

## **Declaration of the Committee of Ministers**

### **on the Rise of Anti-Gypsyism and Racist Violence against Roma<sup>1</sup> in Europe**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 1 February 2012  
at the 1132nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

1. In many countries, Roma are subject to racist violence directed against their persons and property. These attacks have sometimes resulted in serious injuries and deaths. This violence is not a new phenomenon and has been prevalent in Europe for centuries. However, there has been a notable increase of serious incidents in a number of member States, including serious cases of racist violence, stigmatising anti-Roma rhetoric, and generalisations about criminal behaviour.

2. Such incidents have been publicly condemned by, *inter alia*, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and his Special Representative for Roma issues, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Group of Eminent Persons, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), as well as various international governmental and non-governmental organisations.

3. The Committee of Ministers recalls the priorities agreed by member States in the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, adopted at the high-level meeting on 20 October 2010, which include ensuring the timely and effective investigation of racially motivated crime and strengthening efforts to combat hate speech and stigmatisation.

4. In its General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma, ECRI recalls that 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." As such, anti-Gypsyism is one of the most powerful mechanisms of Roma exclusion.

5. The effectiveness of strategies, programmes or action plans aimed at improving the situation and the integration of the Roma at international, national or local level, can be significantly reinforced by resolute action to combat anti-Gypsyism and action to improve the trust between Roma and the wider community, where appropriate building on ECRI's guidelines. Such documents should make clear that attitudes among the non-Roma population are a crucial factor that needs to be addressed. Roma integration measures should include both measures targeted at the Roma population (in particular positive measures) and measures targeted at the non-Roma population, notably to combat anti-Gypsyism and discrimination.

6. Against this background, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

i. expresses its deep concern about the rise of anti-Gypsyism, anti-Roma rhetoric and violent attacks against Roma which are incompatible with standards and values of the Council of Europe and constitute a major obstacle

to successful social inclusion of Roma and full respect of their human rights;

ii. draws the attention of governments of member States to ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 13, in particular its paragraph 8 which contains useful guidelines on combating racist violence and crimes against Roma;

iii. calls on governments and public authorities at all levels and the media to refrain from using anti-Roma rhetoric, in particular during electoral campaigns, and to condemn vigorously, swiftly and in public, all acts of racist violence against Roma, including threats and intimidation, as well as hate speech directed against them;

iv. calls on governments and public authorities at all levels to be vigilant not to use Roma as easy targets and scapegoats, in particular in times of economic crisis, and to conduct in a speedy and effective manner the requisite investigations of all crimes committed against Roma and identify any racist motives for such acts, so that the perpetrators do not go unpunished and escalation of ethnic tensions is avoided;

v. welcomes the existing examples of swift reaction from state and local authorities to hate crime and anti-Roma incidents, including legal responses (e.g. amendments of national legislation to protect Roma from harassment and intimidation; prosecution and conviction by national courts of persons committing such crimes, including through the Internet and other media, preventing and condemning extremist organisations inciting or committing such crimes). It stresses the need for effective action to record racist crimes, support victims and encourage the latter to report such racist incidents;

vi. recognises the interdependence of inclusion and anti-discrimination; therefore, any strategy, programme or policy developed to improve the situation and integration of Roma should include, in addition to measures promoting the social and economic inclusion of Roma in areas such as education, health, employment and housing, measures combating discrimination and addressing anti-Gypsyism, in line with its Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)5 on Policies for Roma and/or Travellers in Europe. Such measures could include research on the phenomenon and awareness-raising activities among the non-Roma population, conducted in co-operation with Roma organisations, with a view to addressing stereotypes and prejudice towards Roma. In this respect, it underlines the role and responsibility of media and journalists. It also recalls that the Council of Europe *Dosta!* campaign is one of the tools at the disposal of member States and encourages them to use it;

vii. underlines the need for all member States to adopt specific and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in line with international and European standards; to set up anti-discrimination bodies equipped to promote equal treatment and to assist victims of discrimination; and to ensure that this legislation is effectively implemented.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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".

## Related Documents

### Meetings

- [1132nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies \(CM Room\)](#) / 01 February 2012

### Other documents

- [CM/Del/Dec\(2012\)1132/6.2E](#) / 03 February 2012 