



## ROMANI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN MACEDONIA

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

According to the official census in 2002, there are 53,879 Roma living in Macedonia. If accurate, these figures indicate that Roma make up approximately 2.6 percent of the total population. Other studies, however, estimate a Romani population of 80,000 to 135,000.<sup>1</sup> An exclusionary citizenship law was adopted in 1997 following the breakup of Yugoslavia, and many people, particularly ethnic minorities, lack citizenship. Roma are recognized as a "national minority" in the Constitution of Macedonia (along with Albanians, Turks, Vlachs and other minorities), and received the status of "constitutive people" after Ohrid Agreement in 2001, obtaining all proceeding rights, freedoms and protection from racial and religious discrimination like all other citizens.

Romani women encounter discrimination both within the family and society, ranging from domestic violence to a lack of access to education, health care, employment, and citizenship. Research shows that discrimination against Romani women remains ignored by the authorities. The Macedonian government has, to date, failed to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination framework that would enable Romani women to secure their rights and challenge abuses.

The National Action Plan for Gender Equality Promotion, which was adopted in 1999, does not prioritize the needs of minority women. Although low levels of education for Albanian and Romani girls are mentioned as a concern, there is a lack of concrete measures to address the multiple barriers to education and employment that Romani women face.

### WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

- There is no data segregated by gender and ethnicity, which prevents the government from addressing the problems of or creating specific policy measures for Romani women.
- In a poll of 202 Romani women, age 18 to 54:
  - 51 percent were unemployed;
  - 8 percent were employed in state institutions, 12 people as cleaners and 4 as machine workers in state-owned factories, all with social benefits;
  - 5 percent were employed in private firms, without social benefits;
  - 4 percent were self-employed with social benefits;
  - 34 percent worked in the informal economy, without any social benefits; and out of seven women age 55 to 65, only three receive pensions.<sup>2</sup>
- Romani women in Macedonia face high poverty rates, mass unemployment, low health status, low level of education, and inadequate levels of political and public participation. According to the United Nations Development Program:

<sup>1</sup> Lakinska, Professor Divina, Zaklina Durmis, Azbija Memedova and Ljativ Demir. *Needs assessment for the Roma Educational Fund*, Macedonia. November 2004. World Bank, 5.

<sup>2</sup> The research was conducted by the European Roma Rights Center, the OSI's Network Women's Program, and The Roma Center of Skopje as background material for the 'Shadow Report On the Situation of Romani Women in the Republic of Macedonia', in 2005 available at <http://www.errc.org/db/01/97/m00000197.pdf>



## 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)*

- 22 percent of Romani men and 39 percent of Romani women have no or incomplete education, compared to 8 percent of non-Roma living in close proximity to Roma;<sup>3</sup>
- 65 percent of Romani men and 83 percent of Romani women have never been employed, compared to 50 percent of non-Roma living in close proximity to Roma;
- 89 percent of Roma live under the relative income-based poverty rate, compared to 39 percent of the majority population in close proximity to Roma; and 79 percent, compared to 34 percent of the majority population, live under the relative expenditure-based poverty rate.

## WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY?

- A study published by the World Bank confirmed that the name, surname, and ethnicity of job seekers influence the employer's decision about hiring a potential employee. In the case of Romani women, physical appearance and style of dress constitute additional discriminating factors.
- Romani women face overt discrimination and verbal harassment by employers, and they are subjected to worse working conditions, longer hours, and less pay than non-Romani women.
- Romani women are forced to work in the informal economy, without any social security, to insure the survival of their family.

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- The government should take concrete steps to prevent discrimination faced by Romani women, and should adopt a comprehensive antidiscrimination law in line with European community law.
- 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.
- The 1999 National Plan for Gender Equality Promotion should be amended to adequately address the specific needs of Romani women, as well as to ensure adequate financial and human resources to effectively implement all measures.
- European institutions (European Union, Council of Europe) should ensure that all funds and institutional support for improving economic conditions in Macedonia address the equality of Romani women.
- Financial and technical support should be provided to improve the employability of Romani women in the labor market.

## MORE INFO:

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

<http://www.romawomensinitiatives.org>

[www.soros.org/initiatives/women](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/women)

<sup>3</sup> “Non-Roma living in proximity to Roma” is defined as a group that faces similar socio-economic challenges as Roma; the target group involved people from all nationalities living in Macedonia.