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Proposal to the Romanian Government
Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection
Regarding the establishment of
An Institute for Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion

In the attention of

Mr. Emil Boc, Prime-minister of Romania

Mrs. Sulfina Barbu, Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection

Mrs. Maria Moța, Advisor Ministry of Labor

Mrs. Olga Vasilescu, President of the Equal Opportunities Commission, Romanian Senate

Mrs. Corina Crețu, MEP

Mrs. Daciana Sârbu, MEP

Mrs. Renate Weber, MEP

Mrs. Liliana-Carmen IONEL, AM POSDRU, Bucharest

Mrs. Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, European Commission

Mr. László Andor, Commissioner DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Mr. Mikael Gustafsson, Chair Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee of the European Parliament

Mr. Dominique Be, Deputy Head Unit for Social Dialogue and Adaptation to Change, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Mrs. Oana Ciurea, DG Employment, European Commission

Mrs. Brigitte TRIEMS, President, European Women's Lobby

Mrs. Amandine Bach, Policy Officer and Project Coordinator European Women's Lobby

Cluj and Timișoara

20.10.2011.

Between November 2008 and October 2011, the Roma Women's Association 'For Our Children' from Timișoara implements the "Equality through difference: Roma women's access on labor market" project (www.femrom.ro) in partnership with Desire Foundation from Cluj, Parudimos Association from Timișoara, National Agency for Roma, Mayor's Office in Timișoara, Autonomía Foundation from Budapest. The project is co-financed



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through the Operational program for the development of human resources 2007-2013 “Invest in people!” European Social Fund.

The mayor objective of our project was to promote the principle of equal opportunities, and to equalize the opportunities of Roma women and Roma youth of having access to the labor market, and in particular to decent jobs. **In order to continue working on the achievement of this objective after the lifetime of our project, on the base of the accomplished results and in order to ensure the projects’ sustainability, we propose to your attention our proposal regarding the creation of an Institute for Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion with regional offices in Timisoara and Cluj. The latter might be established within a pilot scheme that later might be extended to other regions as well.**

We are convinced that such an Institute created at the crossroads of the public and private domain has the potential to fructify the experiences and expertise gathered by our non-governmental organizations through the implementation of the project. Through their involvement in the creation and functioning of such an institute, our teams will be able to contribute further to the implementation at local and regional level the goals assumed by the Romanian Government regarding the promotion of equal opportunities and social inclusion in our country. An institutional precedent for the creation of such a governmental institute might be the establishment of the Institute for the Study of National Minorities from Romania (ISPMN) in 2000 first through a Governmental Ordinance, and later by a law, as a public institution with legal personality subordinated to the Government. By creating the Institute for Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion, the Romanian Government may be willing to reaffirm and implement EU recommendations on ensuring equal opportunities for its citizens and in particular can be prepared to satisfy the requirements of the European Agenda 2020 regarding the elimination of social exclusion.



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One of the major activities of the project “Equality through difference: Roma women’s access on the labor market” was the promotion of the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. Through our materials (informative guides, flyers, posters, the international journal Nevi Sara Kali, the research volume and the project Album) published and distributed in more than 10.000 copies; through the training sessions, informational campaigns addressed to the representatives of public authorities, mass media, civic organizations; through the film of the project; and also through the round tables and public debates organized in many cities from Romania, we brought an important contribution to the dissemination for a wide national and international public of knowledge about social inequalities faced by disadvantaged Roma and about the values of social Europe with equal opportunities for all at its core.

The co-operation with the County Commissions for Equal Opportunities in Timis and Cluj counties, and also with the Directorate for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men of the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection meant to us an important tool for the promotion of the principle of equal opportunities, but as well the recognition of our efforts on the behalf of the local and central public authorities of this domain.

Among the actions carried out, we would like to call your attention on the round table organized in May 2011 at the headquarters of the Directorate for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men from Bucharest, on the international conference „Roma Women for Equal Opportunities” organized within the project in Timișoara at the end of June 2011, on the public debate organized at the Romanian Parliament in August 2011, and also on the recent participation from August and September 2011 at the meetings of COJES Timiș. Each meeting meant an occasion for exchanging experiences and for the promotion of good practices, but as well as opportunities to present our recommendations regarding the approach towards equal opportunities and the necessary institutional changes in this domain.



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On this occasion we present you three of our proposals:

- *Given the fact that gender inequalities include also the inequality between women and men on the base of their social status, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation, **mainstreaming the equality between women and men in order to eliminate gender inequalities and discrimination on the criterion of sex requires the need of addressing the intersectionality of gender inequality and discrimination.** In this way the principle of equal opportunities between women and men may be applied in all the domains of public policies for assuring equal opportunities in general and also for combating multiple discrimination;*
- *There is a need for public institutions that have expertise, authority and trans-sectoral capacity on promoting equal opportunities and social inclusion, which makes necessary, for example, the creation of a **Ministry of Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities, or an Inter-Ministerial Department for Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities** in the subordination of the Prime Minister;*
- *Given the fact that the public institutions on the domain of equal opportunities proved to be inefficient on the local level and that **civic organizations have the capacity to offer services through their direct involvement into the lives of the socially disadvantaged groups and marginalized communities, and also given the fact that governmental institutions need the support of civic organizations in order to ensure equal opportunities and that Structural Funds projects implemented by the latter cannot have a sustainable impact if they are not supported by governmental organization, there is a need on the part of the Romanian state to recognize and support NGOs in the field of equal opportunities and social inclusion; our proposal refers to the creation of an Institute for Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion** which might be based on the cooperation between the public and private domains, in particular between public authorities and NGOs.*



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Through the major activities of the project “Equality through difference: Roma women’s access on labor market” (promotion of the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination; research, studies, analysis; assuring social inclusion; transnational activities; and information and publicity) the Roma Women’s Association ‘For Our Children’ from Timișoara and Desire Foundation from Cluj gained professional expertise and organizational capacity that might be used by the regional offices of the proposed **Institute for Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion**, that should carry on the following activities:

- **Multidisciplinary empirical researches** on the base of which recommendations regarding public policies in the domain of social inclusion and equal opportunities might be formulated;
- **Monitoring the implementation of equal opportunities, anti-discrimination and social inclusion policies** at national, regional and local public and private institutions and companies;
- **Offering information, counseling and mediation (including legal) services** to members of marginalized communities and vulnerable social categories, who are confronting multiple disadvantages cumulated on the base of their ethnicity, gender and social status, and who need to be assisted and empowered in order to exercise their rights ensured by law;
- Developing and sustaining **co-operation and transnational networks** by different means (like international publications and events), which empower social categories facing multiple disadvantages, for example Roma women;
- **Production of informational materials and their dissemination** for a wide audience through media and social campaigns, lobby and advocacy work aiming at recognizing the causes of social inequalities and the importance of ensuring equal opportunities;
- Organizing and conducting **training courses on the domain of equal opportunity, non-discrimination and social inclusion**, accessible to representatives of public authorities, to mass media and employees in order to recognize the need to apply the



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perspective of human rights, equal opportunities and social inclusion in all the domains of life (education, employment, housing, health);

- Organizing **seminars, colloquiums, debates, round tables and national and international conferences** on the theme of equal opportunities and social inclusion across the country;
- Documentation visits at and **exchanges of experiences** and expertise with similar public and private institutions from Romania and from abroad in order to improve actions on this domain and to promote good practices regarding equal opportunities and social inclusion.

In the hope that this proposal raises your interest for the establishment of the Institute for Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion in Romania, and for the creation of offices in Cluj and Timișoara as a pilot project, and that you consider using our experience and expertise in these domains gained through the project “Equality through difference: Roma women’s access on labor market”, please contact us for any further information. We are ready to offer our contribution for the elaboration of plans and strategies related to the establishment of this Institute, starting for example, with the creation of regional offices in Cluj and Timisoara.

Letiția Mark, president of the Roma Women’s Association ‘For Our Children’, Timișoara

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