



Republic of Serbia

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE
ROMA NATIONAL MINORITY**

Pancevo

**PROPOSED TEXT OF THE DECISION ON TAKING A POSITION ON
ELIMINATING CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE ROMA COMMUNITY**

**DECISION ON THE
POSITION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE ROMA NATIONAL MINORITY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA ON ELIMINATING CHILD MARRIAGE**

1.

Guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriage, the Council of Europe conventions governing the protection of violence against women and the protection of children from sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as other relevant international instruments for the protection of human rights and the rights of the child and based on the initiative and in cooperation with the Roma Students Association, Novi Sad, the decision on taking a position on eliminating child marriage in the Roma community is hereby adopted.

2.

Child marriage is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age.

3.

Child marriage is prohibited by law, and establishing and mediating in establishing child marriage is subject to criminal prosecution.

4.



Certain customs, such as child marriage, involve discriminatory practices and represent an obstacle to the full enjoyment of human rights and the unhindered development of boys and girls.

It is also acknowledged that customs and traditions are not and cannot be a justification for practices that are harmful to the development and wellbeing of every child.

Striving towards the full enjoyment of child rights in the Roma community, we advocate a re-evaluation of traditional beliefs and practices, and also advocate a selective attitude towards tradition which involves preserving only the lasting values of cultural heritage and abandoning practices and beliefs that hinder the Roma national minority in achieving its full social potential.

5.

The social phenomenon of child marriage is a harmful practice that violates, abuses or impedes the human rights of the child. Child marriage endangers the lives and the future of girls and boys, deprives them of the opportunity to make decisions about their lives, hinders their education and makes them vulnerable to violence, discrimination and abuse.

Child marriage is also often accompanied by early and frequent pregnancies and childbirths, resulting in reduced maternal health-related quality of life and increased risk of family poverty.

6.

We call on parents and other family members, religious, traditional and community leaders, Roma citizens' associations to develop and implement comprehensive responses for eliminating child marriage in the Roma community.

7.

We call on Roma leaders, regardless of their sex and religion, whenever they can, to clearly distance themselves from the child marriage practice as a Roma tradition, to educate the Roma population about the harmful effects of this phenomenon and to fight against gender stereotypes and prejudices that perpetuate child marriage.

8.

We call on Roma citizens' associations, especially those that have not addressed this phenomenon so far, to develop programmes for raising awareness of the Roma population about the harmfulness of child marriage and to develop mechanisms to support victims.



Roma citizens' associations should support the state's institutions such as the police, the prosecutor's office and courts in addressing this phenomenon and be proactive in recording and reporting child marriage cases.

9.

We call on the institutions of the Republic of Serbia and local self-governments to implement and support laws and policies that prevent child marriage and protect those who are at risk of entering into child marriage.

We call on the judicial authorities and the police to conscientiously prosecute and impose the most severe penalties on those responsible for encouraging and approving child marriages.

10.

Institutions of the Republic of Serbia should develop innovative programmes that will enable children who dropped out of education or did not continue their education after primary school to re-enter the education system easily and free of charge and get support through appropriate affirmative actions, career counselling and labour market education programmes.

11.

This decision shall enter into force on the day of its adoption and will be published on the Council's bulletin board and the website.