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Double discrimination of Romani women and girls

Motion for a resolution
presented by Mrs Zapfl Helbling and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

1. Romani women and girls suffer from double discrimination in society: first, because they belong to the Romani minority, and second, because they are female.
2. The recent case of a male Bulgarian parliamentary observer in the European Parliament, Dimitar Stoyanov, verbally attacking the female Hungarian MEP of Romani origin, Mrs Lívia Járóka, is a case in point. Ms Járóka was nominated by the Brussels-based Parliament Magazine as a candidate for their "MEP Awards 2006", a nomination which Mr Stoyanov opposed on the grounds that she was not beautiful, young, or slim enough for a Romani woman.
3. Sadly it is a fact that, even within the Romani community, women and girls are hit hardest by racist discrimination. Poverty, unemployment, difficult living conditions, and a lack of access to good-quality education characterise the situation of many members of the Romani community across Europe, but women and girls are even more disadvantaged and disenfranchised than Romani men and boys.
4. Thus, many Romani girls are forced – or even sold - into marriages at a very young age (14-16 years) by their own families. Many Romani women and girls suffer from violence at the hands of their husbands, some are raped, others denied access to birth control.
5. Many Council of Europe member states have failed to gender mainstream their policies on the Romani. While open discrimination against the Romani has thus become unacceptable in most member states, the authorities have turned a blind eye to the gender discrimination and the resulting violence Romani women and girls suffer in their own communities.
6. The double discrimination Romani women and girls encounter is also illustrated by the cases of coercive sterilisations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia which have recently come to light.
7. The Parliamentary Assembly thus asks Council of Europe member states to urgently gender mainstream their policies on the Romani, in order to ensure that:
 - i. Romani women and girls cease to be discriminated against, both within their own community and in society at large;
 - ii. special attention is paid to the educational, health and housing needs of Romani women and girls;

- iii. the practice of forced and underage marriages is no longer tolerated, and that Romani women and girls in such marriages and/or subjected to domestic violence are given the necessary assistance to leave such relationships;
- iv. the practice of coercive sterilisations ends and victims receive proper redress.

*Signed*¹:

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ANTUNOVIĆ, Željka, Croatia, SOC
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DROMBERG, Kaarina, Finland, EPP/CD
ERR, Lydie, Luxembourg, SOC
ÖZAL, İbrahim, Turkey, EPP/CD
PAPADOPOULOS, Antigoni, Cyprus, ALDE
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¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group