To start of, I will tell you about the various measures that the Norwegian authorities have started up for the Roma minority in Norway. That way you will get a background picture of how the status of the group is today and how women's position is.

Only about a dozen Norwegian roma survived the Second World War and returned to Norway. Today the group has grown to approximately 300-500 people.

These belong to Vlach - Roma and the subgroup Lovara. In addition, Norway has about 5,000 Roma from Bosnia who came with the Balkan war. We also have Roma from Bulgaria and Romania who have come to Norway in the last ten years. There is very little contact and interaction between these groups.

When the group arrived back in the 60s, they lived in miserable conditions. In the 70- 80s the Norwegian government and the municipality of Oslo initiated a massive program to improve the living conditions of the Roma. The program consisted of house-building, education for adults, a separate social welfare office, schools and kindergartens.

The program initiated by the government can in many ways be considered as modern. This is because the program was built through dialogue with the leading Romas. But this was only the elderly men and they defined what the group needed.

Yet, one might argue that the authorities did not know the group well enough culturally and that they didn’t understand the resistance Vlach rom have towards integration. Many of the measures had an ulterior motive to make the group as Norwegian as they could, but the results did not match up with the measures. In the early 90th century it was decided to lay down all the measures.

In 1999, the Lovara roma of Norway had status as a national minority and in 2009 the Norwegian state drafted an action plan to improve the living conditions of Roma again. Among other things, the authorities started up an advisory service and adult education.

In 2009 There were poor conditions regarding the group.

I would call the Roma generation born in the 80s and 90s for a lost generation. Most of them have not gone to school at all and no one has ever had a regular job. Reading and writing skills are very poor and most Romas in their 30- 40 have very weak understanding about the bureaucratic system and society.

Both socially and culturally, the group had developed a life outside of society. When we started working with Roma in 2009, we therefore had to start all over again. The only thing that was different from the situation after World War II was that Roma today, materialistically, live in better conditions. The mistrust between the authorities, society and romas was really bad.

Although we have held on for many years we have not been able to implement the goals that were set with the plan to educate Romas and integrate them into the workforce and society.

I will say, though, that we have had success with another strategy, which is to make Roma history and culture better known in the community. I believe also this is also a very important strategy to reduce the mistrust between romas and the society and authorities.

Today, there is an increased emphasis type of work which promotes roma culture. Their history in Norway is written down and an apology is given for early times racial and exclusionary policy. The Norwegian state has been allocating money to establish a cultural and resource center where the romas can show their own culture, and were the common Norwegian can become familiar with the roma from the romas own perspective.

Since this seminar is all about women, I will highlight roma women's important work when it comes to promoting roma culture.

We all know that Roma women, and perhaps especially Vlach Roma women have a difficult situation.

They are seen as inferior to men in the roma community and they have a huge duty of care towards family members. Despite this, women have proved to be both initiators and the promoters of several important projects.

This means both to break out of social control. All of this work is something these women also has to do in addition to taking care of their own extended family. As well, I have seen them manage to continue working with very little encouragement from the rest of the roma environment. In fact they must withstand that others all the time tries to pull them down.

As I view it, it is an important task to work with Roma women and give them some of the encouragement that they so desperately need to be able to break out of the very traditionally pattern of the Vlach-roma community. I have seen the strength they have and I believe that they will be very important to make changes both inside they own society and outside towards the majority society.