

ROMANI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN ALBANIA

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 latest national census in Albania does not contain data on the Roma population. National and international NGOs estimate that 95,000 to 150,000 Roma live in Albania; the World Bank's estimate of 95,000 – or two percent of the total population – is considered the most accurate.¹ Three minorities are recognized as national minorities: Greeks, Macedonians, and Montenegrins. Roma and Vlachs are recognized as linguistic, or cultural minorities. Though both national and linguistic minorities have protection under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Roma community would like to be considered a national rather than linguistic minority.

The Albanian Constitution formally establishes the fundamental principle of equality before the law (Article 18) and guarantees freedom from discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, language, social status, or ancestry. There is, however, no specific anti-discrimination legislation.

In 2003, the Council of Ministers approved a national strategy for the improvement of the living conditions of Roma². The strategy acknowledges that the Romani population in Albania suffers discrimination and social exclusion in education, employment, social protection, health care, and the judicial system. Though the strategy recognizes the difficult employment situation of Romani women, it does not offer specific measures to prevent the exclusion of and discrimination against Romani women in the labor market. The strategy does not contemplate further policy development or the mainstreaming of Roma issues within the national strategy for social and economic development in Albania.

WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

- In Albania, the data is not segregated by ethnicity and gender, which prevents the creation of policies to improve the employability of Romani women in the labor market.
- The national unemployment rate is 14.4 percent, and the unemployment rate is higher among women with elementary and high school education³. Therefore, Romani women – based on ethnicity, gender, and education – fall into the highest risk group and are overrepresented among the unemployed. According to the Albanian Roma Strategy, the unemployment rate among Romani men and women is 100 percent in some communities.⁴
- Women constitute only 37 percent of the labor market in Albania. There is no official data on the employment rate of Romani women.

¹ *Roma and Egyptians in Albania – From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion* by Hermine G. De Soto, Sabine Beddies, Ilir Gedeshi, World Bank Report 2005.

² National Strategy for the "Improvement of the living condition of the Roma minority in Albania", prepared by the Inter-Ministerial Group headed by the Deputy Minister of Work and Social Issues. April 2003. Tirana.

³ According to the National Institute of Statistics, see, <http://www.instat.gov.al/>

⁴ Roma Strategy, *op.cit.*, p.6.

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)

- Lack of education remains one of the greatest barriers to employment for Romani women. World Bank research indicates that school attendance was higher (6.2 years) during the socialist period than it is now (3.96 years).⁵

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY?

- Albania did not develop clear indicators for Romani communities that recognized their vulnerabilities.
- Very few Romani women are officially employed in the agriculture, education, trade, and cleaning service sectors.
- Most Romani women work in the informal economy – collecting herbs, selling blood to hospitals, or selling bottles and scrap metal – and are left out of the social and health security system.
- Migration of Romani women to neighboring countries has become a crucial source of income for the survival of many Romani families.
- Illegal migration has facilitated human trafficking; Romani women and children are the groups most affected by this activity.
- Romani women and children suffer from malnutrition, which is allegedly increasing in the Albanian Roma community.⁶
- Romani children frequently drop out of school or never attend, eroding educational gains achieved under socialism and creating a cycle of illiteracy and lack of integration into the new social and economic system.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- The government should establish a data collection method 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 government's national strategy for Roma must include specific measures to improve the employability of Romani women.
- The national strategy for Roma must be mainstreamed into the National Strategy for Social and Economic Development, with particular emphasis on gender discrimination in the labor market.
- European institutions (European Union, Council of Europe) should ensure that all funds and institutional support for improving the economic conditions of Albania address the equality of Romani women.

MORE INFO:

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

<http://www.romawomensinitiatives.org>

www.soros.org/initiatives/women

⁵ Ibid., Annex, Table on the 'Illiteracy Rates for Roma and Egyptians, by Gender and Age Group'

⁶ Hermine De Soto and Ilir Gedeshi, 'Dimensions of Romani Poverty in Albania', in ERRC Roma Rights Newsletter, Nr. 1/2002. Also available at: http://lists.errc.org/rr_nr1_2002/noteb3.shtml