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## Mentoring, Counselling and Mediator Models to Improve the Educational Situation of Sinti and Roma in Germany

**Abstract:** *This article presents the educational situation of Sinti and Roma in Germany. The members of this highly heterogeneous minority group differ not only in terms of the time of their immigration, their legal status and language, but also in terms of their educational participation and success. The only thing they have in common is that they can all be defined as disadvantaged when compared to an average German citizen. Since the 1990s, various mentoring, counselling and mediator programmes have been developed and implemented in Germany to improve the participation in education and the educational success of Sinti and Roma. The impact – for example the positive effects of self-chosen mentors and role models from the majority society or of Sinti and Roma educational mediators – has been proved by empirical studies. In order to further improve and strengthen these models, educational programmes for the professionalisation of mediators have been developed, such as the Hamburg Model or the ROMED Model.*

**Keywords:** *Sinti and Roma, Germany, educational situation, mediator models*

**概要 (Natascha Hofmann & Andrea Óhidy: 以辅导, 咨询和调解员的模式来改善 Sinti 和 Roma 在德国的教育状况):** 本文介绍了 Sinti 和 Roma 在德国的教育状况。这个高度异质的少数群体的成员不仅在他们的移民时间, 法律地位以及语言方面有所区别, 而且在教育参与和成功方面也不尽相同。他们唯一的共同点是, 在与德国公民相比, 他们都可以被视为处于不利地位。自 20 世纪 90 年代以来, 德国制定并实施了各种辅导, 咨询和调解员项目, 以提高 Sinti 和 Roma 在德国的教育参与程度以及教育成就。它们的成效 – 例如自选导师, 主流社会的角色模式或 Sinti 和 Roma 教育调解员的这些积极影响均通过实证研究得到了证实。为了进一步提高这些行动的有效性, 关于调解员职业化的教育方案已经得到了改进, 例如汉堡模式或 ROMED 模式。

**关键字:** Sinti, Roma, 德国, 教育状况, 调解员模式

**Abstract (Natascha Hofmann & Andrea Óhidy: Mentoren-, Beratungs- und Mediatorenmodelle zur Verbesserung der Bildungssituation von Sinti und Roma in Deutschland):** Dieser Artikel stellt die Bildungssituation der Sinti und Roma in Deutschland dar. Die Mitglieder dieser stark heterogenen Minderheit unterscheiden sich nicht nur hinsichtlich der Zeit ihrer Einwanderung, ihres rechtlichen Status' und ihrer Sprache, sondern auch in Bezug auf Bildungsbeteiligung und Bildungserfolg. Die einzige Gemeinsamkeit ist, dass sie alle, verglichen mit dem durchschnittlichen deutschen Bürger, als benachteiligt definiert werden können. Seit den 90er Jahren wurden in Deutschland verschiedene Mentoren-, Beratungs- und Mediatorenprogramme entwickelt und umgesetzt, um die Bildungsbeteiligung und den Bildungserfolg von Sinti und Roma zu verbessern. Ihre Wirksamkeit – zum Beispiel die positiven Effekte selbstgewählter Mentoren und Vorbilder aus der Mehrheitsgesellschaft sowie der Sinti- und Roma-Bildungsmediatoren – wurde durch empirische Studien belegt. Um die Wirksamkeit solcher Modelle weiter zu verbessern, wurden Bildungsprogramme für die Professionalisierung von Mediatoren entwickelt, wie das Hamburger Modell oder das ROMED-Modell.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Sinti und Roma, Deutschland, Bildungssituation, Mediatorenmodelle

**Резюме (Наташа Хофманн и Андреа Охиди: Кураторские, консультационные и посреднические модели для улучшения образовательной ситуации синти и цыган в Германии):** Данная ситуация представляет образовательную ситуацию синти и цыган в Германии. Члены данного сильно неоднородного меньшинства отличаются не только временем их переселения, правового статуса и языка, но и участием в процессе образования и успехом в нем. Единственным общим

*моментом является то, что они все, по сравнению со средним немецким гражданином, могут рассматриваться в качестве неблагополучных. С 90-х годов в Германии разрабатываются и реализуются различные кураторские, консультационные и посреднические программы для того, чтобы улучшить участие синти и цыган в процессе образования и успеха в нем. Их эффективность – например, положительные эффекты самостоятельно выбранных кураторов и образцов из большинства синти и цыган –посредников в процессе образования – подтверждено эмпирическими исследованиями. Для того, чтобы и дальше улучшать эффективность подобных акций, были разработаны образовательные программы для профессионализации посредников, таких как Гамбургская модель или модель РОМЕД.*

**Ключевые слова:** синти и цыгане, Германия, образовательная ситуация, посреднические модели

## Sinti and Roma in Germany

In Germany, Sinti and Roma (sometimes also called “Sinti and Romany”) have been recognised as a national minority since 1998. There is no reliable data on their exact number or proportion of the population. On the one hand, because official statistics – except for the statistics on refugees – do not include the category of “ethnicity”, and on the other hand because German immigration and refugee policy is subject to major changes. According to estimates by Sinti and Roma advocacy groups, there are about 70 to 150 thousand people who can be assigned to this ethnic minority (Engbring-Romang, 2014). The Federal Ministry of the Interior estimated their number in 2009 to be 60,000 Sinti and 10,000 Roma living mainly in the Rhine-Ruhr, Rhine-Main and Rhine-Neckar regions, in the West German provincial capitals as well as in Berlin, Hamburg and Kiel and the surrounding area (BMI, 2009). According to the Berlin Institute for Population and Development (2016), 70,000 Sinti and Roma who were German citizens and 50,000 who were registered as refugees or asylum seekers lived in Germany in 2010 (Brüggemann, Hornberg, & Jonuz, 2013, p. 97). These data alone show very clearly how heterogeneous this minority group is. In Germany, Sinti and Roma will usually be categorised according to (a) the time of their immigration, (b) their legal status and (c) their language (Table 1).

*Table 1: The categorisation of the German Sinti and Roma*

<b>Naming</b>	<b>Immigration</b>	<b>Emigration location/region</b>
Sinti	14th-15th century	India
Vlach	18th-19th century	Transsylvania
Lovara	1950' s	Poland
Roma guest worker	1960-70's	Former Yugoslavia
Roma refugees	1990's	Rumania, Kosovo, Bosnia
Roma EU citizens	Since 2004-2007	Rumania, Bulgaria

**a)** The first immigrant Sinti have lived in the area of today's Germany for about 600 years. They were first mentioned in documents in 1417 (Fraser, 1995); they are considered to be the longest ethnic minority living in Germany. In the 14th - 15th century the Vlach people immigrated from Transylvania, and in the 18th - 19th century the Lovara groups from Poland (Margalit, & Matras, 2007). In the 1960s and 1970s Roma guest workers came from the former Yugoslavia (Jonuz,

2009), and in the 1990s larger groups of refugees came from Romania, Kosovo and Bosnia. Since the so-called eastward expansion of the European Union (2004-2007) more and more Roma EU citizens have been migrating from Romania and Bulgaria to Germany (Engbring-Romang, 2014).

**b)** The Sinti are German citizens. Some of the Roma who immigrated before the 1990s also have a German citizenship. Most Roma who came to Germany as refugees or asylum seekers were and are deported on the basis of repatriation agreements with their countries of origin. The immigrants, as Union citizens, have the right to live in Germany under the Schengen Agreement.

**c)** The German Sinti and Roma are mostly multilingual. The groups immigrated before the 1990s used their own dialects in addition to the German language: the Sinti speak a Sinti dialect of Romani Čhib, the Vlach speak a Vlach dialect, the Lovara group a Lovari dialect (Matras, 2003; Margalit, & Matras, 2007). The groups immigrated after the 1990s also speak the language of their country of origin or the dialect of their region of origin. Their level of competence in German as an educational language is very different (Gogolin, & Lange, 2011). The insufficient German language competence of Roma pupils is one of the most important explanatory factors for their failure at school (ibid.). There are no representative studies on the socio-economic situation of the German Sinti and Roma. Based on the few existing empirical studies, we can conclude that the number and proportion of the unemployed or people who live without a continuous job is significantly higher than in the majority society. Above all, the situation of those who do not have a residence permit and work permit is characterized by poverty and disadvantage, which are further important explanatory factors for school failure (Baumert, Stanat, & Watermann, 2006; Becker, & Lauterbach, 2007).

Most Sinti and Roma have a permanent residence, so they do not migrate. For some families, an absence of several months from their residence (Strauss, 2011) and for a smaller group the so-called circular migration is characteristic: They commute between two (or more) countries. The majority of the society considers them to be non-German (Open Society Institute, 2003). Many of them conceal their ethnic affiliation (Jonuz, 2009) in order to facilitate their own or family social integration or social advancement, as well as to protect themselves and their family members from antiziganism (Winckel, 2002; Heitmeyer, 2010) and institutional discrimination (Mengersen, 2004; Rüchel, & Schuh in: Strauß, 2011).

## The educational situation of the German Sinti and Roma

Due to the reasons mentioned above (difficulties of definition, lack of statistical surveys), there is no representative data available on the educational situation of the German Sinti and Roma. The empirical study carried out by Daniel Strauss between 2007 and 2010, in which 275 people were interviewed orally and in writing, provides the most comprehensive picture of the living and educational situation of Sinti and Roma with German nationality (Strauss, 2011). Brüggemann, Hornberg and Jonuz (2013) compared their results with the study by Andreas Hundsalz (1982), who conducted ("unstructured") interviews in 1981-82 with 132 people and evaluated written estimates of social welfare offices (see Table 2).

Table 2: The Educational situation of the German Sinti and Roma

	Hundsalsz-survey (1982)	Strauß-survey (2011)
<b>Educational participation</b>		
No school attendance	34%	13%
No school leaving certificate	46%	44%
Secondary school leaving certificate	20%	47%
<b>Types of schools attended</b>		
Regular school	69 %	90,6%
Special needs school	31%	9,4%
<b>Vocational training</b>		
Yes	6%	18,8%
No	94%	69%
No specification	-	12,8%

Source: Brüggemann, Hornberg, & Jonuz, 2013, pp.104-105

Based on a comparison of the results of the two studies, we can state that the educational situation of German Sinti and Roma with German nationality has improved considerably since the 1980s (Brüggemann, Hornberg, & Jonuz, 2013, p. 104), but still remains below the German average.

The study commissioned and financed by UNICEF – a comparative study on the living and educational situation of Roma in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Germany (2007) provides a picture of the educational situation of German Sinti and Roma without German nationality: The life of Roma families, who immigrated from the former Yugoslavia in particular, is characterized by insecure residence status, the constant danger of deportation and the associated exclusion of social welfare benefits and school attendance. The low socio-economic status and the lack of German language skills of the affected families make their integration in both society and the school system difficult. Since the Western Balkan countries have been defined as "safe countries of origin", the Roma immigrants in Germany have been systematically deported and returned (Flüchtlingsrat Baden-Württemberg, 2018: <http://fluechtlingsrat-bw.de/roma-fluechtlinge.html> [15.5.2018]).

All in all, we can say that the educational situation of the German Sinti and Roma is very different on the one hand. On the other hand, it can still be described as disadvantaged (compared to an average German citizen). As the Düsseldorf-based social psychologist Sami Dzemailovski put it: "What unites us all is discrimination" (Lindemann, 2005, p. 10). There is a political consensus on the social integration/inclusion of the Sinti and Roma minority in Europe (European Union, 2011) and there is also evidence of how their participation and success in education can be improved (Lindemann, 2005; Frese, 2011): for example with the help of mentoring, counselling and mediator models.

## Sinti und Roma in an educational awakening: Mentoring, counselling and mediator models

Since the 1990s, various programmes have been developed and implemented in Germany to counteract the comparatively high educational disadvantage of children with a Sinti or Roma background and to promote their social participation. The basic aim of these approaches is to accompany and support the educational biographies of these children. However, the programmes, which

take effect in the cities of Bad Hersfeld, Berlin, Bremen, Düsseldorf, Essen, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Hamm, Kiel, Kiel, Cologne, Leverkusen, Mannheim and Straubingen, are characterised by differences in institutional anchoring, in the scope of the practical fields of action and in the qualification of the specialist staff (see BVerfGE 1,2 and 4; Lindemann, 2005; Bezirksregierung Arnsberg, 2011; RAA, 2014; Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung, 2015). The weighting of the different aspects is also reflected in the many different terms: educational advisors, tutors, mentors and mediators.

In scientific literature, mentors are ascribed the role of an advocate and friend, who is often older than his mentee and can become a valuable advisor on account of the difference in experience (Perzlsmaier and Sonnenberg, 2013, p. 22f). Educational counsellors are attributed a similar significance, and their work is also intended to support the mentees' learning or working as well as their personal development. Tutors, on the other hand, focus and accompany formal learning processes in the narrower sense. Education mediators are assigned a mediating area of responsibility. In the following, educational mentors and consultants and mediators are spoken of in particular.

Basically, there are two trend-setting components in the relationship building between mentor and mentee: On the one hand, whether mentees choose their own mentors or whether mentors are made available as contact persons of institutions. Secondly, whether the mentors are from the majority society or part of the community. These aspects can make a relevant difference for the relationship of trust between mentor and mentee.

In the following, two educational biographies of young Roma are used as examples to demonstrate that even elected mentors from the majority society can contribute to the success of educational pathways. It then outlines why efforts are being made at national and international level to qualify Sinti and Roma themselves as mediators and to use them in the field of education. The success conditions of Sinti and Roma as educational mediators in Germany will be discussed using the Hamburg Model and the ROMED mediator programme.

## Self-chosen mentors and role models from the majority society

„Some were inspired by stars, I had Mrs. K. (...)“, reports Bilsena and laughs (Hofmann, 2008, p. 71). Ms. K. is a social worker in a refugee home where Bilsena lives with her family. She is Roma and migrated with her family from Macedonia to Freiburg in the 1990s. Bilsena comes from a family that, due to socio-economic conditions, can be considered to belong to the middle class. Education is considered to be of great importance in her family, but married women usually do not exercise a profession after starting a family. From the very beginning, the young Roma has had the desire to arrive in Freiburg, to move from the dormitory to an apartment with her family and to communicate with the people in Freiburg. Due to intrinsic motivation, Bilsena quickly learned the German language, graduated from secondary school and then trained as a doctor's assistant. She continues to benefit from her multilingualism in freelance translation work. Ms. K. looked after Bilsena early on when she arrived in Germany and encouraged her to go her way. She had passed on her knowledge of formal educational approaches and pragmatically supported Bilsena in completing an education. She also set an example to her by reconciling work and family life.

Neno also reports about a person from the population of Freiburg who played a decisive role in his education: "Mr. B. is a great support for me and like a mentor who has been with me constantly for six years now" (Hofmann, 2008, p. 72). In contrast to Bilsena, Neno only met his mentor months after his arrival in Freiburg. Neno had already had discriminatory experiences with students and teachers at that time. He found no access to his classmates and describes that after three months of regular schooling he was trained in a special school without any reason that he could understand.



Later, other teachers confirmed to him that he was understretched there because his skills could not be adequately developed there. "I could have gone long ago [due to my good grades]. But since I didn't have anyone who could speak German well and would have been able to stand up for me, I was there quite a long time, up to the 8th grade." Retrospectively, it makes him sad and angry. What happened to Neno is described in the literature as institutional discrimination (Gomolla, & Radtke, 2002). When Neno met the social worker and craftsman Mr. B., he worked with Neno to find out his interests and then motivated him to complete the necessary educational qualifications to work in the field of media design. Neno has meanwhile passed his Abitur (high school graduation), founded a family and works independently in the media sector. He describes Mr. B. as a long-standing friend who continues to support him.

The stories of Bilsena and Neno – both names have been changed to guarantee anonymity – were recorded in an empirical survey in 2007. A total of 16 qualitative interviews were conducted. Five out of 16 interlocutors reported that teachers, social workers and employers in particular are of great importance for their educational careers and personal development. The young Roma surveyed cited the following support from mentors and confidants from the majority of society: helping them to find their way around the unknown education system; encouraging them to attend a secondary school or start an apprenticeship; establishing contacts with employers; being a personal role model (Hofmann, 2011, p. 114).

The effectiveness of mentoring and godparenthoods is well known and can be explained with the Inclusion-Exclusion-Theory. According to the sociologist – following Niklas Luhmann's example – the integration into modern societies takes place through interactions in individual functional systems that know their own conditions and forms of inclusion and exclusion (Stichweh, 2005, p. 52). To cut a long story short: Those who are well integrated in many areas of the system increase their ability to build up a secure, stable place in society. Young Roma with an immigrant background – such as Neno or Bilsena "do not yet point out the plural embeddings in different contexts because of the relative shortness of their stay in a new location (...)" and precisely in this regard, it is exactly this that aches and pains; see a "typical cause of exclusion risks" (Stichweh, 2005, p. 57). This is one of the reasons why mentoring and sponsorship programmes for migration and integration work in Germany are booming.

The fact that Neno and Bilsena were able to establish a trusting relationship with their mentors was due to the mentees' willingness to open up and accept the support offered by the authentically interested social workers. It should be noted that these mentoring relationships are not institutionally anchored and characterized by mutual exchange and learning. In addition to the effectiveness of the self-chosen mentor-mentee-relationships in the educational biographies, the 2007 study was able to show that education and integration processes of young Roma could be positively influenced if training facilities became places where the social and cultural backgrounds of minority members were discussed and different starting conditions for school education were perceived.

## Sinti and Roma as educational mediators

At national and international level, Sinti and Roma are considered to play an important role as educational mediators when it comes to the educational awakening of minority members (ECC, 2015). They could manage to turn school into a place that "tastes" (Lindemann, 2005). For Sinti and Roma, as educational mediators, would positively support educational biographies and act as mediators between parents, teachers and children (End, 2009; BezirksregierungArnsberg, 2011, p. 66f; Strauss 2013; Alte Feuerwehrwache e. V., 2014). Discrimination and stigmatisation in education and training as well as the transfer of Roma children to special schools could thus be counteracted. Structurally anchored educational mediator programmes could contribute to the improvement of individual school education, as well as to the development of education and social participation for an entire generation.

Particularly during the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) (see: <http://www.romadecade.org/>; retrieved: 15.5.2018) the development of mediator programmes and the vocational qualifications of Sinti and Roma as educational mediators was promoted at national and international level.

In the following, two qualification programs of successful educational mediator models are to be considered in more detail as trend-setting for the educational awakening of Sinti and Roma in Germany.

## The Hamburg Model

The emergence of the Hamburg model of Sinti and Roma as educational advisors dates back to the 1980s. A large number of Sinti and Roma children did not go to school at all, disproportionately many attended a special school and only a few graduated (Krause, 1989). In 1993, the first Roma teacher was hired at a primary school with the aim of supporting an age-appropriate enrolment and regular school attendance of these children and working towards a school leaving certificate. A concept for the use of additional Roma teachers was developed by the educationalist Mareile Krause in cooperation with the Sinti Union Hamburg. The activities of the Sinti and Roma as educational advisors were geared to the needs of pupils, parents and schools. In this way, it was also possible to respond to the differing needs of groups such as Sinti as a nationally recognised minority or to immigrant Roma groups, which differ in their social status, their variant of Romanes dialect and their knowledge of the German language as a school language, for example.

In 2011, a modular qualification programme for educational mediators was developed and supported by the City of Hamburg in order to professionalise and improve the work of educational advisors. The modules covered a spectrum of topics ranging from developmental psychology, pedagogical, organisational and legal topics, school subject specific and language-promoting knowledge, to areas of professionalisation and dealing with the history of the Sinti and Roma. 15 Sinti and Roma from Hamburg participated in the qualification, 14 of them completed it with a certificate. Nine of them have been permanently employed in the municipal education sector since then.

A study of the Hamburg Model was carried out in 2013 and 2014 (Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung, 2015). Tilman Kressel interviews school administrators and educational advisors and focuses on the areas of activity of the Sinti and Roma at the respective operational schools and their integration into the regular processes of the schools as well as the effects with regard to student and parent behaviour. Kressel was able to work out the central statement that absenteeism has declined sharply since the employment of educational advisors, that trusting relationships between pupils, parents and teachers have been established or strengthened, and that communication between all those involved has improved. As a result, parents are better informed about school processes and tasks and the fear of parents to give their children into "foreign hands", which is also mentioned as the cause of school absenteeism, diminishes. The successful conditions of the educational counsellor's activities include, on the one hand, the motivation, attitude and competences of the educational mediators, on the other hand the recognition of the school management and teachers and their involvement in school structures. It can be seen that appreciative cooperation within the college is beneficial, as it facilitates the identification of educational advisers with the school, especially when the educational advisors are in a conflict of roles or conflict with opinions in their community (Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung, 2015, p. 25f). The results of the survey also indicate the relevance of mother-tongue teaching, which increases the language development of the pupils as well as the appreciation and acceptance of the language in school life. Work still needs to be done on qualifying the educational advisors and developing a curriculum for Romanes.

## The ROMED Model

The results of the "Study on the Current Educational Situation of the German Sinti and Roma" (Strauss, 2011) provided three organisations already active in the field of education mediation with the opportunity to use the available resources and infrastructures to professionalize educational mediation of Sinti and Roma, to make it more efficient and to implement it in cooperation with local authorities. RAA Berlin, Romnokher in Mannheim and Madhouse in Munich were involved. Within the framework of the joint project (2012-2014), which is based on ROMED, a European training programme for Sinti and Roma mediators, qualification and professionalisation measures were developed and implemented at the three locations with Sinti and Roma as educational mediators. The basic goal was to develop and implement strategies and concepts to facilitate equal access for Sinti and Roma to education, training and the labour market (RAA, 2014, p. 7). The qualification in Berlin lasts more than 240 hours and covers four modules covering similar subject and competence areas as in the Hamburg Model: Module 1 - Information, Module 2 - Consulting and Communication, Module 3 - Pedagogy (promotion of inclusive education), Module 4 - Documentation, planning and evaluation (RAA, 2014, p. 26-37). The qualification is dual-orientated and, in addition to the acquisition of skills and specialist knowledge, is based on a large proportion of practical and work experience.

It is interesting to note the attitude towards inclusion and heterogeneous learning groups with which the training of educational mediators is approached, since the focus is on explicit but not exclusive support for Sinti and Roma in the field of education and training (RAA, 2014, p. 27). Support for Sinti and Roma children is seen as an answer to a disadvantage in the formal education system that is conditional on generations, but the offer of educational mediators is not aimed at other educationally disadvantaged children in the sense of an "ethnic" occupation. A culturalisation of educational disadvantage is thus also counteracted at the professional level. This attitude is also reflected in the certificates to be acquired after completion of the qualification: the certificate of the German Mediation Association, the ROMED certificate of the EU and a certificate of the three project partners. A basis for further development opportunities and a multifaceted professional use of educational mediators was thus laid. The systematic and appreciative support of offices and local authorities, the close interaction with the cooperation schools, as well as the motivation and attitude of the mediators (RAA, 2014, p. 44) is cited as a prerequisite for the successful implementation of educational mediation.

## Conclusion

On the basis of our experience to date, we can conclude that the most important criteria for the integration of the Sinti and Roma minorities in schools are as follows: involvement of those affected, promotion of the mother tongue, recognition as an ethnic minority, education and vocational training, political support, the provision of livelihoods, e. g. through residence permits, and mutual trust (Lindemann, 2005, p. 11). With regard to the mentoring programmes, we know that their scientific monitoring and systematic evaluation (ECC, 2015, p. 29) plays a very important role in quality assurance. Based on past national and international experience, the establishment of mentoring programmes seems to be a viable way of integrating Sinti and Roma into schools. In order to pass on the experience and to be able to further develop and evaluate the programmes, networking is of great importance. Furthermore, it is essential that Roma educational mediators acquire a professional attitude that can help them deal with conflict situations. To this end, systematic supervision and collegial advice seems indispensable. Another important prerequisite is that the schools and educational authorities concerned recognise and support the work of the mediators. Based on the



experience of the Hamburg and ROMED Models, a mentoring programme is currently being planned in Freiburg, involving the Pedagogical University and the state educational authorities. We will continue to monitor and report on the development of the planned pilot programme.

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