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“Working together  
for Roma Inclusive  
Education”

## Working together for Roma Inclusive education

Newsletter #1

### 1st transnational project meeting and study visit, Athens, 21-23 January 2017

The 1st translational project meeting and the first study visit of the project “Working together for Roma inclusive education” held to the 2nd Gymnasio of Agia Varvara on 21-23 January 2017. Representatives of project’s partners and many other stakeholders relative to the field of Roma education in Greece participated in the meeting where they had the opportunity to exchange experience and practices.



A number of various stakeholders related to the education of Roma students, have been invited and attended the meeting. Among them was the Mayor of Aghia Varvara, the Deputy Mayor for Educational Issues of Aghia Varvara, representatives of the programme “Education for Roma children” and of Roma organizations, teachers from other schools with large number of Roma students.



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In the beginning of the meeting the student’s of the school presented the history of the town and some school activities to the audience. Then, the Headmaster of the school, Mr Dionysios Vythoulkas together with Ms Maria Potiropoulou presented school activities related to Roma (and non-Roma) inclusive education. Then, the Assistant Professor and Project Scientific Coordinator of the “Education for Roma children” programme implemented by the University of Athens, Mr Christos Parthenis took the floor and presented in detail the situation of “Education for Roma students in national level and he presented many analytical information on the obstacles and challenges acquired. Having gained a general idea of the situation of Roma students in Greece and the aims and objectives of the programme Ms Eirini Tseliou, member of project’s core team, presented the entire programme and its nine activities in detail.



Followed by, Ms Matina Vavouli, Headmaster of the 7th Primary School of Aspropyrgos, described school activities related to Roma inclusion at school and she presented to the audience a short video with some good examples of Roma inclusive education actions which have taken place in the 7th Primary School of Aspropyrgos. The first session closed with an intervention of Ms Kostantinos Paiteris, the President of the Union of Greek Mediators and Collaborators who mentioned the importance of education for Roma inclusion and the valuable contribution of persons like the teachers and the Headmasters of the presented schools to the success of any action related to Roma people. As he said “without actions like that, but most importantly without persons like you, the Roma people would still be isolated and lacked motivations to participated in school life”... “I would not be the person I am today, without the continuous support and the commitment of persons like Ms Vythoulkas and Ms Potiripoulou”.



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Then partners presented and discussed the proposed best practices. Each partner shared its thoughts and ideas on which of the proposed practices could be implemented in its country. The representatives of “Bacho Kiro” school of Bulgaria, expressed their interest in an action implemented by the school of Agia Varvara, where the students had the opportunity to translate (transfer) famous poems into Romani language.

The teachers of the two schools exchanged experience, thoughts and ideas and considered possible ways of transferring the practice to Bulgaria. At the same time, the representatives of the school of Agia Varvara showed interested in two programmes implemented by the Ialomita School Inspectors in Romania entitled “Second Chance” and students’ council. It was discussed the possibility to apply a combination of both of them. The flexibility provided to the Roma participants of those programmes was the key point discussed among the participants. However, due to time limitations (since both programmes require a least one school year to be completed) no decision has been made yet.

Many participants expressed interest in the “photovoice”, a participatory action research which combines photographs and interviews and requires the active involvement of students, implemented by the school of Aghia Varvara with the support of BOLT international Consulting. As a result, it was decided to examine the possibility the proposed action to be implemented in all three countries by making the necessary alterations requested by each socio-economic background.

The second day of the study visit participants visited the visited the Town Hall of Agia Varvara where they had the opportunity to present their organizations, related to Roma inclusive education, to the Mayor of Aghia Varvara, Municipal representatives, including Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture, the Director of Social Services Department and Roma representatives.



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The Mayor warmly welcomed participants to the Town Hall and he presented the Municipal approach towards the social Inclusion of vulnerable people at local level. He mentioned the holistic and integrated perspective of municipality where as he stated “all people regardless if they are Roma or not have equal access to social services”. He also paid great attention to the effects of refugee crisis and he expressed his satisfaction for being part of the ERASMUS+ project.



Before the meeting, partners visited the historical Church of Agia Varvara and the nearby church’s shelter (boarding house) which hosts 100 university students from around the world with economic problems to continue their studies. They learned about the history of the place and the activities of the “Apostoliki Diakonia” (an organization of the Greek Orthodox Church) to support education of vulnerable people.



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