

# Institutional activity

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano pays particular attention to institutional activity which means participation in different institutions and a work style focused on cooperation and partnership with public and private entities and the promotion of work networks and platforms.

We seek two basic objectives with this institutional action:

- › First of all to try to involve other key institutions and actors such as competent public authorities, parties and parliamentary groups, social organisations, the media and other areas of civil society in learning more about and developing a sense of solidarity with the Spanish Roma community.
- › Secondly we would like to contribute, just as any other member of the civil society and tertiary sector, to fostering the construction of a fairer society and collaborating in and developing joint actions with other entities around shared objectives.

## **PARTICIPATION IN COUNCILS AND ADVISORY BODIES**

Therefore the FSG is actively present in **the main institutional bodies and advisory councils** related to our sphere of work thus giving it the opportunity to take part in the decisions affecting the social issues having to do with the Roma community.

The FSG forms part of the **State Council of Social Action NGOs**, is a member of the **State Council of the Roma People** and is present in the different participatory bodies of the Roma community set up in some Autonomous Communities such as the Council for the integral advancement and social participation of the Roma People in the Basque Country, the Roma Community Integration Board of the Community of Madrid or the Regional Council for the Roma Community of Extremadura.

This year we have been called upon to participate in the **State Council for the advancement of equal treatment** created by the government cabinet on 21 September 2007 and yet to be constituted. This will be an especially important forum of discussion



THE PRINCE GREETS OUR PRESIDENT AT THE X VOLUNTEERS CONGRESS IN ASTURIAS.

with other actors and will help promote actions to fight against ethnic discrimination, an issue taking a worrisome toll on members of the Roma community.

### NETWORKING WITH OTHER AGENTS

For the FSG, one of the main components of institutional activity is collaboration and networking both in Spain and throughout Europe in diverse spheres and with different types of entities. The FSG collaborates with Roma and non-Roma entities and with public and private institutions working basically in fields related to social exclusion, defence of Roma minority rights, the fight against discrimination, health, employment, etc.

In this connection, our Foundation forms part of the **Social Action NGO Platform** and actively participates in the **EAPN-ES, the European Anti Poverty Network-Spain** where we form part of its executive council as a national organisation. We are



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PEDRO PUENTE, PRESIDENT OF THE FSG; JESÚS CALDERA, MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS; ISIDRO RODRÍGUEZ, DIRECTOR OF THE FSG; VLADIMÍR ŠPIDLA, COMMISSIONER FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION.

likewise involved in the EAPN's different regional networks which are active in most of the Autonomous Communities where it is operating.

Together with other NGOs committed to promoting quality and transparency in the social action sector, the FSG is participating in the constitution of the **NGO Quality Institute** (Spanish acronym ICONG).

In 2007 the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, through the European Social Fund Managing Authority and in collaboration with our Foundation, was behind the creation of the **European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (EUROMA)**, an initiative seeking to encourage greater effectiveness in the earmarking of Structural Funds for Europe's Roma through the exchange and transfer of approaches and best practices. The Administrative Units of the ESF and the departments responsible for Roma policies of eleven of the EU countries have joined this initiative (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Romania and Sweden). In June the first meeting of this Network was held in Madrid and was inaugurated by Vladimír Špidla,

the EC Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

Also within the European framework, at the end of this year several important organisations defending human rights and the advancement of Roma rights constituted an action platform called the **European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC)** which the FSG was invited to join. This coalition is backed by the European Roma Rights Centre, Open Society Institute, ERIO, ERGO and Amnesty International. The Coalition is set up as an informal pressure group to make sure that Roma issues are on the EU agenda and to promote more active policies targeting this community.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Involving different actors in joint projects and objectives is one of our preferred ways of working and one which has proven most useful over the years to make progress in the implementation of measures for the Roma community and the creation of more stable and lasting commitments. The FSG has Collaboration Agreements at local, regional and national level with nearly 300 bodies: City Councils, regional governmental departments and other public and private institutions throughout the country.

One of the factors contributing to the success of the FSG's *Acceder* employment programme this year as we take stock of the results of that programme was the ability to forge close collaborative relationships with businesses and public administrations.

We would also draw attention to the Collaboration Agreements which the FSG has signed with some Ministries which are having an effect over and above the specific actions contained therein by putting the Roma issue on the agenda of these government administrations where issues having to do with the Roma community were typically only addressed by social affairs Ministries and Regional Departments. In any case, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is our main partner and collaborator in many of the Foundation's initiatives.

Today the FSG also has agreements with the **Ministry of Education** and the **Ministry of Health** which has allowed for the compiling of the first study on health and the Roma community

featuring data which can be compared to those of the National Health Survey. Collaboration with the **Ministry of Housing** has also allowed for the drafting of a *Roma community housing map in Spain* which will be published next year. Mention must also be made of the Collaboration Agreements which the Foundation has been signing with some Town Halls, especially the one dating back to 1999 with the City Council of Madrid which has been instrumental in the development of integrated action in five districts throughout the capital city.

As concerns private entities, we would highlight the importance of collaboration with several different enterprises through our employment access programme *Acceder* which has given a great number of Roma access to training and employment. Year after year we have found that private entities are taking greater interest in our work and this has allowed us to expand our sphere of relationships, mostly with the social work projects of financial institutions, for the execution of projects and support for cultural or social awareness-raising activities. In addition to the collaboration established in previous years, the most recent additions include the Caja de Ahorros del Mediterráneo (CAM), the Social Work area of Caja Madrid, La Caixa, the ICO Foundation (Official Credit Institution), El Monte Foundation, Caixa Galicia, Caja España, etc.

## **Activity undertaken by the Foundation's Board of Trustees**

On 27 February Her Majesty Queen Sofia awarded the President of the FSG, **Pedro Puente Fernández** with the **Civilian Order of the Golden Cross for Social Solidarity** “in recognition of his work at the helm of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, platform from which he has encouraged the defence of the rights of this Community, its exercise of full citizenship and the fight on poverty and social exclusion”.

This award from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs acknowledges the long trajectory of Pedro Puente's personal commitment to the Roma cause, a commitment which led to his founding the *Secretariado Gitano*. Along with the collaboration of José Manuel Fresno who was the director of the entity for 23 years, he forged an organisation which has played a decisive role in changing the conditions of poverty, social rejection and

institutional marginalisation which has plagued Spain's Roma community for so long.

**Marcelino Oreja Aguirre**, who has generously been the honorary president of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano since 2001, informed the Board of Trustees at its 11 December meeting of his decision to abandon this honorary post at this time when he is leaving other public responsibilities as well.

During these years the honorary presidency of Marcelino Oreja has not been a mere formality but has rather shown his strong commitment to the Foundation and the cause of the Roma community by frequently participating in the Board's institutional acts and meetings. His closeness and sensitivity to the Roma community was apparent during his mandate as Secretary-General of the Council of Europe from 1984 to 1989.



**MR. MARCELINO OREJA AGUIRRE**



**SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT WITH THE CORDOBA CITY COUNCIL**



**RECOGNITION BY HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF PEDRO PUENTE FOR HIS SOCIAL WORK WITH THE FSG**