

DRTO(2023)1

Strasbourg, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023

**15<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
DIALOGUE WITH ROMA AND TRAVELLER<sup>1</sup> CIVIL SOCIETY**

**Equality for Roma and Traveller Women and Girls**

**Strasbourg, 6-7 June 2023  
Council of Europe, Agora  
Room G02**

**DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE**

**BACKGROUND**

Women throughout the Council of Europe member States still face inequalities in many respects. Antigypsyism, racism, discrimination, exclusion and extreme poverty are factors which reinforce disadvantages faced by Roma and Traveller women. Despite some progress and the development of targeted measures, the UN Sustainable Development Goal targeting gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls remains unachieved, in particular for women from vulnerable communities, such as Roma and Traveller women.

Manifestations of systemic and institutional racism have intensified in the context of the recent global pandemic and overlapped with intersectional discrimination.

Conditions for inclusion and opportunities for full participation in society of Roma and Traveller women and girls are hindered by unequal access to education, high unemployment rates, scarce opportunities for employment and economic development. Low level of education, high unemployment rates, and weak employment opportunities deprive the Roma women and girls of real opportunities for integration and full participation in society.

A recent study of the Council of Europe<sup>2</sup> concludes that the situation of Roma and Traveller women has not really advanced over the past decades and that “the violations of their human rights are still perpetuated, which indicates a need for special legal and/or strategic provisions to ensure efficient protection of the target groups.”

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Roma and Travellers” 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.

<sup>2</sup> [Empowerment of Roma and Traveller women: a change under construction - Towards a Roadmap for Advancing Gender Equality of Roma and Traveller Women in Council of Europe member States, 2021.](#)

The Roma and Travellers Team contributes to the mainstreaming of Roma and Traveller gender equality issues within the Strategic Action Plan on Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) by promoting the empowerment of Roma and Traveller women and girls in all spheres.

Starting with 2007, when the First International Roma Women Conference took place in Stockholm, the Council of Europe has provided a forum for discussion on the challenges that Roma and Traveller women are facing. The International Roma Women Conferences took place since then every other year. The most recent, the 8<sup>th</sup> one, took place in November 2021, and focused on the topic of protecting the human rights and dignity of Roma and Traveller women in times of crises.

In 2016, the Roma and Travellers Team started together with the European Commission the implementation of the Joint Programme “Roma and Traveller Women’s Access to Justice” (JUSTROM). It responded to gaps emphasized by monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and to needs expressed by Roma and Traveller women within the International Roma Women Conferences. The findings, results and lessons learnt from JUSTROM programme are also feeding into the development of Council of Europe standards.

In view of this solid preparatory work, the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) and the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM) have the task to prepare and propose a Draft Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers on equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE 15TH DIALOGUE MEETING**

The 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society will provide an opportunity for a broad and substantive exchange on the challenges faced by Roma and Traveller women and girls and on solutions which can be proposed to Council of Europe member States, using instruments such as a Committee of Ministers Recommendation.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting will serve as a consultation platform for discussing the draft Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers to the member states on the topic of equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls, drafted by the ADI-ROM Working Group in charge of preparing it.

The meeting will:

- Present the draft Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to the member states on the topic of equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls.
- Discuss the challenges faced by Roma and Traveller women and girls in areas such as: registration in the civil registry and identity documents; protection from extreme poverty and access to social protection; adoption and placement of Roma and Traveller children in alternative care; early childhood and school education of Roma and Traveller girl; health care and sexual and reproductive rights; employment and

economic situation; protection from violence and abuse against Roma and Traveller women and girls.

- Discuss the disproportionate effect that these challenges have on Roma and Traveller women and girls, as well as gender specificities of these issues.
- Bring forward solutions which can be proposed to Council of Europe member states to address these issues.
- Share experiences and good practices addressing these issues, as well as on fostering Roma and Traveller women and girls' participation in political and public life.
- Propose actions that can lead to building the capacity and empowering Roma and Traveller women and girls.

## **PARTICIPATION**

- 20 civil society participants will be chosen through an open call disseminated via the public website of the Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Team. Participants will be representatives of Roma and Traveller organisations and experts from international, national and local civil society organisations. Priority is given to representatives who hold specific expertise on Roma and Traveller women and girls rights. Participants must be competent to work in English, French or Romani, which are the working languages of the meeting.
- Members of the Roma and Travellers Team who are involved in cross-cutting work.
- Members of other departments of the Council of Europe and of the Inter-Secretariat Task Force who are mainstreaming Roma and Traveller women and girls issues into their respective areas of work.

## **DATES AND VENUE**

The meeting will take place on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023 from 09:00-16:15 CEST and on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023 from 09:30 to 15:15 CEST, in hybrid format – in Strasbourg, France and online via the KUDO platform.

Travel and subsistence expenses, as well as visa fees, if necessary, related to the participation in this 15<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting will be reimbursed according to Council of Europe rules and regulations.

Working and background documents:

- Agenda of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting
- Concept Paper of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting
- Draft Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers on equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls