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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution [1996/31](#).



Statement

In a study conducted by the organization in 2011 on the school dropout causes (Roma school participation, non-attendance and discrimination), marriage was brought up by the interviewed parents in only 6.6 per cent of cases. It is important to highlight that, of the 41 cases brought up, the girls were those who had dropped out of school. The same study indicates that marriage under 17 is more desired for girls than for boys (33 per cent and 22 per cent respectively).

According to the latest census, 12.5 per cent of the Romanian population has graduated from university, as opposed to 0.006 per cent of the Roma population. Thirteen per cent of the Romanian female population has graduated from university, compared to 0.006 of the Roma female population. Further, 0.013 of the Romanian female population has no formal education, as opposed to 0.23 of the Roma female population.

With regard to illiteracy, the percentages are 0.13 per cent for the Romanian female population and 0.17 per cent for the Roma female population.

School segregation remains a widespread phenomenon in Romania, which equally affects Roma girls and boys.

During the school year 2007-2008, the organization monitored the application of the desegregation order, No. 1540/2007. The results indicated that teachers did not know about its existence and that not even all interviewed school managers knew about it. Roma parents did not know that school segregation was prohibited by law either. Although the order established that no segregated classes were to be formed at the level of first and fifth grade, this continued to be the case.

In 2009, civil society actors took steps to establish a commission within the Ministry of Education, which was supposed, among others, to monitor the application of the legislation against segregation.

Article 14 of annex I to order No. 1540/2007 mentions that a permanent working group should have been established that should have analysed the reports and elaborate methodologies and comprehensive programmes to eradicate school segregation and its long-term effects. This provision was not put into practice, which this is why the organization has proposed the already functional model of the Commission for Roma within the Ministry of Health, in order to establish a commission within the Ministry of Education.

That commission would elaborate proposals for planning, organizing, coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Ministry of Education strategy in the field of improving the quality of education for Roma, as well as analysing the discriminatory situations in schools and school segregation cases, in order to assure that the principle of non-discrimination is applied in the Romanian educational system.

The commission was not established in 2009 as a result of bureaucratic issues and because of political replacement within the Ministry of Education. The whole lobby process had to be restarted. Until now, there has been no political will to establish this commission.

In spite of domestic legislation, the practice of segregation is still an urgent matter to address.

Ionita Asan School segregation case

In February 2012, a complaint was lodged in front of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, as well as a civil action in front of Caracal Court, against Ionita Asan School and the County School Inspectorate, with regard to the school segregation on ethnic and social category grounds of the Roma children in the first “B” grade, as well as with regard to the unequal access to quality education of these Roma children, compared with the other children in the first “A: step-by-step” grade and the first “A: traditional” grade. The court rejected the action and the plaintiffs — Roma parents and the organization — have appealed the court’s decision. The National Council for Combating Discrimination held that the segregation of Roma children was discriminatory and imposed a fine on both the school and the County School Inspectorate. The decision was appealed and is currently pending in front of the Appellate Court.

In terms of employment, a study conducted by the organization in 2011 on stereotypes and prejudices found that 84 per cent of the interviewed Roma population declared that it is more difficult for a Roma person to find a job, compared to a non-Roma person. The Social Observer in Romania indicates in its studies that 28 per cent of those who have been discriminated in the field of employment are Roma and 23 per cent are women. Sixty-five per cent of those who consider that they have been subjected to discrimination throughout their whole career are Roma, and 53 per cent are women. Disabled people, Roma, women with young children in care, young people and women are the categories with the lowest chances to be hired in Romania. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights indicates that 34.6 per cent of Roma women perform housework, compared with 19 per cent for non-Roma woman and 8 per cent of Roma men.

The Ministry of Labour of Romania indicates that over 70 per cent of the Roma population do not have a professional qualification or perform activities that do not require formal professional training. From the total employed Roma population, less than one third are Roma women.

Access to employment is more targeted in Romania, in terms of gender equality promotion, than other areas. The efforts towards addressing the large differences in employment rates between Roma women and Roma men, or Roma women and non-Roma women, were mainly supported by European Social Fund programmes. Most of these, however, included only professional training and not actually identifying or creating jobs for Roma women.

Roma women remain a vulnerable category, in terms of accessing employment. Large numbers of Roma women perform housework, have no qualification and have very few chances of getting jobs.

With regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the organization calls upon the Commission to urge States to take the following steps:

- (a) Introduce gender and ethnicity components in educational policies;
- (b) Facilitate and promote the participation of Roma women and girls in education at all levels, by taking effective measures, including financial support (e.g. scholarships);

(c) Increasing the access to employment of Roma women, by taking effective measures, including creating job opportunities for them and improving the day-care services for children, and by making them accessible to disadvantaged groups;

(d) Preventing and combating discrimination against Roma women in education and employment.
