



REGERINGSKANSLIET

# The Delegation for Roma Issues

*É Delegatsia pe romané pušaimáta*



English



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## *The Delegation for Roma Issues*

The Delegation for Roma Issues has been appointed to play a proactive role at national level in work to improve the situation of the Roma in Sweden on the basis of Sweden's international commitments to protect and promote human rights. The purpose of the Delegation is to promote the rights of the Roma and to help break the political and social marginalisation of the Roma. The Chair of the Delegation is Maria Leissner, Sweden's Democracy Ambassador. The Delegation works in a dialogue with Romani representatives, including a reference group with representatives from the whole of the country.

- Resande Romers Riksförbund
- Romska Kristna Socialdemokrater
- Romernas Riksförbund
- Riksförbundet Internationella Romska och Resande Kvinnocenter
- Center för romsk kulturutveckling
- Föreningen Resande Folkets Riksorganisation
- Romska Ungdomsförbundet
- Riksförbundet Romer i Europa
- Föreningen Lovara i Lund
- Resandefolkets Romanoa Riksförbund

The Delegation also consults with the relevant actors, such as the Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO), the Office of the Children's Ombudsman (BO), the National Agency for Education,





the Living History Forum, the Delegation for Human Rights in Sweden, the Language Council of Sweden, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

The Delegation has the task of

- investigating the situation of the Roma in Sweden by collecting, compiling, analysing and reporting the experience and knowledge available in the area;
- presenting proposals for how to improve the living conditions of the Roma in society;
- promoting and supporting municipal projects and services intended to improve the situation of the Roma;
- spreading information and knowledge about Roma people and the situation of the Roma in Sweden;
- encouraging exchanges of knowledge and experience between government agencies and municipalities;
- examining the need and scope for building up Romani institutions; and
- taking part in international cooperation on Romani issues.

The Delegation has a temporary mandate that will result in a report setting out proposals for the conduct of work to improve the living conditions of the Roma; the Delegation's report will be presented to the Government in December 2009. The work of the Delegation does not take the place of the areas of responsibility and the duties and mandates that government agencies, county councils and municipalities, institutions and organisations have and that are intended to improve the situation of the Roma.

## *Background*

Society is full of anti-Romani patterns of thought and there is a great deal of ignorance about Roma people and Roma culture. Romani people are discriminated against in many areas, including education, employment and housing. International bodies such as the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) have observed that Sweden should improve the situation of the Roma and take action to counter racism and discrimination. In Sweden the report of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination and other studies have shown that many Roma people are marginalised in many parts of Swedish society and that this exclusion can be seen as a consequence of pervasive, long-term discrimination.




## *Roma – a national minority and a transnational people*

The Roma are one of Sweden's five recognised national minorities. The national minorities in Sweden are all covered by Swedish minorities policy. The objective of Swedish minorities policy is to provide protection for national minorities, to strengthen their scope for exercising influence and to provide the support needed to keep their languages alive. If the objective of Sweden's minorities policy is to be realised, the needs and interests of all national minorities must be taken into account in all parts of the country and at all levels of government. This applies both to government agencies and to municipalities and county councils.

The Roma are a transnational people and there are an estimated 20 million Roma throughout the world. In 2000 the IRU (the International Romani Union) declared the Roma people a non-territorial nation. More than thirty years previously, the First World Romani Congress in London (1971) agreed on a Roma national anthem (*Gelem, gelem*) and adopted its own flag.

Around 50 000 Roma live in Sweden. As a result of several waves of migration Sweden has a heterogeneous Romani population with linguistic, religious and cultural variations. Their common language Romani, or É Romani chib/Romanés, is related to





Sanskrit and consists of some 60 dialects, an estimated 20 of which are spoken in Sweden. One main distinction made in the language is between Vlax and non-Vlax dialects. The Vlax dialects developed among the Roma who were detained in Vlax and Moldova in the 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The non-Vlax dialects developed among the groups who started migrating to other parts of Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> century or earlier. The classification by Swedish authorities of Roma into five groups uses external designations and is based on their country of stay in recent decades: Swedish, Finnish and non-Nordic Roma as well as Travellers and newly arrived Roma.

### *Swedish Roma*

Kelderash speakers, but also Lovari and Čurari speakers, who came to Sweden from Russia around the turn of the last century.

### *Finnish Roma*

The Finnish Roma, or Kale, arrived in Sweden in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and were deported to what was then the eastern part of the kingdom (Finland). Many Kale Roma moved to Sweden in the 1960s on account of the introduction of Nordic passport exemption in 1954.

### *Travellers*

There are an estimated 25 000 Travellers in Sweden. Some of them prefer to call themselves Travellers,

others prefer Travelling Roma. According to certain sources the Travellers originate from the first Roma migration to Sweden in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Others think that they originate from German and French soldiers from the wars of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the then King brought with him to Sweden.

### *Non-Nordic Roma*

This collective term includes both Vlax and non-Vlax Roma. Many of them belong to the Lovari-speaking Roma who came to Sweden from Poland and other countries in the 1960s and 1970s. Roma who come from other countries, such as Kelderash, Romungro and Čurari Roma, also live in Sweden.

### *Newly arrived Roma*

It is mainly Roma asylum seekers and refugees who have come to Sweden from former Yugoslavia and Kosovo (such as Erli och Gurbeti Roma) that are classed as new arrivals.

There are Romani organisations and faith communities in the whole of the country (see the Delegation's website). Romani representatives also sit on international bodies such as the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), the International Romani Union (IRU), the International Roma Women Network (IRWN) and the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP).



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## *If you would like more information*

[www.romadelegationen.se](http://www.romadelegationen.se)

**Terms of reference, Delegation for Roma Issues, ToR 2006:101**

**National minorities and minority languages, the Government's fact sheet:**

[www.regeringen.se/sb/d/8127/a/85633;jsessionid=ab7EWDzg4fM5](http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/8127/a/85633;jsessionid=ab7EWDzg4fM5)

**Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities:**

[www.regeringen.se/sb/d/108/a/12830;jsessionid=ad4Tikhhu\\_X](http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/108/a/12830;jsessionid=ad4Tikhhu_X)

**Terms of reference, European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, ToR 1995:84**