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7th INTERNATIONAL ROMA WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

ROMA AND TRAVELLER WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND RIGHTS

**INCLUDING TAKING STOCK OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
THEMATIC ACTION PLAN ON THE INCLUSION OF ROMA AND TRAVELLERS (2016-2019)
AND POINTING THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE
POST-2019 STRATEGIC POLICY DOCUMENT ON ROMA AND TRAVELLER INCLUSION**

organised under the Finnish Presidency
of the Committee of the Ministers of the Council of Europe

**25-27 March 2019
HANAHOLMEN
Swedish-Finnish Cultural Centre
Espoo, Finland**

ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

**by Gwendolyn Albert
General Rapporteur**

Introduction

In their daily life, many Roma and Traveller women find themselves caught between respect for traditions and new expectations regarding gender roles emanating from contemporary society and their own personal needs.

The overall objective of this conference was to recognise the rights of Roma and Traveller women to live their lives freely and to be able to make their own choices without being subjected to undue pressure from either their communities, their family members, or the states where they live. Its aim was to raise awareness about the serious obstacles faced by Roma and Traveller women in accessing justice and rights.

Finland is at the frontline of the topical human rights issues raised by the Council of Europe, namely the promotion of the human rights of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including women and Roma. In the framework of the priorities set by the Finnish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Finland hosted the 7th International Roma Women's Conference from 25 to 27 March 2019 in Espoo.

The conference had three aims: first, to review the current state of Roma and Traveller women's access to justice and rights in Council of Europe member states; second, to review how the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) has been implemented by the member states; and lastly, to indicate the way forward for a Council of Europe post-2019 Strategic Policy Document on Roma and Traveller Inclusion.

This report analyses the main findings of the conference for each of these aspects. It concludes with recommendations made by conference participants during the plenary sessions and the workshops.

1. General observations on Roma and Traveller Women's discrimination, involvement in the making of integration policy, and access to justice and rights

Intersectional discrimination against Roma and Traveller women was discussed by many participants as a major barrier to their accessing justice and rights. Hate crime against Roma and Traveller women across Europe is a big problem, including ultra-right violence and violence resulting in fatalities. Forced evictions and segregation of Roma and Traveller children in schools are clear indicators that access to justice and rights remains weak. High-level national politicians across the political spectrum, as well as populist and extremist political parties, exploit anti-gypsyist and anti-nomadist rhetoric and openly encourage violence against Roma and Travellers with impunity, while the national institutions responsible for protecting Roma communities against hate-speech and hate crimes remain largely either unable or unwilling to influence this. In many countries, Roma and Traveller-related policies are generally ineffective and Roma and Traveller participation at all levels of policy-making is absent or ineffective. Also, the voice of Roma civil society has weakened in many European countries, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary or the Slovak Republic, due to cuts for financial support of state structures promoting Roma integration. Some states are currently even taking discriminatory approaches to Roma and Traveller-related issues.

The lack of funding and of human resources for Roma and Traveller civil rights organisations means that Roma and Traveller civil society involvement in policy design, implementation and monitoring is largely absent. This also means that many other stakeholders are more influential than Roma and Traveller civil society when it comes to creating and monitoring

Roma integration policies, to the detriment of policy design, implementation and monitoring. Ignorance of the Roma and Traveller civil rights movement, past and present, is a big factor in this circumstance. With very few exceptions, a common observation among NGOs is that governments and institutions still remain unwilling or unable to efficiently collaborate with Roma and Travellers. There is a clear tendency in some member states to speak of discrimination against Roma as a “European problem” in order to avoid taking responsibility for it. Statelessness and the more general refusal to treat Roma and Travellers as equal before the law render some Roma and Travellers even more vulnerable. To make things worse, in many of the cases, the international community has not granted Roma and Travellers adequate protection.

Given the current state of affairs with respect to Roma and Traveller women’s access to justice and rights it is important to highlight that Mr Rauno Merisaari, Human Rights Ambassador of Finland, told the conference that as a Council of Europe and European Union member state, “Finland is ready for a more ambitious European policy on Roma.” He observed that involving women was key to advancing European policy and that Roma and Traveller women currently were a driving force for promoting European policy at the CoE. He called on other member states to provide more political commitment and resources to relevant programmes. Local, national and European policies should complement each other in order to reduce structural discrimination. Therefore, different international minority rights and human rights treaties, Council of Europe project funding, ECRI and EU funds should be used for this purpose both nationally and locally. Combining national mainstreaming policies with locally targeted actions – a twin-track approach – would be the ideal combination, but too often just one or the other approach was taken, which meant that there was less long-term impact. Meaningful participation was important to add to this twin-track approach, and the voice of the Roma and Travellers in policy design should be encouraged through long-term political dialogue. There should be more discussion of this at the Committee of Ministers, and the Council of Europe needed to become a stronger institution by standing with human rights defenders. The Finnish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is emphasizing this in its social media campaigns (“I STAND WITH HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS” - #WeSupportHumanRights).

2. Taking Stock of the implementation of the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019)

In her opening remarks, Mrs Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland, informed the conference that in her view, the opportunities available for Roma inclusion were not being taken advantage of by the Council of Europe member states and their efforts to date were not enough to address structural discrimination against Roma and Travellers in Europe. Her remarks were followed by a summary of the Action Plan implementation review from Mr Hallvard Gorseth, Head of the Anti-Discrimination Department and Head of Department *a.i.* for the Roma and Travellers Team, Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe. Mr Gorseth noted that this was the second time Finland had hosted a Council of Europe International Roma Women’s conference and expressed appreciation for this commitment. He informed the conference that intersectionality was an important concept at the Council and that the review of the Action Plan’s implementation would include a gender perspective with respect to improving access to justice, with respect to promoting equality, and with respect to approaching the protection of reproductive rights and family cohesion.

2.1. Council of Europe review of the implementation of the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) through project work

Mr Thorsten Afflerbach, Head of Division for the Roma and Travellers Team, Council of Europe, recalled that the Action Plan's three priorities were: 1) Tackling anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination and crimes ("anti-Gypsyism"); 2) Demonstrating innovative models for inclusive policies for the most vulnerable; and 3) Promoting innovative models for local-level solutions. The Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM), which includes experts from 41 of the 47 Council of Europe member states, was overseeing its implementation. As of 2015, there have also been biannual Council of Europe Dialogue meetings with Roma and Traveller civil society. The Plan had been implemented through joint programmes with the European Commission such as INSCHOOL, JUSTROM, ROMACT, and ROMACTED, through law enforcement trainings, support to the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAN), as well as previous International Romani Women's conferences and their follow-up trainings.

The EU/Council of Europe Joint Programme ROMACT had been implemented since 2013 in 105 municipalities in Bulgaria and Romania with the objective of building up political will and sustained policy engagement through capacity-building at local level. The project aimed at improving local democracy, accountability, inclusiveness and responsiveness towards Roma citizens and thereby improving the delivery and use of services.

Similarly, the ROMACTED programme (2017-2020) aimed to build up political will and the sustained policy engagement of local authorities in order to enhance democratic local governance. The programme was currently being implemented in 61 municipalities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Like ROMACT, it stimulated the empowerment of local Roma communities and their capacity to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them. The project also assisted the local authorities with integrating Roma-specific dimensions and measures into mainstream local policies, budgets and public service delivery. The participation of Roma women at local level, particularly as members of the community action groups (CAG), and the design of local, specific solutions that address the priorities identified by the women in the community were crucial features of this programme.

Gender balance was an important aspect of these programmes: 55% of those attending local ROMACT meetings were women, while a total of 281 women took part regularly in the CAG meetings and other local dynamics generated by ROMACTED. For both programmes, in some of the municipalities it had been decided to have a specific Community Action group(s) composed only of Roma women, while in other municipalities it was still a challenge to mobilise Roma women to participate regularly in the process. It was a priority for all the ROMACT and ROMACTED teams, regional, national and local, to improve the conditions for the participation of Roma women.

The 6th International Roma Women's Conference about improving political participation and representation of Roma and Traveller women was followed up by training sessions throughout 2017-2018. The conference itself was attended by some 70 Roma and Traveller women, party members or sitting members of parliaments, experts and diplomats and had over 100 participants in total. One of its key recommendations to political parties, international organisations, governmental and European representatives – namely to train Roma and Traveller women to run for election – was followed up by training sessions in 2017 in Germany and in 2018 in Moldova. In 2019, a training session was envisaged in Greece. International organisations, governments, civil society, practitioners and academics

should also invest in capacity-building, and good practices should be supported such as community mediators (as in a current project underway in Ukraine). Action needed to be taken to eradicate obstacles to voting, including resolving the fundamental issues of lack of personal identification and statelessness. Measures to increase Roma and Traveller women's political participation should be promoted as part of an overarching gender equality strategy including actions to overcome gender stereotypes and sexism. As a result of the conference, 13 political parties in attendance signed its Pledge to improve Roma and Traveller women's participation, which had been translated into 15 languages.¹ On 8 April 2018, Secretary General Jagland urged political parties to fast-track Roma and Traveller women into politics and referenced the pledge, which the Roma and Travellers Team invites everybody to join. Many audio-visual and written materials from the conference were available at <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/international-roma-women-s-rights-conferences>.

The Joint Programme on Roma Women's Access to Justice (JUSTROM), implemented in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Romania, provided legal aid and training by setting up legal clinics (two per country). The project had so far provided information and services to more than 3,000 women in more than 50 communities. Its second phase resulted in more than 600 legal submissions. Trainings had been offered to more than 140 judges, 130 police, and to staff in women's prisons. Programme manager Ms Michèle Bergdoll, along with representatives from three country teams, presented its methodology as first involving Roma women to inform them of their rights, and training legal professionals (judges, lawyers, police, prison staff, prosecutors), media and social workers about Roma women's access to justice, anti-Gypsyism, and Council of Europe standards. She emphasised that, for a common sense of ownership, all stakeholders - bar associations, civil society, equality bodies, police, universities, local and national authorities - had been involved in developing the proposal for a two-year extension of the project.

Ms Alexandra Karagianni (Greece) said that the programme was about more than improving access to courts or getting lawyers, as there was no access to justice when many Roma were afraid of the system. During the pilot phase, a top-down approach was easier, since the main priority was to address the authorities with the programme's findings, and this advocacy resulted in a significant amendment to the law about birth registration to include Roma women, in procedural improvements regarding identification cards, and in the Greek Parliament passing legislation improving Roma access to citizenship. The JUSTROM team also initiated the national Gender Equality Body's possible adaptation of a new law concerning gender-based violence. During JUSTROM2, the programme used a bottom-up approach to empower the community and advised professionals working for community centres on how to support their beneficiaries with accessing legal services. The JUSTROM teams also closely cooperated with two women's associations and pointed out that more gender mainstreaming was needed.²

Ms Teodora Krumova (Bulgaria) expressed her gratitude to the people involved in the field with the programme in two localities, one in Plovdiv dealing with patriarchal attitudes, radicalization tendencies, segregation and violence against women, and one more diverse locality in Veliko Turnovo. Strong civil society organisations in both places invested resources and capacities into the project and there was a good synergy between them. The network of community moderators from the Amalipe NGO, with the support of the Bar Association in Veliko Turnovo, used *pro bono* legal services through JUSTROM, and local

¹ <https://rm.coe.int/pledge-on-political-representation-of-roma-women-/168076252b>

² Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on improving access to justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe, available at <https://rm.coe.int/168075f2aa>.

Roma ownership of the project was developed. Roma women gained confidence that institutions would support them, and the community began to realize that violence against women was unacceptable and would spark criminal law consequences. Institutions have also begun to change their attitude about violence against women as a “Roma problem”. The Veliko Turnovo Bar Association continued this work in remote locations and police were also consulting the programme now about how to aid victims of child marriages and violence against women.

Ms Argentina Dragutinovic (Italy) told the conference that immigrant Roma women living in Naples had applied for political asylum and had never received any official communication about their cases. They had asked for JUSTROM’s aid and saw that this programme was not just aid for individuals, but for their entire families. At the beginning, they had believed that JUSTROM were there to exploit them the way other NGOs do, but over time they had understood that that was not the case, and the programme served 60 to 70 people a week at the legal clinics, aiding them, for example, with accessing health care services. Women from the Bosnian immigrant Roma community initially referred the JUSTROM staff to their husbands, as they were not really allowed to speak for themselves or to present their own views, but the staff explained they needed to speak with the women and then helped them to visit doctors and local authorities. Many of those Roma women did not even believe that women could be employed, and at first, they asked the JUSTROM staff how their husbands could allow them to work outside the home; within two years, though, 15 of them were employed themselves, and the men in the community are even proud of this now. In Italy, JUSTROM also enrolled 172 children into school for the first time, from primary through secondary school. In Giuliano, for example, the Roma children had been rejected by the school because local non-Roma parents feared that they would have infectious diseases; JUSTROM had all the children vaccinated and helped them enrol in a school.

2.2. Roma NGO perspectives on the implementation of the Thematic Action Plan

Mrs Miranda Vuolasranta, President of the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), and President *a.i.*³ of the International Roma Women’s Network IRWN/Phenjalipe, gave the ERTF perspective on the implementation of the Action Plan. She first emphasised that the ERTF was an advocacy umbrella organisation,⁴ not an implementer. ERTF advocated for combating racial discrimination and for improving the living conditions of Roma in Europe by voicing Roma concerns as a stakeholder, including by contributing to the design of Council of Europe meetings on women’s rights and participating in them, and participating in the Council’s Dialogue meetings with Roma and Traveller civil society and other conferences.

The ERTF President regretted the fact that while there were 3,500 Roma and Traveller organisations in Europe, those who were most regularly invited to international consultations on Roma and Traveller policies were the Brussels-based Roma networks. She also felt that Roma and Traveller civil society could have been further consulted in developing the Thematic Action Plan and that the impact of the Plan’s projects had not been communicated to Roma and Traveller civil society effectively enough.

Her review of the progress reports on the implementation of the Action Plan was the following:

³ The new President of IRWN/Phenjalipe, Christina Raducan, was elected after these remarks were given.

⁴ Representing the International Romani Union (IRU), Roma National Congress (RNC), International Roma Women Network (IRWN-Phenjalipe), Gypsies and Travellers International Evangelical Fellowship (GATIEF), East Meets West (EMW) Roma youth organisation, International Romani Mission (IREM).

- 1) For the first priority of tackling anti-Gypsyism, including anti-Roma and anti-Traveller crime, discrimination and prejudice, the activities reported did not seem to have been of a nature or on a scale that could convincingly achieve results. Details about beneficiaries and impact were missing from the progress reports. A synthesized assessment of the impact of the Dosta! Campaign was needed, and implementation of it required partnering with civil society more.
- 2) For the second priority of improving access to justice, the reports do not describe the impact of the meetings of the Operational Platform for Roma Equality (OPRE): while an OPRE joint statement on evictions of Roma and Travellers was co-ordinated by the SRSG Roma Support Team and signed by six intergovernmental organisations, the impact of that exercise is not reported.⁵ Similarly, a synthesized assessment of the impact of JUSTROM needed to be clearly communicated to the public and Roma civil society; in addition to quantitative information about the number of events, information about impact and sustainability needed to be reported.
- 3) For the third priority of empowerment and participation, in the ERTF's view, this was the area where the least progress had been made. The question was raised as to whether the consultants and experts engaged to design and implement these projects were really also the best-placed to assess the efficiency and impact of the empowerment activities. Moreover, it was not clear from the implementation reports to what degree the Council of Europe was financially and technically supporting civil society input to the Council.

Ms Manjola Veizi, Vice-President of the International Roma Women's Network IRWN/Phenjalipe, reviewed its activities undertaken for and with Roma and Traveller women and its assessment of the Action Plan. In 2016, the Council of Europe's Support Team of the Special Representatives of the SG for Roma Issues and Soraya Post MEP had supported a meeting in Brussels between the IRWN and Phenjalipe to create a new joint network to advance Romani women and girls' empowerment. Members⁶ agreed to combine their objectives and to prioritize the Strategy for the Advancement of Romani Women and Girls 2014-2020. In June 2016, 17 members of IRWN/Phenjalipe were invited by the Council of Europe for a two-day study visit to Strasbourg, where they were trained in fundraising and other skills. The network's short-term and long-term objectives were defined, and initial responsibilities and tasks were distributed. The network contributed to the design of the Sixth International Roma Women's Conference, where the lack of Roma women's participation in decision-making bodies was proposed as the topic by 23 Roma women's organisations. The administrative requirements for registering the new network in France were not resolved until 2018, when the Council's Roma and Travellers Unit supported the network's Governing Board members to meet in Strasbourg and complete the registration.

As for the Thematic Action Plan, IRWN/Phenjalipe expressed appreciation for the member states' efforts to date to train police and other state administration bodies about anti-Gypsyism, but believed this would not be enough if there was no commitment to bolster anti-discrimination legislation with tougher sanctions. Likewise, the network appreciated the ROMACT, ROMACTED and JUSTROM joint programmes, but was concerned that Roma civil society had not been involved in their design. Lastly, IRWN/Phenjalipe was not aware of what the impact of the Pledge to promote political participation and representation by Roma and Traveller women had been.

⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/1st-progress-report-implementing-the-action-plan/168073df4e>

⁶ From Albania, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia.

3. Council of Europe's post-2019 Strategic Policy Document on Roma and Traveller Inclusion

The development of a post-2019 strategic policy document on Roma and Traveller Inclusion for the Council of Europe coincides with developments at the European Commission for the extension of the EU Roma Framework beyond 2020. Ms Sirpa Pietikainen MEP (EPP) informed the conference that she had signed a letter to the European Commission asking for the EU Roma Framework to be extended, in part because not all of the EU-28 had been taking advantage of the available funding for promoting Roma inclusion, a fact that the Council of Europe's own forthcoming strategy should somehow address.

Mr Hallvard Gorseth, Head of the Anti-Discrimination Department and Head of Department *a.i.* for the Roma and Travellers Team, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe, said that the new Council of Europe strategy would designate priorities for the Council's future work on Roma and Traveller inclusion. He also emphasised that Roma and Traveller women's civil society input during and after the meeting would be crucial to defining that work.

In this regard, Ms Mervi Sarimo, Ministerial Adviser, Ministry of Justice, Finland, informed the conference that support for crime victims was a crucial step towards promoting equal access to justice. The two main international legal instruments to draw from were the EU Crime Victims Directive of 2012 and the Istanbul Convention. States should ensure that victims and their families have access to victim support services free of charge that were relevant to them, including advice related to financial and practical issues, emotional support, and referral to other services, because some victims were in circumstances where they required expert support. Women and children should be offered access to shelter and specialist support services due to the risk of repeat victimization, and victims of close relationship violence, gender-based violence and sexual violence deserved trauma counseling. There should be 24/7 telephone lines established to provide this. The EU Directive said member states should ensure that victims were recognized and treated in a non-discriminatory manner within the context of criminal proceedings, and this included citizenship, nationality or residence status as grounds for non-discrimination. Violence could escalate into persecution if it was not reported, and while crime victims were entitled to victim support, they had to be aware of it and had to have access to it. More awareness-raising about this was needed in the Roma and Traveller community.

Mr Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos, Scientific Adviser at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), informed the conference that gender equality affected all of society, that regression on this issue was underway across Europe, and that it had to be counteracted. Roma and Traveller women were particularly vulnerable, and early and child marriages in some communities were a complicating factor. It was important that Roma and Traveller women and girls claimed their rights. FRA's research demonstrated that no adequate action was currently being taken on this, and the European Commission had published recommendations on how equality bodies could reach out to individuals affected by discrimination, communicate with them so that they claimed their rights, and increase sanctions so they would be dissuasive. In his view, European states needed to transit to a discussion with Roma and Traveller communities about their human rights – for example, instead of lamenting Roma and Traveller non-participation in education, the state should help Roma and Travellers to understand that education was their children's right, and that meant being honest with the public about bullying and safety at school, about issues of respect for different languages, and about the celebration or negation of children's ethnic

identity. The civil society work being done in this regard needed to be taken up by the governments and intergovernmental institutions such as the Council of Europe.

Mr Dan Doghi, Chief of the OSCE/ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI), noted that Roma and Sinti women were significantly underrepresented politically in the OSCE area, even when they had obtained enough education to qualify as candidates, and ODIHR's election observation missions had commented on this. In terms of participating as voters, lack of identification documents meant that many Roma and Sinti could not vote. Other issues included "family voting" (where ballots were not individually completed), vote-buying in Roma and Sinti communities, etc. Roma and Sinti women's lack of awareness of the political systems was due to a lack of civic education and a lack of female Roma and Sinti role models in politics. The established parties remained mostly closed to Roma and Sinti women candidates. Violence against women was also a persistent challenge, and the violence against Roma and Sinti women was intensified by the racism and other barriers they encountered when attempting to accessing public services, which put them at greater risk of sexual violence and trafficking. Unfortunately, even criminal justice authorities tended to excuse violence against women in Roma and Sinti families as endemic to their "culture". With respect to other violence targeting Roma and Sinti women, the ODIHR had provided a forum for dialogue on the issue of forced and coercive sterilization and the need to compensate the victims of these rights violations. Redress for police misconduct against members of their communities was also something Roma and Sinti women did not generally know how to access.

4. Recommendations from the Plenary Sessions and the Workshops

There were several recommendations for the post-2019 strategy that were mentioned during the plenary sessions or workshop reporting events that were livestreamed online and therefore could receive real-time feedback from those participating, both remotely and from within the venue itself. The livestream and online commenting opportunity doubled the number of conference participants. This transparent approach to communicating with the conference live in real time was greatly appreciated by those attending and observing.

4.1. Recommendations emanating from the Plenary Sessions

- 1) Sirpa Pietikainen MEP (EPP) recommended that a special spokesperson for Roma and Traveller issues be established institutionally as part of the intergovernmental and international order in Europe.
- 2) ERTF President Ms Miranda Vuolosranta proposed conducting an analysis of the impact of the Council of Europe's "Dosta! Campaign" and improving it based on that analysis. She also said that it was very important to involve more civil society NGOs at national and European level in the campaign dissemination.
- 3) IRWN/Phenjalipe Vice President Ms Manjola Veizi proposed that the Council of Europe should consider nominating a member of Roma and Traveller civil society in each member state involved with CAHROM to communicate with and involve Roma and Traveller civil society organisations in CAHROM.
- 4) Ms Ursula Till-Tentschert, Deputy Head of Unit, Technical Assistance & Capacity Building Unit, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), recommended that the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) should be used to promote compliance with fundamental rights provisions and to protect against discrimination. She insisted on transparency about the design of algorithms generating "big data"; on assessing the potentially discriminatory impact of data-supported decisions; and on the provision of meaningful explanations about how algorithms operate to the public so people can

challenge data-supported decisions and access remedies for any such decisions resulting in discrimination or violation of other rights.

- 5) Ms Carmen Santiago Reyes, Spain; Ms Yvonne MacNamara and Ms Jenni Berlin of The Traveller Movement, United Kingdom; and Ms Jenita Rauta, of the Finnish Police, all discussed how online campaigning and smartphone technology could be used to encourage victims and witnesses of discrimination and hate crime to report it to the authorities and recommended focusing on the use of such technology as part of empowering Roma and Traveller women to access the justice system

4.2. Recommendations emanating from the Workshops

4.2.1 Roma and Traveller women's networks' cooperation with the CoE-EU joint programmes ROMACT and ROMACTED

- 1) Assign new resources for these networks so that they can become effective multipliers and bring the ROMACT and ROMACTED Community Action Group members together to share their expertise with each other and with Roma and Traveller women's networks, including expertise on how to develop sustainability.
- 2) Promote and support reintegration programmes for Roma and Travellers re-entering society, whether after returning home from emigration abroad or from prison, that involve civil society networks of Roma and Traveller women.

4.2.2. Roma and Traveller women's general access to justice

- 1) Roma and Traveller women should be encouraged and included in decision-making consultation processes from the local and regional community level to the national and international levels.
- 2) States should assess Roma and Traveller women's access to justice and the impact of the international, national and local strategies on gender equality, and should define the necessary gender equality indicators for the National Roma Integration Strategies, such as following the comparative outcomes of particular activities, policies and programmes for women and men, or changes to the comparative situations or status of women and men (such as levels of participation or poverty, for example).
- 3) Council of Europe member states, NGOs, and other relevant bodies should continue promoting the formulation/improvement/modification of free legal aid programmes to facilitate access to justice for Roma and Traveller women.
- 4) Develop specific strategies for effectively including Roma and Traveller women's civil society input into the design, implementation and monitoring of such programmes.
- 5) Train existing Roma and Traveller mediators in how to promote access to justice and encourage them to disseminate the information and help facilitate access to justice.
- 6) Establish monitoring mechanisms for access to justice that will involve all stakeholders, from the international to the national to the civil society level.

4.2.3. Role of equality bodies in monitoring and enforcing Roma and Traveller women's equal access to justice and rights

- 1) Promote ombudspersons' abilities to work *ex officio* and with intersectionality, including aspects of poverty, ensuring that free, accessible and functional legal aid schemes exist in the member states.
- 2) Promote Roma and Traveller women's consultation to and participation in the national equality bodies and in EQUINET.

- 3) Promote research into what Roma and Traveller women need in order to access justice and rights in practice.
- 4) Promote gender-sensitive data collection and the gender dimension generally.
- 5) Mainstream the approach of the OSCE police trainings to other judicial authorities on these issues through EQUINET.
- 6) Promote leadership by employers, whether private or public, to achieve gender balance as part of their social responsibility.

4.2.4. Child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage

- 1) These harmful practices and serious human rights violations should be eradicated primarily by Roma communities with the support of the states and NGOs.
- 2) Approaches to combating this phenomenon should be tailored to the Roma communities involved, which are very diverse, acknowledging that input from all genders is crucial to the success of the applied measures.
- 3) States should promote equal treatment of Roma and Travellers before the law and law enforcement, emphasising that culture/tradition is no excuse for violating children's rights.
- 4) States should promote research on these issues and develop legal frameworks for combating child/early/forced marriage before the age of 18 and towards eventually criminalising it.
- 5) Educational institutions should promote sex education for all genders in both informal and formal education as part of children's right to information.
- 6) Promote work on this issue by Roma and Traveller persons of all genders, various NGOs and other stakeholders.

4.2.5. Forced removal of Roma and Traveller children from their families by the state

- 1) Forced removal of Roma and Traveller children should only be used as a last resort because, according to research, it is extremely risky for children to be reared in institutions instead of in families, as they are disproportionately likely to become addicted, homeless, or suicidal if they do not develop a clear sense of belonging.
- 2) States and regional administration should promote communication between child welfare institutions and Roma and Traveller parents with a view to preferring social support for families over institutionalisation.
- 3) States should include research on Roma and Traveller children's placements into institutional care as part of their general quality control system for child welfare measures and develop alternative measures together with Roma families through open child welfare services.
- 4) States should promote the training of child welfare authorities, public care and child-care institutions on the situation of Roma and Traveller communities, cultures, and diversity affecting child-rearing practices in order to develop their knowledge base, intercultural skills and understanding.

4.2.6. Violence against women, including forced sterilisation and gender violence

- 1) States implementing the Istanbul Convention should ensure Roma and Traveller civil society input about breaking the taboo of gender violence and eliminating all forms of violence against women through work done with all genders.
- 2) Continue to call on Council of Europe member states to compensate the victims of forced sterilizations as a matter of priority, and promote general awareness-raising about the issue and the imperative of women providing free and informed consent to reproductive health care procedures.

- 3) Promote the design of data collection processes about Roma and Traveller women who are victims of reproductive/obstetric/gender violence.
- 4) Medical professionals should develop methods and security procedures to combat forced sterilisation, different forms of obstetric violence, and violations of reproductive rights.
- 5) Promote awareness-raising among Roma and Traveller women about how to defend their rights when they are subjected to violence, and how to help each other defend their rights when they are subjected to violence.
- 6) Promote Roma and Traveller women's involvement in the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) process by reporting violations to it.
- 7) Provide training to police about violence against women and reproductive rights violations.

4.2.7. Forced evictions and pogroms against Roma and Travellers

- 1) Make combating pan-European anti-Gypsyism and anti-nomadism a priority on the agenda of the international community, especially in the context of security of tenure for Roma and Travellers.
- 2) Promote mechanisms for monitoring law enforcement practices in cases of forced evictions that sometimes rise to the level of hate crimes and pogroms, often involving personal injury, property damage, or violence, with a view to holding local administrations accountable for neglecting their obligations to safeguard Roma and Travellers' right for freedom of movement, safety, housing and privacy.
- 3) To prevent forced evictions and pogroms against Roma and Travellers, member states, local authorities and police should pilot the use of depolarization and conflict resolution measures at the early stages of emerging inter-ethnic crisis situations and pilot restorative justice practices during and after such crises.

5. General Encouragements

The following more general encouragements were addressed to Roma and Traveller women and to their allies and reflect fundamental principles necessary to the promotion of Roma and Traveller women's empowerment and protection of their human rights.



"You are entitled to be different and visible. Be visible, be proud."
 - Mrs Tarja Halonen, Former President of Finland



"An attack on anybody based on their culture is an attack on all of us. There is no separation between us. We who have a voice must use it. Let's commit to not remaining quiet. Hate speech is loud, we must be louder."
 - Ms Vivian Isberg, Finnish Roma Youth Activist