



4. OBERAXE: The ESCI I and ESCI II Projects

In 2008 and 2009, the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia (OBERAXE) –which is dependent on the Directorate-General for the Integration of Immigrants in Spain, part of the State Secretariat for Immigration and Emigration– carried out two European projects that are an example of positive actions by the government in the area of equal treatment.

In 2008, it developed –within the European Community Programme for Employment and Solidarity-PROGRESS (2007-2013)– the European Project *ESCI I: Strategies for Citizenship and Integration*.

Among other activities, we'd like to highlight the organisation of a seminar on assistance to victims of discrimination. This took place in Madrid in 2008, and its purpose was primarily focused on motivating a collective reflection on local experiences and practices in mediation in cases of racial and/or ethnic conflicts.

This project finished by convening a **Seminar of Experts on Anti-Discrimination Assistance Services: Diagnosis and Proposals**. The main purpose of the seminar was the exchanges and discussions among experts in the phenomena and practices related to the fight against discrimination, in order to establish a diagnosis and develop recommendations and proposals on the subject. A total of 63 registered people from 21 localities participated. They represented different agencies and organisations, such as city councils, social organisations, immigrants' associations, trade union institutions, Ombudsman's Offices, governmental ministries, etc.

Among the most relevant conclusions and recommendations from the Experts Seminar, consideration was given to the need to continue the Project ESCI work locally, providing methodological tools to combat the creation of prejudice and stereotypes and to continue to develop theoretical and concepts related to equal treatment and non-discrimination. On the basis of the proposals and recommendations developed during the *ESCI I*, the second phase of the project was designed, and was implemented during 2009 under the title **Project ESCI II: Local Awareness Building Plans**. This project is also framed within the *Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity PROGRESS* of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission, and made part of one of the five areas of programme activity, such as that of *Non-Discrimination and Diversity* –whose main purpose is to support the implementation of the principle of non-discrimination and promote their integration into the politics of the Community.

Specifically, the purpose of the ESCI II project is to promote a public reflection on the benefits of diversity and integration, promoting the creation, development and implementation of Local Awareness Building Plans in the field of equal treatment and non-discrimination based on ethnic and racial origin. This objective has been made operative through the following specific objectives:

1. Incorporate and involve public and private institutions and local and regional agencies in the development of awareness building activities and of the promotion of equal treatment and non-discrimination.
2. Discuss and come to an agreement with these institutions regarding the priorities and appropriate and viable methodologies for developing Local Awareness Building Plans.
3. Identify best practices and successful experiences carried out locally, both in Spain and in other European countries, relative to raising awareness about equal treatment.
4. Develop and disseminate a methodological guide for the formulation and implementation of local plans for increasing awareness about equal treatment and non-discrimination based on ethnic and racial origin.

The fight against any type of discrimination and, therefore, against discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, has gained strength in recent years, and has become a significant element in the design of public policies at various levels of the Spanish government. However, there are few specific



awareness activities on equal treatment and non discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin in some public entities, especially at the local level. For that reason, and considering the contributions made in the Project ESCI I, OBERAXE opted for the development of a methodological tool that would support local authorities in developing policies in this area.

This tool is a **methodological guide for the design and preparation of Local Awareness Building Plans** that –from the perspective of involvement of different social agents– provides guidance and support to local authorities in defining and developing specific actions to raise awareness regarding the issue of equal treatment and non-discrimination on the basis of racial or ethnic origin.