

# Advancement of ▶▶ Roma culture



COMMEMORATIVE POSTER FOR 8 APRIL "INTERNATIONAL ROMA DAY 2008". PHOTO BY JESÚS SALINAS.

The Roma community is a very relevant sector of the population in the European Union with approximately 10 million members. A significant proportion of the members of Europe's Roma ethnic minority remain immersed in a situation of social exclusion, subject to discrimination processes which limit the exercise of their rights and their access to resources and services, cultural included, which are readily available to the rest of Europe's citizens.

Spanish society today is a mosaic of historic and cultural realities with its own idiosyncrasies,

languages and peoples. Within this multicultural context it is important to point out that the history of the Roma people in Spain dates back nearly six centuries, is very diverse, that the Roma people have assimilated many of the cultural elements they found here and that today's culture is brimming with contributions made by Roma in art, literature, language, trade, music, etc.

Roma are citizens with full rights, with their own cultural characteristics and share a common identity which does not take anything away from their citizenship but just the opposite; it



CD FEATURING ROMA CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

represents richness and valued added for our society of which we all form part.

Despite nearly 600 years of co-existence, it cannot be said that the Roma integration process has been satisfactory. In fact, the majority society is not fully aware of this co-existence nor of the contributions made by Roma culture to our common acquis. For this reason (and others) it is important to recognise and celebrate the existence of Roma culture.

The FSG has two basic objectives in promoting Roma culture:

**To foster awareness of Spanish Roma cultural life** and the social changes which Roma has undergone and to use this awareness as an integrating element to transmit positive images and disseminate their contributions while giving visibility to Roma communities and their culture in different locations.

**Make people aware of Roma cultural elements** forming part of Spanish traditions. In Spain, Roma have managed to get on better

with mainstream society than in other countries and thanks to that the society has gained from Roma contributions in terms of music, lifestyles and traditions. Spain is an example of both failed co-existence and success stories and neither should be forgotten.

In 2008, approximately 20,000 people took part in our cultural activities organised in more than 20 locations throughout all of Spain with a total of over 100 performances.

Activities can be broken down in the following groups:

- 】 Commemoration of International Roma Day (April 8th) in most of the Autonomous Communities.
- 】 Organisation of and participation in cultural weeks such as the VI Roma Culture Week in Murcia or the celebration of the *Feria Chica Gitana* (Roma fair) in Merida.
- 】 Intercultural meetings and conferences at schools and other institutions.
- 】 Cinema-forum where films and documentaries are shown to work on interculturality and learn more about Roma history and culture.
- 】 Entertainment and sports activities: cultural visits, theatre, dance, photography, singing, percussion, football championships, storytelling, etc.
- 】 Cultural workshops.

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- Presentations related to the Fundación Secretariado Gitano’s awareness-raising campaigns putting a special focus on Roma culture.
- Debate and reflection seminars on the situation of the Roma community yesterday and today.
- Participation in radio and television programmes such as in Badajoz with the report entitled “Five lives of women” or “Christmas Eve with a Roma family” or in Merida with a radio forum on Roma women.

- Different publications: the magazine entitled *Gitanos, Pensamiento y Cultura* (Roma, Thought and Culture). The news bulletin entitled *Los Gitanos en la Prensa* (Roma in the news) with a section focusing on culture. And a long series of monographs such as cook books and others depicting aspects of Roma culture.
- Dissemination of Roma culture through the documentation centre at the Fundación Secretariado Gitano’s headquarters.
- “Sharing Cultures, Roma Today” and “Roma Women, Participating” the aim of which is to foster inter-culturality based on knowledge of the history and culture of the Roma people with a view to favouring cross-cultural enrichment from a perspective free of any discriminatory attitudes and to showcase examples of Roma women’s participation in education, employment, politics and art.



PRESS CLIPPING ABOUT FSG CULTURAL ACTIVITIES.



8 APRIL CELEBRATION





FLAMENCO PERFORMANCE AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY OF FSG HEADQUARTERS IN MADRID.

In 2008 these exhibits have been shown at a number of different venues and visited by many people at the permanent facility at FSG headquarters (Vallecas-Madrid).

Preparation of and participation in many of these activities had the backing of the resources and services of the FSG's Documentation Centre which is a focal point for information and a benchmark for our entity and other institutions when putting together any sort of exhibit.

Through the Ministry of Culture's Action and Cultural Promotion assistance, in 2008 the FSG released the CD entitled *Villancicos Gitanos* (Roma Christmas Carols) as an addendum to the book published in 2007 entitled *Navidad, las costumbres y la tradición en hogares gitanos de España* (Roma families at Christmas, customs and traditions in Roma homes throughout Spain). The aim of this initiative was none other than to promote Roma culture by making it more visible and sharing the Christmas experiences and musical traditions of several Roma families.

A series of materials related to Roma culture has also been published:

- 】 *Cocinando... "disfrutando de la comida saludable en León"* (Cooking... enjoying healthy food in Leon) (FSG León)
- 】 The cookbook entitled *Quinina calí* (FSG Burgos)
- 】 *Recetas gitanas. Pucheros para compartir* (Sharing Roma recipes) (FSG Murcia).

We should point out that these publications reflect the participation, in the form of testimony and experiences, of a number of Roma women and men who have taken part in the FSG's activities and programmes in the different regions.

The promotion of Roma culture by the FSG has become a permanent activity of the Foundation's professional teams. These activities focus solely on cultural promotion but we must point out that culture is also transversely present in many other activities.

“Today's culture is brimming with contributions made by Roma in the fields of art, literature, language, trade, music, etc