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## Spanish Gathering Report

### XX Roma Women Student Gathering of Catalonia

Organization in charge of co-implementing the activity: **Romani Association of Women Drom Kotar Mestipen**

Date of the Gathering: **23rd October 2021**

Place: **Tarragona, Spain**

Hosting institution: **Universitat Rovira i Virgili (public university in the city of Tarragona).**

This time was especial, the Student Gathering took place at a university. Traditionally, in Catalonia, the Gathering has been celebrated in education centers such as primary schools or High Schools located in neighborhoods where there is a high presence of Roma people. Educational centers are spaces that are still restricted, in some ways, to Roma women. Even more universities. In 2019, for the first time in Catalonia, the Gathering was successful organized in one of the most historic buildings of the University of Barcelona. That Trobada set a landmark, showing to the Roma community itself, and to mainstream society, that the university spaces “were also our space”. After that precedent, the XX Gathering was organized in Tarragona, at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, making sure that everything was planned and that the impact could be reached.

#### **1- PREPARATION PHASE BEFORE THE GATHERING**

In order to organize and plan the Gathering, a total of 6 meetings were held between staff members of Drom Kotar Mestipen, and the participating women during the period of 5 months.

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Some of these meetings were attended by members of the National Coordination Committee and others were attended by grassroots women who were involved in the organization of the event but who were not part of this committee. Each time, between 2 and 7 women joined these meetings. The meetings were held either in person, in the city of Tarragona, where the Gathering took place, or in a digital or blended format.

These meetings were aimed at organizing the Gathering and deciding on, for example, the following issues: choice of the topic of the main conference, choice of the role models, dissemination of the event, choice of date and place to hold the event, or other issues related to logistic and infrastructure. More information on each of the meetings is given below.

#### **DATES OF THE MEETINGS:**

**Meeting 1.** 16th June 2021

**Meeting 2.** 14th July 2021

**Meeting 3.** 22nd September 2021

**Meeting 4.** 23rd September 2021

**Meeting 5.** 29th September 2021

**Meeting 6.** 7th October 2021

#### **STAFF MEMBERS INVOLVED:**

**Meeting 1.** Maria Cortés, Maripaz Anderson

**Meeting 2.** Maripaz Anderson, Maria Cortés

**Meeting 3.** María Cortés, María Ollé

**Meeting 4.** María Cortés

**Meeting 5.** María Cortés

**Meeting 6.** María Cortés, Ana Pastrana



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**NCC MEMBERS INVOLVED:**

**Meeting 1.** María Alegría Gabarri, Verónica Santiago, Cristina Vázquez

**Meeting 2.** María Alegría Gabarri, Eli Lucena, Cristina Vázquez

**Meeting 3.** Luisa Cortés, Eli Lucena, María Alegría Gabarri, Jelen Amador, Verónica Santiago.

**Meeting 4.** María Alegría Gabarri

**Meeting 5.** None

**Meeting 6.** None

**LOCATIONS:**

**Meeting 1.** online via zoom

**Meeting 2.** online via zoom

**Meeting 3.** online via zoom

**Meeting 4.** Blended modality. Escola Mediterrani (“Mediterrani school”, which is a school in Campclar neighborhood, in Tarragona) and zoom

**Meeting 5.** Escola Mediterrani (Campclar, Tarragona)

**Meeting 6.** Universitat Rovira i Virgili and Mediterrani school

**EVIDENCES**

Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3
Meeting 4	Meeting 5	Meeting 6

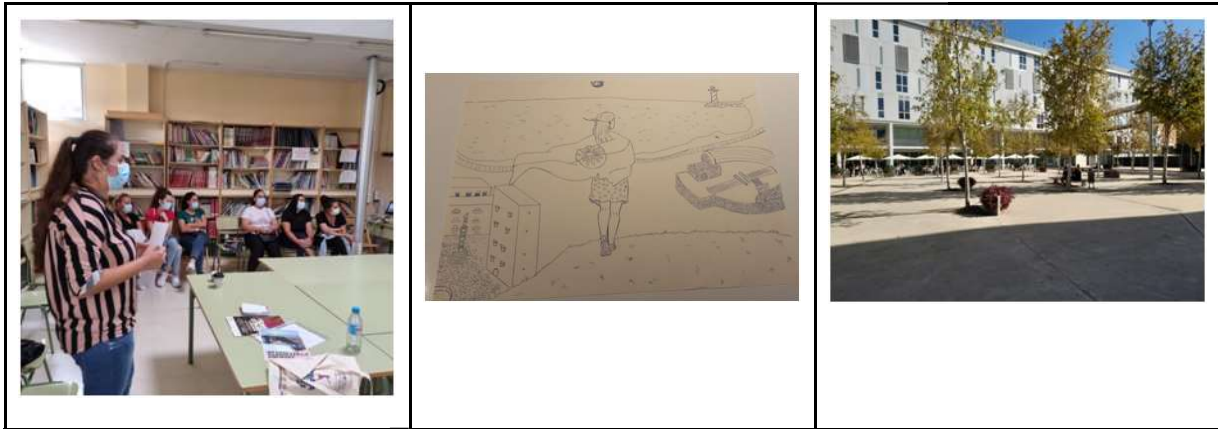
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## ACTION POINTS:

### Meeting 1

- Explaining the Gathering, so that everyone has all the information: what it is, different parts of the Trobada, objectives, experiences of some of those who have already been to one Trobada before. Information on how to participate in the Gathering.
- First contact with the topics that could be the central theme of this Trobada, so women can pass it in their neighborhoods and collect all the concerns of families in the neighborhood, school, etc..

### Meeting 2

- Exposition of the topics that women have collected.
- Proposals for some points such as, poster, dissemination, day of the Trobada, and how to continue with the preparation meetings.

### Meeting 3

- Spanish NCC formation.
- Agreement on next steps to take.

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## Meeting 4

- Face-to-face meeting with the group of women who were proposed to be the motor group. We explain to them all the information about the Trobada and how they can be part of this working group.
- Presentation of all the information gathered in the previous meetings in which not all of them had been. Proposals of poster, topics, dates, dissemination.

## Meeting 5

- Women discuss which is the best drawing for the poster.
- Discussion about which are the best women to be part of the role model table.
- Women talk about the topic chosen and who could make the initial conference.
- Each woman explains within her possibilities in which spaces she would like to be and how she wants to be involved in the Gathering.
- Suggestions on how we are going to reach the women of Tarragona and invite them to the Gathering.
- We also gather information on how to plan the snack, buses and registration.
- Proposals are made of who can take the role of dynamising the working groups.

## Meeting 6

- Visit to the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, to know the place where the Trobada will be held.
- Meeting with Roma women from Tarragona to discuss the main topic for the Trobada.

## NOTES

### Meeting 1

- As a role model it would be great to have a woman who is in politics, since it is necessary to make our involvement visible in this area as well.

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- One of the topics that they consider important is: knowing if her daughter is at the same level as other students of their same age. Some of them are not aware of which is the level required to access post compulsory education.

## Meeting 2

- Women are concerned about the quality of the education their children receive at school,
- Another concern that arises is how the children are going to recover the level they have lost after missing lessons because of Covid lockdown.
- The importance of knowing all academic itineraries to achieve educational success. To know all the grants, possible itineraries and resources for the continuity of the children and the insertion in these itineraries of the women who, at the time, could not continue their education

## Meeting 3

- Presentation of NCC members. All attendants agree to become part of the NCC
- Explanation of the RTransform project.
- Task and responsibilities of NCC members
- Agreement on periodicity of the meeting: one meeting every two months
- Next step to take: NCC training

## Meeting 4

- Of the topics proposed, most of the women think that the one on educational itineraries, grants, and scholarships is the most interesting and important for the families.
- Regarding the poster, they propose a boy and a girl to make proposals of drawings for the poster, which should be ready next week.
- Women make proposals of role models.



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- We talked about the importance of these spaces for all the Roma girls and families, as well as the majority society, to break with the stereotypes and barriers that we, Roma women, find in the different areas of society.

### Meeting 5

We talk about the difficulties that many of them, Roma women, have encountered in the educational and/or work environment, and the importance of having these spaces for the younger ones and to make the Roma women referents visible, so that Roma women can see that they are not alone and that it is never too late to go back to school.

### Meeting 6

The possible main topic that arises for this Trobada is: "My culture does not prevent me from studying. The idea that we want to express is that we as Roma women are already worth it, but if we are also educated we are unstoppable.

## 2- ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION: THE GATHERING

The first thing to keep in mind is that Drom Kotar Mestipen has been organizing this educational activity for over two decades now, and that this was the 20th edition of the Roma Women Student Gathering of Catalonia.

The Gathering was held on Saturday, 23rd October 2021, in the public university of Tarragona "Universitat Rovira i Virgili" from 16.00h to 20.00h CET time and it was attended by almost 200 grassroots Roma women and girls from all over Catalonia. Women from the cities of Tarragona, Tortosa, Reus, different neighborhoods of Barcelona, Girona and Lleida attended the Gathering.

For a better development of the activity, staff members of Drom Kotar Mestipen, and non Roma volunteers were present at the event to undertake technical and organizational tasks. The most relevant parts of the Gathering were, the main conference, the role model table and the working groups:

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**The main conference** title was: “Camí de llibertat: el camí de l’èxit educatiu” which in English means “The road to freedom: the road to educational success”

The conference was delivered by Manuela Fernández, co-founder member of Drom Kotar Mestipen, and Social Educator. The main objective of the conference was to offer reliable, quality and affordable information, to all those present, about the educational pathways that can be followed in Catalonia, and in Spain. Questions such as *What are the steps that I need to follow if I left school being underage? What are the options if I don’t want to take a degree in the university but I want to continue doing a vocational training career? Why is it important early childhood education?* Emerged and were answered by Fernandez. The participant women expressed that this information was very useful to them since, sometimes, in the educational centers, they, or their children, study this information is not provided to them.



Roma women listening to the opening conference at the 20th edition of the Gathering

**The role model table** was composed of 5 Roma women of different ages, profiles and backgrounds, but with one point in common, all of them have reached success on their educational path. This is a brief description of these 5 women.

Mrs. Tatiana Demetrio Díaz, who is currently studying the first year of non compulsory education, in Tarragona, in the neighborhood of Campclar.

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Mrs. Raquel Heredia Gil, who is a Technician in Social Integration and a student of the Degree in Social Education at the Rovira i Virgili University of Tarragona.

Mrs. Laia Cortés Polo, Student of Marine Sciences and Technologies at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia.

Verónica Sánchez Gómez, who is a student of Human Nutrition and Dietetics at the University of Barcelona.

Paqui Cortés Maya, who is currently studying to access university. She wants to study law.



Role model table

These are some of the comments made by the role models during their speeches:

"Studying has opened many doors for me, and I am an example for my nephews and nieces. Now I am working at the Mediterrani school. My presence there motivates the children, because I am a Roma." Raquel Heredia, role model.

"The cultural enrichment that studying gives, I can't get to thank for it". Laia Cortés Polo, role model.

**Working groups:** The participants at the Gathering were divided into working groups to discuss various topics related to education. Each working group was facilitated by a Roma woman, and the notes of each group were taken by a non-Roma volunteer. Later

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on, reference will be made to the document that was drawn up based on the contributions of Roma women during their participation in the working groups.

In addition, it is important to take into account that Roma women were the protagonists throughout the whole activity. Two of them were in charge of presenting the event and giving way to the different parts of the activity. Also, during the coffee break, they were able to exchange ideas, talk relaxedly, and meet other Roma women.

The voices of Roma women have been heard both, during and after the Trobada. These are some of the comments of the participants in the XX Trobada:

“I wanted to continue studying. Through the Trobada I have seen myself with more strength to try to do it.” Roma woman participant of the XX Trobada

“The pride of seeing that we are many Roma women who are studying and achieving success, even those of us with many responsibilities and of different ages.” Roma woman participant of the XX Trobada

### **3- IMPACT OF THE GATHERING**

As pointed out before, approximately 200 grassroots Roma women participated in the Gathering. Five of them were chosen to speak in the role model table about their educational experience. These 5 women, with different profiles, were chosen in order to make visible Roma women have presence in all educational fields, and because these women are an example of how educational success can be reached at any age.

Participants were not only present as listeners in the conference or in the role model table, but also played an active role in the event, asking questions and taking the floor. In addition, in the working groups, the participants took the initiative, and contributed

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ideas for solutions to the problems they and their families are facing. All the contributions made by the grassroots women have been collected in a document of conclusions.

Undoubtedly, this activity is of great importance, both for the Roma community and for society in general. It is for this reason that representatives of the public administration, private organizations and educational centers were present at the event. It is worth mentioning the presence of:

Dr. Misericòrdia Camps Llauredó, Vice Rector of the University Rovira i Virgili of Tarragona, Mrs. Cesca Domènech i Ruera, General Director of Civic and Community Action of the Catalan government, and Mrs. Paula Varas González, Councillor for Citizen Participation, Districts and New Citizenship of Tarragona City Council.

Different social organizations supported the event by helping with organizational tasks or by sharing images and information on their social networks or web pages before and during the event. This is the case of the University Rovira i Virgili (Tarragona), The Roma association “Tumege Kali”, the association “Comunitat Inclusiva DGACC”, the Virtual museum of Roma community in Catalonia, the Roma and Social Innovation Program, and the Roma association “Unión Romani”.

The activity also attracted the attention of different media. Below you can see a compilation of some of the news that were published about the XX Roma Woman Student Gathering of Catalonia.

[DiarioFeminista](#)

[Televisó de Catalunya](#)

[Virtual museum of the Roma community in Catalonia](#)

[Lo Campus Diari](#)

[TAC12 TV](#)

[Tarragona Radio](#)

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## Conclusions of the Gathering:

This text is the final compilation of all the points and topics that were discussed in the working groups, which reflect the demands and aspirations of the women who participated in the activity.

### 1. Information

It is necessary to have more access to information, regarding all educational success itineraries, in order to be able to accompany our children so that we can have our own criteria and not always act only following the advice of the teachers. This information must be provided by the educational centers or by the educational administration and ensure that it reaches all families. We have to decide, having the information is important so that they do not decide for us.

Information must also be disseminated through digital platforms, which are now within the reach of most people. It would be good to create a digital platform where we can search for all the information we need.

### 2. High educational expectations

The teaching staff and the educational community must show more concern for Roma students. They must provide accompaniment and support for Roma students, which is fundamental for educational success.

High expectations on the part of teachers and the educational community are essential.

Studying makes you feel more Roma, empowered and with more opportunities.

No segregation in lower level classrooms. All schools have to have and ensure the highest quality level for all students. We do not want to go to schools outside our neighborhoods to get quality or to be paid more attention, we must ensure quality education for all.

We demand equality in access to work and better training opportunities.

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### **3. Positive Role Models**

We need more referents in schools (teachers, monitors, promoters and Roma students).

### **4. Participation**

Schools must facilitate the participation of all families in the AMPA/AFA (parents' association), school decisions, and in all educational spaces, greater representation and involvement of families in schools.

It is essential that parents support the educational process and that families become involved in the schools, that we become part of them.

### **5. Networks**

It is important to count on the associations to seek help and resources. In this way, we would like to be provided with all the information on grants and scholarships and also to receive support when applying for them.

Families should organize themselves and complain if necessary, but they should not give up. They should be given information about entities or educational support groups that could support them on their educational path.

### **6. Affirmative action**

We complain about the lack of positions in Vocational Training Cycles, baccalaureate and other itineraries, we feel our children are left out. We demand that positions for Roma students are ensured in all education stages. We demand affirmative action in post compulsory education.

We demand more resources, economic and material, from the public administration.



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## 7. Training for teachers

Training and sensitization actions for teachers are necessary. Racism should not be allowed in schools.

Quality training for teachers is necessary.

It is necessary to break stereotypes. Media have a strong power in spreading the reality of our people. The news that the media usually broadcast about Roma people are not representative.

We demand gender-sensitive education to enhance children's development.

The Gathering does not end with the drafting of the conclusions, nor with the dissemination of the activity in social networks and the media. On one hand, this document of conclusions is useful to guide the future working steps of Drom Kotar Mestipen. And on the other hand, it is necessary that the demands contained in the conclusions, which are the genuine expression of the voices of Roma women, are spread throughout the educational community and the public administration, so that real change can happen. With this goal in mind the Drom Kotar Mestipen team has presented these conclusions to schools such as the Institut Montperdut in Terrassa, or to representatives of the public administration, such as Mrs. Cesca Domenech, general director of Civic and Community Action of the Department of Social Rights. Staff members of Drom Kotar Mestipen have also met with Dr. Misericòrdia Camps Llauradó, vice rector of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili.