

Prison inmate population

The Roma prison inmate population is mostly comprised of individuals from groups involved in transformation processes with greater degrees of social destructuring, loss of values and their own cultural identity with diminishing opportunities in traditional labour activities and facing a variety of different difficulties in finding employment. Many elements of this same reality are shared with the majority inmate population although in one way or another the Roma situation is exacerbated due to Roma cultural differences and the marginal situation faced by the community vis-à-vis the rest of society.

Article 25 of the Constitution and the general Organic Law regarding prisons refer to the services offered by penitentiary institutions and access to culture and integral personal development. While progress has been made in services offered, a significant deficit remains in terms of resources, motivation, accompaniment and, in general, everything related to individualised treatment. This is an obstacle to the creation of individualised pathways facilitating social incorporation.

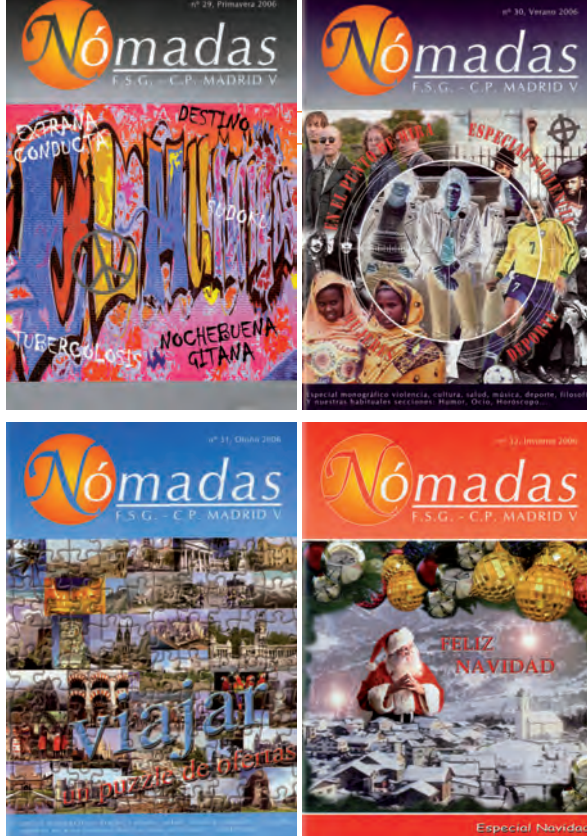
The programme was launched in October 1995 at the Madrid V Penitentiary Centre of Soto del Real with funding from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and with the collaboration of the penitentiary institution. The programme entitled *Assistance and Advancement Programme for Incarcerated Members of the Roma Ethnic Minority* is based on intervention with the incarcerated Roma population (inmates and their families) for the purpose of facilitating their access to existing programmes in penitentiary centres and opening channels for the advancement and social integration of the target group. By developing

activities and carrying out more individualised intervention with inmates and their families, we are seeking to promote a culture and integration into the prison medium and then, through mediation and counselling, facilitate incorporation into a life of freedom with guarantee of access to existing reinsertion and social incorporation channels.

As from the “reception” stage, intervention is having a profound effect. From the very beginning, we try to establish a trust-based relationship in order to analyse as quickly and completely as possible both the user and his personal and family history. This allows us to respond to inmates’ demands both in and out of the penitentiary centre.

Cultural identity is the common denominator of our initiatives which foster this identity in the penitentiary centre as well as the incorporation of the Roma population in activities which aid in the acquisition of social skills and help them to comprehend the changes taking place as a result of their own development. Intervention methodology is carried out in two complementary spheres:

“Individualised pathways not only facilitate social integration in the penitentiary centre but promote the cultural identity.”



COVERS OF THE PUBLICATION "NOMADAS" DONE BY PROGRAMME USERS AT PENITENTIARY CENTRES

- › **Individualised care and follow-up** (204 inmates); this includes individual interviews, social reports for Treatment Boards, lawyers, judges or outside bodies. Referral to labour-market integration programmes on the outside, monitoring of inmates transferred to other prisons, etc. Thirteen follow-up initiatives were undertaken in the case of permits granted. We worked with 115 families focusing our efforts on enhancing the stability of insertion processes of both the inmate and his/her family. To accomplish all of this we undertook 701 coordination initiatives with penitentiary officials, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano and other institutions.
- › **Group work:** This is of vital importance for the reinforcement of individual actions and also as a framework whereby to continue insisting on attitudes, the learning of personal and social skills, group dynamics and teamwork: the Magazine Workshop called Nomads, a penitentiary centre publication drafted and designed by inmates (41 participants); the workshop called Women's

Classroom, a forum for informal education which is ideal for subjects relating to health and social skills (37 participants); Flamenco Group, a musical group whose objective is to reinforce cultural identity (31 participants); men's health education workshop (31 participants); women's health education workshop targeting women with children under 3 years of age (12 participants).

As in other years, **inmate services** were offered during the modules in morning and afternoon sessions and were carried out by programme social workers. The rest of the actions (group activities) undertaken with inmates continue to be offered in morning sessions and two afternoons per week when penitentiary activity is at a low so to be as unobtrusive as possible. We also continue to follow up on the cases of inmates in other centres (Madrid I, Madrid II and Madrid VI).

We also work on the outside in the reinsertion of inmates who have been granted day-release status, parole and even provisional release, making use of mainstream resources either through the Foundation or other institutions. Having regard to the labour market integration of those provisionally released or paroled, their introduction into the labour system is much simpler because they are able to seek work, go to interviews, take courses, accept work on the spot, etc. Most of these cases are channelled through the *Acceder* Employment Programme and to other educational and social insertion programmes.