

Peer Review on the "Integrated Programme for the Social Inclusion of Roma"  
27-28<sup>th</sup> of May in Athens, Greece

**▪ A brief assessment of the possible relevance of the policy to your country (e.g. what problems an integrated programme for Roma inclusion could potentially solve in your country, the extent to which it fits with your policy and legislative system, etc.);**

While Spain has one of the largest Roma populations in Europe (more than 600,000 estimated) and has improved in the last decades its living conditions and achieved greater levels of social inclusion, the Spanish Roma community continues to suffer from inequality and its members are far away from the living standards compared to other non-Roma citizens.

These differences occur mainly in three areas:

- The living conditions and the guarantee to access employment, education, housing or health in equal opportunities.
- Discrimination, rejection, and unequal treatment that continue to suffer members of this community.
- The recognition and legitimization of their identity, their participation in social life and the improvement of their social image.

The VI Report of the FOESSA Foundation<sup>1</sup> on social development and exclusion in Spain, for the first time provides disaggregated data on Roma finding overrepresentation in the area of severe social exclusion of this minority, where 12% of people in this situation are Roma. One out of four families is affected by situations of exclusion. According to the report, now in Spain, belonging to the Roma community means being part of "the most intensely associated group to social exclusion of all analyzed"

This report appears at a time when the effects of financial and economic crisis are becoming more present. The crisis imposes a particularly negative scenario for the Roma people, implies the end of a growth cycle in employment that has began in 1996. During this period a progressive integration of the Roma to the labour market has occurred, despite higher rates of unemployment and the persistence of a large amount of underemployment and precarious economic activities, access to employment has been a key element for social inclusion. At this time there is a risk of increasing the gap of social exclusion and reverse the progress made, not only in terms of employment, but on the opportunities and the changes for many families that accessing the labour market has given them.

The *Acceder Programme*, aimed at the labour insertion of Roma in Spain (for further information visit [www.gitanos.org](http://www.gitanos.org)) has already felt the economic crisis: in fact, in the last six months of 2008, in comparison with the same period in 2007, the demand for services has increased by 20% while the recruitment obtained have dropped by 25%. Trend most likely will worsen in coming months. To face this seems priority to adopt measures to enhance the training and improving job search and getting closer to enterprises. Government measures will be essential to coordinate actions and resources to reduce the impact of the crisis on vulnerable groups and away from the job market.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.foessa.org/quePensamos/nuestrasPrioridades/index.php?MzI%3D> (Spanish version)

The educational situation of the Roma community is characterized by the almost total enrolment of Roma children in the primary cycle, despite the absence rates and differences in educational attainment persist. However the transition to the secondary education remains an insurmountable barrier until now. The high school dropout in the period of compulsory education appears as one of the most important challenges in the education system.

A strategy to coordinate actions at the state and the autonomous communities (responsible for education) in order to ensure transition to secondary compulsory education, reduce dropout rates, and involve families in the process as well as teachers. As housing has been in previous decades the main element for the inclusion of the Roma community, today the key lies in education and will depend on the efforts we make in this area in order to really achieve progress in social inclusion.

A study on the housing situation presented in 2008, done by our Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing, showed on the one hand the improvement that has occurred in this area since 1991, in general the reduction of the percentage of sub-standard houses and a progressive trend to normalization has occurred. Most of the Roma families live today in the first and second quarters of expansion of cities and increasing numbers of families live more dispersed and integrated in the Spanish cities. Despite these undoubted advances, which improve the opportunities for social inclusion, the study also highlights that still 12% of Roma families live in sub-standard houses and 4% of Roma families live in slums. The National Plan for Housing and Land 2008-2012 approved by the Government, includes specific measures for the eradication of slums. We hope that these measures show impact, but it depends not only on available resources, but the political will of many municipalities to take decisions that are often given the opposition of neighbours.

More than half of those surveyed by CIS (Centre for Sociological Research, Study n. 2745)<sup>2</sup> have expressed little or no sympathy for the Roma. They continue to be the worst group of Spaniards valued and the most rejected. These attitudes provide the extent of discriminatory practices. The Roma continue to receive unequal treatment because of ethnicity. Discrimination on the origin of people is one of the most unfair practices that occur in our society. We have advanced legislation to prosecute these practices and protect the victims, but again as shown in the Annual Report on Discrimination and Roma community, published by the FSG<sup>3</sup>, the knowledge of these regulations is low among the victims and even between those responsible for implementation. One year more we must regret the delay in the implementation of measures to promote equal treatment and protection of victims of discrimination. The new Ministry for Equality has announced government plans to develop an Integral Law of Equality, which would be delivered during 2009 and will fully develop the European Directive prohibiting discrimination on ethnic grounds. The new law would create a national agency responsible for providing legal support and assistance to people who suffer discrimination and encourage social awareness raising activities, the extent of knowledge of these rules among the key players or studies on the extent and evolution of this phenomenon.

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/EN/1\\_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?&estudio=8940&\\_element=head](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/EN/1_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?&estudio=8940&_element=head)  
(Spanish version)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gitanos.org/publicaciones/discriminacion08/>

There is no doubt that the important steps being taken in our country to give recognition to the identity and existence of the Roma as part of common culture and common project of coexistence and social development, have a very positive effect for social inclusion. The Roma Culture Institute is a valuable initiative promoted by the Administration during 2008. And the State Council of the Roma is another major initiative which creates a platform for the participation of Roma civil society in fields of interest to developing and monitoring policies that are directed toward this community.

Both initiatives are a great opportunity for the Roma community and must be filled with content and develop a responsible and valuable job in order to really achieve its objectives.

In sum we consider that in Spain, despite having developed certain targeted and also mainstream intervention with Roma, an integrated approach in social intervention is still needed; moreover, because of economic crisis and the specific damage and pain that the crisis is causing to the most vulnerable groups (Roma being one, if not, the most vulnerable one as mentioned), action is needed more than ever.

**▪ A brief assessment of the similarities/differences of the Greek policy with the experience of your country;**

We can find similarities in the late access to the status of citizens with equal rights recognized within the national laws; in Spain their rights were not guaranteed until 1978, their recognition as citizens has been in general terms not questioned by institutions, by Roma nor for the rest of the population.

In both countries we can acknowledge that European policies made a real push forward in the field of equal treatment, creating a legal framework that facilitates specific measures addressed to Roma and other vulnerable groups. Special mention should be made for the antidiscrimination directives as well as for the National Action Plans outlined by the Lisbon process; when properly developed, they create an important framework for social inclusion initiatives coordination and implementation.

In order to address the situation of the Roma community, the Spanish government also approved in 1989 an Integrated Plan with the major aim of improving the living conditions of the Spanish Roma, addressed to reach the same economical and social standards than the rest of the non-Roma citizens. This Roma development plan is being revised in 2009.

The situation of exclusion, prejudices and stigma is a universal problem faced by Roma, a shared challenge in all countries Roma live in and with similar consequences in all countries.

Spain is a much decentralized country and with several levels of governmental administrations being responsible for policies; national, regional as well as local authorities deal with different aspects of the same issue: education, housing, employment, etc. This leads to regional and even local differences and the weight of regional and local governments appear to be equally relevant. Mechanisms of coordination and coherence should be very well set up in order to succeed, as highlighted in the Greek Integrated Action Plan.

It should be underlined that the main difference between Spanish and Greek examples might be the social pattern carried out; during the last decades Spanish Roma had the opportunity not only to access rights, but also services and resources in the framework of a universal welfare state;

the opportunity to access to public housing, social benefits (as the non-contributory pension) to the normalized education system and especially the public health system. These mainstreamed policies were complemented by compensatory or complementary initiatives, target measures addressed to those not accessing general policies. This included: the eradication of slums, education supporting measures, employment targeted initiatives or health prevention, among others.

**▪ An assessment of the learning value of the Greek policy for your country. Furthermore, taking into account the experience in your country, are there any specific issues that you think could be useful in the Greek context?;**

It is very much of our interest to look deeper into educational initiatives, especially at the secondary level, early drop out, low results or even not finishing the compulsory education is today the most relevant concern in our country and the Greek experience of tutoring can be very motivating.

Regarding the Spanish health model, as well as the initiatives of relocation sites and housing in standard (non-segregated) carried out in the last two decades throughout the country could be of relevance to the Greek context.

Specifically on the issue of housing the Spanish experience may be quite valid, both because of good and bad practices. In fact, one of the clearest lessons learnt is based on the errors that were made; the social and economic costs caused by an erroneous housing policy with the Roma: segregated housing construction has been demonstrated clearly negative, hindering the process to produce additional problems. We have also learned that any housing programme should be complemented with measures for social support throughout the process.

There are other experiences that could also be useful: the target prevention efforts in several health regions, the inclusive role of the Minimum Income Programmes, among others.

The experience of the ACCEDER programme, aiming at providing equal opportunities in the access to the labour market of the Roma, could also be taken as a reference. Special mention could be made to some of its key elements:

- Integrated approach and equal balance between the social and the economic perspective
- Individualised employment itineraries combining a nation-wide dimension with the local level
- Long-term planning as well as flexibility
- Targeted but non-segregated services along with a mainstream perspective and actions
- Multicultural and professionalized working teams
- Strong partnership: close relationship with the entrepreneurs, and an appropriate system of public-private relationship. The aim is to cooperate with all possible stakeholders: public administrations, private companies, the media, policy makers, etc.
- Mobilisation of local and regional resources
- Involvement and empowerment of the Roma
- Wide dissemination and visibility of the Programme's actions and results. Visibility and open communication will raise public awareness on the subject

These are key elements to take into account when designing and implementing an employment programme which have proved to be extremely effective in the Spanish context. We dare to suggest further analysis and discussions as to how to incorporate and adapt these elements into the Greek context.

**▪ A note of any important questions about the social inclusion of Roma that are being raised and debated in your country;**

- In times of crisis and readjustments, priorities are being defined and it is crucial to have clear hierarchies in terms of social concerns. According to the Spanish experience the first priority should be set in ensuring mainstreaming of social policies in education, health, housing, employment, etc.

- Attention given to issues of institutional recognition of participation of Roma and other minorities: as for example the creation of Councils, the establishment of Culture Institutes, recognition in the statutes of autonomy, and so on can make a push forward on the progress that had occurred before.

- Regarding the role of Structural Funds (SF) for the inclusion of Roma. The expert report handed over makes a good criticism of the squandering of Phare funds. It is important to note the need to use SF efficiently and transparently and in coordination with national, regional as well as local resources, in order to achieve coherent policies and interventions. In Spain, even though there has been some initiatives and attempts to coordinate different administrative policy levels, still much more real coordination and communication is needed.

- Another possible issue is to highlight awareness campaigns, they are also more effective if they are samples and less stereotyped view of the Roma, in order to brake down stereotypes and prejudices, making general population aware of common discriminatory discourse.

- New anti-discriminatory legislation is given a new opportunity to address different situations and protect victims against direct or indirect as well as multi-discriminatory actions/crimes. The issue that arises now is how o translate such legislation into real practices: what are the measures needed to complement legislation and make equal treatment of Roma a reality.

- In relation to social inclusion of disadvantages groups, for many years there has been a debate whether to make general or targeted measures, which are the advantages and disadvantages. According to our experience, the combination of both is clearly needed. Follow-up of implemented measures, along with a good and deep evaluation as to clearly identify what is working and having impact from what is not having good results, is essential.

**▪ Attention should be paid in particular to the potential contribution of such a policy to the objectives and strategy of your country's National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion;**

In fact, social inclusion of Roma within each country should be paid specific attention within the National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion.

Specific indicators would be helpful in highlighting specific needs and objectives from a cross cut perspective. In order to do so, regional and local governments should have their own Social Inclusion Plans tackling Roma as the most vulnerable groups within their scope of action.

The national strategy should give account of all these measures, along with adequate and coherent funding plus assessment indicators for proper implementation.

**▪ It would also be of interest to discuss briefly how you measure success of policies in this field in your country.**

Very important is the opportunity of having objective and comparable tools that allow analysis in order to design policies based on real data. The measure through time is also very relevant in order to keep track of the achievements fulfilled.

Studies carried out in Spain between specialized organizations in collaboration with public bodies in different fields (employment, housing, health, education, etc); give the possibility to create reliable data to properly address policies and interventions as well as to develop comparison with the general population and to monitor the situation of vulnerable groups.

Also it should be underlined the importance of measuring outcomes of the programs and measures implemented, not only because public resources are being used and citizens demand more and more transparency, but also because assessment of the tools and methodologies being developed help us achieving objectives more efficiently.

Programmes whose beneficiaries come on a voluntary basis are an indicator itself of the programme's success because it reflects the fact that the programme serves their interest and needs.

**▪ Key issues and main questions proposed for debate at the review meeting.**

- How to engage local authorities in a process taking place at national level, not only providing them financial resources but engaging them in the definition of needs, strategies, etc. Setting up mechanisms/platforms for collaboration and coordination.

- Difficulties in programming and the coordination with all relevant stakeholders in different phases of policies and initiatives, sustainable financing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

- How to put into practice a target while mainstream approach. Discuss on the need to ensure the mainstreaming of social policies in education, health, and housing and to avoid isolated measures without a national or regional framework coordination and coherence. These ideas are usually included in documents and recommendations but are not very often implemented.

- Another possible issue is to highlight awareness-raising campaigns against stereotypes and rejection towards Roma in order to sensitise the general population, public administrations responsible for social policies, local governments, among others.

Discussion paper

M. Inés Cedrón – Fundación Secretariado Gitano

Spain