

## BILAGA 1

### SUMMARY AND PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

The Living History Forum was assigned by the Government in its appropriation directions for 2011 to examine the question of how the culture and language of the Roma might be given a stronger position in Swedish society than it currently enjoys. The Forum has taken this assignment during the period February–October 2011, and the results are presented in this report. Enclosed with the report is the following summary, including proposals for action.

The cultural and linguistic rights of Roma and the Roma's right to co-determination and influence with regard to matters affecting them are basically a human rights issue. The question of how to strengthen the position of Roma culture and Romani chib must therefore be based on a rights perspective.

The rights for Roma as a recognized national minority are ultimately intended to help ensure that the Roma community enjoys the same rights and opportunities as the majority population in Sweden. The widespread discrimination to which Roma are still exposed to in their everyday lives contributes significantly to the deprivation and marginalisation that many Roma experience in Swedish society today. Consequently, strong measures to combat discrimination against Roma and to ensure that they enjoy equal rights and opportunities in the education system, in working life and in other areas of community life, are a basic prerequisite in all efforts to secure Roma access to their culture and language.

The situation of Roma today, and the weak position of romani culture and language, is closely related to history and to the state-sanctioned persecution and discrimination to which Roma were exposed during much of the history. In deciding what action to take to improve the status of Roma culture and Romani chib, an awareness of historical events and their links with present-day abuses of Roma human rights is also vital.

By ratifying international conventions, Sweden has pledged to guarantee human rights, such as the cultural and linguistic rights of Roma. In this perspective, creating conditions

that enable Roma to access their rights in practice is of key importance. Stronger legislation establishing broader and more clearly defined rights must be introduced to ensure that Roma are accorded their rights as a national minority. The responsibilities of key actors need to be clarified and action needs to be taken to ensure that the work of these actors within their respective areas of responsibility is effective. Stronger legislation must also make it possible for independent judicial bodies to consider decisions or failures to act in matters concerning Roma cultural and linguistic rights. If their chances of successfully demanding their rights are improved, Roma would be in a better position to take action themselves in situations where they are denied such rights.

Roma influence and empowerment are crucial to the realisation of Roma's rights as a national minority. Real participation can be created through action to strengthen Roma's own initiatives and organisation, in combination with measures that enable Roma to participate in existing structures for culture and language. Such an approach will necessitate special measures in the education and work sectors if Roma are to have the opportunity to become involved in and exert an influence on operations and institutions concerned with Roma issues.

An essential prerequisite both for key actors' efforts to formulate measures designed to secure rights and for Roma empowerment is a thorough understanding of national minority rights. At present, there is very little awareness in this respect. Key public actors also need to develop more in-depth knowledge about the history, culture and language of Roma. Roma participation in the development and dissemination of such knowledge is needed, which means greater opportunities for Roma and others to engage in advanced studies and research in for instance Romani chib are important.

To accelerate the improvement of Roma access to cultural and linguistic rights, and to follow up measures taken in Sweden to ensure the implementation of international conventions, efficient supervision in this area is vital. An independent national body empowered with overall responsibility should facilitate the development of the requisite knowledge and methods for both monitoring and follow-up.

The interaction of stronger legal protection, independent national monitoring and practical action to provide rights would help establish new and essential means of

implementing Roma's linguistic and cultural rights. The future strategy to strengthen the status of Roma culture and Romani chib described in the report - featuring clear, effective legislation, the assumption of responsibility by key actors, and Roma influence and empowerment – will need to begin with a number of specific measures. Vigorous action in a number of different areas can establish a basis for strengthening the weak position in which Roma culture and Romani chib still finds itself in Sweden. To this end, it is proposed that the Government:

- undertake a review of the legal protection extended to national minorities and the national minority languages. Given the weak position of Roma culture and the Roma language, there is reason to question whether current legal regulations effectively contribute to the proper protection of Roma and Romani chib. It is proposed that the review of legal protection should focus partly on the need to clarify and regulate by law the implicit meaning of the rights, the responsibility for implementing the rights and the individual's opportunities for demanding such rights, and partly on the need to grant Roma, by means of additional legislation, the right to use Romani chib in their dealings with public authorities, law courts and the preschool and elderly care systems.
- establish independent national monitoring of national minority rights based on Sweden's obligations through international conventions in general and on the Council of Europe's minority conventions in particular. Human rights monitoring in Sweden today is not sufficient to ensure the implementation of Roma's cultural and linguistic rights. The proposed body to be established would be responsible for independent national monitoring and it should develop and report knowledge and information about Roma access to human rights and compliance with international conventions at various public levels, and should also contribute to their implementation at the municipal level and to the mobilisation of civil society.
- consider the possibility of strengthening research and higher education in Romani studies at one or other of the Swedish universities. There is a current lack of

research-based knowledge about the history, culture and language of the Roma, and Roma today lack influence over the advancement of knowledge in this field. There is also a lack of teachers and teaching aids in Romani Chib. An investment programme incorporating both teacher training for Romani Chib speakers and research-based knowledge should include a stimulus package for the development of a national centre for Roma research, special research funding and, in the longer run, the establishment of a professorship in Roma studies.

- assign the National Council for Cultural Affairs to undertake a wide-ranging, long-term cultural programme focusing on independent Roma cultural institutions and Roma media. Present Roma cultural institutions and Roma media lack the means to pursue long-term activities, and in some parts of the country there are no such institutions whatsoever. Support to Roma cultural institutions and Roma media should be based on Roma's right to influence and empowerment. The aim of such support should be to preserve and develop Roma culture and the Roma language, and to disseminate information about them so as to draw attention to the situation of Roma in Swedish society, both among Roma themselves and among the majority population. Roma should also be given a proper chance to document and publicise their history and their cultural heritage, with the aid of the appropriate museums and archives. The support system must give special consideration to the vulnerable position of Roma and to the situation regarding the national minority Roma's heterogeneity and transnationality.
- assign the Equality Ombudsman to provide rights-based training courses to improve Roma's awareness of human rights and of the protection against discrimination available to them. Roma's awareness of their rights and their willingness to report discrimination are currently limited, and discrimination is an obstacle that is impeding their access to cultural, linguistic and other rights. The Equality Ombudsman's mandate should be based on the Roma's right to influence and empowerment, and should aim to mobilise civil society in the fight against discrimination and for human rights. This work should seek both to highlight the structural obstacles that are limiting Roma access to human rights

and to develop a mutual understanding of the Roma's situation and of what can be achieved by making use of the legal tools available.