

**WARSAW ROMANI, SINTI AND TRAVELLERS WOMEN' DECLARATION AT
THE OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING, WARSAW,
POLAND**

PREAMBLE

At the invitation of the OSCE CPRSI, 40 representatives of Roma organizations, experts and scholars from different countries met on the 26th of September 2012, to discuss the recent developments regarding the situation of Romnia particular, the empowerment of Romani (including Sinti and Traveller) women.

We, Romani women gathered in Warsaw at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, express unanimously our deep concern on the situation of Romani women during the economic crisis.

We are concerned about the stringent reforms and austerity measures which are put in place in several countries, designed to revive the financial sector and strengthen macroeconomic stability. The most difficult consequence of this, perhaps, is that the European governments have not addressed the social consequences of the economic crisis.

Several studies and reports show the deep poverty and multiple deprivations faced by Roma that have a strong gender dimension, particularly amongst those Roma who are living in ethnically and socially segregated settlements. Long term poverty, and the social and economic exclusion that Roma face today, have an intergenerational dimension. If it is not tackled now, during the economic crisis itself, they will remain in an continuous poverty trap. Neglected and unaddressed injustices, inequality, institutional discrimination and racial violence against Roma are undermining the European democracies.

Today, when European politicians and policy makers are discussing the various austerity measures against the economic crisis, they should not forget about the long-lasting social consequences of these policies, particularly on vulnerable groups, such as Roma.

We Romani women face gendered- and ethnic-based multiple discriminations. We are convinced that when societies are in danger of severe economic turmoil, there is evidence of significant rises in violence against women and disadvantaged ethnic groups. Romani women bear the burden of these intertwining social effects.

We believe that Romani women's social, economic and political empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and fair democracy.

CONCERNS

Fiscal stimulus packages disempowering Romani women and reproducing their disadvantaged position.

European governments are using public infrastructure and public work projects as a stimulus packages. They believe that these are the most effective tool in reaching a wide range of unemployed workers, as they are open with regard to education and labor market experience. However, often public works programmes are put forth with discourses that label Romani

people as people who do not want to work ,whom governments need to “activate.” Studies have shown that public works are very expensive and ineffective at integrating Roma into the labor market. Also, our concern is that these fiscal stimulus packages are not engendered. These stimulus packages do not provide opportunities for empowerment, and do not reflect the needs of Romani women.

State should protect social spending

Many austerity measures, unfortunately, do not protect social spending, especially on education, health and social services. Instead of increasing the social expenditures in these sectors, in many countries the governments are doing the opposite, namely decreasing these expenditures, and thus transferring these burdens onto women in the family, affecting mostly the poorest women, such as Roma.

The austerity measures are defeating and seriously damaging the commitments of the European governments on the social and economic integration of Roma. This was reaffirmed by a European Commission’s document on *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*. Also we are concerned about the Romani women's participation and the implementation of gender equality within the EU Roma Framework.

Gender equality and empowerment for Romani women

As Romani women, we are concerned that our interests are not taken into account and we are not participating in the mainstream gender equality regime. For instance, the *EU Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015*, as one of the important strategy documents does not refer to the particular situation of Romani women, thus there is no any planned intervention to empower Romani women.

The mainstream gender equality framework should provide a space and opportunity for Romani women to participate and integrate their concerns, thus strengthening solidarity with the mainstream women’s organizations.

WE CALL UPON PARTICIPATING STATES

General:

- To uphold their commitments and obligations under various international frameworks, such as gender equality and the protection of human rights of Roma;
- To show serious commitment and transpose sectorial policies combined with Roma integration strategy into practice at national and local level;
- To ensure necessary administrative and financial resources for implementing policies for Roma integration and ensure that the upcoming planning for structural funds include Romani women among priorities;
- To ensure that gender equality is one of the priority areas in the implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the NRI strategy
- To make the best use of EU provisions in connection with the new planning period (2014-2020) regarding use of funding of ESF and particularly the ERDF for housing and marginalized communities which effect Romani women

- To increase efforts to combat racial and gender discrimination at all levels, in particular education and employment and to engage in partnership with the Roma civil society organizations and the Roma communities.
- To put an immediate end and ensure adequate support for to all families who face collective deportations, forced returns and repatriations.

WE RECOMMEND TO THE PARTICIPATING STATE

Education

- Ensure access of Romani, Sinti and Traveller girls and boys to obligatory education
- Prevent and combat school drop-out and ensure return of early leavers
- Prevent and combat segregation in education by adopting anti-segregation policies; revise education acts to ensure inclusive and non-discriminatory education; adopt definitions of segregation; enforce existing anti-discrimination legislation; enforce international legislation on anti-discrimination, children's rights and gender equality.
- Increase participation in tertiary education
- Create a specific scholarship for girls to increase their participation in higher education on specific fields, such as medicine, public administration, etc.
- Improve national Roma integration strategies on education by including concrete gender-specific indicators
- Prevent the enrolment of healthy Romani children into special education, do not let the segregate Romani girls and boys in schools for mentally handicapped as it happened in the Czech republic as addressed in the European Human Rights court case DH and others vs. Czech Republic decided on 13 November 2007.
- Re-test Romani pupils from schools for mentally disabled against misdiagnosis and create the conditions for their integration into mainstream schools.

Housing

- Legalize illegal settlements in order to provide security of tenure and property rights for accessing basic rights.
- Ensure the right to adequate housing
- Address housing segregation
- Improve national laws on forced eviction, including on alternative housing and family support
- Implement a moratorium on all mass evictions until the proper legal framework is in place to ensure that unlawful or arbitrary evictions do not occur and that any evictions are in compliance with international human rights law, including as informed by General Comments No. 4 and 7 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacements, prepared by the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing.
- Ensure compliance with international human rights law on housing; ensure that all residents enjoy security of tenure that guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats.

- Revise national laws on social housing and protect against discrimination in the law and implementation
- Provide the necessary infrastructure in remote and disconnected Romani neighborhoods.

Health care

- Ensure access to health care of Romani, Sinti and Traveller women
- Increase the number of Romani, Sinti and Traveller women to achieve universal treatment for Romani, Sinti and Traveller women
- Prevent and combat discrimination in hospitals (segregation in maternity awards)
- Compensate victims of forced and coerced sterilization

Employment

- Employ Romani women in state institutions at local and national level
- Create active measures for employment for Romani, Sinti and Traveller women in line with the targets of EU 2020 Strategy
- Encourage further training for employers and managers to manage cultural diversity and hire Romani, Sinti and Traveller women.
- Provide mechanisms for effective protection against discrimination of Roma in the labour market and workplace.
- Conduct information campaigns and build partnerships at the national, regional, and local level to promote the labour insertion of Roma.
- Reconcile family and working life of women, including the support of families and children's facilities (kindergartens and other facilities).
- Increase Roma and Sinti women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, self-employment, financial services, property and other productive assets, such as skills development and market information.
- To adjust the professional training of Romani women to the market needs as well as move from the traditional crafts to the modern innovative approaches.

Freedom from violence

- Ensure freedom from all forms of violence through preventing and addressing domestic violence, early marriages, trafficking, begging.

Policy development and implementation

- States should ensure that they meet their human rights commitments through the implementation of adequate policies on Romani, Sinti and Traveller women

- Revise national Roma integration strategies to be in line with the European Commission recommendations and based on the 10 Common Basic Principles, especially that on gender equality.
- Demonstrate commitment through the allocation of budget on Romani, Sinti and Traveller women
- Compile, analyze and use disaggregated data on gender and ethnicity, while ensuring protection of personal data.
- Impact studies on Roma policies and programs in the area of education, health care, employment, housing, social protection, participation in public and political life.

Empowerment

- Ensure space for Romani women to participate and define their own priorities
- Design and implement programs on Romani women with Romani women
- Urge OSCE MS, where Traveller communities live, to ensure the visibility of Travellers, especially Traveller women.
- Urge international organisations such as the OSCE, EU, UN, CoE to ensure visibility and participation of Traveller women.
- Urge the Irish government to officially recognize Travellers as an ethnic/minority group, as recommended by human rights bodies, such as the CERD.
- Urge the French government to officially recognize Roma as an ethnic/minority group, as recommended by human rights bodies, such as the CERD
- Media promotion of the positive image of Roma women, changing the public opinion and explaining their socio-economic situation.
- Take measures to eliminate discrimination against minorities to participate in political election.

WE RECOMMEND TO THE OSCE INSTITUTIONS

The Permanent Council

- To discuss and review in a special meeting the implementation of Action Plan on Roma and Sinti, and the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality based on the recommendation of the Romani women civil society actors. In this context, the Permanent Council should mandate the OSCE/ Gender Section in cooperation with the ODIHR CPRSI to make a better use of the existing OSCE gender mainstreaming mechanisms with a view to enhance the participation and status of Romani women by the participating States and also by the various OSCE institutions.
- To upgrade the profile and strengthen the status of the OSCE/ Gender Section. We suggest creating a specific unit on women who face multiple discriminations, such as Romani women.

WE RECOMMEND TO THE EUROPEAN UNION:

- To increase its support for capacity building and empowerment of Romani women civil society and organizations, increase its efforts targeting Romani women and youth and design programs with a view to increase the civic and public participation of Roma communities, including in political life of their societies.
- EU and governments of Member States should make use of the lessons learned from the previous structural funds planning period. They should take into a consideration of the analysis of civil society actors on the implementation of structural funds. Also we consider that there should be a closer and more thorough monitoring and analysis of the extent of the improvement of the Roma situation.