

Action plan for the development of the Roma population (2010-2012)

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Preface

Equal access and enjoyment of social rights, as well as the guarantee of an adequate social protection are key elements in our Welfare State.

It is essential that public authorities can ensure the welfare of the whole citizenship, eradicating inequalities and discrimination, and encouraging participation in public life of all the population on equal conditions.

For this reason, Public Administrations have to intervene through policies aimed at usually overcoming the effects of exclusion, discrimination and inequalities on the population, either through positive compensatory measures or through the regulation of basic rights.

Over the last years, actions have been taken in order to further the development and promotion of the Roma population. These years of implementation and development of comprehensive programmes and projects have yielded positive results, but still remain inadequate.

Throughout its history, Roma population have been the victims of inequality and discrimination situations and, even today, they stand among the most disadvantaged social groups, greatly affected by social exclusion. Still a high proportion of Roma families experience situations of social vulnerability resulting from their lack of access to goods and resources provided by our current welfare state. This situation has led to the design of public policies aimed at facilitating their full integration in society.

In 1989, the Spanish Roma Development Programme was launched. This programme represented a significant step forward in improving the living conditions of Roma population, with a constant and continuing allocation of resources and the cooperation and participation of all public administrations, along with economic support aimed at strengthening the Roma associative movement.

In recent years, progress has been made as regards the participation of Roma associations in the public sphere, with the creation of the State Council for the Roma People in 2005 (Spanish Royal Decree 891/2005), and the Foundation Institute for Roma Culture in 2007, acknowledging their culture and enhancing their contribution to Spanish culture in general.

More recently, the Council for the Promotion of Equal Treatment of All Persons Without Discrimination on Grounds of Racial or Ethnic Origin (Spanish Royal Decree 1262/2007) has been founded, within which, two associations defending the interests of the Roma population are represented.

We cannot fail to mention the integration of Roma women and the role they have been playing in all fields in recent years, with their increasing

Introduction

One of the headline targets of democratic States and, namely, Spain, is the development of compensatory policies aimed at those population groups affected by disadvantages, whether economic or social or due to unequal treatment on the grounds of ethnicity.

Roma population groups first arrived in Spain in the Fifteenth Century, and have historically maintained their own, distinctive culture. They are not a culturally homogeneous group, since they are made up by groups and families with different characteristics, although they share common cultural features, such as family structure, value system, social organisation and language.

Until the enactment of the 1978 Spanish Constitution, which recognises their citizenship and guarantees their fundamental rights and freedoms, the Spanish Roma population has been subject to repressive legislation.

The Roma have suffered a long history of intolerance and rejection by the population belonging to the majority culture. The Roma have responded by showing a strong attitude of group cohesion, which has resulted in a number of difficulties in their coexistence with the citizens of the majority culture. Nowadays, there are certain worrying discriminatory behaviours against some sectors of the Roma population.

These factors, along with those arising from the rapid processes of social and technological change in Western societies, are the origin of the social exclusion currently suffered by part of this population.

Since the beginning of democracy in Spain, the successive Governments have shown their concern and have implemented policies and actions targeting the Roma population in our country.

At the same time, Spanish legislation has been progressively adapted to international legislation by signing, ratifying and joining international legal instruments.

Furthermore, the necessary measures have been adopted to comply with the principles set out in the various Charters, Recommendations, Conventions and Resolutions of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe) on the legal and social protection of ethnic minorities, especially the European Roma population.

The *Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Study of Problems Affecting the Roma Population* was founded in 1978 under the Ministry of Culture.

1. Guidelines

Equality

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 establishes the principle of «equality» as a major value of the legal system (article 1.1) and as a fundamental right (article 14), with all the consequences inherent in them both.

Article 14 refers to the principle of equality of all Spanish citizens before the law, prohibiting any unjustified form of discrimination. Article 9.2 entrusts public authorities with its active promotion.

Therefore, the principle of equal opportunities, the respect for the cultural difference of the Roma population and the development of their own personality is a reference that should underlie the adoption of specific actions aimed at overcoming the existing inequalities.

The principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination should be present in everyday life as well as in public spaces, be they political, administrative or private. This is one of the key strategic themes of the European Union.

Discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin, as well as for other reasons, implies the violation of the principle of equality of all citizens and, therefore, of the exercise of their rights on formal equal conditions set forth by the law.

In the case of Roma Population, the principle of non-discrimination is a key principle to guide policies and actions on this population.

For the purposes of this plan, and as provided for in the Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, ‘the principle of equal treatment shall not prevent any Member State from maintaining or adopting specific measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to racial or ethnic origin.’

The implementation of the principle of equal treatment and the eradication of all forms of discrimination is an essential strategic aspect not only for the development of Roma population but also for the improvement of the democratic quality, the economic growth and the sustainable development of the whole society.

As per equality between men and women, it should be noted that the measures set out in Spanish Organic Law 3/2007 of 22 March on effective equality between men and women, are intended to enforce the principle of equal treatment and the eradication of all forms of discrimination, both direct or indirect on grounds of sex, in any area of life or public or private action.

The enforcement of this law implies the projection of the principle of equality on the various fields of social reality, hence the cross-dimension of equality is considered to be applicable to all actions launched by the public authorities.

In this regard, the Plan considers the principle of equality between women and men to be cross-sectional, which means the use of gender-neutral language, the analysis of gender inequalities in each of the areas covered by this Plan, and the study of the impact of the measures outlined in this Plan on the reduction of inequalities detected between women and men.

Mainstreaming equality between Roma women and men means that the planning of each action must take into account the differentiated needs of women and men, with a balanced presence and participation of both sexes. Therefore, this Plan will promote equal benefits for women and men.

Citizenship and participation

Currently, dignity and justice are the two most appreciated values by institutions and civil society in order to promote the full exercise of rights by all persons.

The defence of the citizenship rights of the Roma population in our country necessarily entails the improvement of their public image and the acknowledgment of the positive contribution of their culture to the Spanish society. While there have been many and varied attempts by institutions and non-profit organisations to improve the public image of the Roma population, there are still negative perceptions of Roma, leading to discriminatory situations.

In order to guarantee the exercise of citizenship rights and becomes realised in the daily life of all Roma citizens, it is absolutely essential that public and private bodies facilitate and encourage participation in all areas of public, political and social, national and international life, for they constitute the most important transnational minority in Europe.

Participation must be exercised in all levels of society, both in the access to public positions as well as in the representation of the Roma community in the non-governmental sector. It is also necessary to encourage the participation of the most excluded groups of the Roma population, who still have a long way to go to achieve the effective exercise of their rights as citizens.

Social inclusion

Another main principle of this Plan is the social inclusion of Roma population. Despite the progress made in recent years, this population is still one of the most disadvantaged social groups, being affected by social exclusion processes. It is therefore necessary to increase efforts to promote access to employment and to all resources, rights, goods and services by the Roma population experiencing or at risk of exclusion.

Similarly, the Plan must be aimed at preventing the risk of exclusion, acting in favour of the most vulnerable Roma individuals and families, as well as activating and facilitating the participation of all actors.

Institutional cooperation

This principle takes on a special significance in Spain because of its administrative decentralisation and its well-marked distribution of powers. Therefore, it is essential to make the measures of this Plan achieve the highest level of effectiveness through collaboration and coordination among the different public administrations involved.

The General State Administration will be responsible for the implementation of this Plan. Several Ministries have collaborated in its development, and the Autonomous Governments have been informed thereof at the Sectoral Conference on Social Affairs, as well as the local authorities and non-governmental organisations working specifically with the Roma.

2. General Objectives

The main objective of this Plan is to promote new actions to correct the existing imbalances between the Roma population and the rest of the Spanish population, as well as to encourage different forms of participation and social development that ensure the full exercise of social rights and access to goods and services of the Roma population.

Through the eight areas of action in which the Plan is structured, it seeks to achieve three main objectives:

- 1) Deepen and advance the design of specific strategies and actions aimed at improving the image of the Roma population, eradicating

Areas of intervention

Area 1: Citizenship, equal treatment and non-discrimination

The habitual discriminatory situations that the Roma population has been suffering difficult their equal access to and enjoyment of goods, rights and services. The guarantee of equal treatment and non-discrimination in all areas of social life is a basic condition to realise the effectiveness of citizenship rights of all persons.

Ensuring the effectiveness of the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination in daily life means to accept that all persons are equal in dignity and rights, overcoming barriers erected by direct discrimination and especially, by indirect discrimination in our society.

The biggest social barrier is prejudice, which becomes entrenched in those areas with a greater lack of social interaction. The public image of the Roma population is anachronistic and stereotypical, and does not conform to the reality of this population: the profound changes that have occurred in all areas of social life. The emerging and active role of women, the diversification of their economic activity, their access to housing, education, etc., are remarkable, although there are still significant differences as regards general population.

The media are one of the most significant elements in projecting and maintaining the stereotypical image of the Spanish Roma community. Generally, they spread a message that reinforces the existing prejudices about Roma, which do not conform to reality.

While the Roma community has evolved through their own efforts and through the social momentum itself, the media not only do not portray that progress but ignore the positive changes and replace them with an image related to marginalisation and social exclusion.

An advanced society should not aspire to homogeneity in all life-forms and lifestyles, but to the assumption of real diversity, with law provisions as the only limitation and the guarantee of the effective exercise of human rights, in both public and private spheres.

Thus, progress towards this reality entails a twofold task: combating all forms of discrimination ensuring equal treatment, and contributing to positive rapprochement and acquaintance, promoting a change in the perception of the Roma population by the general population.

Also, special attention should be paid to situations of multiple discrimination, i. e., the intersection of several forms of discrimination faced by Roma individuals when combining their ethnic origin with factors such as disability, gender, nationality, etc.

Moreover, the European Union has been bearing out its strategy against all forms of discrimination and specifically, on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, for several years. This strategy has led to the adoption of Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

Objectives

1. Combat all forms of discrimination against Roma population, whether direct or indirect, as well as multiple discrimination, taking into account other factors apart from ethnic origin, such as gender, disabilities, nationality, etc., thus ensuring equal treatment and non-discrimination.
2. Change the image of the Roma population in the eyes of the general population.
3. Combat all forms of gender discrimination.
4. Promote equal participation of Roma women and men in the various public and private institutions and in the Roma representative bodies.

Actions under objectives

OBJECTIVE 1: Combat all forms of discrimination against Roma population, whether direct or indirect, as well as multiple discrimination, taking into account other factors apart from ethnic origin, such as gender, disabilities, nationality, etc., thus ensuring equal treatment and non-discrimination.

- 1.1. Support an Equal Treatment Act to provide the fight against discrimination and the defence of potential victims with the specific legal instruments.
- 1.2. Actively collaborate and promote actions within the Council for the Promotion of Equal Treatment of All Persons without

Discrimination on Grounds of Racial or Ethnic Origin, which shall perform all duties arising from the powers granted thereto under Spanish Royal Decree establishing the said Council as regards Roma population.

- 1.3. Reinforce the regular activity on Roma immigrants of the Spanish Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia.
- 1.4. Identify different forms of direct and indirect discrimination that can affect Roma women and men and develop actions to promote equal treatment, in the designated priority areas.
- 1.5. Develop a set of new indicators that allow the diagnosis, monitoring and evaluation of discriminatory situations suffered by the Roma population, with special attention to those that can detect multiple discrimination.
- 1.6. Produce information materials aimed at breaking down discrimination barriers faced by Roma women and men, covering all action areas in this Plan.
- 1.7. Develop training activities aimed at public servants who can play a special role in the fight against discrimination.
- 1.8. Promote citizenship schools among the Roma population to increase the knowledge and awareness of rights and duties regarding coexistence and social interaction.
- 1.9. Promote the development of studies and reports showing the pattern of discrimination against the Roma population and its evolution.
- 1.10. Encourage the analysis of perceptions and attitudes of the general population towards the Roma community.
- 1.11. Create a service that provides guidance, accompaniment and legal advice to victims of discrimination, in the context of the development of Directive 2000/43.

- 3.4. Support the existence of positive examples as regards women that promote gender equality values.
- 3.5. Raise awareness among men on the need of Roma women to make progress and to support male examples that promote gender equality.

OBJECTIVE 4. Promote equal participation of Roma women and men in the various public and private institutions, especially those that work to promote the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination, as well as in the Roma participative or representative public bodies.

- 4.1. Support the inclusion of Roma women and men in electoral rolls, in order to facilitate their access to political representative bodies.
- 4.2. Introduce the balanced participation of women and men in the regulations governing the advisory and participative bodies of Roma NGOs.

Area 2: Education

In the past two decades, the enrolment of Roma children in pre-school and primary education has almost been completed. However, the response of the educational system and the reaction of Roma families have been diverse, leading to very different school situations. The process fortunately seems irreversible, and Roma children have fully assumed schooling as part of their childhood condition, while school attendance no longer causes widespread rejection. Despite the progress achieved, truancy among Roma students is still excessive and educational failure is much higher than that of other students.

Access to secondary education is also lower compared to non-Roma students, aggravated by a generalised school drop-out before the end of this compulsory educational stage.

As per higher education, Roma students who have obtained a university degree are still not many. There is little data concerning higher education levels, and those resulting from the few studies and surveys carried out between 1992 and 2005 should be viewed with some caution.

secondary schools by the families, the commitment to housework and childcare, and the idea of the role of Roma women have a greater influence among Roma female students, while a lack of motivation and their full-time dedication to remunerated work are the main factors affecting male students.

On the other hand, the lack of examples of Roma individuals with intermediate and high education levels and medium and highly skilled jobs and the scarce economic resources of Roma families have a negative impact on the academic continuity of Roma students.

Although there is no reliable data regarding Roma university students, it is estimated that approximately two hundred Roma have a university degree. However, it can be said that Roma population is under-represented in terms of university education. Among the 1,462,771 university students in the year 2004-2005, the number of Roma students did not even reach 1,000, while in terms of population percentage they should amount to 28,468.

A special mention should be made to the educational level of Roma adults: data provided by the Sociological Study on Spanish Roma conducted in 1978 estimated that illiteracy affected 68% of the Roma population over ten years of age, while for the rest of the population was less than 9%. We would have to go back 80 years to find similar data relating to the general population.

Latest data do not indicate a breakthrough. The number of Roma individuals aged over 16 who have not completed their primary education amounts to 70%.

The last study on employment and Roma population³, –which draws on the methodology used in the *Labour Force Survey (LFS)*– concludes that «7 out of 10 Roma individuals aged over 15 are absolute or functionally illiterate.» Overall, the rate of illiterate Roma (absolute or functionally) within the Roma population as a whole is 4.6 times higher than that of the illiterate population within the Spanish citizens, according to the 2001 INE census. If we just take into account the absolute illiterate, the proportion within the Roma population is even higher, the number of Roma illiterate are 5.2 times higher than that of the entire Spanish population.

Without education, it is difficult for the Roma population to access employment, except for unskilled and low-income jobs which do not even compete with social benefits. The investment in education, within the framework of intercultural educational policies, as well as the vocational training of youth and adults, should facilitate the access to employment of

³ *'Poblacion gitana y empleo: un estudio comparado' (Roma population and employment: a comparative study)*. FSG, Madrid 2005.

OBJECTIVE 2. Normalise the enrolment rates of Roma population in primary and secondary education.

- 2.1. Promote a mediation programme between families and schools, helping both parties understand the functioning of institutions, taking into account:
 - The necessary and normalised relationship between tutors and Roma families.
 - The integration of Roma families into Parents' Associations (AMPAS) and School Councils.
 - The promotion of the creation of a School of Parents that helps them understand their necessary involvement in the aforementioned actions.
 - The creation of space and time for the meeting of teachers and families in order to establish trustful relationships built on trust in primary education.
- 2.2. Promote the necessary measures on school monitoring and support in the framework of the Spanish Strengthening, Guidance and Support Programmes as an effective means to reduce truancy and early drop-out in formal education.
- 2.3. Support the introduction in the school curriculum of a preparation programme for the transition from primary to secondary education, with the participation of students and their families, encouraging visits and activities in secondary schools.
- 2.4. Promote a preparation programme for the transition from secondary education to vocational training and/or university, which includes a series of activities and advice on job prospects related to specialised vocational training and on strategies to access university.
- 2.5. Ensure compliance with the principle of equal opportunities between Roma girls and boys, by both families and schools.

OBJECTIVE 3. Facilitate university entrance and permanence of young Roma.

- 3.1. Foster career guidance programmes in the last formal education years, as well as in adult education, in order to facilitate transition from the school to work.

- 3.2. Promote grant programmes supported by non-profit or private institutions to facilitate the access of Roma youth to university.
- 3.3. Encourage organisations belonging to the Roma associative movement to develop programmes to help Roma youth access university.
- 3.4. Promote academic support programmes in Adult Education Centres facilitating the completion of secondary education (ESO) and the taking of the university entrance examination for over 25s, especially in the case of Roma women.
- 3.5. Encourage Roma youth to continue their academic pathway, especially in the case of women.

OBJECTIVE 4. Carry on with literacy teaching and lifelong education of Roma women and men from the age of 16 to the adult age in order to promote the eradication of illiteracy.

- 4.1. Develop, in a more efficient and extensive manner, literacy teaching and lifelong education in Adult Education Centres, Crafts School Workshops, Employment Workshops, etc.
- 4.2. Promote Adult Education Centres and bring «Universidades Populares» closer to the areas or neighbourhoods with a significant number of Roma families.
- 4.3. Promote actions aimed at the obtainment by Roma citizens of the driving licence, in line with the literacy of young and adult Roma population.

OBJECTIVE 5. Train teachers to develop an intercultural education where the Roma culture is equal to the rest of the cultures in Spain.

- 5.1. Promote lifelong training by introducing specific courses on Roma culture in school, resources and materials to work on these issues, and intercultural education advisors to advice schools, in Teacher Training and Resource Centres.
- 5.2. Identify and disseminate good practices in intercultural education, especially in schools with a higher percentage of Roma students.

In general terms, Roma population is highly affected by employment insecurity compared with the rest of the population. 42% of Roma wage-earners are part-time workers, compared to 8.5 % of the total population. 24% of the employed Roma work less than 20 hours (40% in the case of those who help in the family business), which is not in fact a voluntary choice, as four in every ten would like to work more hours if they could. Hawking (mainly), scrap metal collection and harvest are the areas with more underemployment.

Moreover, 71% have temporary contracts compared with 31% of the whole population and what is more, 15% are working under a verbal agreement, with no contract.

This study shows that youth, women and persons and low-skilled people experience more difficulties in accessing employment; therefore, it is necessary to implement educational and training programmes on employment that facilitate Roma access to quality employment.

The current crisis suffered in the labour market is seriously affecting a large part of the Roma population, with a 35% reduction in the amount of contracts, that is, almost twice the incidence in the entire Spanish population.

The economic crisis is first and most strongly affecting the population that has more difficulties to access the labour market and stay in it. Currently, there is a risk of increasing the social exclusion gap and losing the progress made, not only regarding employment, but also with regard to the opportunities and changes that many Roma families have experienced thanks to the possibility of being employed.

In a crisis situation, we cannot only prioritise the most competitive elements (companies and people) of society, but in order to achieve social cohesion, we should also prioritise actions aimed at persons far from the labour market or affected by employment insecurity.

Objectives

1. Promote the training of Roma population for their access to employment, retention and advancement.
2. Establish the priority action guidelines for the access of Roma population to self-employment and to the labour market.
3. Improve information and data collection, disaggregated by gender, on the employment situation of the Roma population.

The Public System of Social Services has been established as a set of services and benefits aiming at the promotion and full development of all persons and groups within society in order to achieve greater social welfare and a better quality of life, in a context of coexistence. In addition, the Public System also aims to prevent and eradicate the causes of social exclusion and marginalisation.

This relationship between Social Services and the Roma population reflects the fact that a relevant part of the Roma population is experiencing or at risk of social exclusion, according to all demographic research studies. According to the latest data provided by the FOESSA report, in all the variables studied, belonging to the Roma community is the main risk factor associated with social exclusion (14% of Roma families experience a severe situation of social exclusion), which shows the need to build a strategy to facilitate the active participation of this community.

It is recognised that Roma poverty is more severe than that of the majority population. However, Roma women and men and the organizations working with them state that they have experienced an improvement in their income over the last decades.

This report also highlights the impact of immigration on the Spanish Roma population, not only because of the increase of Eastern European Roma communities but also because of the competition that the Spanish Roma have experienced in different areas, resources and activities.

Exclusion is manifested in various forms, leading to significant social disadvantages in the Roma community in areas such as education, health, housing and participation. Besides, and affecting all these areas in a cross-sectional manner, the Roma population suffers from intolerance and rejection on the part of the majority population, as shown by official opinion surveys.

Primary Care Social Services are the first level of care and social intervention for an important number of Roma families experiencing or at risk of social exclusion, since this is where they first go to explain their situation and make their demands of all types related to the aforementioned areas.

Information and guidance, and the subsequent referral to other services and institutions, such as domestic help, alternative housing, and social prevention and inclusion, as well as the promotion of solidarity and social cooperation, are benefits and services available for all citizens, including the Roma, and guaranteed by the System.

Furthermore, the area of Social Services promotes the so-called comprehensive plans on urban and rural areas to prevent the risk of exclusion in urban and rural areas, largely including the Roma communities that live in certain areas and neighbourhoods.

It is therefore essential to strengthen the access to and use of the services provided by the Public Social Services System in terms of Social

The processes of social exclusion and social marginalisation have greater impact on those groups that, having historically suffered discrimination situations, do not participate actively in the different areas and spheres of public life.

According to WHO, the term inequality refers to differences in health that are unnecessary, avoidable and unfair. In order to face it, WHO proposes the concept of health equity. Equity in health does not refer to a similar health status for all persons, but to the objective of facilitating the same opportunities to all persons and the necessary resources thus they can enjoy their full health potential.

The main supranational organisations, such as WHO and the European Commission have clearly stated the close link between social inequalities (economic, educational, housing, etc.) and health inequalities. If we consider that certain groups within the Roma population are still experiencing a situation of exclusion or social vulnerability, we understand that there is still a very important lack of equity in health.

Despite the importance of health as a basic indicator to assess the social development in a certain community, it has not been given full consideration in the case of the Roma community. Until recently, any attempt at analysis had to cope with some key limitations, among which we can underline the following:

- The lack of specific data regarding Roma perception of health, their strategies to face disease and their main problems and needs.
- The scarce number of studies on this matter follow a local approach, using very small and geographically narrow samples, being random, with no longitudinal studies. Furthermore, the diversity in the variables analysed and also the research methods made it almost impossible to establish the most elementary comparisons.

However, the ‘Health Survey of the Roma Community in Spain, 2006’, was a major advance in our knowledge of the health status of the Roma population. An added value of this study is that the survey has been designed according to the National Health Survey model, thus allowing comparisons between the Roma community and the whole of the Spanish population.

The Survey shows a series of unnecessary, avoidable and unfair differences in health issues affecting the Roma population. Among others, it shows a greater prevalence of chronic diseases and tooth caries; the rate of accidents is higher; the perception of the own health status is more negative among Roma older persons compared to the general population; and the poor health status results in a higher risk of cardiovascular diseases.

This Survey, as other similar studies, shows the clear influence of the social class in the health status: the lower the social status, the worse the health.

These multiannual housing plans provide the State with the capacity to act in terms of general planning and its application, which is adapted to the diversity and needs of each area, and eventually falls within the scope of the Autonomous Communities.

According to the '*Study Map on Housing and the Roma Population in Spain 2007*'⁵, 88% of the houses inhabited by the Roma population are normalised, but 12% of Roma still live in huts, shanty dwellings or caves and in particularly vulnerable neighbourhoods.

As per territorial distribution, 70% of the houses inhabited by the Roma population are located in the Autonomous Communities of Andalusia, the Valencian Community, Madrid and Catalonia.

83% of households are located in neighbourhoods with more than 15 years of age, which proves that the majority of the Roma population has become sedentary, with a high concentration of Roma families in certain slum areas and neighbourhoods.

27% of households show poor living conditions (for example, 4% of households lack running water).

It should be noted that many households include more than one family. The average Roma people per home is 4.9, a figure that has not changed since 1991.

Some data resulting from the aforementioned study indicate the difficulties in access to housing with forms of protection according to the conditions of the most vulnerable families.

Despite the improvement achieved as regards the inclusion of the Roma community in the area of housing in the past 16 years, differences are greater compared to the general population, both regarding housing quality and the situation of the neighbourhoods where they are located.

Housing or rehousing in normalised houses does not always go with the social support needed in this kind of actions.

Active housing policies should be comprehensive in order to facilitate the access of all citizens to adequate housing within a socially cohesive society.

Given that shantytowns and substandard housing represent a particularly serious situation for many Roma families it is worth noting the following definition found in the State Housing Plan: «Substandard housing is any space or dwelling used as a regular accommodation for persons which does not meet the minimum requirements established in each Autonomous Community to obtain a housing licence or any other similar document

⁵ FSG and Ministry of Housing. Madrid, 2008.

Historical context: From east to west

The Roma population is the transnational population par excellence, of Eastern origin and European projection. Scientific, anthropological, cultural and, above all, linguistic research leads us to categorically affirm that the Roma population originated in India. Apparently, the Roma Diaspora began a thousand years after Christ, probably due to the Muslim invasion in North-West India.

The routes followed by the Roma were those that led them westwards (the Silk Road), crossing the ancient Persia. Although many of them settled in these lands, others continued following the sun towards the European continent, first arriving in Turkey and Greece, where they would settle for centuries.

The first document that gives evidence of the presence of the Roma in Spain dates from the 15th century. On 12 January 1425, Juan and Thomas, 'Counts of Lower Egypt,' entered Saragossa, , being welcomed by King Alfonso V of Aragón, introducing themselves as pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela and accompanied by one hundred people. Another key moment in the development of the Roma population in Spain was their entry to Andalusia dated 22 November 1462.

The entry of the Roma to the Iberian Peninsula brought about relevant cultural contributions, hitherto unknown in Iberian lands given their transnational background.

The status and image of Roma culture are not dignified or promoted enough within the Spanish society.

The recovery of the Memory of the Roma population is still pending, as well as the implementation of their historical reparation, recognising their contributions to Spanish society.

The enforcement and monitoring of regulations, directives and legislations in relation to culture should be enforced at a local, regional, national and European level.

The participation of Roma youth and women is key to the development of Roma Culture.

Objectives

1. Disseminate Roma Culture values and its contribution to common cultural heritage.
2. Establish coordination and collaboration links with the Foundation Institute for Roma Culture.

European Commission Communication of 2 July 2008: ‘Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities: a renewed commitment’. This Communication shows the Commission’s interest in complying with the mandate of the European Council of December 2007, built on the European Parliament Resolution of 31 January 2008 and the demands of civil society, examining the existing policies and instruments to improve the living conditions and social inclusion of the European Roma population.

In the renewed *Social Agenda* issued on 2 July 2008, the European Commission declares its renewed commitment to combat the discrimination suffered by certain groups of European citizens, particularly the most vulnerable groups and at risk of social exclusion. This Agenda stresses the need to implement actions to improve their living conditions, especially regarding the European Roma population.

The ***First European Roma Summit*** gathered in September 2008 representatives of the Member States and of the States participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the French Presidency, representatives of Roma associations and civil society, and representatives of the World Bank.

This event has provided a unique opportunity to face at the same time the challenge of combating the situation of discrimination and the social exclusion suffered by the majority of the European Roma population.

The Summit’s final declaration states that common efforts will be joined, based on the commitment of the institutions and Member States, the representatives of the Roma community and the civil society, to optimise visible results against *‘all forms of discrimination; the defence of values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and respect for human rights, including minority rights; the promotion of equal opportunities for all; and the exercise of the fundamental right of EU citizens to freedom of movement and residence.’*

The declaration also stresses that work will be based *on practical knowledge and community instruments, as well as on the experiences of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and initiatives such as the Roma Education Fund, the OSCE Action Plan, and the recommendations of the Council of Europe and the United Nations.*

Following the First Summit, the *Integrated Platform on Roma Inclusion* was set up, which formulated the Ten Common Basic Principles to be followed in the actions addressed at the Roma population at the European, national and local level.

The Second Roma Summit held under the Spanish Presidency of the European Union represented significant progress in the development of policies in favour of the European Roma population.

It has also been agreed to deepen and develop the *Ten Common Basic Principles of the Integrated Platform on Roma Inclusion* to make their potentialities be fully effective.

The Spanish Government participates in the periodical meetings and activities of the *Roma Expert Group* through the Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, in the framework of the **Council of Europe**. It should also be mentioned that three representatives of the Roma associative movement participate in the *European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF)*, set up within the framework of the Council of Europe in November 2005, as well as in the Forum of European Roma Young People.

Since its creation in 1996, the Group addresses the situation of the Roma in the countries of the Council of Europe. The meetings of this group address issues related to employment, housing, education, health, mechanisms for representation of the Roma population, national Roma minorities, the situation of the Roma in countries undergoing conflicts, etc. This Group elaborates reports thus the Committee of Ministers can issue the corresponding Recommendations in this regard. The last recommendation issued has been the *Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)5 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Policies for Roma and/or Travellers in Europe*.

The European institutions and their dependent agencies, as well as the United Nations, the Open Society Institute and other international institutions and organisations also participate in this Group, without the right to vote, and experts invited ad hoc depending on the issues to be addressed.

In 1998, Spain ratified the ***Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities***, which requires the elaboration of a periodic report assessing its compliance by Spain, and the corresponding Resolution issued by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The ***European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)*** is another body belonging to the Council of Europe, which makes the corresponding observations to the reports that other countries elaborate on the situation of the Roma population in Spain, and in which participation is active, including its executive boards.

We also collaborate with the ***Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE)***, which carries out an ***Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti***. The Spanish Government played a key role in its design.

Besides, there are other European programmes and projects such as the ***Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015***. The Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality represents Spain in the Decade.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion in Europe was established in Sofia in 2005, under the theme '*Roma in an Expanding Europe: challenges for the*

Monitoring and evaluation of the plan

Many of the actions proposed in this Plan have continuity over time, thus their development and effects have a medium-term horizon that coincides with the current term of office in Spain until 2012.

In the last quarter of 2011, the Plan shall be updated with the purpose of identifying new actions to be incorporated and, in particular, give a boost to priority actions.

Annual operational plan: every year, an operational plan concerning the development of the Plan shall be carried out in each area, specifying as much as possible the actions to be performed, indicating a deadline and the body or organisation responsible for their development and financing.

The monitoring and evaluation of the Plan shall involve the following actions:

a) Indicators of the Plan

A working group on indicators shall be created, made up by expert technicians from the Ministries involved, as well as experts in every area covered by the Plan, and gender experts, in order to develop a set of indicators that enable the monitoring and evaluation of the Plan.

b) Working Groups of the State Council of the Roma People

Working groups are a key element to the monitoring of the Plan implementation. The current working groups allow a closer relationship with the ministries responsible for each area of the Plan and thus, the participation in the actions and in their monitoring.

The Standing Committee of the Council shall provide the necessary impetus for the working groups to develop their regular activity.

c) Monitoring reports

An annual report on the activities developed shall be submitted to the State Council of the Roma People.

An interim Plan monitoring report including recommendations for the development of the second phase shall be completed in the last quarter of 2011, and submitted to the State Council of the Roma People.

Budget estimate

The Action Plan for the Development of the Roma Population covers three fiscal years, namely 2010, 2011 and 2012.

The budgetary resources allocated to this Plan have a twofold nature: on the one hand, the budget dedicated to funding actions that directly benefit the Roma population. These include the activities carried out by the State Council of the Roma People, the elaboration of studies and reports, the collaboration agreements with various institutions, and the organisation of conferences and seminars.

This budgetary allocation also includes those social and labour inclusion projects promoted by the Roma associative movement and financed through the tax allocation of the income tax (the Spanish IRPF); the comprehensive social intervention projects for the care, prevention of marginalisation and inclusion of the Roma population carried out in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities, and between the latter and the local authorities; and the activities related to Spain's participation in European projects.

On the other hand, many of the actions included in this Plan are financed through budgetary items targeting the most vulnerable population groups, among which the Roma population stands out in many cases. Since these budgetary items are aimed at a broader population than the Roma community, a budget estimate has been developed, based on available studies on the Roma population, which can be considered to be assigned to the implementation of the actions included in the Plan.

The studies carried out in the time framework of this Plan will allow having better tools to assess the impact that the different budgetary items of the General State Administration will have on the Roma population.

