



December 2012

European Women's Lobby Position Paper

Tackling multiple discrimination of Romani and Traveller Women- a crucial factor for the successful implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies

Executive summary

Over the last few years, European Union institutions and agencies have increasingly addressed the human rights situation of Roma and Travellers in Europe. Discrimination and other human rights abuses against Roma and Travellers remain however widespread and no European government can claim a fully successful record in protecting the human rights of the members of these minorities¹. This Position Paper focuses specifically on the experience of Romani and Traveller women who are often exposed to multiple and intersectional discrimination on grounds of gender and ethnic origin and have limited access to employment, education, health, social services and decision-making. The discrimination can occur within the mainstream society in a context of growing anti-Roma racism, but also within their communities by reason of their sex. Romani women also run a higher risk than non-Romani women of being exposed to all forms of violence against women, notably domestic violence, trafficking and exploitation while facing additional obstacles in accessing protection.

Key facts and figures²:

- Participation in education drops considerably after mandatory school-age for both Traveller and Romani girls and boys. Data from Eastern European countries show that Romani women's educational attainments are half those of Romani men;
- Romani and Traveller women face severe exclusion in the field of employment as well as racist discrimination in the workplace when looking for employment or employed. According to UNDP/World Bank/EC data, the unemployment rates for Roma women is on average one third higher than those of Roma men;
- More Roma women say their daily activities are limited because of health problems. Cases have been reported of some hospitals regularly segregating Roma patients away from non-Roma patients, especially in maternity wards

¹ Council of Europe, *Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe*, February 2012, available at:

http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/prems/prems79611_GBR_CouvHumanRightsOfRoma_WEB.pdf

² Despite some recent large-scale surveys and research on Roma like the Fundamental Rights Agency - UNDP 2011 survey, there is a general lack of data on Roma across Europe and even more gender-disaggregated data that enable us to have a full picture of the situation of Romani women in all their diversity in Europe. We have for example been confronted with the absence of data on Romani women as migrants in Europe.



- Romani women have been facing abuses in the health care system such as forced sterilisation, segregation in maternity wards, refusal to treat or give medical check-ups by physicians and the need to pay for medical consultations. The poor socio-economic conditions of women and children increase their health risks, drastically reducing women's life expectancy as well as increasing infant mortality rate as compared to non-Romani women and children.
- Romani and Traveller women are confronted with inadequate housing conditions in segregated and often polluted areas and experience forced evictions, all of which hinders their access to basic rights, affects health conditions and compromises socio-economic activities and development. The FRA 2011 survey shows that about 45% of the Roma lived in households that lack at least one of the following basic amenities: indoor kitchen, indoor toilet, indoor shower or bath and electricity;
- The great majority of violence and human rights abuses against Romani women goes unreported due to a number of factors: firstly, violence against women is still accepted in patriarchal societies as a legal exercise of power; secondly, there is a fear of further stigmatisation of the Roma community by exposing intra-group violence; thirdly, perpetrators of violence against women are rarely held accountable for their acts, which discourages women from seeking legal help; fourthly, as there is a general mistrust between the police and the Roma communities (including cases of violence), Romani women fear further victimisation by the police (and/or others)³ and losing the support of their families and communities. In addition, some women might be facing additional obstacle for accessing protection linked to their residence status.
- Romani and Traveller women's participation in political life at local, national and EU level continues to be very limited and inadequately documented.

Despite the adoption of a European Parliament Report in 2006 on the situation of Roma Women and "10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion"⁴ by the Council of the European Union in which one of the principles relates to gender awareness, the vulnerable situation of Romani and Traveller women has, in practice, remained unaddressed by European and national policy-makers. The EWL Position Paper aims in this context to highlight recommendations for European and national decision-makers in order for public policies, especially National Roma Integration Strategies, related to both Romani people and to gender equality in general, to fully address women's rights and needs.

³ IMECE Turkish Speaking Women's Group, *Empowering Women or Perpetuating Victimhood: Minority Ethnic and Roma Women's Experiences of Domestic Violence Policy and Service Provision*, London Training and Employment Network, Regional Social Welfare Resource Centre, 2010, available at: <http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?article985&lang=en>

⁴ European Parliament resolution on the situation of Roma women in the European Union (2005/2164(INI)), available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0244+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>; The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion were presented at the first Roma Platform meeting on 24 April 2009. They were annexed to the Council conclusions of 8 June 2009, available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf



Introduction

Over the last few years, European Union institutions and agencies have increasingly addressed the human rights situation of Roma⁵ and Travellers in Europe. Discrimination and other human rights abuses against Roma and Travellers remain however widespread and no European government can claim a fully successful record in protecting the human rights of the members of these minorities⁶.

This Position Paper focuses specifically on the experience of Romani and Traveller women who are often exposed to multiple and intersectional discrimination on grounds of gender and ethnic origin and have limited access to employment, education, health, social services and decision-making. The discrimination can occur within the mainstream society in a context of growing anti-Roma racism, but also within their communities by reason of their sex. Romani women also run a higher risk than non-Romani women of being exposed to all forms of violence against women, notably domestic violence, trafficking and exploitation while facing additional obstacles in accessing protection.

Despite the adoption of a European Parliament Report in 2006 on the situation of Roma Women and “10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion”⁷ by the Council of the European Union in which one of the principles relates to gender awareness, the vulnerable situation of Romani and Traveller women has, in practice, remained unaddressed by European and national policy-makers. The EC Communication on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 from 5 April 2011, which represents an important milestone towards Roma inclusion, is unfortunately an example of failure of the integration of a gender equality perspective, which has been reflected in the majority of National Roma Integration Strategies until now⁸. The EWL Position Paper aims in this context to highlight recommendations for national and European decision-makers in order for public policies, especially

⁵ In the Romani language, rom is a masculine noun, meaning "man, husband", the plural is roma. Romani is the feminine adjective, while romano is the masculine adjective. In this position paper, we use the term Roma as a noun for the whole community while we use Romani as an adjective. At the European Union level, policy-makers have chosen to use the term Roma to encompass different related groups throughout Europe (Roma, Sinti, Manouches, Kalés, Kaalés, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkalis, Égyptiens, Yéniches, Travellers, Doms, Loms, etc...), nevertheless taking into account cultural diversity and lifestyles. We have thus kept the same terminology when we are referring to EU policies.

⁶ Council of Europe, *Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe*, February 2012, available at:

http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/prems/prems79611_GBR_CouvHumanRightsOfRoma_WEB.pdf

⁷ European Parliament resolution on the situation of Roma women in the European Union (2005/2164(INI)), available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0244+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>; The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion were presented at the first Roma Platform meeting on 24 April 2009. They were annexed to the Council conclusions of 8 June 2009, available at:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_10_Common_Basic_Principles_Roma_Inclusion.pdf

⁸ See: *An EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, COM(2011) 173 final, 5 April 2012, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0173:FIN:EN:PDF> ; *National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework*, COM(2012) 226 final, 21.05.2012, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0226:FIN:EN:PDF>



National Roma Integration Strategies, related to both Romani people and to gender equality in general, to fully address women's rights and needs.

1. The gender equality dimension in access to education

Literacy rates are an indicator of the multiple disadvantages that Romani and Traveller women face. The gap in literacy rates for Romani and Traveller women is not only a gendered one, but also an ethnic one. A survey carried out by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) in 2011, covering 11 EU Member States, shows that participation in education drops considerably after mandatory school-age for both Romani girls and boys: only 15% of young Roma adults surveyed had completed upper secondary-general or vocational education⁹. Other data from Eastern European countries show that Romani women's educational attainments are half those of Romani men and that their educational level is significantly lower than that of non-Romani women:¹⁰

- According to the 2001 Bulgarian census, only 4.23 % of Romani women have completed secondary education, and a tiny fraction (0.24 %) completed higher education. In comparison, an average of 40.54 % women in Bulgaria completed secondary education and 18.79 % higher education. Thus, the participation rate of non-Romani women in the education system is almost ten times higher than that of Romani women.¹¹
- In Romania, 3% of Romani women have reportedly completed secondary school, as opposed to 63% of women in general.¹²

Irish and UK Travellers have also lower educational achievements than national average: in Ireland, only 3.1 % of Irish Travellers continued their education past the age of 18 compared with 41.2% for the general population¹³. Poor access to educational establishments, together with experiences of discrimination, verbal and physical abuse in the educational system have been identified as primary reasons for the continued high school drop-out rate in the UK Gypsy and Traveller communities¹⁴.

Romani and Traveller girls are often pressured for various reasons to leave school at an earlier age. This has long-standing consequences: for example, women who have had either no schooling or who have completed the lower levels of schooling only are more prone to early marriages as is the case within

⁹Fundamental Rights Agency – UNDP, *The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States*, 2012, available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/roma>

¹⁰ Balogh, L. and Kocze, A., *Roma Women in Europe, Current Issues in Europe Regarding the Social and Political Inclusion of Romani Women*, policy paper issued for the 'Roma Women in Focus' conference, Budapest, 7 April 2011, organised by Női Erdek, European Women's Lobby, Nemzeti Civil Alapprogram.

¹¹ Balogh, L. and Kocze, A., *ibid.*

¹² Open Society Institute, *Research on Selected Roma Education Programs in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2002, available at: http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/Education%20Resources/a_intro1_20010428%281%29.pdf

¹³ Census 2011, Ireland, available at : <http://www.cso.ie/en/census>

¹⁴ Cemlyn, S., Greenfields, M., Burnett, S., Matthews, Z. and Whitwell, C., *Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities (UK)*, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Research Report 12, 2009, available at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>



many other socio economically disadvantaged communities. A survey carried out by Center Amalipe in Bulgaria shows that 50% of the Roma with the lowest educational level already have a partner at the age of 16, while the average age of first cohabitation among persons with higher education is 23 years (the most common age is 28 years). At the age of 25 about 50% of Roma with higher education have already a partner.¹⁵ In particular, Roma women in rural villages and segregated neighbourhoods are more at risk of finishing elementary school at a later age or not at all.

Many Romani and Traveller girls (like their male counterparts) are prevented from quality education for diverse reasons:

- Some are placed in a segregated environment.¹⁶
- The threat of and actual evictions have serious short and long term impacts on education.
- The general climate of hostility of politicians and inhabitants towards the Romani and Traveller community in Western Europe feeds into the refusal of local level decision-makers to adhere to the obligation to provide schooling for all children, irrespective of the legal situation of the parents. Refusal to register Romani and Traveller children under various false pretexts is a frequent occurrence, particularly in France.
- Mockery, physical and verbal abuse, bullying and ostracising of Romani and Traveller girls are common and impunity reigns for perpetrators. Generally, there is only limited support from and/or protection by teachers and school administrations. In the UK, Romani and Traveller children have the lowest school completion of all groups and this is due mostly to the bullying and abuse which these children are subjected to in schools.¹⁷

2. The gender equality dimension in access to employment

Data from all countries shows that Romani and Traveller women face severe exclusion in the field of employment as well as racist discrimination in the workplace when looking for employment or employed. Many Romani and Traveller women remain entirely excluded from the formal economy, constrained by limited educational opportunities, inadequate housing, and poor healthcare, traditional gender roles and general marginalisation and discrimination from majority communities. According to

¹⁵ Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance, *Preventing Early Marriages*, 2011, available at: <http://www.amalipe.com/files/publications/ranni%20brakove%20last.pdf>

¹⁶ These practices include: segregation in so-called "special" schools for children with developmental disabilities; segregation in Roma ghetto schools; segregation in all-Roma classes; and denial of Roma enrolment in mainstream schools. Such cases have been reported in Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The European Court of Human Rights case 'D.H. and Others v. Czech Republic' was the first case to challenge the systemic racial segregation in education to reach the European Court of Human Rights. When this case was brought, Roma children in the Czech Republic were 27 times more likely to be placed in "special schools" for the mentally disabled than non-Roma children. In 2007, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that this pattern of segregation violated non-discrimination protections in the European Convention on Human Rights. See: <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/justice/litigation/czechrepublic>

¹⁷ Equality, *From Segregation to Inclusion. Roma Pupils in the United Kingdom. A Pilot Research Project*, 2011, available at: http://equality.uk.com/Education_files/From%20segregation%20to%20integration_1.pdf



UNDP/World Bank/EC data, the unemployment rates for Roma women is on average one third higher than those of Roma men, while in the case of non-Roma the gap between female and male unemployment rates is much lower¹⁸. In economically depressed regions, research has shown that Romani women's alternatives are generally impeded by lack of childcare and their ability to gain employment is effectively reduced to zero.¹⁹ Traveller women who are nomadic are also confronted with the additional barrier of having a profession that is compatible with nomadism and family lives.

Nevertheless, many Romani women are engaged in non-registered income-generating activities as such work is vital for the survival of their families. Such activities are however unprotected by labour, health and safety and social security laws. Case studies of Romani communities show that Romani women often play a central role in ensuring their families' subsistence, organising resources and providing for basic needs. Grandmothers in large families provide support to all family members, operate large networks and mobilise resources. To date, there is no official assessment of the informal, unregistered economic activities carried out by Romani men and women, or of work done in households and for the care of children and elders, which is carried out exclusively by Romani women.

In this general context of discrimination, social exclusion and few formal employment opportunities, Travellers and Roma are more likely to be in need of social protection and are therefore more adversely affected by cuts in social protection. Many Roma migrants and some Travellers face obstacles in accessing social protection because of their difficulty to prove a permanent residence.

3. The gender equality dimension in access to health care

Romani women's role in health-related issues

Romani women play a central role as the primary caregivers in their families and communities and are often intermediaries between their families and public services. In traditional communities, a woman's role is not only to take care of her family's health but also that of her whole community. When it comes to health-related decisions, this means that Romani women are quite often influenced by their extended family. It is important to consider that the relationship with the health care system is complex because it is not only a relationship between the system and one individual but involves the Romani woman's entire family and the whole community.²⁰

Access to health – a key element for social inclusion

While access is only one of many dimensions of health, its improvement is a key step towards narrowing gaps in health care between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Access to health care is a right and a

¹⁸ Fundamental Rights Agency, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Ferenc Babusik, Az ózdi régió cigány népessége Ferenc Babusik, Az ózdi régió cigány népessége [The Roma Population in the Ózd region], in Ferenc Babusik (ed.), 'A romák esélyei Magyarországon,' [The Opportunities of Roma in Hungary] Kává Kiadó, Delphoi Consulting', 200, p. 125.

²⁰ <http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?id=126&page=pageview>



prerequisite for good health without which full participation in social, economic and political life cannot be enjoyed. It is inseparable from access to public services such as education, housing, and social protection, and a precondition to accessing and maintaining employment. Ensuring access to health care for Romani women is thus a key element in ensuring their broader social and economic engagement and social inclusion. Securing Romani women's health not only is of benefit to the women themselves, but of their families, communities and society as a whole. Therefore, commitment to providing the conditions and investment in a healthy, educated, and integrated Romani population on the part of the authorities and wider society will reap benefits for the entire population.

Being a Romani woman - a health risk

Romani women experience multiple discrimination linked to their gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and other grounds. According to a survey carried out in Romania among Romani women between 18 and 73 years old, 23% had experienced gender discrimination in a health care setting. An overwhelming majority (95%) of the Romani women who had experienced gender discrimination also believed that health care professionals discriminate against Roma.²¹ Cases have been reported of some hospitals regularly segregating Roma patients away from non-Roma patients, especially in maternity wards²². These factors prevent Romani women's own personal development as well as that of their communities.²³ The FRA 2011 survey also showed that more Roma and non-Roma women than men said their daily activities are limited because of health problems²⁴.

The poor socio-economic conditions of women increase their health risks, drastically reducing their life expectancy as compared to non-Romani women. In Slovakia for instance, the life expectancy of Romani women is 17 years lower than that of the majority population; for men, the difference is 13 years. For the Romani and Traveller population in the UK, life expectancy is between 10-12 years lower than for the settled population and infant mortality rate (IMR) in these communities are three times higher than the national average²⁵. The IMR for Roma has also been found to be notably higher than national averages throughout Europe.²⁶ Moreover, early motherhood and the absence of contraception is largely a consequence of the lack of appropriate access to social services and inadequate health structures which have not addressed the needs of Romani and Traveller communities by including Romani women/people as health professionals and mediators for example. As a result, Romani women bear the consequences of the lack of government initiatives and abuses in the health care system such as segregation in

²¹ Open Society Institute, *Left Out: Roma and Access to Health Care in Eastern and South Eastern Europe*, Public Health Fact Sheet, Roma Health Project, available at: http://www.soros.org/sites/default/files/leftout_20070423.pdf

²² Council of Europe, *op.cit.*; ERRC, "Gipsy rooms and other discriminatory treatment against Romani women in Hungarian hospitals", 2004, available at: <http://www.errc.org/article/gypsy-rooms-and-other-discriminatory-treatment-against-romani-women-in-hungarian-hospitals/2063>

²³ EUMC, *Breaking the Barriers: Romani Women and Access to Public Health Care*, 2003, available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ROMA-HC-EN.pdf>

²⁴ Fundamental Rights Agency, *ibid.*

²⁵ Cemlyn, S., Greenfields, M., Burnett, S., Matthews, Z. and Whitwell, C., *ibid.*

²⁶ EUMC, *ibid.*



maternity wards, refusal to treat or receive medical check-ups by physicians and the need to pay for medical consultations.

Forced sterilisations

Forced sterilisation in Central and Eastern Europe continues to be one of the most flagrant violations of Romani women's human rights. In Hungary the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) has documented sporadic cases, as recent as 2008. In the Czech Republic cases have also been reported as recently as 2007. In 2009 the Czech government expressed regret to the victims of this practice and the Hungarian Government compensated one victim, but no government has adopted a comprehensive plan to compensate all victims or an adequately reformed health care law regarding informed consent. Although numerous cases have been documented in Slovakia, there has been no government response to date. At present, two cases of coercive/forcible sterilisation brought by Romani women are pending before the European Court of Human Rights against the Czech Republic. Recently, the European Court issued two judgments against Slovakia for violation of the European Convention on Human Rights in cases of unlawful sterilisation of Romani women under circumstances overwhelmingly similar to those of many women in the Czech Republic who have suffered these abuses.

4. The gender equality dimension in access to housing

Throughout Europe, Romani and Traveller women are confronted with inadequate housing conditions in segregated and often polluted areas and experience forced evictions, all of which hinders their access to basic rights, affects health conditions and compromises socio-economic activities and development. The FRA 2011 survey shows that about 45% of the Roma lived in households that lack at least one of the following basic amenities: indoor kitchen, indoor toilet, indoor shower or bath and electricity²⁷. The denial of specific cultural needs with regards to housing and the lack of equal legal recognition for settled and mobile accommodation have a direct influence on Romani and Traveller women's and girls' rights and living conditions.²⁸

Education, health and housing services do not take into account the needs of the Romani and Traveller minorities and do not include representatives of these populations within their structures – let alone women's representatives who are very often intermediaries between authorities and Romani communities. For example, in the UK, Romani and Travellers represent the largest minority in 13% of the municipalities and are nevertheless often excluded from programmes or services to which inhabitants have access.

²⁷ Fundamental Rights Agency, *ibid.*

²⁸ Even when there is a provision for culturally appropriate housing, the policy might not be implemented. This is the case in Ireland.



In addition, Romani migrant women in Western Europe are particularly vulnerable due to their status or lack of resident status. There is a state policy to control Romani migrants which leads to forced evictions, breakdown of family structures, and which compromises access to health, education and employment to the extent of affecting the health and well-being especially of women and children.

5. The gender dimension of human rights violations and violence against Romani women

Domestic violence

There are several human rights reports which give accounts of the violence inflicted on Romani women. Research carried out by the European Roma Rights Centre²⁹ and partner organisations in Serbia found that a great number of Romani women have been victims of domestic violence at the hands of their husbands, in-laws and other family members, in many cases over long periods of time. The great majority of violence and human rights abuses against Romani women goes unreported due to a number of factors: firstly, violence against women is still accepted in patriarchal societies as a legal exercise of power; secondly, there is a fear of further stigmatisation of the Roma community by exposing intra-group violence; thirdly, perpetrators of violence against women are rarely held accountable for their acts, which discourages women from seeking legal help; fourthly, as there is a general mistrust between the police and the Roma communities (including cases of violence)³⁰, Romani women fear further victimisation by the police (and/or others)³¹ and losing the support of their families and communities. In addition, in the same manner as for women victims of violence in general, there are a number of practical issues that make it virtually impossible for young, uneducated Romani girls and women to escape the violent environment they find themselves in. Alternative housing and shelters for abused women, inadequate economic means to survive on their own, the general stigmatisation of Romani women and girls and/or the lack of employment opportunities are all factors that compound their means of escape.

Arranged marriage, forced marriage and child marriage

²⁹ ERRC, Bibija, Eureka and Women's Space Report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women commenting on the Initial Report of the Republic of Serbia, available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/03/7C/m0000037C.pdf>

³⁰ Reports received by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the CoE indicate patterns of discrimination and ill-treatment by police towards Roma and Travellers around Europe. Roma have been subjected to police violence both in detention facilities and public spaces, such as Roma settlements during police raids. Over the past two decades, the European Court of Human Rights has been repeatedly confronted with cases in which Roma people were physically abused by police, including cases in which Roma people died in police custody. Source: Council of Europe, *ibid*.

³¹ IMECE Turkish Speaking Women's Group, *Empowering Women or Perpetuating Victimhood: Minority Ethnic and Roma Women's Experiences of Domestic Violence Policy and Service Provision*, London Training and Employment Network, Regional Social Welfare Resource Centre, 2010, available at: <http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?article985&lang=en>



In some Romani communities, arranged marriage, child marriage and forced marriage are still prevalent as “traditional practices”.³² National authorities bear the responsibility to support Romani girls to access their legal rights and, to raise parents’ awareness regarding their children’s right to enjoy a normal development and to achieve social status on the basis of their own choices. Arranged child marriage is a human rights violation, which exposes girls to sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as precluding educational and employment opportunities for girls. Child marriage also has a significant impact on the health situation of Romani girls, increasing their risk of complications during pregnancy and delivery, which may even lead to death.

Trafficking and prostitution – an overlooked risk for Romani women and girls

To date, research and data have been very limited on the issue of trafficking and prostitution of Romani and Travellers youth and women in Europe. Yet, despite numerous reports on trafficking highlighting the fact that minority groups, particularly Romani communities (in Europe), or girls who grow up in orphanages (among them, Romani children are over-represented in CEE) are more at risk of this human rights violation. Research by the European Roma Rights Centre indicates that Roma are highly vulnerable to trafficking due to structural forms of discrimination and poverty which result in low socio-economic status, low educational achievements and high levels of unemployment. Based on information gathered during primary interviews with law enforcement authorities, anti-trafficking service providers and Romani and non-Romani NGOs, Roma are estimated to represent 50-80% of trafficking victims in Bulgaria, 40-80% in Hungary, 70% in Slovakia, up to 50% in parts of Romania and up to 70% in parts of the Czech Republic. According to Hungarian women’s rights NGO activists, 25-30% of prostitutes in Amsterdam, and 98-99% in Zurich are Hungarian citizens of whom 80-85% are Romani women³³. In addition, very few Roma were reported to access victim prevention and protection services in the target countries. In general, policies for the prevention of trafficking and prostitution are ineffective due to the dramatic failure of social protection systems to provide appropriate protection for Romani women and Romani youth who are most at risk of exploitation.

Racist-sexist violence against Romani women

Increasing violence, threats and intimidation are targeted at Romani women and children by extreme right-wing political groups. Since 2008, in many EU countries extremist populist parties and politicians have sharpened their anti-Romani rhetoric and actions, creating a climate in which violations against Roma are more likely to occur with impunity³⁴. For example, the Mayor of a Hungarian town, Edeleny, and a Member of Parliament, stated during a press conference that pregnant Romani women hit their bellies with rubber hammers and take harmful medicines to increase the chances that their child would be born with disabilities in order to receive increased state financial aid. The ‘Hungarian Guard’, a

³² Nicoleta Bitu and Crina Morteau, *Are the Rights of the Child Negotiable?-The Case of Early Marriages within Roma Communities in Romania*, 2010, available at: http://www.unicef.org/romania/Early_marriages_Romani_CRISS.pdf See also the project ‘Life is wonderful. Preventing Child Marriages’ by Center Amalipe, Bulgaria, <http://amalipe.com>

³³ European Roma Rights Centre, Stakeholder Discussion of Trafficking in Romani Communities, Budapest, 10 December 2010.

³⁴ The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has adopted a Declaration on the Rise of Anti-Gypsyism and Racist Violence against Roma in Europe on 1 February 2012, available at: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1902151&Site=CM>



paramilitary organisation with an explicitly racist agenda, continues to operate openly, despite a decree by the Supreme Court banning it in 2009. In 2011 it was reported by several activists that Romani women and children are one of the prime target of threats and intimidation by a neo-Nazi group in the Hungarian village of Gyöngyöspata.³⁵

6. The gender equality dimension in access to participation and decision-making

Romani and Traveller women's participation in political life at local, national and EU level continues to be very limited and inadequately documented. Notwithstanding the general need for the equal representation of women and men in decision-making, public and political institutions need a balance of women and men whose personal experiences convey a wide range of issues related to Romani people, particularly women. But Roma in general are dramatically under-represented in both state and local administrations. Few Roma occupy seats in the parliaments of their countries or local councils. In most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Roma are either not represented at all in parliament, or there are only one or two Roma representatives.³⁶ Romani and Traveller women's participation in public life is essential for improving the situation of Romani and Traveller women and their communities in general. It represents a driving force for ensuring women's equal right to participate in leadership and decision making.

In relation to civil society, although the number of Romani and Traveller women's NGOs has certainly increased over the years, their inclusion however in non-governmental organisations has not been sufficient to ensure Romani and Traveller women's effective representation and participation in public life. Effective participation in public life requires that Romani and Traveller women leaders and activists play a stronger role in both electoral politics and governmental policy-making. The implementation of EU policies related to Romani and Traveller communities and gender equality will not be sustainable as they are not targeting more than the half of the Romani and Traveller populations, meaning women and children.

EWL RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to ensure the integration of Romani and Traveller women's rights, perspectives and needs within EU and national policies, including in National Roma Integration Strategies, strong, concrete and effective commitments must be made by the European Union, the Member States and their state institutions in relation to promoting Romani and Traveller women's social inclusion and political participation. Delivering on these commitments must start now, and will require specific measures and the mainstreaming of women's rights and gender equality issues throughout the process of preparation, implementation and monitoring policies, notably the National Roma Integration Strategy.

³⁵ RED Rights Equality & Diversity, 4 March 2011

³⁶ <http://www.errc.org/article/romani-womens-participation-in-public-life/1359>



We call upon the European Commission to include the following points in the monitoring and evaluation of the National Roma Integration Strategies:

- *On fundamental rights:*

1. Ensure that the fundamental rights of Romani and Traveller women and men living in Europe are respected, notably by verifying the consistency of Member States' actions with EU primary law and EU legislation; ensure that every Member States develops National Action Plans in the four key priority areas: health, housing, employment, and education with specific goals and targets, funding, indicators and timeframe; evaluate progress by measuring outcomes in implementation;
2. Ensure that the European Union continues the monitoring of the State's progress towards meeting the human rights standards set out for candidate EU accession countries; in particular ensure that the rights of Romani and Traveller women and girls are fully taken into account in the framework of evaluating respect of the protection and improvement of the rights of minorities;

- *On National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS)*

3. Ensure that specific measures for women's rights and gender mainstreaming are included in the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS), and that assessment and annual monitoring by the European Commission, and in particular by the Fundamental Rights Agency, take into account a women's rights and gender equality perspective in each section of the National Roma Integration Strategies and that the findings are presented to the European Parliament;
4. Ensure that women's and Romani and Traveller women's activists and NGOs are represented in the EU and national consultation, monitoring and assessment processes on NRIS and all Roma related policy discussions; ensure increased transparency on the processes, including by organising meetings with civil society at relevant timing.
5. When preparing annual reports on the implementation of NRIS for the European Parliament and the Council, take into consideration a broad range of diverse sources of information and data to ensure comprehensive monitoring and evaluation, such as shadow reports, budget monitoring and other forms of civil society watch (carried out by national NGOs, NGO networks or umbrella organizations), expert assessment (carried out by independent experts with proved expertise in the field) and administrative monitoring.

- *On funding:*

6. Establish financial mechanisms for supporting Romani and Traveller women's participation within the forthcoming Multinational Financial Framework 2014-2020, including support to consultation and drafting of shadow reports and other forms of civil society watch on the situation of Romani women and the NRIS.

The European Union Member States must:



- *On fundamental rights and anti-discrimination:*

1. Ensure that the fundamental rights of Romani and Traveller women, men and children are respected and not implement policies such as forced evictions that would further marginalise them; Apply a gender equality perspective to all policies and practice affecting Romani and Traveller women.
2. Ensure austerity measures do not impact disproportionately on Romani and Traveller women and that budget decisions are underpinned by human rights principles.
3. Ensure that disaggregated data according to gender and ethnicity is collected across all administrative systems and used to inform policy development. Such data collection must be undertaken in line with human rights principle.
4. Ensure that Romani and Traveller women and girls are informed about their rights under existing national legislation on gender equality and anti-discrimination and fully benefit from them;
5. Implement equality in civic rights and in access to health services, education, employment and accommodation that respect human rights, non-discrimination and compatible with nomadism in relevant cases;
6. Ensure the adoption and implementation of specific and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in line with international and European standards in all EU Member States, including tackling institutional discrimination and ensuring that anti-discrimination bodies are equipped to promote equal treatment and complaint mechanisms accessible to Romani women and girls; Recognise all Romani and Travellers communities as ethnic minority groups.
7. Ensure that social inclusion priorities are linked with robust anti-discrimination measures and a zero-tolerance approach to anti-Gypsyism.

- *On National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS):*

8. Ensure that National Roma Integration Strategies reflect Romani women's specific rights and needs and develop concrete indicators for their implementation, follow-up and monitoring, e.g. based on the UNDP's Gender Related Development Index (GDI) such as: long and healthy life, knowledge and decent standard of living; and based on the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) such as: political participation and decision-making, economic participation and decision-making and power over economic resources; Use gender budgeting as one of the tools to mainstream gender.
9. Ensure that women's and Romani and Traveller women's activists and NGOs are represented in consultation, implementation, follow-up and monitoring processes on NRIS and all Roma related policy discussions;



10. Develop national monitoring and evaluation framework for the NRIS that include different stakeholders such as: shadow reporting, budget monitoring and other forms of civil society watch (carried out by national NGOs, NGO networks or umbrella organizations), expert assessment (carried out by independent experts with proven expertise in the field) and administrative monitoring
 - *On employment:*
11. Establish positive action measures to proactively increase access to jobs in public administration for Romani and Traveller women and men;
12. Strengthen entrepreneurship among Romani and Traveller women through facilitating access to micro-credit programmes, introducing simple, entrepreneur-friendly administration and taxation rules for micro businesses and issuing special licenses for the recognition of a range of seasonal, temporary, etc. jobs as “paid work” contributing to social security payments;
13. Develop targeted and integration-oriented measures in the field of unemployment support, (e.g. retraining, job creation and placement through wage support, social security support, tax allowances, etc.) – instead of the current, almost exclusive focus on public work programmes, which are very costly and yet fail to help integration into the labour market;
 - *On funding:*
14. Increase the number and visibility of Roma and Traveller programmes and Roma and Traveller beneficiaries, including specific support to Traveller and Romani organisations working to promote women’s empowerment and access of NGOs to structural funds;
15. Develop financial mechanisms for supporting civil society watch and community monitoring on the social inclusion policy, initiatives and projects regarding Romani and Traveller women;
 - *On health:*
16. Ensure access to health, notably through the participation of Romani and Traveller Women’s NGOs in the design, implementation, and evaluation of health programmes and policies that affect their lives and addressing social factors like housing conditions;
 - *On education:*
17. Ensure access to equal and inclusive education and life-long learning programmes to all Romani women, men and children, including nomadic Travellers communities by providing in this case an intercultural education system.



18. Invest resources into attracting “non-traditional learners” to further their educational training, and give support to NGOs and programmes whose goal is to further the inclusion of non-traditional learners through education and adult learning programmes.
19. Ensure access to good quality and affordable childcare;
20. Promote networks of Roma and Traveller students, to encourage solidarity between them, the visibility of reference points of success and overcoming the loneliness of Roma and Traveller students;
21. Encourage the participation of Romani and Traveller families in schools; evaluate the schools where Roma children and youth study and make all necessary changes to ensure the educational integration and achievement of all; specific intervention should target Romani girls, based on successful actions validated by the academic community.