

MUTUAL LEARNING PROGRAMME:
PEER COUNTRY COMMENTS PAPER - SPAIN

Roma issues versus social issues: a false debate?

Peer Review on “Supporting the Labour Market Integration of the Roma Community
in the Czech Republic”

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1 LABOUR MARKET SITUATION IN SPAIN¹

This paper has been prepared for a Peer Review within the framework of the Mutual Learning Programme. It provides information on Spain's comments on the policy example of the Host Country for the Peer Review. For information on the policy example, please refer to the Host Country Discussion Paper.

The structure of the labour market in Spain shows the overwhelming predominance of the services sector (724% of employment), the weight of the construction sector associated with a housing boom since the mid-1990s (9.2% of employment) and the relative fragility of productive sectors (industry: 14.2% of employment; agriculture: 4.2%). The labour market is gendered, as women, despite a significant increase in labour market participation in the past two decades, continue to show activity rates (52.19%) that are inferior to those of men (68.37%), higher levels of part-time employment and hence maternal precariousness (77.27% of all part-time workers). Women are also affected by a gender pay gap (annual wages of women are currently 22% inferior to those of men), and remain essentially confined to the service sector (87.9% of all female employment).²

The Spanish economy has been defined by a tremendously expansive labour market and drastic reduction of unemployment rates, by creating 4.7 million net jobs between 2001 and 2008.³ This expansion was characterised by substantial increases in labour intensive sectors such as construction and services (including domestic services), in addition to the traditional seasonal labour in agriculture. The latter are precisely those sectors that absorbed immigration flows, where the informal economy has been thriving, and where opportunities are ripe for under-employment, denial of labour rights, exploitation and discrimination.⁴

Roma in Spain total between 600,000 and 700,000 persons, mainly concentrated in urban areas and in the South (Andalucía). According to the only available source of information on this subject, the Roma population in Spain remains, as in the Czech Republic, significantly marginalised from the formal labour market. This labour market situation is conditioned by traditions and historical reasons, including high segregation levels, educational deficiencies (poor schooling and high early drop-out rates and a lack of professional training), low participation in regular training schemes, but also inter-subjective perceptions and de facto discrimination in training and employment. At the height of the economic boom (2005), the Roma population in Spain registered significantly higher unemployment rates than the general population (13.86% compared to 8% overall). These figures are significantly higher if we take into account workers without a formal contract. The situation is worse for women, whose unemployment rate reached 16.29% and activity rate 58.01% (compared with 80.89% for Roma men).⁵

The Roma population is concentrated primarily in the services sector (75%), followed by construction (11%) agriculture (9%) and industry (5%). In relation to its labour situation, the Roma population's situation is highly unstable, considering that 71% is in temporary employment (24.88% for the majority population). Furthermore, as in the Czech Republic the level of qualification is significantly lower. In fact, 33.7% of Roma workers are unskilled workers (14.00% for the majority population). The key sectors in which Roma are employed include street selling/peddling (34.2%) (this is an important difference with the Roma in the

¹ This paper was drafted with the support of Andreas Tsolakis.

² National Statistics Institute, Spain (2010a) *Encuesta de Población Activa. Resultados Nacionales*. Available at: <http://www.ine.es/jaxiBD/menu.do?L=0&divi=EPA&his=0&type=db>

See also Spanish Ministry of Equality (2010) 'Presentación del estudio sobre desigualdades salariales entre mujeres y hombres: Bibiana Aído, "reducir la brecha salarial es un objetivo prioritario para este Gobierno"'. Press release. 7 de septiembre.

³ Mahía, Ramón and del Arce, Rafael (2010) 'Impacto de la crisis laboral sobre la población inmigrante'. 28 January. *Real Instituto El Cano*, p.2.

⁴ Europa Press (2008) 'La economía sumergida mueve en España 240.000 millones, el 23% del PIB'.

⁵ FSG (2005) *Roma population and employment, a comparative study* (Madrid: FSG), p.47. FSG (2006) *Informe sobre Población Gitana y Empleo* (Madrid: FSG), p.18.

Czech Republic), cleaning services (10%), agriculture (8.9%), shop attendance (7.1%) and scrap dealing (5.4%).⁶ In contrast to popular belief, the activity rate of Roma (69.3%), similarly to ethnic groups with migrant backgrounds, is higher in Spain than for the majority population and Roma remain longer in the labour market because they initiate employment earlier. Earlier employment is a double-edged sword, however, as high rates of early employment signify a youthful (29.7% of Roma are less than 25 years old, compared to 11.1% for the Spanish population as a whole), potentially active, dynamic population – but also imply extremely low educational levels, exemplified by the 70% rate of complete or functional illiteracy for Roma.⁷ Of the total Roma working population in 2005, 24.14% were employed in family businesses, and 15% without contract.⁸ Nevertheless, the expectations of Roma regarding the labour market are positive, given that almost 50% of Roma would like to work more hours and obtain higher quality jobs, for which they would require capacity building through professional training.⁹

The tremendously negative impact of the global economic crisis on employment in Spain is affecting all social groups, but affecting migrants, Roma, people with disabilities, young and unskilled workers disproportionately.¹⁰ Throughout Spain, 1,280,300 jobs were lost in 2008 and 1,210,800 in 2009, with the total number of unemployed workers reaching 4,326,500 in the final quarter of 2009, and losing a further 319,000 jobs in the first two quarters of 2010, to reach 4,645,500 unemployed persons in July 2010. The unemployment rate has thus more than doubled, from 7.95% in mid-2007 to 20.05% by July 2010.¹¹ The profound crisis impacting the Spanish labour market has also affected unemployment rates among Roma to a greater extent than the general population (35% reduction in contracts in 2009, compared to an 18% decline overall for Spain).¹²

⁶ FSG (2005), *ibid.*, p.55.

⁷ Laparra, Miguel (2007) *Informe sobre la situación social y tendencias de cambio en la población gitana. Una primera aproximación* (Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales), p.116.

⁸ FSG (2006), *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁹ Laparra (2007), *op.cit.*, p.117.

¹⁰ According to the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano*, the Roma population has been disproportionately affected by the crisis: a 30% increase in the number of users of the Acceder Programme, its job insertion and training programme, failed to translate into an increase in employment contracts: 2,859 contracts were obtained through Acceder in 2009, compared with 4,389 in the previous year (a 35% decline). See FSG (2009b) 'Se incrementa en un 30% el número de personas gitanas que se acercan al Programa ACCEDER, como consecuencia de la crisis del mercado de trabajo'. July.

¹¹ National Statistics Institute, Spain (2010b), *op.cit.* The situation improved somewhat in the third quarter of 2010: by September, the unemployment rate had decreased to 19.79% while the number of unemployed reached 4.57 million. See National Statistics Institute, Spain (2010c). *Encuesta de Población Activa. Resultados Nacionales*. Available at: <http://www.ine.es/daco/daco42/daco4211/epa0310.pdf>

¹² FSG (2005) *op.cit.*, p.104. On recent Roma labour developments, see <http://www.gitanos.org/acceder/>.

2 ASSESSMENT OF THE POLICY MEASURE

Generally speaking, Spanish Roma have made more socio-economic progress in the last thirty years than they had in the previous five centuries. This is basically due to five factors: first, the democratisation of the country that has provided them not only with formal rights but citizens' active participation in society; secondly, the substantial economic development of the country following its admission into the EU (1986) has benefitted many Roma; third, the expansion of the national protection system that has been very inclusive towards Roma, compensating for existing disadvantages (redistributive effect); fourth, selective targeted measures addressed to Roma in situations of exclusion; fifth, an active civil movement in favour of the Roma community (including Roma NGOs). Some of these circumstances, such as for example democratisation, or economic growth, may be similar in the Czech Republic, but the way these have benefitted Roma may have been different; in fact many reports mention that the living conditions of the Roma in the Czech Republic have worsened in the last twenty years.

Having adequate social protection systems (sufficient services, adequate services, and those which are adapted to needs) is a prerequisite for social inclusion, but sometimes may be insufficient. The social protection system that expanded in Spain in the 1980s and 1990s was very inclusive of Roma and benefitted them more than the rest of the population, not for their being Roma (ethnic approach) but for being in situations of greater need and vulnerability. In fact, in contrast to the Czech Republic, most of the Roma in Spain are living in urban areas and less than 5% are living in segregated or ghettoised settlements.¹³ Important doubts remain about the extent to which the social protection system is being inclusive for the Roma in the Czech Republic. Living together with non-Roma, in the same buildings, going to the same schools and health services not only facilitates interaction and mutual understanding between Roma and non-Roma, but also a change of mentalities and traditions. Roma and non-Roma communities became less hermetic and Roma became part of the community; a high incidence of physical segregation may also be a main barrier for the Roma inclusion in the Czech Republic. Ultimately, every person (including Roma) wants to improve his/her living standards and it is a matter of opportunities; the problem with many Roma is that they cannot appreciate what they do not know or what they have never experienced; in fact the Spanish experience demonstrates that Roma living together with non Roma may emulate their neighbours in their patterns of daily life.

The Spanish experience shows that despite the inclusive social protection approach, specific measures aimed at the most excluded segments of the Roma community, compensating for disadvantages and facilitating normalization, are needed for Roma integration. Social services must be open to all, but in cases where there is a gap, universal services must be complemented with specific measures. However, these specific measures must lead to normalisation and have to be well connected to public services; if the specific measures are part of the system they will be inclusive but if they are functioning outside of the system or with poor coordination they risk promoting segregation. In fact, many services provided by NGOs risk becoming a parallel system of social services. Excessively targeted and uncoordinated approaches in Spain have proven to be inadequate, because public services stop fulfilling their responsibilities while the non-profit sector will provide marginal services for marginalised persons although attempts at coordination between public administrations and NGOs have been made, such as the *Programa de Desarrollo Gitano* (Programme of Roma Development) and the participation of Roma NGOs in the *Consejo Estatal del Pueblo Gitano* (State Council of Roma People). The long experience regarding the provision of specific, targeted services in Spain in good cooperation and balance with mainstreamed services, may also be different to the Czech Republic. Good governance and adequate partnerships are basic criteria in these circumstances.

¹³ FSG (2008) *Mapa sobre Vivienda y Comunidad Gitana en España, 2007* (Madrid: FSG).

The debate between the ethnic approach and the social exclusion approach has demonstrated in the long term in Spain to be a false debate, promoted by corporative interest. In fact one of the Integrated Principles of the Platform for Roma Inclusion is explicit but not exclusive in its actions, or in other words contains a targeted but not segregated approach. When dealing with Roma, we must distinguish between Roma issues and the specific problems of those Roma people in situations of exclusion who constitute a part, but not all, of the Roma population. Roma issues are related to issues of culture, traditions, identity, etc., and the integration of Roma basically concerns living standards, access to services, participation in the community, etc. It is after having dealt with social issues that we have to take into account the question of culture and identities. A Roma person is first a person (human rights), then a citizen (social rights) and then a Roma (cultural rights), and not the opposite way around.

The case of the Acceder programme, managed by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano in Spain, is a good example of implementation of the principle of explicit but not exclusive targeting. Acceder is a programme in principle addressed and adapted to the Roma community, but about 40% of its beneficiaries, are non-Roma living in the same areas where Roma live and in similar social circumstances (low qualification skills, lack of opportunities in the labour market, people of foreign origin, etc.). In fact, Acceder demonstrate that what is good for the Roma may be also good for other people in similar circumstances, and that a targeted programme does not necessarily mean having an ethnic approach, but rather an open approach that takes into account specific ethnic and cultural circumstances.

A territorial approach must define actions at the community level, starting from local circumstances and the needs of the communities living in the neighbourhoods. Years ago in many cities in Spain there used to be monitoring systems for the attendance of Roma at school and to prevent early school leaving. These programmes were managed by Roma NGOs. Today in most of these schools there are students of ten or twenty nationalities and it is not reasonable to have immigrant associations (Moroccans, Ecuadorians, Romanians, etc.) monitoring each group's needs, because the problems are basically the same for all students (attendance, proper interaction, early drop out, etc.). The lesson for us is that situations have to be tackled according to the characteristics of the problems, not according to the types of people or groups affected by the problems. This said, it makes sense of course to introduce different cultures in the school curriculum, to foster the active participation of associations in the school, to organise cultural events, and so on. This also manifests in the field of healthcare for instance, when addressing specific campaigns for oral care, eating habits, etc.

The Host Country discussion paper states that *The only sensible approach to the integration of "Roma" on labour market lies not only initiatives focussing on providing better access to employment, but in combining educational, housing and welfare policies in order to increase "Roma" employability.* Therefore, unfortunately the experience in Spain as well as in the Czech Republic demonstrates that in most cases it is difficult to carry out an integrated approach on the ground, in some cases because of a lack of resources, in others because of the lack of political will, and in others more simply because of ineffective administrative coordination. The Acceder programme has demonstrated over ten years that even in a difficult labour market situation, if there are working schemes focused on employment in good coordination with other services (educational, health, housing, minimal income, etc.) it is possible to obtain good results in term of employment;¹⁴ furthermore, access to employment can be a good springboard for improvements in housing, health, education, etc. The virtuous circle is an effective combination between service provision

¹⁴ For achievements of the Acceder programme (for example, more than 36,000 employment contracts obtained for its beneficiaries over the past decade) and relevant statistical data, please refer to: <http://www.gitanos.org/acceder/>

and consideration, *stick and carrot* minimum schemes protection, professional training and employment.

When trying to integrate Roma to the labour market, we face a set of problems sometimes related to the basic skills of the candidates, or to the lack of professional qualification, the lack of working experience, the lack of positive expectations, or the existing prejudices and stereotypes of employers for example. This combination of difficulties may affect to a different extent, each person according to his/her personal circumstances. We may perhaps question the way the Host Country Discussion Paper presents the problem by stating that *the problem seen as the lack of capacity within the members of the Roma community or is the problem located in the barriers that prevent Roma from accessing service or resources?* The experience from Acceder shows that if the services cover adequately all the parts of the insertion itinerary (awareness, welcoming, training, personal orientation, intermediation with the companies, each person according to her/his personal circumstances and needs can follow his/her own itinerary – different speeds, different services), there is a high probability of success.

Data collection seems to be a concern for the host country because of the difficulties associated with self-identification. Lack of data collection does not allow proper evaluation. Spain is a country without a tradition of ethnic data collection, yet, since the creation of Acceder, a permanent observatory can provide very detailed and up-to-date information, by gender, age, based on the data provided by the beneficiaries; the experience in the Spanish case demonstrates that the barriers are not in the law or the resistance of the Roma to self-identification, but in the inadequate interpretation of the law, the lack of proper tools and mechanisms to collect and exploit data. At the same time, it is not difficult to obtain a global picture of the Roma in employment through samples or other statistical methods.¹⁵

¹⁵ FSG(2005, 2006) op.cit.

3 ASSESSMENT OF THE SUCCESS FACTORS AND TRANSFERABILITY

This section is understood as transferability in both directions, from the Czech Republic experience to Spain and from the Spanish experience to the Czech Republic and other peer countries. It must be remembered that in Spain most of the Roma are living in large cities and urban areas and that only a small proportion, less than 5%, live in settlements. Establishing a Governmental Agency for Social Inclusion in Roma Settlements at the national level will not be feasible in Spain because it is a very decentralised country where most of the competencies are transferred to the Regional Authorities (Comunidades Autónomas); in contrast, there are experiences in Spain of similar public agencies at the regional level, such as the IRIS, which has been active for more than twenty years and has demonstrated good results.¹⁶ These agencies are working with an integrated approach. The difference is that these agencies are operating mainly in urban areas and the main focus is to eliminate settlements (with housing as the main focus), understanding that living in separate settlements is the key barrier to Roma integration.

We see some commonalities between the Spanish and the Czech approaches in making use of the Structural Funds. These are basically:

- Making use of the Structural Funds and Operational Programmes not only as a financial tool to invest in Roma employment but also as a policy tool for establishing new policies with the Roma community.
- The integrated and structural approach, with the understanding that in order to achieve integration the structural conditions of exclusion need to be removed in a systematic manner. The difference is that the Spanish experience shows that in this integrated approach usually one aspect can play the role of springboard (housing or employment).
- The partnership approach, with an understanding that is important to involve key public and private actors in the process, on the basis of a common understanding of the issues that ought to be tackled to obtain effective results.
- The governance system, with an understanding that a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches are needed, and that the national level has a crucial role to play (not only through financial support) in the design of local policies.

We see some elements of transferability from the Czech Republic experience to the Spanish case. They underline among others:

- The good combination between the different areas to be covered in the integrated approach: educational, housing and welfare policies in order to increase Roma employability.
- The focus of the experience in the Roma localities and the Roma settlements.
- The leading role of the central government through a specialised agency (as already mentioned, such a leading role would have to adapt to the high level of administrative decentralisation of the Spanish State).

¹⁶ See description of IRIS in Madrid (Instituto de Realojamiento e Integración Social de la Comunidad de Madrid). Available at:

http://www.madrid.org/cs/Satellite?c=PVIV_Generico_FA&cid=1142494644870&language=es&pageid=1142469208871&pagename=PortalVivienda%2FPVIV_Generico_FA%2FPVIV_pintarGenerico . See also Consorcio de la Mina in Barcelona. Available at: <http://www.barrimina.org/cast/index.php/consorcio-de-la-mina-mainmenu-34.html>

We also see some elements of interest in the Spanish experience for other peer countries. We underline some of them:

- The Spanish experience shows that despite the inclusive social protection approach, Roma integration is a long process, where the real impact can be demonstrated only after several generations. Continuity, long-term projects, and a common approach over time are preconditions for success.
- Breaking the *cycle of low qualification and educational achievements, inability to budget with a low income, long term unemployment, illegal gainful activities and the development of social pathologies* require stabilising social inclusion policies characterised by:
 - A long term approach.
 - Specific and adapted employment programs in good coordination with the social services and other services, based on individual itineraries and the good coordination between specific and mainstreaming services.
 - Access to employment as a driver, complemented with training activities and individual itineraries.
 - Specific tools, working methods, flexibility, improving the knowhow and specialisation, clear accountability and results-oriented programs, and a suitable coordination and management system.
 - Active Roma involvement and active Roma engagement in all parts of the process.
- The Spanish experience has shown that civil society organisations play an indispensable role in the design, implementation and evaluation of Roma policies. In fact it is one of the keys for the successful promotion of the Roma community in Spain. A well-organised civil society and Roma movement can: better advocate Roma needs, provide updated and innovative answers, empower the Roma community, be crucial partners in public policy-making, be a permanent identifier of Roma needs, and engage the civil society, including economic resources.

4 QUESTIONS

The establishment of the Governmental Agency for Social Inclusion in Roma Localities in 2008 seems to represent a qualitative change in the Roma policies and represents a success factor according to the Host Country Discussion Paper, involving 139 institutions in 13 pilot localities on 72 projects. It would be interesting to have more detailed information about:

- To what extent are these 13 pilot localities developing integrated approaches covering employment, housing, education, and health?
- Do the 72 projects have a long-term approach and, if so, for how many years?
- Are there intermediary quantitative and qualitative results at the moment and what kind of outputs can be demonstrated?
- More details about the governance and partnership mechanism, the involvement of the Roma community, and specially the cooperation between the central – national level and the local level are needed.
- How are the problems mentioned in the report, of data collection and accountability on Roma impact, being resolved?

ANNEX 1: SUMMARY TABLE

Labour market situation in the Peer Country
• Tremendous expansion of the labour market between 2001 and 2008, absorbing women, immigrants and Roma. • Predominance of the service sector in employment structure; concentration of women, immigrants, and Roma in services. • Significant weight of the informal sector in the Spanish economy, undermining labour rights and worsening working conditions. • High activity rate of Roma, but also a relatively high unemployment rate and concentration, with immigrants and unskilled, in the informal sector of the economy. • Profound crisis of the labour market since 2008 (from 7% to 20% unemployment rate) affecting disproportionately vulnerable groups such as youth, unskilled, immigrants and Roma.
Assessment of the policy measure
• Good combination between inclusive social protection systems complemented by targeted measures to compensate disadvantages. • The debate between the ethnic approach and the social exclusion approach risks being inappropriate. • Situations have to be tackled according to the characteristics of the problem, not according to the type of groups affected by the problem. • Access to employment may be a springboard for inclusion in other areas. • Data collection is not so difficult in practice and it is always possible to have a global picture.
Assessment of success factors and transferability
• A long-term approach is needed to achieve results in the medium-term, to achieve changes in mentalities, mutual understanding and social integration; requires significant investment in human and financial resources and the stability of programmes. • Individualised insertion itineraries, taking into account the specific circumstances, abilities, expectations and needs of beneficiaries achieves better results. • Explicit but not exclusive targeting must be at the core of all actions and to avoid new forms of segregation. • A territorial approach (on the ground), combined with global planning is needed to adapt to the needs of beneficiaries. • ONGs add significant value if they effectively coordinate their activities with social services, as demonstrated by the Acceder programme.
Questions
• More details would be needed on the results of the Governmental Agency for Social Inclusion in Roma Localities, especially the success factors that can be demonstrated or are expected to be obtained.