

BACKGROUND PAPER FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
“GOOD PRACTICES IN PROMOTING ROMANI AND MINORITY WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL AND
DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES: FOCUS ON EXPERIENCE IN ROMANIA”

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DRAFT

By Romani CRISS

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“Women have been seen as less important for a long time. We have been made invisible. But women from minority groups have carried a double burden in many ways. And women in politics, especially Romani women, are challenging a lot of opinions. It is controversial. To use politics, you must organize, you must unite, you must dare and be very, very strong. To change Roma women’s lives you have to change laws, fight discrimination, change prejudice and mainstream Roma issues. Politics is the only way to do all this. It’s about organizing, starting networks and helping each other. We must starting acting like sisters. If one Romani woman is sterilized, my freedom is threatened. Women in the majority must show more solidarity. Roma rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights.”

(Intervention of Ms. Mona Sahlin, Swedish Minister for Democracy and Integration, during the Roma Women’s Forum, Budapest, June 2003)¹

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1. Executive Summary

The political participation of women in national parliaments in South Eastern Europe is very poor. It varies from 5.7 % in Albania to the highest percentage, in Kosovo, 27%². In the case of this region it is very difficult to access resources for a higher participation of minority women. In post-conflict countries, minority issues become very sensitive, related to numbers and to nation building.

Romani women's political participation as voters, party members, candidates and elected candidates is much poorer than among the majority.

Among the priorities in the Roma movement, the issue of gender equality is considered to be a frivolous issue in comparison with the more important human rights violations, such as police abuse, poverty and unemployment.

There are a few success stories, but not enough to have an impact. In the past 2 -3 years, in the discourse of international organizations, Romani women are more present. The issues of Romani women have also recently become a very "fashionable" issue for all of the actors involved in promoting rights of Roma.

What is worrying in this state of development is that while the number of Romani women participating in the political processes at different international and national levels is increasing, this has occurred without attention to equality in numbers of men and women or quality of participation.

The participation of Romani women is challenging and breaking the barriers of the ghetto-isation of the Roma issue and the Roma movement and at the same time the marginalization within the women's rights movements.

While at the international level, the discourse on Romani women's political participation is taking shape, at national and local levels there is still little awareness of the issue, let alone participation. Although publicly Romani activists and politicians state that they are concerned and active in addressing issues related to Romani women, in practice the actions of the Roma associations and political parties are far from following any gender equality principles.

The political participation of Romani women is also not considered a priority among Romani women activists. The non-confrontational attitudes of Romani women activists have been present for almost eight years in the Roma movement as a whole. Raising the issue of political participation of women always brings up tensions and divergences. Like other women's rights activists, so far Romani women have preferred to remain in the corner, addressing social services, education of children and the civil sector.

It is also true that the civil society sector for Roma is more appealing for young people including women, due to the resources available for professional training. In addition, Roma political parties are dominated by men, organized in a very hierarchical way, and provide few resources for individual development.

The participation of Roma in politics takes different forms, including:

- In countries where Roma have the status of national minority there are two means of electoral participation: first, **Roma parties running in the elections** (Romania, FYROM, Czech Republic, Slovakia³, the Union of Serbia and Montenegro, Albania), and second, **minority self governments** (Hungary and Croatia);
- **Consultative bodies** for the implementation of national strategy on Roma (Bulgaria, Romania, Union of Serbia and Montenegro, Czech Republic, Hungary);
- **Experts in local and central administration** hired as part of the implementation of the national strategies for Roma (Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia).

If we examine gender equality within the types of participation mentioned above, the last one, experts in local and central administration, has the highest number of women participants (see the case study on Romania of this paper).

The other two political roles played by Roma as citizens of their countries are candidates and voters. In terms of political candidates, the presence of Romani women is very poor. However there are a few individual examples of successful women candidates in general elections in the Czech Republic (1992-1996) and Hungary (1990). At the local level, the participation of women is higher, but with limited results.

Even though there have been Romani women elected in national parliaments and at the local level, their political discourse has not been automatically gender sensitive.

In case of Romani women as voters, according to the experience of the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in observing elections, it was noted that the level of understanding of the process among Romani voters was low, and that the level of understanding was even lower among female and illiterate Romani voters. These people often voted by proxy, usually a family member.⁴

2. International Instruments and the political participation of Romani women as minority women

There are numerous recommendations for states and political parties in the international instruments on gender equality, regarding the political participation of women. However, the implementation of these recommendations is far from being achieved in practice.

It is interesting to note that in the international instruments addressing the rights of women, provisions on minority women are not present. The single exception is the Beijing Platform for Action, 1995.

On the other hand, there is no awareness of gender issues in the recommendations of the international instruments on national and ethnic minorities. However, the Council of Europe Framework Convention on National and Ethnic Minorities uses gender sensitive language: “his and her” is used in the text of the recommendations.

The most advanced international document on Roma issues, incorporating political participation and gender sensitivity, is the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (for a detailed selection of the provisions on gender and political participation, see annex 3 of this document).

The Action Plan contains recommendations for actions for the participating States on different areas such as: participation, racism and discrimination, social and economic issues. The Romani and Sinti women related issues are addressed in a cross cutting manner throughout the recommendations of the Action Plan. A special chapter addresses participation in public and political life (see chapter VI of the Action Plan) and another one makes recommendations for crisis and post-crisis situations.

The Council of Europe Recommendation 1557 (2002) identifies the Roma in relation to their political representation as having double and in the case of Romani women triple intensity.⁵

A number of recommendations have been issued by different international meetings of Romani women such as the International Conference on Romani Women and Public Policies (Bucharest, December 1999), organized by the Roma Women Association from Romania; and the International Roma Women’s Forum, (Budapest, June 2003), organized by the Roma Women Initiative of the Network Women Program of the Open Society Institute. The recommendations on political participation resulting from these meetings focus more on gender equality in the implementation of national strategies on Roma (Bucharest) and appointing Romani women in the government (Budapest).

3. National strategies for Roma and the gender aspect in the political participation provisions

In all national strategies from South Eastern Europe, political participation of Roma is mentioned, as a national minority or/and as a condition of consultation and participation for the implementation of the national strategies. The presence of Romani women is more often in the health and unemployment provisions. There is no case in which the provisions on political participation intersect with the ones for Romani women.

Governments are usually reluctant to add a gender component in their policies as it is seen as a factor which might increase the expenses from the State budget. However, this is not the case: the mention of both women and men in the various strategies and programmes is simply a means to restore the principle of equality of opportunities for women.

Albania

- Political participation

No provisions on specific political participation of Roma in general, accent on the participation of Roma in Civil Administration, in the draft of the Strategy on Improving the Living Conditions of the Roma.

- Roma women

Recommendations targeting Romani women are under *Chapter 2: Cultural Inheritance and the Family* “... measures for the elimination of discrimination , special programs for women and girls.”

Bulgaria

The constitution bans the formation of parties on an ethnic and religious basis, which constitutes an obstacle for the political participation of Roma. As a result of this constitutional provision, under the Program for “Equal Participation of Roma in Life of Bulgaria” there is no recommendation targeting the political participation of Roma. However, the participation of Roma in the implementation of the Program is mentioned. As a result of this, Roma Experts were hired by different national and local administrative structures. Recently, an association of Roma Experts Working in State Administration was founded.

Local and national political solutions were found and there are a number of Roma candidates on the lists of political parties.

The National Plan for the Roma community is far more advanced on gender equality issues, in comparison with the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. There is a separate item in the Plan dealing with the promotion of a “culture of equality”. It is to be underlined here that the recommendations in favour of women respect the general philosophy of the Plan, which is to introduce specific provisions for Roma and, in

the same spirit, special provisions for Roma/Gypsy women, instead of integration of the gender component in the other main areas covered by the Plan.

In the other hand the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan does not contain this provision of the political document. This mean that in practice the provisions mentioned above are not implemented.

Republic of Croatia

Roma in Croatia have the status of a national minority according to the constitution (art 15.1) and to the Constitutional law on the Rights of National Minorities. According to this law the national minorities, including Roma, may establish minority councils at local and regional levels. No additional provisions on political participation are included in the text of the strategy.

No special attention is paid to Romani women's political participation

4. Policy recommendations

For States

- to implement the recommendations of the international instruments regarding the political participation of women
- to introduce gender equality provisions as a criteria for state funds for the organizations eligible for these funds (see the Strategic objective G1, paragraph 190h of the Beijing Platform for Action)
- to achieve the UN Millennium Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women, Target 12. Proportion of seats held by women national parliament
- to review and update national legislation on women's participation and set up institutional arrangements for monitoring gender equality both in the majority and minorities political parties

For International Organizations

- to coordinate of efforts and actions undertaken for a higher impact on the Romani women's rights movement
- to include on their agenda as high priority the political participation of Romani women
- to include gender balance criteria for funds and participation in different international initiatives and meetings
- to include the participation of Romani women in monitoring mechanisms for elections and political participation of minorities and women

For Political Parties

- to elaborate political platforms for the inclusion of both women and minority women in consultation with the women concerned
- to mainstream minority women and in particular Romani women on the list of candidates
- to include gender equality provisions in negotiating political coalitions with parties of minorities

For Political Parties of Roma

- to include gender sensitivity trainings and programs for the party leaders
- to include Romani women's participation in politics on the agenda of the forthcoming regional meeting of elected Roma representatives
- to include Romani women on eligible seats for local and general elections.

5. Recommendations for the Action Plan and the project “Roma use your ballot wisely”

Recommendations for concrete actions to implement the Action Plan for Roma and Sinti

- assist national governments with expertise and organizational support in revising their national strategies for improving the situation of Roma, by including Roma women in the new versions and in their implementation (see sections II.6 and II.19 of the Action Plan)
- organize open fora for debate on Romani women’s rights, including conservative Romani activists (women and men)
- organize information campaigns for Romani women on their rights as voters and candidates (see VII.112)

Recommendations for the activities under the Project “Roma Use your ballot wisely” (see the annex 7)

- Information campaigns in Croatia, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina: targeting both more Romani women as voters and more accessible information about the rights of women to vote.
- Training of Romani women as potential candidates: the curriculum for such training should include information on legal and institutional means to promote women and support on revising the political platform of their parties from a gender equality perspective and exercising their public speech skills.
- Facilitating electoral coalitions based on the results of this conference: inclusion on the agendas of roundtable discussions the place of women and Romani women in building political coalitions.
- Election observations: inclusion of the gender component in the guide for observing the participation of Roma; and inclusion of some very specific guidelines for minority women in the guide for observing the elections from a gender perspective.
- Regional Task Force on Romani women: inclusion in the regional task force a group of Romani women to work closely with the Task force assistant. This task force is charged with elaborating a plan for improving the political participation of Romani women in the region.

6. Political Participation of Romani Women in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

By Sarita Jasarova , International Roma Women Network, FYROM

Background

In Macedonia, several Romani political parties explicitly represent the Roma and specifically call themselves Romani parties. The first Romani party was founded in 1990. This party, which advocated the total Emancipation of Roma (PCER), was founded by Mr. Faik Abdi, the first MP in the Macedonian Parliament since 1996. The last president of this party, before the founding of the Alliance, was Mr. Samka Ibrahimovski. The second Romani political party, formed in 1991, is the Democratic Progressive Party of Roma in Macedonia (DPPRMin), under the leadership of Mr Arif Bekir. The third party is called the Alliance of Roma for Macedonia, and the president is Mr Amdi Bajram.

Present situation

The OPE was founded in the summer of 2002, when the two largest Romani political parties merged. Nezdet Mustafa was elected as president of the newly formed party. This party has now become the only, and historically the largest, active party of Roma in Macedonia. Currently, there are six regional branches, and the party has 4200 active members and sympathizers.

The highest governing body within the party is the Congress, which consist of 211 members. It meets every four years. The Congress is advised by the Steering Committee, which has 51 members. Every two years, OPE hosts a convention to develop organizational goals and strategic plans.

Title	Officer
President	Nezdet Mustafa
General Secretary	Erduan Iseini
President of Supervising Committee	Ferhat Hasan
Technical Secretary	Demir Sulejman
President of Youth	Hanriet Iseni
President of Women Forum	Nadire Selman
Member	Mabera Kamber
Member	Mendija
Spokesman	Nedzat Mehmet

There are four Romani women in the highest governing body of this political party.

The municipality of Suto Orizari is only municipality in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia where the majority of the people are Roma and the mayor is of Roma ethnicity.

There are no Romani political parties led by women. During the last local elections in the Municipality of Suto Orizari, two Romani women were on the candidate list: Nadira Selman and Mendija Mamud. In the parliamentary elections in 2003, the Alliance of Roma for Macedonia had three woman candidates: Vaska Bajramovska and Mendija Mamut from Skopje, and Anife Demirova from Delcevo.

In Macedonia, the municipality is a separate unit of local self-government, existing for seven years and working with the aim to improve the living conditions and citizen's standards. The local-self government is the place where the citizens feel free to communicate with the institutions of the government; the place where they can express their needs and the problems they face.

The establishment and existence of the Municipality of Suto Orizari is significant in Roma history, because for the first time the Roma have conditions for national affirmation in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Organizational structure of the Municipality

The Council of the Municipality is the highest body in the local municipality of the local self-government. It consists of 17 councilors. The council members are from different political and ethnic origins.

The administrative bodies are led by the Mayor, who is responsible for the implementation of the decisions made by the Council. There are 11 employees, 5 of which have a university degree.

Members of the Council

1. Mr. Sali Sulejman
2. Mr. Bekir Rasim
3. Mr. Arif Bekir
4. Ms. Mendija Mamud
5. Mr. Rufat Demir
6. Mr. Sali Bajram
7. Mr. Xeladin Xenan
8. Ms. Nadira Selman
9. Mr. Kemal Ismail
10. Mr. Nazim Zekir
11. Mr. Halit Iseni
12. Mr. Emin Ramadan
13. Mr. Demir Sulejman
14. Mr. Xelal Emin
15. Mr. Mamud Ejvas

16. Mr. Baki Cejvan

At this moment there are two women on the council: Nadira Selman and Mendija Mamud.

Legal framework for political participation of minorities in elected bodies and in public administration in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

In Macedonia there is no law on the minority participation; this participation is based on civil society. Article 7 of the Law on Political Parties, in effect from August 1994, states: *A Political Party may be founded by at least 500 citizens of age who are citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and have permanent residence in The Republic of Macedonia.* This means that the Law of Political Parties does not have a discriminatory context and that all minorities have the right to form parties and actively to take part in political life.

The presence of women in the Parliament of FYROM

Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy in which the rule of law and separation of powers applies. There is a single-chamber Assembly to which members are elected for a four-year term in a free, equal and secret ballot. This parliament comprises 120 seats. Votes are counted according to a mixed majority/proportional representation system. The governing parties are the Coalition for Macedonia, in alliance with the Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), the Liberal Party (LP), and all other minority parties; the opposition parties are the conservative Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian Nation Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). The percentage of women politicians is 18.3%.

Minorities and women in the Government structure. Roma women as officers and staff in the public administration

According to the Ohrid Framework Agreement, because Roma make up 2.2% of the population, 2.2% of employees in state enterprises and governing bodies must be Roma. Currently, employment levels of Roma in state institutions are much lower than this figure. One Romani woman is currently employed in the Ministry of Social Affairs. Roma are currently working for the enforcement of the Ohrid Framework Agreement to increase the number of Roma employed in state institutions.

As a part of this Agreement, the National State Agency for Public Administration together with the European Agency for Reconstruction announced new positions for public administrators from the minorities in Macedonia. From total number of 600 hundred applicants, 20 Roma were accepted. Among them there were seven Romani women: Gjulten Dalipova, Ajnes Ibrahim, Elvira Arslan and Julia Selim all from Skopje; Simhana Jasarova from Stip; one from Tetovo and one from Veles.

Participation/organization of Romani women in civil society

After its independence Macedonia created conditions for women to create organizations, and in particular for Romani women. At this moment there are several Romani Women's Organizations.

City	Organization	Contact person
Skopje	Esma	Nadira Selman
Kumanovo	"Kham"	Mibera Demirovska , 031/411 584
Kumanovo	"Daja"-Kumanovo	Leta Kamberovska 031/413 662/423 654
Skopje	"Luludi"	Kjmet Amet, 02/640 744
Sv.Nikole	Organization of Romany Women	032/440 712
Bitola	"Daja"- branch office	Sebike Kerimova, 047/229 503
Vinica	"Daja"-branch office	Deniza Omerova, 033/363 433
Delcevo	Otvoreni vrati/ Opened doors	Emina Ibrahimova, 033/413202
Pehcevo	Dajakere chave	Sadbera Bajraktarova, 033/441978
Berovo	Romanela	Lejqa Kindarovska, 033/472 700
Delcevo	Phurt	Anka Demirovska, 033/412 337

On March 29, 2004, the Roma officer from the OSCE Mission in Skopje, Ms. Elizabeta Ramova, held a meeting with representatives from Romani woman's NGOs. The participants were Dilbera Kamberovska ("Daja" Romani women's NGO), Ramiza Sakip (independent Romani woman activist), Nadire Selman ("Esma" Romani women's NGO), Kjmet Amet ("Luludi" Romani women's NGO). Participants in this meeting described the problems and situation concerning Romani women. Discussions focused on their experience (positive/negative) in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Gender Task Force Project "Roma woman can do it", the next local elections, initiatives to be taken, and other issues. The conclusions were that there is a need for better cooperation, information and coordination among them, in the creation of a common strategy for a better approach to political life, in the public administration and in preparations for the next local election. There is an initiative to create a Romani women's lobby group. This project would require good training, and the active participation of all Romani women's NGOs in creating a plan for the aims and goals of the Plan of action and implementation.

Romani woman in Macedonia are actively taking a part in **the Roma decade**, and in the creation of the National Strategy for Roma in Republic of Macedonia.

After the meeting with National Coordinator for the Roma Decade, Mr. Jovan Manasievski, a national working group was created. Three women and one man from the NGO sector were proposed and accepted:

Ms. Zaklina Durmis

Ms. Anifa Demirova

Ms. Azbija Memedova

Mr. Nadir Redzeqi

This national working group has 16 members. There are nine representatives from the Ministries, one MP in the Macedonian Parliament, the Mayor of Suto Orizari, and Mabeza Kamberi who serves as a coordinator of the group.

7. Case Study, Political Participation of Romani Women in Romania

by Mihaela Gheorghe, independent

Background

Since 1992, the main Roma political association with the highest electoral percentage in Romania is the Roma Party, which dominates the political scene with the largest gathering of votes since 1992. The Roma Party started to act as a party in 1992 (under the name Partida Romilor - Asul de Trefla), presently called the **Social Democratic Roma Party of Romania** (since 2002).

Other Romani political parties with lower electoral percentages are:

- Alliance for Roma Unity (**AUR**), headquarters in Bucharest
- Christian Centre of Roma from Romania, (**CCRR**) headquarters in Sibiu
- Community of Roma Ethnicity from Romania, (**CER**) headquarters in Bucharest

According to our data, until the present, no Romani woman has ever been leader of those parties or of any of their branches throughout the country.

Since 1992, several Romani women have been candidates in local and parliamentary elections, either on the list of Roma political parties, non-Roma political parties or as independent candidates. However, very few were elected due to a lack of votes and support for a political platform.

Candidatures of Roma women to local and county councils

- In 1992, one Romani woman candidate, Nastase Maria, was elected as councilor to the General Council of Municipality (Bucharest) on the list of the Asul de Trefla, Roma Party.
- In 1996, a Romani women from Botosani county, Stoica Crenguta (sanitary mediator), Stefanesti was a candidate on the list of Democratic Party to the local council, but was not elected.
- In 1996, Tecaru Luisa was a candidate on the list of AUR, for Galati county, but was not elected.
- In 1996 and 2000 Carmen Varga was a candidate on the list of the Roma Association from Harghita county, but was not elected.
- In 1996, Violeta Dumitru (President of Roma Association from Romania) was a candidate on the list of the Roma Party to the Mayor's office sector 2 of Bucharest, but was not elected.

- In 1996, Carmen Babe Emese was an independent candidate to the Local Council, Harghita county, Secuieni.
- In 2000, Elena State was a candidate on the list of the Roma Party to the local council of Glina and was elected.
- In 2000, Viorica Gotu was a candidate on the list of AUR in Galati for the County Council, but was not elected.

There has been one woman candidate for a Mayor's Office. In year 2000, Geta Sandu was candidate to the Mayor's Office in Traianu, Ialomita County, but was not elected.

Obstacles to Romani women's political participation exist, although Roma NGOs and human rights institutions support an increase of Romani women in programs addressing the main issues of the Roma people.

Romanian legislation on minority participation to the elections

According to article 59, line (2) of the Romanian Constitution, organizations of citizens belonging to national minorities, established legally but not obtaining a senator or at least a deputy mandate, have the right to a deputy if they have gained a number of votes per country equal to at least 5% of the medium votes valid expressed for electing one deputy.

(2) The organizations belonging to national minorities which participate in the electoral elections are juridical equal in terms of electoral operations with the political parties.

Roma Women NGOs

Association of Gypsy Women for our Children, based in Timisoara, Director Letitia Mark

Association for Roma Women Emancipation, based in Cluj-Napoca, Director

Association for Roma Women from Romania, based in Bucharest, Director Violeta Dumitru

The main objectives of the Romani women's NGOs are to address the special needs of women including health, education, and socio-economic conditions, rather than the political participation of Romani women.

Consultative bodies of Roma for Roma

As one of the main conditions imposed by the European Union, the Romanian Government established in August 1998 the Ministerial Committee for the National Minorities as an important governmental body for implementing the National Strategy of improving the Roma situation in Romania. Among the general Roma activists and politicians, several Romani women were encouraged to participate to the elaboration and implementation of the national strategy, for example: Nicoleta Bitu, Mariana Buceanu, Maria Ionescu, and Delia Grigore.

As a follow-up of 5 years of debates and changes, central and local consultative bodies have been set up as control and monitoring tools of the strategy for Roma:

The General Secretariat of the Government established the Department for Ethnic Relations

1. The Mixed Committee for Implementing and Monitoring includes 8 persons

2. Interministerial Commissions for Roma with 64 persons

3. County Offices for Roma with 42 experts

4. Local experts for Roma issues in mayor's offices with 420 persons of which :

26 persons-local expert individual employment agreements

128 persons- functionary mayor's offices

263 persons-volunteers

The functionaries of the bodies below are composed of Romanians and Roma ethnic members:

Roma women experts working at the central and regional level

The Office for Roma Issues is the executive body of the Mixed Committee of Implementing and Monitoring. There are 4 Roma women working in the Office for Roma issues: Mariana Roventa, Plebis Floarea, Maria Ionescu and Lamaita Turcan.

There are 12 Roma women of 41 local experts appointed by the Roma Party in year 2003 in the mayor's offices throughout the country Roma County Offices. Also, the Roma Party appointed Roma advisors in each county council.

The Romani women representation seems to mainstream other fields of actions such as: health, education, and local administrations.

There are 160 sanitary Roma mediators, all of which are Romani women who mainly assist the Roma population in obtaining the status of medical insurance. The target group of the health mediator is the child and mother of reproductive age. They are also facilitators between the Roma community and the majority

community, local authorities and health units. They are employed within the Regional Offices of Public Health and paid by the Health Ministry. The women were trained by Romani CRISS, but recommended and monitored by the local Roma associations.

National Council for Combating Discrimination

Relations between Romani women activists and Romani men activists as well as with the Roma politicians

Presently, many of the Romani men activists' statements are in favor of increasing the participation of Romani women at all levels from politics towards implementation of programs or development of communities in general. Still, there is among the Romani men activists and politicians an obvious hesitation when it comes to the participation of Romani women to the decision-making process. The civil Romani activists are more open to the issues of Romani women than the politicians. Civil society supports and admits that the work of Romani women is responsible and serious when it comes to addressing and solving the Roma population issues.

Romani women seem to relate better with other women groups as it is a common matter of respecting and promoting women's rights and this may be demonstrated by the various meetings and seminars related to women issues.

In this regard, the cooperation with other women's groups needs to be strengthened, and the sharing of experience and solidarity action support should be more developed. Learning together new mechanisms of implementing a national strategy for women from Romania with special emphasis on Romani women's issues should be highlighted.

According to the population census, women represent 50% of the Romanian population, which means 50% of the electoral process and 50% of the beneficiaries as well with interests and special needs.

The inclusion of women in the political decision making process will lead to viable solutions and will definitely satisfy a larger percentage of the population. Since the EU has clearly stated the increasing participation of women in the decision-making process, all the member states must comply with its measures.

Annex 1: Selections of provisions in the international instruments on rights of women related to the political participation

UN Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Art. 7

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women on equal terms with men, the right:

a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for elections to all publicly elected bodies.

Beijing Platform for Action (Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995)

Strategic objective G.1.

Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision making

Actions to be taken

190. By Governments

...

b. Take measures, including, where appropriate, in electoral systems that encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non elective public positions in the same proportion and the same levels as men;

...

d. Review the differential impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and consider, where appropriate, the adjustment or reform of those systems;

...

h. Encourage and, where appropriate, ensure that government funded organizations adopt non discriminatory policies and practices in order to increase the number and raise the position of women in their organizations;

191. By Political Parties

b. Consider developing initiatives that allow women to participate fully in all internal policy-making structures and appointive and electoral nominating processes;

c. Consider incorporating gender issues in their political agenda, taking measures to ensure that women can participate in the leadership of political parties on an equal basis with men.

UN Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Press Release WOM /1362: “Women’s political participation, family concept policy, situation of Roma women”; Hungary’s reports (586th and 587th meetings on 20 August 2002)

...

“.. the lack of Roma women in public and social life was regrettable. Roma women were often represented by male representatives and their voices was, therefore, seldom heard. They were likely to suffer from two fold discrimination, as women and as Roma. Real efforts were necessary to integrate women Roma in politic”

“...Four parliamentarians were Roma, but they were all men. ..Every ministry has a new task force for Roma issues and the majority of the ministerial commissioners dealing with Roma issues were women”

Annex 2: Selection of recommendation of the international instruments on national and ethnic minorities

UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, religious and Linguistic Minorities

Art.2...

2. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.

3. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation

OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities: The Lund recommendations on the effective participation of National Minorities in Public Life

Explanatory note: (pg 12, paragraph 3)

When specific institutions are established to ensure the effective participation of national minorities in public life, this must not be at the expense of others' rights. All human rights must be respected at all the times, including by such institutions which may be delegated authority by the State.

Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Art. 15

The parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.

Annex 3:



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.DEC/566

27 November 2003

Original: ENGLISH

479th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 479, Agenda item 4

**DECISION No. 566
ACTION PLAN ON IMPROVING THE SITUATION
OF ROMA AND SINTI WITHIN THE OSCE AREA**

Selection of recommendations for Roma and Sinti women

II. General context: for Roma, with Roma

...

6. The particular situation of Roma and Sinti women should be taken into account in the design and implementation of all policies and programmes. Where consultative and other mechanisms exist to facilitate Roma and Sinti people's participation in such policy-making processes, women should be able to participate on an equal basis with men. Roma women's issues should be systematically mainstreamed in all relevant policies designed for the population as a whole.

III. Combating racism and discrimination

Legislation and law enforcement

Recommended action by participating States:

...

19. Take into account in all measures and programmes, the situation of Roma and Sinti women, who are often victims of discrimination on the basis of both ethnicity and sex.

IV. Addressing socio-economic issues

Unemployment and economic problems

Recommended action by participating States:

...

51. Develop policies and programmes, including vocational training, to improve the marketable skills and employability of Roma and Sinti people, particularly young people and women.

Health care

Recommended action by participating States:

58. Pay special attention to the health of women and girls, *inter alia*, by:

- (a) Promoting and/or developing programmes aimed at providing information on health care (including nutrition, neonatal care and domestic violence, etc.);
- (b) Improving access to gynaecological health care, including prenatal, delivery and postnatal health care services, *inter alia*, through the provision of information and training.

VI. Enhancing participation in public and political life

Recommended action by participating States:

94. Take measures to guarantee the equal voting rights of women, including by enforcing prohibitions on so-called “family voting”.

98. Promote Roma women’s participation in public and political life; Roma women should be able to participate on an equal basis with men in consultative and other mechanisms designed to increase access to all areas of public and political life.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

106. The ODIHR will devote particular attention to activities aimed at increasing access by Roma women to all areas of public and political life.

VII. Roma and Sinti in crisis and post-crisis situations

Recommended action by participating States:

112. Pay special attention to the needs of Roma and Sinti women and children in crisis and post-crisis situations, particularly by providing them with access to health care, housing and schooling.

Annex 4: Women in Parliaments in the South Eastern Region – statistics, table from the presentation of Mrs. Sonjia Lokar, Roma women in Politics in the South eastern Region

COUNTRY	BEST% OF W MP 1974-1985	% OF W MP ELECTED 1990/1	% OF W MP ELECTED 1996/8	% OF W MP ELECTED 1999/2000	% OF W MP ON JANUARY
ALBANIA	33,2	3,6		6,4	5,7
BIH	21,8	5,0	26,0	26,0	16,7
BULGARIA	23,0	12,9		6,4	26,2
CROATIA	17,0	4,4	7,8	20,2	17,8
GREECE					8,7
HUNGARY	30,1	7,3	8,3	8,3	9,8
KOSOVO					27,0
MACEDONIA		3,3		6,8	18,3
ROMANIA	34,4	3,6	7,3	7,3	10,7
SERBIA		3,0		5,5	12,0
MONTENEGRO				3,0	10,0
SLOVENIA	26,0	13,3	7,8	7,8	13,3

Annex 5: Women in South Eastern Europe Elected in Local Governance, statistics, table from the presentation of Mrs. Sonjia Lokar, Roma women in Politics in the South eastern Region

COUNTRY	Last local elections	% of elected women councilors	% of elected women mayors	Joint women's camapign Yes/No	Party with the best results	Qouta in electoral law /on local level
Albania	2003	No offical results	No official results	Yes, no success	Socialist Party	Not yet
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2000	7,9	6 W Mayors	Yes	No data	Yes, 30%, open lists
Bulgaria						
Kosovo	2001	26%	1 and she resigned recently 0	Yes	AAK, PDK have more than 30% W elected	Yes, 33%, every 3rd should be from a different sex
Macedonia	2000	8,4	3 W Mayors 2,4 %	Yes, 100% more W elected	SDUM 35,83%	No, only for national elections
Moldova	2003	15,09	15,4	No	Communist party	No
Montenegro	2002	8,9	4,7	No	?	No
Romania						
Slovenia	2002	13	6	Yes	ULSD 18%	No, only for EU elections
Serbia	2000	6,55	7 W Mayors	Yes	?	Introduced in 2002, every 4
Croatia	2001	15%	14 W M	Yes	SDP	No

Annex 6: Tentative Elections Calendar 2003-2005 in selected OSCE countries, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Country	<i>Presidential</i>	<i>Parliamentary</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>Federal</i>	<i>Referendum</i>	Other	ODIHR EOM
Albania	2005 (tbc)	June 2005	Oct. 2003				yes
Armenia		25 May 2003			25 May 2003		yes
Azerbaijan	October 2003						yes
Bosnia & Herzegovina		November?	2 October 2004				
Bulgaria	2005 (tbc)	2005 June	Nov 23 2003				yes
Croatia	2004 (tbc)	Dec 2003-Jan 2004 (tbc)	May 2004				yes
Czech Republic		Nov 2004 Senate			13-14 June 2003 (EU referendum)		
European Union		June 2004					
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2003 (tbc)	2006 (tbc)	2004 (tbc)				

France		Senate Sept 2004					
Finland	February 2006	16 March 2003					
Greece	February 2005	7 March 2004					
Georgia		2 November 2003					yes
Kosovo/FRY		Autumn 2005 (tbc)	Autumn 2004 (tbc)				

Montenegro/FRY			2006 (tbc)	2003 (tbc)			
FYR of Macedonia	2003	2006	2004				
Russian Federation	14 March 2004	14 December 2003					yes
Serbia/FRY	June 13 (tbc)?	Dec 2003		2003 (tbc)			
Moldavia	2005 (tbc)	June 2005 (tbc)	25 May 2003				yes
Spain		14 March 2004					
Slovakia	3 April 2004 , 17 April 2 nd round						
Ukraine	31 October 2004						
USA	2 November 2004						
Belarus	Sept 2006	October 2004					
Romania	November 2004 (tbc)	28 November 2004	Spring 2004 (tbc)				

Also: Hungary Presidential June 2005/ Poland Parliamentary Sept. 2005/ Portugal Presidential January 2006
For adding data, try www.ifes.org

Annex 7: List of the activities remained to be implemented under the project Roma Use your Ballot Wisely, May 2004 – May 2005

Activity: Public hearing in B&H (Chapter II)

Period: May 2004

Participants: 20 persons

Activity: Training of women electoral candidates for the next election in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Chapter I)

Period: June 2004

Participants: 12-15 persons

Activity: Informative campaign in B&H (Chapter I)

Period: July 2004

Participants: Roma National Council

Activity: Roundtable on facilitating electoral coalitions in FYROM (Chapter I)

Period : August 2004

Participants: 20 persons

Activity: Public hearing in Croatia (Chapter II)

Period: August 2004

Participants: 20 persons

Activity: Secondment of STO in B&H (Chapter I)

Period: September 2004

Participants: Roma trained as STOs

Activity: Information campaign in Moldova

Period: February 2005

Participants: Roma voters in communities with high concentration of Roma electorate, including repatriated and dislocated Romani persons

Annex 8: Proposed plan of activities for the position of the Task Force for Romani Women by Rozaljia Ilic, Roma Information Center, Executive Director

Month	Strategic goal	Activities	Responsible person	Contact institution or individual
<p>February</p>	<p><i>*Renew the network developed during the last project Roma and Stability Pact in South East Europe – mentors and mentored</i></p> <p><i>According to project description (1.7 Activities, Cluster II)-“II.1.4 Regional task force on Roma women will be focusing on the created network during the previous project from the “mentors” and assisted NGOs.”</i></p> <p>Proposed reactivation and development of the RSPSEE network, which is one of the objectives we proposed in the Concept of the TF and announcement we spread.</p> <p>1.7. Cluster II says : This direction of action includes two steps: Producing materials and setting up information campaigns and dissemination of the produced materials in the project’s target communities. In this respect, an intersectionality of different clusters of action of the project will be registered. The local contact points and the task forces contracted within the project will contribute to the implementation of these activities. Roma-to-Roma approach, which was tested during the previous project at regional level, will be applied in the implementation of the activities at the local level.</p> <p>Proposed campaigns , observation of elections ,etc with focus on women participation</p>	<p>*Gathering information</p> <p>*Receiving of information and creating of the new database with the names of active and inactive women from the group, and beginning of communication and activities between women involved in program – mentors and mentored;</p> <p>*Forming of database about women group’s programs from the region;</p> <p>*Raising attention and involvement of mentioned women in political public life (campaigns before elections, observing elections, informing other women about political rights...)</p>	<p>*TF assistant is looking for information on web sites, making a phone calls with women, writing e-mails and receiving reports from women</p>	<p>*Partners -mentors, mentored, local contact points, other women groups</p>

<p>March</p>	<p><i>Spreading information thru network of Roma Women already created about realized activities considering ODIHR's contact points for the issues of Roma and Sinti and especially for "Roma use your ballot wisely"</i></p> <p><i>According to the project description Gender TF should "contribute to the forming of civic alliances of different Roma associations concerned on the issue to be lobbied for"- (.7 Detailed description of activities, CLUSTER II)</i></p>	<p>*Discussion with all women (from RNGOs) who are active at this moment considering creating of the network on local and national activities of women during the elections (before and after);</p> <p>*To inform all women's group in the region about activities on this program by e-mails using already existing web sites and mailing lists of Roma women networks in the region (Contact person: Enisa Eminova, responsible for the site and e-mail lists)</p> <p>-Organize the round table in Serbia</p> <p>-To motivate other women in the region by organizing the round table on the mentioned topic (Activities could be realized until July)</p>	<p>TF assistant – is sending information about activities, offering help in organizing of round tables</p>	<p>Local partners – organizing the round tables</p>
<p>April</p>	<p><i>Spreading information thru network of Roma Women already created about realized activities considering ODIHR's contact points for the issues of Roma and Sinti and especially for "Roma use your ballot wisely"</i></p>	<p>*Finishing the policy papers on the different strategies connected with the topic of position of Roma women (very important documents, and it is necessary for all lobbying that to be done, considering adopting by the parliaments; in my opinion this is the most important thing to do in Serbia; whole Roma movement in Serbia should work on it);</p> <p>*Activities already mentioned during the last period and conferences already planed for April</p>		<p>Slavica Vasic Jelena Jovanovic Enisa Eminova Azbiya Memedova</p>

<p>May</p>	<p><i>Assistance of the Roma women in the elected bodies and administrative offices about the needs in trainings and networking, on women's demand</i></p> <p><i>1.7-Cluster I – training's for Roma women candidates</i></p>	<p>*Holding an meeting/training about importance of women in political life and underlining importance of their candidacy and/or participation in the election on the local level, thru Roma or other parties, how to distinguish parties and their programs that they run (democrats, liberals, radicals, socialists...);</p> <p>*-Gathering of the database about the needs of women in trainings</p> <p>-Forming the questionnaire for this database</p> <p>-Organizing the regional conference for the networking of women on the issues: Political engagement and/or support in the elected bodies and administrative offices</p> <p>Special note: The trainings should not be only for women in the elected bodies and administrative offices (Activities could be realized until December)</p>	<p>*TF assistant is making an questionnaire for the needs, forming the database, plan for the conference</p>	<p>Partners – "Bibija" for the conference, and local women's groups for the trainings</p>
<p>June</p>	<p><i>Making close ties between Roma women's networks and networks of other women in the way of changing experiences, gathering the means and financial assets, and developing solidarity on common interests; also with the network within Gender TF Stability Pact "Roma women can do it".</i></p> <p><i>Follows the objectives set in the concept of TF Gender</i></p>	<p>*Connecting with women that are already engaged in pre or/and election activities "<i>The voice of difference</i>", from Belgrade;</p> <p>*Connecting of Roma women thru already existing Roma networks and informing about political events in the region, connected with Roma women;</p> <p>*Initiating/animating of the communication and making concrete connections between</p>		<p>Enisa Eminova, Nadire Selman, Dilbera Kamberovska</p>

		women in the region within existing networks, initiating of the common programs within women's groups, connecting with other women's groups in solidarity on the stronger / higher involvement of women in politic		
July		*Working on activities that are already mentioned during the last months *Working on the activities that are planed with the program itself		
August	This is the month, when the majority people are on the holidays	*Observing the items and analyses of the reached state		
September	<i>Providing the process of consultation with the networks about the main streams considering gender issues within OSCE/ODIHR action plan for Roma and Sinti</i>			
October	The plan for the October, November and December would be adjusted considering all previous activities during this year.			
November				
December				

Activities that will be done during all or some months

- *Offering help to women that will run their candidacy/campaigns on the local levels, as well as to those on the national level – the possibility is very low, because at the present moment women are not having that level of political thinking; this is why it is very important to do the training to move them on thinking and further on acting in the desirable route/course/way
- *Connecting the women with the women-politicians in order to help them to be engaged in the political parties and support them to run their campaigns and candidacies in the mentioned parties
- *Following the announcements of the political parties in medias (TV, newspapers...) about political rights of Roma people – positively, negatively, following the announcements of the Roma politicians in the medias
- *Engagement in the campaigns for the elections and observing elections
- *Participation at the meeting in Macedonia
- *Participation at other important meetings in the region
- *Making notes with women's experiences that were candidates on the elections
- *Making database about irregularities during elections

Annex 9: Table with persons employed as the result of the implementation of the national Strategy on Improving the situation of Roma- number of women, Romania by Mariana Dinca, Romani CRISS

Crt. No.	Institution	Function	Person's number	No. of women
1.	Romanian Presidency	Presidential adviser	1 person	0
2.	Chamber of Deputies	Deputy	2 persons	0
3.	Government Secretariat- Office for Roma Issues	Secretary of State	1 person	0
		Expert	4 persons	2 persons
		Adviser	2 persons	0
		Specialised Referent	1 persons	1 person
4.	Prefect's office – County Office for Roma	Roma Expert	42 persons	12 persons
5.	Ministries – Inter-ministerial commissions	President of inter-ministerial commission	16 commissions x 4 persons = 64 persons	-
		Secretary of inter-ministerial commission		
		Member of inter-ministerial commission		
6.	Ministry of Education and Research- County School Inspectorates	Inspector for Roma	44 persons	20 persons*
		Pedagogic inspector for Roma education	42 persons	28 persons*
		School mediator	19 persons	15 persons
7.	Ministry of Health and Family- Public Health Directorates	Health mediator	156 persons	155 persons
8.	National Agency for Occupancy and Professional Training	Adviser	42 persons	15 persons*
9.	County Directorate for Social Work	Social worker	42 persons	-
10.	National Council for Combating Discrimination	Adviser	2 persons	1 person
11.	City hall	Roma Local expert for Roma	145persons	26 persons
12.	Romani CRISS	Human rights monitor	10 persons	1 person

Bibliography

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² See the *Roma Women in Politics in the SEE region*, presentation for the International Conference “GOOD PRACTICES IN PROMOTING ROMANI AND MINORITY WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES: FOCUS ON EXPERIENCE IN ROMANIA IN PROMOTING NATIONAL MINORITIES AND ROMA IN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS” by Sonja Lokar, head of the Gender Task force of the Stability PAct for SEE

³ For a detailed analyze of the political participation of Roma in Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland see *The political participation of the Roma: Roma in the Politics in Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland*, by Ewa Sobotka

⁴ ODIHR Projects Roma and Elections and Advancing Political Rights of Roma and Sinti, *Background Paper Summarizing and Analyzing Information Gathered in the Course of the Projects through Participation of Romani STOs in the OSCE Election Observation Missions and Prague Workshop on Romani Political Participation, Prepared for the OSCE Human Dimension Supplementary Meeting on Roma and Sinti, 10-11 April 2003, Vienna* , compiled by Ilona Klimova, University of Cambridge and University of New South Wales, April 2003

⁵ see pg. 5, *The political participation of the Roma: Roma in the Politics in Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland*, by Ewa Sobotka