

Education



Photo: Jesús Salinas

In 2007, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano continued to promote actions in the field of education designed to foster the educational advancement of the Roma community at all levels and targeting all age groups, with particular emphasis on stages which are proving to be the most difficult, i.e. Secondary Education.

Many of the programmes implemented respond to the needs arising at the compulsory level of education. We have observed greater involvement on the part of Roma families in the education of their children both at the pre-school stage (an increasingly greater proportion of children enrolling each year) and in primary education where the main difficulty observed is the lack of consistent attendance.

However, the biggest problems are found at the secondary school level especially when it comes to access, permanence and academic achievement. According to survey data published by the FSG and financed by CIDE (Spanish educational research and documentation centre) and the Women's Institute entitled *Incorporation and pathways of Roma girls in the ESO* (compulsory secondary education), 80% of the Roma student body initially enrolling in the first year of the ESO become school-leavers before finishing the last year. However, the percentage of students who do successfully complete the compulsory secondary level of education and go on to medium and upper level vocational training is slowly increasing.

As concerns the academic level achieved by Roma adults, according to the study entitled



WORK WITH CHILDREN IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING

*The Roma Population and Employment*¹ which compares data on the Spanish Roma population with that of the Spanish population as a whole, the 2004 EPA (Active Population Survey) shows that 7 of every 10 Roma over the age of 15 are completely or functionally illiterate. This points to the clear need to obtain at least a basic level of education focused on acquiring fundamental instrumental skills such as reading, writing and maths and also knowledge related to general culture and the development of skills to gain access to employment.

The programmes carried out in this connection target both young and adult school-leavers and those who were never properly enrolled in school and who now want to make up for this deficit.

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano has mainly been involved in the following lines of action during 2007 as concerns education, some of which are part of the Collaboration Agreement concluded between the FSG and

1 <http://www.gitanos.org/publicaciones/estudioempleo/index.htm>. *Población Gitana y Empleo. Un estudio comparado*. (The Roma Population and Employment, a comparative study). Fundación Secretariado Gitano, "Cuadernos técnicos" Series No 35, Madrid, 2005.

An increasing number of Roma are embarking upon and completing university studies.

the Ministry of Science and Education back in 2005.

Actions have been implemented to encourage the **standard enrolment of Roma students in primary education** focusing specifically on consistent attendance and the development of suitable teaching and learning processes with a view to supporting access, permanence and the achievement of academic objectives at the compulsory stages of schooling and advancement on to higher education as well.

A number of actions have been implemented to facilitate the processes Roma students are undergoing on an equal footing with the rest of the students, remaining ever conscious of the intercultural educational framework, the involvement and support of the family, follow-up and support of students' educational processes and educational compensation in situations where social disadvantage is causing particular difficulties. Accompaniment has been stressed in gaining access to and remaining enrolled in compulsory secondary education as has promotion of awareness and the spread of Roma culture in formal and informal educational settings.

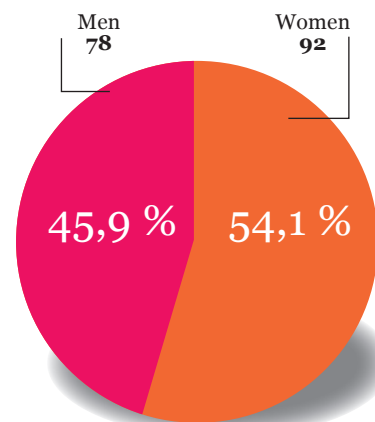
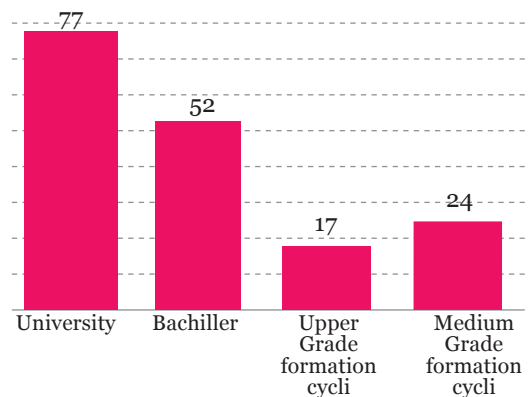
The exhibit entitled *Culturas para compartir. Gitanos hoy* (Sharing Cultures, Roma Today) is one of the main resources used by schools and education professionals. There is a teaching guide for classroom use prior to the exhibit which has been visited by many people of all ages, especially young school children. In addition to the permanent exhibit located at the *Adalí Calí* centre in Vallecas (Madrid), we have two mobile exhibits which we have loaned out 17 times to schools,

cultural centres, social services, NGOs and other FSG centres during 2007 with a total of approximately 2,300 visitors.

In respect of the actions which we have been implementing nationally for several years now in the area of **advancement to higher education** and which focus mainly on giving Roma students enrolled at these levels a small stipend as well as socio-personal support, in 2007 student and family meetings were held in: Galicia, Andalusia, Asturias, Aragon, Murcia, Basque Country and Castile-La Mancha with a total of 650 participants.

Actions implemented in this area include the awarding of scholarships (a total of 170 students have received economic support), tutoring and the organisation of meetings with the participation of Roma students


STUDENTS WITH A GRANT (2007)

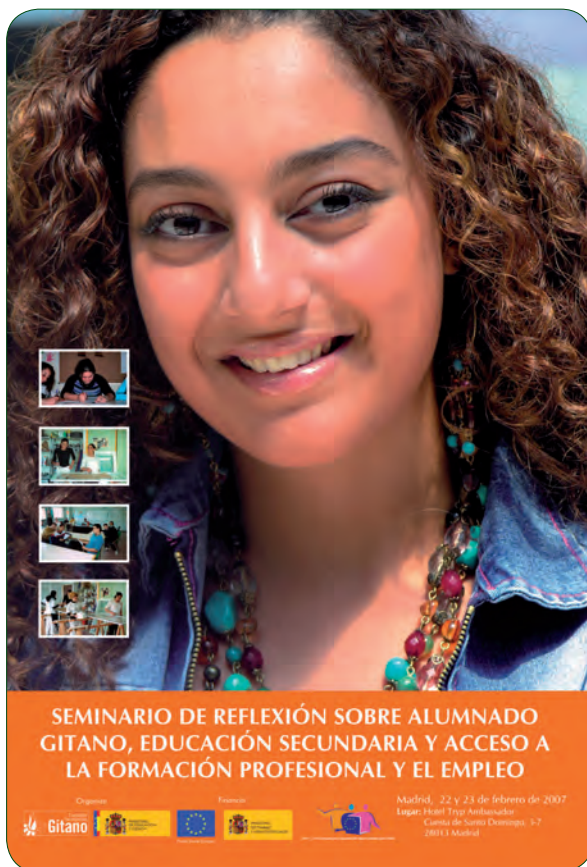


and their families along with professionals working in the educational and social fields.

Furthermore, as part of the Agreement between the Fundación Secretariado Gitano and the ICO Foundation, a special programme was set up to support Roma university students with good academic performance the result being 7 Roma from different Autonomous Communities receiving an extra economic stipend to cover academic costs during the school year.

Another of the Foundation's lines of action in the sphere of education is **basic training for Roma adults** the aim of which is to provide basic education, either at the Foundation's own facilities or in collaboration with other organisations, for

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EDUCATION SEMINAR

their personal development or to help them find employment. This line of work includes literacy and basic training activities as well as preparation for academic diplomas or access to higher studies.

Another of our lines of action focuses on providing **support for educational professionals** through the development of strategies, materials and resources in order to facilitate educational processes in the Roma community. Hence, within the framework of the European Social Fund's Multi-Regional Operational Programme to Combat Discrimination and the Collaboration Agreement concluded with the Ministry of Education and Science we

organised the “**Reflection seminar on Roma students, secondary education and access to vocational training and employment**” bringing together professionals from the public administration and private organisations operating at national level. We took advantage of this seminar to present the study conducted by the FSG and financed by the CIDE and the Women’s Institute entitled *Incorporation and pathways of Roma girls in the ESO* (compulsory secondary education). One of the main conclusions reached was that today the main challenge facing our educational systems and therefore all stakeholders (families, administrators, teachers, other education professionals, social organisations, etc.) is achieving academic success for socially disadvantaged students (especially Roma) at the compulsory level of education. Also in 2007, we responded to 178 requests from schools, universities, teaching centres and other entities for technical assistance, training, consultation and/or the provision of materials or information.

“Professionals working for the public administration and nationwide private organisations were invited to the “Reflection seminar on Roma students, secondary education and access to vocational training and employment”.

And lastly, regarding the European actions in the Area of Education, the FSG has participated in conferences and working groups in collaboration with European organisations such as the Roma Education Fund and the Ministry of Education and Science.

ROMA STUDENTS STAYING BY COURSE (%)

