

# Consolidated Criteria for Assessing Intersectionality Operationalization in European Equality Policies: The Case of Roma Women

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The transition from the 1990s to the 2000s has been crucial in the fields of equality and non-discrimination. At both European and international levels, the end of the twentieth century has marked, at least in theory, the shift from a traditional single-strand approach to inequalities towards the awareness that “discrimination can be experienced on more than one ground” (EC, 2007, p. 5). At EU<sup>1</sup> level, the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999, and the subsequent adoption of the so-called “Equality Directives”<sup>2</sup> in 2000, put the concept of multiple discrimination on the equality agenda to refer to “a situation where discrimination takes place on the basis of several grounds operating separately” (EC, 2007, p. 16). At the same time, a new intersectional approach to discrimination was dominating the equality discourse in the United States. This approach intended to go beyond the logic of *addition* characterising the concept of multiple discrimination by introducing the logic of *interaction*, according to which interacting inequality categories (e.g. gender, race and class) determine unique situations of discrimination where different grounds cannot be separated and no ground is prevailing.

The term “intersectionality” was coined by the legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw to denote the various ways in which race and gender *interact* to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s employment experiences (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). In the essay “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”, Crenshaw made a distinction between structural and political intersectionality: whereas the first concept applies to individual experiences of inequality determined by the intersections of different categories (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245), the latter “captures the ways in which inequalities and the interaction

between them are addressed in political and institutional strategies and struggles” (Krizsan, Skjeie & Squires, 2012, p. 18).

Although intersectionality theory has generated a conceptual shift in how researchers, civil society and policy actors understand social categories, their relations and interactions (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 18), *political intersectionality* is still in an embryonic stage in European policy making (Lombardo & Rolandsen Agustín, 2011, p. 486). If it is true that some statements on combating intersectional discrimination are located in soft law instruments or in policy programs (Kantola & Nousiainen, 2012, p. 33), the EU approach to inequalities still tends to be multiple rather than intersectional. In the case of Romani women,<sup>3</sup> for instance, the European Parliament (EP) has made some steps forward towards a more intersectional debate on inequalities. In its 2013 *Report on Gender Aspects of the European Framework of National Roma Inclusion Strategies up to 2020*, the EP Committee on Women Rights and Gender Equality (i.e. FEMM) has referred to the peculiar discriminatory situation of Roma women as “multiple and intersectional discrimination” (EP, 2013, p. 4), thus replacing the expression “multiple or compound discrimination” (EP, 2006, p. 4) used in 2006. Is this just a terminological shift or does it represent a first step towards a substantial evolution from a multiple approach to inequalities to an intersectional one?

This article intends to propose an operational tool – i.e. a set of criteria – able to examine to what extent intersectionality is incorporated in the policy tissue. It takes into account both the institutional and less institutionally-oriented factors and actors involved in policy-making and -implementation processes. Policies towards Roma women in Central and Eastern European Member States (CEEMS) are used as test cases to check the reliability of the proposed criteria set. The article has a comparative design. It explores the institutional settings, policy strategies and instruments as well as the role of civil society organizations in policy-implementation in Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. This approach facilitates the identification of patterns of change occurring in the equality and non-discrimination regimes of countries with similar cultural, social and political backgrounds. The model enables the isolation of interfering factors, thus contributing to a more accurate investigation of the divergent and/or analogous ways intersectionality is operationalized in domestic policies. It is a versatile operational tool that has the potential to be applied to different geographic contexts and institutional settings and to ease the assessment and comparison of (equality) policies’ strengths and weaknesses.

Before delving into the research, a clarification on terminology is needed. Although this article focuses on intersectional equality policies and makes a clear distinction between multiple and intersectional approaches to inequalities, the concept of multiple discrimination is to be taken into account as still prevailing and

explicitly mentioned in policy and legal documents at both EU and national levels. Given that intersectionality is often treated implicitly (Lombardo & Rolandsen Agustín, 2011), further investigation is necessary to clarify whether and when the terms “multiple discrimination” and “intersectional discrimination” are intentionally or accidentally construed by policy-makers as distinct or interchangeable. The article sidesteps this issue by using the expression “intersectionality-oriented” equality policies.

This article is structured as follows. The first part reviews the literature on intersectionality operationalization in equality policies and indicates the gaps this set of criteria intends to fill. The second part explains the Roma women case and the lack of “intersectional thinking” in policies addressing this marginalized social group. The last part presents the proposed criteria set and applies it to Roma women policies in CEEMS, thus showing how a consolidated model can contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of the extent to which intersectionality is incorporated in (European) equality policies.

### **Understanding Intersectionality Operationalization in Equality Policies**

Researchers’ interest in the operationalization of intersectionality in policies and the development of appropriate methods to assess it has considerably increased.

Scholarly contributions to the understanding of intersectional theory and its operationalization for policy purposes can be divided into two categories: (i) perspectives focussing on how intersectionality is addressed institutionally, and (ii) perspectives concentrating on how intersectionality can improve the quality of policies. This article aims to contribute to the current academic debate on intersectionality operationalization by consolidating these two perspectives in one operational tool and including policy outputs and implementation practices within the scope of the analysis. In particular, it proposes a model which facilitates the comprehensive assessment of intersectionality operationalization in policies by taking into account (a) to what extent equality machineries (i.e. institutions and legislations) are intersectionality-oriented, (b) to what extent intersectionality is taken into account when formulating equality policies, and (c) to what extent intersectionality is taken into account when implementing equality policies.

Concerning the first aspect, i.e. to what extent equality machineries are intersectionality-oriented, renowned examples of literature on intersectionality aiming at evaluating “the ways in which multiple inequalities are being addressed institutionally in Europe” have been collected in *Institutionalizing Intersectionality* (Krizsan et al., 2012). Through an empirical analysis of equality institutionalization across

Europe, this collection fosters the recognition and integration of intersectionality as a policy problem and contributes to “understanding patterns and processes of operationalizing intersectionality for policy purposes” (Krizsan et al., 2012, p. 19). *Institutionalizing Intersectionality* illustrates the evolution of equality machineries in Europe and the shift from policy approaches dealing with gender inequalities separately to approaches addressing multiple inequalities in integrated ways (EC, 2007; Lombardo & Verloo, 2009). It looks at this shift mainly in institutional terms, putting equality bodies at the centre of the analysis. Equality institutions are considered as “one of the most specific expressions of equality policies” and are based on a tripartite structure differentiating them according to their functions (i.e. law-enforcement antidiscrimination bodies, political administrative bodies, and consultative bodies).

With regard to the second aspect mentioned above, i.e. to what extent intersectionality is taken into account when formulating equality policies, Lombardo and Rolandsen Agustín (2011) have proposed a set of quality criteria for assessing “good intersectionality”. Starting from the assumption that intersectional inclusion is one of the aspects that could improve the quality of (gender) equality policies, the tool developed by these authors is based on the following criteria: (1) *explicitness* and *visibility* of certain inequalities as well as *inclusiveness* of a wide range of multiple inequality categories; (2) extent of *articulation* of intersectionality; (3) *gendering* of policy issues and intersecting inequalities; (4) *transformative approach* to intersectionality; (5) *structural understanding* of inequality; (6) awareness/challenging of *privileges*; (7) avoiding the *stigmatization* of specific groups; (8) *consultation* of civil society in the policy-making process. These scholars treat intersectionality as an “open empirical question”: the assessment of how intersectionality is articulated by policy-makers and civil society actors is defined gradually and is not based on any predetermined idea of how an intersectional approach should look like (Lombardo & Rolandsen Agustín, 2011, p. 485). Further, they advise the performance of an “intersectionality impact assessment” to be used as regular practice prior to the adoption of policies. This quality-oriented approach has a double merit: it facilitates the understanding of “what and who is missing from [...] policy design for enhancing the quality of intersectionality” (p. 497), and stresses the added value of consulting civil society during the policy-making process. By emphasizing the role of non-institutional actors in developing more intersectionality-oriented equality policies, Lombardo and Rolandsen Agustín’s work contributes to go beyond equality institutionalization and look at the operationalization of intersectionality from a more comprehensive perspective. Nevertheless, the model they propose aims to assess exclusively the content of policies and the quality of intersectionality in policies, not their implementation (Lombardo & Rolandsen Agustín, 2011, p. 483). Similarly, by

focussing on the ways states are organised and regulated, the institutional approach presented in *Institutionalizing Intersectionality* tends to disregard the analysis of what governments do to implement their equality policies and which actors they involve in the process.

Investigating how and to what extent intersectionality is translated into policy practices requires the identification of methods going beyond the conventional focus on equality institutionalization and involving policy outputs and policy-implementation processes and practices within the scope of the analysis. In order to improve the quality of policy-making at both EU and national levels and prepare the ground for further investigations about policy implementation, Hankivsky (2012) has developed an *Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (IBPA) Framework* for “action-oriented policy methodologies” based on guiding principles and (descriptive and transformative) questions. Prior to this *Framework*, only a few models had been proposed: e.g. the models of Bishwarkarma *et al.* and Parken & Young developed in 2007 (as illustrated in Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011; Hankivsky, 2012). Whilst the first model of Bishwarkarma *et al.* proposes the “examination of each stage of policy process to determine the extent [...] to which an intersectionality approach is needed and [...] whether it is included” (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011, p. 222), the second model of Parken & Young – known as the “Multi-Strand Project” and structured according to four phases, i.e. mapping, visioning, road testing, and monitoring and evaluation – is primarily based on the investigation of a policy field and shows “the steps involved in capturing relationships between different forms of inequity as well as resulting individual and group disadvantages” (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 19). The methodological tool proposed in this article contributes to further the investigations about policy implementation by including into the analysis the actors and factors involved in the implementation process, such as relevant civil society organizations (CSOs) and projects.

The use of a consolidated set – containing both conventional institutional criteria (like institutions and legislations) and less institutionally-oriented standards (related to both policy-formulation and -implementation) – facilitates the understanding of how and to what extent intersectionality is operationalized at each policy level and translated into policy practices.

### **The Lack of Intersectional Thinking in Roma Women Policies**

With the completion of the second phase of the Eastern enlargement wave in 2007, the so-called “Roma issue” moved from being an item on the external relations agenda to a key priority of internal EU policies (Sobotka & Vermeersch, 2012, p. 804; Goodwin & De Hert, 2013, p. 16). According to the last estimates<sup>4</sup> of the Council of

Europe (CoE), approximately six million Roma live in the EU, mostly in its CEEMS. With regard to the four countries under investigation, almost 10% of the Bulgarian population is Roma, followed by 9.02% in Slovakia, 8.63% in Romania and 7.49% in Hungary. It is important to underline that accurate data on the size of the Roma population in Europe are not available, neither at national nor at European level. Nonetheless, most of the policies developed by the EU build on the CoE estimates. For practical purposes this article refers to these figures as well, notwithstanding their limits and the reservations expressed by several Romani studies scholars (see, for instance, Matras, 2015).

Within the Roma community, women are among the major victims of intersectional inequalities: ethnic and class-based discriminations are aggravated by gender-based discrimination. As specified by Kocze (2011), when violations of human rights occur, “Romani women not only confront more issues<sup>5</sup> quantitatively”, but “their experience is also qualitatively different” (p. 53) from that of both Roma men and non-Roma women. In Romania, Roma women’s life expectancy is set at the age of 60, hence being 13 years lower than the life expectancy of non-Roma women and one year lower than that of Roma men. With regard to maternal mortality rate, 0.62% in the case of Roma women dies while giving birth in comparison to 0.04% in the case of majority women (as reported in Vincze, 2013, p. 38). Concerning education rates, in Hungary only 5.8% of Roma women have vocational qualifications, in contrast to 17.5% among Roma men (Government of Hungary, 2011, p. 26). In Bulgaria, functional illiteracy is three times more frequent among Roma women than men (Government of Bulgaria, 2012, pp. 23). Similar situations are detected in Slovakia and Romania.

Despite these figures and some formal attempts to increase the awareness of the gender dimension in Roma inclusion strategies, both EU and domestic policies show a lack of intersectional thinking when addressing this particular marginalized social group. Intersectionality scholars have offered several understandings of this deficiency. According to Stoykova (2008), policy makers often interpret the inequalities of ethnicity, class, family status, and gender as “natural” in the case of Roma women. This “naturalization” of intersectional inequalities thus becomes a great obstacle in reformulating equality policies concerning Roma women (pp. 59-60). Along the same line of thought but from a different perspective, Vincze attributes part of the weakness of Roma women activism to the fact that Roma women themselves tend to consider as “natural elements of their lives” the “forms of violence [they] [endure] within their own communities”, thus remaining silent and reducing the possibilities for activists’ voices “to be heard and eventually to be transformed into actors of policy-making and factors of social change” (Vincze, 2013, p. 41). In “Re-envisioning Social Justice from the Ground Up: Including the Experiences of Romani

Women”, Oprea (2004) investigates the experience of Roma women activists in relation to both gender and anti-racist movements. She affirms that “the two terms ‘Roma’ and ‘women’ have effectively been constructed as mutually exclusive” (p. 33).

The above-mentioned studies paint a varied picture. The lack of intersectional thinking in policies addressing Roma women seems to be ascribed to several actors and to depend on a multiplicity of interlocking factors, going beyond equality institutions and legislative frameworks. The operational tool presented below aims to facilitate the incorporation of these less institutionally-oriented actors and factors into the analysis of (intersectional) equality policies, thus providing a more inclusive picture of the solutions identified by domestic and European policy-makers to address the unique situation of discrimination endured by intersectional social groups: e.g. Roma women.

### **Beyond Equality Institutionalization: Consolidating Criteria for Policy Assessment**

The methodological tool proposed by this article is based on the combination of (i) conventional institutional criteria, like (equality) institutions and legislations, and (ii) less institutionally-oriented standards, like policy formulation and articulation as well as resources allocated by national governments to support relevant CSOs and implement projects addressing specific groups “at the intersections”. As Table 1 (p. 102) shows, the use of a consolidated set allows an overall and immediate understanding of the extent to which each country addresses (intersectional) inequalities at each policy level. This enables us to identify similarities and differences among the policy-solutions proposed by each Member State. It facilitates the assessment of policy coherence at national level. Furthermore, it makes for an easy comparison of equality regimes in different countries.

The first two criteria proposed are clearly inspired by the academic works collected in *Institutionalizing Intersectionality* (Krizsan et al., 2012) and refer to the institutional mechanisms conventionally associated with the operationalization of equality policies: bodies/institutions and legislations. These criteria are articulated as follows:

(1) *Presence of relevant bodies/institutions*: This criterion makes a distinction between single- and/or multi-strand equality and anti-discrimination bodies/institutions. Single-strand institutions are subdivided in gender- and ethnicity-based institutions. Forasmuch as policies towards Roma women are used as test-cases in this article, specific bodies/institutions dealing with Roma issues are also taken into account.

**Table 1. Multiple and/or Intersectional Equality Policies towards Roma Women in CEEMS – First Comparative Results.**

(Source: own. Data collected in the period October 2013-June 2014)

Criteria				Countries			
				Bulgaria	Hungary	Romania	Slovakia
<b>1. Presence of relevant bodies/institutions</b>	Equality & Anti-discrimination	Single-strand	Gender	YES	YES	YES	YES
			Ethnicity	YES	YES	YES	YES
	Multi-strand		YES	NO	YES	NO	
	Roma issues		YES	YES	YES	YES	
<b>2. Reference to multiple and/or intersectional discrimination in national anti-discrimination &amp; equality legislation</b>				YES multiple	NO	YES multiple	NO
<b>3. Appearance of the term multiple and/or intersectional discrimination in policy documents</b>	National policy instruments	National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020	Strategy	NO	YES multiple	NO	YES multiple
			Action Plan	NO	NO	NO	NO
	International policy instruments	Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015	Presidency Plan	NO	NO	YES multiple	NO
			Action Plan	NO	NO	NO	NO
<b>4. Existence of subsidised projects and/or programs addressing Roma women</b>				YES	YES	YES	YES
<b>5. Existence of relevant subsidised CSOs</b>		(For/Of) Roma women		YES	YES	YES	YES

The comparison emerging from the application of criterion no. 1 highlights two different trends in the current CEEMS equality institutional frameworks: while Hungary and Slovakia are still based on a single-strand equality regime, Bulgaria and Romania tend, at least in theory, towards multi-strand institutions. The Romanian National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) is an autonomous public authority under the control of the Parliament with sanctioning powers and an explicit mandate to address multiple discrimination. Although data on cases of multiple discrimination are contradictory (Iordache, 2011, p. 42), through its casework this multiple-strand equality institution became aware of a disproportionate number of cases involving Roma women (EC, 2007, p. 50). Some scholars consider the casework of the NCCD an important area to follow in the future as a potential ground for developing the notion of intersectionality in Romania (Popa, 2008, p. 61). Concerning Bulgaria, the Commission for the Protection against Discrimination (CPD) consists of six standing specialised panels where single-ground discriminations are tackled plus an *ad hoc* 5-member panel dealing with multiple discrimination. Beyond its official status and mandate, no specific approach to multiple discrimination cases has been taken so far by the CPD: e.g. imposing higher sanctions to acts of discrimination based on two or more grounds. Case law on multiple discrimination is still underdeveloped and does not yet properly emphasise the specificity of multiple discrimination claims (Ilieva, 2012, p. 20). With regard to the Bulgarian National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NCCEII), its initial mandate was to advise the Government on minority and gender issues and to serve as a mechanism for cross-sector dialogue between governmental

and non-governmental organizations. Nowadays, it represents the main body in charge of Roma Integration policies, both within the *National Roma Integration Strategies* (NRIS), developed under the impetus of the European Commission, and the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015<sup>6</sup> (the Decade), an international initiative bringing together governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as Romani civil society.

Both Institutions (CPD and NCCEII) have been blamed by a group of Bulgarian NGOs for being not active enough in fighting racism towards Roma people and contributing to their effective integration. With an open letter<sup>7</sup> addressed to the Prime Minister of Bulgaria and the NCCEII Chairman, these NGOs have referred to the stasis of Roma integration in Bulgaria as “flagrant institutional passivity”.

(2) *Reference to multiple and/or intersectional discrimination in national anti-discrimination and equality legislation*: This criterion aims at identifying national laws explicitly regulating multiple and/or intersectional discrimination. Although some judicial systems, like the Hungarian one, do not explicitly address these issues but potentially allow their regulation by judicial means, case-law is not taken into account at this stage due to the scarcity of court cases on multiple and/or intersectional discrimination in the country case-studies.

In line with criterion no. 1, the legal frameworks emerging from the application of this criterion show a discrepancy between the countries entering the EU respectively in 2004 (Hungary and Slovakia) and in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania). Although none of these Member States explicitly address intersectional discrimination in their legislation, they have different positions vis-à-vis multiple discrimination.

The term “multiple discrimination” is present in both Romanian and Bulgarian anti-discrimination laws, while Hungarian and Slovakian anti-discrimination and equality legislations address multiple discrimination cases by treating inequalities hierarchically and/or relying on an open-ended list of grounds (as in the case of Hungary). In Slovakia, the only attempt to introduce a definition of multiple discrimination within the Anti-discrimination Act in 2008 was rejected by the Government (Koldinská, 2011, p. 245).

In relation to Bulgaria and Romania, it has to be highlighted that in the peak of their accession negotiations, multiple discrimination was already an issue on the EU agenda (Krizsan & Zentai, 2012, p. 197), although the term was nearly absent in EU equality legislation. In Romania, 2006 has been a crucial year for the introduction of multiple discrimination: the intense advocacy efforts made by Roma women’s groups led to the amendments of the major national legal tools on anti-discrimination and equality<sup>8</sup> and “discrimination on two or more grounds” became an “aggravating circumstance”, thus potentially punishable by harsher economic sanctions (cfr. Law 324/2006, Article 2(6), and Act 340/2006, Articles 4(h) and 50(1<sup>1</sup>)).

As specified above, the set of criteria proposed by this article intends to overcome the limits of a mere institutional approach by including less institutionally-oriented standards within the scope of the investigation. To this end, criterion no. 3 takes inspiration from the work of Lombardo and Rolandsen Agustín on *Framing Gender Intersections in the European Union* (2011). It is articulated as follows:

(3) *Appearance of the terms multiple and/or intersectional discrimination in policy documents.* This criterion focuses on policy formulation and content and aims at identifying the “intersectionality vocabulary” explicitly or implicitly used in policy documents. Along the lines of Lombardo and Rolandsen Agustín’s work, the development of criteria focused on terminology (i.e. 2 & 3) derives from the recognition of “explicitness” and “visibility” as core elements of good equality policies: the more visible problems are, the easier the identification of probable solutions. Furthermore, the analysis of policy documents at both EU and national level shows a potential, but not obvious, correlation between the use of “intersectional terms” and the recognition of intersectionality as a policy problem among policy-makers. With regard to policies addressing Roma women, the concepts of “explicitness”, “visibility” and “recognition” are particularly relevant. The invisibility of Roma women as a specific group at the intersection of several inequalities has had observable repercussions on policy-making. The presence of this criterion within our set highlights that policy formulation matters in promoting and affirming intersectionality as a policy tool. In order to facilitate and legitimate the comparison among Member States, criterion no. 3 has been applied to common policies addressing Roma inclusion in the region, i.e. the NRIS and the Decade. The application of our criteria set allows for the immediate identification of the analogies and inconsistencies between the vocabulary used in policy documents and the terminology adopted in legal tools by each country.

Although the disadvantaged situation of Roma women vis-à-vis the rest of the Roma community is clearly addressed by each Member State, the term “intersectional discrimination” is not explicit in any NRIS. It is only in the case of Hungary and Slovakia that multiple discrimination is clearly mentioned. These results contrast with the findings of criterion no. 2, where the term “multiple discrimination” appears exclusively in Bulgarian and Romanian legislation. However, it has to be underlined that although the Hungarian and Slovak NRIS seem more advanced in recognising the discrimination against Roma women as a multi-strand form of inequality causing a unique discriminatory situation, the term “multiple discrimination” disappears in the related implementing Action Plans.

With reference to the Decade, only the Romanian Presidency Plan 2005-2006<sup>9</sup> addresses multiple discrimination against Roma people in general and Roma women in particular as one of the main causes of social and economical marginalization and exclusion. The Hungarian National Action Plans contain articulate statements on

Roma women, but no explicit reference to multiple discrimination. Although most of the documents related to the Decade do not clearly mention multiple and/or intersectional discrimination against Roma women, several projects<sup>10</sup> targeting this specific group “at the intersections” have been funded under the Decade itself, mainly through the Decade Trust Fund (DTF).

The last two criteria (4 & 5) aim at assessing the policy implementation efforts of national governments in the field of equality by exploring the resources allocated for funding relevant CSOs and projects/programs. These criteria are the following:

(4) *Existence of subsidised projects and/or programs*; and (5) *Existence of relevant subsidised CSOs*: The remarkable role played by civil society in promoting intersectionality at both EU and national levels confirms the importance of investigating the involvement of non-institutional actors in developing and implementing public policies. Academic works that analyse EU equality policies show that civil society documents “are in general more advanced in terms of including intersectionality perspectives in a more explicit and elaborate manner” (Lombardo & Rolandsen Agustín, 2011, p. 496). These non-institutional actors have proven to be crucial in shaping equality and non-discrimination policies “from the bottom up”. With regard to CEEMS, Romania is a well-known example of how civil society interventions can be important in transforming equality regimes: as confirmed by several scholars (Krizsan & Zentai, 2012; Popa, 2008), the advocacy efforts of Romani women have strongly contributed to introduce the concept of “multiple discrimination” within the Romanian equality legislation and to promote intersectionality as a “critical policy tool and movement strategy” (Popa, 2008, p. 5).

The application of criterion no. 4 shows that various stakeholders (national, international, State and non-State actors) participate in the development and implementation of actions addressing Roma women’s needs in CEEMS. Several financial mechanisms are involved. Many projects/programs carried out at national level can be considered as “good practices”, e.g. the creation of kindergarten-like services for Roma children and related training sessions for their mothers in Hungary and the introduction of Roma assistants – mainly women – into schools in Slovakia. However, most of them are externally funded single initiatives not forming part of a systematic state policy aimed at intersectional equality for Roma women in Central Eastern Europe (Koldinská, 2011, p. 246). Many of the projects targeting Roma women have been funded under the Decade, especially through the DTF, administered by the World Bank and financed by contributions from all Decade countries as well as interested international partner organizations.

Among these projects, several actions address Roma women indirectly, as part of the larger Roma community. A well-known action targeting Roma women in Romania and referring to them as “one of the most vulnerable groups”, “victims of a

double discrimination, at the intersection of ethnicity and gender” is the Fem.Rom project<sup>11</sup>, implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly in partnership with the National Agency for Roma and other national and international stakeholders. Particularly relevant for the diffusion of the concept of multiple discrimination in Romania has been the *European Year of Equal Opportunities for All* (2007). On that occasion, “multiple discrimination” has been chosen as the year’s core issue and several related activities have been organised and implemented by both institutional and non-institutional actors.

As regards criterion no. 5, numerous women organizations, organizations dealing with Roma issues and Roma women organizations exist in the targeted Member States and participate with different roles (e.g. partners, beneficiaries, etc.) in projects funded and/or co-funded by international donors (mainly the EU, the Open Society Foundation and the EEA Financial Mechanism) and, in some sporadic cases, by State Aid, in particular through the Structural Funds<sup>12</sup>. Several scholars consider the involvement of NGOs decisive in intersectional discrimination cases as well as in institutionalizing intersectionality in CEEMS (Koldinská, 2009, p. 558).

In conclusion, the main comparative outcomes can be recapitulated as follows. Although Roma women are generally recognised as victims of a unique discriminatory situation characterised by the co-existence of several discrimination grounds, the concept of intersectional discrimination is not yet embedded in policies and legislation at national level and tends to be neglected and/or treated implicitly in the four country case studies. Conversely, a rather explicit use of the term “multiple discrimination” can be detected. Romania and Bulgaria explicitly address multiple discrimination in their anti-discrimination legislation and tend towards multi-strand equality institutions. Hungary and Slovakia are still based on single-strand equality regimes but their NRIS explicitly mention multiple discrimination with reference to Roma women. Implementation-wise, several gaps seem to emerge: although projects and programs addressing Roma women exist in all targeted CEEMS, most of them are *ad-hoc* actions and not long-term policy initiatives. Despite the fundamental role of civil society in shaping the discourse on multiple discrimination, public funds supporting CSOs dealing with Roma women are quite marginal or even absent and most of the financial resources are allocated by international donors.

## Conclusions

Fostering research on the operationalization of intersectionality in policies requires the development of “explicit and user-friendly methods than can more effectively translate intersectionality theory into practical approaches” (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 20).

The methodological tool proposed by this article has intended to give an empirical turn to political intersectionality theory by serving a double objective: (i) enhancing the assessment of intersectionality operationalization in equality policies at a national level, and (ii) facilitating the comparison among equality regimes – by enabling the identification of similarities and differences among the ways national governments articulate, develop and implement their strategies.

A tentative application of the proposed criteria set to policies towards Roma women in CEEMS has shown that the mere presence of multi-strand equality institutions and legislation cannot exhaustively depict the extent to which intersectionality is incorporated in the policy tissue. The existence of relevant equality machineries does not necessarily explain the recognition of intersectionality as a policy problem by policymakers, nor the existence of a political will to address intersectional inequalities. This article has shown that a more comprehensive policy analysis requires the investigation of additional criteria going beyond the logic of equality institutionalization and taking into account what governments do in practice to implement their equality policies and which actors they do involve in the process.

Notwithstanding the need for further improvement and adaptation, the proposed criteria set can serve as a valuable and operational comparative tool to be used by equality scholars to assess strengths and weaknesses of policy-making and -implementation processes. The application and development of this tool can foster research on the operationalization of intersectionality in policies and lead to the formulation of policy recommendations contributing to address inequalities in a more comprehensive, coherent and effective way.

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## Notes

1. The term “European Union” is used in the text also with regard to periods prior to the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.
2. Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000, implementing the principle of “equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin” and Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for “equal treatment in employment and occupation”.

3. Note on terminology: This article employs the term “Roma” as an umbrella encompassing different related groups throughout Europe who have similar cultural characteristics, whether sedentary or not. The use of this generic term – chosen by Romani leaders at the First World Romani Congress in 1971 and currently dominant in EU-related policy documents – has practical purposes and does not intend to underestimate the diversity of the communities it refers to, nor to neglect their cultural, social and linguistic differences. The term “Romani” is mostly used as an adjective.
4. CoE estimates on Roma population are available at <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/roma> (accessed 29/07/2015).
5. The expression “Roma women issues” refers to the problems these women encounter due to the specificity of their intersectional condition, like forced sterilization, segregated maternity wards, and so on.
6. Further information about the Decade is available at <http://romadecade.org> (accessed 21/09/2014).
7. Available at: <http://romediafoundation.wordpress.com/2013/04/10/celebrating-the-8th-of-april-2013-with-massive-protest-by-roma-representatives-in-bulgaria/> (accessed 30/09/2014).
8. Namely, the Romanian Anti-Discrimination Law (L.324/2006 amending G.O. 137/2000) and the Law on Equality between Men and Women (Act 340/2006 amending L. 202/2002).
9. The Romanian Decade Presidency Plan 2005-2006 is available at [http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9294\\_file2\\_raport\\_un\\_an\\_de\\_presedentie-deceniu-\\_en.pdf](http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9294_file2_raport_un_an_de_presedentie-deceniu-_en.pdf).
10. See, for instance, the following projects: “Social Inclusion of Roma Women” (2009-12), implemented by the Roma Women Association in Romania; “Florika – Romany Women Crafts for Better Life” (2011-12), implemented by the Regional Roma Union – Burgas, Foundation (Bulgaria); “My Dream 2” (2011-12), implemented by the Colourful Pearls Association for Roma Women in South (Hungary). The exhaustive list of projects is available at <http://romadecade.org>.
11. Further information about the Fem.RRom project is available at <http://www.femrrom.ro/en/> (accessed 01/10/2014).
12. Structural Funds are considered as national resources and may therefore constitute a State Aid. Source: <http://europeanfundingnetwork.eu/policy/state-aid> (accessed 28/01/2014).