

Presentation by the ERRC on Gender Issues on the Occasion of the II EU Roma Summit:

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It is difficult to make sense of complex issues in a short space of time so I would just like to make 5 concrete points, which are the following:

- First, it is important to note since the first European Roma Summit held in September 2008, 9 Roma have been killed in racist attacks and anti-Roma violence has remained a serious, and even an increasing, problem in countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy and Slovakia (if you would like to obtain some more concrete information please see the ERRC fact sheet).¹ This is terrible, should be denounced and all steps should be taken to ensure that the perpetrators are identified, prosecuted and sentenced accordingly to the gravity of their crimes. But it is also important to note that Romani women and children continue to be the targets of domestic violence and this also must be addressed with equal urgency. Let's also remember that attention to gender equality and the fight against domestic violence is one of the priorities of the Spanish presidency.
- My second point is on funding: the European Commission should ensure that its funding does not go to institutions which participate in human rights violations of Roma, such as segregated schools or hospitals which perform coercive sterilisations of Romani women. A tool to achieve this could be conditionality clauses establishing criteria that would condition EU funds on compliance with basic human rights standards. Hungary is already doing something along these lines and demonstrates that it's possible.
- Third point: the very limited available data disaggregated by gender and ethnicity is a significant obstacle to understanding the particular situation of minority women, including Romani women, as well as to design adequate policies. Despite this, the available data (EU reports and EP resolutions) show that Romani women are one of the most discriminated groups in Europe.² This

¹ ERRC, "Factsheet: Summit-to-Summit Roma Rights Record", 20 April 2010, available at: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3573>.

² For example see the European Parliament Resolution on the situation of Roma women in the European Union, 2005/2164(INI), 1 June 2006, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P6-TA-2006-0244>.

highlights the need to disaggregate data on the basis of gender, ethnicity and other characteristics as well as to conduct research on the specific situation of Romani women.

- Number 4: Romani women are the target of multiple discrimination on the basis of gender and ethnicity and a concrete example of this is the area of education. Romani girls face higher drop out levels than Romani boys and non-Romani girls. Furthermore, information from the Czech Republic, the only country that collects data on school segregation, indicates that Romani girls are at a very high risk of being placed in segregated schooling: Romani boys are 8 times more likely to be transferred to a school for children with disabilities than non-Romani boys. In comparison Romani girls are 20 times more likely to be transferred to a school for children with disabilities than non-Romani girls. Education is key: the situation of Roma will not change until Roma have equal access to quality education. A powerful tool that the European Commission could use to improve the situation of Romani women is the accession criteria by monitoring progress on minority rights while taking into account the situation of women as well.
- Lastly, I would like to offer a reminder: in line with the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the European Parliament resolution on the situation of Romani women, and as prominent Romani and Traveller women activists highlighted yesterday at a roundtable organised by the Fundamental Rights Agency, there is a need for respective authorities to address human rights violations within Romani communities. Covering them up with references to Romani culture does not serve as an adequate pretext for a lack of intervention in cases where the rights of children and women are violated.

Thank you.