

# First interim report

Kommissionen  
**MOT ANTI  
ZIGANISM**

# To the Minister and Head of the Ministry of Culture

On 20 March 2014 the Swedish Government decided to establish the Commission against Antiziganism to supplement and reinforce society's endeavours to combat discrimination against Roma. In consultation with the actors affected, the Commission's mandate involves gathering information about anti-Gypsyism in order to spread and improve existing knowledge, and identifying and passing on examples of measures to combat and prevent anti-Gypsyism.

The Commission is also tasked with taking a stand on initiatives to combat anti-Gypsyism in public administration and in education, and with participating in public debate and in education and information activities of various kinds. Finally, the Commission is to monitor developments and summarise the examination of and actions taken regarding the issue of registration of Roma on ethnic grounds.

On 21 August 2014 the Government issued further instructions in a supplementary directive. Here the Commission against Antiziganism was also charged with producing and disseminating material drawing on the Government's White Paper on abuses and rights violations against Roma during the twentieth century.

The Commission is chaired by Thomas Hammarberg. Its members are Marianne Eliason, Erland Kaldaras, Stefano Kuzhiov, Maria Leissner, Diana

Nyman, Soraya Post, Simon Wallengren and Christian Åhlund. Andrés Zanzi is an expert adviser.

The Commission has a reference group whose members are appointed by the Government. This comprises Hans Kaldaras, Lars Demetri, Rosmari Demetri Axelsson, Angelina Dimiter Taikon, Kati Dimiter Taikon, Eleonor Frankemo, Gunno Gunnmo, Rosita Grönfors, Silvija Jansson, Domino Kai, Bagir Kwiek, Gunilla Lundgren, Ingrid Schiöler, Tuula Schwartz, Nuri Selim, Emir Selimi, Michael Stankov, Fred Taikon and Marian Wydow.

The Principal Secretary of the Commission is Heidi Pikkarainen. The Secretariat also comprises investigation secretaries Katarina Hammarberg, Lena Mirow, Anneli Tillberg and assistant secretary Būsra Kaya.

The Commission is to report to the Government on how the work is progressing and the measures it has put in place every six months. This is the first such interim report. It sets out the Commission's work so far and the observations and preliminary conclusions that the Commission wishes to present at this stage.

Stockholm, February 2015

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# Mission and working methods

The Commission is to contribute towards ensuring that obstacles that Roma encounter in Swedish society really are eradicated. It is to work to ensure that society in the broader sense does what needs to be done in order to ensure Roma to live without encountering anti-Gypsyism. The Commission has an important role in encouraging greater awareness and understanding of the particular racism that anti-Gypsyism constitutes.

## Influencing agencies

The Commission will be in place for a limited period of two years. Its role is not to take over tasks from existing Government agencies but instead to conduct a dialogue with these agencies on initiatives to safeguard Roma rights. The Commission is to draw up constructive suggestions for how Roma rights are to be protected and the trust gap bridged. Relevant agencies at national and local government level must be encouraged to combat anti-Gypsyism to a greater extent. This involves shining a spotlight on discriminatory structures and working to ensure that the rights of Roma really are protected. It also involves proposing concrete working methods and measures that seriously question and put a stop to anti-Gypsyism.

## Raising awareness of the concept of anti-Gypsyism

At its first meeting the Commission agreed to work to make the concept of anti-Gypsyism better known and understood. It involves both discrimination – e.g. in the labour and housing market, in the education system and in everyday situations such as in shops, in restaurants, at hotels, at petrol stations – and the abusive myths and prejudices about Roma that still exist in Swedish society.

## Following up the White Paper

In an additional directive the Commission is charged with producing and disseminating material based on the White Paper to schools and other parts of society. The history described in the White Paper will be presented as educational material in a book (and in PDF form) to be used in social science and history lessons, among others.

The purpose of the book is to show the abuse and violations committed against Roma, to counteract myths and improve pupils' awareness of human rights. Work in this respect places emphasis on Roma participation and consultation with the Living History Forum, the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Equality Ombudsman.

## Registration on ethnic grounds

The Commission has also been charged with monitoring developments and summarising the examinations that have been performed and action that has been taken by different actors regarding the issue of registration of

Roma on ethnic grounds. The Commission has defined this mandate as primarily concerning the database kept by the police in the county of Skåne in southern Sweden. A summary and analysis of the decisions of the examining authorities is being produced. This part of the Commission's mandate is being carried out in dialogue with directly affected Roma and seeks to shed light on the impact registration has had on Roma rights and trust.

## Gathering facts about the reality of anti-Gypsyism

The Commission has not been charged with exercising supervision but has judged it appropriate to gain a clear picture of events which could be seen as evidence of anti-Gypsyism. The Commission has followed up media reports and approaches from individuals or their representatives with the aim of clarifying facts in such cases as a starting point for its task of forming opinion against anti-Gypsyism. It has also taken part in the public debate on certain such cases.

## Forming opinion

The Commission's mandate includes contributing towards the public debate on Roma rights, including via the media. The Commission's mission has been presented in these contexts. The Commission has also commented on certain individual cases via press releases or in direct contact with journalists.

The Commission thus sees it as its task to take a proactive approach to the media and to participate in the public debate on anti-Gypsyism. The Commission has also initiated contact with local media, e.g. in conjunction with meetings with Roma representatives. In forming opinion the Commission has emphasised that anti-Gypsyism is unfortunately still widespread in Sweden and leads to actual discrimination against individual Roma in their daily lives. The Commission emphasises that effective steps must be taken against this phenomenon and that Roma have the right to redress in such cases.

## Roma participation

At its first meeting, the Commission also agreed that successful work against anti-Gypsyism requires that Roma are involved in and are able to influence how the work of the Commission is run. The Commission has therefore placed particular emphasis on identifying priorities in its work together with Roma.

The Commission works with a reference group of nineteen people with an equal gender distribution. In putting the group together the Commission has sought to obtain broad representation with regard to groups, organisation, geography and age. Two meetings have been held with the reference group. Meetings have also been held with members of the reference group on more topic-specific issues.

The Commission has also carried out relatively wide-ranging consultation with Roma in Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm with the aim of spreading information about its mission and obtaining views on anti-Gypsyism and measures that can combat anti-Gypsyism. A central aspect of the consultation has also involved obtaining opinions on what the Commission should prioritise.

## Action taken in the first six months

### Consultations

The Commission has held two meetings with the reference group and three consultation meetings with Roma in Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm respectively. At the meetings Roma welcomed the appointment of a Commission. This signals that the Government is taking the question of Roma rights seriously. At the same time, many Roma expressed frustration and disappointment over the fact that anti-Gypsyism and discrimination still remain so large a part of Roma's lives. The recurring reports on the nature of discrimination have not led to sufficient action to improve the conditions under which Roma live.

Roma expressed to the Commission that they live with widespread anti-Gypsyism, everyday racism, in other words, which affects every aspect of their lives. It is clear that this is allowed to pass in today's Swedish society and that there is a lack of understanding of the severity of the widespread abuse to which Roma are exposed. Roma also express great concern over the fact that registration on ethnic grounds is taking place both within the police and in all likelihood in other authorities too. The negative consequences the databases held by the Skåne police have had for Roma was a recurrent theme at the meetings and consultations that the Commission held with Roma.

At these meetings it became clear that the widespread discrimination affects Roma trust in the majority society and also Roma opportunities to assert their identity. As a result of anti-Gypsyism, Roma are forced to develop strategies to survive the abuse that they encounter in public spaces and from authorities.

Roma wanted to see long-term and purposeful actions to tackle discrimination and to ensure that Roma rights are not infringed. At the meetings Roma primarily proposed the following measures:

- Greater knowledge must be spread about what anti-Gypsyism is and how it affects Roma rights.
- More actors must distance themselves from the anti-Gypsyism that Roma face.
- Roma opportunities to organise on their own terms must be strengthened.
- It must be possible to establish an institution that works for Roma rights in the wider sense.

## Dialogue with strategically important actors

The Commission has held meetings with a number of Government agencies and institutions with the aim of informing them of its mandate and to establish contact. Meetings have been held with the National Police Commissioner, the Equality Ombudsman (DO), the Skåne Police Authority, the Commission on Security and Integrity Protection (SIN), the Living History Forum, Stockholm County Administrative Board and the Swedish National Agency for Education. The authorities have been encouraged to appoint one or more contacts. At the meetings the Commission asserted how widespread anti-Gypsyism is and how it affects the rights of Roma.

By contributing towards greater awareness of the specific situation of Roma, the Commission has attempted to show how the working methods and procedures of certain Government agencies can contribute towards Roma continuing to be disadvantaged. In the year ahead the Commission intends to deepen its dialogue with Government agencies.

The Commission has also held consultations with the Swedish Data Inspection Board on its mission to examine the occurrence of registration on ethnic grounds in the housing market and in social services. Furthermore, the Commission has held meetings with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, local anti-discrimination offices and the inquiry into more effective measures to combat discrimination.

## Following up the White Paper

The Commission has started work on producing material geared towards secondary school students and teachers, who are the main target groups for the book. Similarly work has begun to produce teacher guidelines addressing the rights perspective of the book and linking it to the education system's values, mission and curriculum. The teacher guidelines will also include suggested lesson plans and tips on where teachers can find additional facts.



## Reaction to actual cases of anti-Gypsyism

The Commission has examined certain reported cases of discrimination against Roma. These cases have come to the Commission's knowledge mainly in that they attracted the attention of the media.

Action was taken as soon as the case became known. In each case the Commission contacted the person responsible for the business or organisation in question with the aim of determining whether the information in the media is correct. This contact also sought to obtain information about the corrective measures that were taken. Where this was judged possible, the matter was handed over to another agency for further processing.

Two of these cases concern instructions of a discriminatory nature. In July 2014 the Aftonbladet newspaper reported that the safety coordinator for Reitan Convenience Sweden AB had sent an e-mail to all stores in the Pressbyrån and 7-eleven chains stating that Roma were inclined towards theft. On the basis of the information which emerged in the case, the Commission judged that there were grounds to hand the case over to DO to investigate whether the action constituted an instruction to discriminate and whether it was therefore possible to hold the company liable.<sup>1</sup>

In June 2014 radio station P4 Stockholm reported that the manager of a store in the ICA chain had a note on the till stating that the staff should not allow Roma to change money. The Commission contacted the ICA manager, who distanced themselves from the discriminatory instruction.<sup>2</sup> The Commission informed DO of the action it had taken.

In August radio station P4 Västernorrland reported that the Västernorrland Police Authority had publicised a description on their website stating that a crime suspect was of "Roma appearance". In its response to the Commission the police authority maintained that its action was justified, which caused the Commission to contact the National Police Board (RPS) to obtain its opinion on the matter.

RPS emphasised that the Västernorrland Police Authority is an independent police authority but simultaneously distanced itself from the action, which was considered to contravene the rules and guidelines in place. Furthermore, RPS stated that they had conducted a dialogue with the police authority and highlighted the importance of the police expressing themselves respectfully in all contexts. The Commission passed the case over to the Parliamentary Ombudsmen (JO) to assess whether there were grounds to criticise the police authority. In the light of the statement from RPS, JO did not find grounds to take any action.<sup>3</sup>

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1 The Commission's actions were reported in Aftonbladet and on Radio Romano.

2 The Commission's actions were reported on radio station P4 Stockholm and Radio Romano.

3 JO decision of 4 December 2014, ref. 5363-2014.

The Commission has also acted in a number of cases in which individuals contacted it to obtain support, stating that there was no other agency to which they could turn. One case concerned the eviction of a Roma family. In this case it is clear that anti-Gypsyism and negative assumptions about Roma had played a significant role in the family's story, which involved evictions, an uncertain housing situation and an unsafe local environment with elements of harassment and physical violence. In this case the Commission urged the municipality to consider that intervention in the course of exercising authority, which for a public official may be a routine decision, can in fact be a repetition of a historical pattern.

In another case the Commission cited the importance of an employer investigating a report of discrimination in the workplace. The report concerned questioning a public official due to their Roma ethnicity.

## Registration on ethnic grounds

The Commission has placed great emphasis on monitoring the examination of the Skåne Police Authority's Roma database revealed in 2013 and intends to present a report on this in due course.

The conclusions of the report are mainly based on an examination of the decisions made by the authority in collecting the data. Currently the Commission is awaiting a decision from JO on the issue of liability. As part of work in fulfilling its mandate, the Commission has asked the Skåne Police Authority, RPS and DO to provide information on the action taken due to the database. Meetings have also been held with the Skåne Police Authority and SIN. The consequences of what happened were also discussed in the Commission's consultations with Roma.

The Commission is also monitoring other examinations concerning registration on ethnic grounds on an ongoing basis. In this work the Commission is particularly following the examinations of the Swedish Data Inspection Board (DI) and SIN of the police's treatment of sensitive personal data in their registers. From SIN's statements on 11 December 2014 it is clear that there are still major deficiencies in the police's handling of sensitive personal information.<sup>4</sup> The Commission particularly notes that in its examination of the new database held by the Skåne Police Authority "Organiserad seriebrottslighet i södra Sverige" (Organised serial crime in southern Sweden) SIN found that information on Roma, termed "Gypsies" was noted, which is worth pointing out.

The Commission has also read DI's inspection report on how the Personal Data Act and other statutes on record keeping are complied with within social services and in the housing market.<sup>5</sup> In consultations with the Commission, Roma have particularly emphasised discrimination and non-objective treatment in these areas.

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4 SIN's statements of 11 December 2014, ref. 463-2013, 67-2014 and 69-2014.

5 Data Inspection Board report of 5 December 2014, Registration of ethnic origin. Inspection regarding registration of sensitive personal data on the basis of ethnic origin. A2014/1272/DISK.

In its final report DI states that there was no evidence of any systematic survey of Roma having taken place or of illegal processing of personal data revealing Roma or other ethnic origin to any broader extent. The Commission takes a positive view of DI's recommendation that the boards draw up clear instructions on how sensitive personal data that reveals ethnic origin is to be treated. This measure is not, however, directly aimed at combating the discrimination and anti-Gypsyism that Roma give evidence of.

## Anti-Gypsyism and migration

One important issue for the Commission is to shed light on how anti-Gypsyist assumptions can affect the way in which Roma from other EU countries are treated in Sweden. The Commission is receiving signals that anti-Gypsyism in general has increased or at least become even more visible in conjunction with how this question is handled. It has therefore been considered particularly crucial to participate in the debate and in different meetings to influence opinion and political decision-makers on Roma rights.

The Commission is in close contact with voluntary organisations that work to ensure that Roma who are often termed "EU migrants" are treated like fellow human beings. One task for the Commission is to work to ensure that Roma rights are not infringed and to point out the need to take action against the hate crimes that affect Roma, particularly those Roma who are forced to beg to earn a living.

In an op-ed article the Commission has directed the following challenges to decision-makers.

- Cease brutal evictions.
- Offer alternative accommodation – a simple but acceptable "roof over your head".
- Give EU migrants the same right to emergency healthcare as paperless migrants
- Encourage the police to take the threats against migrants more seriously.

## Forming opinion

In 2014 the Commission had five op-ed articles and one response published.

The first debate article "Det blev en kommission!" (We have a Commission!) contains a presentation of the Commission, its mission and the focus of its work so far, plus an account report on how the participation of Roma is to be ensured.<sup>6</sup>

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6 Published in *É Romani Glinda*, Issue 4, volume 17.

In the article “Oacceptabel antiziganism mot romer i Sverige” (Unacceptable anti-Gypsyism against Roma in Sweden) the Commission reports on how anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma continues and emphasises the importance of reacting forcefully against this.<sup>7</sup>

The Commission considers it relevant to shed light on how the situation of EU migrants is characterised by anti-Gypsyism, and has actively participated in the public debate on this in various ways. In September the Commission wrote an op-ed article in reaction to the police’s action in evicting Roma EU citizens in Högdalen: “Omotiverat brutal polisaktion mot romer”. (Unmotivated brutal police action against Roma).<sup>8</sup> In the debate that followed the Commission’s article, a final response was also published: “Avhysningen i Högdalen borde ha stoppats”. (The eviction in Högdalen should have been stopped).<sup>9</sup>

The op-ed article “Sverige har ett ansvar för romer som är här” (Sweden has a responsibility to the Roma who are here) is a challenge to decision-makers to ensure Roma rights.<sup>10</sup> The Commission considers that the brutal evictions must cease, that alternative accommodation must be offered, that EU migrants must have the same rights to emergency healthcare as paperless migrants and that the police must be encouraged to take the climate of threats against migrants more seriously.

In the op-ed article “Rasismen mot romer – en upprepning av historien” (Racism against Roma – history repeats itself) the Commission points out the observation that anti-Gypsyism is widespread and that it is a serious matter that infringements of Roma rights are allowed to pass without consequences.<sup>11</sup>

Columns on anti-Gypsyism are published on the Commission’s website on an ongoing basis. Their purpose is to give Roma an opportunity to have their say and make their voice heard, and to increase Roma participation in work against anti-Gypsyism. Columns by Diana Nyman, Eleonor Frankemo and Mattias Gardell were published during the period.

Where the Commission has acted in cases judged to be clear examples of anti-Gypsyism, it has issued press releases and publicised its actions on its website. During the autumn a large number of journalists contacted the Commission directly to obtain statements for articles on anti-Gypsyism and Roma rights.

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7 Published in Göteborgsposten, 21 October 2014.

8 Published in Svenska Dagbladet, 11 September 2014.

9 Published in Svenska Dagbladet, 19 September 2014.

10 Published in Svenska Dagbladet, 10 November 2014.

11 Published in SVT opinion, 5 December 2014.

### Other communication work

In September the Commission launched a website: [www.motantiziganism.se](http://www.motantiziganism.se). The website contains 50 published pages. Several news items on the Commission's work are published every week.

Other communication work includes producing a publication on anti-Gypsyism, profile products and press releases. The Commission also pays special attention on analysing antiziganism in a broad context; what is said in news, seminars, politics etcetera.

### Outreach work

The Commission has been involved in seminars and events on approximately 40 occasions – nationally and internationally. Some of these events are particularly mentioned below:

- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe conference “Human Dimension Implementation Meeting”, Warsaw, 30 September: Thomas Hammarberg, Diana Nyman and Heidi Pikkarainen presented the White Paper and the work of the Commission.
- SVT (Swedish Television) and SR (Swedish Radio) seminar “Romer i fokus” (Roma in Focus), Stockholm, 15 October: Thomas Hammarberg, Hans Caldaras, Ingrid Schiöler, Fred Taikon and Marcela Kovacsova talked about Roma in the media. The seminar was filmed.
- CAHROM meeting (Committee of Experts on Roma Issues in the Council of Europe), Sarajevo, 28–31 October: Diana Nyman and Heidi Pikkarainen presented the White Paper and the work of the Commission. The presentation resulted in the Committee recommending that the Member States allow themselves to be guided by the work of the Commission and by how work on the White Paper is run.
- Swedish Forum for Human Rights, Umeå, 13 November: the Commission arranged a seminar on tools and methods against anti-Gypsyism. Soraya Post, Diana Nyman and Heidi Pikkarainen attended.

In an international context talks on the “Swedish example”, in other words the work of the Commission and work on the White Paper, have proven to be in demand and are seen as constructive guidance when it comes to how work on anti-Gypsyism can be run.

# Considerations and preliminary conclusions

Anti-Gypsyism is deeply rooted in Swedish society and discrimination has never been seriously questioned. The Commission aligns itself with the assessment made by the Delegation for Roma Issues on the importance of asserting the structural dimensions of anti-Gypsyism and the impact on Roma conditions in a wider sense. In its report on Roma Rights (SOU 2010;22) the Delegation asserted that “the situation of Roma is disgraceful in a democratic welfare state such as ours and there are no shortcuts to equal conditions for Roma. The situation demands a long-term, sustainable, and deliberate policy.”

The Commission has been charged with identifying and passing on best practice for measures and methods to counter and prevent anti-Gypsyism. The starting point is that effective measures against anti-Gypsyism should seek to change the structures that allow – or do not sufficiently react against – anti-Gypsyism. In this work the Commission has been able to confirm that there are gaps in the current work of the authorities.

A recurring question in the Commission’s consultations with Roma has been the lack of trust which many Roma have in the authorities, which is based on Roma experience of contacts with authorities. The Commission considers that an effective way of bridging gulfs of trust between Roma and the majority society would be for responsible authorities to react against anti-Gypsyism and clearly take a stand in asserting Roma rights.

A not inconsiderable amount of the Commission’s work consists of giving advice and support to individual Roma on questions of discrimination over the phone and at meetings. The demand for advice, support and information on how to assert ones rights is strikingly high. The Commission firstly provides information on the relevant legislation and which agency the caller can turn to in order to assert their rights. In the light of the conversations and the information that emerges from the dialogues, the Commission has gained the impression that the established institutions do not appear to fulfil the function of supporting Roma and providing them with guidance on how they can assert their rights to a sufficiently high extent.

The Commission has also drawn attention to the fact that responsible agencies take action on matters that concern anti-Gypsyism only to a limited extent, even in cases where the case was reported. Many Roma also express the same view in the consultations and reference group meetings held so far.

One consequence of this is that discrimination and crime motivated by anti-Gypsyism go unpunished. This sends signals that abuse and crime against Roma are not taken seriously, that they are allowed to pass unremarked. This “legitimises” discrimination.

The registration of thousands of Roma by the Skåne Police Authority has further undermined Roma trust in the authorities. The way in which representatives of the police reacted to the revelation of the existence of the database further lowered trust. Once the last word has been said about this illegal database, it is of the greatest importance that the clear anti-Roma dimension is not brushed under the carpet.

## The need for a clearer rights-based perspective

Roma rights and the right to co-determination and influence on issues that affect them are fundamentally human rights issues. Combating anti-Gypsyism, the specific racism that Roma live with, ultimately seeks to ensure that Roma enjoy the same rights and opportunities as the majority population. Working to counter anti-Gypsyism is thus about combating unequal conditions.

The question of how Roma are to obtain a stronger position in society must thereby take a clear rights-based perspective as its starting point.

According to the Commission, issues concerning Roma rights are far too often discussed in other terms, e.g. that the situation of Roma is more or less self-inflicted and whether initiatives lead to Roma “contributing” to society. The Commission therefore wishes to emphasise the importance of a rights-based perspective in working to combat anti-Gypsyism.

This also applies to the treatment of those Roma who come from other countries in order to seek an opportunity to provide for themselves in Sweden. Naturally they must have the same rights as other EU citizens. They also have the right to be protected against harassment and hate crime. The Swedish authorities have not yet taken on full responsibility for ensuring that this is the case.

## Roma influence and co-determination

The authorities are obliged to give Roma an opportunity for influence and participation on issues that affect them. The Commission has read wide-ranging criticism of the extent to which Roma participation really is ensured and has an impact in the different Roma forums set up by national and municipal bodies. Consultations with Roma – if these take place at all – largely appear to take place on the authorities’ own terms and in line with their agenda.

Greater influence and co-determination for Roma at local, regional and central level can be expected to have a major impact on which initiatives are taken to combat anti-Gypsyism and guarantee Roma rights, and the design of these.

In the light of this, the question of how actual Roma participation and co-determination can be realised will be a key issue for the Commission in the next year of its mandate.

## Strengthening Roma rights

In the consultations that the Commission has carried out with Roma, it is clear that prejudice against Roma is extremely widespread. Discrimination covers many different areas of society and affects the everyday lives of Roma in a tangible way. The common discrimination against Roma when Roma enter shops in order to purchase something, or happen to be in a public place in general, must be interpreted as an expression of widespread anti-Gypsyism.

Anti-Gypsyism means that the scope for Roma culture and need to define their own needs themselves is limited. Another consequence is that Roma are denied by and are not visible in the majority society. Even today many Roma are forced to hide their Roma ethnicity in order to avoid discrimination and other abusive treatment. This is particularly true in the labour market and the housing market, but also in contact with agencies such as the Social Insurance Agency, social services and the police.

The task that the Commission has been given is thus about working to ensure that society guarantees fundamental human rights of equal treatment and non-discrimination to a greater extent. Given its time-limited mandate, the Commission does not intend to seek to take on the role of a new, independent Government agency. It must instead attempt to shed light on the work of the existing Government agencies, bearing in mind the need to combat anti-Gypsyism – and recommend change when necessary.

One problem which has become obvious in this context is that the opportunity for Roma exposed to discrimination to truly obtain justice is limited. Reports to the police and DO are only addressed to a very limited extent and the local anti-discrimination offices have limited opportunities and also cover only certain parts of the country.

The Commission is critical of the fact that public authorities have not succeeded in clarifying by their actions that Roma are, and are entitled to be, part of Swedish society. The fact that anti-Gypsyism is allowed to pass unremarked sends signals that Roma rights are not taken seriously and may even be seen as legitimising anti-Gypsyism. The fact that so few reports of discrimination and hate crime motivated by anti-Gypsyism are reported, and that they surprisingly rarely lead to action being taken or to sanctions, is extremely serious in this context.

In working to identify good examples, the Commission has sought to establish new models and working methods for how anti-Gypsyism can be countered, thereby giving Roma rights a stronger position in society. As shown by the report, to this end the Commission has actively reacted in some concrete cases to which attention has been drawn by the media and which can be said to be expressions of clear anti-Gypsyism.

In the next year of its mandate the Commission will continue working to identify best practice for how anti-Gypsyism can be combated and



prevented. The dialogue with representatives of different public authorities on how their work against anti-Gypsyism can be strengthened will continue and be intensified.

## Awareness-raising initiatives

The picture the Commission has gained is that a widespread lack of understanding still prevails in terms of society's responsibility for the vulnerable situation of Roma today and of how anti-Gypsyism continues to affect attitudes and decision-making. The level of awareness of anti-Gypsyism of the general public must be raised further. In particular, higher demands must be made of decision-makers to actively work against and distance themselves from anti-Gypsyism.

Successful work against anti-Gypsyism should, according to the Commission, focus on systematically breaking and questioning anti-Gypsyist thought patterns. By expressly standing up for Roma rights and methodically combating anti-Gypsyist assumptions being given scope, for example in the public sector, awareness of how anti-Gypsyism affects us will increase and acceptance of it decrease. This will also reduce the scope for non-objective (discriminatory) treatment and increase opportunities for equal treatment.

Anti-Gypsyism can only be countered with awareness of the origin of the stereotypes surrounding Roma, which requires information on the present and on history. There is a link between state-sanctioned persecution in the last century as described in the White Paper and what we see today. Prejudices tend to replicate themselves.

The awareness raising and opinion forming work has been, and will continue to be, an important part of the Commission's work. The teaching material drawing on the White Paper will be completed during the next year of operation and will play an important role in this work.

## Proposal to set up an institution

In order to combat anti-Gypsyism, long-term strategic work of change is required. The Commission notes that much of the work currently being carried out to promote and safeguard Roma rights is run in project form and therefore results in marginal improvements for Roma.

Many Roma welcomed the appointment of the Commission and see it as a mark of the fact that the Government is taking the question of anti-Gypsyism and Roma rights seriously. The fact that there is a need is clearly shown by the consultations carried out, and by the number of enquiries and invitations the Commission receives.

According to the Commission there are grounds even now to consider how work against anti-Gypsyism can continue and be reinforced once the Commission has concluded its work. Something long-term must take over. Such an initiative must, however, like the Commission, be based on actual Roma participation and co-determination.

One proposal that Roma have put forward, and which is linked to the proposal in the report by the Delegation for Roma Issues, is to establish some form of institution that works for Roma rights. One proposal that has been discussed is that a national institution, with overall responsibility for issues concerning anti-Gypsyism and Roma rights could have the task of monitoring and driving work to safeguard Roma rights.

It has also been suggested that an institution might play an important role in strengthening Roma's cultural and linguistic rights and of being a natural consultation body. It has also been suggested that an institution could have a role of increasing society's awareness of Roma history, culture and language. It could also act as a documentation centre and constitute a natural starting point for further research into Roma rights.

The Commission will continue discussions on various proposals to establish an institution and on the concrete role that such institution might have. It is hoped that it will be possible to present a concrete proposal during the coming year.

The Commission against Antiziganism is a committee appointed by the Swedish Government. The Commission is to supplement and reinforce society's initiatives against Anti-Gypsyism. The Commission's tasks include gathering knowledge on Anti-Gypsyism, helping to spread existing knowledge and increase its impact and identifying and passing on good examples of measures and methods to counter and prevent Anti-Gypsyism. The Commission is also to reach an opinion on which initiatives the Commission can carry out or contribute towards to counter Anti-Gypsyism in the public sector and in schools.

This is the first interim report published by the Commission.