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| **MINISTERS’ DEPUTIES** | CM Documents | **[CM/Cong(2017)Rec388-final](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Cong(2017)Rec388-final)** | 22 February 2017 |

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| **“The situation of Roma and Travellers in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe” ‒**  **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe Recommendation 388 (2016)**  (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 22 February 2017 at the 1278th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies) |

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Recommendation 388(2016) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on “The situation of Roma and Travellers in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe” and has brought it to the attention of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues (CAHROM) and of the Joint Council of Youth.

2. The Congress will be aware that improving the situation of Roma[[1]](#footnote-1) in Europe has long been a priority for the Committee Ministers. The implementation of its “Strasbourg Declaration on Roma” of 2010 remains high on its agenda, most recently illustrated by its approval of a Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) which prioritises the Organisation’s action for the coming years into three areas: (1) to tackle anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination and crimes more effectively; (2) to demonstrate innovative models for inclusive policies for the most vulnerable; (3) to promote innovative models for local-level solutions. These focus points should contribute to responding to some of the concerns raised by the Congress. The Committee of Ministers would recall that the Action Plan aims to offer targeted support to member States on relevant inclusion policies and to implement result-oriented projects with a concrete impact.

3. With regard to the specific context raised by the Congress recommendation, the Committee of Ministers recognises that the general rise in extremism, intolerance and xenophobia across Europe has had negative repercussions in several areas of society and that the more vulnerable groups, not least the Roma and Travellers, are often the first victims. It notes in this context the particular responsibility which lies with public officials in avoiding and combatting the dissemination of hate speech, including against the Roma. It invites member States to give particular consideration to paragraph 5 of the recommendation. The Committee also recalls in this context the recommendations made by the Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) to member States regarding the integration of Roma and the fight against anti-Gypsyism.

4. The Committee of Ministers is aware of the concerns that the increased flows of migrants and refugees towards Europe may have financial and political consequences and ultimately lessen or divert the efforts underway to promote the inclusion of Roma. The Committee concurs with the Congress that member States should continue to have integration strategies and anti-discrimination legislation and policies which allow for all possible cases of discrimination to be addressed, including those confronted by Roma and Travellers, whilst taking care to avoid suggesting situations of competition when considering one population group (such as migrants) in relation to another (Roma). The Committee of Ministers notes that when planning for integration policies of migrants, the good practices and lessons learned in the social inclusion/integration of persons belonging to marginalised communities like the Roma could bring a useful contribution.

5. The Committee of Ministers would also take the opportunity to underline the importance for governments and public authorities to ensure that their national policies have the capacity to respond to the particular difficulties faced by Roma women, who are particularly vulnerable to gender-related human rights violations or multi-discrimination. In this respect, it welcomes the new joint programme between the Council of Europe and the European Commission on Access of Roma and Traveller Women to Justice (JUSTROM), which aims to provide legal assistance and legal aid for Roma and Traveller women victims of anti-Gypsyism and any form of discrimination and violence. It would also inform the Congress that work is also currently underway on a draft Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation on Improving Access to Justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe.

6. Similarly, the Committee of Ministers notes that young people in Roma communities are also faced with specific obstacles and challenges to integration. Support and assistance to young people is fundamental for bringing about positive social and economic change within Roma and Travellers’ communities. In this respect, the Committee of Ministers would draw particular attention to the Joint Council of Youth’s Guidelines for the implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan for 2016-2017, as well as to the manual “Mirrors – combating anti-Gypsyism through human rights education” , particularly useful for training and awareness raising activities.

7. The Committee of Ministers would also stress that the important role of the media, including social networks and online communication services, should not be neglected as their potential influence in either tempering or on the other hand fuelling negative stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against Roma and Travellers can be considerable. It encourages member States to take all appropriate action through regulation and/or the promotion of media self-regulation and other measures such as media education to combat the dissemination of such stereotypes, with full respect for the independence of the media.

8. Finally, the Committee encourages the Congress to continue its valuable work in promoting the inclusion of the Roma and Travellers at the local and regional level.

9. The Committee would recall the need to take with account the plurality and specificity of the approaches of member States with a view to bring solutions adapted to the problems encountered by the Roma and Travellers.

1. The terms “Roma and Travellers” are being used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term *“Gens du voyage”*, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)