

# Equal treatment

Following the headway made in preceding years having regard to improvements in equal opportunity for Roma through affirmative action, it should be noted that in 2007 one of the most important milestones was the creation of the **Council for the advancement of equal treatment and non-discrimination of persons for reasons of racial or ethnic origin** pursuant to Royal Decree 1262/2007 regulating its makeup, powers and operational regime and defining its affiliation to the Directorate-General for Immigrant Integration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

The Royal Decree also calls on the Council, with the support of the Spanish Racism and Xenophobia Observatory, to provide independent assistance to victims of direct or indirect discrimination for reason of racial or ethnic origin by conducting autonomous and independent analyses, studies and reports on discrimination

“There are still few complaints of ethnic or racial discrimination filed by victims and still fewer receiving favourable judgements specifying racism as an aggravating factor.”

and respect for the principle of equality and to promote measures contributing to equal treatment and the elimination of discrimination against people for reason of racial or ethnic origin. The Council is composed of 8 representatives of the General State Administration with the competences included in their sphere of action and by representatives of the Autonomous Communities, local organisations, business organisations and trade unions and other organisations representing interests relating to racial or ethnic origin. Members are expected to be appointed in 2008.

Another important milestone was the creation of the **Roma Cultural Institute** which, as a public foundation, will work for the advancement of the Romany culture and to promote studies shedding light on the real





situation of this community in Spain and Europe.

However, despite 2007 being the *European Year of Equal Opportunities for All*, some other aspects have detracted from advances made by this community towards the full and effective exercise of its citizenship on an equal footing with all other Spanish citizens. We have once again come up against sluggishness in the effective implementation of Directive 2000/43 on the enforcement of the equal treatment principle evident in its scant application in judicial decisions and expert reports and in terms of preventive measures enacted by the different government administrations.

As has become a habit for the FSG, we have developed all of the strategic lines and actions needed to counteract the phenomenon of discrimination and foster the principle of equal treatment. The following are summarised below:

› **Training and awareness heightening.**

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano has continued to participate in and foster awareness-raising among the key agents in the fight against discrimination undertaking training and awareness-



EQUAL TREATMENT SENSIBILIZATION TRAINING FOR THE LAW ENFORCEMENT FORCES

raising activities mostly targeting legal professionals, law enforcement officials, media people and professionals from the social services area.

Special mention should be made of two seminars specifically targeting state police and security forces which were very highly regarded by the officers (local police from Fuenlabrada-Madrid and Citizenship participation delegated from the National Police of Andalusia).

In this connection the *Practical Handbook on Equal Treatment, Police and the Roma Community* was published targeting the state police and security forces. This handbook has served and will continue to serve as the basis for awareness-raising and training activities targeting law enforcement officials regarding the fight against discrimination and the promotion of equal treatment towards the Roma community.

Also of particular impact were the training and awareness-raising sessions targeting

journalism students, future agents in the media sector and teachers interested in this topic. These training activities were carried out in two universities: The Computer Science Faculty of the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* under the title ***The Social Image of the Roma Community in the Media*** and the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the *Universidad de Valladolid* under the title ***The Image of the Roma Community in the Media***.

In the legal area a seminar was held entitled *Fostering equal treatment and the fight against discrimination in the area of Justice* targeting lawyers and law experts within the framework of the project funded by the Human Rights Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation contributing to the training of lawyers and law experts in equal treatment issues and awareness-raising with a view to combating prejudices and stereotypes giving rise to discriminatory practices in the justice system and protecting the rights of the Roma community.

The Foundation also participated in the Trainers Training programme for discrimination experts given by the European Commission within the framework of the European Project entitled *Capacity Building Civil Society Dealing*



*with Anti-Discrimination* managed by the Luis Vives Foundation. The FSG was invited to take part in this training upon being selected as one of the five national experts in discrimination issues. The course was broken down into several national seminars targeting NGOs and trade unions.

› **Advisory support for victims of discrimination.** In 2007 the FSG collected more than 90 documented cases for its *2008 Discrimination and the Roma Community Report*. The Area of Equal Treatment counselled and provided legal support to the victims of these cases, three of which led to the filing of legal suits and one receiving a favourable judgement recognising the guilt of the perpetrator of the discriminatory act. In line with the Foundation's strategy, the steps taken in these interventions focused on communication, mediation and conciliation before resorting to legal action.


### **Annual Report on Discrimination and the Roma Community 2007.** In



addition to providing an analysis of the situation of the Roma community during the previous year, especially as concerns equal treatment policies and the approval and practical enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation, the *2007 Discrimination and Roma Community Report* describes 146 documented cases shedding light on the situation of inequality still facing a part of the Roma community and provides an in-depth analysis of the nine most significant cases. This Report, translated and published in English as well, continues to be well received and has become a benchmark for institutions in the sector when they examine the conditions contributing to Roma being the group suffering the greatest degree of social rejection.

**» Political and institutional action.**

Together with all of its other activities, political and institutional action is a priority for the FSG which, together with the Red Cross, CEPAIM and ACCEM, has put together a working group to periodically examine and assess the national and European agenda regarding the fight against discrimination. A good

 Discrimination suffered by the Roma community is a constant and global phenomenon in Spain and throughout Europe.

example is the FSG's participation in the creation of a network of organisations promoted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights called the *Fundamental Rights Platform* fighting for equal treatment at European level.

We welcome the collaborative work which we continue to undertake with the public administrations which have supported our activity and with other Spanish and European social organisations networking with the team comprising the Area of Equal Treatment.