

Employment and vocational training

2

2009 has been marred by a deep socio-economic crisis. Day in and day out, in our immediate surroundings and in the media, we have been bombarded with the consequences of a crisis which, at first sight, was financial, but then proceeded to destroy employment at a devastating rate and is now making us question our very model of growth and social development.

The consequences of this serious crisis are easily identifiable in broad sectors of society and are particularly dramatic among the most disadvantaged. One of its most pernicious manifestations is rising unemployment and the number of Roma homes left without income from the labour market. Declining employment means rising social needs and calls for specific resources earmarked to mitigate the inevitable growth in inequality facing the Roma community.

2009 data continue to show how this situation is having a very

powerful impact on the Roma population's access to employment with a 27% reduction in the number of contracts gained through the intermediation of the FSG's employment programmes. And this is coupled with an increasing number of people who are coming to the FSG's employment offices to initiate their quest to join the labour market. The number of people taking part in these programme's has increased by 27% compared to pre-crisis years.



CUSTOMER SERVICE COURSE. GRANADA

We continue to find an excessively demanding labour market which excludes those with low qualification and lacking skills, and this includes a significant portion of the Roma community. Today we face the risk of a widening social exclusion gap and losing some of the headway made, not only in terms of employment but also in the opportunities and changes which having a job on the mainstream labour market meant for many Roma families.

Moreover, the labour market cannot afford to disregard the rich human diversity and potential talent of this group. Their exclusion would be very costly to society. That is why the FSG stands by these individuals and tries to respond to their needs and help them gain access to the labour market. This is the optimal way (but not the only one) to reach a higher level of personal autonomy and participation.

Today we know that we must put a priority on actions targeting those who are most cut off from the labour market by stepping up actions and making a more concerted effort over the next several years, setting sights on fostering individual autonomy so that they can recover their ability to take decisions and responsibility for their own life projects. At the FSG we believe that providing resources and proposing methodologies to help and accompany each individual to find his or her answers is the best

“The labour market crisis is increasing the risk of widening the social exclusion gap and losing ground gained.”



EXAMINATION OF FOOD HANDLERS. MURCIA

way to jointly contribute to the learning process and set each person on the path to change.

That is why the FSG's training and employment programmes stress improving the employability of Roma men and women through the design of individualised labour market integration pathways which put a special accent on motivation to take part in vocational training and the implementation of training initiatives as a compensatory tool which will allow them to compete on an equal footing with the rest of the population.

Furthermore, over the last two years we have implemented actions to raise the level of education and training leading to quality employment by adapting our services and adopting new strategies which basically focus on four pillars:

- }** **Adapting demand to Roma.** This means identifying new needs and priorities with a view to adapting responses, revising strategies and priorities and optimising and adapting the FSG's training and employment services.
- }** **Stressing training and qualification,** earmarking more resources to training initiatives linked as closely as possible to employment.

} **Putting even more stress on labour market intermediation** with the business world because exists, it's just scarcer. In this respect, we have chosen to sign more agreements with big enterprise to collaborate in training and employment at national, regional and local level.

} **Reinforcing cooperation between organisations and governments** by increasing networking, improving coordination and strengthening collaboration with government administrations, enterprise and other stakeholders.

These strategies are carried out by means of integrated intervention with an individualised and multi-dimensional approach focusing intervention on the environment, the family context and the labour market detecting employment possibilities and alliances. This is a mainstreaming approach where we apply a methodology covering a wide range of aspects ranging from labour market counselling to labour skills training without losing sight of the importance of the social skills needed on the job and which segments of the Roma population are lacking.



FRESH PRODUCE WORKERS AT CARREFOUR. ALICANTE.

6 Access to the labour market is the optimal way (but not the only one) to reach a higher level of personal autonomy and participation in society.

In this connection, we take account of the needs of the Roma community, working from a position of empathy focusing on their specific interests and seeking actions that offer alternatives to their specific shortcomings while at the same time keeping a close watch on the needs and requirements of the current labour market.

To achieve this, our work revolves around **three broad areas of intervention:**

- **Direct intervention with the Roma population** the specific objective of which is to undertake direct actions to improve employability. These goal-oriented actions, focusing on and prioritising the participation of Roma and non-Roma alike, are always implemented favouring an intercultural context. These actions mainly but not exclusively target the Roma population, meaning that a maximum of 30% non-Roma population is envisaged on the Programme.
- **Institutional intervention** mostly focusing on supporting more pro-active social policies for the improvement of living and working conditions and the solution of the problems and needs of the Roma population. It is generally the case that there is no real and updated information on the situation and problems faced by the Roma population with respect to the labour market, there are very



CASHIER'S COURSE. VITORIA

few specialised professionals in this line of work with the Roma population, there is no transfer of positive experiences and there continues to be a need to support better adaptation of the Training and Employment Systems to the specific reality of this sector of the population in order to favour access.

- A permanent task of **awareness-raising of the society at large and of the agents intervening in the labour market** favouring the elimination of all discrimination against the Roma population and its access to training and employment. This goal is met, on the one hand, by implementing actions with the Roma community to foster change in their attitude when it comes to training and employment and, on the other hand, by working with government administrations, entrepreneurs, potential employers and public opinion in general, with the aim of raising their awareness with respect to the problems faced by this sector of the population in the area of training and access to employment, reducing prejudice and encouraging the commencement of positive actions.

To achieve this, the following types of actions are undertaken:

- } Information and labour counselling;
- } Individual employment pathways;

We seek to enhance employability as an integration strategy targeting the Roma population and to eliminate the difficulties and barriers in gaining access to training and salaried employment with a view to effectively implementing the equal opportunity principle.

- } Vocational training;
- } Intermediation and labour market integration;
- } Mixed training and employment;
- } Support for sheltered employment initiatives;
- } Implementation of integrated social integration pathways with Roma from Eastern Europe.

The main programmes run by the FSG in the field of vocational training and employment revolve around the Acceder programme within the Multi-Regional Operational Programme to Combat Discrimination (European Social Fund) with co-funding provided within the framework of the Roma community labour market integration Programme and the Social Inclusion Programme with budget allocations from the Income Tax programme (Ministry of Health and Social Policy), and within the comprehensive reception programme and support measures for the integration of Roma from Eastern Europe (Directorate-General for Immigrant Integration, Ministry of Labour and Immigration).