

Workshop on Roma LGBTIQ+ Empowerment

18th November 2021, Pristina

Within the framework of the 7th annual Western Balkans Roma Summit, Civil Rights Defenders organized the Workshop¹: Roma and the LGBTIQ+ Community, which took place on the 18th of November 2021. The workshop convened members from the Roma LGBTIQ+ community and civil society organizations in the region, to discuss challenges and issues related to identifying and addressing multiple discrimination.

In the aftermath of the Workshop the participants agreed upon issuing a common declaration as below:

DECLARATION

We, the 9 representatives of Romani and LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations, community members and academia from 4 Western Balkan Countries (*Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo*), within the framework of the 7th annual Western Balkans Roma Summit, participated at the Workshop Roma and the LGBTIQ+ Community on 18th of November 2021, aiming to increase visibility of

¹ This activity was organized in the framework of the project “Empowering Roma LGBTIQ+ activists and Civil Society Organizations in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia”, implemented jointly by Civil Rights Defenders, Aleanca, Subversive Front and Da Se Zna and is supported by Swedish Institute.



multiple discrimination or Roma LGBTI+ persons and empower community members to become active defenders and promoters of human rights.

We have concluded that Roma LGBTI+ persons face systematic multiple marginalization and discrimination based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This need to be recognized by national and international Roma and LGBTI+ organizations, by other human rights organizations and by state institutions. There is an urgent need to address the challenges the Roma LGBTI+ persons face on daily basis, such as violence and hatred by their families and community members due to the patriarchal mentality still upholding strongly. Additionally, it is important to also address the exclusion and discrimination they face by LGBTI+ organizations, and by majority of society as well.

We agreed that there is an urgent need to develop outreach and to continuously empower the communities by targeting cooperation issues between Roma and LGBTI+ organizations, to build more solidarity among each other by giving space and support for Roma LGBTI+ persons at both Roma and LGBTI+ NGO's. There is a need to build more visibility at the national and international level by producing and sharing knowledge on relevant issues, to frequently monitor policy documents, to raise awareness and proactively do advocacy work, so to push forward the inclusion of the Roma LGBTI+ persons into society.

We call upon the respective state institutions to acknowledge and include Roma LGBTI+ specific issues into the strategic approach towards this vulnerable group. Systematic multiple marginalization and discrimination must be addressed by appropriate intervention programmes such as capacity-building activities for law-enforcement agencies, including the criminal justice system, improving the practice when dealing with Roma LGBTI+ persons, as well as the reporting system to tackle multiple discrimination and hate crimes. There is an urgent need to raise accessibility and to ensure equality of access to different services such as health (mental health, HIV, STD's etc.), education and the labor market among others. Acknowledging the struggles coming from systemic multiple marginalization and discrimination of this community will lead the way to undertake the necessary structural steps towards decreasing the risk that they will be targeted by hate speech, stigmatization, homophobia, and lack of acceptance by society overall.