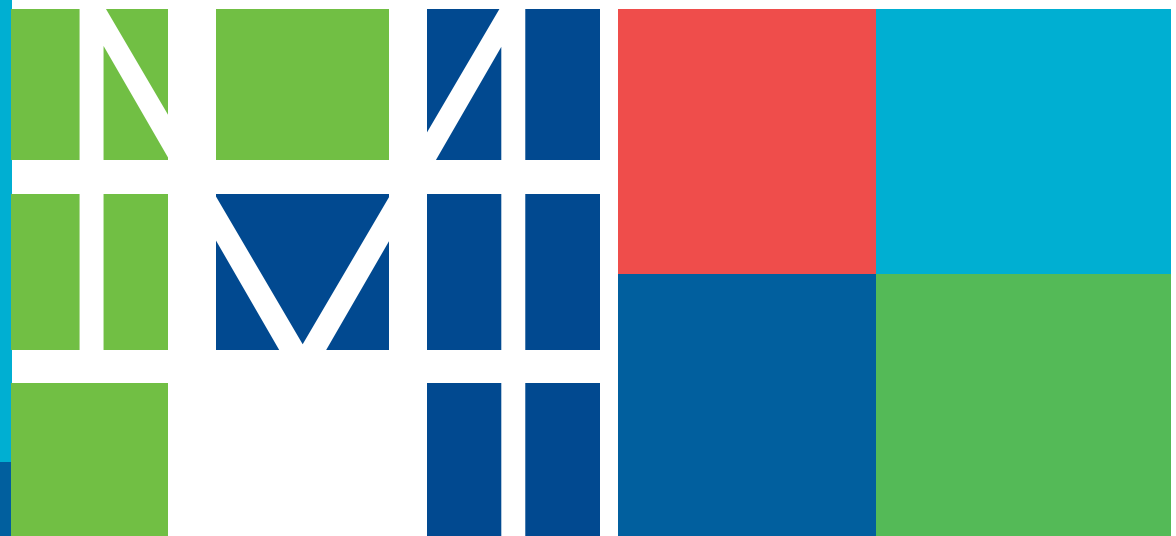


DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION THROUGH MEDIATION

For all the latest news
on the implementation
of ROMED2, please visit
<http://coe-romed.org>
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www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



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Implemented
by the Council of Europe

FROM ROMED TO ROMED2

From 2011 to 2013, the ROMED Programme laid the foundations for quality mediation in 22 countries in Europe. With over 1300 mediators trained, the programme has ensured that mediation¹ between the Roma² communities and public institutions is carried out fairly, avoiding the traps and pitfalls of the complex relationship that can exist between the two sides. This phase of the programme is still ongoing, with new countries joining (Lithuania) and others prolonging implementation to suit their specific requirements (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Ukraine, etc.).

After the first two years of ROMED, the organisational and institutional implementation partners started to ask new questions: How is democratic participation being sparked in communities? How can we ensure that public institutions co-operate and take an active interest in the process? And, most importantly, how can we undertake more in-depth action in order to bring about real and meaningful change in the day-to-day lives of communities through mediation?

From these questions, as well as the foundations laid down in its first phase, the concept of ROMED2 arose with the aim of stepping up action in those places where mediation already exists, where mediators have been trained under ROMED and where there is a greater probability of achieving change through the democratic participation of Roma.

WHO IS AT THE HEART OF THE PROCESS?

The ROMED2 Curriculum was developed by an international team of experts and adjusted to fit the realities and specific context in the field with the help of the ROMED2 National Support Teams.

It contains modules and training resources on topics such as leadership, power, participatory and inclusive decision making, conflict management, development of intercultural competences and diversity management.

A pool of trainers/facilitators has been trained in how to implement the ROMED2 Curriculum in practice.

The work is led in each country by a National Support Team composed of a National Project Officer, a National Focal Point from the previous phase, trainers/facilitators, mediators and experts, and co-ordinated by the Council of Europe.

ROMED2 places the Community Action Group – the Roma citizens themselves – at the very heart of the process, thereby both mobilising their ability to participate and demanding the capacity of the public institutions to respond to it.

The Community Action Group comprises citizens living in the community who progressively become involved in the democratic process of their municipality. This translates into the real possibility for them to voice – in an organised way, bearing in mind the means at the disposal of local authorities, but also their rights and duties as citizens – those priorities that they consider most urgent to tackle through sustainable dialogue with local authorities.

Special attention is reserved in this process to mainstreaming the participation of Roma women (i.e. in the Community Action Groups and the National Support Teams and in the expected outcomes of community empowerment).

ROMED2 uses mediation and the principles of good governance and requires community organisation as a means of initiating a process that is sustainable and fair to everyone. Particular attention will be given to ensuring the participation of women and young people in order to ensure that priorities related specifically to these groups are taken into account in the process.

WHERE IS IT BEING IMPLEMENTED?

At this stage, ROMED2 focuses on 10 countries: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. In each country, five to six municipalities on average have been selected for implementation of the programme.

One of the main difficulties in the first phase of ROMED was the scale of implementation which did not allow for in-depth action or fine-tuning of mediation to adapt it to local contexts: ROMED2 is set to overcome this shortcoming.

In five out of the 10 implementation countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Romania and the Slovak Republic), ROMED2 is being implemented at the same time as the ROMACT Programme, the latter being a new joint initiative between the Council of Europe and the European Union which seeks to provide training to public authorities on the democratic participation of Roma. For more information on ROMACT, please visit www.coe-romact.org.

WHEN IS IT GOING TO HAPPEN?

The ROMED2 Programme has been launched in the 10 implementation countries: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

Although the process should generally follow the same steps in selected municipalities, ROMED2 adapts to the diversity of contexts and needs, allowing for a maximum of flexibility in the order and timing of these steps. Although effective implementation is planned up to March 2015, the aim of ROMED2 is to begin a sustainable process that lasts well beyond this date.

Indeed, this process is long term, complex and demands resources: both time and personal investment from the citizens participating in the Community Action Group on the one hand, and commitment and responsiveness from public institutions on the other. It is through these “small victories” won progressively in win-win situations that ROMED2 is certain that the creation of a context of co-operation through participation is possible. This will undoubtedly lead to better relations between Roma communities and local authorities, higher self-esteem for Roma in becoming fully fledged citizens in society and, ultimately, a better life and better governance for everyone.

1. Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)9 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on mediation as an effective tool for promoting respect for human rights and social inclusion of Roma.

2. The term “Roma” used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as “Gypsies”.