



European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination

NEWS REPORT

Country:	Slovenia
Title:	CoE Human Rights Commissioner's Report
Date:	17 July 2017
Expert:	Neža Kogovšek Šalamon
<u>Context</u>	
Issue at stake:	Slovenia should protect its vulnerable people, including Roma, migrants, the erased and poor elderly
Ground of discrimination:	Race/ethnicity, age
Source:	CoE Human Rights Commissioner, political development
Field:	All fields
Applicable law:	Protection against Discrimination Act

Content

Policy development: On 11 July, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe released a report following his visit to Slovenia from 20 to 23 March 2017. He addressed the issues of migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees, the non-discrimination protection framework, the Roma people, the "erased", and poverty of elderly persons. The report includes several notions and recommendations related to (non)discrimination. The Commissioner noted that the equality body (the Advocate of the Principle of Equality) has been strengthened following the adoption of the Protection against Discrimination Act in 2016. Taking into account the modest resources currently available to the Advocate, the Commissioner encouraged the Slovenian authorities to provide the Advocate with additional resources so that he can carry out his mandate effectively. He also encouraged the Advocate to rapidly outline his priorities and work plan, as well as to raise public awareness about his mandate.¹

As the Commissioner found, the Roma people continue to be victims of prejudice, and face poor living conditions in some parts of the country, such as lack of access to clean drinking water, lack of quality education, and housing difficulties. The Commissioner urged the Slovenian authorities to formulate a clear strategy for the improvement of the situation of Roma.² He encouraged the authorities to monitor the occurrence of *de facto* segregation of Roma children in pre-schools and schools.³ He also urged the authorities to ensure that all Roma families enjoy access to water, electricity and sanitation on the land where they live.⁴ One of the challenges found by the Commissioner is the lack of data. As the Slovenian authorities do not collect specific information on the situation of ethnic groups, including Roma, because of legislation in place on the protection of sensitive personal data, it is difficult to evaluate precisely the problems and needs of Roma and complicates targeted policy making. The Commissioner recalled that it is

¹ Para. 8.

² Para. 86.

³ Para. 95.

⁴ Para. 90.

possible to collect data in an anonymous manner that does not jeopardise the protection of confidentiality and privacy.⁵

Although measures have been taken to restore the status of many of the "erased" people, the Commissioner recommended that those still without remedy should be given a possibility to integrate into Slovenian society with a regularised status. The Commissioner also advocated for educational material regarding the "erased" to be included in the national core curriculum of Slovenian schools.⁶

With regard to poverty, older people were identified as one of the most financially jeopardized groups. In Slovenia, 7.2% of persons aged 65 and above were at risk of poverty in 2015, with older women being particularly vulnerable. The Commissioner's recommendation urges the state to refrain from enacting reforms, including those in the labour market, which could be detrimental to the welfare of older persons.⁷

Key points of analysis: The recommendations of the Commissioner hold special relevance in the current context of insufficient political will to actively enforce non-discrimination policies as per Slovenia's international obligations. Political discourse in Slovenia has been frequently fuelled by prejudice and intolerance, especially on the topic of migrants, asylum-seekers, Roma, the "erased" persons and other vulnerable groups. The Commissioner's comments pertaining to political commitment to combating the population's hostility through outreach at the national and local level are timely and crucial to consider.

Internet link source: <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-visit-to-slovenia-from-20-to-23-march-2017-by-nils-muizn/1680730405>.

⁵ Para. 61.

⁶ Para. 106.

⁷ Para. 150.