

Employment and vocational training

A significant number of Roma today encounter serious difficulties gaining access to the labour market and to vocational training due to a lack of education and professional qualifications. This is an especially serious situation and one of the main causes of inequality and social exclusion given that a large proportion of the prejudices and stereotypes with which they are stigmatised by the majority society are based on economic issues.

This undeniable lack of preparation has clear consequences for Roma people's chances of gaining access to and holding down gainful employment because it clearly diminishes their labour options generally limiting their access to low-skilled sectors and jobs which tend to be unstable, precarious and offer little chance of sectoral mobility and professional advancement.

Therefore, this situation of disadvantage facing the Roma population based on their training and professional qualifications is the main target of our actions. That explains why priority is given to labour market integration in promoting the social advancement of the Roma community and this integration should not be limited to support for Roma in improving their employability but should also envisage the elimination of red tape and barriers standing in the way to gaining access to training and paid employment so as to effectively uphold the equal opportunities principle.



COOK CLASS IN ADALÍ CALÍ CENTRE, MADRID



PEDRO PUENTE, PRESIDENT OF FSG AND CARLOS SAINZ, PRESIDENT OF OBRAS SOCIALES CAM, SIGNING THE CAM ROMÍ PROJECT TO PROMOTE THE ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET OF ROMA WOMEN.

We support an integrated and individualised approach to intervention that tends towards mainstreaming through the application of a methodology covering a broad spectrum of aspects: ranging from counselling on labour market opportunities to labour skill training while remaining mindful of the social skills needed for employment which this sector of the population often lacks, and likewise bearing in mind the situation and needs of the Roma community and working from the vantage point of empathy and their specific interests while also influencing and being conscious of the needs and requirements of the current labour market (skills required to gain access to and hold a job; labour situation in different economic sectors, etc.).

Our actions therefore focus on improving the employability of the Roma community, not only to facilitate its access to the labour market but also as a means to combat the prevailing situation of social exclusion. We thus seek to foster their access to the labour market and ultimately their involvement and participation in society as full-fledged members.

Furthermore, tackling the structural causes of discrimination in the area of labour requires the impetus of more pro-active social policies targeting the Roma population which, in addition to aiding in their full incorporation into society, are instrumental in generating new jobs for members of this community.

To this end, our work revolves around three broad areas of intervention:

Direct intervention with the Roma population the specific objective of which is to improve employability. These goal-oriented actions, focusing on and prioritising the participation of Roma and non-Roma alike, are always implemented favouring an intercultural context. This work mostly revolves around the Multi-Regional Operational Programme to Combat

“The Roma people is willing to work as a very important “potential asset” for the labour market.

Discrimination (European Social Fund) but is also undertaken within the framework of the Roma Community Labour Market Integration Programme under the Spanish Income Tax scheme (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), training and employment experiences (Workshop School, Trade Houses and Employment Workshops), Integrated and Experimental Employment Access Plans, participation in the EQUAL Community Initiative and in other training and labour market integration programmes undertaken by different regional and municipal administrations including the following types of actions:

- › Labour information and advisory initiatives constituting the first phase of the work methodology entailing recruitment, labour information-training and the initial diagnosis of the employability of the beneficiaries.
- › Labour counselling action through a process which entails drawing up a more detailed individual diagnosis of each individual, tutoring sessions and individualised follow-up of beneficiaries throughout all stages of the pathway.
- › Professional-vocational training actions which are tailored to the results of the



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studies conducted in each territory as well as professional initiation training courses within the framework of Social Guarantee.

- › Training and employment actions (the Avutno Vaxt V Workshop School, the Amaró Tegara Workshop School, the Caminando Trade House, the Keriben Employment Workshop, Intercultural Mediation Employment Workshops...) all of which feature mixed scenarios with theoretical learning stages and real practical employment stages.
- › Mediation and labour market integration comprised of accompaniment initiatives in the active search for employment and mediation in the labour market, identifying possible offers of employment that could be covered by service users.
- › Support actions for initiatives such as protected employment and insertion companies (Uzipen: Professional cleaning service; Ecotur: Congress and tourism hostess service; Nabut: socio-labour insertion centre; Lacho Butipen: Press kiosk...) the goal of which is to foster employment experiences bridging the gap with mainstream employment through the implementation of intern training processes which are very similar to the real production of goods and services and are therefore very effective in gaining professional experience, skills training and work habits.
- › Actions encouraging and supporting self-employment such as the drawing up of business feasibility projects, accompaniment and consulting at the latter's commencement and implementation phase and permanent reinforcement of the entrepreneurial initiative (seeking funding, etc.).

Institutional intervention mostly focusing on supporting more pro-active social policies for the improvement of living and working conditions and the solution of the problems and needs of the Roma population. There are very few professionals who are specialised in this sort of work with the Roma population, there is no transfer of the positive initiatives being undertaken and it is still necessary to promote further adaptation of Training and Employment Systems to the specific reality of this sector of the population. In this connection actions have been developed in the area of training and the transfer of methodologies and materials so that the work that is currently under way with the Roma population may be assessed, including quality control systems for all interventions.

In 2006 more headway was made in gaining insight into the reality of the Roma population as regards employment through the dissemination and public presentation of the research study entitled *The Roma Population and Employment: A comparative study* which describes a Roma population which, despite social and labour barriers, wants to work and begins to work from a very early age meaning that their labour life is longer than that of the rest of the population. The study also points out that Roma employment is characterised by instability at the workplace. 51.5% of employed Roma are salaried workers compared with 82% of the total Spanish population (a gap of over 30 percentage points) and 48.5% of all Roma workers are self-employed compared with only 18.3% of the overall Spanish population. Also, 71% of Roma have temporary contracts compared with 31% in Spain as a whole. The unemployment rate of the Roma community is four percentage points higher than the overall Spanish rate.

A study was conducted based on the same methodology to establish the employment characteristics of the Roma population in Aragon.

And lastly, an ongoing effort is the permanent awareness-**heightening of the society** at large and of the agents intervening in the labour market favouring the elimination of all discrimination against the Roma population and its access to training and employment. This goal is met, on the one hand, by implementing actions with the Roma community to foster change in their attitude when it comes to training and employment and, on the other hand, by working with government administrations, the business community and potential employers with the aim of raising their awareness with respect to the problems faced by this sector of the population in the area of training and access to employment, reducing prejudice and encouraging the initiation of positive actions.



SURVEY "EMPLOYMENT AND THE ROMA COMMUNITY"

Addressing labour market inclusion calls for an integrated approach and a balance between social issues and the economic perspective.