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**STATEMENT MADE BY
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Thank you Madam Chair,

My intervention will focus on the meaning of “specific measures for employment of Romani women” from some practical experiences.

The fact that the Romani women are suffering grave unemployment and exclusion from labour market is well known. Just to illustrate, in Romania the unemployment rate of Romani women is four times the unemployment rate of women in the general population; in Macedonia the unemployment rate of Romani women on age of 15-24 is 93 percent. It is self evident that something has to be done, both to apply human rights and provide for overall economic growth.

There are initiatives and policies throughout Europe, as we just heard from Finland and Croatia, and measures have been implemented to tackle unemployment of Roma. These have rarely yielded results in terms of employment of Romani women. To have results in this sense, specific circumstances have to be considered within the employment measures for Romani women. This necessity has been included in the Draft Recommendations from this Forum in general terms. I would like to focus on those specifics relevant for employment of Romani women from some communities throughout Europe.

The first specific is the traditional role of the Romani women in the family and the community. Several elements are important in this regard:

1. Romani women are often not allowed to act on their own *[my organization had itself such experience with the newest employee who came for the interview with her husband and father in law who were present throughout the interview]*. So, any measure for employment of Romani women has to follow wide discussion with the whole Roma community, including both men and women, and should gain the trust and acceptance all.
2. Romani women sometimes have specific obligations at home, meant for specific time of the day or the year, incompatible with the standard working periods *[as example, Muslim Romani women are sometimes not able to participate in any activities during the Ramadan month]*. If this is the case, employment measures for Romani women should consider flexibility in the time when beneficiaries are expected to participate in the measures and the actual economic activity emerging from them.
3. Related to this, Romani women are often already engaged in various, including economic activities, on daily basis, and they are expected to give them up in order to participate in employment measures. It is difficult to motivate them to do so, even when the new activities are more profitable. Thus, employment measures for Romani women might consider gradual engagement of Romani women, or added value that would motivate them to participate.
4. Care for the children is something very sensitive in many communities, particularly minority communities, including Roma. Employment measures for Romani women must consider the issue of taking care of the children of those women involved in the measures, and offer such care that is trustworthy and acceptable for the Roma community. This could be seen rather positively, as additional employment for Romani women to take care of children can be provided, and early child development can be achieved if this is combined with measures proposed yesterday under the topic of education.

5. In a number of Roma communities, physical movement of the women is restricted to their homes or neighbourhoods. Employment measures for Romani women should take this into account and as a first stage offer economic activities close to or in their homes and neighbourhoods, and gradually make Romani women more comfortable to move outside for economic purposes.

Second specificity also widely known is the low level of education of Romani women that is important barrier to their employment. In this sense:

1. The low level of education does not necessarily mean that educational activities must precede employment ones, as this might discourage Romani women to take part because they might not be able to see the benefit that will come later on. In such case it would be good if the education activities are parallel to the employment activities and they actually respond to the emerging education needs of Romani women in relation to their economic activity.
2. In most of the cases, Romani women are not responsible for the family budget and rarely have meaningful contact with money. But employment efforts for Romani women don't make sense if they are not aiming at economic emancipation. Therefore, employment measures for Romani women should also be accompanied with fiscal literacy activities enabling them to understand and manage money and make their own fiscal decisions. Any measure for economic emancipation of Romani women must also work with Romani man in order to make sure that Romani women are allowed to manage their own money.
3. Although there is lack of education, Romani women have some knowledge, skills or abilities, which might be attractive to the labour market, but are unknown as Romani women are simply invisible. Employment measures for Romani women might consider first of all assessing the working skills and abilities in order to use these as a starting point, which would also make Romani women more comfortable to get engaged in employment measures. Of course, this should be further built on in order to achieve full and effective inclusion of Romani women into the labour market.
4. Learning abilities of Romani women are also limited, thus, what Romani women need to learn within the employment measures, be that skills and knowledge related to the job, or some general things (such as working with a bank account), should not only be communicated in a way understandable for them – verbal instructions are usually insufficient. Additional help should be provided, including doing those things with them several times until they grasp the knowledge and skills.

Language and information spreading barriers form another set of considerations in regards to designing and implementing employment measures for Romani women. There are cases when Romani women know more than one language, and this could be used as an asset in the labour market. More often however, Romani women have limited language skills, thus any communication within the employment measures and the emerging economic activities should be linguistically adjusted. Moreover, standard information sharing channels, such as letters, TV, announcements on boards and so on, might not work and alternative channels should be sought, such as verbal communication in an informal setting.

At the end, a word about social benefits and social contributions related to job. Employment measures should not automatically make Romani women ineligible for social benefits and at the same time impose the obligation of paying social contributions. It is important that employment measures first of all make sure that Romani women have gained sustainable income sufficient for dignified life before cutting social benefits and imposing taxes.

The main message from all of this is that if the authorities are to undertake employment measures for Romani women, as they should, they have to get closer to the community and get to know it and involve Romani women from design to evaluation.

Thank you Madam Chair.