

MEDIATION TOOL KIT FOR TEACHERS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND CULTURAL OPERATORS ADDRESSED TO ROMANI MOTHERS



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TOOL KIT ON MEDIATION

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I. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TOOL KIT

1. Developing self-esteem in Romani children, as opposed to the explicit or implicit approach and influences of the social environment in which they live.
2. Developing a positive social identity of Romani children and promoting their feeling of belonging to an ethnic group which is appreciated by the society.
3. Developing positive relationships between Romani and non-Romani children and the ability of teachers to intervene promptly and appropriately in the management of conflict situations that need intercultural knowledge.

II. SITUATION OF ROMANI CHILDREN AND CREATING MOTIVATION THROUGH CULTURAL ACTIVITIES



Developing a positive identity and self-esteem in Romani children

Success in life does not depend only on knowledge as, in most cases, self-confidence increases the chances of success, while the sense of inferiority, the doubts on one's own capabilities and the lack of confidence can significantly reduce successful opportunities.

Numerous studies have confirmed the importance of developing a positive self image in children which would contribute to achieve better learning and social relationships. But this is a real challenge especially for children of groups with pronounced negative image, such as the Romani.

Educational research has shown that teachers' attitudes and expectations about the

children's success directly influence results. Furthermore, research in social psychology shows that members of stigmatized groups have lower self-esteem than those of non-stigmatized groups and have lower performance, regardless of their actual capabilities.

In most cases, the socialization of Romani children happens in environments where the constant message is that they are not as good as their peers and their opportunities are and will always be limited.

Romani children will tend to believe that they are doomed to remain in an inferior position in society, because of the way they consider themselves. This type of reasoning can be the reason why they tend to avoid schooling in regular educational institutions, and often leads them towards a definite school leaving. Sometimes these negative expectations are, unfortunately, reinforced by teachers (often unintentionally and unconsciously) and by peers. Positive reinforcement is a useful model that can be taken as a reference in this field. It is an approach to highlight quality and little progress. It focuses on exploring and discovering moments of excellence and openness to see new potentials and possibilities.



III. WHAT IS MEDIATION?

The notion of mediation is mainly used currently with two different, but compatible, meanings:

1. in the management of conflicts (as a strategy for dealing with conflicts through the intervention of a so-called "neutral" third-party)
2. intercultural relations, for the prevention of misunderstandings resulting from cultural differences and facilitating the communication between people having different cultural background and possibly speaking different languages.

Musc4Rom mediators will have competences to deal in an effective way with a number of challenges and sensitive issues related to identity, ethno-cultural affiliation, intergroup relations and preconceptions faced by Romani children.

IV. COMMUNICATING WITH MOTHERS - RAISING MOTHERS AWARENESS ON THE RELEVANCE OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Teachers working with Romani children often need additional efforts to establish a relationship for effective communication and collaboration with parents of Romani, especially Romani mothers.

To be aware of their own responsibilities and be pro-active in dealing properly with these delicate and important issues, teachers/trainers should:

- reflect on their own perspectives on culture and ethnicity and understanding how those perspectives affect the relationships with children of different ethnicities;
- identify their own stereotypes and prejudices against Roma;
- know cultural practices of a given community.



Home visits can be a good way to become more familiar with the realities of the environment where Romani children live.

If each party interaction implicitly refers to its own reference frame, influenced by cultural background, there is great risk of misunderstandings and inefficient communication.

Self-control (to avoid assessments and decisions based on stereotypes and prejudices) and empathy (to understand as accurately as possible the views of the party) are qualities that teachers should develop. These can significantly promote the development of positive relations with Romani parents.

GETTING TO KNOW THE FAMILIES OF ROMANI CHILDREN

Mediators and social workers may help contacts with Romani communities.

MEETINGS WITH PARENTS

Meetings with parents are often the main type of interaction between teachers and parents. Meeting should put Romani parents in a position of equality with other parents.

Parents need to feel partners in making decisions about their children, therefore meetings with them should be opportunities for real consultation.

Practical examples and/or tips of parental involvement in project activities:



Tip 1: A group of parents can be asked to help with the preparation of a local event during which their children will perform and/or exhibit their work.

Tip 2: Inviting two or three Romani parents to attend session of M4R workshop where Romani culture and traditions are being discussed might be very useful, as they can be a very valuable source of information about local traditions and music.

Tip 3: Observing the activity or workshop. By being directly involved in the educational process, parents are unintentionally learning how to interact with their children. After a certain period of time, they might even start to unwittingly imitate practices of an educator in everyday life.

V. LINGUISTIC AWARENESS

Awareness of diversity and openness toward positive relationships with people who have different ethno-cultural affiliations can start from the realization that people speak different languages, or sometimes different dialects or variants of a language.

This would be a useful way to make Romani language visible and appreciated.

VI. ARTS CENTER

- Creation of drawings, paintings, collages showing the life of children and their families or significant events in the community;
- Balanced exposure to products made both by Romani and non-Romani children;
- Encouraging joint realization of drawings, collages, modeling, etc by Romani and non-Romani children with interdependent situations;

- Playing musical instruments and using background music that reflect the diversity of the group.

GAMES AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES CHOSEN

The role of the teacher in these activities relate mainly to:

- Providing a favorable learning environment
- Prompt management of any problematic situations that may arise.

The practices should allow children the freedom to select the activities and suggest games.

Free play is a barometer of child development in all aspects as it is the universe in which the child can manifest himself "uncensored". Conflicts may arise during games and activities chosen by children. In such cases, the prompt and balanced intervention of the teacher is essential.

Romani and non-Romani children will have to be given time to play together and learn from each other.



VII. DRAWING A WORKING PLAN OF MEDIATION TOOL KIT FOR TEACHERS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND CULTURAL OPERATORS/MEDIATORS, ADDRESSED TO ROMANI MOTHERS EDUCATIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL STRUCTURE



The scope of this educational module is to create a mediation tool kit that will be used for facilitating communication between teachers and Romani mothers.

The innovative aspect of this format shall be the use of music, specifically Romani music, as a cultural medium.

Music comes together with aspects of daily life and personal choices, including the history of the people it belongs to and the musical contacts and contaminations that have occurred in the life of the individuals and groups.

THE GROUPS

The aim of this activity is to develop a tool for the communication between Romani mothers and teachers. Mothers and

teachers will interact to develop, through common work, tools of cultural mediation starting from an exchange of competences and knowledge and from recognition of the abilities of each group, reviewing their own ways of living and discovering their own histories in both formal and informal ways.

The interaction shall be developed through various activities including guided group discussions, communication between individuals and/or small groups

WORKPLAN

Step 1: PREPARATION

- a) **Analysis** of places and people, identification of knowledge and competences connected to Romani music, culture, customs and lifestyles;
- b) **Identification** of common denominator for grouping the mothers;
- c) **Definition** of the objective of each specific activity;
- d) **Survey** on available materials, types of music, human resources;
- e) **Specification** of the roles to be undertaken for specific interactions within the working group of trainers, musicians, social workers.

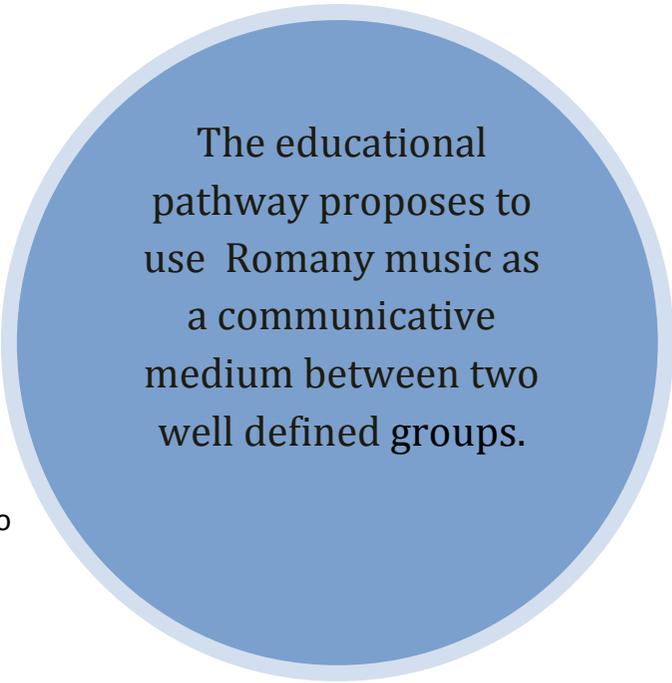
Step 2: UNDERSTANDING

Self-presentation and narration of their stories: way of life, traditions and conditions of Romani women, ways of raising children, the music that accompanies their lives. The music listened at home, in the settlement, which is played on the street, which belongs to the tradition. Example: starting with the formation of a chorus to sing old Romani lullabies we may reconstruct history and values. Singing techniques are learnt. The words can be transcribed. New stories will be added, and so on.

Step 3: ACTION

Returning to the previous example:

During the music sessions there will be an exchange of knowledge and experience. They may identify moments in music and poetry linked to the condition of Romani women. Historical knowledge, understanding and pride in their Romani roots and a critical and informed reading of the present can arise.



The educational pathway proposes to use Romany music as a communicative medium between two well defined groups.

The topics arising from the musical activity, from the spirit of solidarity and participation can be continued and developed in group discussions, in circle time and in focus groups. Recording the experience in a diary will produce the specific mediation tools kit.



Step 4: SUSTAINABILITY

This work leads to a specific product:

- the final performance, musical production, exhibitions, shows, IT production etc;
- a musical group (ensemble, chorus) that can develop its activities;

The group of mothers may continue the experience with other Romani women. The interpersonal communications developed within and outside the group shall give continuity to the experience.



DIDACTIC TEMPLATE FOR ROMANI MOTHERS

Mediation tool kit for teachers, social cultural operators/mediators addressed to Romani mothers

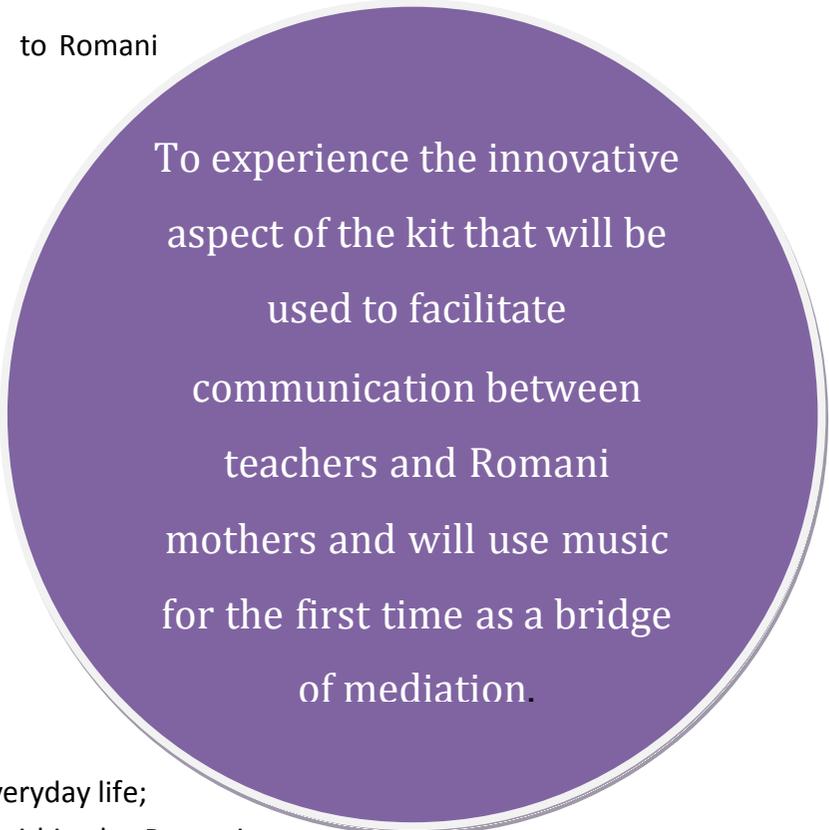
AIMS

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

- using the culture of Romani music to develop communications between women, and between Romani women and teachers
- establishing efficient communications
- developing decision making and problem solving

Specific objectives

- Learning to do research, knowledge of Romani music pieces that refer to everyday life;
- learning to analyze, knowing and developing techniques of childrearing within the Romani culture;
- learning to organize a performance that represents the activities undertaken;
- acquiring self-confidence from reciprocal understanding and respect;
- overcoming learning difficulties;
- developing topics about Romani life and culture in the course of discussions and conversations;



To experience the innovative aspect of the kit that will be used to facilitate communication between teachers and Romani mothers and will use music for the first time as a bridge of mediation.



- knowing how to reproduce the itinerary of the experience undertaken

Interdisciplinary aspects

Science: How to produce sounds at a vocal and instrumental level

Psychomotorial Skills: The daily gestures and movements: affective, negative, positive, the use and the value of dance movement in the Romani culture.

Music: The cultural link between traditional Romani music and Romani daily life, in the present and in the past. Musical techniques used in Romani culture. Knowledge of the Romani world and culture.

Sociology: Learning about life of a Romani: evolutions, techniques of childrearing and communications, homologation, relationships.

Health Psychology: Implement the life skills: developing relationships through mutual understanding, empathy, emotion management and stress in daily life of Romani women.

History and Geography: The provenance of the music and the narrations.

Literacy: Reading and writing Romani lullabies, composition of new songs. Logbook of the daily activity and the developed topics.

ICT (Information and Communication Technology): Use of technologies (including IT)

DIDACTIC PROCEDURE

Meeting the parents and recognizing their cultural and social background.

Circle time to:

- discuss the task to carry out and make simple planning which is presented in poster form
- develop a training agreement, with “rules” for the formal discussions
- identify and choose the practical tasks; forming a chorus, a dance and/or music ensemble...
- identifying and recounting the music of daily life, the lullabies and music connected to particular aspects of the lives of Romani families
- identifying the necessary work materials (actions, oral narrations, discussions, tools, means...) and how to access them
- defining the means for the socialization of knowledge and the emotions experienced in the WS
- organizing further work meetings centered on the same tasks

During the meetings we shall meet the fundamental objectives, using analysis and knowledge of music, as well as topics that facilitate reaching the objectives.

METHODOLOGY

Learning by doing, circle time, focus group, free discussion, literacy, listening techniques, oral narration, life skill

Target: mothers from 16 to 45 years old.

Human resources: teachers, Romani women, assistance of experts and associations, significant figures in the Romani social group. Experts, musicians, etc.

Material resources: IT tools, musical instruments, reserved setting.

Production: a chorus, a small orchestra or ensemble, chorus accompanied by instruments, recorded or written accounts of life today and in the past-a performance.

Electronic and printed versions will be produced.

Expected results in terms of attendance of group activity, knowledge, abilities, skills, key competences and values.

Attendance

90% Participant attendance rate

Knowledge:

- knowing Romani usages, customs and habits in the present and the past
- techniques of child raising,
- the history of Romani music.
- knowledge of the musical motifs of daily life.
- knowledge of world and classical music, of techniques of expression connected to music: dance, song, instrumentals
- knowing the methods and the rules of individual and group communications

Abilities

- making decisions and problem solving together
- knowing how to perform a musical piece together
- recognizing musical pieces from the Romani tradition coming from different places and origins
- using effective means of communication between components of the group
- developing the ability for interpersonal relationships outside the familiar setting

Competences (KC)

- being able to continue learning and communication
- using the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship in different contexts
- cultivating and using cultural awareness and expression for developing personal creative communications skills
- using the acquired knowledge on Romani culture to improve self-esteem
- using and maintaining in different contexts the communications skills gained through this experience.

Values

Acquisition of the value of Romani culture and of the function of music in the history of the Romani people. Being aware of the value of one's own roots.

Assessment methods:

- levels of satisfaction measured by questionnaires to all involved (trainers and pupils) at mid-workshop and at the end
- final questionnaire with self-evaluation of trainers and pupils;
- identification of strong and weak points, of opportunities and problems
- attendance levels at WS, to be monitored during the activity

Topics to develop in formal and/or informal discussions and communications

The function of music in the lives and the history of the Romani people: its social and ethical value

- The importance of music in the lives of Romani women: what it tells us.
- Daily life of a woman in a Romani encampment



- Where the Romani live today: women outside the encampment
- What the songs and music say about daily life in the past and now in Romani families.
- Women and their relationships with music: what it represents for them
- What lullabies say
- Relationships with gagè women
- Interpersonal communication: between women, between Romani women, between women and men, in the family, in the group
- How children are brought up: relationship between tradition and homologation
- How techniques of upbringing are influenced from the outside
- The music young Romani listen to. Homologated music: young people in the world. Do we know our children?
- The influence of contemporary life on young Romani and Romani women: how it is experienced
- Tradition as cultural roots
- Overcoming traditions, how to reduce the gender gap

CONCISE REPOSITORY

Mori Shej Sabina: Gypsy *Lullaby* by Kalyi Jag - YouTube
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIOegDi-Wbg

<http://gypsylyrics.wordpress.com/mori-shej/>

Gypsy Lullaby

Track Artist Mirko Basaldella, Country(s)Serbia; United States Culture Group(s)Romani Genre(s)World music - Instrument(s)Guitar
Duration 2:09

<http://www.folkways.si.edu/TrackDetails.aspx?itemid=37760>

“Gypsy Lullaby” and “Bright Shines the Moon” from *Gypsy Guitar: the Fiery Moods of Mirko*--<http://www.folkways.si.edu/albumdetails.aspx?itemid=2581>

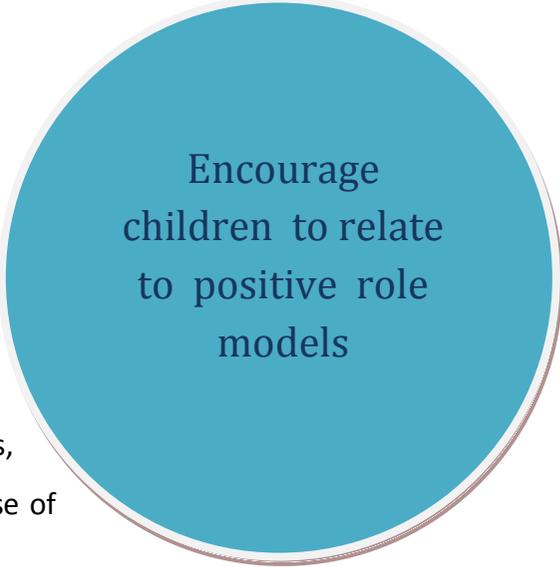
“In the Field Stood a Birch Tree” (“Vo Pole Beryioza Stoyala”) from *Treasury of Russian Gypsy Songs*---<http://www.folkways.si.edu/albumdetails.aspx?itemid=251>

“Poite, Tsygane” (“Sing, Gypsies”) from *Gypsy Nights*
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/albumdetails.aspx?itemid=2620>

Designed by: Kathleen Arends, *A Little Romani Music*, A Smithsonian Folkways
Lesson Open Window School http://media.smithsonianfolkways.org/docs/lesson_plans/FLP10080_russia_romani.pdf

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a positive atmosphere, encouraging cooperation and shared sense of common belonging to the group. The feeling of belonging to the group, the solidarity and mutual support contribute to increase confidence in own strength
- and reduce the fear of failure in completing tasks. Group identity, group interactive activities, games and sports activities, structured to promote group cohesion, can be used to foster a sense of community.
- Ensure that all children feel special and appreciated. This is one of the most powerful impact on self-esteem. It can be done simply by making positive comments on every occasion, without comparing children between them, without creating hierarchy in the group. Activities in which every child is put in a position to feel special can be designed.
- Encourage children to develop independent thinking, take decisions and find solutions to problems. This will avoid placing them in a state of dependency and apathy that only confirms a lower self-image. If a task is perceived as being too difficult or brings problems within the group, rather than providing solutions or deciding what you consider right, it is preferable to question and provide alternatives.
- Emphasize the strengths of each child and highlight successes. Children may have different performances in different types of activities. Use positive reinforcement, every child can have good results at something and he/she can be publicly praised for it. Use positive feedback, highlighting successes.



Encourage
children to relate
to positive role
models

- Provide opportunities for self-help. Through the examples provided by the adults around them, children learn to ask or offer help. Creating situations in which all children have the opportunity to help a peer and be helped, stimulates and encourages self-esteem and pro-social behavior.
- Connect educational activities with children familiar cultural elements. In particular, connecting to Romani culture will have a positive effect on self-esteem of Roma children and also will facilitate learning (it is easier to learn from something familiar) and develop positive attitudes of other children.
- Stimulate the expression of expectations, setting up of individual goals and reflection on progress. In many cases, Romani children are "taught" by the immediate social environment that it is good to have low expectations. Early age is a crucial time to encourage children to dare to want more and to realize that they can make progress. Sometimes, such an approach can generate initial rejection, but remember that, most likely, such a reaction is caused by fear and lack of confidence. Obviously, it is important to support the children and not to ask too much in the short term. Everyone needs time and perseverance to achieve a successful outcome.
- Encourage children to relate to positive role models. The involvement of Romani adults that can represent successful models with whom Romani children can identify is useful. For example, young Romani who affirm their Romani ethnicity and possibly speak Romani.



