



“Împreună”
Agency for Community Development

Madrid, 2005, November 5,

Ladies and Gentelman,

The European Social Fund (ESF), is the “oldest” established Structural Fund, was set up by the Treaty of Rome (1957) to improve job opportunities in the Community by promoting employment and increasing the geographical and occupational mobility of workers.

The European Social Fund is spending €60 billion between 2000 and 2006 to develop work skills and social skills. Special attention was/is paid to funding for areas of the EU with particularly high levels of unemployment or low average incomes. €3 billion is reserved for the EQUAL programme. This tests new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality.

European Social Fund (FSE) <http://www.eubusiness.com/guides/social>

Fields of intervention for the Convergence Objective:

- To increase the adaptability of labour force and enterprises
- To enhance the access of job-seekers and unemployed persons to the labour market, to prevent unemployment, to extend active life and enhance women's and migrants' degree of participation in the labour market
- To support the social inclusion of disadvantaged persons and to fight discrimination
- *Reform* in the field of employment and social inclusion, in particular by promoting the development of partnerships and conventions by the networking of relevant national, regional, and local stakeholders
- Expanding and improving investment in human capital (education and professional training)

- Strengthening the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration and public services at national, regional and local level, with a view to implementing reforms, in particular in the following fields: economic, social, legal, employment, environment.

As can be noticed, the Roma minority does not enjoy special status in the FSE allocation. Nevertheless, if the documents are supported by accurate and verifiable statistical data, in many cases the Roma are indirectly referred to as “disadvantaged groups”; this phrase defines social groups facing major problems on the labour market, due either to inappropriate professional training, or to discriminatory practices (EQUAL).

The main phenomena / processes faced by Roma on the labour market, which are of relevance to FSE, are the following:

- A reduction in the degree of employment and implicitly a reduction in income;
- An accelerated increase in unemployment and in the number of jobseekers;
- Dysfunction and rigidity in the labour market in areas inhabited by a majority / significant Roma population;
- Inappropriate or missing qualifications; the lack of education/training in accordance with current labour market demands;
- The employment status of the population over 16, among whom the number of day workers is increasing;
- An increase in the number of self-employed persons (day workers) and a decrease in the proportion of waged workers, leading to a drop in the standard of living and the social and economic marginalisation of the Roma.

- The competent authorities' lack of information concerning the sectoral approach to the felt needs of Roma communities.
- Discriminatory practices against the Roma.

In many states, domestic legislation holds that the Roma minority must receive major support in order to achieve a coherent professional inclusion. In Romania, the Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM – www.mmsf.ro) lays down specific targets and objectives regarding the professional inclusion of the Roma. These objectives have been introduced only after analysis and research carried out by the National Anti-Poverty Committee for Promoting Social Inclusion (www.caspis.ro) revealed that the degree of employment of the Roma population in Romania is much lower than the degree of employment of the general population (47% compared to 61.7%); Out of the **employed population**, about 27.5% are waged workers; 65% of this percentage are **men**. The proportion of non-working housewives is more than 4 times greater among the Roma population than among the general population, indicating the **low participation of Roma women** in the labour market. These accurate and verifiable data have led to the inclusion of the Roma minority among the disadvantaged categories considered as potential FSE support beneficiaries.

It is self-evident that, in order to guarantee the achievement of good results by implementing FSE programmes for the Roma, we should focus our attention on clear answers to questions such as:

1. What are the values and particularities of Roma community members and what prevents their access to the labour market?
2. Which are the appropriate social policies and, in particular, what should be the response of the social system to Roma integration into the labour market?
4. What are the measures which interested social actors should take in order to ensure the non-discriminatory access of all Romanian citizens to the labour market?

The answers to these questions will certainly be useful both to the relevant central institutions and their reporting institutions (the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family – the National Employment Agency, the Ministry of European Integration, the General Secretariat of the Government – the National Agency for the Roma), and to non-governmental organisations which are developing or wish to promote projects leading to an increase in the economic capacity of the Roma population in Romania.

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