



RTransform

2023

FINAL CONFERENCE REPORT

“Roma women leaders of change”.

EUROPEAN PROJECT RTRANSFORM



Coordinated by:



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



Amrita



Amalipe



Ambedkár
Gimnázium



CYPF



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Drets Socials



Co-funded by the
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PROGRAM

11.00 - 11.25 - Opening - Welcome

Diana Riba i Giner, Member of the European Parliament, Spain

Rosemary Kostic Cisneros, PHD in Sociology. Drom Kotar Mestipen Association President, Spain

11.25 - 12.00 - Panel 1: Roma Women Students Gatherings as transformational tool

Raquel Heredia Gil, Social Educator. Drom Kotar Mestipen participant, Spain

Ibolya Wenczler, Amrita OBK Association participant, Hungary

Lorena Vanda Imre, Amrita OBK Association, participant, Hungary

Chara Skourta, Alternative Innovative Development participant, Greece

Hany Hersh Mohamad, Care for young people's future participant, United Kingdom

12.00 - 12.35 - Panel 2: Social and political impact

Andrea Khalfaoui Larrañaga, PHD in Education, researcher at Deusto University and Drom Kotar Mestipen board member, Spain

Veronika Wenczler, Ambedkár Gimnázium participant, Hungary

Janos Orsós, Coordinator at Ambedkár Gimnázium, Hungary

Terezia Rostas, Coordinator at Care for young people's future, United Kingdom

Mira Kirilova, Amalipe Center, participant, Bulgaria

Teodora Krumova, Coordinator at Amalipe Center, Bulgaria

Elena Karafyllidou, Member of the National Coordination Committee, member AID participant, Greece

Vasiliki Vatali, representative of Municipality of Ampelokipi Menemeni - Community Center with Roma branch, Greece

12.35 - 13:00 - Closing Remarks

Manuela Fernandez Ruiz, Director at Equality and Non-Discrimination Office. Generalitat de Catalunya

Maria Alegria Gabarri, Drom Kotar Mestipen participant, Spain

INTRODUCTION

For more than 20 years, the Roma Women Students' Gatherings of Catalonia have been the result of the motivations, expectations and desire to improve of many Roma women, who have managed to achieve transformations by identifying the educational barriers that exist in their contexts, as well as the possible solutions to overcome them based on scientific evidence of impact.

With the support of the Drom Kotar Mestipen Association, the "Trobadas" promote a space that is dynamic and led exclusively by Roma women, with the aim of strengthening it year after year. Today, through the RTransform project, the Meetings of Roma Women have been extended at European level to countries such as Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria and the United Kingdom.

The meeting spaces are different from others because of their methodology, which among other characteristics prioritises that the participants are grassroots women. At the same time, the dialogical methodology always prevails in the contents and conclusions.

The RTransform Project has been conceived as a response to the strength of this movement of Roma women, adolescents and girls that seeks changes in educational and social inclusion, the promotion of equality, intergenerational dialogue and empowerment.



OPENING TABLE

In this first space, **Diana Riba i Giner** MEP and Rosemary Kostic Cisneros, the president of the **Drom Kotar Mestipen Association** thanked the attendees.

They began the conference by highlighting the beginnings of the Gatherings of Roma Women and the lessons that the project has learned in the three years of implementation.



Above all, the transfer of a methodology to other contexts, with confidence in solid and proven experiences based on successful educational educations.

Diana Riba MEP shared some sentences highlighting the impact of the RTransform project:



Diana Riba i Giner, Catalonia, Spain.

"This programme has succeeded not only in inspiring individual change but also in generating collective dynamics that have spread internationally"

"The multiplier effect of RTransform is an unstoppable force that demonstrates the power of community".

Through the Drom Kotar Mestipen Association, Catalonia has courageously led the way by organising International Roma Women's Congresses and by promoting the Roma Students' Meetings.

"The European Parliament has the privilege of opening the doors to the voices of grassroots Roma women who have been silenced for so long and have no space to raise their voices.

"At the heart of RTransform is the idea that dialogue and reflection are powerful tools to overcome the educational and social barriers encountered by Roma women and girls".

For her part, **Rosemary Kostic Cisneros** emphasised one of the aims of RTransform: to bring together Roma women from the grassroots and politicians with the power to make decisions and promote the changes that the project wants.

"Since the beginning of the project, each of the partners knew that this was an opportunity to learn from each other and also to share our knowledge and experience to build together".



Rosemary Kostic Cisneros, United Kingdom

"Every action of the Drom Kotar Mestipen is based on scientific evidence, they are not ideas, they are proven, they are methodologies that we already know work, such as the Roma Women Students' Gathering".

"All the Gatherings follow a pattern, but Roma women and girls are actively involved in the planning of the different events. The meetings are organised by and for Roma women".

"The conclusions of the meetings are built together with grassroots women to decide which policy recommendations should be transferred".

"It is a space to think collectively about transformations in education, to celebrate Roma culture in educational contexts, and to allow us to think that if I want to be a doctor or a scientist, I can do it! Even if they tell me that a Roma woman can't or shouldn't be in those educational spaces".

PANEL 1

Roma Women Students' Gatherings as a tool for transformation



Raquel Heredia Gil, Spain. **Ibolya Wenczler**, Hungary. **Lorena Vanda Imre**, Hungary. **Chara Skourta**, Greece. **Hany Hersh Mohamad**, United Kingdom.

During this panel, women participants explain how the Roma Women Students' Gatherings have allowed the creation of spaces for transformation in various countries such as Spain, Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria and the United Kingdom.

"The Trobadas for me are a space in which I can motivate myself to continue ... they gave me a space where I didn't see myself as the odd one... it helped me to motivate myself because if I saw someone with a master's degree or a PHD I asked myself: Why couldn't I do it?"

"This year at the last Trobada I was able to announce in front of many women that I achieved another goal because I graduated from university as a Social Educator and my next goal is to do my Master's degree."

Raquel Heredia, 26 years. Spain.

"When a woman changes, she changes the fabric of her whole life and the structure of her family. This is the power of community, of interaction and of Roma women. In the Gatherings we share our stories, free ourselves from assigned roles and imagine ourselves in new positions.

Chara Skourta, 32 years. Greece.



Ibolya Wenczler, 36 years. Hungary.

"During the project we were able to meet many Roma girls and mothers who shared the same problems, such as the separation of children from their families due to poverty and poor living conditions.

Through the project we were able to bring families closer to professionals such as paediatricians to answer direct questions about childcare and improving their quality of life"

During this first panel, there was also the opportunity to listen to the new generations, who explained the changes they have experienced in their environment through their participation in the RTransform Project:

"Even though I am 11 years old, I feel big and dream big. The Gatherings empowered women in the community by bringing together our strengths and challenging us to do better.

I believe that having inspiring role models like my mother, my grandmother and other Roma women does not make me feel alone.



They believe in me and I believe in them. Opre Roma! **"Hany Hersh Mohamad. 11 years. Slovakia.**

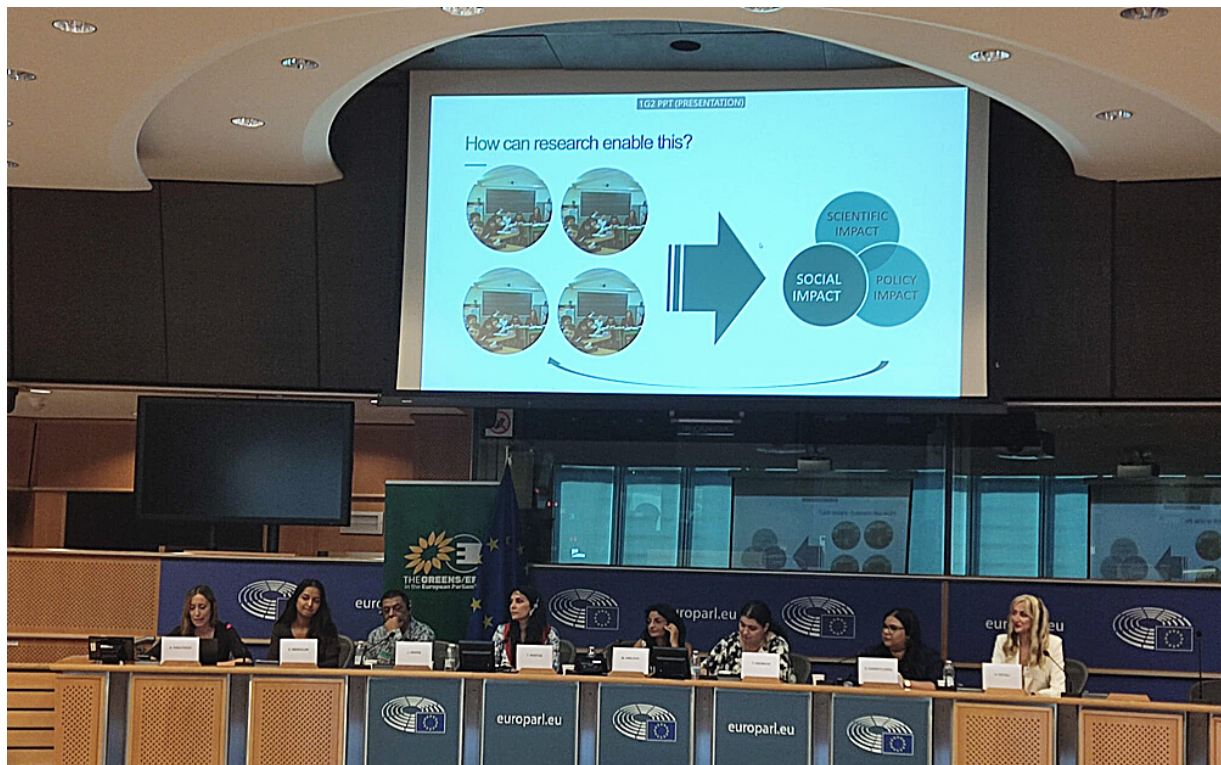


"I will talk about my schools, I am in 6th grade and I have been in schools where Roma students only see 3 classes a day, no high standards, no failing grades because if too many did the school would close. You can also see how the receptionist or the sports teacher taught maths or grammar. being in this project allowed us as students to detect these problems, think of solutions to propose and improve our educational path".

Lorena Vanda Imre, 12 years. Hungary

PANEL 2

Social and Political Impact



Andrea Khalfaoui Larrañaga, Spain. **Veronika Wenczler** and **Janos Orsós**, Hungary
Terezia Rostas, United Kingdom. **Mira Kirilova** and **Teodora Krumova**, Bulgaria.
Elena Karafyllidou and **Vasiliki Vatali**, Greece.

During this panel, women participants and political partners of the project share their experience on the social and political impact in the context of their countries. In addition, the first part explains the methodology used in the Roma Women Students' Gatherings and how research is the basis of the results and impacts.

The research has advanced by prioritising open and honest dialogues between Roma women and stakeholders The communicative methodology is rooted in constant interaction, in multiple opportunities to talk together, to reflect together, to take everyone's ideas and arguments to build useful knowledge, and recognises that this is impossible to achieve if OUR voices are not taken into account....".

Andrea Khalfaoui Larrañaga, 30 years. Spain.



“...I recently moved from Hungary to Austria and had to take some academic and language exams. it was very difficult for me to understand the languages, but with the help of my family and teachers I was able to overcome and move forward.

...So, what I want to say after this experience is that you don't always have to be the best, but we have a

strength as Roma women, which perhaps we don't see here today, but we know that we can go very far and in the future this room could be full of more Romany women discussing important issues. That is my dream”.

Veronika Wenczler, 18 years Hungary

One of the greatest strengths of this programme that I have been part of, that it is the people, the women who are part of their own history, their own lives, who are the ones who are formulating the decisions for policy makers.

I became responsible for the education of the Roma political activism programme in Hungary, and I incorporate



the recommendations from the topics discussed at the meetings into the development of the programme, which was then submitted to the political parties. And these parties decided to make our strategy part of their party policy.

One of the social impact of the programme was the removal of Roma children from their families on the basis of poverty. As a result, 2 children will be returned to their mothers. This is a very big achievement and this could not have happened if this case had not been brought up at the very first meeting and the doctor who was invited to the programme and was in a decision-making position had not helped.

János Orsós, 48 years Hungary

AND WE ARE NEVER TIRED TO KEEP WALKING

Once upon a time... X Roma Woman speaking to the European Parliament (Sept 2023)



RTransform has woven equal dialogues with all participants.

Andrea Khalfaoui



The grassroots partner organisations of the project shared the achievements that RTransform has had at the local level in their cities and how relationships have been built between institutions and organisations that contribute to the sustainability of the project.

In addition to the social impacts that have been highlighted, they emphasised the importance of networking with local government bodies and seeking more and more spaces where Roma women can make their voices and needs heard.



“Through the RTransform project we have been able as an organisation to strengthen our relationships with local and national partners.

For example, we have reached out to 3 different schools in Sheffield, UK where we were able to propose Roma history and language as part of the curriculum in turn,

Hallam University and Sheffield University have committed to support the Encounters and will consider regularly recruiting Roma students to visit or host events for the Roma community that educate staff and students, but also attract Roma women to their campus".

Terezia Rostas, 36 years. Romania.

"The Roma Women Student's Gatherings were very important because they gave visibility to the voice of Roma women from many parts of the country in an academic setting such as the University.

The Vice-President of Bulgaria attended a Roma Women's Meeting and shared her experience in a sentence:



..... In just 1 hour you made me believe that this country has a future, my team and I feel like we are in an oasis of kindness, of positive news, of women who inspire the younger generation to fight against stereotypes and dogmas and to break down walls. All this struggle is worth it because we all deserve a better destiny".

Teodora Krumova, 47 years. Bulgaria.

On the other hand, the political partners of the project, such as the Municipality of Ampelokipi in Greece, shared with the audience the impacts of the project in terms of institutional changes and strategies and good practices implemented in local planning.



"The use of the services of the Municipality of Ampelokipi Menemeni in Greece such as the Community Centre with a Roma Delegation and the redesign of the administrative channel to respond to the needs of women and the Community are some of the policies we have implemented that have strengthened both the participation of women in the Meetings and their interest in education".

...During the implementation of the project there was openness in communication, expression of opinions and participation. But this is not a simple thing: it is a political decision. A decision that creates a space of safety and trust for women to express themselves".

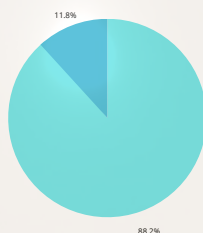
Vasiliki Vatali, 44 years, Greece.

PARTICIPATION



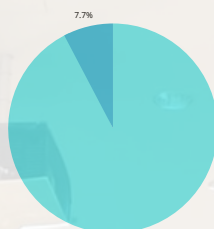
51

PHYSICAL
PARTICIPANTS



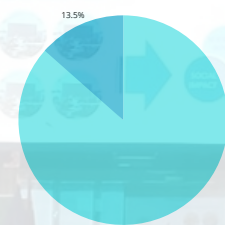
88.2%

ROMA WOMEN



7.7%

REPRESENTATIVES OF
THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT AND
POLITICIANS



13.5%

RESEARCHERS,
TEACHERS



39

ONLINE
PARTICIPANTS

94,9%

Women participants from Spain, Greece and Italy. Among them participants of the RTransform Project, project technicians and university teachers

TABLE OF CONCLUSIONS



Manuela Fernández Ruiz, Spain. **María Alegría Gabarri Moreno**, Spain

At the closing table, the director of the office for equal treatment and non-discrimination of the Generalitat of Catalonia and the first Roma person to hold a position in the Government of Catalonia and also Maria Alegría Gabarri, mediator for the Roma people in the City Council of Amposta, Tarragona; closed with speeches of gratitude, admiration and motivation to continue on the path of education and the transformation of realities.

"The Rtransform project has managed to transform the reality of Roma women. We don't want them to give us the fish already prepared and served, we want the tools to be able to fish for ourselves, we want a sea full of opportunities, where we can choose which fish to catch....

Together we can transform, and for this we need to join together, each one of us needs to contribute our grain of sand, be it from politics, organisations, associations, individually, all together we will achieve this transformation of a diverse and equal society for all".

Maria Alegría Gabarri. Spain.

"This work has incorporated the voice of the Romany people and movements from a civil and political rights perspective, demonstrating how it is essential to involve Romany people in all the phases of drawing up public policies so that they are efficient and effective in their objectives".

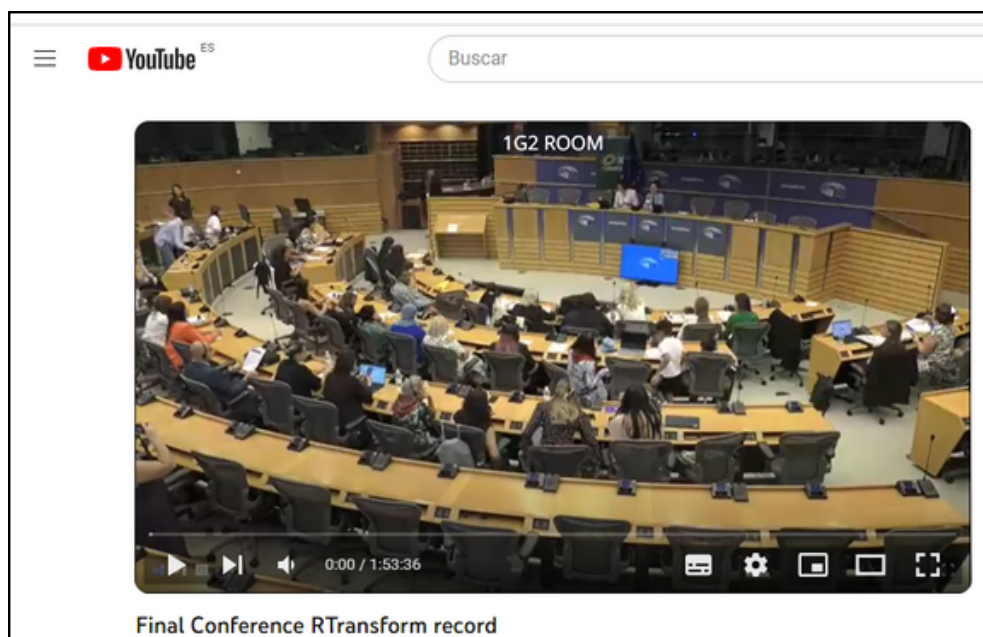
I recognise the usefulness, necessity and impact of projects such as RTransform, ... scientific evidence is of great importance especially in relation to public policies that protect the fundamental rights of minorities, in this case, Roma women, as these policies can be based on results and evidence that have already been successful in the past.

...It is important that there are Roma women not only in educational areas but also in areas of power and decision-making.

Manuela Fernández Ruiz. Spain.

"Thanks to Drom Kotar Mestipen Asocciation for being the coordinator of this successful project for 3 years, thank you for giving us the opportunity to implement this amazing methodology that has travelled to different countries. It has been vital to be able to carry out the work in each organisation part of this consortium.

Fenia Konstantinou
AID Partner, Greece.



[Access to the full video of the Final Conference- RTransform](#)

RESULTS



Below you will find links to the products created during the RTransform project.

[Roma Women Student Gatherings Guide](#)

[Situation of Roma Women _gitanas at al local level: Desk research](#)

[Educational Centres Toolkit](#)

[National Gatherings' Reports](#)

[European Gatherings' Reports](#)

[Videobook: Roma Women's Student's Gatherings in Europe](#)

[Policy Recommendation](#)