

# STRATEGY ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF ROMANI WOMEN AND GIRLS (2014-2020)



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



## Strategy on the Advancement of Romani Women and Girls (2014-2020)

### INTRODUCTION

Romani women<sup>1</sup> across Europe face the additional burden of racism as well as gender discrimination, which push them to the margins of their societies. Low educational achievement, high rates of irregular attendance and school dropouts, high unemployment rates and poor employment opportunities deprive Romani women and girls of realistic possibilities for integration and full participation in society. Lack of personal documents hinders the possibility for many Romani women and/or girls to access education, health care, employment and other related services. Increased racism and anti-Gypsyism in the context of a global economic crisis and international mobility of Romani families affects the safety of Romani women and girls, making them increasingly vulnerable to social exclusion, exploitation, trafficking and violence. Traditional family roles that many Romani women find themselves in, creates additional mechanisms of exclusion. Early and child marriages are still recurrent among Romani girls and boys in traditional families. While there is a positive ascending trend in the gender relations between Romani women and men, there is yet a long way to go for Romani women to become autonomous and feel that they can make choices outside pre-assumed ascribed gender roles.

Romani women and girls are often excluded from consultation and decision-making processes on legislation, policies and programmes, including those that are specifically designed to address their situation. This contributes to a lack of, or a limited perspective on Romani women and girls in policies on gender, social inclusion or Roma which further hinders Romani women's equal access to resources and their full participation in all spheres of public and private life. While some progress has been made in recognizing the multiple discrimination of Romani women and girls and the inequalities they face in their access and distribution of resources and public services, the lack of disaggregated data by gender and ethnicity addressing the status of Romani women and girls across European countries prevents policy makers and human rights advocates from devising viable and meaningful policies and measures for the advancement of Romani women's rights and of their situation at local and national level. The lack of data further prevents the opportunity for establishing a base line and providing a possibility for adequate monitoring and evaluation.

Romani women and girls' empowerment and gender mainstreaming are key to achieving gender equality and strengthening democratic societies. The process of mainstreaming Romani women and girls' concerns and priorities, both in policy and practice would enable public policy to advance equality and to combat discrimination by facilitating better policy responses to meet the needs of people who experience inequality such as Romani women and girls. Gender mainstreaming would also introduce a culture of disaggregated data collection by gender and ethnicity, impact assessment, monitoring and review into the public policy process and thus enhance the effectiveness of Roma specific policies; and not lastly, it would eliminate barriers for Romani women and girls experiencing inequality, reduce poverty, boost economic growth and strengthen citizenship.

Investing in educating Romani girls, increasing literacy rates among Romani women, increasing Romani women's labor force participation and strengthening labour policies affecting women, improving their access to credit, land and other resources and promoting Romani women's political rights and participation are some of the important driving factors to Romani women's empowerment.

Therefore, it is essential to address the multiple discrimination and social exclusion of Romani women and girls in a systematic and comprehensive way, in order to achieve full enjoyment of their rights and substantive gender equality and good governance.

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<sup>1</sup> Romani women is a generic term used to cover all diverse groups of women that associate with the plight of Romani women, such as women belonging to Sinti, Manush, Kale, Dom, Lom, Gypsies, Travellers, Yenish, Beash, Ashkali, Egyptians, and other related groups.

## CONTEXT

Notwithstanding the multiple and intersectional discrimination faced in all areas of their life, Romani women and girls are still waiting to become part of priorities at national level. Despite notable actions by many international organisations in addressing concerns of Romani women and girls, Romani women are still excluded from most policy making processes at local and national level. The discourse involving Romani women and girls has yet to be accompanied by elements of real empowerment through gender mainstreaming approaches, which should not be unique to them, but in the same way the principles of gender mainstreaming and empowerment are applied to non-Romani women. The reluctance to do so should not be justified, however, the lack of information on the situation of Romani women at local level, as comprehensive worldwide reports demonstrate that poverty, discrimination, social exclusion and gender inequality manifest and affect women of various backgrounds in a similar way.

Romani women's issues first emerged in the mid-90s with the support of international organisations, which have started both an internal process of identifying institutional mechanisms to address Romani women's issues within as well as collaborative efforts together with Roma NGOs and other international organisations in promoting and supporting Romani women's issues and building capacity in women's groups and activists.

One of the first important opportunities for Romani women to make their voices heard was the First Congress of Roma from the European Union, organised with the support of the European Commission, in May 1994, in Seville, Spain, where Romani women from all over Europe discussed their problems for the first time. The outcome of the meeting was a 'Manifesto of Roma Women', which referred to the situation of Romani women in Europe and stressed the need for having access to education as a means to empower their fight against discrimination and patriarchal rules within and outside the family. Similar notable participation of Romani women have taken place in 2000 at the Beijing Plus Five meeting in New York and at the UN World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, where Romani women raised issues such as forced sterilisation, unemployment and domestic violence.

Among other international organisations, the Council of Europe (CoE) started to raise awareness on Romani women and youth in 1995 when the Steering Committee for the Equality between Women and Men held a 'Hearing of Romani women' in Strasbourg. The same year, the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe organised a training session for young Roma leaders and as a result, the Forum of European Roma Young People was established in 1998. A series of seminar on Romani women and discrimination of youth have been organized since; unfortunately, the youth related issues promoted by the Council of Europe have remained, to a large extent, isolated from the Romani women's rights broader agenda.

In 2003, the Council of Europe raised the issue of Romani women again through a series of training, campaigns, meetings and studies. In 2003, the Migration and Roma/Gypsy Division conducted, together with the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the study on 'Breaking the Barriers - Romani Women and Access to Public Health Care'. The Report was aimed at helping policy and lawmakers understand the nature for healthcare access for Romani women and to assist them to improve the design and implementation of policies on Romani women and health. In the same year, the Council of Europe and the FRA, in partnership with national governments, started to support initiatives by and of Romani women, such as the establishment of the International Romani Women's Network (IRWN), and to provide forums for Romani women to define policy priorities and facilitate exchanges of information and country experiences.

Since 2007, a number of member States have joined the Council of Europe in an effort to increase the visibility of Romani women and girls' concerns at international level, while providing a bigger forum for Romani women to exchange experiences and elaborate common agenda. In September 2007, the Council of Europe organised, together with the Swedish Government, the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference of Romani women in Stockholm followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of Romani Women in Athens, together with the Greek government in January 2010, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Romani Women's Congress in Granada together with the Spanish Government in October 2011. On the 17-18 September 2013, the Government of Finland organized the 4<sup>th</sup> International Romani Women's Conference in Helsinki in co-operation with the Council of Europe. An Internet page on the International Conferences has been created on the official Council of Europe Internet site.

Gender mainstreaming and a focus on Romani women are an increased priority for the Support Team of the Special Representatives for Roma issues in 2014. A number of follow-up initiatives to the Helsinki Conference have been envisaged and supported with the contribution of the Finnish Government, amongst which are the follow-up work to the

Phenjalipe platform and support for the implementation of this Strategy. In addition, the Support Team included in its activities the objective of mainstreaming gender among its programmes and in other Council of Europe initiatives. In the same vein, the CoE Committee of Experts on Roma issues (CAHROM), appointed a Gender Rapporteur from Finland with the aim at mainstreaming gender within the work of the Committee and has endorsed several thematic reports that address school enrolment, with a specific focus on Romani girls, as well as on measures to reduce school dropouts, absenteeism and school segregation. In 2013, the CAHROM paid particular attention to trafficking of Romani women and girls and its possible links with early marriages. A joint paper by the European Roma and Travellers Forum and Phenjalipe on early marriages was also presented, which was discussed again at the CAHROM/My 2014 meeting together with the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. In the beginning of 2014, Lithuania requested the setting-up of a CAHROM thematic group on the empowerment of Romani women and the gender dimension of Roma integration policies. Finland, Italy, the Republic of Moldova and Spain are among partner countries. The CAHROM thematic visit to Lithuania was tabled for June 2014. In addition, between 2014 and 2015, the CAHROM will also set up thematic groups on Roma youth empowerment and Roma youth dimension of national policies for Roma, child and early marriages in Roma communities and a thematic group on human trafficking, with a particular focus on Roma women and children.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) started addressing Romani women's issues more consistently in 2003, when the Ministerial Council endorsed the Action Plan for Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area. The 2003 Action Plan is a first comprehensive policy document on Roma, addressing key areas and recommending action by participating States. For the first time, the Action Plan underlines that Roma and Sinti women should be systematically mainstreamed in all relevant Roma policies and should be able to participate on an equal basis with men.

In its work on promoting gender equality, ODIHR also co-operated with the Gender Section and the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, addressing the multiple forms of discrimination against Romani women and girls and the particular vulnerability of Roma to trafficking. It also focused on promoting and supporting voters' education among Romani women, and supported Romani women's NGOs and initiatives in conducting information and voter-education campaigns for Roma communities in Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As part of the "Best Practices for Roma Integration" project, implemented by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in the Western Balkans in 2012 and 2013, Romani women's participation in local elections became a best practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, ODIHR supported a "Campaign to Prevent and Combat the Practice of Early Marriage" in Roma communities in Romania, in 2011. As part of the campaign, a documentary on early marriage was made and activities in ten Roma communities in Romania have been implemented.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, at its Twentieth Annual Session in Belgrade in July 2011, adopted two resolutions on Roma, among which was the resolution on "Promoting policies on equality between women and men of the Roma population". In 2012, ODIHR shifted greater focus to raising awareness on the multiple forms of discrimination and vulnerability that Roma and Sinti women face. The Special Day on Roma and Sinti during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting on 26 September focused on the empowerment of Romani women. Representatives from participating States and Roma women's organisations stressed that education is vital to increasing Roma women's active participation in public and political life.

ODIHR has also placed special emphasis on empowering Roma youth and supporting the Roma youth network TemYpe. In 2011, ODIHR supported the efforts of Roma organisations to enhance youth activism, including training on youth mobilisation and civic participation, which led to the establishment of the Roma Youth Alliance. ODIHR also hosted the third "Roma Consultation Meeting" with more than 40 Roma and Sinti women civil society representatives from across the OSCE region. The consultation meeting led to the adoption of the "Warsaw Romani, Sinti and Travellers Women's Declaration", which highlights the vulnerable situation of Roma, Sinti and Traveller women and the negative impact of government austerity measures on them.

After the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in September 2013, dedicated to the assessment of the 10 years of implementation of the Action Plan on Roma and Sinti, on 6 December 2013 the Ministerial Council endorsed the Decision No. 4/13 on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area, With a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children.

Since 2006, the European Union has focused on Romani women, with the adoption of the European Parliament Resolution on the situation of Romani women in the European Union. The resolution noted that: 'Romani women

constitute among the most threatened groups and individuals in the member States and accession and candidate countries”.

In the context of the 2007 European Council conclusions on Roma and the 2008 European Parliament resolution for a comprehensive European framework strategy on Roma, in 2008 the European Commission issued a staff working document on community instruments and policies for Roma inclusion (COM 2008/420), which underlines that most national strategies for Roma inclusion have tended to be silent on the specific obstacles faced by Roma women and underlines that “the incorporation of gender mainstreaming and specific actions to improve the situation of Roma women in all policies is an important step towards gender equality and social cohesion”; by adopting the “dual approach of gender mainstreaming and specific actions, in order to ensure that the issues faced by Roma women are not left behind and are properly addressed.”

In the same year, the European Commission published the report on “Ethnic minority and Roma women in Europe: a case for gender equality”, which confirms that ethnic minority and especially Romani women are the most vulnerable to multiple discriminations and face higher risks of social exclusion and poverty than the women of the native population and minority men.

As regards the work of the FRA, the Agency has facilitated the work of Romani women networks through the participation of Romani women at international conferences addressing the implementation of national policies on Roma, through training and roundtable discussions, which allowed the Agency to ensure that the perspective of Romani women was integrated in its wider work. A conference “Our Voices Heard” which was co-organised by the Swedish Government, the Council of Europe and the FRA in December 2007, focused on the issues of women’s rights, combating trafficking, reproductive rights and access to public healthcare for Romani women. It was an opportunity to share information and good practices between policymakers and Romani Women’s networks across Europe.

In 2011, FRA published a “Study on the situation for Roma women and men in the EU” in eleven member States and presented its gender-focused report at the joint LIBE and FEMM public hearing on “The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies” on 18 September 2011. The findings showed that on average the situation of Roma women in core areas of social life, namely education, employment, housing and health is worse than that of men.

In 2011, the European Commission issued the European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (thereof “the European Framework”), which aims at making a tangible difference in the lives of Roma by encouraging member States to adopt or develop a comprehensive approach to Roma integration. Gender figures only with reference to the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, whereby member States and candidate countries were encouraged to be aware of the gender dimension when designing their strategies on Roma. In May 2011, the EPSCO Council, when adopting conclusions on the European Framework, highlighted that “special attention should be paid to the interests and difficulties of Roma women and girls, who face the risk of multiple discrimination, and thus a gender perspective needs to be applied in all policies and actions for advancing Roma inclusion.” Nonetheless, most National Roma Integration Strategies failed to mainstream gender and Romani women and girls’ issues appropriately and comprehensively. In this context, the European Parliament Committee on Gender Equality and Women’s Rights, under the leadership of the Vice-Chair Livia Jaroka, adopted, in October 2013, the report on the “Gender Aspects of the European Framework of National Roma Inclusion Strategies”, on the account that gender was either missing or addressed in an incidental and inconsistent way in national strategies. The report calls on member States and the Commission to strengthen gender mainstreaming, conduct gender impact assessments, and consult women’s organisations and Roma NGOs with regard to national strategies. It formulates several specific policy proposals and measures addressing, among other issues, children’s poverty, school dropout and early marriage. In its December 2013 conclusions, the EU Council recommended to member States to combat all forms of discrimination, including multiple discrimination, faced by Roma children and women, and fight violence, including domestic violence, against women and girls, trafficking in human beings, underage and forced marriages, and begging involving children, in particular through the enforcement of legislation.

Since 1999, the Open Society Foundations (OSF) through its various programs started to support initiatives on Romani women at regional and European level, when the Roma Participation Program (RPP) organised an International Conference of Romani Women in Budapest. The OSF supported Romani women through its grants for capacity building of Romani NGOs, ensured an increased quota of Romani women and young girls throughout its initiatives on Roma (ex. the internship scheme for young Roma graduates with the European Commission) and created special initiatives for Romani women with the aim to promote and advance the leadership role of Romani women, build local community-based initiatives led and managed by women activists, and widen the possibilities for more substantive participation through

greater numbers of Romani women in policy development. The OSF is currently awarding three fellowships to Romani women university graduates from Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, 'The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, and Turkey who are committed to engaging in Romani women's rights work.

The Open Society Foundations, the European Roma Rights Centre and other human rights institutions have supported the elaboration and submission of shadow reports by Romani and women's NGOs to various United Nations monitoring committees on Romani women's concerns, calling for action from reporting states such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, 'The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

Despite all these efforts by international organisations to support Romani women's concerns and priorities, Romani women and girls at national and local level have received very limited attention, while the pool of Romani women's NGOs and women's activists at national levels is largely under-represented and under-equipped. Romani women need to be able to affirm and enjoy their rights in order to fully participate in society. Therefore, while Romani women and girls started to be recognised at international level as one of the most vulnerable categories to (multiple) discrimination, social marginalisation and poverty, efforts have to focus on making the discourse of gender equality and mainstreaming a tangible reality for Romani women and girls. This calls for specific and sustainable approaches on Romani women and girls to enable them to become transformers of their lives and that of their communities, whereas actions should focus on raising awareness of local authorities and political elites on the necessity to include Romani women and girls in their priorities.

## PROCESS

On 17-18 September 2013, the Government of Finland organized the 4<sup>th</sup> International Romani Women's Conference in Helsinki in co-operation with the Council of Europe. More than one hundred Romani women from various European countries gathered to take stock of past initiatives and developments at policy and Roma community level and to contribute to a Strategy on ways to advance the status of Romani women and girls in Europe.

The 4<sup>th</sup> International Romani Women's Conference in Finland is part of a series of similar initiatives facilitated and supported by the Council of Europe jointly with various national governments since 2003. Within these forums, Romani women raised concerns, exchanged experiences and mobilised jointly over common purposes. In the context where Romani women expressed concerns over the worsening situation of Romani women at national level and the need for more sustainable ways to act as a network and cooperate with other stakeholders on various priority issues, the process of organising the 4<sup>th</sup> International Romani Women's Conference provided mechanisms for wider consultations with Romani women and engagement of national governments.

In 2012, the Finnish government, which had previously announced its intention and commitment to hold the 4<sup>th</sup> International Romani Women's Conference in Helsinki, organised, together with the Romanian government (the National Roma Cultural Institute) and in co-operation with the Council of Europe, a brainstorming meeting of Romani women's experts and activists in Bucharest, which prepared the groundwork for the international conference and defined ways for an inclusive consultation and involvement of Romani women in the outcome of the conference. This included the creation of online consultations via questionnaires for defining priority areas, open calls for participation in the conference and online streaming of the conference in Helsinki.

During the Helsinki conference, Romani women reiterated the need to build on previous developments and increase visibility on Romani women's issues. A platform initiative called Phenjalipe ('Sisterhood') was launched at the conference aimed at supporting the implementation of the strategic outcome document formulated in the objectives of the conference and further facilitates exchanges of information and coordination at regional level on issues related to Romani women and girls. An own initiative Working Group of Romani women experts undertook to develop a Strategy on the situation of Romani women, which could be used as a framework document for policy makers, Romani women activists and human rights institutions.

The Council of Europe facilitated a follow-up expert meeting of the Phenjalipe Romani women's Working Group in Strasbourg, on 17 February 2014, to facilitate the elaboration of the strategy of Romani women and the development of tools for its effective implementation. The draft Strategy together with a bi-annual draft action plan was put forward for final adoption by the Phenjalipe Informal Platform.

## RATIONALE AND APPROACH

The Strategy for the Advancement of Romani Women and Girls (2014-2020) is a response to the needs expressed by Romani women activists and civil society, human rights institutions, professionals working on gender equality and Romani women's issues, governments and policy makers. The present strategy is the result of consultations with members of the Phenjalipe Informal Platform, civil society, governments and international organisations, with a view to preparing a reference document on the situation of Romani women and girls at European and international level for all relevant stakeholders working on Roma, gender equality, social inclusion and human rights protection.

The Strategy is based on existing human rights standards<sup>2</sup>, regional policies on Roma, Romani women and social inclusion<sup>3</sup> and reports<sup>4</sup> and recommendations on the situation of Romani women at European and international level.

The Strategy outlines objectives and priorities for the advancement of Romani women and girls in Europe and beyond. It identifies the main partners needed to achieve its objectives. The Romani community and women's groups are central to the implementation of the Strategy by various stakeholders.

The Strategy may be used, but not exclusively, by the Informal Platform of Romani Women, Phenjalipe, and other relevant stakeholders to:

- Promote, support and facilitate the process of gender/Romani women and girls' mainstreaming in all relevant policies and programmes;
- Promote, support and facilitate the process of protecting Romani women and girls' rights;
- Promote, support and facilitate the empowerment of Romani women and girls in practice;
- Inform and raise awareness of state authorities, legislators, policy makers and relevant actors on the status of Romani women and girls.

While the Strategy can be used as a stand-alone document by various relevant stakeholders in order to advance the status of Romani women and girls, the Working Group of Phenjalipe developed a bi-annual Action Plan with the aim of attaining the objectives of the Strategy more effectively. The Action Plan will be implemented by the Phenjalipe members in co-operation with relevant international and national partners. The Working Group of Phenjalipe will revise the Action Plan and assess its implementation every two years.

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<sup>2</sup> Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocol, Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Lisbon Treaty, European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, EU legislation on employment and training (Equal pay Directive 2006/54/EC), social security and pensions (Directive 79/7/EEC), access to goods and services (Directive 2004/113/EC), professional, private and family life ((Directive 92/85/EEC) and Recast Directive 2006/54/EC, the EU Racial Directive 2000/43/EC, EU Employment Framework Directive 2000/78/EC etc.

<sup>3</sup> European National Framework for Roma Integration Strategies, 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, OSCE Action Plan for Roma and Sinti, OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Council of Europe Strategy on Gender Equality 2014-2017, Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2012-2015), Europe 2020 Strategy, Council of Europe Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Helsinki 4<sup>th</sup> International Romani Women's Conference report

## I GOAL AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the Strategy is to achieve the advancement and empowerment of Romani women and girls in Europe and the strengthening of gender equality and non-discrimination thereof in countries of residence by supporting the implementation of six strategic objectives which also integrate the issue of multiple discrimination while taking into account the specific needs, challenges and opportunities of Romani women and girls.

### Strategic objective 1:

Combating racism, anti-Gypsyism and gender stereotypes against Romani women and girls

Romani women suffer from racism and anti-Gypsyism that is particular to them due to their ethnic belonging and because of their gender. In addition, the impact of racism, anti-Gypsyism and social exclusion of Roma in general has a greater impact on the lives of Romani women and girls, who become more vulnerable to poverty, forced evictions, homelessness, racist violence, trafficking, etc. More so, gender stereotypes and gender ascribed roles within some Romani communities limit the individual development and opportunities of Romani women and girls.

#### Action will focus on:

- Monitoring the human rights situation of Romani women and girls at national level;
- Raising awareness on the extent of racism, anti-Gypsyism and gender stereotypes against Romani women and girls;
- Calling on government and intergovernmental measures and action on combating racism, anti-Gypsyism and gender stereotypes against Romani women and girls;
- Promoting and supporting joint action on combating and preventing racist violence and anti-Gypsyism against Romani women and girls;
- Promoting a positive and non-stereotyped image of Romani women and girls;
- Promote a positive and objective image of Romani women in the media;
- Promoting and supporting a meaningful participation of Romani women in decision-making positions in public institutions and political life;
- Promoting and supporting the role of Romani men in achieving gender equality;
- Promoting and supporting the collection of data on the status of Romani women and girls in all areas of life; and the culture of impact assessment, monitoring and review into the public policy process.

### Strategic objective 2:

Preventing and combating various forms of violence against Romani women and girls

Violence against Romani women and girls remains widespread in Europe, with devastating consequences for Romani women and girls as well as for societies and democracies. Romani women often fall victims to domestic violence, forced marriage, trafficking and forced prostitution, forced sterilisation, violence by the police and verbal or physical abuse by various state actors, etc. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights.

#### Action will include:

- Calling on CoE member States to sign, ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention, as relevant;
- Promoting and supporting the collection and dissemination on data regarding legal and other measures taken at national level to prevent and combat violence against Romani women and girls;
- Promoting and supporting bilateral, regional and international co-operation aimed at the elimination of trafficking in persons, targeting Romani women and children;
- Promoting and supporting measures to prevent and end child and forced marriages;
- Calling on governments to combat and prevent all forms of violence against Romani women and girls, including practices that lead to and/or perpetuate gender inequality or violate the rights of Romani women and girls.
- Promote and support measures aimed at preventing and combating all forms of violence against Romani women and girls, including inclusive and culturally adapted enforcement measures;
- Promote best practices aimed at preventing and combating violence against Romani women and girls both by state and non-state actors.



### Strategic objective 3:

#### Guaranteeing Equal Access of Romani Women and girls to public services

Engrained discrimination and extreme social exclusion prevent Romani women from an adequate and equal access to education, health, social protection, employment, housing and accommodation. The lack of personal documents and high level of illiteracy further their social exclusion and marginalisation. Their participation in society is also prevented by pre-scribed gender roles within traditional families.

#### Action will seek to:

- Promote and support adequate mechanisms for preventing and combating discrimination, including on multiple grounds in Romani women's access to education, employment, health care, social protection, housing, accommodation, etc.;
- Promote and support measures for the economic empowerment of Romani women and girls;
- Promote and support measures for the human rights advancement of Romani women and girls;
- Promote and support exchanges of best practices on good governance on gender/Romani women's mainstreaming in policy and practice;
- Promote and support mechanisms for gender and ethnicity data collection, gender impact assessments and monitoring progress in increasing Romani women's and young girls' participation in society and their equal and meaningful representation in public and political life at all levels.

### Strategic objective 4:

#### Ensuring access to justice for Romani women

Discrimination, racism and gender inequalities impinge on Romani women's access to justice. Romani women are reluctant to access complaint mechanisms and seek justice in courts due to lack of awareness and information, but also confidence and resources, including economic barriers for legal representation. In addition, gender stereotypes and gender power imbalance make Romani women victims of biased and ineffective justice systems, i.e. Romani women get sentenced for crimes committed by their husbands.

#### Action will seek to:

- Identify and raise awareness on obstacles Romani women encounter in gaining access to justice;
- Condemn practices that discriminate against Romani women and girls in their access to justice;
- Identify, collect and disseminate any existing remedies and good practices aiming at facilitating access of Romani women to justice, including out-of-court and quasi-legal stages of protection of women's rights (inter alia through Ombudspersons and other human rights institutions);
- Make recommendations to improve the situation.

### Strategic objective 5:

#### Achieving adequate and meaningful participation of Romani women in political and public decision-making

Romani women lack adequate representation and participation in national and local public administration institutions and in political life. Ensuring effective participation of Romani women in public and political life, not only ensures their participation in decision-making on issues directly affecting them, but also helps to ensure that society as a whole benefits from their contribution and truly reflects its diversity.

#### Action will seek to:

- Promote and support adequate and meaningful participation of Romani women in political or public life in any decision-making bodies;
- Monitor progress on Romani women's participation in decision-making; promote the visibility of data and good practices across countries;
- Promote and support measures aimed at supporting and empowering candidate and elected Romani women, to facilitate and encourage their participation in elections at local and national level;
- Call on governments to ensure the effective participation of Romani women in public and political life.

## Strategic objective 6:

### Achieving Gender and Romani Women's Mainstreaming in all policies and measures

The mainstreaming of gender and Romani women's concerns and priorities, both in policy and practice would enable public policy responses to advance equality and to combat discrimination. Gender mainstreaming introduces a culture of disaggregated data, impact assessment, monitoring and review into the public policy process and thus enhances the effectiveness of Romani women and girls specific policies; it also eliminates barriers for Romani women experiencing inequality, reduces poverty, boosts economic growth and strengthens citizenship. Mainstreaming creates means for the empowerment of Romani women and their autonomy.

#### Action should support mainstreaming in:

- various policy areas, in particular the areas of justice, law enforcement, local government, media, culture, education, minorities, migration, Roma, children's rights, social inclusion and cohesion, youth and sports, trafficking in human beings and drug abuse;
- the development and implementation of programmes, projects and activities of local and national authorities, intergovernmental institutions, human rights organisations and women's groups;
- the policy processes and functioning of the various bodies and institutions;
- the staff policies of local public administration, intergovernmental organisations, monitoring bodies, relevant human rights/Roma rights institutions, etc.;
- good practices on gender/Romani women and girls' issues.

## II PARTNERSHIPS

The Working Group of Romani Women for the implementation of the Strategy will create links and partnerships with existing initiatives and relevant implementing mechanisms such as the following:

#### Council of Europe

- Council of Europe Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma issues
- Council of Europe Ad-Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) and its Gender Rapporteur
- Council of Europe Human Dignity and Equality Directorate (and all its relevant sectors such as Gender Equality, CDDECS, SOGI GRETA, GREVIO, Lanzarote Convention, Children's Rights, FCNM, ECRI etc.)
- Council of Europe Gender Equality Rapporteurs
- Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission
- Council of Europe Gender Mainstreaming Task Force
- Council of Europe Youth Department
- Council of Europe Permanent Representations
- Commissioner for Human Rights
- European Court of Human Rights
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
- Parliamentary Assembly (in particular its Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination)

#### European Union

- European Commission
  - Equality Unit
  - Roma Unit
- European Parliament
  - FEMM Committee
  - Party Groups
- European Council
- Fundamental Rights Agency
  - Gender Focal Points

#### OSCE/ODIHR

- Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues
- Commissioner on National Minorities
- Gender Equality Department

## United Nations

- UN WOMEN
- CEDAW Committee
- Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
- Human Rights Council
- UNICEF
- UNDP

## International Human Rights and Roma organisations

- Open Society Foundations
- European Roma and Travellers Forum
- European Roma Rights Centre
- European Roma Information Office
- European Roma Grassroots Organisation
- European Roma Policy Coalition
- Roma Education Fund
- Roma Decade Secretariat
- International and Regional Romani Women's Networks
- Romani Youth networks

## National level

- National Focal Points of the National Roma Integration Strategies
- Local and regional authorities
- Members of National Parliaments
- Gender Equality bodies
- Ombudspersons
- National Human Rights institutions
  - o Gender Institutes
  - o OSF national foundations
- National and local Roma organisations
- Romani women NGOs, Romani women's groups and networks
- Romani women mediators and their networks
- Romani Youth networks and NGOs

## III. OUTREACH

An outreach plan will be developed with aimed at:

- increasing the visibility of the Strategy;
- facilitating the mainstreaming of the Strategy objectives into relevant policies at regional and national level;
- increasing visibility of the Informal Platform of Phenjalipe and its work;
- raising awareness on specific issues pertaining to Romani women and girls;
- facilitating the exchange of information with partners;
- making good practices more visible at local, national and regional level.

## IV. ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan will be developed every two years by the Phenjalipe Working Group, in consultation with relevant partners and stakeholders, in order to achieve the objectives of the Strategy. The bi-annual Action Plan will include specific activities deriving from the strategic objectives, which will be implemented primarily, but not exclusively, by the Phenjalipe Informal Platform and its Working Group. After every two-year cycle of implementation, an assessment of the activities implemented and of their impact will be undertaken together with members of the Phenjalipe Platform.

«Roma women need social and legal support to improve their socio-economic status and to ensure their access to education and health as preconditions for employment.»  
from the Opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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