



## **FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ROMA WOMEN**

**16-17 SEPTEMBER 2013**

**HELSINKI - FINLAND**

The Fourth International Conference of Roma Women organised by the Council of Europe and the Finnish Government will take place in Helsinki, Finland, on 16-17 September 2013.

Since 2003, the Roma Women's conferences have provided the opportunity for Roma women to address on the international stage the issues affecting their and their families' lives. They have also provided a space where Roma women have kept each other informed of issues concerning them and exchanged experiences.

Faced with the lack of concrete steps taken to date in advancing their cause, the Roma women view the Council of Europe's Conference as a unique forum and space where they themselves should define actions and plans that they can either advocate for with national governments and international organisations or lead and implement. These concerns have been voiced in the preparatory meetings before the Helsinki Conference and through the Roma women's social networks.

As such, the Helsinki Conference should send a clear signal to governments that Roma women have policy proposals, are committed and are natural partners in the policy implementation process.

The Conference will host policy-oriented discussions in workshops focusing on the major Roma women's issues as confirmed by the responses to a questionnaire sent to national Roma women's associations. These priorities will be addressed from the three perspectives (human rights, empowerment and policy) agreed in the Bucharest Preparatory Meeting (3-4 October 2012). The ultimate aim is to draft a

European Strategy for Roma Women containing recommendations addressed to Roma women themselves, Roma organisations, governments and international organisations. Another equally important aim is to strengthen the networking capacities of Roma women's organisations between themselves and with other likeminded gender and equality organisations at national and international levels.

The policy perspectives and the concrete implementation proposals (strategy) should be prepared in advance through online applications and after the selection of the best proposals and initiatives. During the selected workshops, Roma women and representatives of the main international stakeholders such as the Council of Europe, European Commission, European Alliance of the Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, ROMED II, OSI MERI Network and the United Nations will have the opportunity to improve or modify policy initiative based on discussions with participants. **The follow up and implementation of these initiatives should be ensured by different groups and stakeholders (Roma women, IOs, INGOS, governmental bodies).**

The European Strategy on Roma women will include a list of activities and a timeframe for the realisation of the agreed policy actions, which should guide the work of Romani women, CoE, international partners and governments hosting follow-up women's conferences.

A separate call for candidates (rapporteurs and workshop moderators) will follow.

The Council of Europe will cover **the travel and subsistence expenses of one Roma woman participant per Council of Europe Member State**. Roma women in member states will be able to follow the conference and submit their proposals through the remote participation process organised by the Council of Europe in cooperation with national Roma women associations.

Interpretation will be provided in English, French, Romani, Finnish and Swedish

If you are a Roma woman who considers that you have a contribution to make and would like to participate in this gathering, you should firstly express your interest by sending your letter/e-mail of motivation to [roma.team@coe.int](mailto:roma.team@coe.int) by 30 June 2013.