

REPORT OF THE 2ND GATHERING OF ROMA WOMEN IN GREECE

**RTRANSFORM – Roma Women transforming the educational systems around
Europe through their social and political mobilizations**

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Introduction

Project: RTtransform - Roma women are transforming education systems across Europe through their social and political mobilization

Responsible Organization for the implementation of Dialogue Meetings in Greece:

Alternative Innovative Development (AID), aid.com.gr

Date of Meeting: January 27, 2023

Hours: 16.15 - 20.30

Venue: Second Chance School of Ampelokipi Menemeni, Thessaloniki Greece

The Gathering of Greek Roma women took place at the Second Chance School of Ampelokipi Menemeni in Thessaloniki on Friday, January 27, 2023. In the Gathering attended sixty (60) Roma women from various regions of Greece, such as Thessaloniki, Serres, Larissa, Corinth, Athens from nine different Roma communities.

The aim of the nationwide Gathering of Greek Roma Women was for Roma women and girls to discuss issues related to their education, share experiences, exchange opinions and express their needs.

Specifically, in the 1st Gathering had 22 participants from 6 regions of Greece, while in the 2nd the number of participants tripled to 60 women from 5 regions of Greece – 9 different Roma communities.

The Gathering had a local and regional character in the initial planning, however, the interest of the participation of women from all over Greece, led the organizers to reschedule the action and ensure the participation of as many participants as possible from other areas of Greece. A total of 78 women from various regions of Greece expressed interest in participating. An attempt was made to ensure that all of women who expressed interest will participate, but despite the reschedule of the available funds, it was not possible. For the 3rd Roma Women's Gathering efforts will be made to secure the participation of more participants who express a desire to participate.

The national character of the Roma Women's Gathering and the expression of interest of additional eighteen (18) women to participate from various regions, highlighted the importance of Roma women's Gatherings and the implementation of similar actions focused on Roma women.

The women who participated in their majority were Primary School graduates (or have attended to Primary School) , a smaller percentage had attended or are attending to Secondary School and a small percentage had graduated or were attending Tertiary Education.

The 1/3 of the participants of the Gathering participated for first time in an educational activity focused on Roma women and it was the first time they had the opportunity to travel alone for an educational purpose.

Program of the 2nd Roma Women's Gathering in Greece

- Presentation of Roma women's Gathering as a good practice at event of the General Secretariat of Social Solidarity and Combating Poverty - Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs. Conference title: "ROMAPLATFORM2020- Development of the National Platform for Consultation and Dialogue on Roma issues of the National Contact Point for Roma" (online connection): Fenia Papakonstantinou, Irini Rapou, Eleni Karafyllidou.

Greetings

- Welcome and presentation of results of the 1st Gathering, and the goals and presenting the framework of RTransform project: Papakonstantinou, Fenia
- Welcome and presentation of the program by members of the Organizing Committee of the Dialogue Meetings: Eleni Karafyllidou, Rapou Irini and Souta Sofia
- The Second Chance Schools : Giorgos Geranis, Director of the Second Chance School of Ampelokipi Menemeni
- Greeting representative of the Municipality of Ampelokipi Menemeni, Rousseti Magdalini, Head of the Directorate of Social Protection-Education-Sports-Culture of the Municipality of Ampelokipi - Menemeni

Stories of Roma women

- Back to the school in adulthood, Nektaria M.
- Chasing the University dream, Maria P.
- My decision to attend Second Chance School despite the unsupportive environment, Smaro K.
- Accomplishing my goal of becoming a Hairdresser, Hara S.

Expert talks

- Dr. Angelos Hatzinikolaou, former Director of the 5th Intercultural School of Thessaloniki, coordinator of the literacy courses for Roma to obtain a high school diploma in Thessaloniki
- Ourani Rapti, Expert from AID - Reasons behind the early school leaving of Roma women and girls. She shared the barriers and motivations of Roma girls and women based on her 25 years of experience in the Roma field.

Working groups

The women were divided into three (3) groups. Two discussion moderators were present in each working group.

Plenary session

In the plenary, the women shared the conclusions from the working groups and a fruitful dialogue took place between them.

Gathering closure and celebration.

Evaluation of the 2nd Roma women's Gathering in Greece

The Gathering of Greek Roma women took place at the Second Chance School in Thessaloniki on Friday, January 27, 2023. In the Gathering of Greek Roma women attended sixty (60) Roma women from various regions of Greece, such as Thessaloniki, Serres, Larissa, Corinth, Athens from nine different Roma communities.

At the Gathering of Greek Roma women, expressed interest to participate Roma women from islands and other regions from Greece, which highlights their need for such activities, something that the women themselves emphasized at the 1st Gathering.

The women who participated in their majority were Primary School graduates (or have attended to Primary School) , a smaller percentage had attended or are attending to Secondary School and a small percentage had graduated or were attending Tertiary Education.

The 1/3 of the participants of the Gathering participated for first time in an educational activity focused on Roma women and it was the first time they had the opportunity to travel alone for an educational purpose.

Before the Gathering, the women toured to the Second Chance School building and had the opportunity to get to know each other, exchange information about the reasons that led them to participate in the meeting, as well as their needs. Throughout their stay at the venue there were AID volunteers and members of the Organizing Committee welcoming the women, talking with them and encouraging them to meet and network with Roma women from different regions.

Simultaneously with their stay at the venue, before the official start of the Gathering, a representative of AID with members of the Organizing Committee participated in the event of the General Secretariat of Social Solidarity and Combating Poverty of the Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs, presenting online the Gathering methodology and the RTranaform project as good practice by civil society organizations. The theme of the conference was: "ROMAPLATFORM2020- Development of the National Platform for Consultation and Dialogue on Roma issues of the National Contact Point for Roma". The event was attended by Roma organizations, Roma Federations, local government representatives, Roma experts, Municipal Community Centers and other representatives active in Roma issues etc.

The presentation and the event could also be watched by the women who would participate in the Gathering and a projector had been placed in a central part of the room.

At the official opening of the Gathering, a representative of AID welcomed the participants and explained the project, the objectives of the Dialogue Meetings and the conclusions from the 1st Gathering.

The members of the Organizing Committee took the floor, introduced themselves to the participants and stated their role is, extending an open invitation to other women to participate in the Organizing Committee.

Afterwards, the Director of the Second Chance School (SCC), who hosted the event, took the floor and mentioned the way the SCC's operate, emphasizing the differences they have from the formal education system, while he gave information about the registration period.

A representative of the Municipality of Ampelokipi Menemeni, welcomed the participants and their support in the entire effort to empower Roma women in matters of education. The representative stated

that the Municipality is happy because has managed to have schools of all levels of education in Dendropotamos and underlined the importance of education for a better future.

Then the Roma women, took the floor to share their own life stories and how they managed to fulfill their goals, talking about the motivations, the obstacles they faced and the way they managed to face the challenges.

Nektaria is a graduate of the Second Chance School. Although her family environment was supportive in terms of education and her sister is educated, she was influenced by the stereotype of marriage, married and started a family at an early age. In her adult life, despite the difficulties of being a single parent, she decided to continue school. She found great support and strength from the teachers of the Second Chance School and today she is a member of the Association of Parents and Guardians and School Mediator.

Maria is 19 years old and is a candidate for the Panhellenic exams for second time. She comes from a poor family and gives her own struggle to achieve her goals by reading, as she wants to become a Policewoman. She wants to fight crime of all kinds, as she says, she grew up in an area with crime and delinquent behaviors.

Smaro is a graduate of the Second Chance School (SCC). She wanted to continue her education, but many reasons led her to drop out of school. After having a family and having two children, she decided to fulfill her wish and enroll in the SCC, despite the lack of support and the objections of the family environment.

Hara had a dream of becoming a hairdresser. She studied at Vocational School with the goal of finishing hairdressing and opening her own salon. She was one of the first to deal with hairdressing in her area and was heavily criticized at first. In her later career, her goal became to help her community and especially the children's school attendance. She managed to get the certification of the School Mediator and now works in the program for the inclusion of Roma children in the schools of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

After the speeches, the experts took the floor turning the discussion to the right to education. They pointed out that the reasons for school dropouts are often linked to the lack of infrastructure and poor living conditions, calling for measures by the state, while adding that it is also the family's responsibility to send children to school. They encouraged women to choose their own dreams and find the corresponding paths that will lead them to their fulfillment, stressing the importance of education. In addition, through their speeches, they provided information on how to enroll in literacy courses to obtain a Primary School diploma and the co-housing of a Center for Creative Employment of Children and a Second Chance School as a measure to facilitate the study of women in SCC.

Specifically:

Dr. Angelos Hatzinikolaou: He shared with the women his 15 years of experience in supporting Roma communities as an educator. He emphasized that education is the right of each and every Roma and promises a better tomorrow for all the children of the world. He pointed out that the school also has responsibilities and that it is the teacher's duty to keep the children in school. He referred to the distorted perception that the Roma do not want education, stressing that many times other factors push them not to continue school, such as poor living conditions. He then referred to the literacy courses he offers to Roma with the aim of obtaining a primary school diploma, from which 135 people had graduated by 2020. Finally, he emphasized that delinquency is not an inherent characteristic, but something that is

constructed by people and that they themselves they should not feel that it characterizes the Roma culture.

Ourania Rapti: In her speech she emphasized that education is both a right and an obligation of the State and of the Roma families themselves. The older generations (grandma, mom) married at a young age, however if it doesn't express them now, it's an opportunity to change. She referred to the school as the mean that will provide more knowledge and positive examples, while she continued emphasizing that every woman has the right to choose her dreams. In the end, she referred to any obstacles that Roma women may face in caring for children and highlighted as a solution by giving the example of the operation of Center for Creative Employment of the Lighthouse of the World NGO, which operates in the same building as the Second Chance School, so women can attend lessons, while their children are participating in educational activities.

In the second half of the Gathering, the women were divided into three groups. The separation of the groups was shaped during the registration of women at the beginning of the Gathering and emphasis was given dividing the women from the same regions. The coordination of the discussions of the working groups was undertaken by two coordinators in each group. The Community Center of the Municipality of Pavlos Melas, in order to help the women's discussion to share experiences in specific fields, had provided its own produced educational material. The coordinator's were trained of on its use by the Educator and the Mediator of the Community Center before the Gathering in the preparation phase.

During the working groups, the women shared their own life stories, their concerns, discussed what they themselves should do to fulfill their goals and needs. They encouraged each other and exchanged views on how they themselves deal with challenges and discussed on what they need to change in order to have a brighter future.

Below are some the statements of Roma women discussions in the working groups and conclusions:

From the discussions that took place, it emerged that women **recognize the value of education and the benefits it offers**. An important factor in their educational path was the **supportive family environment**. The women also emphasized that they want a better future for their children and this motivates them to continue their education.

"Luckily my husband allowed me to go to night school. I wanted to continue, but I stopped. My son and I graduated high school together. ..Let's motivate our children to read and go to school. School opens your mind. I have worked as a maid, I am expecting for something better for my children"

"Very few people were educated in my family. Nevertheless, I and my brothers were under pressure, too much pressure to study but not to simply finish high school. Study in the University. However, the fact that I finished high school and went to a private school did not satisfy my parents. They wanted me to go to University. Both my parents were illiterate"

"When I was child, I hang out of the windows in the schools to see what they write in the schools. I want my granddaughters to win the time, as long as I live I will support them! I will not marry my little girls (granddaughters), because they must see further than what I saw..."

"As long as our parents don't do it to us. Let's do it to our children!"

"My teachers and mother still keep telling me to keep going and not to give up. Whatever difficulties I face in front of me to overcome it in any way. I don't want to be left behind like some other Roma. I

want to finish school. I have set my goal to finish school and I want to become something in my life. I don't want to get married, have children. After a certain age"

"My father supported me. As soon as I came home from school, he made me read my lessons, but then he engaged me"

"In our house it was an inviolable law to go to school. My father was pushing us to learn."

"I wanted to continue school because of my father, he loved school very much. He taught himself to read while working in a grocery store. He loved school so much that I thought he had gone to school."

Many older women reported that they did not finish school because they had to **work and support the family business, but also because of seasonal work or increased professional needs of their families.**

"I wanted to go to school like the other children, but my dad wouldn't let me. Why shouldn't I go? We own animals, answered my father. We worked all together from an early age and we were 8 brothers. We had to help with everything."

"I didn't go to school because we were on business. Workers"

In their majority, **older women had a family at a young age or did not have a supportive family environment and this was a reason for their school dropout.**

"In the past, even if the daughter didn't want to get married, she had no choice, the father talked for her. Whoever had the most horses was the best choice to marry"

"I got married in early age, I didn't finish school. I wanted to go to school, but my parents married me"

"I am neither a Gypsy nor a Romni. I'm Metskara. We were renting a house, I stopped on 2nd class of Gymnasium, because my dad saw that the other kids weren't going to school and he told me you won't go either. When I was 14, I fell in love with my partner and wanted to get married and have children, just like everyone else."

"I went to elementary school. I grew up with my grandmother, my parents were divorced. School was far and she was afraid to send me to school. She was afraid... I didn't chase it then either."

"At that time our parents wouldn't let us. They did not know. They were wrong... and today we continue to do mistakes. Children marry early"

"I went to school until I was 12... Then I got married. I didn't want to, but a boy came and my mother married me because she was afraid of theft (run away with someone without the approval of the family). It's hard to finish school today"

However, **other younger women noted that early marriage is progressing in several areas and is not an issue anymore.** Nowadays they and they can choose their partners. **Other women, however, indicated that they often have no choice.** Even now (perhaps to a greater percentage) they are somehow "forced" to marry early and drop out of school due to increased social pressures, and in some cases reported that if they refuse marriage, their family is threatened or its main assets (business they run, residence).

"There is progress. Now you can choose who to marry."

"I stopped my daughter from school. She didn't go to school, I was afraid of running away with someone. You know... Whether you like it or not, they will get marry. Instead marrying her (far away), let's marry her somewhere near.. There is a lot going on... They tell you either you will marry the girl or you will give us your the house".

In other discussions, it emerged that many times the **school environment is decisive for the continuation of education and affects the schooling of Roma girls and boys, acting sometimes as a motivation and sometimes as an obstacle.** There were cases of women where even if they themselves wanted to continue, the school environment was hostile and they experienced discrimination, and they report that in some cases even their children nowadays experience the same.

"I loved and still love and will love school. I finished elementary school in a ghetto school, with only Roma students. In high school it was difficult to adjust. I didn't like the fact that the teachers didn't like me, They didn't help us at all, although they knew that we are Roma, so we are behind in school performance. I was a good student, I knew the answers...but the teachers never gave me the chance to speak in the class. And I was bullied by the children... unlike Primary School, where the teachers offered us love! My friends stopped school during the year, so did I. I registered again the 2nd year, alone, without my Roma friends. I couldn't stand it, I couldn't take it anymore. After being encouraged by my aunt, I went to enroll in the Second Chance School.. I couldn't because I was a minor. The director's acceptance and love motivated me to wait one year until I become 18, it gave me strength to try again. Today I am attending to school and I want to become a Social Worker. I receive love from my teachers"

"One of the biggest difficulties a Roma child faces at school is bullying. I in particular have received both physical and verbal violence because of (my) origin. In the school I was the only Roma child. This starts from the prejudices that exist. People are very afraid of the foreigner and think that it is bad. And they don't get into the process of getting to know it at all"

"Many times it happened that kids didn't want to hang out with me at school because I was a little different. My color. I didn't know how to speak Greek well when I was younger. I have also been verbally bullied at school. They called me "Gypsy". I didn't stay that way, of course. I went and told them I don't want to be called that. I may be, but they can also call me Tsiggana or Roma. Because this word for me is offensive, let's say. To be called "Gypsy", and not Tsiggana or Roma. I want to show how proud I am. I have also happened to wear a skirt to school. Some kids looked at me strangely, of course. But the teachers didn't say anything. They were happy to see me in the skirt"

"Another obstacle to note is that Roma children also face obstacles from teachers. Many times...because they discourage them with their attitude. For example, every year I would have to face 2-3 teachers and I should prove them wrong and that I am just a kid who goes to school. But this obstacle never discouraged me. It almost made me stubborn to get them wrong and I succeeded"

"I found support from the teachers of the Second Chance School. They helped me finish school."

It is important to point out that in relation to school, the women pointed out that the **issue of language is an obstacle.**

"When you don't know the language, you feel like you're something other than what you've been put in (meaning section at school). I am a foreign part. Very hard to adjust. And it is the most difficult thing for a child to intergrade in education and participate"

In several cases, Roma **women feel criticized by the wider community when they make some choices that deviate from those of their social environment.**

"We can also accept bullying from our own community because as you know the Roma are many years behind and I don't believe they will progress. Because when I speak and I want to do something and I speak to them in Greek, they bully me. That I am like a Greek woman and many other things that discourage me...I feel that I am between two worlds"

"A large percentage of Roma still consider that women especially Roma who go to school are not worthy and that they are doing something bad that goes against their principles and values. And in tradition"

"They would say she goes to school for other things and not because she wants to pursue her dream. They would see it negatively. Because that's how it is for us. Why do they think that as soon as they turn 11 they want to marry. And they would see it as negative for you to continue school"

"Everyone will start talking and then there will be negativity in the basic environment within the home and family. Because we live in a patriarchal society. There are families and cultures that are negative with women's independence. There is only the basic role, which is the woman to function as a tool of the house. While the man manages all the situations and initiatives that a woman has no opinion on. The patriarchal community establishes this. The woman is for the house work"

The women also mentioned **the difficulty they face to help their children with homework and** underlined that it would be **beneficial for them to know more in order to help their children.**

"I have a 9-year-old daughter and I've been single for 8 years. I have a job and I am independent. I don't want anyone commandeering my wallet. I'm glad my daughter goes to school and loves it. She knows more things than I do. I'm ashamed in front of her that I don't know geography and things she knows, but I'm proud of her..! I want to help her, go somewhere and learn"

"I want to be able to help the child at home. He has work to do and I can't help him."

They emphasized that they **face financial difficulties due to not** finding a job and that they themselves **wish to continue their education motivated by their professional rehabilitation and their personal autonomy and happiness.**

"I worked for 6 years at the Municipality and they fired me because I didn't have the Certificate of Gymnasium – Secondary Education. Even now I want my old job, cleaning the trash! I sweep the whole neighborhood by myself. I want a job, I can do all jobs."

"Who is happy?" The man goes out of the house and the woman is inside the house. I'm not going anywhere. Is this happiness? I ask him for money and he says I don't have any. If I had a job and knew how to write, I would have money"

"I got married young, I gave birth at 13.5. I have three children. I want to work... I have an (unemployment) card for 13 years"

"I also want to finish high school so that I have something to do with my life afterwards. And not to marry young, because I don't want. Because I want to have my own job"

The discussions that took place highlighted the fact that **they do not have access to information and how to continue school, and they found the prospect of continuing their education at the Second Chance School particularly interesting.**

"I just heard about this school. I didn't know, we don't know. I go to Unemployment Agency (OAED) to look for a job. Now that I know about the school, I have to go. With 3 children, I have to find a job to afford living"

Women agreed that as women they should decide for themselves by having a more dynamic presence and gave courage to each other and motivation.

"I can't have someone keep me as a maid, come home and give me money. I have my wallet, my dreams... Today the difficulties made me stronger. I can decide for myself"

"Don't hesitate girls! Take the decision to go to school. Life is not all about housework. I was working and going to school. To my older daughter, I didn't force her to take care of the younger one, I let her do her own activities. Volleyball, walks... and I used to go to Second Chance School and the same time I was taking my younger daughter to Creative Child Care Center, so I could attend the school"

"I have to say to older women who love education, learn the basics, don't be shy. One does not need to become a doctor, to learn read regardless of age. I'm in high school, but I want to continue with my education."

The 2nd Gathering ended with all women agreeing that **education is a way to improve their lives and give hope and a better life to their children. They themselves wish to become the "lighthouses" to change the communities and to combat stereotypes such as that of early marriages.** They expressed their **positive feelings about the event** as they had the opportunity to meet and talk with Roma women who share the same concerns and to share their concerns and exchange information. **All the women are engaged and looking forward to the next** Gathering due in the summer and stressed the importance of the **value of being with other women at such women's only events.**

"School is love, when you get to know the knowledge you create a relationship that no matter how many times you leave you want to return to it. Chase your dream. The meaning of life is not inside the 4 walls"

"Because our dreams must be above all. And not the dreams of others. Because we won't be happy"

"Seize your dreams and age doesn't matter. We are women and women can do anything."

"Happiness means taking life into our own hands, chasing to find happiness and become independent"

"You are happy when you are loved, accepted, literate, independent and go to school to pursue your dreams!"

"Those who have value and respect their will within will look to escape from this. Our mothers did not have the chance from their mothers. They had to go to work, bring money, collect wood, cook. Their lives ended there. "Come on, I'll take you." "11 years old, you will marry". The case is over. But life goes on. Have your values. Your children, even yourselves to move forward... If you learn the knowledge, the whole world will open to you doubly. You will know how to distinguish white from black... Take your children out of the dark. Give them a light.... To work. To study. To become masters of themselves"

Conclusions of the 2nd Gathering of Roma women in Greece

The 2nd Gathering of Roma women took place in Thessaloniki on January 27, 2023 at the Second Chance School of Ampelokipi Menemeni. The holding of the Gathering at the Second Chance School had a symbolic character and aimed to bring the women in contact with the school environment and respectively to provide them with information on the way the Second Chance School operates, since it is exclusively addressed to adults and the nature of education is not the same as the formal system, but more flexible.

In the Gathering of Roma women, a total of 78 women from all over Greece (including islands and distance areas) expressed interest in participating, which highlights the need for the Gathering to have a national character, but also to carry out similar activities focusing on Roma women, something that the women themselves had emphasized at the 1st Gathering. Important is the fact that since the 1st Gathering, the number of participants has tripled (22 participants in the 1st Gathering and 60 participants in the 2nd Gathering).

The selection of 60 participants was made on the basis of ensuring the participation of women who would participate in a similar activity for the first time, while emphasis was equally given on the selecting Roma women from areas where they face challenges and actions are not often organized for women. Particularly encouraging was the fact that even three days before the event there was interest from women from all over Greece to participate in the Gathering, however their participation was not possible due to unavailable funds, as adjustments had already been made for women's travel and accommodation from other areas.

To disseminate the Gathering, all available means were used (social networks, invitation to people from the existing network, groups on Roma issues, institutional bodies, Community Centers, Council of Europe, etc.) and educational workshops and meetings with women were held before the holding of the 2nd Gathering (see more: Evaluation of preparations for the 2nd Gathering of Roma women in Greece). Many representatives of formal institutions and stakeholders expressed their willingness to attend the event, however they couldn't because the Ministry was also holding this important event in Athens.

As a good practice for mobilizing women to participate and mostly women that haven't participated in other educational activities turned out to be the conduction of meetings and educational workshops with people from Roma communities and the practice of creating groups of women and ensuring accompanying persons (Mediators or Community Centers workers). The accompanying persons were Roma mediators and teachers (as in the case of the Pavlos Melas Community Center and the Municipality of Fili), while in other cases the accompanying persons was men (1-2 per group) where they were Roma mediators or Presidents of associations. The men were aware that they would not participate in the Gathering and will remain outside the event.

The women who participated in their majority were Primary School graduates, a smaller percentage attended or are attending Secondary School and a small percentage was graduates or were attending Tertiary Education.

The 1/3 of the participants participated for the first time in an educational activity focused on Roma women and it was the first time they had the opportunity to travel alone for an educational purpose.

The main conclusions of the Gathering, confirm several of the conclusions of the 1st Gathering. Roma women recognize the value of education and the benefits it offers. Many of them were not aware of the existence of educational structures that could continue their education (Second Chance Schools, Vocational High Schools, Night Schools) and expressed interest in enrolling in the following year. **The lack of information is considered a significant obstacle for women's participation in education and public life.**

Most of the women **expressed their positive attitude towards education and today they actually motivate their children to go to school and try to be good students.** However, **they also wish to be able to help their children.**

Regarding the context in which education is provided in schools, several cases of **discrimination or inequality were mentioned**, a factor that contributed to the drop out of women from school, while correspondingly **the supportive environment of the school from the teachers' point of view emerged as a motivation to continue education.** In some cases the women reported that due to the support of the teachers and the **positive school climate they managed to complete their studies.** It was additionally reported that **teachers' and students' ignorance of Roma culture, prejudices and stereotypes create a more hostile environment and an additional challenge for Roma students.** In some cases it was even reported that because they are Roma **the level of education provided is not appropriate and teachers have lower expectations, which works against student achievements.** It was also pointed out that **language is a key obstacle** to the inclusion of Roma children and their adaptation to school.

Regarding **early marriage as the main factor in school dropout, the data were different by region.** The older women mentioned that in the past there was no choice and they were driven into marriage, however they agreed with the **younger that today this phenomenon has disappeared and there is the option not to marry, so to continue school if they want.** The reality in other areas is different **and girls do not continue to Secondary education because they are married at an early age,** while it was reported that in some cases the marriage takes place under the fear of losing part of their property.

The Roma women wish to work because they face financial difficulties, while most of them claimed that they would accept any kind of job offered to them. **They themselves see education as the means that will be able to improve their economical problems and professional status, however, they mentioned cases where even if they have qualifications, because of being Roma, they are not offered jobs.**

Furthermore, **it was emphasized that education is a way for them to become independent, more complete as personalities and to change their lives by escaping from housework.** They want the respect and appreciation of other family members, but also the possibility to choose for themselves.

Women reported that **they want to be more active and have a public say and participate in activities that concern their community.** Activities that focus exclusively on women and their needs are important to help themselves and their communities, and they noted that networking with other Roma women gives them courage and a new perspective.

Finally, it is noteworthy that 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 of 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

Evaluation of preparations for the 2nd Dialogue Meeting of Roma women in Greece

For the bureaucratic procedures and coordination of the 2nd Dialogue Meeting of Roma women in Greece, the team and members of AID were responsible for organizing it, in cooperation with the members of the Organising Committee. The Organizing Committee consisted of nine members in total, six (6) Roma women and two (2) members of AID and one (1) representative of the Municipality of Ampelokipi Menemeni. The Organising Committee was formed in the 1st Gathering and is the same until now.

The Roma women who participated were very active throughout the process and effectively participated in organization of the Gathering, while they took a leading role in the process. The contribution and presence of the representative from the Municipality of Ampelokipi Menemeni in the Committee was also important, as questions about procedural issues could be resolved immediately and there was support and substantial participation in the entire event.

For the organization of the 2nd Gathering, the Organizing Committee started to meet systematically from October 2022. A total of 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 meetings of the Organizing Committee were mainly held online (Google meet, Messenger) and aimed at organizing and coordinating the actions for the 2nd Gathering of Roma women in Greece. The average duration of the meetings were 2 hours per meeting or more. The topics that were discussed by the Organizing Committee and taken decisions are:

- Preparation of promotional material (brochures, applications, banners, invitations, etc.)
- Selection of the date and place of the Gathering
- Identification of needs and common thematic areas that concern Roma women today in terms of education
- Finding suitable speakers based on the identified topics
- 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

For the participation of Roma women in the 2nd Gathering, coordinated actions were taken to disseminate the event and the preparation started 4 months before the implementation of the event. The main dissemination activities were coordinated by AID in collaboration with the Organizing Committee and during each of their meetings, the issue of women's participation was discussed.

The dissemination actions that took place were the following: informing the existing network of Roma women who participated in other activities of AID and contact the network of the members of the

Organizing Committee, informing the Vice-President of the Association of Roma Mediators and sending an invitation to Roma Mediators in Greece, contacting staff from various Roma Community Centers with the aim of creating groups of women who would like to participate, posting posters, invitation of the event in groups on Social Networks concerning Roma, on the website and social networks of AID, on the website of the Municipality of Ampelokipi Menemeni and the Second Chance School, sending an invitation to the General Secretariat of Social Solidarity and Combating Poverty, EETAA, Council of Europe and other institutional bodies. Accordingly, AID aimed at mobilizing women had conducted training workshops and worked closely with representatives of Roma communities and Roma women.

In addition, before the 2nd Dialogic Meeting, there was a Multiplier event organized by the Municipality of Ampelokipi Menemeni who is also partner of the project and an educational workshop that helped to disseminate the Gathering and engage more audience also also disseminate the RTransform project.

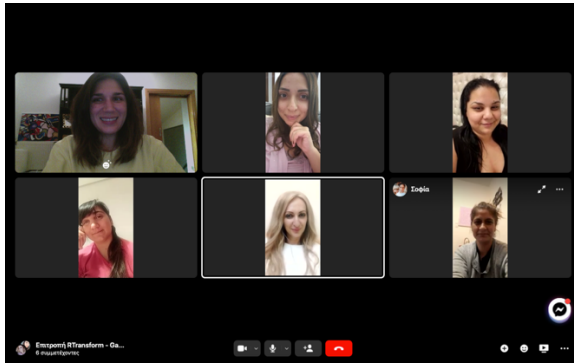
The cooperation with the Second Chance School of Ampelokipi Menemeni and the director was very constructive and the foundations were set for the implementation of more activities. Before the Gathering, a member of AID together with a member of the Organizing Committee visited the venue, recorded the necessary equipment that was required to be bring for the Gathering and checked the suitability of the rooms for the activities.

For the children's activities, provision had been made for them to spent their time at the Center for Creative Activities for children of the Faros tou Kosmou (an organization that focuses on the education and support of Roma children by offering a variety of services). The Child Care Creative Center was functioning in the upper floor of the venue of the Gathering, same building of Second Chance School. So children could actually move and visit also their mothers and go back to the educational center. One volunteer from AID was accompanying the children every time.

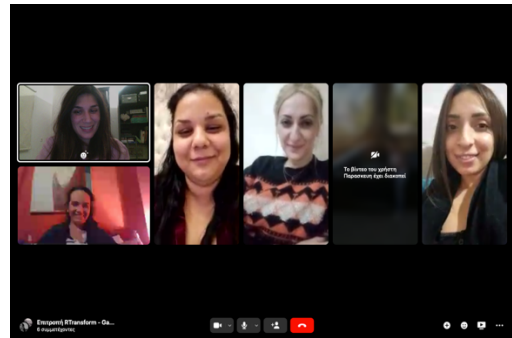
Before the Gathering, the women toured to the building of the Second Chance School and had the opportunity to get to know each other, exchanging information about the reasons that wanted to participate in the event, as well as their needs. The members of the Organizing Committee (Roma women) and the AID volunteers played an active role in the welcome, while it must be emphasized that the contribution of the Organizing Committee was a valuable help for the successful outcome of the Gathering.

Photo material of Organizing Committee meetings:

1st Committee Meeting - 31/10/22



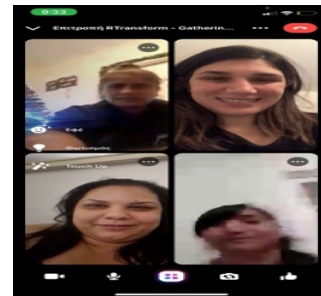
2nd Committee Meeting - 22/11/22



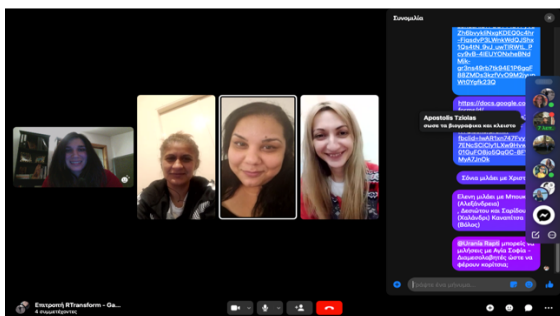
3rd Committee Meeting - 5/12/22



4th Committee Meeting - 8/12/22



5th Committee Meeting - 10/1/23

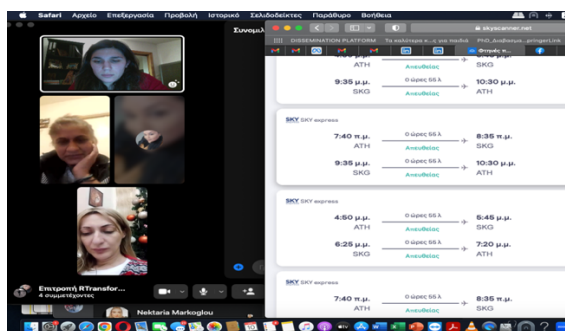


6th Committee Meeting - 16/1/23



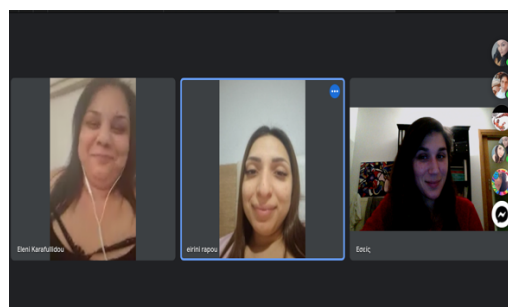
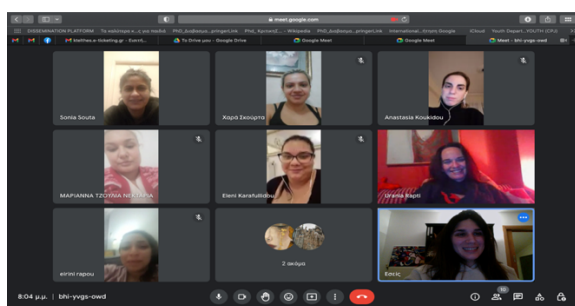
7th Committee Meeting - 22/1/23

8th Committee Meeting - 23/1/23



9th Committee Meeting - 24/1/23

10th Committee Meeting 26/1/23



For the 2nd Gathering of Roma women in Greece we specially thank:

- All the Roma women who honored us with their presence
- The members of the Organizing Committee for their valuable contribution
- The Municipality of Ampelokipi Menemeni and especially the contribution of the Mediator Elena Karafullidou for the active participation in the Organizing Committee and the coordination of the 2nd Gathering
- The Second Chance School of Ampelokipi Menemeni and the director Giorgio Gerani.
- The Community Center of the Municipality of Pavlos Mela for the provision of educational material for the discussion groups and the accompaniment of the women by the Teacher, Anastasia Koukkidou and the Mediator, Irini Rapou, who was an active member of the Organizing Committee
- The Community Center of the Municipality of Fylis for the participation of Mediator, Panagiota Tzamali and the accompanying of Roma women
- The Children's Creative Center of Faros tou Kosmou NGO