



ROMED
Médiation pour les Roms Mediation for Roma

ROMED Trainer's Handbook

European training programme
on intercultural mediation for Roma communities

Funded
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ROMED1 TRAINER'S HANDBOOK

European training programme
on intercultural mediation
for Roma communities

**A European Union and
Council of Europe Joint Programme**

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Foreword

This handbook is intended for trainers who followed a course of training for trainers in the framework of the ROMED1 programme. It contains the key information trainers need for the delivery of the ROMED1 training. The content of the materials is to be adapted to the specific context in the countries involved and to the profile of the mediators participating in the training, particularly as concerns the terminology used. The handbook also contains the handouts to be distributed to mediators during the training.

The first edition of the handbook was compiled in 2011. This is the second edition and includes additional elements and adjustments generated by the feedback received after the delivery of the training sessions during the first years of implementation of the programme.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to all those who contributed to the design and development of the ROMED1 programme. Among those who contributed substantially to the shaping of the programme we must mention here Nicolae Gheorghe, Jean-Pierre Liégeois, Arthur Ivatts, Nicoleta Bitu, Mariana Buceanu, Dominique Steinberger and Jan Hero. We also thank Valeriu Nicolae for his recommendations following the first stocktaking exercise.

Many people contributed to the development, testing and implementation of the ROMED1 curriculum. The list would be too long to mention everybody individually. The programme's development and evolution took into account the feedback and suggestions of the members of the ROMED1 Pool of Trainers, the National Focal Points and the representatives of various national Roma NGOs and public institutions working on Roma issues in the countries involved.

We also thank all the mediators who participated in the programme and who contributed to the development of the curriculum through their experience, practice and feedback from field work.

A substantial part of this curriculum is inspired and based on the adaptation of existing pedagogical materials from other sectors of the Council of Europe, particularly from the Youth Department. We therefore acknowledge and thank our colleagues involved in producing these materials.

The development of the programme would not have been possible without the strong political support of the leaders of two organisations: Mrs Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth; and Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Part I

**ROMED1:
the European training programme
on intercultural mediation
for Roma communities**

Chapter 1

The mission defined in the Strasbourg Declaration

In the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, adopted in October 2010 at the High-Level Meeting on Roma,¹ representatives of member states agreed that the Council of Europe should implement a **European training programme on intercultural mediation for Roma communities** 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.

Some achievements and elements of impact (2011-15)

The implementation of the programme started in November 2010 with the consultation of key stakeholders in the field and with the selection of the first group of trainers, and continued with the training of trainers, while the delivery of the first training sessions for mediators started in the spring of 2011.

In the period 2011-15 several key achievements can be mentioned:

- a. A set of reference documents:
 - ▶ design and elaboration of a new **Training Curriculum for Mediators** (described further in this document and available in 20 languages);
 - ▶ a **European Code of Ethics for Mediators**:² 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;
 - ▶ adoption by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers of the **Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)9 on mediation as an effective tool for promoting respect for human rights and social inclusion of Roma**.³
- b. Influence on national policies:
 - ▶ **mediation** increasingly present in **the National Strategies for Roma Integration** elaborated on the basis of the EU framework;
 - ▶ **increased visibility and enhancement** of existing mediation systems or of on-going processes through a snowball effect in Ukraine, Greece, Romania, Germany, Bulgaria, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Portugal and Kosovo;⁴
 - ▶ **institutionalisation of mediation** in the Republic of Moldova and "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".
- c. Impact on the practice and training of mediators:
 - ▶ **improved perception of the mediator** and her/his role by the public institutions (around 700 representatives from national and local institutions involved in activities);
 - ▶ **improved awareness of their role among mediators**: intense peer networking, exchange of experiences and ability to build collective responses to problems;
 - ▶ **creation of a European pool of ROMED1 trainers**, more than half being Roma, able to deliver the ROMED1 curriculum in 20 languages;
 - ▶ **over 1 258 mediators trained and certified in 22 countries**: a very large majority of mediators are Roma (see Figure I), the others have a very good knowledge of the Roma community.

1. The terms "Roma" and "Travellers" are used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

2. Appendix II – Code of Ethics for Mediators.

3. Appendix III – Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)9.

4. All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Figure 1 – Overall percentage of mediators of Roma origin trained, 2011-2015

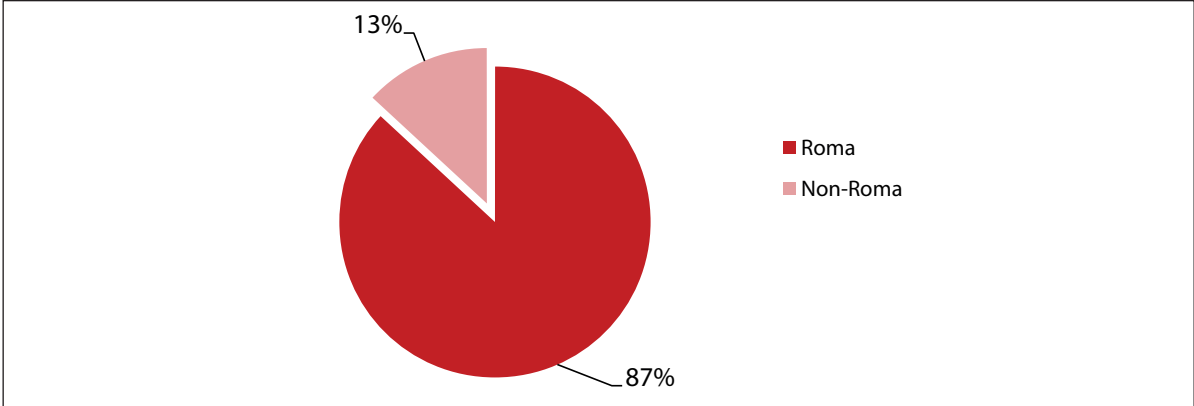


Figure 2 reflects the distribution by country of the mediators who completed the ROMED1 training process.

Figure 2 – Mediators trained, 2011-2015

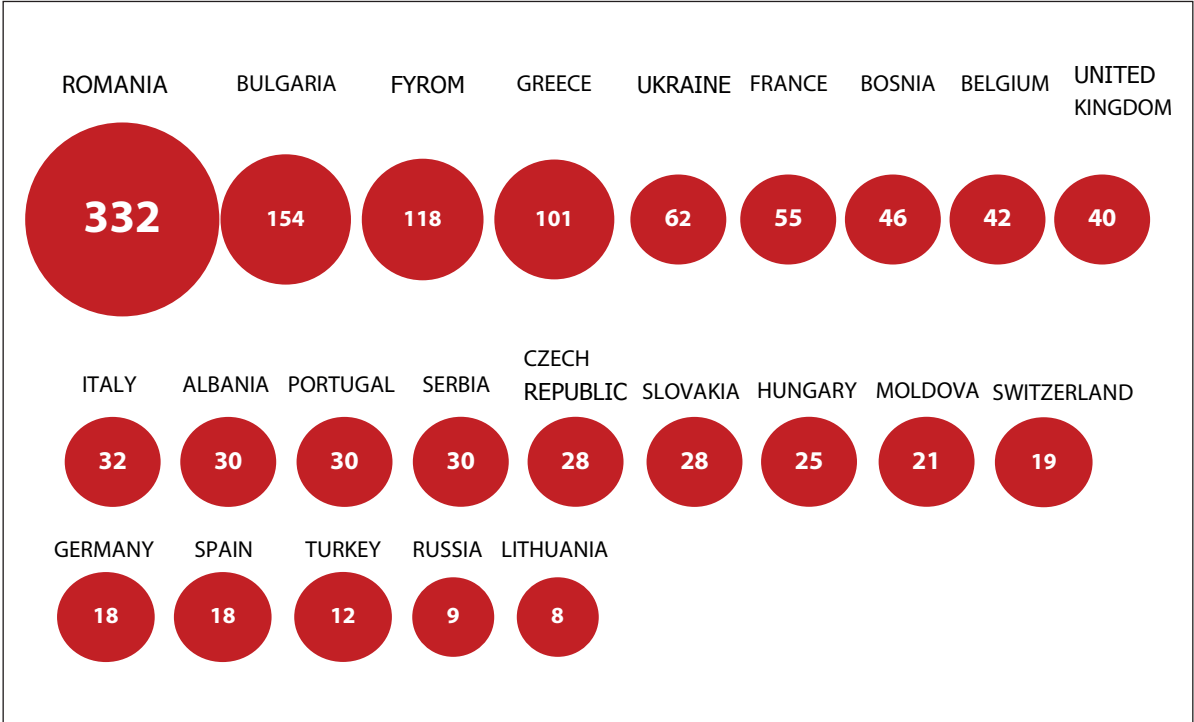
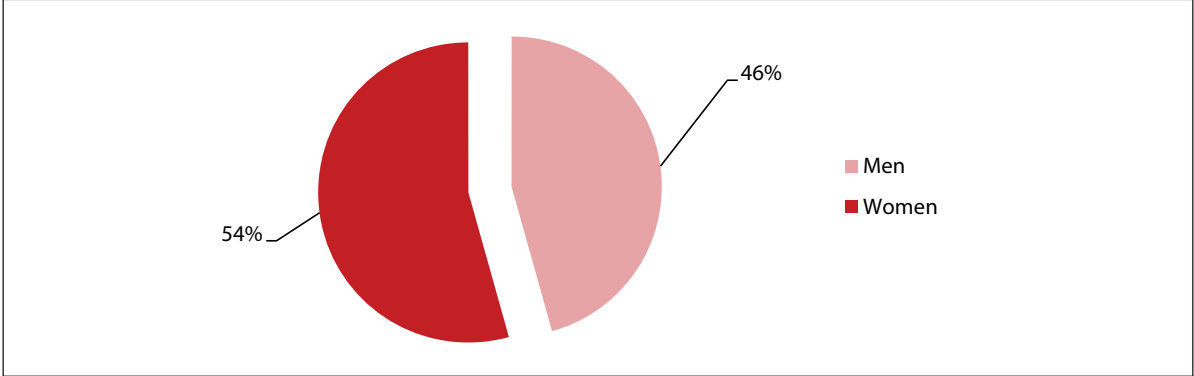


Figure 3 shows that the number of female mediators trained is larger than the number of male mediators trained.

Figure 3 – Overall balance in gender participation in ROMED1, 2011-2015



A **European Database of Mediators** has been set up as a valuable resource with up-to-date information on various aspects of Roma mediation in a number of countries.

Mediators trained work either with institutions in a specific field (education, health care, employment) or in a transversal way with various local institutions.

Starting points: facts, challenges and vision

Mediation is one of the measures used across Europe to tackle the inequalities Roma face in terms of access to employment, health-care 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. An important additional challenge is raised by Roma migrating, permanently or temporarily, to other countries.

A pragmatic approach to target group identification

Considering this diversity of situations, and in order to avoid the resistances which may be generated by an attempt to impose a common standard and terminology, the ROMED programme took a pragmatic approach and focused on supporting all professionals whose tasks and responsibilities include facilitating communication and improving the direct co-operation between Roma and a public institution. As shown in the previous section and according to the provisions of the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers, most of the mediators targeted have a Roma background and, where needed, speak the language of the Roma community they are working with.

Challenges in the practice of mediation

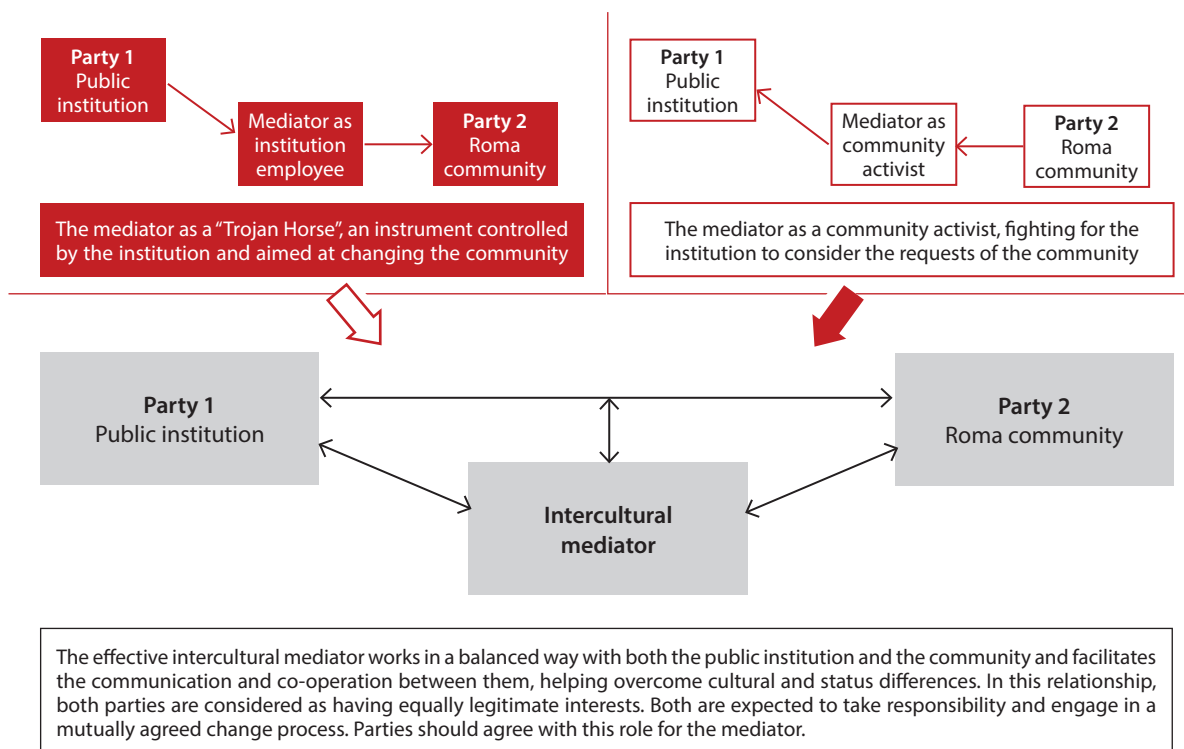
Mediation has often led to significant improvements, but its effectiveness is frequently challenged by issues such as the low status of mediators and a precarious employment, dependency (to the head of the institution, to political influence, to community leaders), or the assignment of additional minor tasks, sometimes not included in the job profile. In addition, mediators might be used by the staff of public institutions as an excuse to avoid direct contact with the community, or are expected to shoulder full responsibility for solving problems. Sometimes, Roma community members have a distorted perception of the role of the mediators, expecting them to solve their problems, thus maintaining a position of dependence, or perceiving them as representatives of the institution. Often mediators work day to day, in a reactive way, only responding to the occurrence of problematic situations, with little or no planning, with inconsistent evaluation and lacking 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.

Three types of approach can be identified (Figure 4):

- ▶ the "Trojan Horse" (the mediator is 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 (the mediator is perceived as 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 co-operation and on stimulating both parties to take responsibilities and to be actively involved in a change process).

The ROMED programme is focusing on the promotion of the third approach: effective intercultural mediation.

Figure 4 – From a “Trojan Horse” or a community activist to an effective intercultural mediator



General aim and objectives

The general aim of ROMED1 is to improve the quality and effectiveness of the work of school, health, employment and community mediators, with a view to supporting better communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions (school, health-care providers, employment offices, local authorities, etc.)

To contribute to the achievement of the general aim, the ROMED1 programme was focused on the following three objectives:

1. to promote effective intercultural mediation to improve the communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions;
2. to ensure the integration of a rights-based approach in the mediation between Roma communities and public institutions;
3. 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.

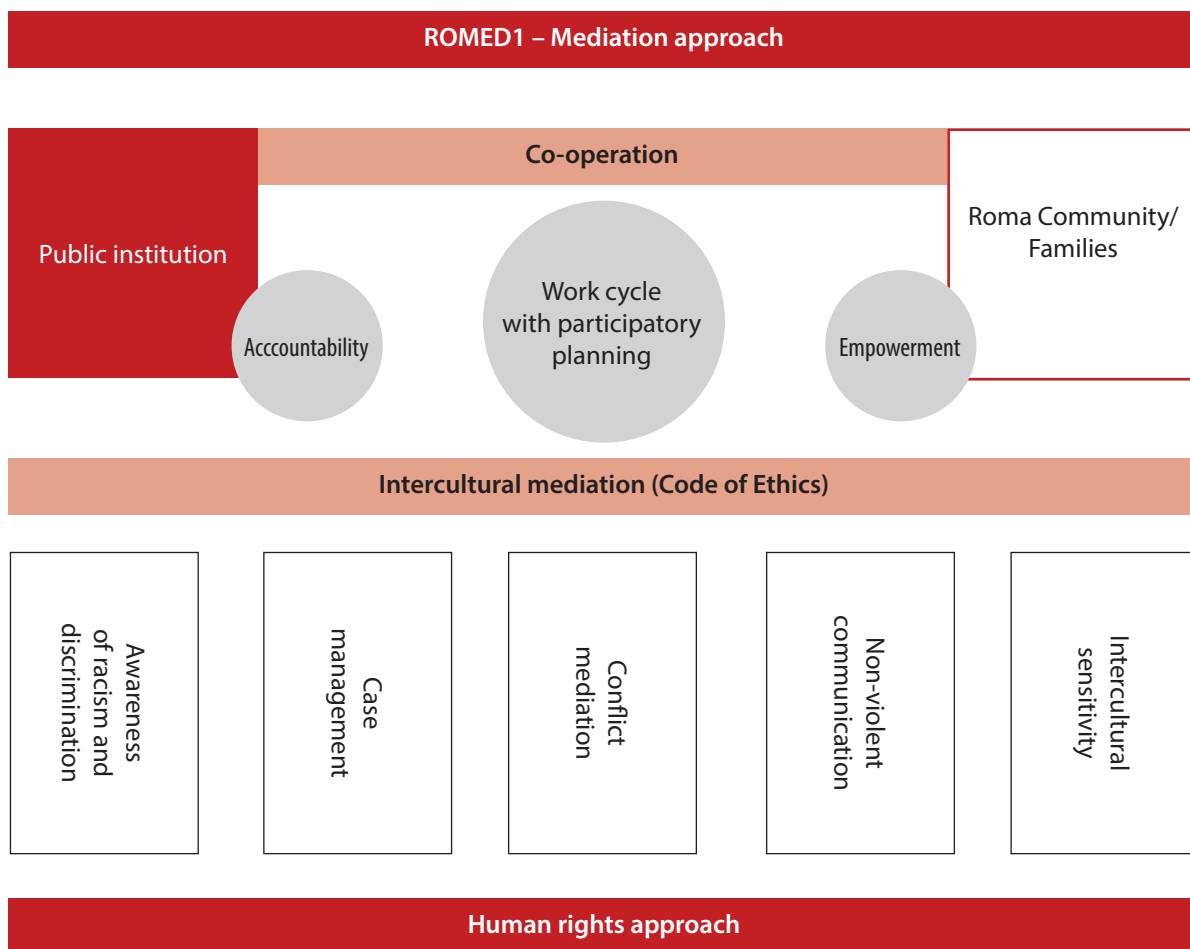
Effective intercultural mediation is understood as in Figure 4, above. This means that mediators, their employers, public institutions in general, as well as members of the Roma communities, need to clearly understand and accept co-operation based on the principles of mediation. Mediators therefore need support and specific competences to perform their role from this perspective.

The human rights based approach, which is one of the pillars of the work of the Council of Europe, is essential for overcoming the paternalistic perspective often encountered in public institutions, as well as the tendency for complacency in a situation of dependency, often encountered among members of the disadvantaged Roma communities, mainly because they do not trust that it is possible otherwise. Thus, the ROMED1 programme promotes the idea that the intervention of a mediator is necessary to build trust between Roma and public institutions, not as an act of charity, but as a responsibility for ensuring effective access to fundamental rights of citizens.

To perform their role as intercultural mediators from a rights-based perspective well, mediators also need practical skills, tools and specific methods to organise their work. The ROMED1 programme contributes to the development of the key competences mediators need and proposes a participatory work cycle starting

with the set-up of support teams, both at community level and within the public institutions. The work is structured as a cyclic process including participatory planning, implementation and evaluation, leading to empowerment, accountability and better direct co-operation.

Figure 5 – ROMED1 mediation approach



A European Code of Ethics for Mediators⁵

An important contribution to achieving the objectives of the ROMED1 programme is brought by the Code of Ethics, a set of core principles and norms to guide the work of mediators which has been identified based on a wide consultation with specialists and practitioners, as a key tool for protecting the mediator against abuse and for enhancing the quality of the services provided.

A framework curriculum to improve the co-operation between institutions and Roma families, the ROMED1 training relies 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. Figure 5 illustrates the key ideas described above and the interconnection between the various elements of the curriculum.

The ROMED1 training does not replace or duplicate existing training programmes at local or national levels, but rather completes them, providing additional tools and methodologies, and contributing to the development of the core competencies all mediators need. ROMED1 also assists countries in setting up training programmes and encourages all relevant stakeholders to include its principles, tools and materials into local and national training programmes for mediators.

⁵ Appendix II – Code of Ethics for Mediators.

Competences of mediators

In order to accomplish their task, mediators need:

- ▶ A set of core competences:
 - general communication competence;
 - intercultural communication competence;
 - mediation and conflict management competence;
 - knowledge and understanding of the socio-cultural and historic background of the communities they are supporting, including understanding of recent migration processes and patterns;
 - competence in assessment of the local situation, organising participatory planning, monitoring implementation and evaluation.
- ▶ Specific competences (specific to the concrete – national/local/sectorial – work context):
 - knowledge of the institutional and legal framework in which they are working;
 - elements related to the sector they are working in (education, health care or employment);
 - knowledge of the needs and background of the specific subgroups and categories of beneficiaries of their work.

They will also need to be able to deal with a number of challenges and sensitive issues, including:

- ▶ motivating and encouraging Roma people to access the respective institutions, considering the frequent lack of trust in the possibility of improving their life, based on previous negative experiences and general negative attitudes they or their fellows encountered;
- ▶ dealing with sensitive issues related to identity, ethno-cultural affiliation and intergroup relations and representations;
- ▶ dealing with prejudice and often unconscious discriminatory behaviour of the staff in the institutions, as well as with preconceptions and practices, sometimes rooted in the communities' social and cultural background, which are not compatible with the principles of democracy and human rights;
- ▶ working, in co-operation with other professionals, with people in situations of deep social exclusion and marginalisation;
- ▶ compensating the significant inequalities of status between Roma and the staff in order to establish interactions which are compliant with the principles of mediation, which must ensure equal recognition and concern for the needs and interests of both parties;
- ▶ remaining impartial, while maintaining the trust of both parties and providing the necessary support to the Roma people they are serving;
- ▶ avoiding being assigned tasks which are unrelated to their job description and obtaining professional recognition for their role and achievements as mediator;
- ▶ mobilising additional community and institutional support in order to enhance effectiveness of their work and achieve stronger improvements in the situation of the people and of the communities they are serving.

Training topics

Considering the aim and the objectives of the training, as well as the competences listed above, and taking into account that the ROMED1 training is supposed to complement local or national training, which is in a better position to deal with the specific competences related to the field of work and the legal, administrative and socio-cultural context, the following training topics have been included in the curriculum:

- ▶ role and tasks of mediators – What is real and effective intercultural mediation?;
- ▶ consequences of racism, discrimination and marginalisation;
- ▶ cultural differences, equal access to public services and human rights;
- ▶ Code of Ethics for Mediators;
- ▶ the annual work cycle of a mediator (assessment, planning, implementation and monitoring, evaluation or self-evaluation);
- ▶ strategies for building confidence and consensus based on non-violent communication;
- ▶ interaction with members of the Roma communities and facilitating intercultural communication;
- ▶ case management;