



# **Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion**

## **(LERI) Project**

# **Community Summary**

**Córdoba, Spain**

This community summary forms part of FRA's **Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion** (LERI) project. LERI is a qualitative action research project under [FRA's multi-annual Roma Programme](#). It was developed in response to the [European Commission's](#) Communication on an [EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020](#). LERI brings together local authorities and residents, in particular Roma, to investigate how they can best be involved in Roma integration actions, and identify which aspects of these actions work, which do not, and why. The aim of the project is to facilitate the engagement of all local stakeholders, including Roma, in joint efforts to enable Roma inclusion. The experience gained and the lessons learned during the process will help improve the design, implementation and monitoring of Roma integration policies and actions at the local level.

LERI is the first FRA project to test participatory action research methodology. By identifying the key factors that lead to the success or failure of local integration activities, the project is helping to improve the planning of effective integration programmes for the future. At the same time, facilitating engagement at local level empowers all those involved, building their capacity to participate as equal partners with local administrations and civil society, and enabling a shared understanding of which measures need to be taken and how their implementation can be monitored. The project is being carried out in 21 localities across 11 EU Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom).

## LOCALITIES

Pavlikeni,	Bulgaria
Stara Zagora,	Bulgaria
Brno,	Czech Republic
Sokolov,	Czech Republic
Helsinki,	Finland
Jyväskylä,	Finland
Lille Metropole,	France
Strasbourg,	France
Aghia Varvara,	Greece
Megara,	Greece
Besence,	Hungary
Mátraverebély,	Hungary
Mantova,	Italy
Bologna,	Italy
Aiud,	Romania
Cluj-Napoca,	Romania
Hrabušice,	Slovakia
Rakytník,	Slovakia
Cordoba,	Spain
Madrid,	Spain
Medway,	UK

## Córdoba, Spain

### Overview of the country context

There is no exact data available on the size of the Roma population in Spain.<sup>1</sup> According to the 2007-2008 and 2009-2010 FOGESA surveys for the years, estimates of approximately 2.1 % and 1.7 %, of the Spanish population may be Roma, which would add up to a total between 800,000 and 970,000 people.

The European Council has acknowledged an estimation of 725,000 Roma in Spain, which would make it the fifth largest Roma community in Europe.

With regard to Roma, Spain is both a contradictory and yet important case. The vast majority of the Spanish Roma community have lived in Spain for centuries, and have deep roots in the country. The Roma minority has experienced an ambivalent process of integration and exclusion since their arrival in Spain during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The constitution of 1978<sup>2</sup> granted equal rights to all citizens, opening a period of change for the entire country. This included the establishment of a democratic and highly decentralised state as well as the consolidation of social welfare structures, which were previously weak and not universal. Since 1985, a series of projects and programmes aimed at the further inclusion of Roma have been implemented alongside sectoral policies in health, education, housing,

employment, social services and other fields.

The specific social policies, such as the Roma Development Programme (*Programa de Desarrollo Gitano*),<sup>3</sup> and the plans of several autonomous regions, are implemented by a variety of actors, which are mostly local authorities and non-profit organisations.

Over the past twenty years, various general and specific policies have been implemented at various levels of government (local, regional and national), with the aim of improving the situation of Roma in Spain, from the creation of the Roma Development Programme in 1989 (*Programa de Desarrollo Gitano de 1989*),<sup>4</sup> to the National Roma Integration Strategy in Spain in 2012-2020 (*Estrategia nacional para la Inclusión Social de la Población Gitana en España 2012-2020*).<sup>5</sup>

Although progress has been made, problems persist for Spanish Roma in terms of unemployment, substandard housing, high rates of school failure and dropouts, and a lower life expectancy compared to the rest of the population.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, there is an underlying layer of discrimination noticeable in the portrayal of Roma in the media, which contributes to the social prejudices against the Roma population.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Spain, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (*Ministerio de Sanidad, Política Social e Igualdad*) (2011), *Diagnóstico social de la comunidad gitana en España- Un análisis contrastado de la Encuesta del CIS a Hogares de Población Gitana 2007*, Madrid, Ministerio de Sanidad, Política Social e Igualdad, available at: [www.msssi.gob.es/ssi/familiasInfancia/inclusionSocial/poblacionGitana/docs/diagnosticosocial\\_autores.pdf](http://www.msssi.gob.es/ssi/familiasInfancia/inclusionSocial/poblacionGitana/docs/diagnosticosocial_autores.pdf) (All hyperlinks were accessed on 23 October 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Spain, General Courts (*Cortes Generales*) (1978), Spanish Constitution (*Constitución Española*), 29 December 1978, available at: [http://noticias.juridicas.com/base\\_datos/Admin/constitucion.t1.html](http://noticias.juridicas.com/base_datos/Admin/constitucion.t1.html).

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <http://www.msssi.gob.es/eu/ssi/familiasInfancia/inclusionSocial/poblacionGitana/home.htm>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Spain, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (*Ministerio de Sanidad, Política Social e Igualdad*) (2012), 'Estrategia nacional para la Inclusión Social de la Población Gitana en España 2012 -2020', 2 March 2012, available at: [www.msssi.gob.es/ssi/familiasInfancia/inclusionSocial/poblacionGitana/estrategiaNacional.htm](http://www.msssi.gob.es/ssi/familiasInfancia/inclusionSocial/poblacionGitana/estrategiaNacional.htm)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) (2015), *Discriminación y comunidad gitana 2014*, Madrid, Fundación Secretariado Gitano, available at: [www.gitanos.org/centro\\_documentacion/publicaciones/fichas/109822.html.es](http://www.gitanos.org/centro_documentacion/publicaciones/fichas/109822.html.es).

### Locality background information

Córdoba is one of the eight provinces of Andalusia, the southern region of Spain, in which approximately half of Spain's Roma population lives.

The city has the second highest rate of unemployment in Spain at 33.88 % which is also reflected in the employment situation of the Roma population. As a population at particular risk of marginalisation, the Roma have felt the effects of the economic crisis more intensely than the general population.<sup>8</sup>

Córdoba's economy is based on tourism, with other modest industries and the traditional jewellery sector also contributing.

From a political point of view, Córdoba was governed for twenty years by the left-wing party until 2010, when the Conservative Party won the local elections. After the elections in May 2015, the local government has once again been led by the Socialist Party.



Map of Córdoba city

According to the National Statistical Office (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*) in 2013, out of the 328,707 inhabitants of Córdoba, 7,500-8,000 (2.4 %) are Roma. Within Córdoba City, the Roma communities are concentrated in three mainly peripheral areas: Palmeras and Zona Guadalquivir (where over half of the Roma population lives) and to a lesser extent in Fuensanta. They also live in other areas such as the Jewish Quarter and the city centre.

The population of Romanian Roma, which came to the region more recently, has considerably decreased in Córdoba. Currently, there is a small settlement of Romanian Roma living outside of Córdoba in a segregated area where no services are provided.

The Roma population in Córdoba has been a settled, sedentary population since 15<sup>th</sup> century. Traditional occupations such as cattle dealing and blacksmithing have since been replaced by itinerant trading. Nowadays, approximately 65 % of the population is involved in this activity. A small percentage of Roma owns family businesses, while the rest of the working population works as dependant employees.

Compared to all other Spanish cities, the number of Roma professionals and academics in Córdoba is very high, however, in the north of Spain there are cities without any Roma graduates.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of the crisis, the economic status of the Roma population has also suffered over the last few years.<sup>10</sup> An important factor affecting the street

<sup>8</sup> Córdoba had at the end of 2014 an unemployment rate of 33.88% according to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) data. At the beginning of 2015 the unemployment rate was higher (36%) according to the same source.

<sup>9</sup> In the city of Córdoba the Roma population includes six active attorneys, two doctors, and others holding master degrees as well as nurses, graduates with degrees in tourism and business. In many other Spanish provinces, the Roma population does not have any university graduates according to

Federación de Asociaciones de Mujeres Kamira data.

<sup>10</sup> Córdoba City Hall (*Ayuntamiento de Córdoba*), Institute for Advanced Social Studies (*Instituto de Estudios Sociales Avanzados*) (2010), *Estudio diagnóstico sobre condiciones de vida de la población en Córdoba*, available at:

<http://ssm.cordoba.es/otros-contenidos/documentacion/72-otros-contenidos/119-diagnostico-social-del-municipio-de-cordoba.html#pf>

products. Due to this, their profit margins have decreased, as well as the total sales.

According to data provided by the City Council, 11.5 % of the entire population of Córdoba was in a situation of exclusion or poverty in 2010, with one of the lowest average incomes per capita in Spain. A large percentage of this figure was represented by the Roma.

In general, there are no specific problems in relation to the access to public services: 97.5 % of Roma children up to 12 years old attend school, however, approximately 80 % leave school before finishing their secondary education.<sup>11</sup> The low educational level of Roma children is recognised as one of the biggest problems.

The vast majority of the Spanish Roma population is covered by health insurance. Access to social services is also provided. Largely, there are no problems with the rest of the society, although some indirect and hidden discrimination still exists. This is expressed through people choosing not to send their children to predominantly Roma schools, or by nightclubs refusing entry to Roma.

More positively however are the links between Roma culture and flamenco, which are widely recognised. There are training courses and activities carried out by a number of associations. Furthermore, a Roma lawyer writes a weekly article in the largest local daily newspaper, *Diario Córdoba*.<sup>12</sup>

### **Objectives and thematic focus of the LERI project**

The objective of LERI in Córdoba is to establish cooperation between the different local stakeholders and the community, in order to develop and implement a 'Strategic Plan for Roma people in Córdoba', which does not yet exist. To make this possible, two meetings with the municipality of

Córdoba and Roma associations were held in order to identify areas of action, which are listed as follows:

**Employment:** Considering the high rate of unemployment in the city, and the general situation in Spain, addressing this issue is the main priority. The wealth of the population has decreased, in particular during recent years as a result of the economic crisis. As mentioned above, the profit margins and total sales of street sellers has significantly decreased.

The causes of unemployment are several, including a lack of qualifications, opportunities and expectations among Roma, along with discrimination. One possible solution, implemented in the framework of LERI, may be to select a group of women and a group of young people as agents of change to promote employment amongst the Roma community.

**Housing:** In the Torremolinos street neighbourhood, a regional project for housing rehabilitation which received European funding has received much acclaim for transforming the image of area, which is located in a very deprived area of Córdoba.<sup>13</sup>

It is not certain if LERI will encourage the continuation of the project, but there is potential for LERI to support several important actions that could address existing challenges, including: risk of evictions, difficulties in accessing housing programmes, and the lack of public facilities in the neighbourhoods, including swings for children.

### **Health:**

Public data shows that the health of the Roma population is worse than of the rest of the population, while life expectancy is also considerably lower. The causes are multiple, including lack of prevention

<sup>11</sup> Federación de Asociaciones de Mujeres Kamira, Programme to promote the academic success within the Roma population.

<sup>12</sup> *Diario Córdoba* (2013), 'La discriminación que ha sufrido la mujer no es comparable a otra', 7 June 2013, available at: [www.diariocordoba.com/noticias/cultura/marcos-santiago-cortes-la-discriminacion-ha-](http://www.diariocordoba.com/noticias/cultura/marcos-santiago-cortes-la-discriminacion-ha-sufrido-mujer-no-es-comparable-otra_808487.html)

[sufrido-mujer-no-es-comparable-otra\\_808487.html](http://www.diariocordoba.com/noticias/cultura/marcos-santiago-cortes-la-discriminacion-ha-sufrido-mujer-no-es-comparable-otra_808487.html).

<sup>13</sup> Available at:

[http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/avra/opencms/areas/ExperienciasParticipativas/Habitar-seleccion\\_actuaciones/San-Martin-Porres.html](http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/avra/opencms/areas/ExperienciasParticipativas/Habitar-seleccion_actuaciones/San-Martin-Porres.html) .

measures, lack of healthy habits, poor nutrition, poverty, etc.

**Education:** The main needs and the fundamental problems in this area are constituted by the following issues:

- High drop-out rates in secondary schools;
- School failure or lack of academic success;
- School segregation: there are a number of schools where Roma children are significantly overrepresented, making up 97-98 % of the entire student population, something which not necessarily accepted by the national educational institutions.

**Gender equality:** The strategy will include a fifth area, focusing on women.

For each thematic area, an NGO taking the leading role has been identified. The area of employment will be managed by Fundación Secretariado Gitano, while education and gender equality will be handled by the Roma NGO KAMIRA.<sup>14</sup> Finally, one of the main tasks will be to establish a coordination mechanism to monitor all activities conducted with Roma population in Córdoba, in order to promote wide participation and inclusion of Roma in all activities they are involved in.

### **Activities implemented and actors involved in the needs assessment phase**

The LERI project will use PAR methods to achieve the maximum participation of local actors, including the City Council. The goal is to work on each area of actions listed above with representatives of associations and experts in the different fields. Focus-groups will be organised to determine the needs and priorities of action.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Two areas (health and housing) have no leading NGO to date. However, NGOs for these areas will be identified in the next months.

<sup>15</sup> Asociación Panyabi, Asociación Secretariado Gitano, Fundación Secretariado

In a second phase, the results of the focus groups will be discussed with several young women who live in a predominantly Roma neighbourhood. These women will work as LERI co-researchers and will be adequately trained to be change agents. The main PAR technique used will be the equality roundtables, run directly by Roma women. Trainings to boost self-esteem are expected to be organised, as the lack of expectations has emerged as a worrying and common place perspective amongst these young women.

Once these tasks have been completed, the third phase will begin with a conference aimed at exposing the main points of the strategy, so that it can be approved by all political forces. After this conference, the focus of the LERI activities will be further defined. It will also emerge which (if not all) of the areas of actions previously identified (employment, housing, health, education and gender equality) will continue to be the focus of the LERI project in Córdoba. This will mainly depend on the results of the application of PAR techniques.



*Meeting with stakeholders involved in the LERI project in Córdoba*

Gitano, Federación de Asociaciones de Mujeres KAMIRA, Aula de Mejora Educativa, Proyecto Urban, Encuentros en la Calle, ADSAM.

**Expected outcomes**

The PAR will result in the design and implementation of a local strategy for the Roma population of Córdoba.

In this first phase, the needs of the Roma community will be identified through focus groups on each of the themes chosen in order to determine problems and possible actions to be taken. Then, in a second phase, the strategy will be defined together with the Roma community, in parallel with the 2020 strategy’s main goals.

In March and April 2015, two meetings were held involving all local actors for the joint organization of 8 April, International Roma Day. Celebrations and other activities were organised with the participation of all principal actors, including the former mayor.



*Celebratory events on 8 April, International Roma Day*

**Consideration of the lessons learned through implementation and sustainability.**

The implementation of LERI with participatory action research (PAR) techniques and with the agreement of all stakeholders has improved the overall

coordination on Roma issues. The first major achievement was the commitment to take joint action, which has already been translated in the celebration of 8 April, combining efforts, material and human resources.



*Activities involving Roma and non-Roma communities.*

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