



**Transnational cooperation on Roma community and Social Exclusion
New opportunities for the upcoming period of Structural Funds (2007-2013)
Madrid, 7th and 8th June 2007**

Seminar Briefing

Last 7 and 8 of June, the Seminar “Transnational cooperation on Roma Community and Social Exclusion. New opportunities for the upcoming period of Structural Funds (2007-2013)” was held in Madrid. An initiative launched by the Spanish ESF Unit, together with the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) and with the support of the Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP).

This meeting had the aim of setting the first steps for establishing a network between Member States in order to develop a common approach under the Structural Funds aiming at improving the effectiveness of social policies regarding Roma population in the European Union. The next gathering, for the formalization of this platform, will most likely be held in October.

This initiative intends not only to exchange knowledge, best practices and experts but also share common initiatives, create working groups, organise seminars, produce joint documents and publications, develop awareness raising campaigns, among others, in the future framework of the Structural Funds (2007-2013).

The new period for Structural Funds reinforces the transnational and territorial cooperation principle and is the proper framework to set this working network among public administrations and other entities working for the Roma Community and Structural Funds.

The scope of transnational cooperation in the next ESF programming period 2007-2013 is much wider than it was in EQUAL. The new ESF Regulation gives the opportunity to all MS to share their experiences and know-how among a wide range of actors, such as public authorities, social actors and NGOs. In this context the European Commission is pushing forward all sorts of initiatives on transnational cooperation coming out from the Member States.

In the opening address, the initiative was very much welcome by the European Commissioner, Mr. Vladimir Spidla who highlighted the importance of establishing this network, affirming that the Roma Community is the largest minority in the continent after the 2004 enlargement of the European Union. He also emphasized that one of the best practices financed by Structural Funds is the ACCEDER Programme, a successful

experience managed by the FSG integrating the Roma Community into the Spanish labour market. In this same line, the Spanish Ministry Mr. Jesús Caldera pointed out that as the ACCEDER programme, other good practices framed in the network, should help us moving forward into finding proper solutions for the situation of the most excluded Roma.

Participants coming from twelve Member States (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Sweden as well as the Spanish hosts) mainly responsible for managing ESF in their countries, together with representatives from the Spanish ESF Unit and the Fundación Secretariado Gitano and a wide delegation from the European Commission, after the two day work expressed their willing to be part of this initiative.

The most important issues that were developed during the seminar were **the opportunities and social inclusion policies aimed at the Roma community in the European Union** with interventions from the European Commission: DG Regional Policy, Territorial Co-operation and DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (Unit Action against Discrimination, Civil Society and Unit ESF Coordination).

After this first panel, there was a presentation on the **Spanish experience** in the use of the Structural Funds in favour of the Roma community, followed by a **round of intervention from the participant Member States** in order to inform about their perspective on the Roma community and the Structural Funds (2007-2013).

The second working day started with an introduction of the **Spanish Operational Programme “Fight against Discrimination” (2000-2006) and the Roma community**, which included an overview of the **ACCEDER** project and its complementary actions such as the awareness raising campaign, besides a dialogue on other possible outputs for the network.

After this, the Spanish ESF Unit presented the proposal of setting a transnational network given the **opportunity offered by the Transnational Cooperation (2007-2013)** and there was a very interesting debate on the establishment of a **transnational network** and its future potential.

The closing of the seminar remarked the upcoming opportunities for the collaboration presented and the potential framed in this initiative.

After the closing of the seminar, evaluation forms were handed out, requesting participant's to choose from a scale ranged from 1 to 5 (being 1 the worst rate and 5 an excellent rate) on the following issues:

1. Achievement of the seminar's objectives
2. Interest of the contents of the seminar
3. Methodology of the seminar
4. Organization of the seminar
5. Material, Seminar room, Timetable, Hotel and Lunch

6. Seminar as a whole

Twenty-two forms were completed and collected, the aggregated data can be observed in the table below.

The seminar as a whole has been evaluated with a mark of 4.45 out of 5 possible points; the issues better evaluated by participants were the following: the material handed out, the organization of the event and the contents of the seminar, although too formal for some participants.

1. Objectives	2. Contents	3. Methodology	4. Organization	5.a Material	5.b Room	5.c Time table	5.d Hotel	5.e Lunch	6. Seminar as a whole
4,59	4,73	4,27	4,80	4,86	4,57	4,57	4,30	3,90	4,45

Very interesting comments were included in the forms, as for example the common feeling that objectives had been achieved, the willing to participate in the network, the need to include flexibility and openness in this initiative, the need of more detailed discussion on certain issues, among others, that can be seen at the annex 2.

Main agreements achieved:

- To include suggestions and proposals to the “Proposal for a European Network on Roma Community and Social Inclusion (First Draft)” made in the seminar.(Already included in annex 1).
- To follow this next steps:
 - a. Every participant in the Madrid Seminar would communicate to their national responsables, the outcomes of the mentioned seminar in order to formally determine to be an active member of the transnational network. This communication should be done any time before next meeting in October. Early communications from all Members to the Secretariat on this matter will be appreciated.
 - b. Suggestions to the network proposal: 2nd draft (included as annex 1) should be sent before the end of August to carolina.fernandez@gitanos.org with copy to jsoezdela@mtas.es, ines.cedron@gitanos.org and mgarcia@mtas.es .
 - c. The 3rd draft (including July suggestions) will be sent to all Member States before September 15th.

In this occasion the following information and documents will be sent:

 - The date for the formal launch of the network, around mid October.
 - A letter of commitment for every Member State to formally express their willing to participate in the transnational platform
 - Working plan for the seminar.
 - d. Every member of the network should evaluate and present feasible ways of including transnational activities in the framework of their Operational Programmes.
- That the Secretariat will have the role of the Administrative and Communication tasks and that this responsibility will be entrusted to the Fundación Secretariado Gitano.

- In a final round of interventions all participants expressed their willing to take part in the platform initiative. It has also been stressed out that further internal debate should be pursued in order to achieve a formal compromise.

2nd Draft Proposal:

The document including the suggestions collected in the Transnational Seminar held in Madrid last June, 2007 is included in annex 1: **2nd Draft Proposal**.

The Secretariat and the Spanish ESF Unit will send the second draft, as well as the outcomes of the Madrid Seminar to national ESF Administrative Units from United Kingdom, Ireland and France, informing them about the process started and expressing our willing and interest for their participation in this initiative.