

*LEARNING BY DOING*

*for the labour market inclusion of young people*

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF EXCLUSION

Executive report



## An opportunity for the most abandoned youth

**Youth employment** is now one of the biggest problems in the Spanish labour market and has reached **dramatic proportions for an entire generation**.Although the ongoing and critical deterioration of the labour situation for young people has improved marginally in recent months, still today[[1]](#footnote-1) over 49% of those under age 25 are unemployed. In other words, **nearly half of the young people who want to work cannot** as it is simply impossible to find a job.

This situation is **particularly alarming** in the case of young people with low qualifications: the **unemployment rate** of those with no diploma (not even secondary school) is **57%** (63% in the case of young women).

If we factor in disadvantaged personal situations such as **low-income families**, belonging to groups facing **discrimination** on the basis of their country of birth or ethnic origin, residing in **run-down neighbourhoods, lack of contact networks**, etc. (circumstances not reflected in official statistics), the real likelihood of finding a job drops exponentially putting many young people on the **brink of vulnerability and social exclusion**, limiting their chances for future development as citizens with full rights.

Employment policies will only have an impact on these young people if **specific initiatives are implemented** targeting those who are having the most difficult time so that on their path towards employment they are at least at the same starting point as many others who are not facing the same elements of vulnerability.

Only then, by **ensuring equal opportunity in employment**, will we contribute to a fairer and more cohesive society where sustainable growth benefits everyone.

It was with this objective, i.e. to respond to the reality faced by youth in severe risk of vulnerability and social exclusion, that the Fundación Secretariado Gitano conceived the project called **“Learning by Doing, training and employment for young people”**.

## What are these young people like?

These youth, who participate in the social and employment programmes run by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, have a number of characteristics in common:

• **A strong desire to find a job and create a future for themselves** but facing the discouraging reality of lacking the skills and professional qualifications demanded by the labour market, in a very competitive environment where jobs are scarce.

• **They are not familiar with** how companies work in terms of employment.

• **They have great learning potential** although are frequently unaware of it.

• **They sometimes lack the support they need** from their immediate surroundings, often due to the limited economic resources of their families. This stands in the way to their persevering in long social-labour inclusion processes as they need to seek alternative ways to sustain their domestic economy.

*The project “Learning by Doing” run by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, was conceived to give options to young people in severe risk of vulnerability and social exclusion. Only by implementing specific actions to put those facing the greatest hardships at the same starting point can we ensure equal opportunity in employment and thus contribute to building a fairer and more cohesive society.*

# THE PROJECT

## “Learning by Doing” a labour market integration initiative for young people in risk of exclusion

The **“Learning by Doing”** project of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano is, first and foremost, a **project offering opportunity to young people facing social difficulties** through which they discover and hone their talent through a process of empowerment and capacity-building. It is likewise an opportunity for employers that contribute by breaking down access barriers. To achieve this:

• **We accompany** young people in the assessment of their skills and professional interests to help them take decisions on their future employment.

• **We encourage** training initiatives focusing on core skills generally required across the labour market, and help them to enhance those skills through reflection, practice and serious vocational training in order to qualify them for a profession or trade.

• **We help** the families hardest hit by the crisis with social aid so that lack of resources does not keep young people from participating in the training process which lasts several months.

• **We broaden** work opportunities by seeking partnerships with companies which are the key agents for the labour market integration of these potential workers.

## Key factors: knowledge, practical training and the involvement of companies

The methodological model underpinning **“Learning by Doing”** is based on two training periods with different content during which tutoring and accompaniment are essential. The involvement of companies is also key insofar as they offer a place to do internships and commit to learning throughout the process to make it a real gateway to social inclusion.

**1. Knowledge and skill improvement**

In the first few weeks, activities focus on **knowing oneself and group building.** Basic indispensable labour market tools are also provided: mathematical reasoning, reading comprehension and expression, communication, digital skills, teamwork, organisation, responsibility, social skills, etc. Participants are also introduced to different sectors through visits to companies, presentations by human resources professionals and basic theoretical training allowing them to commence learning in real work environments.

From the very beginning, **companies have been key players** and actively participate both in the design of the project and in familiarising participants with the different work sectors: human resources people give group talks regarding labour issues, characteristics, possibilities and requirements for job posts, tasks involved, skills needed, etc.

**2 . Professional qualifications and practical training in real work environments**

The **main activity** of the **“Learning by Doing”** project takes place in the companies. Once participants complete these initial weeks of orientation, **companies take over the training** conducted in real work environments.

This is when the young people engage in a **broad training pathway** allowing them to learn the skills needed to do more than just one job in the company. The aim is to train future employees who will be able to do different jobs making them more versatile and therefore increasing the likelihood of employment.

During this period they continue with theoretical training and cross-cutting skills are further reinforced. Individual tutoring of each person also continues.

*Thanks to a comprehensive theoretical-practical training pathway in real work environments, these young people discover and hone their skills through a process of empowerment and capacity-building.*

## Value added

The value added of “Learning by Doing” is its innovation, quality, social commitment and competitive edge.

**INNOVATION**

• An innovative initiative whose essential elements coincide with **experimental training and employment models** promoted under current public policy.

• An initiative designed and implemented jointly by two national NGOs: The Spanish Red Cross and the Fundación Secretariado Gitano; an **example of collaboration and co-leadership** heightening its impact and results.

**QUALITY**

• High-quality training that combines theoretical and practical learning and is **tailored by a thorough analysis of the needs** of the selected companies and sectors, with a highly motivated student body specifically focused on the defined professional profile and skill set through a very demanding selection process.

**SOCIAL COMMITMENT**

• Linked to **Corporate Social Responsibility** and companies' commitment to the training and labour market integration of young people who are socially and economically vulnerable.

**COMPETITIVENESS**

• Full involvement of collaborating companies in the entire training process, making them **more competitive** in their management of human resources (management of diversity, personnel recruitment and social impact).

*“Learning by Doing” has a key partner: companies that are fully involved in the entire training process and which benefit from the value added.*

## 

## A public-private collaboration model

**“Learning by Doing”** was made possible thanks to the economic support from the **European Social Fund** in the framework of the **2014-2020 Operational Program Youth Employment**, with the support of the Administrative Unit of the European Social Fund under the **Ministry of Employment and Social Security**.

Also, the collaboration ties that the Fundación Secretariado Gitano have with **“la Caixa” Social Work** regarding the labour market integration of vulnerable groups led to a co-funding commitment for this new project which has enhanced the likelihood of employment for many young people facing difficulties.

This public-private economic support forms part of the **Entrepreneurship and Employment Strategy Targeting Young People** in which the Fundación Secretariado Gitano take part.

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano put **professional employment teams** formed by salaried workers and volunteers engaging in counselling, enterprise mediation, etc. in charge of the technical design and development part of the project. **Training and tutoring of the different organisations** was vital for all activities; 22 full-time staff engaged in accompaniment and part of the training of the participants and also coordinated with the directors of the collaborating companies.

In addition, **29 volunteers** helped with the personalised support of each participant. We would also draw attention to the internship tutors in the companies. These are workers who generously give of their time to make sure that the young people are progressing adequately in their studies.

Through close collaboration with the public administrations, social entities and private companies, we have managed to implement an intervention model showing very positive results in the labour market integration of young people facing social difficulties.

***Close collaboration between public administrations, social entities and private companies has been key in implementing “Learning by Doing” and making this intervention model very positive for the labour market integration of young people facing social difficulties.***

*The project has benefited from the work of 22 people from the professional employment teams of the Fundación Secretariado General Gitano with 29 volunteers, mostly for the individual reinforcement of each participant.*

# RESULTS

## 440 young participants and 22 training and employment workshops in 2016

Following a rigorous selection process, a total of **440 young people took part in “Learning by Doing”** and 352 of them were selected for internship training in companies and were able to complete the full cycle. In total, thanks to the involvement of the companies in this start-up phase, **22 training projects in 22 cities** throughout Spain were carried out.

## A close-up look at the 440 young people who participated

The 440 participants in the first stage received a stipend of €6 for each day they attended. The 352 who managed to complete the full training pathway received a grant of €350 for the second phase.

The employability profile of these young people is dictated by a number of variables: **unemployment affecting the entire family unit** (more limited access to employment, critical life experiences, basic needs not covered, etc.), **low educational level, few professional skills, residence in underprivileged neighbourhoods** with little to offer in terms of free-time, training or labour activities. In some cases, young people **have sons or daughters that they are responsible for.**

Hence, project participants have a low degree of employability and require **comprehensive intervention**, reinforcement and permanent support in many aspects of their lives.

*440 young people have taken part in “Learning by doing” in 2016, 47,5% are women, 86% are under age 25 and 87% have no academic qualifications and 95% are Roma*

*Unemployment of all family members, low level of studies, poor professional qualifications, residence in run-down neighbourhoods, taking on family responsibilities at a young age and psycho-social problems, all affect the employability profile of participants in “Learning by doing”.*

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## A careful selection process: data

The young people participating in the project were very carefully chosen, bearing in mind their **social profile, attitude and motivation** towards employment and specifically towards the training proposed. However, special focus was placed on the **skill set** of each young person to assess his or her appropriateness and potential for the type of training proposed.

**352 WERE ABLE TO COMMENCE THE TRAINING PHASE IN THE COMPANY**

•HR interview at the company

•Selection Committee

•Company + employment services of the Fundación Secretariado General Gitano

**440 PASSED THE SELECTION PROCESS** to begin phase I

**OVER 859**

**WERE GIVEN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS**

•detailed information

•personal, social and employment analysis: employability assessment

•Collection of documentation

**OVER 1.080 YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDED** Information sessions

**OVER 1.998 YOUNG PEOPLE WERE POLLED**

•age 18-30

•Interest in training

•Potential for skills development

•Highly motivated

•Economic and family needs

## 

## Impact reaching families

The social impact of this project extends over and above the direct beneficiaries participating in the training and employability enhancement activities. We are talking about over **1.760 people including the family members of the 440 participants** who are the direct beneficiaries of this initiative. These are families with very low incomes living in poverty.

These tend to be **large families** (average of four members) that subsist with a monthly income of only **€570 per family** which comes to an average income of €142 per person. Most of this income comes from pensions, integration grants and subsidies or unemployment benefits. 56% of family income comes from work salaries, mostly part-time work, informal jobs and, to a lesser degree, self-employment.

The situation of poverty and extreme vulnerability of the families of project participants is also apparent in employment figures: in 58% of cases, all family members are unemployed. Also considering that a large portion of this income is either temporary or precarious, social perspectives point to a great deal of vulnerability.

*“Learning by doing” also has an impact on the families of these young people, most of which find themselves in situations of poverty and extreme vulnerability. These are large families with monthly incomes of only €570 which usually come from pensions, integration grants and subsidies or unemployment benefits.*

## 22 training projects in 22 cities

In 2016, a total of 352 young people from 22 different locations have taken part through 22 territorial training projects broken down into six areas:

• Shop and storehouse assistant

• Catering assistant

• Food preparation assistant

• Automobile industry assistant

**ORGANISER**

* **Fundación Secretariado Gitano**

*The 22 territorial projects undertaken were supported by 40 work centres located throughout all of Spain and of different sizes and in different sectors ranging from large retail or hotel chains to small family restaurants or shops.*

1. Active population survey, Q-2, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)