

WP4.3 Good Practices Guide – Romania

*Created by Sastipen Romania and the
Trained Roma Influencers*

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



“This guidebook was created within the Roma Influencers Network project, as a collective effort to empower Roma women and girls to shape their own futures. It is dedicated to all mediators, educators, and young women who believe that change begins in their own communities.”

Nicoleta Filip, National Coordinator – Romania

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

General Context

- Early marriages and early motherhood continue to represent a major challenge in Romania, particularly affecting vulnerable communities. Despite legislative progress and educational interventions, social pressure, lack of information, and poverty remain key factors that perpetuate this phenomenon.
- The project “Roma Influencers Network – Breaking the Circle of Early Marriages and Early Motherhood” (2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507), funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, was created to address these challenges through an innovative, participatory approach based on the leadership and empowerment of Roma women.

Early marriages and early motherhood remain complex issues

- *Early marriages and early motherhood remain complex issues with multidimensional impact – physical, psycho-emotional, educational, and economic – on children and young women, especially within vulnerable communities. In Romania, national and regional data show that the phenomenon persists in various forms (informal marriages, unregistered “union-type” marriages, teenage pregnancies), with a disproportionate incidence among certain vulnerable Roma groups.*
- *For example, UNICEF data indicate that approximately 1 in 10 children in Romania is born to an adolescent mother, and the international child marriage database estimates an adult prevalence (women aged 20–24) of around 6–7% married before the age of 18 in Romania (<https://childmarriagedata.org/>).*
- *These figures justify the need for a practical, evidence-based instrument addressed to health mediators, local authorities, and community organizations, aimed at supporting preventive and educational interventions in vulnerable communities.*



1 in 10 children in Romania

is born to an adolescent mother

Around 6–7% of women aged 20–24

were married before the age of 18.

Romania remains

among the European countries with
the highest rate of teenage
motherhood

Purpose of the Good Practice Guide

- This guide is the result of a participatory research process and of the collaboration with health mediators, educators, youth, and local leaders from Bucharest, Giurgiu, and Neamț.
- It was created out of the need to provide a practical instrument that supports professionals in the social, medical, and educational fields in preventing early marriages and early motherhood.
- Through its content, the guide:
 - 1.provides updated information on the phenomenon and its social, educational, and public health consequences;
 - 2.promotes the rights of children and women, in accordance with international standards (UNICEF, WHO, CEDAW, and the Istanbul Convention);
 - 3.presents examples of good practices developed by Roma influencers trained within the Roma Influencers Network project;
 - 4.offers educational resources and participatory methods for training, awareness, and advocacy at the community level.

Long-Term Vision

- The Roma Influencers Network is not just a project—it marks the beginning of a European movement that promotes dignity, freedom of choice, and equal access to education and healthcare.
- Each influencer trained within this program becomes a voice of change—a role model who inspires other girls to believe in their own potential and to build their future on the foundations of knowledge, respect, and solidarity.

2.1. Proposed Methodology for the Development and Update of the Guide

The proposed methodology for developing and updating this guide combines three essential elements:

a) A rights-based and evidence-based approach:

We rely on published research, official reports, and clinical-epidemiological studies — including those from the World Health Organization (<https://www.who.int/>), UNICEF (<https://www.unicef.org/romania/ro>), and the Roma Center for Health Policies – Sastipen (<https://www.sastipen.ro/ro/publicatii/raportari/>) — as well as academic studies, to ground all practical recommendations in reliable evidence.

b) Community participation and action research:

This involves the direct engagement of health mediators, school mediators, young Roma women, and parents in collecting qualitative data (through questionnaires and interviews) and in testing the tools (piloted in three counties: Bucharest, Giurgiu, and Neamț), ensuring the cultural relevance and acceptability of the proposed interventions.

c) Multisectoral perspectives:

The methodology integrates components of health, education, social protection, and non-discrimination — emphasizing the role of health mediators as vital bridges between communities and public services, to ensure coherent, evidence-based, and locally relevant recommendations.

2.2. Objectives of the Guide

General Objective:

To reduce the risk and impact of early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities by improving access to information, medical services, and psychosocial support through the network of health mediators and collaboration with local authorities.

Specific Objectives:

- 1.To increase knowledge and awareness of reproductive health, sexual and reproductive rights, and prevention options (modern contraception, family planning) among girls aged 16–19 and their families.*
- 2.To strengthen health education and awareness on body development, hygiene, and emotional well-being among girls aged 12–16 and their families.*
- 3.To standardize early identification and case management procedures (counseling, referral, protection) related to early marriages and early pregnancies, for implementation within health centers and by health mediators.*
- 4.To provide policy and practice recommendations for local authorities (education, health, and social assistance) to support prevention, the educational reintegration of young mothers, and family support, based on evidence and good practice models.*

2.3. Working Group and Development Process

Composition of the Working Group:

Health experts / health mediators: Ioana Constantin, Carmen Andrei, Gabriela Olaru, Stanciu Stela, and others

Education experts: Elena Radu

Social workers and sociologists: Beatrice-Maria Radu

Community members from Bucharest, Giurgiu, and Neamț

Guide coordinator: Nicoleta Filip, public health expert

Family doctors and gynecologists with experience in adolescent care

Community-based social workers and psychologists

Representatives of local authorities (Public Health Directorate – DSP, DGASPC)

NGO representatives specialized in Roma rights and the prevention of early marriages – Sastipen, Roma Forum (a national platform bringing together 62 Roma NGOs), and partner civil society organizations working in the fields of education, health, and gender equality

Youth representatives (Roma girls from the target communities) for participatory validation

2.4. Development Stages

- a) Documentation – collection and analysis of relevant studies, legislation, and research.
- b) Collection of real-life stories from health mediators working in the field.
- c) Community consultations – through focus groups in the three counties (Bucharest, Giurgiu, Neamt).
- d) Drafting the guide in an accessible and inclusive format.
- e) Validation by experts and members of the Roma communities involved.

2.5. Documentation Sources

- Reports and data from Girls Not Brides, UNICEF, and WHO
- European Union policies and recommendations on Roma inclusion
- Relevant practices and case studies from Ireland, Portugal, and Greece
- Academic studies on mental health, sexual education, and early marriage prevention

CHAPTER III – CHILD AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS

3.1. Connection with Fundamental Human Rights

- The respect and promotion of the fundamental rights of children and women represent a key pillar in every educational, social, or cultural initiative. These rights are guaranteed by international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

1. For the Child:

- The right to quality, accessible, and non-discriminatory education, enabling harmonious development and active participation in society.
- The right to protection against any form of abuse, neglect, violence, or exploitation.
- The right to freely express opinions and to participate in decisions affecting their lives, according to age and maturity.
- The right to health and to a stable family environment and emotional support.

3.1. Connection with Fundamental Human Rights

2. For the Woman:

- The right to equality of opportunity and treatment in all areas of life, including education, employment, and social participation.*
 - The right to protection against all forms of violence, discrimination, and exploitation.*
 - The right to equal access to healthcare services, including reproductive and maternal health services.*
 - The right to active and equal participation in community life and in decisions that affect her.*
-
- In all activities, efforts are made to create a safe and inclusive environment in which both children and women are respected, valued, and supported in their full development. Awareness of these rights is actively promoted, alongside efforts to combat stereotypes and prejudices that hinder their exercise.*

3.2. Challenges in Traditional Roma Communities

- *In traditional Roma communities, unwritten rules and cultural customs often act as significant barriers to the respect and implementation of these rights, particularly regarding the issue of early marriages.*
- *Such practices, deeply rooted in the history and culture of these communities, require sustained, culturally sensitive, and long-term efforts to be effectively addressed.*
- *Health mediators play a strategic and essential role in defending and promoting the fundamental rights of children and women within these communities. Their presence ensures a vital bridge between local authorities and Roma families, enabling real dialogue, mutual understanding, and culturally adapted solutions.*

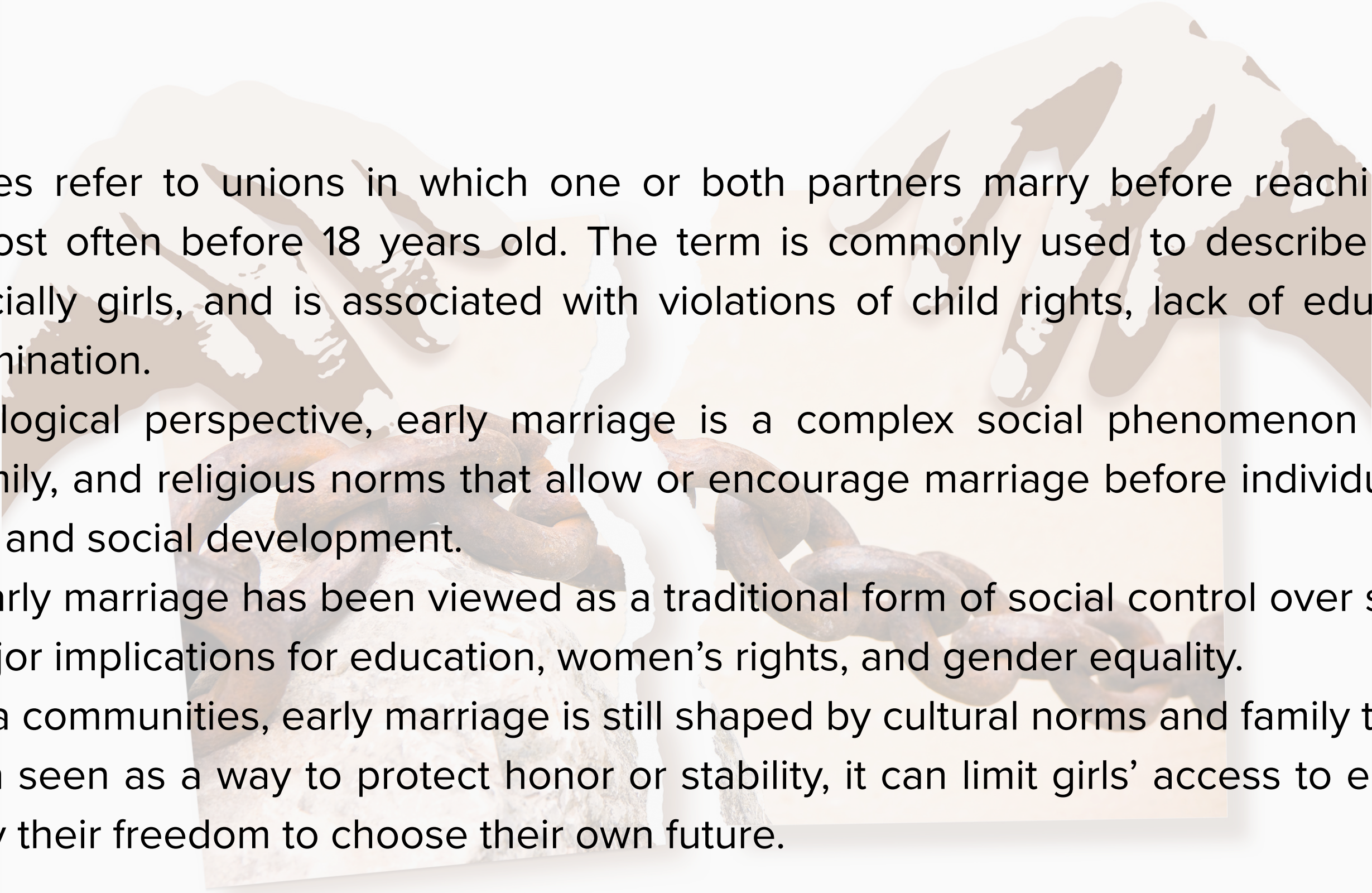
3.3. The Strategic Role of Health Mediators

- Through their deep understanding of community culture, health mediators facilitate open, respectful communication between community members and authorities. They possess the unique ability to earn the trust of families and local leaders and to clearly explain, in culturally adapted terms, the importance of education, reproductive health, and protection against early marriages.
- In their relationship with local authorities, health mediators act as a genuine “bridge of connection”, bringing attention to the real needs of the community and facilitating access to social, medical, and educational services.
- They are often on the front line in identifying cases of risk, mobilizing resources for appropriate intervention, and helping prevent discrimination and violence.

3.3. The Strategic Role of Health Mediators

- A crucial advantage of health mediators is their fluency in the Romani language, the mother tongue of most community members. This removes linguistic barriers, fosters trust and openness, and allows mediators to deliver messages of prevention, awareness, and education in a culturally and linguistically adapted manner, thus increasing the effectiveness of interventions.
- In this context, recognizing and supporting the role of health mediators by local and national authorities is vital for the success of policies and programs aimed at inclusion and protection of the rights of women and children in vulnerable communities.
- Investing in their training, motivation, and integration into decision-making and operational structures is a pragmatic, effective, and sustainable solution to overcome the cultural and social barriers that still hinder progress.

CHAPTER IV – UNDERSTANDING THE PHENOMENON: WHAT ARE EARLY MARRIAGES?

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- Early marriages refer to unions in which one or both partners marry before reaching the legal age of majority — most often before 18 years old. The term is commonly used to describe marriages involving minors, especially girls, and is associated with violations of child rights, lack of education, poverty, and gender discrimination.
 - From a sociological perspective, early marriage is a complex social phenomenon shaped by cultural, economic, family, and religious norms that allow or encourage marriage before individuals have completed their personal and social development.
 - Historically, early marriage has been viewed as a traditional form of social control over sexuality and gender roles, with major implications for education, women's rights, and gender equality.
 - In many Roma communities, early marriage is still shaped by cultural norms and family traditions.
 - Though often seen as a way to protect honor or stability, it can limit girls' access to education and health, and take away their freedom to choose their own future.

- In many cultures, early marriage was linked to protecting family honour and ensuring lineage continuity. Among traditional societies, it was often motivated by economic and demographic factors, serving as a survival mechanism within fragile social systems.
- Within Roma communities, early marriages have deep historical roots, originally functioning as a form of social protection for girls during vulnerable times such as the slavery period, when family stability and bloodline continuity were prioritized.
- These practices became intertwined with the principles of Rromanipen – the Romani code of conduct regulating family honour, respect, and tradition.
- Although these customs hold cultural significance, they must be critically re-evaluated in the light of children's rights and the modern need for women's social and educational emancipation, promoting equality and individual freedom.
- Romanian anthropologist Andrei Oișteanu, in his article published in Revista 22, approaches early marriages from historical and cultural perspectives, emphasizing that they cannot be understood merely as social practices but as expressions of traditional gender and power norms within communities.
- He argues that early marriages historically reflected a strong link between patriarchal structures and control over women's bodies, especially young girls, who were perceived as family property meant to be “protected” through marriage.

- Oișteanu highlights that in Roma culture (as in others), these traditions have been perpetuated through inherited customs that must now be re-examined critically within the framework of human rights and gender equality.
- He identifies several social functions of early marriage in traditional contexts:
- Sexual and social control of young women: marriages arranged early to limit autonomy and reinforce patriarchal family structures.
- Protection of family honour: early marriage as a means of preserving virginity and avoiding premarital relationships considered shameful.
- Strengthening family alliances: marriage used to consolidate kinship and social networks.
- In the modern era, these practices have become a barrier to women's emancipation and to the respect of fundamental child rights. As Oișteanu stresses, the argument of "tradition" cannot justify violations of freedom and dignity — traditions evolve, and must adapt to democratic norms and universal human rights.
- Modern legislation and growing awareness of child protection have led to the gradual abolition of early marriage, with the legal age of consent and marriage now established at 18 years in Romania and across Europe.

CHAPTER V – WHAT IS EARLY MOTHERHOOD?



- Early motherhood refers to giving birth at a very young age, typically during adolescence (under 18 years), before reaching full physical, emotional, and social maturity. It is one of the most significant consequences of early marriage and is often perpetuated by poverty, lack of education, and cultural expectations.

Main Causes of Early Motherhood

- Early marriages and family pressure to establish a household quickly, according to traditional norms of purity and honour.
- Lack of sexual education and limited access to contraception — due to shame, silence, or cultural taboos around sexuality.
- Poverty and social exclusion, which may lead adolescents to view motherhood as a way to gain social status or security.
- Cultural and religious norms promoting traditional female roles.
- Sexual abuse or domestic violence, leading to unplanned pregnancies.

Consequences of Early Motherhood

- Physical health risks: higher chances of premature birth, low birth weight, and medical complications for both mother and child.
- Interrupted education: young mothers are often forced to drop out of school, while boys are encouraged to continue — reflecting gender inequality rooted in patriarchal norms such as Rromanipen, where the man is the “pillar of the house” and the woman “fertile ground.”
- Psychological and emotional impact: stress, anxiety, depression, and difficulties in assuming maternal responsibilities.
- Perpetuation of poverty: limited education and job opportunities keep young mothers in cycles of economic dependency.
- Social marginalization: teenage mothers may face stigma and exclusion from both community and educational settings.

Solutions and Prevention Strategies

- Comprehensive sexual education accessible to all adolescents, covering contraception, reproductive health, and sexual rights.
- Improved access to reproductive health services, including counseling and modern contraceptives.
- Social inclusion programs to combat poverty and support vulnerable families.
- Cultural change campaigns, involving community leaders and promoting gender equality.
- Support for young mothers: reintegration into school, psychological counseling, and access to social and health services.
- Legislation and public policies that prohibit marriage under 18 and protect children's rights.



Supporting Teen Mothers

Strategies to empower young Roma mothers and enhance child welfare practices

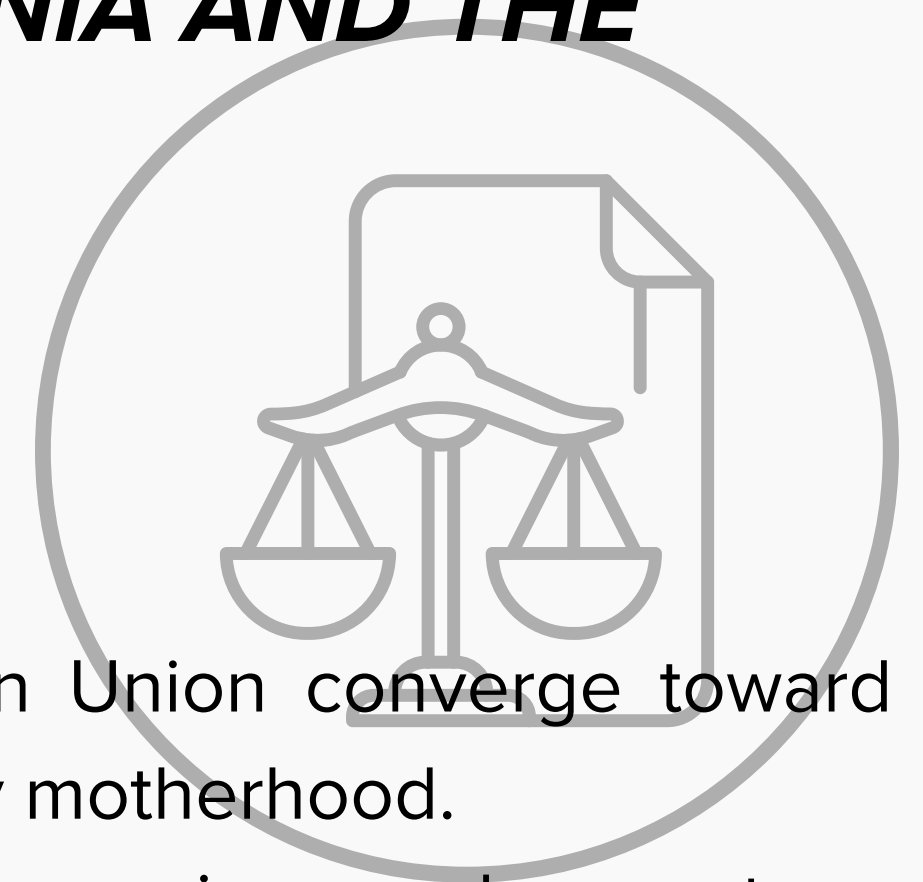
- Access to education
- Community support networks
- Health services availability
- Parenting workshops
- Financial assistance programs



Photos and illustrations: Canva Media Library & AI-generated visuals (Magic Media, 2025).

CHAPTER VI – LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN ROMANIA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

6.1. National and European Context



- Romania's national legislation and the legal framework of the European Union converge toward the protection of minors' rights and the prevention of early marriages and early motherhood.
- Both systems establish strict legal norms regarding the minimum age for marriage and promote public policies that guarantee adolescents' rights to education, health, and balanced development.
- At the European level, these principles are supported by:
- The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which prohibits child exploitation and guarantees the protection of minors;
- The Council of Europe Istanbul Convention, focused on preventing violence against women and protecting children from harmful practices;
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), ratified by all EU Member States, including Romania.

6.2. The New Romanian Law on Forced Marriage (2025)

- In October 2025, the Parliament of Romania adopted a major legal reform by amending the Criminal Code (Law no. 286/2009) to introduce a new article – 209¹ “Forced Marriage and Cohabitation”, which clearly criminalizes early and forced marriages.
- The law will enter into force on March 1, 2026.

Key Provisions of Article 209¹:

- Forcing or deceiving a person over 16 years old to marry or cohabit is punishable by 3 to 7 years of imprisonment.
- Organizing, enabling, or assisting the “marriage” or “engagement” of a minor under 16 years old is punishable by 2 to 7 years of imprisonment.
- If such actions involve violence, coercion, exploitation, or harm, the punishment increases to 5 to 12 years of imprisonment.
- Consent of the minor does not justify or diminish the crime.
- The birth of a child as a result of such a relationship does not reduce the gravity of the offence.
- Any person providing services (e.g., organizing a wedding, offering clothing, filming, or photographing) for minors under 16 involved in such relationships can also be penalized.

Extended Sanctions:

- Those who force, deceive, or traffic minors for marriage or cohabitation abroad face imprisonment from 3 to 10 years.
- If the act results in serious injury or death, the penalty increases to 12–18 years in prison.
- The law also includes a reduction clause: those who report or help identify other offenders during investigation may have their sentence reduced by half.

6.3. Audiovisual Law Amendment

- The same law also amends the Audiovisual Law (no. 504/2002), requiring all TV and radio broadcasters to air daily warning messages between 18:00–22:00, such as:
- “Forcing a person or a minor to marry or cohabit is punishable by imprisonment.”
- “Arranging weddings or engagements for minors under 16 is a criminal offence.”
- “Encouraging or celebrating child marriage violates fundamental rights.”
- These messages will be mandatory from October 2025 to June 2026, marking a major step toward public awareness.

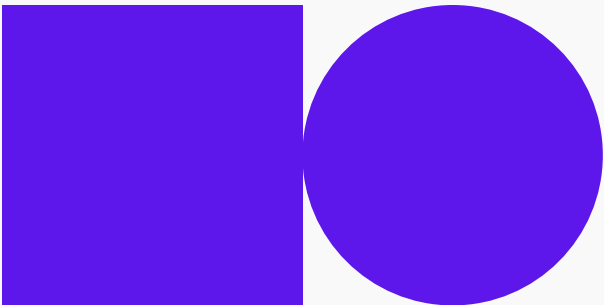
6.4. Importance for Health Mediators and Community Workers

- The new law reinforces the role of health mediators and community professionals in early identification and reporting of risk cases.
- Health mediators, educators, and social workers must:
- Inform families about the legal consequences of child and forced marriage;
- Collaborate with DGASPC, DSP, schools, and police in prevention and protection actions;
- Promote the new legislative message during awareness campaigns and community meetings.

Useful resources

- **Child helpline - 119**
- **Free medical care for minors - contact your family doctor**
- **National network of Roma health mediators - through the county DSP**

Timeline



2025

**Community Support
Initiatives Launch**

Strengthening community ties through support.

2026

**Empowering Roma Young
Mothers Program**

Providing resources and guidance for young families.

2027

**Educational Workshops
Begin**

Teaching skills for brighter futures ahead.

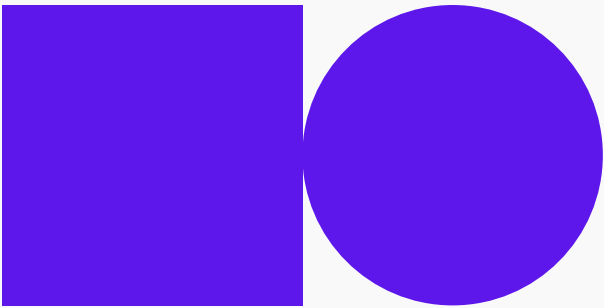
Building Trust and Rapport



Understanding Cultural Context

Establishing **trust and rapport** is essential for effective communication, especially within diverse communities. Understanding cultural nuances can significantly enhance interactions and foster collaboration among social actors.

Timeline



2025

Workshops for Roma Mothers

Building networks for young mothers

2026

Community Support Initiatives

Increasing access to education and resources

2027

Empowering Young Leaders

Creating pathways for future success

Empowering Roma Youth

Building a Brighter Future

Education Initiatives

Access to quality education is vital for **empowering young minds**. Providing resources and support helps Roma youth achieve their academic goals and increase future opportunities.

Healthcare Access

Ensuring accessible healthcare services fosters **healthy communities**. Regular check-ups and education on health issues can greatly benefit young mothers and their children, promoting overall well-being.

Empowering Young Roma

Supporting mothers and children

Early Childhood Development

Focus on nurturing **foundational skills** during early years to foster growth and learning.

Educational Support

Provide access to **quality education** to enhance opportunities and empower young Roma.

Healthcare Access

Ensure **comprehensive healthcare** services are available to support mothers and their children's well-being.

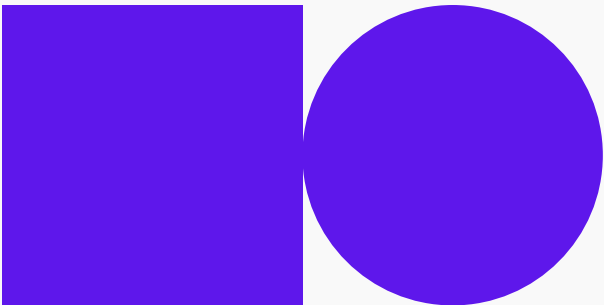
Tips for Engaging with Families

Engaging with families in the Roma community requires **cultural sensitivity** and **understanding**. Here are some important practices to follow:

- **Build Trust:** Establish relationships by being approachable and respectful.
- **Listen Actively:** Pay attention to their needs and concerns, demonstrating genuine interest.
- **Be Inclusive:** Involve family members in discussions and decision-making.
- **Respect Traditions:** Acknowledge and honor their cultural practices and values.
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** Ensure that personal information remains private to foster a safe space.

By following these guidelines, you can create a supportive environment that encourages positive interactions and strengthens community ties. Always remember, **open communication** and mutual respect are key to successful engagement.

Timeline



2025

Community Empowerment Initiative Launch

Engaging local social actors

2026

Annual Youth Development Workshop

Workshops focused on skills and empowerment

2027

Advocacy for Teen Mothers

Supporting young mothers through advocacy efforts

Effective Advocacy

Legal Framework

Understanding laws helps protect the rights of families.

Building Partnerships

Collaborating strengthens community support for Roma youth.

"Did you know that?"

Early marriage is not only a girls' issue. Boys who marry too young face pressure to provide for their families, often sacrificing their education and emotional growth.

Did you know that... boys can also be victims of early marriage? Many drop out of school to support their families, long before they are ready for adult life.

Did you know that almost 12 million girls under the age of 18 get married every year worldwide? That means over 23 girls get married every minute!

Did you know that early marriage significantly increases the risk of complications in childbirth, which are the leading cause of death for girls aged 15–19?

Did you know that early motherhood can cut off a teenage girl's access to education by more than 90%, affecting her chances of employment and financial independence?

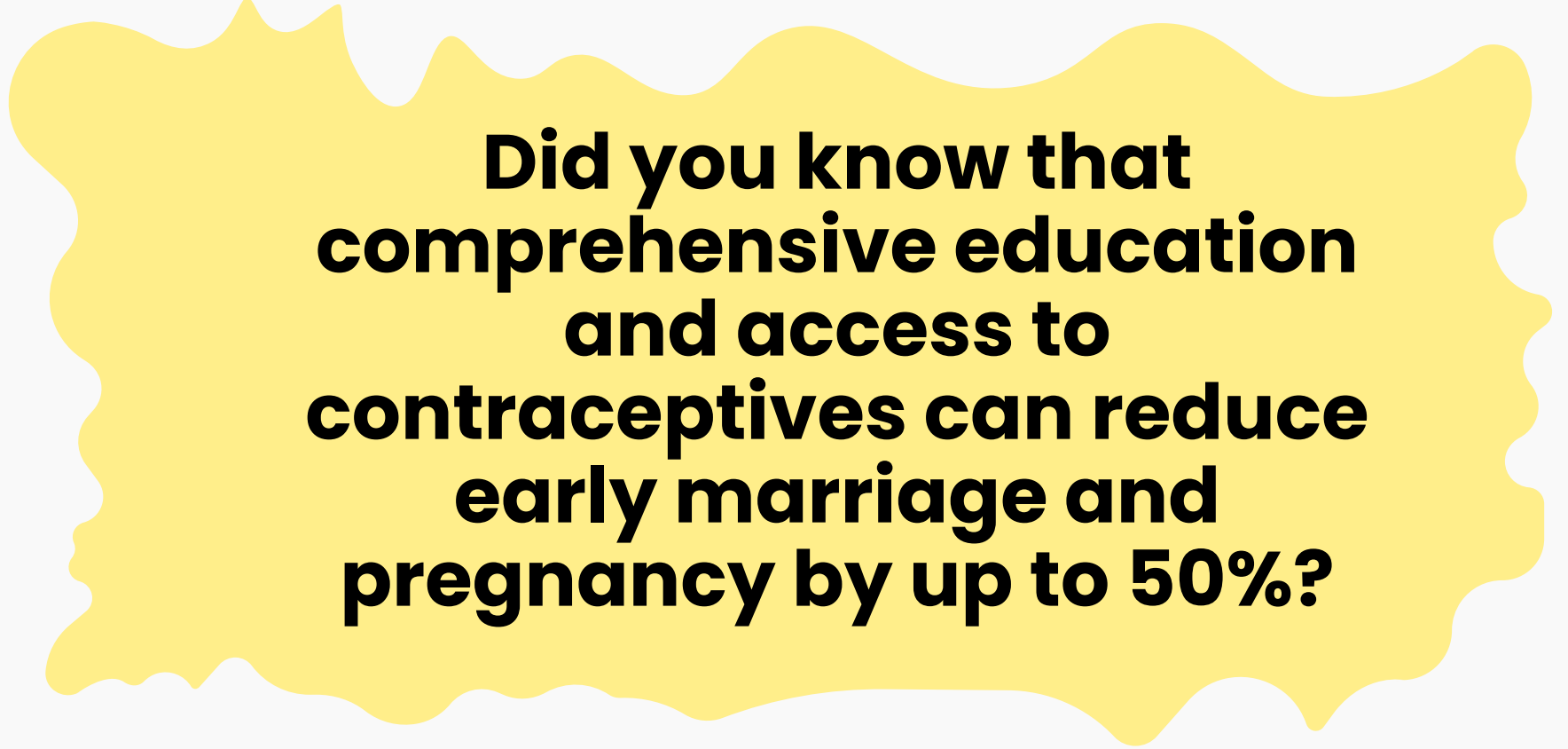
Did you know that in some countries, the legal minimum age for marriage is still under 15, and that these practices contribute to perpetuating poverty and social inequality?

Did you know that in Romania, the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 and under 16 it is permanently banned to protect children's rights?

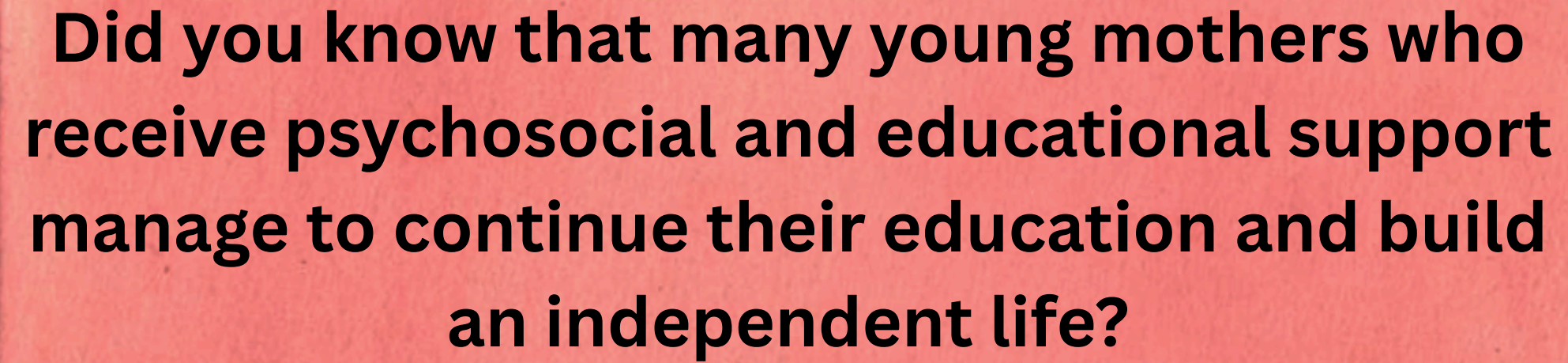
Did you know that the World Health Organization recommends that all countries ban marriages under the age of 18 to protect children's health and rights?



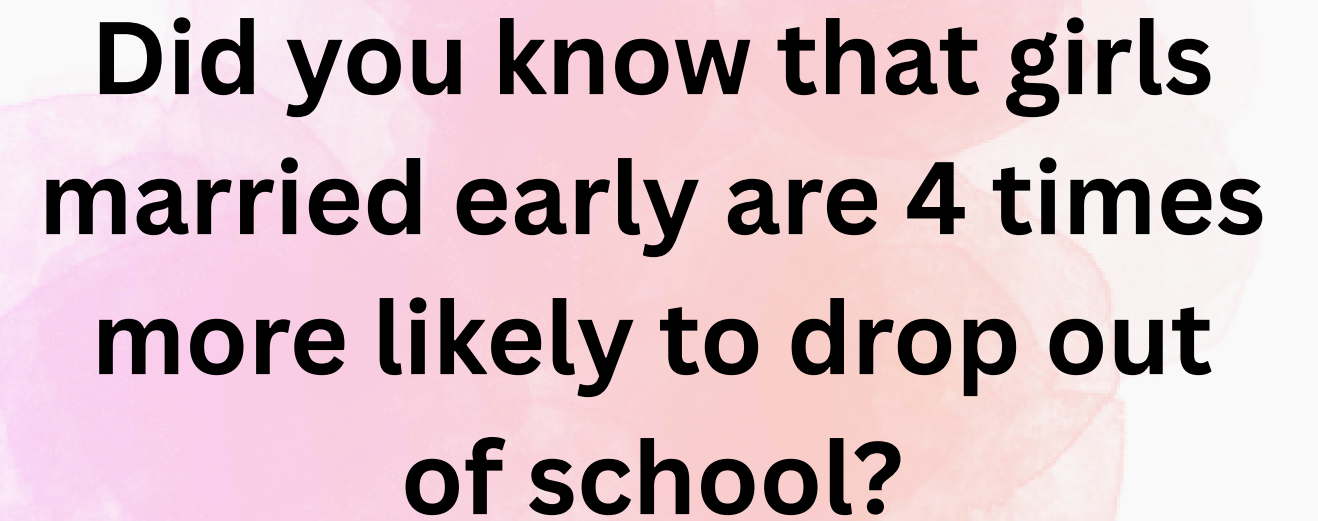
Did you know that preventing early marriage and early motherhood is considered an essential investment in a country's economic and social development?



Did you know that comprehensive education and access to contraceptives can reduce early marriage and pregnancy by up to 50%?

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Did you know that many young mothers who receive psychosocial and educational support manage to continue their education and build an independent life?

A circular area with a textured, light pink background, resembling a watercolor wash.

Did you know that girls married early are 4 times more likely to drop out of school?

Success Stories

Highlighting the **transformative journeys** of Roma **teen mothers** and their children, this section showcases inspiring success stories from various **communities**, emphasizing the impact of support and education on their lives and futures.



Photos and illustrations: Canva Media Library & AI-generated visuals (Magic Media, 2025).

Maria's Story

“I want to stay in school and build my future.”

Maria, a 16-year-old Roma girl, dreams of becoming a nurse.

One day, an older boy asked her to leave school and go away with him.

She felt afraid but remembered what she learned in a health education workshop:

“You have the right to say NO to anything that makes you feel unsafe.”

With courage, Maria looked at him and said:

“No. I want to stay in school and build my future.”

Today, Maria inspires other girls in her community.

She learned that talking about health is not shameful — it is strength.

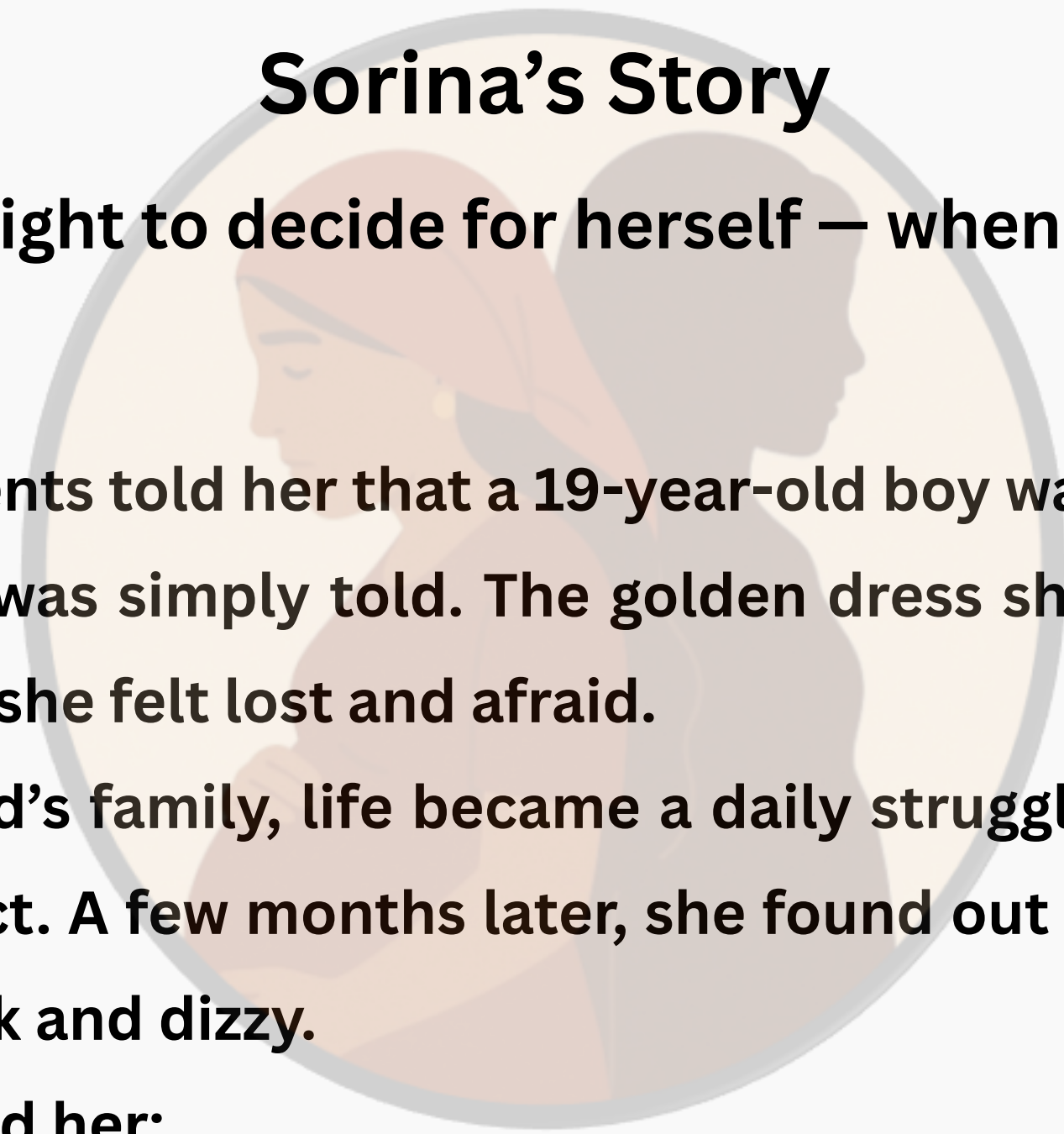
Through education, she discovered that every girl has the right to say NO, to dream, and to build her own path.



Story written by- Stanciu Stela

Sorina's Story

“A Roma girl has the right to decide for herself — when and if she wants to marry.”



Sorina was only 15 when her parents told her that a 19-year-old boy wanted to marry her.

She didn't get to choose — she was simply told. The golden dress shone at her wedding, but Sorina's smile was only for the pictures. Inside, she felt lost and afraid.

After moving in with her husband's family, life became a daily struggle. She woke up early, cooked, cleaned, and stayed silent to avoid conflict. A few months later, she found out she was pregnant. Her young body was not ready, and she often felt weak and dizzy.

One day, a school mediator visited her:

“Sorina, you're still a child. You have the right to be supported. Let's talk about how you feel.”

That moment changed everything. Someone had finally listened. With time, Sorina learned that her life was not over at 15 — she still had the right to learn, to grow, and to dream again.

Every girl deserves the right to choose her own path.

Story written by- Beatrice Radu

“I Chose My Own Path”

“It’s not shameful to have a different dream.”

My name is B., and I was 16 when everything happened.

In my village, girls are expected to marry early — “before it’s too late,” as people say. When my mother told me that a man from a nearby village had asked for my hand, I felt fear. Fear of losing school, my dreams, and my freedom.

One night, I gathered my courage and talked to my Romani language teacher. She told me:

“It’s not shameful to have a different dream.”

Together, we spoke to the school counselor, and after several discussions, my parents agreed to cancel the engagement — as long as I stayed in school.

It wasn’t easy. I studied hard, worked weekends, and kept my goal alive: to become a social mediator for Roma girls.

Today, I know that education means freedom.

Girls should not be forced to marry; they should be free to choose who they are and what they want to become.

Change begins with courage — and with every girl who dares to say “No.”

Story written by- Beatrice Radu

When Silence Cost Too Much

“Silence doesn’t protect you — it hides you.”

“Your courage can change lives.”

I was 15 when my life changed. A relative said it was “for my own good” to marry an older boy. I stayed silent — too ashamed, too afraid.

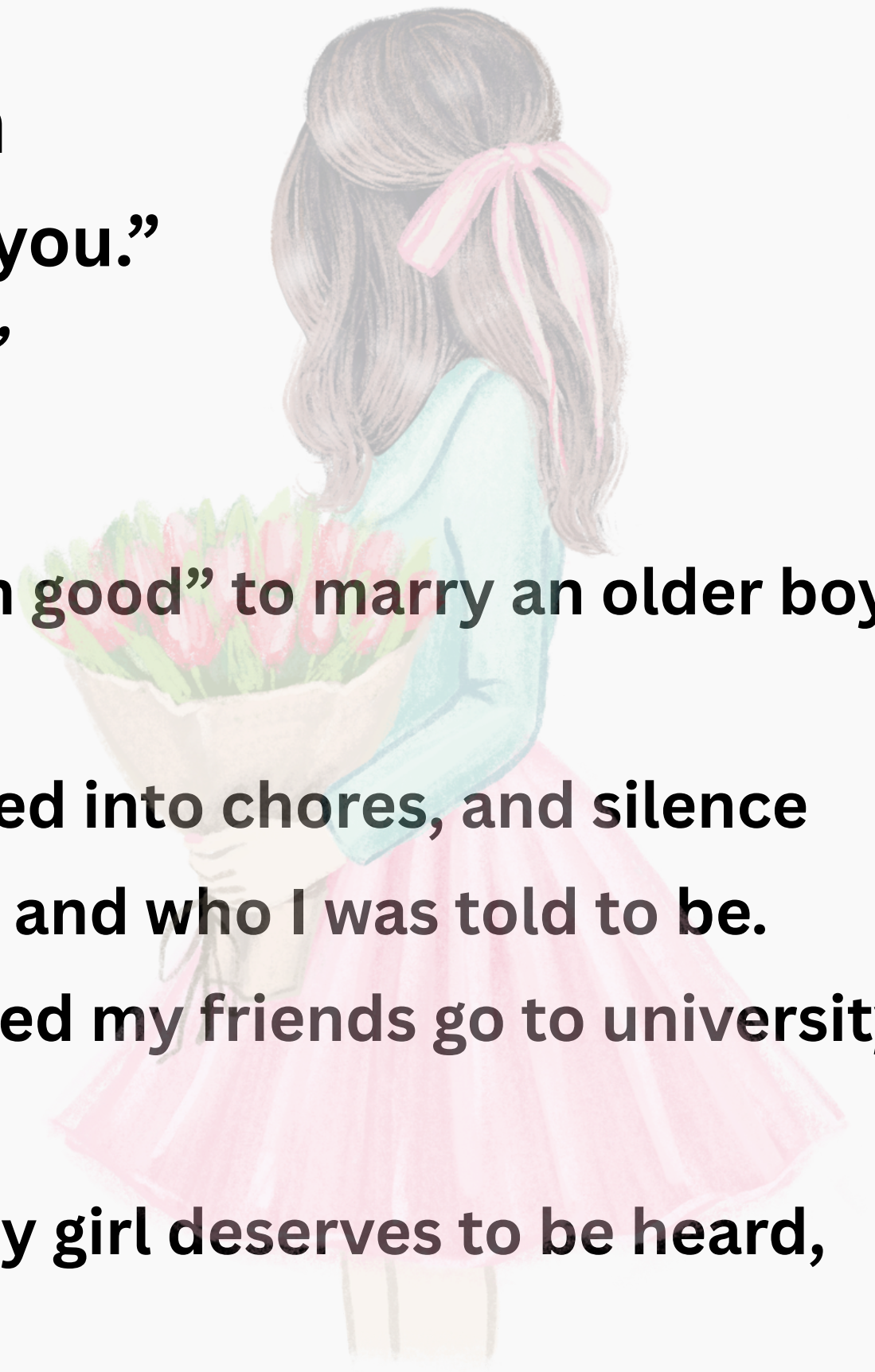
At 16, I was married and forced to leave high school. Books turned into chores, and silence became my only escape. Each day, I felt torn between who I was and who I was told to be.

The birth of my child was painful, and sadness followed. I watched my friends go to university while I stayed behind, trapped in a story I hadn’t chosen.

Now I know that silence doesn’t protect you — it hides you. Every girl deserves to be heard, supported, and free to dream.

Speak up. Don’t stay silent. Your courage can change lives.

Story written by- Beatrice Radu



Conclusion

Voices That Change the Future

The stories of Maria, Sorina, Bianca, and many other Roma girls are not only testimonies of struggle — they are stories of courage, resilience, and hope.

They show that beyond silence, shame, and fear lies the deep desire to be heard, to be respected, and to build one's own path.

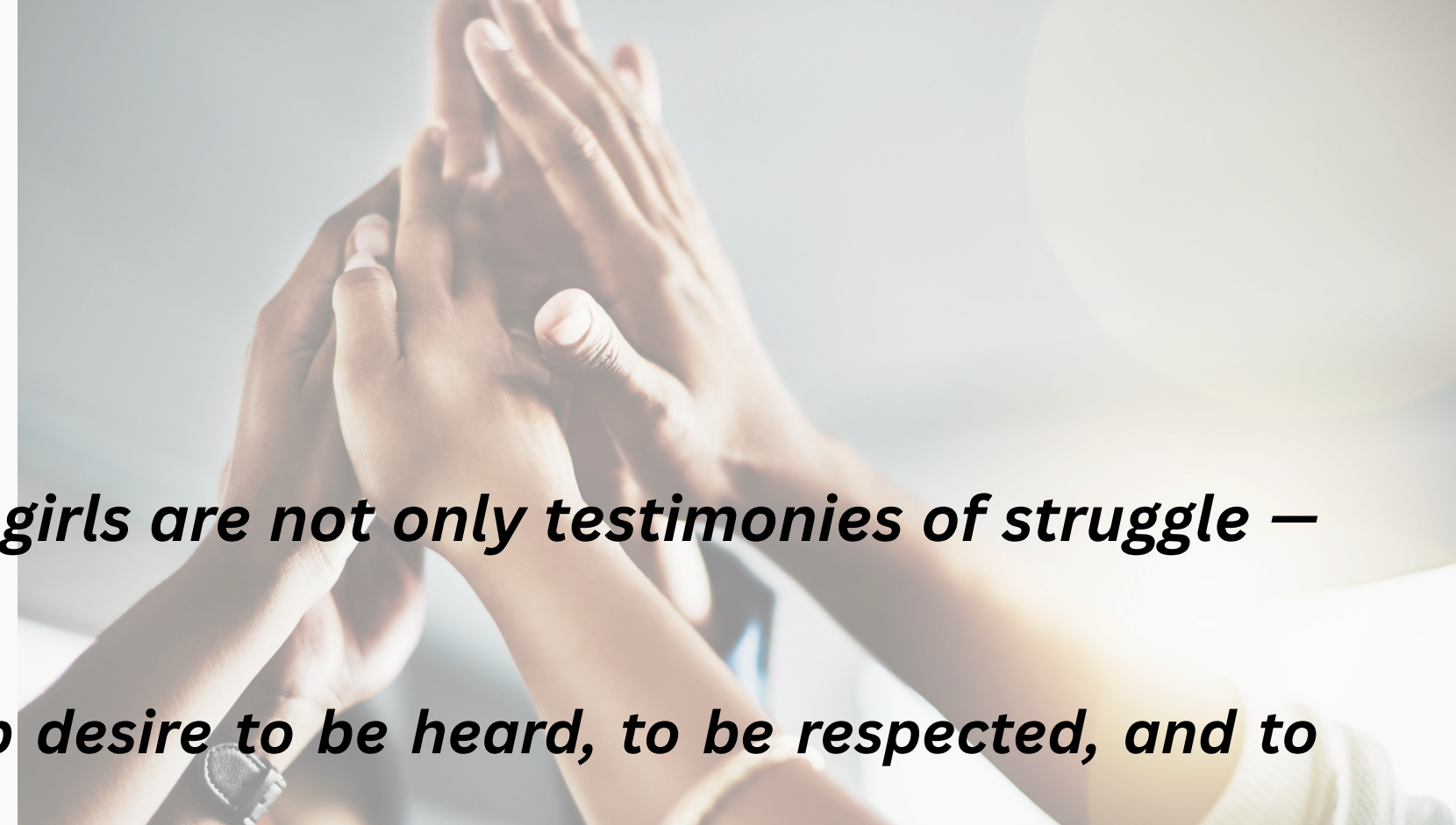
***Every girl who says “No” to an early marriage,
every mother who encourages her daughter to stay in school,
and every mediator who listens with empathy —
they all contribute to real, lasting change.***

These stories remind us that education is not a privilege — it is a right.

That health and freedom of choice are universal values.

And that when one voice dares to rise, an entire community can be transformed.

“When one girl is empowered, an entire generation moves forward.”



Team of Roma Influencers Networks Romania

Thanks and recognition

This good practice guide has been developed within the project "Roma Influencers Network - Breaking the Circle of Early Marriages and Early Motherhood" (2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507), funded by the Erasmus+ program of the European Union.

It reflects the collective contribution of the project team, trainers, Roma influencers, coordinators and partners involved in the development and validation of the methodology, research and writing of the guide.



Romania Team (Sastipen)



Nicoleta Filip – National Coordinator, PhD Candidate in Social Work

A dedicated professional in social work and community health, Nicoleta is deeply committed to empowering Roma women and improving access to integrated socio-medical services in vulnerable communities. As a mother of two children, she brings both professional expertise and personal empathy to her work, believing that every girl deserves the chance to grow, learn and choose her own path.

“My voice is not only mine — it carries the echoes of every girl who was never heard.”



Elena Radu – Roma Influencer & Educational Methodology Author

A dedicated educator and Roma influencer, Elena played a key role in developing the educational methodology of the Roma Influencers Network Good Practice Guide. A mother of two and a proud member of the Ursari Roma community, she has devoted her career to promoting Roma identity, intercultural education, and the preservation of the Romani language. Through her expertise and deep commitment, she empowers others to build bridges between Roma communities and educational institutions, believing that education and culture are the true foundations of social inclusion.

„Svako chaj saj te alosarel pesqo suni, na i trash”

“Every girl can follow her dream, not her fear.”



***"Be proud to be a Roma girl!
Live your childhood to the fullest!
Life is beautiful when you know how to live it!"***

Ioana Constantin- Roma Influencer & Health Mediator



Beatrice Maria Radu – Roma Influencer & Youth Advocate

My name is Beatrice, and I am a proud Roma student who believes that true change begins within our own communities. Deeply connected to my roots, I am inspired by the strength, creativity, and resilience of Roma people—especially the women who keep our traditions alive while dreaming of more for the next generation. My journey began with a simple wish: to help Roma girls recognize their own strength and potential. Through my studies and community initiatives, I focus on promoting education, health, and equality, and on preventing early marriages by encouraging open, honest, and empowering conversations that inspire hope and transformation.

"Every Roma girl deserves to live her dream, not her fear.

Remember — you choose for yourself, you decide when and how.

And never forget: you are not alone. There are many of us, walking forward hand in hand"



Steluța Stanciu – Roma Influencer & Health Mediator

My name is Steluța Stanciu, and I have been working as a health mediator since 2016. My role is to build bridges between the Roma community and the healthcare system, helping people access medical services, accurate information, and personalized support. Through my work, I contribute to prevention, health education, and improving the quality of life in vulnerable communities.

I believe that my work is not only about prevention and guidance but also about hope, trust, and respect. I strive to be a voice that explains and a hand that supports, because every person has the right to health, dignity, and information.

"You have the right to peace and support.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to someone you trust or seek professional help.

You don't have to go through this alone."



Lenuta Stănescu – Health Mediator, Neamț County

Lenuta Stănescu proudly represents the traditional Roma Căldărari community. Her journey began in 2012, when she met the Sastipen team — an encounter that changed her life. After completing the health mediator training, she overcame social and cultural barriers that often prevent traditional Roma women from working.

In 2015, she became officially employed, working closely with the Neamț Public Health Directorate. For Lenuta, health mediation means empathy and commitment — going door to door, listening, documenting, and supporting people in need.

Her greatest satisfaction is helping others and inspiring young Roma women to believe that they, too, can build their own path.

"Be what you want to be, try, you need patience, hard work and you will fulfill your dreams



Gabriela Florea – Health Mediator, Neamț County

My name is Gabriela Florea, I am 52 years old and have been working as a health mediator since 2003, serving the Roma community in Bâhna, Neamț County.

For over 20 years, I have supported access to medical services, provided accurate information, and contributed to improving the health of vulnerable people.

I am deeply dedicated to my profession and believe that respect, empathy, and collaboration can bring real change to people's lives.

My motto: "Community, support, and change – building bridges between people and health."