



Background document on situation of Roma in Barcelona

The exact number of Roma people living in Barcelona is unknown, since there is no register of data on ethnic origin of residents. The data available offers an estimation based on figures collected from schools, healthcare centres and Roma communities. Based on this data, it is estimated that Barcelona has a Roma population between 6,000-8,000 'native' Roma (Spanish citizens) and about 1,000-1,500 Roma people coming from Eastern Europe and Portugal.

The policies for promotion of Roma inclusion in Barcelona are developed in two different public administration departments, depending on whether the Roma is EU-mobile (coming from Eastern Europe) or live in settlements with a stable population. In the first case, policies are managed by the city department of Social Rights and are mainly focused on social care for people who live in irregular settlements on lots or in disused commercial premises.

At the end of the 1990s, Roma families from Galicia and Portugal arrived to Barcelona and settled on unused lots in the industrial areas of the city. In the early 2000s, those Roma settlements grew and small settlements of caravans and slums appeared in these industrial areas. In 2008, a specialised social services unit was created, being further expanded in 2015 due to changes in the composition of this EU-mobile Roma population in the city with more Roma arriving to Barcelona from Eastern Europe.

The Service for Social Inclusion to Families (SISFA) living in settlements serves mostly Roma people of Galician-Portuguese and Eastern European origins. Its priorities are to guarantee social rights of the children, to provide guidance on pathways to employment and to provide access to affordable or social housing. SISFA has achieved schooling of all Roma children living in settlements and ensured medical exam for 100% of them.

The rest of the Roma inclusion policies are managed by the city department for Citizen's Rights and are mainly based on the active and effective inclusion of Roma, as an indispensable and essential element to be able to enjoy fully their rights as citizens. The services implement intercultural perspectives on the actions towards recognition, interaction and dialogue, and fight against discrimination.

The meaningful participation and engagement of Roma people is ensured through the Roma People Municipal Council, a consultative body created in 1989 and comprising more than 20 Roma associations. The Municipal Roma Councils aims to monitor and input into municipal policies. The Council manages its own budget for self-organised activities to promote a rights-based perspective and visibility of Roma people. This council is in charge of organising the annual programme of activities on 8 of April to celebrate the International Roma Day, being also in charge of promoting political positions such as a recent institutional declaration to demand the inclusion of Roma history and culture in the school curriculum. The Roma People Municipal Council has both budgetary as well as technical support from the Barcelona City Council.

On the other hand, applying this intercultural perspective to policies for Roma inclusion involves highlighting the structural causes of the historical inequalities suffered by this ethnic group, as well as looking for social changes that go beyond mere assistance and emergency management.

Our intercultural paradigm works on three axes:

1. **The fight against discrimination and anti-gypsyism.** On this axis, specific views on Roma discrimination are raised within the general framework of the city policies, which include:
 - an Office for Non-Discrimination, where complaints are collected and alternative conflict resolutions are proposed, likewise acting as legal advice in case of hate crime;
 - an Anti-rumour Strategy that conducts training, edits materials and promotes awareness-raising actions aimed at fighting stereotypes and prejudices about the most discriminated groups, among which Roma people are included;
 - specific work on the discrimination in the media and social networks through a specialized website <http://www.barcelona.cat/bcnvsodi>, where anti-gypsyism has a dedicated section, and through the support of different initiatives of media monitoring on these issues, such as the Discriminatory Discourse Observatory.
 - a series of discussion groups with Roma people, interviews with Roma and non-Roma experts and a survey on anti-Gypsyism are currently being held, all of which will serve to develop other concrete measures on the discrimination suffered by Roma.
2. **Recognition and promote of the Roma culture.** This axis includes:
 - actions for remembrance of history (city routes, exhibitions, books) aimed at explaining the persecution and discrimination that Roma people have suffered for more than 600 years in our country, and serving as a framework for its recognition and reparation;
 - measures to revitalise the Romani language (extracurricular classes, materials published in Romani) are also included as a distinguished and enriching cultural feature for the entire city that needs to gain visibility.
3. **Intercultural dialogue and positive interaction.** This axis addresses actions dealing with the community life of Roma neighbourhoods as well as with the inclusion and participation of Roma people in the community plans, equipment, coordination roundtables and other decision-making spaces at the local level, where Roma population has traditionally been absent or voiceless. These initiatives imply that, beyond the Municipal Roma Council, it is also needed that the rest of municipal spaces (councils, policies, services) are inclusive and take into account Roma people. In this regard, **a specific government measure on the participation of people and groups of diverse origins and cultural contexts, where the Roma people were included, has been approved.** To ensure their participation, it is absolutely necessary to empower people and entities so that they have the time and build the capacities needed. This specific support is also framed through grants on employability pathways as well as specific measures such as Roma school promoters.

This intercultural perspective helps us to focus on the reality not as a series of problems but as a series of human rights violations, where it is necessary to identify where the causes and the consequences stand, in order to promote policies of real and sustainable social transformation.

In this regard, the problem to be solved is therefore not only, for example, the school absenteeism of Roma children, but the evident distrust and lack of confidence of Roma families in the educational system. This distrust and lack of confidence can be improved by concrete initiatives seeking either direct participation or actions to increase the sense of belonging and identification of Roma children with schools, that is, "gypsyfying" the school. It is with good reason that the motto of this year's programme for the 8 April 2018 was "*Let's gypsyfy Barcelona*".



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