



RTransform

# II EUROPEAN GATHERING REPORT 2022

ROMA WOMEN STUDENT  
GATHERINGS



Project:



Coordinator:



Associació Gitana de Dones  
Asociación Gitana de Mujeres  
Romani Association of Women

Project Partners:



Funded By:





## **Introduction**

This second RTransform EUROPEAN GATHERING REPORT include all the Roma Students Gatherings (RSG) that have been carried out during 2022. If required, the First European Report can be found on the RTransform Project website. It is important to highlight that the Roma Student Gatherings have been possible thanks to the joint work of all partners of the consortium, and especially thanks to the work carried out by grassroots Roma Women, by participating actively in their communities. Drom Kotar Mestipen (DKM), as the coordinating institution (Spain), has been giving support to the entities to ensure that the quality and the criteria of the RSG were met.

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief overview of the implementation of the Gatherings in all the countries that are part of the consortium (Spain, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, and the UK). Therefore, this document is divided into the following sections:

- 1. The Roma Student Gatherings in Europe**
- 2. Details of the implementation of the Roma Women Student Gatherings in Europe**
- 3. The impact of the Gatherings at a European level**
- 4. Conclusions of the Gatherings at a European level**

The RTransform project aims to transform the educational systems of Europe by generating an open dialogue between Roma women, educational staff, relevant political entities and stakeholders. The goal is to include Roma women's voices in the policy making processes to improve the situation of the Roma communities in general and the Roma women in particular.

To achieve this goal, one of the activities that have been carried out along the project is the Roma Women Student Gatherings (RWSG) in the five countries that are part of the consortium.

The Roma Women Student Gatherings are an educational activity that aims to work towards greater inclusion of Roma women and girls at all stages of the education system. For more detailed information about the Gatherings and its history, you can visit this link, where you will find the activity guide.

The RWSG, activity that successfully promoted a more active participation of Roma women in different areas in the society have a long history. They has been implemented in Spain since 2000, with a recognized personal, social and political Impact, and at the crux of the project's goals is this transfer the impact of the RSG to other European countries.

6

Six Gatherings were held throughout 2022, one on each partner country.

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two Gatherings in Spain where participants have a double demand to meet at the end of the school year in May and again in October.

The most important details of the meetings can be found below:

The **XXI and XXII Roma Women Student Gatherings of Catalonia** were held on the 28th May 2022 in Amposta, and on the 8th October 2022 in Girona. A total of **300** grassroots Roma women attended the meetings, which took place in two different relevant places for them. Women from all over Catalonia joined the meetings, and were also heard by several political representatives that came to the Gatherings.

The **II Roma Women Student Gathering of Greece**, co-organized by AID, took place on the 27th January 2023 in the Second Chance School of in Dendropotamos, Thessaloniki.

A total of **60 grassroots women** attended the meeting. Women from various regions of Greece joined the meeting, such as Thessaloniki, Serres, Larissa, Corinth, Athens and in total (9) different Roma communities. The topic of the Gathering was "Participation of Roma women to education, barriers, motives and experiences" and women discussed the situation of their education status based on their city and community.

The **II Roma Women Student Gathering of Hungary** took place on the 15th July 2022 at the Central European University in Budapest. Co-organized by Amrita OBK, a total **20 Roma Women** attended to the Gathering, titled: "The impact of the war in Ukraine and its consequences on our daily lives and access to services". Some participants stayed overnight at the dorms of the Central European University, bringing them closer to a space that has usually been vetoed for Roma women.

On the 20th of October 2022 the **II Roma Women Student Gathering of Bulgaria** was carried out in Veliko Turnovo University, co-organized by Center Amalipe under the title "Girls with dreams: Let's turn the page! The university is also a place for Roma women!" **50 Roma women** were able to discuss different topics around education with the presence of the vice president of Bulgaria, Iliyana Lotova.

The **II Roma Women Student Gathering of United Kingdom** took place in the Firvale Secondary School in Sheffield, on the 3rd December 2022. The organization in charge was Care for Young People's Future, and a total of **40 Roma Women** attended the meeting, whose inaugural conference was titled "Roma Women transforming the educational systems in the UK and political mobilization".

In total  
a number of

500

women have joined  
the Gatherings in all  
these countries.

## Details of the implementation of the Roma Women Student Gatherings in Europe

DKM's experience in the implementation of the Gatherings in Catalonia, Spain, helped to set a specific guideline for its execution in the other countries of the consortium. That way, the success and the impact of the Gathering can be guaranteed.

All the Gatherings follow a series of key elements, which are:

1. The inaugural conference
  2. The table of role models
  3. The working groups
  4. The plenary presentation of the conclusions reached by the participants after the event
- However, during the event planning, the decisions are mainly made by the participants themselves, not the technical staff.

Some of the issues/topics that were discussed by the women that would participate in the event, accompanied by the technical staff, were following:

1. The composition of the role model table.
2. The theme of the inaugural conference.
3. The poster of the Gathering (designed by participants or their children, which causes a sense of belonging to the activity).
4. The day and time of the Gathering.
5. The functions of the volunteers.
6. The space in which the activity will take place.

Therefore, each Gathering follows a guideline and the structure is very clear but the essence and heart of the Gathering and what makes it bespoke are the Roma women and girls from each context:

## CATALONIA

Catalonia hosted two different gatherings in 2022. The first one was the **XXI Roma Women Student Gathering**, which took place in Amposta, in the South of Catalonia, on the 28th of May 2022. It is relevant to mention that, following the last Gathering in Tarragona in 2021, Roma women from Amposta asked to organize the next edition of the meeting in their city.

They claimed most of the activities usually take place in Barcelona, and Ampostian Roma women wanted to bring women from other parts of Catalonia to their territory.

Therefore, the preparation phase consisted of 3 meetings during April between staff members of Drom Kotar Mestipen (DKM), the participating women, members of the National Coordination Committee, and representatives from the Amposta City Council. The meetings were held both online via zoom and in person.

These meetings aimed to encourage Roma women to participate in the organizational groups and to approach the organizational issues of the meetings. Topics such as the place of the Gathering, the theme of the inaugural conference or the dissemination poster were discussed. In addition, the Gatherings were presented to the representatives of the City Council that showed interest in the project and were willing to collaborate.



National Gathering Girona, Catalunya. 8th October 2022



A total of **70 grassroots Roma women** and girls assisted the Gathering, coming from different cities of Tarragona, Tortosa, Reus, Amposta, and different neighborhoods of Barcelona and Castellón. During the event, a childcare service was offered to the mothers, to ensure they were able to take part in the Gathering. Also, staff members of DKM and non-Roma volunteers were present at the event to undertake technical and organizational tasks.

The **inaugural conference** was delivered by Dr. Carme García Yeste, Professor of the Department of Pedagogy at the University Rovira i Virgili, and director of the Consolidated Group recognized by the Catalan government, Methodology of Educational Research with Social Impact (MEDIS). The theme was "Family Education", and she spoke about the importance of the implementation of this Successful Educational Action, and its impact at both personal and community levels.

The **role model table** was formed by 3 Roma women of different profiles, chosen because of their examples of success in their respective educational paths.

## Role Model Table

**Ms. Trini Heredia González**, Technician in Social Integration at the Salvador Seguí Institute, Barcelona.

**Ms Eli Lucena Cortés**, Graduated from compulsory secondary education in adult education, currently preparing for the university entrance exam.

**Ms Andrea Khalfaoui Larrañaga** holds a PhD in Education from the University of Deusto with the thesis "Keys to intercultural coexistence in early childhood education." She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Edinburgh.

After gathering together into small working groups, the **conclusions of the Gathering** were discussed and were summarized into 5 key points:

1. Educational resources: The necessity to have trained staff at all levels of compulsory education to ensure equal possibilities for all students, and the importance to implement actions such as the tutoring library.
2. Educational center: Roma Women claim more information about educational paths, and more spaces in educational center to get parents involved in the education of their children and the implementation of SEAs (Successful Educational Actions).

## Working groups



National Gathering Amposta, Catalunya. 28th may 2022

3. Participation: Foster communication between families of students and teachers, along with activities such as Gatherings that promote the empowerment of girls and women and encourage them to continue or rejoin studies.
4. Role models: It is important to create new role models to motivate children, and promote the representation of Roma people in schools.
5. Other support: grants for daycare are necessary to help women join training courses, and education should be financially accessible to everyone.

Representatives of **public administrations** were present at the event and were able to hear the petitions of Roma women. The meeting was attended by Ms. Cesca Domènech i Ruera, General Director of Civic and Community Action of the Catalan Government and. Mr. Adam Tomàs I Roiget, Mayor of Amposta, and after the Gathering DKM met with the representatives of public administrations to share the conclusions and transfer them to the policymakers.



Moreover, the Virtual Museum of the Roma People showed interest in the event and shared information about it through their networks, you can find it here. Two members of the DKM met with the journalist and supported the final article. It was essential to ensure that the voices of the women were embedded in the article and not solely a typical journalistic report of the event.

After this Gathering, Roma women from Girona, a city in the North of Catalonia, asked to host the following meeting. Therefore, the **XXII Roma Women Student Gathering** took place on the 8th of October 2022 at the University of Girona under the name:

**“You set the limits; there is a world full of opportunities, and they are waiting for you”.**

The location of the Gathering was chosen on purpose, given the symbolic gesture of Roma women taking up spaces that have been traditionally exclusionary towards them. Furthermore, October 8th is the day when the 1st International Roma Women’s Congress took place, and since then it is being reclaimed institutionally declared as International Roma Women's Day.

It is worth mentioning that the Gathering held in October 2022, was the first Gathering that welcomed partners from the RTransform project. The consortium was able to experience a Catalan Roma Women Student Gathering firsthand.

During the **preparation phase**, 9 face-to-face meetings were conducted during the 3 prior months to the Gathering. These meetings took place in different parts of Catalonia (Girona, Sant Adrià del Besòs, El Prat, Tarragona) to assemble a motor group and to start preparing the details of the Gathering. It is important to note that the number of meetings held during the preparation phase depended on the dynamics and willingness of the women themselves. It was the women themselves who planned the number of meetings.

During these preparation meetings, several schools were visited to gather concerns and important issues of the students and to invite them to join the meeting. These Roma women and educational center were reached thanks to the network of the motor group, mainly composed of Roma women from the neighborhood of Font de la Pòlvora, in Girona. In fact, they encouraged the participation of first timers Roma women who had never before participated in this type of event reaching the amount of **230 total participants** in this Gathering that came from all over Catalonia.

The **inaugural conference** was conducted by Dr Lena de Botton, Professor of Sociology at the University of Barcelona and member of the Advisory Council on Religious Diversity of the Generalitat de Catalunya, and was entitled "Participation in the educational field for constant improvement and educational success for all".

The conference's purpose was to answer the questions and concerns that women had expressed, such as the lack of attention that their children receive from some professionals in educational center, the lack of involvement of families in educational spaces, the distance between families and schools and the need for more tools and/or resources to ensure an adequate level of education.

Afterwards, the **role model table** took place. It was composed of 5 women of different profiles, backgrounds, educational levels and ages although all of them are examples of success in their respective educational trajectories:

## Role Model Table

***Mss Julia Heredia Amador***, 4th ESO student at IES La Salle, Gerona.

***Mss Nayara Sánchez Sánchez***, Senior Technician in Design and edition of printed and multimedia publications at IFP Algueró, Cornellà, Barcelona.

***Mss María Baddou Heredia***, 1st year Law student at UOC, Girona, Spain.

***Mss Silviya Stancheva***, Bulgaria, partner of the Erasmus+ RTransform project funded by the EU.

***Mss Ana María Fernández López***, 1st-year student of Social Work at UNED, Gavá.

Following the role model table, women gathered together in working groups to get to the final part of the Gathering, where these 3 key-point conclusions were reached:

1. **Educational center:** Roma women ask for an equal level of education for their children since there is a tendency to lower the level for Roma children. Furthermore, the educational staff should advise, guide and inform the students of all the existing quality educational itineraries, motivating them to continue studying on the path that will lead them to good results in their future. Concerning the school curriculum, Roma women request the history of the Roma People to be included as part of the joint history and to give visibility to the contributions and cultural elements of the Roma people in educational spaces.

2. **Spaces for dialogue:** Teachers and families should work as a team to promote success for the students. Some examples would be to implement actions that involve families in schools, and having continuous communication. Additionally, there is a need to have representation of Roma families in educational center and spaces such as the AFA (Association of Pupils' Families).

3. **In the future:** Roma women advocate for diverse schools that do not segregate and ensure the right educational level for everybody. Moreover, they see a future where discrimination and dismissals based on identity will not be consented.

This event was attended by several representatives of public administrations, which were:

- Ms. Cesca Domènechi Ruera, General Director of Civic and Community Action (Generalitat de Catalunya).
- Ms. Marta Madrenas Mir, Mayoress of Girona.
- Dr. Silvia Llach, vice-rector of the University of Girona. The political impacts of the Gathering are further explained in the next section.

Overall, both Gatherings raised important issues for the Roma community such as the low educational expectations or the lack of Roma references in educational center. Those claims were transferred to the policy-makers so that they can be taken into account in the next procedures.

## GREECE

For the preparation of the Gathering, total ten (10) group meetings were held, while there was continuous communication, in addition to the individual meetings with members of the Committee via telephone and constant information through the group created for this purpose and is active since the start of the RTransform project.

The topics that were discussed by the Organizing Committee and taken decisions were the preparation of promotional material (brochures, applications, banners, invitations, etc.)

- Selection of the date and place of the Gathering, the identification of needs and common thematic areas that concern Roma women today in terms of education, finding suitable speakers based on the identified topics, organize the event dissemination, preparation of participants and identification of areas from which women will participate.

- Volunteer team organization and responsibilities, schedule configuration, preparation of discussion group moderators and how to write reports.

The Gathering took place in a 2nd Chance School in Dendropotamos, Thessaloniki. During the same hours there was the Creative School for Children in place. We managed to keep the children there during the same time as the Gathering. In this way the women and girls that didn't know what is it, could actually meet teachers and the staff and learn how it differs from the formal schools. AID managed to double the participation of women and this shows also the dynamic of the practice of the Gatherings.

## Role Model Table

The **role models table** was composed by 4 Roma women from different backgrounds:

**Mss. Nektaria M.** "Back to the school in adulthood".

**Mss. Maria P.** "Chasing the University dream"

**Smaro K.** "My decision to attend Second Chance School despite the unsupportive environment".

**Hara S.** "Accomplishing my goal of becoming a Hairdresser".

Most of women that participated had not finished the Primary School, some had attended Gymnasium and others are now students and graduates of Second Chance Schools, Universities etc. The discussions and the exchange of life stories and views were conducive and women agreed that they need to continue. Some women had never travelled alone for attending an event and this was their first time to leave the family. After the Gathering, they were enthusiastic and we still receive positive feedback and intentions to register in 2nd Chance Schools. Additionally, women realized the importance of finishing Gymnasium to get a job because of the current legislation.

The feedback received of the gathering was very positive. Furthermore, from the workshops held with Roma women, other women learned about these gatherings, and expressed their intention to participate in future gatherings.

In the local level we can see a positive impact of the Gatherings to the Roma community and to the women themselves. They are contacting us to know how to register in 2nd Chance schools and enroll in other seminars. They feel more inspired, motivated to develop their goals and get back into the educational system.

As it is described in the report of the 1st Gathering, they realize the value of education but they do not have enough information on how to continue or they feel that they are too old to study. Worth mentioning, is that the Gathering created an even stronger network between Roma women. They realized that they were all struggling with similar issues and challenges and this in turn created a stronger solidarity amongst them. The women also expressed that they wanted to be good examples for their children so they could achieve their dreams and full potentials, and not be held back due to stereotypes and fears, like it was in their generation.



National Gathering , Dendropotamos, Thessaloniki. Greece 27th january 2023

### **Conclusions:**

After the Meeting, around 12 women expressed interest in enrolling in the Second Chance School. The participants expressed positive thoughts for 2nd Gathering and their wish for the 3rd Dialogue Meeting to be held in another city.

The main points of the conclusions can be summarized as following:

- Roma women recognize the value of education and the benefits it offers and wish to gain personal and professional autonomy through education.

- They envision a better future for themselves and especially their children, so there is a need for measures to be taken so that mothers themselves can help their children's education and benefit also themselves by learning (for example weekly meetings of mothers with teachers in order to prepare- teach them how to support their children at home with homework. The main of the meeting can be presenting to mother the teaching material and homework of children)
- Emerge of accessing information or providing information to Roma communities and women of the educational options they have to continue school.
- Ensuring the transfer of women to Second Chance Schools from the communities (they don't have a car in order to go to school and public transportation is not an option because they live in regions far from the center) or establishing Schools close to Roma communities would increase their participation in education.
- The existence of structures for women (e.g. Second Chance School) and children (Creative Center for Children) in the same neighborhood or even building is a good practice for facilitating the attendance of Roma women in education.
- The inclusion of Roma history and culture at national and European level in school is important, in order to strengthen their cultural identity as equal to the rest society, raise the awareness of society and counter the Anti-Gypsyism they experience.
- Local empowerment actions and workshops for Roma women based on the needs the women identify are needed.



## HUNGARY

Amrita OBK Association is the association that promoted the organization of the **II Roma Women Student Gathering**, which took place on the 15th of July 2022. The meeting was held at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, and **20 participants** had the chance to visit the building, meet some of the students

studying there and sleep at the dorms, given that they were in Budapest for two days. The topic of the Gathering was “The impact of the war in Ukraine and its consequences on our daily lives and access to services”. Given the current war situation of Ukraine and its proximity to Hungary, Roma women asked to address that particular topic, that influence education impact on Roma Students in their schools.

Our invited guest was the student coordinator of Romaversitas, who help students to choose the right school during the summer camp. His task was to describe the further education opportunities and conditions available in Budapest. He also shared information and services to help girls who have been admitted to schools to successfully complete their studies. We also had on our panel the Roma girl who had chosen a university based on this information and told us about her experience.

In the course of the **preparation phase**, 8 online meetings were carried out from April to July. During the first meetings, girls who participated in the first Gathering discussed their experiences and talked about the criteria for choosing the participants of the next gathering. At the end, the criteria for participants were women with few opportunities and role models. The rest of the meetings were about logistics and involved staff and National Coordination Committees (NCC) members.

### Role Model Table

The role models table was composed by 5 Roma women from different backgrounds:

**Imola Rubina Malek**, economist consultant.

**Bogdán Klaudia**, International Relations Department Assistant.

**Boda Laura**, senior student at an Italian secondary school who has applied to University in Budapest to study communication.

**Péterné Boda**, Nursery Nursemaid.

**Wenzcler Ibolya**, mum of four, full-time mother.

Around the question “How has the war in Ukraine affected your daily life in economic, health, housing, education and employment terms?”

**The girls who participated in the panel had a great impact on those who attended the gathering for the first time. Their school stories, in which they shared their successes and failures and the solution and help they could ask for (from whom, how) reassured many participating mothers. Very important and useful information was shared by both the role models and Roma versitas staff. This was crucial from the point of view of the girls facing a career choice, as was the fact that after the meeting, the mothers allowed their daughter to enroll in a distant city high school or university.**

The proposals do not specifically reflect on education, but rather on the everyday needs and problems of women and girls. Even then, without satisfying these needs, they cannot get involved in mainstream education. They cannot afford a personal teacher to prepare them for the final or entrance exams. We consider it important to introduce scholarships, which will make the lives of families and students easier and greatly promote their participation in education, regardless if it is formal or non-formal education.



National Gathering , Budapest, Hungary. 15th july 2022

## Conclusions

- Proposals to the Government: Roma women ask to raise the limits on the amount of electricity and gas.
- Incentive the creation of quality jobs for the underprivileged; non-discriminatory, quality education for all children, regardless of race, religion, gender identity and social status; make university education a matter of course for Roma.
- Proposals to the government (with plenty of EU funding this could be done):
  - \* Put a limit on food growth.
  - \* Raise the limits on the amount of electricity (210) and gas (140)
  - \* Set a time limit for these laws e.g. reducing overheads to 2023.
  - \* Exempting people living below the minimum per capita of 1 from this law.
- Instead of building a stadium, create facilities that create declared jobs for the underprivileged.

Proposals to the Amrita OBK Association:

Conduct surveys and statistics on the extent to which people in our country are affected by the crisis, e.g. how many people cannot afford to pay their utility bills and therefore turn off their heating and cook and bath less, switch to a filling solution, how many people become unemployed, how many small businesses go bankrupt, how many people become homeless. Submitting the above proposals to the government backed up by these statistics.

## BULGARIA

The **II Roma Women Student Gathering** in Bulgaria was carried out by the organization Center Amalipe on the 20th of October 2022. This time, the hosting institution was Veliko Turnovo University, and the Gathering took place on the main building of the University, the Rectorate. As it has been remarked before, the University is a symbolic vindicatory place for Roma women, and that is why it is important the meeting took place there. Under the title of "Girls with dreams: Let's turn the page! The university is also a place for Roma women!", topics such as the challenges each Roma woman face, the challenges she faces in her work and everyday life, the strong role models to motivate the participants to face the difficulties along the way of education and opportunities and the importance of mothers supporting their children were discussed. The Gathering was attended by **50 Roma women**.

During the **preparation phase**, two main preparation meetings during May and June were organized by staff and NCC members, followed by several bilateral meetings with active Roma women who participated in the first Gathering. The first one aimed to discuss the point of view of younger girls and how it should be reflected during the Gathering; therefore it was carried out with high school students Roma girls. They suggested having women of different ages and deliberately inviting active Roma women with their high school or university daughters', to create continuity and transfer the message from generation to generation.

The second preparation meeting was organized with adult Roma women from different parts of Bulgaria during the Children Roma Festival. In this one, it was discussed the organization of the meeting, how different generations could be included, and how to attract more political attention. In total, 2 staff members and 5 NCC members were involved.

As a result of these two meetings, invitations to different Roma women were sent. Overall, there were women who had been very active since the previous gathering and had managed to organize local educational training as well as other local activities for promoting Roma women empowerment. Many of them had already participated in other events and they had already started building the feeling of belonging to a community.

Moreover, the organization tried to cover the whole country and include representatives of different Roma groups, especially active women mothers whose daughters are following their way and are also becoming active.

The Gathering started with a **welcome conference**: first of all, Iliyana Lotova, the vice president of Bulgaria, stressed the importance of understanding Roma traditions, the need of stimulating and educating young people through Bulgarian schools and universities, and the significance of having role models. There were also parliaments of Teodora Krumova, the program director of the Amalipe Center; Prof. Dr Hristo Bonjolov, Rector of VelikoTarnovo University; and deputy mayor of the municipality of VelikoTarnovo, Neiko Genchev.

Afterwards, the participants shared **real examples and difficulties** they have faced so far. The difficulties they encounter during their work as educational mediators or teachers, the early marriages, and the still existing domestic violence not only against Roma women but also children. The girls shared what inspires them, and what helps them survive the hard stories they face. It also emphasized the importance of creating and maintaining a network of people to share all those difficulties, but also the successes. Finally, they all emphasized the power of role models. In fact, Silvia Stancheva and Teodora Krumova participated in the meeting as role models.

After getting together in working groups, the participants presented their impressions from the national Gathering and their action plan until the end of the school year. Therefore, the main conclusions were:



National Gathering , Veliko Turnovo, Bulgary. 20th October 2022



## Conclusions

- About the impact and dissemination of the Gathering, it is relevant to remark that the vice president participated actively during the whole meeting, sharing with and listening to the Roma women. She stated she would continue to be a strong supporter of the rights of Roma women.
- The conclusions and impressions of the Gathering were also sent to other Roma women that could not attend, and after the meeting, many of the women organized follow-up meetings in their localities. One of the participants shared her experience of the Gathering, and the magnitude of impact is shared in the media coverage of the event.





## UNITED KINGDOM

“On the 3rd of December for the second time, over 40 Roma families gathered in Sheffield, UK at Fir Vale Secondary School located in the heart of the community, to discuss education evidenced-based examples and to dream together for a brighter future.

2nd Roma Women Gathering – Sheffield - A dream to education for our community!

To be able to raise the aspirations of the Roma women and girls, the NCC and the Roma Women thought that compared to the previous year's Gathering, which was held at the Hallam University, this year we should be in the community, exactly where the roots of the education for the Roma girls and women is happening, to increase the exposure to role models and positive choices at our host school – Fir Vale School.

Fir Vale Secondary School, in the city of Sheffield, was the place chosen for the **II Roma Women Student Gathering** on the 3rd of December 2022. Care for Young People's Future was the project partner responsible for the organizational aspects of the Gathering. Given that the Gatherings' goal is to listen to the concerns of the Roma community, Roma women and the NCC from the United Kingdom decided to carry out this meeting in this school, where at least half percentage are Roma and it is situated in the heart of the community. It was held weekly face-to-face and virtual meetings and workshops to prepare the topics for the Gathering from September 2022 - Dec 2022 to identify role models together with our NCC and our Roma Women, to research and identify most needed topics and to demonstrate to ourselves and to the society that **“We belong here”**.

During the **preparation phase**, Roma women and Care For the Young People's Future (CFYPF) decided to work around the 3 main issues that Roma women had expressed in the previous Gathering: Strengthen the Roma Women Movement, improve educational expectations and make the voice of Roma Women heard. Therefore, in 2022 they have focused on organizing sessions around education, arts and heritage, and health and well-being.

These sessions, a total of 13 from September to November, were both face-to-face and virtual and consisted of meetings and workshops to prepare the topics for the Gathering. The workshops consisted in raising aspirations and talking about dreams with women and young girls, as well as talking about their needs.

Moreover, Care For the Young People's Future have ongoing mentoring through dance, Roma language and history at Sheffield Park Academy, and collaborated with Fir Vale Secondary school on supporting the Roma girls to produce educational videos in the health system.

Coventry University (CU) was involved in every stage of the preparations and in many instances joined CFYPF at the events, preparation workshops, meetings with the NCC, school sessions and travelled with CFYPF to political meetings. The partnership between CFYPF and CU has organically supported one another.

The dissemination for the events and the preparation of the Gathering relied on thinking about the grassroots women, the schools, political partners and also consulting the Assessor Panel. CU met with the Assessor Panel to discuss the Gatherings and too inquire if they could disseminate and support the Gathering. There were three meetings between CU and the member o the Assessor Panel political representative. Dissemination at a grassroots level relied on word of mouth , social media and our outreach and grassroots work , by meeting regularly with our Roma women and Roma girls in both contexts, educational settings and community settings too.

The organization in charge of co-implementing the activity and organizing the Gathering was: Care for Young People's Future CIC and the hosting institution: Fir Vale Secondary School

**The 2nd Gathering held** in the UK in Sheffield had as a main title for the Gathering:  
"Roma Women Transforming the educational systems in the UK and political mobilization. Reimagining social/educational/ health inequalities"

## Role Model Table

The role models and speakers were experts in the field of education:

**Rosa Maria Kostic Cisneros** – PhD Sociology and Dance Researcher.

**Terezia Rostas**– graduated in Law– Human Rights and Secondary school teacher also Health and Wellbeing Coach

**Olga Fuseini** –studied Politics and currently working as a Research Associate in Health inequalities and Ivana Gombarova – qualified Play worker and currently studying Business Management.

**Ramona Constantin**, Roma Rights activist and Roma Women expert/consultant Empowering the Roma community and Women to have a voice (NCC member too)

**Ivana Gombarova**, Student at Leeds Campus University –Business and Tourism Management, qualified play worker and own business founder .

**Emilia Mizigarova**, BSL Sign Language trained – aspiring to become a Sign Language teacher

The role model table was been carefully chosen in partnership with our NCC members due to their amazing educational achievement and progress.

Once the role table models finished, the Roma women then listened to the evidence-based intervention delivered by Olina Fuesini who delivered a talk called “Reimagining Social Health and Health Inequalities Research” and drew from her ongoing research taking place at the University of Sheffield.

Terezia Rostas discussed “Exploring the invisibility in Education of Roma and for Roma. ¿What leads to success and ways of transforming the educational system? And ¿How to create a culture of inclusion and avoid gender discrimination?”

After the talks the women gathered into three working groups that tackled the 3 points mentioned above. We have been able to identify the impact of the Gathering on our Roma women and political partners on the same day. This was our 2nd Roma Women Gathering, and we have been able to see immediate impact from our 1st Gathering.

We have had Roma Women who got into employment in schools as Teaching Assistants, Role models who became a Research Associate advocating for our Roma community and raising awareness of inequalities, mums who are now collaborating with CYPF on a paid capacity as a translator, BSL British Sign Language, dancers and mentors.

**The impact of the gathering was very powerful as we have achieved the following:**

- Roma women felt more confident in attending education
- Challenging conversations and their rights
- Continuing weekly activity sessions with the Roma girls and women
- Organize further events where Roma women can meet role models and explore opportunities
- Organize University and college visits
- Raise aspirations
- Follow up education advocacy training
- Look into educational formal qualifications for Roma mothers.



National Gathering, Sheffield UK 3th December 2022

From those groups, emerged the **Conclusions of the Gathering:**

**1. Role models:** Roma women ask to be better represented in educational settings, cultural and health sectors.

**2. Access to education:** they claim to be encouraged and welcomed in higher education, as well as financial help to tackle the existing inequalities and gaps. Remove barriers such as requirements for Diploma, Certificates and recognize lived experience as an alternative or help the Roma community to build on the requested certificates (foundation courses)

**3. Heritage:** create a partnership with lived experience communities where we can celebrate through a community calendar our heritage, arts and values that we bring into the society or specific sectors.

### **What do our Roma Women want?**

**1.** Better visual and in person representation in educational settings, cultural and health sectors.

**2.** Our Roma history and language to be visible, accessible and recognized in educational institutions

**3.** Create a Romani studies program which will increase to more Roma students in accessing Higher University.

**4.** Create resources for Roma and Non Roma to recognize our heritage ( Library, My mum is a teacher, recognize lived experience of our Roma community, heritage and culture)

**5.** Financial support, mentoring for Roma students/ women /girls – bursaries.

**6.** Attend, visit and collaborate with local colleges, universities, museums, arts and educational settings and health system.

7. To be recognized, encouraged and welcomed in higher education, colleges and museums also health institutions.
8. To receive mentoring, needed support for us as Roma in accessing and finding our belonging in educational, cultural spaces.
9. Financial help when enrolled into a higher education programme, Roma Education Fund or bursaries to enable us to tackle the existing inequalities and gaps.
10. To commit into existing pledges that support Roma in education, health and arts.
11. To create a partnership with lived experience communities where we can celebrate through a community calendar our heritage, arts and values that we bring into the society or specific sectors.
12. Remove barriers such a requirements for Diploma, Certificates and recognize lived experience as an alternative or help Roma community to build on the requested certificates( foundation courses).
13. Create in partnership with us a Cultural Roma Studies course which can be studied by Roma and Non Roma to tackle inequalities, lack of representation empowering Roma community to find more educational resources about their own history.
14. Create educational resources, incorporate Roma history and Roma language into your existing courses and make it available to our Roma and non Roma students.
15. Train Roma academic mentors- so that we increase aspirations for attending academic courses or vocational as well as PhD opportunities.



**16.** Train and create Roma health champions, doctors, nurses from the Roma community to support those with language barriers, illiteracy and who need support for their wellbeing.

**17.** Train Roma to become interpreters, teachers, business, sports, doctors, artists and be visually, physically in different sectors where our young people are constantly exposed to through school and in life.

The political representation at the Gathering consisted of school governors coming to listen to the women speak on the day. Staff and the head teacher for the school were also in attendance. Members of the Sheffield City Council, the Department for Education, and senior leadership from the NHS were also invited to the event. Impact of the Gathering is manifold.

Some examples include that the local schools in Sheffield and Coventry are considering producing more accessible resources in Roma language. Coventry University printed books and resources from RTransform and gave these to the various partners and schools that showed an interest in having Roma-friendly and Roma produced materials. Another impact is that the schools have created Parent Councils drop-in sessions which feedback to the governing bodies of those schools.

This allows Roma families to have a direct impact on the schools. Another outcome of the Gathering is that the local medical hospitals and practices are committed to working closely with the schools, families, CFYPF and Coventry University to develop more health education initiatives.

## The impact of the Gatherings at a European level

This was the second time these Gatherings took place in 4 different countries that are part of RTransform project. It is worth highlighting the number of participants that attended in each country was higher compared to the first Gatherings. Most of the participants were concentrated in Spain, which counted with the participation of 230 women in the XXII Roma Women Students Gathering. The number of participants in the rest of the countries was 170.

The fact that the number of participants had increased proves that the Gatherings are a **safe and enhancer space for Roma girls and women, where they can share their concerns and raise their voices together to ask for real changes and also develop real-life solutions.**

In addition to grassroots women and organizations, most of the meetings have had the support of key actors in their respective communities. For example, the Bulgarian Gathering was attended by the vice president of the country, who actively listens to the Roma women's claims. In Spain, Ms Cesca Domènech I Ruera, the General Director of Civic and Community Action of the Catalan Government accompanied the participants on the 2 Gatherings that took place in 2022, and DKM met with other municipal and rectoral authorities following the Gatherings, to share the conclusions of the meetings and make an impact on policy-makers. In Hungary, the Gathering counted on the student coordinator of Roma versitas' presence, who shared information and services to help the girls successfully complete their studies.

From the first to the second Gathering, there has been a diversity of social and political impacts on each country. For example, in Spain, after the Gathering in Ampostà, the network between different Roma communities in Catalonia got stronger and currently DKM is in process of implementing workshops in several schools from Tarragona. Also, the vice-rector of the University of Girona, where the XXII RWSG took place, recognized how important it is for Roma women to symbolically occupy spaces such as the University, and showed interest in getting deeper connections between DKM, the University and Roma women. In Bulgaria, The Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria attended to the 1st National Gathering and all National televisions and medias attended and reported about the Gathering and shared the topics and the problems discussed.

In Greece, the Gathering discussions were very powerful and women from 9 different Roma Communities that are living in totally different contexts came together and discussed about their access to education, their dreams and the challenges they face. Also, the political partners from other Municipalities, representatives of civil society organizations and National Authorities that expressed their intention to be involved in the next Roma Gatherings and even to organize a Gathering in their area.

In United Kingdom, Sheffield, 3 secondary schools attended by a larger number of Roma students have been engaging with the project regularly, community organizations are committed to support and ensure equal Access services to Roma communities, and the NHS health institutions in Sheffield are improving health inequalities and career aspirations for Roma young girls too.

## Conclusions of the Gatherings at a European level

**Access to education.** The Gatherings stressed the importance of promoting quality education and access to information for Roma women who want to continue their education, this need was identified as a common factor.

**Maintain and strengthen the women's network.** The possibility of having common spaces where they can express their needs and share the concerns that they identify as a collective is an opportunity to create alternatives to the problem and learn from the experiences of each participant.

**Inspiring role models.** The possibility of having Roma women who, because of their life's journey, can inspire other women has been a highlight of the Gatherings. It is also a way to motivate participants to share their achievements and identify new personal challenges.

**Active role played by the Romany women** during the whole process of preparation and realization of the meetings. They have been involved in the planning and execution of the gatherings. It has been a complete participation and involvement with the spaces that they have managed.

**Strengthen Roma Women Movement** the Gatherings in each country improve educational expectations and aim to be a platform for the voice of Roma women to be heard.