

31st SESSION

The situation of Roma and Travellers¹ in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe

Recommendation 388(2016)²

1. In its declaration of 1 February 2012,³ the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe expressed its concern over the rise of anti-Gypsyism, anti-Roma rhetoric and violent attacks against Roma in Europe. It called on governments and public authorities to swiftly and publicly condemn incidents of hate speech or hate crime, as well as to ensure national strategies for social inclusion in the field of housing, education, health care and employment have a strong component on anti-discrimination, for which it called on member States to implement anti-discrimination legislation.

2. In its Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)5 the Committee of Ministers recommended to member States to adopt coherent, comprehensive and adequately resourced national and regional strategies with short- and long-term action plans, targets and indicators for implementing policies that address legal and social discrimination against Roma and Travellers and enforce the principle of equality; to monitor the implementation of these strategies and to include relevant stakeholders such as regional and local authorities, self-governing bodies, Roma and Traveller organisations and the broader public in the implementation.

3. Resolution 1740(2010) of the Parliamentary Assembly on the situation of Roma in Europe called on member States to adopt national action plans and strengthen their efforts for their implementation, not least by ensuring implementation at the local level.

4. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe has underlined that he has “encountered one serious human rights problem in practically every member state - the prolonged exclusion and discrimination of the Roma population”, which he said could be reversed with a little political will.⁴ In a recent statement, he called on member States to fight racism and discrimination against Travellers, whose way of life is still not respected in many member States of the Council of Europe.⁵

5. In light of the above, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, keeping in mind all recommendations issued by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and building up on its own recommendations to the member States, recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite member States to:

a. rise to the challenge set by the prevailing political and social situation exacerbated by phenomena such as violent extremism and the refugee influx by turning it into an opportunity to review their integration strategies in order to systematically address the Roma and Traveller inclusion dimension;

1 The term “Roma and Travellers” is being used 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.

2 Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 20 October 2016 and adopted by the Congress on 21st October 2016, 3rd sitting (see Document [CPL31\(2016\)03final](#), rapporteur: John WARMISHAM, United-Kingdom (L, SOC)).

3 <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=Decl%2801.02.2012%29&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383&direct=true>

4 <http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/roma-inclusion-is-mission-possible>

5 <http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/travellers-time-to-counter-deep-rooted-hostility>

- b.* adopt anti-discrimination legislation and policies which are in line with international and European human rights standards to ensure that Roma and Travellers as European citizens enjoy legal and social equality;
- c.* develop the legislative framework to overcome institutional anti-Gypsyism⁶ and manifestations thereof such as segregation (spatial or in schools) and forced evictions, in order to facilitate local government policy making and action in support of Roma and Traveller inclusion;
- d.* provide legal remedies for victims of anti-Gypsyism, whether institutional or social, that grant victims compensation and satisfaction, and deter potential perpetrators from discriminating against Roma and Travellers;
- e.* provide local and regional authorities with own sufficient financial resources or transfers to enable them to address the Roma and Traveller communities' needs;
- f.* actively and publicly condemn and counter public manifestations of anti-Gypsyism in the form of hate speech, discrimination, threats, intimidation and racially motivated violence, whether by individuals or organised groups, and take steps to ensure that the law is enforced effectively and in a non-discriminatory manner by the police and other responsible agencies.

⁶ Anti-Gypsyism is a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination. – European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), GPR 13, 2011.