

**6<sup>th</sup> International Roma Women Conference**  
**“Women and Political Representation: The Case of Roma and Traveller Women”**

**Strasbourg, 6-7 November 2017**

**Recommendations emanating from the Conference**

1. More political parties should design measures to promote Roma women in elections, including quotas.
2. Electoral systems and the geographical boundaries of electoral constituencies matter. Proportional electoral systems with closed lists have shown to increase women’s political representation, and countries should consider switching to such systems.
3. To promote minority participation, the legal threshold for parties under proportionate representation systems should be low enough.
4. Voting mechanisms should be designed to provide the possibility for Roma women to be voted all over the country in those countries where the minorities are scattered.
5. Quotas are a powerful tool to achieve better political representation. Member states should consider setting strong quota laws or parity systems (with high quota percentage, rank order rules, strict sanctions).
6. Funding should be made available for Roma women who want to campaign in elections. In every country where there is a law regarding the use of election funding, financial resources should be available also to the Roma candidates in equal proportion.
7. Measures should be put in place to encourage Roma women to enter the world of politics, through training, mentorship, career advising and peer networking.
8. Political parties, international organisations, governmental and European representatives should train Roma women to stand for political office, by facilitating mentorship programmes for Roma women (utilising existing role models from within the Roma community and mainstream politicians), by supporting exchange of expertise between Roma women in politics but also with other women representing diverse community interests or the mainstream. Support should be given on longer-term and in consistent manner, building on experiences, which led to effective participation.
9. International organisations, governments, civil society, practitioners and academics should invest in the capacity building of Roma women. In addition to designing specific initiatives, where needed, it is

important to ensure that Roma women have access to capacity building initiatives that exist in the countries, as well as access to resources.

10. Women's organisations should examine their own agendas and practices to ensure that Roma women's issue are included in the women's movements.
11. Action should be taken to train leaders and executives of political parties, as well as the bodies responsible for choosing the candidates for elections, so they can reflect on their party's structure and address gender biases in the functioning, recruitment and selection practices in order to become inclusive, including by adopting strong political party quotas.
12. Participation of Roma women should be promoted in all decision-making bodies and administrative structures that affect their lives, including national and local government structures, law enforcement bodies and the judiciary.
13. Good practices of Roma women participation should be supported, in particular mediators at community level.
14. Participation of Roma women as voters should be increased in order to act as a powerful electoral constituency.
15. One way to support Roma women's political participation is to support the education/ training of voters and sensitisation campaigns targeting women. Action needs to be taken to eradicate obstacles facing Roma women to fully exercise their electoral rights, by ensuring that all Roma have identity documents and are included in the voters registration list; by addressing family (group) voting and securing that women can take an informed, free and secret choice for casting the ballot, and, by taking actions against vote manipulation and vote buying.
16. Roma women candidates should also be supported after their election.
17. Measures to increase Roma women's political participation should be embedded in a larger gender equality strategy for Roma women, which also includes actions to overcome gender stereotypes in society and in Roma communities, and support for the reconciliation of family and work. All decision makers, including those in government and political parties, should make a strong commitment to gender equality and balanced participation in political and public decision-making, leading to appropriate measures in legislation, policies and practice. Furthermore, all Roma-related policies, frameworks and programmes at international, European, national and local level should integrate a strong gender mainstreaming component.
18. There is still a pressing need to collect gender-disaggregated data about Roma women's participation in political life. More research is needed, such as a report on the impact of electoral systems on Roma women's representation in politics.
19. Awareness should be raised among the media and the general public about the importance of having balanced participation in political and public decision-making, and the obstacles faced by women so that positive actions are supported as long as necessary.
20. Awareness should be raised among political parties, media and the general public on the importance of language in reproducing, but also in countering racist and sexist mind-sets. The use of non-sexist language when speaking about Roma women candidates should be promoted.

21. International organisations, governments, political parties and civil society should design actions aimed at engaging Roma girls so that they consider political careers, including through role models and networking.
22. Partnerships and co-ordination between and within governments, civil society, international organisations, media, political parties, practitioners and researchers are critical to the success of efforts to tackle the democratic deficit resulting from the unbalanced representation of women, and the severe under-representation of Roma women, in the political decision-making processes.
23. All political parties in Europe should sign the “Pledge on political representation of Roma and Traveller women” launched at the Council of Europe’s 6<sup>th</sup> International Roma Women Conference in Strasbourg on 6-7 November 2017.