

No Hate Parliamentary Alliance holds a meeting at the Swedish parliament to discuss anti-gypsyism

“Anti-Gypsyism is a form of racism, it is incompatible with the values of a democratic society and should be condemned by political leaders throughout Europe with the same clarity as other types of racism”, stated Ms Alice Bah Kuhnke, Swedish Minister for Culture and Democracy, opening the meeting of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance held in Stockholm on 18 May 2016.

Alliance members had the opportunity to learn more about anti-gypsyism in Europe today, and how to tackle it, thanks to a hearing with the participation of Ms Soraya Post, MEP and co-Chair of ARDI, the Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup of the European Parliament; Mr Martin Collins of the Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre of Dublin, and additional member of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities in respect of Ireland, as well as Mr Adam Weiss, Managing Director, European Roma Rights Centre, Budapest.

The personal and political testimony of Ms Post and Ms Collins showed how a discriminatory discourse escalated to severe forms of discrimination and even physical violence against Roma, Sinti and Travelers. There was a link also between anti-gypsyism and the horrific housing conditions of many Roma, as Mr Weiss made clear. Such conditions, in turn, led to forced evictions and other forms of harassment by the public authorities.

There is no easy solution, but a variety of measures may be taken, the guest speakers explained. Developing good neighbourhoods, education and job opportunities is essential in order to turn the situation around. ECRI’s recent General policy recommendation n.15 contained useful guidelines on how to counter hate speech, ECRI Chair Mr Christian Åhlund recalled.

“Much remains to be done and it is politicians’ role to take up these issues”, concluded Ms Milena Santerini, General rapporteur on combating racism: “We should avoid both negative stereotyping and an idealised vision which underestimates the challenges”.