

Acceder Programme for the employment of Roma

Programa Acceder para el empleo de la población gitana

Description

The *Acceder* programme was first developed by the FSG as a pilot project in the city of Madrid in 1998, financed by the European Social Fund. Further to its good results, it was later spread throughout Spain with the support of the several consecutive EU funds programming periods (2000-2006, 2007-2013 and currently 2014-2020). The initial idea was to support Roma youth in their access to salaried employment as an alternative to precarious self-employment or family traditional business.

The situation of Roma in the labour market in Spain was and continues to be characterised by their initial disqualification with a high degree of precariousness (short-term contracts with long periods of unemployment, low salaries, etc.) and persistence of non-regulated activities and non-protected employment spelling the absence of labour rights. Roma were not taking part in mainstream active employment policies; they had limited experience in salaried employment and, as a consequence, lacked both references and motivation to access jobs, together with scarce realistic information of the functioning and requirements of the labour market. On top of this, discrimination against Roma is operating in everyday life, including in the access to training and employment. Consequently, the need to develop a specific employment initiative focused on Roma (but not exclusively) as a measure to counter their unequal situation and combat exclusion and discrimination seemed necessary. The *Acceder* programme was conceived as an initiative that would contribute to improving the living standards of the Roma community through measures favouring their access to salaried employment in the labour market.

The Programme's main assumption is that "gaining access to the labour market is the gateway to social inclusion and equal opportunities", focusing on employment as the key step for a full social inclusion. In fact, the *Acceder* programme focuses on the promotion of labour-contract employment as a better means of social inclusion, recognising that through coexistence in the labour market, cultural understanding between Roma and non-Roma people would be facilitated.

The *Acceder* programme is structured around three-dimensional action features, all of which are equally important and reinforce one another: individual approach, intervention in the immediate surrounding (families) and intervention in the labour market (cooperation and intermediation with private companies).

Beneficiaries



NEETs in recent search



Discouraged and disengaged young people

The *Acceder* Programme does not have only one type of beneficiaries. The initiative has an explicit but not exclusive approach, meaning that it preferably aims at Roma but not excluding other people with similar difficulties to take part (7 out of 10 beneficiaries are Roma).

Due to the sociodemographic composition of the Roma population (66% of Roma are under

30 years old), and to the earlier entry of Roma in the labour market (they get out of the educational system earlier than the majority of Spanish youngsters), most of the beneficiaries of the *Acceder* are young, with a low level of education, with little experience in employment and with limited reference models of persons in salaried employment.

The *Acceder* programme is implemented by Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), a Spanish NGO with more than 40 years of experience working for the equality of Roma people in Spain and in Europe.

FSG provides services to improve the lives of Roma and to fight for their social and economic rights, mainly in employment (through *Acceder*), education and social inclusion. It also develops programmes related to housing and health.

Besides, FSG carries out advocacy actions in Spain and in Europe, attempting to improve policy, legal and financial frameworks, launching awareness-raising campaigns and fighting against the discrimination of Roma and improving their stereotyped and negative social image.

Countries

 Spain

Education level and sector

 Lower secondary education

The *Acceder* is not addressed to only one specific education level, but due to the general low level of education of the Roma community, 70% of *Acceder* participants have not completed the compulsory secondary education (52% are in lower secondary education and 17% have not finished primary education).

Level of implementation / Scope

 National level

The project started in the year 2000 and today is still ongoing.

In 1997-98 the *Acceder* pilot project was upscaled from the original experience in Madrid to the whole country, being now present in more than 60 cities in 14 regions in Spain, in which the same methodology is implemented with minor adaptations to the local contexts. Centralised actions addressed to different regions are developed but organised at national level, creating efficient synergies.

Aims of policy/initiative

Acceder promotes the access of the Roma population to the labour market as a gateway to social inclusion, thereby fostering equality of opportunities. To achieve this aim, the programme has developed an integrated way of working which boosts opportunities for the Roma population in the labour market, particularly through the model of salaried employment. Some of the objectives proposed to reach this aim are the following:

- increase the employability of the Roma population through the development of skills, competences and knowledge required to access the labour market;

- improve vocational qualifications and the access of Roma people to salaried employment and occupations;
- increase awareness among companies regarding the situation of the Roma population in the labour market in order to achieve greater equality of opportunities in recruitment processes;
- provide support in the process of self-employment, creation of viable businesses and development of competitive street trading projects;
- generate protected employment initiatives and the creation of labour market inclusion posts, providing Roma people with the possibility of a gradual integration into the labour market;
- raise awareness of the prejudices and discriminatory practices suffered by Roma men and women and improve their social image;
- extend the implementation of active employment policies for the Roma population with the aim of effectively improving their living conditions and ensuring equal opportunities;
- create strategic alliances which allow the impact of the actions carried out to be increased, or new initiatives to be launched, bringing Roma people closer to the labour market;
- develop innovative actions which equip the Roma population to meet the new technological, digital and operational requirements of the job market. Anticipation to labour markets requirements of ongoing-labour market changes as a way to guarantee equal access to current and upcoming labour opportunities.

Features and types of activities implemented

In order to offer an integrated response to the situation of structural discrimination faced by Roma people in the world of work, the *Acceder* programme has developed a methodology based on personalised pathways for labour market inclusion. This methodology involves the provision of information, support, individual and group guidance, skills development, occupational and vocational training, job intermediation and the matching of workers to vacancies, support in self-employment processes and participation in other areas of social and labour market inclusion.

The people who enter the programme follow a personalised pathway – thanks to staff specialised in intercultural mediation, guidance and job intermediation – and go through a process which facilitates their access to the job market and improves their skills and capacities through specific training. Each pathway includes holistic work, starting from the person's unique circumstances and based on the family environment, the community and the wider context in which they find themselves.

The number of years over which people participate in the programme can vary, being tailored to the needs of each person.

In general, *Acceder* pathways are made up of different activities or phases, which can be characterised as follows:

- activities related to guidance and active job search include accompaniment, support and follow-up for each participant on their labour market inclusion pathway, from the first stages of welcome and needs assessment to the follow-up conducted once in employment. These activities include training and skills development, preparation and presentation of job applications, etc.;
- training actions are a key tool for the improvement of skills and professional competences of participants, delivered through multiple activities and training option. Training actions are defined as a response to labour market needs;
- access to employment and subsequent follow-up form the last part of the process, focused first on facilitating labour market entry and then on supporting the person once in work.

The methodology of using personalised labour market inclusion pathways as a means of boosting the inclusion of the Roma population has been complemented by a series of cross-cutting actions which seek to combat discrimination and foster equal opportunities:

- public awareness-raising and institutional action;
- production of data in studies and publications on the situation of the Roma population in terms of access to employment, as a way to understand their situation and inform public policies;
- technical assistance and training of public and private professionals who work with the Roma population.

Resources

A significant proportion of the financial resources to fund the *Acceder* programme come from the European Social Fund (ESF), complemented by funds from other public bodies at national, regional and local level as well as private entities.

The *Acceder* staff is composed of around 200 workers in more than 60 teams all over Spain. The *Acceder* teams are intercultural (composed by Roma and non-Roma workers) and multidisciplinary, combining the social (intercultural mediators, counsellors) and the economic perspective (job/enterprise intermediary).

In the period between 2000 and 2020, the total funding of *Acceder* accounted for EUR 182 694 467.77, with 90% of this amount being allocated to the direct intervention with the beneficiaries.

The average unit cost per participant of the programme is EUR 1 925.52. When comparing to other social initiatives working with highly vulnerable groups with an estimated reference cost of EUR 6 000, *Acceder* shows its exceptional efficiency.

Evaluation of the measure

After 20 years of implementation of *Acceder*, in 2020, FSG took one step further and verified the value and impact of the *Acceder* programme as a force for change and equal opportunities in the lives of Roma. To this end, an external impact evaluation of the *Acceder* programme was commissioned. This evaluation confirmed the scope and results of the programme to improve the lives of Roma people thanks to the long-term support of the ESF and its focus on most disadvantaged groups.

The executive summary of the evaluation can be found here:

<https://www.gitanos.org/actualidad/archivo/134660.html>

The complete evaluation (available only in Spanish) can be found here:

https://www.gitanos.org/estudios/evaluacion_de_resultados_e_impacto_del_programa_Acceder_2000_2020.html.es

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

Between 2000 and 2022, *Acceder* has had more than 140 000 participants; it has achieved 104 650 work contracts (40% of them for people under 35 years old), providing jobs for 38 854 people; it has trained more than 44 000 people; it has accompanied 2 893 self-employment projects; and it has collaborated with 21 589 companies.

The average employment rate achieved in the programme is of nearly 40%, which raises up to 46% when participants go through a pathway that includes counselling, job search and specific training. Those participants having or achieving the compulsory secondary education certificate, increase their employment rate up to 58%. Employment rate of those participants with previous labour experience increases chances of being employed by 19 percentage points (the focus on facilitating Roma youngsters' first labour experience being crucial).

In terms of qualitative impact, it is worth highlighting that the *Acceder* programme has contributed to improving the quality of life of Roma people by generating job opportunities, offering training and facilitating access to employment; it has contributed to enhancing the importance of education (educational return and training); it has been a catalyst for essential changes to promote the advancement of Roma women through their incorporation into the labour market; and it has been a good antidote to discrimination and antigypsyism, helping to break down prejudices and negative stereotypes.

Success factors

The *Acceder* Programme was innovative since its beginnings and keeps being flexible and adapting to the labour market changes and to Roma needs. Some of the key characteristics that support the success of the programme are:

- ESF as a key instrument. The ESF has allowed for a long-term approach, which is a requisite for achieving a greater impact.
- Targeted but not segregated service (mainstreaming while targeting) increases social impact. Actions focused on the target population, but not exclusively, and these actions aim at standardisation and promoting access to ordinary resources and services. The objective is to build a bridge between the needs of the Roma community and the labour market.
- Flexibility and adaptation not only in the design of actions to the individual circumstances of each participant and providing the most appropriate support, but also having the capacity to adapt to the labour market opportunities that arise and to the companies.
- Gender equality. Roma women access to employment creates greater empowerment as well as transformative effects on their community too.
- Results-oriented / Role-model approach: a results-oriented approach, seeking positive results, “betting on the best prepared” and creating a multiplier effect on the rest.
- Strong partnerships. The relevance of investing, as part of the methodology, in creating solid partnerships at local, regional, and national) level as a requisite to effectiveness. This refers to public authorities (mainstream services), and private resources.
- Particularly, the collaboration with companies (small, medium and large), understood as a useful employment intermediation service, is a strong success element of the methodology. The partnership between NGOs and companies fosters the employment for Roma, and contributes to the breaking down of stereotypes.
- Intercultural professional multi-sectoral teams, reflecting the social and economic balance perspective and stressing the professionalism of the working teams. All work teams are composed of Roma and non-Roma members as well as diverse and complementary professional profiles reflecting the social and economic components of the methodology.
- Combination of service provision and advocacy for the equal rights of Roma.

Contact details for further information

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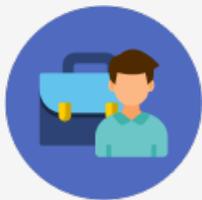
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