

Municipal programme of shanty towns eradication in Avilés (Principality of Asturias)

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Summary

This document is intended as a contribution to the Peer Review to be held in Avilés (Principality of Asturias, Spain) on 23-24 October 2006. The Avilés municipal shanty-town eradication programme was presented in the Kingdom of Spain's 2005 National Plan for Social Inclusion as a best practice promoting social inclusion and was subsequently selected as one of the principal case studies in the discussion on *Integrated policies and actions to promote the social inclusion of Roma in urban environments and disadvantaged neighbourhoods*.

The existence of Roma in Spain is documented as from 1425. During the course of the nearly six centuries as of that date, the Spanish Roma population has gone through a number of different historic moments characterised to a great degree by rejection and social exclusion. **The number of Roma living in Spain today is calculated at 630,000** and, while they comprise a homogeneous cultural group, there is a growing degree of diversification in terms of socioeconomic situations, lifestyles, social status, etc. Despite the growing flow of immigration over the last decade, Roma is still today the most numerous and the most marginalised ethnic minority in our country.

It cannot be denied, however, that **the Spanish Roma population has undergone an unprecedented transformation process over the last several decades**. In general terms, with the exception of a few subgroups, there is no doubt that Roma in Spain have changed and progressed more over the last 30 years than during the previous five centuries. This progress is attributable to a number of different factors among which we would stress the dawn of democracy, overall improvement in living standards in our country, the implementation of social protection policies, specially tailored measures and programmes specifically targeting the Roma population and mobilisation in favour of the Roma community.

The advancement and progress of Roma in our country rests upon four main pillars: education (access to and staying in school), housing (access to dignified housing on an equal footing with the rest of the population), employment (access to vocational training and normalisation of the labour situation) and health (access to the health-care system). **Housing**, in particular, **has proven to be essential as a springboard** and a "point of no return" **social incorporation of the Roma population**.

Over the last forty years a number of very different types of action programmes targeting Roma have been implemented throughout all of Spain in the field of housing. We can find a large number of cases in which, despite the best of intentions, the measures undertaken led to spectacular failure and should never be repeated. Many others have gone only half-way in terms of the initial intentions and what was actually achieved while still others, a significant number as well, are good examples of the way things should be done.

The Municipal Programme for the Eradication of Shanty-towns in Avilés is precisely one of those examples of best practices. Moreover, **owing to its location, the characteristics of the target Roma population, local leadership, the moment at which it was undertaken, the evolution it has had, the philosophy of action which it is modelled on, the way it has developed and the results obtained, can all provide us with a wealth of information** which can be extrapolated not only to a number of different scenarios throughout Spain, but also internationally, especially in Central Europe.

In any case, with its successes and its failures, this programme provides us with a sense of optimism in a European context in which Roma are the object of concern and are perceived as being problematic, as resisting integration and as a group on which a lot of money has been invested with meagre results. It is a living example that with perseverance, political commitment and constant renovation, even under adverse conditions, good results can be obtained with the most poorly educated and most excluded sectors of the Roma population.

I. Roma and Housing in Spain

1. Roma in Spain: Transformation and Change

1.1. Historical notes

There is documented evidence that the first groups of **Roma arrived to Spain in the year 1425**, making their way into the Iberian Peninsula from the north following the medieval pilgrimage routes leading to the city of Santiago de Compostela. In 1492, the *Reyes Católicos* (Catholic Monarchs) managed to unify the Spanish kingdoms through a social and cultural integration process which included the expulsion of the Jews and Moors. Roma managed to avoid expulsion probably due to their small numbers and owing to their nomadic lifestyle which made them difficult to pin down and the fact that they converted to Catholicism, the official religion.

Roma's unorthodox behaviour, their nomadic lifestyle, their dress, their peculiar trades and their language all contributed to the Catholic Monarchs' enactment, just a few years later, of the first anti-Roma law which ordering the expulsion from the Kingdoms of any Roma found "without a trade, without a lord or together" (refers to travelling together). This law, which was only the beginning of a long **history of exclusion and repression**, was followed by over 300 more during the course of four centuries. The sheer volume of these laws which were generally aimed at the lazy and troublemakers, behaviours associated with Roma, bear witness to the practical inefficiency of many of them while others were enforced with effective harshness as exemplified by the episode known as *La Gran Redada* (the great round-up) in which over 12,000 Roma were taken prisoner during the course of one night. Some of these anti-Roma laws, such as the Civil Guard Regulation against loitering and delinquency, remained in force until the enactment of the Spanish Constitution in 1978.

These medieval laws did manage to **extinguish the language of the Roma people, some of their labour activities and the nomadic lifestyle of some groups**. Spanish Roma today do not have their own language although some of the elderly members do still use some words of a Romany dialect known as Caló but do not speak enough for it to be considered a language. In contrast to popular belief, Roma in Spain were not nomadic until the 60's, many of them actually taking up permanent residence centuries ago.

Recently, especially during the 70's and 80's as part of a permanent settlement process, a mass migration took place from the countryside to urban centres. This migratory process was caused by the transformation of the rural world which spelled the end of many of their traditional trades: chalaneros (buyers and sellers of livestock), basket weavers, farriers, sheep shearers, field hands, etc. This massive migration from rural to urban areas was not specific to Roma but included the entire Spanish population and was part and parcel of the productive structure modernisation process.

However, if we are to understand the phenomenon of Roma shanty-towns and sub-standard housing in urban and semi-urban areas, there are certain **peculiarities characterising Roma migration which are very important to bear in mind.** In general terms, massive migration of Roma happened later than that of the non-Roma population and, while it was the younger generations who emigrated in the case of the latter, in the case of Roma it was the entire extended family meaning that all rural ties were severed. Moreover, while non-Roma found work mostly in the industrial sector, in the budding services sector and in public administration, their Roma counterparts worked in the collection of scrap metal, paper and industrial waste and later in mobile trading. The phenomenon of shanty-towns, sub-standard housing and the so-called "absorption settlements" was not exclusive at that time to the Roma population but affected many emigrants. However, the public housing schemes of the 70's and 80's, while indeed benefiting many Roma as will be explained further on, practically eliminated the shanty-towns of the non-Roma but not those of the Roma.

1.2. Demographic notes

Spanish Roma today are urban dwellers, even to a greater degree than the rest of the Spanish population, **and are concentrated mostly in large cities and towns.** As shown in the following table, they live in Andalusia (approximately 45%) and in the most densely populated Autonomous Communities (AC) such as Madrid and Catalonia.

Table 1. The Roma population in Spain broken down into Autonomous Communities. 1999

Autonomous Community	Spanish Roma population 1999 (No of persons)	Percentage of Roma population per AC vis-à-vis the total Roma population	Total population per AC (No of persons)	Proportion of Roma with respect to the total (%)
Andalusia	286,110	45.21%	7,340,052	3.90%
Aragón	18,209	2.88%	1,189,909	1.53%
Asturias	4,780 ¹	0.76%	1,076,567	0.44%
Balearic Islands	5,423	0.86%	845,630	0.64%
Canary Islands	854	0.13%	1,716,276	0.05%
Cantabria	6,021	0.95%	531,159	1.13%
Castilla y Leon	28,339	4.48%	2,479,118	1.14%
Castilla-La	33,552	5.30%	1,734,261	1.93%

¹ According to the study's data and to the demographic projections for the year 2006, the Asturias Roma add up to around 7.000, although according to various organizations, the number would be around 10.000.

Mancha				
Catalonia	52,937	8.36%	6,261,999	0.85%
Ceuta and Melilla	2,030	0.32%	72,473	2.80%
Extremadura	11,318	1.79%	1,069,420	1.06%
Galicia	13,741	2.17%	2,731,900	0.50%
La Rioja	7,361	1.16%	264,178	2.79%
Madrid	59,082	9.34%	5,205,408	1.14%
Murcia	33,006	5.22%	1,149,328	2.87%
Navarre	5,954	0.94%	543,757	1.09%
Basque Country	11,675	1.84%	2,098,596	0.56%
Valencia	52,455	8.29%	4,120,729	1.27%
Total	632,847	100.00%	40,430,760	1.57%

Source: Asociación Secretariado General Gitano. April, 2000.

The relative importance of the Roma population with respect to the overall Spanish population (1.5%) is low when compared with Central European countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania. However, it is high when compared with the older members of the EU.

Having regard to breakdown by age groups, the Roma population is young, especially when compared with the overall Spanish population which is one of the countries with the highest life expectancy in the world. **It is estimated that 50% of Roma are under the age of 25 while only 27% of the overall Spanish population fall into this category.** However, as with other aspects, a transformation process is under way in the structure of the Roma population: 20 years ago 70% of the Roma population was under the age of 25 and only 1.7% were over the age of 65 while this latter figure now stands at 4.3%.

Table 2. Breakdown of the Roma population by age groups

Age	%
From 0 to 2	6
From 2 to 5	14
From 6 to 10	18
From 11 to 15	14
From 16 to 20	10
From 20 to 24	8
From 25 to 34	12
From 35 to 44	8
From 45 to 54	5
From 55 to 65	3
66 or older	2
Total	100

Source. Sociological study. Spanish Roma 1978. Asociación Secretariado Gitano.

Table 3. Breakdown of the Roma population and the overall Spanish population by age groups, 2004.

Age groups	Roma population	Overall Spanish population
From 0 to 9	17.1	9.1
From 10 to 19	23.1	10.6
From 20 to 24	11.3	7.2
From 25 to 29	8.8	8.8
From 30 to 44	20.4	24.6
From 45 to 54	10.1	12.6
From 55 to 64	5.0	10.2
From 65 to 74	3.2	9.1
75 and over	1.1	7.8
Total	100	100

Source. From the housing data of EDIS and INE

This indicates that the birth rate of the Roma population is falling drastically while life expectancy is on the rise. In addition to this demographic phenomenon, if we consider that the number of children per family is falling off substantially, people are marrying later and the extended family is giving way to the nuclear family, it becomes clear that the family, the main pillar of Roma tradition and culture down through history, is undergoing a radical transformation process.

1.3. Radical changes

It was mentioned in the introduction that despite the situation of marginalisation in which many members of the Roma community continue to find themselves, the latter has undergone greater change in our country in the last four decades than over the five preceding centuries and this, in our opinion, is due basically to five factors:

1.3.1. Democratisation

The arrival of democracy to Spain and the Spanish Constitution which acknowledges the equality of all citizens under the law, has provided a clear opportunity for the exercise of the Roma community's civic rights. While it is true that this minority still suffers serious discrimination and that surveys on prejudice show that social rejection basically targets persons of Roma and Moroccan origin, it is no less true that now Roma can legitimately claim their rights, defend themselves before the courts and, most importantly, are recognised as full-fledged rather than second class citizens. This democratic transformation has spelled a change in the attitude of the Roma community, in the public administrations and in the services furnished by the latter. The most illustrative example of this transformation is that prior to democracy the Civil Guard, in application of the loitering and delinquency law, devoted a portion of their time to persecuting the Roma population, but throughout the 70's and 80's these same officers were the protectors of Roma children enrolling in public schools and of Roma families moving into their flats in normal residential neighbourhoods.

1.3.2. Rise in living standards

Most people are well aware of the economic and social development which Spain has undergone over the last two decades which, to a large degree, is due to European Union accession. In 1986, per capita income in Spain was 71% of the EU average while today that figure is over 90% of the EU-15 average and stands at 100% of EU-25. This economic development, not only accounting for a higher standard of living but also for improved infrastructures, public services, etc., has undoubtedly benefited the Roma community.

However, there are doubts as to whether Roma have benefited from this economic boom to the same degree as other sectors of the Spanish population in light of increased inequalities, but it **still remains clear that our country's economic progress is one of the factors contributing to the headway made by Roma in Spain over the last several years.** The rise in mobile trading and overall commercial activity of the Roma population, contributing to a higher degree of integration and serving as an alternative to the practical disappearance of traditional professions, the fall in seasonal work and the collection of scrap metal, has been possible thanks to an increase in consumption levels. Significant access to standard employment which has been gained over the last several years, especially among Roma youth, has been possible in Spain thanks to the decline in the unemployment rate from 22% in 1991 to 8.5 % in 2006.

1.3.3 Universalisation of social welfare policies

In Spain, as in other Mediterranean countries, the welfare state was a latecomer. The percentage of public spending in areas such as housing, education, health-care and social protection in general remains below the EU-15 average. But a fact which has **characterised our social protection system in all of its different facets** is that it has **included the Roma community** and guarantees two basic principles: that of universality, i.e. it is made available to all Spanish citizens (and therefore to Roma as well), and the principle of redistribution, i.e. citizens with the greatest needs benefit most.

The Roma population, which for the most part lived on the fringes of society and was persecuted often by the institutions themselves up until the 70's, is now beginning to reap the benefits of the social state. The first step taken in this direction was that of across the board documentation for everyone. It should not be forgotten that until as recently as the end of the 60's, many Roma had no documents whatsoever, i.e. they were not accounted for in the census, they had not identity card, no Family Record Book and therefore had not rights and could not take advantage of public services, schools, health-care, etc. For all intents and purposes they were non-existent and charity was their only safety net.

Housing is a clear example of how the implementation of social welfare services has had a redistribution effect on the Roma community. In 1991, 50% of the homes where Spanish Roma resided were publicly subsidised or social protection dwellings and very few of these were specifically built for the Roma population. In the rest of the cases, Roma applicants gained access to social housing just like any other Spanish citizen. **Thus, over and above the resettlement programmes directly targeting the Roma population, a much higher percentage of Roma have benefited from public housing than the rest of the Spanish population but not due to their Roma ethnicity but rather owing to their needs in this regard and because housing schemes focused specifically on those who did not have a dignified place to live and this included many Roma.**

Similar examples are found in other areas such as access to non-contributory pensions, access to and use of social services, access to the health-care system and blanket enrolment of the Roma population in public schools over the course of these last several decades. Thus, in the eighties, almost all Roma children accessed public school and, during that same period, healthcare coverage was guaranteed for the Roma population.

1.3.4 Implementation of programmes specifically targeting Roma

At the time Roma were starting to make use of public services, a large number of support programmes (Target programmes) were concurrently implemented throughout the whole of Spain to compensate for the disadvantages suffered by the Roma population in different spheres. Specifically in the area of housing we can find a great many examples throughout all of Spain of resettlement and shanty-town eradication programmes which, rather than targeting the Roma population at large, focused on those Roma citizens who did not have a dignified home and who had not taken part in the social housing programmes. In the area of education, we would draw attention to what at that time were known as “bridge schools”, the first step in enrolling (not all) those Roma children who had never attended school, and the school support and follow-up programmes which are still in vogue today.

In the field of employment, a good example is the ACCEDER programme which operates at national level in cities where the greatest number of Roma inhabitants are found. Its aim is to compensate the disadvantages endured by the Roma population in the area of vocational training and employment.

The debate concerning whether specific programmes targeting Roma should be implemented or whether Roma should simply participate in the programmes in operation for the population at large, quite heated in some Central European countries and oftentimes in the European Commission as well, has been resolved in Spain in a practical way, i.e. by trying, with varying degrees of success, to encourage Roma to take part in existing programmes available to the entire population while at the same time implementing, to a greater or lesser degree depending upon the situation, programmes and initiatives targeting those Roma who are especially disadvantaged or who, for some reason, fail to take advantage of universal measures.

1.3.5 Mobilisation in favour of the Roma community

Until the 60's, a large percentage of Roma lived on the fringes of Spanish society. **During the last stage of the dictatorship and the first years of democracy, coinciding with the rise in social movements in Spain, people started to mobilise in support of the Roma community later giving rise to the associative movements.** The first pro-Roma initiatives were taken by individuals (religious and secular) mostly through the Catholic Church which established ties with Roma and made their problems known to the public administrations.

This was a very relevant development destined to bear fruit in many different fields such as documentation and consequently the legalisation of many Roma individuals, the implementation of the first housing initiatives and programmes, school enrolment, awareness raising of the Roma community as to public institutions and society, identification of leaders and Roma individuals who began to attend meetings and act as spokespersons regarding the needs of the

group and the beginnings of a self-organisation movement which would pave the way to Roma associationism.

At this important juncture of the democratic transition, mobilisation in support of the Roma Community helped to make Roma visible in society and put their issues on the political agenda. In this connection, the Interministerial Commission was created to study the problems affecting the Roma community and to encourage understanding on the part of the Spanish society that Roma are citizens with the same rights and duties as all other Spaniards.

1.4 Divergent situations and cultural change

The reality facing the Roma population today in Spain is tremendously plural and heterogeneous and diversification is constantly increasing. This plurality of situations is due to a variety of factors, some of which are historical. For instance, there is a long-standing tradition of co-existence, integration and even racial blending in certain parts of western Andalusia and in rural areas of Extremadura. Some families have been permanently settled for centuries, especially in areas with the greatest concentration of Roma population. Economic level, lifestyle, the type of interaction with the society, habits and customs also vary greatly and are undergoing momentous changes as of late.

In general terms and simplifying things quite a bit, we could say that there is a segment of the Roma population (small) characterised historically by integration in society either owing to high income level, stable professions or higher level of education. They live like anyone else, they feel and behave as Roma and do not have any particular social needs. Another more representative segment of the population, by far the largest, is now undergoing an impressive process of transformation and change. This is the segment most affected by the changes referred to in the foregoing and which is taking part in this process with greater or lesser impetus and with varying support needs. This group encompasses those who, in just a few short decades, have gone from being undocumented to being subject to rights and duties, from being semi-nomads to permanently settling down, from having their own traditional labour activities to partaking in mobile trading or taking up salaried employment, from being illiterate to enrolling in school, from living in shanty-towns to living in standard flats alongside non-Roma, in short, from living on the fringes of society to being integrated into it, albeit at the lower echelon and often lacking quite a few of the necessities. There is a third segment comprised of the most disenfranchised groups of people who are typically characterised by a very precarious standard of living, who are more dependent on government benefits and social programmes, whose employment situation is particularly precarious, who live in segregated settlements with less interaction with their surroundings and some of whom have suffered the ravages of social phenomena such as drugs and who, in short, are living in a situation of extreme marginalisation.

In the wake of the changes described in the foregoing, a far-reaching cultural transformation process is also under way within the Roma community. This is not to say that Roma culture is in risk of disappearing but simply that it is evolving in a context in which **there are a myriad of ways of interpreting what it means to be Roma in the 21st century.** The disappearance of many rules and guidelines governing social behaviour owing to their unfeasibility at this point in time, the loss of meaning of many traditional symbols, changes in priorities and traditional values and the elimination of others, all contribute to a state of perplexity, if not crisis, for many members of the Roma community. **The culture of resistance, the basis on which Roma identity was forged in a context of persecution and repression,**

no longer makes sense in an open society in which people possess multiple identities. Increasingly common and irreversible phenomena among many groups of Roma, such as the disappearance of the extended family living under the same roof, urban dispersion, the new role played by women, the growing number of people taking on salaried employment in the standard labour market, an increase in mixed marriages, etc., will all lead to important changes.

These changes which the Roma community is undergoing owing to the factors described in the foregoing and the concerted effort many members have made to integrate themselves into society, are not given due social recognition. The perception that the rest of the Spanish society has of Roma continues to fluctuate between the selective troubadour stereotype of the Roma artist, happy-go-lucky bullfighter, etc. who is socially recognised and admired and the all-pervasive predatory stereotype of the Roma drug addict who is despicable, a troublemaker, lazy and uninterested in integration. The Roma population, according to most opinion polls, continues to be the social group held in lowest esteem by the Spanish society. This rejection of Roma is more intense than that endured by the general immigrant population and is only comparable to that which the Moroccan population is subjected to.

Table 4. Would you be *very*, *quite a bit*, *not very* or *not at all* bothered if your neighbours were...

	Very	Quite a bit	Not very	Not at all	Does not know	No comment	(N)
Ex prison inmates	14.5	0.3	28.7	24.9	4.7	1.6	2485
Roma	15.5	0.2	25.6	30.7	2.7	0.8	2485
Students	0.6	0.0	17.9	76.7	1.3	0.4	2485
Persons on the extreme left of the political spectrum	5.8	0.1	19.5	57.0	6.0	0.7	2485
Alcoholics	12.6	0.3	27.9	27.2	2.5	1.0	2485
Persons on the extreme right of the political spectrum	10.4	0.2	19.2	47.2	5.7	1.2	2485
Families with many children	0.8	0.0	15.2	79.7	1.1	1.0	2485
People suffering from psychological problems	6.8	0.2	28.9	38.4	3.9	0.9	2485
Immigrants	4.5	0.1	26.6	55.5	2.4	1.2	2485

Source. 2005 "Barometer" survey of the Sociological Research Centre (Spanish acronym CIS).

Large-scale immigration to Spain over the last several years making Spain a multicultural nation also means that Roma is no longer Spain's number one minority in terms of numbers, that Roma affairs are losing the little relevance they have had on the social and political agendas over the last few decades and that Roma policies need to be readdressed in accordance with this new intercultural context. However, it also represents an opportunity for our country to take a more pro-active stance in combating discrimination and to be more open in the management and governance of diversity.

2. Housing and Roma in Spain: Light and Shadow

2.1 Housing and social exclusion in Spain: contextual considerations

In the 60's and 70's Spain underwent an unprecedented migratory movement from rural areas to urban centres, especially gravitating towards large cities and industrial areas. Coinciding with industrial development, the last stage of the dictatorship and the beginning of the democratic period, Spanish cities experienced a housing boom consisting mostly of buildings of flats. Public initiative and different forms of housing promotion contributed to this expansion.

The 80's in Spain were marked by upheaval in the housing market in the form of a steep rise in prices which spelled frustration for many Spanish households wishing to purchase or rent a home. This situation particularly affected young people by dashing their chances of going out on their own and was most serious in large cities and among the most vulnerable social groups². The situation became even worse in the 90's and the first years of this new century. Housing prices have risen exponentially despite a comparable exponential increase in supply (houses have been going up at a rate of nearly 700,000 per year over the last several years), the substantial decline in interest rates and the rise in salaries. The sacrifice made by families in purchasing a home has increased substantially: in 1999 mortgage payments accounted for 33% of family income but by 2001 this figure had risen to 42% and today stands at 60%.

The State's compensatory function has been hardly effective in palliating this problem. Measures such as the liberalisation of land prices have certainly not contributed to bringing down costs, social housing has not been increased, tax measures have had scant repercussion on the most excluded groups and alternatives available to remedy this process, especially targeting young people and those in situations of social exclusion, have been few and far between. The progressive decentralisation of authority in respect of housing, owing to the fact that social housing is now the responsibility of regional and local governments, has led to significant differences among Autonomous Communities.

During the year 2005, the government has approved a new Housing Plan that will go up to 2008. Its aim is to put at the disposal of Spanish families 720.000 housing units and opening a line of housing credit. The overall investment constitutes 6.822 million euros. The Plan comprises specific programs addressed to groups with special difficulties in accessing housing.

This situation appears even more contradictory if we consider that the housing problem in Spain is, first and foremost, a problem of access and not of construction or market availability in a country like ours where people opt to buy rather than rent (78% percent of all occupied housing in Spain is owned as opposed to rented). It is estimated that in Spain today there are approximately 3,000,000 homes standing empty accounting for 15.8% of the total number of dwellings. Spain is also one of the EU countries with the highest percentage of its citizens owning second homes thus representing a tremendous real estate glut which, in many cases, goes hand-in-hand with environmental deterioration.

Despite the huge investment made over the last several years to improve facilities and accesses to cities, disadvantaged neighbourhoods are a lingering and permanent phenomenon which

² Sociological report on the social situation in Spain. FOESSA Foundation 1994.

attract a whole range of problems such as low professional skills, high unemployment, social decay, sub-standard housing, deterioration of public spaces and of the environment in general, etc. Many of these neighbourhoods continue to lose functional diversity caused by urban development management which is more focused on increasing the flexibility of the real estate market than on transforming these neighbourhoods into centres of sustainable development and social integration. This phenomenon is further exacerbated by emerging realities such as the concentration of immigrant population and poor upkeep of existing homes.

2.2 Evolution of the living situation of the Roma population

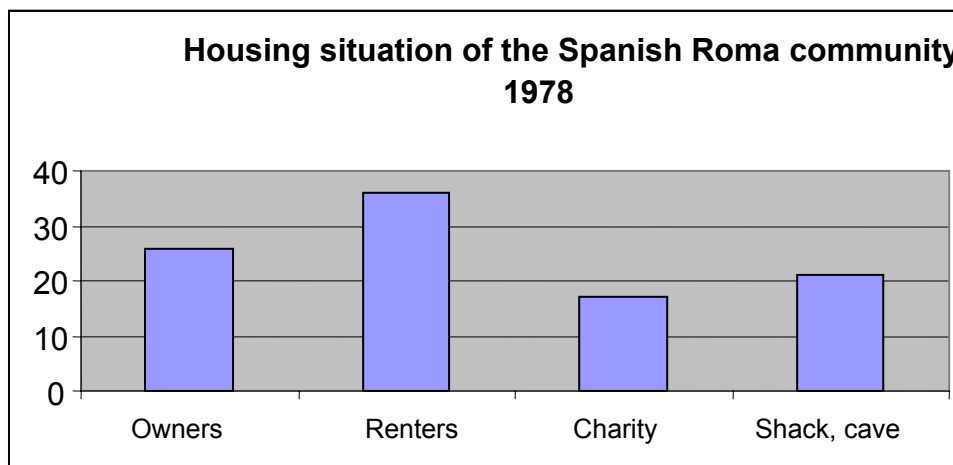
As explained in the foregoing, the 60's and 70's were marked by migratory movements of Spanish Roma to big cities where they settled permanently. **In 1978, 88% of all Spanish Roma were living in standard homes on a permanent basis.** The quality of those homes, however, left much to be desired; it is estimated that only 23% of the Roma population was living in acceptable conditions. Living conditions, utilities, space and equipment were marginal in most cases.

Table 5. Standard equipment in homes where Roma reside. Spain 1978

Equipment	% Population
Running water	66%
Hot water	15%
Toilet	50%
Shower	25%
Bath	16%
Electricity	86%
Heating	15%

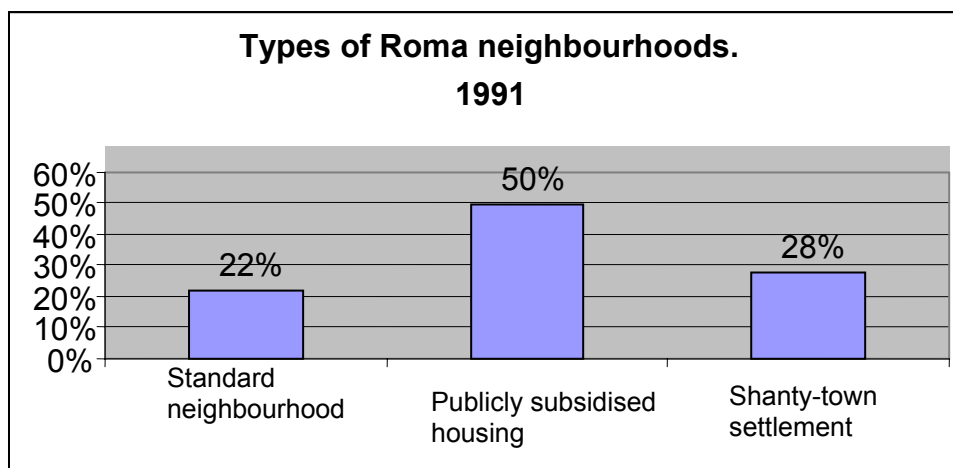
Source. Spanish Roma (Asociación Secretariado General Gitano, 1978)

In terms of occupation rates and types of homes, we find that at that time 26% of all Roma families were homeowners. These were mostly families which had historically been settled in urban or rural areas and those with greater spending power. 36% rented their homes and this figure includes those families which paid their own rent and those others who lived in social or publicly subsidised housing. 16% lived in housing furnished by charity organisations which gives an idea of the magnitude of specific action focusing on Roma undertaken by charity and altruistic associations as well as the public administration. 21% were still living in self constructed shacks or in caves.



Source. Spanish Roma (Asociación Secretariado General Gitano, 1978)

If we compare the situation described above with the one observed thirteen years later, we find a number of very important changes. For example, in 83% of the places where Roma reside, they have been there for over 15 years. As for the housing situation, we find that 13% live in the historic quarters or old downtown neighbourhoods of cities, 23% in neighbourhoods arising from primary and secondary expansion processes, 4% on the outskirts, 8% in segregated settlements and another 8% in dispersed areas.



Source. Roma housing map. PASS Group (1991)

Of Roma housing considered jointly, it is estimated that 31% was in a poor state of repair and that 10% of that figure were shacks or caves (21% in 1978). This situation varied quite a bit depending on the Autonomous Community in question. At that time in Asturias, an estimated 30% of Roma lived in shanty-towns.

When it comes to utilities and services, the situation has improved substantially.

Table 6. Neighbourhood utilities and services.

	Housing
Sewage	89%
Garbage collection	95%
Paved roads	84%
Street lighting	92%
Public transport	77%

Source. Roma housing map. PASS Group (1991)

2.3 The situation today and current trends.

As we have seen, **the 70's and 80's bore witness to important headway made in the living situation of Roma. However, little progress has been made since that time to the present** (save some honourable exceptions) due to the factors outlined in the foregoing sections (drastic reduction in public housing programmes, skyrocketing prices, land and housing speculation, stigmatisation as drug dealers, etc.). Moreover, the Roma now targeted for resettlement schemes are from the lowest income levels and find it more difficult to adapt to new situations.

This is not to say that we have moved backwards in housing matters. Some groups of Roma have continued to gain access to the scant supply of social housing while others, who have managed to improve their economic situation, have purchased or rented their own homes. In many neighbourhoods of publicly subsidised housing, significant investments have been made in facilities and remodelling and in some locations, new sub-standard housing and shanty towns eradication programmes have been implemented.

However, the persistence of shanty-towns and segregated settlements, probably still affecting 8% of the Roma population, remains a concern. Shanty towns basically emerge from old settlements which were never eradicated given their location removed from areas of urban interest and in some cases, new settlements have even appeared in large cities. There are also some peculiar neighbourhoods and dwellings which were home to transitional population groups conceived as an intermediate step in the path towards permanent integration of Roma in standard housing but which were never followed up on.

This current context has led to new problems in the persistent shanty-town situation such as the concentration of Roma population (or of Roma and immigrants in some cases) in some standard neighbourhoods owing mostly to natural growth of the Roma population and the fact that non-Roma are moving out in search of better residential conditions. This concentration is associated with other factors such as the deterioration of the urban environment, a rise in insecurity, overcrowding, breakdown of coexistence, etc. Another worrisome situation is the progressive "ethnification" of neighbourhoods, i.e. concentration of minorities, caused by the massive influx of immigrants. In light of a lack of adequate measures, this not only spells the stigmatisation of these neighbourhoods, but also the deterioration of public services, especially schools. Moreover, many young Roma families which manage to improve their standard of living and make the effort to venture out on their own and find a flat to rent, come up against a discrimination barrier put up by flat owners and a lack of equal access guarantees.

New housing programmes and schemes are emerging throughout all of Spain to deal with these new situations providing a ray of hope. They have the backing of Autonomous Communities, city

governments and social entities and experiment with new formulas of social accompaniment, rental housing, social insertion housing, eradication of “special” neighbourhoods, etc.

II Shanty-Town Eradication and Social Integration of Roma in Avilès

1. Roma in the Principality of Asturias and in Avilès

Asturias is one of Spain’s 17 Autonomous Communities and is situated on the Cantabrian coast in northwest Spain and has a **population of 1,076,635³**. Asturias, like other regions in the north of Spain, underwent heavy industrial development in the 20th century, especially focused on mining and steel-making and also features a thriving livestock industry in rural areas. The industrial conversion process of the 80’s and 90’s brought about a change in the productive structure, decreasing activity in these sectors which gave way to a burgeoning services and tourism sector. Per capita GDP in Asturias currently stands at 85% of the Spanish average.

Map 1. Principality of Asturias



The population of Asturias is mostly concentrated in the triangle formed by the cities of Oviedo (the capital), Avilès and Gijón and their basins and outlying areas. **The Roma population in Asturias is estimated between 7.000 and 10.000 people, accounting for approximately 0.6% of the region’s population** and is also concentrated around these three cities and their outlying areas. As in the rest of Spain, the presence of Roma in Asturias goes far back in history, but in the second half of the 20th century there was an important migratory movement from other parts of the Iberian Peninsula to this region owing to the latter’s industrial development. **Generally speaking, and relative to other geographical areas in Spain, the level of development and living standards of Roma in Asturias is inferior, despite recent advances.** As proof of this we can look to educational and income levels and types of economic

³ Figures as of 01.01.05. National Statistics Institute.

activity as well as the high percentage of the population still living in shanty-towns in this Autonomous Community.

According to the information provided by Social Services and to the work undergone with 925 Roma families in Asturias (around 5.600 people), at present (end of 2005), 98 families, 374 people live in shacks.

Between the years 2001 and 2005, 120 Roma families have been granted access to publicly subsidised housing. Furthermore, 82 shacks were eliminated and emergency programs have been implemented with 113 families.

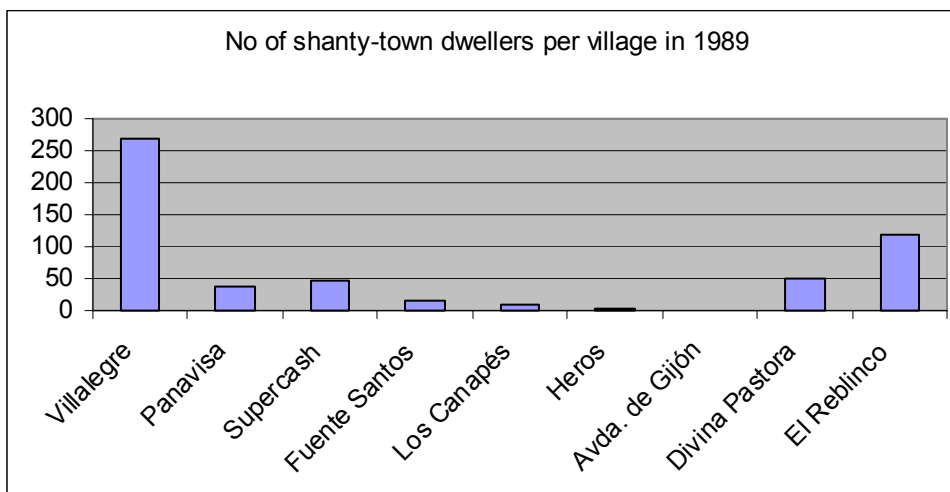
This situation can be traced back in history to such things as the distribution of the population in the territory and the scant effort made by public institutions in the past.

In 1950, **Avilés** was at the centre of a farming and livestock district with a population of 21,000. In the 60's it became an industrial steel-making city attracting unprecedented migration giving rise to hurried urban development rushing to meet the needs of industry. By the 70's, the Avilés population had surged to 82,000, a three-fold increase over a 20-year period. The steel crisis which struck at the end of the 80's and early 90's and spelled the conversion of ENSIDESA, the principal firm operating in the district, gave rise to a serious crisis in the region and a sudden depopulation of the Avilés municipality which today has **83,800 inhabitants**.

The 50's and 60's were also years of important migratory movements for the Roma population both within the region and from other parts of Spain. The Asturian Roma who traditionally worked in the livestock trade, as seasonal field hands, basket weaving and other subsistence activities, settled in the region's developing areas in urban centres such as Oviedo, Gijón and Avilés, and the Nalón and Cauda basins. These groups were joined by other Roma families mostly from neighbouring areas such as León, la Coruña, Santander and the Basque Country. The Roma settled on the outskirts of emerging cities building shacks grouped together in different areas.

Table 7. Distribution of the Roma population in Avilés by shanty-town in 1989.

Shanty-town	No of persons	No of shacks
Villalegre	268	42
Panavisa	38	9
Supercash	48	8
Fuente Santos	17	4
Los Canapés	10	2
Heros	2	1
Avda. de Gijón	1	1
Divina Pastora	49	12
El Reblinco	120	20
TOTAL	553	99



Source. Municipal Social Services Centre

The Roma population lived in a state of marginalisation characterised by the virtual inexistence of regular, stable employment, shanty-town living, unhealthy conditions, urgent sanitation problems, low school-enrolment rates, etc. and the situation grew even worse over time due, inter alia, to the natural growth of the population. It was at the end of the 80's that the first serious initiatives emerged to address the problem.

2. Shanty-Town Eradication Programme (Spanish acronym PECH)

A series of initiatives were taken by the Spanish central government at the end of the 80's which had repercussions on how the Roma situation would be addressed. In 1989 a Plan for the Development of the Roma People was created under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and budgetary funds were earmarked for the co-financing of programmes with Autonomous Communities and Municipalities. In 1988 the Co-ordinated Scheme for the Implementation of Basic Benefits was put in place to bolster the role played by social services agencies in the cities and towns. Beginning in 1989, funds were channelled from the 0.52% of personal income tax which citizens may set aside if they so desire, for social initiatives targeting excluded groups (Roma among them) through programmes managed by NGOs.

In 1989 the City of Avilés launched what was known as the Ethnic Minority Integration Scheme (Spanish acronym PIME) focused on documentation, school enrolment, health-care and labour market integration. Within the framework of this scheme, duly noting that the resolution of the Roma community's housing problems was essential for integration, the Avilés Shanty-Town Eradication Programme (Spanish acronym PECH) was launched. Two schemes would be implemented over time (the first broken down into two stages) and, due to economic resource allocation, etc., three different phases can be identified: the first from 1989 to 1996, the second from 1996 to 2000 and the third from 2000 to the present time.

2.1 Objectives of the PECH

The overarching objective of the PECH is to eradicate shanty-towns in Avilés by facilitating access to standard housing, with measures supporting socio-labour market integration of the Roma population and fostering intercultural co-existence.

This major objective calls for integrated intervention in different areas of action with operational objectives, definition of responsibilities and resources:

- **Housing:** Foster access to dignified housing facilitating co-existence and social integration; refurbish the urban environment once occupied by eradicated settlements.
- **Training and employment:** Improve personal and social employability of Roma.
- **Education:** Enrol all minors in school and raise awareness as to the importance of formal education as both a right and an instrument providing passage to mainstream society on an equal footing.
- **Health-care:** Foster habits which will raise living standards.
- **Social participation:** Encourage internal (within the Roma community itself) and external (with mainstream society) communication processes with a view to enhancing mutual awareness and improving intercultural co-existence.

2.2 Phases of the PECH

Phase one, 1989 to 1996

This phase marked the launching of the programme. In 1990 a study was conducted to analyse the situation. The initiative was carried out mainly through social services which attended to 770 Roma, 60% of whom were living in shacks. **Action focused mainly on Villalegre, the largest shanty-town.** An agreement was signed with the San Martín Charity Construction firm which would take responsibility for acquiring and rehabilitating homes intended for the resettlement of shanty-town families. Scant human and economic resources with which to address established objectives obliged responsible parties to limit their areas of action and to reschedule deadlines. **All the while, resettlement operations to standard housing situations (urban flats) were undertaken during this period, although insufficient.**

Phase two, 1996 to 2000

More families were relocated in standard urban housing but this phase was especially **characterised by the inauguration of Valliniello, a transition village in an isolated area of the city (on the opposite bank of the estuary).** This was a transitional arrangement with two-storey homes (36 in all) whose purpose was to help Roma families from shanty-town settlements to adapt to this new situation with a view to incorporating them into standard housing within a five-year period. This adaptation process entailed integrated programmes focusing on social intervention, co-existence, home and neighbourhood upkeep, scholastic monitoring of children, health education, employment, etc.

Phase three, 2000 to the present

This phase was marked by the **approval of a new shanty-town eradication programme casting doubts on the transitional housing model (in light of the latter's failure) and launched a work model featuring new objectives and a significant budget increase**. The Social Welfare Committee took the decision to create an ethnic minority working group comprised of a variety of different social players (including Roma families) who agreed upon a new plan. The San Martín Charity Construction firm was turned into a Foundation with the participation of several different public administrations. The goal was to permanently eradicate all shanty-towns and by 2003 the towns of Villalegre, Divina Pastora, Fuente Santos, Superchas and Gaxín had all disappeared. Encouragement was provided for relocation initiatives in standard flats which the Town Hall purchased, rehabilitated and rented to Roma families with the support of the San Martín Charity Construction firm. A new home rental programme was simultaneously implemented.

2.3 Players and work methodology

2.3.1 Municipal leadership in the project

The most important characteristic of the PECH is that both the initiative and leadership have come from the city government throughout the entire process. This leadership has been more or less enthusiastic depending upon the political party in office but the initiative has always come from the local authorities in light of **administrative decentralisation right down to the municipal level and the principle of subsidiarity between government administrations**. Hence, it is the city government which decides to implement the plans, orchestrates them, exercises leadership and implements the structures it deems most suitable to carry them out.

This municipal leadership has always solicited central government resources made available through the National Roma Plan and the Co-ordinated Scheme as well as regional funds through cooperation agreements with the Principality of Asturias. Furthermore, work approaches have always been established according to the principles, guidelines and social and housing programmes of the regional and central governments.

2.3.2 Partnership as a work methodology

The experience gained during phase one and two of the programme and lessons learned from mistakes made, motivated the city to come up with a new work strategy beginning in 2000. This was possible thanks to a change in government, growing social awareness of these problems, the increasingly important role played by professionals and the good will and understanding of all involved.

The **decision taken by the Social Welfare Council (advisory body for social policy) to create the ethnic minority working group comprised of the different stakeholders**, and especially the way work was conducted to arrive at a consensus on the fundamental pillars of action and the 28 key measures, was an extremely important factor in the results obtained during the last phase. The very fact that this group was comprised of technical experts, politicians from different parts of the spectrum, social entities and Roma associations **marked the beginning of a social**

consensus process providing strong citizen-based enthusiasm for the development of this project.

The group identified 28 initiatives in four priority action areas: housing, education, health and employment, all four approved unanimously by the political groups forming the municipal government at the time of the 2nd Municipal Plan for the Eradication of Shanty-Towns, Resettlement and Social Integration of the Population. This plan expressly rejects the transition village model in favour of integration into standard housing within the urban structure of the city and defines clear steps in the resettlement process involving families from shanty-towns and from the transition villages.

Table 8. Entities comprising the Ethnic Minority Working Group

Political parties represented in the Municipal Plenum, legislative period 1999-2003.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socialist Party - People's Party - United Left Party - URAS Representative
Collaborating social entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cártas Inter-parish of Avilés - Local Assembly of the Red Cross - Fundación Secretariado General Gitano - UNGA Socio-cultural Association - San Martín Charity Construction firm
Roma Groups and Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - La Quel de los Chaborrós - Divina Pastora Women's Association - Transition Village Families
Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unión General de Trabajadores - Local division of the Comisiones Obreras Trade Union
Municipal Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Development and Employment Service - Educational Service - Social Services

Source. Municipal Social Services Centre

2.3.3 Mobilisation of resources and creation of synergies

The different public and private entities forming the network became involved in addressing the priority areas of action thus making the execution of the 2nd Municipal Shanty-Town Eradication Scheme possible with the financial support of the Town Hall and the Principality of Asturias and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the technical and social support of the different municipal services involved and entities such as the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), Fundación San Martín (FSM), the Red Cross, UNGA, Cáritas, Roma Associations and trade unions.

Clearly defined priorities, work mechanisms and functions on the part of each of the entities helped in the organisation of resources and allowed the new opportunities offered by the projects and actions presented to fit into the priorities established and into the common work project.

2.3.4 Integrated approach of actions

This is an integrated plan insofar as, in addition to putting the **major focus on housing**, i.e. the eradication of shanty-towns and the transition village called Promotional City of Valliniello, the **other key aspects of education, health, employment and co-existence are also addressed**. The municipal social services are the ones that take the initiative in the coordination of actions and approach each person and family on an individual basis in accordance with their personal insertion itinerary thus leading to the creation of common information tools. This coordination effort puts a priority on operational understanding in everyday work thus preventing the creation of burdensome inter-departmental structures between the municipal and regional governments which could slow down the taking of decisions and would be inefficient.

2.3.5 A specific and specialised entity to undertake resettlements

The San Martín Charity Construction firm was a private social initiative founded in 1968 with the aim of providing housing for those families unable to acquire it on their own. At its early stages it purchased homes on the market or constructed new buildings which it subsequently sold to renters under advantageous conditions. It eventually became the perfect instrument at the service of the municipal administration to resettle families with housing needs.

The transformation of the construction firm in 2001 into the San Martín Foundation with members from the different administrations and social entities on its Board of Trustees, has given it renewed impetus in seeking solutions to the housing problems endured by excluded persons. Its time-proven experience, the support it receives from different entities, its specialisation and agility have made it an ideal instrument for the undertaking of relocation processes which would proceed much more slowly if they were managed directly by the municipality.

The San Martín Foundation is in charge of finding homes and, in accordance with municipal social services and based on the criteria of the PECH, takes the decision of whether to acquire them or not. It subsequently renovates them as required and, based on established criteria, chooses the family to which the home will be awarded. An agreement is reached with the family, a rental contract is signed, and a price suited to the family's socio-economic conditions is established. Social intervention with the family continues after the relocation process has been concluded consisting in monitoring integration into the new neighbourhood. During the process, especially in the past few years, several evictions have taken place due to non-payment or non-compliance with the leasing contract.

2.4 Resources, economic investment and financial backers

2.4.1 Mobilised resources

One of the characteristics of the **programme** is that throughout its recent development **it has taken advantage of all available opportunities to attract economic resources, establish synergies with the different entities and, in short, make the best of available means in an efficient manner**. We would draw attention to the following:

- Various different agreements between the Avilés Town Hall and the Principality of Asturias which finance the purchase and refurbishing of the homes.
- Funding channels from the Central Government for social intervention with Roma families through the National Roma Plan and the Programme to Combat Social Exclusion.
- An agreement by which municipal housing resources earmarked for municipal workers also include shanty-town families among beneficiaries.
- An agreement between the Avilés Town Hall and the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) to bolster social intervention and implement the ACCEDER project focusing on labour counselling and labour market integration of Roma.
- Priority given to resettled persons in local and regional socio-labour market integration schemes by means of personalised accompaniment itineraries.
- Fostering of Roma participation in training and employment programmes undertaken at the municipal level such as the Global Subsidy Project, Equal, etc.
- Collaboration with organisations such as the Red Cross, Cáritas, UNGA and the FSG for support in individualised social intervention and accompaniment projects with families.
- Conducting of a Municipal Census of Shanty-Town Families and police control of new settlements through the figure known as the Shanty-Town Controller.
- Transformation of the legal status and strengthening of the San Martín Foundation, a mediation entity and key part of the programme, providing it with sufficient human and material resources.
- Through the Minimum Insertion Income labour programme, important maintenance was undertaken on homes designated for the relocation of shanty-town families.
- Organisation of group activities such as: workshops, school for fathers and mothers, school hygiene activities, seminars and conferences, festivities marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racism and Xenophobia, organisation of leisure and free time activities.
- Initiation of the Experimental Programme for Access to Rental Housing for the Roma ethnic minority in collaboration with the Principality of Asturias and the San Martín Foundation.
- Thorough analysis of the status and impact of the programme by means of a study conducted through an agreement with the University of Oviedo.
- Design of an information-gathering instrument under way to provide all collaborators with a common tool with a view to objectivity and subsequent use of information.

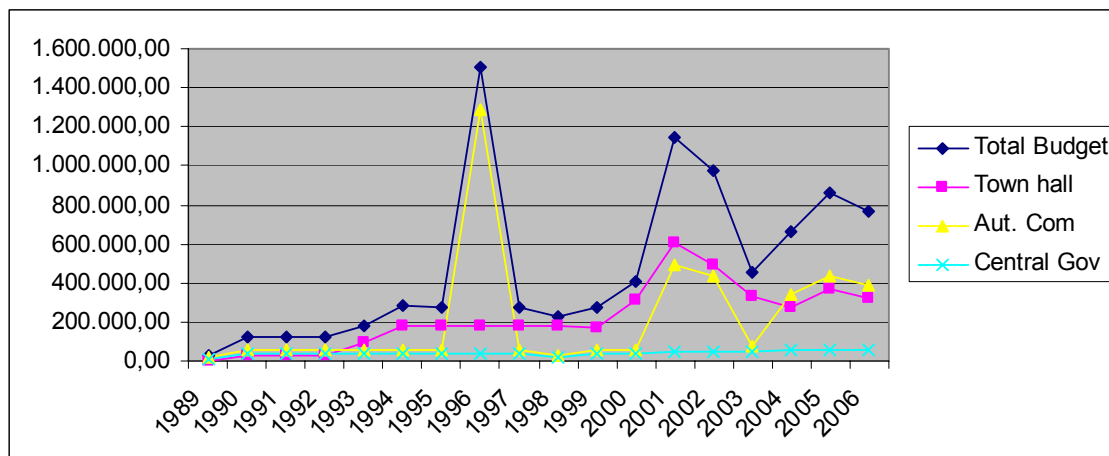
2.4.2. Economic investment and financial backers

The following table shows budget investment in the programme throughout its implementation. **Programme expenditure over the past 18 years has totalled €8.691.610,05 and was furnished as follows: 45.3% from the Town Hall, 46% from the Principality of Asturias (regional government) and 8.4% from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.** The table shows that, with the exception of just a few years, central government funding was steady over time and rose during the last few years thanks to the Programme for the Eradication of Poverty. The Autonomous Community has participated every year as a co-funder but the amounts have fluctuated. Of particular significance was 1996 because that was when the Transition Village of Valliniello was built, and also the years 2000, 2001 and 2002 when there was an increase in the number of homes purchased. The Town Hall has steadily increased its funding, especially in 1996 and 2001-2002.

Table 9. PECH budget 1989-2006 (expressed in euros).

Year	Total budget	Town Hall	Aut. Community	Central Adm.
1989	32,845.31	0.00	19,707.19	13,138.12
1990	120,202.42	24,040.48	57,697.16	38,464.74
1991	120,202.42	24,040.48	57,697.16	38,464.74
1992	124,512.36	24,040.48	60,283.13	40,188.75
1993	178,603.46	90,151.82	53,070.98	35,380.66
1994	281,505.21	180,303.63	60,720.95	40,480.63
1995	272,841.46	180,303.63	55,522.70	37,015.13
1996	1,506,998.04	180,303.63	1,289,679.28	37,015.13
1997	272,841.46	180,303.63	55,522.70	37,015.13
1998	226,633.87	180,303.63	27,798.14	18,532.10
1999	272,222.44	171,801.11	60,252.80	40,168.53
2000	410,228.81	308,525.22	61,022.15	40,681.44
2001	1,140,983.50	603,512.61	490,765.89	46,705.00
2002	977,123.29	496,029.16	432,899.37	48,194.76
2003	455,825.00	334,825.00	72,600.00	48,400.00
2004	666,354,00	272,677,00	338,491,00	55,186,00
2005	865,479,00	373,461,00	434,710,00	57,308,00
2006	766,208,00	319,538,00	387,849,00	58,821,00
TOTAL	8.691.610,05	3.944.160,51	4.016.289,60	731.159,86

Source. Municipal Social Services Centre 2003



Budget item breakdown shows that the largest expenditures corresponded to the purchase of homes on the market and the construction of the Valliniello transition village. In analysing the budget it is very important to highlight the extraordinary investment made in 1996 accounting for nearly 25% of total programme spending for the construction of the Valliniello transition village which was dismantled just four years later when it was decided that the model chosen was neither ideal nor did it foster integration. It has, therefore, been a very costly operation, and not only owing to the initial investment but also due to maintenance costs and related social programmes. In light of the fact that all of these families have had to be resettled again between 2000 and 2007, costs have doubled thus substantially increasing the price of per-family relocation. Furthermore, acquiring a home at 1996 prices was 50% less expensive than in 2005 meaning that with the investment made today, more than double the number of families could have been resettled in 1996.

Therefore, there are currently three types of housing actions undertaken with the Roma population: social protection housing to which the families have access according to standards set by the appropriate regulations; the eradication of shanty-towns, addressed to families that still live in shacks; Renting Programme, which has recently been put in motion and represents a new alternative and allows to keep all Roma families from living in social housing.

3. Main Results of the Programme

3.1 Current status of the Roma population targeted by the PECH

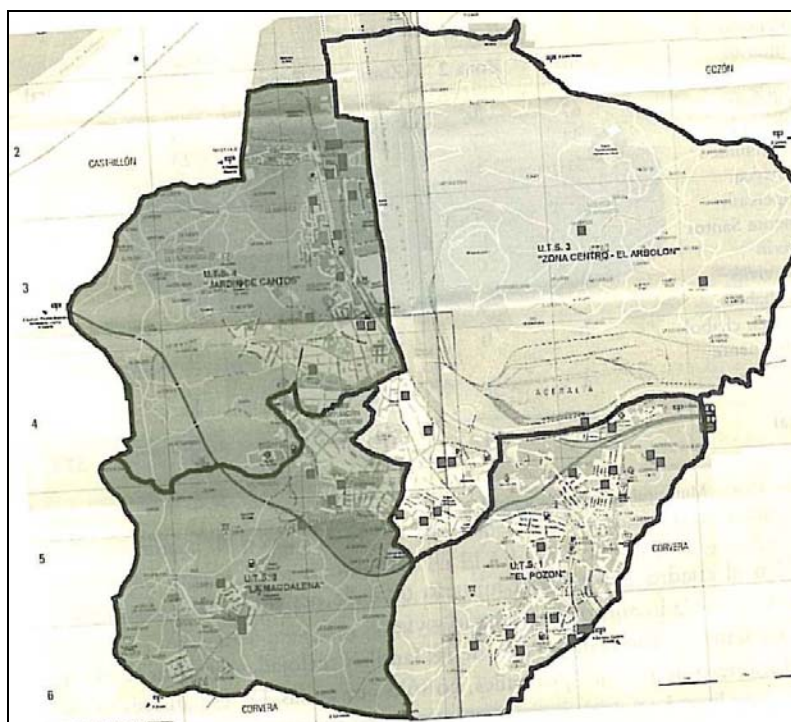
For the sake of economy in this document, this section will **only include the most relevant data relating to housing and the current habitat (2003 data) of the shanty-town families participating in the PECH⁴.**

It is important to point out that **one of the criteria considered when resettling families was the distribution of the Roma population throughout the municipality.** The table shows that housing purchases and rentals took place in four different parts of the city. There were also 12 relocations outside of the municipal district (to neighbouring municipalities). This initiative was

⁴ More detailed socio-demographic information can be found in the book entitled *Erradicación del Chabolismo e Integración Social de los Gitanos en Avilés* pp. 113 to 160. Universidad de Oviedo and the Avilés Town Hall.

taken in the case of families considered to need a home with special characteristics which was not available within the municipality. These were found with the help of the social services of the towns hosting the relocated families.

Map Distribution of flats used for resettlement in Avilés



When distributing families throughout the city's different zones, **an effort was made not to relocate more than one family in the same block of flats.**

Table 10. Current type of housing of the surveyed population by zone

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Outside of the Mun.	Total	Percentage
Shanty-town	0	0	0	17	0	17	2.94%
Transition village	0	0	179	0	0	179	30.97%
CBSM	81	58	21	81	48	289	50.00%
Flat/ individual home	7	0	5	0	0	12	2.08%
VPP	39	13	9	0	0	61	10.55%
Municipal	0	0	7	0	0	7	1.21%
No address	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.17%
Don't know/ no comment	0	0	0	4	8	12	2.08%
TOTAL	128	71	221	102	56	578	100%

Source. Municipal Social Services Centre

This table shows the type of lodging in which Roma families taking part in the relocation scheme are currently living. According to the initial census, 121 families were targeted for relocation while 110 have actually been relocated and of these, 74 are now living in standard housing mostly made available through the San Martín Foundation. It should also be mentioned that of

the 36 families which initially were housed in the Valliniello Transition Village only 9 remain because the rest have been relocated to standard housing.

3.2 Results achieved

3.2.1 The most relevant results of the programme to date are as follows:

- Eradication of all shanty-town settlements in Aviles.
- 112 shanty-town families resettled in standard housing in line with geographical dispersion criteria and tailoring homes to the characteristics of each family.
- 14 families accessed a house for rent in the regular market
- 17 Roma families taking part in the Experimental Programme for Access to Rental Housing initiated in 2005 were provided with housing on the mainstream rental market.
- High “standardisation” rate concerning aspects such as health, documentation and school enrolment.
- Contribution to mainstreaming and advancement in Roma community access to the labour market: individualised insertion itineraries (IMI, current Basic Social Salary, local employment schemes, access to vocational training resources such as workshop schools, FIP schemes (professional insertion training), Social Guarantee, employment workshops, etc.).
- Improvement in urban environments at the old shanty-town settlements through different urban planning initiatives.
- Fostering of specific associative movements especially those focusing on youth and women (associations such as *Mulheres Divina Pastora*, *L’quel de los Chaborros*, *Mujeres Bambani*, *Mujeres Chachipen*).
- Increased interaction and intercultural co-existence between the Roma and non-Roma populations.
- Scant social conflict during the relocation process.
- During the final phase the programme has also achieved:
- Wide-ranging political and social consensus in respect of the integration of ethnic minorities in our municipality.
- Progressive integral intervention on exclusion through networking which facilitates action on complex social vulnerability processes leading to exclusion.

3.2.2 Lessons learned

Below is a list of **elements which those involved in the project deemed important** and which were discovered as the project unfolded.

Essential elements contributing to the successful implementation of this project:

- Networking.
- Broad-based social participation including beneficiaries.
- Consensus-seeking within the community.
- The simultaneous implementation of different schemes, programmes and projects in the same region and with complementary objectives and intervention strategies involving different administrations and entities.

- Rejection of the transition village model in the 2nd Eradication Plan and the progressive dismantling and restructuring of the one already built, relocating its inhabitants to standard housing.

Work methodology and content:

- The broad-based participation and social consensus achieved, together with the involvement of beneficiaries, contributed to the success of the project.
- Networking allowed for the simultaneous implementation in the same region of different schemes, programmes and projects with complementary objectives and intervention strategies.
- The involvement of different administrations in planning, evaluation and funding contributed to the project's multi-dimensional aspect.
- The importance of integrating specific shanty-town eradication schemes in more ambitious programmes targeting social inclusion and which consider the complexity of situations.
- The experience-based conviction that concentrated resettlement in one single enclave does not contribute to intercultural co-existence nor to the integration of minorities.
- Specification of objectives through operational measures.

Opportunities for improvement:

- Greater involvement of neighbourhood entities in the process which would most certainly reduce rejection from the community.
- Heighten awareness within the Roma community as to the need for education as an added value enhancing employability, establishing measures by which to prevent early dropout as students advance from primary to secondary school.
- Foster a change of attitude among Roma, encouraging co-responsibility in social inclusion processes.
- Intensify follow-up on resettled families.

III. Housing and Roma: Reflection and Debate based on the Avilés Experience

1. Complexity of the Housing Issue

As we have seen, despite the momentous changes that the Roma community has undergone in Spain over the last several decades, the wide array of situations and radical change exhibited by the younger generations, the path leading to permanent integration in society and the rectification of inequalities suffered is still long and arduous. Major progress has been made in terms of incorporation into economic activity but precariousness and underemployment are still high, discrimination remains an important issue, the health-care situation leaves much to be desired and educational deficit is making it difficult to overcome social inequalities.

When it comes to housing, stellar efforts have been made. In just a few decades, the vast majority of the Roma population, historically segregated from mainstream society and living in

sub-standard conditions, is now living in standard housing situations alongside the rest of the population and is enjoying at least decent minimum standards. However, **although the correct model appears to be mainstream housing, the latter still has a lot of room for improvement.** Moreover, we should not lose sight of the fact that **population growth**, conditioned by a high birth rate and short generational cycles, **spells constant demographic pressure** which should be borne in mind when devising any medium-term programme.

While action taken with the Roma community should be integrated and address basic areas such as housing, education, employment, health, co-existence, there can be no denying that **Spain's experience has proven that access to dignified housing in a standard, non-segregated context, is an all-important springboard to advancement and almost certainly a prerequisite for integration.** This is true not only because it dignifies the situation of these persons but also because interaction and co-existence with non-Roma, in the case of most families, leads to a change of attitude, habits, social expectations and a substantial improvement in their self-image. Also, **the move from a segregated habitat to a mainstream environment represents a point of no return** in the insertion journey of nearly all families.

One cannot deny that on many occasions the changes to which the Roma population has been subjected are due to specific urban development policies, political changes and social pressures and oftentimes are brought about in the absence of any logic or economic rationality. It is no less true, however, that on many other occasions (Avilés being the case in point) it is pro-active and decided institutional action that gets the ball rolling. **The issue, therefore, is one of processes and of generating the conditions so that these can flourish** and it is here that aspects such as firm political will and consensus, social mobilisation, status reports, the role played by technical experts, the awareness-raising role played by the media, etc. are of the essence.

2. Action Principles

There are a number of principles and key action criteria which can be deduced from the Avilés experience and others like it which should be borne in mind when implementing housing initiatives with the Roma community. The fact that these principles are shared and well-known does not guarantee that they are necessarily paid much heed in the implementation of programmes given that limited resources, the situation at a given moment, pressure and emergencies often render them impractical.

1.1 Involvement of the different administrative levels.

In light of the breadth of the work that needs to be undertaken and the economic, political and social implications, municipal governments are clearly unable to meet this challenge on their own (not only from an economic standpoint but also due to social and political repercussions). This makes **collaboration between different administrations a must in order to gather needed resources.** Avilés is an excellent example of consensus-seeking between the three administrative levels which must have clearly defined notions of the competences of each one in the project at hand. A **prerequisite** for the participation of different administrations is therefore **political consensus** – a basic underlying condition contributing to the reduction of social conflict and the prevention of a biased media analysis.

1.2 Activation, partnership and networking.

Experience has taught us that the most successful resettlement initiatives have been those characterised by broad-based participation and social consensus. When these actions involve people from disadvantaged groups (or groups stigmatised by a negative social image such as Roma), rejection is often the response and this can be remedied or palliated by encouraging participation and dialogue with the different stakeholders, based always on a decision and the firm will of the government to seek solutions. The working group created in Avilés within the framework of the Council is an example of participation and involvement of the different public and private actors enabling the pursuit of common objectives and the transmission of coherent messages.

1.3 Clear leadership and responsibility sharing

Working in partnership arrangements does not mean that everyone does a little bit of everything but rather entails proper coordination, responsibility sharing, synergies and making efficient use of resources. Moreover, not all entities are able to operate on the same level and it is therefore important to identify a clear leader to empower, coordinate, organise and, in short, to be the driving force behind the project. In the Avilés case we observed that the role of the municipal government was key and in many other cases the lack of a clear leader has rendered projects unviable. This has also been the case when a joint body is created among different government administrations. **This leadership must be endowed with functions, responsibilities, etc. and must be based on an acquired credibility, merits for its good work in the past, acknowledged by the other participating parties.**

1.4 Permanent solutions leading to normalisation.

Permanent solutions must be sought rather than transitory measures which simply shift the problem or postpone its solution, oftentimes making it worse. This was the case in Avilés with the transition village. Segregated settlements do nothing to promote the integration of their residents and, in most cases, are a source of social conflict. **Provisional solutions tend to prolong the problem over time and end up being much more costly.** Also, when relocating people to flats, the concentration of families in the same blocks, on the same street or even in the same neighbourhoods should be avoided. We saw how the Avilés programme made an effort to relocate the Roma population in four different zones throughout the city. Relocation which is exclusive to low-income districts tends to encourage the resettlement of other families, the *ghettoisation* of local schools and, in short, segregated urban environments. Sustainability efforts need to be made in the neighbourhoods and their surrounding areas.

1.5 Housing measures imbedded in global action schemes

Relocation measures cannot be envisaged individually from an urban development perspective but rather require a more integrated vision of the myriad of factors exerting an impact on the situation of the most disadvantaged families and the socio-economic development of neighbourhoods. **The aim is not limited to providing a dignified home but also includes creating the conditions and environment that facilitate opportunities for social incorporation.** That is why housing initiatives must go hand-in-hand with social accompaniment and must likewise link up with objectives such as socio-labour market integration, educational

and health-care mainstreaming initiatives and the fostering and enhancing of intercultural co-existence, taking full advantage (and adding to) existing local resources. The PECH was implemented within the framework of the municipal Roma scheme.

1.6 Commitment and action over the medium term

We must not lose sight of the fact that, **to a large extent, the Roma social incorporation process entails generational turnover, meaning that real change will be perceived over the long-term.** That is why government administrations and projects cannot be linked to one single legislative period but must have continuity over time. Despite a mid-stream shift in philosophy, the PECH has been ongoing since 1989. Many other schemes, however, are cut short and not only fail to achieve their objectives but are also stigmatised with a sense of failure on the part of the administration and have led to frustration on the part of Roma.

1.7 Individualised approach based on community support

It is important to devise a general “model” providing action guidelines in relocation processes and helping to prevent the dispensing of piecemeal solutions based on isolated situations. However, we must also bear in mind that not all Roma share the same needs nor do they all require the same responses, **i.e. attention must be individualised.** There are persons or families that, owing to their activities or other circumstances, should not be resettled following standard practice. In some cases it is advisable to seek solutions individually tailored to their conditions. This was the philosophy applied in the PECH.

1.8 Monitoring, surveillance and control mechanism.

From the moment the decision is taken to undertake a resettlement scheme, it is important to conduct a swift but rigorous census of the dwellings and families affected and to implement a control mechanism to prevent the arrival of new families, people taking up residence in uninhabited dwellings and the re-emergence of shanty-towns. If this precaution is not taken, the influx of new Roma groups to the area and the arrival of family members of existing residents will render the project unviable. The *controller* was a vital part of the success of the PECH. Furthermore, follow-up should be done on an ongoing basis allowing for the implementation of swift measures to head off potential problems.

1.9 Participation, involvement and commitment on the part of the relocated population.

It is vital to **encourage the participation of the beneficiary population and to solicit their opinions** and also to **secure the commitment of families to the housing process** and their subsequent social inclusion. Roma rights must be guaranteed and they must also be educated in respect of their duties. This means that Roma families must make an economic contribution (mortgage or rental payment arranged with a bank, for example) commensurate with their income level. In this same connection, a social incorporation agreement should be set up defining the commitments assumed by both families and social services in terms of their inclusion (education, health-care, social benefits, access to employment, community co-

existence, etc.). This commitment and educational effort should also be made on the group level, especially in the neighbourhoods in which people are being relocated.

1.10 Positive expectations and ongoing checks

One of the reasons behind the failure of many relocation schemes is the lack of positive expectations on the Roma themselves and their willingness to change and scepticism towards the commitment of government agencies. In the Avilés case, the enthusiasm of those involved in the project, especially the technical experts from the different government administrations and participating entities, was vital in giving it the necessary impetus and ongoing review and improvement. These positive expectations are closely linked with the search for updated data, the yearning to gain insight into other experiences and conduct assessments, all of which is an integral part of a programme's success.

3. Debate and Controversial Issues

There are other issues which are more controversial given that opposing approaches have proven to work well depending on the location and the circumstances. We will now address some of them:

Programme leadership

In the Avilés case we saw the importance of the decentralisation principle, meaning that decisions were taken on the local level. It was very important in this case that the Town Hall was the one to take the initiative and leadership of the PECH in collaboration with the rest of the administrations. The grass-roots nature of the municipal administration, first-hand knowledge of families, the ability to respond to needs, etc. was vital. However, this is not always the case. In many other cases it has been the Autonomous Community which has proven most effective in taking the initiative and leadership given that municipal officials may be subjected to urban development and social pressures making it more difficult for them to take the initiative (for reasons of political unpopularity) and rendering the approach incoherent. In other cases, a supra-municipal approach can be instrumental in resolving shanty-town problems simultaneously in several different towns, in redistributing the population, etc. In any case, **the overriding controversy here is who is really responsible for housing issues or rather, what competences or responsibilities should be vouchsafed to each administrative level and how to guarantee that each actually meets those responsibilities.**

Dependence or emancipation

The undertaking of integrated actions calls for concentrating ample resources and services on the Roma population and also entails accompaniment. In a great many cases this has led to dependence of the Roma population on public resources which eventually are abused and instead of educating people to become increasingly autonomous in resolving their problems, we are actually providing them with a subsystem which does the work for them. In the case of the Avilés programme, the approach employed was both rigorous and integrating. The

administration took responsibility for setting up the rules of the game and work was done on an individual basis with group reinforcement. This is not always the case, however. **The risk of generating dependence on public services and NGOs does not question the virtue of specific programmes targeting the Roma population. It does, however, require us to re-think how these services are conceived**, their temporary nature and their integration and coordination with mainstream programmes intended for the population at large.

Rental housing or home ownership

The model employed by the PECH in Avilés was public (and recently private) rental of homes to the Roma population and this system proved to be very positive. However, there are other cases where public assistance has been made available (subsidies, soft loans, etc.) for Roma families to purchase their homes. Many hold the opinion that families who own their home take better care of it because it is theirs, it is the final solution and the government has no more commitments with which to comply. It is also true, however, that lack of subsequent government control can lead to the sale of the property which was acquired with public funds.

In search of new measures

The recent changes which have taken place in the area of housing in Spain, within the Roma community and as concerns housing policy have made it necessary to look beyond traditional relocation models as the only alternative and to seek new programmes with new approaches. The housing rental programme implemented in Avilés is an example of just that. New intermediation, accompaniment, transition, neighbourhood remodelling and other initiatives are emerging throughout Spain. These new approaches attempt to deal not only with the traditional problems of shanty-towns but also to address issues such as overcrowding, the demands of young families, guarantee of non-discriminatory treatment in gaining access to the mainstream housing market and the de-concentration of Roma in certain parts of standard neighbourhoods.