rapprochement between peers. This is how equality is achieved, together with all these values, the basis for positive coexistence. This is how the

activity based on the handling of emotions, friendship and rapprochement through music and movement was born.

Case Description

The practice consists of playing music and letting the children dance freely through the classroom space. The teacher stops the music at a certain moment and shows a pictogram in which they indicate an action they must do with a partner. These actions can be: give a hug, shake hands, shake hands, shake hands, kiss, sit together or lie down together. Once the action is done, the music plays again and the children continue dancing through the space until the teacher stops the music again and again shows another pictogram with another action. Actually, this concrete practice is only an appropriate example for the early childhood stage; any activity based on these principles for any other age would also be valid. For example, in more advanced courses it is a good idea to play a game of greeting every morning, with children choosing how to greet the fellow protagonist of the day: shaking hands, giving a hug or banging their fist.

In this good educational practice, **the key competences** according to the European framework for lifelong learning are the following:

- ✓ Competence in Linguistic Communication (C1)
- ✓ Learning to learn (C4)
- ✓ Social and civic competencies (C5)
- ✓ Consciousness and cultural expressions (C7)

The key principles of this method are: the work of friendship, tolerance, respect and equality among children.

The goals of this approach are:

- ✓ To create a good climate of coexistence between students of different ethnicities.
- ✓ Prevent future difficulties that may arise related to coexistence at later age levels.
- ✓ Overcoming cultural and language barriers through musical activity.
- ✓ To use music, movement and contact as a means of union between students.

The activity takes place in the classroom. It is situated in one of the own areas in which Infant Education is situated, the area of Knowledge of the environment. This area refers to the knowledge that children acquire in their contact with the environment and with the basic **social groups** where they relate or belong. This area includes the work of school life, which involves the establishment of broader experiences, interpersonal relationships, generating links and developing new behaviors and emotions that constitute the basis of their socialization. This innovative activity has been applied with infant students; however, the idea is that in the future it will be carried out with all pupils of the school, from 3 to 12, in the following way:

* A set of organisational and **curricular actions** will be designed in an **innovative way**, adapting the curriculum and the teaching-learning process to the cultural diversity existing in our centre.

* Groups of four teachers with similar age students decide, organize and set in motion the contents and activities that will be carried out in the classroom.

* The preschool and primary tutors are in charge of making all the preparations in the classroom for the different activities.

* The director supervises and coordinates all the educational agents and the activities carried out.

* This activity will take place throughout the academic year, from two to three times a week. It is a routine with a duration of 10 to 15 minutes that can be done at any time of the day. In addition to the curricular innovation involved in carrying out these activities in a regulated manner, it also has the advantage of **improving the qualification of the teaching staff** in pedagogical and psychological techniques to be applied in the classroom, which led to a considerable improvement in relations between students and with teachers.

Results achieved

This activity is very motivating for students. The first time it was a success because they found it so much fun. The children enjoy music and also love feeling loved by their classmates. Right after the activity I remember perfectly how I was surprised by a girl who had never related too much with the rest of the classmates saying with a smile: "This girl is my friend". In general, all children were thrilled and the atmosphere of the class was loving and pleasant. The best part about this is that this was the result only after the first time, but when it became a routine, one could imagine the benefits it can bring. The children are looking forward to the activity and little by little the classroom atmosphere is getting better. The students, even when they are three years old, already establish bonds of friendship and, moreover, they do not question whether or not someone is their friend due to ethnic differences.

But **the main result** is that coexistence has improved, the students have joined as equal people, and the classroom environment is very positive.

Challenges

The main challenge was to reduce conflicts between different ethnic groups and to emphasize the cultural richness of our students, to put into practice and defend the values reflected in the Educational Project of the Center, such as equality, solidarity, respect for others, active listening, the value of friendship, etc. As far as the relationship with **families** is concerned, this must be continuously strengthened in order to increase their interest and participation in school life.

Sustainability

This practice does not require a large amount of material resources, so it is sustainable over time. It requires the will of the teacher and the carrying out of the activity in a routine way. It is important to emphasize that it must be included in the Annual General Programming, and within this, the annual objectives must be formulated for the improvement of the coexistence and the preservation and promotion of the cultural wealth that characterizes our center.

Lessons Learned

It is necessary to lay the foundations and work on values of friendship, tolerance and respect from an early age. It is important to use this approach to achieve a mental change in the pedagogical process in which the students are the main ones and the teachers are guides who support the development of the students.

Multiplication of the practice

Educational practices aimed at fostering interculturality should be taken into account in any educational institution. It can also be applied to any age, since at all ages it is essential to work on these aspects, as they are especially important for living in a diverse society. For example, in **extra-curricular classes**, like sports, arts or different games. This activity also has an impact at a **social level**, as it does not only cover the educational field. It creates a foundation of friendship and respect with peers, regardless of their ethnicity, what it teaches for life. Outside the school children will act in the same way.

Policy Recommendations

In terms of education policy, more should be invested in emotional education and included more prominently in the curriculum. In this way, teachers have it more in mind and more in their classrooms. This aspect is included but insufficiently. More emphasis should also be placed on how to evaluate it as an essential part of the curriculum.

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3. AN INTERCULTURAL RADIO PROGRAMME

Background

In this practice, we are focusing on an heterogeneous group of fifth grade students in which 17 pupils were born in 2008 and 8 pupils repeated a grade once throughout their school years, so they were born one year earlier (2007). Therefore, their ages are between 10 and 11 years old. The group consists of 11 girls and 14 boys. One of the girls is a Roma student, another is of Romanian origin, another of Chinese origin, two Ecuatorians, another from the Congo, another from the Dominican Republic, seven Moroccan children and the remaining 11 children are Spanish. Therefore, we find a great cultural variety within the classroom. The socio-economic and cultural level of the families is medium-low, and there are even families that have difficulties with Spanish language.

Case description

CEIP *San Carlos* received a proposal from a non-profit association dedicated to the recording of radio programmes in the neighbourhood of Villaverde, in Madrid. This proposal consisted of the preparation (with the tutor) and later elaboration of a radio programme (with the radio experts) by twenty-five students from the centre who were responsible for choosing the main topic they were going to work on. **The key principles of this practice** consist of children being in the centre of the teaching and learning process, performing as active participants of their own learning, while building their knowledge in a meaningful and constructive way. It is based on learning by projects, an innovative methodology that schools should support.

In this good educational practice, the key competences according to the European framework for lifelong learning are the following ones:

- Competence in Linguistic Communication (C1).
- Learning to Learn (C4).
- Social and Civic Competences (C5).
- Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurial Spirit (C6).
- Awareness and Cultural Expressions (C7).

The goals of this practice are:

- Valuating the cultural diversity in the classroom.
- Learning aspects of different cultures (in our specific case, about the Arabic culture).
- Knowing the radio techniques.
- Making a radio programme about one of the most prevalent ethnicities in our group: the Arabic one.

The group's tutor, Sandra Cañibano Martínez, worked with the twenty-five students through several preparation sessions prior to the final recording of the radio programme. Also, **two professional journalists**, speakers of a local radio program, belonging to a non-profit association that records radio programmes concerning the neighborhood of Villaverde, in Madrid, worked with the students throughout the final radio recording session.

This innovative activity has been applied with 25 fifth-graders during the first term of the 2018-2019 school year. The recording of the radio programme was on November 7th, 2018 in the music room and in the school library, respectively. The evaluation was carried out in the following day in the classroom with the whole group-class. The steps that were followed are explained below.

- CEIP San Carlos received a proposal that consisted of the preparation (with the tutor) and later elaboration of a radio programme (with the radio experts) by twenty-five students from the centre that are in their 5th year of Primary Education. The centre received an email in which the non-profit association offered its services to all the schools in Villaverde. The Head of Studies organised a meeting with the 5th grade teacher and she gave a positive response. After this first contact, the date on which the programme was to be recorded was chosen and a meeting was arranged with the two people in charge of the programme so that they could explain the functioning of the activity to the school, as well as to elaborate a basic working plan.
- Once the bases had been established by the professionals involved, the preparation phase began, which lasted five 45-minute sessions.
 - The plan was discussed with the students and a survey was carried out to find out what they wanted to talk about on the radio. Of all the themes proposed (media, news, environment and recycling, orchard and urban plantation, inclusive sports, musical creativity, healthy habits, sexuality, teamwork and coexistence, prevention of drug consumption, xenophobia, bullying, gender equality and multiculturalism), the one chosen was, unanimously, multiculturalism.
 - In order to involve the families, the children were asked to ask in their homes about surprising facts about the culture to which they belong, traditions and other information they considered relevant.
 - Afterwards, their findings were shared and they chose the culture with the most striking data, which was the Arabic one in this specific case.
 - Then, a brainstorming was made to know the general structure of the programme. The selected structure consisted of interviews, a song and a poem made by the students themselves.
 - The organisation of the programme went on: selection of opening and closing songs, presenters, couples for interviews (an Arab child with one from another culture, if possible) and topics (food, weddings, births, tea, Ramadan, parties and Henna tatooes). Finally, dialogues and rehearsals had to be prepared.
- The implementation phase lasted an hour and a half, and they recorded the programme after testing and learning about the internal features of a radio programme: gestures, specific language and respecting silence and turn of word.
- Finally, the evaluation was carried out in the classroom with the students. The most significant aspects were discussed in the classroom orally. Likewise, the students' own experience on the radio was reflected in personal essays. Besides, the activity was evaluated in the centre's annual report at the end of the school year 2018-2019 (in June). In the same way, the association has been contacted by e-mail to comment on the teacher's and students' satisfaction, and an *in situ* evaluation was carried out, assessing from 1 to 5 aspects such as the organisation, viability and satisfaction of the teaching staff and students with the activity.

The main indicators or strengths covered by the innovative practice presented are as follows:

- **The greatest part of this practice is the participation and representation of migrants, making them be even more integrated.** Children had to prepare the sessions on their own, through group or pair work, with the supervision of the teacher. As a result of this work in small groups, the relationship amongst them all improved a lot, spending more time together in the playground, playing different games together.
- **Along with this practice, parents got more involved in the teaching and learning process of their children** – They came to the classroom to explain how Henna tattoos work or how tea should be made. Families are also active participants in celebrating social events and other cultural festivals that are organized in the school.
- **Besides, the school counts on a supportive environment**, in this case represented by a local radio programme that initiated the engagement for this good practice.

Among the **results obtained**, the following ones should be underlined:

- Increased students' motivation. This has been measured when writing about their impressions on the radio. The impact was so great that all the students used positive words and good feelings in all the essays. In addition, the opinions expressed orally in the subsequent sharing were very good, always highlighting the feelings of surprise and better knowledge of this culture so numerous in our classroom.
- The interest for the Arab culture was great, and it remains in time. On one occasion there has been a thematic party in class around the tradition of drinking tea with Arab sweets and has been a success, asking the children about other related habits, such as listening to Arabic music while interacting. Therefore, prior knowledge is linked to new learning and this leads to improved interpersonal relationships, as well as greater self-confidence and security in children of Arab origin.
- Through this practice, not only have families been contacted to be informed about the complementary activity their children were going to do, but they have also been involved in telling anecdotes, traditions and striking facts about their own culture. In this way, they have felt that they were part of the classroom and that their costumes have been everyone else's, at least for a few days.
- Relations between the school and its surroundings have become closer, since a non-profit association has been contacted from the centre.

Challenges

Challenges are related to keeping all the children engaged with their education, while learning from other cultures – or their own ones. However, we need to face the lack of time to comply with the current Spanish curriculum, given that the preparation phase takes time and the involvement of the students must be complete. Besides, the support of the families is needed. So, the richness that is provided with the multiculturalism in the school should be promoted amongst the whole education community. Therefore, this practice should be carried out in other schools worldwide.

Sustainability

The sustainability and relevance of this good practice are evident, since the cost to obtain the final product is reduced to a minimum: all the means used are technological (microphones, sound table and laptops) and human (two radio broadcasters with journalism training). The costs, in this specific case, were null, due to the fact that the collaboration was made with a non-profit association, so that the personal resources were lent provided for free?, as well as the materials. We can also highlight the multiple advantages that this practice has meant for students, ranging from the contextualization of learning in a feasible situation in real life, through the development of language,

both oral and written, to something very important for us: the knowledge, acceptance and admiration of other cultures with which we coexist.

Lessons Learned

This practice responds to the well-known and disseminated 'project-based learning', as well as to the education in values, in which the European Union is very conscious. As it has been observed through the implementation of this practice, the results obtained are very satisfactory, therefore, it should be considered in other schools, since it makes students, families, teachers and everyone else that concerns the educational community, involved in school life.

Multiplication of the practice

This practice is easily replicable in any context of similar characteristics, both Spanish and foreign, given the wide possibilities that the new technologies offer us. If you do not have a non-profit association that is expressly dedicated to recording radio programmes, the programme could also be recorded with an application available on mobile phones (tape recorder) and edited with *Audacity* (available at <https://www.audacityteam.org/>), for example, since it is one of the most intuitive and easy to use programmes to work with pieces of audio.

Policy Recommendations

On the one hand, this practice should be part of the centre's Annual General Programme, as it has to be planned as a complementary activity. On the other hand, it is carried out within the Tutorial Action Plan, as it is a group activity that improves the classroom climate and seeks the inclusion of all cultures in the group-class. For these reasons, both the management team and the teaching staff should be properly informed and committed to the practice. Besides, the entire educational community: students, parents and even the city council and other organizations of the school environment should be informed in order to multiply forces and implement practices similar to this one in other schools as curricular or extracurricular activities.

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4. THE SCHOOL YARD AS A CULTURAL MEETING - DESIGNING A SPACE FOR INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTER

Background

The San Carlos Infant and Primary School is located in Villaverde Alto, south of Madrid and provides schooling for a total of 420 children from 3 to 12 years of age from more than 25 different nationalities (especially from Morocco, Eastern Europe and South America). The socio-economic level of the families is low and so is their involvement in the education of their children. One of the biggest problems facing the centre is the limited space available in its different facilities, especially in the schoolyard, where more than 400 pupils have to play daily in a space that does not exceed 400 square metres.

Case Description

The situation described above led to continuous confrontations between the children and a serious deterioration of coexistence, which led to the need to adopt organizational and curricular measures

of the Centre as a good educational practice. These measures are aimed at improving the recreational possibilities of the students not only in the playtime in the schoolyard, but also in physical education classes, in the cultural activities carried out at the Centre and even outside the school grounds. The first measure implemented was going two to three playground shifts as a measure aimed at reducing one hundred students in the second cycle shift (third, fourth and fifth) and fifty students in the children's shift (three, four and five years), which has led to a better socialization of students and coexistence in general.

In addition, a recreation protocol has been created to organize the different games and activities carried out in the courtyard to maximize the recreational possibilities of a small enclosure. Also, in the physical education sessions a manual called "Games of the World" has been created with the favorite games that are made created? in the different countries of our students. This organizational measure has been accompanied by other curricular measures that promote coexistence and knowledge and respect for the different cultures of the students in our Centre.

- Organisational measure: the recreation protocol was created at the beginning of the school year coinciding with the increase from two to three playgrounds in the Centre.
- The cultural and educational measures are implemented in the different activities on interculturality in the three main celebrations of the school:
 - Peace Day: with songs of different countries, recital of poems and games.
 - Carnival Day: parade of costumes from the countries of the world.
 - Book Day: A drawing competition was held with the theme: "I want you to know my country". From each country one or several drawings were selected, digitalized and permanently exhibited in a large vinyl mural that covers most part of the fence of the Center along with the flag and some significant element of each country.

In this good educational practice, **the key competences** according to the European framework for lifelong learning are the following:

- Competence in Linguistic Communication (C1)
- Learning to learn (C4)
- Social and civic competencies (C5)
- Consciousness and cultural expressions (C7)

The main pedagogical goals pursued:

- To improve the coexistence and the relationship of the students.
- To increase the possibilities of games and sports in the playground and outside the school.
- To favour the knowledge and the appreciation of the cultural diversity in the centre.
- To encourage artistic and cultural manifestations among students and their families.

This innovative activity was applied to students from the school from 3 to 12 in the following way:

*A committee of festivities formed by a representative of each cycle and the head of studies (four people in total), decide, organize and set in motion the contents and activities that will be carried out in the courtyard in carnival, day of peace and in the day of the book.

*The preschool and primary school tutors are in charge of making all the preparations in the classroom for the different activities.

*The parents' association contributes to the decoration of the centre and promoting the activities among the families of our pupils.

*The physical education teachers create the protocol of games and the book "Games of the World" with the collaboration of the students in their classes.

*The headmaster supervises and coordinates all the educational agents and the activities carried out, especially the vinyl mural for the fence made thanks to the contest "I want you to know my country"

The main indicators or strengths covered by the innovative practice presented are as follows:

- A set of organisational and curricular actions have been designed in an innovative way, adapting the curriculum and the teaching-learning process to the cultural diversity existing in our centre.
- The entire educational community has been mobilized, the students, the teachers and especially the families through the parents association, aimed at improving coexistence and promoting the cultural richness of our center.

Among the results obtained, it is worth highlighting:

*Conflicts in the schoolyard have been reduced by 70% and expulsions of students for serious misconduct in the Centre have been reduced by half.

*Relations with parents, teachers and management have improved. In the first year of the project's implementation, there was no significant conflict with families (in previous years there had been three or four conflicts of special relevance).

*The participation of parents in the Centre's activities and in the meetings with the teachers has improved.

*The students' recreational and sporting possibilities have been improved by having more physical space and organisation to carry them out, as well as a greater number of games from different parts of the world to be able to play.

*With the vinyl mural displayed on the fence, has improved curricular knowledge of the countries of origin of our students, such as flag, population, capitals, languages, geographical location, etc.. Enabling the realization of various games and competitions throughout the year to promote the learning of the students through gamess.

Challenges

The main challenge of the educational practice presented is the promotion of the cultural richness of our students and the defence of the values reflected in the Educational Project of the Centre, such as equality, solidarity, respect for others, active listening, the value of effort, etc.

On the part of the management team, the weak points or needs for improvement of the Centre (such as the case of our small school yard) must be analysed in order to work on them and turn them into strengths.

As far as the relationship with the families is concerned, this has to be continuously reinforced in order to increase their interest and participation in school life.

Sustainability

With the collaboration of the entire educational community, the good practice presented is sustainable over time and does not require a large amount of material resources. It is important to emphasize that it must be included in the Annual General Programming, and within this, the annual objectives must be formulated for the improvement of coexistence and the preservation and promotion of the cultural richness that characterizes our Center and an increasing number of educational centers in today's society.

Lessons Learned

From the Annual Report of the Centre, carried out at the end of each school year, the needs and points for improvement are obtained for the preparation of the objectives of next year's Annual

General Programming. It is necessary that among the formulated objectives, besides the improvement in the curricular contents of each area, they also include the improvement in the coexistence and the promotion of the participation of the families in the life of the Center.

Multiplication of the practice

Educational practices aimed at fostering interculturality must be taken into account in any educational institution, since we are immersed in a plural and diverse society. The school is only a reflection of society and should contribute to improving it. Practices aimed at this end must be promoted and shared so that everyone can make good use of them. I understand that the practice presented "The schoolyard as a cultural meeting" can be used in any educational centre in our environment.

Policy Recommendations

In order to carry out this educational practice it is necessary to have the participation of the entire educational community, not only understood as students, teachers and parents, but it is also important to involve the city council and in particular, the Department of Education in Madrid plays an important role in supporting the necessary logistics so that these innovative activities are carried out and at times we've missed a greater collaboration on its part.

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5. "WEAVING TIES BETWEEN THE CENTER AND THE FAMILIES"

Background

The San Carlos School is a center with a great ethnic and cultural diversity, there are students of more than 25 nationalities. In order to favor the integral development of the students, as well as the integration and improvement of the coexistence in the center, it is necessary to count on all the education Community (students, teachers, families). Families are an important part of the Educational Community. In the case of ethnic minority and/or socially disadvantaged families, we find that they often have situations that make their involvement in the educational process of their children and in the school more difficult, such as, for example, lack of knowledge or difficulties in the language, precarious work situations, lack of knowledge of the resources and assistance they can access, difficulties in being able to help their children with homework and school matters.

For this reason, the school wants to bring families closer to the centre and create a climate of cooperation between the centre and the families, which improves the integration, relations and coexistence of the entire Educational Body.

Case Description

This practice aims to create a space for cooperative work, relationships, knowledge and respect, which improves the integration and participation in what? of students and families of the school. We work on Education in Values, a transversal axis to all subjects and fundamental in the integral education of children and adults. This practice consists of organizing a party/meeting between families, students and teachers of the school, which takes place on the occasion of the celebration of the spring festival. In this celebration different recreational activities are carried out such as games, different workshops (handicrafts, stories, dances), theatre, flea market, etc.

It is intended that the central axis of the activities to be carried out is interculturality, ethnic and cultural diversity, so that school students and families belonging to ethnic minorities can feel more represented and are more interested and motivated to participate and be involved in them. To carry out this practice, we rely on an Active-Participatory methodology. The organization and development of it, is done through cooperative and participatory processes of the entire Educational Community (teachers, families and students).

It has been demonstrated that in order to improve education and the educational work, it is necessary to involve and collaborate with families, and even more so with regard to infant and primary school age (from 3 to 12 years old, ages of children attending school). The practice is aimed at all families and students of the school. **It is an extracurricular practice that takes place outside of school hours.**

Phases of the organization of the Meeting:

- Creation of the Coordinating Team: The first thing is to create a team that will be the one that coordinates the whole process of organization of the meeting. This team is integrated by representatives of: the parents, the teachers, the students, the management team and the community service teacher.
- Design of the activities proposal: Students, parents and teachers will be asked to give their opinion on the proposed activities to be carried out at the party. It will be done through tutorials with students, meetings with parents and teachers, information letters and also will use a suggestion box, which will be placed in the schoolyard, where anyone can leave proposals in writing.

With all the opinions gathered, the coordinating team will design the proposal of activities to be carried out. The selection of activities that represent different cultures and ethnicities will be taken into account.

- Organization of activities: For the organization of the activities it is defined:
 - Who is responsible for coordinating each game, activity, workshop, that day. To do this, parents, teachers and sometimes also a neighborhood association are involved.
 - Organization of the spaces and decoration: This party is usually held in the schoolyard, gymnasium and other spaces of the school. Students, parents and teachers collaborate to decorate the spaces.
 - Organisation of specific materials for each activity: Depending on the type of activity, the necessary materials are organized, e.g. music equipment, stage, plastic materials, furniture, etc.

- Diffusion of the party/meeting: To spread and inform about the meeting we use different means such as:

Posters and informative letters are made to spread the event, meetings, computer means.

As we want there to be a high participation of families it is important to motivate them and awaken their interest in participating. How do you motivate them?

As mentioned above, the meeting takes place in May, in the afternoon after school hours and with an approximate duration of 3 hours. But the whole process of organization and preparation, takes approximately one month in advance.

In this good educational practice, **the key competences** according to the European framework for lifelong learning are the following:

- Social and civic competences (C5).
- Consciousness and cultural expressions (C7).

The main pedagogical goals pursued:

- Facilitate the relationship and integration of minority students and families in the center.
- Encourage the participation of families in the activities carried out in the school.
- Promote the encounter and knowledge of ethnic and cultural diversity.
- Reinforce content dealt with in some areas of the curriculum.? Could you explain please?

The main indicators or strengths covered by the innovative practice presented are as follows:

- The entire educational community has been mobilized, the students, the teachers and especially the families through the parents association, aimed at improving coexistence and promoting the cultural richness of our center.
- It is an extracurricular activity that reinforces contents of education in values and, to a greater or lesser extent, of the rest of the areas, depending on the theme used each year, that is, nature sciences, social sciences, mathematics, physical education, etc.
- Support and collaboration is encouraged with other bodies such as the Town Hall itself, the Family Support Centre and cultural and social centres in Villaverde (Madrid).

Among the results obtained, it is worth highlighting:

- Improvement of social relations, integration and participation of the entire educational community, especially pupils and families of ethnic minorities.
- Satisfaction and enjoyment of the participants.
- Increased knowledge of and respect for other cultures and cultural diversity.

Challenges

The involvement of families, especially the most disadvantaged ones, in the education of their children is a major challenge that must continue to be worked on. In order to do this, it is necessary to take into account the issues or weak points that can make this participation difficult, such as long working hours, cultural level, lack of knowledge of the language, etc.

Sustainability

It can be sustained over time without requiring a great deal of material resources. It is necessary to continue to have a good coordination between all the components of the Educational Community, as well as the firm support and collaboration of the families.

Lessons Learned

This type of practice shows us that it is necessary to work on education in values and emotional education (respect, tolerance, cooperation, empathy, social skills, emotions, etc.) in the school. It contributes to improve the coexistence and integration of the whole educational community, as well as to improve the interest and motivation for education.

Multiplication of the practice

This practice can be applied in other schools as well as outside the school context through other institutions and organizations such as social, cultural and community associations. These types of activities can also be applied in the context of non-formal education, in the context of leisure time, in the social and cultural context.

Policy Recommendations

It would be necessary for educational administrations to give more importance to education in values and emotional education and to include hours within the school schedule to work on it as the rest of the subjects of the curriculum.

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1. THE CASE OF ROMA EDUCATION PROGRAM

Foundation Open Society – Macedonia

Background

Roma represent 2.66 percent of the total population in Macedonia and are the most socially and economically disadvantaged ethnic group. Some 88% of Roma live below the poverty line, comparing to overall national average of 30.2%. According to the 2002 Census, 90% of the Roma population older than fifteen have either completed primary education only (37.4%), have incomplete primary school (28.6%), have no education at all (23.2%) or are still in primary school (0.8%). Only 9.2% of Roma population has completed secondary education, and only 0.3% complete some form of post-secondary education. The problem with low retention and achievement rate of Roma while at primary school endangered the educational pipeline of Roma and had many spill-over effects within the society. The low participation and completion rate of Roma in primary education led to an even lower level of involvement in secondary and in higher education respectfully. Affected by poverty and lack of basic living conditions, many Roma families cannot afford to send their children to secondary schools.

From the very beginning of its activities, the Roma Education Program had to deal with multiple education challenges Roma community face in the country: high drop-out rate in primary school for Roma children (around 50%); existing stereotypes concerning the Roma community, deeply rooted in the Macedonian society; hidden discrimination in schools and other public institutions; lower expectation from Roma primary and secondary school students; less inclusive school system (for Roma as well as for other marginalized groups); no/or insignificant participation of Roma parents in school activities, a minimal number of Roma teachers; illiteracy among Roma, etc. As a response to this situation, a Roma Education Program (REP) was launched by the Foundation Open Society Institute-Macedonia (FOSIM) at the end of June, 2004, financially supported by the USAID mission in Skopje.

Intended to improve the education status of Roma community in the country, particularly of Roma children and youth as the most vulnerable groups in the society, REP was implemented in period of 10 years. It was structured around four components: preschool, primary, secondary and higher education components. The pre-school and primary education component of REP was implemented in partnership with informal Roma Education Centres (RECs), active in five Roma settlements in Skopje, Kumanovo and Prilep, as follows: “Soncogledi” in Klanica, Skopje (2004-2011) and “Dendo Vas” in settlement “Dame Gruev” in Skopje; “Vrama si” in settlements “Lozja”, “Bavci” and “Baraki”; “Kham” in Sredorek, Kumanovo; and “Aid for Disabled and Poor” in settlement “Trizla”, Prilep (2004-2014). Program activities were implemented in cooperation with 11 primary schools in these settlements that benefited from the teacher training and technical assistance delivered under this component. Relying on its trainers, as well as the trainers from the Foundation for Educational and Cultural Initiatives “Step by Step”, FOSM provided training for the teaching and management staff at project schools.

In cooperation with the secondary schools in the county, FOSM implemented project activities intended for high-school students, while the program component known as “Romaversitas” included activities aimed to support Roma university students. In the course of its 10 years of support, REP has directly assisted over 3,000 Roma students at all levels of education (from

pre-school to university), 400 primary and 150 secondary school teachers and over 1000 Roma parents.

Case Description

Case/component: Pre-school age Roma children better prepared for entering primary school Roma Education Centers

The pre-school program of REP was organized in 5 Roma Education Centres (RECs) run by the following local NGOs: Soncogledi in Klanica, Skopje (from 2004 to 2011), Dendo vas in Skopje, KHAM and Vrama si in Kumanovo and Aid for poor and handicapped in Prilep (from 2004-2014). The program created a rich and engaging pre-school learning environment for Roma children. Following the Step by step model, it employed an individualized approach that responded to the educational needs and interest of each child. The program also sought to change the attitudes and perspectives of Roma parents towards regular schools. The program worked with parents to help them recognize the value and importance of education.

REP activities intended to pre-school children included the development of social and cognitive skills, cultural and hygiene habits of students, Macedonian language acquisition and basic knowledge in math. The pre-school program has been implemented by RECs through different creative means and ways of expression, fun and educative games depending of the age of the children. The basic numeracy part of the program has been focused on the acquaintance to basic math terms and concepts (different geometric shapes, orientation up-down, left-right, in-front behind, learning to count till 10; visualize and recognize the numbers etc.). Particular attention by the Roma language speaking educators throughout the entire year has been given to the children to overcome the language barriers through learning songs, stories and fairy tales and practice the conversation in Macedonian language with the educators and the other children in the group.

RECs conducted a series of workshops and /or other activities on wide range of themes and topics related to the specific periods/seasons of the year and/or particular holidays and/or events. REP pre-school school component was also focused on provision of assistance to Roma parents with the necessary documentation needed for enrolment in primary education, especially immunization records and birth certificates, informing the parents on the immunization procedures as well as the school registration dates and registration procedures. RECs assisted the Roma parents with the paper work needed for late registration in 1st grade of primary education of those pre-school students that returned from foreign countries.

Primary school component:

In order to improve the achievements of Roma primary school students, the Roma Education Program took actions in three (3) directions:

The first one was focused on out-of-school activities for Roma students organized in non-formal Roma Educational Centers. Through Roma Educational Centers active in targeted Roma neighborhoods, the following out-of-school support was provided to children, their parents, and to the Roma communities:

- After-school support activities to children in homework assignments;
- Tutoring activities for additional support in education (knowledge in specific topics or subjects: Cyrillic and Latin alphabet exercises, Math. other subjects of interest)
- Creative and other educative workshops;
- Regular meetings with parents (informing them about the school results and other achievements of their children)

- Parents workshops (raising awareness, parental skills, debates)
- Regular coordination meetings between school teachers and REC's educators (in defining complementary approaches and monitoring of student work in schools, organizing joint capacity building activities, organizing joint informal education activities).

To maintain and strengthen the interest of parents for involvement in the school life and the education of their children, the work with the parents was one of the key priorities in the FOSM' and the Roma Education Centers' activities. RECs undertook a wide range of activities for parents:

- individual meetings with parents;
- visits to Roma families and parents' meetings where the performance & progress of their children (school grades and school attendance) were discussed.
- Educative and informative workshops conducted by the REC educators and/or professionals from various fields where they've could familiarize with many topics and issues of their interest and of best interest for their children and/or wellbeing of their families (protection of various disseizes, nutrition, parenthood as well as on the conditions/procedures, use and abuse of the visa liberalization, human trafficking, children's rights, early marriages etc.).

RECs succeeded to keep the interest of Roma parents on the education outcomes of their children and maintain the involvement of average number of 250 parents monthly. Being perceived as center(s) that serve the needs of the entire Roma community, the concept of the Roma Educational Centers proved to be successful due to their holistic approach in promoting & supporting education inclusion of Roma children that influenced the access, retention, completion and progression rates of REP beneficiaries.

Second one was focused on supporting regular primary schools in targeted Roma communities. The Intervention activities in 11 primary schools included teacher training, support of small-scale intercultural projects, provision of didactical materials. Beside the technical support, an extensive teacher and organizational development capacity support was provided to primary schools in targeted areas. The training package offered to project schools included the following themes:

- *The Step by Step methodology* uses a developmental approach based primarily on the theories on Piaget, Ericson and Vigotsky, believing that children grow best when they are intrinsically involved in their own learning. Step by Step introduces child-centered teaching methods and supports community and family involvement in pre-school and primary schools;
- *Reading and writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT)* training is professional development project for teachers which provide participants with strategies for interactive methods of teaching to prepare students for citizenship. RWCT training is designed to be applicable to teachers at every grade level, from primary school through post-secondary education and is not limited to specific subject areas. Teachers learn strategies to help pupils use self-reflection to solve problems and engage actively in the education process;
- *Education for Social Justice - Anti-biased training for adults* was intended to all teachers in the project schools provide teachers with knowledge and skills needed to better understand themselves, their own cultural reality and own view of the world, all of which is a precondition to truly understand others, other cultural realities and develop a constructive, positive approach to social and cultural differences.'
- *The training in School improvement plans* was aimed to support school managing staff and teachers to plan effectively their work in the school for a period of 3 to 5 years in order to

improve their quality and performance of their students. This training covered the themes of efficiency and effectiveness in the school work; Characteristics of a dynamic school; School needs diagnostics; Selection and defining priorities, goals and activities; Guidance thought the process; Tackling resistance to change; Creation of a Code of good behavior in the school;

- *Intercultural education* promoted cultural diversity as an important value of schools, classrooms and the process of learning and served as a point of departure for positive school performance. All different backgrounds in culture, language and religion among children to be equally valued and supported in schools. Teachers were supported to encourage and built positive self-perception in each student, overcoming prejudices and stereotypes’;
- *A competent teacher for the 21century* training was designed on communication, dialogue and interaction between students and teachers, as well as respecting the rights of the child as positive teaching practice. Teachers were trained to practice inclusive teaching, support students’ initiatives, teaches their students about their rights, but also on responsibilities in order to become active and responsible citizens in the society.

The third intervention was focused on small-scale school intercultural projects. After the completion of the training, the project schools were given a possibility to develop and implement small intercultural initiatives. The support was implemented in 3 cycles. FOSM provided the schools with instructions for proposal writing and for designing the budget. All schools were provided with feedback, suggestions and comments on the draft initiatives they submitted and FOSM worked with the schools on improving and finalizing their ideas aimed to:

- Promote inter-culturalism as value and important aspect of an inclusive school and to encourage, develop and foster positive interaction and cooperation among students with different ethnic, social and cultural background;
- Contribute to improved school environment and school life by encouraging students’ creativity and to increase the “visibility “of children/students from small ethnic communities and assist them in creating a positive self-image.

Case/component for Roma Students in High Schools

In order to improve the school performance of Roma students aged 15-19, the interventions of the high school component of REP was design to provide scholarships, school-based mentoring and additional academic support to 2 cohorts of Roma secondary school students.

Scholarships for Roma secondary school students;

The Scholarships addressed poverty barriers and met the studying needs of Roma secondary school students. It secured family support and improved educational inputs such as textbooks, supplementary learning materials, transportation, food, clothes, etc. A total of 1,110 scholarships were provided to 364 high students in the 4-years period of schooling. This component provided support to 2 cohorts of Roma secondary school students to complete their secondary education. The Department for Development and Promotion of Education in Languages of Minorities as well as the Bureau for Development of Education were involved in attaining the initial contacts with the schools, schools’ principals and teachers, spreading the announcement as widely as possible.

School-based mentoring support

The mentorship assisted Roma students to overcome or alleviate deficiencies from previous levels of education. The program ensured that each student is provided with individual support and help with learning skills, school- related and personal problems, as well as facilitate student integration into the life of the school. Mentors supported students in their

subject studies, academic planning and active learning with the purpose to improve the overall school performance of Roma students (their GPA, regular school attendance and involvement of after school activities,). High school teachers (157) have been recruited through an open competition and a rigorous application and selection procedure to serve as mentors. The mentorship manual was developed and mentorship trainings were delivered. Through training mentors were able to better understand role in working with Roma. In addition, mentors received anti-bias training. They were approachable, available, and able to share life experience and technical expertise. Different students required different levels and kinds of a advice, information, and encouragement.

Additional academic support (summer camps, for Roma scholarship recipients);

The Roma scholarship students were given an opportunity to participate in various activities: summer camps organized around different themes (for example: debate, street law, human rights, learning strategies, communication skills, etc.), English language and computer courses and assistance for preparation of Graduation (Matura) exam. This enabled students to expand their knowledge, build capacities, make friends, and exchange opinions on topics of common interest.

Case/component for Roma Students in Higher Education - Romaversitas

The aim of this component was to encourage and support young Roma involved in higher education to improve their academic achievements and to help them complete their university education. Roma university students through Romaversitas have benefited from Scholarship Program; Tutoring, Additional Academic Support Program and Library and information resources.

- *The Scholarship Program* provided selected students with essential financial support in order to overcome, or alleviate economic disadvantages. The scholarship was intended for books, travel costs, accommodation and other school equipment. The intervention activities targeted all Roma students enrolled at the state universities in the country. Becoming members of Romaversitas enabled the scholarship students to actively participate and benefit from other available project activities (trainings, debates, and other academic support activities);
- *Tutoring* was core feature of REP academic assistance provided to Roma students in need for academic guidance and support with their academic courses at different study years, and study fields and at different universities country-wide;
- The *Additional Academic Support Program* helped in filling the educational quality gap from the previous level of education as well as provision of opportunities for all motivated students to develop their personal skills and to improve their academic performance. *Romaversitas* offered basic, but also advanced academic training tailored to the needs and interests of students. For instance: essays writing - how to write an essay; reports writing, how to get information required for research; presentation and communication skills, presentation, etc.
- *Library and information resources -Romaversitas* created a library where students had access to information relevant for their studies and academic research. Also, some of the books needed for students in their respective field of studies were purchased. *Romaversitas* also provided computers and unlimited Internet access to all interested Roma students.

Being perceived as unique Roma youth organization, *Romaverstas* attracted interest by international organizations, politicians and NGO activists. *Romaversitas* is unique educational resource center for Roma students, with educational cycle management approach. Over 490

Roma students were supported by *Romaversitas* in period of 10 years from all North Macedonia.

Results

Quantitative Results:

Key REP results:

- Every project year, 200-250 pre-school children benefited from day-to-day assistance provided by the Roma Education Centers and got better prepared for regular school. More than 90% of participating pre-school children successfully enrolled in 1st grade;
- 750-900 Roma primary school students from 11 project primary schools participated in project activities annually and benefited from the education out-of-school support provided by the Roma Education Centers on a daily basis. More than 94% of primary school students, direct RECs beneficiaries successfully completed their grade and achieved better results which is 20% higher compared to the grade completion rate among non-REC beneficiaries;
- 2 cohorts consisting of 364 high-school students received 1,110 scholarships, school-based mentoring from 157 teachers and other academic support for 1 to 4 years of secondary education. 298 of the high school students successfully completed their secondary education;
- 316 scholarships were disbursed to 150 Roma university students, while every year around 80 university students benefited from a wide range of services offered by REP's university component (*Romaversitas*). 97 of students completed their higher education;
- REP efforts doubled the national rate of Roma students with completed secondary and higher education compared to the period prior to the Program's implementation. Majority of graduated students are employed in public administration, schools, international organizations and hold positions that advocate for policies on integration of Roma people;
- 453 primary school teachers, school principals, pedagogues and psychologists from 11 participating primary schools benefited from training in child-centered methodologies, critical thinking strategies, education for social justice, school development plans, etc., while 157 secondary school teachers were trained in education for social justice and student mentoring. Project schools also benefited from didactic aids that allowed teachers to effectively apply the knowledge acquired during the training in the everyday work with students;
- More than 1,000 Roma parents participated in teacher-parent meetings, as well as various workshops, public debates and meetings dedicated to education of their children. Roma parents are now members of parent and school boards at REP project schools;
- A total of 20 small scale intercultural projects were implemented in 7 Primary Schools from Skopje, Kumanovo and Prilep;
- 17 policy documents were developed and discussed, followed by their submission to relevant institutions/stakeholders (MES, BDE, State Education Inspectorate, education donors).

Qualitative Results, from Final Performance Evaluation survey:

Which aspects of the project had the biggest impact and what difference did the project make in lives of beneficiaries?

- There is an increase of the number of children enrolled in school (including the number of Roma children enrolled in first grade) and decreased number of school absences.
- Roma enrolled in primary schools demonstrate better achievements and their participation in activities increased, along with their integration in the school community.

- Teachers and school services have better cooperation with Roma parents, who demonstrate greater involvement and engagement in school activities.
- Increased motivation and awareness about the importance of education among primary school students. They demonstrate better achievements and continue their education in secondary schools (where they continue to demonstrate better achievements).

Benefits for High-School Graduates

- Possibility for education and increased self-confidence.
- Better knowledge and additional professional skills (through informal education, mentor support, etc.).
- Opportunities for career development that would not have been possible due to their poverty status.
- Financial support that alleviates the burden on their families.
- Building relations with other Roma and non-Roma students.

University Students

- Young Roma more easily enroll and complete their higher education studies, thus earning university degrees.
- Improved access to employment at state institutions.
- Possibility to acquire additional professional skills (foreign language courses, computer literacy, communication skills, personal development, etc.).
- Tutoring helped them pass their exams more easily.
- The project facilitated their continued education in post-graduate studies.

Project Schools

- Teachers improved their professional skills and increased their knowledge of teaching methods; training modules had a major positive effect on overall performance of schools.
- Enriched curricula in specific subjects proposed by teachers attending training modules.
- Project activities are integrated in school's annual work programs; thematic planning, etc.
- Schools organized extra-curricular activities with intercultural programs, celebrations, etc.
- Roma parents and students became members of school boards/student councils.

Gender Issues

- Many respondents indicated that reduced number of juvenile marriages among Roma teenagers is an indirect result of project activities.
- Students reported that high number of girls do not wish to marry until they complete their studies or find employment, while girls who started school and later dropped to get married have more positive attitude toward education, passing it on to their children.

Challenges

Being faced with serious existential problems, many Roma families used to go on a seasonal work in agricultural sites in the countries to bearing fruits and vegetables and often -times bringing their kids with them. This influenced the timely registration of Roma children in 1st grade as well as the regular school attendance of primary school students. As a result, RECs had to put extra efforts and additional catch up-classes for the kids of the seasonal workers to enable them to easily integrate in education process when they get back to school. The same challenge REP faced and applied the same approach for Roma returnees that after the visa liberalization of the country in December 2009, have left seeking asylum in western European countries.

Sustainability

The following are the most significant project results and key features for maximizing the impact and for sustaining the REP positive effects beyond the project life:

- As a result of the REP work, there is a growing number of well-educated Roma with higher education qualifications. 298 Roma high school and 97 university graduates serve as role models in their communities and advocate for higher educational attainment among Roma. The university graduates in various academic fields increased the number of Roma professionals (lawyers, teachers, social workers, medical doctors, etc.) so much needed in the Roma community and in North Macedonia. Over 60% of them hold positions in public service, local and international organizations, being in a position to stand up for themselves and for the rights of the entire Roma community, to directly influence the public policies and to advocate for a more effective inclusion of Roma in the society.
- Better use of all available resources and exploring possibilities for funding by various donor agencies and organizations to continue support for Roma. Although the USAID funding of the REP university component ended few years ago, FOSM continued to support Roma university students with own funding, funding from the OSF Network and from the Roma Education Fund. FOSM Romaversitas continued to advance capacities and carrier prospects of Roma university students by provision of additional academic support (tutoring, academic trainings etc.). Around 100 Roma university students from different study fields have been receiving support from the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program (RMUSP) every academic year. Besides the limited possibilities, FOSM together with REC Roma NGO partners continued exploring funding of other REP interventions by other donors and organizations.
- Sustaining and building upon the best teaching and learning practices and positive school climate existing in the project schools - 453 primary school teachers trained by the project, represent a solid human capital to ensure long-lasting impact beyond the project life.
- The extensive and diversified Roma education portfolio and impressive results makes FOSM a credible advocate for Roma education. In partnership with its Roma NGO partners, FOSM will strengthen its advocacy for greater resource allocations of the education ministry and other institutions and keeping Roma integration on the Government agenda
- Advocacy for sustaining the REP interventions beyond the project life and for keeping Roma education high on the national agenda beyond the end of the Roma Decade - The Government of North Macedonia (GNM) continues to implement high school scholarship and mentorship support since 2009, as a most visible legacy of REP. From the closure of REP secondary school component to date, the GNM, in partnership with the Roma Education Fund, provided 2,862 scholarships to Roma secondary school students. 420 Roma secondary school students completed their education with GNM support which together with 298 USAID supported Roma high school graduates increased the national secondary school completion rate of Roma. The transfer of REP know-how to MES continued not only with REP's Chief of Party serving as a member of the GNM's Scholarship Selection Committee, but also with REP contribution to the development of a new National Strategy for Roma Integration 2014-2020.

Lessons Learned

In the course of project implementation many lessons were learnt in regard to different aspects- target groups, project activities, external factors etc. All of them were considered and whenever possible incorporated into activity plans.

At the end of the project the following *lessons learnt* could be stressed:

- The project interventions are effective and efficient if the project work is done simultaneously with children, parents and institutions at local and national level;
- Participation of Roma is of utmost importance; local Roma NGOs must be included in all phases – from project design to project implementation since it creates a greater sense of ownership, holding them accountable on the results achieved;
- Balance between needs-based and rights-based approach needs to be secured;
- Inclusion of non-Roma beneficiaries into the program (underachieving students, other children in need, parents) is important for interaction of students and social inclusion;
- Although the project had limited space to respond to the challenges occurred by external factors- i.e. extreme poverty of Roma resulting in leaving the country and asylum seeking in Western countries, the project was flexible and needed to (1) to educate them about the consequences of such a decision and (2) to assist the integration of children –returnees into the schools.

Multiplication of the Practice

Diversification of revenue sources from other donor agencies and organizations is perceived as one of the major FOSIM/REP accomplishments. It concerted the efforts of the donors' community around the issue of Roma education, enabled the extension of the number of beneficiaries as well as the extension of the scope and the type of envisaged interventions.

Since 2005 to date, Swiss Pestalozzi Children's Foundation co-funded the activities for 3 RECs, strengthened the intercultural education component of the project and enriched the project with the development of few studies/researches and analysis tackling the education barriers and lobbying for the right to education of Roma children (Analysis report on the implementation of the elective subject Language and culture of Roma in 3rd grade of primary education; Research report on the intercultural content in social science textbooks in primary education; Analysis on the "Reasons for drop-out of Roma students" and on "Adults education for Roma-needs and opportunities" ; Commentary on the Realization of the Right to Education in North Macedonia with a Special Reference to the Education of Roma Children", an CRC alternative report to be submitted to UN). PCF funded activities on intercultural education curricula mainstreamed into school annual plans and inclusion of detailed plans for compensatory classes for underachieving students.

Roma Education Fund co-funded the university component of the project since 2006 enabling bigger number of Roma university students to receive tutoring support, short academic trainings and workshops, foreign language and computer courses, implementation of small students' initiatives and projects from their areas of studies and/or on issues relevant to Roma community. OSCE provided about 10,000 EUR for a series of capacity building trainings for Romaversitas (university component) staff and students. OSCE and the Hungarian Embassy co-founded the secondary school component of REP. Recognizing REP as a successful model, the Dutch Embassy awarded FOSIM a 3-year 2 million euros grant for the expansion of REP primary school component in 10 new sites with highest concentration of Roma country-wide.

As a result of the strategic alliance with the MoES, a joint four-year project has been developed and submitted by FOSM to the Roma Education Fund (REF) for scaling up the secondary scholarship component with other new cohorts of Roma secondary school students. The 1.2 million euros project has been implemented in the period 2006-2009.

Policy Recommendation

Experiences and lessons learned from the Program and research and analysis reports were presented at international conferences and were shared with representatives of nongovernmental organizations from several countries in the region and beyond. In order to provide an independent insight in the implementation of provisions from the Convention on the Rights of the Child in North Macedonia, in cooperation with REP's partner organizations, FOSM developed the Commentary on the Realization of the Right to Education in North Macedonia with a Special Focus on Education of Roma Children. This alternative report was submitted to the UN and in 2009 was presented on the pre-session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva.

FOSM published manuals for teachers and educators and produced 17 publications within REP that included valuable research findings, analysis and studies on various aspects of Roma education that has influenced the Roma education related policies and has been partially /and on some aspects have fully been endorsed and/or implemented by the policy makers, local municipalities, national education authorities and other stakeholders (including donor organizations). See lessons learnt for what works best and what doesn't work and please consult FOSM publications for detailed policy recommendations at the following link:

<http://fosm.mk/en/Home/Publications?catID=9&additionalID=82>

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2. Scholarship and Mentor Support to Roma Students - The Case of Secondary Economic and Law school *Arseni Jovkov*, Skopje

Background

The good practice implemented in the Secondary Economy and Law school *Arseni Jovkov*-Skopje, Macedonia with four years length education relates to a case of giving a scholarship and mentor support to Roma students attending secondary schools. Teaching process is conducted in two languages: Macedonian and Albanian in 64 classes. It is a multiethnic school where most of the students are Macedonians, then Albanians, Turks, Roma and Bosnians. Roma students are at the age of 15- 19 of both genders. Every school year approximately 50 students are taking part in this practice. Most of the students are from *Suto Orizari* municipality. About 10 % of students are Roma students, and they usually have difficulties with economic subjects, math and English language. They need support in socialization and increasing their self-confidence, skills and competences.

The key principles of these methods are:

- ✓ increasing the rate of Roma that complete secondary education and not leaving school
- ✓ helping them to pass graduation (Matura) exam and finish school with better marks
- ✓ increasing their chances to continue their education at the universities

Case description

The practice has been carried out for more than 15 years in the period 2004-2018. At first it was financed by USAID and Foundation Open Society Macedonia. The Ministry of Education and Science, MES has recognized the success of the scholarship/mentoring model and has been providing scholarships for Roma high school students since 2009. The duration of the practice is 9 months (one school year). The school where the practice is implemented is located 5 km from the city center, in a part of the city where the Macedonian and Albanian citizens live together. The Roma settlement *Suto Orizari* is 3 km from the school and the interest of Roma to study in this school is significant. The practice is implemented by a team of teachers who are teaching economic subjects, Macedonian language, English Language and math. Usually there are 10 mentors engaged to work with students. Each mentor works with 5-6 students. Students are attending additional classes in subjects where they have difficulties.

Roma students in secondary school receive scholarships and mentoring support from a teacher mentor who is helping them overcome difficulties (bad marks, absences, socialization) during their 4 years secondary education. Mentors are obliged to help students to complete secondary education and pass graduation exam. Mentors receive monthly fee for their engagement. MES is announcing a competition for mentors and scholarship holders and making selection of mentors and scholars. Both students and mentors are presenting monthly reports about the absences and the goals achieved as well as a quarterly report about marks, student's progress and absences at first to the Institute Open Society, and then to the Ministry of Education and Science.

The goals of this approach are:

- ✓ To help Roma student overcoming difficulties in economy subject especially : Economy, Statistics, Accounting and business, then math, Macedonian language and English language using methods and curricular adjusted to their needs and achieving better marks, by giving them additional classes in subjects where they have difficulties, at least twice a week
- ✓ To decrease the number of excused and non- excused absences
- ✓ To improve their self – confidence and awareness of their skills and to develop their own personal identity while also exploring the identity of others
- ✓ To increase their parents awareness on the importance of education
- ✓ To build values for interethnic integration in a multicultural society

The innovative method was applied to 50 students each school year at the age of 14- 19 years old attending secondary school from and the main principles are as follows:

Mentors were trained to work with vulnerable groups of students and the same time they learnt a lot about Roma's background, life and habits:

- ✓ Students and mentors together are making an action plan based on student's needs .They detect current situation (their marks, number of excused and non- excused absence) and make schedule of their meetings. Also they are planning together- the learning time and the free time. Students design assessments.
- ✓ Visiting institutions (market, stock market, companies) and learning through practice
- ✓ Spending free time together out of school
- ✓ Roma students can attend an English Language course in the Foreign Language Center and computer lessons for free
- ✓ Students and mentors are motivated to work harder receiving monthly fees
- ✓ Mentors develop routines and procedures, classroom management practices and the development of positive relationships that support taking risks, asking questions and

making mistakes. Mentors are encouraging, integrative tasks, learning and judgment, team work, giving and receiving feedback

The major part of the educational approach is the work with parents and their participation in a variety of extracurricular work.

Mentors make contact with parents, making a schedule for meetings, visit their homes and discuss about the importance of education. Visiting student homes gives opportunity for closer relations between teachers, parents and students. Also parents are attending meetings at school as well as social events organized in school such as days of ecology, of the school, bazaars etc.

Results:

Students involved in this practice pass the graduation exam, and their motivation, interest, capacity to collaborate, to reflect and learn as well as their socialization is at a higher level. Students developed communication skills and cooperation with members of other ethnic communities, a sense of respect, empathy, trust and acceptance of other cultures. They are able to recognize and reduce stereotypes and prejudices, and to solve conflict situations. Students improved their accounting skills, simulation of conducting a company, company leading skills, communications skills and eloquence. According to Student Evaluation Report in the frames of USAID and Foundation Open Society Macedonia, 298 high school students who have been awarded scholarships have successfully completed the secondary education. Since 2004, 92 scholars obtained university degrees, most of them are now employed in public administration, schools, NGOs and are strong advocates for Roma inclusion and activists in Roma communities;

Challenges

Some students are working, and are involved in their family businesses. Some parents don't realize the importance of education and they prefer their children to bring them additional income more than to attend school. It is a challenge to persuade them that education is a powerful tool for children's future. There is also a problem with early marriages. After marriage, especially girls leave schools. Some families go abroad to find better work and when some come back after a few months, it is a challenge to get their children back in the educational system.

Sustainability

At the beginning of 2018, MES did not finance this practice. But the goals of practice are achieved in schools through the additional classes in all subjects that teachers are obliged to do, so Roma students could overcome difficulties in certain subjects.

Lessons Learned

This practice has been successfully applied for 15 years and gave wonderful results. Teachers, social workers, school directors, media, community, all together should work on raising awareness of Roma about the importance of education. If parents are not aware of that, they will not let their children go to school. Schools found a way to accept back student that leave school by giving them a chance to continue education.

Multiplication of the practice

This good practice is giving a lot of benefits for Roma students. MES should find resources to continue this excellent practice in its original form: training teachers for mentors and giving them

monthly fee for their work as well as giving scholarships for students. It can be applied in primary schools and universities. Also students can be mentors to other students.

Policy Recommendations

MES should find a way to continue with financing of this wonderful practice which shows significant results and make efforts for establishing the practice as a regular national programme.

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3. Roma Mediators in Primary Education in the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM)

Background

The good practice of Roma mediation is implemented at the primary education level in RNM in 19 municipalities in 41 primary schools. This is a pilot program of the Roma Education Fund, the NGO *Roma Resources Center* and the NGO *Sonce* which started in 2015. From 2018, this program is funded under the Ministry of Education and Science, MES. The programme secures equal access to primary education of Roma children aged 6 to 14, decreasing the drop-out rates and increasing the retention rate of Roma students in primary education. More specifically, Roma mediators as a good practice is a model developed by the Council of Europe and the Roma Education Fund, Budapest together with the local NGO *Roma Resource Center* from Skopje and the *Sonce* NGO from Tetovo. The key principles of these methods are to support the schools for enrolling Roma students in schools on time, on one hand, and to support Roma parents to prepare their children for primary education.

Roma mediators are trained and certified professionals for inclusive education for vulnerable groups. Because schools do not have enough capacities to be in the field and identify and enroll children in education, engaging Roma mediators contributes to overcoming the big percentage of non-enrolled children in primary education, improving regularity of children, increasing retention rate of students and motivating Roma parents to support the education of their children from the very beginning.

Case description

This good practice is started in 2017/18 school year as a program of the MES. With this method are targeted more than 8000 children per year. In 2017/18 were engaged 16 mediators; in 2018/19 -20 Roma mediators and in 2019/2020 - 30 Roma mediators were involved. Having in mind the previously engaged mediators (from 2015 till 2017) the overall number of mediators is 98. The budget for this method is provided from MES. These mediators will continue to be the link between the schools and the Roma community in order to improve the situation with primary education of Roma.

The key principles of this method are: each student has to attend school regularly and to receive support to finish their primary education and continue with secondary education. The Roma mediators are facilitators of this process.

The goals of this approach are:

- To identify the children in the field who are reached the age for 1st grade in primary school;
- To increase the number of enrolled children in 1st grade in primary education at national levels;
- To create a sense of belonging and community within the schools;
- To improve the regular attendance of school;
- To improve the retention rate of Roma students during their education;
- To decrease the drop-out of Roma children;
- To increase awareness of Roma parents and their motivation to support their children;
- To improve the motivation for continuing schooling beyond primary education;
- To improve the socialization of students through different extracurricular activities together with the other students from other ethnic groups.

The innovative method was entailed in the following main principles:

- The mediator is a facilitator between school and parents and making sure that they share common values and interests. For the school to have bigger number of enrolled children and for the parents their children to be in school;
- The mediator is a motivator of Roma and he identifies children and facilitates their enrolment; identifies non-attending and drop-out students and supports their return to school;
- The mediator together with school staff organize extracurricular activities for celebrating holidays, traditions, sport events, in order to increase the multicultural and infer ethnic cohesion between the children from different ethnic origin and to combating against discrimination;
- The above approaches develop awareness about the importance of education, trust, responsibility, sharing and a sense of community among students, schools and parents.

The major part of the work of mediators is with students, schools staff and parents and their participation in a variety of extracurricular work. Parents are included through different meetings, events, workshops; the teachers pass special trainings for social justice, anti-discrimination in education, etc. Through these activities, they learn how to motivate their children, talk to them and support them, how to deal with their psychological development. As a result of this intense work with parents, schools staff and children, more than 300 children are enrolled in education.

In addition, through regular home visits the parents are kept abreast of the progress of their children – every month, the classroom teacher provides report to parents and discusses any possible issues and ideas of importance related to the students. The parents are more responsible and they have regular short meetings with the classroom teacher in order to provide more appropriate info for their children.

Another principle is the support for children during the home visits of mediators for the children with their homework and to clarify key educational issues from the program, together with the parents.

Results: According to MES data, in 2019, 89% of 4th, 5th and 6th grade students passed into the next grade out of a total number of students 3330. 85.7% was the retention rate in 2017/18; the number of enrolled children increased by 4% in comparison to 2017/18 year, the dropout rate is reduced by 1.8% on a national level.

Challenges

- Challenges are related to identifying all children to be enrolled in 1st grade.
- The second challenge is keeping all children in school and securing their continued education.
- The third challenge is the level of responsibility of parents for the education of their children

Sustainability

The MES should continue its support for this program with their own budget from the state. The program *Roma mediators* is included in the new Law for Primary Education since 2019. This is the important element for sustainability of the program. The funding for mediators will be provided from the state budget. According to the Law it is an obligation of the MES to implement this activity and to provide budget each year for the mediators.

Lessons Learned

The key lessons learned are:

1. The importance of building the link between schools and the Roma community

This program demonstrated that additional links between schools and Roma parents are crucial and it is necessary. Without this link the Roma parents are not included in the process of education of their children for different reasons. The discrimination toward Roma community is high, and this has a huge influence for the access of the parents and their children to education. This program was crucial for changing the situation with primary education of Roma. Currently, mediators are part of the school and they are contributing to regular attendance and decreasing the drop-out rates. The schools recognized this profile as very important for supporting them in providing better education for Roma at local level.

2. Providing real data from the field

The Roma education mediator became crucial for improving primary education of Roma. With their work they contributed to providing clear data for the situation of the Roma children in the field (because the official statistic data is not based on the real situation on the field). They have a huge contribution for increasing the number of enrolled students in 1st grade, for improving school attendance, decreasing the drop-out rate, and working with Roma families as one of the crucial elements for successful education of Roma students. Roma mediators programme and methods have been already tested and approved in other countries where Roma population is significant. Roma mediators build the bridges between schools and the community. This is very important in order to provide appropriate access to education of the Roma children. The Roma mediators are the extended hands of the schools in the field.

Multiplication of the practice

This method definitely has to be multiplied not just for Roma but for other vulnerable groups. In North Macedonia this program started in: Tetovo, Gostivar, Kicevo and Suto Orizari. Now this program is multiplied in 19 localities and is functioning in 41 primary schools. Also this practice can

be implemented for other levels of education. The future plans are to apply this programme for pre-school, as well as for secondary education (high school).

Policy Recommendations

Roma mediation is included in the Law for Primary Education as a result of several years of advocacy activities for the sustainability of this program. The advocacy work started in 2011 from the following organizations: Roma Education Fund, Budapest, Council of Europe, Roma Resource Center from Skopje, Sonce from Tetovo, and National Roma Center from Kumanovo. It is important for the MES to now develop its own certification programme to officially certify the profession of the Roma Mediator.

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4. The case of NGO Umbrella, Skopje

Background

Despite the fact that elementary schooling is compulsory in North Macedonia, the dropping out of Roma children is moving in a geometrical progression. Based on data from the State Statistical Office, only 20% of Roma who complete elementary school continue their education in secondary schools. In the academic year of 2002-2003, 0.3% of the enrolled students were Roma. Compared to the previous trend this number is significant, since in absolute numbers there were 134 Roma students, this being the largest number until now.

Numerous are the reasons why the Roma educational level is so low:

- very bad social and economic situation of a large portion of Roma families
- large percentage of children are not enrolled in pre-school education
- the number of children who enroll in school is lower compared to the real number of children that should be covered (enrollment is not timely and complete, in part because not every newborn child is registered)
- there are no adequate conditions for learning at home (bad housing conditions)
- non-regulated citizenship of a significant number of children makes more difficult their inclusion in the process of education
- child labor is used in the informal economic sector
- the network of pre-school and school institutions to accept all Roma children has not been sufficiently developed
- Roma children also face discrimination in the schools
- insufficient knowledge of Macedonian language when children are enrolled in first grade, and as a result they cannot follow the instructions later
- a large number of the enrolled children drop out during the eight-year primary school education, especially after fifth grade

Case Description

The NGO *Umbrella* undertakes action in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, MLSP to immediately relocate families in better housing.

Our vision and mission is social empowerment and self-empowerment of Roma in the process of inclusion and integration into society. We support and work with Roma, children and women who are excluded by institutions. Currently, The *Umbrella* NGO is working with homeless families located in a reception Center in Vizbegovo near the municipality of Shuto Orizari in cooperation with MLSP. Their number in the Center is 102 people, 67 of whom are children. We started in 2017, the process of socialization it continues into 2020, until a permanent solution is found for homeless families. We support undocumented individuals together with MLSP - their official number is 700 people with no birth certificates. In cooperation with NGOs, a Law has been drafted for such persons to facilitate the process of registering them in the Birth Registry.

The goals of the above activities are:

- Improving the status of Roma students in the educational process:
- Improving of social inclusion of Roma
- Organizing additional educational seminars and training for Roma parents to inform them about the need for continuing education
- Providing information to parents and their children on international and national programs and projects on social and educational inclusion of Roma children against dropping out
- Creating conditions to increase the labor market integration of the long-time unemployed and to mitigate the risk for groups that are poor and socially excluded
- Developing programs for continuous education, especially of the risk groups
- Overcoming the high level of social exclusion and discrimination of Roma, but also of other risk groups like people living in institutions and people with special needs
- Strengthening policies supporting the family, social networks and protection of children's rights

In order to improve the living conditions of Roma children and students, the NGO *Umbrella* works in the following directions:

1. *Participation, visitation and representation of vulnerable groups / migrants in formal education.*

These activities include Social Mapping and Identification of Vulnerable Groups of Homeless Families in Skopje who are living in makeshift dwellings and abandoned buildings without water and electricity - 51 families or about 160 people were found; most of them children aged 0 to 13 years.

2. *Availability of extracurricular foreign language classes, arts, social skills classes.*

The *Umbrella* NGO prepared a pre-school program for children aged 6 to 12 that included 28 children. The aim of the program was to provide children with basic educational knowledge before starting school, especially intensive learning of the Macedonian language. *In cooperation with the Employment Service Agency, we have included working parents in a free program* for strengthening social skills, through training for, carpenters, tailors, plasterers, welders, hairdressers, etc.

3. *Availability of other social and cultural activities aimed at the educational integration of vulnerable youth categories.*

The NGO is organizing visits for children and their parents to the ZOO, theatre, amusement park, and other events.

4. Mobilization and participation of parents in the school process, extracurricular activities and social events.

Umbrella organizes regular monitoring of children for school attendance, success, and parental attendance at school. The NGO supports more frequent communication with teachers, active participation in school-organized events, patrons, celebrations, and other important events.

5. Engaging mediators and social workers to prevent early school leaving

The Umbrella team consisting of an education mediator, a social worker and a pedagogical specialist regularly monitors children in school to ensure regularity and progress of the school curriculum. The team assists children with writing homework through out-of-class activities and organizes workshops for parents to raise the awareness of parents about the importance of education and its benefits.

Results:

As of 2017, the target group are homeless Roma

Today, after two years of hard work with homeless families, they live in better conditions

All families have personal documentation, health care, social financial assistance:

- ✓ 23 children aged 6 to 12 are enrolled in Primary School in Shuto Orizari, and attend classes;
- ✓ 12 people aged 15 to 20 , follow the education for adults programmes
- ✓ 11 people are temporarily employed in public communal hygiene works.

Homeless children and their parents are supported by the school they attend, the Mayor of the municipality, MLSP) , domestic and foreign donors and NGO Umbrella. In addition, families were supported in parallel by the mayor and other domestic and foreign donors in school with food, clothing, footwear, transportation.

Sustainability

There is political will, especially with MLSP in charge of inclusion and socialization of Roma in society. Namely, the MLSP provided housing for the homeless families for free; all current expenses are paid for them. Most parents are temporarily employed in relation, in order for families to become independent and sustainable.

Multiplication of the practice

There are real opportunities for the above-mentioned good practice to be implemented in other regions and cities at national level. The practice of inclusion and socialization should also be implemented with other vulnerable groups, especially with street children with the support of MES and MLSP.

Lessons Learned

Active engagement of parents in education should be implemented not only by educational mediators and social workers, but should also be supported by teachers and school principals.

The key factor for the successful inclusion and sustainability lies in the cooperation between MES, MLSP and NGOs.

Policy Recommendations

Competent Ministries should continue the policies and good practices of supporting vulnerable groups at local and national levels in cooperation with the civil sector until a lasting solution is found for them.

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Campaign for Regular School Attendance “Every Pupil at School”

Elementary School *Brakja Ramiz-Hamid*, Shuto Orizari, Skopje



Background

The primary school *Brakja Ramiz-Hamid* is located in the municipality Shuto Orizari in Skopje. The school building was built in 1979, but in 2016 the old building was extended and now there are 54 classrooms. It is one of the largest Roma elementary schools, not only in North Macedonia, but also in the region. In the school year 2018/2019, we had a total of 1992 pupils enrolled in 81 classes, grades 1-9. 99% of the pupils are Roma. In Brakja Ramiz-Hamid there are 114 teachers, 18 of them are Roma and the other teachers are Macedonian. The teaching language is Macedonian, but students have the opportunity to learn the optional subject *Language and Culture of Roma* twice a week.

Case description

One of the main challenges we face in our school is regular school attendance. This problem has been going on for several years, and unfortunately we had no solution to this. The reasons for not attending classes regularly are of a different nature. Roma in North Macedonia, are marginalized, discriminated, not accepted by others and living on the edge of poverty. From 1993 pupils enrolled in the school year 2018/2019, 148 (or 7%) didn't attend school regularly. Having in mind the large

number of irregular pupils, we decided to do something completely new in order to bring the students back to school.

Our key principle was: Increasing awareness on the importance of regular attendance of students in the legal, educational and social sense and reducing the absences of pupils from school.

The goals of this approach are:

- Increasing the rate of students completing primary school
- Decreasing the rate of missed classes and decreasing the number of absentees
- Increasing their chances to continue their education
- Spreading the information on laws concerning education and pupils' rights and obligations
- Improving awareness of the importance of regular school attendance among parents and students in legal, educational and social sense
- Bringing the importance of education closer to all members of the community in Shuto Orizari
- Educating love for learning among pupils from all grades
- Understanding the future benefits of education and the disadvantages of not going to school

Our main pedagogical goals were:

- Decreasing the number of absences from school
- Improving self- confidence of students
- Higher level of awareness about importance of education and the laws on primary education
- Changing the parents' attitudes towards education
- Improving communication and exchange of ideas by conducting a survey

The Campaign for regular school attendance **"Every Pupil at School"** was conducted in *three phases*:

I phase:

- Gathering statistical data on the Braka Ramiz-Hamid School on pupils from grades 1-9, who for reasons do not come at all or do not come regularly to school;
- Prepare and conduct surveys on the awareness of parents and students of legal regulations in accordance with the law and by-laws for primary education, as well as the internal school regulations;

II phase:

- Publishing the survey
- Conducting workshops, events and various other activities on the subject of education within the school and in the *field (Included: teachers, lecturers, successful Roma from the community, municipality, students and parents)*

This phase engaged pupils with low grades and bad behavior and the purpose was to activate and motivate such pupils. The following activities were performed

- a. Leaflets with appropriate content on education with a style and a language that is more

comprehensive for the community were distributed to students and parents;

- b. Organizing trainings for parents and pupils in school days, but also at various popular localities for different social groups from the community;

- c. Debates, video surveys, announcements with appropriately tailored content made

by pupils and appropriate staff were organized and produced;

- d. Presentation of the legal rights and obligations in local media;
- f. Art Exhibition on the topic *School is Important!* Acts of Famous Roma from the country and abroad;
- g. Reading literary works from pupils and parents in Romani and Macedonian
- h. Training in writing and reading for students and parents with learning disabilities
- i. Organizing oratory event on education, Roma and Romani language in Macedonia with speeches made by pupils
- j. Making posters about the campaign by pupils and choosing the best one

III Phase:

- ✓ Presenting final results of the survey and the campaign and summarizing the impressions of parents, students, teachers and all other stakeholders
- ✓ A final event was organized which showed the following results:

All previous activities with summarized results were presented, short videos made by students with success stories, pictures and drawings, speech on the importance of community education were displayed and a student read all the rules, regulations, statistics. All this was covered by the media.

Results:

In the school year 2018/2019, there were a total of 1992 pupils enrolled in 81 classes from the first to the ninth grade. Many students leave the country mainly for socio-economic reasons. Regular students represent 78%, or a total of 1563. Some of them do not attend school regularly and the School campaign was planned to identify the reasons. For this purpose, a statistical review of the current situation in the school was carried out.



Total number of enrolled pupils: 1992

Regular students: 71%

Unrated students: 22%

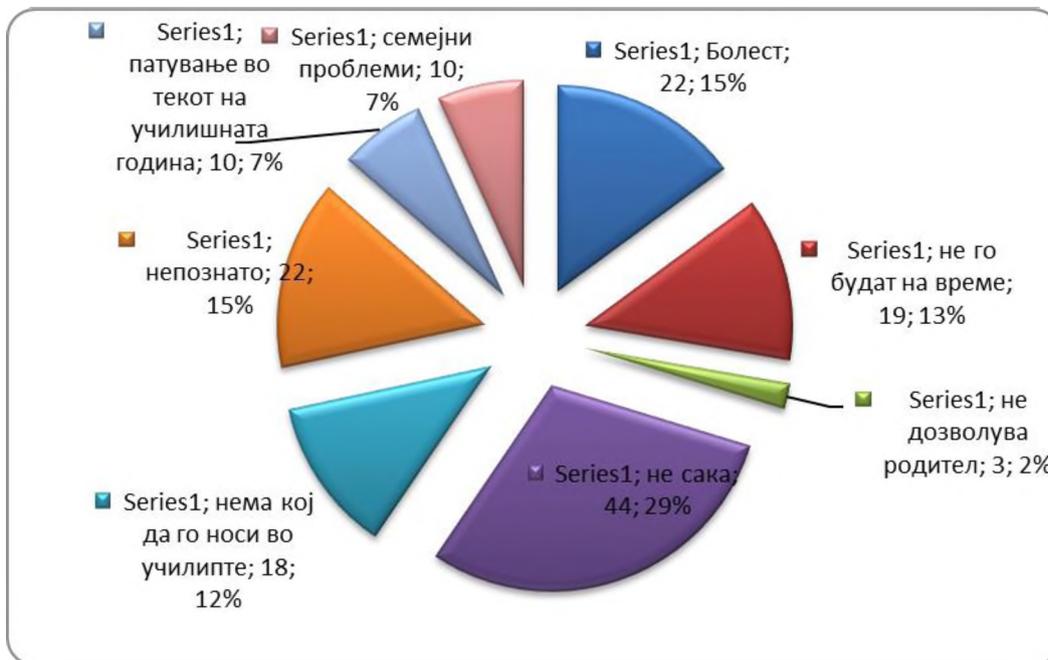
Irregular students: 7%

Reasons for not attending school regularly:

Disease 15%

Don't wake up on time for school 13%

The parent does not allow the child to go to school 2%
 Does not want to go to school 29%
 No available person to take the child to school 12%
 Unknown 15%
 Parents are traveling abroad 7% Family problems 7%



Challenges

This campaign was conducted by a team of teachers of Macedonian and Roma nationality. It included students, educational mediators, an education counsellor from the municipality of Shuto Orizari, as well as parents and citizens. The implementation of this campaign requires huge responsibility of all parties involved. Given that this kind of campaign is being implemented for the first time in our school and in our country, additional support is needed from all institutions involved in the integration of Roma in the educational process.

Sustainability

In order to reduce the leaving and absenteeism from schools of Roma students and at the same time to make this method sustainable, the financial support from MES and other institutions is necessary.

Lessons Learned

We have learned from this campaign that with a little more effort some things can be changed that haven't changed in years. We have learned that having one common goal can produce positive results. The positive approach to problem solving is the key to success.

Multiplication of the practice

As the campaign has produced positive results, it can also be replicated in other schools where regular attendance of Roma students is a problem. Teachers from Elementary School *Brakja Ramiz-*

Hamid can provide a range of teacher training on how to successfully run the campaign in other schools.

Policy Recommendations

Our school believes that penalties do not produce positive results. On the contrary - the purpose of the campaign is to show students the importance of education through positive examples. Involving parents and students, informing them about the importance of the education in life, laws and making them love school is the key of bringing all this kids in the schools. It is advisable that MES incorporates this method of work in all schools where children leave early or do not attend school.

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