

▶ International cooperation



WORKING MEETING FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE EUROMA NETWORK (EUROPEAN NETWORK ON SOCIAL INCLUSION AND ROMA UNDER THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS) IN SEVILLE.

For Europe's Roma population, 2008 was a year marked by several outbreaks of xenophobia and racism in a number of EU countries. In Italy, the Czech Republic, Hungary and others, discriminatory acts and xenophobia perpetrated against the region's most numerous ethnic minority were cause for a great deal of alarm in light of the reiterated violation of human rights and failure to comply with European law. Concern focused not only on equal treatment and non-discrimination but also on fundamental human rights in general.

Reports of these events and the concern expressed by European organisations led to discussion on the inclusion of the Roma population in Europe at the **I European Roma Summit** (Brussels 16 September 2008) which brought together 400 high level representatives including the President of the European Commission, Duraó Barroso, several European Commissioners, representatives from the World Bank, the Council of Europe and Ministers and senior government officials from a number of Member States. Several members of the FSG took part in that event and the Foundation's Director, Isidro Rodríguez, was honoured by being invited to speak.

The main conclusion was the commitment to launch a "European Platform for the Inclusion of the Roma population" aimed at promoting social inclusion policies targeting the Roma population in the different EU Member States.

The FSG, as a specialist organisation with a long history of addressing Roma issues, has reinforced its objectives in the international arena. Initiatives include fostering experience sharing, technical assistance for different players and fostering joint learning throughout Europe.

The following specific objectives have been set:

- 1 Institutional activity: communication with government administrations and public authorities to include the specific interests and needs of the Roma population on the political agenda and to boost pro-active

measures and policies for the advancement of the Roma community.

- ▮ Advisory support and technical assistance: targeting the public administrations, NGOs and other social organisations with a view to sharing approaches and methodology for the development of policies designed for the Roma population and guidelines to follow in drawing up national strategy schemes or implementing local initiatives.
- ▮ Network support and promotion: with a view to fostering partnerships, networking and the exchange of experiences and work approaches and methodology.
- ▮ Execution, monitoring and evaluation of European projects and programmes: aimed at the transnational improvement of the living standard and position of the Roma population in areas such as employment, housing, health, education, youth, equality, etc.

In 2008 this has served to begin to consolidate the FSG as one of Europe's leading organisations in the sphere of the social inclusion of the Roma population. In fact, in light of the projection of the FSG in the international arena over the last several years, the decision was taken at the close of 2008 to give greater weight to the then Area of International Cooperation with the formal creation of the International Department within the Foundation's organisational structure.

The lines of action carried out during 2008 have mainly focused on the development of the EURoma Technical Secretariat, participation in other European networks and the monitoring and execution of European programmes. This is all in addition to specialised technical assistance and advisory work in different areas. Following is a brief description of each of these lines of action:

TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT OF THE EUROMA NETWORK:

The FSG is in charge of the Technical Secretariat of EURoma, the European Network of Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds for the period 2008-2013.

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MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE EUROMA NETWORK AT A MEETING IN BUCHAREST, ROMANIA.

The overarching objective of this Network is to promote the use of Structural Funds to enhance the effectiveness of Roma community social inclusion policies. Twelve EU countries form part of the Network (Spain, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Finland and Sweden). Network members are the ESF Administrative Units and these are the specialised bodies responsible for Roma policy in each of these countries. The Network has the explicit support of the European Commission and the Administrative Unit of the European Social Fund (UAFSE) in Spain and fosters the sharing of information, experiences, best practices, strategies and mutual learning through working groups to specifically address certain areas (employment, education and social inclusion). The Management Committee is the decision-making body which meets at least twice yearly.

The network was formally launched in January in Seville. The second Management Committee meeting was held in Bucharest, Romania in May to decide on the Network's work plan and operational tools. The third Management Committee meeting was held in October in Mytelini, Greece where the dynamic of the theme groups was discussed and planning got under way for the latter's initial activities.

In short, 2008 was the year the EURoma Network was launched. The involvement of a large number of EU countries (including those with the largest Roma population) and their active participation in the Network's meetings and activities are key elements in the eventual consolidation of the Network and the achievement of its founding objective: to improve the use of the Structural Funds for the social inclusion of the Roma community in the EU.

EUROPEAN PROGRAMMES:

The number of European programmes managed in 2008 by the International Department (formerly the International Area) has increased significantly. This increase not only has to do with quantitative aspects (higher number of programmes) but especially with the enlargement of the scope and dimension of international participation: for the first time the FSG is carrying out direct intervention programmes in Europe with



all that this entails for the management and implementation of the FSG's mission on an international scale. This is the case of the transfer of the *Acceder* programme outside of Spain which has required a great deal of technical adaptation to new diverse and complex contexts in another EU country (Romania) but also beyond the borders of the EU (Bosnia and Herzegovina). A major challenge.

› **Acceder Programme in Romania**

The overarching objective of the *Acceder* Programme in Romania is the transfer of the *Acceder* methodology developed in Spain to the Romanian context, working basically within the sphere of training and access to employment together with educational measures in the last years of compulsory education.

The Programme, entitled «*Împreună pe piața muncii*» (“Together in the labour market”), got under way on 1 November 2008. The National Agency for Roma (NAR) is the intermediate body responsible for project management and the FSG is the transnational partner entrusted with providing the necessary technical assistance for the proper transfer of the *Acceder* Programme in Romania. Initially, the Programme will be implemented for a period of two years (2008-2010) in 8 cities in Romania: București (Bucharest-Ilfov Region); Călărași (South Muntenia Region); Craiova (Southwestern-Oltenia Region); Timișoara (Western Region); Cluj-Napoca (North-western Region); Alba Iulia (Central Region); Piatra Neamț (North-eastern Region); and Braila or Galați (Southeast Region). It is funded by the European Social Fund in Romania within the framework of the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD) under priority axis 6: promotion



ACCEDER TEAM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.

of social inclusion. The project will be implemented by five-member teams in each of the 8 offices plus a centralised coordination team. In order to ensure the proper transfer of the *Acceder* methodology, the FSG has transferred one of its staff members, Humberto Garcia, who is permanently on site to provide technical assistance during the project's execution period.

› **The Acceder programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The *Acceder* Programme has likewise been implemented since the beginning of 2008 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically in the city of Sarajevo. That programme is funded by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation which has decided to continue and consolidate the project in 2009. The transfer to Sarajevo of the *Acceder* Programme, so successfully implemented in Spain over the last several years, has been done in several stages. The first entailed adaptation of the Programme's logic, objectives and methodology; the second included on-site (Sarajevo) technical training and tailoring of the methodology to the context and reality of the country; and the third involved monitoring and conclusion of the basic transfer of the

Programme. Following an initial delay in implementation due to bureaucratic issues the *Acceder* team, composed of 4 professionals (coordinator, intercultural mediator, labour counsellor and enterprise mediator) became fully operational. Still pending is the consolidation of the methodology and full involvement of the team in the socioeconomic and administrative context of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an organisation with a project offering positive results and enhanced real opportunities for employment for that country's Roma population.

Project on Free movement and residence: the Roma case

The FSG forms part of the Consortium created to carry out the project entitled “The right to free movement and residence in the Member States of the European Union: the Roma case” which commenced at the end of 2008 and will continue during 2009. The aim of the project, funded by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, is to conduct a study on the protection of the rights of European citizens of Romany origin to move freely and reside in other EU member countries.

In addition to the FSG as the organisation from Spain, the following organisations participate in the Consortium: The European Roma Rights Centre (coordinator), the Finnish League for Human Rights (Finland), the Traveller Education Service (United Kingdom), FNASAT (France) and the European Roma Information Office (international).

The aim of the study is to furnish relevant information to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and to other European institutions and Member States for the implementation of policies and measures to

meet the needs of the EU's Roma population. To that end, a comparative study will be conducted in five Roma migrant recipient countries (United Kingdom, France, Italy, Finland and Spain). Five locations were selected in each country. For Spain, the cities of Valencia, Oviedo, Cordoba, Barcelona and Madrid were selected. The study consists of gathering qualitative information on the situation of Eastern European Roma migrants living in the five participating countries and the policies and programmes being carried out. Fieldwork will mostly entail semi-structured interviews of Roma migrants, representatives of the municipal administrations of the five selected cities and social organisations carrying out programmes with these Roma. The final product will be a shared analysis that will include, inter alia, the situation of Roma migrants in the countries of origin and destination, negative and positive factors in the different countries, available measures and resources, successes and limitations of these measures, cases of discrimination, etc. This information will be supplemented by a more in-depth case study in each country and a best practices report.



<http://www.euromanet.eu/>

› **The Building Inclusion programme**

The FSG participated as an associated entity in the project entitled “Building Inclusion” led by the Directorate-General for Immigrant Integration of the Ministry of Labour and Immigration and funded by the European Commission within the framework of the 2008-2009 PROGRESS Programme. Five partner countries take part in the Programme to share experiences in the area of access to housing and social inclusion. This year the FSG contributed with best practices and know-how from Roma population shanty town eradication experiences at grass roots level, specifically in Aviles and Cordoba. It has also participated in the study visits organised to foster learning and experience sharing.

In 2008 there was another series of European programmes supported by the International Department although they were implemented by the Social Action Department.

› **Health and the Roma Community Programme**

The FSG’s Area of Health leads the project entitled “Health and the Roma Community, analysis of the situation in Europe” under the auspices of the European Union within the framework of the Public Health Programme. The project’s aim is to collect reliable and objective data on the health situation of the Roma population, the use of health services and access to healthcare in Spain, Bulgaria, Portugal, Romania, Greece, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It is being carried out from November 2007 to October 2009. In 2008 the stage was set to conduct the study allowing for the detection of inequality gaps and needs of the Roma population in terms of health following discussions on research methodology with specialist groups created for that purpose in each country.

› **Roma Youth Programme – European Citizenship**

The project entitled “Roma Youth - European Citizenship” funded by the European Commission is an initiative coordinated by the FSG (through the area of youth) running from 15 December 2006 to 15 December 2008 with partners from Slovakia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Romania for the purpose of building the capacity of young Roma in the exercise of their citizenship at European level. Exchanges and study visits have been carried out and teaching material compiled through



MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE EUROMA EUROPEAN NETWORK AT THE MEETING IN LESBOS, GREECE.





the project with a view to raising the awareness and training young people regarding issues having to do with European citizenship: how the European Union came about, enlargement processes and criteria, EU institutions, fundamental rights and other topics.

PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN NETWORKS:

The FSG has been involved in a number of different fora entailing activities at European level in defence and promotion of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination of the Roma community throughout Europe.

► European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC)

In March, the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) of European NGOs was created with the objective of lobbying the European Union to take firm action against the discrimination and inequality suffered by the Roma population throughout Europe following the logic that the *Roma issue* has a European dimension and that it therefore requires joint responses from all EU Member States and institutions. In this connection, the Coalition urges the EU to adopt a *Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion* addressing three key issues: the responsibility of national authorities to fulfil their duty to protect the Roma population from discrimination; foster equal access to education, healthcare and housing for the Roma population; and support and build the capacity of Roma through participation in the country's civic and economic life.



The adoption of a European Framework Strategy for the social inclusion of the Roma population will take a global and comprehensive approach to the persistent discrimination suffered by Europe's largest ethnic minority and to the human rights violations endured by this population and the conditions of social and economic inequality they face in many EU countries.

The said strategy will also draw up a roadmap for the different Member States promoting the coordination of national policies and guidelines and assistance for their implementation. A systematic exchange of proven best practices will likewise be structured among Member States.

VLADIMIR SPIDLA, COMMISSIONER FOR EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND THE PHILANTHROPIST GEORGE SOROS DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT THE SUMMIT.

The FSG participates in this Coalition with other renowned European organisations with a proven track record in the defence of human rights, the fight on discrimination and social intervention work with the Roma population: Amnesty International (AI); European Network Against Racism (ENAR), European Roma Grassroots Organisation (ERGO), European Roma Information Office (ERIO), European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), Minority Rights Group International (MRGI); Open Society Institute (OSI), Spolu International Foundation (SF) and Roma Education Fund (REF).

The ERPC has distinguished itself as a relevant player in communication with different EU institutions and has participated in numerous events organised in the EU where it has made an impact.

European Anti-poverty Network (EAPN-EU)

The FSG forms part of the European Anti-poverty Network (EAPN-EU) through the Spanish EAPN-ES network and participates in several working groups, the Executive Committee and the Group of State Entities.

Fundamental Rights Platform

The FSG also participates in the Fundamental Rights Platform attached to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). This is a cooperation network between the FRA and non-governmental organisations defending human rights which aims to be a permanent and dynamic mechanism for information sharing and discussion in this field.



SPEECH MADE BY ISIDRO RODRÍGUEZ, DIRECTOR OF THE FSG, AT THE FIRST EUROPEAN ROMA SUMMIT HELD IN BRUSSELS, SEPTEMBER 2008.

“The first European Roma Summit was attended by over 400 high-ranking representatives to discuss the social inclusion of Roma in Europe.”



<http://www.romapolicy.eu/>
WEB PAGE OF THE EUROPEAN ROMA POLICY COALITION