

ROMANI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN CROATIA

FACT SHEET 2006

OSI JOINT ROMANI WOMEN'S
INITIATIVE

Established in 2006 as a partnership between the NWP Roma Women's Initiative and the Roma Participation Program, OSI's Joint Romani Women's Initiative (JWRI) continues to support young Romani women's leadership, capacity building, advocacy and research.

"We cannot expect to attack poverty effectively and empower women economically if these women are suffering from poor health, inadequate schooling and skills, social exclusion, and gender-based discrimination."

*Jennifer Tanaka, Assistant Director,
Pakiv European Roma Fund in Budapest*

BACKGROUND

The Roma in Croatia are recognized as a national minority that, according to the 2001 national census, constitutes 0.21 percent of the population, or approximately 10,000 people. However, NGOs estimate that between 30,000 and 40,000 Roma live in Croatia. There is a lack of data on Romani women's access to education, employment, and health.

Equality is guaranteed to members of all national minorities including Roma under the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, which protects human rights and minority rights. In 2003, the Croatian government adopted a comprehensive policy document on Roma.¹ However, the document reiterates a paternalistic, biased attitude towards Romani women and does not address the issue of employment, the most challenging situation for Romani women. The Croatian government has, to date, failed to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination framework by which Romani women could secure their rights and challenge abuses.

WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

- There is no data segregated by gender and ethnicity, which prevents the government from creating specific policy measures to address the problems faced by Romani women.
- Empirical data and field research done by the European Roma Rights Center indicates that the employment situation for Romani women is an issue of serious concern.²
- Out of 122 Roma, of whom 63 were women, interviewed by a local NGO,³ only 1 percent were employed full time.
- Research by the organization Better Future revealed that the greatest percentage of the employed Roma population was involved in the part-time trading sector and domestic related activities, 16 percent and 19 percent respectively.

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY?

- There are no policy measures to address the lack of access to employment for Romani women.
- The government's Roma policies fail to consider gender disparities when addressing the unemployment of Romani men and women.

¹ Government of the Republic of Croatia, "National Program for Roma", October 2003, Zagreb.

² "Shadow Report of the European Roma Rights Center on the Republic of Croatia's combined second and third periodic reports to the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women" (CEDAW 32nd Session 10 to 28 January 2005) Accessible on the website, <http://www.errc.org/db/00/E2/m000000E2.doc>, 2006-06-05

³ Research on the situation of Roma conducted by the organization "Better future", 2001, Zagreb.

WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN?

“Discrimination against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”

(Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Article 1)

WHAT DOES THE EU RACE DIRECTIVE SAY?

“In implementing the principle of equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, the Community should, in accordance with Article 3(2) of the EC Treaty, aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality between men and women, especially since women are often the victims of multiple discrimination.”

(Council Directive 2000/43/EC of June 29, 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Preamble 14)

- There is a huge gap between the educational level of the majority population and the Roma, particularly Romani women. This discrepancy results from a lack of citizenship and residence documents, which make it difficult for Romani parents to register their children for school, limited financial resources, which prevent parents from enrolling their children in school; and the practice of marrying Romani girls at an early age, before their completion of primary school.
- For Romani women, this lack of education remains the greatest barrier to entering the labor market.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- The government should take concrete steps and adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, in line with European Community law, to prevent discrimination against Romani women.
- The government should establish a data collection method segregated by ethnicity and gender, according to the international standard, to address the exclusion of Romani women from the social and economic system and to introduce measures to integrate them into the labor market.
- European institutions (European Union, Council of Europe) should ensure that funds and institutional support for improving economic conditions in Croatia address the equality of Romani women.
- Provide financial and technical support for improving the employability of Romani women.
- Romani women should be included in the design of any policies or programs that address them.
- Ensure that the National Program for Roma accounts for the issues that Romani women face. Guarantee that the program will address the employment situation of Romani women; that it will be implemented and monitored with the participation of Romani women; and that the impact of the policies is assessed to ensure their results.
- Require that the Office for Gender Equality develop programs for Romani women and girls to improve their access to health, education, employment, and political participation. Facilitate the development of better links between Romani women's organizations and mainstream women's organizations.

MORE INFO:

<http://cps.ceu.hu/>

<http://www.romawomensinitiatives.org>

www.soros.org/initiatives/women