THE CONGRESS
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL
AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 315 (2011)\(^1\)
The situation of Roma\(^2\) in Europe:
a challenge for local
and regional authorities

1. Many of the 10–12 million Roma living in the 47 member
countries of the Council of Europe suffer extreme marginalisation
and live in very poor conditions. They are denied full
access to their social rights, such as quality education,
employment, health care and housing. Not only are their
human rights not respected, they are also trampled under
foot. In addition, they suffer widespread discrimination and
anti-Gypsyism, and are victims of hate speech, harassment
and violence.

2. Member states are responsible for protecting the human
rights of all members of society and, considering that eco-
nomic and social rights are human rights, they must ensure
they are also accessible to the Roma population without
discrimination.

3. Achieving the social inclusion of Roma has been included
in the policy programmes of many member states although
national responses have been variable. National action plans
full of good intentions have been drawn up, but their impact
has been limited.

4. Local and regional authorities have been criticised for
inaction or for failing to carry out central government poli-
cies on Roma issues; however, government policies have
not always included provisions for translation into local
action and the division of competencies between the
different levels of government is not always clear.

5. Local and regional authorities may also face obstacles
such as limitations to their legal competencies or inadequate
financial means.

6. In the light of the above and of the conclusions of the
Summit of Mayors on Roma organised by the Congress on
22 September 2011 in Strasbourg, the Congress of Local
and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe recom-
mends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of
Europe call on member states to:

\(a\) consider recognising Roma as a “national minority”
(where this has not yet been done) in order to ensure that
Roma have protection under international law (and in par-
ticular the Framework Convention for the Protection of
National Minorities – ETS No. 157), especially as regards
their access to rights at the local level;

\(b\) ensure that national strategies on Roma issues incorporate
appropriate provision for effective implementation at the
local level, including by ensuring that local and regional
authorities have the necessary powers and responsibilities to
undertake this task, as well as access to sufficient resources
and expert support;

\(c\) support local and regional initiatives for Roma inclusion
and establish appropriate frameworks for close co-operation
to ensure that national strategies to promote Roma inclusion
are implemented effectively at local level;

\(d\) support in this regard the establishment of a European
Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, decided
by the Summit of Mayors on Roma;

\(e\) explore how Roma can contribute to and benefit from
social security and taxation regimes;

\(f\) include representatives of local and regional authorities in
the design and monitoring of national strategies/action plans
for Roma, making use of national networks of municipalities
and/or regions;

\(g\) implement General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on
combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma,
adopted by the European Commission against Racism and
Intolerance (ECRI) in June 2011;

\(h\) prohibit in law and practice the segregation of Roma chil-
dren (whether in mainstream or special schools or classes)
and issue guidelines for national and regional inspection
institutions on how to identify and report situations of segre-
gation. Additional resources must be given to regional and
local authorities in order to ensure that all children, includ-
ing Roma children, can develop to their fullest potential in
integrated mainstream schools;

\(i\) adopt national guidelines, which set out the process that
must be followed for all evictions, based on the UN Basic
Principles and Guidelines for Development-based Evictions
and Displacement. Such guidelines would provide a frame-
work for local/regional authorities in order to ensure an end
to forced evictions, which currently disproportionately
affect Roma communities;

\(j\) actively and publicly condemn and counter any public
manifestation of anti-Gypsyism in the form of hate speech,
discrimination, threats, intimidation and physical 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 police or other responsible agen-
cies. Governments have to exercise due diligence to prevent,
investigate, punish and provide redress for racially motivated
crimes by private individuals or groups.

7. The Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers
reiterate its call for all member states to implement its
recommendations on Roma and particularly its
Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)5 on policies for Roma
and/or Travellers in Europe.
8. The Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers, in line with the political priority given by the Council of Europe to social inclusion of Roma and respect for their human rights, set up, in co-operation with the Congress, a European programme for capacity building at local and regional level, to complement the Council of Europe Roma mediators training programme (ROMED) and operate in the context of a pan-European framework of cooperation between local and regional authorities, and in particular the planned European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion. Voluntary contributions could be the basis for the launch of this programme.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 19 October 2011, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG(21)8, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: J. Warmisham, United Kingdom (L, SOC).

2. The term “Roma” used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as “Gypsies”.