

Transfer of the FSG's training and employment programme to Eastern Europe

The *Acceder* Programme in Romania

During the course of the *Acceder* Programme's last several years of operation, many institutions and organisations have contacted the Fundación Secretariado Gitano requesting information to gain a deeper understanding of the programme and, in some cases, have asked for specific training and capacity-building with a view to reproducing it either completely or partially in other European countries. There have been many study visits to gain insight into the Programme meaning that the overarching philosophy of *Acceder* and its specific methodology have been broadly disseminated among different actors from different European countries. The following is a specific project to transfer the Programme to other countries, in this case to Romania.

For years now the FSG has been stressing the importance of focusing the new period of Structural Funds, 2007-2013, on improving the living standard of the Roma population in Spain and in other European countries based on the premise that these funds are the main financial instrument available to the EU to reduce the development gap between regions and Member States thus contributing to the objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

In 2007, the Romanian government took the decision to carry out a full-fledged transfer of the *Acceder* programme to the eight most important Romanian cities using Structural Funds to finance this endeavour. This pioneer initiative¹ is a test of the value of the *Acceder* programme transferred to a context which is quite different from that of Spain.

This new context features a series of basic differences calling for adaptation of the work methodology: a labour market with a still very weak business fabric, a sluggish and bureaucratic public administration, extremely precarious living standards for the Roma population, very pronounced discrimination towards this sector of the population, etc. However, the situation is changing and Romania's recent incorporation into the European Union offers bright perspectives for economic improvement and hopefully for the living standard of its citizens, including the Roma population.

The challenge facing Romania and, in this specific case, the National Agency for Roma (NAR) which is the Programme's Intermediate Body, is to see that the Structural Funds truly reach the Roma population and respond to their pressing employment and economic needs. The Agency is also managing a further four European Social Fund projects targeting the social inclusion of this sector of the population in areas such as education and which will support the vocational training and labour market access initiatives undertaken under the *Acceder* programme.

In light of the current situation, i.e. the recent incidents in Italy and Spain's political response to the presence of Roma from Romania, it is important to emphasise and highlight other intervention models and social policies targeting this population with a view to

¹ This initiative is pioneer in the sense of implementing the "*Acceder* model" in 8 Romanian cities and the fact that financing is through Structural Funds. However, the first experience in transferring *Acceder* is already under way in the city of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) where the project was launched in March 2008 with funding from the AECID (Spanish International Development Cooperation Agency).

increasing effectiveness and, in any case, to making sure that they are contributing to the respect and promotion of the social and economic rights of these people as expressed in the founding values of the EU.

In this connection in 2007 the FSG, together with the Administrative Unit of the European Social Fund in Spain, launched an initiative to create the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (*EUROMA*)², whose aim is to promote the use of the Structural Funds for the social inclusion of Roma. It is our hope that examples such as the *Acceder* and its transfer to other contexts within the EU like Romania can help in consolidating the use of Structural Funds to implement proactive employment policies targeting this sector of the population.

The project

Once the Romanian government took the decision to submit this initiative to the 2007-2013 Structural Fund call for proposals, the NAR and the FSG immediately began to draft the project.

It was submitted to the Administrative Unit of the European Social Fund of Romania and was approved and signed on 16 April 2008 under the title "**Împreună pe piața muncii**" ("Together in the labour market"). The order from the Romanian Government to commence work on the programme was finally issued on 1 November.

It will initially be implemented for a period of 2 years (2008-2010) in 8 Romanian cities (one from each of the so-called Euroregions). Initially the propose cities are: **București** (Bucharest-Ilfov Region); **Călărași** (South Muntenia Region); **Craiova** (South-western Oltenia Region); **Timișoara** (Western Region); **Cluj-Napoca** (North-western Region); **Alba Iulia** (Central Region); **Piatra Neamț** (North-eastern Region); and **Braila or Galați** (South-eastern Region). Depending on project results during these first two years, it could spread to several more cities during the 2010-2013 period.

The NAR has appointed an administrative team (composed of three people) which will have the support of an FSG Technical Advisor. A Central Team will also be engaged in Bucharest (which, in principle, will be comprised of four technical experts in the area of training and employment and three technical experts in the area of administration and management) and eight local teams, one in each city (with five professionals each, just like the *Acceder* offices which the FSG operates in Spain).

The project's target group is the Roma population (especially the active population that can work) between the ages of 16 and 64 and also young people between 14 and 16 nearing the end of their compulsory studies.

It is included in the Human Resources Sectoral Operational Programme and is implemented under Priority Axis 6: Promoting Social Inclusion.

Objectives

The project's overarching objective is to generate well-being by promoting the social inclusion of the Roma population in the labour market (6,770 people) throughout the country by providing opportunities to engage in a modern, flexible and inclusive labour

² For further information see: www.euromanet.eu

market and to gain access to steady employment and the benefits arising from being employed with full rights.

Specific objectives include:

1. Develop a specific intervention programme with a view to improving the Romanian Roma population's access to employment by adjusting the *Acceder* labour market intervention model implemented by the FSG in Spain from 2000-2006 to the Romanian context.
 - Adjust and adapt the *Acceder* model to the reality and the problems facing Romanian Roma in the labour market to help the estimated 6,770 people.
 - Monitor and continuously evaluate the implementation of the *Acceder* model in the labour context of Roma in Romania where the labour market is not yet very dynamic but has significant potential over the short term.
2. Promote the social inclusion of the Roma population in the labour market through the specific vocational training of women and men adjusted to the requirements of the Romanian labour market.
 - Through vocational training activities targeting 1,070 people tailored to the requirements of the labour market.
 - Promote labour market access on an equal footing for men and women and the incorporation of 800 people into the labour market.
 - Maintain a constant supply of socio-vocational services and job counselling with a view to increasing the likelihood of finding a job.
3. Develop a strategy whereby to increase the likelihood of the future participation of young Roma between the ages of 14 and 16 in the labour market by encouraging attendance at school and preventing early school leaving.
 - Maintain (and recapture) at least the number of people necessary in the educational system to allow 800 Roma youth from the 8 cities mentioned to gain access to the labour market.
4. Draft two progress reports on the social inclusion of Roma in the labour market through systematic monitoring with due consideration for all of the factors contributing to the unemployment of Roma:
 - discriminatory hiring practices;
 - lack of professional qualifications;
 - scant vocational training;
 - vocational training targeting Roma but failing to coincide with labour market needs.

The role of the FSG

According to the agreement signed with the NAR, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano will discharge the following duties:

In general terms, consulting and the adaptation, transfer and implementation of the *Acceder* model to the Romanian context. Specific duties include the following:

- Participation and advisory support in the process of personnel selection of the central team and the local office teams.
- Training of personnel by means of study visits to Spain and monitoring in Romania, transfer of methodologies and the translation of documents and key tools.

- Participation in the Project's organisational structure and design using the *Acceder* model as a benchmark both in terms of the definition of the organisational chart and the duties of personnel, labour relations, evaluation, etc.
- Advisory support in the programme implementation process:
 - Methodology and support for educational advancement and labour market integration actions.
 - Support and guidance in economic and administrative management and control procedures (draw up a management handbook, audits, operation identification, etc.).
- Advisory support regarding the characteristics of the centres and the equipment needed to implement the project.
- Support for the drafting of project result reports.
- Help and support in properly justifying project expenses.

The following human resources will be provided for the discharge of the said duties:

- A Permanent Representative of the FSG in Bucharest for at least the first year of the project. That person will provide direct advisory support to the central team and the local teams and especially to the project director.
- The FSG central team in Spain serving as the direct link between the NAR and the FSG in Spain and coordinating its actions with the permanent representative of the FSG in Bucharest and the project director providing technical assistance both in terms of methodology as well as management and administration.
- A number of different FSG professionals who will offer their support in specific fields (vocational training, counselling, searching for business prospects, intercultural mediation, management and administration of European Structural Funds, etc.) in Spain as well as in Romania.

Project implementation

An 8-stage process has been designed for project implementation:

STAGE 1: The FSG gains insight into the Romanian context.

Before embarking upon this process, FSG personnel coordinating and generally involved in the project needed to gain insight into and understand the administrative and socioeconomic context, the organisation and the educational, training and employment policies in Romania as well as the living standards of Roma.

To that end, in addition to compiling a great deal of documentation on these aspects, a training session was organised for the FSG coordination team in Madrid on 6 June 2008 and was run by two experts: Fernando Villarreal and Nicolae Cuta.

STAGE 2: Selection of FSG personnel to be stationed in Romania.

In February 2008 an internal selection process was initiated to recruit a person from the Foundation to go to Bucharest to support the *Acceder* project transfer and implementation process. In May, once having interviewed those who applied for the post, the Administration chose Humbert García, then the territorial director of Andalusia, to carry out these duties as the FSG's permanent representative in Romania.

Preparations then got under way to establish this permanent presence in Romania. Coinciding with a meeting of the European Network for Social Inclusion and Roma Community (EURoma) within the framework of the Structural Funds, the first round of meetings was held on 6-7 May in Bucharest with members of the NAR in order to iron out the details of the collaboration agreement and the FSG's role in the project.

Following the signing of the collaboration agreement, as from 19 August the Foundation has had a permanent representative in Bucharest and as from 1 September he has been working with the NAR to prepare the implementation of the project.

STAGE 3: Selection of Romanian personnel.

The above-mentioned preparations included the commencement of the selection process of the personnel for the central team and for the offices located in the 8 cities. Different instruments were translated so as to be able to follow a similar recruitment process as in Spain.

As of today (October 2008), both processes are under way and we have pre-selected the best CVs of the applicants. As soon as the order is received, the central team will be selected and immediately thereafter the local teams. In the selection of the local teams, some members of the central team will also participate as part of the selection committee.

STAGE 4: Methodological indoctrination of Romanian personnel

Once personnel are hired, they will receive methodological instruction through a series of training sessions. The following are envisaged:

An initial training session in Spain (approximately one week) for the central team and, at a later date, for the 8 coordinators of the local teams. This training will be broken down into a series of sessions and consist of several components: methodological transfer (technical and management), reflection and debate and planning of programme implementation. A work plan will be drawn up during these sessions for ongoing programme-related tutoring. A second training session is planned for the last quarter of 2008 in Romania targeting all of the members of the local teams with a structure and duration similar to the others.

And lastly, there will be a third training session, probably in Spain, which will include separate sessions focusing on analysis, monitoring and evaluation of the work undertaken with each of the professional profiles comprising the programme (coordination, counselling, job prospecting and mediation). This third action is planned for the second or third quarter of 2009.

STAGE 5: Development and adaptation of tools and materials.

In addition to the tools and materials which have been adapted and translated for the selection of the technicians, others are likewise being adapted and translated which are needed for project development (both in terms of intervention and management).

As concerns key tools, the *Acceder* database has already been translated and the process of review and adaptation to the Romanian reality is about to commence. The translation of the *Acceder* methodological document, whose latest revision in Spanish was just finished, is likewise envisaged.

STAGE 6: Search for and furnishing of premises

At the same time as the selection process, contacts have been made with the different intervention sites through the NAR structure in order to study the possibility of renting premises which meet the requirements for the proper implementation of the programme. Work is also under way to assess different supply chains with a view to swiftly equipping the different premises.

The aim is to make as much headway as possible now so that when the official order is given to implement the programme all of this preliminary work will be concluded.

STAGE 7: Advisory support in the implementation and monitoring of the programme

Specific procedures and instruments are envisaged for the implementation and monitoring of the programme. Just a few examples of the tasks which need to be addressed during implementation are drawing up an intervention context analysis, lists of entities to be contacted and quarterly work plans by service

As for monitoring, a plan will be drawn up jointly by the NAR and the FSG with a schedule of actions and visits. This monitoring will combine monitoring visits of Romanian personnel to Spain and of Spanish FSG personnel to Romania.

STAGE 8: Dissemination, visibility and other aspects

Dissemination is an important element in terms of making the Programme visible to the Roma community and to public and private organisations with which we need to work. In this connection, some relevant issues currently being addressed at the implementation stage are letterhead paper, a logo, leaflets, a web page and e-mail addresses.

We have high expectations for the transfer of the Spanish *Acceder* programme and we hope that they are all met despite the inherent complexity of programmes of this sort and a very different context.

- Belén Sánchez-Rubio (*FSG International Area and Employment Coordinator*) and Humberto García (*Permanent Representative of the FSG in Romania*).