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Roma women in the EU

European Parliament resolution on the situation of Roma women in the European Union (2005/2164(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the fact that the Union and its institutions have on a number of occasions expressed concern or even alarm at the situation of the Roma generally and Romani women in particular, in documents and actions such as the following:
 - its resolution of 28 April 2005 on the situation of the Roma in the European Union¹,
 - the report by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia report on “Romani women and access to public health care: Breaking the barriers”,
 - the Commission’s important and disturbing report on the situation of Roma in an enlarged European Union, including the particular attention paid in that report to gendered aspects of the situation of Roma in Europe²,
 - activities supported by the Commission, such as the Daphne programme’s study on the situation of Romani women in Spanish prisons,
- having regard to the fact that a number of Council of Europe bodies has also expressed dissatisfaction at the situation of Roma and Romani women in Europe and has urged policy- and law-makers to redress the unacceptable situation of Roma, including Romani women, in Europe, in documents such as:
 - the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1203 (1993) on Gypsies in Europe, which notes inter alia the importance of education of Romani women,
 - General Policy recommendation No 3 (1998) of the Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies, which emphasises the double discrimination faced by Romani women,
 - the recently-published report by Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Europe (2006),
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Institute for Gender Equality (COM(2005)0081),

¹ OJ C 45 E, 23.2.2006, p. 129.

² Commission Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs, Unit D3, 2004.

- having regard to the OSCE Action Plan to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area¹, which emphasises the principle of taking full account of the interests of Romani women in all matters and ensuring Romani women's participation in all aspects of life and the principle of “Roma to Roma” cooperation,
 - having regard to the Beijing Declaration for women’s rights, Article 32 of which provides that states are to “intensify efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement”²,
 - having regard to General Recommendation XXVII on discrimination against Roma, produced at the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2000),
 - having regard to the documentation compiled by the European Roma Rights Centre with partner organisations and provided to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (UN CEDAW) concerning Member States and accession and candidate countries, and having regard to the recommendations made by the UN CEDAW concerning the situation of Romani women and the need to take urgent measures to resolve the manifold problems faced by Romani women in Europe,
 - having regard to Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin³,
 - having regard to Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation⁴,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0148/2006),
- A. whereas, in the European Union, protecting human rights is of particular importance, and whereas, at present, Romani women constitute among the most threatened groups and individuals in the Member States and accession and candidate countries,
- B. whereas there are indications that, as a result of patriarchal traditions, many women - including Romani women and girls - do not enjoy full respect for their freedom of choice in matters concerning the most fundamental decisions of their lives, and are thus thwarted in their ability to exercise their fundamental human rights,
- C. whereas EU law and policy-makers have adopted an extensive body of law and devised many policies designed to challenge the twin disadvantages of racial and gender discrimination and their combined effects,

¹ PC.DEC/566, 2003.

² Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

³ OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p.22.

⁴ OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p.16.

- D. whereas European policy- and law-makers have not yet succeeded in securing full and effective equality for Romani women, and their equal inclusion, with full dignity, in the societies of Europe,
- E. whereas Romani women face extreme levels of discrimination, including multiple or compound discrimination, which is fuelled by very widespread stereotypes known as anti-gypsyism,
- F. whereas surveys show that the life expectancy of Romani women is, in some geographical areas, shorter than that of other women,
- G. whereas there is ample documentation indicating that Romani women are particularly excluded from health care and often only have access to health care in the case of an extreme emergency and/or childbirth,
- H. whereas Romani women have, in recent years, been victims of extreme human rights abuses in Europe and in particular of attacks on their physical integrity, including coercive sterilisation; whereas, although some Member States have provided redress for such abuse, others have yet to do so,
- I. whereas the gap in the level of education between non-Romani women and Romani women is unacceptably large¹; whereas very many Romani girls fail to complete primary education²,
- J. whereas racial segregation in schools and biased attitudes among teachers and administrators contribute to the low level of expectations of Romani parents for their daughters in particular,
- K. whereas the unemployment rate among adult Romani women is, in many places, many times higher than that of the rest of the adult female population,
- L. whereas a significant proportion of Romani women throughout Europe currently live in housing that is a threat to their health, and whereas in many places Romani women live under constant threat of forced eviction,
- M. whereas Romani women are frequently among victims of trafficking in Europe,
- N. whereas a lawsuit was recently brought before the European Court of Human Rights against the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), alleging extreme harm to a number of persons, including Romani women and girls³,
- 1. Welcomes the proposal to establish an EU Institute for Gender Equality and urges the institute to focus intensively on the situation of women suffering multiple discrimination, including Romani women;

¹ In Romania, 3% of Romani women have reportedly completed secondary school, as opposed to 63% of women in general (Open Society Institute, Research on Selected Roma Education Programs in Central and Eastern Europe, 2002).

² UNDP report on “*Avoiding the dependency trap - the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe*”, Bratislava, 2002.

³ See European Roma Rights Centre press release, “Victims of Kosovo Poisoning Bring Lawsuit at European Court of Human Rights”, 20 February 2006, at: www.errc.org.

2. Urges public authorities throughout the Union to promptly investigate allegations of extreme human rights abuses against Romani women, swiftly punish perpetrators and provide adequate compensation to victims and, as such, urges the Member States to regard, as among their highest priorities, measures intended to provide better protection for women's reproductive and sexual health, prevent and outlaw coercive sterilisation and promote family planning, alternative arrangements for those who get married early and sex education, and to take proactive measures to eliminate racially segregated maternity wards, ensure that programmes are developed to provide services to Romani victims of domestic violence and exercise particular vigilance with respect to the trafficking of Romani women, and urges the Commission to support governmental and civil society initiatives designed to tackle these problems while securing the fundamental human rights of the victims;
3. Urges the Member States to review the implementation of all policies to ensure that Romani women are involved in the preparation, planning and implementation of these processes;
4. Urges the Member States to adopt minimum standards within the framework of the open method of coordination with the aim of taking a range of measures to ensure that women and girls have access on equal terms to quality education for all, including: adopting positive laws requiring school desegregation and setting out the specifics of plans to end the separate, substandard education of Romani children;
5. Insists that Romani children must be taught to read and write and that this must be a priority for the schools in which such children are educated;
6. Urges the Member States to improve Romani housing by providing recognition under domestic law of a right to adequate housing, remedying the current dearth of protection available to individuals under domestic law against forced eviction, adopting in consultation with representatives of affected communities comprehensive plans for financing the improvement of living and housing conditions in districts which have a sizeable Romani population and ordering local authorities to promptly provide adequate potable water, electricity, waste removal, public transport and roads;
7. Urges the Member States to promote socially mixed housing;
8. Calls upon the Member States to make sites available for non-sedentary Roma that enable them to enjoy a satisfactory standard of comfort and hygiene;
9. Demands adequate relocation to safer housing especially for Romani women refugees in the highly lead-contaminated land of the Mitrovica region of Kosovo; draws attention to the temporary and newly renovated location of the French KFOR Camp Osterode, which is provided as an interim solution; calls on the Council, the Commission and the Member States to provide sufficient financial resources for a relocation to the place of origin; emphasises the need to enforce human rights while continuing the Stabilisation and Association Process;
10. Urges the Member States to ensure that all Romani women have access to primary, emergency and preventive health care, to develop and implement policies to ensure that even the most excluded communities have full access to the health care system, and the introduction of anti-bias training for health-care workers;

11. Urges governments to ensure that equal treatment and equal opportunities are an integral part of employment and social-inclusion policies, to tackle the very high unemployment rates among Romani women, and in particular to address the serious barriers posed by direct discrimination in hiring procedures;
12. Urges the adoption of the concept of “positive obligations”, whereby state and non-state entities are required by law to ensure that Romani women are represented proportionately to their presence in the local population;
13. Urges governments to examine barriers to self-employment by Romani women, and to create programmes to enable accessible, fast, and inexpensive registration for Romani women entrepreneurs and self-employed persons, to establish avenues for accessible credit – including micro-credit – for the financing of undertakings by Romani women, and urges the Commission to support these activities through relevant funding mechanisms;
14. Recommends that the Member States and the Commission promote social entrepreneurship models specifically targeting Romani women;
15. Calls upon the Commission and Parliament, in the context of the various funds, to treat as a horizontal objective capacity-building and empowerment of Romani women individuals and organisations in education, employment, leadership and political participation;
16. Urges the Commission to support, through its many relevant financial mechanisms, activities targeting Romani women in particular, review rules for the allocation of all funding and ensure that particular provision is made for the inclusion of Romani women and urges the Member States to pursue similar practices at the level of national, regional and local institutions;
17. Recommends that the Commission launch legal proceedings and ultimately levy dissuasive fines against any Member States that have not yet transposed the anti-discrimination Directives¹ into domestic law and/or fully implemented them in practice as regards Romani women, and that it monitor the enforcement of any judgments passed by the Court of Justice of the European Communities in cases of inadequate compliance;
18. Urges the EU institutions to take as a key criterion for evaluating states of readiness for accession to the European Union the situation of Romani women in candidate countries, including the situation of Romani women in those candidate countries not traditionally or readily associated with Roma issues;
19. Recommends that Member States take full advantage of policy processes such as the open method of coordination to develop and implement policies ensuring full equality in practice of Romani women;
20. Urges the Union institutions to take the lead in encouraging governments to collect and publish data disaggregated by sex and ethnicity on the situation of Romani men and women, in order to measure progress in education, housing, employment, health care and

¹ Including the Directives adopted pursuant to Article 13 TEC as introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam, and the related Directives specifying the scope and dimension of the ban on discrimination against women under EU law.

other sectors; considers that the EU should urge governments to raise awareness in state administrations and among the general public of the fact that ethnic data can be gathered without threatening individual identification, and should encourage governments to use any existing, safe and innovative methodologies;

21. Recalls that the horizontal approach successfully makes it possible each year to provide support for the organisation of the annual forum for Romani women living in the European Union;
22. Urges the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia to initiate a series of studies on the role of the media in fostering anti-gypsyism, and in particular on the promotion of damaging stereotypes of Romani women;
23. Calls urgently for close consultation of Romani women in the drawing up of any programme and any project undertaken by EU institutions and/or by the Member States which may affect them, and for positive action to be taken for their benefit;
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and accession and candidate countries.