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AVILEAN!**

**WELCOME!  
BUN VENITI!  
BIENVENIDO!  
BIENVENUE!**



**Teacher's needs  
as regards  
the educational  
processes of  
Roma migrant children  
in the Spanish  
educational system**

**STUDY REPORT**

**within the project  
MISTO AVILEAN**

***School is  
MISTO  
everywhere!***



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Helping children worldwide.



This paper was elaborated within the project “MISTO AVILEAN (in Romani, Welcome) Migration = Integration: Service Transfer Optimisation — MISTO” funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) through the Grant Agreement 809784 - MISTO - REC-AG2017/REC-RDIS-DISC-AG-2017.

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**This paper was elaborated by:  
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### ***MISTO AVILEAN! (Welcome)***

Grant Agreement number: 809784 — MISTO — REC-AG-2017/REC-RDIS-DISC-AG-2017

## Report on the teacher's needs as regards the educational processes of Roma migrant children in the Spanish educational system

Prepared in the context of the Project MISTO AVILEAN!

*Education is the best tool for social change, to break the cycle of poverty and achieve social inclusion. We believe in the transforming power of education to make a fairer world that values the richness of cultures (FSG)*

December 2019

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## 1. Context of the document

This document has been drafted in the context of the Project MISTO AVILEAN!, whose main aim is to address the difficulties faced by Roma minors of Romanian origin to continue with their compulsory educational process when migrating with their families within the European Union borders. Specifically, the project is designed to tackle this challenge looking at the situation of the country of origin (Romania) and of two common destination Member States (Spain and France).

To that end, it proposes developing a series of initiatives to open up a route to improved access to and permanence of Roma migrant boys and girls in their educational processes. This transnational collaboration between the organisations Terre des Hommes Romania (TdH Ro), Terre des Hommes Europe (TdH EU), AFEJI France and Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) plans to pursue:

- A report on the barriers and obstacles faced by Roma migrant pupils and their families in accessing and remaining in the educational system of the destination country.
- A report on the needs of teachers as regards the education of Roma children in a migration process in the educational system of the destination country.
- A transnational cooperation mechanism and an exchange platform.
- A training programme for teachers and professionals in the educational system.
- An awareness-raising campaign led by children themselves.
- Political advocacy to facilitate the schooling of Roma pupils, as well as their permanence and successful completion in the educational system.

The programme has taken a qualitative **methodological approach** to identify the needs of teachers as regards the educational process of Roma migrant pupils in the classroom. To this end, it has conducted interviews with educational professionals, with a range of profiles, who play an important role in the compulsory education phase of children in six locations in Spain: Avilés, Badalona, Barcelona, Burgos, Oviedo and Valencia.



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Between August and December 2019, 20 professionals were interviewed, with the following profiles:

- Primary and secondary schools: teachers, management team
- Educational authorities: education inspector, staff from school enrolment office
- Scientific field: researcher specialising in the Roma population
- Private and public social resources: local social services (social workers and social educational workers)

Although the right to an education for all is enshrined under the 'Rights and Liberties' section of the Spanish Constitution, there are multiple reasons and circumstances where that right is not sufficiently safeguarded for all pupils. Roma migrant children are faced with the challenges related to the mobility of their family unit on the one hand and to their condition as the most discriminated-against ethnic minority, as recognised by numerous studies and research works in Spain and Europe (Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EUMIDIS), Council of Europe, etc.).

These factors can have a major bearing on Roma migrant pupils' access to and continuity in the different educational stages, which is why they should be addressed from all possible angles. The teacher is a crucial figure in the educational process of the pupil, which is why it is important to examine what their needs are, whether in terms of training, methodologies, support, material and human resources, etc.



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## **2. Managing diversity in the classroom**

The 2006 publication *“La educación. Un proyecto compartido. Claves y estrategias para la inclusión educativa de jóvenes gitanos”* (Education. A shared project. Keys and strategies for the educational inclusion of Roma youngsters) identified that “working on diversity in school from an intercultural perspective means change — important change in what is transmitted and in how it is transmitted. An inclusive educational policy must seek to achieve cultural understanding in school”. One of its basic aims is to promote positive feelings of unity and respect among pupils and lessen stereotypes. In turn, intercultural education “also involves the whole school community, including the essential contribution of pupils in a critical analysis of the social reality and practical projects to combat inequalities. Therefore, intercultural education is configured as the systematic education of all pupils, not just boys and girls belonging to cultural or ethnic minority groups. Its teaching principles are principally:

- Recognition of each pupil's personal right to receive the best education in the formation of their personal identity.
- Positive acknowledgement of the diversity of cultures and languages and their necessary presence and cultivation in school.
- Attention to diversity and respect for differences, without labelling pupils according to them.
- Non-segregation in groups in and out of the classroom.
- Improved school attainment and promotion of pupils from ethnic minorities or those at a socio-cultural disadvantage.
- Training and empowerment of the educational community in the human values of equality, respect, tolerance, pluralism, cooperation and social co-responsibility.
- Active fight against any declaration of racism or discrimination.
- Prevention of prejudices and stereotypes.
- Active communication and interrelation of all pupils.
- Democratic cohabitation and active participation of all pupils in classrooms and the school.
- Active involvement of fathers and mothers in school and increased communication and positive relations between different ethnic groups.
- Active presence of the school in the local community.”



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This type of education, therefore, requires significant adaptation, the acquisition of new skills, training and support measures that are not always available in schools, particularly those with a higher percentage of pupils with multiple difficulties.

## **3. Results**

Based on the interviews conducted as part of this transnational initiative, the core needs when teaching a classroom where there are Roma migrant children can be regrouped as follows:

### **3.1. Pupils, their families and schools**

One of the first difficulties is not knowing the language — a problem for certain older minors who struggle to adapt to the system and the adults themselves, who even after a number of years do not know the language of the destination country. That forms a barrier and complicates understanding between parents and the school.

This can also cause a different interpretation of events and their meaning between parents and schools, such as incorrect interpretation of attitudes and behaviours (misunderstandings, failure to submit documents on time, not attending some events, etc.). That can be a real impediment to making the most of the benefits that schools can offer. The issue becomes even more complex in an educational system that includes multi-language learning, and as a result a Roma migrant pupil may be enrolled in classes with up to three languages (Spanish, the official regional language and English).

When pupils arrive in Spain at an older age, for example in the last years of primary education, they often experience difficulties to adapt to the system. That leads to an attainment gap and lack of motivation to complete compulsory education or to continue studying.

*Illiteracy* among many fathers/mothers of these minors is common. They may not have completed compulsory education in Romania, which makes it harder for them to motivate, support and help their children in their homework. Parents' lack of familiarity with studying may mean they are not able to keep up with whether their children have



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the right books or are doing their homework — an activity they may consider strange to have to do at home.

Fathers/mothers are not *aware of the importance of studying* because of their poor experiences in their country of origin, like older minors who arrive in Spain, due to their education having been limited in Romania.

The majority of fathers/mothers are educated to a very low level, and although they say that they want their children to learn, it appears that they are referring just to the basics. They want them to go to school, but there comes a point when they believe it is no longer necessary because they earned or continue to earn a living without an education. They ask "*Why the obsession with them having to study?*". They may be more interested in boys finishing compulsory education at least, but they do not see it as necessary for girls to do so. That is why girls are at a greater disadvantage, because they are taught that by the age of 12 or 13 their ambition should be to prepare for marriage and to assume a certain role in their future family — something that does not involve completing their studies. As a result, the gender gap is very wide.

In the majority of cases, there is also a ***lack of relationship between members of the community and the native population***, because they tend to mix more with people from their country of origin, and because of societal prejudice. The scale of *rejection* is greater in times such as these when there is rising xenophobic discourse.

In some cases, ***absenteeism*** occurs, although there is continual pressure and contact with social services. This is particularly a cause of family dynamics, with communication difficult because of frequently changing telephone numbers, due to a feeling that they are being "hounded". However, more recently arriving families show lower rates of absenteeism than families who have been here for longer.

There is a lot of ***geographical mobility*** — moving residence within the same city — mostly due to economic reasons but also sometimes due to work-related issues. That makes it difficult to keep up the support measures established in schools. A further difficulty is faced by those who typically travel twice a year: mainly before summer at end of the academic year and at the beginning of the next academic year. Whether for administrative / bureaucratic reasons or due to family illness, these two dates are key.

All the above contributes to a more difficult education process, causing academic failure.



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*“It is a recurring problem. The issues to be solved by parents have an impact on children. As they do not have relatives who can take care of minors while they are away, they take them wherever they go”* (teacher of high school in Barcelona).

### **3.2. Infrastructure and human resources needs**

It is well known that the economic downturn beginning in 2008 did not affect the population equally; those who were already more excluded are more so now, and the Roma population (and within that, the Eastern European migrant Roma population) is feeling the effects more seriously and in a disproportionate way, as was found in the 2013 FSG report, *“El impacto de la crisis en la comunidad gitana”* (*The impact of crisis on the Roma community*).

The Roma population's exclusion from employment, education, housing and healthcare are the major variables, according to statistics from the FOESSA study. The rate of exclusion from employment is very high among the Roma population (78.6% in 2013), and clearly much higher than the general population. Yet while this is to a large extent a result of the economic downturn, in Roma households it is not a circumstantial phenomenon but a structural one.

The seriousness of their exclusion from education can be seen in the very low level of formal education among the Spanish Roma population compared with the mainstream population, but above all in the early school leaving rates from 12 years of age and the rates of academic failure, which among the Roma population is nearly five times higher than for the rest of the population (64.4% compared with 13.3% in 2013, according to data from Fundación Secretariado Gitano). However, the most concerning statistic, which shows the extent of the inequality, is that education exclusion of Roma people has doubled in recent years (from 18.2% in 2007 to 36.7% in 2013), precisely when the trend was turning the other way among the general population (dropping from 10.2% in 2007 to 7.7% in 2013). Once again, there is no information available for the Roma migrant population in the educational system.

Studies have shown systematically that there is a clear relationship between the level of education and the intensity of exclusion. The higher the level of education, the lesser the possibility of social exclusion. That is why, if we want to break the intergenerational passing on of poverty and exclusion, that is so prolific in the Spanish and migrant Roma community, we must support serious investment in quality education programmes that



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offset the inequalities suffered by groups most excluded and further away from the educational system. However, the educational system, just like the rest of the social protection system, has been weakened in its capacity to protect following cuts to numerous resources available to all, and that were particularly relevant for the most disadvantaged groups. The educational system has seen its budget whittled down year after year, with a major impact on classrooms.

The main consequences identified from interviews include: higher teacher-to-pupil ratios, making it more difficult to manage diversity; less availability of support workers (speech therapists, psychologists, therapists, etc.); more classes in each year group, with some schools even closing while others are saturated; the virtual disappearance of school support resources or adaptation classes for newcomers; the reduction or eradication of ongoing professional development for teachers, and more. All this despite the recognised importance of the need for the teaching staff that face these challenges and for the schools facing the most complex situations to count on more support and resources, because they are the ones most in need. The experience shared by a teacher of Barcelona illustrates this: *“Until last academic year we had a welcome classroom (reduced classroom of a few hours per week for pupils who have been for less than 2 years in Catalonia where they can learn the language and get to know the environment), but this year it has been eliminated. If a new pupil comes, he/she will have to be in class with the rest of pupils”*.

### **3.3. Awareness-raising and fight against discrimination**

The majority of interviewees of the educational sector believe that immigrant pupils receive a special reception and do not believe that Roma migrant pupils are discriminated against. In general, there are special classes for language learning and support in certain subjects. They also stated that they are concerned when there is absenteeism and insist they make an effort to get pupils back in the classroom when they believe they need after-school support. They find a way to express themselves that is understood and accepted by the family. This is characteristic in primary and secondary schools, and in various organisations that work with these groups. They are unaware of any instance of a child being refused enrolment, except where due to lack of spaces.

However, it is considered that accepting a migrant pupil, from another culture, or poor migrants, can harm the image of the school and stigmatise it. There will likely be someone



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who will try their best to pass the buck: *“Get them to go to another school where possible. The management team’s view of migrant pupils is highly important”*. (educational expert in Asturias)

In terms of the **teaching staff**, there is a small group of sensitised teachers who are willing to receive training in issues relating to this group. For the majority of teachers it is a challenge to have immigrant pupils in the classroom, which is why they consider it important to receive training in all aspects that are different, and the management of diversity from all perspectives. The most common teaching style is one-way and standardised. What the teacher wants is to “give a lesson”, and they prefer “good pupils”, wherever they may be from.

The interviewees also mentioned that there is a series of different **socio-cultural and administrative reasons** why Roma migrant children’s school education is interrupted, and they require addressing: on the one hand, they have to do with fathers/mothers’ awareness of studying and family dynamics, and that in some cases teachers consider it to be a problem having these pupils in class. It is difficult to balance the expectations of starting a family at a young age with meeting purely academic milestones. Migrant Roma pupils often get into relationships relatively young and change their life path, which will be always be a block. Fathers/mothers do not see a benefit in the short term. They also have no long-term expectations in terms of aspirations.

In addition, the **precarious conditions** in which the families find themselves can be overwhelming, yet teachers often do not consider them to be relevant because all families have the same access to grants. There are grants for books, book banks in schools, school meal grants, transport grants, etc. They also have the possibility of support from other organisations (Trama, Caritas, Cruz Roja...).

### **3.4. Needs in terms of training for managing diversity in the classroom**

If we begin with the premise that we are all part of society's intrinsic diversity, that recognition alone means valuing difference and the contribution we all make. In reality, our societies are fairly far from recognising that diversity, and the classroom is no exception. That is why it is imperative to educate to have a positive social view of the plural composition of our society.



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We are currently witnessing discourse that systematically questions, devalues and puts down everything that is “different”. Xavier Lluçh i Balaguer identifies “someone different” (“ethnic”, immigrant, foreigner) who is directly related to negatively construed situations: either in poverty or marginalised, in situations of conflict/violence, or a combination of all that (...) This representation eventually creates a perception of intercultural contact as harmful, fragmenting the cultures involved and threatening the culture of the host society in question”.

It is vital to provide teachers and other professionals who have the challenging task of accompanying pupils through their educational process with tools, content, resources and methodologies. Some of the needs that educational professionals identified in terms of training included in particular the need for resources and methodologies to manage diversity (cultural diversity, but also in terms of gender, guidance, functionally, etc), at the same time as having spaces of exchange and learning communities to support the processes. According to an educational expert interviewed ***“Professionals should have knowledge of the Roma community and spaces to address stereotypes. I believe a broader understanding of the cultural diversity and the inequality than the common one is needed”***.

To develop the training needs highlighted by the educational professionals interviewed, a series of potential channels have been identified, which can be pursued individually or in combination:

- Training of trainers on the content that has been identified as necessary to one person per school who will subsequently pass on that training to their colleagues.
- Collaboration with professional educational organisations, incorporating training sessions into their regular training days.
- Development of webinars to reach a greater number of professionals and spread the content further.
- Through an agreement with the Spanish Ministry of Education and Professional Training, and specifically with the National Centre for Innovation and Education Research (CNIIE in its Spanish acronym), which has as a key function to development guidance, support and innovation programmes to promote equal opportunities for pupils as regards the access, the processes and the results of education, educational inclusion or attention to other areas of social interest.
- Through collaboration with permanent training centres in the various Autonomous Regions.



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### **3.5. Needs in terms of bureaucratic and procedural barriers**

The interviewees highlighted the lack of statistical data on *institutional limitations* when enrolling these minors. In terms of perception, they believe that the majority of Roma migrant pupils have no problems, but, in some cases, there can be bureaucratic difficulties when enrolling in nursery school. The issue of municipal registration (*empadronamiento*) and the lack of paperwork from the country of origin (vaccination record, previous study record and curriculum, etc.) can be barriers for schooling.

When asked whether they would value having some contact with the Roma migrant pupil's schools of origin, they answered that great care would have to be taken, respecting data protection, and avoiding passing on the stigma of pupils from the school of origin to the new one. Contact between schools must be only for the purpose of overcoming administrative obstacles that could be easily solved through these exchanges (certificates, records, clarification about content), while being respectful of the pupil. It should always be in search of the greater good of the child and improving pupil-teacher relationships, to facilitate learning and better understand the identity and needs of each individual student.



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#### **4. Conclusions and recommendations**

- To improve the communication with families, dedicate them more time and explain them what is done and why. The better the communication, the better the relationship, and if parents are happy with the school, the pupil goes to school happy.
- To keep welcome classrooms, even just a few hours a week, particularly in regions that have another official language, because it is difficult for minors to successfully integrate in schools where there are two or three language other than their native language.
- To count on support resources such as those provided in specific programmes offered by other organisations or by schools (e.g. with a social worker) designed for the migrant population, to give families and teachers peace of mind.
- To make progress in a legal framework to promote diversity from an inclusive perspective, guaranteeing the right to education for all pupils.
- To ensure that authorities design and implement specific diversity plans to guarantee that the right to education is effectively safeguarded.
- To promote that schools include inclusive diversity proposals and actions in their school education plan.
- To improve coordination with other key resources to support the educational process of pupils at risk of exclusion, such as the social workers and social educational workers provided by the local authority.
- To include diversity management in the permanent teacher training curriculum, including cultural diversity management and special recognition of the features of anti-Roma racism.
- To create cooperation mechanisms between schools of origin and of destination of Roma migrant children to facilitate the exchange of essential documentation and information to guarantee the inclusion and continuation of minors in the educational system.



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- To facilitate spaces of exchange between professionals who work with minorities so that they can share tools, training, documentation, methodologies, best practice, etc., and become a learning community on cultural diversity.
- To strengthen participation, exchange and shared knowledge spaces for the educational community. Although it can be difficult for families in a precarious position to take part in these spaces, they can be beneficial for all the educational community.
- To facilitate access to the necessary procedures for the proper and swift enrolment of children, including accompanying support and mediation for families in need.
- To enhance absenteeism monitoring mechanisms to support the children and families who are most alienated from the educational system.
- To provide schools with the resources, materials and staff necessary to properly deal with diversity in the classroom: support classes, speech therapists, mediators, spin-off groups, adaptation classes, etc.
- To carry out awareness-raising campaigns for the whole educational community and citizens in general, so that they can start to positively value the contribution of Roma migrants to Spanish and European cultural heritage.



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# FOLLOW US FOR OTHER RESULTS AND RESOURCES



## REPORTS & PUBLICATIONS TO FOLLOW

- Data Collection Methodology, three Country Reports for Romania, Spain, France and Recommendations at EU level regarding school integration of Roma children on the move
- Need assessment of educational professionals in Romania, Spain and France
- Manual for Transnational cooperation mechanism
- Package of information for government bodies, local authorities, NGOs and schools
- Project opening brochure, Success stories brochure, Guidelines for the provision of nondisruptive and non-discriminatory education of Roma children on the move



## PUBLIC EVENTS TO FOLLOW

- Launching event in Romania, Transnational event in Spain, Final event in France
- Training activities in Romania, Spain and France for 330 teachers
- Webinars with 240 participants
- Exchange sessions with Roma families in Romania, Spain and France
- Dissemination events with specialists in Romania, Spain and France
- Promotion campaigns in schools from Romania, Spain and France
- Advocacy campaigns in Romania, Spain, France, Hungary and Brussels



## ONLINE SITES TO FOLLOW

[www.misto-avilean.eu](http://www.misto-avilean.eu)

### ChildHub

[www.childhub.org/en](http://www.childhub.org/en)

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scan for access to project manuals, reports, campaigns, webinars, forums related to educational and social integration of Roma children on the move