



Project: “Roma Influencers breaking the circle of early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities”



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www.romainfluencersnetwork.eu romainfluencersnetwork@gmail.com [Roma Influencers Network](https://www.facebook.com/Roma-Influencers-Network) [Roma_Influencers_Network](https://www.instagram.com/Roma_Influencers_Network) [Roma_Influencers_Network](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Policy Recommendations Work Package 3 Activity 3.4 Romania

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This public policy recommendation is addressed to the Government of Romania, the Ministry of Labor, Family, Youth, and Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Health, and the National Agency for Roma, institutions responsible for the development, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of public policies regarding child protection, social inclusion, and the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority.

The document was developed as part of the European project “Roma Influencers – Breaking the Circle of Early Marriages and Early Motherhood in Roma Communities,” funded by the Erasmus+ Program, and is based on the findings of the “National Report on Early Marriages and Early Motherhood in Roma Communities – Romania.” The national report was prepared by experts delegated by the Sastipen Association – Roma Center for Health Policies, under the coordination of the partner CESIS – Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social, the organization responsible for coordinating research activities within the project.

The phenomenon of early marriage and early motherhood continues to pose a major challenge for public policies on child rights protection and social inclusion in Romania. Research highlights that these phenomena disproportionately affect girls and young women in vulnerable communities, particularly in Roma communities exposed to poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, and limited access to essential public services.

The report shows that Romania is among the European countries with high rates of teenage births, a phenomenon linked to school dropout, a lack of health education, limited access to medical services, and the perpetuation of traditional social norms. In many cases, early marriage or motherhood leads to interrupted education, limited career opportunities, economic dependence, and an increased risk of social exclusion for girls and young women.

At the same time, the research highlights difficulties in implementing preventive measures and integrated services at the local level. Although Romania has a relevant legislative framework in the areas of child protection, equal opportunity, and Roma inclusion, institutional interventions often remain fragmented, and mechanisms for cooperation between the education system, social services, and the healthcare system are underdeveloped.

In this context, this document sets forth a series of public policy recommendations aimed at preventing early marriage and teenage pregnancy through integrated measures in the areas of education, health, and social protection. The recommendations promote the



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strengthening of inter-institutional cooperation, the development of community services, the improvement of data collection on the phenomenon, and the implementation of information and awareness campaigns culturally adapted to Roma communities.

The document advocates for an approach based on children’s rights, the active participation of Roma communities, and the involvement of civil society organizations in developing and implementing solutions. Through coordinated and sustainable measures, public authorities can help reduce the social vulnerabilities that contribute to the perpetuation of this phenomenon and promote the social and educational inclusion of Roma girls and young women in Romania.

2. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE ISSUE

Early marriage and early motherhood are social phenomena that directly affect the respect for children’s rights, equal access to education, and the process of social inclusion for vulnerable groups. At the European level, these practices are considered major factors contributing to the perpetuation of poverty, social exclusion, and gender inequalities, affecting in particular girls and young women from marginalized communities.

In Romania, this phenomenon continues to be particularly prevalent in vulnerable communities, where economic hardship, limited access to public services, and low levels of education contribute to early marriage and pregnancy. Research conducted as part of the project highlights the fact that Roma girls and young women are at increased risk of dropping out of school, social exclusion, and economic dependence, in the context of persistent structural vulnerabilities.

The data analyzed show that Romania ranks among the European countries with high rates of teenage births, a phenomenon that is more pronounced in rural areas and in communities affected by poverty and social marginalization. In many cases, early motherhood leads to the interruption of education and limits the prospects for personal and professional development for girls and young women. At the same time, limited access to healthcare and a lack of information on reproductive health contribute to the perpetuation of this phenomenon.

The analysis conducted as part of the research highlights the fact that the phenomenon of early marriage and early motherhood cannot be explained solely by cultural factors, but must be understood in the context of broader social issues: poverty, poor housing conditions, discrimination, limited access to education and social services, as well as the lack of effective preventive interventions. In many cases, vulnerable families and communities do not have access to integrated support and counseling services that could help prevent this phenomenon.



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Although Romania has a relevant legislative framework in the areas of child protection, equal opportunities, and the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority, the implementation of preventive measures and integrated services remains inconsistent at the local level. In this context, it is necessary to strengthen prevention-oriented public policies, develop interinstitutional cooperation, and actively involve Roma communities and civil society organizations in the development and implementation of solutions.

3. ANALYSIS / MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The analysis conducted as part of “National Report on Early Marriage and Early Motherhood in Roma Communities – Romania” highlights that the phenomenon of early marriage and early motherhood continues to be a significant social problem in Romania, with direct effects on children’s rights, educational participation, and the social inclusion of girls and young women in vulnerable communities. The research shows that the phenomenon disproportionately affects Roma communities exposed to poverty, marginalization, and limited access to essential public services.

The data analyzed in the report show that Romania is among the European countries with the highest rates of teenage births. According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2023 there were 648 births to girls under the age of 15 and 14,714 births to mothers aged 15 to 19. At the same time, 2,339 cases were reported in which the fathers were between the ages of 15 and 19, and 157 cases in which the fathers were involved in births to girls under the age of 15.

The report also highlights that the phenomenon is more pronounced in rural areas and marginalized communities, where access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities is limited. Field research conducted as part of the project reveals that many of the participants dropped out of school before completing compulsory education, and early motherhood contributed to increased economic dependence and social exclusion.

An important finding highlighted by the research is the direct link between early marriage, early motherhood, and a lack of access to information on reproductive health. Many of the women interviewed stated that they had not received health education, prenatal counseling, or information on contraception and reproductive rights. The report indicates that low participation in prenatal consultations and health education programs is driven by poverty, a lack of accessible medical services, and low levels of information.

The research also highlights the fact that many of the participants perceive early motherhood as a natural stage of life, influenced by social norms and family models prevalent in the community. In many cases, social pressure and a lack of educational and professional opportunities contribute to perpetuating the phenomenon. At the same



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time, the report emphasizes that the phenomenon should not be interpreted exclusively from a cultural perspective, but rather in the context of persistent structural vulnerabilities: poverty, discrimination, poor housing conditions, and limited institutional intervention.

The analysis also highlights difficulties in implementing public policies at the local level. Although Romania has relevant strategies and legislation in the areas of child protection and Roma inclusion, there is a lack of integrated mechanisms for preventing and monitoring the issue. Cooperation between schools, social services, healthcare facilities, and local authorities is often insufficient, and preventive interventions are fragmented and limited in scope.

The findings of the research highlight the need for integrated and sustainable public policies based on prevention, education, and community support. The report underscores the importance of strengthening inter-institutional cooperation, developing community services, and actively involving mediators, community leaders, and Roma organizations in implementing prevention and support measures for girls and young women at risk.

4. POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to prevent and reduce the incidence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy in Roma communities in Romania, it is necessary to develop an integrated, multisectoral approach centered on children’s rights, in line with European standards on the protection of national minorities, equal opportunities, and the fight against discrimination, including the provisions of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the EU Strategy on Roma Inclusion.

The recommendations set out below are addressed to the Government of Romania, the Ministry of Labor, Family, Youth, and Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Health, and the National Agency for Roma, as well as to local public authorities and institutions responsible for implementing public policies on Roma inclusion.

i. Development of an integrated national prevention and intervention mechanism

It is recommended that an integrated national mechanism be developed and implemented to prevent early marriage and early motherhood, ensuring ongoing cooperation between the education system, the healthcare system, social services, local authorities, and civil society organizations.

This mechanism must include clear procedures for the early identification of children and adolescents at risk, rapid intervention measures, and integrated counseling and support



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services for vulnerable children and families. It is also necessary to establish multidisciplinary teams at the local level, comprising representatives from schools, social services, health care, school and health mediators, as well as Roma organizations.

Implementing such a mechanism would help improve institutional coordination and develop preventive interventions tailored to the needs of vulnerable communities.

ii. Improving the collection and monitoring of data on the phenomenon

The national report highlights significant gaps in statistical data regarding early marriage, informal unions, and early motherhood among adolescents. In this context, it is recommended that a unified national system be developed for the collection, centralization, and analysis of data on the phenomenon, in compliance with the principles of data protection and non-discrimination.

The data collected should make it possible to identify high-risk areas and communities, monitor trends, and assess the impact of the measures implemented. At the same time, it is important to include relevant indicators on school dropout rates, access to healthcare, and girls’ participation in educational and prevention programs.

A stronger statistical foundation will support the development of evidence-based public policies and contribute to the efficient allocation of public resources.

iii. Strengthening educational measures to prevent school dropout

Education is one of the most important tools for preventing early marriage and early childbearing. To this end, it is recommended that national programs aimed at preventing school dropout in vulnerable communities be strengthened and that the participation of Roma girls in the education system be increased.

The Ministry of Education and Research must expand “After-School” programs, remedial activities, mentoring and school counseling services, as well as financial support measures for children at educational risk. At the same time, it is necessary to develop health education and children’s rights programs that are culturally appropriate and accessible to children and adolescents in vulnerable communities.

It is also recommended to strengthen the role of school mediators and educational counselors in facilitating the relationship between schools, families, and the community, as well as in preventing school dropout among girls at risk of early marriage.

iv. Increasing access to medical services and reproductive health programs

The Ministry of Health must develop community health services accessible to adolescents and young women in vulnerable communities, particularly in rural and marginalized areas.



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It is necessary to expand information programs on reproductive health, family planning, prenatal care, and the prevention of teenage pregnancies. It is also recommended to increase access to psychological counseling and emotional support services for pregnant adolescents and young mothers.

Roma health mediators must be supported through continuing education programs and actively integrated into activities aimed at prevention, information, and facilitating access to medical services for vulnerable communities. Their role is essential in building a relationship of trust between public institutions and Roma communities.

v. Implementation of culturally appropriate information and communication campaigns

It is recommended to develop national and local information and awareness campaigns regarding the negative consequences of early marriage and early motherhood on the health, education, and social inclusion of girls and young women.

Campaigns must be conducted in a non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate manner, avoiding the stigmatization of Roma communities. It is important that the messages promote children’s rights, equal opportunities, continued education, and access to health and social services.

Public authorities must collaborate with community leaders, Romani women, mediators, Romani influencers, and nongovernmental organizations to develop effective methods of communication and awareness-raising at the local level. The involvement of Romani communities in the design and implementation of campaigns is essential to increasing the acceptance and effectiveness of these interventions.

vi. Training professionals who work with children and vulnerable communities

It is recommended to develop ongoing training programs for teachers, social workers, medical staff, police officers, mediators, and local government representatives on the prevention of early marriage and early motherhood.

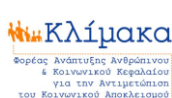
Training programs must include topics such as children’s rights, combating discrimination, gender equality, intercultural communication, identifying at-risk situations, and intervention methods in vulnerable communities.

Strengthening the skills of professionals will help improve the institutional response, develop more accessible public services, and increase the authorities’ capacity to intervene effectively in preventing the phenomenon.

Implementing these recommendations can help reduce the social vulnerabilities that contribute to early marriage and early motherhood and promote social inclusion and the rights of Roma children and young women in Romania.



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