

CASE STUDY

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ACCESS IRELAND ROMA MEDIATION PROJECT



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Ireland and cities like Dublin have grown more and more multicultural as a result of the rapid economic expansion. A country that has historically been a country of emigration has had to make certain accommodations for immigrants due to the shifting cultural environment. New ideas like cultural mediation and intercultural communication are becoming more and more well-known in Irish culture.

Since the end of Communism in the mid-1990s, Roma people from Eastern Europe have been migrating to Ireland. In order to escape the prejudice and persecution they experience in their own countries. The majority of Roma in Ireland are from Romania, however they do not consider themselves to be Romanians and speak a language entirely separate from Romanian called Romani.

The Roma face prejudice and discrimination almost wherever they go. The social and health services established for other minority groups sometimes fall short of meeting the specific needs of these groups since there is little awareness of the culture and customs of this community.

One strategy for bridging this gap and clearing up miscommunications is through cultural mediation. The Roma Cultural Mediation Project, an EQUAL Development Partnership in Dublin, Ireland, developed such a strategy.

In order to enhance community members' access to social and health services, the Project is educating cultural mediators from the Roma community to serve as a bridge between service providers and other members of their community.

The Roma people still experience prejudice in Ireland due to their status as a visible minority.



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They encounter prejudice over their appearance and some parts of their behaviour, such as street begging, and are frequently maligned in the media. The Irish people and the government institutions they interact with have a very limited awareness of the history, culture, and customs of the Roma population. Due to restrictive educational systems in their countries of origin, many Roma in Ireland have poor educational levels, and few can speak English. They therefore have limited options.

Due to bad experiences in their own countries, many Roma feel mistrust for the government. Non-governmental organisations have had difficulty building relationships based on trust with community people and including them in their programmes. Access to services for racial and ethnic minorities, including the Roma, can be hampered by not just language problems but also cultural differences and service providers' lack of awareness and understanding. This reduces the efficacy of social and health services.

Access Ireland, the project's primary partner and an EQUAL development partnership, has prior expertise in creating and implementing cultural mediation services. To make it easier for ethnic minority populations to obtain services, cultural mediators were prepared to serve as a communication conduit between service providers and those communities

Through this experience, it became clear that there was a critical need to train Roma cultural mediators to address the unique communication problems and cultural misconceptions they frequently encounter.

*Developed by Dominika Marcinkowska (January, 2023) on the basis of <http://www.nwicn.ie/pdf/NWICAN%20Guide.pdf>



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