



Presentation

In 2004 another important step forward was taken in the advancement process that the Roma community has been undergoing over the last several decades. Advances in terms of the standard of living of the most disadvantaged of the community's members, of their institutional recognition, in improving their social image and, in short, in the full-fledged exercise of their citizenship as Spanish Roma. A lot of work still lies ahead for the definitive resolution of the problems affecting many Roma people but there is also an increasingly large number of initiatives both on the European and State-wide levels that fill us with hope.

The year 2004 has witnessed the enlargement of Europe to today's 25 members and the incorporation of several countries with an extensive Roma population has sparked the European Union and a number of international organisations to begin to give serious thought to the relevance that the Roma community has acquired in Europe as the continent's principal minority group and likewise to address the grave problems that still persist in many countries.

In our country 2004 was a year of general elections and the platform of the party that was elected included several commitments that, if turned into concrete action, could also represent a strong boost for the Roma issue. Very special mention should be made of an important issue still pending: the transposition of the Equal Treatment Directive.

For the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2004 has also been a year of strengthening of its activities, passing the halfway mark in the Acceder Employment Programme 2000-2006 which has produced such good results (more than 15,000 labour contracts) and also for the consolidation and expansion of other lines of actions which, considered jointly, touch the lives of over 70,000 beneficiaries.

At the conclusion of this year for the first time the Foundation implemented a wide-ranging awareness heightening campaign which will run through 2005 in order to improve the image of the Roma community by transmitting a simple but important message: in lieu of stereotypes and prejudice towards Roma, "*Get to know them before judging them*".

So, it has been a year that we can be proud of in terms of the important gains made but especially because it has confirmed that we are on the right path to take on the challenges that lie ahead. On behalf of the FSG's Board of Trustees, I would like to extend a very special thanks to all of the public and private entities for their support and contributions and likewise to all of the Foundation's workers for a job well done.

Pedro Puente Fernández
Chairman