

Roma school mediators in Viennese schools

Since September 2000, Roma school mediators have been working on behalf of Romano Centro in selected Viennese schools with a high percentage of Roma pupils. Roma school mediators liaise between teachers, pupils and parents. They motivate and accompany children in class, assist teachers with problems in understanding and try to facilitate parental access to school. For the children, school assistants as native speakers play an identity-generating role; for the parents, they act as confidants, thanks to their understanding of the cultural and traditional background.

The project is already a "pilot" for a long time, with a considerable extension in 2012/2013 when the funding could be doubled and four mediators could be employed. Every effort is made to ensure the continuous further development of the programme, which currently, due to lack of funds, can unfortunately not be extended to more schools. Sadly, we have also so far tried in vain to get support for an adequate training-programme for Roma school mediators and to extend the number of them up to 10 to 12 to face the growing interest and need for this kind of support in schools.

Currently there are four mediators in nine schools, all of them are Romnja.

Their **tasks** are:

- supporting relations between school and home as well as communication between teachers and Roma parents
- informing, advising and accompanying parents in both school and educational matters
- acting as multi-lingual liaison person for Roma pupils and parents as well as for teachers encountering problems of/with Roma pupils
- accompanying school field trips to ensure the participation of Roma pupils
- supporting Roma pupils in class during lessons, above all also through communication in their language(s)
- support the families in difficult social situations (together with a social worker)
- arranging additional courses and remediation for Roma children
- providing knowledge on Roma culture and history for both pupils and teachers

In 2013/2014 the project was funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs, the Federal Ministry for Integration, European and Foreign Affairs and the Federal Chancellery (funding for ethnic groups).

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