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## ROMA RIGHTS AND DISCRIMINATION BASED ON ETHNICITY IN SWEDEN (GÖTEBORG, VÄNERSBORG, STOCKHOLM AND TROLLHÄTAN)

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### ABSTRACT

This article is about the rights of the Roma in Sweden and the level of discrimination that Roma are facing. The aims and objectives of the article is theoretical and practical understanding of the situation of the Roma and their human rights through our research and analysis of reports from international organizations, civil society organizations, deep interviews and data from the collected 57 questionnaires. The data is collected during the two study visits in November 2016 and February 2017.

The article summarises the actual situation of the Roma in Sweden and shows new data I have collected while visiting Göteborg, Stockholm, Vänersborg and Trollhättan. I did 4 deep interviews with representatives from Civil Right Defenders, Kronan School and members from UNHCR Sweden. The interviews were composed out of 22 questions about the current condition of Roma in Sweden, implemented projects for improving the Roma human rights, discrimination, police harassment, Roma register, legal remedies against discrimination, financial benefits if pursuing education, non-governmental organization working for and with Roma, equitable representation of Roma in the state bodies, affirmative actions (positive discrimination), Romani political parties, allocated funds for projects improving the Romani situation, system of minority right protection, equality of Roma among the Swedish citizens. The questionnaire about discrimination is composed out of 15 questions about the forms of discrimination, feeling or witnessing discrimination, discrimination in delivering services, discrimination in employment, and reporting discrimination.

**Key words:** Roma, human rights, Sweden, discrimination, Göteborg.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This article is about the rights of the Roma in Sweden and the level of discrimination that Roma are facing. The aims and objectives of the article is theoretical and practical understanding of the situation of the Roma and their human rights through our research and analysis of reports from international organizations, civil society organizations, deep interviews and data from the collected 57 questionnaires.

As a young researcher and as a winner of the Civil Society Scholar Award for 2016 I wanted to do a research about the Roma rights and examine the level of discrimination felt by the Roma students in Sweden in 4 cities where there is a Roma population Göteborg, Stockholm, Vänersborg and Trollhättan. I did 4 deep interviews with representatives from Civil Right Defenders, Kronan School and members from UNHCR Sweden. Also I did a questionnaire about discrimination which was composed out of 15 questions and was filled by 57 Roma students.

I am very pleased from the response given to me from the employees of the Civil Rights Defenders in Stockholm especially from John Stauffer, Legal Director and Deputy Executive Director and also from the legal advisor Nazli Pirayehgar.

I was honored to meet and interview the only Roma teacher from Kronan School in Trollhättan. Fatima Miftar teaches two subjects math and Swedish for foreigners. She was a witness of the horrible racial attack in the Kronan School that happened in 2015 when 2 teachers and 1 student were killed, and many others were injured. Also I got a great response from Danny Jasar, a Roma economics graduate and employee at UNHCR Sweden.

## **1. FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM OF RESEARCH**

The problem of research is current because human and minority rights represented and will represent interest not only in science and theory but in theory and practice as well. The area of research is not explored and the given results will have a great significance to the science affecting the human and minority rights.

Previous research shows that the traditional approach in addressing minority issues, does not give the expected results when it comes to Roma. Therefore there is a need to prepare separate research so that we can meet the specific needs and problems about the discrimination of Roma and the problem of this research is to determine the level of discrimination based on ethnicity in Sweden and it covers the period between 2016 and 2017.

## **2. GOALS AND SUBJECT OF RESEARCH**

The aim of this research is to gain insight into the the Roma rights and discrimination based on ethnicity in Sweden. The research is containing data that will present the results from the made analysis.

This research is significant from several aspects:

### **1. Macedonia's aspirations to membership in the European Union**

Preparation of the Strategy for Roma in Macedonia comes from Macedonia's aspirations to join the European Union. It involves building a comprehensive development policy for the Roma which complies with the Copenhagen criteria for accession to the European Union and several EU documents that directly relate to Roma.

### **2. Unexplored area**

In the Republic of Macedonia and in the Balkans there are many research and projects made by governmental and non governmental organizations which have Roma as target groups but a research has not been made to gain insights of the discrimination based on ethnicity in Sweden. The subject of this research represents an unexplored area.

In all of the Progress Reports of the Republic of Macedonia by the European Commission it is said that “in regard to the Roma a little progress can be seen” and “the four action plans within the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 have recently been revised and continued slow implementation”. Because till now an adequate analysis has not been made related to this subject of research, our research receives a scientific weight and also a wide range of opportunities at research.

### **3. HYPOTHESIS, HYPOTHETICAL VIEWS**

Our assumptions are as follows:

1. Discrimination based on ethnicity is very common in Sweden especially when it comes to Roma;
2. There is discrimination in delivering services based on ethnicity in the areas of education, health and safety;
3. The structural discrimination toward the Roma continues to be spread on everyday basis.

### **4. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF RESEARCH**

This paper has a descriptive and analytical character. In the research we use quantitative and qualitative research methods and techniques. The quantitative analysis method is often used in this paper, due to the numerical perception of certain data and statistical indicators that would help in explaining the equitable representation of Roma in the public and state administration. The method of content analysis will serve to thoroughly analyze the content of all documents related to the area of research. This method will be applied in all primary and secondary sources. The data was collected with interviews and questionnaires.

#### **4.1. Interview questions**

1. What is the current condition of the Roma in Sweden?
2. Do the Roma have the status of the most marginalized group in Sweden?
3. Are their human rights are being respected and is the state implementing projects which promotes the Roma situation?
4. Are Roma still subject to discrimination and are they harassed by the police?
5. Can you brief me about the famous issue with the Roma register?
6. What legal remedies can Roma allow if they are being discriminated?
7. Is the situation of Roma in terms of education improved, do Roma get social or financial benefits for being high school or university students?
8. What is the number of non-governmental organizations who are working on improving the situation of the Roma?

9. Are there registered Roma political parties and are there any attempts for establishing a Romani political party in Sweden?
10. Will the Kingdom of Sweden be for or against such an act?
11. Is there any state body, institution, council or non-governmental organization that is being advised when policies for Roma are being created?
12. Is there a system for protection of minority rights?
13. Is there an equitable representation in employment and are there affirmative actions or deductions by the state when Roma are being employed?
14. Are there appointed Roma governmental officials for high state positions as ministers, directors, coordinators or members of the Parliament?
15. Does the Swedish voting system allow guaranteed places for Roma in the Parliament?
16. Are there projects which improve the Roma situation especially in the areas of education, housing, employment, social protection?
17. How much funds are allocated for projects for improving the Romani situation and what are the sources of funding?
18. Do Roma have the constitutional right to educate in their mother language (Romani)?
19. Does King Carl XVI Gustaf have a special advisor for minority rights?
20. Do you think that the situation of the Roma is improved after the implementation of the Roma Decade 2005-2015?
21. Do you think that Roma are equal citizens with the rest of the people in Sweden, and are Roma being discriminated by the institutions?
22. In your opinion what is the best way to integrate Roma in the modern society and do you think that Sweden is committed enough to Roma?

#### 4.2. Questionnaire about discrimination

1. Can you tell me by your opinion, how common are the following forms of discrimination in Sweden?

	Very common	Quite common	Quite Rare	Very Rare	Do not know (DN)	No response (NR)
Ethnicity	1	2	3	4	-1	-2
Gender	1	2	3	4	-1	-2
Sexual orientation	1	2	3	4	-1	-2
Age	1	2	3	4	-1	-2
Religion	1	2	3	4	-1	-2
Disability	1	2	3	4	-1	-2
Party membership	1	2	3	4	-1	-2

2. If you compare the current situation with the one 5 years ago, would you say that the discrimination based on ethnicity is common or rarer?

1. Very common
  2. Quite common
  3. Neither common, nor rare (the same)
  4. Pretty much rarer
  5. Very rare
- 1 DN      -2 NR

3. Have you in the last 12 months:

	No	Yes	DN	NRS
Felt discrimination personally due to your ethnicity	0	1	-1	-2
You witness discrimination based on ethnicity	0	1	-1	-2
Please give an example:				

4. In your opinion, is there discrimination based on ethnicity in delivering the services:

	No	Yes	DN	NR
Safety and police (protection/intervention, giving permits, birth certificates, passports, ID cards, citizenships)	0	1	-1	-2
Judiciary (prosecution, judiciary, institutions for execution of sanctions, etc.)	0	1	-1	-2
Public Finance (customs, taxes, denationalization)	0	1	-1	-2
Economy (licenses for export-import, concessions, licenses)	0	1	-1	-2
Agriculture (subsidies, permits, access to IPARD funds)	0	1	-1	-2
	No	Yes	DN	NR
Health (health insurance, health services - examinations, treatment, prescriptions, orthopedic devices, childbirth)	0	1	-1	-2
Education (enrollment in state schools, scholarships, accreditation, verification of diplomas)	0	1	-1	-2
Social services (welfare, adoption, other fees)	0	1	-1	-2
Culture (financial support to artists, institutions and projects: books, movies, plays, etc.)	0	1	-1	-2

Works (building permits, purchase of apartments, land alienation, urban planning, etc.)	0	1	-1	-2
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5. With which of the following statements do you agree, using a scale of 1 to 10?

- Police ensures public order and security, regardless of the ethnic structure of the community

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- Police prosecutes criminals regardless of their ethnicity

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

6. With which of the following statements do you agree, using a scale of 1 to 10?

- The Budget is allocated by favoring others (not mine) ethnic communities

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

- The rule of law and law enforcement are implemented equally throughout the country, regardless of ethnic background

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

- Other ethnic communities confiscated the jobs of my community

I agree	I do not agree	I don't know	No response
1	2	-1	-2

8. In your opinion, is there discrimination in employment:

	No	Yes	Do not know	No response
State sector	0	1	-1	-2
Private sector	0	1	-1	-2

9. Would you agree or would be against the introduction of affirmative measures to ensure equal employment opportunities for people from the Roma community? (Training programs, employment quotas, tax incentives and deductions)

	Partly agree	Completely agree	Partly disagree	Completely disagree	DN	NR
State sector	1	2	3	4	-1	-2
Private sector	1	2	3	4	-1	-2

10. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

- Students from the same ethnic community should learn in integrated/mixed schools in a separate building

Partly agree	Completely agree	Partly disagree	Completely disagree	DN	NR
1	2	3	4	-1	-2

- Students from different ethnic communities in the same school should study in the same shift

Partly agree	Completely agree	Partly disagree	Completely disagree	DN	NR
1	2	3	4	-1	-2

- Students from different ethnic communities study in the same language should study in ethnically mixed classes

Partly agree	Completely agree	Partly disagree	Completely disagree	DN	NR
1	2	3	4	-1	-2

- Roma should study grouped in Roma classes

Partly agree	Completely agree	Partly disagree	Completely disagree	DN	NR
1	2	3	4	-1	-2

11. Do you think the media encourages discrimination, stagnation or spreading prejudice against an ethnic community?

No	Yes	I don't know	No response
0	1	-1	-2
0	1	-1	-2

\* If yes, please specify the community \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you find it acceptable to be elected on a high political function

	No	Yes	DN	NR
Ethnic Roma	0	1	-1	-2
Ethnic Albanian	0	1	-1	-2
Ethnic Turk	0	1	-1	-2
A member of another ethnic community	0	1	-1	-2

13. Do you find it acceptable a member of another ethnic group to be elected:

	No	Yes	DN	NR
President of state	0	1	-1	-2
President of Assembly	0	1	-1	-2
Prime minister	0	1	-1	-2
Head of Constitutional Court	0	1	-1	-2
Head of Supreme Court	0	1	-1	-2
Public prosecutor	0	1	-1	-2
Ombudsman	0	1	-1	-2
Minister of foreign affairs	0	1	-1	-2
Minister of defence	0	1	-1	-2
Minister of internal affairs	0	1	-1	-2
Minister of justice	0	1	-1	-2
Minister of finance	0	1	-1	-2

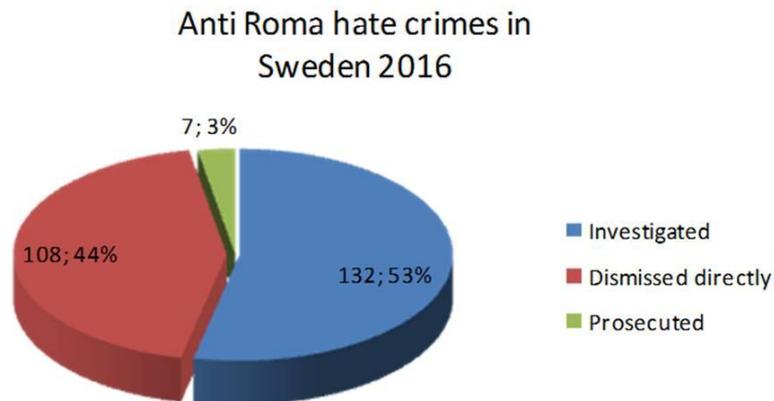
14. If you are a victim of discrimination, will you seek protection from relevant institutions and organizations?

No	Yes	I don't know	No response
0	1	-1	-2
0	1	-1	-2

15. If you are a victim of discrimination, from which institution / organization would you seek protection?

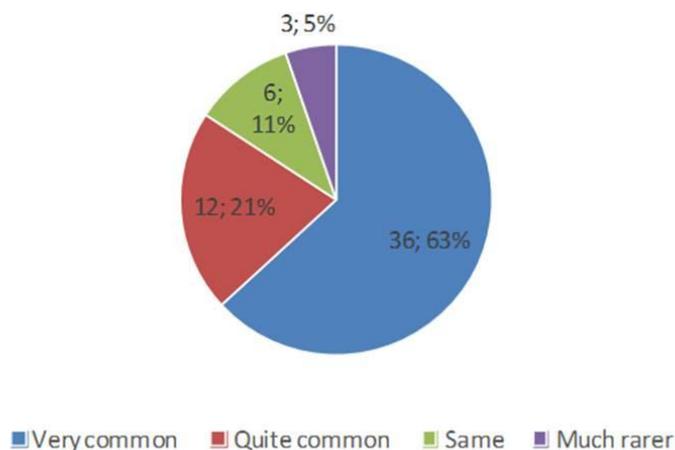
Court	1
Police	2
Ombudsman	3
Lawyer	4
NGO	5
I do not know	-1
No response	-2

## 5. RESULTS



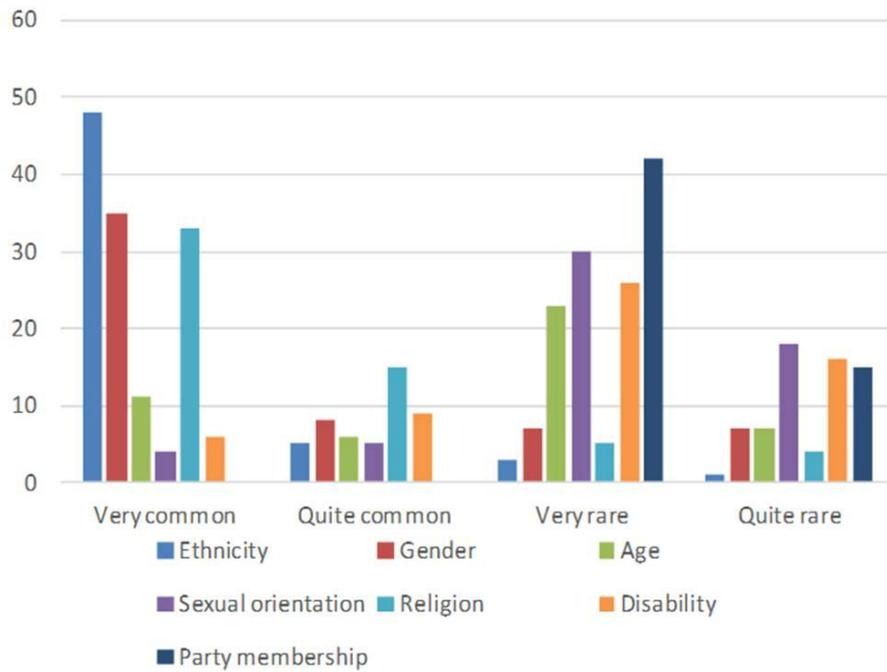
The chart shows that out of all 240 hate crimes with anti Roma motives committed in 2016 there was only investigations with 55% of the cases while 45% were dismissed directly. From the total of 240 hate crimes against Roma only 3% led to prosecution as if somebody was identified. The police in Sweden is practicing an indirect discrimination in the shape of ignoring the crimes that are made upon the Roma citizens.

**Comparison (common or rarer) of the discrimination based on ethnicity 5 years ago and now**

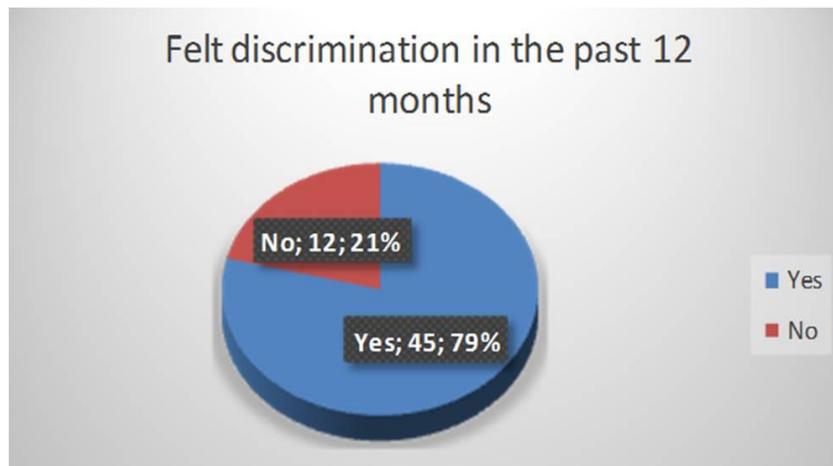


The chart shows when questioning if the discrimination based on ethnicity is common or rarer 5 years ago and now that 63% of the respondents stated that the discrimination is very common and 21% stated that is quite common. 11% stated that the discrimination based on ethnicity is the same now as in 5 years ago, while 5% stated that the discrimination is much rarer these days.

### How common is discrimination in Sweden?



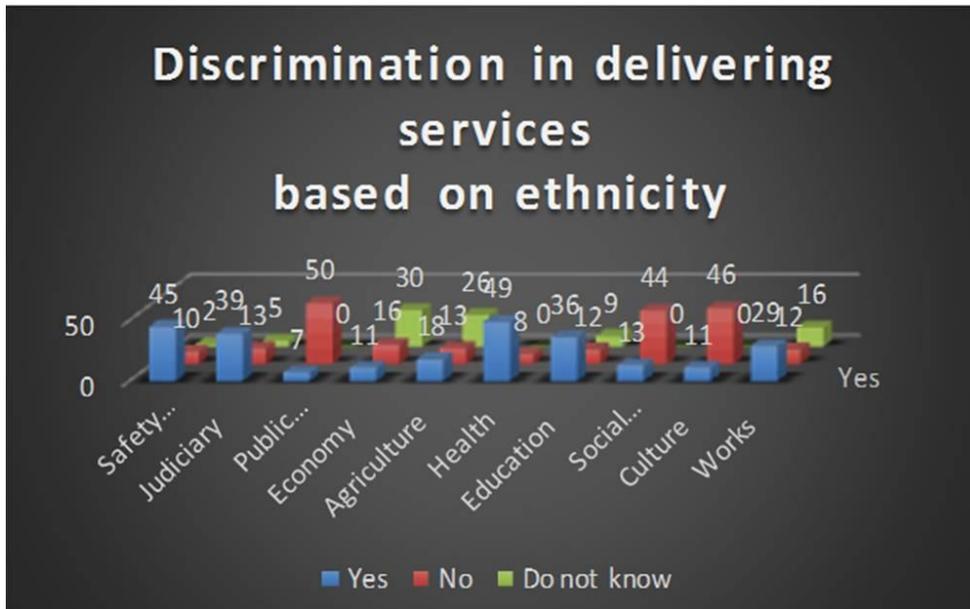
When asked how common is discrimination in Sweden based on ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability and party membership the respondents stated that the most common discrimination is the one based on ethnicity, gender and religion. Also the respondents stated that the rarest form of discrimination is the one based on party membership, sexual orientation and disability.



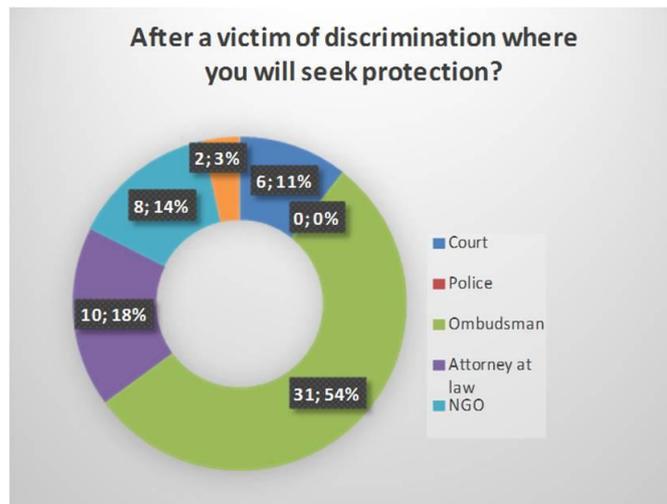
When asked if they felt any form of discrimination in the past 12 months, 12 Roma students (21%) stated that they did not feel any discrimination, while 45 Roma students (79%) stated that they felt discrimination in the past 12 months.



When asked if they witness discrimination based on ethnicity, 48 (84%) of the respondents stated that they were witnesses of ethnical discrimination, while 9 (16%) of the Roma students stated that they did not witness discrimination based on ethnicity.



The respondents have stated that they felt discrimination in delivering services based on ethnicity in the areas of health (49 Roma), safety (45 Roma), juridiciary (39 Roma), education (36 Roma), social works (29 Roma) and agriculture (18 Roma).



When asked where they will seek protection after being discriminated 31 Roma (54%) stated that they will go to the Ombudsman, 10 Roma (18%) stated they will seek protection at the attorney at law, 8 Roma (14%) stated they will go to the NGO sector, 6 Roma (11%) will seek protection of their rights in the courts, and 2 Roma (3%) said that they will seek protection in other places. From the entire respondents 0% stated that they will seek protection of their rights at the police. This shows us that the young Roma population still does not trust the police and do not entrust their rights to the police.

## CONCLUSION

The research outcomes are not so positive for Sweden as a country. The current situation of Roma in Sweden is not acceptable, the current situation is closely related to the historical abuses which are acknowledged by the Government “White Paper”. There is a big ignorance about the historical violations and abuses that are repeating themselves in the current situation today. And even do the Government has adapted the 2020 national strategy for Roma inclusion and there are a lot of project conducted by institutions and civil society organizations there are still a lot of protection gaps today.

In Sweden there is structural discrimination toward the Roma and it is in every area (visiting shops and restaurants, applying for an apartment, applying for a job, etc.) And when you are discriminated in one right it often offends a different right so the discrimination is spreading from one area to another. Our research shows that out of all 240 hate crimes with anti Roma motives in 2016 there was only investigations with 55% of the cases while 45% were dismissed directly, and out of these 55 only 3% led to prosecution as if like somebody was identified. The police in Sweden is practicing an indirect harassment in the shape of ignoring the crimes that are made upon the Roma citizens. In Sweden there are no affirmative actions based on ethnicity. Also there are not established Romani parties or any party based on ethnicity.

It is very difficult to answer if Roma are the most marginalized group in Sweden. This is because Roma in Sweden are not just one group. They came in different periods, they have different cultures, and they are still coming so we cannot compare them to the group that came 200 years ago, so definitely there is still structural discrimination, racism in every sphere of society for Roma but I would not say that the Roma are the most marginalized

group in Sweden but I could say that EU migrants with Roma heritage are the most marginalized group in Sweden. The creation of the Roma registry is a very concerning issue that has a lot of unanswered questions.

The human rights of the Roma are not being respected even do Sweden is implementing projects for improvement of the Roma situation. The strategy is from 2012-2032 but the projects started way earlier. The work started in 2007 with the Roma Delegation who started to investigate and identify the problems and they came up with 50 proposals what the government had to do in order to improve the situation of the Roma, so the work started there and also there are the ones who proposed and create the White paper. They gave in the final report in 2010.

In 2010 the work started at the Commission for antigipsizm which a government mission authority with mandate is to combat antigipsizm in Sweden so the work has started 2 years before the National Strategy. There are project implemented but the National Strategy is only in its beginning so it's really hard to see what the effects are. The main ambition of the Strategy is that a Roma person who will be 20 years old in 2032 will have the same rights with someone without Roma heritage. The Government said that this ambition is high. I do not agree with that and believe that everyone should enjoy equal human rights. At this period there are 5 municipalities they are trying this in, and after 2 years another 5 municipalities will be reached plus, and they will continue like that till 2032. In 20 years only ¼ of the municipalities will be covered, so in mine opinions the ambition level is still low. With that said, where the projects are implemented in the municipalities have given very well results. The projects are about housing, social welfare, education, health.

When policies are created that are referring to Roma there is no specific NGO or authority that is being consulted. From 2007 to 2009 Sweden had a Delegation for Roma issues. From 2014-2016 they had a Commission for antiziganism. Today currently there is no authority as the ones mention above. But in Sweden when new laws and policies are drafted, there is a consultation process were the new policies are sent to to all the relevant actors who are obliged to answer the law proposal but there are also send to NGOs and civil society organizations and they have the options to send consultations acts and comment voluntarily.

There is only one Roma reference group that works closely with the government offices and the national strategy lies in the hands of the Ministry of Culture. This group is composed of 20 people elected after being recommended and went through external nomination process. Their role is to identify the needs of the Roma community, they suggest initiatives and spread information but sadly they meet only twice a year with the Ministry of Culture.

At the very end of the conclusions of our research we would like to confirm all given hypothesis and state that the discrimination based on ethnicity is very common in Sweden, especially when it comes to Romani population, there is discrimination in delivering services based on ethnicity in the areas of health, education, judiciary, safety, social work and agriculture. Roma continue to be discriminated on everyday basis even in a democracy such as Sweden.

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