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## Persecution of people of Roma origin

**Reply to Written question<sup>1</sup>:** Written question No. 549 (Doc. 11655)  
Committee of Ministers

### 1. Question from Mr Lindblad

The history of the Roma is marked by centuries of persecution. Discrimination seems to follow them wherever they go and therefore they are unable to enjoy full human rights in present-day Europe. Recently, several media sources have reported of anti-Roma persecutions in Italy.

However, the news of the current persecution of the Roma community in Italy has a particular dimension, as the reports are also about strongly discriminatory and threatening remarks by representatives of the parties in government, as well as legislative proposals that conflict with EU law: prison sentences of up to four years have been proposed for people who enter the country illegally. The proposal is directed at people who lack proper papers and reveals a tendency that they are especially seeking to “drive the Roma out of the country”. Collective expulsion is prohibited under the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Mr Lindblad asks the Committee of Ministers:

What action the Committee of Ministers plans to take to persuade Italy to fulfil its obligations in this respect as a member state of the Council of Europe.

### *Reply by the Committee of Ministers*

1. The Committee of Ministers reaffirms its firm position against all forms of racism and xenophobia, including hate speech, which have no place in a democratic society, and are contrary to the core values of the Council of Europe.
2. The Committee of Ministers expects all member states to respect the rights and freedoms embodied in the European Convention on Human Rights, and other relevant instruments, including the principle of non-discrimination which carries particular importance with regard to the Roma and other vulnerable populations which risk being particularly subject to prejudice and discrimination. The Committee of Ministers highlights the importance for the authorities of member states to ensure compliance of national legislation with relevant European principles and standards, in particular those relating to human rights.
3. The Committee of Ministers has welcomed the assurance received from the Italian authorities that the legal and practical measures taken in Italy in this respect, and which have been the centre of controversy, are fully in line with European standards and practices. Moreover, the Committee of Ministers has taken note that the Italian authorities continue to pay due attention to the specific issues raised by various Council of Europe bodies, such as the Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). In particular, the Committee of Ministers takes note of the commitment of the Italian Government to continuing its good co-operation with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights who thoroughly reviewed the issues relating to Roma and Sinti during his visit to Italy in June 2008.

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1. adopted at the 1041st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (19 November 2008)



4. The Committee of Ministers is therefore confident of the commitment of the Italian authorities to ensure that there is no violation, or risk of violation, of the European human rights norms and standards to which all member states are committed. It will continue to closely follow developments in this regard.