

Roma women in the Czech Republic are specifically included in the Concept for Romani integration, because they are making a particularly vulnerable target group which has to overcome more barriers. For example the hardship Romani women face when want to entry to employment. Roma women are often separated from participation in the labour market for a long period for reasons of maternity, and in view of this do not have so many opportunities to obtain work experience and to develop work careers. A fundamental role in this regard is also played by factors such as the perception of the traditional role of the Roma woman, associated with a caring role in the family.

- Roma women at their most productive age participate in the labour market less (32%) when compared with the overall percentage of Czech women (62%)

In the area of **employment** the government is striving to increase the number of Roma men and women in employment. It wishes to achieve this aim by a change in public employment services, by supporting social entrepreneurship in excluded Roma localities and by including business in the schools framework education programmes. The government is also promoting the consistent monitoring of the incidence of discrimination and other unlawful practices in the labour market in relation to Roma, as well as their penalization, and supports the expansion of the network of an anti-discrimination service through which Roma may invoke their right to equal access to employment, as guaranteed to them by current legislation. A fundamental task in this area is to affect the attitudes of employers and promote the principle of diversity in the private sector and in public administration, thus increasing the willingness of employers to accept members of Roma communities as employees.

In **education**, the Czech Republic made a huge step forward the inclusive education after the DH and others versus Czech Republic, the new approved policy is moreover based on the relevant gender desegregated data, that were collected over the last year. The further state running annual monitoring of Roma excluded communities is also presenting its data with gender sensitivity.

The government also supports **surveys of situation of Roma communities in the health care area** (e.g. the research project **Sastipen**), which led to the adoption of new measures to improve health condition of this minority. Moreover, the government has also contributed to the resolution of the issue of **sterilization of men and women** and has initiated legislative protection of patients in this particular area, which has been a subject of international criticism addressed to the Czech Republic. The Ministry of Health has drafted a bill of specific services, which include, by definition, also sterilization. The legislative measure that has already become effective in this respect is the Decree No. 385/2006 Coll. on 1 April 2007, which sets forth detailed particulars of an informed patient consent and of a declaration of rejection of recommended medical care.

Furthermore the Government of the Czech Republic has announced on 23 November 2009 the apologies for the illegal sterilization initiated by the Minister for Human Rights Michael Kocáb. I personally see this a momentum in the integration process of Roma, such important signals need to be sent to the society, similarly Kocáb made it with the in the Declaration for the Common Approach towards the Elimination of the Extremisms that has been signed by the members of government, parliament, head of the political parties and president Vaclav Havel. Governmental office also financially supported a Romani women group Manushe in their campaign "Women against Racism". And we know how much the extremism and growing violence affecting Romani women in their daily life. I strongly believe that if there is a political support the integration has a change to happen on both sides.

Therefore I am also strongly supporting the empowerment initiatives that lead to involvement of Roma and especially women into the official structures. It has been already four years, when the governmental office was supporting the "Roma women political leadership program", out of 10 women who participated and received eight week long training, there is me being a director of Romani unit at the Czech governmental office and Lucie Horvathova who is leading a candidate list of a Green political party – I acknowledge this is a great success. Such role models need to be intensively supported, since only due to the real

involvement and full participation in all phases of the process, we can ensure that the Romani women voice will be heard on the right places, on the places where actually are policies being created.

## PLATFORM

The European Platform for Roma Integration is a structured process that facilitates coordination of national and EU policies on Roma inclusion. The Platform facilitates exchange of good practices and experiences between Member States relevant governmental offices dealing with the Roma issues, aiming to enable decision makers on national as well as international level to shape mainstream policies relevant for Roma inclusion in a manner consistent with the principles of the Platform.

Due to the using the relevant instruments such as an Open Method of Coordination (OMC), the Romani inclusion shall be mainstreamed at EU level. For the Platform to be a successful and effective tool for inclusion of the Roma, it must represent common opinion of involved Member States with shared responsibilities common policy guidelines, aiming to develop specific targets and comparable indicators in long term. Further more it needs to involve Roma into all phases of the process, Romani and Travellers women needs to have adequate representation. Only like that we can head to successful integration of Romani men, women and children.

To take into account the Ten Common Basic Principles in the design and implementation of all relevant policies and to develop guidance we always have to have in mind the **Principle No 2: Explicit but not exclusive targeting**. This has been mentioned here many times already, and I would say that the gender dimension should not be limited only to the Principles no. 5 “Awareness of the gender dimension” , but should be mainstreamed among all principles as well included in the general themes that is the EU dealing with. In the facilitation their practical implementation, we need to tailor operations to specific needs and existing legal and socio-economic circumstances and by supporting regional and local

authorities in the implementation process. We always have to think that there are also Romani women and children who are strongly influenced by all policies and programs. Common guidelines are derived from evidence based research and comprehensive and comparable data collection, which the Platform guarantees. In this way the Platform should provide analytical gender sensitive support and stimulates mutual learning from experiences of national governmental offices dealing with the Roma inclusion with a strong women involvement. The commissioner today also said that “for Roma and with Roma” are the policies possible, the same goes with Romani women, and moreover Romani women should not be talking only about the Romani women issues, but should have a chance to be heard also in fighting for Romani and human rights in general.

Non the less for the success of the Platform, we need to have a stronger commitment from the European Commission, the Member States, civil society and local policymakers. Only by establishing a management system, working mechanisms and facilities we can guarantee its effective functioning, though women should be part of such a system. In my opinion, if there is a structure and the technical support, we can fulfill our aims. The content is here already, we know what we want, but we cannot build our efforts only on the proclamations. Although I do support the EU Roma Strategy, we need open the principles to the local authorities; make people on the local level sensitive for the issue. And you might ask, where are women, where is the gender dimension. And I say is there, if there are women involve and if we are sensitive to all most vulnerable.