

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0080/08

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Viktória Mohácsi, Marco Cappato, Alexander Alvaro, Sophia in 't Veld, Baroness Sarah Ludford, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Ignasi Guardans Cambó, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Renate Weber and Gérard Deprez, on behalf of the ALDE Group to the Commission

Subject: Creation of a Roma fingerprint database in Italy

The Italian Minister of the Interior reportedly stated during a hearing in the Constitutional Committee of the Italian Parliament that the police are collecting fingerprints of Roma in the framework of a series of checks that are being made in Roma camps in larger cities, and that minors also undergo fingerprinting procedures. It appears that the data are being stored in a newly created special database held by Italian law enforcement authorities placed under the control of Prefects, who have been appointed as 'extraordinary commissioners for the Roma emergency' and granted extraordinary powers. The database's purposes and aims, the question of access and other data protection guarantees have not been clarified. The Minister reportedly stated during the hearing that 'it is not an ethnic file, but a census ... which provides for the fingerprints of all residents (in the camps), minors included, to be taken, to avoid phenomena such as begging; the ultimate objective is to allow those who stay to live in acceptable conditions, those of a civilised society'.

Is the Commission aware of the creation of a Roma database in Italy? Does the Commission not consider this database to be based on race and ethnic origin, as fingerprints are gathered only for Roma, while Italian citizens are not required to undergo a similar procedure? Does the Commission not take the view that this constitutes a clear case of discrimination based on race, ethnic origin and nationality? Does the Commission not consider that the collection of fingerprints of Roma and the creation of a Roma database constitute a violation of human right and fundamental freedoms, the principles of equality and non-discrimination, privacy rights and data protection rules, as recognised by the European Convention on Human Rights and the related jurisprudence, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the EU Treaties, particularly Article 6 of the EU Treaty, and the political mandates of Article 12 of the EC Treaty (prohibition of discrimination based on nationality) and Article 13 of the EC Treaty (prohibition of discrimination based on race and ethnic origin), as well as the anti-discrimination directive on race and ethnicity (2000/43/EC)¹ and the directive on free movement (2004/38/EC)²? Will the Commission raise its concern with the Italian authorities, and what will the Commission do to ensure that the current situation of Roma in Italy is dealt with in accordance with European standards on human rights and fundamental freedoms?

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Deadline for reply: 11.07.2008

¹ OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p. 22.

² OJ L 158, 30.4.2004, p. 77.