

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 388 (2016)¹ The situation of Roma and Travellers² in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe

1. In its declaration of 1 February 2012,³ the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe expressed its concern over the rise in anti-Gypsyism, the increase in the use of anti-Roma rhetoric and the rise in the number of 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 that national strategies for social inclusion in the fields of housing, education, health care and employment include 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 on policies for Roma and/or Travellers in Europe, the Committee of Ministers recommended member States to adopt coherent, comprehensive and adequately resourced national and regional strategies, together with short- and long-term action plans, targets and indicators, for the implementation of policies that address legal and social discrimination against Roma and Travellers and enforce the principle of equality. It also recommended monitoring the implementation of these strategies and including relevant stakeholders, such as local and regional authorities, self-governing bodies, Roma and Traveller organisations and the broader public in the process.

3. Resolution 1740 (2010) of the Parliamentary Assembly on the situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of 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 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, which is exacerbated by phenomena such as violent extremism and the refugee influx, by turning it into an opportunity to review their integration strategies and policies in order to systematically address the dimension of Roma and Traveller inclusion;

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 (both spatial or in schools) and forced evictions, in order to facilitate local government policy making and action in support of the inclusion of Roma and Travellers;

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 sufficient financial resources or transfers to enable them to address the needs of Roma and Traveller communities;

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, in a non-discriminatory manner, by the police and other responsible agencies.

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

2. The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of 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.

3. Declaration of 1 February 2012

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>

6. “[A]nti-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 No. 13, 24 June 2011.