

Health



Health is one of the main indicators of well-being and living standard of individuals, groups and communities.

Health is not conceived solely as the absence of disease but rather as a broader concept encompassing a number of different physical, psychological and socio-cultural aspects of individuals. Variables such as age, sex, gender conditioners, socioeconomic level or ethnic group are risk factors when it comes to health. The

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many health risk factors as a consequence of social exclusion and the fact that they do not take advantage of mainstream health resources on an equal footing and with the same rights as the rest of the population. Moreover, cultural aspects specific to the Roma population and health-care providers' ignorance of these means that said aspects frequently hinder access to the health-care system.

Improvement of health and living standards of the Roma community and the advocating of more active policies to compensate for inequalities in this field are the priority objectives of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano's area of health. In addition to consolidating capacity building actions focusing on the Roma population as regards prevention and health education and the training of health-care providers working with the Roma population, we have initiated a nationwide research project with a view to making an accurate diagnosis of the situation facing the Roma population having regard to health.

The main lines of work undertaken in 2006 can be summarised as follows:

› **Analysis and research.** Pursuant to the lines of work laid down in the agreement with the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs, we are conducting research into the situation of the Roma community in Spain as regards health and access to health-care services. This work will provide us with reliable data with which to accurately diagnose the situation and enable us to compare these data with those of the majority population and obtain recommendations in order to more closely tailor intervention to the Roma population. We have also continued with the work initiated in 2005 forming part of the public health project funded by the European Commission (Directorate-General of Health and Consumer Protection), consisting of an analysis of the situation of the Roma population in each of the partner countries participating in this project led by the FSG. Under the title Reduction of existing health inequalities among the Roma population, expert groups were consolidated in Portugal, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary for the purpose of conducting an initial diagnosis and to develop a

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series of recommendations to be implemented in accordance with the situation and context of the Roma population in these countries.

› **Training actions.** We have continued with our specific training actions targeting health-care providers with a view to giving them greater insight into the Roma culture and the way Roma view health with the aim of providing them with tools and strategies to improve the care received by Roma patients. In addition to health-care providers, a priority has also been placed on the training of mediators in the area of health. In 2006 we focused efforts on the honing of dispute settlement skills and communication techniques, providing these professionals with the resources needed to promote the health of this sector of the population and facilitate their work with Roma patients within the health-care system. We worked with over 100 professionals during the course of two training sessions.

› **Health promotion actions.** Specific work with the Roma population is taking root and improving year by year with the development of workshops for different groups of the population: women, youth and adults. Acquisition of habits for a healthy life and prevention are two aspects we focus on at the territorial level and which are coordinated at the health area level, taking care to adapt methodologies and strategies to the interests and specificities of our users, extending health promotion to a broader range of programmes and more informal settings.

› **Prevention and awareness heightening actions within the Roma population with respect to HIV-AIDS.** In 2006 we consolidated previous years' collaboration with the National AIDS Plan by carrying out prevention and health promotion activities serving a total of 2,169 minors, youth and adults. This figure represents a significant increase in the number of beneficiaries and the number of centres from which we conduct actions of this nature. The training of our own professionals



TRAINING OF HEALTH-CARE PROVIDERS, IN LUGO

has also been a priority in the development of this line of action and has enabled us to train and come to a consensus regarding strategies for awareness-raising, prevention and care with regard to HIV/AIDS in the Roma population. In 2006, 25 youth informers and other technicians from our entity took part in this training.



SEMINAR ON HEALTH PROMOTION OF THE ROMA COMMUNITY IN MADRID

› **Drug addiction prevention actions.** We continued with the development of the Romanó Sastipen Programme in collaboration with the Government Delegation for the National Drugs Plan. Just as in previous years, this has allowed us to offer Roma adolescents and youth a series of entertaining activities in their neighbourhoods incorporating key elements of the Roma culture without losing sight of their identity as youth. It is, in short, a process by which to foster interest in certain pastimes which are eventually incorporated as healthy living habits, hence lowering the risk of drug consumption. A total of 933 direct participants took part in the different activities carried out at the territorial level. Within the framework of the subsidy received by this Delegation, we organised two seminars for professionals working in the area of prevention with the Roma population with a total of 69 participants.

› **Technical assistance and advisory support actions.** Approximately 582 calls from entities and public and private institutions for technical assistance and advisory support were answered on health issues relating to the Roma community.

“Priority objectives include the improvement of health and living standards and the advocacy of more pro-active policies to compensate for inequalities.

› **Development of tailored materials.** Within the framework of the Collaboration Agreement between the FSG and the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs, we published the Handbook for Action in the Area of Health Services with the Roma Community. The ultimate purpose of this Handbook was to reduce health inequalities in the National Health System, in response to the need for all people to be able to gain access to these health services and be treated equally and in a way culturally suited to their specific needs. To that end, a series of action proposals are made to correct present inequalities having regard to the Roma population's access to the public health system. Also, within the framework of the European health project entitled Reduction of health inequalities among the Roma population, this handbook has been adapted to the context and situation of the Roma community in each of the participating countries with the advisory support of the FSG.



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