

Summary on National Cooperation Workshops between Roma Mediators & GBV Professionals



Enhancing support for Roma women victims of GBV



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Introduction

The RoW-POWER project is delighted to share the successful completion and analysis of the data gathered during the highly critical Specialised Cooperation Workshops (Activities A2.2-A2.7). These sessions were a central step in enhancing the shared capacity and developing a robust collaborative framework between Roma Mediators and professionals working in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) support services.

1. Project Background and Workshop Implementation

The overarching mission of the RoW-POWER project is to train and specialise two key professional groups: Roma mediators of various specialties and GBV professionals. This specialisation is necessary to equip Roma mediators with the knowledge to encourage and direct Roma women towards appropriate GBV reporting and support services. Concurrently, the project aims to equip GBV professionals with the skills needed to approach and manage the complex cases of Roma women, as they may be unfamiliar with their living conditions and the violence that may result from Roma customs and traditions. The ultimate goal is to provide both groups with the training and practical experience needed to work harmoniously with each other and with Roma women, ensuring survivors or potential victims of GBV receive support in the best possible way.

The project successfully mandated that all partners (except HIP) would be responsible for organising 3 workshops in their respective countries. A total of 18 specialised cooperation workshops (broken down in 3 session per country) were foreseen to be conducted across the participating countries. These sessions successfully convened at least 90 Roma mediators and GBV professionals in total.

The workshops were strategically implemented between June 2024 and December 2024.

Workshop Structure and Format

Each national workshop was generally structured into three distinct sessions or thematic segments. These sessions typically focused on: 1) GBV reporting procedures and indicators of Roma women's vulnerability; 2) The specific role, boundaries, and techniques of the Roma Mediator; and 3) Identifying knowledge and skills gaps. 4) Good practices

To maximise participation and reduce implementation costs, these workshops were often conducted in a hybrid way, combining face-to-face (F2F) and online participation. This flexibility was crucial for ensuring a balanced and inclusive participation and accommodating the geographical and scheduling needs of participants.

2. Key Insights and National Findings

The national workshop reports provided crucial data regarding vulnerabilities, knowledge gaps, and the agreed-upon role of the Roma Mediator across the diverse European contexts.

Ireland

The Irish workshops held by Spectrum Research Center, involved 18 participants (Roma support workers, mediators, GBV professionals) across Group 1 (Online) and Group 2 (F2F), held in June-July 2024.



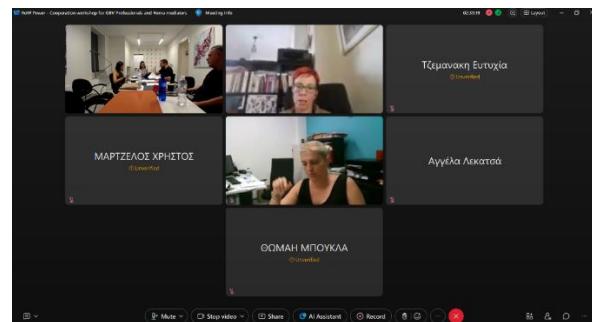
Vulnerability and Gaps: Participants noted that the Roma community faces vulnerability due to poverty, discrimination, and language barriers. GBV professionals specifically noted they lacked understanding of the specific cultural needs and traditions of the Roma community.

Mediator Role: Participants agreed the Roma Mediator should be involved right from the start, especially during initial disclosure, obtaining consent, and documentation. Their role is to facilitate communication and provide cultural context, utilising active listening and culturally sensitive communication. **Boundary:** The mediator must support communication *without overstepping professional boundaries*.

Good Practice Highlight: Practices cited, such as the *In from the Margins* initiative, emphasise tackling structural discrimination as a foundational approach to reducing vulnerability and improving service access for Roma women

Greece

The Greek workshops were held by Symplexis, in 3 Rounds on 9 July 2024, involving 15 people (10 women, 5 men), including 11 Roma Mediators (7+ years of experience) and 4 GBV professionals (7+ years of experience). Participation included both physical presence and online participation.



Vulnerability and Gaps: Roma women often normalise the violence they receive. There is a high degree of distrust and insecurity towards legal services and state institutions.

Mediator Role: The Mediator's role is strictly supportive in the stages of Reception, Recording, and Needs Assessment to overcome language and/or cultural barriers. **Boundary:** This participation is *only if the survivor agrees and wants their help*. The Mediator is not a consultant or counsellor and must not comment, take sides, or attempt to influence the survivor's decisions.

Good Practice Highlight: Protocols like the PATTERN Domestic Violence Protocol were noted as useful examples for cooperation between social workers and Roma mediators, including tools for screening and documentation

Germany

The German workshop directed by IRMI took place on 24 July 2024 in Lörrach, with 17 diverse participants (10 male, 7 female), including cultural mediators (Turkish, Alevi, Roma, Kurdish, Ukrainian).



Vulnerability and Gaps: The primary vulnerabilities identified were the lack of trust and the language barrier. GBV Professionals need to acquire better cultural knowledge on diversity to adjust their approach.

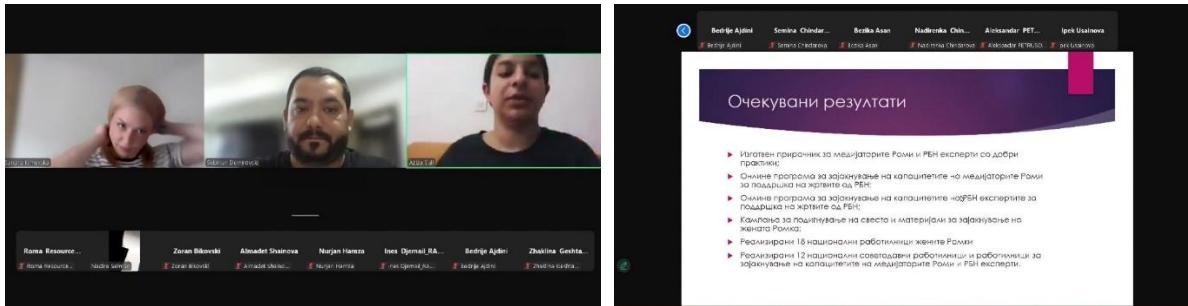
Mediator Role: Mediators play a critical role in directly communicating with survivors and gaining their trust. If the client does not know the language, a translator/mediator needs to be involved from the beginning. Boundary: Mediators must work within professional boundaries, adhering strictly to confidentiality and safety.

Good Practice Highlight: The project *Active against digital violence* was highlighted, focusing on strengthening IT expertise in counseling centres to combat digital GBV, which particularly affects Roma women on social media platforms



North Macedonia

The North Macedonian workshop was held by RRC, in 1 Round online on 09 August 2024, structured into three distinct sessions. It involved 17 participants (16 women, 1 man), including 8 Roma Mediators (Health and Educational) and 9 GBV professionals.



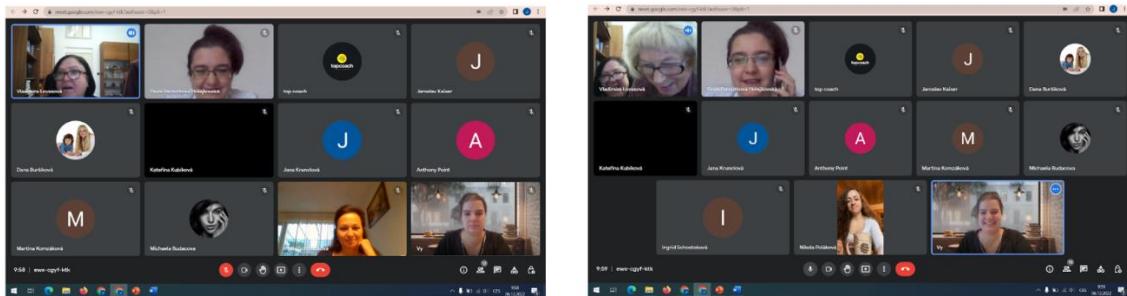
Vulnerability and Gaps: Roma women face multiple vulnerabilities, and GBV is considered a taboo topic. GBV professionals need basic knowledge about the position of women in Roma society and the multiple vulnerabilities they face.

Mediator Role: The Mediator's participation is supportive in the initial phases (Reception, Recording, Needs Assessment), only if the survivor agrees. In psychosocial or legal stages, their role is limited to translation, explanation, and interpretation; they must not be a counsellor or judge the survivor's decisions.

Good Practice Highlight: The *Center for offering psycho-social help and support* ("ISI ARKA") was noted for providing support "from Roma Woman for Roma Woman" in the native language, maximising trust and eliminating cultural barriers.

Slovakia

The Slovakian workshop was conducted online by Topcoach, in 2 Rounds on 16 December 2024, structured around three main thematic sessions. It involved 15 participants (13 women, 2 men), consisting of 7 Roma Mediators and 8 GBV professionals.



Vulnerability and Gaps: Vulnerability is linked to the stigma surrounding domestic violence, financial instability, and deep distrust towards state institutions. GBV professionals require a better understanding of the cultural, socio-economic, and underlying negative aspects (like substance use) within Roma communities.

Mediator Role: Participation of Roma Mediators is "more than welcomed" during the initial phases (Reception, Recording, Needs Assessment). Boundary: Their role must be strictly defined as a translator and interpreter, specifically excluding psychological consulting or subjective implications. They join counselling sessions only if the survivor willingly asks due to a language barrier.

Good Practice Highlight: The *Handbook: How to prevent partner violence* was highlighted for equipping professionals to address GBV within Roma communities and empowering women to recognise early signs of violence.

Spain

The Spanish workshop was held by Caminos, in one combined session online on 26 July 2024, involving 16 participants, with 15 having prior experience working with the Roma community.

Vulnerability and Gaps: The primary finding was the crucial necessity to develop support strategies that actively consider the cultural needs of Roma communities and establish culturally sensitive and accessible protocols.

Mediator Role: Roma mediators were unanimously deemed necessary to build trust in external services and help. They have to work as builders of trust in these services.

Good Practice Highlight: The *Mujeres gitanas víctimas de violencia de género: Protocolo para la atención específica* (Protocol for specific care) was noted as valuable for providing specialised training and guidelines for professionals working with this particularly vulnerable group

3. Achieving Project Impact

The intensive cooperation workshops served as the practical foundation for developing the project's key outputs. The discussions successfully addressed the fundamental objectives that the RoW-POWER project sought to achieve:

- To identify and highlight gaps in the knowledge, skills, and experience of both Roma mediators and GBV support professionals, alongside identifying existing good practices of cooperation.
- To enhance shared understanding, collaboration, and analysis of responsibilities between Roma mediators and GBV professionals, aimed at increasing both target groups' capacity to more effectively address the needs of Roma women experiencing GBV or at risk of GBV.
- To strengthen cooperation and common guidelines and methodologies between Roma mediators and GBV professionals to collaboratively address the support needs of Roma women survivors of GBV.

By successfully collecting and analysing this crucial information from the professionals on the ground through the specialized workshops, the project has ensured an Increased knowledge, cooperation patterns & common understanding of daily practices, roles &



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responsibilities between Roma Mediators & support services GBV professionals in practice.

This intensive activity has directly contributed to the provision of solid innovative practical guidelines & tools/methodologies (at least 30 in total) for cooperation between Roma Mediators and support services professionals. These deliverables will enable GBV professionals and Roma Mediators to effectively inform and guide Roma women towards appropriate GBV counselling services, providing them with integrated and culturally sensitive support pathways.



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