

## Using positive role models to create mutual respect and tolerance

BY: ASSOCIATION OF  
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*“Children are not born racist. We need to create a culture which means that they do not start to copy others and become intolerant as they grow up.”  
Mrs Ivanova, teacher*

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### What was the issue?

Many young Roma are discouraged from following their dreams of finishing their education and pursuing professional careers by the lack of positive role models, as well as other cultural challenges.

Kadir Mehmed is an 11 year old Roma boy, who dreams of becoming a police officer. He is very creative, and enjoys making cards, ornaments and jewellery. His favourite subject at school is maths. He attends school regularly and we chose him to be one of the participants in our second ‘Good examples’ film. Despite his good attitude, he still has many obstacles to overcome in achieving his full potential. He comes from a very poor family and has not grown up with positive role models to follow.

Children like Kadir need extra help and encouragement to reach their goals.

### What did we do?

A maths teacher, Mrs Ivanova saw our ‘Good examples’ film and contacted us. She was touched by Kadir’s story and wanted to help him. She offered him free maths tuition in order to support his learning.

Stela Bozurova from the Association of Young Psychologists in Bulgaria met Mrs Ivanova to discuss her offer. She had seen the ‘Good examples’ film at her school, where it was been screened to teach children about respect and tolerance. After her references had been checked, Stela approached Kadir’s parents. They agreed to meet Mrs Ivanova at their home and find out more about her offer. They were very pleased to meet her.

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*“I am very happy that there are projects like this, showing real lives to help us fight racism. Showing positive stories about Roma children teaches us tolerance and humility.”*  
*Mrs Ivanova, teacher*

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*“A big thank you to Mrs Ivanova for all her lessons and interesting tasks! She is a great inspiration to me and my family.”* Kadir, 11 year old Roma boy

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*“When I play with my friends, I am always the policeman! That’s what I want to be.”* Kadir, 11 year old Roma boy

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Mrs Ivanova now helps Kadir with maths and other subjects every week, and he is making excellent progress. She has also encouraged Kadir’s mother to start attending adult night school classes in literacy in Varna. This has a double benefit – she is gaining valuable skills and also showing her son her commitment to education.

Mrs Ivanova has been sharing Kadir’s progress with her class, and continues to underline the message of tolerance and respect to them. They have gathered books, teaching materials and stationery, which she has given to Kadir to help his learning.

## What difference did we make?

With Mrs Ivanova’s encouragement Kadir is hoping to secure a scholarship for the next stage of his education, and then enter the police academy.

Kadir’s mother is also learning fast.

Mrs Ivanova has been able to bring the message of respect and tolerance alive for her school class, by sharing the story of one individual boy. They can relate to him because he is the same age and shares many of the same dreams. This is an excellent way of fighting discrimination, by celebrating common interests and goals.

## What did we learn?

**1: Targeting resources to individuals allows them to progress rapidly and sends positive messages to all stakeholders.**

**2: Sharing information between agencies allows such models to be easily replicated.**

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Mutual Action Targeting  
Racism, Intolerance  
and Xenophobia



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