Historical partnership with Fundació Privada Pere Closa to advance the education of Rroma youth and the dissemination of Rroma culture in Catalonia

Grantee: Fundació Privada Pere Closa
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Website: www.fundacionpereclosa.org

The Fundació Privada Pere Closa is a Spanish non-profit foundation established in 1998 by a group of young Rroma who recognised limited access to formal education and vocational training as a significant barrier to social and economic inclusion. Since its creation, the organisation has worked to expand educational opportunities for Rroma children and young people, strengthening their skills, autonomy, and prospects for further education and employment while supporting their cultural identity.

Over the years, the Fundació Privada Pere Closa has developed more than 35 projects across education, social inclusion, and the promotion of Rroma culture. Its programmes support children and young people enrolled in primary or secondary education, as well as in professional or university studies, to access the job market, strengthen social participation, be citizens with full rights without relinquishing the cultural heritage that forms an integral part of their identity.

In Catalonia, where Fundació Privada Pere Closa carries out much of its work, alongside programmes in other autonomous communities of Spain, child poverty remains a significant challenge, with approximately one in three children and adolescents at risk of or living in poverty. Rising housing costs and deteriorating household living conditions have placed additional pressure on vulnerable families, while socio-economic disadvantage continues to have a significant impact on children's educational opportunities and outcomes.

These structural inequalities disproportionately affect the Rroma population, particularly children and young people. Across Spain, around 15% of people under the age of 30 are neither in education nor employment, compared with approximately 63% among Rroma youth. Educational disparities are similarly pronounced, with early school leaving among Rroma students reaching around 64%, while participation in post-compulsory secondary education and university remains very limited. Together, these barriers restrict access to further education and employment, reinforcing cycles of socio-economic exclusion across generations.

Educational segregation and the relationship between some Rroma people and the school system are significant factors in these disparities. In Catalonia, around 17% of schools are classified as highly complex or highly segregated, while more than half of Rroma students attend segregated schools, often characterised by a high concentration of Rroma pupils. Beyond the effects of segregation on educational quality and academic opportunities, differences between the cultural frameworks of schools and Rroma families can create additional barriers to participation. Limited understanding of Rroma culture within educational institutions, combined with persistent stereotypes and low expectations towards Rroma students, can undermine trust and reinforce perceptions that education does not reflect or recognise their identity. At the same time, some families may view formal education with apprehension when they perceive it as distancing children from their cultural heritage. This mutual lack of understanding can leave students feeling unsupported or isolated within their educational journey, affecting motivation, self-

esteem, and their sense of belonging at school. Combined with socio-economic disadvantage and structural discrimination, these factors can contribute to absenteeism, grade repetition, disengagement, and early school leaving, further limiting opportunities for continued education and social and professional inclusion.

In this context, Fundació Privada Pere Closa works to improve the educational outcomes of Rroma children and young people through targeted socio-educational interventions that engage students, families, and schools throughout the learning process. By providing academic support, strengthening dialogue between families and educational institutions, and promoting gender equality among adolescents, the organisation seeks to reduce barriers to participation, prevent early school leaving, and create more inclusive educational environments.

Central to this approach is the recognition that educational inclusion should not come at the expense of cultural identity. Despite enduring social and institutional discrimination, Rroma people have maintained a rich cultural heritage, including their history, traditions, and the Romani language, which remains one of Europe's significant minority languages but faces challenges in its intergenerational transmission and limited presence within formal education. The organisation therefore works to increase knowledge and recognition of the diversity of Rroma culture, both within schools and across wider society, challenging stereotypes and promoting a more accurate and positive understanding of Rroma identity. By bringing educational support and cultural recognition together, the Fundació Privada Pere Closa seeks to strengthen students' sense of belonging and confidence in their identity while expanding their opportunities for further education, employment, and full participation in society.

The Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation - Delegació a Catalunya (NaEPF) has supported the Fundació Privada Pere Closa since 2019 through four successive grants, reflecting a sustained partnership focused on advancing educational opportunities and social inclusion for Rroma children and young people. This collaboration continues through the current three-year programme, running until July 2029, which focuses on promoting educational success while strengthening the recognition and transmission of Rroma culture. The initiative aligns with NaEPF's commitments to education, social inclusion, and the protection of vulnerable communities, while building on its long-standing engagement with Rroma people and locally rooted initiatives in Catalonia.

In 2023, the partnership led to the establishment of the Elsa Peretti–Pere Closa Study Awards, which supported 200 primary and compulsory secondary school students, followed by 150 students in both the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 academic years. Beyond the Study Awards, NaEPF's support has enabled Fundació Privada Pere Closa to extend its socio-educational activities to more than 3,500 primary and secondary school students each year, working in collaboration with schools across Catalan municipalities and a network of socio-educational professionals.

Building on this long-standing partnership, the 2026–2029 grant will further address persistent educational inequalities affecting Rroma people in Catalonia, focusing on the structural, social, and cultural barriers that can limit students' educational attainment and future opportunities. The programme brings together four interconnected areas of intervention: education, gender equality, culture, and communication.

Each year, approximately 170 Rroma students will receive tutoring, mentoring, and after-school educational support, with 150 students also benefiting from study grants to help meet education-related costs. Working closely with families and schools, Fundació Privada Pere Closa will seek to strengthen students' engagement with education and reduce the risk of early school leaving. The programme will also deliver participatory gender equality activities for Rroma adolescents aged 12 to 16, addressing equal opportunities, gender-based violence, and youth empowerment.

Alongside these interventions, storytelling, theatre workshops, and educational activities centred on Rroma history and culture will reach approximately 3,800 students each year, fostering intercultural understanding and challenging persistent stereotypes within school communities. A dedicated communication component will extend the programme's reach by sharing its results and raising wider awareness of Rroma education, culture, and educational inclusion. Implemented primarily in Badalona, Sant Adrià de Besòs, Barcelona, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Santa Coloma de Gramenet, and Lleida, the initiative ultimately seeks to improve educational outcomes, advance gender equality, and strengthen the recognition of Rroma culture within Catalan society.