

Strasbourg, 30 June 2023

**15TH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
DIALOGUE WITH ROMA AND TRAVELLER¹ CIVIL SOCIETY**

Equality for Roma and Traveller Women and Girls

MEETING REPORT

¹ 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.

1) Introduction

The focus of the 15th meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society was the topic of equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls. It provided 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 Committee of Ministers recommendations.

As such, the meeting also served as a consultation platform for discussing the draft Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers to member States on the topic of equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls, drafted and proposed by the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) and its substructure, the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Inclusion (ADI-ROM).

Over the course of two days and through nine workshops and two plenary sessions, representatives of Roma and Traveller organisations and experts from international, national, and local civil society organisations (CSOs) reflected upon 11 topics, shared their experiences and presented good practices, to propose a list of recommendations for each topic for all stakeholders. The recommendations should serve as a practical tool and guidance for member States, national, regional, and local authorities to assist them and relevant stakeholders in the areas where Roma and Traveller women and girls face the most discrimination.

2) Executive Summary

The 15th meeting of the Council of Europe dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society reflected upon the topics addressed by the Draft Recommendation on equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls. The meeting served as a unique platform for civil society organisations (CSOs) to reflect upon 11 separate topics, to discuss the challenges faced by Roma and Traveller women and girls in these areas, presenting good practices, directly analysing the proposed recommendations and providing feedback and additional recommendations in these areas.

Each topic discussed in the workshops has its own specificities and recommendations, but overall it should be noted that most of the findings are complementary to one another and seek solutions that require holistic approaches. For example, violence and abuse of Roma and Traveller women and girls is closely linked to housing and the work needed to provide support to victims of violence. The same applies to the category of women and girls who live in extreme poverty and lack personal space for fulfilment of their needs.

Importantly, each area has gender specific angles and, in addition to the contributions made regarding the Draft Recommendation on Equality for Roma and Traveller Women and Girls, participants emphasised that every policy for Roma and Travellers should incorporate, implement, and engage specific recommendations on women and girls. Participants highlighted the

importance of providing support to women and girls in the form of capacity building, providing training, and support through the creation of safe spaces and peer-led groups in Roma neighbourhoods.

The recommendations and challenges which have been put forward by participants illustrate that prove that Roma and Traveller women and girls are particularly vulnerable and face additional burdens caused by inequalities in society. In parallel, Roma and Traveller women and girls carry great potential that can be used towards the overall improvement of the situation within their of the communities. Their resilience to struggles, stamina, and ability to multitask can lead to change provided they are supported through a long-term approach and that alliances with other women and girls, including non-Roma women groups, are built.

3) Workshops - Key Discussion Points and Recommendations

The following part of the report presents an overview of each topic as discussed during the sessions and highlights challenges, good practices, and recommendations for stakeholders as applicable.

Workshop 1: Registration in the civil registry and identity documents

The topic of registration in the civil registry and identity documents is one of the biggest challenges faced by people living in extreme poverty who cannot access and take advantage of their human rights. Women and mothers are especially vulnerable since a lack of documents prevents them from accessing health services and insurance, affecting also their sexual and reproductive rights. This issue is especially present in countries that require parents to have official identification and documentation in order to register their newborn children. For example, some Western Balkan countries do not register the birth of a child if the mother does not have documents. These undocumented children cannot access basic human rights, as was the case of young people who died in North Macedonia due to not being able to access healthcare.

Several member states, such as North Macedonia and Serbia, have made efforts to find solutions to integrate these individuals into the system. Despite these efforts, the adopted instructions in Serbia and the adopted Law on undocumented persons in North Macedonia have not granted access to basic rights for this category of persons. In Serbia, the instructions are not legally binding, resulting in children remaining without documents if their mothers' status remains unresolved. In North Macedonia, although they receive a special ID and identification number, this number is not recognised by the country's system. To address this issue, countries must implement systematic solutions and make changes to existing laws to provide each newborn child with an identification document. Furthermore, given that this category of persons is mobile and hard to reach, institutions need a constant grassroots presence to effectively engage with them.

Good practices in this field in several member states were shared. In North Macedonia in 2018, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy together with Roma NGOs carried out a successful mapping campaign of 700 persons without documentation. In Serbia in 2020, the Ministry of State and Local Administration reached out to undocumented persons through a campaign promoted by well-known Roma through the media and schools in order to provide them with documentation. Georgia has successfully resolved the issue of lack of identity documents. According to Georgian laws, every newborn child can have a personal identification number and birth certificate, regardless of the civil registry status of the mother/parents. Personal documentation in Georgia can be also acquired if attested by two witnesses. Moreover, after five years of living in Georgia, stateless persons can become citizens. Georgia was able to fully resolve the issue of lack of registration in the civil registry through a door-to-door campaign (possibly due to the small number of Roma). In Croatia, birth registration is now carried out online, allowing every newborn to quickly receive their birth certificate and citizenship. Whilst participants in the group discussion recognised the potential of online registration, they also highlighted the difficulties that community members might have in accessing the internet and the need to make the registration process easier and more accessible.

Recommendations:

- Member states and civil society organisations should increase collaboration on the provision of documentation and citizenship to Roma.
- Member states together with civil society organisations should carry out continuous campaigns to highlight the legal implications of lacking identity documents or birth certificates.
- Member states should establish an online birth registration system and the possibility for every child to obtain a registration number and birth certificate.
- The Council of Europe and its member states should organise a conference addressing the lack of identification documents and statelessness.
- The Council of Europe should compile a collection of good practices in this area.
- Member states should create a specific programme for undocumented Roma and Travellers to ensure access to health, education, and employment until their registration in the civil registry has been processed.

Workshop 2: Protection from extreme poverty and access to social protection

Extreme poverty disproportionately affects Roma and Traveller women and girls. Poverty faced by the Roma is multidimensional and spans generations. To address extreme poverty, a long-term intergenerational strategy is necessary. Young girls growing up extreme poverty are at risk of early marriage and becoming young mothers. These circumstances often result in them dropping out of school early and having difficulties in finding employment later. The examples shared in this workshop showed that girls from impoverished backgrounds find it hard to break the cycle and usually choose partners with a similar social status.

Mothers in extreme poverty usually live in overcrowded informal housing without access to water, electricity and the other basic amenities needed to take care of their children and family. Mothers are also very vulnerable when it comes to breastfeeding, since they lack a safe place and privacy to do so. Extreme poverty directly impacts the health, quality of life, and education of adult Roma and Traveller women.

Roma and Traveller women and girls are in general more vulnerable to extreme poverty. Housing conditions significantly impact their quality of life, as they often bear the responsibility of taking care of the children and managing the household and housework. Therefore, addressing extreme poverty linked to social protection and access to social housing should be viewed from a gender perspective. Obtaining social housing and alternative accommodation is still difficult and the process to access them remains cumbersome.

Staff working in social services do not often treat Roma and Traveller women and girls in a professional, fair and empathetic manner and can be judgmental and influenced by stereotypes. To improve the access of Roma and Traveller women and girls to social services, better communication systems within state institutions are needed.

The effects of the pandemic hit Roma and Traveller women even harder, due to their existing extreme poverty and inadequate living conditions affecting their hygiene and health.

Good examples in addressing extreme poverty were shared, including from Greece where every year Roma can apply for municipal jobs and receive funding to start businesses. It was suggested that some of the ideas and practices to combat extreme poverty from refugee programmes could be replicated to benefit Roma and Traveller women. A good example from Ireland is a social enterprise built close to community homes which offers flexible working hours for women. Integro Association shared the example from Bulgaria of a hub led by Roma mothers who also received vocational training.

Recommendations:

- Member states should lower the age for receiving social benefits from 18 to 16 years.
- Member states should create long-term approaches and mechanisms to combat extreme poverty instead of just fulfilling immediate needs.
- Member states should include a gender perspective considering the specific needs of Roma and Travellers women and girls when preparing policies and measures to combat extreme poverty.
- Civil society organisations and member states should work together to foster a deeper understanding of the work, obligations and needs of Roma and Traveller communities and social service providers.
- Member states should ensure access to social services in settlements.
- Civil society organisations should ensure that their social services programmes operate in settlements.

- The Council of Europe should lead a process of revision of the indicators for poverty of international institutions (for example, Eurostat) since current indicators do not reflect the extreme poverty faced by Roma and Traveller women and girls.

Workshop 3: Adoption and placement of Roma and Traveller children in alternative care

Research by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) in Czechia, Hungary and Romania revealed that Roma children are often removed from their families and placed in state care institutions for economic reasons. However, these economic grounds are not legally prescribed grounds for the placing of children in the state care system. Moreover, there are indications that Roma children are overrepresented in the care system and that their placement is not always a last resort.

The economic reasons for taking children into care relate to poverty and inadequate housing conditions. It was highlighted that the institutionalisation of young children is a form of violence, and as such the overrepresentation of Roma children amounts to a form of racist violence. It should also be noted that the rate of removed children who return to their families is extremely low. These children grow apart from their parents, even though they have the right to communicate with them and preserve their culture and language. Several examples of violence and sexual exploitation occurring in alternative care (in Hungary and North Macedonia) have been reported, emphasizing the need for states to ensure safe and suitable conditions for children placed in state care.

Roma and Traveller women often hesitate to report domestic violence out of fear that their children will be taken away and placed in alternative care.

On a positive note, in the village of Sinoasa, Republic of Moldova, families facing economic hardship receive assistance from the local community.

Recommendations:

- The Council of Europe and civil society organisations should provide training on antigypsyism to social workers.
- Civil society organisations should provide legal support to mothers to challenge the decisions on the removal of children from their care and their placement in alternative care
- Civil society organisations should make better use of the free legal aid available from member states.
- Civil society organisations should provide legal support to help children placed in the state care system to claim compensation.
- The Council of Europe should advocate and represent the right of the child to keep a close relationship with their parents and preserve the culture and language.

- The Council of Europe and civil society organisations should support mothers who are victims of domestic violence cases, helping them maintain their autonomy whilst raising the child/children.
- Civil society organisations should support and empower Roma and Traveller families to become foster care families.
- Member states should collect disaggregated data for Roma and Traveller children placed in state care systems.

Workshop 4: Early childhood and school education of Roma and Traveller girls

Education is crucial to overcome poverty, create equal opportunities and achieve progress for Roma and Traveller women and girls. Roma and Traveller women and girls face several obstacles in attending school, including poverty, early marriage, the need to take care of the family and discrimination in school. Roma and Traveller women and girls need to learn about Roma and Traveller history, culture, arts, and language, as elements of modern Roma and Traveller culture, as opposed to the traditional culture that can include patriarchal aspects.

Racism in schools also hinders the provision of quality education for Roma and Travellers. Efforts should be to integrate Roma and Traveller children fully into the educational process.

Another challenge is the absence of references to Roma history, culture, arts, and language from school textbooks.

Furthermore, bearing in mind the online schooling from 2020 to 2022, and the challenges faced by Roma and Traveller children with a lack of technological devices, the impact of the pandemic on them must be assessed to understand their progress or setbacks.

Recommendations:

- Civil society organisations should work with Roma and Traveller parents to ensure compulsory attendance of children in school.
- Civil society organisations should create catch up programmes to encourage and teach deprived communities about the usage of computers and the internet and improve the wi-fi connections in them.
- Member states should involve Roma and Traveller parents in schoolboards/committees.
- There is a need to build upon the achievements from other projects and experience of school mediators.
- The Council of Europe and civil society organisations should ensure programmes for Roma and Traveller women and girls who are out of school so that they can finish their primary and/or secondary education.
- Civil society organisations should create incentives for Roma and Traveller girls to finish compulsory education and create programmes to boost the self-esteem of Roma and Traveller women and girls.

With reference to the draft text of the Recommendation on equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls:

- Member states should ensure access to quality education for Roma and Traveller children and the Council of Europe should refer to this in the draft text.
- The Council of Europe should underline in the draft text that segregation refers to racial segregation.
- The Council of Europe should include intercultural education in the draft text and exchange knowledge and information.
- The Council of Europe should expand recommendation 24 of the draft text to include history, arts and language and ensure teaching about Roma and Traveller history to Roma and Traveller women and girls.

Workshop 5: Health care and sexual and reproductive rights

Vital to the improvement of the situation of Roma and Traveller women and girls is their access to and enjoyment of healthcare, sexual and reproductive rights. There has been a historically deep-rooted hatred towards Roma and Traveller women and girls in these areas which can still be noted today. Discrimination is also present in the form of blaming Roma and Traveller women and girls for being poor and hence responsible for having poor health. As pointed out in a Pavee Point study² carried out in Ireland, 84.1% of Roma women reported feeling discriminated against in healthcare services. Moreover, the same study also points out the disproportionate mortality rates and life expectancy of Roma and Travellers compared to the general population.

² "The National Roma Needs Assessment: Women's Rights Briefing", May 2018, available here: [Publications and Research - Pavee Point](#)

When it comes to sexual and reproductive rights, topics like contraception, family planning and sexual education remain taboo unless they are discussed in safe places created and led by women and girls to increase trust. Safe places (peer-led groups of Roma and Traveller women) together with the need for cooperation between women organisations (Roma and non-Roma) were mentioned as good practices. There is also the need to raise awareness of the importance of mental health which is not currently available to Roma and Traveller women and girls.

As previously stated, undocumented women and girls are very vulnerable since their access to health, sexual and reproductive rights is hindered.

Recommendations:

- Civil society organisations should increase the awareness of women and girls on sexual and reproductive healthcare.
- The Council of Europe and civil society organisations should support safe spaces for women and create peer-led groups and initiatives.
- The Council of Europe should support research on the mental health of Roma and Traveller women and girls including gender-specific health conditions.
- Civil society should design public awareness campaigns to destigmatise mental health and encourage Roma and Traveller women and girls to seek support if needed.
- The Council of Europe should support training on anti-racism for medical staff as well as education on recognising violence in practicing health rights.
- Member states should provide access to medical information in the community's language.
- Member states should collect ethnic data within the health system of the countries to create better healthcare policies for Roma and Traveller women and girls.
- Member states should engage and ensure the participation of Roma and Traveller women in the process of policy creation and implementation, both on Roma and Traveller specific policies and the mainstream health topic.

Workshop 6: Employment and economic situation

Roma and Traveller women and girls currently face various challenges in the field of employment and economic opportunities, such as exclusion from the job market, being discriminated against, and having less employment opportunities compared to non-Roma women and girls, as well as Roma and Traveller men. CSOs have reported that Roma and Traveller women and girls are predominantly working in low-skilled jobs within the informal sector (especially in the Western Balkans) without access to social and other benefits. Roma and Traveller women and girls are not adequately represented in mainstream public discussions and or policy-making processes.

A good practice is the Roma Digital Boost Programme of the Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative (REDI). Through this programme, Roma can improve their digital marketing skills in order to better promote their business. Another good practice is from North Macedonia where

specific measures for Roma women were adopted by the Agency on Employment in their operational plan.

Recommendations:

- The Council of Europe should support the process of capacity-building of Roma and Traveller women engaged in the private and public sector.
- The Council of Europe should help to improve collaboration and support between civil society organisations and non-Roma and Traveller women's organisations on gender topics and the organisation of leadership workshops to boost skills and confidence.
- Civil society organisations should create unions of Roma and Traveller business owners, offer mentorships, and teach Roma and Traveller women about entrepreneurship and funding opportunities.
- Member states should adopt gender sensitive policies and measures in employment.
- Member states and civil society organisations should create and foster ideas for including Roma and Traveller women and girls in green and digital jobs, promoting digital literacy for professional development.
- Council of Europe and civil society organisations should support the process of building and advancing the skills of young Roma and Traveller girls.
- Member states and civil society organisations should work on securing a smooth transition from the informal to formal sector for Roma and Traveller women and girls.
- Member states should provide support to access employment for Roma and Traveller women who are victims of violence.
- Civil society organisations should create a transformative leadership with bottom-up approaches.
- The Council of Europe should support the enhancement of skills of Roma and Traveller women, together with CSOs, by providing career advice.

Workshop 7: Housing and accommodation

The culture of nomadism in Ireland is endangered due to the trespass law which led Travellers to stop moving around the country. Some Travellers were forced to relocate to England or Northern Ireland. As reported during the discussions, almost half of Roma and Travellers in Ireland have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. The homeless issue is significant in Ireland, affecting 39% of Travellers in comparison to 6% of the general population, and has to be addressed at the local level.

Common housing challenges include lack of access to electricity, quality running water, proper sewage systems, lack of social housing, overcrowding, lack of privacy and personal space and forced evictions. These issues disproportionately impact women and girls and so addressing them would benefit the whole community. Women facing evictions, domestic violence or environmental risks need support with the provision of social housing or alternative accommodation.

Environmental factors also affect the quality of housing, life and health. For example, in Galway, an old sewage system has led to contaminated water consumption in the community. Moreover, there is a clear need to analyse environmental and health trends and find solutions.

Roma women in Türkiye are among the most marginalised groups, living in substandard housing. They have limited living space in an extended family environment. Moreover, Roma neighbourhoods (“mahalas”) do not have the parks, gardens, or outdoor infrastructure that non-Roma neighbourhoods have. During the pandemic and the current economic crisis, many Roma have left their rental homes and moved into tents in certain areas. This affects women’s security and private space with the risk of increased violence and domestic violence.

Recommendations:

- Member states should create local policies and clear guidelines that allow Travellers to practice nomadism at local level.
- Civil society organisations should open day care centres where women could have private spaces.
- Member states should grant women access to social housing and provide alternative accommodation in eviction cases.
- Civil society organisations should assist with legal aid to secure alternative accommodation in eviction cases.
- Member states should collect disaggregated data on housing for better policy making.
- The Council of Europe should improve understanding of the consequences of homelessness for women, especially Roma and Traveller women and girls.
- Member states should ensure safe housing and support services for Roma and Travellers who are victims of domestic violence.
- The Council of Europe should explore future housing topics and recommendations, considering future food shortages and encouraging growing food at home.
- Member states and civil society organisations should advocate for environmentally (green) safe places to live.
- Member states should create family-friendly housing environments that respond to the needs of children and women.

Workshop 8: Protection from violence and abuse against Roma and Traveller women and girls

Violence and abuse of women is a consequence of gender inequality, and in Roma and Travellers communities it is a phenomenon that is exacerbated by poverty and social barriers. The violence and abuse faced by Roma and Traveller women and girls, as noted by the CSOs, can be in different forms, such as family pressure, bride selling, various forms of discrimination typical for Roma and Traveller women and girls (such as sterilisation), lack of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, violence in general, as well as cross-generational violence from older Roma women.

Moreover, Roma and Traveller women and girls often lack the knowledge to recognise the violence and abuse.

Roma and Traveller women and girls' who are victims of violence and abuse have no means of financially supporting themselves and escaping from their abusers. These women are particularly vulnerable and lack help, social housing, access to shelters (especially in rural areas due to a lack of transportation), mental and financial support, and long-term support in general. Roma and Traveller women and girls often go back to the abusive and violent environment. In particular, Roma and Traveller women and girls face difficulties in trusting shelters and social workers due to discrimination and a lack of understanding. These women also have a generational trauma and fear that reporting violence in the family may result in their children being taken away from them. Community pressure and shaming also influence their decision to report - or not - the violence and abuse.

Lack of communication between state services complicates victims' lives. It was reported that these services lack solid professional knowledge and experience in protocols for helping victims. Moreover, abusers receive only monetary fines in some countries (for example, in Bulgaria and other Balkan countries). Prison sentences are only issued in homicide cases. In general, it was noted that Roma and Traveller women's CSOs lack long-term funding for working with victims of abuse and violence.

Recommendations:

- Member states should create comprehensive and long-term support systems, including affordable and safe housing, for Roma and Traveller women and children who are victims of violence and abuse.
- Civil society organisations should raise awareness about gender-based violence.
- Civil society organisations should prioritise mental health and provide free psychological services for Roma and Traveller women and children.
- Member states should adopt individualised support for Roma and Traveller victims of gender-based violence.
- Member states should facilitate coordination and information sharing among different state services to provide comprehensive support for Roma and Traveller victims, including underage victims.
- The Council of Europe should provide support to civil society organisations in training them to deal with Roma and Traveller victims of violence by empowering them to report abuse.
- Roma and Traveller civil society organisations should collaborate with mainstream CSOs on violence and the provision of support to victims.
- The Council of Europe should support research on gender-based violence in the Roma and Traveller community and encourage collaboration between CSOs, governments and academic institutions.
- Civil society organisations should implement awareness and educational programmes and campaigns to promote responsible internet usage.

- The Council of Europe should prepare and provide guidelines for youngsters on how to protect themselves from cyber violence.
- Member states should collaborate with CSOs and media to discourage cyber violence.
- The Council of Europe should support training of social workers to address violence against Roma and Traveller women and girls.
- Civil society organisations should also include Roma and Traveller men and boys in discussions on gender-based violence.
- Member states should provide specialised training to police officers on dealing with victims' claims, specialised training for law enforcement and frontline workers.
- Member states should consider imposing stringent penalties for offenders, especially for repeated offences and domestic violence cases.
- Member states should increase the availability of shelters for victims with appropriate facilities for children.
- Member states and civil society organisations should provide counselling and recovery services for victims of domestic violence.

Workshop 9: Data, research, and monitoring - Legislation, strategies, and action plans

Some policies do not include a gender aspect or difficulties are faced in implementing policies for women and girls. Policies for Roma therefore need a better intersectional approach that can provide answers to the issues faced by different groups in the community. The European Union Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation (EU Roma Framework) addresses diversity and includes Roma and Traveller women in the development of the national strategies, but it lacks the strong engagement and networking of women. A common phenomenon is the adoption of action plans for women that are not implemented afterwards.

There are challenges in how data is collected, since recent census results show that census data for Roma is inaccurate. There is a discrepancy between the official and unofficial data which further creates a challenge in interpreting the data. Furthermore, there is a lack of gender disaggregated data.

Recommendations:

- Member states should include or consult Roma and Traveller CSOs in data collection processes, especially in qualitative research methods, serving as socio-demographic proxy, and use them for updating policies.
- Member states and civil society organisations should collect gender disaggregated data when monitoring the implementation of strategies for Roma and Travellers, consider intersectional identities and introduce gender impact assessments.
- The Council of Europe should support funding and provide resources for research on Roma and Traveller women's issues and advocate for the provision of grants in this field.
- Member states, the Council of Europe and civil society organisations should ensure that all policies for Roma and Travellers consider the challenges faced by Roma and Traveller women and girls.

Plenary Session 1: Capacity building and empowerment of Roma and Traveller women and girls

The empowerment of women is a recurrent theme in numerous documents and currently the International Roma and Traveller Women's Conferences serve as a tool for networking and as platforms for empowering Roma and Traveller women and girls. Nevertheless, the empowerment of women should be measurable through indicators to show progress. Additionally, the use of legal aid is seen as a tool that can empower Roma and Traveller women and girls in directly tackling the challenges that they face. Roma and Traveller women prisoners and former prisoners should be considered as a specifically vulnerable category of women. The variety of challenges faced by women and girls should be recognised and measures should at least cover their minimal protection.

Recommendations:

- The Council of Europe should foster networks of Roma and Traveller women and girls at national level (like the International Roma and Traveller Women Conferences).
- The Council of Europe should support Roma and Traveller women's organisations with capacity building, support, and training for CSOs on monitoring of implementations of measures and recommendations.
- The Council of Europe and civil society organisations should support capacity building processes for professional women and the creation of think-tanks to follow the implementation of policies and the process of empowerment.
- The Council of Europe and civil society organisations should support talks on taboo topics as a way of empowerment.
- Civil society organisations should develop programmes designed for Roma and Traveller women and girls to address their needs and challenges, and also fund training programmes in emerging industries and technologies.

Plenary Session 2: Participation in political and public life (including decision making)

The area of political participation and participation in public life was highlighted as particularly challenging: on the one hand, this area is dominated by men and, on the other hand, the community, including women, lack understanding of the importance of participation. The participation of women in decision-making processes has great potential and should be advocated for in national and international settings. The empowerment of women to enter into political and public life should be supported through capacity building, advocacy training, and the introduction of ethnic gender quotas. Two methods of the latter were discussed: one example from Malta, namely appointing persons to specific positions; and a second example regarding reserved seats - in the Republic of Moldova, six Roma women were elected as local council members. Other good examples shared during the discussion were the advocacy training sessions for youth organised by Phiren Amenca, and training courses on political systems organised by CSOs that served as preparatory programmes for bringing women into political and public life.

Recommendations:

- Civil society organisations should support the participation of Roma and Traveller women and girls in political and public life.
- Civil society organisations should create alliances and spaces for women (between Roma and Traveller women and non-Roma women) for participation in political and public life, including joint projects, exchange of knowledge and cross-border consultations.
- The Council of Europe should strengthen its activities regarding Roma and Traveller women and provide regional, national and local discussion spaces for women to talk.
- The Council of Europe should create platforms for activists and CSOs to share experiences on topics related to women and also the LGBTI community.
- Civil society organisations should create joint projects and exchange knowledge on the political and public participation of Roma and Traveller women and girls.
- Civil society organisations should open up more positions for Roma and Traveller women in the field of research, especially on identifying and eradicating obstacles in engaging women into politics and public life.
- The Council of Europe should support the application of intersectionality and talk about Roma and Traveller communities in mainstream settings.
- The Council of Europe and civil society organisations should support the creation of programmes and training for the participation in political and public life of young Roma and Traveller women and girls, also providing support during the mandate.
- Member states should adopt and implement measures for tackling electoral violence and discriminatory treatment during mandates of elected candidates.
- Civil society organisations should create spaces for knowledge sharing among Roma and Traveller men and boys about the importance and benefits of women's participation in politics and public life.

4) Conclusions

Overall, it should be noted that most of the findings are complementary to one another and seek solutions that require holistic approaches. For example, violence and abuse of Roma and Traveller women and girls is closely linked to housing and the work needed to provide support to victims of violence. The same applies to the category of women and girls who live in extreme poverty and lack personal space for fulfilment of their needs.

Importantly, each area has gender specific angles and, in addition to the contributions made regarding the Draft Recommendation on Equality for Roma and Traveller Women and Girls, participants emphasised that every policy for Roma and Travellers should incorporate, implement, and engage specific recommendations on women and girls. Participants highlighted the importance of providing support to women and girls in the form of capacity-building, training, and the creation of safe spaces and peer-led groups in Roma neighbourhoods.

The recommendations and challenges put forward by participants illustrate that Roma and Traveller women and girls are particularly vulnerable, and face additional burdens caused by

inequalities in society. In parallel, Roma and Traveller women and girls carry great potential that can be used towards the overall improvement of the situation within their communities. Their resilience to struggles, stamina, and ability to multitask can provide change if they are supported through a long-term approach and if alliances with other women and girls, including non-Roma women groups, are built.