

LETTER TO MR. RASIM LJAJIC, MINISTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS (ETHNIC AND NATIONAL MINORITIES)

WRITTEN BY THE ROMA WOMEN'S CENTER "BIBIJA" ON BEHALF OF THE NETWORK OF TRUST

Dear Mr. Ljajic,

Herewith we refer ourselves to you in the aim of asking your attention for the following:

1. Anti-discriminatory law – some shape of this law has been already existing. We suggest that the Ministry should spread information on this theme (transparent clear communicating what it means, that this law is compulsory as any other law and how to implement it), monitoring efficient of its implementation as well as taking measures against those who violate this law.
2. Providing an interpreter so that members of minorities can use their mother tongue. The right to use your mother tongue is a human right guaranteed to every person belonging to ethnic or national minority. Therefore we suggest that the Ministry should increase activities aiming to inform public of this possibility as well as to take monitoring steps in order to follow the implementation. Advocacy services free of charge are also essential part of progressive legislation system. This is with no doubt the necessity rather than luxury when speaking of Roma population that has been one of the poorest social groups.
3. Equal opportunity for Roma to become the part of decision making process. This means that every state body that is in charge to take decisions on issues that have been relevant to Roma population must include at least 50% of Roma in itself. It is to emphasize that these persons must be in position to actively work and decide within bodies (not just "decoration"). Particularly we pay your attention on asking Roma women to take decisions on Roma women's issue.
4. Forming the team within the Ministry or as a kind of Council by the Government which would be concerned with "Women's human rights - Roma women's issue".
This team would be working on e.g. the problem of discrimination of Roma women at health services, police and schooling and the problem of gender-based violence that Roma women face and paying special attention on violence against children. The aim is changing attitudes of professionals employed at these services. This team should also include at least 50% of Roma recruited from Roma women's movement (female Roma activists).

We hope to hear from you and believe that some of our suggestions may be the subject of future co-operation.

Sincerely,

Activists of Roma Women's Center "Bibija"

January 2003