



Alianța Civică a Romilor din România

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ROMA CIVIC ALLIANCE'S STATEMENT ON ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF ROMANI WOMEN

Roma Civic Alliance of Romania strongly urges the OSCE to work with participating states and international organizations and to come up with a concrete common plan to ensure the socio-economic security by economically empowering the Roma, especially Roma women, pursuant to chapter IV –Addressing socio-economic issues of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of the Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area.

CONTEXT

The Roma population more than anyone else were the losers of the transition to the market economy in the countries of Central and South Eastern Europe (Comparative Economic Studies, 2006, 48, p.6). The unemployment rate is 100% in some rural areas and most often the only income consists of the social benefits provided by the Governments.

In Romania the historically agrarian reforms have excluded Roma. Starting with the key moment of abolition of the slavery in 1856 when none of the former Roma slaves received granted land and continued with the fall of the iron curtain, when the last agrarian reform was adopted in 1991.

The 2000 years brought National Strategies for Roma Inclusion, strategies that have had low impact and little results, because of the lack of a proper budget and inadequate implementation mechanism, but the main thing missing is the real commitment of the National Governments to Roma inclusion.

In 2008 when the global economic recession began to threaten, the UN Assembly mentioned [...] *there is a particularly important gender dimension which requires analysis of the domain of nonmarket work and social reproduction. Women bear the brunt of crisis because of the paradigm of the male bread-winner that prevails all over*

the world across cultural divides. When job retrenchment takes place, the tendency is to protect employment for men and compromise on women's jobs. But women's incomes are essential for family survival, especially when they are heads of households and/or in poor families. They cannot afford to stop working so they end up in jobs with much worse and often unacceptable conditions.

Economic empowerment of the Roma women

The estimated number of Roma living across Europe is 10-12 million. The estimated number does not represent just the largest minority living in Europe, but a massive young workforce that can contribute to economic life by becoming taxpayers.

Economic empowerment provides incentives to alleviate the Roma women poverty, to change negative attitudes, and the patterns traditional behavior to which a woman is bound as a dependent member of the household.

Economic empowerment is a feasible alternative in combating the discrimination on access to employment – paid job, which Roma are facing.

The security is the second important fundamental need of a human being; the first is the need of food and thirst. The income security can be the hub of breaking the circle of Roma exclusion.

Economic empowerment for Roma women means preferential employment, skills development, ownership, management, socioeconomic development, and preferential procurement.

The current financial crisis affected more the poor and the poorest population, especially Roma and Sinti. Their low skills exposed them and worsened the situation.

The OSCE should not limit its intervention to addressing the question of the fulfillment of the political commitments by participating states. The OSCE, ODIHR – CPRSI, especially OCEEA is well-equipped to support the participating states quota: *to developing approaches designed to overcome obstacles and discrimination that prevent Roma and Sinti people from fulfilling their potential in the economic sphere*

The OSCE and the participating states have committed (and this commitment was also made to the Roma communities) *“to respond effectively in crisis situations to ensure protection of Roma communities at risk [...] develop policies and programmes, including vocational training, to improve the marketable and employability of Roma and Sinti people, particularly young people and women ”*

This is why, Roma Civic Alliance strongly urges the OSCE to work with participating states and international organizations and to come up with a concrete common plan to ensure Roma economic security through economic empowerment.

Roma Civic Alliance urges those participating states that have first-hand experience in dealing with economic empowerment to make such experience fully available for other participating states and for the OSCE.
