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Memo: ‘Data collection based on ethnicity under the Council of Europe’s Human Rights system: The Swedish police registries on Roma people discovered in September 2013’

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Memo: Data collection based on ethnicity under the Council of Europe’s Human Rights system: The Swedish police registries on Roma people discovered in September 2013

I. Introduction:

At the end of September 2013, the news of a discovery of two Swedish police registries in the Skåne province, based on ethnicity and especially targeting Roma people, created a stir in the whole country of Sweden. While prejudices and negative attitudes towards Roma people had come across my way several times, when I was travelling in the Eastern Part of Europe in the Summer of 2013, so appeared the same issue now in the front of my doorstep, in the province where I am living and most importantly, acted out by a public authority, which seemed to act on the very same prejudices. It was further of personal interest to me, to investigate the Human Rights system under the Council of Europe (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Council’). Hence, the following will discuss the collection of personal data on grounds of ethnicity by the Swedish police from a legal point of view and regarding the following questions: How is the registry of Roma people by the Swedish police in breach with the Human Rights law under the Council of Europe? How does the case law of the European Court of Human Rights relate to the issue of ethnical data collection? Which contradictions are there in the Council of Europe’s Human Rights system when it comes to data collection based on ethnicity?

In order to establish a background to the registries I relied mostly on Swedish newspaper articles and an extract from the Swedish government’s newly established ‘Vitbok’ (Whitebook), which outlines the discrimination Roma had to suffer in the country during the twentieth century, as well as literature concerning the ethnic group of Roma. For a legal investigation of the case, the main sources used contain the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (herein after referred to as ‘the Convention’), the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention ETS No. 108). In addition to that I used case law of the European Court of Human Rights (herein after referred to as ‘the Court’), as well as academic literature concerning the Convention. To highlight the issue of contradiction within the Council, I resorted mainly to reports and recommendations, regarding Roma people and ethnical data collection from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ERCI).

Besides the fact, that the Council contacted the Swedish government concerning the registries, it has not yet given a legal interpretation on the matter, which forced me to rely on previous case law. Moreover, time and scope of the Memo are too limited, as to make an extensive research and to cover all the relevant case law of the court. (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50414/20130924/ October 02, 2013)

Finally, the focus of this paper lies only on the Human Rights system under the Council of Europe and does not consider relevant law of the European Union, such as the Directive 2006/24/EC, which might has stronger influence on the matter, since it does not allow for any exemptions regarding its articles, not even on base of national law. (Privacy International, 2011, https://www.privacyinternational.org/reports/sweden/ii-surveillance-policies October 03, 2013)
II. Background:

The ethnic group of Roma presents with a population of around ten million people the biggest ethnical minority in Europe. Tracing their roots back to medieval India, the Roma have been living in Europe for more than five hundred years. (Goldstone, James A., 2002) (European Commission, 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm, October 02, 2013)

The Roma people have been subject to persecution and discrimination throughout the history of the continent. Discriminatory actions against Roma date until the present day, in areas such as housing, expulsion from state territories, like in France in 2010, or unequal access to education, which Roma children faced in the Czech Republic and which the court found to be a violation of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 2 of Protocol No 1 of the Convention, to name just a few. (Claude, Cahn, 2002) (Cameron, 2011) (Goldstone, James A., 2002)

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council stated in its Resolution No 1740, that Roma constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in the region, while reaffirming in Recommendation 1557, on the legal status of Roma, the urgent need to provide the group with special protection. Important to note here is, that the term Roma as used in connection with European Human Rights law, also refers to groups of people calling themselves Gypsies, Travellers, Sinti, Manouches, as well as other titles which are, however, not of relevance for this paper. (Resolution 1740) (Recommendation 1557) (Goldstone, James A., 2002)

According to the Council, it is estimated that around 50,000 Roma are residing in Sweden, where discrimination against the group has a history as well, also, and especially relevant to the present case, when it comes to personal data collection. So undertook Sweden a ‘Census on Gypsies’, including personal information in 1943, at a time when Roma people were persecuted and murdered from the Nazi-regime in vast parts of Europe. (Chukri, Rakel, September 2013, http://www.presseurop.eu/en/content/article/4182451-sweden-s-shameful-secret, October 02, 2013), (Council of Europe, July 2012, ‘Estimates and official numbers of Roma in Europe’)

A more recent example, is given in the ‘vitbok’, whereby a municipal body of the city of Stockholm, called ‘Gypsy Section’ (Zignersektionen), collected huge amounts of data, including personal information, addresses, family trees, health care reports etc. A so called research program, financed by the section, made home visits to Roma families and estimated the quality of the household, characteristics and intelligence of the persons, as well as the general behaviour of Roma people. The Stockholm police had access to these files and kept them until 1996. It is therefore important, to understand the present case within this historical context. (Swedish Government, 2013, http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/22/50/83/926aee343.pdf, October 01, 2013) (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50476/20130927/ October 02, 2013)

The Swedish newspaper ‘Dagens Nyheter’ published on Monday the 23th of September 2013 that the police of the Skåne province in the South of Sweden, is in possession of a registry concerning Roma people, which was solely established on grounds of ethnical origin. (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50378/20130923/ October 02, 2013)

The registry is said to include 4000 names of Roma people, including further personal data, such as family trees, personal identification numbers, addresses and arrows indicating the relation between the persons. (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50386/20130923/ October 02, 2013)
A day later, the Dagens Nyheter reported on another registry of Roma people in the database of the Skåne police, which contains almost 1000 names, some of whom were also appearing in the more comprehensive list. The registries include names of children and persons who already died. According to Dagens Nyheter, the computer file of the first list was created in May 2012, yet an anonymous, retired police officer, who was involved in working with the registry, told the Swedish newspaper ‘Aftonbladet’, that the list was already created in 2005. (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50400/20130924/ October 02, 2013)

The Deputy Chief of the Swedish police, Petra Stenkula, stated, that the registry was created in relation to criminals within the Roma community, while admitting that officers had added unsuspected persons to the list as well. The Swedish police however denied, that the registries were officially sanctioned. It is nevertheless also not confirmed that the lists were created solely by individual police officers. Fact is, that at least some officials within the Skåne police knew about the existence of the registries, which were also accessible to the National Bureau of Investigation in Stockholm. (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50394/20130923/ October 02, 2013) (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50378/20130923/ October 02, 2013) (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50414/20130924/ October 02, 2013)

The issue is currently dealt with on a national level, through an investigation from the Swedish Commission on Security and Integrity Protection (SDI) and an investigation from Sweden’s Equality Ombudsman, who will determine whether the persons on the lists were discriminated against by being part of the registries, will follow. First and foremost, however, the matter is reviewed from the police itself, and Deputy Chief Petra Stenkula announced that the registries will be destroyed. (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50394/20130923/ October 02, 2013) (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50414/20130924/ October 02, 2013)

While no legal interpretation of the case has yet been given from the Council of Europe, Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland commented, that the registries violate the Convention, as well as data protection laws. Taking this as a starting point, the following will provide a more detailed examination of how the case is in breach with relevant Human Rights law under the Council and how the case law of the Court refers to the issue of personal data collection based on ethnicity.

III. Legal analysis:

3.1 The Right to Private Life, Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights

At first, it is crucial to clarify the scope of the term ‘personal data’. Article 2 of the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention ETS 108), ratified by Sweden in 1982, defines personal data as ‘any information relating to an identified or identifiable individual.’ (Convention ETS 108, Art.2, a) Furthermore it states, that a data file can be regarded as an ‘automated data file’, if it undergoes ‘automatic processing’, which inter alia includes the storage of data, as well as their alteration. (Convention ETS 108, Art.2 b, c) The content of the police registries in the present case, including various personal information and family trees, therefore fall under the definition of personal data under the Convention ETS and in the light of the storage of those registries, they can be regarded as automated data files, the only category of data files to which the following Articles of the Convention ETS 108 apply. (Convention ETS 108, Art. 3)
The most relevant article when it comes to the protection of personal data and the present case, is Article 8 of the Convention, the right to Respect for Private and Family Life which states: ‘1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence. 2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.’ (European Convention, Art. 8)

In the case of Leander v Sweden in 1987, in which the applicant inter alia complained that his right under Article 8 had been violated, due to a file in a secret police-register containing personal information on him and to which the authorities refused him access, the Court had stated, that ‘both the storing and the release of such information, which were coupled with a refusal to allow Mr. Leander an opportunity to refute it, amounted to an interference with his right to respect for private life as guaranteed by Article 8.1.’ (European Court of Human Rights, 1987, § 48) However, the Court finally did not found Sweden in breach of its obligations under Article 8, since it regarded the state’s actions justified under the exemptions provided in § 2 of Article 8, where it states: ‘There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security {...}’ (European Convention, Art. 8.2) (European Court of Human Rights, 1987, § 52-68)

For the present case, it is nevertheless important to consider the above statement of the Court concerning § 1 of Article 8. Solely on the base of that, the registries of the Skåne police would be in breach with Article 8 of the Convention, since it was storage of personal data without the affected persons having an opportunity to refute it. Unless the state could argue under the exemptions provided in Article 8.2, that it acted according to the law and that the actions were necessary in a democratic society.

The Convention ETS 108 contains the same exemptions as Article 8.2 of the convention. Thus it states in Article 9, regarding the issue of data collection, that it needs to be provided for by law and ‘constitutes a necessary measure in a democratic society, in the interest of: protecting state security, public safety, the monetary interests of the State or the suppression of criminal offences.’ (Convention ETS 108, Art. 9)

‘In accordance with the law’

Concerning the first provision in these exception clauses, namely the obligation that public authorities act in accordance with the law, if they interfere with an individual’s rights under Article 8, the case of Shimovolos v Russia in 2011 offers more clarity. The applicant, a human rights activist, complained that his rights under Article 8 of the Convention had been violated since a file on him existed in a police database. The grounds for establishing the database were not accessible to the public, hence it was unclear what the purpose of the database was, as well as what information it contained and who was in control over the file. (European Court of Human Rights, 2011)

The Court stated on the matter, that ‘in accordance with the law’ within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 requires, firstly, that the measure should have some base in domestic law’ and further, that the law is accessible to the concerned person. (European Court of Human Rights, 2011, § 67) Moreover, the Court requires the law to have some ‘minimum safeguards’ in order to avoid abuses, which includes: ‘the nature, scope and duration of the possible measures, the grounds for ordering them...’
the authorities competent to permit, carry out and supervise them, and the kind of remedy provided by the national law’ (European Court of Human Rights, 2011, § 68)

Regarding the present case, there are no domestic laws in Sweden, which provided those minimum safeguards for the ethничal registries in the police database. The nature of the registries seem to concern ethnicity, the scope seemed to encompass members of the Roma community. The duration of the registries is unknown and referring back to the statement of the retired police officer, at least one of them seemed to have existed already for eight years. Article 5 of the Convention ETS 108 states in regard to this: ‘Personal data undergoing automatic processing shall be: {…} preserved in a form which permits identification of the data subjects for no longer than is required for the purpose for which those data was stored.’ (ETS 108, Article 5, 1981) The purpose for which the data was stored, was according to Deputy Chief Petra Stenkula, that it related to criminals within the Roma community. Yet, it is very contesting, that the Skåne police investigated for eight years to convict criminals within the Roma community. Thus, it will be difficult to justify the storage of the registries for this vast amount of time. (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50394/20130923/, October 02, 2013)

In fact, even if those safeguards would have been fulfilled in a domestic law, there are no domestic laws existing, which provide for establishing these registries. According to lawyers who reported to the Dagens Nyheter, the registries would rather violate several domestic laws, including the law against general police surveillance registries. Furthermore, Swedish citizens are under Regeringsformen 2:6, § 2 protected against: ‘significant infringements in personal integrity if this occurs without consent and involves monitoring or surveying the individual’s personal situation’. (Cameroon, 2011, p. 118) Hence the provision of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention: in accordance with the law, does not justify the interference by public authorities with Article 8 § 1 in the present case. (The local, September 2013, http://www.thelocal.se/50378/20130923/, October 02, 2013)

‘Necessary in a democratic society’

To the second provision in the exception clause, on whether the interference of public authorities with an individual’s right under Article 8 is necessary in a democratic society, refers the Court in the case of S. and Marper v UK in more detail. The Court found the UK in violation of the applicants’ rights under Article 8 of the convention, due to indefinite retention of personal information regarding them in a database, which had been added in connection with criminal proceedings against the applicants that had however been terminated. ((European Court of Human Rights, 2008) The Court refers to the principle of proportionality and states: ‘An interference will be considered ‘necessary in a democratic society’ {…} if it is proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued.’ (European Court of Human Rights, 2008, § 101) The Recommendation No R (87) 15 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, dealing with ‘Regulating the Use of Personal Data in the Police Sector’, elaborates more on the matter. In principle 2 of the Recommendation it states: ‘The collection of personal data for police purposes should be limited to such as is necessary for the prevention of a real danger or the suppression of a specific criminal offence.’ (Committee of Ministers, 1987, p. 2)

Referring once again to the statement of Deputy Chief Stenkula, that the registries were established in relation to criminals within the Roma community, it becomes unjustifiable that the scope of the registries, containing over 5000 persons, including children and persons who already died, are ‘pro-
portionate to the aim pursued of convicting criminals within the Roma community or that these collection of personal data can be regarded as ‘necessary for the prevention of a real danger’. (Committee of Ministers, 1987, p. 2) The same applies concerning the duration of the registries storage. Hereto the Recommendation No R (87) 15 further states: ‘Measures should be taken so that personal data kept for police purposes are deleted if they are no longer necessary for the purposes for which they were stored.’ (Committee of Ministers, 1987, p. 4) Obviously the Skåne police did not comply with this. Hence the provision ‘necessary in a democratic society’ does as well not justify the interference of public authorities with Article 8 § 1 of the Convention in the present case. Therefore the registries of the Swedish police, breach Article 8 of the Convention.

3.2 Freedom from Discrimination, Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights in conjunction with Article 8

The most important aspect of the present case is, however, not solely the fact that the registries are in breach with Article 8 of the Convention, but that they are based on ethnicity and thus joining the long historic queue of discriminatory actions against the Roma community. In the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995), ratified by Sweden in 2000, it states in Article 4: ‘The parties undertake to guarantee to persons belonging to national minorities the right of equality before the law and of equal protection of the law. In this respect, any discrimination based on belonging to a national minority shall be prohibited.’ (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Art. 4)

The European Convention further reads in Article 14: ‘The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.’ (European Convention, Art. 14)

First, it is important to note that Article 14 cannot be invoked on its own, but merely in conjunction with other Articles of the Convention, as it says in Article 14: ‘The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground {…}’. (European Convention, Art. 14) Hence the Article only applies to an individual’s rights under the Convention, whereby Article 8, which has been violated even without a conjunction with Article 14, as shown above, is the Article in question for the present case. (Cameron, 2011, p. 156 ff.)

Recommendation R (87) 15, also refers to discrimination, with regards to data collection by the police and states in Principle 2.4: ‘The collection of data on individuals solely on the basis that they have a particular racial origin, particular religious convictions, sexual behaviour or political opinions or belong to particular movements or organisations which are not proscribed by law should be prohibited.’ (Committee of Ministers, 1987, p. 2)

Concerning the present case, the fact, that the Swedish police was in possession of registries containing personal data solely of members of the Roma Community and people married to Roma, hence storing data of ethnic origin, shows that the State of Sweden failed to comply with Principle 2.4 of the Recommendation R (87) 15, Article 4 of the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and with its obligations under Article 14 in conjunction with Article 8 of the Convention.

Moreover, in S and Marper v UK, the Court regards an individual’s ethnicity as ‘sensitive data’ and
refers to Article 6 of the Data Protection convention concerning ‘Special Categories of Data’, where it states: ‘Personal data revealing racial origin, political opinions or religious or other beliefs, as well as personal data concerning health or sexual life, may not be processed automatically unless domestic law provides appropriate safeguards. The same shall apply to personal data relating to criminal convictions.’ (Important to note here is that the term ‘racial origin’ includes ethnicity).

(Convention ETS 108, Art. 6) The Court concludes in S and Marper v UK, that the sensitive data of ethnicity attracts a higher level of protection. (European Court of Human Rights, 2008)

In order to correlate this with the special situation of the Roma community, it is crucial to recall the Resolution 1740 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council, which regards the Roma as one of the most vulnerable groups in Europe, as well as Recommendation 1557, which reminds of the urgent need to provide the Roma with special protection. (Resolution 1740) (Recommendation 1557)

Taking all this sources together, there can be no doubt, that the registries of the Swedish police can be seen as, illegally containing sensitive data without any base in national law, breaching the Prohibition of Discrimination under Article 14 of the Convention in conjunction with Article 8 and being far from the Council’s Recommendation 1557 to provide the Roma with special protection.

Finally, there is another aspect of the case that relates to Article 14 of the convention, namely the principle of presumption of innocence. In its ruling on S. and Marper v UK, the Court stated that it is the right of every person under the Convention to be presumed innocent, if he has not been convicted of any criminal offence. The Court commented further on the applicants’ personal data storage, even after the proceedings against them had been terminated, that ‘it was an entirely improper and prejudicial differentiation to retain materials of persons who should be presumed to be innocent.’ (European Court of Human Rights, 2008, § 127)

The same applies to the persons in the police registries in the present case, since it is very likely, given the number of persons included, that there had never been criminal proceedings against the majority of individuals. Moreover, there is no justification for criminal proceedings against children and persons who already died.

IV. Contradictions within the Council of Europe regarding data collection based on ethnicity

While the law of the Council and the rulings of the Court, as outlined above, relate very clearly to the present case, there are nevertheless some contradictions within the Council of Europe when it comes to data collection based on ethnicity.

Thus, bewailed the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council, in § 11 of Resolution 1740, that national action plans concerning Roma people can often not be evaluated appropriately, since many states would refuse to collect data based on ethnicity. The Resolution continues with urging member states to: ‘collect reliable statistical data – including ethnic and gender-disaggregated data – with the necessary strict safeguards to avoid any abuse, in line with ECRI’s recommendations and the opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and to analyse these data carefully in order to assess the results and to enhance the effectiveness of the existing plans and programmes.’ (Resolution 1740, § 15.7) Hence there seem to be legitimate grounds for states to collect data based on ethnicity, as long as it is undertaken in accordance ‘with the necessary strict safeguards to avoid any abuse’, in line with ECRI’s recommen-
ations and the opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities’. (Resolution 1740)

Hereunto, the Advisory Committee on the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities encourages the Swedish government in its Third Opinion on Sweden, in 2012, ‘to take appropriate measures to collect reliable data on national minorities’. (Advisory Committee, 2012, § 30, http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/3_FCNMdocs/PDF_3rd_OP_Sweden_en.pdf October 03, 2013) Furthermore, they urge the government, to speed up the process of collecting data, regarding persons belonging to national minorities, yet stressing, that this needs to be done in accordance with international standards on the protection of personal data. (Advisory Committee, 2012, http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/3_FCNMdocs/PDF_3rd_OP_Sweden_en.pdf October 03, 2013)

If the Convention on Data Protection is part of this international standard, than Sweden did not comply with it in the present case, as shown above, and the state could not argue that it acted according to the Third Opinion of the Advisory Committee.

Lastly it needs to be defined what the recommendations of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), determine on the matter. The ECRI encourages states in its Report on the ‘Ethnic Data Protection in the Council of Europe Member States’ and in the policy Recommendation No 13 on combating racism against Roma, to adopt policies which allow for the collection of data based on ethnicity, for the purpose of determining the extent of ethnical discrimination and in which areas it takes place. Hence, the approach of the ECRI is not contradictory but complementary to its aims of combating ethnical discrimination and improving the situation of the Roma. Nevertheless aware of the possibility of abuse in case a state legislates for allowance of ethnical data collection, the ECRI stresses the need for minimum safeguards concerning the law and mentions consent from the individual concerned, as one of these major safeguards. (ECRI, 2011) (Simon, Patrick, 2007, http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/themes/Ethnic_statistics_and_data_protection.pdf October 03, 2013)

As regards the present case, Sweden has, as mentioned above, not legislate domestic laws, which allow for the collection of data based on ethnicity. Thus, since the police registries were of no base in national law, there existence cannot be justified on grounds of recommendations given by the ECRI that member states may establish such laws. Even if these national laws would exist in Sweden, the registries would clearly violate the major safeguard of informed consent of the individuals concerned. Furthermore, it is highly doubtful that the police would be the appropriate institution among Sweden’s public authorities to be responsible for the collection of personal data based on ethnicity. (Simon, Patrick, 2007, http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/themes/Ethnic_statistics_and_data_protection.pdf October 03, 2013)

V. Conclusion

As this paper is written in the direct aftermath of the discovery of the Skåne police’s registries on Roma, it is difficult to predict how exactly the matter will be dealt with from a legal perspective. Certainly there will be consequences on a national level, according to national law, and there are still a number of unanswered questions surrounding the case, such as: how long were the registries
stored and who were the people responsible for their establishment? This paper nevertheless tried to give an overview of how the Human Rights law of the Council of Europe, including case law of the Court, refer to the matter.

Fact is, that the registries are in breach with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as with Article 14 in conjunction with Article 8, neither were they in accordance with Swedish law nor were they necessary in a democratic society. They are further in breach with Article 8 and probably Article 5 of the Convention ETS 108, as well as with Article 4 of the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and not in line with the Recommendation No R (87) 15 of the Committee of Ministers and Resolution 1740 of the Parliamentary Assembly. Moreover the registries did not apply to the ECRI’s Policy Recommendation No 13, which urges states to establish national laws allowing for the collection of ethnic data, since no such law is existent in Sweden and its required safeguards still would have been breached.

Even though it is not of comparable dimension, the facts of the present case nevertheless fit in to the recent discussion on data protection following the revelations of Ex NSA-employee Edward Snowden and could join the call for stronger safeguards when it comes to police surveillance and data storage, which cannot always be weighed out on grounds such as national security.

The main impact of the recent events in Sweden is, however, the meaning it carries regarding the Roma community and the long history of discrimination against this particular minority group. It shows, that there is still a long way to go to combat discrimination against the Roma, and that states continue to fail, to effectively protect the members of this particular group, even, or especially from themselves. Furthermore, it is a heavy backlash to the trust crucial to include, not assimilate, the Roma community stronger into Swedish society. Yet, the stir up in the whole country that followed the events can be interpreted as positive, showing how far the awareness for Human Rights has come in Sweden.

The establishment of the Vitbok might further be a good initiative for Sweden and its Roma community to rehabilitate the common history, yet the present case has sadly shown, that there are still parts of public authorities that act on discriminatory prejudices against Roma and that it is not time to close the Vitbok yet. However, after all it is only a book, and confessions of mistreatment are not where an effective dealing with the issue stops, it is only where it starts.
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