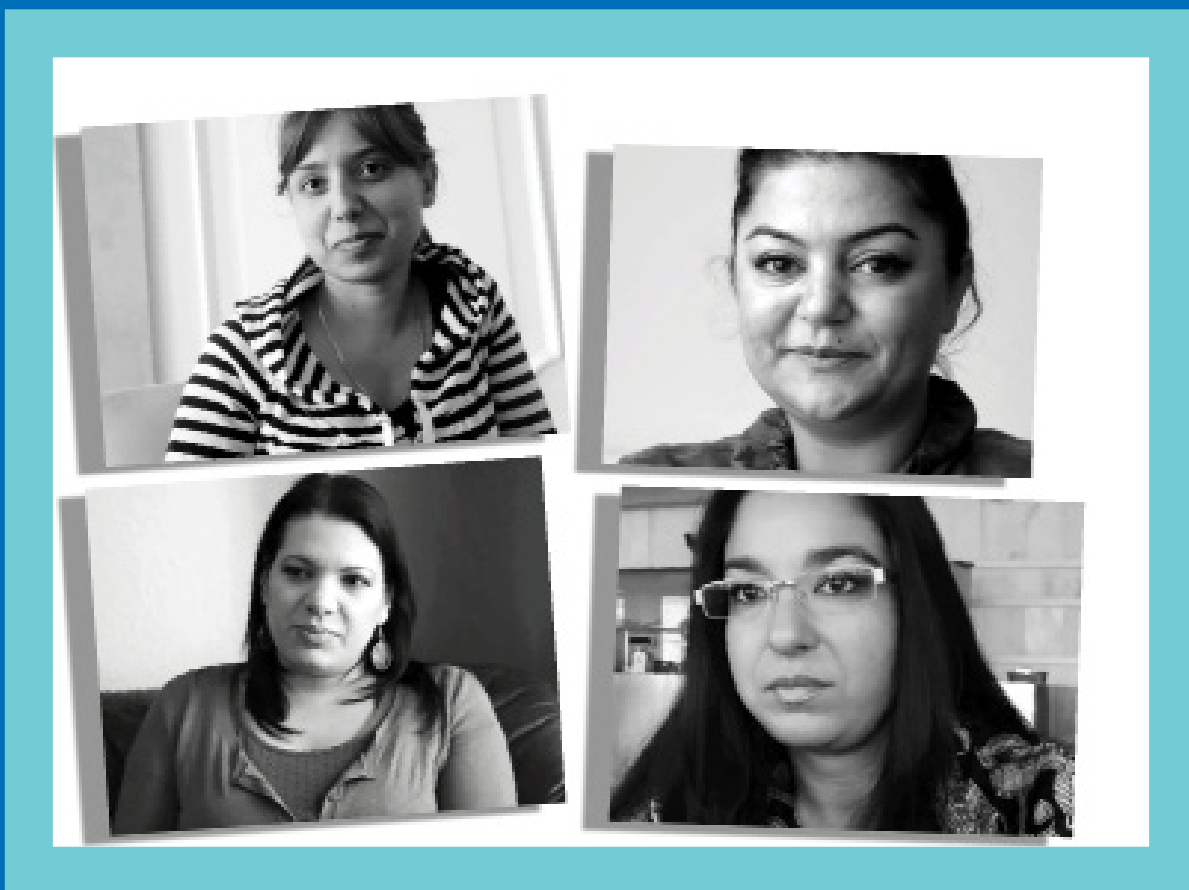


# WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IN MIGRANT, MINORITY AND ROMA AND SINTI COMMUNITIES IN THE OSCE REGION



PROCEEDINGS FROM AN EXPERT ROUNDTABLE

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# **WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IN MIGRANT, MINORITY AND ROMA AND SINTI COMMUNITIES IN THE OSCE REGION**

**Proceedings from an Expert Roundtable**

**Vienna, February 2014**

# QUOTES

*“In every society there is a long way to go before women can truly say that they are recognized as equals and can fulfill their true potential as agents of change at every level. For migrant and minority women the situation is much worse and requires dedicated attention.” - Rita Izsák, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).*

*“[W]e have to admit that there are barriers that prevent women of minority backgrounds from harnessing their full potential as agents of change. They easily become victims of exclusion. I often note the lack of women around the table when I meet with government officials.” - Ambassador Knut Vollebaek, former OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.<sup>1</sup>*

*“The leadership of women, especially from migrant and minority communities, cannot be underestimated if we want to make a real impact on the grassroots level, be it in the political, economic, social or cultural fields.” - Ambassador Jennifer Brush, Head of OSCE Mission to Moldova.*

*“Today’s political culture demands instant gratification from public investment, when the reality is that the results of much of our integration work will only come to fruition over the course of many generations. Many of the ‘best practice’ in the field of integration, ‘what works’, has yet to prove itself fruitful. We cannot expect instant gratification from our investment in the field. We need to be willing to take risks and be innovative.” - Vidhya Ramalingam Programme, Associate of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue.*

*“Finally, it’s not enough to adopt action plans and progressive rhetoric; Roma women rights and gender equality need to be supported and promoted by policy and the state and its respective Institutions and with active Roma women involvement.” - Andrzej Mirga, former Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.*

1 Ambassador Knut Vollebaek and Andrzej Mirga, former Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), were in function during the Roundtable.

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# FOREWORD

The importance of empowering women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities cannot be overstated. Women from minority backgrounds face significant barriers in achieving leadership and decision-making positions due to the “double discrimination” phenomenon, where they may experience both gender-based and ethnic-based discrimination.

By adopting the Copenhagen Document in 1990, OSCE participating States affirmed that respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities is a universally recognized human right and an essential factor for political stability and security. Moreover, equality between women and men forms an integral part of the OSCE’s core commitments as outlined in 1975 in the Helsinki Final Act. Despite the positive developments in the international legal framework and the on-going efforts by the OSCE towards achieving stability and peace in relations between national minorities and majorities significant challenges still exist for the situation of Roma, Sinti, migrant and minority environments. Women from these communities continue to lack the support needed to act as effective agents of change in their environments. Women from marginalized groups are particularly affected by human rights violations, pervasive poverty and physical insecurity. This publication makes a valuable contribution by placing the issue of minority, migrant, Roma and Sinti women within the overall discussion of minority rights. A number of OSCE Institutions work with different aspects of minorities’ human rights, such as the High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and their work together with the work of the OSCE Gender Section can have an important impact for ensuring minority women’s needs and priorities are mainstreamed within the overall debate on minority issues.

Mainstream discussions on minority rights, migration issues and discrimination are often carried out without a gender analysis. This means that the concerns, needs and experiences of women from minority, migrant or Roma and Sinti groups are often not included in these discussions. There is simply not enough understanding and knowledge of the double discrimination that women from minority groups face. The lack of research and data, including data on access to health care, services, education and participation in the labour market and public life by minority, migrant and Roma and Sinti women is a significant obstacle. One of the major recommendations from this publication is thus the importance of developing a new research agenda on which evidence based policy making can be undertaken.

With this publication, the OSCE Gender Section aims to further the debate on how to empower women of marginalized groups to become leaders and agents of change, not only at a local level but also on a wider scale. This report is the outcome of discussions led during a two-day expert roundtable on “Women as Agents of Change in Migrant, Minority and Roma and Sinti Communities in the

OSCE Area” on 6-7 September 2012 that was hosted by the OSCE Gender Section in Vienna. It begins with a short introduction to OSCE commitments on gender equality, migration, minorities, as well as, Roma and Sinti. The main part of the publication focuses on the recommendations provided by the participants of the roundtable on how to address the challenges to the inclusion of women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities, as well as on policies and tools for empowering these women to act as agents of change. Further, this document contains short reports of the various sessions of the roundtable.

While progress has been made in some areas in combating inequality among national minorities, many obstacles for women who suffer from both gender and minority-based discrimination still remain. In addition, the new challenges for women’s empowerment that have emerged over the past decade, such as the feminization of migration, need to be more effectively addressed. We hope this publication breaks the silence on the lost opportunities for migrant and minority women who are unable to fulfill their true potential as leaders and agents of change.

**Office of the Secretary General**  
**OSCE Gender Section**

# INTRODUCTION

Throughout history we have witnessed numerous examples of how women's participation in the social, economic and political life of their communities results in positive change.

Regardless of these positive examples, change has been slow and there is still much progress to be achieved, especially since women continue to be underrepresented in positions of leadership and decision-making worldwide, and where progress has been achieved it has often been uneven in terms of giving opportunities to elite women but not minority or grassroots women.

Socio-economic obstacles, long standing cultural stigmas and discriminatory or repressive legal codes create challenges for women's inclusion and participation. Meanwhile, processes such as the global economic crisis exacerbate these barriers. Research has shown that austerity measures often affect women disproportionately more than men<sup>2</sup> and can result in a decrease in women's participation in the labour market as well as reducing access to services, health care and education. In order to mitigate some of the risks and challenges faced by women in a difficult global financial climate it is important that OSCE policies and programmes integrate gender equality as a foundational aspect of sustainable security and development.

Nowadays, we have an unprecedented number of international legal and normative commitments on social, political, economic and human rights; yet many vulnerable populations in the OSCE region are still far from being in a position to exercise those rights. Women in minority communities in particular need to be supported to act as **agents of change** and bring about important institutional changes in the way their societies enable vulnerable and marginalized populations to engage in political, economic and social life.

A clear example of women as active agents of change is in the acquisition of voting rights. In most countries around the world, women mobilized and fought for their right to vote, as opposed to passively waiting to receive the right. Moreover, as stated by the former OSCE Special Representative on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, Ms Anastasia Crickley: *“Women have always been agents of change in their communities and beyond and this holds true within minority communities as well.”*

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2 Jane Lethbridge. Impact of the Global Economic Crisis and Austerity Measures on Women. Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU). 2012. <http://www.psir.org/reports/impact-global-financial-crisis-austerity-measures-women>.



It has been acknowledged both by a number of international and OSCE decisions that **gender equality and the full integration of women in all spheres of society contributes to stability and security. This is equally true for women in migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities who face many additional challenges in their struggle for social inclusion, human rights and gender equality.** These women have proved to be important catalysts in a number of countries where civil society and governments actively work together to create opportunities for minority women and men.

In recognition of the challenges the participating States have reinforced their commitment to fighting gender-based discrimination through several decisions. By endorsing the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, the participating States have committed themselves to promoting gender equality, empowering women and combating discrimination in the OSCE region. Other decisions aimed at fighting discrimination, including gender-based discrimination and biases, include the 2003 Action Plan for Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area, the 2005 MC Decision on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation, the 2006 OSCE Ministerial Statement on Migration and the recent **2013 MC Decision (4/13) on Enhancing OSCE Efforts To Implement The Action Plan On Improving The Situation Of Roma And Sinti Within The OSCE Area, With A Particular Focus On Roma And Sinti Women, Youth And Children.** In addition, a number of OSCE decisions in the field of counter-trafficking, notably the 2003 OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, have provided major guidance to the work of all stakeholders responsible for addressing human rights violations that affects in great numbers women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities.

## **Event Background**

On 6-7 September 2012, the OSCE Gender Section hosted an expert roundtable focusing on the significant barriers faced by women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities in relation to social, economic and political integration. The objectives of the roundtable included identifying tools and mechanisms to assist women in overcoming obstacles, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable to discrimination and violence; identifying positive policies that provide women from these communities with the support, guidance and opportunities to become agents of change; and identify a set of potential next steps for OSCE structures and participating States to act upon the roundtable recommendations.

The two-day expert roundtable brought together representatives and experts from the OSCE commu-

nity at large (representatives of participating States, OSCE structures/Institutions including ODIHR, international organizations, civil society, and academia). The event aimed to raise awareness among participating States of the situation of women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities and encouraging them to review, revise and/or develop relevant national policies on combating discrimination against these groups. To this end, the expert roundtable convened to address the following three issues:

1. **The current situation and obstacles** for integrating women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities;
2. **Good practices in combating various forms of discrimination** (in the labour market, in accessing social benefits or at the household decision-making level) in migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities, including synergies between OSCE, other international organizations and civil society;
3. **Policies and tools for empowering women** from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities to act as agents of change.

Another important purpose of this initiative was to encourage participating States to implement OSCE commitments on minority issues and develop and review policies that promote women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities to act as agents of change. In the course of the two-day meeting, the participants had an opportunity to share lessons learned and good practices on strengthening the role of women as agents of change and facilitating their integration and social inclusion. The expert roundtable format consisted of an opening session and keynote speech, followed by four plenary sessions and concluding thoughts:

1. Opening Session & Keynote Speech: Women as Agents of Change
2. Session I: The Current Landscape
3. Session II: Options for Inclusion
4. Session III: Moving Forward
5. Session IV: Engaging the Roma and Sinti Community
6. Conclusions from Sessions and Closing Remarks

The sessions enabled the participants to share experiences, identify common challenges and recommendations, including specific actions for promoting women's empowerment and increasing their participation and representation at the local level.

Some of the areas that participants identified as critical issues for follow-up by the OSCE and the participating States included: **reviewing anti-discrimination legislation; implementing existing commitments; providing support to social inclusion (i.e. mentoring); increasing participation and representation of the target group in political life; and increasing research and creating a body of evidence.** Moreover, there was a general consensus on the need to continue support, including the allocation of resources, for the work of the OSCE on integrating gender into all three dimensions and in particular for working directly with women from migrant, minority and the Roma and Sinti communities in the Field Operations.

This report is structured into two parts: the first section consolidates the recommendations from the roundtable and identifies potential actions and next steps for participating States, civil society and OSCE structures towards strengthening women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities to act as agents of change. This section is not exhaustive, but rather an invitation for stakeholders in the OSCE region to reflect upon how the work within their own field of expertise and within their mandate could further address the empowerment of migrant, minority, Roma and Sinti women to act as agents of change.

The second section, in the annex, entails a summary of the roundtable sessions, including recommendations and examples of best practices highlighted by the participants.

## **Existing OSCE Commitments on Gender, Migration, Minorities, Roma and Sinti**

It is important to highlight that many of the recommendations from the roundtable echoed the OSCE commitments taken by the participants States (including recommended actions by OSCE Institutions and structures) and calling for improved implementation of these commitments.

**Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area**, MC. DEC/3/03, (2003)

- The Action Plan recognizes that the particular situation of Roma and Sinti women should be taken into consideration while designing and implementing all policies and programmes. It States that women should be able to participate in policy-making processes equally to men (Article 6) and highlights that minority women are often victims of discrimination on the basis of both ethnicity and sex (Article 19). The Action Plan requires the OSCE and its participating States to pay

attention to the health of women and girls (Article 62), promote equal access to education for girls (Article 79), counter high educational drop-out rates among girls (Article 80), improve the employability of youth and women minorities (Article 51), take measures to guarantee the equal voting rights of women and prevent “family voting” (Article 94), promote women’s participation in public and political life (Article 98, 106) and pay special attention to the needs of Roma and Sinti women and children in crisis and post-crisis situations.

**OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**, MC. DEC/2/03 (2003)

- The Action Plan provides participating States with a comprehensive toolkit to help them implement their commitments to combating Trafficking in Human Beings (THB). It recommends adopting at the national level such legislative and other measures as it is recommended in Article 3 of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. Furthermore, it recommends collecting separate data related to women, men and children victims of trafficking, enhancing job opportunities for women, taking appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, encouraging gender sensitization and education on equal and respectful relationships between the sexes, ensuring that adopted policies allow women equal access to and control over economic and financial resources.

**2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality**, MC. DEC/14/04 (2004)

- The 2004 Action Plan aims to set out the priorities of the OSCE in promoting gender equality, in the Organization and in all participating States, and to ensure the monitoring of its implementation. It requests that the OSCE Institutions and structures support participating States in implementing relevant commitments to promoting equality between women and men.

**OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women**, MC. DEC/15/05 (2005)

- Participating States are urged to take, with the support and assistance of the OSCE, all necessary legislative, policy and programmatic monitoring and evaluation measures to promote and protect the human rights of women and to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls. They are also called to comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, if they are parties, and, if they have not already done so, to consider ratifying or acceding to these Conventions.

**OSCE Ministerial Statement on Migration**, MC. DEC/6/06 (2006)

- The Statement encourages all relevant OSCE Institutions and structures to continue their work on migration and integration issues in all three dimensions, in particular on the potential contribution of migration to sustainable development and co-development to promote integration with respect for cultural and religious diversity to address forced migration while respecting relevant international legal obligations, and to combat illegal migration as well as trafficking in human beings and the exploitation, discrimination, abuse and manifestation of racism directed towards migrants, with special attention to women and children.

**Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area**, MC.DEC/6/08 (2008)

- The Action Plan calls for appropriate national authorities relevant to the situation of Roma and Sinti, to enhance their efforts to ensure the implementation of OSCE commitments within national legislation on equality and non-discrimination, with special attention on Roma women and girls.

**Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Ensure Roma and Sinti Sustainable Integration**, MC.DEC/8/09 (2009)

- The document calls upon the participating States to enhance their efforts to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE and continue to supply information to the ODIHR on progress made on its implementation.

**Ministerial Council Decision on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life**, MC.DEC/7/09 (2009)

- The document calls on the participating States to consider providing for specific measures to achieve the goal of gender balance in all legislative, judicial and executive bodies, including security services and political parties and ensure gender balanced participation in public life.

**Belgrade Declaration of the OSCE Parliament Assembly, Resolution on Promoting Policies on Equality between Women and Men of the Roma population**, adopted at the 20th Annual Session (2011)

- The declaration recognizes that the consequences of the economic crisis have had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable members of society, including women, young people, people belonging to national minorities and migrants.
- The document finds that women from ethnic minorities, and especially Roma and Sinti women,

face much more serious multiple discrimination than men from the same ethnic group or women from the majority; that the employment rate of Roma women is lower than that of Roma men, and that, given their role in the family, women can be the cornerstones of the integration of marginalized communities.

### Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan On Improving the Situation Of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children, MC. DEC/4/13 (2013)

- This document recognizes the importance of including women from the Roma and Sinti community in the implementation of all policies addressing the situation of Roma and Sinti. It encourage the relevant OSCE executive structures to enhance their activities meant to build the capacities of Roma and Sinti women and youth organizations, with a view to promoting empowerment, education and non-discrimination among Roma and Sinti women and youth, and to encourages the participation of Roma and Sinti women on an equal footing with men in all areas of their interest.
- The document encourages participating States to take measures to ensure the security, well-being and health of Roma and Sinti women, youth and children, including by addressing domestic violence, early marriages and trafficking in human beings.

## Gender Equality in the OSCE

Experts participating in the roundtable placed a strong emphasis on the need to implement commitments on gender equality and the promotion of women's participation and representation. Gender equality is a fundamental aspect of the OSCE's cross-dimensional approach to security and while there has been progress in many areas, women from migrant, minority, and Roma and Sinti populations in the OSCE region continue to experience high levels of inequality and multiple forms of discrimination.<sup>3</sup>

Participants agreed also that there is a need to continue channeling greater support and resources towards OSCE activities that can have a direct impact on the lives of migrant, minority and Roma

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3 Multiple forms of discrimination refers to simultaneous forms of discrimination faced by individuals based on their gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, religion, disability, sexual orientation, etc which combined has a detrimental effect.

and Sinti women. In line with this view, it is important to recall the “Recommendations and Strategic Priorities” presented in the 2012 Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, as well as a quote from the foreword by the OSCE Secretary General:

*“Addressing gender equality as a security issue is a prerequisite for the implementation of the OSCE’s cooperative and comprehensive approach to security. Our common vision for the future should be to strengthen the implementation of the OSCE’s gender policy framework in order to reach sustainable results on gender equality in the OSCE region.”<sup>4</sup>*

### *Recommendations from the Expert Roundtable to OSCE Structures*

- The OSCE and all its Field Operations should **continue to integrate gender into all policies** and programmes and ensure gender mainstreaming remains high on the agenda;
- Field Operations with conflict resolution mandates should request **technical assistance to demonstrate the relevance of a gender perspective in conflict resolution** on the day-to-day lives of ordinary people.

#### Potential Next Steps for Action:

- Strengthen and institutionalize the **OSCE’s Gender Focal Point network**;
- Strengthen the technical support provided to the OSCE Field Operations on gender, conflict resolution and minority women through development of a **toolkit on gender, conflict resolution and mediation<sup>5</sup>**.

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4 Annual Evaluation Report on the Implementation of 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, 2012, pg. 3

5 The OSCE Gender Section launched the publication *Guidance Note on Gender-Responsive Mediation* in October 2013. The publication is a step in the enhancement of early warning and conflict prevention structures of the OSCE.

# THE WAY FORWARD

## Recommendations Proceeding from the Women as Agents of Change Roundtable

Based on the discussions of the expert roundtable four general areas of recommendation were identified and will be discussed in detail below:

1. Create an Evidence Base for Advocacy
2. Partner with Mainstream and Minority Media on Awareness-Raising
3. Support Access to Capacity and Network Building Opportunities
4. Support Women's Community Leadership Roles and Participation in Political Process

### 1. Create an Evidence Base for Advocacy and Conduct Reviews of Anti-Discrimination Legislation and Implementation of Existing Commitments

The primary responsibility for reviewing and ensuring adequate and full implementation of commitments on gender equality and non-discrimination rests with the OSCE participating States as the main duty bearers. The OSCE structures, Institutions, civil society and international partners are prepared to support participating States to achieve results and fulfill commitments. According to the participants at the roundtable, **the lack of implementation of commitments and obligations outlined in OSCE documents and international legal frameworks is a significant factor in hindering the progress of migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women in the region.** Addressing this gap requires political will and appropriate human and financial resources.

Effective public policies and programmes are designed on evidence of gaps, priorities and needs. Although there is a large body of research and publications on a socio-economic integration of minorities and marginalized populations there is much less research available specifically on the situation of migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women. In particular where there is data on migrant and minority populations it is often not sex-disaggregated in order to allow an understanding of what gender differences may be.



Participants at the roundtable called for more research and development of indicators that can assist policymakers and stakeholders working in the field of anti-discrimination and migration to address some of the key issues from an evidence-based approach (for example, specific factors that drive migration flows of women from specific minority groups). Evidence can also be used as a tool to counteract myths and misconceptions about migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women. Another important aspect concerning research and indicators is the need to increase co-operation among experts, researchers, academia, civil society, policymakers and the community. In particular, greater efforts need to be made in order to involve the participation of the target group, not only as respondents, but also in the process of developing initiatives and follow-up recommendations.

Furthermore, as demonstrated by the presentation of the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) of their survey of Roma populations, research must follow a rigorous methodology so that robust and comparable data is generated and should include a control group for the purpose of comparison to non-minority populations living in comparable circumstances. FRA cautioned that research and development of indicators and longitudinal data is an area that demands long-term support and commitment from stakeholders and donors since outcomes and impact of social policies may emerge only in the medium to long term.

### *Recommendations from the Expert Roundtable*

#### **Recommendations to OSCE participating States:**

- Review the **implementation of OSCE commitments and national and international legal instruments** concerning discrimination of minority women, with a view to identifying the most common gaps in implementation and solutions;
- Ensure gender mainstreaming takes into account the diversity of minority women and the **multiple forms of discrimination against vulnerable groups**; such as women from a migrant, minority and Roma or Sinti background;
- Develop legal and policy frameworks that **take into account multiple discrimination** and include gender impact assessments in policy development;
- Implement the **OSCE Gender Action Plan** and its very commitments;
- Promote national development plans that **prioritize community level needs** and are supported by policies with the objective of addressing the root causes of gender inequalities;
- Address negative attitudes towards migrants by **strengthening the anti-discrimination legal and policy frameworks** and identify the reasons driving migration and how to address them;

- Build **political will and coalitions** towards implementing commitments;

### **Recommendations to the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations:**

- Support the OSCE participating States to review their **gender-equality legislation so that it meets OSCE commitments on minorities** and international legal standards;
- Data that is **disaggregated by sex and ethnicity** is needed to identify types of discrimination and root causes and to develop and assess the impact of policy and legislation;
- Roma and Sinti **integration strategies** should include a strong gender perspective and relevant indicators should be developed to evaluate the progress of such strategies;
- Improve **monitoring and reporting mechanisms** in order to provide better information about attitudes and behaviors of intolerance towards the most affected communities and use data to create a referral mechanism in order to enable vulnerable populations to seek services and support;
- Improving consideration of **gender in early warning mechanisms**. ODIHR's 2009 publication on "Gender and Early Warning Systems" is useful in this regard.

### **Potential Next Steps for Action:**

- The **OSCE structures and Institutions undertake a review of the implementation of commitments** by all stakeholders, in particular participating States, in providing support to migrant, minority, Roma and Sinti women in access to housing, health, employment and education services.
- Participating States **support relevant research Institutions** to undertake initiatives on migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women with the goal of developing cross-national comparable data.
- OSCE structures and Institutions should **facilitate the exchange of information and research findings and support awareness raising initiatives** within the OSCE region on issues affecting migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women, including with the EU Institutions. This can include convening meetings on relevant topics as well as including the presentation of research at OSCE meetings as appropriate (i.e, focal points meeting, seminars, etc.).

## 2. Partner with Mainstream and Minority Media on Awareness-Raising

Mainstream media has the power to shape the public's views both by setting the agenda in terms of the issues to be discussed as well as by framing the actual discussion around those issues. Depending on the role it chooses to play, the media can have either a powerful positive or a negative impact on the use of stereotypes and the representation of minorities.

In recent years we have seen a number of positive developments through the use of social media tools (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.). However, this medium is still not widely available or accessible to large segments of populations in the OSCE region, in particular to those with limited economic means (i.e. migrants, minorities etc.). Nevertheless, the use and adaptation of such “tools” is worth considering (whenever viable) as an alternative medium to mainstream media in order to counter-act negative messages. Moreover, as demonstrated in a number of recent international events, the use of social media tools can increase the level of participation and “voice” of those usually not heard (i.e. youth, women, minorities etc.).

The creation and dissemination of alternative programming can also provide a space for the views and generally unheard voices of minorities. Nowadays, video channels (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, and Bing), internet blogs and internet radio as vehicles for information dissemination are all powerful tools in the process of opinion-making and act as an alternative to traditional mass media vehicles, such as television and newspapers. Another interesting and cost effective tool for awareness raising and empowerment is called “photovoice”: this is a participatory method based on the use of photography by a given target group for the purpose of social change. Empowerment, awareness-raising and “direct” communication (i.e. transmission of individual voices/experiences) is among the direct benefits of using this tool.<sup>6</sup>

Based on examples of awareness-raising initiatives from a number of anti-trafficking initiatives in the region, there is a particular need to work on the level of awareness of editors and journalists in order to curb myths and misconceptions about marginalized groups.

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6 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photovoice>.

## *Recommendations from the Expert Roundtable*

### **Recommendations to OSCE participating States :**

- Provide support to Roma women's movements as key vehicles to bring about positive changes in practices and attitudes within Roma and Sinti communities and to promote active participation of community members in society.

### **Recommendations to the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations:**

- Raise awareness through the media of the multiple forms of discrimination that minority and migrant, Roma and Sinti women face;
- Support development of a pluralistic media, **including minority media outlets** that give a voice to marginalised groups, including to Roma and Sinti, dispel stereotypes and contribute to political dialogue;
- Use the arts and theater as a tool for campaigning and awareness raising;
- Develop counter-narratives to common stereotypes. Create linkages between minority and majority populations and **mobilize civil society to build positive social contacts**, especially with regard to the public image of Roma and Sinti women.

### Potential Next Steps for Action:

- Develop a **project proposal that addresses issues related to media, gender and minorities** in OSCE region;
- Increase **the awareness of key mass media stakeholders, such as editors and journalists**, on gender discrimination and bias in reporting and collaborate with journalism academies to ensure modules on multiple discrimination and gender is included in training curricula;
- In all communication and outreach activities OSCE structures and Institutions should **partner not only with mass media but also with women in minority media outlets in order to raise their visibility and capacity** and support training opportunities for migrant, minority, Roma and Sinti women on using social media tools for awareness raising and anti-discrimination campaigns.

### 3. Support Migrant, Minority, Roma and Sinti Women to Access Capacity and Network Building Opportunities

Participants highlighted that many migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women live in difficult conditions, often lacking adequate housing, health, education, and employment services in order to meet the basic needs of the community and enable a process of women's empowerment. **The absence or inadequate provision of basic services has a pervasive effect on the lives of both individuals and the community and contributes to a vicious circle of poverty and deprivation that affects multiple generations.**

According to UNESCO the low enrolment of girls in school and women's literacy programmes is strongly correlated to multiple discrimination factors they face – their poverty and ethnicity leads to cultural attitudes and low expectations of their ability to perform in formal education systems <sup>7</sup> “*Globally an estimated two-thirds of girls from ethnic minorities are out of school in their countries.*” <sup>8</sup> One of the most significant recommendations of the report to the States is the need for greater allocation of resources into the formal educational system, as well as the need for “secondary-chance” alternatives to formal schooling in order to address the educational and equality gap for women and girls.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, in line with the OSCE expert roundtable recommendations, education attainment has an impact on the participation of women in political life and decision-making, since illiteracy and lack of education may deter or inhibit women to come forward as a community representative. To illustrate this point, results from a study by Kagitcibasi (2005) “*found that women who took part in the literacy programmes in Turkey were more likely to vote and to participate in community organizations than peers lacking literacy skills*”. <sup>10</sup> In sum, it is paramount to step-up efforts to address the education gap (through formal and non-traditional forms of programmes) for migrant, minority, Roma and Sinti girls and women in the OSCE region, since this issue has a direct impact on the individual/community overall well-being (i.e. empowerment, employment, health, participation/representation etc.).

7 From Access to Equality: Empowering Girls and Women through Literacy and Secondary Education, UNESCO, Paris, 2012, page 12

8 From Access to Equality, page 31

9 From Access to Equality, page 12

10 From Access to Equality, page 38

The importance of tailoring programmes and services to the needs of migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women was also discussed, as well as the types of mechanisms that could be created to promote their participation in decision making processes. However, in order for these women to be able to participate effectively in these processes it is necessary to first enable them to develop their skills and capacities, access training and networking opportunities and receive encouragement and support.

Education and mentoring programmes were identified as effective mechanisms to facilitate the process of empowerment for migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women. The provision of formal education rests in the hands of participating States; yet nowadays there are a number of non-traditional vehicles for educational attainment that not only provide skills and know-how, but can also facilitate the empowerment of women and girls by focusing on life-skills, building self-confidence, providing information and opportunities for networking.

The Summer School of Leadership Skills organized by the OSCE Mission in Moldova is one example of how this method can be implemented. The summer school has so far targeted about 200 women and girls, **including from minority and rural communities, and gives them intensive training on leadership and capacity building and networking.** Initiatives such as summer schools or camps for marginalized youth or training seminars for women have also been implemented with much success in many western countries (for example, youth camps aimed at supporting minority group entry into



Roma health mediators at a roundtable on implementation of the Action Plan on Roma health. Belgrade, 7 May 2009.

university or training seminars on leadership skills for women etc.).

The use of long-distance e-learning platforms is also an alternative to traditional learning Institutions and can provide additional support to target groups. However it is important that e-learning tools are used in combination with a face to face approach that builds networks and contacts. Using video lessons to make learning more accessible has shown good results and participants raised the example of [www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org), an online educational tool free online. Civil society organizations have also availed themselves of these tools in combination with traditional forms of education or project initiatives in the process of building up skills among members of the community. For example, the NGO C.E.O Women used a video production to provide additional support on language skills, financial literacy and entrepreneurial training through a series of stories (soap opera style) as part of their overarching program to assist migrant and refugee women to start their own business.

Overall, alternative educational support can be used as a vehicle to increase the competency and skills of disadvantaged groups. However this is not a substitute for the formal channels of education which should address inadequacies in access for migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women and girls.

An effective tool for empowering women is mentoring. It is a partnership between the mentor, a person with valuable experience in a given field, and the mentee, a person seeking guidance and advice, in which knowledge, skills and support are shared towards achieving an agreed objective. The objectives can vary from definite goals, such as advancement in a career or gaining employment, to broad ones such as gaining knowledge and integrating into a new country. Mentoring programmes have been used widely in business settings, integration programmes for migrants and refugees, as well as in initiatives meant to advance women's participation in economic and political life. Mentoring programmes vary in their approach, methodology, focus etc.; yet the basic concept as a tool to support the advancement of the mentee remains throughout the different programmes and field of activities with much success. Moreover, since networking is a key element in facilitating the capacity building of individuals, **mentoring is seen as an opportunity to expand the contacts and exposure of migrant, minority, and Roma and Sinti women with mainstream society.** In addition, as shown by the example of KVINFO<sup>11</sup> and other mentoring programmes, mentors also gain a great deal from such initiatives, including greater cross-cultural understanding and communication skills. Mentoring programmes bear a great potential to reach a broad spectrum of groups, while providing opportunities for growth, cross-cultural learning and empowerment.

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11 KVINFO is the Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity: <http://forside.kvinfo.dk/>.



## *Recommendations from the Expert Roundtable*

### **Recommendations to OSCE participating States:**

- Create **policies and programmes tailored to the specific situation** of women of different backgrounds, taking into account the community contexts and specific issues that these women face;
- In responding to violence against minority women, provide for access to **shelters and for autonomous residence permits** for spouses;
- There should be **positive action measures for funding ethnic minority organizations**, and they should be viewed as experts not only as beneficiaries;
- Provide **funding and support to enable representatives of minority women's groups in their countries to attend forums**, such as this roundtable.

### **Recommendations to the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations:**

- In the economic sphere there should be systems in place to **recognize qualifications acquired abroad and mentorship programmes** for women entrepreneurs should be supported;
- Role models and mentors from the **arts, politics and public life** can play a transformational and inspirational part in the lives of migrant and minority women;
- Invest in **women's participation in community relations and community development**. Empower existing grassroots initiatives, enhance the visibility of role models and measures for minority women to shape policy and to develop leadership skills;
- Build-up **positive incentive structures** that ensure the sustainability of policies and programmes and encourage public-private partnerships;
- Promote the **mentor network** concept as a good practice which could be set up in other countries. Such an effort must be based on trust, professionalism, values and responsibility, keeping in mind the complexity of individual needs and stories;
- Use **education as an entry point to promote values of tolerance** and non-discrimination and the importance of women's participation in communities. This is a fundamental building block that affects the future of our societies;
- The **basic needs for access to health, adequate living conditions and education** are fundamental.



## Potential Next Steps for Action:

- Based on the experience of mentoring programs in the region, the OSCE Gender Section will **commission the development of a training manual and seminars** on how to establish mentoring networks, which can be adapted to the local context by the Gender Focal Points and other interested parties. These can include mentoring for entrepreneurial women, mentoring for gender equality advocates and/or mentoring for women in politics;
- The OSCE and other interested stakeholders should support capacity building activities, such as training seminars for OSCE programme staff, on how to **integrate the needs of migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women into programme development across all three dimensions**;
- Continue to support the Field Operations to develop and implement initiatives that **apply non-traditional education mechanisms** such as “Summer Schools” to transfer skills, knowledge and provide networking opportunities for migrant, minority, Roma and Sinti women and girls;
- Continue to pursue formal and informal education activities that **promote values of tolerance and non-discrimination and gender equality**;
- The OSCE Gender Section, in co-operation with UNESCO and other relevant organizations, should collect examples of **good practices of non-formal educational programs that create bridges between formal education and formal employment** for migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women.

#### 4. Support Migrant, Minority, Roma and Sinti Women to Take on Community Leadership Roles and Participate in Political Processes

Political participation and representation of migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women is a key step on the path to improvement of socio-economic standards. While there has been increased awareness of the contributions made by women in conflict resolution and peace-building this still needs to be fully translated into women's influence in political decision-making, especially in areas such as national budgeting processes. This gap is even more striking when looking at the participation and representation of women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities in public office.

Based on research and accounts from female political leaders, women's political participation is not only a human rights issue but also brings another dimension into political life, including tangible results in areas such as greater responsiveness to citizens and community concerns. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has found in countries around the world that "an increase in the number of female lawmakers led to legislation related to anti-discrimination, domestic violence, family codes, inheritance and child support and protection."<sup>12</sup>

It is important to highlight that the value of diversity is not only in numbers, but in terms of bringing in a perspective which is more in line with the needs of the community, thus contributing to more effective outcomes. Moreover, according to NDI "when women are empowered as political leaders, countries often experience higher standards of living with positive developments in education, infrastructure and health."<sup>13</sup> Using data from 19 OECD countries, researchers identified a correlation between an increase in the number of women legislators with an increase in total educational expenditure as well as a reduction of the gender gap in school attendance.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond supporting measures already mentioned it is also critical to do more on engaging men from both majority and minority ethnic groups for gender equality. The support of male political leaders and champions can be crucial in creating an enabling environment for women where they can pursue

12 Statement by National Democratic Institute, Handout: Why Women in Politics, 2012. <http://www.ndi.org/files/Handout%204%20-%20Why%20Women%20in%20Politics.doc>.

13 Statement by Kenneth Wollack, President, National Democratic Institute, 2010

14 Statement by Kenneth Wollack, President, National Democratic Institute, 2010

space in political life and representation in decision-making bodies. Perhaps, more than in any of the other recommendations, on this issue one would hope to see an increase in experienced male politicians and leaders who support migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women's leadership through concrete temporary special measures that would open-up space and opportunities for their engagement. Other types of strategies that male champions could support include systems of proportional representation, mentoring of individuals, provision of training and resources, as well as supporting women in building and exercising leadership skills. Sometimes, the greatest support to gender equality comes from the recognition that is time to give space and enable those underrepresented members of the society to take central stage in the social project of building a more sustainable community.

### *Recommendations from the Expert Roundtable:*

#### **Recommendations to OSCE Participating States, Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations:**

- Encourage participation and representation of women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities in **public and political life, decision-making and law-enforcement Institutions**;
- Support **temporary special measures targeting Roma and Sinti women and girls** which address inequality in education, health, economic and political participation.



Participants get involved in the debate on Roma Women in Serbia– Activism for Sustainable Changes, supported by the OSCE Mission to Serbia. Belgrade, 4 April 2012.

### Potential Next Steps for Action:

- Support the provision of training and mentoring programmes to build the capacity and skills of migrant, minority, Roma and Sinti women so that they can become **leaders in their communities and take part in decision making processes** both in politics, community based organizations and business;
- Support OSCE structures such as mediation teams and the HCNM, to include both gender expertise that reflects experiences of minority women in their dialogues as well as engage directly with minority women;
- The OSCE Gender Section, in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR, should draw on the experiences of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, national parliamentarians and other relevant actors from government, academia and civil society to gather lessons learned on measures for increasing the participation and representation of migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women;
- In this context, the OSCE Gender Section could take the initiative by developing and implementing a seminar/roundtable with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and ODIHR in order to identify problems and best practices on increasing the participation and representation of migrant, minority, and Roma and Sinti women in the political life and decision making of the community. Proceedings from the seminar/roundtable combined with other materials on the theme could lead to a number of follow-up initiatives at local level, along with a compilation of examples of good practice.

# CONCLUSION

The expert roundtable convened by the OSCE provided an excellent opportunity for high level stakeholders to consider some of the challenges and obstacles faced by marginalized women from migrant, minority, and Roma and Sinti communities in accessing basic services as well as participating more fully in their communities and society. The recommendations that were raised in the roundtable fell under four broad headings that are naturally linked to one another – first we need more evidence and data under which we can argue for better designed policies and programmes. Second we need to raise awareness through media partners of the challenges that the research identifies and the solutions and policies that are created to address them and are available to marginalized women. Third, the policies must be implemented in a way that successfully strengthens the capacities and skills and networks of women from marginalized communities. Fourth, these new skills and networks can be used by marginalized women to become community leaders and get involved in decision-making and in turn become positive role models for their own community youth.

Improving the status of marginalized women will have a multiplier effect on the marginalized communities they live in and will over time lead to increased stability and security for the society as a whole. As an organization that promotes the comprehensive approach to security, the OSCE is strongly in support of strategies and activities that target women from migrant, minority, and Roma and Sinti communities as an integral part of building overall sustainable security.



Elena Gorolova (l) from the Group of Roma Women Harmed by Sterilization addresses participants at an event to highlight discrimination against Romani women in access to health care. Warsaw, 26 September 2012.

# ANNEX 1

## EXPERT ROUNDTABLE

### Opening Session and Keynote Speech: Women as Agents of Change

The opening was led by OSCE [Secretary General Lamberto Zannier](#) and Ms [Anastasia Crickley](#), Head of Department Applied Social Studies, National University of Ireland, Maynooth. The keynote address was delivered by Ms [Rita Izsák](#), United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues.

[Ambassador Miroslava Beham](#), Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, Office of the Secretary General, OSCE, warmly welcomed the participants, while stressing the importance of focusing gender related debates and policies not only on mainstream aspects but also on the role and situation of women in marginalized communities. When looking at migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities it becomes clear that women within these communities face significant barriers with regards to social, economic and political integration. Against this backdrop, the participants were invited to reflect upon and contribute in the course of the roundtable on three main points. First, by providing clearer insights into the current situation and obstacles for the integration of women from the migrant, minority, and Roma and Sinti communities within the OSCE region, while taking local contexts and situations into account. Second, by identifying gaps in existing frameworks related to such an integration process, and; third, by sharing best practices, policies and tools for the empowering of women from those communities in their role as agents of change. Ambassador Beham reminded the audience that in order to create meaningful change and sustainable levels of prosperity, women have to be freed from the barriers of full participation in the community at large. She called upon the participants to consider that while migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women face significant barriers, they can be excellent advocates for change. The interconnected nature of their work and their vast dedication to restoring rights make these groups key partners in the OSCE's efforts to promote women's rights and equal societies.

[OSCE Secretary General, Lamberto Zannier](#), in his opening remarks took the opportunity to develop in a more general framework the issue of gender equality and women's integration by pointing the recent international developments (i.e. "Arab Spring" revolutions), in which women's participation was significant. Ambassador Zannier highlighted the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize laureates as shining examples of this on-going trend, as well as being a strong signal of recognition by the international



community of the concept of women as agents of change. However, he cautioned that progress is not guaranteed as one sees the rights that were gained by women during revolutionary periods receding after a period of mobilization. Moreover, he reminded the participants that socio-economic barriers, long standing cultural stigmas and repressive legal codes create challenges for women's inclusion at the global level, thus undermining women's empowerment and tangible contributions to the development of societies. Referring to the Millennium Development Goals he stressed the importance of women's political empowerment, and also the obligation to properly secure their social and economic needs and rights in order to create more just and more positive societies for the benefit of all. Ambassador Zannier described the OSCE and its approach of comprehensive security as a natural milieu towards developing a better understanding between majority and minority groups while fostering greater sustainability and prosperity for society as a whole.

Ms [Anastasia Crickely](#), who spoke on behalf of the Irish OSCE Chairmanship, drew her assertions from her life and extensive professional experience, including being the first Chairperson of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, as well as working with minority ethnic groups. In the course of her opening statement, Ms Crickely recalled that the perspective of women as agents of change provides a useful lens through which to examine the issues, opportunities and achievements of minority women, but reminded the participants of the need to celebrate progress while considering the on-going challenges. Furthermore, in the context of the OSCE work in addressing discrimination she emphasized the need to take on several fundamental aspects, for example - the need for comprehensive and meaningful collection of data with regard to the role of women in marginalized communities. This, according to her, implies a better awareness when such data are being compiled and analyzed. Moreover, she stressed that when addressing a shared problem, it is important to take the general principle of asking basic questions on the role of women in the community, otherwise challenges may be aggravated. Moreover, as racism remains a prevailing negative element in our society, there is a need to always take this element into account when devising solutions. Furthermore, Ms Crickely highlighted that when looking at women's empowerment stakeholders must clearly define their goals. She cautioned that a major distinction should be made between the goal of integration, which is a positive perspective, versus the notion of assimilation which tends to hamper the development and agency of women in several ways, including by hegemonic concepts of identity. Women should rather see and be defined in their role as catalysts for integration by society. Overall, despite a great number of challenges, women from minority groups have achieved significant changes for themselves and their communities, stated Ms Crickely. In her final remarks, Ms Crickely highlighted that any perspective on the role of women as agents of change should also take into account existing role models and successful examples in order to build upon positive experience. This is of particular relevance when dealing with the internal dynamics of women in marginalized communities. From

a practical point of view, efforts of groups and the forging of group identities have proven to be more promising and successful than initiatives centered on the individual.

In her keynote address, Ms [Rita Izsák](#), United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues, drew upon her professional experience while serving as an OSCE Human Rights Officer, and recently in her activities in the fields of research and in the UN system. From her perspective, the starting point of successful initiatives lies in asking the right questions and being in close contact with the communities affected by a given challenge, while gathering information to the extent possible in order to gain insights into existing problems and situations. Ms Izsák stated that in most cases migrant women are in a more difficult position compared to long established minority groups; yet each State has an obligation to protect the rights of all groups, including from all forms of discrimination. She believes that the starting point in any activity with the community should begin by focusing on the most marginalized, because they usually experience serious challenges which demands a great deal of reflection on how to overcome them, while assisting and empowering women to fulfill their potential. Moreover, Ms Izsák reminded the audience that “women belonging to minority or migrant communities frequently experience unique challenges and multiple or intersecting forms of discrimination emanating from their status as members of minorities and migrants and as women or girls”. Regarding the notion of women as agents of change, she emphasized that one should ask the following four questions:

- [What must be changed?](#)
- [By whom?](#)
- [Who wants change?](#)
- [Who does not?](#)

Women in these communities know what are the challenges that need to be addressed; yet they are usually barred from the decision-making processes which directly affect them and the community. According to Ms Izsák, group stereotypes of being uneducated, powerless and oppressed continue to influence the treatment of women belonging to this community, perpetuating discrimination by wider society.

She reminded the participants that insights into many questions derive from direct contact with communities. For this reason, country visits and contacts with government officials are very useful. Ms Izsák illustrated her approach by elaborating on a number of areas needing to be addressed if migrant and minority women are to become agents of change. One area of concern relates to women from and in minority communities regarding basic hygiene and socio-economic conditions, including the lack



of childcare support or reproductive healthcare, which makes this group often very vulnerable. When forced to leave their place of residence because of substandard conditions, migrant, minority, and Roma and Sinti women are in danger of becoming victims of various forms of exploitation. Another important challenge for this group of women is lack of participation in decision-making bodies, including political participation, as well as access to education, which is often marked by higher barriers for girls compared to boys. As a consequence, personal and individual growth expressed in qualities such as self-esteem or external acknowledgement of excellence is often out of reach for those girls and women. In the sphere of adult professional life aspects such as, property and inheritance rights can also manifest as barriers to self-realization and economic empowerment. Ms Izsák highlighted that it is also important to take a critical look at internal structures and traditions within the communities, such as early marriage as factors which contributed to the vulnerability of women.

Based on international experiences from around the world, Ms Izsák availed herself of the opportunity to propose a number of recommendations on the dismantling of barriers for migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti women's participation in the community, for example:

- Women can be more successful when they work collectively; the initiative must come from within those groups, not as an imposed/"outside" measure;
- Use of role models, adapted to various contexts, successful role models can be used also for mentorship;
- It is important to recognize that a great deal of women from those communities are not yet ready to "step-up" into political participation/representation, thus they must be accompanied/supported such as the example of the work done by the Inter-Parliamentary Union shows;
- Women must be prepared to face an environment with which they have not socialized; on the other hand, denial of their origins should be avoided and overcome;
- Support of the media and public awareness for the problems and challenges involved is very much needed;
- Practical measures such as drama groups, community houses, exchange with other groups and similar efforts should be given due consideration.

This session was moderated by [Ambassador Miroslava Beham](#), Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, Office of the Secretary General, OSCE and [Dr Uwe Petry](#), Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Germany to the OSCE, served as rapporteur.

## Session I : The Current Landscape

This session explored the current structural and socio-cultural context for addressing the needs of migrant and minority women, it also addressed the international and national institutional and legal frameworks which guides the work on empowerment, as well as the underlying political, social, cultural and economic challenges that exist for the integration of those groups into society.

The presentations were led by [Ambassador Knut Vollebaek](#), the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and Ms [Fotini Sianou](#), Director of the Centre for Research and Action on Peace, Greece.

Ambassador Knut Vollebaek opened the session by stating that while there is no shortage of speeches highlighting the crucial role women play in society, in reality the position of women, in particular minority and migrant women is less favorable. Furthermore, Ambassador Vollebaek took this opportunity to provide some examples encountered during his country visits, which provided concrete examples of women as agents of change, as well as promoters of peace and security in their respective communities (i.e. in the Transdnistria region of Moldova, in the Gali District in the Abkhazia region of Georgia, in Kyrgyzstan. He reminded the audience of the importance of implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “to increase the representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international Institutions and in mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict”. He declared that, in reality, women are usually absent from the negotiating/decision-making table. This absence is also felt concerning interventions and programmes aimed at national minorities and women’s groups.

Ambassador Vollebaek underlined that “the stability of a society as a whole benefits from the fullest possible participation and inclusion of all its members – irrespective of their ethnic or linguistic identity, nationality or gender.” He highlighted that marginalization of certain groups contributes to tension which can lead to wider conflict in any given society. To illustrate this point, he mentioned that any form of discrimination or inequality, including that based on gender, seriously undermines democratic governance and weakens the social fabric. According to him, the starting point of this work is respect and compliance to human rights standards, as well as having the State as the main entity responsible for the identification and addressing mechanism of discrimination and inequalities

within the various communities.

The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities identified five specific challenges to the integration and empowerment of migrant and minority women which need addressing. These entailed:

- Existing barriers to their participation and representation in public and political life –“a lack of gender balance limits the ability of representatives to effectively represent the interest of their communities...[and] participation must be effective and not merely symbolic”. Moreover, lack of consultation with persons belonging to national minorities in decision-making on the part of state authorities was also signified;
- Barriers of entry to formal political structures also need addressing, including the pursuit of special measures to promote the participation of minority women in public life;
- Despite education being a crucial element in the process of integration, inter-ethnic cooperation and mutual understanding, it is often undervalued and undercompensated. Ambassador Vollebaek called upon “States, educational Institutions and communities to pay particular attention to ensuring that minority girls, who may encounter greater obstacles in their education, receive the support they need to cultivate their full potential;”
- There is a need to deploy pro-active measures to ensure Institutions encourage representation and responsiveness towards migrant and minority women, as well as enabling them to join such Institutions (i.e. law enforcement);
- Mass media gender and ethnic stereotypes must be addressed, while opening up spaces in which the voices of migrant and minority women can be heard. For example, by having public service broadcasters supporting programming that meets the needs of diverse groups.

Ambassador Vollebaek concluded his contribution by informing the participants of the launching in November 2012 of the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies, aimed at improving social cohesion through the effective integration of all members of the community.

Ms [Fotini Sianou](#), Director of the Centre for Research and Action on Peace in Greece, initiated her deliberation by remarking that despite progress on gender equality, gender gaps still persist, as exemplified by: excess deaths of girls and women; persistence at high levels of violence against women; disparities in girls’ schooling; unequal access to economic opportunities; and differences in voice in households and in society. Similarly to women’s groups, minorities still have a long pathway to cover, but there has been a change in consciousness, which is reflected in a strong human rights framework

for the advancement of minority rights and protection, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Outcome Document of the Beijing Roundtable. However, Ms Sianou acknowledged that implementation gaps still persist.

Ms Sianou underlined that the similarities in life and forms of exclusion experienced by migrant and minority women provide a strong basis for increased understanding, empathy, cooperation and solidarity between women's groups/organizations and organizations representing these groups. Moreover, she stated that women belonging to minorities experience multiple forms of discrimination as members of minorities and as women. As such, this makes minority women vulnerable to violations of their rights in both public and private life, as well as in their own communities and in mainstream society. Ms Sianou also pointed out that minority women hesitate to voice their gender specific difficulties within their own groups and even less to those they consider as "outsiders" to their community. On the other hand, as an example of good practice of minority women self-empowerment, she referred to an NGO named "HOPE" which was established by 20 Roma women in the town of Xanthi, Greece, which focuses on education of children and adults, improvement of infrastructure in the settlement, creative activities for the children, parent consulting, and health education. This initiative resulted in increasing levels of children being enrolled in primary and secondary schools, reducing early marriage, as well as early childbirth; yet due to the economic crisis their activities have been limited by the lack of financial resources. Furthermore, Ms Sianou called upon the participants to consider how the current economic recession in Greece (for example) impacts disproportionately on more vulnerable groups in terms of provision of social services (i.e. health, education, childcare – women being both the main providers and consumers), working and living conditions (i.e. high unemployment levels and loss of protection for dismissal), as well as increased social tension and racist rhetoric against migrants and minorities. As a final point, Ms Sianou highlighted the importance of taking the proceedings of the 2011 UN Forum on Minorities into consideration when preparing Action Plans for the support of migrant and minority women as agents of change in the OSCE region, in particular on themes such as education, socio-economic and political participation.

## *Discussion*

In the lively debate that ensued, a number of participants stressed the importance of addressing simultaneously the empowerment and inclusion of women and the need to put forward effective national legal frameworks and policies, while respecting existing international obligations.

Other issues raised by the participants were: the role of independent and pluralistic media, the need for inclusive education in preventing multiple forms of discrimination, as well as promoting integration of women from migrant and minority groups. It was also mentioned by some participants that the role of international organizations, civil society and social mediators remained vital in this field and it should go hand in hand with a more effective implementation of the existing international and national legal frameworks in this regard.

Lastly, a participant, referring to the crisis that had erupted in Kyrgyzstan, pointed out that certain events in some OSCE participating States could lead to mass flows of migration to other participating States, especially of women. In the same light, the participant stressed the tremendous risk for women to become victims of labor exploitation and human trafficking, addressing also their inability to access basic social services, such as health care.

## *Recommendations*

### **Recommendations to OSCE participating States:**

- Review the implementation of OSCE commitments and other international legal instruments concerning gender discrimination, with a view to discussing possible gaps;
- Further raise awareness and consciousness of the multiple forms of discrimination that minority and migrant women face;
- Address more effectively the issue of gender-balanced discrimination with a focus to vulnerable groups such as minorities and migrants in the media, and to educate society on this matters;
- Ensure that media are pluralistic, support minority media outlets and give a voice to marginalized groups, dispel stereotypes and contribute to a healthy political dialogue, by informing society about the problems these groups face;
- Encourage participation and representation of women from migrant, minority and Roma and Sinti communities in public and political life, decision-making and law-enforcement Institutions;
- Pursue a gender perspective that takes into account multiple forms of discrimination against different vulnerable groups such as women from migrants, minorities and Roma and Sinti background;
- Put forward policies tailored to the specific situation of women of different backgrounds, taking into account the community contexts, the values and specific issues that these women face.

### Recommendations to the OSCE Secretariat, its Institutions and Field Operations:

- Help OSCE participating States to review their gender equality legislation so that it meets OSCE commitments and international legal standards.

This session was moderated by Mr [Ang Nguyen](#), Senior Regional Migrant Assistance Specialist, IOM Regional Office for South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and Ms [Tania Falierou](#), First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Greece to the OSCE, served as rapporteur.

## Session II : Options for Inclusion

This panel explored the options and best practices for improved empowerment and inclusion of migrant and minority communities. It focused on how stakeholders can cooperate to better integrate and include migrant and minority women at both national and international level.

The presentations were led by Ms [Amandine Bach](#), Policy Officer, European Women's Lobby (EWL) and Ambassador [Jennifer Brush](#), Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to Moldova.

Ms [Amandine Bach](#) shared with the audience the experiences of managing the project “Equal Rights, Equal Voices: Migrant Women in the EU” as a lesson learned exercise on how to end discrimination. She gave a brief history of how the project partnership was developed, which provided some useful pointers for building effective partnerships through a step-by-step approach. She presented this development as having three phases – the first phase focused mostly on the importance of allowing time and flexibility in order to listen to the needs of minority women, getting to know them, discussing commonalities and differences, building trust and ownership, as well as creating a strategic plan. In the second phase, while moving towards the formalization of the network, she stressed the need to speak at the European and international forums, while extending membership and seeking independent funding. Nowadays, as the network moves in to its most recent phase, the focus is on advocacy activity such as the production of a documentary about changing stereotypes of migrant women, undertaking research (e.g. on issues related to education and employment policies), awareness raising, capacity building and fundraising. Moreover, she highlighted the importance of supporting migrant

women through mentoring programmes, as well as bringing their voices to be heard at the decision-making level in an effort to facilitate a shift in policy.

In her presentation, Ms Bach described some of the results achieved with the campaign on family reunification by the European Network of Migrant Women and the European Women's Lobby, as well as the impact on the European Reunification Directive.<sup>15</sup> Within that context she mentioned the increasing challenges faced by migrant women, as strict qualification conditions around housing standards and salary levels is put in place in relation to procedures for family reunification. Another important issue affecting women is the dependency on spouses for their residence status in the host country. She stated that the EU Directive provides for a five-year waiting period before a spouse can acquire autonomous residence status from her partner. As such, this policy has proved a challenge in cases of domestic violence.

Based on project results, Ms Bach availed herself of the opportunity to share with participants three key advocacy achievements by the project, as follows:

1) Increased acknowledgement regarding the expertise of the network, for example through on-going invitations to take part in European and international policy debates; 2) Increased networking with European NGOs; and 3) Participation in consultative structures, such as at European Integration Network.

As a last point, Ms Bach offered some ideas, which could serve as guiding principles towards a successful partnership. These included: 1) The need to allow time and flexibility; 2) The “building-up” process should be bottom-up rather than one where people feel that ideas are being imposed upon them; 3) Good institutional and personal relationships are needed; 4) There should be a common understanding and shared interests among members; 5) There should be clear roles and a resourced strategic plan, as well as accountability, transparency and ownership. Finally, she noted that one must acknowledge the diversity of women's groups, as well as increase migrant-ethnic minority participation in public and political life through the allocation of funding for their organizations.

[Ambassador Jennifer Brush](#) provided some examples from the United States in order to demonstrate

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15 The purpose of this Directive is to determine the conditions under which third-country nationals residing lawfully on the territory of the Member States may exercise the right to family reunification.

that despite her country's development as a diverse and multicultural society in which migrants have de facto contributed to the socio-economic and political fabric of the country, still there are challenges to be addressed. For instance, on anti-discrimination and integration work among migrants and minority communities, especially regarding women. However, similar challenges are also found in Europe as migration flows continue to rise. Ambassador Brush took the opportunity to describe some interesting initiatives in the United States regarding women's equalities through the work of advocacy groups such as, the National Organization for Women, "Running Start: Bridging Young Women to Politics"<sup>16</sup>, and Emily's List<sup>17</sup>, the later an initiative very worthy of note in support of women interested in pursuing public office.

Speaking on the need to harness migrant and minorities leadership, Ambassador Brush gave some powerful examples of women from minority groups who serve as role models for their community, as well as demonstrating to mainstream society how minority women can and do influence people's lives. She cited the examples of First Lady Michelle Obama, TV presenter Oprah Winfrey and pop star Jennifer Lopez. All had through their words and actions triggered a shift in public opinion of minority groups and inspired millions of women. In comparing the United States experiences with those of post-communist cultures in Europe, Ambassador Brush suggested that this "role model effect" is not yet apparent in the region. Ambassador Brush also spoke of the experience of minority women in the Western Balkans and noted that nowadays the region is enjoying a period of relative peace, in which women from minority and displaced communities needed to be assisted in their struggles to protect their individual and community rights.

In Moldova, where Ambassador Brush heads the OSCE Mission, she observed that the role of women as leaders and agents of change is slowly being recognized despite cultural and socio-economic challenges. She mentioned that women represent 58% of migrants from Moldova living abroad, and while they contribute with steady remittances to the overall family welfare, this comes with challenges including family care and social protection. Ambassador Brush also noted the role of Roma women in Moldova describing them as probably the most discriminated group in the country, since they face multiple forms of discrimination on grounds of gender and ethnicity. According to the UN study on Roma and Sinti, there is still a significant discrimination against minorities, regarding access to education, employment, healthcare and political leadership. She stressed that Roma women's difficulties

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16 Running Start: Bringing Young Women to Politics is a non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire young women and girls to run for political office.

17 EMILY's List is a non-profit organization founded in 1985 and elects pro-choice Democratic women to office.



in accessing education and employment are often the result of traditions within communities and deeply rooted stereotypes.

As examples of good practice, Ambassador Brush described some of the activities being implemented by the OSCE Mission in Moldova, such as a Summer School of Leadership Skills for about 200 women and girls, including from minority and rural communities, as well as a project on increasing women's participation in local elections. In fact, (in the week of her presentation) a high-level roundtable was being organized in order to train 40 women, aimed at increasing women's participation in political parties. In her final words, Ambassador Brush used the opportunity to call upon the attention of the participants to two examples of good practice implemented by other international organizations. First, the UN Women project on "Joint Information and Service Bureaus" for rural women aimed at facilitating access to services on employment, social, vocational training, etc., and second, the Women in Business Programme aiming at promoting women's entrepreneurship through advisory support and market development.

### *Discussion*

In the subsequent discussion, one of the participants stressed that the recognition of minority women has been well reflected in the videos presented during the session featuring Michelle Obama, Oprah Winfrey and others. However, the question remains as to how one can promote more minority and migrant women into positions of power. Moreover, are the successful examples from North America transferable to Europe? Can a successful example of the supporting program (such as Emily's List) be transferable to other areas of society? And what can we take/learn from the experiences of different migrant and minority groups?

One participant acknowledged the importance of evidence based research but noted the challenge of linking research with policy and on ensuring effective implementation. Working in partnership with academia is also an important element in building partnership while ensuring adequate research, stated another participant. Moreover, a number of interveners spoke in support of the role that the arts (in all its forms) can play in raising awareness and reaching broader audiences. One participant mentioned that despite clear commitments and other decisions related to minorities in the OSCE region, implementation was still lagging behind. Another participant described the positive steps that the United States has made in developing its immigration policies so that minority women, including victims of domestic violence and trafficking, could regularize their status leading to residence permit

all the way to citizenship. One of the participants stated that it is necessary to look for the reasons that compel minority groups to migrate from their country of origin, since “push factors” may indicate unresolved problems in the community (e.g. discriminatory practices in education). As a final point, one speaker called upon the participating States to continue support of the gender program, since it is a major leverage in carrying out the OSCE mandate in areas dealing with conflict resolution.

### *Recommendations*

#### **In accordance with the OSCE Gender Action Plan:**

- Legal and policy frameworks should be developed by participating States to allow for multiple discrimination clauses in law, as well as include gender impact assessment in policy development;
- In responding to violence against women, participating States should provide for access to shelters and for autonomous residence permits for spouses;
- There should be positive action measures for funding ethnic minority organizations, and they should be viewed as experts not only as beneficiaries;
- In the economic sphere: there should be recognition of qualifications acquired abroad and mentorship programmes should be supported.

#### **More generally:**

- Participating States should implement the OSCE Gender Action Plan and its commitments;
- The OSCE and all its field Operations should continue to focus on gender equality activities, and “Keep gender on the agenda”;
- Field Operations with conflict resolution mandates should consider introducing gender equality into the discussion so as to demonstrate the relevance of conflict resolution efforts to people’s everyday lives;
- Political will is essential if commitments are to make a real difference;
- OSCE Delegations should consider the provision of funding and support to enable representatives of minority women’s groups to attend forums, such as this roundtable;
- Role models in the arts, politics and public life can play a transformational and inspirational part in the lives of migrant and minority women;
- The power of the arts should be considered as a tool for campaigning and awareness raising;
- In the context of Roma women, participating States should seek to address the reasons why the

groups are forced to leave their countries. Explore the push factors and indicate solutions.

Session II was moderated by Ms [Joanna Goodey](#), Head of the Freedoms and Justice Department, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), and Mr [Paul Welsh](#), First Secretary, UK Delegation to the OSCE Vienna, served as the rapporteur.

## Session III: Moving Forward

This panel explored examples and models of effective approaches towards ensuring equal opportunity for participation in public life and political processes of migrant and minority women. It examined specifically what has worked and what still needs to be done.

The presentations were led by Ms [Vidhya Ramalingam](#), Programme Associate, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, United Kingdom and Ms [Elisabeth Møller-Jensen](#), Managing Director, The Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Ethnicity - KVININFO, Denmark.

Ms [Vidhya Ramalingam](#), initiated her presentation by emphasizing that migration has become a permanent feature of Europe, in which States have to face challenges in building cohesive and equal societies. Moreover, she noted, Europe has implemented a number of integration models; yet, despite the investment in time and resources, results have been diverse while inequalities and anti-immigration sentiment is on the rise. Integration according to Ms Ramalingam has become a politically charged area of policy and framed for different purposes by decision-makers. In addition, she made an interesting remark concerning the state of integration policies in Europe, which “have tended to focus on ill-defined target groups and specific elements of integration and failed to address wider and systematic challenges, such as urban poverty, institutional discrimination, political disengagement, and gender inequality.”

Alongside this background, Ms Ramalingam presented the findings of a research project that tried to identify “what works” in integration programming across Europe. She stated that addressing the basic needs – such as education, housing, health and basic security – does not necessarily mean “empowerment” for women. In order to contribute to real empowerment, longer-term programming going

beyond the “basics” is a must, while enabling women to take leadership roles in the community, tackle common problems, have autonomy and opportunity to advance and benefit from economic and wider societal growth. Findings from the study was divided into three groupings, and summarized as follows:

1. **Investing in and prioritizing at the community level as a key element towards success:**

Community developments work, especially when supporting alternative livelihood opportunities and instituting social protection measures the form of income generating activities and employment opportunities; there is a need to reinforce community-level coalitions, build in capacity and empower grassroots actors; there is a need to prioritize group mobilization, mobilizing women in the community, and to promote female leadership; there is a need to support capacity building interventions – particularly the capacity to ‘feed up’, including: investment in people, investment in structures and mechanism to improve coordination, involvement of women from migrant and minority groups in public administration, etc; there is need to work on equality advocacy and awareness raising;

2. **Incentives/Integration:** Integration policies/programming should build smart incentive structures, such as investment in human capital and recognition of skills and competences of the target groups;

3. **Private Sector Partnership:** There is a need to increase the number of public-private partnerships, including strong commitment to support women entrepreneurs and venture capitalism in building strong local businesses. This approach could contribute towards building a more sustainable integration programming, including long-term funds.

She highlighted that in order to increase the probability of sustainability, all efforts should be embedded in national development plans and supported/complemented by macro-level policies addressing the root causes of gender inequalities.

Ms **Elisabeth Moeller-Jensen**, initiated her presentation by highlighting that integration of migrants is a burning issue in Denmark, and one which has played a decisive factor in the last three elections. However, she stressed that the way forward concerning integration issues is to leave aside the cultural prejudices one may carry, and instead focus on the individual and in building a cross-cultural trusting relationship within civil society. Moreover, she pointed out that mainstream media may be counter-productive in the way they portray migrants, while also stressing that sometimes words such as equality and integration have different meanings for those belonging to different communities within the

society.

Following those initial remarks, Ms Moeller-Jensen presented the Women's Mentor Network project, which combines the business mentoring approach with the values of women's movements. The main pillar of the project is not on providing migrants with access to employment, but rather on building a trusting relationship from which a broad understanding and needs assessment is taken into consideration by mentor/mentee. Up to today, the network has brought together 3 400 mentees and 4 000 mentors. She specified that the key to success is to put the individual mentee at the centre, while leaving aside cultural differences. Moreover, this model also aims at building solidarity between the women (mentor/mentee) towards a mutual empowerment. In general, mentors offer their professional network and support voluntarily and are matched with their mentees via a database managed by the office. Until now, one fourth of the trainees have found employment through the network. At the same time, the mentoring structure contributes by involving the newcomers, but this process has also been a valuable learning experience for the mentors. The project has also built up cooperation with other countries and could serve as a model to set up similar practices in other regions (i.e., the Middle East and North Africa). In her final comments, she appealed for more opportunities for women to organize in a professional manner in order to enhance trust and mutual learning.

### *Discussion*

In the discussion following the two keynote speeches, experts shared their experiences and pointed out that a great deal on this issue still needs addressing. Some participants referred to negative trends around a growing anti-immigration attitude in many OSCE participating States and the adverse impacts of extreme right movements in politics. To counteract such trends, a number of participants called for the support of civil society in mobilizing the kind of solidarity needed on behalf of migrants and minorities. One participant stated that the mentors in the network project also act as vehicles for awareness raising on behalf of migrants and minorities through public presentations, thus being a useful tool in counteracting myths and misinformation. It was pointed out that migrant women have been depicted in the political debate in a particularly problematic way, often as the object of oppression. One expert hinted that the current climate of economic austerity and lessening capacity to counter such polemics has a direct impact on the work of integration and empowerment of migrant and minority women. It was stated that it was in the interest of the OSCE that relevant stakeholders promote policies and action in order to limit emerging security risks relating to those negative trends.

## *Recommendations*

### **Recommendations on community development:**

- Invest in community relations and community development. Some successful approaches include the empowerment of existing grassroots initiatives, enhancing the visibility of role models and measures for minority women to shape policy and to develop leadership skills;
- Promote national development plans, which support the prioritization of community level needs. Such a development plan would have to be supported by policies addressing the root causes of gender inequalities;
- Build-up smart incentive structures, which ensure the sustainability of programmes developed. In this context also, public-private partnerships should be encouraged.

### **Other recommendations:**

- Promote the mentor network idea as a good practice which could be set up in other regions. Such an effort must be based on trust, professionalism, values and responsibility, keeping in mind the complexity of individual needs and stories;
- Counter anti-immigration attitudes and stigmatizing of women by strengthening the legal and policy framework for equality and anti-discrimination. It is particularly necessary to improve monitoring and reporting mechanisms, to inform better about the different phenomena of intolerance in the most affected communities, in order to enable people to seek concrete help and support;
- Develop counter-narratives to stereotyping attitudes. Efforts must aim at bringing people together and mobilizing civil society and solidarity in order to build positive, social contacts;
- Use education as an entry point to promote values of tolerance and non-discrimination, also including the role of women in communities. This is an important building block that relates to the future of our societies.

This session was moderated by [Ambassador Blanka Jamnišek](#), Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the United Nations, OSCE and other international organizations in Vienna, and Ms [Katharina Stoffl](#), Political Adviser, Swiss Delegation to the OSCE served as rapporteur.

This panel explored the national level challenges for empowerment of Roma and Sinti women. It explored the international and national institutional and legal frameworks for the inclusion and integration of Roma and Sinti women, as well as what are the strategic options to address integration and

inclusion of Roma and Sinti women.

The presentations were led by Ms [Ronnie Faye](#), Director of Pavee Point Travellers Centre, Ireland, Ms [Joanna Goodey](#), Head of the Freedoms and Justice Department, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Mr [Andrzej Mirga](#), Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and Ms [Angela Kocze](#), Hungarian Academy of Science, Hungary.

## Session IV: Engaging the Roma and Sinti Community

Ms [Ronnie Faye](#) started the presentation by highlighting that travellers are a minority ethnic group. She stressed the need for cooperation between the Irish travellers and settled population based on empowerment and mutual trust. However, she regretted that quite often travellers are not included in the discussions concerning Roma and Sinti communities. Ms Faye pointed out that understanding root causes of problems faced by travellers is a first step towards addressing challenges, but one must also consider collective outcomes vis-à-vis the community. In this regard, the use of gender mainstreaming approach is a must when examining the gender impact and targeting initiatives at all levels - from local to international programmes. She also used the opportunity to voice that minority women are often excluded from the development and decision-making process related to programmatic activities affecting their lives and their community on issues such as housing and health. Furthermore, she called upon stakeholders to take on a holistic approach when dealing with larger issues such as health, since the latter has also an impact on the social, economic and general well-being of the individual and the community. According to Ms Faye, the key aim of the work of the Pavee Point Travellers Centre is to concentrate on self-determination of the traveller community through building trust and implementing a community development approach. The work is inclusive of gender mainstreaming and involves both young and old members of the traveller community through specific programmes covering various fields of activities and issues. An example of such work is the health program that among other things tries to address the causes of ill health that often lie in the living conditions of travellers, while attempting to include travellers' problems in relevant national strategies. Ms Faye also indicated the need to prevent state policies from actually marginalizing traveller and minority women. In her final remarks, she made a number of recommendations for further work, such as: the

need for consistency in state policies, implementation of human rights instruments, and the need for disaggregated data based on gender and ethnicity.

Ms [Joanna Goodey](#)'s presentation focused on the challenges for empowerment of Roma and Sinti Women, based on survey data compiled by the Fundamental Rights Agency. She started the presentation by remarking that despite years of efforts towards the integration of marginalized and excluded Roma and Sinti populations, evidence from a number of reports still points towards the on-going deterioration of their situation. Moreover, she cautioned that although these reports were instrumental in drawing attention to the plight of the Roma, practical integration efforts continued to be hampered by a lack of robust and ethnically disaggregated data. The first "hard" socio-economic statistical data, she noted were produced in 2004 by the UNDP.

Ms Goodey in her presentation provided the political context, prior to the implementation of the survey, which started in 2010 as the EC Roma Task Force, identified a number of problems, which were hindering the implementation of actions to address the challenges faced by the Roma community. Among those challenges: lack of know-how and administrative capacity in using European Union (EU) funds, lack of civil society and Roma and Sinti community involvement, lack of available socio-economic data on Roma, as well as the need for data in order to have informed policies. As a result, the EC Communication on Roma tasked the Fundamental Rights Agency with the expansion of research on Roma to cover all European Union Member States, collection of data regularly across the European Union, as well to assist Member States in developing effective monitoring tools. She continued by presenting the survey, which was carried out in 11 EU Member States, covering Roma and non-Roma households living in close proximity to each other. The survey collected data on the following issues: employment, education, health, and housing; socio-economic household and individual characteristic such as gender and age; neighborhood characteristics and infrastructure; integration, discrimination, rights awareness, mobility and migration; and active citizenship (e.g., voting, NGO participation, etc).

While data collected in the survey confirmed the strong differences between Roma and non-Roma population in areas such as housing conditions, discrimination awareness, education, etc., the gender (and other) differences varied between countries and between Roma communities. These differences should be sufficiently recognized and addressed. Based on the experience from the survey exercise, Ms Goodey made the following concluding remarks, first, the need for robust, comparable data is essential to inform policy and legislative developments on non-discrimination, integration and inclusion; second, data is needed to be able to assess whether policy and legislation is having the desired impact over time; third, comparisons – between men and women and between Roma and non-Roma groups – are essential to be able to gauge a situation; and fourth, the need for data – collected any-



mously for statistical purposes – needs to be supported by Roma communities.

Mr [Andrzej Mirga](#)'s starting point was to highlight men's responsibility to support and contribute towards achieving greater rights and gender equality, yet to be enjoyed by most women worldwide. He echoed the statement of a number of previous speakers, who had noted that despite positive legal and policy measures aimed at ensuring equality and rights for women, implementation still lagged behind. He attributed the slow progress on equality to continued discrimination, prejudices, traditions and practices experienced by women, while stating that a high educational attainment (within a given country) has a direct correlation to that society's compliance on women's rights. The latter can be demonstrated by measuring the gender inequality gap through economic, political and educational status and health attainment. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2010, countries that have achieved high levels in these four areas also demonstrate greater gender equality. However, based on results from OECD studies, Mr Mirga warned that growth and higher accomplishment of female education does not translate into an equal footing on labor market participation or decision-making mechanisms for women, in particular political representation.

Mr Mirga recalled that significant socio-economic and gender equality differences between countries and regions are a major factor leading women to migrate; yet, a number of features may contribute to make them more vulnerable/or at risk of being trafficked. Echoing the growing trend that gender equality "is a key factor in enhancing development, democracy and peace", he concurred with the positive trends which indicate an increase in women's participation worldwide. However, he asserted that women from Roma and Sinti community "are not there yet; they do not display a role of agents of change", this process is still in its early stage. Against this background, he cited a number of challenges faced by Roma women, such as discrimination, dramatic lower levels of education attainment, and unemployment. He continued by stating that despite a number of international decisions addressing Roma issues, women are often not specifically targeted nor are decisions systematically implemented. Reflecting on the results from the global gap index, Mr Mirga appealed for an improvement in the access to quality education offered to Roma and Sinti women, as well as assistance to the Roma women's movement that can first and foremost support the process by which Roma women can become agents of change within their communities and in mainstream society.

Ms [Angela Kocze](#) focused her presentation on the strategic options to address integration and inclusion of Roma and Sinti women at national level. She initiated her presentation by noting that the gender dimension is generally missing from national and EU Roma Integration Strategies. In addition, such strategies bear insufficient recognition of multiple forms of discrimination affecting women, thus leading to unaddressed issues in important areas such as education, housing, economic par-

participation, etc. Based on the EU Framework she recalled that legislation is not enough to address the problems faced by the Roma and Travellers in Europe; additionally, States must “develop and implement an integrated and sustainable approach that combines efforts across different areas, including education, employment, health and housing”, while establishing “mechanisms and positive actions to improve the inclusion of Romani, Sinti and Travellers women”. Moreover, she pointed out a number of human rights abuses, which are still systemic in the community and that have a direct impact on the conditions of Roma women (i.e., domestic violence, forced marriage, trafficking in human beings, and hostile actions by extreme right movements). Furthermore, in order to monitor and evaluate strategic plans, there is a need to develop indicators so as to measure results.

In order to present the challenges and best practices affecting Roma and Traveller women, Ms Kocze drew on the results from the UNDP-FRA 2011 study regarding four policy areas: education, employment, health and housing. Regarding education, she mentioned that early drop out rates for minority women and low educational levels are a challenge. When providing examples of best practices in addressing this issue, Ms Kocze stressed the need to increase the participation of Roma women and girls in the educational system, organize special mentoring and supporting systems, as well as allocate scholarships to assist them in attaining higher qualification. The second policy area in need of attention is sustainable form of employment for minorities. Among the examples of good practice in this field, Ms Kocze cited the Spanish program that promotes necessary skills and simultaneously facilitates access to ordinary training towards employment. In addition, she called for more support to micro-credit systems aimed at women. Finally, she noted the need for joint effort by inter-governmental organizations and governments to create mechanisms, in order to provide sustainable funds and opportunities for Roma women to speak up. At the same time, she stressed the importance of the participation and integration of women within the Roma community in order to have a positive impact on the local and national policies affecting them, as well as the need for Roma organizations to work on gender issues.

The panelists unanimously noted that while gender-based discrimination has been on the public agenda for quite a while, and much has been done, gender equality is still not a reality. In particular Roma and Sinti women face multiple forms of discrimination as women and as members of minority group.

## *Discussion*

In the discussion one participant brought the example of the Roma Women Network in Serbia as a

means to encourage and draw attention to empowered Roma women while preserving Romani culture and traditions. The participant encouraged governments to implement concrete measures to that effect. Another participant positively noted the OSCE and UN activities in this area being implemented in Serbia, while stressing the importance of cooperation of international organizations in the field. She also suggested that OSCE structures could address in coordination meetings in January 2013 the topic of women's empowerment with the emphasis on minority groups, drawing from the experience of field offices. Further, the involvement of the Representative on Freedom of Media could be developed. The participant also suggested the encouragement of positive discrimination in the employment of OSCE staff, especially in field operations, as well as strengthening the finance of OSCE structures to organize more events with NGO-participation.

A participant asked how a career-woman would be perceived in Roma community, considering some of their perceptions; and whether there are any data on the positive impact of migration, such as educated Roma returning to their countries of origin. He also wished to know how important would be a discussion of Roma issues on the European level. It was suggested that it is clear that non-segregated education is normally of better quality and improves the lives of the persons concerned; the indirect effects on the Roma community are harder to measure. The hostile debates on Roma issues have added nothing to address the various challenges faced by the community, but have had a negative impact on public opinion on the subject. One participant was of the view that it is not possible to discuss the situation of Roma women without having an equal number of Roma and Sinti women participating and suggested inviting more participants to such events.

A participant shared plans for a mentorship program and introduced an initiative on minority cultural autonomy bodies in Serbia to encourage minority women to participate in these bodies with a view to increase their impact on local policies. She suggested taking into consideration the existing arrangements for participation of minorities in public life and how to make the most of the work of women who hold positions in such bodies. Another participant raised the issue of multiple forms of discrimination in the legal framework and the possible remedies. The panelists agreed that there is very little case law on actually addressing multiple forms of discrimination. One participant made a series of recommendations such as: first, the need to undertake comprehensive research on multiple discrimination of Roma women to ensure their access to education; second, to establish cooperation between parents, schools and teachers to prevent discrimination, to enforce laws against discrimination and ensure that laws and policies adequately account for Roma women; and third, to ensure the adequate participation of Roma women in decision-making forums concerning issues which directly affect them and their community. Concluding the session the moderator noted the need to keep in mind the additional challenges of the financial crisis.

## *Recommendations*

**Based on the presentations and discussion, the following recommendations to empower Roma and Sinti women were drawn up:**

- Gender and ethnic-specific data is needed to identify the root causes of discrimination; to develop and assess the impact of policy and legislation;
- The basic needs of access to health, adequate living conditions and education are fundamental to the empowerment of women;
- Roma and Sinti integration strategies should incorporate a strong gender dimension, while relevant indicators should be developed to evaluate the success of such strategies;
- More attention should be paid to indicators and addressing multiple forms of discrimination;
- Awareness-raising, education and State support to Roma (women) movement are key vehicles to bring about the change in practices and attitudes that prevent Roma women from active participation in the society;
- International instruments should be consolidated, streamlined and further developed;
- Measures targeting Roma and Sinti women and girls which address inequality (particularly in education, health, economic and political participation) can contribute towards strengthening their role within their own community, as well as in society at large. However, to be successful, these measures need to be tailored to specific needs of this group and developed with their participation.

This session was moderated by [Ambassador Timo Kantola](#), Permanent Mission of Finland to the OSCE, and Ms [Dea Hannust](#), Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia to the OSCE, served as rapporteur.

## Conclusions from Sessions and Closing Remarks

In this session the rapporteurs presented to the participants the summary of the four panel sessions, including the recommendations. This was followed by concluding remarks from [Ambassador Miroslava Beham](#), Senior Adviser on Gender Issues, Office of the Secretary General, OSCE Secretariat.

Ambassador Beham thanked all participants in the expert roundtable for their invaluable contributions and fruitful discussions. She mentioned as a follow-up the compilation and dissemination of proceedings of the roundtable, while encouraging the participants to send additional suggestions concerning further recommendations, challenges and best practices which were not covered during the event. Based on the two-days of deliberations, she observed that without much surprise there is still a great deal of challenges to be tackled when dealing with protection and empowerment of migrant, minority, Travellers, Roma and Sinti women. Moreover, she concurred that at the heart of all these issues lay the security aspect, which most governments remain oblivious to. Examples given at the roundtable (for instance, the effects of the economic crisis in Greece) demonstrated the direct consequences on the living situation of migrants. Moreover, the growing power of extreme right movements within the political spectrum, has a deteriorating effect upon the human rights situation in many OSCE countries, which is also related to the current economic crisis. This situation, warned Ambassador Beham, should be treated as a typical early warning indicator of growing tensions that can lead to social conflict. However, despite the fact that such indicators should require immediate response from governments, unfortunately there are difficulties in foreseeing appropriate action by national authorities, while civil society and international organizations continue to fulfill the task of awareness raising. Ambassador Beham welcomed a dialogue with the participating States on these issues, since they are directly linked to gender equality. She praised the diversity and perspectives brought by the participants to the roundtable as they indicated a number of areas in which much work still must be done, such as: awareness raising among women on the situation of migrant, minority, Roma and Sinti women; on best practices that can bring about significant change (i.e., the KVINO mentoring program which should be implemented in the OSCE region); and the need to involve men in the empowerment of women. Moreover, she called for the strengthening of partnerships between OSCE Institutions, field operations, civil society, international organizations, Institutions and UN working in the broad themes covering migrant, minority, Roma and Sinti women. In her final remarks, Ambassador Beham noted that progress is much dependent on individual commitments and strong personalities. Therefore, she encouraged the participants to continue diligently in their work despite great challenges, while thanking them for their commitment and dynamism.



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