

International
cooperation in respect
of ethnic minorities
FSG's experience



Projects undertaken

In the sphere of international cooperation, the FSG's work focuses mainly on the provision of consultation support and training and the promotion of experience-sharing and work approaches. Depending on the project, one of these factors may take precedence over the rest and therefore, for illustrative purposes, we have divided projects into three categories depending on the activities which are prioritised:

1. Theme-based transnational networks
2. Bilateral twinning
3. Technical assistance

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1 Theme-based transnational networks

These projects, mostly led by the FSG, single out a specific subject (education, health, equal treatment, social inclusion, etc.) concerning which transnational partners are sought in order to share and exchange experiences. Although national contexts may be different, informal networking of this sort provides a very enriching mutual learning experience for all partner entities involved.

Health

In the area of health, the **European Network SASTIPEN** (health in Romany) is an initiative which was started in 1995 when the FSG, with the backing of the European Commission and the National Drug Plan, launched a programme for the purpose of gaining greater insight into the needs of the Roma population in respect of the effects of drug dependency and HIV/AIDS.

Network activity has been ongoing since 1995 to the present through different projects. With the passage of time the Network has become more firmly established and new partners from different Community countries, where the Roma population faces dynamics similar to those prevailing in Spain, have come

on board. The scope of the work undertaken has extended beyond drug dependency and HIV/AIDS and has become an important source of knowledge and information on the health status of the Roma population in Europe and now has the possibility of become a valid go-between with public administrations in this area of health-care, lobbying for greater attention to be put on this population which is normally forgotten when it comes to the design and implementation of policies.



The types of actions undertaken within the framework of the SASTIPEN projects range from mediator training to the drawing up of budgets and recommendations and the development of specially-adapted materials with a view to improving the health-care situation of the Roma population and the latter's access to health-care services.





The SASTIPEN Network is a forum for reflection and exchange, a platform for the promotion of actions whose purpose is to improve the living standard and health of Europe's Roma population.

Special mention should be made of the latest two projects implemented. During 2003 and 2004, the FSG carried out the project “**Promotion of cooperation networks among entities addressing the problem of drug addiction and the Roma community**”. On this occasion, partners from Eastern European countries took part (Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria). This project, supported by the European Commission's D.G. Enlargement, is basically focused on networking with regard to drug dependency prevention and the training of social agents concerning a specific topic such as this.

The latest project carried out within the framework of the SASTIPEN Network is “**Reduction of health inequalities in the Roma Community**” (2005-2006) forming part of the European Public Health Programme. Partners are from Bulgaria, Slovakia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, the Czech Republic and Romania. The aim of this project is to gather information on the health situation of the Roma community in Europe, analyse the socio-economic and environmental factors having a negative effect on the Roma population and identify the factors hindering mainstream access to health-care services.

As for social inclusion at European level, in 1999 the FSG launched a project within the framework of “**Preparatory actions to combat and prevent social exclusion**”. The main objective of this initial project (in which the FSG led a group of partners from Portugal, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom) was to identify and thoroughly analyse the causes underlying the social exclusion of the Roma population and to reflect on why anti-exclusion social policies have barely had any impact whatsoever on Roma. One of the main tasks of the partners was also to identify positive experiences or best practices in combating social exclusion. This project was mostly focused on research and analysis.



Social inclusion □



In 2002 within a new European framework defined by the European Social Inclusion Strategy and its attendant Community Action Programme, the FSG submitted a pilot project entitled “**Promotion of more pro-active social inclusion policies for the Roma and Traveller communities**”. This project was instrumental in drawing up a subsequent one involving a wide array of partners from 14 different entities and 7 European countries. While the previous project included only Member States from EU-15, this second project, running from 2002 to 2005, came at an historic time marked by the enlargement of the European Union to include Eastern European countries and the importance acquired by the large Roma population in this process of the then candidate countries. The FSG was in tune with this situation and incorporated countries from Eastern European countries in all of its projects.

This project has had great institutional relevance for the FSG insofar as 7 Ministries responsible for the social inclusion policies of the partner countries as well as one NGO per country, all became involved as partners in the same project. The transnational and institutional dimension of the project has had a great impact.

Project objectives were consistent with fostering institutional action, particularly focused on National Action Plans for Social Inclusion and capacity-building with a view to promoting the social inclusion of the Roma population. Actions were designed to analyse social inclusion policies and devise indicators allowing for the assessment of progress in the Roma inclusion process

Projects undertaken

and recommendations in this connection. The final result of that effort was the publication of an extensive joint report along with an instrument entitled “*Awareness-raising guide for the social inclusion of the Roma community*”, summarising the guidelines of previous analyses. The project likewise included training in each of the partner countries targeting Roma associations to foster their participation in social inclusion processes as well as the public administrations responsible for social policies.

Education □

In the field of education, the Foundation has implemented several projects under the umbrella of the different versions of the European Socrates Programme. From 1996 to 1999, the FSG implemented a number of projects focusing on the “**Training of mediators and teaching staff at schools where Roma students are enrolled**”. The purpose of these projects was to support teaching staff by developing strategies, materials and resources to facilitate the educational processes of Roma students at the different stages of education and to draw attention to aspects such as cultural diversity, values education and co-existence and intercultural education.

In 2001, the project entitled “**Training and support for teachers at schools with cultural diversity**” was undertaken for the main purpose of contributing to ongoing teacher training in the area of diversity and intercultural education. In this case, support





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documents were drafted for teachers with guidelines, suggestions and basic strategies for dealing with cultural diversity and calling for the inclusion of material on minority cultures (especially Roma) in course syllabi. The project also included identification of best teaching practices and values education for a multi-cultural society, cooperation between in-school and external educational agents, social integration of ethnic minorities in the school, etc. Partners from France, Portugal and Slovakia took part.

The FSG has also worked in the field of the adult education within the project: **“LUMINA: lifelong learning for disadvantaged adults”** (2001-2004) with partners from the United Kingdom and Romania.

In 2003 the FSG coordinated the project **“Ethnic minorities and secondary education: the Roma student body”**. The purpose was to analyse the variables affecting educational processes of ethnic-cultural minority students (Roma) at the secondary level of education, and to define measures and strategies to promote access to school, permanence and ultimately, success. In partnership with six countries, specific analysis actions were implemented to gain insight into the factors influencing access to and permanence in secondary school in the case of these students; to promote awareness-raising; and to compile documents containing guidelines to foster access to and academic success of ethnic minority students in secondary education.



In 2005, the FSG initiated a two-year project entitled **“A new approach to relations between students, teachers and parents”** through which a didactic application of the “Forum Theatre” method has been developed as a methodological strategy to work on communication and settlement of disputes in a group setting. The FSG participated as a partner along with organisations from Romania and Turkey.

Vocational training and employment □

In this area, the FSG began to work with European funds in 1995. The first project was **“ENFORMA-Empowerment”** (a Horizon Initiative) consisting in the training of mediators and the sharing of labour market integration experiences with partners from France, Greece and Ireland. In 1996, this project was followed up with the **“FORMAROM”** project (Leonardo Da Vinci Programme) with the aim of enhancing the quality of initial vocational training and the transition of youth to an active life of employment. Work was undertaken with partners from France, Italy and Portugal.

Projects undertaken

Equal treatment and the fight against discrimination □

Another important work area where the Foundation has been making a constant effort to follow and disseminate European guidelines is that of equal treatment and the fight against discrimination. The European Union is known for spearheading the promotion of anti-discrimination legislation and for supporting measures and projects related to equal treatment, far ahead of the majority of individual Member States.

The FSG took part at different “Fight against Racism” campaigns (1995-1999) and in 1999 coordinated a project entitled **“Identification of best practices against discrimination levelled at the Roma community”**. The objectives were, on the one hand, to analyse the indirect discrimination to which the Roma population is subjected in terms of treatment received in gaining access to certain public services and social rights. On the other hand, cases of best practices were identified in these same spheres including an analysis of their strategies both in terms of filing complaints and raising awareness as regards these forms of discrimination and of how to correct them. The results of this process were published in the document entitled **“Roma and Discrimination. A Transnational Study”** featuring case studies from all of the participating countries (Spain, Ireland, France, Portugal and the Netherlands).

In 2002 the FSG carried out the project **“Raising awareness for the promotion of equal treatment”**, a European project

But without a doubt, the most important project in this area is **“ACCEDER: Roma community access to the labour market”**, a project which started out as a pilot experience with our French partners in the framework of the INTEGRA Programme in 1998 and which, due to its good results, was enlarged and turned into a six-year project (2000-2006) financed with Structural Funds (ESF and ERDF). This project, combining individualised itineraries towards employment with more general training, technical assistance and awareness-raising methods has received the recognition of the European Commission as a model of best practices in light of its results and good management. In fact, the project has been renewed for the new Structural Fund period 2007-2013.



Within the framework of the Socrates programmes but in the Grundtvig 2 section, in 2005 the FSG embarked upon the project entitled **“Skills for companies and job-seekers”**. Together with partners from Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy and Romania, this project promoted the organisation of exchanges and the production of tools in two areas: vocational counselling methodologies targeting job-seekers and interdependence with companies with a view to conducting an objective and practical assessment of the competences and skills required of potential workers.

with a national dimension, designed to raise the awareness of government administrations and Spanish social organisations regarding the new legal framework being implemented in the European Union with a special focus on Council Regulation 2000/43 Implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment Between Persons Irrespective of Racial or Ethnic Origin. Within the framework of this project, the handbook entitled “Discrimination and the Roma Community. Key issues and strategies for the promotion of equal treatment” was published and an international seminar on this subject was organised.

In 2004, the FSG launched the preparatory phase of the project entitled “**ROMA-EDEM: promoting integration and equal treatment of Roma/Travellers in education and employment**”, implemented during the course of 2005 and 2006 within the framework of the Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination. The main objective here was to help close the existing gap between anti-discrimination legislation and institutional practice. The project includes a number of bodies specialising in combating discrimination in Northern Ireland, Portugal, Romania, the Czech Republic and Hungary, along with



Promotion
of Roma/Traveller
Integration and
Equal Treatment
in Education
and Employment

a Romanian NGO. The project achieved its initial objectives through the organisation of national and international seminars focusing on education and employment and the publication of specialised material and a handbook on discrimination intended for the Roma community.

European citizenship

A new area of work that the FSG has recently initiated under the umbrella of its international dimension is that of fostering European citizenship among young Roma. Throughout 2007 and 2008, within the framework of Action 5 of the European Programme “YOUTH”, the project entitled “**Roma youth - European citizenship**” has set the objective of fostering the capacity-building of Roma young people in the exercise of their citizenship at European level and informing and training Roma youth to get them involved in European processes and dynamics with a view to putting them on an equal footing with the rest of Europe's youth and citizens.

Through training and capacity-building actions on European citizenship, the publication of teaching material, a web page, the celebration of Europe Day, the publication of a Teaching Handbook “*Roma Youth: European Citizenship*” and the organisation of study visits, the project seeks to close the gap between Roma youth and the notion of Europe and European citizenship as well as its values, resources, participatory mechanisms, etc. Partners from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia are taking part in this project.

2 Bilateral twinning

Phare Twinning is a formula created by the European Commission whereby a Member State of the European Union supports and advises the administration of a Candidate Country in a specific field as part of its European Union incorporation process. This is the main cooperation instrument for European governance created in 1997 in which the FIIAPP, as the intermediary between the Commission and the national government, plays an important role. These are projects based on institutional capacity-building, consulting in the design and implementation of policies, training of key players, etc. In these types of projects the Pre-accession Advisor, the main expert entrusted with the implementation of the project, works directly in the beneficiary country.

The FSG's first experience with this sort of project was in the Czech Republic with the project entitled “**Fostering ethnic and racial equality**” (2000-2002). In this case the FSG implemented the project in collaboration with the UK Ministry of the Interior, the counterpart being the Czech Department of Human Rights. The aim of the project was to support the Czech Government in the design and development of its legislative and institutional framework to combat racial discrimination.



In 2003 in Hungary the FSG launched the project “**Enhancing the effectiveness of policies targeting the Roma community**”. For a period of 21 months, the Pre-accession Advisor was in charge of coordinating institutional strengthening actions at the Hungarian Government's Office for Roma Affairs consisting mostly in technical advisory support and drawing up plans and measures aimed at the Roma community and the training of personnel working at that Office. During the course of the project, a great many visits were made and meetings were held with different key players allowing for a thorough analysis of the institutional framework and practical application. All of this was then used for the subsequent drafting of proposal documents and final recommendations addressed to the Hungarian Government.

For a period of 6 months in 2004, and once again in the Czech Republic (Twinning Light), the FSG carried out the project “**Combating social exclusion of the Roma community**”. This project provided support to the Office of the Council for Roma Affairs of the Czech Government in the design of an institutional model to coordinate and implement actions focusing on the Roma population and on improving the impact that employment, social affairs and housing policies have on this sector of the population. Many analysis and proposal documents were drawn up and several training seminars were organised in different Czech cities.



In 2005 the FSG undertook the project entitled “**Promotion of ethnic tolerance**” in the Russian Federation (Republic of Udmurt). These projects, with the same format as the PHARE-Twinning projects, are carried out with third-party countries in Eastern Europe (not European Union candidate countries) under the TACIS programme. This was the first time that the Foundation worked in this geographical area outside of the European Union and its candidate countries. Implementing this project was a major challenge for the FSG but also opened the door to new possibilities for cooperation. The purpose of this one-year project was to create collaboration mechanisms between the central government, town halls, ethnic associations and the media with a view to fostering ethnic tolerance in a republic with over 70 minorities.



3 Technical assistance

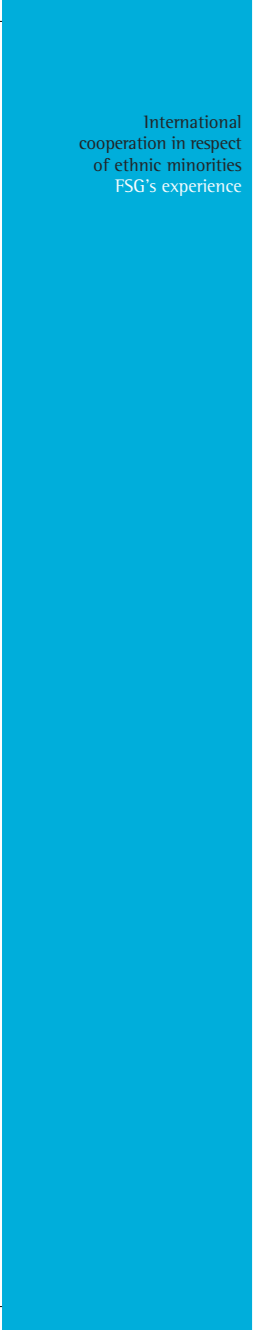
Although most of our international projects are based on technical assistance, we intentionally created a specific section for those principally focusing on technical assistance and which, given their characteristics, do not fit the description of the preceding sections.

In 1999, the FSG commenced cooperation with Eastern European countries with the project entitled “**Technical assistance regarding Roma policies in Slovakia and transfer of best practices**”. This two-year project was carried out with the support of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (Spanish acronym AECI) and its counterpart was the Slovakian Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and Minorities. The aim of this project was to provide technical assistance through the transfer of Spanish approaches and experiences, mostly targeting municipalities and social entities in Slovakia. A number of study visits were organised in Spain and training seminars in Slovakia and a handbook was compiled entitled *The Roma population in Spain and Slovakia. Key action strategies*.

In 2004, the FSG signed a technical assistance agreement with the Council of Europe - Council of Europe Development Bank

for the “**Identification of projects aimed at improving the standard of living of the Roma community in Eastern European countries**” (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria). Improvement of the living standard of the Roma population has always been on the Council of Europe's agenda and therefore this project sought to identify different initiatives which, in accordance with feasibility, sustainability and suitability criteria, could be supported by the Bank. After several months of analysis, conversation and proposals with different contact persons in the five beneficiary countries, the Foundation submitted its final report in July 2004.

In 2006 the FSG launched an international cooperation project providing technical assistance in the Balkans, a new geographical area and one which is home to a large Roma population which is clearly disadvantaged vis-à-vis other minorities and the rest of the citizens, exacerbated in part by the recent situation of conflict which the area has undergone. With the support of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI), the Foundation is carrying out the project entitled “**Support for the Roma Council in the incorporation process of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a participant State in the Decade of Roma Inclusion**”. The main objective of this initiative is to act as a consultant for the different agents, mainly the Roma Council, in the drafting of national housing, education and health schemes within the framework of the Government of



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Bosnia and Herzegovina's National Strategy for Roma. The FSG will contribute with its experience and know-how in the drafting of preliminary Schemes and by participating in working groups and organising seminars to review the said Schemes ultimately leading to their approval. In addition to helping to improve the living standard of the Bosnian Roma population, the FSG's contribution will enable this country to take part in the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015" initiative.



Lessons learned and project success factors

The FSG has always recognised the added value of participating in projects with a European dimension and considered these a learning process further enriching the experience of our organisation. International cooperation has given the Foundation the perspective of other contexts and work approaches which have allowed us to compare and contrast our progress and limitations.