

Sixth International Roma Women Conference
Women and Political Representation:
The Case of Roma and Traveller¹ Women

6-7 November 2017
Palais de l'Europe (Room 9)
Strasbourg, France

Pledge
on political representation of Roma women

¹ The term "Roma" is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "*Gens du voyage*", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

Following the discussions held at the 6th International Conference of Roma Women “Women and Political Representation: The Case of Roma and Traveller Women” held at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, on 6-7 November 2017,

and taking into account that:

- in spite of the progress being made in Europe in terms of improving equal opportunities and rights for women and men, the Council of Europe notes a persistently low level of participation by women in decision-making processes and in political life;
- women from ethnic minorities, and Roma and Traveller women in particular, remain severely under-represented in European, national and regional parliaments, regional and municipal councils, governments and posts of responsibility in political parties;
- considering that balanced participation by women and men in decision-making is a precondition for improving the functioning of democracy and society;
- ongoing under-representation of women in political decision-making reflects a basic democratic deficit in both the member States of the Council of Europe and the broader international context;
- national electoral and party systems have an important responsibility for ensuring a balanced representation of women at all levels of government and parliament;
- electoral quotas are often effective means of achieving significant, rapid progress, provided that they are correctly designed and consistently implemented;
- quotas should be adapted to the electoral system in force and set ambitious yet achievable targets and where possible, such quotas and other positive measures should also be introduced for women from minority groups, including Roma and Travellers;
- political parties have a crucial role to play in improving the political representation of women in general and women from minority groups in particular, including Roma and Traveller women, as by selecting and supporting the candidates, they act as gatekeepers of elected positions, and their choices determine to a large extent the final outcome of elections concerning gender-balance and minority representation;

We, members of political parties, pledge to promote gender equality and the participation of women from minority groups, in particular Roma and Traveller women, in decision-making bodies and in political representation at the next European, national, regional and local elections.