

FUNDACIÓN SECRETARIADO GENERAL GITANO

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(English version)

AGREEMENT: SI2.324601(2001CVG2-211)

TITLE: "Santé et Communauté Tsigane"

Final Report

FUNDACIÓN SECRETARIADO GENERAL GITANO (FSGG)

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MADRID, September 2003

Introduction

This report covers actions carried out from 1 September 2001 through 1 July 2003 within the framework of the European Project: **“Santé et Communauté Tsigane”**, funded by the European Commission, the Spanish Home Ministry’s National Drug Plan, the National AIDS Plan, the Community of Madrid’s Drug Agency and the Madrid Town Hall (Municipal Anti-drug Plan) and implemented by this Foundation with the collaboration of other European organisations related with UNISAT (France), REAPN (Portugal), CNCA (Italy), KEPIT (Greece) and T3E (UK). Other organisations such as Pavee Point (Ireland) or the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (United Kingdom) also took part in light of their similar objectives and activities. Another of the project’s most relevant advances has been the development of active synergies with public and private organisations in candidate countries such as Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria with which ongoing links favouring coordination and joint work have been established.

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Description of the Project

2.1 - Objectives

The overarching objective of the activities that the Fundación Secretariado General Gitano has been carrying out in the field of drug abuse since 1992 is the promotion of intervention in the areas of prevention and care in certain sectors of the Roma ethnic minority. This project has focused on *awareness heightening initiatives with Roma organisations, solving the problem that Roma drug abuse victims have in gaining access to health care services, implementing intervention instruments specially tailored to our community and on consolidating coordination and the transnational character of the work carried out by the project’s partner organisations.*

The following operational Programme objectives figured in our project and have guided our actions:

- 1- To consolidate and strengthen the European Network “Sastipen” as a forum for exchange, contact and mutual support, knowledge and **information** regarding the status of Europe’s Roma community as regards drug abuse and HIV/AIDS and health in general.
- 2- **To generate a Discourse and shared knowledge base** from elements of common interest on the Roma population and drug dependency, methods and intervention strategies and **transfer** this know-how and significant experiences to action partners, other drug abuse networks and ethnic minorities and public administrations and organisations of other European countries in which the Roma reside (especially Central and Eastern European countries with large Roma populations).
- 3 – **To mobilise** the different professionals involved in drug issues (experts, institutions, etc.) as well as those of the Roma community itself to develop prevention and intervention initiatives focusing on this population fostering a specific approach that bears lifestyles and cultural characteristics in mind in the Project’s partner countries.
- 4- **To facilitate access** of Roma drug abuse victims to mainstream health services.
- 5- **To produce, disseminate and apply** prevention materials and instruments tailored to the Roma population.

2.3 – Activities Implemented

Summary table of actions implemented

ACTION	INITIATIVE	RESULTS
NETWORK COORDINATION AND EMPOWERMENT ACTIONS		
1- Network coordination and empowerment actions	Network coordination meeting	Rome, 26-27 October 2002 Porto, 1-2 March 2002 Madrid 11 May 2002 Athens, 20-21 September 2002 Florence, 13-14 December 2002 Granada, 7-8 March 2003 Brussels, 22 May 2003 Dublin, 27-28 June 2003
SEMINARS, COURSES, WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING AND EXCHANGE MEETINGS		
2- Specific courses and seminars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meetings for mediators taking part in the Romanó Sastipen Programme (Spain) ▪ Transnational mediator meetings (Athens – Greece) ▪ Health seminar (Portugalete – Spain) ▪ Work seminar with Central and Eastern European countries (Brussels – Belgium) ▪ Training and exchange seminars for professionals working with Roma drug abuse victims (Rome and Florence – Italy) • Government training of Roma mediators in the areas of health, drug abuse and AIDS (Portugal) • Training of specialists and professionals on “Health and the Roma Communities” in Braga (Portugal) • Training of Cedofeita CAT specialists (Porto - Portugal) 	<p>50 mediators from different Spanish organisations took part on 17-18 December 2001 and 21-22 March 2002.</p> <p>Held on 16-18 May 2002 and on 29-31 June 2003. Mediators from Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom took part.</p> <p>Approximately 60 professionals from different public and private organisations in the Basque Country took part.</p> <p>Brussels, 23-24 May 2003</p> <p>Three seminars held in Italy on 16 May and 13 and 16 June.</p> <p>16-18 July 2002 11 mediators from Braga, Coimbra and Lisbon were trained in health education and drug abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention.</p> <p>Held in Santo Tirso on 27-29 November 2002; 13 specialists from the city of Braga took part.</p> <p>Four training sessions on 17, 24 and 31 March and 7 April for</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Series of thematic meetings for specialists on intervention with the Roma community in Portugal. Exchange and working meeting with professionals in London (United Kingdom) Roma mediator training in Ano Liosia (Greece) 	<p>specialists from the drug centre.</p> <p>107 specialists from different areas of social action including health promotion took part.</p> <p>Held on 11 December 2002 and was attended by public administrations and social organisations involved in drug abuse issues.</p> <p>Training of 10 Roma mediators</p>
NATIONAL WORKING GROUPS		
3- Working groups in Spain, France, Portugal, Italy, United Kingdom and Greece	Consolidated groups in Portugal, France, Italy and Spain have been formed. Work has been initiated in United Kingdom and Greece and, as of the middle of 2002, in Ireland.	Working groups have been actively working on intervention with the Roma population.
EUROPEAN WORKSHOPS ON HEALTH AND THE ROMA COMMUNITY		
Most relevant transnational exchange action of the Sastipen Network.		Held in Madrid on 8-10 May 2002; 160 participants.
INFORMATION SYSTEM REGARDING CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF EUROPE'S ROMA POPULATION AS REGARDS DRUG ABUSE AND OTHER ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS AND GENERAL HEALTH.		
<p>Development of an information and observation system on the health status of Europe's Roma population.</p> <p>The final qualitative research report on knowledge, behaviour and attitudes of Spain's Roma community with regard to HIV/AIDS was presented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation DELPHI Group Secondary source analysis Ad Hoc studies 	<p>Reports from the different countries have been drawn up and the joint report is currently being finalised.</p> <p>The final research report was presented to FIPSE (Spain's national AIDS plan).</p>
UPDATING OF THE DATA BANK ON INITIATIVES WITH THE ROMA COMMUNITY		
Data bank update management	The update and contact process continues forward with a view to implementing the network.	<p>Mostly focussing on the Eastern European countries with which work has commenced on drug abuse and HIV/AIDS issues.</p> <p>The contacts established in this sense have helped in the update of data.</p>
THE ROMANO SASTIPEN PREVENTION PROGRAMME FOR WORK WITH ROMA		
Romanó Sastipen Programme	<p>Different formats of the programme are being developed in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spain Greece Portugal Italy 	<p>In Spain work has been done with approximately 869 Roma minors and young people in the area of drug abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention.</p> <p>1,071 requests for technical assistance and 119 call for advice were also answered.</p> <p>In Greece and Portugal diverse material such as "Prevention workshops for Roma youth" has been translated and disseminated to public and</p>

<p>HIV/AIDS prevention programme aimed at the Roma population</p>	<p>Systematically developed in Spain and throughout the rest of the partner countries by means of specific actions.</p>	<p>private entities working in the area of prevention.</p> <p>In Italy mediator training initiatives have been implemented using the "Romanó Sastipen" methodology, translating and applying the materials produced.</p> <p>During this period in Spain there were a total of 1,023 beneficiaries including both individual and group intervention initiatives.</p> <p>Technical expertise was provided to 212 public and private entities.</p>
<p>PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION OF MATERIALS</p>		
<p>Production of the WEB page</p>	<p>The WEB page is updated and in operation. http://www.fsgg.org/sastipen An electronic newsletter with current information on Network activity has also been included.</p>	
<p>Publication of the magazine <i>ciganos.pt</i></p>	<p>Portuguese edition</p>	<p>Two issues of the magazine Ciganos.pt have been published with a circulation of 1,500 for each issue.</p>
<p>Publication of Sastipen Network news in different publications</p>	<p>Articles have been published in the magazine "<i>Gitanos: Pensamiento y Cultura</i>", "<i>Rediteia</i>" "Gazette of the Community of Madrid's Association of Social Workers", "<i>Idea-Prevención</i>" and others.</p>	
<p>The "Prevention Workshops for Roma Youth" have been translated into Greek.</p>	<p>Material has been distributed to more than 1,000 health care professionals.</p>	
<p>Translation, adaptation and edition of "Health workshops for Roma women".</p>	<p>Translated and published in Portuguese.</p>	<p>1,000 copies</p>
<p>Development, publication and dissemination "Prevention workshops for Roma families"</p>	<p>This prevention material for families has been developed and used in Spain within the framework of the "Romanó Sastipen" programme.</p>	<p>Spanish, 1,000 copies</p>
<p>Development, publication and dissemination of the comic strip for drug abuse prevention "<i>El que más chanela mejor decide</i>" (The well informed take better decisions).</p>	<p>A comic strip has been developed with a view to improving the information that Roma youth have regarding drugs and their effects and is distributed through the network of youth information centres under the auspices of the Fundación Secretariado General Gitano.</p>	<p>Spanish, 1,500 copies</p>
<p>Development, publication and dissemination of the comic strip "<i>¿Qué me puchelas?</i>" (How's it going) and the accompanying teacher's guide.</p>	<p>This publication is designed to deal with key issues concerning the prevention of HIV/AIDS in the Roma community.</p>	<p>Spanish, 1,000 copies of the comic strip and 1,000 copies of the teacher's guide.</p>

<p>Publication in Italian of the conclusions of the working seminars for professionals that were held in Rome and Florence in May and June 2003.</p>	<p>In press.</p>	
<p>OTHER NETWORK IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS</p>		
<p>Participation in other networks, projects, workshops and meetings.</p> <p>Technical assistance provided to European organisations on issues concerning health and drug abuse.</p> <p>Other Network implementation and dissemination actions.</p>	<p>Involvement in different initiatives both in the Network partner countries and in Europe (seminars, meetings, etc...)</p> <p>Technical assistance provided to over 3,000 organisations and professionals.</p> <p>Institutional action to call attention to health care deficiencies as concerns the Roma community.</p> <p>Political action and institutional representation.</p>	

1- NETWORK COORDINATION AND EMPOWERMENT ACTIONS

- Eight coordination meetings were held in Rome, Porto, Madrid, Athens, Florence, Granada, Brussels and Dublin in addition to numerous telephone and e-mail contacts.
- The meetings were helpful in coordinating, planning, monitoring and evaluating project actions.
- Visits were made to the different intervention projects in the countries in which meetings were held.
- See annex 1 for the minutes of the coordination meetings.

The following coordination meetings were held:

- Rome, 26-27 October 2002:

This was the first coordination meeting following project approval the purpose of which was to draw up plans for the period in accordance with the approved budget and programme objectives. Information was also provided regarding the recent audit of the project done by the European Commission (August 2001).

- Porto, 1-2 March 2002

This was basically an activity follow-up meeting at which agreement was reached on the agenda of the 6th European Conference on “Health and the Roma Community” and planning was made for other relevant activities of the Sastipen Network.

- Madrid 11 May 2002

Taking place after the Conference, this meeting allowed for initial assessment. Moreover, the work programme for the 2nd international meeting of Roma mediators in Athens (Greece) was planned and defined. The activity itself and fulfilment of objectives was monitored as were technical aspects related to the project.

- Athens, 20-21 September 2002

Information was provided regarding the signing of a collaboration agreement with the Spanish Health Ministry and the approval of a PHARE-Drugs project that, by means of joint actions, would serve to strengthen Sastipen’s aim of broadening the scope of intervention to Central and Eastern Europe. An evaluation was also done of the Athens mediators’ meeting as well as of other pending activities. Plans got under way for the presentation of a request for funding to the new Framework Programme for Public Health. Two new organisations joined in Network efforts: Pavee Point (Ireland) and ITM (United Kingdom)

- Florence, 13-14 December 2002

Monitoring of the activity and discussion regarding the guidelines that should be followed by the project to be submitted to the DG SANCO. Information was provided

regarding progress in the implementation of the Sastipen Network in the Network's different partner countries.

- Granada, 7-8 March 2003

Follow-up meeting. A visit was also made to the employment facility managed by the FSGG serving the population of Granada. An exchange meeting was also held between project partners and the Andalusian Regional Drug Plan.

- Brussels, 22 May 2003

Final project evaluation meeting. An exchange meeting was held with the partners of the PHARE-drugs project from the public administrations and social organisations of Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria. The Sastipen Network was presented along with information regarding its objectives and working methodology.

- Dublin, 27-28 June 2003

Coordination meeting on some of the final aspects of the project implementation process focusing mostly on financial and activity reports. A visit was made to the travellers camp and a coordination meeting was held with the Pavee Point health care team with a view to sharing experiences in the area of health promotion and drug abuse prevention.

2- SPECIFIC COURSES AND SEMINARS

2.1 – TRAINING COURSES FOR MEDIATORS TAKING PART IN DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAMMES (SPAIN)

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Madrid, 17-18 December 2001 and 21-22 March 2002
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Mediators/educators implementing drug abuse prevention programmes for Roma minors and youth.
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	50 mediators
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See annex

Coordination meeting for mediators involved in drug abuse prevention programmes in Spain. Sessions were both theoretical and practical and focused on issues related with direct intervention, drug abuse prevention and health promotion.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETINGS

- Provide a forum for meeting and communication among professionals working with the Roma population in the area of drug abuse prevention.
- Define criteria to be used in the monitoring and coordination of the Romano Sastipen programme.
- Share intervention methodologies used with young people in drug abuse prevention.
- Establish criteria and intervention methodology for use with Roma families.
- Establish future lines of development for the Romano Sastipen programme.
- Identify possibilities for programme implementation in educational contexts.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETINGS

The most significant conclusions were:

Positive aspects

- Good meeting organisation
- Atmosphere of reflection
- Participatory methodology allowing for information sharing
- New intervention techniques and strategies were acquired especially for use with Roma families. A family-centred approach to intervention was considered very interesting.
- Very positive experience sharing
- Detection of intervention needs and priorities in this field

- A global vision was acquired of what is being done in the area of health with Roma in Spain. Different realities and experiences were unveiled.
- New teaching materials were presented along with an assessment and analysis of their practical applications.
- Group work and general participation were very positive.

☐ ***Aspects needing improvement***

- Not enough time to delve deeper into specific aspects.
- A need for specific workshops was detected.
- More time should be spent on the sharing of work experiences.

In general terms it can be said that all of the proposed objectives were achieved. Participants' evaluation of the meeting was very positive stating that it allowed for reflection on the current status of the programme identifying its needs and deficits as well as its achievements and progress. The meeting also contributed to the development and assessment of future shared lines of action. Family intervention as a way to approach drug abuse prevention with young people was given a very positive evaluation in light of the important role played by the family as the principle channel for socialisation. The specific material entitled "Workshops for prevention with Roma families" was evaluated as a very useful work proposal.

2.2 – TRANSNATIONAL MEDIATOR MEETINGS IN ATHENS (GREECE)

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Athens (Greece) 30-31 May and 1 June 2002 29-31 May 2003
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Roma mediators involved or who could be involved in the field of health promotion and drug abuse
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	22 participants at the first meeting 24 participants at the second
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See annex

One of the meeting's main objectives was to train the most important social agents (public services professionals) in order to improve drug abuse prevention and intervention initiatives with Roma. The fact that the training focused mainly on the Roma community was also a positive factor in getting it involved in the development of its own prevention capacity and health promotion skills.

The objectives of this training were:

- To gradually form a cohesive group and establish contacts among the participants for the development of joint actions.
- To familiarise the participants with each others' organisations and to build a knowledge base by sharing experiences among the different entities.
- To share experiences and best practices concerning intervention with the Roma community and the needs and problems faced in the different countries.
- To define the role of the mediator and to consider mediation as a specific profession.
- To raise participant awareness as to the actions that need to be developed to defend their rights and those of the people with whom they work.
- To develop a common framework regarding the future of mediation as a profession.
- To work on two documents and reach an agreement on their content: a topic paper on the profile of the mediator and a Best Practices Guidebook on mediation focusing particularly on the area of health.

Mediators from five different countries took part in the meetings (Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy, United Kingdom) and they were from different professional backgrounds (mediators, professionals, students, spontaneous mediators...) and most were Roma.

Special mention should be made of the positive evaluation received by the participants and the synergies established among them. Greater awareness was also gained as concerns the transnational problems facing the Roma community and the need for active involvement by all.

2.3 – HEALTH SEMINAR IN PORTUGALETE (SPAIN)

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Portugalete, (Vizcaya) 12 December 2001
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Professionals from the social services, social-health services and other social entities
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	21

INTRODUCTION

This training meeting was part of a global strategy of the FSGG's Area of Health and responded to the need to train the different intervention agents in order to better prepare local entities to carry out effective drug abuse prevention and treatment and general health work. In order to meet this goal, one must unify criteria, share experiences and provide working tools for those that deal with the day-to-day reality at the local organisations and social and health services.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

- Present a health intervention model for use with the Roma population.
- Transmit experiences and examples of best practices in the area of health promotion and drug abuse prevention.
- Analyse specific drug abuse prevention materials.
- Promote fora for the acquisition of know-how and experience sharing among organisations working on health issues with ethnic minorities.

STRUCTURE OF THE MEETING/PROGRAMME

The meeting was structured in the following manner:

10.00-11.00: Basic principles of health intervention with the Roma community (FSGG)

- Introduction: The Roma community and health
- Intervention principles and strategies
- Health intervention programmes

11.00-11.30: Coffee break

11.30-12.30: Drug abuse prevention with the Roma community (FSGG)

- Intervention principles
- Activities, techniques and work methodology

12.30- 14.00: Materials specifically tailored to drug abuse prevention with the Roma population (FSGG)

- “Prevention workshops for Roma youth”
- “Prevention workshops for Roma families”

14.00- 16.00: Lunch

16.00- 18.30: Experience sharing

- Community health agents from the region of Navarra.
- The “Gao Lacho Drom” Association from Vitoria.

METHODOLOGY

A dynamic and participatory methodology was used at the meeting based on the work experience of the participating professionals. Sharing of information and know-how was encouraged and an analysis was done of the different intervention methodologies and techniques from an intercultural point of view considering health promotion and access to mainstream resources as a priority for ethnic minorities.

The heterogeneous makeup of the participants (health agents, social workers, educators, etc.) contributed to a multi-disciplinary exchange of information approaching drug abuse prevention from an integrated intervention perspective.

CONCLUSIONS REACHED AT THE TRAINING MEETING

The most significant assessments of the meeting were as follows:

Positive aspects:

- Learning of a global model for intervention with the Roma population.
- Familiarity with the values of the Roma culture.
- Knowledge of specific intervention material.
- Acquisition of new intervention techniques and methodologies.
- Sharing of information work experiences and resources.
- Intercultural learning.
- Broad perspective on drug abuse intervention in Spain.
- Motivational reinforcement for everyday work.
- Interdisciplinary approach to prevention.

Aspects needing improvement:

- Lack of time for more in-depth work.
- Specific workshops needed.
- More time needed for the sharing of work experiences.

2.4 – WORK SEMINAR WITH CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Brussels, 23 May 2003
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Policy promoters and designers in the field of health promotion European and national social organisations
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	32 participants
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See meeting report (annex)

Context

One of the European Union's principal objectives is to pursue greater social cohesion and to eliminate situations of poverty and exclusion affecting some of its citizens. That is why the Treaty of Amsterdam was provided with the necessary legal measures and decisions were taken at a number of European Councils that have permitted the EU to establish actions that strive for a more inclusive society. Along these same lines, the European Public Health Programme (2003-2008) puts a priority on actions with a horizontal focus remedying inequality in health issues.

For the Roma population, as well as for any other group, health standards are important indicators of inequality, standard of living and degree of participation in the society as full members. As is a well known fact the Roma community, a very heterogeneous group within the European context (Roma, Sinti, Traveller, etc.) is an ethnic minority residing in all of the EU countries and is comprised of more than two million citizens that suffer from one of the most serious situations of marginalisation. In the near future this situation will take on even greater importance in European policies when the group of candidate countries, where the majority of Europe's Roma population resides (approximately four million), become part of the EU making health and exclusion indicators even more significant.

It was within this context that the Sastipen network decided to organise the international seminar entitled *Roma Health: a challenge facing European inclusion policies* (Brussels, 23 May 2003) to highlight the importance of transnational cooperation on the governmental level as well as in civil society. In this sense, the policies being implemented in Europe are having an important effect thanks to the support and promotion of initiatives that facilitate synergies among the different organisations and institutions working with Europe's Roma population.

Objectives of the seminar

The main objective of the seminar was to include the Roma agenda in both national and European policies and strategies. The specific objectives were:

- To transfer successful methodologies, experiences and strategies in the field of intervention-prevention with the Roma population.
- To mobilise social agents and public institutions to promote and develop prevention and intervention initiatives for the Roma population in the partner countries.
- To take stock of the needs and expectations of the organisations of the Central and Eastern European countries that focus their efforts on drug abuse intervention.

Target population

The seminar focused on two specific groups:

- a) Policy promoters: Non-governmental organisations and networks working in the field of health promotion (especially drug abuse) as well as in the advancement of the Roma community. From among these organisations, special mention should be made of the Sastipen project partners (REAPN-Portugal, Pavee Point-Ireland, CNCA-Italy, T3E-United Kingdom, KEPIT/EFXINI POLI – Greece and FSGG-Spain) as well as the partners of the project entitled *Promotion of network cooperation and work on drug abuse in the Roma community* (Blue Point-Hungary, Romani CRISS-Romania, Initiative for Health Foundation-Bulgaria, PRIMA-Slovakia, SANANIM-Czech Republic) and networks such as the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and the Roma Women's Network (RWN).
- b) Policy designers: Government administrations with jurisdiction in the areas of health, drugs, social inclusion and ethnic minorities in project partner countries (Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic).

Activities (seminar agenda)

The seminar was divided into two main blocks: the morning session included a presentation of the European policies on health (Public Health Programme 2003-2008) on discrimination (transposition of European Directive 2000/43/EC to national legislations) on social inclusion (National Action Plans for inclusion and European Union recommendations) and on EU enlargement to include Central and Eastern European countries. The afternoon session had a more practical focus. Working groups were set up to present and share best social intervention practices and instruments in the field of drug abuse, health and housing and women's health. Methodology sharing between EU Member Country organisations and the other organisations was especially fruitful and innovative (see www.fsgg.org/sastipen for the conclusions of the working groups).

2.5- TRAINING AND EXCHANGE SEMINARS FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING ON DRUG ABUSE ISSUES WITH ROMA IN ITALY

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Florence, 16 May 2003 Rome, 16 June 2003
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Mediators and social operators working in the area of health and drug abuse with the Roma community
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	60 mediators/operators
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See report on this activity filed by the Italian partners

The two training seminars were held during the course of three days (one and a half days for each one of the sessions). Italian speakers and others from the Sastipen Network participated in each one. The aim was to describe the most relevant operational experiences as regards prevention and intervention through therapeutic services provided to the Roma community along with other significant experiences in the field of health promotion.

Two Italian projects focusing on drug abuse intervention with the Roma population were also presented: the “*Gitanos*” project in Rome and the “*ASUN*” project in Florence.

The seminars were sponsored by the corresponding local administrations that provided the organisation with the meeting halls and offered to publish conclusions and provide support for the start-up of an inter-regional network in this area.

2.6- GOVERNMENT TRAINING OF ROMA MEDIATORS IN THE AREA OF HEALTH, DRUG ABUSE AND HIV/AIDS IN PORTUGAL

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Coimbra (Portugal) 16-18 June 2002
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Roma mediators
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	11
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See report filed by the Portuguese partners

In light of the importance of the work being done by mediators and in an attempt to provide them with further knowledge in the area of health, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, the REAPN (Portuguese partner) and the National anti-AIDS Commission organised this training session entitled “Health, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS” within the framework of this project.

The training was aimed at mediators throughout the entire country and focused on the following objectives:

- To train mediators for intervention with Roma communities providing them with the necessary knowledge base.
- To promote and encourage health education while raising the awareness of mediators as to the need to develop prevention practices throughout their communities underscoring the importance of making more information available to bring about a change in dangerous practices.
- To increase the overall knowledge base of the mediators regarding health especially as concerns the problem of drug abuse and AIDS.
- To reinforce and highlight the role of Roma women as key players in prevention by training them as agents of health promotion.

Mediators from three Roma association participated in the meeting: the Roma Association of Coimbra, the Association of Portuguese Roma Women and the National Programme for Pastoral Work with Roma – Lisbon Diocese.

Given that lodging was provided on the premises, the three days of training allowed the mediators to share and get to know one another better creating a forum for experience and best practices sharing in the area of health, for learning, work and discussion on issues such as interculturality, cultural diversity and reflection on the role played by mediators in the area of health.

All of these positive points were mentioned by the participants. This was in fact a pioneer experience in Portugal in that it specifically focused on mediators and the subject of health.

2.7- TRAINING OF TECHNICAL EXPERTS AND PROFESSIONALS IN BRAGA (PORTUGAL)

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Santo Tirso (Portugal) 27- 29 November 2002
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Technicians from the public administration
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	13 participants
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See activity report filed by the Portuguese partners

The idea of a training initiative focusing on technical experts was the result of a request from the *Hermandad y Santa Casa de Misericordia* of Santo Tirso that was in the process of implementing the *Djibé* project on primary drug abuse prevention. The REAPN, having grasped the importance of this initiative which meshed perfectly with the objectives of the Sastipen Network for that period, took responsibility for the organisation of this seminar.

This training initiative was given a very positive overall evaluation and special mention should be made of the following aspects:

- If synergies are to be established with other entities, it is important to call on the collaboration of the REAPN to meet the specific needs of technical experts.
- The seminar was an excellent example of partnership between the REAPN, the SINA group and the Sastipen Network.
- All of the trainers had extensive knowledge and facility for interpersonal contact which made the sessions active with high levels of participation. The participants showed their interest and desire for further knowledge regarding the subjects presented at all of the sessions.
- Although this is something that can only be assessed over the middle term, in general terms the training met the fundamental objectives of transmitting the knowledge and instruments needed for intervention with the Roma community taking a detailed and realistic but also a positive approach to the Roma communities, raising the awareness of technical experts and eliminating the myths and stereotypes that they may have had.
- The training met the expectations of the participants which were basically to gain a deeper understanding of the Roma communities. All of the participants felt that this training would help them in carrying out their functions.

2.8- TRAINING OF CAT DE CEDOFEITA TECHNICAL EXPERTS (PORTO – PORTUGAL)

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Porto (Portugal) 17, 24, 31 March and 7 April 2003
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Technical experts from the Cedofeita drug abuse centre in Porto
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	34 technicians
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See report filed by the Portuguese partners

This training was done at the request of the SINA group of Portugal in light of the fact that in the CAT area of intervention there are a number of neighbourhoods with an extensive Roma population. The significant drug problem observed in these neighbourhoods and the low number of Roma drug abuse victims coming to these centres led to the conclusion that training of the professionals working at the centres was essential if Roma participation in treatment was to be normalised.

Training focused on all the people working in the centre and was divided into four sessions covering the following topics:

- Social exclusion
- Culture, identity and ethnicity
- Rights and citizenship
- Characteristics of the Roma culture
- The phenomenon of drug abuse in the Roma community
- Intervention strategies

The results of the training were very positive not only for having raised awareness of the Roma community but also because upon conclusion of the training a working group was created to draw up a map of the local Roma population, to assess the relevance that the drug problem has for these communities and to define the most appropriate intervention strategies.

2.9- SERIES OF THEME-BASED MEETINGS ON INTERVENTION WITH THE ROMA COMMUNITY (PORTUGAL)

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Portugal, 10 December 2002, 20 March 2003 and 26 June 2003
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Social agents
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	107 people
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See report filed by the Portuguese partners

Given the success of the first series of theme-based meetings organised within the framework of the Sastipen Network in the year 2000, a new series of meetings was planned for this project to approach relevant health-related issues such as housing, Roma from Eastern Europe and mediation.

The methodology developed was similar to that of the first series of meetings: the REAPN took charge of drafting a base document (with consensus from the Sastipen partners) to help put the ensuing debate in the right context. An invitation was also extended to some experts in these fields of work in order to empower the meeting.

Final conclusions featuring the principal contributions of the participants were drawn up for each of the meetings.

The decentralisation of these meetings was important in fulfilling the objective of empowering the Roma issue and the Sastipen Network in the different partner countries. The meetings were therefore held in Braga, Coimbra and Lisbon. Collaborating entities participated in each one.

2.10- WORK AND EXCHANGE MEETING WITH PROFESSIONALS WORKING ON DRUG ABUSE ISSUES WITH THE TRAVELLER POPULATION

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	London 11 December 2002
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Technical experts from social entities and government administrations
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	12 people
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	

In light of the growing interest in the United Kingdom in providing specific care for Roma and Traveller drug abuse victims, a working session was organised with social entities and regional government administrations.

Experience sharing and a presentation of the Sastipen intervention model took place at the meeting that was given a very positive evaluation by the participants.

Another of the meeting's most relevant conclusions was the consolidation of the national working group in the United Kingdom and the importance of the joint debate on the advantages of developing a tailored intervention model while at the same time allowing for the use of public services by minority member drug abuse victims.

Thanks to this meeting, the *Irish Traveller Movement in Britain* that participated in Network coordination meetings throughout 2003, became a Sastipen Network member.

2.11- ROMA MEDIATOR TRAINING IN ANO LIOSIA (GREECE)

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Ano Liosia (Greece)
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Mediators/educators implementing drug abuse prevention programmes with Roma minors and youth
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	10 mediators
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See report filed by the Greek partners

Training initiatives were also carried out in Greece in light of the Network's priority objective of training Roma mediators for health care intervention during the course of this project.

Prior to the seminar, research was done on the training needs of this profession and on the functions and role of Roma already working professionally in this field.

Training was then carried out to reinforce all of these aspects and included the following content material:

- Definition of the role of the mediator in relation with the cultural framework of the Roma community;
- The socio-political context in which the professional mediator operates;
- The need for a mediator figure;
- Specialisation in mediation work (special importance was given to health promotion and drug abuse and HIV/AIDS intervention);
- Professional skills required;
- Personal attitudes required;
- Training needs;
- Professional prerequisites to be met;
- Career plans;
- Professional fields;
- Effective communication techniques;
- Trans-cultural communication;
- Communication with clients (users, public administrations, etc.);
- Case studies on communication difficulties;

3- NATIONAL WORKING GROUPS

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Working group meetings were held in all partner countries (including Ireland) except France
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	Agents involved
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	Varied from country to country
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	

Spain

A working group was set up in Spain within the framework of the “Romanó Sastipen” programme and brought a number of different entities together (mostly government administrations and Roma organisations) to deal with the issue of drug abuse prevention in the Roma community.

The following objectives were set for this working group:

- To act as an observatory on the situation facing the Spanish Roma community suffering the ravages of drug abuse and on preventive strategies being developed;
- To define a model and strategy for intervention;
- To make headway with innovative approaches in light of the new needs arising in the area of drug abuse;
- To develop specially tailored materials to deal with this issue. A number of different materials were specifically developed during the period that the project was in force:
 - Prevention workshops for Roma families;
 - Drug abuse prevention comic strip entitled “*El que más chanela mejor decide*” (the well informed take better decisions)
 - Poster “*El que más chanela mejor decide*”
 - Comic strip geared towards HIV/AIDS prevention entitled “*¿Qué me puchelas?*” (How’s it going?).
 - Teacher’s guide for the comic strip “*¿Qué me puchelas?*”
- To implement technical assistance initiatives with public and private organisations on drug abuse intervention strategies designed for the Roma community.

The group met every three months with the participation of an average of 15-20 people.

Spain’s government administrations with jurisdiction in this area were also involved in the development of the working group’s activities via concrete coordination initiatives.

Specifically the FSGG works in a coordinated fashion with the Government Delegation for the National Drug Plan (Home Ministry), the Ministry of Health, the Municipal Drug Plan of the Madrid Town Hall, the Anti-drug Agency and the Health Council of the Community of Madrid and the Youth Institute (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs).

Italy

The Italian working group (like those of the rest of the countries with the exception of the United Kingdom) was already formed at the time of the project's past edition and has continued to make headway in its activities. Group members are the operators working in drug abuse intervention projects with Roma through the CNCA.

The aim of this work has been mostly to coordinate the actions developed in light of the geographical dispersion of the intervention and to develop common strategies for dealing with the situation.

Also joining the group were other social organisations that do work with the Roma population such as Caritas, Opera Nomadi, Arci, la Agencia Comunale per le Tossicodipendenze de Roma and others.

Working group activity has focused on two aspects: support and maintenance of activities implemented through already existing projects (especially concerning methodological aspects) and the involvement of all of the agents working with the Roma population with a view to developing an effective partnership.

Portugal

In 1996 and within the framework of the Sastipen Network, the SINA group was formed which has been instrumental in bringing together Roma and non-Roma professionals from different public and private entities in relation to intervention with the Roma community.

These working group meetings have provided the opportunity for meeting, exchange and reflection with the aim of planning and evaluating activities that have been developed. Since this group has become a formal working group, minutes are drafted for each meeting and are subsequently distributed to the different working groups (see report filed by the Portuguese partners).

Fifteen coordination meetings were held during the course of the period and special mention should be made of the important achievement of involving a significantly greater number of Roma organisations in the group.

The SINA group has signed collaboration protocols with different public administrations such as the National Anti-AIDS Commission and the Regional Social Security Service covering the northern region.

Greece

The Greek working group has brought together a group of Roma youth to develop actions for the advancement of their community and involvement in the work carried out by the Sastipen Network.

This working group has held seven coordination meetings during the course of the period and has maintained ongoing coordination with public and private administrations and with Roma organisations.

United Kingdom

The meeting held on 11 December 2002 in London marked the starting point of United Kingdom's working group. That meeting was attended by public and private entities serving the Traveller population and/or working in the area of drug abuse.

Three coordination meetings have been held since that time and work has mostly focused on the coordination of actions, the establishment of synergies with other social entities and the involvement of the associative Traveller movement.

Ireland

In Ireland, Pavee Point maintains a stable coordination structure encompassing public and private entities focusing on health problems affecting the Roma and Traveller community in Ireland. This structure involves a number of different agents, experts and the community itself in the search for tailored solutions.

Pavee Point has also developed a drug abuse intervention project that is very similar to the one proposed by Sastipen in terms of its theoretical and methodological approach. These points in common have led over the past year to Pavee Point's taking part in Network coordination meetings.

This organisation also participated in the definition of the National Plan for Health Promotion of the Irish Traveller community; a very important qualitative step forward in the national health strategy that could be passed on to the rest of the partner countries as a best practice.

4- EUROPEAN CONFERENCE “HEALTH AND THE ROMA COMMUNITY”

<input type="checkbox"/> DATE AND LOCATION	Madrid, 8-10 May 2002 “Health promotion, the Roma community and European inclusion policies”
<input type="checkbox"/> BENEFICIARIES	
<input type="checkbox"/> NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	125 people from 9 countries participated
<input type="checkbox"/> OBSERVATIONS	See report in issue 15 of the publication “ <i>Gitanos: Pensamiento y Cultura</i> ”

The VII European Conference on Health and the Roma Community was held on 8-10 May at the Madrid Congress Hall. This Conference was the latest edition in a series of annual conferences that the Sastipen European Network has been organising since 1995 with a view to approaching health promotion in the Roma community from the framework of European social inclusion policies. The goal is to strengthen transnational cooperation, the transfer of knowledge and experience and to mobilise the agents involved in the process.

Attendance at the Conference was high with approximately 125 participants, mostly professionals from public and private associations and entities throughout Europe working on health promotion of the Roma community and on the design of public health policies. The following countries were represented: Greece, Portugal, United Kingdom, Ireland, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Belgium and Spain.

The Conference was inaugurated by Marcelino Oreja Aguirre, Honorary President of the FSGG. He gave a brief presentation on the situation facing Europe’s Roma people making special mention of their heterogeneity while also highlighting the idea of social cohesion as one of the basic elements of European construction. He pointed to the important role played by the Council of Europe in the advancement of minorities (“that Roma be considered first class citizens is a moral obligation of the Council”) and the relevance of Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam in the fight against discrimination.

Dolores Flores Cerdán spoke on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs since the Minister, Celia Villalobos, was unable to attend as originally planned due to a last-minute engagement in Brussels. Dolores Flores, Director General of Public Health and Consumer Affairs, gave public recognition to the individuals and organisations represented at this Conference and issued the optimistic message of the Government’s will to take a stand against the problems of exclusion facing the Roma community beginning with integrated health promotion.

Conference conclusions

Some of the main **conclusions** from the Conference summarised below make reference to the following aspects:

Health and ethnic minorities

- **Health is not an exclusively biological phenomenon** but is also the result of other social and/or environmental factors that can potentially be modified such as gender, territory or membership in an ethnic group. One should not lose sight of the negative effect that a run down **habitat** or precarious **socio-economic conditions** can have on health. **Housing** is a key element in the development of certain ailments while at the same time offering the principal source of protection from the elements of nature and should therefore offer at least a minimum standard of living. All of these elements have underscored the deficient health situation facing some European ethnic minorities such as the Roma or the Travellers in Ireland and the United Kingdom.
- **From a legal standpoint** health is a fundamental right that is necessary for the exercise of other rights and implies receiving proper and necessary health care. The States must guarantee this right and also make sure that it effectively extends to ethnic minorities. As examples we can point to Article 2 of the European Human Rights Convention that speaks of the right to life and public vaccination and to Article 8 that makes mention of the impact of environmental pollution.
- Discussion also focused on the **need to tailor health services** to the specific needs of patients belonging to ethnic minorities. In order to do this it is necessary to advance further in research and studies to identify different cultural habits and to add flexibility to health systems. As far as the Roma people are concerned, one must bear in mind when formulating and implementing European health policies that they are a heterogeneous people and are presently involved in a transformation process.

Health promotion actions with ethnic minorities:

- The future accession to the European Union of the Eastern European countries will mean the incorporation of approximately five million Roma. Bearing in mind that their standard of living is below the mean, priority must be placed on adapting social policies to the new situation. Today the European Union **PHARE Programme**, offering assistance to palliate situations of need in the future Member States, already earmarks a significant proportion of its funds to improving the living standards of the Roma population in the Eastern European countries.
- The **National Inclusion Plans** are being implemented as a **European Union policy strategy** related with the promotion of health for segments of the population facing situations of social exclusion throughout the different Member States. Their structure is based on three fundamental axes of action: analysis of the risks and causes of poverty and exclusion, sharing of best practice models and collaboration among the different public and private agents. Special mention should be made of the following objectives common to all of the plans:

- To encourage integrated health policies that guarantee that the most impoverished groups gain access to health services;
 - To foster participation in employment processes;
 - To prevent the risk of exclusion;
 - To develop actions to benefit the most vulnerable groups: women, ethnic minorities, minors, disabled persons, etc.
- The priority target groups for **Intervention services within the Roma community** are women, minors and youth mostly in the areas of hygiene, nourishment, child health, family planning, prevention of gynaecological diseases and drug abuse prevention. The figure of the **intercultural mediator** is a key element bridging the gap between the ethnic group and the majority society promoting access to mainstream resources and social participation.
 - **Policies focusing on the relocation of ethnic minorities** are an integrating strategy that, when accompanied by other social measures, contribute to improvements in the perception of one's habitat and the development of more healthy daily habits. The improvements brought about by these types of policies also tend to increase the number of children attending school and decrease the rate of absenteeism. It was pointed out that living in shanty towns was not a characteristic of the Roma culture but rather was a consequence of precarious socio-economic conditions and a situation of social exclusion.
 - Regarding the **role of European social organisations** working with the Roma population, it was stated that the health field has not been a priority area of intervention. A lack of coordination and shared strategic lines of action among the organisations makes for a situation in which the larger ones are overshadowing the work and development of the smaller ones.
 - The **Sastipen European Network** develops actions the purpose of which is to foster access to tailored health resources, increase knowledge on inequalities, develop mediator training and the sharing of work experiences and best practices among the different bodies involved.

Roma community access to health services:

- One cannot ignore the **discrimination** suffered by the **Roma population** when it comes to differentiated health services: the so called "active discrimination" which is outright refusal to meet the health needs of a Roma patient and "passive discrimination" which means that the specific health problem is addressed in isolation, void of the necessary prior care or of subsequent follow-up.

The Roma community and drug abuse

- As concerns the **Roma population and drug abuse**, mention should be made of the lack of proper strategies that take cultural characteristics affecting one's behaviour with regard to drugs into consideration. This is why Roma families seek other treatment alternatives through institutions such as the Church of Philadelphia, private physicians or the problem is simply ignored in domestic circles. A **solution** to this problem could be to involve the Roma themselves in the

implementation and development of projects designed to train health care professionals from an intercultural vantage point while strengthening the figure of the mediator as a health promoter.

Assessment of the Conference

In general terms it can be said that the assessment was very positive given that it met the proposed objectives. The following principal achievements should be highlighted:

- The high level of expertise and specialisation on the subject on the part of both speakers and participants;
- The broad range of participating countries that contributed to the creation of a forum for the sharing and comparison of diverse experiences as well as the establishment of collaboration mechanisms for the future;
- The new focus in the approach to health issues with ethnic minorities concentrating principally on the promotion and improvement of living standards with the involvement of community members as the principal agents of development;
- The involvement of the Spanish Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs that stated its explicit will to open lines of collaboration for the implementation of initiatives to promote health in the Roma community;
- The link established between health and social exclusion highlighting the incidence that certain factors such as habitat degradation, poverty or discrimination have on the development of a decent standard of living.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

8 May

Official inauguration:

- Dolores Flores Cerdán, Director General of Public Health and Consumer Affairs. Spanish Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs.
- Marcelino Oreja. Honorary President of the *Fundación Secretariado General Gitano*.

Opening presentation: Inequalities in health and social exclusion.

- Inés Palanca. Physician and expert in Public Health and Primary Health Care

Presentation: Health and the Roma community: diagnosis, needs and action priorities.

- José Manuel Fresno. Director Fundación Secretariado General Gitano.

Topic area: Health and ethnic minorities in European Union National Inclusion Plans.

- Introductory paper: Fintan Farrell, EAPN Deputy Director
- Round table discussion on experiences:
 - Manuel Porras. Deputy Director General of Social Service Programmes at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
 - Ilda Figueiredo. Responsible for monitoring National Inclusion Plans at the European Parliament.
 - Elza Chambel. Vice-president of the National Commission for the National Inclusion Plan and responsible for the National Programme Fight against Poverty.

9 May

Topic area: The Roma community's access to health rights, resources and services.

- Introductory paper: Ina Zoon. Lawyer, Management Committee of the European Roma Rights Centre.
- Round table discussion on experiences:
 - Kostas Karakatsanis. President of the Pan-Hellenic Educational Society of Greece's Roma community in Agia Barbara.
 - Adelaide Gomes. Drug centre (Portugal)
 - Pavee Point (Ireland)

Topic area: Presentation of the observation system on the health status of Europe's Roma community (Sastipen Network).

- Francisco Alvira: Full Professor of Social Research Methods and Techniques at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

- Francisco Monturiol: Criteria Evaluation Group

Topic area: Actions focusing on prevention and health promotion through neighbourhood services in intervention with the Roma community.

- Patricia Bezunartea. Responsible for the FSGG Social Intervention Department, Technical Secretariat of the Sastipen Network.

Topic area: Actions focusing on prevention and health promotion through neighbourhood services intervention with the Roma community. Intervention experiences.

- Introductory paper: Jesús Loza. FSGG Board Member and Member of the Basque Parliament.
- Round table discussion on experiences:
 - Angeloi Goya. Coordinator of the Health Promotion Programme for the Roma Ethnic Minority, Government of Navarra Health Department (Spain).
 - Nuria Serrano. Coordinator of the Direct Health Intervention Team, FSGG (Madrid-Spain).
 - Fernando García. Mediator of the Direct Health Intervention Team, FSGG (Madrid-Spain).
 - Amalia Gorou. (KEPIT). Greece
 - Áurea Ferreriro Carballo. Municipal Drug-dependency Attention Unit, (UMAD). Santiago de Compostela (Spain).

10 May

Topic area: Run down environments and health: shanty towns, mobile housing and sub-standard housing and their impact on the Roma population's standard of living.

- Introductory paper. Nicole Purnode. Director of the Brussels City-Region Health Unit.
- Round table discussion on experiences.
 - Florencio Martín. Manager of the Relocation and Social Insertion Institute (IRIS)
 - M^a Victoria González. Councillor for Social Well-being, Aviles Town Hall.
 - Manoulis Rantis. Director of the trans-municipal network ROM in Greece.

Topic area: Health and ethnic minorities in EU enlargement candidate countries.

- Introductory paper: Carolina Fernández – International Cooperation FSGG.
- Round table discussion on experiences:
 - María Budkovicova. Physician working on projects with the Roma community in the eastern part of Slovakia.
 - Jan Jarab. Vice-president of the Czech Government Council for Roma Affairs.
 - Juraj Nagy. Slovakian Health Ministry

Topic area: The role of European social organisations in the promotion of health in the Roma community.

- Introductory paper: Sergio Aires. Secretary EAPN – Portugal.
- Round table discussion on experiences:

- Isidro Rodríguez. Deputy Director of Programmes, FSGG. Technical Secretariat of the Sastipen Network.
- European Platform of NGOs.
- Juani Rodrigo Álvaro. First World Social Worker. Medecins du Monde, Spain.

5- ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTING TO A KNOWLEDGE BASE ON THE SITUATION FACING THE ROMA POPULATION AS REGARDS HEALTH, DRUG DEPENDENCY AND OTHER RELATED PROBLEMS

5.1 – INFORMATION SYSTEM ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION FACING EUROPE’S ROMA POPULATION AS REGARDS HEALTH, DRUG DEPENDENCY AND OTHER RELATED PROBLEMS

The initial objective of this work was to create a system for the observation, diagnosis and drafting of recommendations for action providing information on the situation facing the Roma population in the different Sastipen Network partner countries and subsequently in the rest of the European Community countries.

The incorporation of Central and Eastern European countries into the European Union with a high percentage of their Roma population in a real or potential situation of social exclusion makes this type of activity an essential tool for taking stock of the situation and implementing public policies focusing on the needs of this sector of the population. Moreover, health is a fundamental indicator of the degree of social incorporation of a group in the society.

Methodology

An external entity specialising in social intervention (CRITERIA Evaluation Group) has been called upon for the development of this activity in light of the specific technical know-how needed for the elaboration and implementation of the system. It will then be applied in the Network partner countries through standing working group teams and subsequently in the rest of the European Union countries.

The process was planned in three phases:

I. Definition of objectives, design of instruments, indicators and key analysis devices.

The result expected from this initial phase is the drafting of a report listing the indicators agreed to by all of the partners and the questionnaire for implementation in each one of the countries.

At the same time a search for secondary sources was carried out that, through the publication of other research and articles published in medical journals, allowed for a more realistic vision of the health situation of Europe’s Roma population.

II. Implementation of the analysis and information system through the standing working groups set up in each country.

The time frame for this phase was between February and April 2000.

III. **Drafting and publication of an annual report** that includes the national reports of each partner country and an overall European report with a proposal for recommendations for intervention in this field. The annual report has already been completed.

Conclusions of phase one implementation

The following are the most salient conclusions of this first report:

- There are very few data and in no instance were they found in a systematic format but rather were collected in piecemeal fashion or through ad hoc studies. Moreover, the studies found are very spread out over time. In this compendium we handled studies from the 70's up to the present which underscores the lack of data on the state of Roma community health. This complicates the utility of the indicators if other sources of information aside from these secondary sources are not guaranteed. We therefore feel that it is necessary to implement the techniques proposed in this report to provide input to this information system: Delphi, research and ad hoc studies.
- Despite this lack of data, We feel that the health situation of the Roma is improving in some aspects: rise in the number of vaccinations, better health coverage and better use of services.
- There are, however, new fields in which an important deficit is found: drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. These are new problems and the Roma population is not in a position to deal with them effectively.
- The Roma concept of curing rather than preventing illness is an obstacle to the proper use of health care services and the acquisition of healthy habits (especially with regard to nutrition).
- Lack of proper housing and the unhealthy marginalized environments in which a large proportion of the Roma population still lives also stand in the way of access with a guarantee of health.
- There seems to be no doubt as to the need to carry out the study and definitive implementation of the system of indicators if one expects a suitable information system on the Roma minority. Data as they exist today are very fragmented.

In order to forge ahead with the development of the Information System we suggest the following actions:

- Secondary source analysis: In this second phase we suggest continuing forward with the secondary source analysis initiated during the first phase. To do this we are going to use the *documentation collection card*. This card, as was described in the "techniques and instruments" section, facilitates data collection on the proposed indicators and their reliability and validity.
- Implementation of a Delphi Group that will allow us to gain a clear understanding of the situation facing Roma in each European country. The application of the Delphi method constitutes a research project in and of

itself for each one of the countries. A description of the characteristics of this method is found in the annex.

- Data collection systems. During this period the aim is to work out agreements with drug centres, health centres, hospitals or community intervention programmes for the collection of information on the established indicators. A data card on which to record information will be developed for this purpose.
- Ad hoc studies. In light of this situation, characterised by a lack of data and difficulty in locating it, priority must be given to the implementation of studies in each one of the countries.

Through these initiatives we will continue to develop the system and via the Delphi studies a global vision will be gained on the situation and health status of Roma in each one of the countries. We also give great importance to the set-up of information collection systems even if this is through the collection of health data on Roma in already existing systems such as drug centres, health centres or local out-patient clinics. At the same time it is also important to initiate health data collection procedures through programmes that are being carried out by participating organisations or other organisations considered to be particularly relevant.

A provisional report of results is found in the annexes.

5.2 – QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON AWARENESS, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS OF THE ROMA POPULATION AS CONCERNS HIV/AIDS

This research was carried out through a collaborative effort between the Department of Social Anthropology of the Political Sciences and Sociology Faculty of the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* and the FSGG. The work was funded by the Spanish Foundation for AIDS Research and Prevention (FIPSE).

This research had a dual objective: on the one hand, to find out the effects that HIV/AIDS is having on the Roma population, to discover the cultural mechanisms employed in dealing with this phenomenon, to identify the reaction of social networks to this disease, etc.; and on the other hand to use these results to improve the intervention work being done since 1996 by the Fundación Secretariado General Gitano (FSGG) and the Sastipen Network with the support of different institutions (National AIDS Plan, Health Council of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, the National Drug Plan, the EU (DG SANCO), etc.

The need to know what is happening within the Roma community in relation to HIV/AIDS with a view to applying this knowledge to intervention makes this a Research-Action project in so far as the results obtained will be used as working tools in the different programmes. The fact is that intervention set the stage and helped this work to mature.

The FSGG's scope of action (national), its implementation in the different Autonomous Communities and its role in the territorial coordination of initiatives as well as its

participation in European health networks and projects guarantee the impact and transferability of the results.

At the outset this work was intended to be the first step in a process that would unveil the reality of the Roma community as concerns HIV/AIDS. This initial work was developed using qualitative methodology that in the future should be complemented by epidemiological research that is undoubtedly necessary for intervention purposes.

Work objectives

- To broaden the knowledge base, habits and socio-cultural patterns to tailor HIV/AIDS prevention and care measures to the needs of the Roma community.
- To gain insight into the socio-economic factors, habits and lifestyles shaping the attitudes and behaviours that the Roma community has of health and illness.
- To analyse the awareness, attitudes and behaviours of the Roma population vis-à-vis HIV/AIDS transmission.
- To gain insight into and analyse elements of the socio-cultural networks that this group has traditionally used to deal with health and disease issues and to evaluate their adaptation to confront the problem of HIV/AIDS.

Hypothesis:

The following initial hypotheses were formed:

- Analysis of the socio-cultural manifestations and practices of the Roma population regarding health and illness is fundamental to the study of how the HIV/AIDS problem is integrated as a specific disease not linked with any of their traditional cultural categories.
- We conceive these manifestations and practices as part of an historic feeling and behaviour construction process. Therefore, one of the fundamental elements of this research will be to link the traditional forms of perceiving and acquiring knowledge with social change processes. As a hypothesis we feel that in the same way that drug abuse has been one of the most important factors leading to breakdown and social change within the Roma community, HIV/AIDS may turn out to be a process of breakdown and subsequent rebuilding of new social strategies for this community. Analysis focusing on gender and generational differences and their varying conceptions and practices with respect to drug abuse and sexuality will be essential to the study of these phenomena of change.
- In light of these characteristics that differentiate the Roma community from a socio-cultural perspective, we want to show how the HIV/AIDS discourse emerges and is constructed from three different focal points: externalisation (AIDS as something foreign to the Roma culture), over-stigmatisation (accounting for denial and silence) and risk behaviour (1- drug abuse and a culture of intravenous drug use and 2- sexuality and sexual practices intimately linked to a patriarchal model).

- The social construction of knowledge, manifestations and practices of the Roma community is intimately linked to the latter's relationship with the non-Roma world. It can be assumed that the relationship between the Roma and non-Roma worlds is unbalanced with power in the hands of the latter and it is our view that this relationship affects not only awareness of HIV/AIDS problems but also has a very significant bearing on health care and prevention processes (difficulty in gaining access to social and health services, hostile environments, different conception of time and practical considerations, failure to use adapted language in social and health messages, etc.).

Methodology

As was mentioned above, qualitative methodology was chosen for this research in keeping with the ethnographic model. The specific techniques used were as follows: in-depth interviews with key informants, discussion groups with broad representation and life stories where the focus is on specificity from an initially general approach. Given the aim of the study, analysis of awareness, attitudes and practices, we felt that qualitative techniques offered significant advantages over quantitative ones. Moreover, the cultural characteristics of the Roma community and their distrust of the non-Roma world made the use of this methodology all the more relevant. It should be pointed out that the research is multidisciplinary in terms of the training of the researchers: social anthropology, sociology, social work.

The scope of the study was national although the transfer of similar research projects throughout Europe is foreseen since the *Secretariado Gitano* has the instruments needed to gain access to the Roma world in Spain. The fact that this was initially a national study allowed us to compare and contrast significant differences between autonomous communities in relation with the different characteristics of the Roma communities in each one of them.

The subjects participating in the study, members of the Roma community, were not infected by the HIV/AIDS virus (with the exception of those telling their life story) but were especially vulnerable to becoming infected. The two main variables were gender and age because the community's prior knowledge indicates that social change related to health and illness is very much determined by generation and gender showing that women are in fact more involved in processes of education and change.

The other significant variables were the vulnerability of the subjects. Both men and women drug users who were not infected by the virus were interviewed to study risk behaviour and interviews were also conducted with women who did not use drugs but who found themselves in a vulnerable situation due to marital relations with a husband who led a risk-ridden lifestyle either due to intravenous drug use or sexual promiscuity without protection.

And finally, interviews were conducted with men whose promiscuous sexual relations without protection made them especially vulnerable to HIV infection.

Data were collected *in situ* or at the *Secretariado gitano* and were subsequently transcribed for content analysis and narrative study. Whenever possible data was collected in the familiar surroundings of the community, in their own homes, thus allowing for direct observation.

The final report of results may be found in the annexes.

6- UPDATE OF THE DATA BANK ON INITIATIVES WITH THE ROMA COMMUNITY

6.1 – DATA BANK ON DRUG ABUSE AND HIV/AIDS PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INITIATIVES TAKEN WITH EUROPE’S ROMA POPULATION

The existing data base (Access) has been maintained with these organisations and contacts have been extended mostly to Eastern and Central European countries: Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany...

Objectives

- 1- The purpose of this action was to collect data from all organisations and initiatives carrying out intervention work with the Roma population affected by drug abuse or HIV/AIDS.
- 2- This Data Bank is considered an essential tool needed to set up an exchange of information, experience and know-how among European organisations working in this field.
- 3- The purpose of this action was also to incorporate new partners and to maintain contacts with collaborating organisations in all European countries with a view to consolidating the Network, disseminating its activities and achieving a real exchange of experiences and best practices.

Methodology employed and Actions carried out

- In each country the collaborating organisations in this Project have been forwarding data on Roma organisations, health care services for drug abuse victims, social services and other institutions.
- The responses received have been used to broaden the data base and directory that will be constantly updated in the future.
- The tendency has been to especially include organisations that work with Roma in the Eastern European countries given their large Roma population and incorporation into the European Union in the near future in the case of some.
- The observation system described above has served as an excellent source of data to learn about other entities and the work they are doing.

7- THE ROMANO SASTIPEN DRUG ABUSE AND HIV/AIDS PREVENTION PROGRAMME FOR ROMA YOUTH

In Spain, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS intervention has been carried out with a approximately **869 Roma Minors and youth**.

1,071 calls for technical assistance and 119 for consultation were also answered.

In Greece and Portugal diverse material has been translated including the “Prevention workshops for Roma youth” and subsequently distributed to public and private entities working in the area of prevention.

Mediator training has been done in Italy using “Romanó Sastipen” methodology while translating and applying the materials produced.

During this period in Spain a total of **1,023 users** have been beneficiaries of individualised and group intervention.

Technical assistance has been provided to **212** public and private administrations.

THE “ROMANO SASTIPEN” ROMA YOUTH AWARENESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAMME 2001/2002

SUMMARY TABLE OF ACTIONS CARRIED OUT

ACTIONS	ACTIVITIES	RESULTS
<p>1 – Awareness heightening, support and consultation provided to Roma associations and other public and private entities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with associations that have ongoing prevention programmes • Consultation and support activities for associations with initiatives planned • Awareness heightening and new initiative promotion activities • Participation in workshops and seminars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 551 requests for technical assistance have been answered by fax, telephone or post. • Consultation services rendered to a total of 57 public and private entities • Participation in 7 workshops and seminars transferring Programme work experience • Collaboration with European institutions: European Drug abuse Observatory and the Council of Europe • As regards intervention with EU enlargement candidate countries, technical assistance and training was provided through the project to 73 people through two seminars in Slovakia and two visits from public officials to Spain.

2- Romanó Sastipen Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working meetings with the mediators in charge of programme implementation ▪ <i>In situ</i> technical assistance for mediators and associations in charge of the programme ▪ Information meetings for the search, selection and processing of bibliographical information and resources with regard to drug abuse ▪ Free time actions (structured Open Classroom activities, workshop modules for drug abuse prevention) 	<p>15 working meetings in Navarra, Asturias, Basque Country, Vigo, Valladolid, Burgos and Madrid.</p> <p>5 information and consultation meetings in Navarra, Bilbao, Barcelona and the Basque Country.</p> <p>423 Roma minor and youth beneficiaries</p>
3- Mediator training for drug abuse and HIV/AIDS intervention	<p>Seminar on “Health promotion, drug abuse prevention and ethnic minorities: work experiences with the Roma community”</p> <p>“I training meeting for mediators of the Romano Sastipen drug abuse prevention programme”.</p> <p>“II training meeting for mediators of the Romano Sastipen drug abuse prevention programme”.</p>	<p>Portugalete, 12 December 2001. 21 participants from social and health services and social entities.</p> <p>Madrid, 17-18 December 2001. 22 participants from 7 associations.</p> <p>Madrid, 21-22 March 2002. 23 participants from 5 entities.</p>

8– PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION OF MATERIALS

8.1 – Production and updating of the WEB page

- **Address** of the WEB page: <http://www.asgg.org/sastipen>
- **Languages:** English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian
- Approximately **5,000 visitors** to date

The following will appear on the WEB page:

- The same information found in the brochure
- Content of the Framework Document
- Network activity information
- Information on seminars and workshops
- Information regarding other relevant activities
- Information provided by the partners
- Electronic Newsletter

8.2 – Publication of the magazine “Ciganos.pt”

Two issues of the magazine *Ciganos.pt* have been published. This publication was designed for the dissemination of Network activities in Portugal and throughout the rest of Europe and has become a basic information tool.

Two issues and a total of 3,000 copies have been published.

See the publication in the annexes.

8.3 – News publications related to Network efforts in different publications

Articles have been published on the Network, its materials or the documents it has produced in the following and other publications:

- The magazine “*Gitanos: Pensamiento y Cultura*”
- “*Rediteia*”
- Publication of the Madrid chapter of the Association of graduates in Social Work
- “*Idea Prevención*”
- Newsletter of the EPHA
- Newsletter and WEB pages of other European networks and projects

8.4 – Publication and dissemination in Greek of the “Prevention Workshops for Roma Youth”

The document was adapted, translated, published and disseminated. It was distributed to 150 public and private social entities working with the Roma population.

As was the case with the book “Taking Action in the Roma Community”, the adaptation, translation and publication of materials (in this case the *Workshops*) in the different countries is an activity that meets the objective of transferring experiences and best practices, partnership work among the different European organisations comprising the Sastipen network and methodological adaptation in mainstream intervention initiatives with specific population groups. In this sense, the Sastipen Network is contributing to the advancement of methodological transfer and exchange among Europe’s Roma population.

This publication has enabled, as was mentioned above, the implementation of a prevention programme for Roma youth in Greece vis-à-vis direct intervention work being done by Efxini Poli.

It has been distributed to more than 1,000 professionals.

8.5– Translation, adaptation and publication of “health workshops for Roma Women”

As part of the Sastipen Network objective of building on the transfer of best intervention practices in the health field within the Roma community, a Health Handbook for Roma Woman has been published in Portuguese.

1,000 copies were printed.

In Portugal it is pending distribution to technical experts and professionals working on aspects related to health and prevention with groups of Roma Women.

See published material in the annexes.

8.6– Drafting, publication and dissemination of the “Prevention workshops for Roma families”

Material has been developed within the framework of the “Romanó Sastipen” programme for drug abuse prevention with Roma families.

This material has set the following objectives:

- To provide mediators working with families with suitable teaching schemes for a family based approach to prevention.
- To provide Roma fathers and mothers with guidelines on how to address the subject of drugs with their children reinforcing their role in prevention.

The material has been published in Spanish, has been distributed to 500 public and private entities and is being used with 10 groups of mothers and fathers in 9 cities in Spain.

1,000 copies were printed.

See published material in the annexes.

8.7– Drafting, publication and distribution of the comic strip designed for drug abuse prevention entitled “El que más chanela mejor decide” (The well informed take better decisions)

Following along the same lines as the “National Drug Strategy 2000-2008” and European recommendations and mindful of the fact that the new consumption patterns of Roma youth are not that much different from those of Non-Roma young people, we have established, as one of the priority aims within the framework of awareness and information actions of the Romano Sastipen programme for 2002-2003, to provide ample information on the risks associated with the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other substances that can create dependence or serious health problems.

Although it is true that prevention messages and general information should be the same for all young people, in the case of the Roma these messages should be tailored to their cultural values. The strategy consists in making the information more accessible to Roma youth by focusing on their expectations, life experiences and ways of approaching life in general. We have therefore developed the comic strip “**El que más chanela mejor decide**” which translates as “The well informed take better decisions.”

The story line of this comic strip is based on a group of young people talking together in a park about a number of different things including drugs. A Roma mediator enters the scene and sparks their interest in learning more about this subject and becoming part of a youth association. As the story unfolds it offers objective information about different substances and their effects placing special emphasis on risk factors (those that lead to continued use) as well as on factors of protection. The negative consequences of even sporadic drug use and how this sort of behaviour affects other areas of life such as personal and family relationships, work or health are also highlighted.

Before developing the comic strip and in order to gain insights into the reality facing Roma youth as concerns drug abuse and their perception of drugs, **three discussion groups** were organised in Madrid and Navarra as described below:

- **Madrid groups:** Two parallel groups were organised in the Pan Bendito neighbourhood; one for Roma girls and another for Roma boys. In the group of boys ranging in age from 14 to 16, only sporadic use of certain substances was detected (mostly hashish, alcohol and tobacco) especially at the weekend and less frequent use of substances such as extasis and cocaine. In the group of girls ranging in age from 14 to 17, no consumption was detected.

- **Navarra group:** This group was organised for young people between the ages of 16 and 20 who had participated in one of the activities of the “La Majari” association in Pamplona. Occasional consumption of certain substances such as alcohol, hashish and tobacco was also detected.

The results obtained from the group discussions were very useful in the development of the material because the young people spoke openly about their doubts and concerns with respect to drugs. Participation was very active and the principal topics of discussion were:

- The origin and effects of lesser known substances such as hallucinogenic mushrooms, Ketamine and extasis in liquid form.
- Sex-related myths associated with certain drugs.
- The effects that consumption has on social, labour and family relations and on health.

In our view that publications of this sort focusing mainly on Roma youth, while not providing a full solution, are an essential tool when consumption is a reality or when young people find themselves immersed in certain processes of social and/or personal breakdown that could give rise to situations of marginalisation.

The information provided in this comic strip will help young people defend themselves from the erroneous and stereotyped messages surrounding drugs and aid them in gaining a more complete understanding of this phenomenon.

The aim is to provide them with reliable and objective information allowing them to respond freely and maturely in deciding to turn away from drugs.

This comic strip also emphasizes the importance of associations as a resource provided by the society to encourage access to mainstream health services and participation in activities with a view to exercising active citizenship.

The comic strip is being distributed mostly through the Network of Youth Information Points (“Chavó Nebó” Network) that the FSGG has set up thanks to a collaboration agreement with INJUVE in a number of different cities. The increasingly large number of young people being exposed to these centres helps to make them especially valuable in implementing both specific and non-specific drug abuse prevention initiatives via entertainment and free time activities.

Dissemination is also through the Roma associations throughout the different Autonomous Communities and other public and private entities working with Roma youth.

8.8– Drafting, publication and distribution of the comic strip designed for HIV/AIDS prevention “¿Qué me puchelas?” (How’s it going) and the accompanying teacher’s guide

The use of comic strips as a teaching resource is especially relevant in the case of groups not very used to written language as is the case with the Roma community. In light of this reality, it was decided to develop a comic strip for AIDS prevention focusing specifically on the Roma community.

The comic strip is comprised of five short stories depicting daily situations giving insights into some basic aspects related with AIDS, forms of transmission and the need to protect oneself from the risk of infection.

The aim of these stories is also to uncover the myths and stereotypes related to this disease and provide suitable information. When we say *suitable* we are not only referring to correct information on prevention methods but also to adapting these methods to the peculiarities of the Roma community. We feel that it is fundamentally important to be respectful of their principles and approach to life and to not offend Roma individuals in any way.

If one expects to take maximum advantage of a comic strip as a teaching resource, mere reading is not enough. It must become an instrument provoking thought and heightening awareness as to the importance of approaching this subject **as soon as possible** in light of its affect on this community.

The number of people infected with the HIV virus in the Roma community is growing but despite increasing concern it has not been taken seriously enough. Intravenous drug users are prime targets of infection given their use of needles without proper hygiene or disinfection. In some cases Roma families deny that one of their members is infected thus hiding the problem for fear of rejection from their own community and also due to the fear that a new stereotype associating Roma with AIDS will be created.

Roma living conditions, low level of education, alienation from health care resources and overall lack of awareness of the disease and prevention methods all add up to a lack of protection from the AIDS virus and insufficient care for those infected.

The comic strip ¿QUÉ....ME PUCHELAS? and the accompanying Teacher’s Guide have been developed with a view to raising awareness on this subject and encouraging mediators working with this community to take stock of the situation in light of the urgency of taking action within the Roma community as concerns AIDS.

The guide offers teaching suggestions for the development of the work sessions on the different stories depicted in the comic strip. It should be mentioned that an open and flexible methodology is proposed making it readily adaptable to the specific characteristics of the different groups and the individual working methodology of the monitor using it.

The short stories are quite different from one another, i.e. each one focuses on a specific group: women, young people, young people in situations of social exclusion

and/or more vulnerable to fall prey to intravenous drug use, drug users, etc. The target group for which each of the working sessions was designed is specified for each of the short stories.

In each case the monitor is in charge of selecting the ones best adapted to the target group of the AIDS prevention intervention.

The recommendation, therefore, is to consult the teacher's guide accompanying the AIDS prevention comic strip *¿QUÉ...ME PUCHELAS?* before implementing it. It is a very important key for success and correct and enriching use and can also be used as complementary material in any AIDS intervention programme focusing on the Roma community.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- To gain insights into and share the feelings and attitudes of the group as concerns AIDS and HIV infection.
- To raise awareness and motivate the Roma community as to the importance of urgently dealing with the subject of AIDS.
- To provide reliable information on the principal characteristics of this disease and its forms of transmission thus eliminating erroneous ideas and myths that have developed concerning AIDS.
- To identify risk practices and take stock of the need to employ protective measures.
- To become aware of the importance of seeking health care resources in the event of having been exposed to situations of risk.
- To raise awareness as concerns the progress made and achievements in the treatment of this disease and to pass this hope of improved standard of living on to those directly affected and their families.
- To stress the importance of teamwork in approaching this problem.

STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKING SESSIONS

The teaching plan is the same for the five working sessions.

Work begins with the distribution of the comic strip, individualised or group reading followed by group work on the content of each one of the stories. For each story a subject is proposed based on a series of situations.

The stories themselves do not form the content of the working sessions but rather are intended as a representation of everyday situations giving rise to joint analysis of certain aspects of AIDS, of risk practices and of possible preventive measures.

The methodology used is a group discussion based on the story and the participants spontaneously comment on what comes to mind: prior information that they have, opinions, attitudes, feelings, real life experiences, etc.

In order to spark discussion, a series of questions is proposed intended to lead to reflection and analysis.

In most cases the working session is rounded off with complementary activities the objective of which is to delve deeper into the issue at hand.

The general structure of each one of the working sessions is as follows:

- Introduction to the specific subject of the story
- Presentation of the story
- Key issues of the story
- Specific objectives
- Specific groups on which it focuses
- Working methodology
- Complementary activities

8.9– Publication in Italian of the conclusions of the work seminars for professionals working in the area of drug abuse with the Roma community

Given the interest in the Conferences held in Italy in May and June 2003 and upon request by the participants, the conclusions were published.

These conclusions are currently in press and we therefore do not have a copy to attach to the report but it will be forwarded once it is available.

9 –OTHER NETWORK IMPLEMENTATION AND DISSEMINATION ACTIONS

9.1 – Partner participation in projects, workshops and meetings with other European networks

Throughout the course of the project, coordination efforts have been made with other entities for the organisation of conferences, seminars and working meetings. The most relevant are listed below:

- ◆ Participation in the meetings organised by the European Commission;
- ◆ Participation in the AIDS & Mobility Network meeting;
- ◆ Participation in different European projects for intervention with and the advancement of the Roma people;
- ◆ Collaboration with the EPHA;
- ◆ Participation in the project of the International Organisation for Migration on “Health, exclusion and ethnic minorities”;
- ◆ Participation in a number of Council of Europe initiatives;
- ◆ Participation in the European Conference entitled “Roma Women and Access to Public Health Care” on 22 February 2002.

9.2 – Technical assistance provided to European organisations in the area of health and drug abuse within the Roma community

The Network’s Technical Secretariat as well as the headquarters of the different partner countries have responded to approximately **3,000 queries** by organisations and individuals on the aim of the Sastipen Network. Most of these request were received via e-mail subsequent to a visit to the Web page.

Other forms of contact have been through: distribution of Sastipen Network publications, the publication of documentation regarding methodology applicable to intervention with the Roma community, conferences, meetings and seminars, etc.

Most request have been for methodology and tailored materials, specific documentation and project development. There have also been requests from the media for information on the aim of this Network and other specialised networks or projects.

9.3 – Other Network implementation and dissemination actions

During the course of the project’s period of execution, actions involving contact with and dissemination of the Sastipen Network have been developed and have allowed for:

- ◆ Greater awareness of objectives and strategies;
- ◆ Collaboration in fora in which the same objectives are being pursued;
- ◆ Contact with and the addition of level 2 project partners;

- ◆ Contact with European organisations participating in the Network in a secondary manner (information, visibility and the transfer of knowledge);
- ◆ Institutional actions aimed at increasing the visibility of health care deficiencies vis-à-vis the Roma community;
- ◆ Political action and institutional representation.

Assessment and Conclusions / Data collected and generated

3.1 – Project accomplishments, results, effects, impact:

In the work being done through this Project on the phenomenon of drugs and AIDS in the Roma community, quite a bit of headway has been made vis-à-vis the initial situation and some difficulties and limitations have been encountered as well:

- a) The project's quantitative impact has been very relevant: Training actions have touched a total of **597 individuals**, **1,402 people** have been handled directly through the development of the programmes; over **3,000 requests for technical assistance** have been answered and the Web page has received an average of **5,000 visitors** and materials produced have been distributed to **9,500 individuals**.
- b) It continues to be an **innovative project and a specific intervention model** including new areas for intervention and pointing to the need to observe the evolution of the health status of Europe's Roma population with a view to fine-tuning local, national and European policies. The Central and Eastern European Countries have expressed their approval of this project as a suitable intervention model tailored to the target population.
- c) It is allowing for the **construction of a veritable area of transnationality**, partnership and the transfer of best practices.
- d) It continues to raise awareness and **empower the different agents involved**: government administrations, NGOs, Roma associations, etc.
- e) It is allowing for **contact with and effective participation in the work being done by organisations and governments of Central and Eastern European countries** with large Roma populations facing social difficulties. A stable partnership has been established with a significant number of public and private entities in these countries.
- f) Very significant **empowerment, awareness heightening and direct intervention work on the national level** is being done with the Roma population in Network partner countries despite difficulties still being encountered in some of them.
- g) **Methodologies, materials and best practices** continue to be adapted in the different countries with very positive results.
- h) Impetus is being given to the implementation of an **information and observation system** on the situation of Europe's Roma population as concerns health care. This is in response to the priorities set by the European Commission regarding the need to

gain insights into the health situation of the population so as to establish priorities and public policies especially with regard to the most underprivileged groups among which the Roma population is found.

- i) A greater degree of **involvement and support on the part of the public administrations** has been achieved in the different countries involved in the project.

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