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WP 4.1: Training of new Roma Influncers by Roma Influncers

Educational Material (revised)

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ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507

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preface

The present revised training material (Work Package 4, Activity 4.1), is integrated in the European Project:

“Roma Influencers Network - breaking the circle of early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities” (Grant Agreement no. 2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU -000247507) in the framework of the ERASMUS+ Programme.

It specifically constitutes the educational material that will be used by the already trained Roma Influencers to educate new Roma Influencers to participate in the Network.

The main objective of Work Package 4, Activity 4.1, is to expand both national and transnational networks of Roma influencers.

This will be achieved by identifying, introducing, and training new Roma influencers, building on the groundwork laid by existing influencers within Roma communities.

The influencers will support and guide new participants, helping them develop the skills and confidence needed to become active influencers in their communities.

The present revised training material (Work Package 4, Activity 4.1), is based on the educational materials developed in Work Package 2, Activity 2.3 by the organizations participating in the project :

GREECE: Klimaka www.klimaka.org.gr

IRELAND: Cairde www.cairde.ie

PORTUGAL: Cesis www.cesis.org &
Cooperactiva www.cooperactiva.info

ROMANIA: Sastipen www.sastipen.ro/ro/

Visit our website to find all the project’s outputs, including the educational handbooks and the bibliography:

<https://www.romainfluencersnetwork.eu/library-deliverables/>



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01

Introduction to the Project Work Packages & Activities





The project “Roma Influencers breaking the circle of early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities” under the title acronym “Roma Influencers Network” derives from the gravity of the extremely harmful practice of early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities. It is focused on empowering, supporting, protecting and awareness raising of the Roma community, especially women & girls affected by the specific concern by suggesting ways to change behaviors and attitudes in order to overcome, reduce or eliminate it.

Activities

- 📎 national researches & reports & comparative report to describe and analyze the harmful practice of early marriages and early motherhood and its consequences in 4 countries to compare it in transnational level, to verify the need of intervention and change
- 📎 training courses to train Roma women & girls in each country to become influencers on the concern of early marriages and early motherhood
- 📎 Roma Influencers Network (national & transnational) to engage the Roma community and specially Roma women & girls in active participation breaking the harmful practice
- 📎 awareness raising campaigns to Roma settlements to create awareness of the Roma
- 📎 national & transnational workshops, documentary films (national & transnational) & Roma Influencers festivals to increase awareness of women’s institutions, local and regional authorities, national & European institutions, NGOs, civil society, policy decision makers, mass media & broader community on the thematic of early marriages and early motherhood
- 📎 good practices guide (national & transnational) & policy recommendations (national & transnational) to create awareness of decision-making centers representatives



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02


Role of Roma Influencers Roma Influencers Rules







Influencers from the community


 Roma women / girls are the closest to communities and the first interveners and agents of social change.

 Roma Influencers are members of the community they will work with and have a significant in the girl's life.

 They have the best knowledge about the attitudes and behaviours of their communities and are most vested in changing discriminatory norms, especially around women's human rights.

 They are critical stakeholders in the process of addressing early marriages & early motherhood.

It is therefore very important to engage with them and increase their knowledge on the harmful effects of early marriages & early motherhood.

 Also, by enhancing their skills on mitigating this complex issue, we will be able to create sustainable solutions to the problem of early marriages & early motherhood.






Role of Roma Influencers

Roma women & girls will take action to challenge the harmful practice of early marriages & early motherhood, to advocate for policy change, to support the marginalized Roma community by Roma themselves amplifying their voices, to integrate their perspectives into decision making processes, overcome apathy, disconnection, disengagement, unequal access to resources, information, and opportunities, to give them the floor to express opinions, contribute to decision-making processes & policy decisions that affect them that shape their communities and lives.

The influencers are supposed to change hearts and minds of other Roma women & girls, contribute to the general objectives: create awareness of the Roma community and adapt positive attitude towards democratic values, fundamental rights children & women's rights into Roma culture.



Roma Influencers Rules

-  **Respect:** Give undivided attention to all persons
-  **Confidentiality:** What we share in this group will remain in this group
-  **Openness:** Be as open and honest as possible, but we won't disclose or discuss with others' (family, neighbors and friends) personal or private issues or lives. It is okay to discuss situations as general examples, but we won't use names or other identification.
-  **Non-Judgmental Approach:** We can disagree with another person's point of view or behavior without judging or putting him/her down.
-  **Sensitivity to Diversity:** We will remember that members in the group may differ in any background and/or other preferences



03

Reality & Data of early marriages and early motherhood



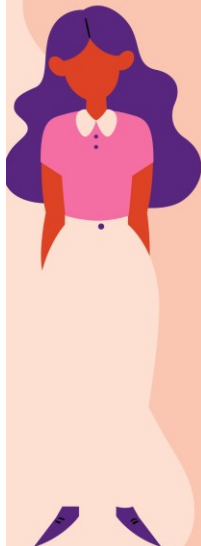


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COMPARATIVE REPORT SELECTED FINDINGS IN 4 COUNTRIES

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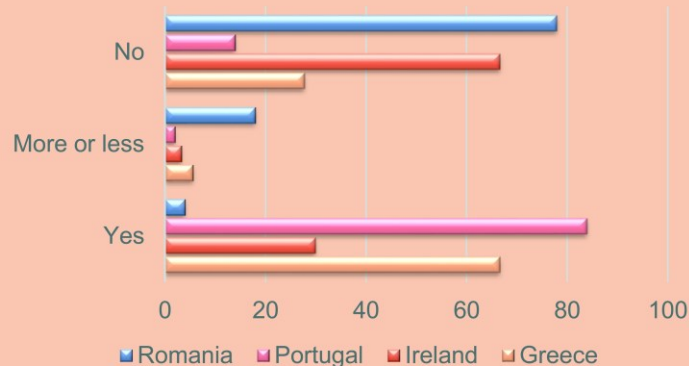
The Comparative Report on early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Romania conducted under Erasmus+ programme, Project "Roma Influencers breaking the circle of early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities" Project Code: 2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507 contributes to a deeper understanding of the harmful practice of early marriage and early motherhood, by outlining the legal frameworks, existing policies, and the current situation of Roma communities in 4 countries. Find & download the entire report: <https://www.romainfluencersnetwork.eu/library-deliverables/>



Average number of children per women interviewed, by country



Adequate information about pregnancy, by country (%)



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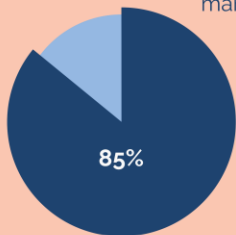


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Given the importance of the issue of early marriage and how it can affect the lives of young Roma women, not only physically but also in terms of their choices and futures, the opinions of respondents highlight the need for intervention. Of the 184 respondents from the four countries, 85% considered it important to promote activities to reduce or prevent early marriages.



Believes that it is important to promote activities to reduce or prevent early marriages

COMPARATIVE REPORT SELECTED FINDINGS IN 4 COUNTRIES

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Reasons for not promoting activities to reduce/prevent early marriage (%)	Greece	Ireland	Portugal	Romania
This will never change	11	13	14	4
It is needed to preserve tradition	11	17	6	2
It is needed to preserve the role of women	5	20	6	0
Roma women like to marry early	9	20	10	2
Marriage is too important in Roma girl's life	11	23	10	4
There is a strong pressure from the families for early marriage	1	6	6	0
If we do not marry in an early age people start to talk badly about us	5	10	6	2

The reasons given for those women who do not agree with the opinion of the majority vary from country to country. In Greece and Portugal, the main reason activities aimed at preventing early marriage are not valued is due to the longevity and constancy of traditions: *this is something that will never change* but also with the conviction that traditions should be preserved (Greece and Ireland). Also a Portuguese woman offers a "good" explanation for this continuity: *'I don't think it's going to change – it's tradition! A woman who gets married at 19 or 20 is already considered old, so that's not going to change'*. In all countries except Romania, the importance of women's 'will' was recognised (*Roma women like to marry early*), which also led to the importance that marriage assumes in their lives.

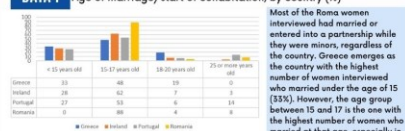


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DATA 1 Age of marriage/start of cohabitation, by country (%)



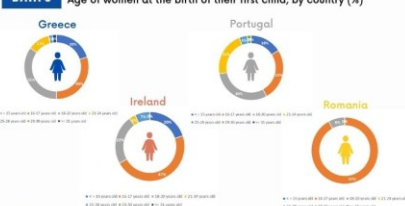
Most of the Roma women interviewed had married or entered into a partnership while they were minors, regardless of the country. Greece emerges as the country with the highest number of women interviewed who married under the age of 15 (33%). However, the age group between 15 and 17 is the one with the highest number of women who married at that age, especially in Romania.

This information shows that there is a tendency towards early marriage in these populations, regardless of country of origin. For women in particular, marriage is perceived as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood in a world where childhood is short and adolescence is almost non-existent.

DATA 2 Reasons for marrying at this age, by country (%)



DATA 3 Age of women at the birth of their first child, by country (%)



More specifically, most births generally took place before the age of 20. However, most of the Roma women interviewed had their first child before the age of 15, with the exception of Romania. The youngest mothers, aged 13, were found among Greek, Portuguese and Roma women living in Ireland.



04

Basic body functions

From child to adult: Transformations of body and mind

Mental health - How to recognize and maintain it

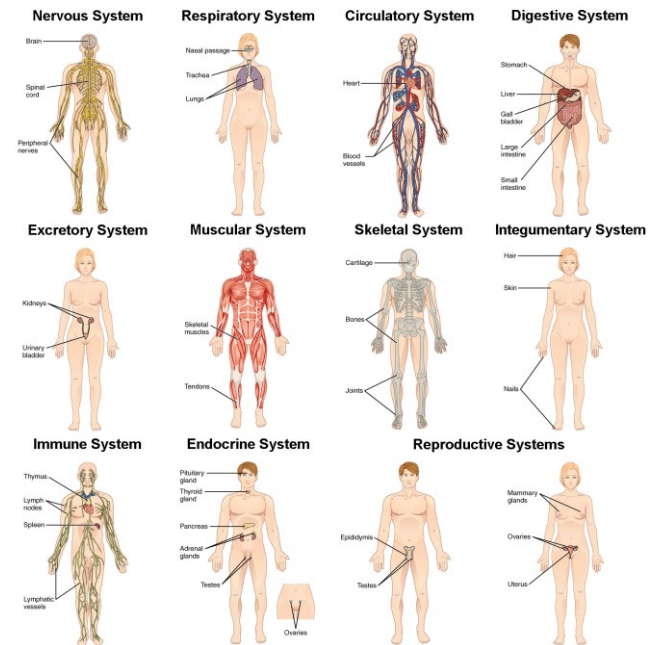
Reproductive health

Human body

Relational (the link between the body and the external environment through the sense organs)

Nutrition (this function is carried out by the respiratory, digestive, circulatory and excretory systems)

Reproductive (sexuality, which - physiologically - is designed to ensure reproduction, and emotionally is linked to essential emotional aspects).



From child to adult: Transformations of body and mind

Puberty - is the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, characterized by physical, hormonal and emotional changes.

It begins:

-8-13 years in girls,

-between 9-14 years in boys, and ends around the age of 16

-17 years.

"Puberty is a complex biological process that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood, generally occurring between the ages of 8-13 for girls and 9-14 for boys" (National Institutes of Health, 2021). (National Institutes of Health, 2021)

Adolescence - According to the World Health Organization (WHO), adolescence is the period between the ages of 10-19 years and is a critical phase of personal and social development.

Stages of adolescence:

10-13 years - early adolescence

14-16 years - middle adolescence

17-19 years - late adolescence

"Adolescence is a unique and formative period. Multiple physical, emotional and social changes, including exposure to poverty, abuse or violence, can make adolescents vulnerable to mental health problems".

(World Health Organization, 2023)

Youth (15-35 years)

Some specialists consider that youth extends up to the age of 35, taking into account the postponement of the stages of maturation (family, career, housing). Sub-stages may include:

24-28 years - Adaptation (apprenticeship, couple life, first professional steps)

28-32 years - Establishing (consolidating professional, parental status)

32-35 years - Stability (clarification of personal values and aspirations)

(UNESCO, 2019; WHO, 2022)



Mental health - How to recognize and maintain it

What is mental health?

Mental health is a state of emotional, psychological and social well-being. It influences how we think, feel, behave and manage stress, relationships and decision-making. *World Health Organization (WHO, 2022).*

"Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders - it is a resource that helps us cope with life."

Postnatal / post partum depression

What is postpartum depression?

Postpartum depression is a mental disorder that can occur in mothers in the first months after giving birth. It is not a form of 'weakness' or 'laziness', but a real medical condition caused by hormonal changes, stress and lack of social support. *American Psychological Association (APA, 2020).*

Understanding Postpartum Depression

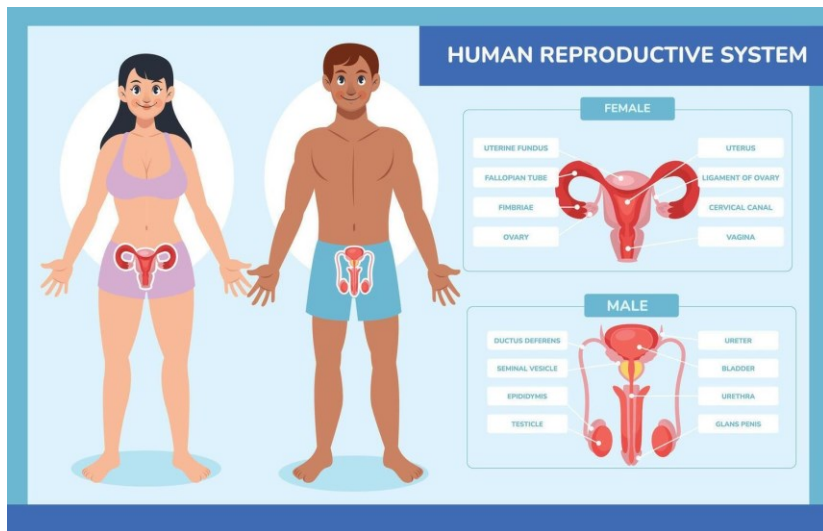
Common symptoms:

Frequent and unexplained crying;
Lack of energy and difficulty concentrating;
Feelings of guilt, shame or worthlessness;
Difficulty bonding with the baby;
Thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

How do we support a mother with postnatal depression?
Non-judgmental listening;
Encouragement to talk to a specialist (psychologist, doctor);
Offering concrete help (childcare, household);
Validating emotions: "It's ok to feel overwhelmed, you are not alone."

Reproductive health

The reproductive system is a set of organs and structures that play an important role in reproduction, but also in the Hormonal and sexual development of each individual.



The female reproductive system includes:
*ovaries (produce eggs and hormones such as estrogen),
 the fallopian tubes (carry eggs to the uterus),
 the uterus (where pregnancy develops),
 vagina (the birth canal),
 vulva (external part of the genitals).*

The male reproductive system includes:
*testicles (produce sperm and testosterone),
 vas deferens (transport sperm),
 seminal vesicles and prostate (contribute seminal fluid)*

It is essential for teenagers to know their own bodies, understand how they work, and eliminate shame or myths about reproduction. Body knowledge is the first step towards a healthy sex life, preventing abuse and unwanted pregnancies.





Link to the Roma Influencers Network project:

In many Roma communities, information about reproduction is either taboo or misinformed. Influencers (girls) have a key role to play in educating girls and boys about their bodies in a fair and friendly way.

Reproductive health

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are infections that are transmitted mainly through vaginal, oral or anal sex. Some STDs can also be transmitted from mother to child through blood or contact with infected fluids.

Most common STDs:

-  HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) - weakens the immune system
-  HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) - some strains can cause cervical cancer
-  Chlamydia - often without symptoms, but can lead to infertility if untreated
-  Gonorrhoea - bacterial infection that can affect the reproductive organs

Possible (but not always occurring) symptoms:

- ◇ Unusual secretions
- ◇ Pain when urinating
- ◇ Sores or blisters in the intimate area
- ◇ No symptoms does not mean no disease!

Effective prevention:

- ◎ Correct condom use (internal or external)
- ◎ Regular STD testing
- ◎ Avoiding unprotected sex
- ◎ Access to correct information and counseling



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05

Alternatives – Girls with a future
Our future. Our choice.
Freedom to dream. Time to grow.








Key aspects of women's rights today:

-  **Legal and Political Rights:**
Women have the right to vote and participate in democracy, influencing laws and policies.
-  **Education and Economic Rights:**
Women have the right to education and equal opportunities in the workforce, including fair wages and property ownership.
-  **Physical and Mental Health:**
Women have the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including access to reproductive healthcare.
-  **Freedom from Violence:**
Women have the right to live free from violence and discrimination, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and gender-based violence.
-  **Equality and Non-Discrimination:**
Women have the right to be treated with respect and dignity, and to be free from all forms of discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics.

Moving Forward

Advancing women's rights requires ongoing efforts to address these challenges:

-  **Advocacy and Awareness:**
Raising awareness about women's rights and the issues they face is crucial.
-  **Legal Reform:**
Ensuring that laws protect women's rights and provide for equal treatment is essential.
-  **Economic Empowerment:**
Providing women with access to economic resources and opportunities can help them achieve self-sufficiency and independence.
-  **Ending Violence:**
Preventing and responding to violence against women is a critical priority.
-  **Promoting Gender Equality:**
Creating a society where women and men are treated equally and have equal opportunities is a long-term goal.



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Consortium

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