

## ROMANI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

FACT SHEET 2006

### OSI JOINT ROMANI WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

Established in 2006 as a partnership between the NWP Roma Women's Initiative and the Roma Participation Program, OSI's Joint Romani Women's Initiative (JWRI) continues to support young Romani women's leadership, capacity building, advocacy and research.

"We cannot expect to attack poverty effectively and empower women economically if these women are suffering from poor health, inadequate schooling and skills, social exclusion, and gender-based discrimination."

*Jennifer Tanaka, Assistant Director,  
Pakiv European Roma Fund in Budapest*

### BACKGROUND

According to population estimates, approximately 250,000 to 300,000 Roma reside in the Czech Republic, constituting 2.5 percent of the population. However, there is limited data in the Czech Republic on ethnicity and even less that analyzes the relationship between gender and race, making it difficult to assess the condition of Romani women.<sup>1</sup>

According to the official 1991 census, only 32,903 people identified themselves as Roma; in 2001, this number fell to 11,746, out of which 5,597 were Romani women.<sup>2</sup> The researcher Květa Kalibová argues that official data underestimates the actual size of the Roma population as many Roma do not claim their ethnicity on census questionnaires due to past experiences of being punished after doing so. In addition, the category of "nationality" can be confused with state citizenship, thus producing inaccurate responses. And finally, many Roma choose not to identify themselves as Roma and declare a different nationality.<sup>3</sup>

### WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

- The unemployment of Romani women is nearly four times higher than the unemployment rate among their women neighbors in the majority population.<sup>4</sup>
- 58 percent of Czech Roma consider discrimination in accessing employment a serious problem; 18 percent consider it a problem, although of lesser importance.<sup>5</sup>
- A poll of Roma indicates that approximately one third of those interviewed (39 percent of men and 27 percent of women) have encountered discrimination in the job market. Of respondents from the majority population, 40 percent assumed that Romani job seekers are discriminated against in the labor market.<sup>6</sup>
- Romani men are almost 50 percent more employed or self-employed than Romani women.<sup>7</sup>
- Romani women between the ages of 15 and 24 face the highest rates of unemployment.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oprea, Alexandra. "The Erasure of Romani Women in Statistical Data: Limits of the Race Versus Gender Approach," Available at <http://www.eumap.org/journal/features/2003/april/romastats> Dec. 7, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Czech statistical office, Available at [http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/basic\\_final\\_results\\_of\\_the\\_population\\_and\\_housing\\_census\\_2001](http://www.czso.cz/eng/redakce.nsf/i/basic_final_results_of_the_population_and_housing_census_2001) May 27, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Kalibová, Květa. *The Roma as Viewed by Statistics and Demography. Roma in the Czech Republic: Collection of Essays from Social Politics*. Prague: Socioklub, 1999 (Originally in Czech).

<sup>4</sup> UNDP research 2004, table, *Employment Status*.

<sup>5</sup> The Report on State of Romani Communities in the Czech Republic 2004, Governmental Office of the Czech Republic, The Office for Council for Romani Community Issues, p 15 (Originally in Czech), 94-106.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Winkler, Tomáš Sirovátka, Miroslava Rakoczyová, Ivana Šimíková and Milada Horáková. *Analýza potřeb integrace Romů na českém trhu práce* (Analysis of Requirements of Roma Integration on the Czech Labor Market), 2004. The study is based on several fundamental sources of information, particularly on original empiric research describing the situation of the Roma on the Czech labor market.

<sup>7</sup> UNDP research 2004, table, *Employment Status*

<sup>8</sup> UNDP research 2004, table, *Unemployment according the main age groups (women)*

## WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN?

“Discrimination against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”

*(Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Article 1)*

## WHAT DOES THE EU RACE DIRECTIVE SAY?

“In implementing the principle of equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, the Community should, in accordance with Article 3(2) of the EC Treaty, aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality between men and women, especially since women are often the victims of multiple discrimination.”

*(Council Directive 2000/43/EC of June 29, 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Preamble 14)*

## WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY?

- Though the Czech government has taken positive steps, it has failed to act as a role model in addressing racist attitudes and stereotypes toward Roma.<sup>9</sup>
- Limited educational opportunities, as well as stereotypes and discrimination, are factors that contribute to the high rate of unemployment of Roma. Gender discrimination compounds the ethnic discrimination Romani women face in the labor market.<sup>10</sup>
- The lack of participation of women in politics also influences Romani women. Out of 70 candidates, there are only 12 women, none from a minority group.<sup>11</sup>

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- The government should address the situation of minorities in a manner that also works toward gender equality.
- The Czech Republic should comply with the European Union Council Directive 2000/43/EC of June 2000 and adopt an antidiscrimination act to ensure the right of an individual to dispute discriminatory practices.
- The government should create policies that work to change employers' attitudes toward the Roma and ensure the rights of Roma in the workplace.
- The agencies that address gender equality should ensure that their efforts target minority, and especially Romani, women.
- Small business loans for socially disadvantaged women should be supported by the state and the international community.
- The implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion should be monitored from a gender equity perspective.

## MORE INFO:

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

<http://www.romawomensinitiatives.org>

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

<sup>9</sup> Results of the 100 Romani women meeting, summary of Romani women discussion, Prague, February 10-12, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Concept for the Romani Integration, Governmental Office of the Czech Republic, The Office for Council for Romani Community Issues, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> According to the gender audit of the candidate lists to the parliamentary election 2006 ([www.padesatprocent.cz](http://www.padesatprocent.cz)), accessed Dec. 3, 2006.