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**ACCEDER: programme for the employment of Roma
through the Operational Programme Fight Against
Discrimination under the European Social Fund**

Assessment Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the assessment of the Spanish *Acceder* programme carried out between January and May 2013 in the framework of the Call for Proposals "Assessment of key policies, programs and approaches using EU funds for Roma inclusion" under OSF Programme "Making the most of EU Funds".

The main goal of the *Acceder* Programme is for Roma people to access the labour market, thus achieving equal opportunities. Roma access to the labour market is facilitated mainly through labour integration actions such as counselling, training, intermediation with companies and coaching in early stages of employment, all on the basis of individualised employment pathways. The *Acceder* programme operates on the basis of 48 teams currently working throughout Spain, providing counselling, training and job search and intermediation. The programme has achieved sound results over the past 13 years. By the end of 2012, the programme had served more than 70,000 beneficiaries and facilitated more than 40,000 job contracts. These results have been recognised by the Spanish authorities and by the European institutions.

The assessment has attempted to respond to five assessment questions which can be summarised as follows: (i) Has the *Acceder* programme been effective in a recessionary environment?; (ii) Are the economic costs of *Acceder* returned via positive effects in the economy?; (iii) Does *Acceder* run as a parallel system to mainstream services or does it contribute to make mainstream services more inclusive for Roma and other disadvantaged groups?; (iv) Besides Fundación Secretariado Gitano's *Acceder* programme, have Roma organisations participated in managing the European Social Fund in Spain?; (v) Are the conditions that made the success of *Acceder* possible country-specific or to what extent can some of the programme's components be replicated in other country contexts?

The methods used included analysis of secondary data and consultations through discussion workshops, interviews and electronic questionnaires to key informants.

Acceder programme has gone through two different cycles in its 13 years of existence. Firstly, during the period of 2000-2007 it took advantage of the economic growth-cycle to facilitate the job integration of vulnerable people in

labour-intensive industries, which expanded during those years. The second cycle (2007-2012) has come with the rise of unemployment since 2008 by which the programme has been affected. During the period of 2007-2012 the programme has had to face the effects of the severe economic recession and sustained unemployment growth. Data from this period shows that the programme has responded to this situation most notably by increasing the participation of beneficiaries in training actions since 2007. The intermediation activities have been maintained in absolute terms but due to the increase of programme beneficiaries the proportion of those who benefited from this assistance decreased. Data from this period also shows a certain deceleration of the number of job contracts facilitated by the programme, which are also more precarious and of shorter duration. Nevertheless, Acceder has continued facilitating job contracts and sustained a significant percentage of beneficiaries accessing employment after receiving intense programme assistance (a combination of counselling, training and intermediation with employers). This demonstrates that active measures in favour of disadvantaged groups can achieve meaningful results, even in a recessionary environment.

The programme generates a positive economic impact. This is concluded by a study on the economic returns of the actions of similar nature delivered by 4 Spanish NGOs (one being FSG's Acceder Programme) in the framework of the Spanish ESF Operational Programme "Fight against Discrimination". According to this study, besides the positive outcomes in relation to their stated objectives (integration into the labour market) the actions stimulate the country's economy as well as indirect fiscal savings via tax revenues, social security contributions, and savings of the benefits the unemployed would have received.

In a context of crises it is perceived that, under the pressure of other problems, some public authorities' commitment to continue supporting Roma-targeted actions is losing intensity and this can bring negative effects for the Roma. It is seen as necessary to give fresh impetus to the implementation of the broad Roma policy frameworks such as the National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020 using actions programmed for the new ESF programming period.

In prospective terms, there are a number of reasons for continuing sustaining Roma-targeted actions, especially in a context of economic downturn: the persistence of discrimination Roma face, the severe social exclusion situations Roma are experiencing and the future costs of not acting now were highlighted

by participants of a workshop discussion. Specific targeted actions for the most disadvantaged groups must continue coexisting with mainstream employment services which are not able to adapt to the specific needs of these groups in a context of high unemployment.

Proposed adaptation strategies point at the need to work more intensively on self-employment but without losing the perspective that hired jobs will continue being the entry door for larger proportions of beneficiaries. In this regard, strengthening the collaboration with solid companies by jointly designing practical trainings and the commitment to hire a proportion of the trained beneficiaries arose as strategies to be reinforced in the future. Regularisation of the informal economy, and paying more attention to the quality of jobs are also proposed ways of moving forward during the next ESF programming period.

Spain has been recognised a positive example in regards to the use of EU Structural Funds for Roma inclusion as well as in relation to the participation of the civil society organisations in the management of these funds. Nevertheless, assessment findings reveal that the use of ESF for Roma in Spain has been rather limited to the *Acceder* programme under the broader Operational Programme it is part of. ESF Regional Operational Programmes (19 in Spain) make little explicit mention of the Roma, and local Roma organisations have participated only to a very limited extent as beneficiaries. The existence of a nationwide-targeted programme such as *Acceder* may have been a disincentive for regional authorities to programme meaningful Roma-related activities in their ESF regional OPs.

Following the views expressed by consulted sources it is suggested that the potential of grassroots organisations to contribute to the programme implementation should be analysed and a more systematic collaboration between the *Acceder* programme and these organisations should be established in the next implementation period. Furthermore, grassroots Roma organisations need enhanced capacity to participate in the complex management of the ESF.

Results of a conducted consultation among international experts on the potential of transferability of *Acceder* show the following results: all consulted informants considered that transferability of key elements of *Acceder* to other country contexts to be possible and desirable although many expressed nuances.

Keys to success relevant to other countries were identified and included issues related to core aspects of *Acceder*'s methodology such as individualised pathways to employment, job exploration, intermediation with companies and job coaching in early stages of the employment. Moreover, the value of multicultural teams in which Roma and non-Roma work together, and the combination of cultural sensitivity to Roma culture with aiming for the mainstream employment were also highlighted.

Necessary conditions for successful transferability of the *Acceder* model approach may be summarised as: political will and support, mobilisation of institutions and resources, economic environment providing opportunities, networking between programme managers, authorities and employers, long-term action frameworks for implementation, administrative capacity, engaged competent staff to apply the methodology, and robust data.

Barriers that can risk the programme performance relate to segregation and discrimination of Roma communities, political confrontation, lack of economic opportunities. Lack of flexibility of regulations as regards, for example, vocational training; Heavy bureaucracy for managing the ESF, lack of administrative capacity and lack of available specialised human resources for implementing the actions.

Proposed recommendations drawn by the assessment include: (i) Public authorities should continue placing efforts on the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy; (ii) Public authorities should continue supporting explicit but not exclusive targeting actions for the Roma; (iii) Spanish Regional Authorities should programme actions targeting Roma in their operational programmes for the next programming period; (iv) Programme promoters should continue developing methods to measure and show evidence of the medium and long term impacts of programmes aimed at the integration of the most disadvantaged groups; (v) ESF managing authorities should programme actions for enhancing the capacity of Roma organisations; (vi) Attempts of transferability of *Acceder* components and keys to success should carefully consider a range of factors which may hamper or ease the programme's good performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Acceder Programme

Roma in Spain have generally been self-employed in the past; they used to work in family businesses and their jobs were related to the agricultural sector, scrap and solid residues gathering and itinerant trading. Although the situation of the Roma in Spain has improved in the last four decades, as in many other countries they continue to experience high levels of poverty and social exclusion, poor educational results and suffer disproportionately from discrimination. In regards to employment, Roma face high unemployment rates, have low qualifications and are underrepresented in the labour market.

The Acceder programme has been the response of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) to this situation. Based on a previous 2-year pilot project developed in the city of Madrid within the framework of the ESF Initiative INTEGRA, it was subsequently expanded throughout Spain with the support of the ESF and ERDF (2000-2006 financing period) and ESF (2007 – 2013 financing period).

The main goal of the Acceder Programme is for Roma people to access the labour market, thus achieving equal opportunities. Roma access to the labour market is facilitated mainly through labour integration actions such as counselling, training, intermediation with companies and coaching in early stages of employment, all on the basis of individualised employment pathways.

The Acceder programme operates on the basis of 48 teams currently working throughout Spain, providing counselling, training and job search and intermediation. The programme has achieved sound results over the past 12 years. By the end of 2012, the programme had served more than 70,000 beneficiaries and facilitated more than 40,000 job contracts. These results have been recognised by the Spanish authorities and by the European institutions.

1.2. The Acceder programme within the framework of the ESF Operational Programme “Fight Against Discrimination”

In the period of 2007-2013 ESF activities have been implemented through three central government multiregional programmes¹ that account for 60 % of total funding, with the remaining 40 % shared between the 19 regional programmes.²

One of the three multiregional programmes is the Operational Programme for Fighting against Discrimination. This OP addresses the second of the three strategic objectives of the ESF in Spain for the period 2007-2013: “Attract more persons to the labour market, making employment a real option for all, fostering employability, social inclusion and equality for men and women, by particularly boosting the labour market integration of young persons, the long term unemployed, immigrants, the disabled and persons at risk of exclusion from the labour market”.

This OP is managed by 10 intermediary bodies; out of these 10, five are public bodies and the remaining 5 are Non-Governmental Organisations. Four of these five NGOs are: *Cáritas Española*, *Cruz Roja Española*, *Fundación ONCE* y *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (FSG) which undertake job integration actions targeted to specific groups.³ FSG's *Acceder* programme forms part of this broader Operational Programme.

1.3. Assessment questions and methodology

Different reports have highlighted the *Acceder* programme keys to success – among others, the integrated approach, the balance between the social and the economic perspective, involvement of the Roma; long-term planning,

¹ There are two groups of ESF Operational Programmes in Spain: a) Multiregional Operational Programmes which contain actions of Central Government institutions and agencies that are implemented nationwide; b) Regional Operational Programmes (one per each *Comunidad Autónoma* [Regional Government]).

² For 2007-2013, Spain is receiving EUR 8 billion of ESF funds that, with national co-funding, brings the total ESF spending to EUR 11.4 billion.

³ Besides FSG's *Acceder*, the other three NGO *Cáritas Española*, *Fundación ONCE* and *Cruz Roja Española* address highly socially excluded persons, people with disabilities, and immigrants respectively.

targeted but non-segregated services; flexibility and adaptation to Roma needs; multicultural working teams; strong partnerships, etc.⁴

Without questioning all these positive results, there are other questions that should be answered in order to identify the challenges for the next programming period in Spain. Furthermore, it is necessary to identify the transferable, as well as non-transferable elements from the *Acceder* experience to other European countries, notably those with larger Roma populations. This assessment aims to address some of these questions.

The objective of this assessment was to answer to 5 core questions related to the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and transferability of the programme:

- ➔ *Acceder* has demonstrated to be a successful programme in a period of economic growth during which the labour market expanded. However, to what extent does it continue to be effective in the context of an economic downturn Spain has been experiencing within the last few years?
- ➔ Are the economic costs of *Acceder* returned via positive effects in the economy?
- ➔ *Acceder* has followed the principle of Aiming for the mainstream. Nevertheless, after 13 years, does *Acceder* run as a parallel system for the Roma? Is it justified the continuation of a targeting programmes for specific groups?
- ➔ *Acceder* has been positive in terms of the participation of a civil society organisation in the management of the European Social Fund. However, has this participation extended to other Roma organisations?
- ➔ Are the conditions that have made the success of *Acceder* possible country-specific or to what extent can some of these components be replicated in other country contexts?

The assessment methodology has combined different methods. For the quantitative side, it has analysed *Acceder*'s data base and used secondary resources. In particular, the assessment has used the results of a recently conducted study on the four programmes managed by NGOs in the framework of the Spanish ESF Operational Programme "Fight Against Discrimination".⁵ For

⁴ See for example <http://goodpracticeroma.ppa.coe.int/en/pdf/81>

⁵ Sosilla Rivero, S. "Segunda Parte: Impacto Económico" en Rodríguez-Cabrero, G. (2013) *El empleo de las personas vulnerables: una inversión social rentable. Evaluación del impacto del Programa Operativo Pluriregional de Lucha contra la Discriminación* (forthcoming). Section 2 of the report uses some cross

the qualitative side, a variety of consultations to a range of stakeholders and key informants were conducted. More specifically, two discussion workshops were held in May 2013 – one with Roma representatives and the other with *Acceder* managers, government representatives and Roma representatives. These were facilitated on the basis of questions previously sent to the participants. Consulted sources included a core group of five Roma representatives who participated in the two workshops; advanced drafts of this report were distributed amongst them for comments. In addition, interviews were conducted in the area of Barcelona with representatives of local authorities and local Roma organisations. Lastly, a consultation using an electronic questionnaire was conducted on the topic of transferability. The questionnaire included open questions to allow informants to clarify their opinions in regards to the opportunities, necessary conditions and foreseen obstacles for the transferability of the *Acceder* programme to other country contexts.

The report is structured as follows: Section 2 contains an analysis of quantitative data of *Acceder*'s programme performance during the period of 2007-2012. This part is mainly based on performance data from *Acceder* programme data base. Section 3 gives a synthesis of a recent econometric study which analyses the economic impact of four programmes (one of which is *Acceder*) managed by four Spanish NGOs under an ESF operational programme in Spain. In Section 4, the views of stakeholders about the relevance of the *Acceder* programme, as well as their positions and expectations in regards to future orientations in the next programming period are discussed. Section 5 examines to what extent Roma organisations have participated in the management of the ESF as well as how the *Acceder* programme relates with them at the local level; future challenges to improve the situation are outlined. Section 6 presents the findings of a consultation to selected informants about the possibilities of transferability of *Acceder* to other country contexts. Lastly, Section 7 presents conclusions and suggests some recommendations for the future.

tabulations from the analysis of Davia, M.A., García Serrano, C. M. "Evaluación de la inserción laboral resultado del POLCD: Fundación Secretariado Gitano" (unpublished).

2. EFFECTIVENESS: THE PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE IN A RECESSIONARY ENVIRONMENT

2.1. Background

It has been 13 years since the programme *Acceder* initiated its activities with the aim of supporting the job integration of the Roma population. Nowadays, the initial programme's expectations have been surpassed: the programme has achieved more than 46,000 job contracts, delivered more than 1,800 courses, supported more than 130 entrepreneurial initiatives, launched a sheltered employment project and four *empresas de inserción* [employment integration companies] have been promoted.

Lessons learned underline the effectiveness of providing solutions tailored to specific disadvantaged groups. However, despite the success of the programme, as a result of the economic downturn in recent years there has been an increase in the number of beneficiaries per year as well as a return to the programme by former beneficiaries who had already integrated into jobs but lost them in the past few years marked by unemployment. Unemployment has risen from 8.23% in 2007 (which was the starting year of the second stage of the *Acceder* programme) to 27.16% in the first quarter of 2013,⁶ and the crisis has severely impacted labour intensive industries which employed low-skilled labour force during the period of economic growth.

2.2. Programme beneficiaries

Throughout the period of 2006-2011 the programme has served a total of more than 75,000 beneficiaries that corresponds to more than 42,000 registered individuals. Among these, over 70% were Roma along the period. According to programme data the annual flow of individuals who became *Acceder* beneficiaries for the first time has remained over 6,000 individuals per year, but the number of active beneficiaries per year has dramatically increased from 9,295 in 2006 to 16,050 in 2011. This partially suggests that some former beneficiaries have returned to receive assistance from the programme after

⁶ Data from the Active Population Survey (National Statistics).

losing their jobs in a context of huge increase of unemployment. Despite this increase of beneficiaries, the number of job contracts has slightly decreased in relation to 2006 and 2007 results, and their average duration significantly declined.

Table 1. Summary of Acceder results 2006-2012

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Beneficiaries per year (total)	9,295	10,845	11,521	11,877	12,779	14,709	16,050
Roma beneficiaries	6,926	8,190	8,256	8,387	9,028	10,798	11,616
Non-Roma Beneficiaries	2,369	2,655	3,265	3,490	3,751	3,911	4,434
New beneficiaries per year	4,715	5,454	6,574	6,797	6,590	6,247	6,168
Trained beneficiaries	1,291	1,765	1,823	1,949	2,401	3,203	3,220
N° of job contracts	4,132	4,664	3,920	3,401	3,869	4,097	3,760
Average duration of contracts (days)	605	538	528	428	374	241	131
Job contracts per person (average)	1,46	1,41	1,39	1,35	1,34	1,37	1,45
Beneficiaries with contract	2,826	3,300	2,809	2,511	2,882	2,985	2,589

Source: Acceder programme data base

Table 2 shows the percentage of Roma participants has remained with no significant alterations over 70%. It slightly decreased in 2008 and 2009 to increase again in 2011.

Table 2. Assisted beneficiaries by ethnicity (%)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Roma	75,52%	71,66%	70,62%	70,65%	73,41%	72,37%
Non Roma	24,48%	28,34%	29,38%	29,35%	26,59%	27,63%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 3 shows that gender distribution has remained stable although there is an increase in men's participation in the last years. This trend is consistent with the overall increase of male unemployment. On the other hand, the table also shows the decrease of the proportion of young beneficiaries (below 24 years of age) contrasting with the increase of beneficiaries between 35 and 44 years.

Table 3. Beneficiaries breakdown by sex and age (%)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Sex							
Men	45.8	45.0	45.6	48.8	48.4	48.5	47.2
Women	54.2	55.0	54.5	51.2	51.6	51.5	52.8
Age							
16-24	43.7	42.3	40.3	38.2	36.9	34.3	38.8
25-34	33.7	33.6	33.6	34.3	33.5	34.2	33.8
35-44	16.4	17.6	18.5	19.2	20.2	21.4	19.1
45 & above	6.2	6.5	7.6	8.3	9.4	10.1	8.2

Source: Acceder programme data base

In regards to the beneficiaries' level of studies, it can be seen in table 4 that the majority of beneficiaries both Roma and non Roma have either no education at all or have attended school but without completing compulsory education. Yet, this majority of beneficiaries with lower level of studies is more marked in the case of the Roma beneficiaries.

Table 4. Beneficiaries' level of studies by ethnicity (%)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Roma Beneficiaries						
No education	26,56%	24,19%	22,00%	22,35%	25,14%	23,86%
Certificate of school attendance	54,79%	57,44%	57,59%	55,55%	54,06%	53,64%
Compulsory secondary education	15,37%	15,16%	16,18%	16,96%	16,20%	17,42%
Post-compulsory secondary education	2,69%	2,69%	3,53%	4,50%	4,06%	4,43%
Higher education	0,60%	0,52%	0,70%	0,64%	0,55%	0,64%
Non Roma Beneficiaries						
No education	26,33%	31,70%	29,86%	23,09%	22,40%	27,79%
Certificate of school attendance	28,74%	25,94%	24,81%	31,19%	30,35%	27,36%
Compulsory secondary education	24,78%	22,51%	23,41%	23,86%	24,83%	24,04%
Post-compulsory secondary education	14,05%	15,47%	17,62%	17,33%	18,18%	16,76%
Higher education	6,10%	4,38%	4,30%	4,53%	4,24%	4,06%

Source: Acceder programme data base

2.3. Programme's key actions evolution

In summary, *Acceder* carries out three main types of actions in order to strengthen the employability of its beneficiaries: counselling, training actions, and job prospection and intermediation with employers.

2.3.1. Counselling actions

Counselling includes interviews, individual assessment, advice and planning of an individualized pathway to employment. All *Acceder* beneficiaries enter the programme through counselling. There is an increase of counselling actions per year from 9,000 in 2006 to 11,000 in 2011.

2.3.2. Training actions

The training activities are courses organized by *Acceder* or by others aimed at improving capacities and skills related to specific occupations. In the period of 2006-2011 there were 18,658 training actions registered in the *Acceder* data base. The number of participants in training actions has increased along the period. The annual percentage of new beneficiaries who participated in training actions rose from 14.1% in 2006 to 29% in 2011. It is also worth noting that training activities including a practical component (e.g. company internship) rose from 5.4% in 2009 to 31.6% in 2010, and to 40.4% in 2011. Lastly, the percentage of beneficiaries successfully completing the training oscillated between 86% in 2006 and 89% in 2011.

In regards to the course duration, there is an even distribution between courses of less than 100 hours (35.2%), courses between 100-350 hours (33.9%), and courses of more than 350 hours (30.9%). It can be observed that during the referred period of 2006-2011 the weight of courses of less than 100 hours decreased from 38.3% in 2006 to 31.3% in 2011, whereas the 100-350h courses increased from 31.7% to 39.3% in the same years.

As to the type of training delivered by the courses, vocational training courses are above 30% and training courses in companies and crafts firms over 20%. *Acceder* courses (organized and delivered directly by the programme) are 20% of the total, and the rest correspond to formal education and others.

It is worth noting that there has been a higher participation of youngsters below 24 years of age (25%) than beneficiaries older than 45 years, who only

participated around 15%. Lastly, women continue participating more in training actions than men (22.9% and 18.4% respectively).

2.3.3. Job intermediation actions

These actions consist mainly in identifying job vacancies and bridging the job seekers with potential employers by supplying them with suitable candidates. In total, there were 12,420 intermediation actions during the period of 2006-2011. Although the number of programme users benefiting from this type of assistance decreased during the years of economic recession, specially in 2009 and 2010, it is worth noting that in 2011 it reached again levels similar to the ones in 2006 and 2011. However, since the number of beneficiaries increased notably during the last years, the percentage of *Acceder* beneficiaries participating in intermediation actions has decreased from 10.5% to 7.9% related to the reduced labour supply. The data also show that men were participating more than women in 2006, but the trend has changed and in 2011 a higher proportion of women beneficiaries participated in these actions.

2.3.4. Success of actions in terms of employment

Regarding the success of the actions in terms of accessing job contracts by the beneficiaries, programme data shows that the annual percentage of beneficiaries that accessed job contracts has decreased over the past years. It can be noted that the trend has shifted as regards men and women and the latter seem to cope better with the crises effects. This is nonetheless consistent with the overall unemployment rates, which show that the rise of unemployment has affected men more severely.

Table 5. Beneficiaries' access to employment rates per year disaggregated by sex (%)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Men	35.6	27.2	22.8	23.2	20.1
Women	34.7	30.6	27.0	25.9	23.3
Total	35.1	29.1	25.0	24.6	21.7

Source: *Acceder* programme data base

Table 6 shows that the distribution of the achieved contracts by level of studies has changed along the period 2007-2012. The two lowest levels of education have significantly dropped whereas the others have increased.

Table 6. Job Contracts by level of studies (%)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No education	16,23%	15,43%	14,70%	14,53%	16,48%	13,94%
Certificate of school attendance	50,90%	49,92%	44,13%	42,98%	40,98%	39,55%
Compulsory secondary education	23,39%	23,27%	26,08%	25,30%	27,61%	29,26%
Post-compulsory secondary education	7,16%	8,49%	12,00%	13,98%	12,25%	13,88%
Higher education	2,32%	2,88%	3,09%	3,20%	2,68%	3,38%

Source: Acceder programme data base

Related to the previous paragraph, it can be observed that the percentage of the hired Roma beneficiaries has decreased 10 points in favour of the Non Roma beneficiaries. There seems to be an evident correlation between the higher level of studies of the Non Roma participants and their better performance in the last years of the period when the labour market was requesting more formal qualifications.

Table 7. Job contracts by ethnicity (%)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Roma	77,87%	74,39%	67,45%	66,48%	66,27%	67,05%
Non Roma	22,13%	25,61%	32,55%	33,52%	33,73%	32,95%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Acceder programme data base

Another important aspect to consider is the employment access rate of beneficiaries in relation to the type of actions they participated in. Data shows that the combination of different types of programme's assistance continues being successful for accessing employment. For example, only 13.2% of beneficiaries who received counselling in 2011 accessed jobs in that same year, while 43.4% of those who combined counselling and intermediation did. Furthermore, those who combined counselling, training and intermediation were hired 59.1% representing an increase in regards to previous years (52.4% in 2009 and 54.2% in 2010).

Table 8. Beneficiaries' access to employment rates in 2011 in relation to type of assistance

Actions	Access to employment in 2011 (%)
Counselling	13.2
Counselling and training	17.8
Counselling and intermediation	43.4
Counselling, training and	59.1

Source: Acceder Programme data base

In regards to the characteristics of the job contracts, there are several trends which can be observed during the period analysed:

- the temporary contracts have increased from 75% in 2007 to 87% in 2011,
- the duration of contracts has decreased: the percentage of contracts with a duration of 1 year or more has dropped,
- the percentage of part-time contacts has increased from 22.6% in 2006 to 35.3% in 2011, although full-time jobs continue representing the majority.

Lastly, as regards job seeking methods, the majority of individuals who found employment succeeded in doing so through either "Active search" (in which FSG participated to a certain degree) or "Prospecting" (which involves direct intermediation by FSG). The first method has decreased during the recessionary phase while the second one has increased, which is an indirect indicator of the efficiency of the service provided by FSG.

The analysis of *Acceder* quantitative data allows drawing some conclusions in relation to the assessment questions: *Acceder*, during the period of 2006-2012 has had to confront the effects of the severe economic recession and unemployment growth. Data from this period shows that the programme has responded to this situation most notably by increasing the participation of beneficiaries in training actions since 2007. The intermediation activities have been maintained in quantitative terms but due to the increase of programme beneficiaries the proportion of those who benefited from this assistance decreased.

The performance of *Acceder* has been definitely affected by the economic downturn. While the programme developed in a context of economic growth

during its first stage (2000-2006), the second period observed in this assessment shows a decrease of the rate of success in beneficiaries' access to jobs and an increase of temporary and part-time jobs. Nevertheless, this cannot be interpreted as a failure of the programme. *Acceder* has continued facilitating job contracts and the significant percentage of beneficiaries who gain access to employment after receiving intense programme assistance (i.e., combination of counselling, training and intermediation) demonstrates that active measures can have meaningful results, even in a recessionary environment.

3. THE ECONOMIC RETURNS OF THE PROGRAMME

This section of the report presents a synthesis of the results of a recently conducted study⁷ on the macroeconomic impact of the ESF Operational Programme “Fight Against Discrimination” (OPFAD) the *Acceder* programme is part of. The study refers to the period of implementation 2006-2011 and provides a quantitative estimate of the effects of the OPFAD on a set of macroeconomic variables of Spain.

3.1. The study on the economic impact of the ESF Operational Programme “Fight Against Discrimination”

The aforementioned study conducted an evaluation of the macroeconomic effects of the OPFAD during the period of 2006-2011. For this evaluation, the macroeconometric model HERMIN-Spain⁸ was used to quantitatively estimate the impact of the actions and investments made by the 4 NGO programmes within the OPFAD. This analysis looked at set of key macroeconomic variables of Spain, such as the Gross Domestic Product, employment, unemployment rate, inflation, private consumption and public finances. The actions and investments carried out by the 4 NGOs impact on the economy, on the one hand by means of higher spending, which has effects on the demand and therefore on production, employment, consumption and public finances; on the other hand, the investments in human capital (improved skills and employability of beneficiaries) generate effects on the supply side through improvements in productivity, resulting into cost reductions and increased competitiveness which stimulate the aggregated output of the Spanish economy.

The analysis compared the National Statistics' official data with a simulated scenario “without OPFAD”. In the simulation the estimated effects of the NGOs' actions were detracted so that the differences observed would indicate the effects of the OP actions on the economy.

⁷ Sosilla Rivero, S. “Segunda Parte: Impacto Económico” en Rodríguez-Cabrero, G. (2013) *El empleo de las personas vulnerables: una inversión social rentable. Evaluación del impacto del Programa Operativo Pluriregional de Lucha contra la Discriminación* (forthcoming).

⁸ HERMIN is an econometric modeling framework for analyzing structural policies. It nowadays covers all EU member states including Spain. The specific HERMIN-Spain is a macroeconometric model which disaggregates GDP into four production branches: manufacturing, market services, agriculture, and non-market or public services. It is based on 178 equations distributed among three broad components: a supply side, an absorption side, and an income distribution side.

The total expenditure of the part of the programme managed by the four NGOs during in the 2006-2011 period amounted to 244,114,930 euros (an average of around 40 million euros per year). Specifically, the expenditure of the *Acceder* programme amounted to 51,313,835 euros representing a 21% of the total.

A summary of the main results of these simulations carried out by the study is presented below. Over the period of 2006-2011 the 4 sub-programmes run by the NGOs within the OPFAD (which *Acceder* is part of) has:

- resulted in boosting the economy's aggregated output by an annual average of 56 million euros,
- increased the annual average consumption of Spanish families by 34 million euros,
- maintained or generated the equivalent of 19,673 full-time annual contracts, out of which 5,167 have been direct (own programme workers and beneficiaries employees) and 14,673 indirect jobs in other sectors.
- contributed to an annual average drop of the unemployment rate of 0.016%,
- produced an annual average decrease of the public deficit of 23 million euros; this being the result of an average increase of 39 million euros in revenues minus 15 million of public spending,
- increased by 10 million the average revenue from direct taxes and another 10 million from indirect ones,
- resulted in an increase of 11 million euros in the average revenue from social security contributions, and
- resulted in annual average savings of 9 million euros in welfare benefits by means of the direct jobs created.

The study concludes therefore that the results of the simulations suggest that the action carried out by the four NGOs implementing OPFAD sub-programmes, including FSG's *Acceder*, have not only contributed to the employment integration of disadvantaged groups but they would have also provided for a stimulus of the Spanish economy. Furthermore, according to the presented study's simulations, an average of 0,91 of every euro invested in this programme was returned by means of Government's revenues such as taxes, social security contributions plus savings in terms of replacing welfare benefits.

4. RELEVANCE OF THE PROGRAMME IN VIEW OF THE NEXT PROGRAMMING PERIOD

4.1. Background

As seen in a previous section of this report *Acceder* programme has been affected by the crisis since 2008 although it has managed to maintain significant results. At this point, in view of a new programming period of the EU Structural Funds for the period 2014-2020, questions arise related to the relevance of the programme *Acceder* in the current context as well as regarding possible ways of improving the programme and its adaptation to new circumstances. In a moment in which large sectors of the population are struggling to cope with very difficult circumstances, to what extent is it justified to continue investing in tailored actions for specific groups?

On May 23, 2013 a discussion workshop was held in Madrid gathering experts, representatives of public administrations and of civil society organisations to discuss these matters. The objectives of the meeting were:

- to discuss aspects related to the relevance of the *Acceder* programme in the current context of economic recession and in future foreseen scenarios;
- to identify ways/orientations of improving the programme in view of the next ESF programming period.

The findings of this workshop are presented in this section of the report following the structure of the discussion and the questions the participants were asked.

4.2. Discussion Summary

THEME 1: The *Acceder* programme and the mainstreaming of access to employment of the Roma population

*Question 1.1. After 13 years of existence, is *Acceder* perceived as a parallel/duplicate service, or rather complementary to the mainstream public employment services? What are the reasons for extending the duration of a specialised service of this nature?*

Some participants rated the *Acceder* as a parallel service to the public employment services and others did as complementary. However, all views stressed that the programme is still necessary for a number of reasons:

'Perhaps 13 years is a long time, but I consider it [Acceder] as complementary and not as duplicate. We continue perceiving the exclusion and special barriers the Roma face'. (Roma representing a regional government's department).

'We believe that it is parallel rather than complementary, but it is absolutely necessary because the Spanish Government in its decentralisation, complexity, bureaucracy and lack of interdepartmental coordination cannot address the complex situation of the Roma and their access to employment. The Roma Development Programme was born in 1989 with the aim of making public services inclusive but those expectations have not been met, so there is no doubt we need a programme like Acceder' (Central Government programme officer).

A representative of civil society highlighted that *'many Roma beneficiaries have acquired skills to deal with their situation of unemployment within the system as for example to obtain an employment card. It may be a duplicated service but I find it very useful'* (Roma civil society representative).

In summary, the participants emphasised **three types of reasons for the continuation of an explicitly Roma-targeted programme:**

- The persistence of discrimination the Roma are victims of: *'In an ideal situation, without discrimination, mainstream services may be sufficient, but while discrimination continues to exist, Acceder continues to be necessary'. (Roma CSO representative).*
- Social exclusion situations which are increasing and worsening in a context of recession and social cuts: *'The crisis is affecting more Roma people and we shouldn't be the scapegoats of it'* (Roma civil society representative).
- The costs of not acting: *'Right now it is more necessary than ever: We must continue investing in training, finding employment niches; if we abandon the most disadvantaged now we will find a much worse situation later on, which will be more difficult to deal with'. (Acceder programme officer).*

In view of the skyrocketing unemployment rates that have already been reached, the most likely scenario in the near future is that active employment policies will prioritize people that are more "employable" and who have lost their jobs during the period of rising unemployment but who need less assistance and financial efforts for their reintegration into the labour market.

Public offices should assist people who are in a more disadvantaged position. However nowadays, public employment services intermediate in an insignificant percentage of job contracts for the overall population and they have failed to address the needs of the disadvantaged groups. An Acceder Programme's manager highlighted that the programme's primary objective was not to establish a Roma job placement office but rather to activate the Roma population with difficulties to access mainstream jobs so that they can better use mainstream services and, ultimately, not need the programme anymore. The reason for the continuation of the programme was summarised as follows: *'We are not the system, but make it more flexible by placing the emphasis on building the beneficiaries' capacities to use it'*. (Acceder manager).

On the basis of the agreement on the need to continue maintaining actions explicitly targeted to (but not exclusively) the Roma population, the discussion raised the future viability of continuing to carry out highly specialized group-specific actions from the point of view of the public financial supporters. It was underlined that the landscape of employment services in Spain is very scattered, with many public agencies and job placement offices at central, regional and local levels. This landscape will have to aim at streamlining and simplifying services. With this in mind, the programme's justification of "what we do works well" may not be enough for public financial supporters in the future as greater integration of specialized services for disadvantaged groups may be requested (i.e. attending all groups with special difficulties). In this regard it was stressed that complementarity should be aimed at with other promoters of the Operational Programme "Fight Against Discrimination" and joint actions should be performed. *'We should build synergies and carry out joint actions with other specialised services to other disadvantaged groups, as we are already doing with other operators in the ESF Operational Programme for Fighting Discrimination'*. (Acceder manager).

Question 1.2. In the current cycle of labour market contraction and considering existing future forecasts, is Acceder's work focus on mainstream paid

employment the most suitable? What strategies and orientations of work are appropriate to schedule the next programming period? Can examples for the short and medium term be provided?

The discussion highlighted that Acceder has gone through two different cycles in its 13 years of existence. Firstly, during the 2000-2007 period it took advantage of the economic growth-cycle to facilitate the job integration of vulnerable people in labour-intensive industries, which expanded during those years. The second cycle has come with the rise of unemployment since 2008 by which the programme has been affected. However, it was stressed that the programme has been effective in cushioning the effects of the crisis: *'It has been shown that in years of crisis you can continue creating opportunities'*. (Acceder programme officer).

Acceder programme officers highlighted also that, although the number of job contracts has decreased and some former beneficiaries have returned to the programme, we must not lose sight of the value of the programme in terms of activation and increase of the employability of the beneficiaries in a context of high unemployment rates. *'We have to measure not only the job contracts but also the results from the perspective of activation: the challenge is to improve the "backpack" that each beneficiary carries. [...] Itineraries are individualised and can last more or less, three months or three years, depending on the circumstances, but even people who get back into the programme do so with a lot of new skills, and that is a success of the programme'*. (Acceder programme officer).

In summary, the main proposals that emerged in the debate in regards to approaches for planning action in the next ESF programming period, were:

- Continue focusing on paid employment,
- Strengthen efforts on promoting self-employment,
- Work on the quality of contracts,
- Work to regularize informal work

First of all, it was stressed that the programme should **continue to work to reduce the gap of the Roma population occupied in paid activities and the general population**. According to data used by *the National Strategy for the Inclusion of the Roma population 2012-2020*, the percentage of Roma occupied in paid

activities in 2011 was 37.6%, whereas it was 83.6% for the general population. The programme must continue focusing its efforts to close this gap because *'the public employment services and active policies are failing and in the current situation they are not paying sufficient attention to the most disadvantaged'* (Acceder Programme Officer). Related to this, a participant stressed that the programme should serve less employable persons *'[...] who are being marginalized by the policy of the current situation'*. (Roma civil society representative).

Some participants noted that it would be desirable to give **more weight to the promotion of self-employment activities**: *'We must incorporate new concepts of entrepreneurship and encourage entrepreneurship'*. (Roma civil society representative).

From the perspective of the programme lessons learned, it was noted that expectations from the impact of promoting self-employment activities should be realistic bearing in mind these will always have less impact in quantitative terms than paid work. Furthermore, a correlation was established between the pathways towards paid work and the success of self-employment projects. *'Those who have now the skills for being self-employed had been employed before in paid jobs. The idea is to have a transfer between working for others and self-employment. Self-employment projects are now better than before, academy of arts, catering services ... and these projects come from people who have gone through paid jobs'*. (Acceder programme officer).

Related to the promotion of self-employment, the need to work for the **regularization of activities being carried out in the informal economy** was underlined. In this regard, the added value of the specific guidance programmes was stressed: *'we can make this kind of things, but other resources cannot; nobody is coming to the Chamber of Commerce saying 'look, I'm working in the informal economy and I am thinking of setting up a respectable business''*. (Acceder programme officer). It was also noted that within activities aimed at self-employment, new windows should be opened that did not have to do exclusively with trade: *'All companies that are created are sales-related. We are in a vicious circle that we don't see. We should go to other professions'*. (Roma representing regional government department)

A participant also suggested the need to work more intensely social clauses into service contracts (e.g. maintenance) tendered by local authorities.

Another suggestion was that the programme in the future should strengthen the **monitoring of the quality of employment contracts** to avoid situations of exploitation. Moreover, according to participants the programme should focus efforts on taking more advantage of the competences of the beneficiaries and not on restricting them only to low-skilled jobs. However, another reflection pointed out that the segment of low-skilled jobs would not be left behind without dropping the early school leavers rate among the young Roma.

THEME 2: The Acceder programme relations with the institutional environment and economic agents

Question 2.1. What is the assessment of Acceder relations with public administrations in general? How can these relations improve in the future?

The relationship with public administrations arose initially from the need of co-financing for the European Social Fund allocation to the programme. Through the signing of protocol agreements with regional and local authorities, mechanisms of relationship were established; these included, among others, regular monitoring meetings, annual conferences for presenting results, etc.

The participants generally noted that the relationship of the programme with public administrations has been positive and has also had positive effects: *'The relationship from the outside looks good. The Acceder placed the issue of Roma employment on the agenda and has succeeded to involve employment authorities. Roma issues were previously circumscribed to social services departments'*. (CSO Roma representative); *'It has contributed to order policies. Before, small things were funded in order to justify the authorities were doing things with the Roma. There is now more pressure on focusing on the use of public money on programs and specific objectives'* (Acceder manager).

Some also stressed the fact that Acceder was welcomed by public authorities, mostly because it brought effective responses to an issue they did not know how to address: *'Public authorities found the formula for addressing Roma issues. There were funds for co-financing ESF contributions and they could capitalize politically on it'*. (Central Government programme officer).

At present, in a context of economic downturn and cutbacks, various participants pointed out that these relations were getting worse. It was reported

that some cooperation agreements have been cancelled, there are payment delays by some authorities and the collaboration has lost intensity.⁹ *'Nowadays Roma issues have lost momentum among all the current social problems'*. (Central Government Programme Officer); *'The policy initiative is lost'* (Roma representing a regional government department).

Various opinions focused on claiming a greater undertaking of responsibilities by public authorities: *'At the present there are two weaknesses: a) governance and b) finance. The instruments exist. In the first case there are the EU's structural funds; in the second case, there is the National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020. Therefore, instruments exist, but what is missing in the current context is political will. The public authorities do not have the [National Roma Integration] Strategy on the desk; as an example, the recently approved housing plan does not include actions for the eradication of slums'*. (Acceder manager).

'The Acceder is very positive but we now have a complex scenario ahead and I do not see that the Administration is active in moving forward on this issue; the perspective must not only be what civil society organisations are able to do, but public authorities must undertake their responsibilities'. (Roma representing a regional public employment service).

Question 2.2. One of the keys to success has been the interaction of the programme with potential employers. From a generally positive assessment of this strategy, what could be reinforced / improved in the future?

Participants noted that one of the positive aspects of the programme was to improve Roma perception among employers.

It was underlined that one of the programme's strategies to deal with the consequences of the economic crisis has been the intensification of prospecting efforts and the establishment of stable alliances with the business sector through collaboration agreements. Since 2009 14 agreements have been signed with major companies in their respective sectors. There has been thus an

⁹ As an example for this loss of intensity the not-renewal of the agreement with the Public Employment Services of Andalusia can be highlighted. Under the old agreement (from 2008-2012) the ten *Acceder* presences in the region of Andalusia worked as Service offices and were able to access the data basis and carry out administrative procedures of the beneficiaries of the programme (e.g. stamping unemployment cards).

evolution in the programme's work with companies: firstly, the programme's focus was on the small companies at local level; for the future, the plan is to involve bigger firms and carry out joint projects. The trend is to go from courses at home to doing courses jointly with employers.

The future challenges the participants pointed out are:

- The programme must raise the qualifications of the beneficiaries further and needs to improve the ways through which it does so.
- The programme must incorporate companies in the working process and, jointly with them, design training actions with their commitment of a certain percentage of the trainees that will be hired.
- An already highlighted topic that was addressed in the previous theme, regarding the need to work on the quality of the job contracts.
- The programme must strengthen efforts to work with large companies through its departments of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

5. ACCEDER AND THE PARTICIPATION OF ROMA ORGANISATIONS IN THE USE OF EU FUNDS

5.1. Background

The Spanish Roma association model can be classified as an asymmetrical one that replicated the organisational model and development of the Spanish third sector from the 1980s onwards, however adapting it to the Roma population. This resulted into a *de facto* territorial balance, with few national entities and a large variety of local entities covering the entire country. During the 1990s second level entities, the regional Roma federations were created. Today these federations integrate a large share of the local Roma entities and play a role in the political dialogue. Most recently, the association phenomenon has experienced the creation of associations and federations of women, students and those of religious character, all of which have enriched the association landscape. Women's associations have become one of the main references for community mobilizing and constitute an alternative to traditional associations, as have some youth associations. Some religious associations also have great convening and mobilising powers among their members.

In general, most of the traditional Roma association movement at local level can be described as being close to one of a volunteer community, sparsely specialised in comparison to the organisational development of other civil society organisations, although there are exceptions. Roma organisations receive almost 100% of their funding through small subsidies from public administrations, which is affecting their sustainability at times of budgetary cuts. However, a trend towards a major development in management and organisational capacities among Roma youth and women's entities can be observed.

During the last decade the capacity of political dialog has been strengthened due to the establishment of governmental advisory bodies on Roma policies at national and regional levels with representatives of Roma associations, The State Council of Roma People, created in 2005, integrates representatives from entities at state and regional level.

5.2. The Acceder programme and the local association environment

This section is mainly based on the views expressed by Roma representatives from different regions of Spain during a round table discussion held on May 6, 2013. Prior to this meeting, consultations to representatives of Roma organisations and the municipality of Barcelona had been conducted.

5.2.1. Early stages of the programme

The Acceder Programme was introduced on a case-to-case basis via negotiations with the industrial environment of each region and locality. The Programme was first approved by the ESF and then had to face the challenge of raising the necessary co-funding from regional and local administrations as the promoting agency FSG was lacking the financial means to co-finance the total ESF amount by themselves.

A consulted representative from a local authority highlighted that the Acceder project was seen as “fresh air” that had the capacity to spread to the dynamics of relations between Roma associations and public administrations, which at that time were characterised by a lack of innovation: *‘Finally, someone came with something other than hairdressing courses for the girls and computer courses for the boys. [...] The project was innovative, results-based and in addition, co-funded; you couldn’t say no to that’*. Another novelty of the programme positively valued by informants was the introduction of multidisciplinary and multicultural teams.

From the perspective of Roma people linked to the association movement who still remember the beginnings of the programme, it was stated that Acceder had been introduced as a “top-down” approach and the institutional efforts by the promoting entity were perceived as having concentrated more on negotiating with public administrations in order to obtain co-funding, rather than on creating a cooperative framework with the local Roma associations. The associations were informed about the start of the programme¹⁰, but the predominant sensation among the informants is that these beginnings did no

¹⁰ In some cases the agreements with public administrations were signed at institutional events in which the local associations participated. For example, the cooperation agreement in Barcelona was signed within the framework of the *Consell Municipal del poble gitano de Barcelona*, a City Council body in which the city’s most representative Roma entities participate.

translate into intensive work collaboration. First of all, the cooperation was limited to the fact that the associations provided reference experts from the local Roma community (sometimes volunteers from the same association) who could serve as potential candidates for positions of the programme.

Nevertheless, it is also recognised that the Roma associations at that time did not have the organisational capacities to develop a programme this ambitious and specialised. *Acceder* is said to have used the opportunity that other entities were not prepared to develop.

5.2.2. Development of the programme

One of the aspects widely recognised by the consulted parties is that the *Acceder* Programme mobilised and involved the employment departments of the regions and municipalities, shifting the Roma issues from social services to labour policies. Additionally, *Acceder* marked a change in working styles and approaches between public administrations and Roma entities, emphasising on aspects such as planning and the definition of objectives and results. In this respect, *Acceder* has been able to contribute to the professionalization of Roma entities as these had to strengthen their efforts to adapt to the greater demands in management and accountability. Furthermore, the *Acceder* programme mobilised a large amount of human resources, both of Roma as well as non-Roma origin, who strengthened their professional competencies within the multidisciplinary teams of the *Acceder* programme.

According to consulted sources' views, the cooperation between the *Acceder* programme and local associations is considered improvable; although it appears that in some occasions, time favoured the building of synergies. In either case, the channels of collaboration do not respond to a systematic work approach of the programme as a whole but rather depend on local circumstances as well as on confidence and understanding between the people. This collaboration is based on the mutual referral of its users – on the one hand, the associations contacting *Acceder* for job-search assistance and *Acceder* offices contacting the associations for other types of social assistance, on the other. Another form of collaboration has been reported in the context of

training activities, in which the local Roma entity preselects a group of people able to participate in a training organised by the *Acceder* programme.¹¹

Nonetheless, the existence of the *Acceder* programme at local level, in the regions where it is present, has not led to an increase in participation of other Roma entities regarding the use of Structural Funds. This aspect will be discussed in the next section.

5.2.3. Participation of Roma organisations in the EU Structural Funds

Based on the analysis of Spain's ESF Management Unit data from the *Comunidades Autónomas* [regional governments in Spain], the below table gives an overview of the degree to which the Roma population is represented in the respective regional Operational Programmes.

Table 9: Roma in the ESF Regional Operational Programmes in Spain

	Are the Roma explicitly mentioned in the Regional OP?	Are Roma NGO as beneficiaries?	Nº of Roma NGO as beneficiaries	€ for Roma NGO in period 2007-2012
ANDALUCIA	Yes	Yes	2	240,202€
ARAGON	No	Yes	3	157,224.17€
ASTURIAS	No	Yes	2	312,881.70€
BALEARES	No	Yes	1	133,467.33€
CANARIAS	No	No	0	-
CANTABRIA	No	No	0	-
CASTILLA-LA MANCHA	Ethnic minorities are mentioned, not explicitly the Roma	Yes		579,364.92€
CASTILLA-LEON	No	Yes	2	36,027.00€
CATALUÑA	Yes (Measure 71)	Yes	1	32,652€
CEUTA	No	No	0	-
EXTREMADURA	Yes	Yes	2	69,066.70€
GALICIA	Yes	No	0	-
LA RIOJA	No	No	0	-

¹¹ During the course of this assessment one example of such collaboration was reported in Sabadell (Barcelona), where the *Acceder* programme and the delegation of the Federation of Christian Associations of Andalusia (FACA) collaborated. Training sessions are held on a regular basis for groups of worshipping women. These trainings are organised by the respective persons in charge at FACA and the city's *Acceder* presence – the successful cooperation, participation and joint management have been extremely well received by both sides.

	Are the Roma explicitly mentioned in the Regional OP?	Are Roma NGO as beneficiaries?	N° of Roma NGO as beneficiaries	€ for Roma NGO in period 2007-2012
MADRID	No	Yes	5	289,078.91€
MELILLA	No	No	0	-
MURCIA	No	Yes	1	172,080 €
NAVARRA	No	Yes	1	106,096€
PAÍS VASCO	No	No	0	-
VALENCIA	No	Yes	15	1,263,461€

Source: Regional lists of beneficiaries of ESF in the period of 2007-2012. Available at: <http://www.empleo.gob.es/uafse/es/beneficiarios/>

With some exceptions, most notably the region of Valencia, it can be observed that the number of Roma beneficiary entities and the amount allocated to them is rather low. Therefore, while Spain is considered as an example of using Structural Funds for Roma integration thanks to the well-known *Acceder* programme, the regional programming of these funds in Spain does not regard significantly the Roma. This situation may have two reasons:

- The multiregional Operational Programme on the “Fight Against Discrimination” (managed by the central government, representing the programme under which *Acceder* is operated) might have had a discouraging effect on the will of regional governments to launch activities favouring the Roma population since they could assume that this issue had already been sufficiently covered by the Programme at state level.
- During the course of this assessment it has been found that Roma grassroots organisations are not aware of how the ESF works and the possibilities that it offers and find difficult to access it. Thus, mobilisation to participate and influence the programming and management of the ESF at regional level has been limited.

5.3. Challenges for the future

- ➔ The collaboration between the *Acceder* programme and Roma grassroots entities do not seem to follow a strategy or systematically planned operational procedures of the programme but is established on an ad hoc basis at local level. The consulted informants demand greater intensity and formalisation of this technical collaboration, especially in a context of scarce resources due to the crisis, which calls for collaborative and imaginative

actions between the entities. Following the views expressed by the consulted sources, the ways of improvement for the new implementation stage could include:

- *Acceder* could carry out an analysis of the association environment in each locality in order to identify the collaboration potential for activities of the new stage. Attention should be paid to the areas of expertise of the grassroots associations who are in close contact with the local community. Reinforcing this collaboration would be an acknowledgement for the local entities.
 - Establish protocols for the collaboration between local grassroots entities and the programme, improving the mechanisms for identifying potential beneficiaries and holding periodical meetings in order to exchange information. This kind of collaboration has been informal; therefore, making it more visible would acknowledge the local entities.
 - Collaborate with grassroots entities in order to reach the Roma population with the lowest employment rate who require greater investment in the development of their itineraries. Grassroots Roma entities can assist in pre-job training activities which could serve as a measure to increase the employability of these persons. This type of collaboration would therefore play a bridging role. According to an informant, this would mean using the opportunity provided by *"connecting the programme with the community work which is carried about by other entities"*.
- ➔ The *Acceder* Programme has made use of European Social Fund benefiting a large share of the Roma population. The promoting entity (FSG) is the only organisation with the necessary institutional capacity to manage a programme with these characteristics at national level. However, Roma organisations have highlighted the difficulties of accessing these funds as beneficiaries at regional level.

According to the European Commission's proposed new priorities and rules for the next programming period of 2014-2020, a minimum share of the 20% ESF should be dedicated to social inclusion actions. Furthermore, there is a greater emphasis on supporting the most disadvantaged groups and marginalised communities and on participation of civil society organisations implementing ESF activities. More specifically, as the Common Strategic Framework

proposed¹², one of the ESF 2014-2020 thematic objectives (i.e. Enhancing institutional capacity) includes the capacity building of non-governmental organisations in order to help them deliver more effectively their contribution to employment, education and social policies. This framework offers possibilities to address the capacity-building needs of Roma organisations.

¹² Commission Staff Working Document. Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014 to 2020. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/index_en.cfm

6. TRANSFERABILITY OF THE PROGRAMME

6.1. Background

The last topic this assessment addressed was the potential transferability of the *Acceder* Programme to other national contexts. Various previous reports have acknowledged positive results and highlighted factors of success of this programme. Yet, there are still challenges to identify for the next programming period as regards, for example, what is transferable from the *Acceder* experience to other European countries. For this purpose, a consultation was carried out among key informants who are familiar with the *Acceder* Programme and wished to contribute with their views to this assessment by replying to a questionnaire that was sent.

In this section the responses of the 10 respondents to the questionnaire are recorded. The results are organised following the structure of the questionnaire; in some cases quotations from the respondents are included.

6.2. Respondent's' views

Question 1. Do you think the Spanish *Acceder* Programme is transferable to other country contexts?

This question was positively answered by all respondents, although with several nuances. It was noted that the *Acceder* model has some particularities, which are hard to find in other national contexts. The model is considered transferable but the replication should study in detail contextual differences in regards to the legal framework, professional practice, etc. Furthermore, certain contextual issues and macro-level problems were also pointed out. For example, regional unemployment (i.e. Eastern Slovakia or Eastern Hungary) constitutes a major barrier for Roma to access employment. The existence of segregated communities without access to infrastructure (transportation, housing, etc.) turns out very difficult to establish a similar programme. However, it was also highlighted by Romanian respondents that the transferability of some programme components had been successfully tested in Romania. (Project *Împreună pe piața muncii* [Together in the labour market] implemented in 8 Romanian cities in the framework of the ESF Human Resources Sectoral Operational Programme).

The value of the “explicit but not exclusive targeting” approach was underscored: *‘The model of explicit but not exclusive targeting is better than either one which denies ethnicity (and most Roma simply fall through) or one which is ethnically exclusive (and too much focus moves to the issue of who is and who is not a member of the targeted ethnic group; plus it may perpetuate elites within that group who may not need it. [...] In spite of the limitations, there seems to be no valid reason to believe that a culturally sensitive, mainstream-employment-oriented employment programme with subsequent job coaching would not have better results even in the more difficult circumstances of Central and Eastern Europe than what they currently practice’*. (Respondent from International Organisation 1).

One respondent supported the transferability noting also that some components should be replicated not only by a project but also by mainstream public services. *‘Foremost, to some extent, the primary labour market services should incorporate some of the [Acceder] service components’*. (Respondent from Hungary 1).

Question 2. Which of the programme’s actions and keys to success are in your view more relevant for other country contexts you are familiar with?

The keys to success highlighted by respondents were:

- Methodology based on individualised profiling and pathways to employment adjusted to the labour market and to the beneficiaries. *‘Beneficiaries end up with a personalised intervention plan, adapted to his/her situation, personal resources and objectives’* (Respondent from Romania 1).
- Labour market exploration and intermediation and innovation in identifying employment niches and matching supply and demand. *‘Most of programmes in Eastern Europe focus on training but do not assist participants in finding and retaining employment’*. (Respondent from Hungary 2).
- The multicultural approach, where Roma and non-Roma work together as programme managers: *‘In Eastern Europe there is still an inclination to treat Roma as a mere ‘target group’ where programs are designed and delivered by non-Roma only; Or in contrasting case there are Roma NGOs who do not provide services to non-Roma and do not have on staff non-Roma workers’*. (Respondent from Hungary 2).

The combination of some of these factors, specifically of technical aspects of the methodology with cultural sensitivity was highlighted: *'The keys to success are, in my view, three: cultural sensitivity to Roma culture, but combined with aiming for the mainstream employment; and job coaching in early stages of the employment. This approach has shown to be superior in human as well as economic terms to the creation of segregated "project jobs" on an artificial, parallel job market. And indeed, it has proved to be superior to investment into vocational training without realistic perspective of subsequent employment'*. (Respondent from International Organisation 1).

Question 3. In your view, what conditions are necessary for these actions and keys to success to be successfully replicated in other countries? Which of these conditions already exist in those countries and which don't?

The respondents' answers to these questions are summarised as follows:

- Political will and support. In comparison to other countries situations, it is seen as vital that in Spain there has long been a political consensus between the two major parties on Roma inclusion. Furthermore, it is noted that implementing the programme: *'requires a degree of political strategising, not only on the part of the politicians concerned, but also on the part of those who wish to work with them – i.e., trying to get the main political parties on board'*. (Respondent from International Organisation 1).
- Capacity to mobilise resources. There are initial costs of a programme such as *Acceder* that might discourage public authorities from taking that option. In this regard, multi-level financing is seen as essential. The capacity to mobilise existing resources from the municipal, regional or State budget, or to effectively use EU Structural Funds, is a key factor.
- Economic environment: according to various respondents the size and economic structure of the area and the degree to which the area is connected to a major economic centre is important. The existence of large industries or agricultural sector, which can absorb low-qualified workers, is necessary.
- Existence of long-term action frameworks that allow the programme to develop: *'The length of our project was not enough to demonstrate the real sustainability of the action'*. (Respondent from Romania).

- The general attitude of the large population towards Roma to be one of tolerance and acceptance rather than discriminatory one. Various respondents underscored that the levels of direct discrimination Roma face are an important factor for replication to be considered *'My perception is that Roma in Spain are less discriminated against than in my country. In my country prejudices and discrimination are a huge factor and I believe transferability needs to take this into account'* (Respondent from CR).
- Effective networking: *'of local authorities, productive industries, NGOs and Roma associations, training resources, competent staff and good potential beneficiaries of the action'*. (Respondent from Italy). As regards the human resources needed to run the programme, various respondents noted this is a key condition to success. The importance of their motivation and engagement was underscored (Respondent from Czech Republic) as well as the need to strengthen their capacities since the programme's methodology may not be familiar in other contexts. (Respondent from Hungary 1).
- One respondent pointed out that the transferability of the programme also needs proper data collection desegregated by ethnicity.

Question 4. What barriers/constraints do you consider exist in other countries for the transferability/replication of the positive aspects of the Acceder programme?

The barriers and constraints expressed by respondents may be summarised as follows:

- Uneven regional development and territorial clusters of unemployment.
- High level of discrimination not effectively addressed in the labour sphere.
- High level of segregation (especially in rural areas of Slovakia and the Czech Republic) with communities lacking access to housing and transportation. Existing fragile or passive local communities that may be difficult to mobilise.
- Lack of political consensus: *'Parties play the "Roma card" against each other, competing as to who scores more point against the Roma'*; (Respondent from CR); and lack of engagement of local bureaucracies as well as corruption practices and patronage. A respondent from Hungary noted that resource intensive employment services are uneasy to be

adopted in a context of cutbacks *'eventhough on the long run they would be "profitable"'*.

- Lack of connection between social assistance and active employment policies which *'continue to discriminate Roma population'* (Respondent from Hungary 2). Furthermore, it is noted social assistance policies sometimes discourage employment seekers (i.e. losing assistance when engaging in part-time employment).
- Lack of flexibility of regulations, such as for example the non-recognition of vocational training unless it is delivered by a licensed agency, which is an obstacle for example to organise an important programme component such as practical training in companies. (Respondents from Romania).
- Heavy bureaucracy for managing Structural Funds.
- Lack of qualified human resources to implement the programme methodology and lack of administrative capacity on part of beneficiary organisations and even on part of the authorities themselves. In this regard, one respondent was raising the question: *'Is there an attempt to define an appropriate role for the state and not leave most of the actions in the hands of NGOs?'* (Respondent from an International Organisation 2).

In conclusion, consultations conducted under this assessment reveal that the transferability of key components of the *Acceder* approach is perceived as relevant and desirable to other country contexts where sizable Roma population live. Nevertheless, insufficiently informed attempts of replication of some perceived *Acceder's* keys to success may run the risk of underestimating some key pre-requisites. Firstly, the programme building has laid on mechanisms and dynamics that it are important to grasp in-depth; secondly, it requires certain institutional conditions.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides a short discussion based on findings of the assessment alongside a set of proposed recommendations.

The assessment of the *Acceder* programme has found that the performance in the last years has been affected by the economic downturn. However, despite the recessionary environment, which has dramatically affected the Spanish labour market, it can be ascertained that the programme has resisted and achieved meaningful results. Even if results during the last years are inferior in comparison to prior stages of overall economic growth, they should still be considered positive, which suggests that tailored assistance for the most disadvantaged groups is not only effective for an expansive environment but also for coping with difficult conditions and cushioning the effects of an economic downturn. New adaptation strategies proposed pointing at the need to work more intensively on self-employment but without losing the perspective that hired jobs will continue being the entry door for larger proportions of beneficiaries. Strengthening the relationship with solid companies and expanding the on-the-job training approaches are proposed ways to move forward.

On the top of this, the perceived trend of public authorities' fatigue due to the multiplication of social problems in combination with fiscal adjustments may be particularly counterproductive in the mid-term for the social inclusion of the Roma. Policy frameworks such as the Roma Integration Strategy (and others at regional level) cannot be abandoned despite a context of multiple pressing demands.

RECOMMENDATION: Public authorities should give impetus to the on-going explicitly Roma-targeted policy instruments (i.e. National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020). Programming of ESF actions should consider building synergies with the Strategy provisions, thus boosting its effective implementation.

As suggested in section 4 of this report, it is a highly likely scenario that, given the rise of unemployment rates in the last few years (skyrocketing in some Southern Europe countries such as Spain), future job placement efforts will be focused on lowering unemployment rates by prioritising the most 'easily employable' workers who were expelled from the labour market during the harsher recessionary period. The combination of unemployment rates over 25%, a

persisting climate of discrimination and low qualifications of some Roma and other disadvantaged groups, turns out to be particularly difficult for them to access mainstream jobs without tailored assistance. These programmes constitute a specific formula of more intensive and costly assistance but that has demonstrated to effectively outreach different disadvantaged groups (not only the Roma) whereas standard job placement efforts do not.

RECOMMENDATION: Along with mainstream employment actions for job placement of the unemployed, targeted programmes should continue to be supported in the future.

The study presented in synthesis under section three of this report represents a first approximation to the analysis of the economic impact of investments made in measures in favour of disadvantaged groups. Applying an econometric model and based on simulations, it concludes these programmes generate economic returns in the form of economic stimuli and indirect fiscal savings. Showing evidence of the economic benefits of these programmes constitutes the best legitimization of their continuation in a context of fiscal cutbacks in which any public spending might be perceived as superfluous. The challenge ahead is therefore to develop further methods for accurately measuring the positive social and economic impacts of these programmes with a medium and long-term perspective.

RECOMMENDATION: Future programmes aimed at Roma and other disadvantaged groups should place emphasis on developing methods to measure and show evidence of their broad social and economic positive impacts.

Programmes aimed at improving Roma conditions should make the most of the potential contribution of Roma community-based organisations at the grassroots level. Besides, the existence of a Roma-targeted nationwide action (such as *Acceder* in Spain) cannot legitimate that regional authorities with ESF managing powers fail to programme meaningful actions for Roma in their Operational Programmes

RECOMMENDATION: ESF Operational Programmes (notably regional ones in the Spanish case) should programme actions in favour of Roma as well as facilitating the participation of Roma organisations as beneficiaries.

According to the European Commission's proposed new priorities and rules for the next programming period of 2014-2020, a minimum share of the 20% ESF should be dedicated to social inclusion actions. Furthermore, there is a greater emphasis on supporting the most disadvantaged groups and marginalised communities and on participation of civil society organisations implementing ESF activities. More specifically, as the Common Strategic Framework proposed¹³, one of the ESF 2014-2020 thematic objectives (i.e. Enhancing institutional capacity) includes the capacity building of non-governmental organisations in order to help them deliver more effectively their contribution to employment, education and social policies. This framework offers the opportunity to address Roma civil society organisations.

RECOMMENDATION: ESF Management Authorities (either national or regional when the latter exist as in Spain) should programme actions aimed at enhancing the capacity of Roma organisations to help them deliver more effectively their contribution to employment, education and social policies.

Consultations conducted under this assessment reveal that the transferability of key components of the Acceder approach is perceived as relevant and desirable to other country contexts where sizable Roma population live. Nevertheless, insufficiently informed attempts of replication of some perceived Acceder's keys to success may run the risk of underestimating some key pre-requisites. Firstly, the programme building has laid on mechanisms and dynamics that it are important to grasp in-depth; secondly, it requires certain institutional conditions.

RECOMMENDATION: Replication of the Acceder model approach should be based on a well-planned management programme which includes consideration of human resources capacity-building, working tools, and conditions of the institutional and economic environment. Ad hoc preparatory actions to establish feasibility grounds may be considered for funding by EC instruments or other donors.

¹³ Commission Staff Working Document. Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014 to 2020. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/index_en.cfm