National Roma Integration Strategies

evaluating gender

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The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) which is the most representative Roma organization in Europe, is active in pushing for improvements in the living conditions of the Roma and in combating racial discrimination. The ERTF has a partnership agreement with the Council of Europe, which provides it with a political dimension and a privileged relationship with the various organs of the Organisation. It addresses governments, intergovernmental organisations, political groups, companies and other non-state actors. It seeks to disclose discrimination of Roma accurately, quickly and persistently. It researches the facts relating to individual cases and patterns of human rights abuse. These findings are publicized, and members, supporters and staff mobilize public pressure on governments and others to stop the abuses.

The ERTF and its members are committed to the aim of achieving equal rights and equal opportunities for Roma in Europe as well as increasing political participation. The ERTF take an active role in the fight against discrimination (anti-Gypsyism) and for the full realisation of human rights.
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I. Introduction to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies

In April of 2011, the European Commission adopted a Communication requiring each state to create, or further develop, a National Roma Integration Strategy, or a set of solidified policies and measures to be taken for Roma inclusion. The EU heads of state and governments endorsed this EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, and an annual monitoring mechanism was put in place, with the European Commission reporting to the European Parliament. The national strategies were to take into account the number of Roma living in each country, and cover the period 2012-2020, with the EC setting goals to be reached in 2020. The strategies were to be funded by the states, the MFF, and possibly other international or EU funding.

After receiving the national strategies from the member states, in 2012 the EC issued both collective and individual assessments for the members. In December 2013, the Council of the EU issued a Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States. In both 2013 and 2014, the European Commission issued an assessment report on the steps taken towards implementation of the required EU framework.

Although the EU has undertaken detailed analysis of the national strategies, this report will focus specifically on the issues of gender, youth, and anti-discrimination. This report finds that these three areas, gender in particular, deserve more thorough attention both in the EU framework and recommendation as well as in the national strategies of the countries. Finally, this report offers some methods for both the EU bodies and the member states to more adequately mainstream gender, as well as youth, and strengthen their approaches to anti-discrimination measures.

II. Structure of the EU Framework

Acknowledging the difficult situation for the marginalized Roma population in Europe, the European Commission created the EU Framework to tangibly improve the lives of Roma in Europe by the end of the decade (2020). The Commission found that although discrimination on the basis of race or ethnic origin is already prohibited by EU law, legislation is not enough. The EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies will support state efforts to create and implement “action plans with specific measures commensurate with Roma inclusion targets, supported by a clear timetable and appropriate funding.”

The Framework focuses on four issue areas, as well as the structural and practical requirements of integration and implementation. The four principle areas, which normally guide EU Roma integration policies are education, employment, healthcare and housing. The structural requirements of implementation include “cooperation with civil society, with regional and local authorities, monitoring, antidiscrimination,” the establishment of a national contact point, and funding. The Recommendations adopted by the Council in 2013 form the first legal instrument for Roma integration measures.
III. Gender

A. Introduction

In June of 2013, the European Parliament asked the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) to conduct a gender-based analysis of the FRA's Roma Survey data. This analysis of the survey provides a detailed breakdown of the specific challenges that Roma women face in regards to the four issue areas of the strategies: education, employment, housing, and health, as well as any other gender sensitive areas. The EU Parliament used this FRA “Analysis of FRA Roma Survey Results by Gender” to write its own resolution in December 2013 on “Gender aspects on the European Framework of National Roma Inclusion Strategies.” The Gender aspects report is essentially a list of recommendations for how the national strategies could do more and do better to improve the situation of Roma women, by specifically accounting for, strategizing and funding initiatives specific to Roma women.

1. Multiple Discrimination and the Necessity of Cultural Competency

Roma women and girls face multiple discrimination for their status as Roma combined with their status as women and girls, leading to a level of oppression that can be immeasurably more difficult to overcome. They may also face other types of intersectional discrimination from their status as migrants/immigrants/non-citizens, persons experiencing poverty and/or homelessness, and other aspects of their individual identities. They also face gender discrimination from both inside and outside of their communities. Ana Bogdanić, an activist from the Croatian Romani women's NGO “Better life,” states that Romani women face a double burden from the cultural values and laws of the majority culture that subjugate women, as well as from Roma cultural values and customary laws. She finds that “existing gender relations between Roma men and women reveal hierarchies of power and the subordination of women within the Roma minority.” She finds that Romani women today are beginning to navigate the difficult territory of how to preserve their culture while also ending the gender inequality they face within it. Bogdanic argues that there is a delicate balance that must be found between seeking to preserve Roma minority culture, while not preserving the parts of Roma culture that are patriarchal, presumably by giving women more of a voice in defining Roma rights and culture. She claims that many minority group programs fail to account for this inter-group discrimination. However, at the same time Roma should not be unfairly targeted or discriminated against for the patriarchal values that perpetuate women's oppression in their culture, acknowledging that the majority culture also continues to value men's voice over women's and men have greater access to public space and power.

All NGOs and state bodies who are working to empower Roma women, namely the EU member state governments who are the focus of this report, must make sure to recognize the universality of these problems, when seeking to account for the complexity of Roma women's situation. Member states must address the changes that are necessary to bring the Roma in line with international human rights standards while preserving Roma culture and traditions.

11 Id.
12 Id.
13 Id.
B. Beginning at the Structural Level

Women in every community face diverse, different, and often more pressing challenges than men. They face higher levels of poverty, greater unemployment, multiple discrimination, different health consequences, gender discrimination within their own communities, with girls facing special education and health challenges of their own. Often, strategies and solutions built for a ‘general’ population fail to recognize and account for the specific problems they face, highlighting the focus on gender mainstreaming in recent years to draw attention to these specific needs.

First of all, challenges to empowering women cannot be identified without an approach that looks for them. Although the EU asked the FRA to carry out a gender analysis and itself made gender specific recommendations, they still fail to assess or account for gender in either the EU Framework that created the national strategy system, and the yearly assessments that they make. Thus it comes as no surprise that the national strategies themselves fail to properly account for gender in their solutions. The EU was able to identify problems specific to women and girls in some comments and also in its recommendations but these steps are ineffective without requirements to build gender into policy, and monitor policy implementation the same way they do for the four issue areas, as well as anti-discrimination, funding, and structure. Simply trying to increase overall employment, school drop-out rate, and access to health care will not require the same steps for providing access to men and women. If gender is ignored in solutions, we are pretending that men and women are starting on an equal playing field with equal opportunities and challenges and the EU has pointed out that this is not the case. A first step to improving the situation of women and girls would be to include a gender category in all future yearly assessments by the EU Commission.

1. EU Framework

In the EU Framework for the National Roma Inclusion Strategies, gender was only mentioned three times, and only once as an actual recommendation. It is clear that gender, or women and girls, were not prioritized during the creation of the national strategy program. The EU Framework should be expanded to include the recommendations of the "Gender aspects" reports so that they become binding on member states, and not merely an afterthought or another document to be disregarded by policy makers and other stakeholders.

2. Yearly Assessment Reports

The yearly assessment reports issued by the EC, which have so far been released for 2013 and 2014 and will continue until 2020, focus on the four main issue areas of education, employment, housing and health but also include added sections on anti-discrimination, funding, and structural priorities to be considered. The assessment contains a very general report on the efforts of all countries combined, and then about 1.5-2 pages on each country individually covering the seven topics just mentioned.

However, the word gender, women, and girls were scarcely used at all in this assessment, with an average of three times for each year, usually occurring in the same three footnotes of an eighty-page report. At one point, both the Netherlands and Portugal are encouraged to pay more attention to the situation of Roma girls in education – Portugal specifically in the area of awareness-raising – and once Sweden is encouraged to do more awareness-raising for Roma girls on health issues. It is without doubt that these issues of health and education apply to all member states, and it is unknown why it was only encouraged in the context of two countries for education, or one country for health.

This shows that indiscriminate attention is being paid to the issues of Roma women and girls. The precarious and specific discrimination and difficulties they faced are not being accounted for, and only casually mentioned as an afterthought in the EC reports.

For the general report on all member states, the education section does not even mention the word gender or girls, or any issues that might affect girls in particular or in a stronger fashion than boys, even when this is especially notable with school attendance or early marriage, early child birth, and community gender discrimination for Roma girls as mentioned in FRA data. While it mentions a few specific successful programs of member states, none of them are aimed at gender. Inequality between the sexes is not a disputed issue that the EC must avoid or tread lightly upon, but a well-known and well-researched phenomenon amongst even the general majority population. We know that girls face gender-specific obstacles that need special attention and solutions, and we encourage the EC to create a specific gender analysis category in their annual evaluation for each member state, and in general. The multiple discrimination faced by women and girls should not be casually mentioned in a footnote, or in a recommendation to Portugal, the Netherlands, or Sweden, when we know very well from other EU reports that these same problems are pervasive and widespread. In addition, we must do more than only mentioning problems but must also invest in researching, sharing and implementing solutions.

C. Analysis of Individual Member State National Strategies

1. Introduction

The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020\textsuperscript{15} mentions “gender” only one time, and only in a footnote\textsuperscript{16}. In the text, the report states that the national strategies should be “in line” with the 2009 Council Conclusions on the Ten Basic Principles of Roma Inclusion, which includes as Number 6: “awareness of the gender dimension.” Presumably, awareness of the gender dimension signifies more than a footnote. “Women” are only mentioned four times, normally to quote disparate statistics in the health or employment areas between Roma men and Roma women. While such statistics are important, they do not convey a sense of commitment or dedication by the European bodies. Thus, it should be of no surprise that the National Strategies of the member states reflect an almost completely parallel dedication and commitment to women’s issues in the Roma community. Gender, women, and girls are typically only casually mentioned in passing, as a footnote or a statistic, without offering any real analysis of the problem, or possibility of a solution.

It must be noted that not only is each national strategy itself unique, but the obstacles to inclusion are vastly different for each of the EU’s member states. However, when analyzing the gender dimension of the strategies, there are many common themes that run through all, or the majority, of national strategies. Similar to the EU Framework, most national strategies do not even mention gender, or perhaps they do only once or twice, but perhaps only in a non-concrete way, for instance, in a list of different types of anti-discrimination laws in the country (age, race, gender, etc.). Mentioning the importance of a gender lens, or a gender dimension to oppression is important, but it is only the first step. This approach gives no definite plan as to how, when, where, or other details are necessary to actually mainstream gender into the state response, and most states do not seem to go any further into truly focusing their plans and policies on women’s and girl’s specific needs.

\textsuperscript{16} Id. At pg. 8.
Women are mentioned in the national strategies much more often than gender. Nearly all national strategies mention women in the context of employment and health. For example, they give statistics in the difference of employment rates, or state that women’s health needs may be different. It is unknown whether the member states are going farther than this in other working documents and policy creation. The fact is, that we don’t know. If the EU collected data from them on their efforts specifically directed at women’s employment, health, housing and education, then we could more accurately measure if they are actually taking steps and problem-solving or simply pointing out that they recognize a problem exists.

Many of the reports describe the multiple discrimination that Romani women face.

2. Evaluating Individual EU Member States

Each EU member state has a Roma National Integration Strategy and this section of the report will give a short analysis of each state’s incorporation of the specific needs of women and girls, or gender mainstreaming, into their strategy. In general, the majority of states have failed to appropriately incorporate a gender analysis or lens into their national strategy, thus ignoring the specific needs and challenges faced by Roma women and girls.

Most of the countries only mention gender, women and girl(s) a few times throughout their strategy, usually only in reference to one issue area such as health or education, while failing to recognize that women and girls face specific and more difficult challenges in all four issue areas of health, housing, education and employment, as well as other areas not encompassed under these titles such as political empowerment and crime (i.e. GBV, trafficking.) Furthermore, when women and girls are mentioned in the strategies, it is usually only in a vague, passing manner that is not specific enough to have any real impact on policy formation. For example, a strategy might include a statement about “increasing career opportunities for women.” While inclusion of this goal is commendable, the strategy must include specific policy objectives and methods in order to achieve it.

This report calls for each state to critically re-evaluate their policy, utilizing the EU documents relating to incorporating gender into their strategies, and consider inviting gender experts or consultants to aid them in mainstreaming gender into their policies. Further recommendations will also be noted at the end of this section.

1. Austria 17

38 page - approximately 25,000 Roma live in Austria (0.3% of the population).

In Austria, girls are mentioned only in reference to education, highlighting that migrant girls are more likely to drop out of the education system early. The report also seeks to understand how to encourage so-called “unsupportive” parents to support girls’ education. Women’s health is mentioned, specifically a promising pilot project for breast-screening in Vienna. Reference is also made to labour market policies that focus on women.

2. Belgium 18

52 pages - approximately 30,000 Roma live in Belgium (0.29% of the population).

Belgium does not mention gender, and only mentions women three times: once in reference to the “situation of women in the labour market,” once in regards to art therapy for women, and once they mention the multiple discrimination that women face. Multiple discrimination is a very important concept to mention, but solutions and information on how to counter it are also needed.

3. Bulgaria 19

23 pages - 750,000 Roma live in Bulgaria (10.33% of the population).

Gender is not mentioned, yet women are mentioned nine times. However, most of these are in the context of treaties that are being cited and not really comments on issues specific to women. Although Bulgaria should be highlighted for mentioning the differences in functional illiteracy between Roma women and men (three times higher for women) as well as how Roma women traditionally raise the children, thus making their lower levels of education of crucial importance to the educational aspirations and school success of children. Bulgaria also quoted the Ten Basic Principles that include recognizing the gender dimension and include information on promoting affirmative actions to “overcoming traditional practices” that violate women’s and girl’s rights. Bulgaria also includes a note about “empowering the mind” of Roma women, by encouraging their full individual, economic, and social participation. Girls are only specifically mentioned in the context of early-school leaving.

4. Croatia 20

148 pages - approximately 30–40,000 Roma live in Croatia (1% of the population).

Croatia’s national strategy deserves praise for its well-rounded inclusion of gender principles into its national strategy as a whole. There is a record 204 uses of the word women, and a whole section on reproductive health as well as an entire section on Roma women. In addition to these specific sections for Roma women and women’s health, women are also mentioned in the context of areas as diverse as trafficking, political participation, discrimination, data gathering, social inclusion, employment and education. The entire document begins with a footnote that states “All terms used in this document equally and without any discrimination refer to both men and women...” The term “Roma” in this context pertains to both genders. In its sections that expressly pertain to and describe the specific situation of women and/or men, the Strategy uses the appropriate wording. Croatia has included very comprehensive statistics on women’s and girls’ education and employment, and includes thoughtful solutions such as individual counseling for drop-out students, guidance back to school, or enrolment in adult education programs. Extending micro-lines of credit for individual women enterprises is also mentioned, as well as employment preparation workshops for women and men. Croatia also has a section on women’s health, paying attention to special circumstances like their lack of transportation, and seeking to dispel prejudices that their poor health is only a result of their own negligence. In this same vein, Croatia made special efforts to understand the discrimination experienced by Roma women. The following passage is an example of their efforts:

“Nonetheless, it should be borne in mind that the above description of the status of Roma women contradicts the manner in which the Roma community sees itself: as a community in which women, particularly adult women, are respected and deemed pillars of the community. They maintain ethnic identity and tradition, protect the unity of the family, manage the money and engage in communication with the world outside.” (Pg. 29).

5. Cyprus 21

8 pages - approximately 1,250 Roma live in Cyprus (0.16% of the population).

Cyprus calls its national strategy more an integrated set of policy measures than a strategy and refers frequently to existing national policies. Gender is twice mentioned when referencing state prohibition against gender discrimination in schools or in social welfare services. It mentions women only once, while stating that free medical services can only be provided in exceptional services to illegal immigrants, such as for pregnant women. Girls are not mentioned at all in the report.

6. Czech Republic

74 pages - approximately 250,000 Roma live in the Czech Republic (1.93% of the population).

The Czech Republic opens their report by explaining the “human rights viewpoint” through which their report will be written, and recognizing the vulnerable groups within the Roma population who face overlapping discriminatory factors, listing gender, health, religion, and nationality as factors. (The only mention of gender.) Women are mentioned 16 times throughout the report, focusing heavily on the implications of the childcare duties of Roma women and the inclusion of Roma women into the labour market. For example, the report gives statistics showing the lower level of Roma women’s participation during the most productive years. The report gives traditional maternal roles and responsibilities as a reason for low level of participation and and cheduling career training alongside the provision of childcare suggestions. This ideal algorithm shows the presentation of a conflict, analysis of its causes, and the proposal of a solution. Multiple discrimination is also mentioned. Negative perceptions of the Roma are also mentioned as a factor, especially compounding for women, noting that women are viewed as primary childcare providers with less flexibility to commit to external work. The report also mentions developing flexible forms of work “harmonization” to facilitate working mothers such as part-time work. The incorporation of women into the labor strategy deserves recognition, however women are not mentioned in the other contexts. Girls are never mentioned in the report.

7. Denmark

14 pages - approximately 5,500 Roma live in Denmark (0.1% of the population).

Gender equality is mentioned, but only in the context of Denmark’s national law of acquiring both de facto and de jure gender equality (therefore it is not specific to Roma or offers any specific policies.)

The Danish strategy includes a section on human trafficking in Denmark and the estimated level of Roma sex workers in Danish cities, as well as the recovery of some minors with Roma backgrounds. Girls are only mentioned once in the report, while noting that early marriage traditions amongst Roma appear to have slowed down, due possibly with detrimental effects to girls’ education.

8. Estonia

8 pages - approximately 1,250 Roma live in Estonia (0.1% of the population).

Gender equality is notably mentioned as one of the objectives of the report: “To eliminate gender inequality and promote equality through improving the coordination of the mainstreaming of gender equality, reducing violence against women and domestic violence and reducing human trafficking.”

The Estonian report primarily makes use of a seemingly intensive socio-economic study on Roma women, which is very useful in explaining the economic difficulties faced by them. For example, many Roma women make use of the state pension when they are incapable of working and for the care of children not their own. The study also showed the great disparity in Roma women’s awareness of social services and their rights and that “limited living space is an acute problem.” It further showed that Roma women typically work blue-collar jobs including selling goods at the market, housekeeping and cleaning and fortune telling.

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Roma women mostly attribute job discrimination to their nationality and many of them have been working abroad for some time, often in Finland, the UK and Sweden. The study also showed that Roma are well covered by health insurance, although they rarely use it. Girls were not mentioned in the report.

9. Finland

147 pages - approximately 11,000 Roma live in Finland (0.21% of the population).

Finland, like Croatia, should also be commended for its incorporation of gender into its national strategy. The dimensions of gender, sex and women were used to create a more comprehensive state policy although, like most other policies, girls did not receive many mentions. (Girls were mentioned twice here, as compared to zero mentions for many other states.)

The importance of gender equality is mentioned in the context of objectives and gender is noted as an important factor of inter-group Roma social status. Achieving gender equality should be a focus for equality organizations and NGOs. Multiple Discrimination, sometimes referred to here as multiplicity, is also mentioned in different contexts. Gender inequality within the Roma family and culture is also mentioned, as well as the importance of educating Roma on gender equality issues, specifically the division of housework, authority and childcare within families.

Reference is made to the CEDAW Committee of 2008 emphasis on the prevention of discrimination against Roma women. It is noted that special attention should be paid for all age groups and for the special problems of Roma women. It is stated that adolescent Roma women need particular support and encouragement to plan their future, and enter the labour market, and that attention is paid to Roma women’s challenges in the labour market, such as negative attitudes, presumably from both within and outside of their community. Roma women should be encouraged to start their businesses and towards entrepreneurship. Workplace discrimination should be countered by the “various operators in working life”, proper authorities and Roma organizations. The multiple discrimination faced by Roma women is also mentioned and elaborated upon, using an example of how Roma women may be prohibited from gaining employment due to their traditional dress, even when it presents no impediment to the potential work. The limited opportunities to study and participate in social activities for women are mentioned as well as the threat of family or clan violence for Roma women that may cause them to flee their homes, schools or jobs.

The report also notes the creation of Roma women’s NGOs in the 2000s, but notes that most Roma NGOs are not very active and/or have been short-lived. Girls are mentioned specifically once, referencing the need for their equal treatment with Roma boys. Finally, it is noted that during the gathering of statistics and surveys, due attention should be paid to age and sex.

10. France

27 pages - approximately 400,000 Roma live in France (0.21% of the population).

Neither sex or gender are mentioned in the French report and women are only mentioned three times. Women are mentioned twice in the context of health mediation, and that mediation is at times specifically targeted towards women and children. There is a section on human trafficking, that mentions how a residence permit program is focused on minors and women. Girls are mentioned only once, but directly alongside boys, as can often be seen in the reports, and with no regard to their unique challenges.

28 Women are sometimes mentioned, but not in a substantive fashion that actually references their unique situation, but often in passing such as “women and men” or in the context, such as here, where an Act is mentioned that contains the word.
11. Germany

52 pages - approximately 105,000 Roma live in Germany (0.13% of the population).

Gender is not mentioned and sex is mentioned once in the context of a national education policy that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Multiple discrimination is mentioned, specifically its effects on women and girls. The integration courses provided by the German Government are mentioned, as well as special courses for women. The German Micro-credit fund is mentioned and how loans of up to 20,000 euros are to be provided, in particular to undertakings run by women. The funding of a project for Sinti women is also mentioned, without any more details given. Girls are only mentioned once: in reference to the multiple discrimination they face.

12. Greece

41 pages - approximately 265,000 Roma live in Greece (2.47% of the population).

Sex is mentioned in the context of sex education in schools, with a focus on gender equality. Women are mentioned twelve times in the report. The exclusion of women in employment, the “medical monitoring of women,” special measures to support women’s use of adult education programs are all mentioned. In reference to adult education, the report states: “Special lifelong training seminars on management of staff and family income (micro financing), as well as arts teaching, to improve women’s education.” It is unclear why these skills specifically would improve women’s education, and elaboration would be helpful. The percentage of Roma women in such programs would also be monitored. In the proposed measures section, access to health care, particularly for women and children is mentioned, as well as some reproductive health services (family planning, etc). Development of actions to empower Roma women is also mentioned in the proposed measures section, to be supported by the ‘individual actions’ of “Local learning-through-experience Programmes, Education of competent officials, and links with competent agencies.” There is even a quantification of objectives section that sets goals of creating 25 empowerment programs for women, and 110 health programs in settlements, as well as 11 more family support centers (in addition to the 33 existing.) Time tables are also included for the quantifiable objectives. Greece should be commended for its extensive use of practical, quantifiable objectives and action plans to implement them.

Girls are not mentioned in the report.

13. Hungary

133 pages - approximately 700,000 Roma live in Hungary (7.05% of the population).

Hungary’s adherence to Common Principle Number 6 of “Awareness of the Gender Dimension” deserves recognition. Gender, women, and girls are all mentioned at much higher rates than nearly all reports and on a comparable level with Croatia and Finland. Hungary mentions gender 12 times, first with the Common Principles and then with multiple discrimination, which they mention a few times throughout. The report overall is very extensive, at 133 pages, and includes an entire section at the beginning outlining the current situation of Roma women. After this section, women continued to be mentioned throughout the report when strategies for health, education, and employment are discussed (women do not seem to be specifically mentioned in the housing sections.) The Hungarian report pays special attention to discrimination, including statistics on gender and racial discrimination in the EU and in Hungary, and includes current policies and future goals to fight it. The end of the report includes a list of goals and indicators with which to measure progress.

Gender is not mentioned in any of the goals, where it should be. Gender is mentioned three times as indicators to measure, along with accompanying sources to use, but gender is relevant to each of the goals and collecting and paying attention to indicators of gender (for example, i.e. number of women achieving employment, without employment, etc) is also important.

Women are mentioned 60 times throughout the report, with 38 in the section on the current “Situation of Roma women.” Early on the risks and dangers faced by Roma women are mentioned, as well as the fact that they are not stressed emphatically enough. This fact is even visible in the other reports, which though they might pay attention to the problems faced by Roma women in education or employment, most often fail to mention the specific violence, and other dangers that Roma women face, besides just health-related risks. The section also immediately stresses the need for “concentrated interventions” to deal with these problems. The section goes on to explain the specific concerns of Roma women in the context of education, employment and health. Interestingly it contains a special sub-section about the “correlation between poor education, low employment rate and motherhood amongst Roma women.” These three paragraphs deserve recognition for their engaging and new, or rarely stated, perspectives on these topics. The report states that

“It is a hypothesis supported by international and local empirical studies relating to specific regions rather than to the entire country that, in the hopeless labour market situation, early motherhood is the only chance to become an adult, to invite respect and to obtain self-esteem.”

This quote gives a nuanced perspective on early marriage and child birth that seeks to understand and empower the agency of Roma women, and could help to explain from their own point of view or unique social position, why early marriage and early motherhood are desirable. This subsection then continues by saying that in regional impoverished areas, the child bearing customs of non-Roma are similar to the Roma, showing that these issues are not uniquely Roma, and the country must work approach the issue from a class/poverty perspective, while at the same time specifically targeting the unique situation/multiple discrimination of Roma women. Finally, the section includes a subsection on “Violation of law and violence against Roma women” pointing out the particular vulnerability of Roma women and girls to human trafficking and sexual exploitation and the lack of statistical data on this topic.

The Hungarian report, overall, includes many detailed statistics and hard facts about diverse issues such as unemployment percentages amongst women, use of contraceptives, rates of abortion, smoking during pregnancy and offers unique focus areas for attention, such as women returning to the workforce after pregnancy, training women for careers where there is a shortage of workers (like nursing staff), the creation of mother and parent clubs for early childhood development, and other “targeted equalization programmes.”

Girls are mentioned 4 times, in the context of education, trafficking, and informing girls of their rights in marriage.

15. Ireland

31 pages - approximately 37,500 Roma live in Ireland (0.9% of the population).

Gender is mentioned only once in a section on the Diversity Strategy that recognizes the rights, needs and dignity of minorities and differences, including gender. The Diversity Strategy has been found to be having a positive effect, such as 85% increase in connecting Ethnic Liaison Officers (a type of mediator) with women.

Women are mentioned 4 times in the report. Ireland’s report is heavily focused on Travellers and mentions that many Travellers, mostly women, are recruited to act as Community Health Workers in the Irish Primary Health Care Projects. The report, like other reports, mentions the shortened life expectancy for Traveller women (and men); Traveller women lived a shockingly high 11.5 years less on average. It is mentioned that recent surveys showed better access to health care and improvements in Traveller women’s health.

Girls are not mentioned in the report.

16. Italy

90 pages - approximately 140,000 Roma live in Italy (0.23% of the population).

Italy is another country which deserves recognition for their commitment to Roma women. However, at the same time, a “focus” on women is often mentioned in the context of many different areas or activities, without giving specific examples, data, or issues that can truly help practitioners and institutions look out for women’s special interests.

The word gender is used 30 times, sex 12 times, women is used 48, and girls 12 times. Early on Italy commits to a human rights-based approach, which includes a gender-based approach within it. They rename the 6th principle on “awareness of the gender dimension” as gender mainstreaming and state a commitment to gender equality in all their policies towards the RSC (Roma, Sinti and Caminanti peoples). CEDAW is mentioned as an international standard of human rights law.

Section 2.1.2 on the gender-based approach recognizes multiple discrimination, the necessity of empowering women, and gives a road map to realizing gender inequality:

“The gender-based approach entails the following activities: gender based disaggregated data; identification of discriminatory factors between men and women, or alternatively, inequalities; the analysis of such disparities; the formulation of specific objectives to overcome disparities; the definition of indicators to measure the reduction of disparities; identification of necessary resources; development of specific strategies; updating the strategies in force.”

The first national surveys on discrimination, which includes gender discrimination, are mentioned, as are the needs for more survey research on the gender dimension in order to make current strategies feasible and to verify results. The gender dimension is frequently mentioned in the formation of policies on employment, education, etc. The implementation of a training course for 100 RSC women to become mediators to encourage their own integration, empower their “emancipation” and establish a national network is referenced. In education, Italy promotes the return to school for young mothers, using flexible pathways as well as an 8th grade diploma, as well as teaching on gender and encouraging girls to stay in school.

35 Id. at 21.
A government memorandum on the prevention and combat of violence and intolerance based on race, religion and gender is mentioned. Every school has a “national week against violence” campaign to “promote awareness raising, information and training for students, parents and teachers on the prevention of physical and psychological violence” and violence against women and children are both thematic areas.

A toll-free number for women experiencing violence is also mentioned. Promoting special pathways and focus for women, and increasing their access, are mentioned in the context of the core areas of “training and promotion of access to work, education, and health and social services.” The establishment of networks for women and youth to increase project involvement and activity are referenced. The area of employment most often just mentions that all strategies for employment should include women, but often fail to elaborate further. Incentives for entrepreneurship/self-owned businesses for women are mentioned. Replication of the Spanish ACCEDER project in certain Italian regions is described.

Concerning the health of pregnant women, it is suggested to try and prevent “the reluctance to conduct tests and inspections prescribed in the belief pregnancy as a natural event, does not require any control and monitoring.” The report includes a special section on reproductive health and maternal health. A leaflet on newborn care and child health was distributed by an immigrant NGO and the Ministry of Health in ten different languages. The Min. of Health and CCM (an Italian medical and health NGO) in 2010 also funded a study on the Prevention of abortion in foreign women, that included as objectives: “the training of community health intercultural approaches aimed at the protection of sexual health and reproductive services organizations to increase access and involvement in the prevention of abortions and the promotion of widespread and extensive information for the immigrant population by involvement of community of immigrant women.”

Also in 2010, the Min. of Health and CCM conducted a two-year project on access to health care for immigrants, particularly women and children, looking for cross-cultural interventions including best practices from various regions and recognizing that improved health and access to health care also empowers Roma women.

Girls are mentioned 12 times. A special support system for teen mothers “to recover their attendance at school or in vocational training, placement, and promote early education for their children” is interesting. The report mentions that it is mostly girls who do not finish their studies after primary school and seeks to show Roma youth possible career routes, mentioning a documentary called “I, my family, and Woody Allen” which is the autobiography of a young Roma girl made by her and shared and published by the Italian NGO UNAR.

17. Latvia

2.1 pages - approximately 25,000 Roma live in Latvia (0.3% of the population).

Gender, sex, women, females, or girls are not mentioned in the Latvian Report. The report includes a section on the current situation, challenges, and a long list of promising policies and even action plan measures and tasks: the concrete practical steps that many reports lack. Thus it is very unfortunate that awareness of the gender dimension was not integrated into the report, and the specific difficulties and needs of Roma women have been and will be ignored in policy creation and implementation.

36 “The Spanish project Acceder, favors the job in a context of regular employment, and grows along 2 main lines: a) Custom routes and integrated access to the labor market (90% of resources). a. orientation, training and job placement, vocational training actions for pre - employment and training activities specifically designed for the Roma population; b. investigations on linguistic and cultural mediators and mediation; b) promotion of proactive policies for the Roma (10% of resources) a. promoting strong partnership structures at local, regional and national level for the development of the best program combining the efforts and create synergies; b. strengthening of public programs aimed at improving the social conditions of the Roma; studies, monitoring, production data; c. development of awareness campaigns against prejudice; d. technical assistance to government authorities and social organizations for the design of plans and measures.” Id. at 66.

37 Id. at 69.

38 Id. at 74.

39 Id. at 52.

18. Lithuania

10 pages - approximately 3,000 Roma live in Lithuania (0.08% of the population).

Gender is not mentioned in the report. Women are mentioned twice: once in relation to a survey covering mostly unemployed Roma women with school-age children showing that 27.5% had not made any effort to put them to school, and the other refers to a goal, or a measure, to organize a cycle of lectures on health and hygiene for Roma women and girls. (This is the only time girls are mentioned.) No types of sex discrimination are mentioned.

19. Luxembourg

11 pages - approximately 300 Roma live in Luxembourg (0.06% of the population).

The report is only available in French and the words femme, filles, or genre are not present in it. The word “sexe” is present 4 times. Each time it is mentioned in references to laws or legal codes, and specifically for education, stating that discrimination on the basis of sex is forbidden. (listed in a series with other traits.)

20. Malta

2 page letter – estimated 0 Roma.

The European Commission National Integration Strategy webpage for Malta states “Malta has not adopted a national Roma integration strategy as there are no Roma population on its territory.” In place of a strategy, Malta’s letter from their Ministry of Education, Employment, and the Family (the relevant contact ministry for Roma issues) to the European Commission states that both unofficial and official sources on “foreign nationals” show that there are no Roma living in Malta. It is suggested that Malta should investigate sources of country nationals as well. The letter also states that no non-governmental organization has brought Roma-identifying citizens to the government’s attention. Finally, Malta states its commitment to all marginalized groups and offers that resources and policies are available should the need arise to address Roma.

21. Netherlands

6 pages - approximately 37,500 Roma live in the Netherlands (0.24% of the population).

It is suggested that the Netherlands could benefit from exposure to the strategies, ideas and perspective of other countries as well as a more thorough view of EU documents on Roma inclusion. Article 1 of the constitution banning sex discrimination is mentioned. Gender is only mentioned in the report, right after the statement that “If you can work, you must work” regardless of “age, ethnic origin or gender.” Women are not mentioned at all and girls are mentioned 3 times, in stating only that they tend to marry and have children at a young age, and positively, that the municipalities use funds to encourage school attendance, particularly for girls.

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44 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/malta/eu-funding/funding_en.htm
46 Id. at 4.
22. Poland

52 pages - approximately 12,731 Roma live in Poland (0.1% of the population).

Poland’s National Strategy includes a zip file with several documents including an introduction, the Programme (the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland for years 2003-2013), an evaluation of the Programme, and six annexes containing current statistics. In the actual 30-page programme, the words gender or sex are not used, and women are only mentioned 3 times. It is only used in mentioning the name of a government role, the lack of monitoring of Roma women’s pregnancies, and the increase in Roma women’s doctor visits overall. Girls are only mentioned once, saying that girls aged 13-16 are already seen as candidates for wives, and once becoming wives they rarely go back to school.

Women are only mentioned once in the evaluation section of the report, with a finding that more Roma women are sharing a willingness to find employment, and feeling responsible for the family, revealing a shift from the traditional model.

Girls are mentioned twice in the context of education, once while debating whether to give more financial resources for problems specific to Roma requiring internal solutions, such as early marriage and early pregnancy and again on the need of increased awareness of the importance of lower secondary school for girls.

23. Portugal

82 pages - approximately 40,000-70,000 Roma live in Portugal (0.52% of the population).

Portugal is yet another country that deserves recognition for its incorporation of gender into its national plan. The word gender is used 30 times, and women are mentioned 19 times. However, girl(s) are mentioned 0 times. (The word sex is only used in terms of sexual orientation; the word gender is always used instead when talking about state discrimination policies.)

Gender equality is listed as a goal of the program. Portugal is using municipal mediators who are diverse in terms of gender. Portugal mentions the references to gender equality in Article 13 of their own constitution, and also the gender dimension in the 10 common basic principles given by the EU to guide strategy formation. A paragraph of the introduction is also devoted to the importance of gender equality in the report, and how results are itemized into men and women to assess the impacts on them separately and to see where more data are required to assess equality. Portugal held meetings on the four pillars and included gender entities to gather expert advice for defining the priorities and measures. Article 13 of the Portuguese Constitution that prohibits discrimination on gender is included.

The Portuguese plan includes 8 “dimensions,” or parts, which cross-cut the four main issue areas, and one of the 8 dimensions is gender equality. The section is devoted to gender and begins by acknowledging that ethnic minority women are the major victims of exclusion and discrimination, and includes other valuable information such as the need for intercultural mediation and gender mainstreaming, as used in other international and EU programs. Included within this section are two priorities: 1) Roma family values should be respected where they clash with the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the Portuguese Constitution, 2) to promote women’s empowerment through mediation and women’s associations. More information is included about these priorities as well as specific targets to reach by 2020.

Women are also mentioned in the context of optimizing social support. A reference to children “of both genders” is frequently made in the education priority area.

This quote from Portugal’s report highlights the valuable role women can play towards increasing gender equality:

“It is important to stress that, despite their subordinate role inside the group (Roma communities remain essentially patrilineal), Roma women not only play a key role in preserving habits and traditions, but may potentially play an important role in promoting change.” (Pg. 32)

The report mentions the need to promote the independence, qualification, and empowerment of Roma women with a cultural supportive family and community context. However, while such goals are commendable, the measures to achieve it only include 30 training actions for social skills, aimed towards creating a supportive environment for employment, training and personal goals, and 30 awareness actions on work/life balance, with no clear explanation of what these are or will be.

The section on mediation and increasing Roma women’s associations includes goals to increase the number of female mediators and train Roma mediators on gender equality, as well as encouraging the formation of women’s organizations.

Girls are not mentioned specifically in the report.

24. Romania

35 pages - approximately 1.85 million Roma live in Romania (8.32% of the population).

The word gender is used twice in the Romanian strategy, first in regards to access to education, stating that “gender inequality is more pronounced,” a claim that does pose a risk to stigmatizing Roma. Romania also lists nine principles to guide their Roma integration, and principle six is “equal opportunities and gender awareness,” emphasizing women’s important role within the family and Roma community, and increasing their level of education, qualification and employment rate while also supporting family cohesion, welfare level, and future generations.

The word women is used 11 times. It is first used to say that women face discrimination and then the report gives statistics on the differences between men and women’s employment and health. Romania mentions the strategy of “flexicurity” for vulnerable groups like women, which means getting flexible jobs that still allow social security contributions. Their strategies include support for small family businesses, entrepreneurship, and apprenticeship and tutoring opportunities. Notably, Romania mentions the availability of nursery, kindergartens and after-school care for children to support women. Romania also mentions awareness campaigns on public health issues specifically for women and children, as well as information campaigns on early marriage, and preventing and fighting domestic violence and trafficking in persons.

Girls are mentioned 4 times in the report, but only in regards to education and not other issue areas. The strategy presents statistics that only 18% of girls aged 15-18 are in school, compared to 24% of boys. They note the difficulty of retaining all children but especially girls in the secondary and superior education cycles, and the concern over non-participation in education of all Roma, but especially traditional communities and girls. It is also noted that Roma girls face disproportionate risks, which they seem to tie to their next statement that gender inequality is more pronounced among the Roma.
25. Slovakia

77 pages - approximately 500,000 Roma live in Slovakia (9.17% of the population).

Slovakia also deserves recognition for the attention they have paid to gender issues and women in their national strategy. They have not created a specific section like some other plans, but have integrated gender more throughout the report. Gender appears 18 times, women appears 36 times, and girl appears 3 times in the strategy.

Implementation must take account of the multiple discrimination faced by Roma on account of ethnicity, gender and age, as well as other reasons. Slovakia includes a set of eight implementation principles, including the principle of solidarity, partnership and gender equality. This paragraph dedicated to gender equality states that “the adopted policies must adhere to the principle of gender-sensitive approach due to the fact that no measure, no policy, and no decision are gender neutral.” (Pg. 12).

All goals and measures must be planned and evaluated with the impact of Roma women taken into account, with a gender-impact analysis, to help avoid multiple discrimination, eliminate gender stereotypes, and support Roma women where they are disadvantaged compared to men. The Slovak Republic mentions that more detailed work on gender issues would be carried out in 2012, to elaborate the inclusion policies in this area. This would set up future priority policies.

In the education section, the integration of gender sensitivity as well as multicultural education is mentioned as a goal. In 2010, a "new, permanent, advisory body for the government" was created: the Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality, with a workgroup to collect data on age, gender, ethnicity, and other characteristics. The plan has a specific section on Non-discrimination, which includes under the goals section, eliminating multiple discrimination for Roma women and eliminating discrimination in both their public and private lives. Another goal is supporting economic independence through education on gender equality in collaboration with local NGOs working in this area.

Slovakia also gives statistics on men’s and women’s employment from four different sources, as well as the number of each surveyed. These differences are taken into account in the section on ‘global goals’ for reducing unemployment. There is also a paragraph giving statistics and facts on the level of educational attainment between Roma men and women, showing more women with incomplete elementary and high school education, with 8 percent less women completing high school. Many of these statistics are used as benchmarks to measure progress.

In the health section, it is mentioned that studies show that Roma have more drug and alcohol addictions, including the smoking of cigarettes by Roma pregnant women. Lack of information on sexual conduct and childcare is mentioned, as well as the lawsuit claims Slovakia is facing over forced sterilization of Roma women.

Most notably, Slovakia pays special attention to the reproductive justice issues of Roma women including this entire paragraph in its plan:

“Increase awareness of education on parenthood, reproduction health, motherhood and childcare, implement educational comprehensive non-stereotypical activities aiming at increasing awareness on sexual and reproduction behavior for MRK women and men (including campaigns to raise and improve awareness on using modern methods of contraception) and ensuring MRK women and men non-discriminative, qualified and free access to modern contraceptive methods and services of sexual and reproductive health, based on free will and principles of informed decision-making and consent. Indicator: Average age of a mother from the marginalized community at giving birth of the first child. Benchmark: Will be set later based on the combination of data for 2011.” (Pg. 36).

Equally important, educational activities on violence against women, domestic violence, sexual abuse and human trafficking are mentioned, but oddly, only in the context of “socio-pathological effects” of drug addiction. The paragraph does go on to include increasing awareness by targeted consultancy services to eliminate and prevent violence against women and domestic violence.

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Finally, the effects of multiple discrimination for women are mentioned again, as well as a traditional family structure that keeps them busy with a large family, with low education and low income, which also negatively affects the children and the continuing cycle of poverty. Slovakia states that empowering women and respecting their rights, including reproductive rights, is a base attribute of human development, and thus special attention must be paid to eliminating prejudices and inequality against Roma women and girls.

Girls are also twice specifically mentioned in the education section, with the inclusion of one gender-separated statistic and the use of separate data as an indicator for the number of Roma children in special schools, to reduce this number in the country.

26. Slovenia

40 pages - approximately 8,500 Roma live in Slovenia (0.42% of the population).

In Slovenia’s national programme, gender is mentioned 3 times. Uniquely amongst the reports, in the introduction, Slovenia states that “[e]xpressions in the male gender used for people in this Programme are perfectly neutral and apply equally to men and women.” (pg. 4). When explaining its measures taken on increasing Roma inclusion in the labour market, ‘due consideration of the gender aspect is mentioned.’ (pg. 21). This consideration is also mentioned in a section on training and employing Roma in the cultural sector, to support Roma culture and artists with European Structural Funds.

Women are mentioned 12 times. They are mentioned in the basic goals, to improve health care, especially for women. Women’s role in the family is listed as an ‘institutional impediment’ to Roma advancement. The strategy includes a table of the inclusion of Roma in active employment programmes and an entire column is dedicated to showing how many women were active in the programs. A variety of different measures and activities are listed. (pg. 20). The assisting of long-term employed women was also listed as a specific program. The strategy includes a public tender for 12 development projects to be created to support Roma inclusion in the labour market, especially vulnerable persons, and the need for and provision of equal opportunities between men and women is repeatedly mentioned.

Slovenia conducted a study in 2008/09 on use of health care services by Roma women and children and plans to use the data to create adequate programs for these groups. In 2009, Slovenia held a conference on health and Roma women. Slovenia lists women as a ‘vulnerable group’ that merits special attention in promoting and protecting Roma health.

Girls are not mentioned in the report.

27. Spain

45 pages - approximately 725,000 Roma live in Spain (1.57% of the population).

Gender is used 7 times. When creating their “social inclusion targets for 2020,” the quantitative targets were broken down by gender, particularly when the data showed that significant differences between males and females existed. It is stated that this was not possible in all cases, but where it was, it was used to breakdown indicators and realign targets. The Spanish Employment Strategy of 2012-2014 includes promoting gender equality in the labour market. The Health section is aimed at reducing health inequalities for the Roma, with inclusion of the gender aspect. Section 3.2.5 includes a “cross-cutting gender focus” subsection that advocates “effective incorporation of the gender aspect by public administrations in the design, development and evaluation of policies,” the fostering of education centers to promote gender equality in all issues of the Roma family, and “development of studies on how gender violence affects Roma women, and the rolling out of preventative measures.”

Women were mentioned 20 times. Regarding employment, the report states that “aspects such as unemployment and seasonal and part-time working affect Roma women more than non-Roma women and even Roma men.” For health, the low use of preventative gynecological medical services by Roma women is mentioned, as well as statistics that Roma women report poorer health than Roma men or non-Roma women, with their percentage reporting poor or very poor increasing as the housing quality decreases.

Importantly, in terms of the social inclusion targets for 2020, Spain breaks down “certain quantitative targets by gender,” which is key to understanding women’s current status and needs in different areas. Spain states this breakdown has not been possible in all cases, but an attempt has been made to breakdown the indicators during monitoring and reviewing the targets. For example, one target is to reduce obesity for Roma women, and increase the number of Roma women that have never had a gynecological exam. Increasing employment for Roma women is also mentioned, with the goal of 68.5% employment for Roma women aged 20-64 years. The strengthening of women’s political participation and women’s associations are also mentioned as goals. It is notable that gender violence is not only mentioned, but is included as a target: to develop studies to see how gender violence affects Roma women, and then the rolling out of “preventative measures.” More detail is needed however on what these preventative measures can be.

Girls are mentioned 5 times; first in terms of school enrolment, showing data that girls ages 13-15 are only at 71% enrolment compared to 84% for boys. The other reference to girls is not to address their special needs, but pool them together with boys towards common targets (i.e. increase school completion for girls and boys.)

28. Sweden

68 pages - approximately 42,500 Roma live in Sweden (0.46% of the population).

Sweden is another country that deserves recognition for the incorporation of gender into its national strategy. Gender is mentioned 7 times in the report, women are mentioned a record 79 times, and girls are mentioned 20 times. Sweden’s strategy is also commendable for the specific policies and measures it has employed, which can be used as models and examples for other states.

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55 Id. at 26.
56 Id. at 6.
57 Id. at 18.
58 Id. at 20.
59 Id. at 25-26.
60 Id. at 6.
The gender analysis begins with an explanation of multiple discrimination, and later mentions double discrimination for women. Section 8.2.2: Greater knowledge on equality describes an in-depth study to be carried out, in consultation with Roma, on issues related to gender equality, including the topics of gender roles, homosexuality, prostitution, and human trafficking. Sweden mentions that gender roles vary across individuals, families, and groups, and they need more data on Roma views on gender equality issues. Sweden is especially concerned about the high rates of human trafficking and similar exploitation in the Roma communities across Europe, especially for Roma women and girls. They report that police often fail to recognize Roma as trafficking victims, and many Roma are afraid or unwilling to seek law enforcement help. Also, in 2012, the National Board of Youth Affairs distributed money to organizations fighting against discrimination, with the projects being mainly directed at gender discrimination.

Sweden wants all “Roma women and men, girls and boys” to participate in Swedish society in equal ways with the majority. They use these terms in place of referring to all Roma people generally as one static unit. They also frequently refer to “Roma men and women,” even when not stating or describing any differences in policy or data on gender. Sweden begins by describing Roma oppression at the pan-European level and quotes the World Bank that employment numbers for Roma, and especially for Roma women, fall far below the non-majority population. Women and children are target areas in the Swedish 20-year strategy from 2012-2032. Women are a target group because they bear the majority of the responsibility for the home and childcare, efforts to support their education and labour market activity can increase their trust and integration into society, and is supported by relevant consulting bodies. Sweden states that this does not mean there will not be measures directed at all Roma.

Sweden describes its use of “bridge-builders,” both men and women, who seem to perform the role of mediators in Sweden and have improved educational outcomes for Roma. Strengthening the position of women in the labour market is listed as a practical goal, as it is especially difficult for Roma women to get jobs. Sweden consulted a number of bodies who specifically highlighted these difficulties.

In the health section, it is noted that Roma women describe a high level of stress, which they attribute to their heavy workload in the home. Sweden states that care should be equal for women and men.

In their “health, social care and security” section, Sweden has two sections devoted to Roma women’s health. Section 8.2.1 is a health measure devoted to increasing knowledge of the life and health of Roma women. The government plans to carry out a detailed assessment to identify what support Roma women receive, what they are aware of, and the possibility of telephone consultations with women and girls about sexual and reproductive health issues. The goal is to create concrete measures to improve physical and mental health in cooperation with Roma women. The Swedish government consulted bodies for advice on telephone consultations. These bodies support the study but fear that Roma women might be reluctant to phone consultations because of the taboo nature of sex. Sweden however argues that other Roma do not want sensitive issues to be avoided and pointed to the great need for support and care. Sweden’s report includes a number of paragraphs to explain the need for the assessment and mentions a number of Roma women’s health issues which are rarely discussed. They note that through a study on minority victims of violence, they found that the Roma family is a patriarchal collective model where young women are at the very bottom and women in a very vulnerable social situation.

Customs such as traditional dress, notions of cleanliness, ethical and hygiene rules, control of social relations, and child marriage can all affect women’s health. Sweden is concerned that initiatives aimed at sexual and reproductive health, contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, are not reaching Roma women and girls. Demands were made at consultative meetings for an anonymous hotline that Roma women could call to get information and support and speak their language, Romani Chib. For issues of violence, Stockholm county has both a Roma women’s and girls refuge shelter, to welcome women and girls from across the country, and serves as a national resource on domestic violence issues. Minority women have reportedly been turned away from majority shelters. State financial aid has been given to various organizations working for women’s equality, welfare and cooperation, who also provide preventative programs.
Section 8.2.2 is another health measure to create an in-depth study on issues of gender equality, such as gender roles, prostitution, human trafficking and homosexuality. Sweden acknowledges that gender issues in the Roma community have only been given limited attention although they affect the Roma community just like the non-Roma community. They plan to study areas like: 1) views on male and female occupations, 2) the place of men and women in society, 3) male and female sexuality, 4) forced marriage and child marriage, and 5) prostitution and human trafficking.

In a section on engaging Roma in civil society, consultative meetings in 2010 showed support for earmarking funds for Roma women’s organizations to work on issues like “education, abuse, equality, and enterprise.” (Pg. 62). These organizations can apply for financial support. Sweden also wants to use “engagement guides” to seek out people who are not traditionally involved, in different areas and sectors of the population, specifically those with lower levels of education. These efforts have shown that engagement with parents on attitudes and values is an important way to make sure young women are allowed to access associations, democratic processes and development of their community. The government plans to continue this working engagement guides, supporting the involvement of women and young people.

The government has made special efforts to increase equality among national minorities, which lead to changed attitudes, shared experiences amongst minorities, and national networks of minority women. This has reinforced the autonomy of the minority groups, and particularly Roma women, who held a conference in the Spring of 2011. The government continues to give support to minority organizations, to support women’s role into representative functions of power and decrease gender inequality within organizations. The money can also go towards women’s organizational and networking activities and collaboration between minorities.

The International Roma and Traveller Women’s Forum and the International Association for Immigrant Women (RIFFI) are listed as consulting bodies in the report.

Girls are mentioned frequently in the education section. Statistics shows that attendance falls off greatly for girls in their later years, many drop out around this time, and few complete with a final certificate. Sweden states that: “According to the UN’s International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Sweden has a responsibility to prevent parents keeping girls home from school. It must not happen that pupils leave school early, e.g. because of marriage.” (Pg. 28).

Girls are also mentioned frequently in the health section, although specific measures: sexual and reproductive health and rights are aimed at both women and girls. Girls are also mentioned in the section on human trafficking and other violence and exploitation. Sweden also uses “health communicators” which it believes are important for young people, to address the specific health needs like drug abuse, dietary information and sexual and reproductive habits of girls and boys. Sweden has also commissioned a report on child and forced marriage due to consultations claiming there was a need to prevent both of these phenomena from occurring. Sweden was awaiting the results of a 2011-12 survey on traditional and quasi-marriage ceremonies conducted to obtain greater knowledge on what leads to child marriage and forced marriage for children. They appointed a special investigator to explore possible measures to counter the problem.

29. United Kingdom

24 pages - approximately 225,000 Roma live in the United Kingdom (0.36% of the population).

The UK report does not include the word gender or sex. Women are mentioned twice, once in the Scottish section that references women’s health groups that are offered by a community association. Another program in Scotland that works to integrate and help ethnic minorities, including Roma women, is mentioned. Girls are not mentioned at all in the report.

Reccomendations

The following recommendations should be considered:

1. The European Parliament adopted a Resolution on 10 December, 2013 on ways of incorporating gender aspects in the main areas considered in the European Framework: education, employment, healthcare and housing. The recommendations contained in the EP Resolution should be incorporated in the Framework itself, thus making them binding on member states.

2. The European Commission should create a specific gender analysis category in their annual evaluation for each member state to put in evidence the multiple discrimination faced by women and girls and provide measures for counteracting them.

3. Country reports should take a more comprehensive approach to these issues and pay attention to the complexity of women’s challenges. Member states should utilize and take account of the recommendations contained in the EP Resolution when drafting their objectives and methods for Roma integration, and incorporate gender into their strategies.

4. The assessment reports should ensure that the strategies do not remain “nice literature”. The national strategies should have quantifiable objectives, timetables and funding. In this respect Greece should be commended for its extensive use of practical, quantifiable objectives and action plans to implement them.