

Joint conference statement
Roma and Sinti Women in the Public Sphere: Turning Voices into Change
3 December 2025

I. Core values of equality and human rights

We, the participants of the multi-country conference “Roma and Sinti Women in the Public Sphere: Turning Voices into Change,¹” reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the core values of equality and human rights. The full and equal exercise by women of their human rights is essential to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic area. We are determined to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women and girls of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We emphasize the need to respect, protect, and promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms—civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights—for all women and girls throughout their life course, while upholding the rule of law, the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and ensuring equal access to justice. We recognize that many Roma and Sinti women and girls experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, vulnerability, and marginalization throughout their lives, experiencing antigypsyism, discrimination based on descent, ethnicity and gender.

II. Specific commitments on gender equality and Roma and Sinti women participation

This statement is grounded in binding international and regional frameworks for gender equality, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Council of Europe, and OSCE commitments.

- A. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):* We recognize that the full, effective, and accelerated implementation of declarations such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action² and the fulfilment of the obligations under CEDAW are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.³ We urge Participating States to comply with CEDAW obligations as they relate specifically to Roma women’s political participation, including the standards outlined in General Recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems and General Recommendation No. 29, which emphasizes States’ responsibility to eliminate intersecting forms of discrimination and antigypsyism.
- B. Council of Europe Recommendation on Protecting the Rights of Roma and Traveller women and girls:* We recognize the full, effective, and accelerated implementation of the

¹ The conference “[Roma and Sinti Women in the Public Sphere: Turning Voices into Change](#)” took place on 2 to 3 December 2025 in Warsaw, Poland. It was organized under OSCE ODIHR’s CHANGE project in cooperation with [ODIHR’s Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues \(CPRSI\)](#).

² A 2025 review of 35 national reports on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action across Europe shows that about 38% of the reviewed countries do not mention Roma women at all. [Beijing +30 Report Review National Reports.pdf - Google Drive](#)

³ UN Women. (2025). [Women belonging to communities discriminated against based on work and descent: Advancing intersectional rights and justice](#).

Council of Europe’s Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)1. We urge Member States to take proactive measures—including legal guarantees, targeted leadership programmes, and participatory policymaking—to ensure that Roma, Sinti and Traveller women can meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives and communities. We further encourage States to align national legislation and budgets with the Recommendation, establish robust monitoring mechanisms, and allocate adequate resources so that Roma, Sinti and Traveller women can fully exercise their political rights and contribute to democratic governance.

C. *OSCE Commitments on Roma and Sinti Women*⁴: We call on all relevant stakeholders to ensure the full implementation of commitments made within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) framework, which specifically:

- 1) Acknowledge the particular situation of Roma and Sinti women.
- 2) Mandate the systematic mainstreaming of Roma women’s issues in all relevant policies designed for the population as a whole.
- 3) Urge the promotion of women’s participation in public and political life.
- 4) Call for attention to the situation of Roma and Sinti women and girls in the implementation of national legislation on equality and non-discrimination.
- 5) Require active measures to support the empowerment of Roma and Sinti women by ensuring they can enjoy and exercise their human rights and combating discrimination at all levels, engaging in partnership with Roma and Sinti civil society organizations.
- 6) Specifically promote the effective and equal participation of Roma and Sinti women in public and political life, including through promoting women’s access to public office, public administration, and decision-making positions.
- 7) OSCE-ODIHR to devote particular attention to activities aimed at increasing access by Roma and Sinti women to all areas of public and political life.

III. *Political vision and objectives for participation and representation*

Our political vision is driven by the genuine demand for progress and recognition that the time is ripe for an ambitious push towards increased and meaningful political participation of Roma and Sinti women. Addressing the persistent underrepresentation of Roma and Sinti women in decision-making is a key area where progress will ensure tangible and sustainable advances in gender and Roma equality overall. The situation of Roma and Sinti women is often sidelined when larger collective group rights are formulated.

Underrepresentation in decision-making remains a major gap. Roma and Sinti women face significant obstacles to engaging meaningfully in political life. Roma and Sinti women must be included in high-level forums, moving beyond Roma-only spaces and ensuring their inclusion in broader movements. We note with concern that in the 2024 European Parliament elections, no Roma MEPs were elected. This trend reinforces the urgency of adopting

⁴ OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (2003), OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2004), Ministerial Council Decision No. 6/08, Ministerial Council Decision No. 4/13, OSCE Parliamentary Resolution on Promoting Policies on Equality between Women and Men of the Roma Population (2011).

ambitious and targeted measures. The lack of Roma and Sinti women in national parliaments underscores a persistent and widening gap in minority representation at the highest levels of political decision-making.

We recognize that the barriers faced by Roma and Sinti women in entering political life often accumulate at the earliest stages: lack of party support, candidate selection and party list positions controlled by party structures, political violence, financial constraints, language barriers, community-based stereotypes, and violence or intimidation. These barriers must be acknowledged and directly addressed in all national and party-level reforms.

IV. Recommendations

To transition from current challenges to achieving political representation and decision-making participation, we articulate the following clear objectives:

- Achieve progress by adopting a systemic approach based on the sequence of *Access - Voice - Transformation*⁵ to advance Roma and Sinti women’s political participation. Roma and Sinti women must first gain access to political life, then be empowered to exercise meaningful influence, and finally be supported by institutions that embed equality into their internal systems and decision-making processes.
- Ensure Roma and Sinti women's effective and equal participation in public and political life and decision-making systems.
- Achieve better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making, including promoting Roma and Sinti women’s access to public office and administration.
- Successfully integrate Roma and Sinti women’s priorities in decision-making agendas and processes at national and transnational levels.
- Build the capacity of Roma and Sinti women’s organizations to promote empowerment, education, and non-discrimination.

1. Governments and national authorities must:

- Adopt nested or ‘double-track’ quotas that include both gender and minority dimensions when putting forward candidates for reserved seats for national minorities and in other contexts, ensuring that Roma and Sinti women are put in the front of the list.
- Guarantee the meaningful and consistent inclusion of Roma and Sinti women in all consultations, working groups, parliamentary bodies, institutional processes, local self-government structures, and expert platforms related to Roma inclusion, gender equality, and human rights, ensuring their full participation in all relevant decision-making spaces.
- Establish a permanent multi-stakeholder working group that brings together relevant institutions and NGOs—particularly Roma and Roma women’s organisations—to co-create policies, monitor progress, and ensure meaningful participation in all decisions affecting Roma communities.

⁵ See [Tool 1: Advancing gender equality in politics — National assessments and action plans](#)

- Create enabling legal and political environments that support the development and sustainability of Roma-led political parties and civic movements, ensuring that Roma political participation is not limited to symbolic inclusion on mainstream party lists but allows for autonomous political expression and representation.
- Embed gender-sensitive and inclusive procedures, such as codes of conduct, internal reporting systems, and inclusive working methods, to ensure that Roma and Sinti women, once elected, are able to exert meaningful participation.
- Adopt and institutionalize intersectional gender-responsive budgeting that explicitly includes Roma and Sinti women by developing budgeting tools that identify structural inequalities, and ensuring full transparency and accountability in how public funds are allocated and spent.
- National authorities should strengthen and enforce robust electoral integrity mechanisms to prevent and monitor vote-buying and other manipulative practices. This includes actively enforcing prohibitions on “family voting” and vote-buying, ensuring accountability for violations, and adopting targeted safeguards to protect Roma and Sinti women’s equal, free, and independent exercise of their voting rights.
- Encourage the creation and strengthening of Roma-led civil society organizations that provide political education, advocacy, and capacity-building for Roma women leaders at local and national levels.
- Use existing good practice principles to prevent, document, and respond to violence and harassment targeting Roma and Sinti women in politics, stressing the urgency of addressing the three layers of abuse experienced by them: gender-based, political, and ethnic.
- Assess and strengthen the impact of existing laws addressing antigypsyism and the specific challenges faced by Roma and Sinti women, ensuring not only their adoption but effective implementation, monitoring, and enforcement across all institutions.
- Develop targeted measures to address antigypsyism within non-Roma communities, including prevention, awareness-raising, and accountability mechanisms that challenge prejudice, discrimination, and gendered stereotypes.
- Promote the active involvement of non-Roma allies in the fight against antigypsyism, recognising that combating structural racism requires broad societal engagement and responsibility beyond Roma communities themselves.
- Systematically collect and publish gender sensitive data specifically on Roma and Sinti women in political and public life, in line with established guidance notes on equality data.
- Take necessary steps to establish permanent national mechanisms for measuring Roma and Sinti women’s equal participation and representation at European, national and local levels.
- Establish robust, sustainable support frameworks that ensure Roma and Sinti women have equal access to employment, internships, mentoring, and leadership development, including dedicated scholarships, political academies, and structured training programmes that enable young Roma women to pursue political studies and build long-term careers in public and political life.
- Ensuring that neither mainstream women’s programmes nor minority programmes overlook the specific needs of Roma and Sinti women.

2. Political parties:

- Formally endorse and sign the [*Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-racist and Inclusive Society*](#) and fully uphold its commitments in both policy and practice, ensuring that their platforms, campaigning, internal procedures, and public messaging align with its principles of equality, non-discrimination (antigypsyism), and inclusive political participation.⁶
- Promote equal participation of Roma and Sinti women, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making.
- Ensure the elimination of male-dominated Roma candidate lists by requiring validation processes to reject lists composed solely of men, and guarantee balanced gender representation by placing Roma and Sinti women in competitive, electable positions. This should include their full participation in policy formulation, leadership functions, and decision-making processes, rather than limiting their inclusion to symbolic roles.
- Introduce internal party quotas or targets for Roma and Sinti women representation at the European, national, and local levels.
- Adopt and enforce internal party guidelines that guarantee fair and transparent access for Roma women to nomination processes and leadership opportunities, while conducting regular inclusivity audits of party structures, procedures, and policies affecting Roma participation.
- Include Roma and Sinti women's needs into political parties programs, and develop gender action plans, including targeted measures for Roma and Sinti women.
- Establish dedicated and transparent mechanisms for equitable campaign financing, including earmarked financial support for Roma women candidates, and eliminate informal financial, institutional, and network-based barriers that disadvantage candidates lacking access to resources or political capital.
- Develop tailored support systems for Roma women entering politics, including political training academies, leadership courses, mentorship by experienced women politicians, and safe spaces to discuss challenges such as discrimination, internal party pressure, or harassment.
- Establish youth wings or youth forums within political parties, enabling young Roma—especially young women—to engage early, gain experience, and influence policy agendas.
- Promote Roma women political role models by publicly highlighting current and emerging Roma women leaders at local, national, and European levels. Their visibility should be systematically supported through party communications, media engagement, and women-led mentorship programmes so young Roma women can see themselves reflected in political leadership.

⁶ Council of Europe. (2022). Charter on the Political Rights of Everyone in a Democratic Society (No Hate Platform, EGA Inf (2022) 08). Available online at: <https://pace.coe.int/en/pages/no-hate-politicalchart>

- Mainstream Roma issues within broader political agendas, ensuring that Roma representatives and Roma women leaders are integrated into general policy processes, not isolated in “Roma-only” niches.
- Establish legal and institutional protections for Roma women candidates, including monitoring of hate speech, harassment, or intimidation during campaigns, and sanctions against discriminatory behaviour by political actors.
- Encourage structured cooperation between political parties and Roma and Roma women’s civil society organisations—in policy development, voter education, and the monitoring of discriminatory practices, while jointly supporting Roma women candidates through shared resources, including communication and campaigning skills, public speaking, policy development, and voter outreach.
- Include Roma young women in election observation missions, both as short-term and long-term observers, to ensure accountability, transparency, and political education.
- Roma political parties should clearly articulate their political ideology, policy programmes, and governance principles, and embed gender equality—including the leadership and representation of Roma and Sinti women—as a core, non-negotiable element of their platforms and internal statutes.
- Roma political parties and Roma-led civil society organisations should actively promote unity, dialogue, and strategic cooperation across parties and movements, addressing fragmentation and fostering collective political strength to enhance Roma representation at local, national, and regional levels.
- Political coalitions involving Roma parties or representatives should establish formal safeguards against political marginalization, including coalition agreements that explicitly guarantee the independent voice, visibility, and agenda-setting capacity of Roma and Sinti women representatives on issues affecting their communities.

Civil society organizations (CSOs):

- Promote cooperation and exchange of experience between Roma and Sinti organizations and non-Roma CSOs specializing in political education, in order to develop inclusive methodologies, approaches, and training tools adapted to the needs of Roma communities.
- Stimulate NGOs involved in advocacy and invest in Roma young people to ensure sustainable engagement and leadership development.
- Address the challenges of shrinking civic space and lack of funding by ensuring CSOs prioritize the empowerment of Roma and Sinti women.
- Women’s organizations and feminist parties should critically examine their own agendas and practices to ensure the authentic inclusion of Roma and Sinti women’s issues within the broader women’s movement and political agenda, moving beyond tokenism to active engagement and co-creation of strategies.
- Invest strategically in Roma and Sinti women’s leadership programs and continuous education on voting and political participation, ensuring that these initiatives support their political participation and leadership potential through empowerment and transformation.

- CSOs must actively engage with young Roma women aspiring for politics or community service in strategic advocacy efforts, recognizing that nurturing this engagement serves as a critical investment into a new generation of Roma women leaders
- Create and support cross-party platforms for Roma women in politics, enabling peer support, exchange of strategies, and collective advocacy that strengthens their influence within and across political institutions.
- Engage male champions to support Roma and Sinti women’s political participation.
- NGOs should support political parties in their efforts towards Roma and Sinti women’s inclusion and representation.
- CSOs dealing with election observation and voter education should pay particular attention to fight existing stereotypes among Roma and Sinti women.

International and Intergovernmental Organizations, UN Agencies, and other stakeholders

- OSCE-ODIHR should actively promote and disseminate guidance to participating States on investing in Roma civil society organisations, with a clear priority for Roma women-led and feminist organisations.
- ODIHR should strengthen and assert a more proactive role by systematically examining and documenting the factors that affect the implementation of existing OSCE commitments on Roma and Sinti inclusion and gender equality. By fully exercising its monitoring and reporting mandate, ODIHR can shift the focus from merely reaffirming commitments to actively identifying practical political, institutional, and funding challenges, thereby helping participating States advance effective implementation.
- ODIHR should act upon its mandate and continue to document [Anti-Roma](#) and [Gender based](#) hate crime.
- ODIHR should continue to address violence against women in politics ([Addressing Violence against Women in Politics](#) in the OSCE Region) and examine how it affects Roma and Sinti women in politics.
- The Council of Europe should support member States in the effective implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)1 on protecting the rights of Roma and Traveller women and girls by strengthening measures aimed at their political participation.
- The Council of Europe should ensure that Roma women are fully and systematically included in its classical political education and leadership programmes, including Roma political schools and mainstream Council of Europe political schools and academies, as part of its mandate to promote pluralistic democracy, equality and inclusive participation.
- The European Commission should ensure that the updated EU Roma Strategic Framework places explicit and strengthened emphasis on Roma political participation in its classical, institutional sense, alongside a robust gender perspective. In particular, the revised Framework should explicitly recognise and promote Roma women’s participation in formal political processes, including voting, standing for election, holding public office, and participation in political parties, elected councils and decision-making bodies at local, regional and national levels — not only engagement through civil society or consultative mechanisms.

- We ask the CEDAW to request States to adopt time-bound special measures to increase Roma and Sinti women’s representation (candidate quotas, placement rules), fund civic and leadership training for Roma women, and adopt measures to prevent and sanction violence and online abuse against Roma women in politics.
- We invite the CERD Committee to recommend creating formal consultation structures with Roma and Sinti women’s groups, adopt antigypsyism action plans with measurable targets for political inclusion, and issue guidance to electoral bodies to remove administrative hurdles disproportionately affecting Roma communities.
- We ask the UN Human Rights Committee to request the State party to: (a) provide disaggregated data (by ethnicity⁷, sex, age, disability, location) on voter registration, turnout and elected officeholders; (b) repeal any laws or administrative practices that restrict Roma women’s voter registration or eligibility to stand for election; and (c) adopt targeted measures (training, legal aid, accessible registration, quotas/temporary special measures) to increase Roma women’s meaningful participation in public life.
- We call upon the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism to provide evidence of local practices that exclude Roma and Sinti women from candidate selection, document hate speech or political exclusion, and request the Special Rapporteurs to raise these issues with the State and in thematic reporting.
- We call upon the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to request thematic guidance and country-level interventions to prevent, investigate and sanction violence against Roma and Sinti women candidates — including online abuse — and ensure support (legal, security, psychosocial) for victims.
- We call upon UN Women and [UNECE](#) to enhance participation of Roma women in key global forums, such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the status of Roma women in EU accession countries.
- We urge UN Women, UNDP and OHCHR to provide multi-year, flexible funding for Roma women-led political leadership and candidate support programmes; to ensure access to legal aid, security and psychosocial support for Roma women candidates and elected officials; and to support the development of national monitoring frameworks and public dashboards with disaggregated data to measure Roma women’s political participation, safety and representation over time.
- The National Democratic Institute, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, IFES and other international entities should prioritise Roma and Sinti women’s political participation and leadership as a core element of its democracy-support work, by designing targeted programmes that support Roma women’s entry into formal politics, including political parties, electoral processes and elected office. This should include direct engagement with political parties to promote inclusive candidate selection, tailored leadership and campaign support for Roma women candidates.

⁷ In line with Guidance note on the collection and use of equality data based on racial or ethnic origin, European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Directorate D – Equal Opportunities Equality and Union citizenship, Unit D1 - Non-discrimination and Roma coordination, Brussels, 2021

- Donors should provide direct, flexible financial support to Roma and Sinti women candidates, including campaign funding, legal assistance and security support, to address structural funding gaps and unequal access to political resources.
- International organisations should actively engage and train Roma- and Sinti-led political parties to embed gender equality within party structures, promote Roma and Sinti women’s leadership, and address discriminatory practices in internal decision-making. Equally international organizations should conduct internal training on inclusive elections and intersectionality.

V. Call to action for Roma and Sinti women

We recognize that collective action is vital to channelling our voices and challenging existing power structures. Therefore, in this Call to Action, we call upon Roma and Sinti women who were not present at this conference to actively engage in advancing our shared goals by publicly endorsing this joint statement and sharing it widely within their networks and communities; by communicating this vision to national authorities, political parties, and local decision-making bodies to ensure that our priorities are reflected in policy agendas; and by taking concrete actions at the national and local levels to enhance Roma and Sinti women’s political participation. We further urge all to promote solidarity, equality, and cooperation with relevant stakeholders working on gender equality, ensuring that Roma and Sinti women’s voices are central to democratic and inclusive decision-making processes.