



**Let's know each other:
Strategy for the Equity Inclusion of Roma Students**

Project code 2020-1-EL01-KA201-078810

**Best practices for Roma
education and parental
involvement**



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1. Introduction

Currently one of the values that are most promoted in school is the acceptance of difference and respect for people of different ethnicity, religion, customs, etc. School plays a very important role in relation to these issues and must adapt to all educational and social realities while promoting a democratic and inclusive society. A good educational practice is the inclusion of Roma students and their social integration.



In recent years, Roma access to education has progressively improved and little by little the distrust of the school community regarding Roma students and of these towards the school is disappearing. The distrust of many families is also disappearing and Roma students feel more comfortable and useful and they realize that what they learn will serve them in the future. It's essential that students feel at ease and that families feel they are safe and they are taking advantage of the time to learn,



avoiding the exclusion of school, the dropping out of school and avoiding conflicts.

School is facing nowadays a great challenge and has to be attentive to the constant social and cultural changes so that all students can develop and integrate in the same way.



2. Roma students at school

The current project for the integration of Roma students was born from the collaboration between the school and the TECHARI Roma Association, created in 2019, which aims to help the Roma community in the region and promote their social integration. This Association develops cultural and social activities in the community and encourages the education of young people.





<https://www.facebook.com/Techari-Associa%C3%A7%C3%A3o-Nacional-e-Internacional-Cigana-103814141171293>

In order to know more about its role at school we interviewed the president of Techari, Mr. José Fernandes.



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Q- How and why did this collaboration start?

A- We know that there have been many problems with Roma students at school over the years. We had an idea, we presented it to the President of the Parish Council, he presented it to the school Headmaster, she was receptive to the idea and... here we are.

Q- It started this school year just in one school?

A- Yes, but next year we will be in another one.



Q- What do you do at school?

A- First I want to present you the two Techari members that work every day at school, as mediators: Mr. José Carlos Silva and Mr. José Silva.



They are at school to show support to the Roma students because they don't feel very well when they don't see other Roma near them.



We want them to learn like everybody else. We are here to see if they come to school, if they don't come we talk to the families and we check if in the classroom they are working and performing the tasks teachers tell them to do.

I am going to tell you something... we are Portuguese but we also have our culture.

If our community is not present the students don't understand the importance of learning, the importance of school.



When we bring our culture to school is profitable for our kids and also for the school. You can see that now we have many girls at school because the parents trust our mediators and know they are all day here. Our students also feel they have someone at school that can help them.

We also tell our students that they have to follow school rules. If we don't help them at school what will become of them in the future?



One of our main goals is to solve the problem of those who miss classes. Another one is to find help at school, too. Did you know that Roma students don't have access to a school psychologist? Why? I think they have to follow the rules but they must have the same rights as the other students. School reflects the social problem. That's why I think we have a lot of work to do in the community and at school.

Then we talked to the mediator José Carlos Silva that told us about his work at school.





My day at school? Ok. It starts at 8H00 and finishes at 18H00.

I check if they are in the classroom and if they need something. I also check if they are wearing the masks, if they have books, pens, pencils, all the things they must have and also if they are working.



It's important for them to know we are here, they work, they behave better and they feel supported.

We also talk to the families, they feel more at ease when they talk to us about their children. Family is very important and it's good for the children if parents allow them to be at school and want to know about what they are doing. We also talk to the teachers when they want.

We can also help others students if they need, of course.

I think our work here is good for us and for you.



At the end of our interview Mr. José Fernandes add the following: *Teacher, I am going to tell something that I think most people don't know. First, Techari means Liberty, the international Romani day is on 8th April and we have a flag and an anthem.*



Gelem, Gelem

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dk-QjOgg_Kc&list=RDdk-QjOgg_Kc&start_radio=1&rv=dk-QjOgg_Kc&t=7

The International Romani Day is always marked on April 8th each year. It honors the first major international meeting of Romani representatives, on april 1971 in Chelsfield , England.



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3. Conclusion

In order to have other opinions to better reach a conclusion we listened to the opinions of some teachers, one assistant Mrs. Irene Costa and the school coordinator Mr. José Morgado and they all shared the same opinions.

The presence of the Roma Mediators is essential to keep the good behaviour in the classroom, in the corridors and in the playground.



They take the students to the classroom and they obey them and don't complain. They respect them and follow their instructions. Some of them started to come to school every day, so there is less absentism; the only thing that is still a problem, in spite of the instructions of the mediators, is that most of them keep going to class without books.

One of the good things pointed by everyone is that the school became less noisy, because the mediators don't allow them to shout and run at school.



Now they don't remain in the corridors, they go to the classroom and little by little they started working.

They stopped fighting among them and with other students and they started to respect the teachers and the educational assistants.

We can say that Techari involvement at school became positive to all the school community: Romani students and other students, because now it's possible to live, work and learn together.

