



4. Regional

4.1. Agreement with the Andalusian Ombudsman

With regard to the Office of the Andalusian Ombudsman and, in particular, to its director, Mr José Chamizo de la Rubia, for years, there's been a special sensitivity about the situation in which a large part of the Roma community in the Andalusian Autonomous Community find themselves.

A large percentage of the Andalusian Roma men and women have historically been on the losing end when it comes to the fundamental rights in a social, democratic country ruled by law. Even today, after a general improvement in living conditions for society as a whole, the Roma community is significantly lacking in basic rights such as housing, employment and education. Above all, however, is the cornerstone of their problematic situation: the poor image that society in general has of Roma people, a poor image that, in practice, become acts of direct or indirect social discrimination.

The relationship between the FSG and the Office of the Andalusian Ombudsman began several years ago with sporadic collaboration. These different opportunities to collaborate have come about in two ways, always at the request of the Office itself. Firstly, they've called on us to intervene in socially high-risk situations caused by conflicts between the majority society and the Roma community living in a specific municipality. In these cases, our intervention ends with a report in which we offer our perspective on the situation and provide recommendations to address the conflict and how they can be prevented. The 2005 *Cortegana* (Huelva) case, *El Saucejo* (Seville) in 2006 and *Castellar* (Jaén) in 2008 are some examples of this type of conflict. Secondly, we've provided assessment in studies related to the Roma community being carried out by the Office of the Andalusian Ombudsman.

Finally, in May 2009, a Collaborative Agreement between the Andalusian Ombudsman and the Fundación Secretariado Gitano was signed in Seville so we could collaborate on activities aimed at attaining our common goal of improving the defence and promotion of citizens' constitutional rights and freedoms.

This Agreement contributed greatly to legitimising the FSG as a key player when addressing conflictive situations, as situations have existed in the past in which the FSG was not allowed to participate in the forums regulating these conflicts (City Councils, Governmental Delegations, State Security Forces, etc.). What's more, this legitimisation may help to have a more complete perspective on issues that are sometimes not appropriately resolved between the different governmental institutions and without taking into consideration the disadvantaged situation that the Roma community is in, in those municipalities where the conflict occurs.