

**Oral statement
to UN CEDAW Committee to the General Recommendation on Girls’/Women’s Right to
Education**

7 July 2014

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma through strategic litigation, research and policy development, advocacy and human rights education.

The ERRC wishes to call the Committee’s attention to **the specifically vulnerable position of Romani women and girls, in accessing education.**

Romani women throughout Europe continue to **suffer from multiple discrimination on the basis of their gender and ethnicity** and this has not been given due attention in legal or policy measures. They experience barriers in **accessing equal education**, healthcare, adequate housing, and employment and in accessing justice through administrative or institutional channels.

The ERRC urges the Committee to formulate general recommendations that enable States to implement the Convention so as **to ensure Romani girls and women have access to equal, high-quality education.** In particular, the ERRC wishes to ensure that **the Committee views the problems facing ethnic minority women and girls not only from the perspective of the need to respect minority rights** (e.g. under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities) but **also from a non-discrimination perspective.** Romani children in Europe often cannot attend integrated schools and enjoy the same kind of education as their non-Roma counterparts **or are segregated into separate and/or inferior classes and schools on the sole basis of their ethnicity.** As the statistics show, the consequences of discrimination and segregation in schools are particularly dire for Romani girls and women when compared with Romani boys and men and with non-Roma. ERRC research shows that **child marriage** frequently precludes Romani girls from attending school, infringing their right to education and diminishing their employment opportunities.

The Concept Note on the General Recommendation on Girls’/Women’s Right to Education by CEDAW recognises that disadvantaged groups of women and girls are in particularly vulnerable position in accessing equal and quality education. The ERRC believes **it is very important to recognise intersectional discrimination, i.e. the cumulative effect of ethnic and gender discrimination, as well as disadvantaged social and economic status and migration.**

Recommendations

The ERRC recommends the Committee to include into its General Recommendation the following recommendations for States to:

- adopt **comprehensive policies** that address the situation of Romani women in general and in terms of access to education **in accordance with their positive obligations under international law to ensure equal access to education** for Romani children, including Romani girls;
- recognise and react the **cumulative effects of multiple discrimination** including gender, ethnicity and other status of women such as “rural” or “migrant” suffered by Romani women in accessing equal education as part of their law and policymaking in particular education, social and Roma inclusion policies;
- acknowledge that **ethnic discrimination** can prevent Romani children, including Romani girls from accessing equal education;
- recognise of the effect of **harmful practices**, such as early marriages, and their disproportionate effect on Romani girls in accessing equal education;
- **collect disaggregated data based on ethnicity and gender;**
- **allocate budgets** specifically to improve the situation of Romani girls and women in education.