

# International cooperation



INTRODUCTORY SEMINAR OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK OF SOCIAL INCLUSION AND ROMA COMMUNITY (MADRID, JUNE 2007)

The Roma community's European context changed in 2007 with the EU accession of Romania and Bulgaria, two countries with a large Roma population which, considered jointly with the 10 Eastern European enlargement countries of 2004, have forced the European Union to change its view of Europe's Roma population over the last several years.

The incorporation of a large number of Roma citizens into the European Union and the need to adapt policies to this new reality and earmark resources to that end has led the European Union to remind Member States of their obligations to their Roma citizens.

In this European context, clearly favourable for the development of policies and measures designed to improve the social inclusion of the Roma community, the FSG has continued with intense international activity which it launched several years ago. The Foundation's external

initiatives have always been accompanied by a number of complementary actions:

- › Institutional activity: focused on contact with the public administrations and authorities and seeking to put the Roma community on the political agenda with a view to fostering measures and active policies and involving administrations in the social advancement of the Roma community.
- › Advisory support and technical assistance: targeting public administrations but also NGOs and other social entities focused mostly on approaches and methods to implement policies designed with the Roma population in mind, guidelines for the drafting of national plans or strategies or the development of local initiatives.
- › Training and capacity building of agents: specific training and improvement of

the qualifications of the Roma themselves and of the field professionals working with them.

- › Network support and sponsorship: with a view to promoting partnerships, networking and the exchange of experiences and work approaches and methodology.

Without a doubt, one of the key actions of 2007 was the launching of the **European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds**. Together with Spanish ESF Managing Authority, the FSG organised a seminar in June in Madrid to propose this initiative to the rest of the European Union Member States, especially those with the largest Roma population. The overarching objective of this transnational initiative is to promote the use of Structural Funds to enhance the effectiveness of Roma community social inclusion policies.

In addition to the European Commission, Network members include the Administrative Units of the European Social Fund in each country and the public body responsible for policies targeting the Roma population in the 12 European countries with the largest Roma population (Spain, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Finland and Sweden).

This Network, with the explicit support of the European Commission, will focus on the exchange of information, experiences, best practices and strategies and mutual learning through working groups focusing on specific areas (employment, education, social inclusion). The FSG act as the Network's Technical Secretariat.

Another milestone in the Foundation's activity was the completion of the project carried out in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and the commencement of a new one. These initiatives have the support of the Spanish International Development Cooperation Agency (AECID). The project which concluded in 2007 provided consultation support for the drafting of the National Action Plans for the Roma community (employment, health and housing). These plans are designed to improve national policies targeting the Roma community of Bosnia and Herzegovina but will also be instrumental in helping that country to gain access to benefits



FSG PARTICIPATION IN THE SEMINAR ENTITLED "ROMA AND THE LABOUR MARKET" HELD IN BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA (NOVEMBER 2007).





within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015).

In 2007 the first steps were also taken in the new project in Bosnia and Herzegovina which is a much more intense goal-oriented activity focusing on the transfer of the FSG's *Acceder* Programme carried out in Spain to boost the Roma population's access to the labour market. The FSG will open an employment office with a four-person team in Sarajevo following the methodology of the *Acceder* Programme adapting the latter to the context and reality of the country.

In this connection the FSG worked throughout 2007 with Romania's National Agency for Roma (NAR) to develop a project also based on **transferring the *Acceder* model to the Romanian context** and which will be implemented in 2008 in Romania within the framework of the European Social Fund's Human Resources Operational Programme.



MEETING RELATED TO THE PROJECT ENTITLED SUPPORT FOR THE ROMA COUNCIL IN THE INCORPORATION PROCESS OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AS A PARTICIPANT STATE IN THE "DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION" (FSG/AECI).

In 2007 the project entitled "Building inclusion" to be implemented in 2008 and 2009 was approved. This project is funded by the European Commission and will be carried out within the framework of the **PROGRESS initiative**. It is led by the Directorate-General for Immigrant Integration of the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and has partners from a number of different European countries including the FSG. During 18 months it will work on the exchange of experiences and learning in the area of access to housing and social inclusion.

The Foundation's Area of Youth is carrying out the project entitled "**Roma youth – European citizenship**" with funding from the European Commission through the *Youth* Programme and will run for two years (2007-2008). The project's main objective is to build capacity among Roma youth in the exercise of their European citizenship by training and teaching about European processes and dynamics so that they can exercise their citizenship on an equal footing with the rest of Europe's citizens. The FSG is working in this project with partners from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia.

In 2007 the FSG's Area of Health launched the project entitled "**Health and the Roma community, an analysis of**

**the situation in Europe”**. This project is funded by the European Commission within the framework of the European Public Health Programme. The project is led by the FSG and the other participants are organisations, NGOs and governmental offices from Portugal, Greece, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria. The aim of this project which will run for two years (November 2007 to October 2009) is to procure reliable and objective data on the status of the Roma population as concerns health, the use of health services and access to health care. The real needs of the Roma population as concerns health will be identified and recommendations will be drafted which will serve as the framework for the development of measures, actions and policies at national and European level with a view to reducing the inequality characterising Europe’s Roma population in the area of health.

This year the **SFEJ Gundtvig project - Basic Employment Skills** was also implemented in collaboration with several international partners: Southampton City Council (UK), CESVIIP and INFORCOOP (Italy), the Local Development Agency of the Punta Umbría City Council (Italy) and MIREC (France). This project was divided into two parts: the end of the second call for proposals (which ended in July 2007) and the beginning of the third call (September 2007) which is still in force. The second call for proposals focused on the analysis of basic skills for the employment of persons in a situation of social exclusion. The third call deals with analysis of these basic skills as regards self-employment of entrepreneurs and the skills required of professionals supporting these types of initiatives.

As for actions carried out by the International Area, 2007 saw the publication in Spanish and English of the text entitled **Spanish**



INFORMATIVE POSTER FOR THE FSG-COORDINATED EUROPEAN PROJECT ENTITLED: “ROMA YOUTH- EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP”.

**international cooperation in the area of ethnic minorities, the FSG’s experience.**

This publication, supported by the International Foundation for Iberoamerica on Administration and Public Policies (Spanish acronym FIIAPP) traces the international experience of the FSG from the beginning explaining each of the European projects it has managed and the lessons it has learned from this experience.

Lastly, as concerns institutional activity, in 2007 the FSG had an intense agenda including participation in a number of European events organised by different organisations and institutions: the European Commission, the European Union’s Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the OSCE, the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the Roma Education Fund and others. Also in 2007 the FSG signed a Collaboration Agreement with one of its long-standing partners, the REAPN in Portugal.