

EARLY MARRIAGE – CULTURE OR ABUSE?

The project "Early Marriage – Culture or Abuse?" was awarded an action grant under the call for proposal in the framework of the Specific Programme "Daphne III" (Action Grants 2013) of the European Commission (DG Justice). In compliance with one of the priorities of the call "violence linked to harmful practices" the main objectives of the project are focused on exploring the sociological aspect of the Roma view on early marriage, early detecting the problems in the Roma community as well as educating teachers, Roma representatives, experts in the field of social work, counselling and health care, NGO's and the police on how to act as a mediator at the occurrence of early / forced marriage. Furthermore, education prevention program will be developed to raise awareness among schoolchildren on topics like reproductive health, cultural diversity, violence, peaceful resolution of conflicts.

To achieve those objectives the project will have the following workstreams:

- Sociological research "Early Marriage: Culture or Abuse" (WS1)
- Training on mediation and "door to door" visits (WS2)
- Prevention programs for schoolchildren (WS3)
- Dissemination and promotion (WS4)

The main target group are members of the Roma community, especially parents. Their children in particular girls of 12-14 years are the main beneficiaries of these activities. The target group are also public services on local level (schools, social services, health community centres, police and others) and NGO's and Roma activists.

The project uses "door to door" method of field work in order to have reliable picture about the problem. The project applies a method of coordination and participatory approach and ensures coordinated work of responsible institutions, NGO's and Roma authorities for preventing early / forced marriages.

As a result members of the Roma community and others will develop higher awareness on the topic and be presented with the notion that early / forced marriage is not a cultural norm and getting education and marring later is more favourable practice that does not violate Roma culture but contributes to its development.

Schoolchildren will receive knowledge on reproductive health, sexual education and family planning, encouragement to learn and acquire skills for constructive solving of conflict situations; awareness of cultural diversity and modernization of Roma culture.

Roma mediator will be trained and have the experience to detect problems. Public services on local level (schools, social services, health community centres, police, others) and NGO's will gain necessary knowledge on how to act as a mediator.

Most important outputs and deliverables are tools and results of the sociological research, prepared and executed training program for mediators, employed Roma mediators who will carry out "door to door" visits in Roma settlements, organized thematic discussion of

interdepartmental teams, implementation of prevention programs in primary schools with educational film, discussions in the community, discussions in the group and guidelines with research findings and tested recommendations for the prevention of early / forced marriages to be sent to decision-makers in all project partners countries.

Dissemination strategy includes work with mass media, project website, promotion in elementary schools, publication of the program for mediators, publication of prevention program for schoolchildren and final conference in Ljubljana.

The project activities will be implemented in the period from 1.10.2014 until 30.9.2016.

The project partnership consists of four partners:

[People's University of Kočevje](#) (Lead partner) (SI)

[Development and Education Centre Novo mesto](#) (SI)

[Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance](#) (BG)

[FormAzione Co&So Network – Consorzio scs](#) (IT)

Project website: www.early-marriage.eu