



# Intercultural Mediation for Roma Communities

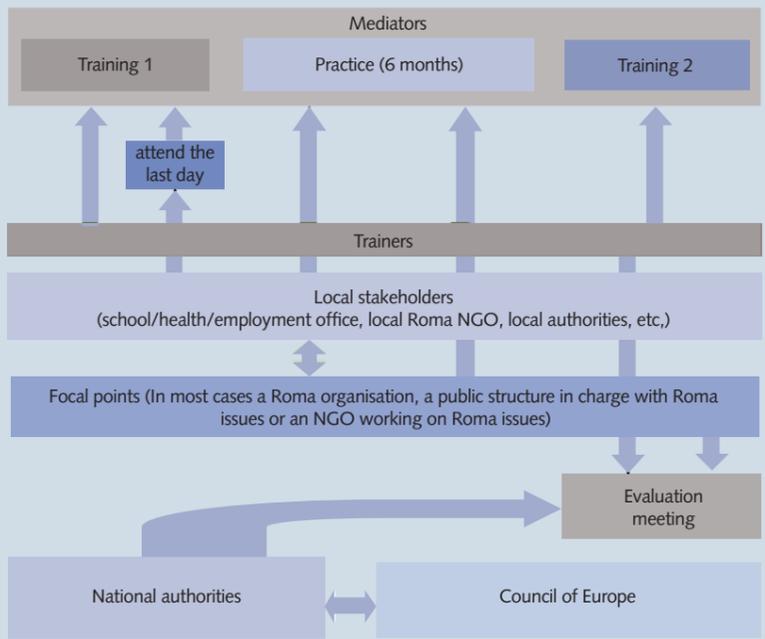
A joint Council of Europe/European Commission action

### Mediators

- establish a relationship of trust and open communication with the parties' representatives;
- seek to understand the situation in order to reflect the respective viewpoints and the basis for opinions, feelings, attitudes and actions;
- establish contact between parties by ensuring effective communication;
- facilitate and/or reinforce the communication and relations between the Roma communities and the public institutions (education, health and employment).

### National Focal Point

- supports the mediators to carry out practical activities in the six months' interval between the two training sessions;
- supports the Council of Europe in the monitoring process;
- provides input to the pool of trainers on the online platform, to help in organisation of the second training session;
- provides feedback on the national activities during the evaluation conference.



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Implemented by the Council of Europe

### Starting points: facts and challenges

Mediation is one of the measures used across Europe to tackle the inequalities Roma<sup>1</sup> face in terms of access to employment, healthcare services and quality education. It consists of employing people with a Roma background, from local Roma communities, or with a good knowledge of Roma issues, to act as mediators between the Roma and the public institutions.

#### ► A diversity of situations and tasks

Many differences exist between countries, both in the situation and needs of the Roma communities, in the terminology used, and in the extent to which mediators are professionally employed and trained with job profiles varying. Another new challenge is raised by Roma migrating to other countries.

#### ► A pragmatic approach to target group identification

This programme will use mediators with a Roma background who speak the language of the Roma community they are working with, if needed. Their tasks and responsibilities include facilitating communication between Roma and a public institution.

#### ► Challenges in the practice of mediation

Mediation has often led to significant improvements, but its effectiveness is frequently challenged by issues such as the low status of mediators and precarious employment, dependency (to head of the institution, to political influence, to community leaders), or the assignment of additional minor tasks, sometimes not included in the job profile. In addition, mediators might be used as an excuse to avoid direct contact with the community, or are expected to shoulder full responsibility for solving problems. Their work can be day to day, reactive, with little or no planning, inconsistent evaluation and lack of support in performing the job. Such factors mean that success is strongly dependent on the mediator's personal qualities and on personal attitudes of the staff of the institutions the mediator works with.

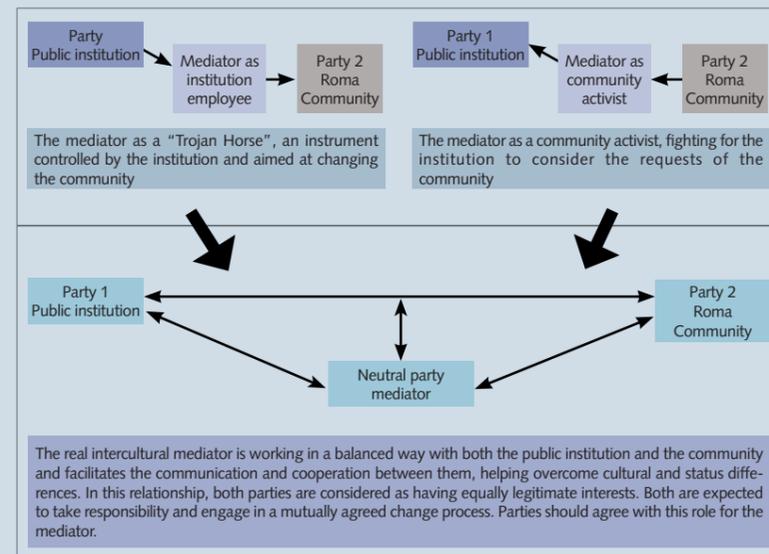
1. The term «Roma» used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as «Gypsies».

### Three types of approach can be identified:

- The “Trojan Horse” (the mediator as an instrument of the institution, having as mission to reach out to the community with the aim of changing its attitudes and behaviours);
- The community activist (a representative of the community, fighting against the institution, for the rights of the Roma);
- The real intercultural mediator (has a good knowledge of the “cultural codes” of the community and of the institution, is impartial and focused on improving communication and cooperation and on stimulating both parties to take responsibilities and to be actively involved in a change process).

This programme is focusing on the promotion of the third approach: real and effective intercultural mediation.

### From a “Trojan Horse” or a community activist to a real intercultural mediator



### The mission defined in the Strasbourg Declaration

In the Strasbourg Declaration, adopted in October 2010 at the High Level Meeting on Roma, representatives of Member States agreed that the Council of Europe should implement a **European Training Programme for Roma Mediators** in order to consolidate the existing training programmes and more effectively use existing Council of Europe resources, standards, methodology, networks and infrastructure, in close co operation with national and local authorities.

#### ► General aim of the ROMED programme:

To improve the quality and effectiveness of the work of school/health/employment mediators, with a view to supporting better communication and cooperation between Roma and public institutions (school / healthcare providers / employment offices).

#### ► Objectives of the ROMED programme:

- To promote real and effective intercultural mediation;
- To ensure the integration of a rights-based approach;
- To support the work of mediators by providing tools for planning and implementation of their activities which encourage democratic participation while generating empowerment of Roma communities and increased accountability of public institutions.

The ROMED programme is not replacing or duplicating the existing training programmes at local or national levels, but is complementing them, providing additional tools and methodologies, and contributing to the development of the core competencies all mediators need. The ROMED programme will also assist some countries in setting up training programmes.

#### ► A framework curriculum:

The training will rely on a curriculum with a strong focus on practice and adaptable to specific training needs of mediators working in different contexts and with different institutions and Roma communities.

#### ► A European Code of Ethics for Mediators:

A set of core principles and norms to guide the work of mediators has been identified as a key tool for protecting the mediator against abuse and for enhancing the quality of the services provided. A first draft, inspired by experiences in various countries, has been drawn up and will be submitted for feedback to mediators attending the trainings.

#### ► A pool of trainers and European networking:

A first group of trainers, selected on the basis of an open call, was trained in Strasbourg from 26 to 29 January 2011. A Focal Point has been identified in each country (wherever possible, a Roma organisation with experience on working with mediators). Networking and peer learning will be stimulated via an online platform.

#### ► First group of beneficiary countries:

Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey, Ukraine. The Programme will be expanded to other countries, and additional training delivered in the first group of countries, if additional resources become available.

#### Implementation of trainings (March – December 2011)

- **First round of training** (4 days). During the last day: joint activities with local stakeholders;
- **Six months of practice** (implement the approaches and use the tools introduced during the training into daily work). Local stakeholders and Focal Points provide support;
- **Second round of training** (3 days) First day focuses on a review of practical activities implemented;
- **Evaluation meeting** to review achievements and define follow-up and policy responses.

### Which bodies play which roles?

#### Council of Europe

The Council of Europe ensures the overall coordination of the programme through the work of the support team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues. Other Council of Europe structures, such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, provide support. A training curriculum has been drawn up and a group of trainers has been selected and trained following consultation with experts in the field. Throughout the process, the Council of Europe maintains close communication with Roma organisations active at European level, and with other European and international organisations, to ensure coordination and support for the programme. The programme can only be successful if a variety of stakeholders contribute.

#### National and local authorities

- identify the mediators who will be trained;
- ensure that representatives from local institutions participate during the last day of the first training and encourage them to provide support for mediators at local level;
- attend the final evaluation conference and reflect on possible policy responses.

International Roma mobility is a key issue in the work of mediators, so transnational bilateral or multilateral cooperation between structures in countries of origin and destination countries is a useful tool for support and sustainability.

#### Relevant institutions (health, school, employment) at local level

- attend the last day of the first training together with the mediators;
- support mediators to carry out practical activities based on the approach promoted by the Council of Europe;
- provide feedback to the focal points on cooperation.

#### Roma organisations

- support the implementation of the programme at local level;
- provide feedback and suggestions to the focal point;
- contribute to the evaluation process and to the identification of suggestions for policy adjustments.