



Affirmative action in the fight against discrimination



4. Affirmative action in the sphere of the fight on discrimination

4.1 Spanish Observatory against Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE)

The duties of OBERAXE include promotion of the equal treatment principle and in this connection the "Recommendations handbook for the training of law enforcement officials" was published in 2007. This publication received the support of the Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination (2001-2006) which was established to support the effective enforcement of new anti-discrimination law in Europe.

4.2 Fundación Secretariado Gitano

4.2.1 Training and resources targeting key players

The fight on discrimination is one of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano's main areas of priority intervention. Within its work structure it has a specific area for anti-discrimination activity and for the promotion and defence of the equal treatment principle. The lines of work of that area include awareness-raising targeting public administrations, social organisations and the Roma community and the fostering of social policy for the promotion of equal treatment.

Several training initiatives were carried out in this connection in 2007 by the Foundation itself and in collaboration with outside organisations and entities. Specifically, a seminar was organised targeting Madrid lawyers and jurists entitled "Fostering Equal Treatment and the Fight on Discrimination in the Area of Justice". In this same line of work promoting the principle of equal opportunity for all, the *Practical Handbook on Equal Treatment, Police and the Roma Community* was drafted, edited and disseminated.

Three training actions targeting law enforcement officials were also conducted: one for the local police of Fuenlabrada, another for the Citizen Participation delegates of the National Police of the whole of Andalusia which took place in Granada and the last at the National Police Corps Training Centre in Avila.

Given the importance of the media in the creation and dissemination of opinion and stereotypes, training and awareness-raising sessions were conducted with students of the Information Science Faculty of the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* and with those of the Philosophy and Letters Faculty of the *Universidad de Valladolid*.



And lastly, a training activity entitled “Social intervention with the Roma population through primary care social services: Comprehensive Plans” was carried out in the district of *Bajo Aragón* targeting professionals working with the Roma population.

4.2.2 FSG study: “Health and the Roma community. The situation of the Roma community in Spain in terms of health and access to health-care services”

The first national health survey targeting the Roma population was carried out in 2006 within the framework of the Collaboration Agreement concluded between the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs and the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (2003-2008) under the umbrella of the project entitled “Health and the Roma Community: analysis of the situation in Europe” funded by the European Union through the Public Health Programme. The survey was done at national level and included the following objectives:

- Diagnosis of the health status of the Spanish Roma population mostly focusing on social factors affecting health and the use of health-care services.
- To gain insight into the health status, lifestyle and access to health-care services of the Spanish Roma population and determine whether this group is on a par with the Spanish population as a whole.
- To ascertain whether social inequalities exist in the area of health which could affect this community and, if this is the case, prioritise areas of intervention.

These objectives were achieved by collecting first-hand information by surveying 1,500 Spanish Roma of all ages who also furnished relevant information regarding members of their families. In order to be able to compare the results with those obtained for the Spanish population as a whole, the Roma population survey was designed according to the same methodological guidelines as the National Health Survey and identical or similar variables were selected.

The results of this survey bear witness to the major health advances achieved by the Roma community while also shedding light on some areas where specific intervention is needed because of a clear situation of inequality between the Roma population and the population as a whole.

The Roma population living in sub-standard housing or shanty towns is most affected by chronic health problems.

Irrespective of gender, the Roma population consistently shows a prevalence of accidents which is higher than that of the overall Spanish population. In this connection, the number of traffic accidents suffered by the Spanish Roma population is of particular concern.

The adult Roma population (age 16 and older) consumes more medicines than the total Spanish population. However, the proportion of these consumers who “self-prescribe” is significantly greater than that of the overall Spanish population.

Most of the Roma population adheres to the established vaccination programme. In this connection, there are three factors which have a bearing on Roma adhering less strictly to the vaccination calendar: lack of health-care services in their neighbourhood or area of residence, living in non-standard housing and minors under the age of 10.



The Roma population visits the dentist less frequently than the Spanish population as a whole. The percentage of Roma who claim to have never gone to the dentist (26%) is 16 percentage points greater than that of the overall Spanish population.

The Roma population makes more frequent use of emergency services. While the usage rates of those services are similar at younger ages, as they get older the usage rate of the Roma population rises.

The percentage of Roma women who visit the gynaecologist for reasons other than pregnancy or to give birth is lower than the overall percentage of Spanish women. 67% of Roma women (between the ages of 20 and 64) have never had a mammography and 52% have never had a pap smear.

40% of the Roma population over the age of 15 smokes (habitual or occasional). Specifically, 54.9% of Roma men smoke on a daily basis.

More than half of the Spanish Roma population does not engage in any type of free-time physical activity. Related to this later finding, we would draw attention to the fact that the obesity rate is higher among the Roma population in the case of both minors and adults.

Based on the information obtained, we have been able to verify a situation of inequality as concerns health and access to health-care services, a situation significantly affected by factors such as exclusion and social disadvantage affecting a large proportion of the Roma community; factors which should be the target of health-care and social policies.

The report corresponding to this study and some action recommendations made by experts in the field can be found at www.gitanos.org.

4.2.3 The FSG housing and habitat think-tank

The think-tank is an initiative forming part of the plan of activities to promote access of the Roma population to housing. This set of activities forms part of the specific Collaboration Agreement between the Ministry of Housing and the Fundación Secretariado Gitano.

The aforementioned agreement was born of the need to analyse and propose measures to solve the residential exclusion problem still suffered by part of the Roma community suffering from the effects of inequality and of social discrimination also in relation to housing due to the creation of special neighbourhoods, the persistence of shanty towns, resettlement schemes in neighbourhoods lacking proper facilities, etc. These effects have further aggravated already unfavourable initial conditions paving the way for other social problems contributing to the poor image and social rejection plaguing this community and acting as another barrier standing in the way to their advancement.

The shared objective of the different actions forming part of this agreement is to gain greater insight into the housing situation of the Roma community and to set the stage for the subsequent formulation and design of action policies.

The aim of the think-tank is to draw up a diagnosis to move forward in the identification of needs and the development of intervention proposals in the area of housing with the Roma community through a thorough analysis of that situation serving as the basis for the development of both policy and technical measures.



The think-tank lasted approximately one year concluding with the presentation of the results of this work at a nationwide conference on housing and the Roma community held in Madrid on 18-19 October. Based on the document drawn up for the occasion, this conference served to develop and disseminate specific proposals and measures in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities and local governments and other stakeholders.

The think-tank's main conclusions and recommendations were drafted in the form of a report serving as the bridge between the reflection process and the proposal of policies favouring social cohesion with due consideration for respect for the diversity existing in our society and within the Roma community. This document, published by the FSG and entitled "Report on housing and the Roma community 2007" is available at www.gitanos.org.

4.2.4 Awareness-raising campaign: "Employment makes us equal"

The FSG's third social awareness-raising campaign entitled "Employment makes us equal" was launched at a nationwide presentation in November 2007 at the Fine Arts Centre of Madrid with the attendance of nearly 300 people. As in the Foundation's previous campaigns, this inaugural presentation was followed by many others at regional or local level throughout the entire country.

On this occasion, in view of the employment theme, the presentations were also used to take stock of the results of the ACCEDER programme which the FSG has been running in 13 Autonomous Communities since the year 2000 and to present the new period of these actions within the framework of the European Social Fund's new 2007-2013 Operational Programme to combat discrimination.

The awareness-raising campaign uses a very graphic symbol: a box which represents a barrier built of stereotypes and prejudice for the purpose of raising society's awareness of how difficult it still is for a large proportion of the Roma population to gain access to employment. This campaign, designed by the *Publicis* agency, features a television spot, two radio spots, four graphic creations (for posters, press announcements, urban furniture, etc.), Internet banners and a number of different merchandising items (tee-shirts, post cards, pen-drives, folders...). All of the information on the campaign is available on its own micro-site at: www.gitanos.org/iguales.

The nationwide presentation was given same-day press coverage on the *Antena 3* mid-day news (with over 3 million viewers), channel 4 news (nearly one million viewers), *Canal Sur* and *Canal 2 Andalucía*. A radio news report was also recorded on the 27th for the new *RNE-1* news programme *España Directo*, another was broadcast on *Radio 3* and the hosts of *Aquí hay trabajo* (channel 2) mentioned during their programme that a few hours later they were going to take part in the presentation of the FSG's campaign as masters of ceremonies. The next day the nationwide newspaper *El País*, with approximately 9 million readers, published a brief article about the results of the ACCEDER Programme in addition to other references.



4.3 The Luis Vives Foundation: Third Sector Fora. Equal Treatment

The Luis Vives Foundation, aware of the need to engage in an analysis and reflection on the third sector, has been developing what have been called “Third Sector Fora”. As the Luis Vives Foundation itself explains, “third sector fora are meetings where experts from different fields with different perspectives and taking advantage of the plurality and complementarity of different points of view, analyse and debate current social issues which are the focus of Third Sector institutions and likewise deal with issues concerning their development.”⁴⁴

The topic “Equal treatment, equal opportunity and the Third Sector was selected for the third edition of these meetings taking advantage of the European Union’s declaration of the European Year of equal opportunities for all. The three basic questions of the Forum were equal treatment and equal opportunity in Spain and in Europe, current trends and challenges and the way forward for the third sector.

The work undertaken at the meetings was divided into three parts which, while all adhering to a common theme, are clearly divided in terms of their specific objective and doctrinal perspective. This scheme was used because the Luis Vives Foundation considers it essential to take an inter-disciplinary approach to problems linked to equality. The first part of the work is of a legal nature having to do with the concept of equal treatment in the Spanish legal system and throughout Europe. The second part is a “sociological view of the specific problem of relations between the third sector and racial and gender equality policies in Spain⁴⁵”. And lastly, the third part is an economic study on the challenges that gender equality policies pose for the third sector.

In 2008 the Fundación Secretariado Gitano is going to work together with the Luis Vives Foundation on the promotion and development of these meetings. Specifically, plans are under way for 13 workshops in 13 different territories in Spain.

⁴⁴ Debate Annals: *III Foro del Tercer Sector. Igualdad de trato, de oportunidades y Tercer Sector*. Fundación Luis Vives. P.7

⁴⁵ Debate Annals: *III Foro del Tercer Sector. Igualdad de trato, de oportunidades y Tercer Sector*. Fundación Luis Vives. P.11