



ЦРС

ЦЕНТАР НА РОМИ НА ГРАД СКОПЈЕ  
CENTAR E ROMENGO RO TARI I DIZ SKOPJE  
ROMA CENTER SKOPJE

P.P.1063, 1000 Skopje, Macedonia  
Tel./fax: (+ 389 2) 2618575; Tel: 2638 800  
Email: [center@t-home.mk](mailto:center@t-home.mk)

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*We chose the road to equality.*

*Non – Discrimination in every way is the key to progress of every society.*

## **SUBMISSION TO CEDAW**

Commentary  
on the realization of the Romani women rights

with focus  
on the 2006 CEDAW Committee Recommendations No. 28

January 2013

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## 1. Background

**1.1.** A Joint Shadow Report<sup>1</sup> on the situation of Romani women in the Republic of Macedonia was submitted to the CEDAW Committee in December 2005<sup>2</sup>, commenting on the Initial, Second and Third period Reports of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The joint shadow report was based on comprehensive field research which among the rest revealed: 1) *Lack of desegregated data by gender and ethnicity which prevents the Government from defining the real problems faced by Romani women and consequently from formulating effective policies aimed at addressing the discrimination encountered by this group;* 2) *Existence of deep prejudices and racial hatred against Roma in Macedonia, supported by the mass media at a large degree;* 3) *Lack of special measures for addressing the multiple barriers faced by minority women in their access to all fields covered by the Convention;* 4) *The majority of Romani women in Macedonia are de facto excluded from a range of protections guaranteed by the Convention, especially in the fields of education, employment, health and participation in public and political life;*

**1.2.** Based on the elaborated data in the Joint shadow report, the CEDAW Committee expressed concerns with regard to the Romani women situation in the country (concluding comment No. 27) and recommended to the Macedonian Government (among the rest) *"...to implement special measures to eliminate the discrimination against Romani women ..."*<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Introduction

**2.1.** This short report written by the team of the Roma Center of Skopje<sup>4</sup> (RCS) intends to present the progress made by the Government of Macedonia since 2006 in implementing effective measures as recommended by the CEDAW Committee.

**2.2.** The Roma Center of Skopje concludes that

- The situation of Romani women in Macedonia is still deteriorating (data presented in the 2005 Shadow report are still valid)
- The Government of Macedonia has made insignificant progress towards enhancing the rights of Romani women and girls over the reporting period.
- The recommended special temporary measures by the Committee are not undertaken.
- The responsible institutions did not implement concrete measures directed at Romani women and girls within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and planned within the two National Action Plans for Promoting the Status of Romani Women (for the period 2008-2010 and 2011-2013) adopted by the government in early 2008 and 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> The Joint Shadow report was submitted by the **Roma Center of Skopje**, based in Skopje, Macedonia, the **European Roma Rights Center**, based in Budapest and the **Network Women's Program**, an initiative of the Open Society Institute from New York.

<sup>2</sup> The Joint Shadow Report is available at: <http://romawomeninfo.com/doc/crs/Shadow%20Report%20ENG.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Recommendation number 28, CEDAW/C/MKD/CO/3, 3 February 2006.

<sup>4</sup> **The Roma Centre of Skopje (RCS)**, based in Skopje, is a local nongovernmental organisation aiming to foster the integration of the Romani community in Macedonia by empowering Romani activists and Roma-led nongovernmental initiatives. Through its activities to empower young Romani women activists and Romani youth, the RCS promotes gender equality and human rights of minorities.

### **3. Recommendations:**

**3.1.** The Roma Center of Skopje urges the CEDAW Committee, in their review of Macedonia's implementation of the Convention in February 2013 to strongly re-affirm their previous recommendations and to suggest concrete further specific measures that the Macedonian government should undertake, with respect to ensuring the rights of Romani women and girls:

- Based on the external evaluation of the implementation of the two adopted National Action Plans for Romani Women (2008-2010, 2011-2013), the Government should adopt new concrete actions, supported with significant state funds, for the purpose of overcoming the social and human rights barriers of Romani women to access all areas covered with the Convention.
- The links between the National Action Plan for Romani women and all other National Plans within the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the Strategy for Roma should be clearly detected and addressed in all future state programs for Roma and Romani women.
- All relevant institutions should gather data based on gender and ethnicity, the data should be available to the public at large and carefully used for appropriate analyses in future programs for women's empowerment.
- Urgently take all necessary policy and financial steps to improve the educational, socio-economic, health and housing conditions of Romani women and families.
- The Macedonian Government should present desegregated ethnic data in the next CEDAW report (especially articles related to education, employment, health and public and political participation), with special focus on Romani women.

#### 4. CEDAW' 2006: Conclusion No.27 and Recommendation No.28:

27. The Committee is concerned that rural women, as well as ethnic minority women, particularly Roma and Albanian women, remain in a vulnerable and marginalized situation, in particular with regard to access to education, health, employment and participation in political and public life. The Committee is particularly concerned about the high school dropout rates among Roma girls and girls living in rural areas.

**28. The Committee urges the State party to implement effective measures to eliminate discrimination against rural women, as well as ethnic minority women, in particular Roma and Albanian women, and to enhance their enjoyment of human rights through all available means, including temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and general recommendation No. 25 of the Committee. It calls on the State party to implement measures to decrease dropout rates among Roma girls and girls living in rural areas and to reintegrate them into the educational system. The Committee requests the State party to provide, in its next report, a comprehensive picture of the de facto situation of rural women, as well as of ethnic minority women, in particular Roma women, in the areas of education, health, employment and participation in political and public life, and of the efforts of the Government to eliminate discrimination against these women. The Committee calls upon the State party to provide information, in its next report, on concrete projects directed at Roma women under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.**

#### 5. Government's response to the CEDAW Committee's recommendation

##### Temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention

5.1. The absence of any information about Romani women in the combined fourth and fifth periodical state CEDAW report, with reference to article 4 (regarding the special temporarily measures), is a clear sign of the Government's failure to meet the Committee's recommendation.

5.2. Furthermore, the Government response to the additional question about the temporarily special measures (November 6th, 2012, question/response No. 5) does not contain a single word about Romani women, other minority or rural women.

5.3. The lack of data and information based on ethnicity in both of these state documents suggests that the authorities are still not paying the necessary attention to the special needs of women from different ethnic backgrounds and the rural women, with respect to article 4 of the Convention.

##### Drop outs rates among Romani girls

5.4. The state CEDAW report failed to present any information about the dropout rates in the country, and especially about the dropout rates among Romani students desegregated by sex and age. The number of school age children out of the system is still not known both at national and local level.

5.5. Both the state report and the Government's reply to additional questions state that the implemented measures influenced *"the improved coverage of the male/female students from the Roma community, as one of the most vulnerable groups"*, but the question about the dropout rates in the country at all levels of education, in particular at the primary level is not answered by the Government.

**5.6.** In the single official (state) document published in 2010 concerning the number of Romani girls and boys in the education system<sup>5</sup>, the following data are presented: In Shuto Orizari, the biggest Roma settlement in the country, out of the 3231 citizens aged 15-24, 264 are illiterate. In the 2007/2008 school year, 9785 Romani students stayed in primary education out of which 4755 were girls. The same year, 243 primary students have dropped out (107 girls and 136 boys). 1304 Romany students were enrolled in high schools in the 2007/2008 school year, out of which 606 were girls. By the end of the 2007/2008 school year, 53 high school Romani students were dropped out (27 girls).

**5.7.** Because of scholarship opportunities for Romani high school students, offered since 2005 through the Roma Educational Fund<sup>6</sup>, as well as the matching funds which the Ministry of Education started to provide recently, the number of Romani high school students increased in comparison to several years ago. However, due to the lack of statistical data about the actual number of Romani school age children in the country born in different years which could be compared to the current numbers of enrolled Romany students at all levels of education, it is hard to make any qualitative judgment about the educational status of the Romani youth.

**5.8.** Furthermore, the current financial support for the scholarship project offered by the Ministry of Education is closely linked to the donor requirement for matching funds (Roma Education Fund, Budapest). The share of the state in this scholarship project is not known and, moreover, the sustainability perspective of this program is questionable.

**5.9.** The field research implemented by the Roma Center of Skopje in 2010<sup>7</sup> in 7 towns with significant Romani population, suggested that 17% of the interviewed Romani women have never enrolled in primary education and 26% have not completed primary education (or 43 % have no education)

#### **A comprehensive picture of the de facto situation of Romany women in the fields of education, health, employment and participation in political and public life**

**5.10.** The Macedonian Government failed to provide the CEDAW Committee with appropriate information about the de facto situation of the Romani women in the country.

**5.11.** The main effort in the reporting period made by the Government to address the special situation of Romani women is the adoption of the National Action Plans (NAPs) for enhancing the status of Romani women in Macedonia. The Roma Center of Skopje was involved directly in the creation of the both NAPs and monitored the implementation.<sup>8</sup>

#### **NAP for Romani women, 2008-2010**

**5.12** The Government acknowledged that the NAP for Romani women 2008-2010 was not implemented as planned due to lack of finances (*Government's reply letter to the additional questions, bullet No.20, page 13*). Furthermore they underlined that the human rights priorities contained in the NAP were realized with financial support from foreign donors

<sup>5</sup> [http://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/analiza\\_obrazovanie\\_romi.pdf](http://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/analiza_obrazovanie_romi.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The Roma Education Fund (REF) was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005. Its mission and ultimate goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. In order to achieve this goal, the organization supports policies and programs which ensure quality education for Roma, including the desegregation of education systems (<http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/ref-one-page>)

<sup>7</sup> 450 Roma women aged 14-80, were interviewed Tetovo, Gostivar, Kicevo, Veles, Delcevo, Kriva Palanka and Kavadarci. Out of the 450 interviews, 431 were used for the final data analysis

<sup>8</sup> RCS was invited by the Department for Equal Opportunities, within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, to support the process of creation of the NAPs. RCS created the methodology, facilitated the process by securing wide participation of Romani women NGOs and activist, but the final versions of the NAPs and the budget issues were under the responsibility of the Department of Gender Equality, other relevant Ministries and the Government.

(UN Women, IOM). Unfortunately, for outsiders who are not following closely the situation in the country and cannot make comparative analyses of **what exactly was planned and what was actually implemented**, the above statement does not allow any proper judgments to be made of the achieved results. Moreover, some people may read the statement "the human rights priorities contained in the NAP were realized with financial support from foreign donors", as meaning that all aims regarding the "human rights priorities" have been implemented as planned. Unfortunately, the situation is more than terrifying. In the following lines, we present a table with **what was planned and what was actually achieved in the NAP 2008/2010, based on the defined indicators**:

#### Education:

<b>Aim 1: Educate illiterate Romani women in 10 municipalities (getting formal primary education):</b>			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Forming data base in 10 municipalities for defining the number of illiterate Romani women (aged 10 and above)	Ministry of Education, State Statistical Office, NGOs	March-September 2008	<b>NO</b> 13 pages document drafted by the head of the Department for Equal Opportunities with few data which are presented above (footnote no. 5). The document is not presenting the needed data
Detecting the conditions for completing primary education	Ministry of Education, Bureau for Education, Local Self Governments	March September 2008	NO
Campaigns for raising the awareness for the importance of education of girls	Ministry of Education, NGOs, Roma Information Offices	2009-2010	NO
Forming classes for completing formal education in 10 municipalities (25 women per class, aged 15-30)	Ministry of Education, Local Self Governments, schools	September 2008/2009 September 2009/2010	NO

<b>Aim 2: Reintegration of Romani female drop outs in primary and secondary schools (7-15 and 15-35 years old) and prevention from further dropping out</b>			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Forming data base for drop outs at primary and high school level	Ministry of Education, State Statistical Office	January - September 2008	NO
Workshops and meetings with drop out students and their parents in 10 municipalities	Ministry of Education, Municipalities, NGOs and schools	April, May, 2008, 2009, 2010	NO
Affirmative programs for free books and school material (for the returned drop outs)	Ministry of Education	2008-2010	NO

<b>Aim 3: Additional support to Romani girls for enrolling in high school and universities</b>			
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Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Campaign for scholarship opportunities	Ministry of Education, NGOs, municipalities	May-June 2008 May - June 2009	NO
Scholarship for all Romani girls enrolled in high schools and universities	Ministry of Education	September 2008-2009 September 2009-2010	NO (the government is presenting results achieved through the scholarship project supported by REF and some % of their share)

## Employment

### **Aim 1: Support and prepare unemployed Romani women for labour market (18-40 years old), with high and university education**

Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Counseling meetings and workshops	Ministry of Labor, Employment Agency, Roma Information centers	2008-2010	NO

### **Aim 2: Support and prepare unemployed Romani women for labour market (18-40 years old), with primary education**

Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Implementing programs for unemployed persons for known firms	Ministry of Labor, Employment Agency, Roma Information centers	2008-2010	NO

## Health

### **Aim 1: Legal support provided for ensuring access to health care and protection according to the law and prevention programs in Macedonia**

Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Detecting the real number of Romani women who do not have health protection in SKopje, Kumanovo, Prilep, Bitola Stip, aged 18-65	Ministry of health, Roma information centers, NGOs	April-December 2008	NO
Health protection ensured for Romani women who have right to health care according to the law	Ministry of health	2008-2010	NO
Issuing certificates to Romani women who does not have health protection but fulfil criteria under different prevention programs	Ministry of health	2008-2010	NO

## Human rights

<b>Aim: Detecting the de facto situation of Romani women for enjoyment of their rights through creation of data base</b>			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Analysis of the current legislation, research, publication in 4 languages and promotion and dissemination of the analysis at local and national level	Ministry of Labor, Statistical office, NGOs	May-December 2008	Partially achieved with support of the UNIFEM / Un Women office in Skopje in 2009

<b>Aim 2: Educate the public about the women rights and protection mechanisms</b>			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Training for Trainers: 24 Romani women trained for women rights and 120 follow up meetings with Romani women in their communities	Ministry of Labor, municipalities, NGOs	March - June 2009	The training was held but information about the follow community meetings is not available
Campaign for raising the awareness of the public servants (6 trainings, brochures, TV spots....)	Ministry of Labor, municipalities, NGOs	September 2009-September 2010	NO
Employing qualified Romani women in Centers for Social work	Ministry of Labor,	2008-2010	NO

## Public and political participation

<b>Aim 1: Starting initiative for submitting amendment for changes in the Election law (ethnically secured places)</b>			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Lobby the political parties, Women lobby, Women Parliamentary Club and the commission for equal opportunities for accepting the initiative	Ministry of Justice, NGOs, municipalities, media, international organizations	2008	NO
Campaign for implementation of the new provision in the Election law	Ministry of Labor, Women Parliamentary Club, NGOs	2009	NO

<b>Aim 2: Education for political empowerment of Romani women at national and local level</b>			
Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Trainings for raising political awareness of Romani women	Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Justice, NGOs	2008-2010	NO (some trainings were implemented by the NGO DAJA from Kumanovo)
Trainings for Roma women, members of	Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Justice, NGOs	2008-2010	NO (some trainings were

political parties			implemented by the NGO DAJA from Kumanovo)
Scholarships for Romani women students at the Political Science University	Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Justice, NGOs	2008-2010	NO
Trainings for members of political parties	Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Justice, NGOs	2008-2010	NO

### NAP for Romani Women 2011-2013

**5.13.** Without internal or external evaluation of the achieved results of the implementation of the first NAP (2008-2010), the Government made a decision to develop another three year NAP for Romani women in Macedonia. All representatives from related Ministries, who participated in the drafting process<sup>9</sup>, were advised by their authorities to *"suggest activities which do not require any funds from the state budget"*. This was the basis on which the new 2011-2013 NAP for Romani women was created: not on the real needs of the Romani women, but based on the decision of the Macedonian Government to adopt a new plan which does not have "any financial implications" on the state budget.

**5.14.** In the following table, we present the activities from the 2nd NAP for Romani women (2011-2013)<sup>10</sup>:

#### Employment

<b>Aim: Increasing opportunities for integration in the labor market through regular information of the target group and appropriate models adapted to needs</b>				
Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Financial inputs	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Information meetings for presenting the available measures for employment in 10 municipalities with large number of unemployed Romani women	Agency for Employment, in partnership with Ministry of Labor, NGOs, Roma Information Centers	2011-2013	No financial implications	Around 150 unemployed Romani women attended information and counseling meetings organized by the Agency for employment. <i>The indicators for this activity state: 3 meetings per municipality annually, 25-30 participants per meeting.</i>

#### Health protection

<b>Aim: Improving the access to basic health care through increased information and awareness for prevention and opening gynecological ordinations in municipalities with significant number of Roma and Romani women</b>				
Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Financial inputs	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Information meetings for promotion of healthy habits and rights for health protection	Ministry of Health and Roma information centers, in partnership with HERA	2011	Budget of Ministry of health and donors	Not known
Research for detecting	Ministry of	2011-2012	Budget of	The report which is still not

<sup>9</sup> The working group involved Coordinators for equal opportunities from each relevant ministry, representatives from relevant state institutions and Romani women NGOs.

<sup>10</sup> The NAP is available at: <http://mtsp.gov.mk/?ItemID=6FC822BBA79A61429117F41943673AE4>

the health situation of the Romani women in Macedonia	Health, partners: Statistic office, Institute for public health and NGOs		Ministry of health	disseminated to the public <sup>11</sup> contains general information about the Roma in Macedonia, their socio-economic situation and partially the health conditions. Gender desegregated data cannot be found. According to the indicators for this activity, a research in 8 municipalities was supposed to be implemented but this is not done.
Media complain for prevention of infection diseases, tuberculosis, cancer etc	Ministry of Health, partners: Institute for public health and NGOs	2012-2013	Budget of Ministry of health	Not know  (some brochures are mentioned by the Government, but wider information about this activity is not disseminated)
Detecting the legal opportunities for opening gynecological ordinations in municipalities with significant number of Roma	Ministry of Health, partners: Institute for public health	2011-2013	Budget of Ministry of health	NO

#### Education:

**Aim: Increase the number of Romani women with elementary and high education through detection of the real number of drop outs at national level and their integration in the education system**

Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Financial inputs	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Forming data base in 10 municipalities for defining the number of illiterate Romani women (aged 10 and above)	Ministry of Education	2011	No financial implications	NO
Analysis of the need for designing short program for inclusion in the education process of group aged 8-15 (and 15-30)	Ministry of Education, Bureau for Education	2011	Budget of the Ministry for education	NO
Implementation of the short program in 10 municipalities	Ministry of Education, Bureau for Education	2012-2013	Budget of the Ministry for education	NO
Workshops for teachers and school staff in 10 municipalities for the importance of girls education and the barriers which they confront in their education	Ministry of Education, Bureau for Education	2011-2012	No financial implications	NO
Continues maintaining the data base of the drop	Ministry of Education,	2011-2013	No financial implications	NO

<sup>11</sup> RCS received the electronic version of the report in end of December 2012 from the head of the Department for Equal Opportunities

outs at national level				
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## Human Rights

Aim: Equal opportunities and access to enjoyment of human rights of Romani women				
Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Financial inputs	RESULTS based on the defined indicators
Workshops for state servants and health workers for overcoming the unequal treatment in the access to services	Ministry of Labor, Department for equal opportunities	2011-2013	Budget of the Ministry for Labor	Yes, with UN Women financial support
Trainings for Romani women NGOs for protection mechanisms within the antidiscrimination law	Ministry of Labor, Department for equal opportunities	2011-2013	Budget of the Ministry for Labor	Yes
Meetings of the working groups (6 months) for evaluation of the results and planning the activities for the next period	Ministry of Labor, Department for equal opportunities	2011-2013	No financial implications	Not known
Drafting annual progress reports for the implementation of the NAP	Ministry of Labor, Department for equal opportunities	2011-2013	No financial implications	6 months progress reports are posted on the website of the Ministry of Labor.  The content of the reports are not linked to the indicators and it is very difficult to follow the progress.

**5.15.** Under the leadership of the Roma Center of Skopje, the Informal Network of the Romani women NGOs and activists<sup>12</sup> in Macedonia, sent 4 letters to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Finance (the letters were published in daily newspapers as well): the 1st letter was sent on 31.12.2009 (referring to the progress made in 2008/2009), the 2nd on 31.12.2010 (referring to the progress made in 2010), the 3rd on 31.12.2011 (referring to the progress made in the first year of the new NAP) and the 4th on 31.12.2012 (referring to the progress made in 2012). All letters expressed full dissatisfaction with the implementation of the NAPs and called the Government to urgently reallocate state funds for implementation of the activities.

**5.16.** Although the letters were addressed to the Prime Minister, as the most responsible person in the decision making hierarchy and the one who makes all decisions about the state resources, responses came from different institutions, i.e. authorities: the reply to the 1st letter came from the Minister without Portfolio, responsible for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, saying **that the NAP is not under his mandate** and that we should call the Department for Equal opportunities. The response on the 2nd letter came from the Minister for Labor and Social Policy, underlining that the **Ministry has no funds for implementation** of the NAP. And finally, the response on the 3rd letter came again from the Minister without Portfolio informing us again that the NAP is not under his mandate. Presently we await the reply on the 4th public letter (if any).

<sup>12</sup> Representatives from 12 Romani women NGOs and around 14 Romani women activists are coming to quarterly meetings of the informal network since 2009

**5.17.** This elaboration clearly outlines the lack of interest of the authorities for genuine improvement of the situation of Romani women in the country, but also for the structural setting of the NAP for Romani women in the decision making hierarchy. Formally, and from the aspect of the "topic", the Romany women issues are under the responsibility of the Department for Equal Opportunities within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (that does not have funds for implementation of the NAP), but from the aspect of "ethnicity", it is perceived as part of the "Decade of Inclusion project" which the Government is reluctant to support with concrete state finances.

**5.18.** The authorities perceive the issue of Roma and Romani women in Macedonia as a "project issue" for which money should come from the donors. Thus, the results achieved so far both within the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the Strategy for Roma in Macedonia are more than modest.

**5.19.** Macedonia is a country dominated by the ethnic majorities, country where the minorities are given some concessions. Thus, we cannot talk about integration when we actually still speak about privileges given to minorities. And how many or which privileges can be given to Roma in our country, actually depends on the mercy and the willingness of the majority political parties.

**5.20.** A positive aspect which deserves to be underlined is the fact that the head of the Department of Equal Opportunities, Ms. Mirdita Salju, is regularly informed about all activities implemented by the Romani women NGOs and she is participating in the meetings of the informal network of the Romani women NGOs and activists in Macedonia. At the same time, she is also sharing information with all NGOs as much as her mandate allows.

#### **Concrete projects directed at Roma women under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015**

**5.21.** Unfortunately, the absence of any information both in the State CEDAW report and the Government's replies to additional questions from the Committee, on concrete projects directed at Romani women under the Decade of Roma Inclusion, is a clear answer to the question about any implemented project in this reporting period.

**5.22.** The 2012 EU progress report on Macedonia<sup>13</sup>, among other things underlines: "...Some very limited actions targeting Roma women were implemented. Institutions do not appropriately exercise their role in ensuring better integration of the gender perspective into other policy areas. There is no strategic approach to implementing national strategies and action plans...Discrimination against Roma persists, including continued stereotyping in the media and in social networks on the internet. Roma women and Roma with disabilities face precarious living conditions because of double discrimination...." Concerning the NAP for Romani women, the EU report states the following: "...Insufficient support to the National Action Plan for Roma Women renders its implementation almost impossible...."

**5.23.** Another indicator of the lack of progress made by the Macedonian Government in guaranteeing the right of Roma and Romani women is the considerable increase of Romani asylum seekers, since the liberalization of the visa regime with the EU (since December 2009). Pressured by the EU member states, the Macedonian authorities decided to take repressive measures which violate the basic human rights, instead of taking measures to fight against the poverty of Romani families. Around 5000 Roma, although with proper biometric passports, could not leave the Macedonian border just because of the color of their skin and other visible signs of their ethnicity. There are also cases when the police officials take away passports of Roma who want to travel abroad and they put a stamp which prevents these Roma people from travelling out of the country. The Ministry of

<sup>13</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2012/package/mk\\_rapport\\_2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/mk_rapport_2012_en.pdf)

Internal Affairs and the authorities are proud because with these measures the number of asylum seekers has decreased. Under these circumstances, the constitutional rights of Roma to equality and freedom of movement, as well as the internationally guaranteed right to asylum are violated.

Skopje, January 2013

***RCS Team***