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Training activities within the SMILE project carried out by all Partners Countries

Overview

Belgium

The training took place at the primary school Arc-en-Ciel in Brussels between May and September 2015. The trainer was of Roma origin and taught the modules on Roma history, culture and language. 39 trainees attended the sessions and all teachers had Roma students in their classes.

The module on Roma history and culture provided trainees with a basic understanding of the origins and migration patterns of Roma as well as of their modern history and the Holocaust. The module on Romani language provided a basic understanding of its historical dimension, and teachers learned some useful Romani vocabulary to use with their Roma pupils.

By the end of the training, trainees had improved their knowledge on Roma culture, history and language. Trainees felt more confident to communicate with and relate to Roma parents. It seems that the training had a positive impact on the confidence of some of the teachers also when relating with Roma parents. Indirectly, their Roma pupils will benefit from all this.



Croatia

The training was organized at a school outside the city of Koprivnica where there is a sizeable Roma settlement. The teacher has a long lasting strong connection with the Roma community and she also speaks Bajash, a regional Roma language, thus being able to supply all the information regarding the upcoming training to the Roma people involved. 22 trainees were involved in the lessons on Roma culture and history as well as Roma language and Prosociality. Trainees who took part in the lessons were school teachers, experts in education, Roma and non-Roma parents, Roma and non-Roma relatives, school staff, social workers and Association members. There were however more Roma than non-Roma parents since the headmaster and the teacher of the fourth class had established a strong connection with the Roma community and therefore all people involved showed strong commitment during the project.

After the modules were implemented the headmaster organized a series of meetings with the school staff in which teachers learnt about the new curriculum plan.

By the end of the training, trainees improved their knowledge on Roma culture, history and language.

Modules on Roma history and culture, and Roma language will be included in the current school plan and programme, not as a separate subject, but as a part of civil education, history and geography, art, music, Croatian language, and class meetings.

United Kingdom

Training was carried out with a group of young, newly-qualified, teachers aged between 20 and 22 at a Primary School in North Manchester which has a significant number of Roma pupils.

The teachers were receptive to the training. They felt confident in their understanding of Prosociality since they had been introduced to the concepts in the teacher training that they were completing. They understood concepts regarding teachers' work with pupils and parents in assisting and supporting each other, in raising educational expectations and meeting the needs of every child. They also recognised the need for children to relate and make friends with peers of their own age from different communities based on mutual respect as individuals with diverse backgrounds rather than seen as a transaction.

Teachers had a good understanding of the concepts of Prosociality, having addressed them in their degrees.

The SMILE modules helped them relate the concepts to their day-to-day practice with emphasis on the needs of each child and the improvements in attainment and expectations generated by pupils having friendships with peers from diverse backgrounds.

While education systems in England are geared to supporting children from all backgrounds and encouraging parental involvement, the current lack of knowledge on Roma history and culture is a barrier: SMILE has overcome this barrier.

Bulgaria

The training took place at the primary school 'Daskal Dimitri' in Kyustendil with mixed classes with Roma children. 3 trainers were involved, one of them was the famous Roma poetess, Sali Ibrahim, whose works have been translated in many European languages. She taught Roma language and supported the module on Roma history and culture which was taught by one of the authors of the book "Roma History and Culture", product of a previous KA1 Roma project CORE. 23 trainees attended all training modules and 5 more attended some of the courses. The training was mixed - mostly teachers but also several Roma parents. This was a good decision because Roma parents were happy to take an active part in the training and 'teach' the teachers on Roma subjects such as language, culture and local history. All modules consisted of lectures and debates. The module on Prosociality inspired the trainees to discuss challenges in building a Prosocial environment. The module on Roma history and culture was enriched with information and debates on Roma taboos and in some specific cases on 'proper behaviour'. The module on Roma language provided basic information about the oral language preserved throughout the centuries as well as the current work for its preservation and the difficulties for its standardization.

The main improvements were an increased confidence of Roma parents in their children's teachers and in the school's endeavour to be Roma-friendly, as well as a much improved communication of the teachers with Roma parents and the Roma community.

Italy

The training activities and the experimentation were organized in an urban area close to Turin. The primary school teachers involved carried out their activities in mixed classes attended also by Roma children who have been living in the Turin area for years.

First of all the teachers highlighted the fact that in order to increase school attendance and improve relationships among children, the basic need is to increase the participation of their parents. Since the teachers pointed out the problem faced by Roma children in abiding to the school rules owing to cultural differences, part of the training was addressed to Roma culture and topics related to "how to fight stereotypes". The first phase of the training addressed Roma culture and the second the concept of Prosociality, which was proposed not as a different area of conceptual meaning, but as a unique cognitive process to create a Prosocial and multicultural environment in the classroom, thus building a pleasant environment in the class and a positive approach towards studying.

Both the methodology and the approaches learnt in a trend of mutual discovering were also based on the direct involvement of different stakeholders and of the members of the Community of Concrete Answers CCA. All the activities with the children had a positive impact and the concept of Prosociality was put into practice. The experience is also an added value in terms of educational and social integration.





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