

The Roma community in Europe

An estimated 10 million Roma citizens live in Europe today and are unevenly distributed throughout the whole of the continent but tend to concentrate in Eastern European countries (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria).



Given their history and the different contexts in which they have lived, Roma is a heterogeneous and diverse people. However, if there is a common denominator characterising Roma in the countries where they have settled, it would have to be the conditions of poverty and marginalisation. Social exclusion and rejection on the part of the majority society are conditioning factors which have left their mark. Although this situation has been improving for many Roma, it is still urgent for a large proportion of Europe's Roma population: much higher unemployment rates than for the rest of the citizens, much lower levels of education, precarious health and run-down housing conditions. Furthermore, Roma is the most rejected social group and the one suffering the greatest discrimination from majority peoples. For all of these reasons, intervention taken to improve the integration of the Roma community in their respective societies is more than warranted.

FSG’s experience in international cooperation

For over a decade now the FSG has been working in Europe-wide projects and participates in transnational networks and hence, the Foundation's international dimension has been growing over the years. Now that work in Spain has taken root, it is free to broaden its geographical horizons and spheres of action through European projects.

International
cooperation in respect
of ethnic minorities
FSG's experience



FSG's experience in international cooperation

In 1999 the FSG began to extend its actions to the Eastern European countries where there is a greater concentration of Roma population and the social situation is most dire. The timeliness and political relevance of the protection of minorities on an international scale, together with the process of European enlargement (accounting for the incorporation of approximately six million Roma between 2004 and 2007), has drawn attention over the last several years to the repercussions and impact this will have on the Spanish Roma population.

Until just recently, Spain was the European Union country (EU-15) with the largest Roma population. Thanks to its specialisation and extensive work in this field, the FSG can contribute through the experience it has gained in working with this group and through the social integration model developed by Spain over the last several decades.

The FSG's international cooperation activities are carried out mainly through three basic lines of action:

- Consulting and technical assistance in the design and execution of measures and policies provided to the different levels of public administration (state, regional and local) and to Roma associations and social entities working with this population sector;
- Specific training and improvement of the qualifications of the Roma themselves and of the field professionals working with them;
- The broadening and promotion of links and experience sharing with entities and institutions of other countries promoting networks and work platforms.