

ROMANI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN ROMANIA

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 preliminary 2002 census data for Romania, 535,140 individuals registered as Roma, making up 2.5 percent of the total population. However, independent research indicates that this census data seriously underestimates the actual size of the Roma population. According to the Research Institute for Quality of Life, Roma make up approximately 6.7 percent of the total population. Gheorghe and Liegeois estimate a Romanian Roma population of between 1,800,000 and 2,500,000, or between 8.3 percent and 11.5 percent, of the total population.¹

Since 2001, there has been an effort, starting with the Governmental Strategy for Improving the Roma Situation, to establish a legal framework to address the most acute needs of the Roma population. Within this strategy, state institutions assumed responsibility for each of their respective policy areas. The National Office for Employment designs and implements employment programs for the Roma population, including a 2005 vocational training program to improve access to the labor market. Approximately 10,366 Roma participated, of whom 2,503, or 24 percent, were women. The office appointed one person in each of the county employment agencies to monitor the implementation of such initiatives.

WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

- The unemployment rate within the Roma workforce is estimated to be between 24 percent and 56 percent,² although rates as high as 90 to 100 percent can be registered in some rural areas.
- According to a 2005 UNDP report, 35 percent of Romani women and 20 percent of Roma men are unemployed in Romania;³
- Seasonal work for Romani day laborers in agriculture and construction accounts for 42 percent of Roma women and 41.6 percent of Roma men working in rural areas.⁴
- Other sectors where Romani women work include the textile and food industries, commerce and services, public services, skilled jobs, health care.⁵

¹ Liegeois, J-P., and Gheorghe, N. *Roma/Gypsies: A European Minority*, Minority Rights Group International Report, 1995. London.

² Andrey Ivanov, *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap*, 2002. Bratislava: UNDP, 33.

³ *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Hope*, Vulnerability Profiles for the Decade of Roma Inclusion Countries, 2005. Bratislava.

⁴ Zamfir, M. Preda, *Roma in Romania*, 2002.

⁵ OSI Roma Participation Program, *Broadening the Agenda, the Status of Romani Women in Romania*, March 2006.

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?

- Compared to women in the majority population, Romani women have low-levels of education, which limits their employment opportunities to agricultural, low-paid, and unstable jobs.
- Discrimination against Roma contributes to limited access to the labor market, and Romani women face discrimination compounded by both gender and ethnicity.
- The transition to a market economy limited the ability of Roma to own property, increasing economic insecurity.
- Some of the groups seriously affected by unemployment have come to rely on the welfare of the state, which can make re-entering the job market more difficult.
- Romani women are not aware of their rights as employees and are often vulnerable to private employers who do not adhere to labor laws. Private employers can exploit the cheap labor force without registering individual labor cards and thus avoiding paying taxes to the State.
- According to the National Anti-Poverty Plan, groups vulnerable to unemployment include Roma, women, people with disabilities, youths without work experience, and those unemployed over 45 years.⁶

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- Within the government's Roma strategy program, there is an urgent need to create specific measures to improve the employability of Romani women.
- The Action Plan for Implementing National Strategy on Equal Chances between Men and Women should include specific measures to help Romani women access the labor market.
- The Structural Funds Plan for Human Resources Development, Increasing Employment and Promoting Social Inclusion for 2007–2013 of the Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family should prioritize supporting the participation of Romani women in the labor market at all levels.
- For Elaborating Operational Programs for the upcoming Structural Funds, the managing authorities should include in its consultative body representatives of Romani women.
- The Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family should develop awareness campaigns on employment rights for Romani women.
- Civil society must partner with state institutions to address the concerns of Romani women.
- Information on gender discrimination cases evaluated by the National Council for Combating Discrimination should be made public.
- Romani women's civil society should be more active in implementing and monitoring the Romanian strategy for gender equality.

MORE INFO:

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

<http://www.romawomensinitiatives.org>

www.soros.org/initiatives/women

⁶ See <http://www.caspis.ro>