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**AD HOC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ROMA AND TRAVELLER<sup>1</sup> ISSUES (CAHROM)**

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**CAHROM THEMATIC VISIT ON ROMA MEDIATION (WITH A FOCUS ON SCHOOL MEDIATORS/ASSISTANTS)  
FOLLOWING THE THEMATIC VISIT TO VILNIUS AND PANĖŽEVIŠ, LITHUANIA, 25-27 APRIL 2017**

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**FINAL THEMATIC REPORT**

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Roma and Travellers" is 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. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Context of the thematic report and visit

This CAHROM thematic visit was devoted to Roma mediation and Roma mediators and was proposed by Lithuanian authorities (see Appendix 1) as the follow up of many discussions on low level of education of the Roma minority across Europe which is one of the sources of Roma marginalisation and exclusion. Although there were several CAHROM thematic visits on education since 2012 (on reducing school drop-outs and absenteeism of Roma pupils, the Netherlands, 2012; on inclusive education as opposed to special schools, Czech Republic and Slovak Republic, 2012; on school drop-outs and absenteeism of Roma girls, Finland, 2012; on inclusive pre-school education for Roma children, Czech Republic, 2014; on schooling of Roma migrant and Travellers children, France, 2015; on vocational training and education for Roma, Poland, 2015; on testing systems and diagnoses for Roma children with allegedly mild mental disabilities, Hungary, 2016) - the mediation as a tool was never discussed separately, except during the thematic visit in Bulgaria devoted to Roma health mediators, in 2015<sup>2</sup>.

Taking into account that many European countries have at their disposal interesting and useful experiences concerning Roma mediation (Roma working as school mediators, health, social or labour market mediators or community mediators) and making use of existing findings of the ROMED joint programme between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, the thematic visit in Vilnius was a response to the need for assessing mediation as a tool. Furthermore, experts wanted to discuss policy and legal mechanisms that led to the introduction of Roma mediation or its institutionalisation, the concrete functioning and budgeting of Roma mediators, the advantages and obstacles of mediation at national and local levels, as well as the desirable developments that would serve to improvement of Roma education and – as a consequence – the participation of Roma in socio-economic life as fully-fledged citizens.

Following the adoption of the Strasbourg Declaration in October 2010, the ROMED1 programme was launched in July 2011 as a joint Council of Europe/European Commission action and was designed based on earlier extensive work of the Council of Europe to promote **intercultural mediation** and on a series of **training of Roma mediators** in some of its member States. ROMED1 was set up as a European Training Programme, implemented in co-operation with national and local authorities with the aim to enhancing the quality of the work of Roma mediators in order to improve Roma access to education, healthcare and other services. ROMED1 was co-funded by the Council of Europe and the European Union and implemented by the Council of Europe in 23 European countries mainly from July 2011 to March 2013 and has continued with funds from the Council of Europe in some countries or new ones until the present time in response to demands from national institutions to train or provide refresher training to specific groups of mediators.

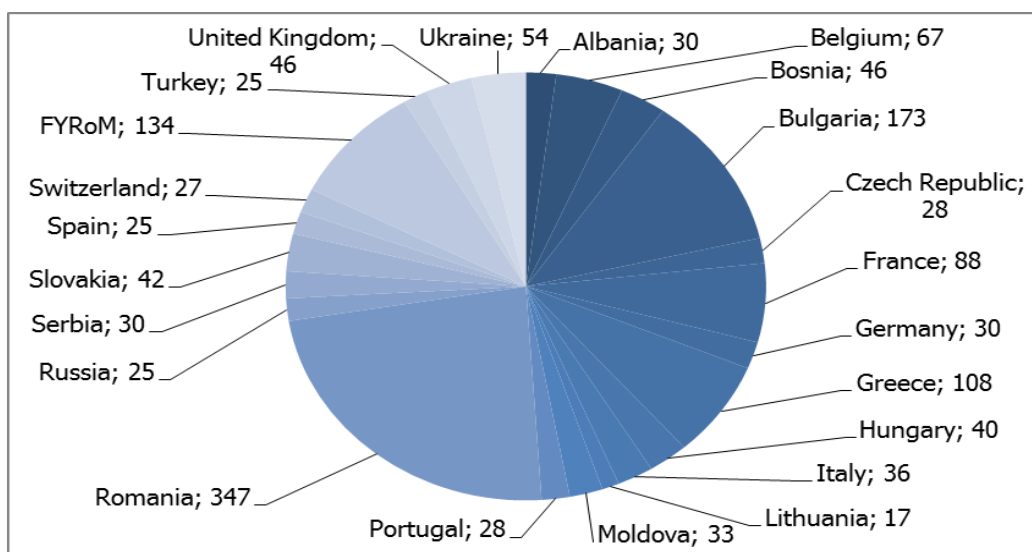
ROMED1 help defining the **expected profile of the intercultural mediator**: he/she shall have a good knowledge of the “cultural codes” of the community and of the institutions, shall be impartial and focused on improving communication and co-operation and shall stimulate both parties to take responsibilities and to be actively involved in the change process. A good mediator shall be impartial and not be “(mis-)used” neither by the communities or the institutions.

**ROMED was subject to an external evaluation in 2016.** Below are some of the main findings and recommendations of the external evaluation: ROMED1 developed and spread a new vision for the role of Roma mediators at European, national and local levels. It was initiated as a complex capacity building effort aimed at systemic change. The methodology was systematised in the ROMED1 Trainer’s Handbook<sup>2</sup> which was continuously improved on the basis of feedback from trainers and participants. From 2011 to 2016 ROMED1 trained 1,479 mediators from 500 municipalities in 23 countries. Approximately 90% of the trained mediators are Roma, and more than 50% are women. Over 700 representatives of local

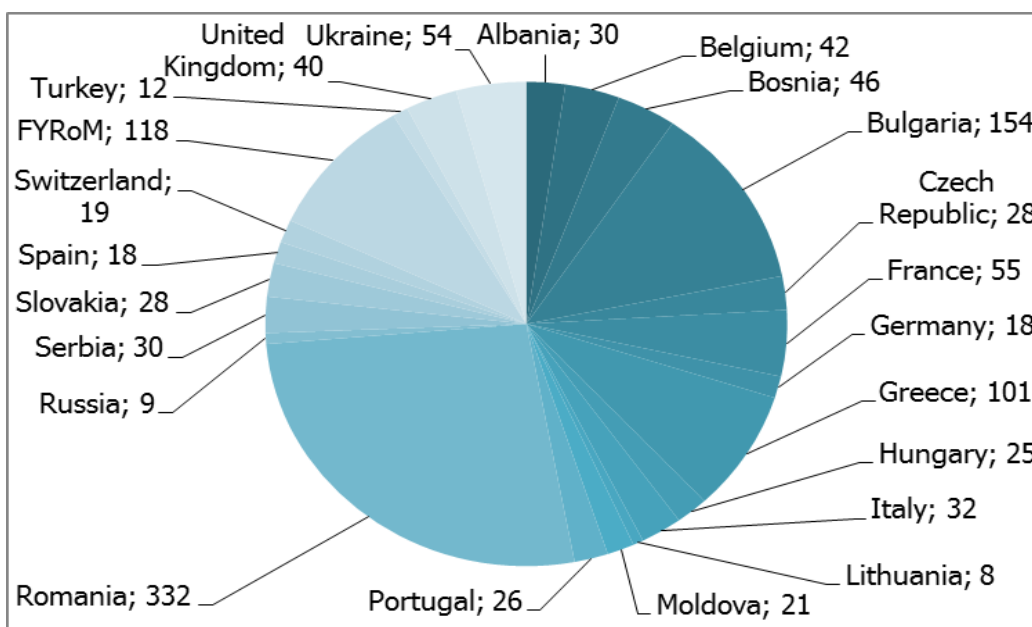
<sup>2</sup> Reports from above mentioned thematic visits can be found on CAHROM webpage: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cahrom>.

institutions took part in training sessions which increased their understanding of the role of mediators. Representatives of national institutions with relevant responsibilities in Roma inclusion were also present at some training sessions.

**ROMED1 mediators trained 2011-2016**



**Mediators certified<sup>3</sup> 2011-2015**



The ROMED1 training programme was considered by local stakeholders to be highly relevant to the needs of local Roma inclusion processes. In particular, mediators valued it for its human rights-based approach and empowerment orientation, and for its focus on the clarity of the role of mediators and the practical aspects of their work. The programme's main

<sup>3</sup> Mediators received a ROMED1 certificate following the completion of the training sessions and practice period.

impact was to increase the functional capacities of participating mediators. However, it had little impact on the employment status of mediators, especially in countries where the mediator's profession is not recognised. The programme had variable impact across the evaluation focus countries on national policies relating to mediators. The overall effectiveness of ROMED1 was constrained by its rapid expansion.

#### **Main Recommendations of the External Evaluation to the ROMED 1 Programme (Training of Intercultural Mediators)<sup>4</sup>**

It is recommended that support to the ROMED programme be continued, but with a clear focus on sustainability and national and local ownership.

Future ROMED mediator training should focus on sustainability by developing in-country systems for formal recognition of mediation as profession and continuing professional development. More concretely, the ROMED1 programme should:

- Ensure alignment with existing national programmes and require clear commitment from national authorities that mediators will continue their employment or will be formally employed, and that financial resources are allocated to support their training and continuing professional development;
- Focus support on developing the capacities of established mediator networks as new actors promoting intercultural mediation;
- Allocate resources to assist national advocacy efforts for: recognition of the profession of mediator; allocation of government support for mediator training programmes; official certification of training for mediators and incentives for their professional development;
- Support more systemic monitoring of the implementation of the Strasbourg Declaration signed by national governments. Civil society and networks of mediators can contribute by developing annual shadow reports on the situation of mediators in each country.

A number of European countries employ members of Roma communities to help improve the education of children from those communities. The practicalities of such arrangements vary widely, as do the situations of Roma communities in relation to schooling.

The idea of involving people from Roma communities to give Roma children easier access to schools and improve their chances of succeeding when they get there, accords with the more general principle of encouraging members of those communities to play a direct part in finding and implementing solutions to their problems. First put forward over at the beginning of 21th century, this idea is now applied in several countries – which means that we are no longer dealing simply with theoretical schemes and visions of the future. Thanks to practical experiences gained in a number of countries, one has sufficient information to envisage solutions which are not just realistic, but realizable. This experience must now be analysed and assessed, with a view to formulating, for policy-makers, proposals on viable measures which are genuinely likely to produce positive long-term results.

Spain, Finland, Romania and the Czech Republic were among the first countries to use members of the Roma communities to improve Roma children's chances of succeeding at school.

In the 1980s, for example, Andalusia, the Roma most inhabited region in **Spain**, already had some 100 Roma monitors/mediators, who monitored schooling, and liaised between teachers and families, schools and homes, for the purpose of reducing absenteeism, which topped 50% in some provinces. In the 1990s, **Finland** employed Roma social workers and mediators, who helped to settle various problems (educational, linguistic, legal, etc.). The **Czech Republic** has

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<sup>4</sup> The full results of ROMED External evaluation are available at <http://coe-romed.org/articles/romed-external-evaluation-report-published>

Roma teaching assistants, who have been operating in schools since the early 1990s, and are mainly concerned with facilitating communication between teachers and Roma children, and helping the latter in the classroom. In addition to providing direct support for the teaching process, they mediate between families and schools. The **Slovak Republic** also has Roma teaching assistants. They operate in three main areas: (1) the actual teaching process, (2) the leisure activities of Roma children and (3) co-operation with families. They also work with public authorities, non-governmental organisations and churches, and with Roma activists and mediators/assistants. They help to identify the needs of local Roma communities and plan projects for them.

**Romania** has “Roma school mediators”, who were introduced - with “Roma health mediators” - in the mid-1990s. They have no classroom involvement and are concerned with relations between schools, Roma children’s families and the whole local Roma community. Their duties, as defined by the Ministry of Education, are:

- supporting the schooling of Roma children at all levels;
- facilitating the holding of meetings with Roma parents;
- working with Roma and non-Roma NGOs;
- helping to keep school attendance figures;
- identifying possible future teachers among young Roma;
- reporting, and mediating in, conflicts between and within communities;
- providing the community with information on measures concerning the schooling of Roma children;
- encouraging parents to participate in their children’s schooling and in the life of schools;
- informing schools and the authorities of any special problems which arise in the community.

In the **United Kingdom**, the education authorities have set up school support services for Travellers. These specialists advise schools and teachers on integrating Travellers’ children successfully, and facilitate communication between parents and schools. In **Austria**, the organisation, Romano Centro, has been using student volunteers to help Roma children with their homework for the last nine years. They originally worked with groups of Roma children in the afternoon, but this approach failed, so they have changed into helping children at home. These “Lernhelfer” encourage Roma children to go to school and help them to get better results, but they work outside schools and have no direct contact with teachers.

Roma assistants work in **Poland** where there were firstly employed 20 Roma on a pilot scheme in the Małopolska Region in 2001. This led on to the government countrywide programme for Roma, adopted in 2003, with approximately 100 Roma school assistants, hired by state authorities (local authorities as responsible for education) on the regular, legally formalized basis (2004), which provides for support teachers in classes (mass) with Roma children. Assistants, who are trusted by the local Roma community, have the task of helping Roma children to communicate at school, giving schools a positive image and stressing the benefits of education, providing psychological support for Roma children, helping teachers working with Roma children, promoting the Roma language and culture in schools, monitoring attendance and performance, identifying the problems and talents of Roma children, helping schools and families to communicate and mediating in conflicts, telling Roma parents about teacher-parent meetings and encouraging them to attend and generally participate in the life of the school (e.g. out-of-school activities - excursions, visits, cultural events, etc.), and identifying family and financial problems which can negatively influence the process of learning of Roma children. They also provide pupils and teachers with information on Roma culture and its special features. They attend lessons and Teachers rooms and they have their own space for their duties (meeting with pupils, parents, etc.)

In **Croatia**, Roma assistants were first used experimentally in 2000. They have been officially provided for in the national programme for Roma since 2003, and 18 assistants have been appointed by the Ministry of Education in 2004. Assistants divide their time between schools, where they help teachers and pupils, and the community. In schools, they ensure that Roma children attend regularly, meet the school’s requirements and master the curriculum. They co-operate with teachers in monitoring Roma children’s progress and help them when necessary - particularly with language problems. In the community, they monitor Roma children’s arrival at school in the morning and departure in the evening, liaise with

parents, co-operate with social services working for Roma and help children with their homework, providing extra coaching when necessary.

In some countries these workers are employed by authorities responsible for formal education (government or self-government/schools), while in others the employer may be a local NGO. Differences may also be observed as regards initial and in-service training, job profiles and specifications and so on.

Different terminology is used to designate such positions in different settings. The two most common terms are: **mediator** and **assistant** (See in Appendix 4 an updated table on Roma mediators working in several countries).

The network of foundations and organisations in the countries of central, eastern and south-east Europe also use Roma school or community mediators, and Roma teaching assistants. Roma assistants are involved, for example, in the “Step-by-Step” programme for primary classes, where they give Roma language and culture a foothold in schools, and help children to make a connection between their own and the classroom language. They function as co-teachers, helping teachers to personalize lessons, and organizing small working groups in co-operation with teachers.

Generally speaking, assistants focus primarily on supporting Roma children in the context of school activities (school attendance, classroom learning, communication with teachers, homework), but also facilitate communication between schools and families (or in wider sense: between institutions and Roma communities). School mediators focus on relations between the school and families and are also responsible for raising both school and community awareness and informing the Roma community about school-related issues.

Notwithstanding these differences, there is thus **a common core of activities: facilitating relations between the school and the Roma community(ies), and between teachers and other school staff and parents of Roma children**. This is in line with below listed texts and documents adopted by international organisations on mediation/mediators (see also chapter II of this report).

### **What do Roma school mediators do?**

The role and practical responsibilities of the mediator depend a great deal on the kind of issues specific to the schooling of Roma children in the local context. According to the situation and the priorities, mediators/assistants should focus on objectives such as:

- ensuring school attendance;
- preventing and tackling the problem of school drop-outs;
- encouraging academic success;
- favouring positive relations between Roma and non-Roma children, Roma parents and school, Roma community and the majority.

If school attendance at early ages is not an issue, the work will concentrate on the reasons why pupils drop out of school and ways to improve their chances of academic success. If, on the other hand, the local community faces problems such as access to schooling or the school being rejected by the local Roma community, these issues should be addressed by working with both partners: the school and the community.

In more practical terms, the work of a mediator should focus (*inter alia*) on:

- welcoming Roma children to the school and helping them integrate, particularly at the start of the school year;
- facilitating communication between the school and Roma parents;
- fostering a school climate conducive to intercultural communication between Roma and non-Roma based on mutual understanding and recognition.

## 1.2 European and international texts of reference

The main text of reference for this thematic report is [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2012\)9 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on mediation as an effective tool for promoting respect for human rights and social inclusion of Roma](#) which provides clear guidelines to member States on an effective mediation and a sustainable Roma mediation process. See Appendix 5 for this text and other relevant European and international texts of reference.

## 1.3 Composition of the thematic group of experts

Experts participating in the visit represented a wide range of entities dealing with Roma issues at different levels: institutions responsible for national minorities and/or persons responsible for implementation of the inclusion strategies (Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”), a scientific institution (Republic of Moldova), a teacher working with Roma (Norway) and a Roma mediator herself (Latvia). The list of the experts participating in the thematic group is listed below and their contacts details can be found in Appendix 3.

### Experts from LITHUANIA, requesting/hosting country

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Ms Vida MONTVYDAITE</b> | CAHROM member, Director of the Department of National minorities, Government of the Republic of <b>LITHUANIA</b>  |
| <b>Ms Gražina SLUŠKO</b>   | CAHROM substitute member, Division of Relations with National Minorities, Department of National Minorities, Government of the Republic of <b>LITHUANIA</b> |

### Experts from LATVIA, REPUBLIC OF REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, and “THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA”, partner countries

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Ms Dana DIDŽUS</b>        | Roma school mediator, <b>LATVIA</b>  |
| <b>Mr Ion DUMINICĂ</b>       | CAHROM member, Head of the Ethnical Minorities Department, Institute of Cultural Heritage, Academy of Sciences, <b>REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA</b>                     |
| <b>Ms Cecilie MØRLAND</b>    | Oslo Education for Adults, Skullerud, <b>NORWAY</b>  |
| <b>Ms Agnieszka GAJEWSKA</b> | CAHROM member, Ministry of Interior and Administration, National and Ethnic Minorities Division, <b>POLAND</b>   |
| <b>Ms Berill BARANYAI</b>    | CAHROM member, High Commission for Migration - Support Centre for Roma communities (Núcleo de Apoio às Comunidades Ciganas - NACI), <b>PORTUGAL</b>            |
| <b>Ms Gjulten MUSTAFOVA</b>  | CAHROM member, State Advisor for Non-Discrimination and Human Rights, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, <b>“THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA”</b> |



#### 1.4 Programme of the thematic visit and main issues addressed

The agenda (see Appendix 2) included meetings and discussion with several relevant ministries and state agencies (Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour, Education Development Fund, Centre of non-formal Youth Education, National Centre for Special Needs Education and Psychology, Lithuanian Children Fund, Equal Opportunities Ombudsman), representatives of local authorities (Vilnius, Eišiškes and Panevėžys municipalities, school social pedagogues from Eišiškes, Panevėžys, Vilnius, Deputy Mayor of Panevėžys, head of secondary school in Panevėžys) and Roma representatives from Vilnius, Šiauliai and Eišiškes, including Roma mediators and local catholic church representative working within Roma community in Panevėžys.

During the second day field visits to Panevėžys was conducted, enabling direct contact with Roma community and Deputy Mayor in the spot.

A debriefing session between the experts of the thematic group was organised in the morning of the third day. After the debriefing session few experts visited the Roma settlement in Vilnius, organised by Lithuanian host immediately on the request of experts which should be appreciated.

The organisation of the visit was perfect and timing in preparing logistic and merits details was excellent what must be specially underlined. The agenda followed the guidelines developed by the CAHROM and allowed the possibility for partner countries to introduce their experience and exchange views with local interlocutors.

Some of the main issues addressed during the thematic visit were the following: institutionalization of the school mediators position, the sources of financing and law regulations needs, positive results of mediation, problem of special schools and preschool education in relation to mediators' work, problem of children coming back from abroad, school attendance and frequency, the areas of interventions of school mediators apart from education, promoting Romani culture, including language as a tool that make school environment more friendly for Roma pupils and that can change the negative stereotype of Roma, attitudes of Roma communities towards the education, need for professional and psychological support for Roma mediators, reception of the school mediators by school staff, process of selection and criteria for mediator's position, taking into consideration the low level of education of Roma and some others items.

During the visit only the school mediators' issues were discussed although some other forms of existing Roma mediation were mentioned (Roma health mediators, labour market mediators, etc.) as complementary part of systemic support of Roma integration strategies implementation and indispensable complementation of Roma school mediator work<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Information concerning Roma health mediators can be found in CAHROM report on Roma health mediators from the thematic visit in Sofia, Bulgaria, held on 2-4 November 2015 on the CAHROM web-site: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cahrom>

## 1.5 Terminology

### Council of Europe Descriptive Glossary of terms relating to Roma issues: terms related to mediation

| English                                 | French  | Comments   |
|---|---|--|
| <i>intercultural mediation for Roma</i> | médiation interculturelle pour les Roms             |  |
| <i>employment mediators</i>             | médiateurs pour l'emploi                            |  |
| <i>health mediators</i>                 | <u>médiateurs sanitaires</u><br>médiateurs de santé | The role of health mediators is to mediate between Roma patients and health professionals, provide basic health education and assist Roma communities in obtaining necessary insurance and documents [cf. CM Rec(2006)10]. They are social workers, usually of Roma origin and frequently women, and they liaise between Roma and Roma families in remote areas (neighbourhoods, villages) and public institutions (doctors, hospitals, etc.). Roma mediators operate in other areas too (such as schools and employment agencies).  |
| <i>school assistants and mediators</i>  | assistants et médiateurs scolaires                  | According to a DG IV report (DGIV/EDU/ROM(2004)11), a distinction should be made between the two concepts: school assistants have a subordinate function which may actually perpetuate inequality between Roma and non-Roma, while the term "school mediator" implies a process involving equal parties – a process which may help to build a more balanced relationship between schools and the Roma community. Another difference: school assistants work mainly in schools and classrooms, while school mediators act as an interface between schools and the community. "Mediation" is common to both, however, since school assistants also mediate between pupils and parents. |

The present report refers to Roma mediators; however, the existing terminology differs from country to country: "mediators" or "assistants" or "intercultural mediators" or "neighbourhood stewards" or "facilitators", etc.

## II. SIZE, COMPOSITION, LANGUAGE, LIFESTYLE AND SITUATION OF THE GROUPS COVERED BY THE THEMATIC VISIT

Following the decision taken by the CAHROM at its 12<sup>th</sup> meeting in November 2016, information about the size, composition, language and situation of the groups covered by the thematic report are no longer reproduced in the core of the document but in an appendix (see Appendix 6). This information will be soon incorporate in country factsheets to be published on the Roma portal of the Council of Europe.

### III. ROMA MEDIATION LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK AND PRACTICES

#### 3.1 Lithuania

Since 2000, three programmes for Roma integration have been implemented in Lithuania. The means of the Action Plan for Roma integration into the Lithuanian society for 2015–2020 are currently being implemented. However, the institute of Roma mediators is not institutionalized and highly depends on project-related funding.

##### **Education mediators**

In the framework of the Programme for Roma integration into the Lithuanian society for 2000-2004, The Public Institution Roma Community Centre has been built in Kirtimai settlement, Vilnius. Education mediators as teacher's assistants have been working at the centre since 2001. Two teacher's assistants (both members of Roma community in Kirtimai settlement) are helping the teachers to communicate with Roma children during the lessons by translating from Lithuanian language to Romani language and interacting with children.

In 2012 this case of good practice was transferred to 2 mainstream schools in Vilnius. In the framework of the project "C.A.F.E. Changing Attitude Fostering Equality", implemented by Equal Opportunities Ombudsman's Office in Lithuania, two teacher's assistants were assigned to Vilnius schools of Naujininkai and Saulėtekis for 1 year. After the project discussions were held with the Ministry of Education on creation of teacher's assistant positions in those schools with a higher number of Roma pupils. As a consequence, seven applications to the Ministry of Education have been submitted by Lithuanian schools in order to employ teacher's assistants. Nevertheless, this has not been taken into account.

##### **Community mediators**

According to the Action Plan for Roma integration into the Lithuanian society for 2015–2020 it is planned to employ Roma mediators trained in the framework of programme ROMED (Mediation for Roma). However, there is no funding allocated for implementation of this measure. Therefore, 5 trained Roma mediators were included into the activities of the project "Lithuanian Roma Platform – Going Local", implemented by the Department of National minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

On September 1, 2016, trained representatives of the Roma communities started working with five Lithuanian municipalities (Vilnius, Šalčininkai, Panevėžys, Šiauliai and Marijampolė); they are described as community mediators between local Roma communities and municipal institutions. The nature of the activity of the mediators depends on issues relevant to the Roma. The key areas of the mediators are social, economic, cultural issues and administrative help for the Roma. The mediators help the Roma to communicate with representatives of state institutions, assist them in dealings with public and private institutions, help solve other problems of everyday life, carry out education and prevention programs. Extra attention in the municipalities is paid to the cherishing of the Roma culture and raising public awareness.

The following tasks were carried out by Roma mediators in different municipalities:

Vilnius – accompaniment of Roma children from Kirtimai settlement to school;

Šiauliai – assistance in solving problems faced by Roma children at school, dealing with debt repayment procedures, assistance at municipality, health care centres, workplaces;

Panevėžys – accompaniment of Roma children to school, charity management, prevention and awareness raising;

Šalčininkai – administrative assistance, correspondence management, help to solve IT related problems;

Marijampolė – assistance in getting employment, accompaniment of Roma to the health care centres, administrative assistance.

Although the contracts of mediators are valid until May 1, 2017 it is planned to continue activities during the second part of the project with the focus on school mediation.

**Labour mediators**

Since 2004, three ESF projects were implemented that have helped disadvantaged and socially excluded Roma integrate into the labour market. Within the projects, models for Roma employment were developed and tested, training programs and methodical recommendations for recruitment specialists were prepared. Labour mediators were assisting Roma in every of those projects. Currently there is an on-going project "Let us work together with the Roma – new job opportunities and challenges", where 7 labour mediators are working. The project will continue until 2020.

**3.2 Latvia**

The main legislation of education in Latvia includes the Education Law from 1998 and the General Education Law from 1999. The 1998 Law of Education forbids the differential treatment to education. It means that Roma people have the same rights and obligations with regard to education as the general Latvian population. Since 2002 education of 5-6 years old children is mandatory.

More specific guarantees, aims and goals are regulated by the normative acts of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia. For example, the amendments to the Cabinet Regulation No. 461 of 18 May 2010 "Regulations Regarding the Classification of Occupations, the Basic Tasks Appropriate to the Occupation and the Basic Qualification Requirements, and the Procedures for the Use and Updating of the Classification of Occupations" allow municipalities to provide their pre-schools and elementary schools with a teachers' assistant of Roma background in order to promote school attending especially among Roma children. The general secondary education level is the minimal grade to work as teachers' assistant of Roma background, but in the same time the tertiary pedagogical education is necessary to be employed as non-Roma teacher assistant.

The Education Development Guidelines 2014 - 2020 stipulates measures for improving the content of preschool, primary and general education, raising professional competence of teachers, as well as ensuring inclusive education. The Guidelines defines the policy results to be achieved and result indicators. One of results is an involvement of Roma in the Latvian education system taking into account their cultural and historical traditions must be facilitated. For example, there is a targeted measure on supporting activities for the training and implementing Roma teacher assistants in the schools at the municipality level, taking into account municipality needs and Roma mediation practice results. According to the monitoring results in 2017 there are 16 municipalities which have indicated the need of Roma teacher assistant work in the pre-school or primary schools. The Guidelines foresees also preparation of various methodological materials and implementation of educational activities for Roma pupils.

The more specific guaranties, aims and goals are regulated by the normative acts of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia:

- State Guidelines of Preschool Education (No 533), goals, objectives, educational content, methods and expected results, <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=250854>;
- Terms of Teachers Required Educational and Professional Qualifications of Teachers and the Improvement of Professional Qualification Procedure (No 363); <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=258334>;
- Procedures for Ensuring the Safety of Students in Educational Institutions and Organized Events (No1338); <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=201106>;
- Hygiene requirements for child care providers and educational institutions in the exercise of pre-school education programs (No 890); <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=260057>

**Monitoring – Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with municipalities.**

The Education Development Guidelines 2014 - 2020 foresees monitoring of Roma students' achievements and training teachers with Roma background. Ministry of Education and Science in Latvia in collaboration with municipalities are

constantly monitoring achievements of Roma students, thriving towards the higher achievements among them. With accordance to the student's educational needs and issues involving Roma families, there has been a focus on training assistant teachers with Roma background, as well as on publishing manuals targeted towards Roma children's educators. In collaboration with the municipality Education boards and education institutions was conducted in Roma pupil monitoring by collecting data on the number of Roma pupils and their achievements: • Roma pupils who acquire general education programs, including pre-school, primary, secondary and vocational education programs; • Roma pupils who haven't got the document for compulsory primary education; • Roma pupils who have received supporting measures to improve academic achievement. As well as data on Roma teacher assistants who work in general educational institutions. Latvia has developed a set of national Roma integration policy measures. The measures have been included in the development planning document – National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Guidelines 2012 – 2018 (approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 20.10.2011.). The Ministry of Culture is responsible for the implementation, coordination and evaluation of the Guidelines as well as set of Roma integration policy measures, and the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for activities for Roma education. There are many targeted measures included in the set of Roma integration policy measures.

### 3.3 Republic of Moldova

The integration of Roma people represents one of the national priorities in the Republic of Republic of Moldova. In order to ensure the commitment to improve the situation of Roma the Action Plan to support Roma population for 2011-2015 was approved by the Government on 8 July 2011 and subsequently amended on 31 January 2012. The Action Plan was developed under the EU Framework on Roma, OSCE/ODIHR Strategy and the Report on States Parties implementing the OSCE Strategy (2008), Council of Europe and UN recommendations. The implementation of the Action Plan is reconfirmed within the main framework for human rights in the Republic of Republic of Moldova under the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2011-2014. The main objectives of the Action Plan refer to the key seven priority areas: 1) Promoting services of the Roma community mediators; 2) Education; 3) Employment and Economic welfare; 4) Health and Social security; 5) Culture and Media; 6) Public administration, Public order and Documentation; 7) Housing<sup>6</sup>.

At the time being, one of the main achievements represents the Institutionalization of Roma Community Mediators. The Parliament adopted the Law No. 69 from 5 April 2013 on supplementing Article 14 of the Law No.436-XVI of 28 December 2006 on local government, by which the local Council of the 1st level was given a new power, to decide on the establishment of the community mediator in the settlements populated compactly or jointly by Roma. Their role is to facilitate communication between Roma communities and public local authorities, to ensure a better access to available public services in the area of health, education, labour and social assistance. Community mediator is employed on the basis of contest on an individual employment agreement with the 1st level Local Public Authority in accordance with the Labour Code, and calculation of community mediator's salary is carried out in line with the GD No. 381 of 13 April 2006 on terms of labour remuneration for public sector employees<sup>7</sup>.

Under Government Decision No. 557 of 17 July 2013 was adopted the Framework Regulation on employment modalities and organization of the community mediator's activity in compact and / or mixed communities populated by Roma<sup>8</sup>. According to the Framework Regulation community mediator is a person of Roma origin whose mission lies in facilitating communication between beneficiaries (socially vulnerable representatives of Roma) in local communities and the 1st level Local Public Authority, in overcoming difficulties and problems identified or in rendering adequate support to beneficiaries. Community mediator identifies beneficiaries and their number in locality, evaluates their needs; is responsible for engaging in productive communication with the relevant authorities in that locality to ensure that clients

<sup>6</sup> <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=342070&lang=2>

<sup>7</sup> **ACFC/SR/IV(2015)005**. *The IV Periodic Report of the Republic of Moldova on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*. Council of Europe. Strasbourg, 16 June 2015.

<sup>8</sup> <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=348861&lang=2>

have full access to social assistance, education, medical assistance, employment, documentation and housing services and other essential services. The regulations on services for socially vulnerable persons from the ethnic population provide for one community mediator per 150 clients.

The data that emerged from the Mapping of Localities mainly inhabited by Roma in the Republic of Republic of Moldova conducted by the UNDP Office in Republic of Moldova at the request of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and the Family in 2012 showed that an additional 48 posts of community mediators should be established in 44 localities mainly or partly inhabited by Roma<sup>9</sup>. The process of recruiting community mediators under the State budget began in 2013. The first budget allocation for this purpose was 462.600 Republic of Moldovan lei (approx. 28 918 Euro) for 15 community mediator posts in 14 localities. The medium-term budget 2014-2016 provided for a total expenditure of 16.198.000 Republic of Moldovan lei (approx. 901 406 Euro) for the recruitment of 33 additional mediators in 30 localities in 2014. Between January 2013 and January 2014, the Republic of Moldovan Government allocated 2.082.400 MDL (approx. 115 883 Euro) in order to put the community mediation service on a sound footing. The conditions were thus created to ensure access to such mediation services in all 44 localities mainly inhabited by Roma or populated by mixed communities<sup>10</sup>.

On 1 January 2015 the new provisions on decentralized funding entered into force at national level, according to which Local Public Authorities should allocate funds for a number of local services, including for the activity of community mediators; however, the hiring process of community mediators by the LPAs was stopped due to lack of finance. According to latest data, in 2015 the number of community mediators employed within the mayors' offices and paid from the local budget was only 15, and in 2016 – 9 persons. It should be mentioned that in the given situation, the role of public associations of Romani is very important. Taking into account that sometimes one of the reasons not to employ the community mediator lies in the lack of his/her necessity, the role of public associations of Romani is important in building an efficient dialogue with LPAs in order to further improve the service of community mediator<sup>11</sup>.

The new Action Plan to support the Roma people for 2016–2020 was approved on 09.06.2016 by the GD No.734<sup>12</sup>. The document is a continuity of Government's commitment to enhance social inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Republic of Moldova. The Plan stipulates specific measures and responsibilities in such fields like education, health, labour and social protection, housing and community development, participation in decision-making process and combating discrimination. Republic of Moldovan authorities express their willingness to provide Roma community mediators with a robust program of training and education in order to strengthen their capacity-building and to ensure their professional qualification in order for them to better relate with the other civil servants and public officials. Starting from 2011, Trainings within the joint programme of the Council of Europe-European Union "Intercultural mediation for Roma communities" (ROMED1) was already ensured<sup>13</sup>.

Furthermore, governmental and international support continues to be granted in professional trainings and arranging of workplaces for 48 community mediators aiming at successful implementation of the system of Roma community mediators<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/6491363/RAPORT\\_Cartografierea\\_localitatilor\\_dens\\_populate\\_de\\_romi\\_din\\_Republica\\_Moldova](https://www.academia.edu/6491363/RAPORT_Cartografierea_localitatilor_dens_populate_de_romi_din_Republica_Moldova)

<sup>10</sup> CERD/C/MDA/10-11 – Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) / United Nations. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention. Combined tenth and eleventh periodic reports of States parties due in 2014. Republic of Moldova, 02 March 2016.

<sup>11</sup> A/HRC/WG.6/26/MDA/1 - Human Rights Council. Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (26th session 31.10-11.11.2016) / United Nations-General Assembly. National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21. Republic of Moldova, 23 August 2016.

<sup>12</sup> <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=365368&lang=2>

<sup>13</sup> <http://coe-romed.org/romed1>

<sup>14</sup> <http://md.one.un.org/content/unct/moldova/en/home/presscenter/press-releases/de-la-discriminare-la-drepturi-egale--mediatorii-comunitari-sunt.html>

### 3.4 Norway

For many years it has been a challenge to facilitate schooling for Roma children in Norway. In recent years, Oslo municipality has received government funding for a mentoring project as part of the follow-up of measures in the Action Plan for Roma in Oslo municipality. The department of Roma Measures (Romtiltaket) in Oslo was established in January 2007 and is a part of The Education Agency and Oslo Municipality. Since 2009, it has become responsible for three areas within the "Action Plan for improvement of the living conditions of Roma".

These three areas are:

- 1) Advisory services for Roma. This was instituted with two anthropologists in autumn 2009 and three mediators from 2012/2013.
- 2) Education for adults. The main goal was to teach the parents basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics, data and social science, in addition to helping each individual and family in contact with the authorities. The idea was that the children's ability to complete school depended on the parent's life situation.
- 3) Education advisor/mediator/teacher for the Roma pupils in different schools situated around Oslo (age 6-19). This was established in autumn 2012 with one teacher and has since expanded in August 2016 with one coordinator, two teachers and one mediator/school assistant from the Roma community.

The education for adults was shut down in 2015 after the evaluation of the action plan. Today the remaining measures are: 1) advisory services and 3) the teaching/school mediator services for Roma pupils in different schools around Oslo. These follow-up measures were recommended as a result of the evaluation of the action plan, and currently there is no new action plan in motion.

The evaluation of the Action Plan shows that the scheme with mentors acting as a link between school and parents has worked well. The mentors have been an important resource in monitoring attendance, together with the children and their parents. The Roma mentors have increased understanding of and trust in schools among Roma parents. The mentors have also helped to reduce absence and increase the learning gains for many Roma children.

#### **Roma School mediators in the education system**

There are few Norwegian studies concerning the situation of the Roma children in education, and there is little systematized knowledge of this matter. Due to the observed needs in the Roma community (and due to the evaluation of the Action Plan) Oslo municipality decided to hire two school mediators, both working (part-time job) from August 2016. Currently there is only one school mediator working two days a week in one specific school. From August 2017 the proposed plan is to employ one more school mediator to cover several schools around Oslo which have a large attendance of Roma pupils. As the programme with school mediators is a recent project in Norway, there is currently no legislation concerning this matter, and no official training programme has been implemented for mediators.

The school mediator is supported by two teachers, one coordinator, two anthropologists and three mediators (from the Roma community) working in the advisory services, to conduct several activities. The work tasks are to stay in contact with the parents and supervising the Roma pupils in the classroom alongside a teacher, to help them understand the instructions given in the lessons. The objective is to strengthen the pupil's understanding of the material and to make sure they feel safe and happy in school. As the school mediator and teachers are present in the same schools, they often teach the same pupils. This encourages cooperation between the two so that they are able to discuss the needs of the pupil. The Roma school mediator has been the most important asset for the teachers in the Department of Roma Measures to obtain trust amongst Roma families. The school mediator works as a constant interpreter of culture for both teachers and Roma families and pupils.

Experience indicates that it can be difficult to find satisfactory solutions for safeguarding Roma children's right to education while also enabling them to develop their cultural identity and way of life. Hiring and training more school mediators from the Roma community seems to be the most efficient tool for inclusion in the educational system in the future.

### 3.5 Poland

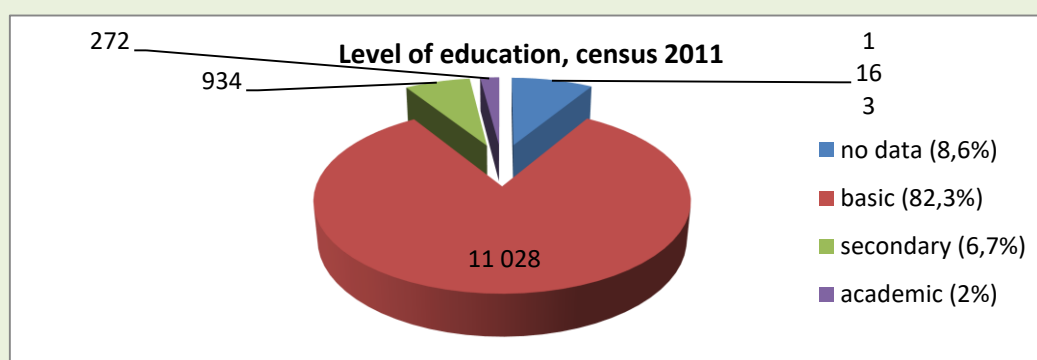
**Roma health mediators** – non-existing position in Poland, due to cultural ban among Roma communities (jobs connected to medical care are culturally unclean). Position replaced by non-Roma nurses.

**Roma community mediators** – in 2016 – 2 persons (Roma origin, women) working: in social care centre (Warsaw) and Municipality Office (Limanowa).

Roma school assistant position exist in Poland since 2001; since 2004 is fully institutionalized; since 2006 law regulations - responded to diagnosed educational shortages of Roma pupils – introduced the additional financial resources for education of Roma origin pupils. Those regulations are beyond the “Roma strategies”, are independent from any Roma-related actions, they are the part of general system. Roma school assistants are school team members, hired by local authorities (responsible for education) on regular basis (full time, permanent job), present in classrooms during the lessons, having their own, equipped room for meetings with pupils and parents and trained. They are part of consultation processes on local actions plans and they are in constant contact with relevant Plenipotentiary on National and Ethnic Minorities of Voivod Offices (regional representatives of government) and Ministry of Interior and Administration (responsible for national and ethnic minorities). There are 92 Roma school assistants working (2016), the estimate number of Roma pupils vary between 2,500 – 3,000 pupils.

#### Why Roma school mediators? Education level is an answer.

Fig 1. Level of education among Roma in Poland, census 2011, numbers and percentage



The key barriers contributing to the persistent low level of education among the Roma community include:

- the lack of initial preparedness ensured by preschool education;
- insufficient knowledge of Polish, resulting e.g. in not understanding the teacher’s instructions;
- early school dropout of the Roma pupils, in particular girls;
- migration of the Roma families, resulting in interrupted school education, frequently without resuming it in the new place of residence and the educational deficiencies after returning from abroad;
- absence from school classes (due to the lack of the sense of obligation to send children to school, family responsibilities understood from the community perspective);



- the lack of motivation and support from parents;
- insufficient preparation of teachers to work with culturally diverse pupils;
- dislike on the part of non-Roma peers;
- poverty, poor social and financial conditions making it difficult for pupils to prepare for classes.

### Roma School Assistants in the education system

The number of working Roma school assistants vary, approx. 100 persons during last decade; in 2016 92 persons were hired; out of them - 62 hired on permanent basis; 75 % are women.

The position of Roma education assistant was introduced to the Polish school system in 2001<sup>15</sup>. Achieved results decided on continuation of their position in forthcoming strategies and legal regulation of Roma school assistant position. Roma Education Assistant provides assistance to Roma students in contacts with the school and works with the parents and with the school environment. The purpose of their work is to increase the low turnout of pupils, and to assist in the implementation of school obligations. Roma assistants are Roma who have the trust of local Roma communities.

The duties of the assistant should also include building a good contact between the parents and the school, informing parents about the progress at school, as well as monitoring attendance of pupils and progress at school. Assistants are responsible for providing comprehensive assistance for children and youth at school and beyond. To a large extent, it is their duty to cooperate with the parents of Roma pupils.

In 2004 the profession of Roma education assistant was entered into the official catalogue of professions<sup>16</sup>.

Since 2013 Roma school assistant - apart from: pupil him/herself, parents, teacher, form tutor, youth worker, psychological and pedagogical counselling centre - can initiate a psychological and pedagogical support for individual pupil which if great importance also in the context of diagnosis of mental ability of Roma pupils that can lead to the opinion on mental (or social) disability. This kind of opinion allows Roma parents to place their child at special school. Roma school assistants can counteract in a family environment against this negative phenomenon.

Since 2006, a systematic change in the system of financing of Roma education assistants has taken place. Initially, their work was funded under the *Roma Programme*, which involved large pool of funds. Over time, the legal instrument of the financing of their employment by the self-government (responsible for education) was established (so called educational subvention).

### Mechanism of financing minority pupils' education

The existing legal regulations protect the linguistic autonomy of the national and ethnic minorities. Students belonging to these groups are guaranteed the right and a practical ability to learn their mother tongue, history and geography of the country of origin at all stages of education. These issues are governed in detail by the relevant regulations of educational law.

Due to the higher costs of education of such students, the Ministry of National Education annually collects the information about the number of students using this additional form of education and supports local authorities (responsible for education) with extra financial resources.

Fig.3. Additional financial resources devoted to the minority pupils' education in 2015:

| National/ethnic minorities pupils in general | Additional financial resources for their education PLN | Additional financial resources for their education € | Number of Roma origin pupils | Additional financial resources for Roma pupils PLN | Additional financial resources for Roma pupils € |
|--|--|--|------------------------------|--|--|
| 66,651                                       | 326 011 000  | 81 502 750   | 2,044                        | 16 269 412   | 4 067 353  |

<sup>15</sup> In the framework of the *Pilot government programme for the Roma community in the Małopolskie voivodeship for the years 2001 - 2003*.

<sup>16</sup> Regulation of the Minister of Economy and Labour, dated December 8, 2004, on the vocational specialties for the needs of labour market and the scope of its usage (Journal of Laws No. 265, item. 2644, as amended).

In case of students from the national and ethnic minorities (except the Roma pupils), these resources are allocated for teaching their native language, history and geography of the country of origin. Roma pupils were also introduced into this mechanism but not with relation to the teaching of minority's mother tongue, history or geography of country of origin. In case of Roma students – in view of the impossibility of teaching above mentioned subjects – these resources are allocated for “additional educational needs of Roma students”. This – intentionally general formula – allows to meet the specific educational deficits of Roma students: financing so-called additional compensatory classes according to individually diagnosed needs, employing Roma teaching assistants, employing teachers supporting education of Roma children, participation in school and sight-seeing trips, purchasing additional teaching aids, etc.

Fig. 4. Additional financial resources devoted yearly to the local authorities for additional educational needs of Roma students (subvention) for school which organize additional courses, hire Roma education assistants, etc.

| Year | Additional financial resources according to the number of Roma pupils indicated at schools PLN / € |             | Number of Roma pupils at schools which organize additional activities for those pupils |
|------|--|-------------|--|
| 2015 | 16 269 000   | 4 067 250 € | 2 360  |
| 2014 | 17 914 000   | 4 478 500 € | 2 256  |
| 2013 | 17 988 000   | 4 497 000 € | 2 209  |
| 2012 | 17 511 000   | 4 377 750 € | 2 289  |
| 2011 | 16 692 000   | 4 173 000 € | 2 306  |
| 2010 | 15 655 000   | 3 913 750 € | 2 304  |
| 2009 | 12 861 000   | 3 215 250 € | 2 354  |
| 2008 | 10 504 000   | 2 626 000 € | 2 060  |
| 2007 | 10 024 000   | 2 506 000 € | 1 850  |
| 2006 | 10 413 000   | 2 603 250 € | 1 360  |

In practice: while in 2015 the amount of PLN 5,259 (ca. EUR 1,315) was allocated per one student/year, the amount of PLN 5,259 (EUR 1,315) + extra PLN 7,888 (ca. EUR 1,972) → **PLN 13,147 (ca. EUR 3,287) was allocated per Roma pupil**, respectively.

The data on the number of children and schools implementing the tasks for pupils from minority groups are public (*inter alia*, may be found on the websites of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration<sup>17</sup>).

### Independent evaluation

Independent evaluation of Roma Programme<sup>18</sup> among its strengths pointed out, inter alia, introduction of Roma education assistants to schools and broad support for children education

Roma do appreciate all the actions devoted to the education of children and youth. Their opinion proves the change of attitude towards much more pro-educational. The raise of rate of Roma children attended school is observed - mainly on basic education level. Thanks to Roma school assistants work and their devotion – school is perceived as friendly environment for both: Roma children and Roma parents. They pointed out school as the safe institution and to which they feel attached to. Roma school assistant is perceived as important and needed. Often his/her role is far beyond education issues becoming kind of bridge between Roma community and institutions.

“The teacher supporting Roma education” position is rare than Roma school assistant, but his/her role is clearly defined, and his/her help is appreciated by Roma.

<sup>17</sup> <http://mniejszosci.narodowe.mswia.gov.pl/mne/komisja-wspolna/grupy-robocze/finasowanie-zadan-oswia/9175,Prace-grupy-roboczej-Komisji-Wspolnej-Rzadu-i-Mniejszosci-Narodow-ch-i-Etnicznyc.html>

<sup>18</sup> Final report of the evaluation study carried out within the framework of the "Q-quality - the improvement of functioning of the Roma Programme", 2011

### **Improvement programme for Roma education assistants and teachers supporting Roma education in 2014-2020 Strategy**

The aim of the vocational improvement programme for Roma education assistants is levelling necessary knowledge related to the functioning of an assistant in the school environment, and raising vocational skills through legal, psychological, educational, and social training, etc. Simultaneously, support is devoted to so called “supporting teachers” (tutors), with particular emphasis on the cultural characteristics and effective intercultural communication. The aim of these actions is to maintain and deepen a model of cooperation between assistants and teachers. Under the improvement programme, it is possible to support the implementation of practical classes carried out at universities in the fields of study related to the education of Roma education assistants and teachers supporting Roma education. An important element of this process is establishment of network of assistants and teachers participating in the above-mentioned programmes.

### **3.6 Portugal**

In Portugal, the intercultural mediation approach appears for the first time in public policy in the area of education, in the Intercultural Education Project under the responsibility of the *Entreculturas* Secretariat, in the Ministry of Education (1993-1997), through which a set of schools involved selected mediators from their own community, in order to improve the insertion and scholastic performance of the students. In addition to the Ministry of Education, other public and private organizations also developed projects and activities focused on the profile and the training of 'socio-cultural' mediators. The formal recognition of socio-cultural mediation in Portugal appeared in 2001, with the publication of Law 105/2001 of August 31, which establishes the legal status of the socio-cultural mediator, stressing the importance of their specific training.

#### Law 105/2001 of August 31

##### Article 2 - Skills and duties of the socio-cultural mediator

- 1 - The socio-cultural mediator promotes intercultural dialogue, stimulating respect and a better knowledge of cultural diversity and social inclusion.
- 2 - The skills and duties of the socio-cultural mediator are namely:
  - a) Collaborating in the prevention and resolution of socio-cultural conflicts and in the definition of social intervention strategies;
  - b) To actively collaborate with all those involved in social and educational intervention processes;
  - c) To facilitate the communication between professionals and users of different cultural origin;
  - d) To advise the users in their relationship with professionals and with public and private services;
  - e) To promote the inclusion of citizens of different social and cultural backgrounds on equal terms;

In 2004, ACIME<sup>19</sup>, later ACM, IP, in partnership with immigrant associations, placed socio-cultural mediators in the National Immigrant Support Centres to ensure, “... not only cultural and linguistic proximity to immigrants seeking services, but also to promote an essential link between the public administration and the immigrant population”.

In 2009, ACM, IP (former ACIDI, IP) launched the Pilot Project of Municipal Mediators, which had about 21 municipalities in which Roma mediators were integrated to intervene with their community. The aim of this project was to improve

<sup>19</sup> Recognising the importance to have a coherent integration policy for immigrants, Portugal has created in 1996 a state service with the main mission of promoting the integration of immigrants and promoting the intercultural dialogue in Portugal: High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities (ACIME). In 2007, its powers and intervention has been reinforced becoming a public institute with a new institutional name High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI). More recently, acknowledging the change of the migratory experience of Portugal, and the challenges of the population ageing, the institution was once again reinforced. Under the new Organic-Law of the institution published in 2014 this public institute was renamed to High Commission for Migrations (ACM). The thematic of Roma integration have been maintained among its missions.

Roma communities' access to local services and equipment and to promote communication between Roma communities and the surrounding community, focusing on preventing potential conflicts. The project was addressed to all the municipalities of mainland Portugal, with Roma population among their inhabitants, which recognized the importance of establishing bridges for a constructive dialogue. It aimed to place mediators in the services of the Municipal Councils or in initiatives promoted by them, within a training program in a working context.

Similarly, in order to respond to the commitments made in the II Plan for the Integration of Immigrants, ACM, IP (former ACIDI, IP) also instituted the Project on Intercultural Mediation in Public Services (MISP) in 2009. From the beginning this pilot project aimed to state the principle of intercultural diversion as a pillar of social cohesion. Besides, it sought to integrate the management of cultural diversity into public administration services. Contributed to create a reference in intercultural mediation and defined the profile and functions of its agents. In a pilot phase, the Immigrant Associations and NGO's, working with these communities, were challenged to identify in their geographical areas the services for which intercultural mediation would be an asset. In June 2009, 11 local partners placed 28 intercultural mediators in 25 public services in the districts of Lisbon, Faro and Setúbal, in the areas of Health, Municipal Services, Education, Social Security and Public Security Police.

Following this phase - called Geração Autarquias - which began in 2012, the MISP maintained its structure of intercultural mediation but reinforced the community approach: profiting from the previous experience of the Municipal Mediators' Project, from the Gypsy communities. With the support of the local authorities in the creation of a prompt response they contributed to strengthen the sense of belonging to a community, driven by a team of mediators recruited from civil society entities and coordinated locally by the municipalities participating in the project. In the period between May 2012 and June 2015, MISP involved 9 partner entities and was invigorated by 20 mediators, placed in the Municipalities of Amadora, Cascais, Castelo Branco, Loures, Setúbal and Sintra.

#### **Work of Roma mediators – Project for Municipal Mediators (2009-2015)**

This Project merged from the positive outcome of mediators' action within multicultural contexts in recent years. Its goal was to improve access to local infrastructures and services by Roma communities, as well as promote equal opportunities, intercultural and social cohesiveness, through the employment of Roma mediators by municipalities. Launched on the 8th April 2009, this pilot project was started on 1st October 2009, in 15 municipalities (Lamego, Paredes, Peso da Régua, Idanha-a-Nova, Aveiro, Coimbra, Marinha Grande, Sintra, Amadora, Seixal, Setúbal, Sines, Beja, Moura and Vidigueira) and finished on 30th September 2013.

The second stage of the Project was launched in 2011, with the inclusion of 6 new municipalities (Abrantes, Barcelos, Espinho, Odivelas, Valongo and Vila Real de Stº António) and finished on 30th June 2015.

The High Commission for Migration, as promoter and national coordinator worked in partnership with the municipalities who had the role of local coordination, and with local civil society organizations, who were the local managing entities of the project.

The mediators were a member of the local Roma communities, proposed by the municipality, who, in addition to being recognized by Roma and other local communities, had an in-depth knowledge of the most suitable cultural approaches to achieving effective social action. The mediators had the following profile:

- Intercultural dialogue facilitator;
- Active agent in negotiating, building and/or restoring social relationship;
- Attentive listener, conciliator and impartial;
- Reliable mediator between the various communities and institutions involved;
- Ability to adjust existing services to the needs of Roma communities.

In addition to a qualification in the field of work, crucial empowerment actions had been organized, under the guidance of the Social Intervention Studies Centre (CESIS), in various fields, in order to meet the most pressing qualification requirements: institutional law and regulations, communication and mediation, and Portuguese language, spoken and written.

Given the innovative character of this project, an independent analysis was required, in order to ensure that the corresponding impacts were assessed objectively. From the project starts, this task had been entrusted to a “Dinamia-CET” Team - ISCTE. (For further information about the evaluation, please consult: <http://www.obcig.acm.gov.pt/documents/58622/202605/Roma+municipal+mediator+project.+Experimental+project+evaluation+results+--+Summary+report.final.pdf/4ce8d332-cae3-402f-81c7-c2e5f49505c5>)

### **The ROMED Programme in Portugal**

From the second semester of 2011, the mediators and the municipalities had been integrated into the ROMED Programme of the Council of Europe where 30 mediators were trained and certified based on the ROMED1 methodology.

The ROMED2 Programme was launched on March 2014, in Portugal, with the participation of different stakeholders from the municipalities of Abrantes, Barcelos, Figueira da Foz, Elvas, Beja, Moura and Seixal, the local Roma communities’ representatives, mediators, National Focal Point (High Commission for Migration), National Project Officer (Letras Nomadas Association) and National Trainers. The municipality of Torres Vedras joined the Programme a few months later. In January 2015 was organized the II National Workshop in Torres Vedras. Its objective was to promote and share the experiences of the ROMED2 Programme’s local implementation. After this Workshop were organized several local workshops “Viver o ROMED”, by the National project Officer, with the main aim to promote the program among the local partners and social networks.

The High Commission for Migration, from 2016 only assumes the role of the National Contact Point’s role informally, supporting the different actors without any contractual commitments with the Council of Europe.

We could observe that the ROMED2 Programme in Portugal had stimulated the Roma communities’ participation in the Program, through its Community Action Groups (CAG), especially in Elvas, where the CAG is very dynamic and very committed, also thanks to the significant openness of the local authority.

However, there are some constraints that have been found in the case of some municipalities (in particular: low municipal involvement, low dynamic or unmotivated local groups, weak participation of Social Networks) that still need to be worked on. Within EFS Funding (PT2020) a new Mediation Programme is being designed.

### **The Choices Programme and the figure of Community Facilitators**

The Choices Programme is a national government program, created in 2001, promoted by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and integrated in the High Commission for Migrations. It aims to promote the social inclusion of children and young people from the most vulnerable socio-economic contexts, with a view to equal opportunities and the reinforcement of social cohesion.

The Choices Programme creates in the figure of the Community Facilitator: young person from the communities where the projects are implemented, integrated in the technical teams who stand out for their positive leadership profile. The Community Facilitator is a reference model and contributes to the mobilization of children, young people and the whole community as a privileged channel, with new functions integrated into the technical teams with defined training goals. Looking for systematization, this figure arises from the recognition of the importance and necessity of existing in the territories of intervention, individuals who, belonging to the communities, become an added value for the projects financed by the Choices Program. In this moment the Choices Programme works with 8 Roma Community Facilitators.

### **Education**

Early school dropout is one of the most notorious challenges facing the Roma communities and their children and youth. To combat this problem, the integration of Roma children and youth must be recognized as a two-way process, involving both the Roma community and the already established educational system.

Since the Portuguese government sees education as a priority in the area of integration, the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Community (ENICC) dedicated a pillar to this topic. Several activities/projects connected with ACM and more specifically the Roma Communities Support Office (NACI) and the Choices Programme (involving more than 90.000 participants throughout the country) also aim to tackle this important challenge.

Under the ENICC's Pillar IV – Education, Priority 22 deals specifically with the Prevention of early school dropout. The priority focus is twofold, firstly on mobilizing the school for the importance of having some flexibility in the education and training pathways according to the beneficiaries, sensitizing the school for the importance of combating successive retention from year to year. Secondly, it focuses on involving the families in the educational pathway decisions of their children and youth, investing in support by proximity and according to the emerging needs.

The general goals are:

- Reduction of school dropout by Roma children, by 40% until 2016 and by 60% until 2020;
- Participation of families of female and male Roma children in the educational pathways of their children, 30% by 2016 and 60% until 2020.

The OPRE, the new scholarship programme is financed by ACM for young university students from Roma communities, for the 2016/2017 school year. 25 students, 11 men and 14 women were granted to this support. This Programme also includes tracking the success of Roma students with the objective of inverting the dropout tendency, bridging families and schools. The programme works with two mediators who have the responsibility to act on the field in close contact with the communities; involve associations and groups of auto-representatives of the different Roma communities; give personal support to the young participants and, through mediation, support the communication, contacts and, eventually, in the resolution of problems conflicts.

The programme was inspired by the Opre Chavalé project's success, whose main objective was to integrate young Roma in higher education, cofounded by the Choices Programme. Within the framework of the project, ACM signed a protocol with the Roma Association Letras Nomadas to finance 8 student scholarships (4 girls and 4 boys) as a way to support the initiative.

### 3.7 “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” has three types of mediators: pre-school mediators, Health Mediators and Roma Information Centres who are working as mediators in local level for all Roma issues.

The pre-school mediators are engaged through the MLSP and Roma Education Fund project for Inclusion of Roma children in pre-school institutions. There are 23 mediators in 19 municipalities whose main goal of is to provide better access and attendance for Roma children in the kindergartens and to make connection between the KG's and Roma parents.

The Health Mediators are engaged through the Ministry of Health and we have 14 health mediators in 8 municipalities. They are situated in the local health institutions and the main goal of those mediators is to provide information to Roma clients for health care services and better access for them in the health care institutions. Also, they need to promote among Roma people on local level all health prevention services such as immunization and regular check-ups. They usually connect Roma people to other Roma mediators or Roma Information Centres for other issues.

They are not regularly employed.

Roma Information Centres are engaged through the Ministry of labour and social policy and funded by the National budget. They are not regularly employed but they are employed for short term period and all contributions such as health insurance and other are paid for them by the national budget. They have a status as employed but not permanently. We have 16 people engaged in 12 municipalities. They are situated in the Centres for Social Affairs in local level. The main goal of the RIC's is to provide access to Roma people to all services on local level, such as social services, education, health employment, documentation and other and to make a connection between Roma people and institutions on local and national level and Roma people with other Roma mediators.

In the next period we will work on transferring the status of Roma Information Centres in to permanent employments and finding place for them in the system. We already have prepared the systematization in January 2017, and we will send it for adoption until the end of 2017.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED, GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED AND ENVISAGED FOLLOW-UP

##### 4.1. General conclusions on the topic of Roma mediation

Although the concept of Roma mediators and Roma mediation is part of international discussion for over a decade, it is still not fully exercised by some European countries whereas its advantages are clear. Apart from evident proofs of impact, especially in the education area, integration and participation, Roma mediation can be also perceived as a tool of affirmative actions which can and should led to the better self-esteem of Roma people and their participation in social life.

The existing terminology differs from country to country: “mediators” or “assistants” or “intercultural mediators” or “neighbourhood stewards” or “facilitators”, etc. For experts participating in this thematic visit, the best term to describe the sense and goal of this position is probably the term “**facilitators**”. Roma mediation and Roma mediators facilitate mutual understanding between Roma and non-Roma local communities, contacts between state agencies and Roma and access of Roma to the public services for benefit of two sides.

For the most efficient results Roma mediation should be tailored to very basic, local level circumstances and needs – there is a common agreement that there is no universal manner. Mediation *modus operandi* should be adjusted to complex local factors like: Roma number, ID-related issues, education level of Roma community, level of their integration, spatial condition, housing situation, vocational experiences, general situation of the country in terms of unemployment rate, general poverty rate, etc. That is why the cooperation between local authorities and Roma community is crucial in proper defining the goals and types of mediation/mediators (school mediators, health mediators, community mediators, employment mediators or “intercultural mediators”).

Existing experiences clearly show that work of school mediators (as the most popular type) has changed the attitude of different Roma communities towards the education in general and towards school as institution. Even if still many Roma children do not attend school at all or in limited manner – so far the school mediators appear to be the only efficient tool to limit this negative phenomenon as well as the problem of child marriages or gender equality within the Roma community.

**If we perceive schools as engine of changes – Roma mediators must be perceived as a fuel!**

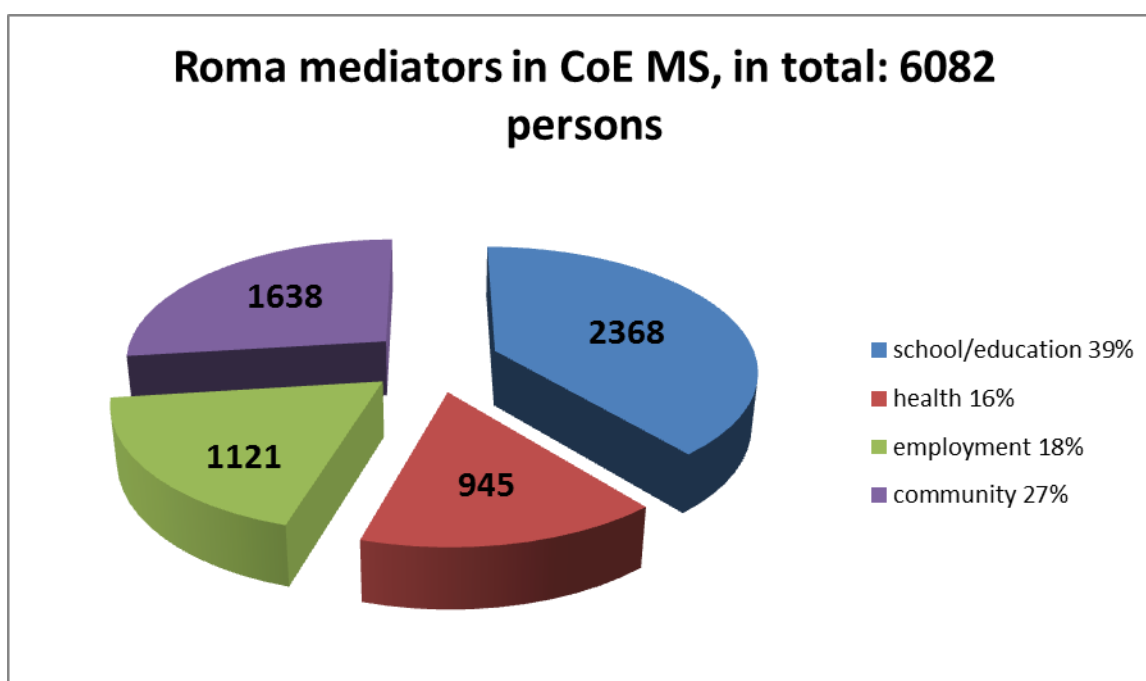
Nonetheless, mediators cannot be perceived as the kind of *panacea* for all Roma communities problems so their job should be accompanied by holistic system of support which consists of teachers, social workers, municipal “contact points”, NGOs, and with system of accompanying several others parallel solutions, like: scholarships system, free transportation and meals, school equipment, preschools attendance, etc. Exclusively this kind of local circle creates needed synergy that make integration strategies efficient. Perceiving the Roma mediator as “the only responsible” for Roma-related issues will lead to his/her overload, professional burn out and demotivation and at the same time to shifting the responsibility from all official/educational stakeholders to the mediator. That is why the Roma mediators’ network is strongly recommended as system of mutual cooperation, exchange and support.

To make Roma mediation possible the decent and stable financial support is needed – this factor, apart from its budgetary dimension, might also have legal consequences - to make Roma mediators’ position fully institutionalised and part of national system (like the school mediators in Poland – they became an element of education system, with legal and financial regulation entered into life, beyond the “Roma strategy”). The states’ reluctance towards law changes – enabling creation of Roma mediation/mediators in legal terms - is generally observed, which reflects kind of absolutisation of law regulations when it comes to Roma-related issues.

*Conditio sine qua non* in regards of Roma mediation – apart of political will on national level and readiness to cooperation on local level – is the local Roma community consent for mediation (and mediator) and his/her knowledge of local Roma cultural background, including language and knowledge of needs and shortages of this/these community(ies) – as sometimes in one locality there are more than one different Roma groups - that is why mediators should origin from local Roma communities and to enjoy their trust. Those skills also enable Roma mediators to limit the negative phenomenon of Roma pupils' overrepresentation in special schools' system, which still is a serious obstacle in economic integration process (no school - no employment).

A serious barrier in Roma mediators' employment is the educational level threshold, which is often used to justify a lack of appointment of mediators. Taking into account the common, very low level of education among Roma – innovative attitude in this regard is needed. Even having no higher education – Roma mediators still have skills to be a crucial element of process of real changes. Member States that have institutionalised the position of mediators have been confronted with the same challenge and managed to find legal and/or practical solutions. Their experience should be further analysed and used.

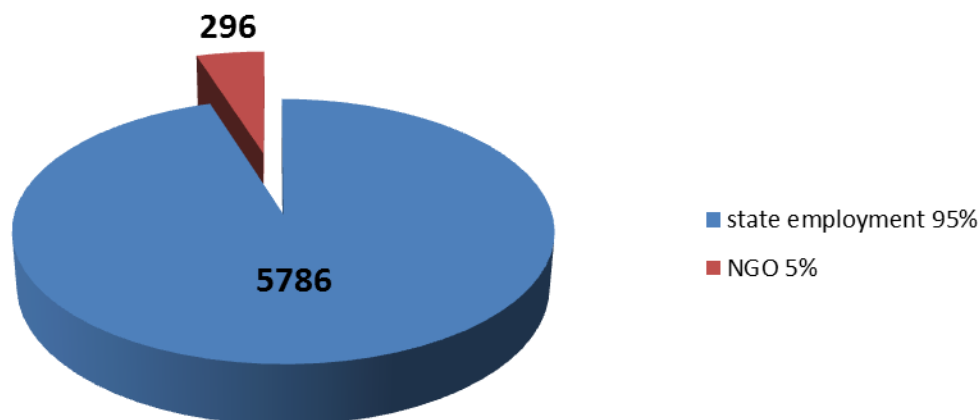
Before the visit CoE member states were asked to inform CAHROM Secretariat on the mediators' employment. On the basis of those replies it can be stated the following<sup>20</sup>:



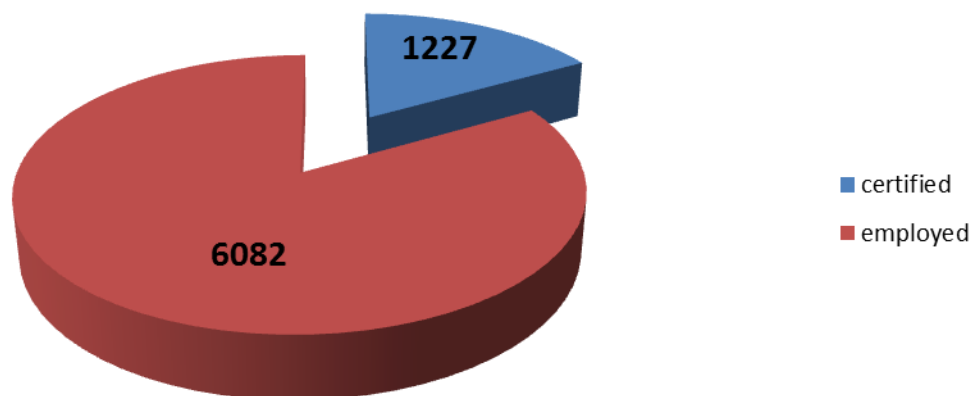
<sup>20</sup> On the basis of replies from 29 countries received until May 2017: Armenia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Republic of Moldova, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey and Ukraine, and updated during 14th CAHROM plenary, held 24-27 October 2017, Strasbourg, France.



### Roma mediators: employment



### Roma mediators certified (ROMED) versus employed



- There is not sufficient and clear monitoring of mediators' employment; in some countries there are Roma mediators working but there is no possibility to obtain any numbers and assessment (Belgium, Italy);
- The term "Roma mediation/mediators" is not always clear (f.in. Roma origin, Roma languages user; from the community and with the support of the local Roma community, etc.);
- Although not institutionalized in majority of the countries (in legal, financial and organizational term) - 95 % of mediators are state employed which is good prognostic and proof of states' engagement; mediators' position is institutionalized in Poland, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia, the network of mediators is present in: Bulgaria, Poland and Greece;

- The number of mediators currently working (6,082 persons) is much more higher than the number of those certified within the ROMED (1,227), which again is good prognostic and proof of proper recognition of advantages of this position; on the other hand - taking into account at least over 10-years public discussion on the Roma mediation institution as well as the needs of Roma communities - the number of currently working mediators seems to be too modest on the European level;
- Nonetheless it is worthy of underlining that in countries with huge number of Roma the number of working mediators is big: **Slovak Republic** (2,909 persons), **Czech Republic** (961), **Romania** (777), **Bulgaria** (317), **Hungary** (311) and **Serbia** (296). Next on the list is **Poland** (114) despite of relatively small number of Roma in the country (approx. 25,000) which is the good example of proper recognition and institutionalisation of mediators' position.

It must be underlined here that without those countries: Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria Hungary and Serbia – **the number of mediators decrease rapidly to the number of ... 481 mediators in the rest of Europe. If we minus the number of 114 Roma mediators working in Poland – the number of mediators working in the other 23 CoE member countries (out of 47 CoE member States) will be... 397...**

In rest of the countries the number of working mediators varies between: 1-10 (Austria, Ireland, Latvia, Republic of Moldova, Norway and Switzerland), 11-20 (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lithuania and Turkey), 21-30 (Germany, Greece, Portugal, Slovenia and Ukraine), 41-50 (Croatia, Sweden and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"), 51-60 (Finland). There are no mediators in Armenia, Estonia, and Luxembourg.

**Over one third (39%) of the number of working mediators covers the education area which is positive as the education is the only factor that can structurally improve the situation of Roma in longer perspective; 16% of mediators covers the health area, which is useful taking into account that life expectancy rate within the Roma community is much shorter that within the majority; not huge percentage of employment mediators seems to illustrate the low possibilities of obtaining the job on the local level, due to the low education level; the exception is Slovakia, where work 860 employment mediators.**

- The number of Roma origin pupils in most of the countries is not known, even as an estimation; there is no proper information on a maximum number of pupils covered by work of one Roma school mediator; this should be improved;
- In several countries apart of mediators working there is a system (or project(s)) of supporting their work by non-Roma: teachers, tutors, pedagogues, coordinators, etc. (Poland, Finland, Germany, Norway);
- In several countries there are no Roma origin mediators but only non-Roma mediators working with Roma (mainly migrant) communities. Due to cultural ban within Roma communities in Poland (medical jobs are perceived as culturally unclean) the health mediators are non-Roma.

Experts participating in the visit unanimously agreed that proper integration of Roma school mediators into the school environment is crucial for the results of mediation – it encompass not only the teachers but whole school community, including administration staff and non-Roma pupils. One of the threats in school mediators' job in case they are now highly educated is lack of respect from teachers' and rest of the school staff side.

Indispensable complement of school mediators' work results is preschool education from one side and work of employment mediators on the other side to make the life cycle approach in Roma related actions. Another one is complementation by the afterschool activities – creating the day care centres with teachers' help, different courses organised and space for leisure. Usually Roma school assistants are part of such centres, but authorities should invest in this kind of entities (run by municipality, churches or NGO sector).

#### 4.2 Specific conclusions of the thematic group of experts

Although every country has its own specificity most of the problems that were presented during the visit are the same or similar thus most of the solutions can be exchanged and can be used as follow up different countries. During the discussion and exchange of CAHROM experts and participants attending the meetings several mutually agreed recommendation and suggestions to authorities were made:

##### Local level authorities' engagement

- Cooperative and partner attitude are needed for the efficiency of mediation.

##### Formalization/institutionalisation

- Formalisation/institutionalisation in legal and financial terms is THE condition for improving the sustainability of mediators' job and results achieved, especially in countries with big number of Roma; in case of countries with small number of Roma - maybe the institutionalization is not needed but it should be introduced practically as indispensable tool for improving the level of education of Roma population; it must be mentioned here that thanks to formalisation Roma mediators' labour rights are secured.

##### Data collection on education

- One of the unacknowledged although highly important result of mediators' job is data collecting – mediators are the best and more actual source of data concerning local Roma community in terms of school attendance, mother tongue users, level of education of older generations, their vocational skills, housing needs, etc. - this is the basic factor that should influence the preparation of integration action plans – that is why Roma mediators should be a part of consultation and participation processes, especially on the local level.

##### Roma family approach

- The Roma family approach should be constantly taken into account while working with Roma community - as in many Roma groups there is collective (not individual) responsibility; thus the mediator's work should be accompanied by other institutions working with Roma to create effective, holistic approach; one of the conditions to make it useful is training system for all local stakeholder on Roma culture specificity which will improve better understanding of reasons, needs, values, obstacles, etc.; this kind of trainings make the schools and institutions environment more understanding thus more friendly for Roma clients. Such trainings on Roma culture can change the negative stereotypes on Roma and can present this community as "culture owners", as a part of European cultural heritage instead of predominant "social issue" image.

##### Stable training system

- A sustainable training system for Roma mediators, especially in case of mediators with lower education; training should consist of wide range of themes: starting with developmental psychology of children and youth, pedagogy, educational system, Roma history, drug addiction prevention, anti-discrimination, equal opportunities standards, etc. adapted to the cognitive capacity of mediators; any form of psychological support is useful as Roma mediators are sometimes the object of extraordinary pressure from Roma and non-Roma side; it must be mentioned that internal conflicts among Roma different groups may limit the access of Roma mediators to some Roma families – it is the responsibility of Roma leaders to facilitate Roma mediators activities within the whole local Roma community.

#### Visiting family

- The duties of mediators, especially those working within education area should encompass not only presence in school and cooperation with teachers but also they should be in regular touch with Roma parents and families (*inter alia* to monitor family situation that may influence children's education process); their work should be adapted to the individual needs of every single Roma child so the number of school assistants should be adequate to the number of Roma pupils;

#### Networking

- As Roma mediation so far become one of a few relatively efficient tools improving the situation of Roma in long term and more systemic perspective the network enabling exchange and promotion is recommended on local, regional, nation and international level.

### 4.3 Lessons learned by the experts

**As regards Lithuania – the requesting country** – it must be noticed that the situation of Roma still is a challenge. The mediation system should be implemented in a more systemic way and solutions that worked out in other European countries should be implemented or at least tested. The results achieved so far seem to be modest taking into consideration the small number of Roma in Lithuania – approx. 2,500 persons. Such a small number do not require a large amount of money - rather systemic, stable and holistic approach and administrative solutions. The field visits showed that the level of cooperation on local level is still a postulate. It seems that central level is much better recognised and familiar to Roma communities than local.

Many countries, including hosting **Lithuania**, made use of European Social Fund sources to finance the Roma mediators' position. Apart from positive side of this practice it must be underlined that this solution is project-depending and do not reassure the sustainability of mediation.

As in few countries the mediation system does not exist in sufficient way - the regional cooperation is recommended, like Balkan countries, Central-East Europe, etc. In this regard using the systemic solutions related to Roma school mediators worked out in **Poland** are recommended to neighbouring countries, including **Lithuania**.

**Latvia:** After the thematic visit on Roma mediation Latvian experts concluded, that in many circumstances it is better if there are many mediators in different specific sectors at the municipal level, for example: teacher assistant and social mediator. For only one community mediator per municipality with significant Roma population it is too difficult to sustain active cooperation with institutions and organizations in wide range of Roma integration issues. Based on experts' discussion during the thematic visit, it was clear that Roma mediation is the most promised and successful practice in

order to provide dialogue between Roma families and municipality institutions and service providers. But the situation and size of Roma population in each country should be taken into consideration.

The role of the National Roma Contact Point is crucial in the process of convincing municipalities to use the mediation practice not only in the framework of the project, but also as mainstream measure, providing substantial and sustainable financial support. It cannot be only project-to-project activity. There should be also trainings and practice sharing activities for mediators and teacher assistants to learn from each other, networking and improve their skills. The motivational and educational measures for attracting Roma to become mediator or teacher assistant are needed.

Monitoring of Roma children's achievements also should be organised on regular base specially to follow the educational process of Roma students in order to prevent early drop out from the school. There has to be class/auditorium for Roma mediator in the school, where mediator can work individually with Roma children – doing homework, etc., because many children do not have good conditions for learning at home and working with the families. For example, in some Latvian schools there are Roma resource centres, which are used for aforementioned purpose.

Latvian experience on children motivation in schools seems important to experts from participating countries. In Latvia's city of Jelgava this practise is as follows: if children regularly attend the school during the whole month, they got a free ticket to the cinema or bowling, and the teacher goes together with those children. Also, in Jelgava Primary School there is a system of marking certificates when the school year ends. There are bronze, silver and gold mark tables in the end of the year, depending on average mark of the student.

The Latvian expert sees **Roma mediators also as Roma cultural messengers**, who organize cultural events for Roma children, their parents and mainstream society during the celebration of traditional fests, for example Easter. In these events Roma traditional cultural practices could popularize Roma in general in a positive way in order to promote intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Doing cultural practices Roma people develop their ethnic and national identity, feel that they are a part of mainstream society and make this society be more culturally diverse. It can be problematic in countries where Roma in the past were punished only for using their mother tongue, that is why they do not demonstrate their culture so actively.

**Republic of Moldova:** Within the process of social inclusion of the Roma it is important to be taken into account the involvement of ecclesiastical institutions in one's capacity as local stakeholder. In Catholic communities, clergy engagement is significant not only on the field of social-humanitarian or charitable assistance, but also in promoting values of Romani language, history and culture<sup>21</sup>. Besides other important stakeholders, representatives of the local clergy in partnership with Roma mediators – can be approached as one of the main links between Roma community and local authorities.

#### 4.4 Good practices identified

Before initiating the process of developing Roma local policies (including Roma mediation) it sounds preferable for the expert from the Republic of Moldova to accomplish **field studies by anthropologists**. One of the positive examples of **involvement of anthropologists** of was presented by the Oslo municipality, where the **Department of Roma Measures from Oslo Adult Education Centre**<sup>22</sup> consists of advisory service provided by two anthropologists. Following the positive example provided by the municipality of Oslo, policies adopted by local elected representatives should be permanently guided by studies, reports, informative notes, etc. which are elaborated by researchers or experts on Roma issues. This advisory body responsible for Roma issues should be recommended to be included in the local organisation chart.

<sup>21</sup> <http://vaikudienoscentras.blogspot.md/2013/11/sveciuose-jonavoje.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://felles.oslovo.no/en/about-oslo-vo/the-centres-in-oslo-adult-education/oslo-vo-skullerud/>

The Norwegian practice of a **small electronic dictionary Norwegian-Romanes as an application to mobile phones** was presented by the Norwegian expert. Experts from Poland and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” found it a very useful tool both for teachers working with Roma pupils and for those later who can improve their Norwegian language. It is also part of language promotion used by Roma (there was an attempt to prepare such a tool in Poland at the beginning of 2000, but it was strongly opposed by Roma in Poland, due to the linguistic taboo, and therefore not realised). This practice was also judged by the Latvian expert as a very innovative tool. Using this application, the mediator together with the teacher can create this word box, word bank with photos, where are written 3,000 words in the Romani language and country language. It helps not only Roma learning the national language but is also useful for teachers to learn local Romani variant(s). It will be easier to use such practice in countries where only a few Roma variants are used.

The expert from “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” noticed that in Lithuania there are **no Roma children in the street situation**. She found that **the Polish system of financing Roma issues** is interesting as more sustainable way of financing Roma inclusion in Poland and thus should be analysed and maybe replicated in her country.

#### 4.5 Envisaged follow-up

Participants of the group of experts are aware that Roma mediation is one of few efficient instruments for sustainable Roma integration, in education in particular. There is a need for independent evaluation of mediation and mediators. Follow up actions might be needed in order to rise up the effectiveness and to respond to higher requirements needed for persons working with Roma pupils in the area of education.

**Republic of Moldova:** After the final version of the thematic report on Roma mediation (with a focus on school mediators/assistants) will be endorsed by the CAHROM, it will be spread through the National Association of Roma Mediators in the Republic of Republic of Moldova<sup>23</sup>.

**Poland:** Results of the visit will be disseminated among main stakeholders in Poland, including Roma school mediators, and translation of the report when ready. As the Roma school mediators play a crucial role as partners for public administration in implementation of an integration strategy – it is going to be continued.

“**The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**” noticed that in Lithuania there are no Roma children in the street. She also found that the Polish system of financing Roma-related issues is interesting and seems to be a more sustainable way of financing Roma inclusion in Poland. The expert thus indicated that her authorities will further analyse the Lithuanian and Polish systems and proposed solutions to see if and how they could be applicable in the context of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. This analysis will require expertise and therefore future cooperation and further exchange on details is envisaged.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.infoecmi.eu/index.php/latest-ecmi-epp-activities-ukraine/>

## APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: Official invitation received from Lithuanian authorities**

<https://rm.coe.int/appendix-1-letter-on-invitation-from-the-lithuanian-authorities/1680967e7b>

**Appendix 2: Agenda of the CAHROM thematic visit to Vilnius and Panevėžys, Lithuania, on 25-27 April 2017**

<https://rm.coe.int/appendix-2-final-agenda/1680967e7c>

**Appendix 3: List of experts participating in the CAHROM thematic group**

<https://rm.coe.int/appendix-3-list-of-participants/1680967e7d>

**Appendix 4: Table on Roma mediators working in Council of Europe member states**

<https://rm.coe.int/appendix-4-table-on-mediators-in-coe-ms/1680967e7e>

**Appendix 5: European and International standards and reference texts**

<https://rm.coe.int/appendix-5-european-and-international-standards-and-reference-texts/1680967e7f>

**Appendix 6: Size, composition, language, lifestyle and situation of the groups in question in participating countries**

<https://rm.coe.int/appendix-6-basic-information-on-roma-travellers-situation-in-participating-countries/1680967e80>