



Employment and vocational training



Over the last several decades the Roma community has undergone major changes partly due to the general improvement of living standards in Spain but especially due to the fact that the Roma population is gaining access to the benefits of the welfare state.

However, if this trend is to continue, positive mechanisms must be put in place to facilitate and guarantee access to their legally recognised rights.

The situation of social exclusion may not necessarily improve in consonance with the increase of wealth in a given territory if progress is not made in other areas. In fact, a rise in economic prosperity is often accompanied by an increase in social inequality. Social exclusion must always be interpreted in terms of social participation and has a collective component.

The lack of training and social qualification leads to an especially serious situation and is one of the main causes of inequality and social exclusion. A significant number of Roma today have serious difficulties gaining access to the labour market and vocational training and this directly limits their possibility of finding a job and holding on to it over a period of time. Special mention should be made of the potential the Roma population has for the labour market. Labour market data concerning Roma shows that they want to work despite job



CHEF'S ASSISTANT TRAINING COURSE IN MADRID

instability, the low-skilled nature of available work and discrimination suffered in the application process.

Hence, this situation of disadvantage facing the Roma population as concerns their training and professional qualifications is vital to our actions and explains why **priority is given to labour market integration in promoting the social integration 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 access to training and paid employment so as to effectively uphold the equal opportunities principle.

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. The aim is to palliate the situation of exclusion by means of individualised labour market integration pathways designed to incorporate them into the world of work

6 A social justice issue prevails when it comes to the Roma community and it is the responsibility of the public authorities to come up with specific measures to compensate for disadvantages and ensure equal opportunity.



STUDENTS TAKING PART IN THE ASTURIAS VEDELAR TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

and consequently their involvement and participation in society as full-fledged citizens.

To this end we propose and develop holistic intervention with an individualised and multi-dimensional approach focusing intervention on the environment, the family context and the labour market detecting employment possibilities and alliances. This is a mainstreaming approach where we apply a methodology covering many 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 down a job; labour situation in different economic sectors, etc.).

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 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 and through 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 beneficiaries.
- › Labour counselling actions entailing a more in-depth individual diagnosis and tutoring sessions to provide guidance and individualised follow-up for beneficiaries throughout all of the phases of their pathway.
- › Vocational training actions and training directly linked to employment opportunities identified through the prospective studies conducted in each territory and training sessions preparing beneficiaries for their first job through the Social Guarantee programme and projects to enhance the employability of minimum income recipients.
- › Training and employment actions (Madrid's *Amaró Tegara* Workshop School, the Hostess-Promoter Workshop School in Malaga,



INDIVIDUALISED SOCIAL-LABOUR COUNSELLING SESSION AT A CENTRE IN LEON



STUDENTS DOING THE PERSONAL ASSISTANT FOR AUTONOMY COURSE AS PART OF LEON'S "KERIBEN" EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP

Almeria's intercultural mediation Workshop School, the *Caminando en Sestao* Trade School, Employment Workshops, personal autonomy training, intercultural mediation, etc.) implementing mixed scenarios envisaging learning stages and subsequent internship and employment stages.

- › Mediation and labour market integration actions 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*: social-labour market integration centre; *Lacho Butipen*: Press kiosk; *Vedelar*: gardening service) 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 during the projects' start-up and implementation phase (seeking funding, etc.).

Institutional intervention mostly focusing on supporting more pro-active social policies for the improvement of living and working conditions and resolution of the problems and needs of the Roma population. Today 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 with a view to favouring their access. 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 connection with what was initiated in 2005, work was ongoing in 2007 to gain insight into the reality of the Roma population through studies and research, this time focused on the Autonomous Communities where we are implementing our programmes. The aim of these studies is to acquire as broad an idea as possible of the situation facing the Roma community allowing for a comparison to be made with the situation of the entire Spanish population based on the parameters used by the National Statistics Institute (Spanish acronym INE) for their Active Population Survey (EPA). For this purpose, a research project entitled *The Roma Population and Employment: a comparative study in four Autonomous Communities* was developed: in the Community of Madrid where fieldwork, analysis and dissemination-presentation of study results was done and in Asturias, Castile-Leon and Galicia where field work and data processing was done in 2007 and dissemination and presentation

6 Critical aspects in moving forward with the social inclusion of the Roma community:

1. education and training;
2. access to new technologies;
3. underemployment in family businesses;
4. tailored measures targeting advancement to gain access to the labour market;
5. promotion of equal treatment and non-discrimination.



INTERNSHIP OF THE STORE CLERK COURSE IN COLLABORATION WITH TOYS"R"US IN GALICIA



of results is planned for 2008. These studies show us a Roma population which, despite social and employment barriers, wants to work.

“Employment makes us equal”. It is up to us all to turn this slogan into reality by fighting for true equal treatment and equal opportunities for all in gaining access to the labour market.

And lastly, the ongoing effort and 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.



ECOTUR HOSTESS WORKING AT A CONGRESS