

## D5.9

# Evaluation Reports

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## Cover Letter

This document (D5.9) contains:

- (1.) The Evaluation of the Seminar/Conference content created by the consortium and based on the feedback obtained from the attendees\*.
- (2) The external evaluator's (Dr Maeve Martin) report on the project.

\*Please note that the actual/raw evaluation forms completed by the participants/attendees at the seminars and conference have been included in the document for each deliverable previously uploaded.

## BReAThE Seminar and Conference Evaluation Report

### Overview

A large part of this project was to increase knowledge sharing and raise awareness of the barriers that Roma children may face in education (with a focus on bullying and discrimination). Networking and collaboration was key, as was working with inter-disciplinary groups and both Roma and non-Roma individuals to promote best practice and learn from each other. Four seminars and one international conference were hosted to achieve this aim. This document outlines the feedback from participants at these events, as well as some information the consortium learned during the process of hosting and attending these events. The following sections give an overview of the seminar/conference content, the profile of attendees, some notes on the effectiveness of the events (according to participants), and the main discussion points from these events in terms of best practice and recommendations. For more detailed recommendations we refer you to the Policy Advisory and Cross-National Report.

### Seminar/Conference content

**Seminar 1** consisted of four sub-seminars on: (A) Participatory Research Practices, (B) Participatory Action Research approach (C) Creating Space for Diversity and Social Justice in the Classroom, and (D) Ethnicity-based Bullying and Discrimination: The Case of Roma Ethnic Group. Seminar-A, was on conducting research on anti-bullying policy in Europe and corresponding implications or practical solutions for the Roma community, presented by Dr. Paul Downs (from DCU in Ireland). Seminar-B was on applying a participatory action research approach to the production of bullying knowledge, presented by Dr Niamh O'Brien (from Anglia Ruskin University in the UK). Seminar-C was on teaching approaching addressing anti-bullying and creating space for diversity and social justice in the classroom with refugee literature, presented by Professor Anne Burke (from Memorial University in Canada). Seminar-D was ethnicity-based bullying/discrimination and the case of Roma, presented by Dr. Seffetullah Kuldass. The first seminar took place on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019, while the rest three happened on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 at Dublin City University.

### Seminar 1: Pictures of Attendees



**Seminar 2** was hosted by the project partner *Musicantia* (renamed as *Manouche*) over the course of three sessions at different dates and times. Session-1 (on August 27, 2019) was about Roma History, Culture, and Education (presented by Mr. Sergiu Pruteanu, the executive manager of *Musicantia*), and included consultation of leading researchers (Mairead Foody & Seffetullah Kaldas, DCU) with members of the Roma community in Ireland. The Sessions-2 (October 2, 2019) consisted of two presentations on: (i) *Empowering Roma Engagement* (presented by Mr. Felix Gallagher, Fingal County Council) and (ii) *Bias in Research on Roma Ethnicity-based Bullying and Discrimination* (presented by Dr. Seffetullah Kaldas, Dublin City University). The Sessions-3 included three presentations on: (i) *Bullying and Discrimination in relation to Ethnicity and History of Roma* (by Dr. Seffetullah Kaldas), (ii) Roma Integration (by Mr. Felix Gallagher, SICAP), and Musical presentation (by Mr. Sergiu Pruteanu).

**Seminar 2: Pictures of Attendees**



**Seminar 3** entitled “*Inclusion of Roma Children in the Educational System and the Local Community: Trends and Challenges in Cyprus and Europe*” was held on was on-line (November 18, 2020) and hosted by the project partner, Mr, Doros Polykarpou, the Executive Director of KISA in Cyprus. KISA hosted the seminar in two sessions, which included the one keynote speech, seven presentations, and one guest speaker. The keynote speech was on *School and Social Inclusion of the Cyprus Roma: Practice, Policy and Change*, by Professor Dr. Loizos Symeou (Vice-Rector of Academic Affairs, European University Cyprus). Presentation 1 was on *Local Authorities Engagement in the inclusion of Roma Children and Families*, by Ms Christina Tsiamparta (the Head of Social Programmes, Limassol Municipality). Presentation 2 was on *Challenges faced by the Roma Community in Cyprus*, was by Ms. Kibariye Mehmet (Roma Community Representative). Presentation 3 was on the *Experience of “Cyprus National Platform for Roma” and the upcoming new Strategy on Roma Inclusion of the CY Government*, by Ms. Maria Yiangou (Welfare Officer, National Focal Point for the Roma Inclusion). Presentation 4 was on *Active Participation and Engagement of the Roma Community in Society*, by Mr. Sergiu Pruteanu (CEO National Roma Centre (Musicantia) Dublin), Presentation 5 was *Legislation for Educational Inclusion of Roma Children in Europe*, by Dr. Seffetullah Kuldass (National Anti-Bullying Research & Resource Centre at Dublin City University). Presentation 6 was on *the Inclusion of Roma Children in the Education System in Cyprus from the Civil Society Point of View*, by Dr. Chryso Pelekani (President of Cyprom - Cyprus Roma Association). Presentation 7 was on *the Invisible Barriers in the Education of Roma Children*, by Ms Matina Vavouli, (Principal of Aspropyrgos 7th Primary School). Last, Guest Speaker was Ms Skevi Koukouma (Member of the House of Representatives of Cyprus).

**Seminar 3: Pictures of Attendees**





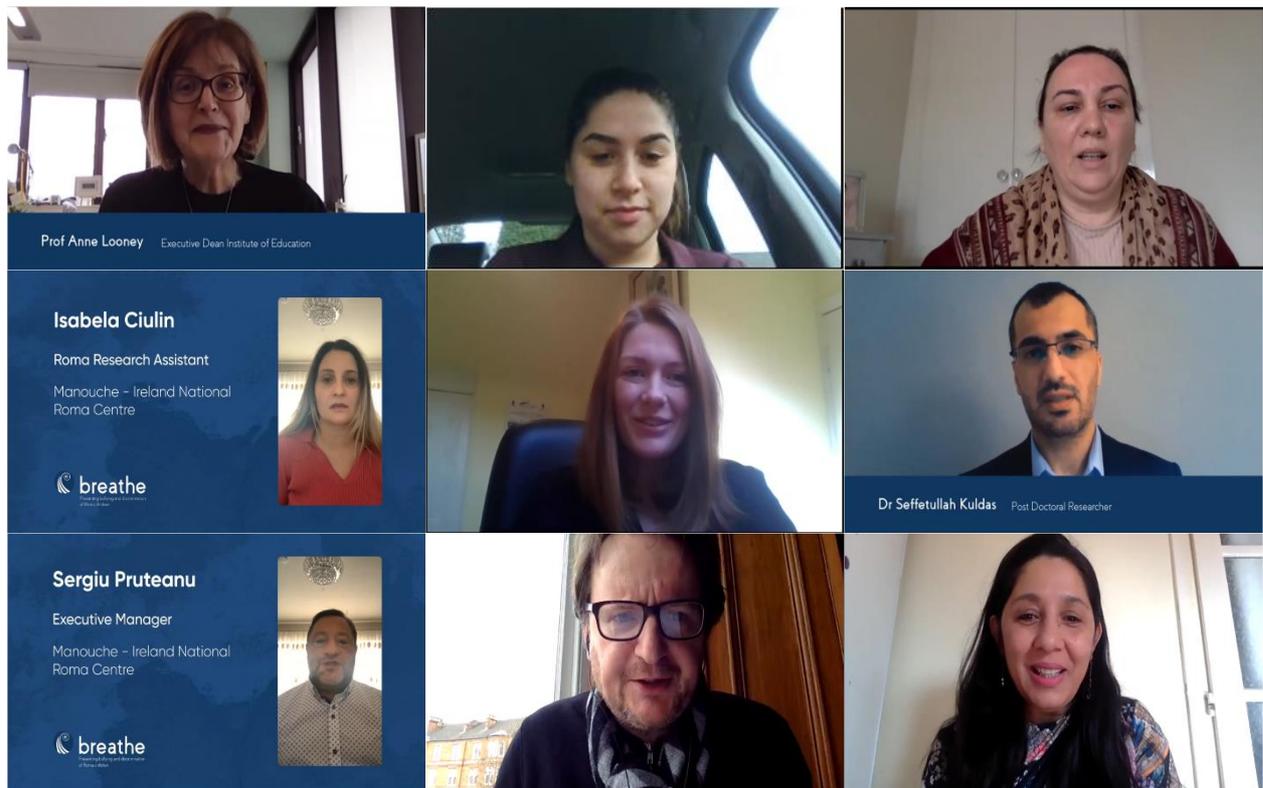
**Seminar 4** entitled “Policy in Ireland and Europe as it stands on Roma Education and Inclusion Issues” took place on-line (Friday, 11 December, 2020) and was jointly hosted by ABC – DCU (National Anti-Bullying Research & Resource Centre, Dublin City University) & Musicantia – Culture & Educational Roma Centre Dublin (renamed as Manouche – Ireland National Roma Centre). The seminar included six presentations: First presentation was on *Preliminary Findings about Anti-Bullying Policies for Roma Inclusion*, by Dr. Maeve Dupont (School of Human Development, Dublin City University). Second presentation was on *Policies for Education of Roma Children in Cyprus – Recommendations for the Educational Inclusion of Roma Children in Ireland*, by Dr. Chryso Pelekani (President of Cyprom – Cyprus Roma Association). Third presentation was on *Recommendations for Educational & Social Inclusion of Roma “Empower Experience*, by Mr. Felix Gallagher (Manager SICAP – Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme). Fourth presentation was on *Roma Education Policy of Equity Not Equality*, by Ms. Gina Miyagawa (Roma Education Worker – Cork Traveller Visibility Group). Fifth presentation was on *Roma’s view on What Needs to be Changed*, by Mr. Sergiu Pruteau (Managing Director of Musicantia, Dublin). Last presentation was on *Revisiting the Need for Anti-Discriminatory Legislative & Policy Framework for Roma Education in Ireland*, by Dr. Seffetullah Kuldass (ABC- DCU).

**Seminar 4: Pictures of Speakers**



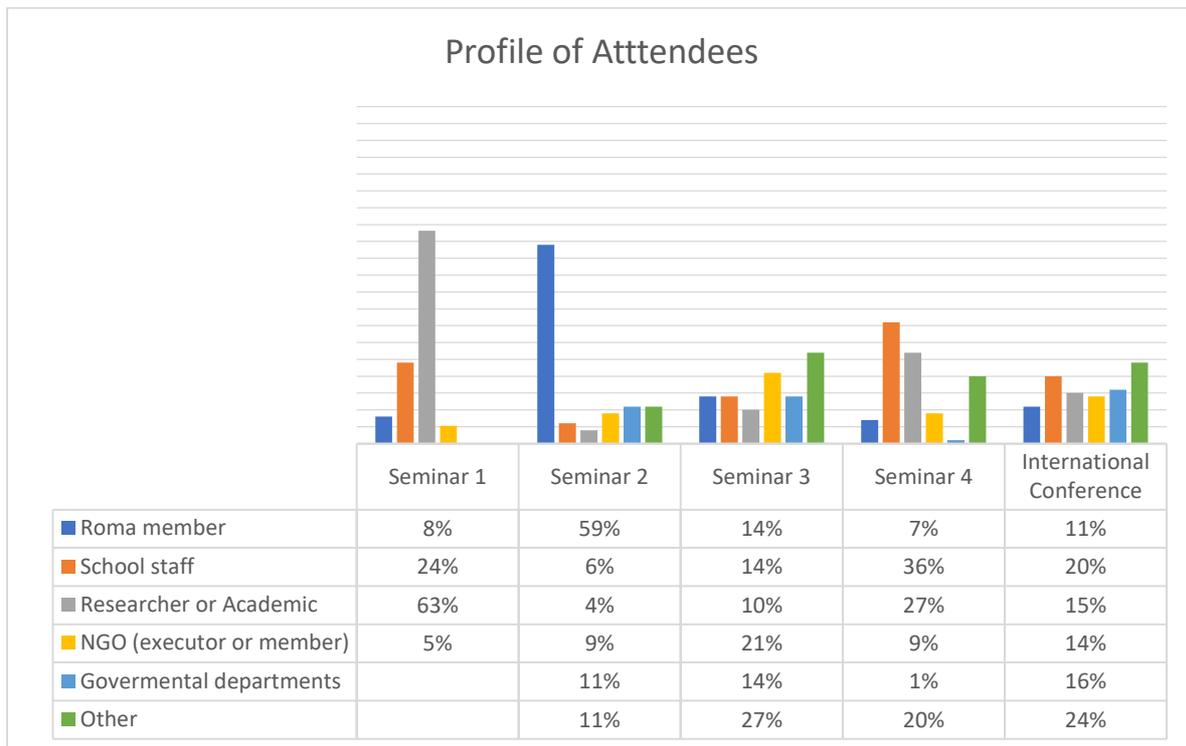
**The International Conference** entitled “Empowering Roma in Education” (24 February 2021) was online. ABC hosted the conference with musical interludes (provided by Musicantia) interspersed throughout the day and included seven presentations with one keynote speech. Presentation 1 was an *Overview of Empowering Roma in Education*, by Dr. Seffetullah Kuldas. Presentation 2 was about a *Journey through the Educational System*, by Ms. Bianca Paun (Roma Representative and Graduate of Maynooth University). Presentation 3 was about Roma Perspective of the BReAThE Project, by Ms. Isabela Ciulin, Emanuel Pruteanu, and Sergiu Pruteanu (Ireland National Roma Centre). Presentation 4 was on *Roma rights in Europe*, by Ms. Anna Orsos (European Roma Rights Centre). Presentation 5 was a critical look at the conference: *Is “Empowerment” Enough? – Dismantling the Structures and Language of Anti-Traveler Racism in Neoliberal Education*, by Prof. Colin Clark (University of the West of Scotland). Presentation 6 related to *Realising Traveller & Roma’s Right to Education*, by Jenny Liston & Gabi Muntean (Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre). *Presentation 7 was President’s Address* by Prof. Daire Keogh (the President of Dublin City University). Last. The keynote Speech by the Ombudsman for Children, Dr. Niall Muldoon.

**International Conference: Pictures of Speaker**





### Profile of Attendees of the Seminars and International Conference



Seminar 1 had a total of 52 attendees ranging from members of the consortium, academics, teachers, and members of the Roma community. They were from different nationalities or ethnicities, including Canadian, Cypriot, Greek, Irish, Icelandic, Italian, Kurdish, Norwegian, Polish, Roma, Serbian, Spanish, and Swedish.

Seminar 2 had three sessions and at least 85 attendees including members of the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD), representatives of Fingal County Council local government agency, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Balbriggan Integration Forum, Members of the Roma Community, Empower Community Development & Learning Hub, General Public and members of the consortium.

Seminar 3 had a total of 67 attendees including representatives from Welfare Office - National Focal Point for Roma Inclusion, Member of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, Representatives of Social Programmes, Limassol Municipality, Representative from European University of Cyprus, Representative from Cyprus Roma Association, NGO Partners - KISA (Nicosia, Cyprus), Musicantia (Dublin), Representative from the European University of Cyprus, Representative from Welfare Office - National Focal Point for Roma Inclusion, Representatives from Dublin City University, Representatives from the Cyprus Roma Association, Representatives from School communities, Representatives from the Roma Community in Cyprus, Representatives from the Cork Traveller Visibility Group Ireland, and stakeholders from the public.

Seminar 4 had a total of 59 attendees including representatives from the Government of Ireland Department of Education, School communities, Fingal County Council local government agency – Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), NGO Partners – KISA (Cyprus), Musicantia (Dublin), Academia – Dublin City University, Cyprus Roma Association, Cork Traveller Visibility Group, members of Roma Community, the Consortium members, and stakeholders from the public.

The International Conference had a total of 252 participants, including representatives from the Roma Community, NGO Partners - KISA (Nicosia, Cyprus), Manouche Ireland National Roma Centre (Dublin), Representative from the University of the West of Scotland, Representatives from Dublin City University, Representatives from School communities, Representatives from the Department of Education, Ireland, Representatives from the Cork Traveller Visibility Group Ireland, Representatives from Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, Dublin, Representatives from Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Ireland, Representatives from European Roma Rights Centre, Representatives from Empower Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme, Dublin and stakeholders from the public. Participants were from different countries including Albania, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italia, Romania, Scotland, Serbia, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela.

## Effectiveness of the Seminars and International Conference

The effectiveness of the four seminars and the international conference was evaluated based on ten questions below. The raw data pertaining to these questions are provided in the deliverable document for each seminar/conference, so we will provide an overview here:

- Were you satisfied with the online communication in advance of and during the event?
- How would you rate your overall experience regarding the event? (e.g. Were you satisfied with the allocated venue, time, and facilities?)
- Was the purpose of the conference clear/understandable?
- Did you know that the promotion of social and educational inclusion of Roma ethnicity is an aim of the European Union?

- What is your opinion or experience regarding your national policy for the inclusion and empowerment of Roma children in school and society?
- Was the conference a valuable/beneficial experience for you?
- Did the conference live up to your expectations?
- Do you think the conference content could help promote inclusivity of Roma in society and school?
- What do you know about a whole school-community approach to bullying/victimisation experiences amongst Roma students?
- Do you know a best practice guideline for promoting Roma inclusivity in society and school?

Seminar 1 was effective in three aspects that attendees remarked on: The seminar (i) provided them with **novel information on Roma history and culture**, (ii) made them aware of historical stigmatisation and discrimination against Roma; and (iii) made them **realised the importance of Roma participation** in conducting research and making policies for their educational and social inclusion. However, some attendees reported the seminar could give them more information about how to facilitate the Roma participation.

Seminar 2 manifested its effectiveness in increasing awareness about the needs of: (i) the Roma community for social and educational inclusion in Ireland; (ii) for documentation of barriers, concerns, and solution; (iii) for a large scale empirical research; (iv) for Roma employment opportunities; (v) for a participatory research approach; and (vi) for the awareness biases in research findings.

Seminar 3 appeared to be effective as attendees passed very positive remarks, but also noted the technical difficulties at the begging of the event. According to attendees the seminar had *“a well-balanced representation by various actors was achieved (academics, NGOs, Roma individuals)”*. A common point among the attendees was that **“the seminar placed the parameters and multi-layered aspects of integrations of Roma children in the correct human-rights based framework.”**. Attendees also found that *“the content of the seminar will be helpful for the Integration of the Roma to the Cypriot society and especially in the school”*. The seminar was also effective in bringing together various Roma representatives in Cyprus and Ireland and sparked the establishment of a network between them for further collaboration.

Seminar 4 showed its effectiveness in attendees’ evaluation as it provided detailed information on policies and legislations that are *“barriers for inclusion for Roma children”*. Some attendees also founded that the seminar not only highlighted the issues and but also *“how they might be addressed”*. The outstanding success of this seminar was the active Roma participation, that is, **half of the presenter were of Roma representative.**

The International Conference appeared to be the most effective in term of reaching much broader audience. The outstanding effect of the conference was **an opportunity to build a network within Roma- and cross-community, advancing actual collaborations between stakeholders** (e.g., Roma, NGOs, school communities). A common remark among the attendees was that the conference *“was really very well organised and balanced with a good blend of practical experience/ input complemented by research and even some music... given the challenges of COVID”*. The cost efficiency was also another effective point that some of the attendees highlighted. As one attendee stated: *“due to conference being online I was able to attend same as I would not have been given approval to travel due to costs, time and other work commitments. With online participation you have more availability as I would have lost a full day travelling to and from Dublin”*. Its impact of raising awareness was also

explicitly noted by some attendees, as one said “*I wasn't really aware of the goals of Roma Education before attending the seminars and the conference*”. However, the lack of earlier provision of a timetable for the day made attendees unsure how much time to leave for it on the day.

## Issues Stakeholders Have in Enacting EU Aims in Regards to Roma Inclusion

There are two main recurring issues highlighted in the seminars and the conference. The first issue is the need for changing paradigm from equality to equity policy. As the Roma community is very heterogeneous, their needs for social and educational inclusion can be very different. This difference warrants to tailoring educational and social resources to their specific needs (e.g., English language proficiency and recognition of ethnic minority status). The second issue is about ways to empower Roma participation as the reconstruction of their self – and – collective agency in their own social and educational inclusion.

## Best Practice Indicators

Despite their disadvantaged backgrounds or exposure to adversity, Roma children can demonstrate positive educational attainments, particularly when their teachers, parents, peers, or community members encourage it. For instance, raising awareness of school staff and students as to how Roma people were dehumanised through enslavements and genocides can help develop empathy and a sense of equality towards Roma, which in turn can prevent or reduce discrimination or bullying Roma children at school. The same activities to raise this awareness can help Roma children develop a sense of belonging to the country and boost confidence in their own ethnic identity rights as well as the mainstream society and authorities to report. Likewise, Roma representative centres and Roma education assistants can function as mechanisms (i) to promote the Roma tendency for social accommodation or integration; (ii) to deinternalise the sense of discrimination (unequal citizens) and replace it with ethno-national identity development (i.e., Irish-Roma identity); and (iii) to raise awareness of their rights and thus boost their confidence in reporting any experience of discrimination or bullying against them; (iv) to prevent school dropout by increasing Roma parents’ and children’s belief in employability.

## Recommendations

Three main points came up at the seminars and conference several times. The first is the lack of accurate monitoring of ethnicity data within the school systems in Europe. It means that is very difficult to determine the exact number of school students from the Roma community. As such, we have recommended in our Policy Advisory that this is rectified. The second relates to the way Roma and Travellers are often combined for advocacy and funding purposes in Ireland. This seems to take away from the positive efforts of Roma advocates and assumes that these groups are the same in terms of culture and needs, which is not the case. We recommend revising this design in our Policy Advisory Document. The third is the lack of representatives from the Roma community on school boards and within school staff in both Cyprus and Ireland. This should be encouraged and all advocacy work should include adequate representation from members of the Roma community. These recommendations and others that arose from the discussions at these seminars are outlined in our Policy Advisory, our Guidelines for Principles and our Cross-National Report.

## Evaluation of the BReAThE Project January 2018- March 2021

Completed by external evaluator Maeve Martin

### Introduction

The Breathe project which received funding from the European Union Rights, Equality & Citizenship Programme and from the Department of Education in Ireland, was hosted by the National Anti Bullying Research and Resource Centre (ABC) at Dublin City University. The National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre (ABC) is a university designated research centre located at DCU Institute of Education. The Centre undertakes studies on issues related to bullying and cyberbullying and develops resources and training to tackle these problems. Researchers at ABC were the first in Ireland to undertake academic research on school bullying (1996), workplace bullying (1998), homophobic bullying in schools (2003) cyberbullying (2009), and the relationship between mental health and sexting (2019). The Centre hosts the UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying in Schools and Cyberspace, and the International Journal of Bullying Prevention (Springer). It provides to post-primary schools an anti-bullying and online safety programme called FUSE.

### The Project Partners

Breathe had a four-way partnership that included representatives from an NGO, KISA, in Cyprus, NASC an NGO in Cork, Ireland, Musicantia/Manouche an NGO from north Dublin, and the lead partner was based in the ABC at Dublin City University. All partners in the project had extensive experience of working with minority and marginalised groups.

The project was fortunate to have a very competent team leading it forward. The Director of the ABC was supportive of the project throughout, was very skilled at motivating his team while playing an active role in monitoring the project's progress. The principal investigator had an excellent track record of involvement in research projects, and this combined with a winning set of social skills made for a harmonious and fruitful roll out of the project. A post-doctoral researcher was recruited who having worked in many intercultural settings had extensive first-hand experience of cultural differences. He brought an approach to research that was different to the dominant approach of the ABC. His contribution was very valuable not only as a fine researcher but also in negotiating differences where they presented. The finance officer kept a vigilant eye on the varied aspects of the project expenditure, and communicated at frequent intervals with the project team. The project administrator had a focussed, systematic and streamlined approach to her work. This kept the project moving and ensured that meetings were timely and efficient, record keeping of all meetings and transactions were carefully documented and distributed with prompt attention while

issues that arose were followed up. The complementarity and intertwined skills of the team contributed to a high quality, collaborative work environment that enriched the work while simultaneously creating the opportunity to acquire new project skills and refine existing skills.

The Breathe project ran from January 2019 until March 2021. Originally, the project was due to finish in December 2020, but the advent of the Coronavirus Pandemic in March 2020 caused delay to the full implementation of the project's targeted deliverables. Permission was sought and granted for an extension of three months to accommodate the planned activities as set out in the original deliverables document.

## Why The BReAThE Project?

The education of Roma children is a key priority for UNESCO and the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe published goals for the next ten years designed to overcome segregation, stigmatisation and marginalisation of the Roma and to make society more inclusive for them. In particular, they aim to reduce the rate of early school leaving among Roma children by half by 2028; and to increase by four the amount of Roma youth who have a secondary school diploma. It was against this backdrop that the Breathe project engaged with Roma Children's schooling as a topic of significant interest. The project had at its core the education experiences of Roma children in a sample of schools within Ireland and in Cyprus. From this sampling it set out to extrapolate further and to investigate the type and frequency of bullying that Roma children face in schools across Europe. The outcomes of the cross national research have generated recommendations for educators and policy makers so that Roma children's right to access, and to participate in education are improved, early school leaving is reduced, and more Roma children complete secondary level schooling. This represents ground breaking research for stakeholders who are committed to improving the experience of Roma children in the education sector.

Education free of harassment or violence is a human right. Despite this, many Roma representative groups claim that their children continue to experience bullying and other forms of discrimination simply because they are Roma. Bullying has been linked globally to poorer school attainment, truancy and early school leaving, not to mention poorer mental and physical health. Access and participation of Roma children within the education systems in Europe are important if they are to achieve equality and further opportunity for inclusion, wellbeing and economic viability. Reducing bullying in education is an essential objective if societal attitudes towards the Roma community and other marginalised groups are to change. Specifically, the Breathe project set out to pursue the following:

### Objectives

- To identify the prevalence and impact of bullying amongst Roma children
- To describe attitudes towards/experiences of Roma children among school and educational staff

## Aims

- To create a cross-national policy advisory document and outline for a training module for Roma inclusiveness in schools to be implemented beyond the life of the project
- To enhance cross-community capacity, advancing collaboration between stakeholders (e.g. Roma, NGOs, school communities, academia)

## Goals

- To facilitate the inclusiveness of Roma children in schools
- To promote integration, reducing bullying and enhancing the well being of Roma students.

## The Deliverables of the BReAThE Project

At the first meeting of the partners in January, 2019 in the ABC in Dublin, the four partners had a detailed overview of the deliverables. They were considered in detail and it was the view of the partners that they would be able to carry out the deliverables. Each deliverable was presented at the meeting with a timeline, and the sites where associated activities would take place were identified. There was good discussion about the implementation and where possible difficulties were identified, the approach was solution based. The consensus of the partners was that they had sufficient budget and time to make real the deliverables as set out in the carefully prepared spreadsheet document. The group expressed confidence that back in their work environment they would set about embarking on the items discussed. There was a shared sense that the deliverables were realistic and attainable and that there was the relevant expertise among the partners to fulfil their allocated tasks. Good structures were put in place for communication and inter partner collaboration. There were two main aspects to the deliverables--- data gathering and the hosting of seminars. A conference was planned to bring the project to an end and to be the culmination of the work of the partners over the two-year period.

A major factor when reporting on the success of the Breathe project is to allow for the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. It should be remembered that Roma was the target population for the project. It should also be remembered that schools were the focal location for much of the data gathering. Information coming to the project following the international eruption of Covid was that the Roma population was greatly impacted by the spread of the virus. Their needs became very basic indeed---adequate housing, access to health care, in short, survival. School, if ever it was a priority, became less so. This resulted in unanticipated difficulties in gaining access to the target population. There were understandable difficulties with data gathering. Poor digital literacy and lack of access to computers among Roma respondents meant that the tools for data gathering had to be paper based. In Cyprus the Covid pandemic compounded other difficulties like location of where the Roma were based relative to

the headquarters of Kisa and the data gatherers. Involvement in a research project seemed for Roma families an irrelevance when much more basic issues were at play for them. Added to the reality of contracting the virus, there was the closure of schools. Ireland's schools were closed for longer than in any other European country. So, for the teams in the partner locations who were working to achieve their deliverables, there were unanticipated difficulties. Yet, despite these difficulties, it is to the credit of the partners that sufficient data were collected to allow for a meaningful reporting of results, and for the compilation of a document on Roma experiences in school that should prove to be influential. The technical reports from the principal investigator and her team will submit fine detail on this.

Alongside the data gathering, the seminars in the partner locations and the final conference were central to the envisaged deliverables. Feedback to the evaluator indicates that more inter-partner discussion and planning around the seminars and the conference would have given a deeper sense of belonging within the project. Greater involvement would have strengthened a sense of trust and respect for the expertise of all partners. The seminars were to be live events with all the partners participating, and with outreach to the wider community and to local academic institutions. Apart from the first seminar in Dublin City University, and the second seminar in the headquarters of Musicantia/Manouche in north Dublin, all of the other planned events were online. Understandably, this required great flexibility and negotiation with local IT experts to deliver a seminar and a capstone conference via ZOOM. These online events catered for large numbers and delivered successfully the smooth roll out of worthwhile material presented by experienced field workers, Roma contributors, influential policy makers, advocates and academics. The events that were a central plank of the project had a very good impact. The presenters were authentic and their material was relevant. Great interest was generated as the seminars unfolded, and the final conference was a forum for policy makers and government departments to gain knowledge of the issues for Roma. There appeared to be good participation from members of the Roma community. There was a commitment to move to improve the situation. A policy document prepared by the lead partnership should have great influence across Europe. The training programme for school principals will be a valued resource for the education system and of special interest to schools catering for Roma students.

Details of these events have already been posted to the relevant portal. Due to the creativity of the teams involved, the online events were an unequivocal success. With regard to the data gathering, reference has already been made to the difficulties experienced by the Kisa and the Nasc partners. At times it was frustrating for the lead partnership at ABC not to have meaningful updates and explanations for problems with delivery of promised material from Kisa. Despite best efforts the communication was sporadic and the obstacles in data collection and the paucity of volume were not totally clear until deadlines for analysis were reached. This made for undue pressure as the project drew to a close. There were language translation issues that needed to be addressed and the volume of collected data fell well below the envisaged target.

## The Overall Impact of the Project

### Partners

The evaluator organised a Zoom call with each of the partners to give an opportunity to unpack their experiences of the project. Their accounts differed. The Nasc spokesperson explained how the impact of Covid altered completely the priorities for the Roma community in Cork. Involvement in a research project was of no relevance or immediacy for respondents. The use of technology which would have facilitated data gathering was not an option for the Roma community and there were also problems with literacy. Their view was that the level of funding which Nasc received fell far short of the resources that would be required to meet the deliverables that were expected. The schools that Nasc contacted seemed disinterested in cooperating with data gathering and so there was no data to analyse. The efforts to organise a seminar ran into difficulties, among them, finding a venue that allowed for social distancing. In time it became clear that Nasc would not be able to comply with the expectations of the project. The spokesperson suggested that the expectations were set too high, and as pressure mounted to fulfil the deliverables, it became apparent that Nasc was not in a position to do so. Early stages of involvement in the project were very satisfying, but with the arrival of Covid and its impact on the target research population, continuing in the project became untenable. It was decided reluctantly that the best option was to withdraw and return the relevant funding. It was a difficult decision for Nasc to withdraw from the project. The organisation had never done so before and the decision to withdraw was made at Board level. There was an acknowledgement that the Roma are very interested in education and anything that would improve their school experiences was deemed very worthwhile, so it was with regret that Nasc withdrew. They did so in the full realisation that they could not meet the project responsibilities as outlined in the vision document.

The Kisa partner reported that the early stages of the project were very satisfying. There was trust, enthusiasm and a real sense of sharing and partner cooperation. With the arrival of Covid and its impact at national level, and in particular its impact on the extremely vulnerable Roma population the picture changed. At first there was uncertainty about how long the pandemic would last and so moving on the deliverables was curtailed. When it became clear that the pandemic was of much longer duration and gravity than at first appreciated, it is the view of Kisa that the partners worked not in unison but in parallel lines. It must be remembered that Kisa was the only offshore partner in the project, and so they may justifiably have felt that they were not as close to the lead partner as they would have wished. They were also of the view that their expertise and competence were in question when it came to organising their seminar. Every detail was sought, but when it came to the organisation of the final conference in Dublin, they were not consulted and so felt left out of the planning. They had no input into the conference programme and were aggrieved that their contributions were

not sought. But their overall view was that the involvement of Kisa was worthwhile. They are committed to being a resource for the beleaguered Roma population in Cyprus and will continue to work on their behalf after the project has drawn to a close. The Kisa situation helped other partners to appreciate the internal difficulties that exist in Cyprus when trying to meet the needs of Roma. Central government is not supportive and, in reality, the policy seems to be to drive Roma out. This is in marked contrast to the experience of other partners who enjoy the support of central government in seeking to assimilate the Roma and provide for their needs.

Other partners in the project reported that their participation had been a very worthwhile experience. They reported that they learned a lot, not just about the Roma population, but that in the course of carrying out the work they had acquired a new set of skills, gained new insights, and extended their research techniques. They had grown in confidence through the collaboration with others involved and had extended their professional networks. They had learned to be flexible and creative as the global impact of Covid altered traditional methods of meeting project deliverables. Good leadership, detailed planning and calm heads helped this process and led to the ultimate success of this valuable work. The knowledge gained and the professional extension of skills repertoire are very positive outcomes especially for novice or early career academics / researchers. For the Roma partner, Musicantia/Manouche, it was a first involvement in an EU research project. The spokesperson for that partner was very positive about the whole experience and has gained sufficient confidence to embark on further projects involving partners with whom to collaborate. He was especially enthusiastic about the commitment to include Roma in the education systems. He expressed that the future is good for the current young generation of Roma. At the final wrap up meeting of the partners, the Kisa partner expressed the view that Kisa felt left out of the communication flow on occasions. This is regrettable as the lead partner made valiant attempts to keep communication lines open and constructive. One of the partners left the project before the finish date for the project was reached. The contributing factors to this early departure were a combination of factors that included the impact of the Covid pandemic, the workload that ensued for personnel in the organisation, the poor response from schools catering for Roma children and the lack of relevant experience in field work and dealing with Roma.

## Relevance

The project is of significant relevance not just to the Roma community, but to the schools that enrol Roma students. It is also relevant to the wider society as increasingly Roma men are joining the workforce. The more society understands the issues and the practices of this hitherto marginalised group, the more likely there is to be progress. Traditionally, schools would have little experience of working with Roma families and of making adequate provision to meet their needs. The Breathe project generated a lot of interest among educators and it heightened awareness of the multiple facets of this group of learners and their culture. Education systems seek to be inclusive and to cater for all equally. The project seminars gave plenty of

opportunity to set out the challenges for both Roma families and for schools seeking to work productively together. The data gathered showed the reluctance and the fear for many Roma mothers in engaging with school authorities. Negative experiences were reported, but so were wonderful stories of successful schooling and inspirational and caring teachers.

## Effectiveness

The project was very effective. Out of it has come very valuable insights for educators and for policy makers. Tangible resources will be available for school principals and for teachers working with Roma. The involvement of Roma personnel as a key partner in the project (Musicantia/Manouche), and as key contributors to the seminars and conference is testimony to the appeal of the project and the worth that it offered. It reached a broad spectrum of people---Roma families, researchers, academics, student teachers, educators, policy makers and government departments. Following the project there is a core group of committed persons who are well placed to maintain the progress that the project has kick started.

## Efficiency

The project was extremely well managed by the team at the ABC in Dublin City University. Though there was a change of PI for a period of time during the project, the good organisation and the clear mapping of the project ensured that momentum was retained. Financial oversight was a constant as was the unobtrusive monitoring by the Director of ABC. The office manager worked tirelessly to keep the deliverables moving along, and to check and double check all aspects of the seminar and conference roll outs. It cannot be said that all partners embraced the work of the project with the same level of enthusiasm or engagement, but there was enough to ensure that the main outcomes planned for the project were achieved. The disparity in the carrying out of the deliverables was in a way a learning experience for those involved. It also was a frustration.

## Sustainability

There is every reason to be optimistic that the effects of the Breathe project will be sustained. There has been great awareness raising of the issues confronting Roma families and schools catering for them. The project through the seminars and the conference opened up opportunities for Roma presenters to share their experiences and to act as role models for other young Roma adults/students. The policy makers have been very interested in the proceedings and have now developed a shared interest in moving things forward. There are NGOs that are working with Roma and giving them the confidence to participate in many aspects of their local communities. The dissemination of recent documents outlining European policy will lend strength to the initiatives that are underway. There is a sense of an awakened consciousness

about the Roma question and with a cadre of committed individuals to drive it forward, there is reason to be hopeful that the situation is on a road to improvement.

## Coherence

The theme of the Breathe project sits perfectly with the mission of the ABC. It is nested among other projects that focus on bullying and on populations that society may marginalise. The synthesis of work done in the Centre can only strengthen the findings of this Breathe project.

## Conclusion

It is the view of the evaluator that, on balance, the Breathe project was a success. It shone a light on a population who experience discrimination and marginalisation. This is a population that is separate from a traveller population. It has its own distinctive identity and the Breathe project increased understanding of this. It also showed that the Roma are not a homogeneous population---some live in comfortable housing, their children attend school and the head of house may be employed. Others live in abject poverty and require a range of supports to lift them out of their predicament. The project gave members of the Roma community the opportunity to celebrate their traditions and to play a central role in many facets of the project, ranging from data collection, presentations at seminars and acting as a viable and trustworthy partner within the project. The Roma children in the school system will be the beneficiaries of the valuable work carried out in the project. The school principals where these children attend will be supported by access to an online module dealing with the challenges involved for Roma, and offering constructive guidelines to help ensure integration and inclusion.

Attendees at the seminars will have the benefit of having heard a broad range of relevant perspectives and will have take away links and transcripts of the presentations. The audiences at the seminars included teachers, student teachers, researchers, academics, department of education personnel including from the inspectorate, policy makers and in the case of the conference, the Ombudsman for Children. Feedback from the seminars suggested that for many there was new learning and heightened awareness about Roma and their schooling.

The success is attributable to the calibre of the partners. It is true that some were more involved than others, but the unwavering commitment of the lead partnership at the ABC kept the core work and the momentum of the project alive, despite the disruption caused by the arrival of Covid and the challenges it posed. The interpersonal skills of the team at ABC ensured good working relationships, harmony and sustained motivation. The work was truly ground breaking, and there is every reason to be optimistic that Roma school going children will have their life chances enhanced by teachers and school personnel who will be more informed about their culture, their ambition and their challenges.

The evaluator is grateful to all who contributed to the compilation of this report.

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