

WP3.2: Implementation Report of the 288 Awareness-Raising Campaigns in Four Countries: Greece, Ireland, Portugal & Romania on Early Marriage and Early Motherhood

1. Introduction

Within the framework of Work Package 3 (WP3), Action 3.2 of the *Roma Influencers Network* project, a total of **288 awareness-raising campaigns** were implemented across four countries—Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Romania—with the aim of informing, preventing, and empowering Roma communities regarding the phenomenon of early marriage and early motherhood.

The activities were carried out in vulnerable Roma settlements and communities, utilizing the Roma Influencers who were trained under Action 2.4. The campaigns were designed in a culturally sensitive manner and adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of the local communities.

At the same time, the conclusions drawn from these activities were further enriched by the experiences and data emerging from similar interventions in the partner countries, providing a comprehensive transnational approach to the issue.

2. Field Implementation of Activities

The 288 campaigns were conducted directly within Roma communities, aiming to strengthen trust and facilitate meaningful dialogue.

The activities included:

- Presentation of the objectives and philosophy of the *Roma Influencers Network* project
- Open discussions on early marriage and early motherhood
- Information sessions on reproductive health issues
- Provision of information on the social, educational, and psychological consequences of early marriage
- Information on the legal framework concerning forced and underage marriages
- Presentation of real-life testimonies by trained Roma women

The meetings were conducted using simple and understandable language, while in cases where it was considered necessary, the Romani language was also used to ensure understanding and strengthen familiarity and trust.



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3. Community Participation and Reactions

Participation in the activities was particularly significant, although some hesitation was observed during the initial phase, mainly due to the sensitivity of the topics discussed.

At the beginning of the discussions, several participants referred to traditional beliefs and social norms as justification for maintaining the practice of early marriage.

However, maintaining an atmosphere of respect, trust, and a non-judgmental approach gradually led to greater openness.

The participation of young girls was particularly positive, as they expressed interest and concerns regarding:

- Continuing their education
- Their professional and personal prospects

At the same time, young men actively participated, acknowledging the social pressure placed on them to assume family and financial responsibilities at a very young age.

Many parents stated that financial hardship and lack of opportunities are key factors contributing to the continuation of these practices.

4. Key Issues Identified

Through the 288 campaigns, several recurring issues were identified.

Socioeconomic Factors

- Poverty and economic insecurity
- Limited educational and professional opportunities

Educational Gaps

- Limited access to comprehensive sexual education
- Insufficient awareness of children's and women's rights

Cultural Pressures

- Strong traditional beliefs
- Pressure related to family honor and social acceptance



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Lack of Legal Awareness

- Limited knowledge of the legal consequences of forced or underage marriage

School Dropout

- Leaving school due to pregnancy or marriage at a young age

In several cases, it was found that early marriage is perceived by some families as a mechanism of protection or economic survival rather than as a violation of fundamental rights.

5. Impact and Added Value

The campaigns made a substantial contribution in the following areas:

Strengthening Dialogue

Greater communication was observed between parents and children regarding issues of marriage, education, and personal choices.

Raising Awareness

Participants gained a better understanding of the social and legal dimensions of the issue.

Empowerment of Local Actors

The Roma Influencers emerged as credible agents of change within their communities.

Identification of Cases Requiring Intervention

Cases requiring further support and follow-up were identified and documented.

Amplification of Authentic Voices

Through the documentary short films, the promotion of authentic narratives proved empowering and offered positive examples for others to follow.

6. Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The experience gained through the implementation of the 288 campaigns confirmed that social change requires:



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- Consistent presence within communities
- Respect for cultural particularities
- Creation of safe spaces for dialogue
- Flexibility in methodological approaches
- Continuous involvement of community members themselves

The experience further confirmed that when information is delivered with empathy, cultural understanding, and practical support, communities demonstrate a genuine willingness to reflect and embrace change.

7. Final Conclusion

The 288 awareness-raising campaigns implemented across the four participating countries demonstrated that the prevention of early marriage and early motherhood requires long-term, multi-level, and participatory intervention.

The active contribution of the Roma Influencers proved that change is possible when it is based on dialogue, trust, and collective action.

The findings of the transnational experience will make a substantial contribution to the formulation of the project's final policy recommendations, strengthening the voice of Roma communities in decision-making processes and supporting sustainable social change across Europe.



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