

►► Employment and vocational training



In 2008 the global crisis with its consequences such as growing unemployment and a fall in hiring due to lower production and consumer activity had a significant impact on a large proportion of the Roma population.

In global terms and in view of the data from the socio-labour integration programmes carried out by the FSG, 17% fewer contracts were signed in 2008 in comparison with the previous year and there was a 22% increase in the number of Roma requesting help up from 5,340 in 2007 to 6,837 in 2008. In addition to the 1,500 additional people served in 2008, we must also add an important number of Roma who found work through these programmes in previous years and who are now suffering the effects rising unemployment in terms of unstable labour market conditions and have once again turned to the FSG for

help. It is also true that the fall in hiring rates is a mirror image of the fall in the number of contracts signed by the Spanish population as a whole over the last year.

These data show that the labour market crisis always affects the most vulnerable and it is being especially hard on Roma who find themselves in situations of social exclusion. **In times of crisis it is not enough to prioritise only the most competitive (enterprise and people) of society; in the interests of social cohesion a priority must also be**



BACKHOE OPERATION TRAINING COURSE IN SALAMANCA.

placed on actions targeting those who are most distant from the labour market or who are working under the most unstable conditions. This means people who require longer processes and for whom programmes such as Acceder are more essential than ever before. In other words, programmes which design and implement combinations of guaranteed income, access to training and employment and access to mainstream services.

Furthermore, after ten year of work we still observe that a large gap exists between the average level of vocational training and qualification of the Roma community and that of the rest of the population. 75% of the persons served through the FSG's labour market integration programmes have no studies, not even primary school; 20% have a primary school diploma and only the remaining 5% have some sort of higher training (vocational training, high school, University, etc.).

This undeniable lack of qualification has clear consequences for Roma people's likelihood of gaining access to and holding down a job because it clearly diminishes their chances of being hired, generally limiting their access to low-skilled vocational sectors and jobs which tend to be unstable, precarious and offer little chance of professional advancement.

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A STUDENT WORKER INVOLVED IN THE UZIPEN TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE IN ALICANTE.

Special mention should also be made of the potential the Roma population has for the labour market. Labour market data concerning Roma shows that they want to work despite rising unemployment, job instability, the low-skilled nature of available work and discrimination suffered in the application process.

The gap between the Roma population and the labour market is a key aspect contributing to a scenario of social discrimination and therefore, in keeping with the importance afforded this issue by the European Employment Strategy and the European Social Inclusion Strategy, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano dedicates a large proportion of its efforts to addressing this problem.

Combating discrimination and support for social inclusion through employment is a tool to promote a more cohesive and intercultural society but labour market integration should not be limited to support for Roma in improving their employability but should also envisage the elimination of red tape and barriers standing in the way to access to

training and paid employment so as to effectively uphold the equal opportunities principle.

This access is promoted through individual employment pathways and the development and enhancement of human resources.

We prioritise the quality of the programmes we carry out adapting them to the needs of the Roma who they target in order to achieve greater impact on their standard of living by carrying out comprehensive intervention with an individualised and multi-dimensional approach where we also focus on the environment, the family context, the labour market and search for work possibilities and partnerships. This is a mainstreaming approach where we apply a methodology covering a great many aspects ranging from counselling on labour market opportunities to labour skill training while remaining mindful of the social skills needed for employment which this sector of the population often lacks, and likewise bearing in mind the situation and needs of the Roma community and working

from the vantage point of empathy and their specific interests while focusing actions to offer alternatives to meet their specific needs while also remaining conscious of the needs and requirements of the current labour market despite the serious crisis and rise in unemployment.

Our methodology based on individual needs includes the following three types of actions:

Direct intervention with the Roma population the specific objective of which is to improve employability. These goal-oriented actions, focusing on and prioritising the participation of Roma and non-Roma alike, are always implemented favouring an intercultural context. This work mostly revolves around the Multi-Regional Operational Programme to Combat Discrimination (European Social Fund) but is also undertaken within the framework of the Roma Community Labour Market Integration Programme under the Spanish Income Tax scheme (Ministry of



INDIVIDUALISED SOCIO-LABOUR COUNSELLING SESSION IN SESTAO.



COMPUTER TRAINING COURSE IN BURGOS.

Education, Social Policy and Sports) and the comprehensive reception programme and support measures for the integration of Roma from Eastern Europe (Directorate-General for Immigrant Integration), training and employment experiences (Workshop School, Trade Houses and Employment Workshops), Comprehensive and Experimental Employment Access Plans and other training and labour market integration programmes undertaken by different regional and local administrations and by private entities including the following types of actions:

1 Labour information and advisory initiatives constituting the first phase of the work methodology entailing recruitment, labour information-training and the initial diagnosis of the employability of the beneficiaries.

2 Labour counselling actions entailing a more in-depth individual diagnosis and tutoring sessions to provide guidance and individualised follow-up for beneficiaries throughout all of the phases of their pathway.

3 Vocational training actions and training directly linked to employment opportunities identified through job search studies conducted in each territory and training sessions to enhance the employability of minimum income recipients.

4 Training and employment actions (Madrid's *Amaró Tegara II* Workshop School, the hostess-Promoter Workshop School in Malaga, Almeria's intercultural mediation Workshop School, the *Seguir Caminando* Trade School in Sestao, the Trequejenar a Currelar Workshop School in

Puertollano, etc.) implementing mixed scenarios envisaging learning stages and subsequent internship and employment stages.

▮ Mediation and labour market integration actions consisting of accompaniment initiatives in the active search for employment and mediation in the labour market and identification of possible offers of employment that could be covered by service users.

▮ Support actions for protected employment initiatives (*Uzipen*: Professional cleaning service; *Ecotur*: Congress and tourism hostess service; *Nabut*: socio-labour market integration centre; *Lacho Butipen*: Press kiosk...) the goal of which is to foster employment experiences bridging the gap with mainstream employment through the implementation of intern training processes which are very similar to the real production of goods and services and are therefore very effective in gaining professional experience, skills training and work habits. It is important to point out that at the close of 2008 the enterprise “*Vedelar - Jardinería y Trabajos Forestales, S.L.*” was constituted in Asturias. This is a start-up firm under the tutelage of the FSG whose aim is to help workers make their way into the mainstream labour market through this preliminary experience where they can acquire professional skills.

▮ Actions encouraging and supporting self-employment such as the drawing up of business feasibility projects, accompaniment and consulting at the latter’s commencement and implementation phase (seeking funding, etc.).

▮ Actions targeting the implementation of comprehensive social insertion pathways with the Roma population from Eastern Europe, paying particular attention to the identification

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and overcoming of barriers and deficits prior to their social integration so that they can later merge into the labour market.

Institutional intervention mostly focusing on supporting more pro-active social policies for the improvement of living and working conditions and the solution of the problems and needs of the Roma population. Today there are



INTERNSHIPS FORMING PART OF A CASHIER’S COURSE IN COLLABORATION WITH SABECO IN HUESCA.

very few professionals who are specialised in this sort of work with the Roma population, there is no transfer of the positive initiatives being undertaken and it is still necessary to promote further adaptation of Training and Employment Systems to the specific reality of this sector of the population with a view to favouring their access. In this connection actions have been developed in the area of training and the transfer of methodologies and materials so that the work that is currently under way with the Roma population may be assessed, including quality control systems for all interventions.

In connection with what was initiated in 2005, work was ongoing in 2008 to gain insight into the reality of the Roma population through studies and research, this time focused on the Autonomous Communities where we are implementing our programmes. The aim of these studies is to acquire as broad an idea as possible of the situation facing the Roma community

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allowing for a comparison to be drawn with the situation of the entire Spanish population based on the parameters used by the National Statistics Institute (Spanish acronym INE) for their Active Population Survey (EPA). For this purpose, a research project entitled *The Roma Population and Employment: a comparative study in three Autonomous Communities* has been published and disseminated – Asturias, Castile-Leon and Galicia.

And lastly, an ongoing effort is the permanent **awareness-heightening of the society** at large and of the agents intervening in the labour market favouring the elimination of all discrimination against the Roma population and its access to training and employment. This goal is met, on the one hand, by implementing actions with the Roma community to foster change in their attitude when it comes to training and employment and, on the other hand, by working with government administrations, the business community and potential employers with the aim of raising their awareness with respect to the problems faced by this sector of the population in the area of training and access to employment, reducing prejudice and encouraging the initiation of positive actions.



BENEFICIARIES OF THE ACCEDER PROGRAMME
WORKING AT A SUPERMARKET.