

Second interim report

Kommissionen
**MOT ANTI
ZIGANISM**

To the Minister and Head of the Ministry of Culture

On 20 March 2014, the Swedish Government decided to establish the Commission against Antiziganism. The Commission will complement and reinforce Swedish society's efforts in this area. The Commission has been established in order to coordinate efforts to tackle antiziganism¹ and to bridge the gap in trust that exists between Roma and the rest of society.

In the Commission's terms of reference, the Government declares that Roma in Sweden are victims of prejudice and discrimination, as they are in many other countries. This is expressed in forms such as acts of violence and harassment against Roma. The Government also states that government authorities have implemented measures in recent years that have contributed to improving the situation for Roma to some extent. The work to tackle antiziganism has primarily been conducted in conjunction with work to tackle racism, but it has had a relatively hidden role. In light of this way of viewing the problem, the Government concludes that further measures are required to intensify efforts to tackle antiziganism.

The Commission's role includes gathering knowledge about antiziganism, assisting relevant actors with distributing and improving the impact of existing knowledge and identifying and disseminating good examples and measures to counter and prevent antiziganism.

The Commission's role also involves participating in the public debate and contributing to various forms of educational and informational activities. In addition, the Commission is to decide on initiatives to counter antiziganism in the public administration and schools. Finally, the Commission is to monitor developments and compile the investigations and measures concerning the issue of the registration of Roma on ethnic grounds.

Supplementary terms of reference were adopted by the Government on 21 August 2014. The Commission was tasked with drawing up and distributing a material based on *The Dark Unknown History – White Paper on Abuses and Rights Violations against Roma in the 20th Century* (Ds 2014:8). This assignment also involves producing and distributing a teachers' guide.

¹ Often referred to as "anti-Gypsyism"

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The Commission has a reference group composed of members appointed by the Government Offices of Sweden. These are Rosmari Axelsson, Hans Kaldaras, Lars Demetri, Eleonor Frankemo, Gunno Gunnmo, Rosita Grönfors, Silvija Jansson, Domino Kai, Bagir Kwiek, Gunilla Lundgren, Ingrid Schiöler, Tuula Schwartz, Nuri Selim, Emir Selimi, Michael Stankov, Angelina Dimiter Taikon, Kati Dimiter Taikon, Fred Taikon and Marian Wydow.

The Commission also has a reference group linked to the implementation of the supplementary terms of reference. The members of this are appointed by the Government Offices and are Mona Danielsson, Nadja Ek, Albert Idic, Majlis Lindberg, Manuel Tan Marti and Angelina Dimiter Taikon.

The Commission's Principal Secretary is Heidi Pikkarainen. The secretariat also consists of investigation secretaries Katarina Hammarberg, Anna Holmlin Nilsson and Anneli Tillberg, as well as assistant secretary Büsra Kaya.

The Commission will report to the Government every six months about how its work is proceeding and what measures have been implemented.

The Commission's second report describes how the Commission has exercised its mandate during its second operating period, February–August 2015. The report also contains the observations and conclusions the Commission would like to draw attention to at this stage.

Stockholm, September 2015.

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The Commission's Mandate

The Commission's primary task is to contribute to actually breaking down the antiziganistic barriers Roma face. This involves identifying measures that result in Roma being able to live lives that are free from abuse and where they are not confronted with antiziganism. The Commission's role is to foster a greater knowledge about and increased understanding of the specific type of racism antiziganism constitutes.

In its first report, the Commission has already declared that it can only be effective and legitimate if it works with and for Roma. It is a priority for the Commission that Roma influence and participation are ensured at every stage and permeate both how the Commission is organised and operates.

Over the course of its second year of activity, the Commission's work has primarily been focused on the following four areas.

Raising awareness of the concept of antiziganism

The Commission has a mandate to acquire and distribute information about antiziganism. Raising awareness of the term antiziganism is therefore one of the Commission's priorities. This involves revealing what the term means, what consequences antiziganism has for the rights of Roma and that it has its roots in a long history of State-sanctioned abuses.

This work is guided by the definition of antiziganism presented by the Delegation for Roma Issues in its report:

Antiziganism is a persistent latent structure of ideas hostile to Roma as a collective that manifests itself on an individual level as attitudes, in the culture as myths, ideology, folk traditions and imagery and in actions – social and legal discrimination, political mobilisation against Roma and collective or state violence – which results in and/or aims to alienate, drive away or wipe out Roma simply because they are Roma.²

Monitor the issue of registration on ethnic grounds

The Commission is tasked with monitoring developments and compiling the investigations and measures implemented by various actors in relation to the issue of the registration of Roma on ethnic grounds.

The Commission has restricted this task to primarily encompass the register maintained by the police in Skåne. In April, the Commission published a report containing a summary of the various decisions taken by authorities as a result of the Police Authority in Skåne having maintained an extensive

² Translated from Swedish, SOU 2010:55, page 83.

register containing data concerning Roma. This report provides an account of the impact this registration has had on the Roma community's confidence in the Police that is based on the summary and on consultations with Roma conducted by the Commission over the course of its first operating period.

Follow up the White Paper

The Commission has been tasked with drawing up and distributing an educational material based on the Government's White Paper on abuses and rights violations against Roma in the 20th century to schools and other parts of society.

Over the course of spring, the Commission has been working intensively to complete a material based on the White Paper and a teachers' handbook. The Commission is producing this material on the basis that a historical perspective can provide pupils with the opportunity to reflect in which way historical antiziganism permeates contemporary Sweden. The book is expected to be finalised by the end of September.

Forming opinion on the issue of antiziganism

One of the Commission's tasks is to participate in the public debate and contribute to various forms of educational and informational activities.

The Commission prioritises this aspect of its work as it provides an opportunity to work strategically to influence opinion.

The Commission has an active and proactive approach to the media and also prioritises participation in initiatives such as lectures and debates that contribute to increase awareness of the issue.

In all opinion-forming activities, the Commission sets out its role and mandate and how it is organised. It is emphasised that the majority of the Commission's members are Roma. This gives an indication of the importance of Roma participation in the Commission's work. It's a clear signal that increased Roma representation creates a more equal distribution of power and influence and that a change in this direction is possible for other relevant institutions as well.

The Commission's first interim report

The Commission stands by its assessment of the situation for the human rights of Roma as described in the first interim report to the Government, submitted in February 2015. In this, the Commission emphasised that antiziganism is extensive and widespread in Sweden. Roma are subject to extensive discrimination that affects all aspects of life.

In light of this, the Commission is critical of how the human rights of Roma are not given sufficient protection by Swedish authorities. The Commission believes that this sends out a signal that discrimination and abuses motivated by antiziganism are not taken seriously.

A press conference was arranged to coincide with the publication of the Commission's first interim report. There was a great deal of interest. About 20 journalists came to the press conference. The report generated about 40 articles and several reports on the radio and television. As a result of the report, questions were also asked of other concerned parties such as the Equality Ombudsman and the Minister for Culture and Democracy. This involved partly the issue of Roma seldom receiving redress when they report discrimination and partly the question of an institution for the Roma rights. This got additional actors involved in the subjects the Commission highlighted in its first interim report.

A review of how the Commission's first interim report was reported shows that the media mainly focused on the following:

- antiziganism and violations of the human rights of Roma,
- an institution for Roma rights,
- criticism of the police and the Equality Ombudsman,
- the school textbook, and
- the issue of registration.

The report has been translated into English and is available in PDF format on the Commission's website.

Gather and distribute information

In its first interim report, the Commission announced that efforts to raise awareness and form opinion are an important aspect of its work. This part of its role has to be interpreted in the light of the widespread lack of understanding that exists with respect to society's responsibility for the situation for Roma today and of how antiziganism generally affects how they are treated and how decisions relating to them are made. The Commission believes that antiziganism can only be combatted with knowledge about the origins of stereotypes concerning Roma, which require information about both the present and the past. This involves making it clear that there is a link between the State-sanctioned persecution that took place in the last century, as described in the White Paper on abuses and rights violations against Roma in the 20th century, and what we can identify is happening today.

This effort to raise awareness has also been at the heart of the Commission's work over the course of this operating period. The initiatives the Commission has implemented with the aim of increasing awareness of discrimination against Roma and of the importance of challenging and questioning antiziganism are described in the following section.

Letter to the Swedish Academy

It is important that there are words that can be used to describe discrimination and racism against Roma. The Commission therefore turned to the Swedish Academy at the beginning of February with the proposition that the word antiziganism (the word is the same in Swedish) should be included in the Swedish Academy's glossary and dictionary.

The Commission received a response from the Swedish Academy in March stating that the word antiziganism would be included in the fourteenth edition of the Swedish Academy Glossary. This edition is now on sale.

The Swedish Academy Dictionary's definition of antiziganism:

hostile attitude to Roma

The publication Antiziganism

A successful effort to tackle antiziganism should, according to the Commission, focus on systematically breaking down and questioning antiziganistic attitudes. Explicitly committing to maintaining human rights and methodically countering antiziganistic perceptions – even in the civil service – will hopefully raise awareness of how antiziganism affects us and reduce its acceptance. The ambition must be to reduce the scope for differential treatment and increase the chances of being treated as equals.

In light of this, the Commission has produced a publication that paints a picture of what antiziganism is, how antiziganism affects conditions for Roma today and historically, and some recommendations for measures that may contribute to counter antiziganism.

The publication “Antiziganism” has been sent with a covering letter to all municipalities and relevant authorities. The publication is available online, but the printed edition is finished. The Commission can conclude the demand has been particularly strong among municipalities, which have also submitted requests for other educational initiatives to the Commission. The Commission is considering printing a new edition of the publication.

Recognise 2 August as a memorial day for Roma Holocaust victims

In March 2015, Commission member and MEP Soraya Post proposed a resolution in the European Parliament that recognised the term antiziganism. Furthermore, the EU’s member states were encouraged to recognise 2 August as an official memorial day for the genocide of Roma during the Second World War. In April, the European Parliament voted in favour of the resolution and the European Commission adopted it in June.

On 2 August, in conjunction with the Swedish International Roma Film Festival and the Living History Forum, the Commission against Antiziganism commemorated the Roma victims of the Holocaust by arranging a memorial ceremony at Raoul Wallenbergs Torg in Stockholm. Commission member Diana Nyman was one of the speakers.

Via Radio Romano, Diana Nyman also raised the issue of whether the Government should establish an official memorial day for Roma victims of the Holocaust. Deputy Prime Minister Åsa Romson, who also took part in the ceremony, responded that “the Government has been clear in its statement of government policy that we need to work actively against antiziganism and this needs to be done on many fronts and with a variety of tools. An official memorial day may of course be one such tool”.³

The Commission intends to follow up the resolution’s demands and review further opportunities to draw the Swedish Government’s attention to the significance of an official memorial day.

Monitor the issue of hate crimes with antiziganistic motives

Roma are victims of hate crimes with antiziganistic motives. According to the latest statistics from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå), there has been an increase in the number of reports concerning hate crimes in recent years. In 2014, there were around 290 such reports, representing an increase of 23 per cent compared to 2013 and the highest level so far.⁴

³ Radio Romano, 2 August 2015.

⁴ Brå (2015:13), Hatbrott 2014 [Hate Crimes 2014].

It is often stated that it is a prerequisite for the authorities responsible to take action that these crimes be reported. A reasonable assumption is that the likelihood of reporting such crimes is affected by the extent to which reports are investigated and lead to further action. It is therefore worrying that very few reported hate crimes with antiziganistic motives lead to anyone being held responsible. According to Brå, only three per cent of reports concerning hate crimes in 2013 led to a prosecution. The Commission also notes that investigations concerning these reports are closed within a year to a greater extent than is the case for hate crimes targeting other groups.

It is positive that more Roma are reporting hate crimes, but it can be assumed that a very large number still go unreported. The fact that so few reports lead to further action is both alarming and an indication that further action is required.

Given this, the Commission has instructed the researcher Isabel Schoultz, criminologist from Lund University, to analyse the police's criminal investigations resulting from reports to the police concerning hate crimes with antiziganistic motives made in 2012 and 2013. This study will propose measures to improve the clear-up rate.

The available statistics do not indicate how many of the reported hate crimes are reported by people who have come here from other EU countries and are in Sweden temporarily. In this context, the Commission would like to highlight an investigation into attacks against EU citizens published in the magazine Expo in June 2015. This investigation is based on events reported in the mass media over the course of the past 18 months. It indicates that there have been at least 76 incidents, several of them very serious. Expo has noted 23 cases of assault, 12 of arson and 27 of harassment, in many cases combined with assault and threats. The picture that emerges is consistent with the Commission's knowledge of the very seriously vulnerable position in which many Roma EU citizens live when they are in Sweden.

The Commission concludes that there appears to have been a serious escalation in cases of harassment against people from other countries – many of them Roma – who beg or collect deposit bottles. Several serious incidents have taken place in only the last few weeks. Violent attacks have targeted temporary camps, often at night. Tents have been cut to pieces, caravans burned and people sprayed with water and, in some cases, lighter fluid and other harmful liquids. Bombardment and assault with tools has also taken place.

At the same time, there has been an increase in hateful propaganda in certain social media. Some of the hate sites have published detailed information about where the various temporary camps have been set up and how they can be reached.

Based on its remit, the Commission believes it is vital to highlight hate crimes with antiziganistic motives that affect this group. However, one hypothesis is that people in this group are generally less likely to report crimes committed against them. Roma expert Tiberiu Lacatus has therefore been tasked with conducting interviews with the target group and civil society actors with the aim of learning more about antiziganistic hate crimes targeting this group.

The ambition of the reports concerning hate crimes is for them to form the basis of the Commission's future efforts to highlight the effects of antiziganism. They will be presented in conjunction with a seminar in autumn 2015.

Conference on the rights of women

Antiziganism affects women and men to different extents and in different ways. In addition, experiences of discrimination often interact with other factors such as age, religion and disability. In order to learn more about how antiziganism affects Roma women's rights, the Commission held a conference in May involving 26 Roma women from different parts of the country.

The morning was devoted to a presentation of the Commission and the White Paper. Roma expert Miranda Vuolasranta was especially invited in order to illustrate the situation of Roma women from the perspective of international law.

In the light of what emerged at the conference, the Commission can conclude that discrimination against Roma women is both serious and extensive. This manifests in everyday situations, e.g. when Roma women buy food, fill their cars with petrol or go to the doctor. Violence or threats of violence on public transport, in the park or on the way home from work are common. The point of view that discrimination against Roma is often discussed in gender-neutral terms was also put forward at the conference. The Commission believes it is important to specifically highlight the Roma women's experiences of discrimination at work, in the education system and when they come into contact with the authorities.

The conference was also devoted to discussing, based on the White Paper, what was characteristic for the policies of the 20th century. There was discussion concerning some of the consequences the antiziganistic past has had for human rights today and of how there are too few people who understand that this past is an explanation of why many Roma are still in an unequal position. Many have lost their language and their culture. During the conference, the demand for compensatory measures from the Government in order to strengthen Roma culture and language was raised.

Another subject taken up was how the forcible taking of Roma children into care has been part of a policy of assimilation that has been pursued in Sweden. The view that this issue has not been given sufficient attention in the White Paper was discussed. In addition, there was discussion of the

circumstance that even today Roma report perceived discrimination in conjunction with the social services making decision in cases concerning the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act. The participants were united in the opinion that this is a very complicated issue that requires specific initiatives from the National Board of Health and Welfare and the municipalities.

During the conference, the participants agreed on five recommendations that can counter antiziganism affecting women.

- Strengthen Roma women's opportunities to organise.
- Specific initiatives to tackle hate crimes against Roma women.
- Resources to revitalise language and culture.
- Specific initiatives to prevent discrimination within social services.
- Specific initiatives against discrimination at work.

Roma women's experiences of living in Sweden provide insight into how unequal Swedish society is. The Commission believes it is very serious that discrimination against Roma women is so extensive and widespread. The Commission intends to devote special attention to following up the recommendations and working to reveal how the rights of Roma women are affected by antiziganism. This will involve initiatives such as dialogue with the National Board of Health and Welfare and also through specific actions to make hate crimes visible. The Commission's continued work to analyse existing and potential new institutions' significance to reinforcing the human rights of Roma is also significant to the follow-up of the recommendations.

Reaction to a case of antiziganism

The Commission follows up information about antiziganism in the media with the aim of elucidating facts about such cases as a basis for the ambition to raise awareness of the term antiziganism and shape opinions against antiziganism.

In May 2015, the newspaper GT reported how a tram driver from Västtrafik had thrown four Roma women off a tram. The article states that the driver, according to a witness, did not check whether the women had valid tickets. The witness has also told GT that she thought the driver threw the women off the tram simply because they were Roma. In light of this report, the Commission invited Västtrafik to comment on this incident and asked if it believed there were grounds to take action in order to ensure that Roma are not discriminated against in its operations.

Västtrafik's response describes how the company works against discrimination, how, as a result of this incident and the Commission's letter, it has had a conversation with the driver, asked him to give his version and talked about how all forms of discrimination are unacceptable. Västtrafik has also noted that the resources used for driver training may need to be reviewed as a result of this incident. In a response to Västtrafik, the Commission has offered its expertise on issues relating to antiziganism.

Registration on ethnic grounds

A not insignificant aspect of the Commission's work has been devoted to following up the investigation into the Police Authority in Skåne's databases concerning Roma that were revealed in September 2013. The Commission has presented a report on this investigation.

In particular, the Commission has monitored whether the way this data was processed can be considered to have been registration or surveying on ethnic grounds, as well as the question of redress in the form of accountability and compensation.

Several of the investigating authorities have criticised the fact that shortcomings at the time of registration have led to the protection of privacy being put at risk. Swedish Commission on Security and Integrity Protection (SIN) has also assessed that the database "Kringresande" [Travelling] was illegal in several respects. The Equality Ombudsman stated that, on the basis of these circumstances, it could not rule out the possibility that ethnic profiling takes place in the police's crime-fighting operations.

The issue of accountability has been investigated by both the Swedish Prosecution Authority and the Parliamentary Ombudsman. The Prosecution Authority, which primarily investigated if this was a case of misuse of office, found that it was not possible to prove a crime had been committed. However, the Parliamentary Ombudsman, which focused its investigation on accountability for the shortcomings established by SIN, directed serious criticism at the Police Authority in Skåne, the heads of the county criminal investigation department, the chief commissioner of the county police department, the head of the criminal intelligence service in Lund and the police officer who built up the databases.

This criticism resulted in the National Police Commissioner reporting one of the identified police commissioners to the Government Disciplinary Board for Higher Officials. However, the case was dismissed as the period of limitation had run out a number of weeks previously. Aside from the potential for internal action within the police service, this closed the door on the possibility of holding any individual to account.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman also addressed the issue of registration on ethnic grounds in its decision. It concluded that the serious shortcomings in the way the police handled the personal data resulted in "a more or less permanent register of a large number of people of Roma origin being built up" and that the database therefore "in practice attained the character of a register of ethnic affiliation". The Ombudsman also emphasised that these circumstances, as well as the fact that registration affected an already vulnerable group, further reinforced the seriousness of what took place.

In the days immediately following the Ombudsman's decision, over fifty Roma contacted the Commission's secretariat to obtain information about how to find out if they were included in the register. The Commission's impression is that it primarily was older people who got in contact. Many said that because of the Ombudsman statement, it was now worthwhile to turn to the authorities to find out if they were included in the register.

The Ombudsman's clear assessment and standpoint on the issue of ethnic registration has thus had a significant impact on Roma's confidence in the justice system and opportunities to assert their rights. According to the Commission, it is a concrete example of how society's clear standpoint against violations of Roma rights has a significance for human rights.

The Commission has a positive view of the Ombudsman's statement and the effect it has had. At the same time, the Commission concludes that the investigatory authorities' long turnaround times have led to major difficulties demanding personal accountability for the rights violations the registers involved. This aspect has worsened the lack of trust further.

In May 2014, the Office of the Chancellor of Justice (JK) decided that all those who had been registered are entitled to damages of SEK 5 000 based on the serious shortcomings identified by SIN. This compensation was thus not based on the aspect of registration on ethnic grounds. This issue was instead being addressed in an ongoing damages process that Civil Rights Defenders is pursuing in court as the representative of eleven Roma.

Based on its contact with Roma, the Commission can conclude that the Skåne police's registration has had serious consequences for the legal and human rights of Roma.

- Roma's trust in the police and other authorities has been damaged further, which has an impact on the likelihood of them reporting crimes.
- The tendency for Roma to feel obliged to hide their ethnic affiliation has grown.
- The antiziganistic prejudice that Roma are criminals has been reinforced, which leads to greater vulnerability.

The consultations conducted by the Commission have confirmed that more distinct and forceful action will be demanded in order to repair the damage caused by the Skåne police's registration.

There must be guarantees to ensure that this scandal is the last of its kind. All registration on ethnic grounds must be prevented. To this end, the handling of personal data within all relevant authorities must continually be checked. SIN and the Swedish Data Protection Authority have a vital role in this. Following the revelations about the registration by the Skåne police, SIN has reviewed how several other police authorities handle sensitive personal data. Shortcomings were also found during these investigations, which indicates that continued checks are required.

The Data Protection Authority has specifically investigated this aspect within social services and the municipal housing companies. Such random sampling is purposeful. In addition to such activities, the Commission recommends there be an investigation into whether the legal protection against registration on ethnic grounds can be strengthened, including a review of the Discrimination Act (2008:567) in accordance with the communication the Equality Ombudsman submitted to the Government on 20 February 2014.

In terms of trust in the police, the Commission's understanding has been that an official apology for the Skåne police's registration would be highly significant. The Commission's report into the registration issue was also discussed with the National Police Commissioner, Dan Eliasson, at a meeting in April 2015. During this meeting, he apologised for the registration of Roma, which he also did in an article published in the newspaper DN.⁵

At the meeting with the National Police Commissioner, the Commission also emphasised the importance of following up the apology with other measures that specifically focus on preventing and countering antiziganism. One example is to draw up a concrete and effective action plan to counter antiziganistic attitudes and approaches within the police service. The importance of involving Roma in this work cannot be sufficiently stressed.

The police have a key role when it comes to protecting Roma against crimes and rights violations and are therefore also an important actor in efforts to build trust. The police leadership openly talking about and distancing themselves from antiziganism may also have a positive effect in other areas of society that have an impact on the rights of Roma. Consequently, the Commission intends to continue its dialogue with the Police Authority.

The school textbook – Antiziganism då och nu [Antiziganism then and now]

The Commission is in the closing stages of the process of completing a school textbook that describes Sweden's antiziganistic history and how this manifests in the present. Material from the White Paper has been adapted to reach the target group and is complemented with links to human rights, photographs, additional interviews with Roma and a chapter based on Roma's descriptions of how they work for human rights today.

⁵ Published in Dagens Nyheter on 8 May 2015.

Opinion forming

Over the course of the first half of 2015, the Commission has been able to get eight op-ed articles published in national media; in Expressen, SVT Opinion, Dagens Arena, ETC, Metro and Feministiskt Perspektiv.

In the op-ed article “Ta ansvar för antiziganismen!” [Take responsibility for antiziganism],⁶ the Commission informs readers that the publication “Antiziganism” has been sent to each of the country’s municipalities and selected authorities. The Commission argues that it is high time for the country’s authorities and municipalities to take responsibility and counter antiziganism.

“Romer måste få upprättelse efter Skånepolisens register” [Roma must receive redress for the Skåne police’s register]⁷ was published in conjunction with the Commission publishing the report “Registrering av romer” [Registration of Roma]. In this article, the Commission emphasises that the Skåne police’s register has acquired the character of a register of ethnic affiliation and that the police’s actions have had far-reaching consequences for the human rights of Roma. In the article, the Commission demands that the Government ensure that forceful and effective action is taken within the police service to guarantee that nothing similar happens again. This involves a concrete action plan to counter antiziganistic attitudes and approaches within the police service, a review of the legislation protecting against ethnic profiling and the implementation of systematic checks of how authorities handle sensitive personal data.

“Tiggeridebatten spär på unkna fördomar” [The begging debate aggravates stale prejudices]⁸ addresses how the proposal to ban begging supports the prejudice that Roma are criminal and untrustworthy. The article points out that the current discussion about evictions and demands to ban EU citizens’ begging strongly resemble how measures targeting Roma have been discussed historically.

“Skilj på offer och förövare i tiggeridebatten” [Differentiate between victims and perpetrators in the begging debate]⁹ highlights that the debate about organised begging has taken a wrong turn – guilt is ascribed to the victims, not the perpetrators. The Commission wants to focus on the hate crimes that impoverished EU citizens fall victim to.

In “Fem punkter för att stärka våra rättigheter” [Five points to reinforce our rights]¹⁰, 26 Roma women write about the five points that were drawn up during the women’s conference the Commission arranged the week before the article was published. They demand greater opportunities for Roma

6 Published in Dagens Arena on 2 April 2015.

7 Published in SVT Opinion on 16 April 2015.

8 Published in Metro on 8 May 2015.

9 Published in Dagens Arena on 7 June 2015.

10 Published in Expressen on 15 June 2015.

women to organise, particular initiatives against hate crimes against Roma women and specific initiatives to prevent discrimination within social services.

In “Upprepade avhysningar är ingen lösning” [Repeatedly evicting people is no solution]¹¹, the Commission argues that there is an omission in the Government’s proposals concerning EU citizens who beg. The Government wants to speed up evictions of visiting migrants from sites where they do not have permission to spend the night. But the Commission sets out that no ideas were presented about where those who are evicted are to go and states that there needs to be a national policy in order to come up with a tenable solution.

In “Se tiggande romer som människor” [See begging Roma as human beings]¹², the Commission reasserts its position that respect for human rights demands that no evictions are carried out if there is no reasonable alternative housing solution. Proposals to criminalise begging were also criticised.

“Antiziganism handlar om myter – inte om romer” [Antiziganism is about myths – not about Roma] is a line from the chair of Unga romer [Young Roma], Emir Selimi’s op-ed article “Säg aldrig ‘antiziganism’ – säg antiromism!” [Never say ‘antiziganism’ – say anti-Romanyism]¹³, in which he argues that antiziganism is an insulting and racist term and that the Commission has not accepted his request to use the word “antiromism” [anti-Romanyism] instead of “antiziganism”. The Commission’s response is that the term “antiziganism” isn’t about Roma themselves, rather the majority society’s prejudice against “zigenare” [gypsies] – the root of the word “ziganism”. In addition, the Commission argues that there is a historical component to the term that is lacking from “antiromism”.

The Commission is now well-known and an actor to which it is natural to turn in the debate about antiziganism. The Commission also wants to work to ensure that Roma voices are heard on issues that touch on antiziganism. Thanks to these articles, the Commission has highlighted several pertinent aspects of antiziganism and worked to involve Roma civil society in the public debate.

Other articles

The editor of the Socialmedicinsk tidskrift [Journal of Social Medicine] invited the Commission to write three articles for the special issue “Den nya utsattheten – om EU-migranter och tiggeri” [The new vulnerability – EU migrants and begging].¹⁴ “Därför kommer de hit” [Why they come here] deals with the antiziganism and structural discrimination Roma from primarily Bulgaria and Romania come up against and that leads to some of them coming to Sweden to try and make a living. “Sveriges antiziganistiska historia” [Sweden’s antiziganistic history] addresses Sweden’s long history of

11 Published in SVT Opinion on 25 June 2015.

12 Published in ETC on 10 August 2015.

13 Published in Feministiskt Perspektiv on 18 August 2015.

14 Socialmedicinsk tidskrift, 2015 volume 92 number 3, “Den nya utsattheten – om EU-migranter och tiggeri”.

persecuting and driving away Roma and how the continuity of antiziganism affects Roma today. The article was written together with the Roma experts who were connected to the work on the White Paper. “Att reagera mot antiziganism” [Reacting against antiziganism] deals with how public-sector actors in particular have a responsibility to react against antiziganism.

Forum for Roma voices

An important aspect of the Commission’s work involves revealing Roma voices and perspectives. Columns about antiziganism are continually published on the Commission’s website. The aim is to give primarily Roma a platform where they can make their voices heard and to make Roma’s work to combat antiziganism visible.

Over the course of spring 2015, the Commission has published three columns on its website: Fred Taikon and Bengt O Björklund from É Romani Glinda wrote about the Skåne police’s illegal registration of Roma, Marian Wydow from the Roma Information and Knowledge Centre in Malmö discussed problems with the term integration and Jenny Jansson Pearce and Ylva L. Hartmann from the Swedish Foundation for Human Rights wrote about “begging” from an international legal perspective.

Work with the media

The media is, as indicated, a prioritised channel for the Commission to reach out with its message. The Commission reaches the media via press releases (the Commission has sent out six press releases over the course of this period) or through direct contact with individual journalists.

The Commission wants to emphasise that Roma media such as Radio Romano and É Romani Glinda are significant to forming opinion about Roma rights and antiziganism. The Commission intends to return to this issue with proposals that contribute to strengthening Roma media channels.

The Commission can conclude that the interest in its work has increased in the media in spring 2015. This is obvious through the fact that journalists contact the Commission for statements concerning antiziganism or Roma rights and that the Commission is asked to write op-ed articles.

Outward-facing activities

The Commission has taken part in seminars and events on about 20 occasions – primarily within Sweden. The following refers specifically to:

- Rättighetscentrum Västerbotten (Västerbotten rights centre), Sensus and Rung (association for travellers, young, new and old) seminar on antiziganism on 5 March: Katarina Hammarberg held a presentation on the White Paper and the Commission's work.
- Municipal network, Eskilstuna, 13 March: Katarina Hammarberg and Anneli Tillberg held a presentation on the Commission's first interim report and proposals for an institution for Roma rights.
- International Roma Day, 8 April: in Stockholm, Diana Nyman and Katarina Hammarberg participated in an event organised by the Living History Forum and the County Administrative Board in Stockholm. In Malmö, Romskt Kulturcenter (Roma Culture Centre), Erland Kaldaras arranged an event in which Anneli Tillberg participated.
- Luleå Municipality's conference "Romsk inkludering – en konferens om rätten till innanförskap" [Roma inclusion – a conference on the right to inclusion] took place between 22–23 April: Diana Nyman held a presentation on the work of the Commission.
- Södertörn University, 21 May: Thomas Hammarberg lectured on antiziganism.
- The Parliamentary Ombudsman, 8 May: Thomas Hammarberg lectured on antiziganism.
- Tater/romaniutvalget (Norwegian Roma committee) ceremony in Norway between 2–3 June: Heidi Pikkarainen held a presentation on the White Paper and the Commission's activities.
- The Ministry of Culture, 9 June: Thomas Hammarberg lectured on the Commission and antiziganism.
- Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 23 April: Thomas Hammarberg and Diana Nyman participated in a seminar on the Roma Holocaust.
- Civil Rights Defenders, 8–10 April: Diana Nyman lectured on the White Paper and the Commission.

Other communication activities

The Commission set up a Facebook page in March. This is used to publish news and posts about the Commission's work. The Facebook page has nearly 400 likes and the number is increasing every week. Posts published there reach an audience of about 1000 people and this number increases each time a post is published. Each post is liked an average of 20 times.

Weekly news updates that reflect the Commission's activities are also published on the Commission's website: www.motantiziganism.se.

Other work

Advice and support

Over the course of this operational period, the Commission has also received many telephone calls from Roma who want advice and support with regard to a variety of issues. As mentioned above, over fifty people called the Commission following the Parliamentary Ombudsman's statement in order to find out if they had been registered. Many of the other telephone calls have been about the forcible taking of children into care.

One conclusion is that advice and support are an unavoidable aspect of the Commission's work and will probably continue to be so under its continuing remit. These telephone conversations provide the Commission with a good picture of the situation and of the issue Roma believe are most pressing. In addition, it is obvious that the sheer number of calls indicates that there is great need for such a service.

Institution for Roma rights

The issue of some form of institution for Roma rights was brought to the fore during the consultations with Roma the Commission conducted in autumn 2014. At these meetings, Roma described the shortcomings they feel there are with the current measures and authorities – including a lack of opportunities for Roma to influence decisions that concern themselves. At these meetings, there were discussions concerning whether the creation of a new institution could be one possible solution to reinforcing the human rights of Roma.

The idea of establishing such an institution is nothing new. This has previously been suggested by Roma activists and was also one of the proposals the Delegation for Roma Issues addressed in its official report from 2010. The issue has now been subject to renewed discussion involving the reference group that is linked to the Commission and with representatives of Roma organisations.

On top of that, the Commission has met with the Swedish Arts Council, the Roma Information and Knowledge Centre in Malmö, the Swedish Committee Against Anti-Semitism and Romskt Kulturcenter in Malmö. During this process, the Commission visited two institutions in Norway, Kulturfonden för resande (Traveller's cultural foundation) and Glomdalsmuseet (Glomdal museum) and had a consultative meeting on this issue with the Equality Ombudsman, the National Agency for Education and the Living History Forum. This issue has also been discussed with the municipal network for Roma inclusion.

In an op-ed article in DN, the Government has announced that it will be submitting a proposal to the Parliament that a special institution for human rights be established of the type that have already been set up in other European countries.¹⁵ The Commission is supportive of this initiative. Such an institution could contribute to reinforcing Roma's position and to countering antiziganism. The Commission gladly contributes its opinions on how such an institution could be organised to this end.

The issue of the institutional framework for a reinforcement of the protection for the human rights of Roma will be pursued in autumn. This analysis will cover what must be done in order to ensure Roma influence in decision-making that concerns Roma's situation and future.

¹⁵ Dagens Nyheter, 7 July 2015.

Concluding comments

Some progress has been made in the efforts to tackle antiziganism, which this report indicates. However, the Commission believes there is much still to be done. Antiziganism affects the lives of Roma in Swedish society.

The fact that many Roma feel they are forced to hide their Roma identity should be an eye-opener. Similarly, the frequent reports concerning harassment of Roma or their being denied access to restaurants, hotels or shops. These are situations that particularly affect Roma women. Children are often present at these occasions. Consequently, the children witness their parents' rights being violated at the same time as their own rights are violated.

The Commission also notes that Roma have long been reporting that social services use forcible means in situations where they as citizens should have access to protection and support. This is particularly pertinent with respect to cases where children are taken into care.

Over the course of the remainder of its term of office, the Commission will continue to identify shortcomings and to propose measures in order for Roma to be able to feel that their rights are actually respected in Swedish society.

When the Commission acts publicly against antiziganism, for example through statements or articles, there are, as a rule, racism and hateful attacks on social media.

Hateful websites agitate against vulnerable visitors from other EU countries, many of them Roma, and point out the places they spend the night. A series of very serious violent crimes have been committed against these people.

Hate crimes committed against vulnerable visitors are rarely reported, the victims fear they would be subject to reprisals and have no confidence that there will be a serious investigation. It has also been shown that reports from Roma concerning hate crimes seldom lead to prosecution or other action.

There needs to be a mobilisation in Swedish society against antiziganistic prejudices and their aggressive, racist manifestations.

This involves pursuing a process that aims to make authorities ensure the human rights of Roma. In the immediate future, the focus will be on the specific form of antiziganism that targets Roma women, hate crimes with antiziganistic motives and the treatment of Roma by social services.

The Commission against Antiziganism is a committee appointed by the Swedish Government. The Commission is to supplement and reinforce society's initiatives against antiziganism. The Commission's tasks include gathering knowledge on antiziganism, helping to spread existing knowledge and increase its impact and identifying and passing on good examples of measures and methods to counter and prevent antiziganism. The Commission is also to reach an opinion on which initiatives the Commission can carry out or contribute towards to counter antiziganism in the public sector and in schools.