

# *Gypsy, go home!*

Hate crime against Roma EU-migrants who make a living on the streets of Malmö, Sweden.

An intermediary report.

Skåne Stadsmission  
Civil Rights Defenders  
Simon Wallengren, Malmö University  
Erik Hansson, Uppsala University



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**Tackling Anti-Gypsyism against Roma Migrants in Malmö**

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Authors:

**Simon Wallengren**, researcher, Malmö University

**Erik Hansson**, researcher, Uppsala University

**Adriana Holmberg Milea**, project coordinator, Skåne Stadsmission

**Albert Dandos**, project officer, Skåne Stadsmission

**Christian Tigerblad**, project officer, Skåne Stadsmission

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## ABSTRACT

This report is the first publication within the project, *Tackling Anti-Gypsyism against Roma Migrants in Malmö*, implemented by Skåne Stadsmission, together with Civil Rights Defenders and co-financed by the European Union (EU). The objective of the two-year project is to combat hate crime against migrant EU-citizens of Roma ethnicity, who make a living on the streets of Malmö, Sweden.

Several studies have previously drawn attention to the fact that migrant EU-citizens making a living on the streets, live at a high risk of falling victim to abuse and attacks motivated by hate. This report investigates hate crime against this group, both from the perspective of the victims and of the perpetrators. Part 2 presents preliminary results of a study carried out by the project team, on the incidence and experiences of hate crime against migrant EU-citizens who live on the streets of Malmö. Parts 3 and 4 examine explanatory models for motives behind these crimes. Part 3, written by Simon Wallengren, presents the results of a survey of Malmö residents' attitudes towards Roma EU-migrants who make a living through begging. Part 4, by Erik Hansson, presents a historical and psychological perspective on people's responses to begging.

The results confirm previous research and demonstrate that migrant EU-citizens suffer an extensive and systematic exposure to hate crime. 56 percent of the migrant EU-citizens interviewed stated that they had been victims of hate crime during the past 12 months in Sweden. Self-identified Roma respondents were more likely to have experienced hate crime and most respondents experienced hate crime several times a week. Although a seemingly low number of hate crimes were reported to the police, this is nevertheless a good result for the project's first five months, when compared with only two police reports being filed the previous year.

However, we found a discrepancy with previous research regarding beliefs and attitudes towards Roma EU-migrants who beg; few respondents answered that they have been angry with, provoked by, or afraid of Roma who beg. Also, compared to other surveys, relatively few respondents showed support for a ban on begging (33 percent). It was though, rather common that respondents considered the Roma who beg to be disturbing public order (18 percent). The consequences of poverty are perceived by many people as a disturbance of the normative and aesthetic order of the public space.

There are two types of measures that could prevent violence. One is that Swedish authorities begin to work actively to ensure the basic human rights of vulnerable EU-citizens in Sweden. The second measure would be to revise hate crime legislation; to consider that states of homelessness and poverty can make people targets for hate crimes that are not necessarily motivated exclusively by the victims' ethnicity. A more nuanced understanding and application of hate crime legislation would lead to more prosecutions and greater respect for the seriousness and prevalence of the issue.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade it has become increasingly common in European cities, to see people who travel across European Union (EU) countries for short periods of time, to make a living through begging. In Sweden, this group of people has been referred to as, "beggars" or "Roma beggars". Official documents, however, talk about vulnerable EU-citizens. In this report we use the terms "vulnerable EU-citizens" and "EU-migrants" interchangeably when referring to the group. The latest estimation, based on numbers from the police, is that there are approximately 4840 vulnerable EU/EES citizens in Sweden (Länsstyrelsen Stockholm, 2019). According to a report from 2016, a majority of these (approximately 80%) belong to the Roma minority from Romania and Bulgaria (SOU 2016:6).

Several academic studies, official reports and civil society organisations have drawn attention to the fact that vulnerable EU-citizens are an extremely marginalised group of people. They live at a high risk of falling victim to various types of abusive and criminal attacks during their stay in Sweden and when they are begging in public places. (Lacatus, 2015: Wallengren & Mellgren, 2018).

This report is the first publication within the framework of the project, *Tackling Anti-Gypsyism against Roma Migrants in Malmö*, which has been developed by Skåne Stadsmission together with Civil Rights Defenders. Crossroads is Skåne Stadsmission's centre supporting vulnerable EU-citizens and has worked closely with the project's target group for four years. Civil Rights Defenders works both globally and in Sweden in support of human rights; the protection of the rights of EU-migrants is one of its priorities in Sweden.

The project is co-financed by the EU and runs for a two-year period during 2019-2020. Its purpose is to combat hate crime against migrant EU-citizens of Roma ethnicity who support themselves in Malmö's street environment, mostly through begging. The police in Malmö also actively participate in the project's implementation.

The project focuses on the migrants' daily lives in Sweden and the protection that wider society should offer them as victims of hate crime and in reducing their exposure to crime. Crossroads Malmö has been gathering testimonies from the target group over the past years. These stories show a widespread and systematic exposure to hate crime; defined as a crime where the underlying motive is fear or hostility towards the victim because he or she is either of Roma ethnicity or is believed to be. Although the victims are seriously affected by hate crimes, few cases have been reported to the police and none in practice have led to legal action against the perpetrators. The project's objective is to change this situation, so that the propensity to report hate crime increases, cases are investigated and lead to trial and in the long term a reduction in hate crime is seen.

A study of the incidence of hate crime against EU-migrants who make a living on the streets of Malmö has been conducted by the project team as a first step in this work. 96 individuals

have been interviewed so far about their knowledge of and exposure to hate crime. The systematic documentation of hate crime against the group is an important part of the project and will be carried out throughout the project period. In this report we present preliminary results based on the documentation work done so far, during the first five months of the project. These results, presented in part 2, confirm the picture presented by previous research, of the extensive and systematic exposure to hate crime that vulnerable groups face.

For the work ahead, it is important to know more about explanatory models for the occurrence of hate crime. Are there negative beliefs among the wider population that can explain the motives of hate crime or that legitimise hate crime? This report, therefore, includes the results of a survey on attitudes towards the group, presented in part 3 and authored by Simon Wallengren, a researcher at Malmö University. 150 people who came into contact with migrant EU-citizens who make a living through begging, responded to a questionnaire about: a) what they generally thought about Roma and Roma EU migrants, b) whether they considered the group to be a nuisance, c) sympathised with people who commit offences against them and finally, d) what the respondents thought about different measures, positive and negative, regarding the group. Surprisingly, the results show no direct correlation with the results of the aforementioned study that is presented in part 2.

In media and political debate in Sweden, the presence of migrant EU-citizens has often been linked to various negative phenomena, for wider society or for the persons in question presented as victims of human trafficking. The phenomenon of begging (referred to as passive money collection) has received a central place in public debate. A begging ban has been discussed as a solution which ensures protection for the people who beg but also for wider society. Those in opposition to a ban argue that begging is an important source of income, allowing families to overcome severe poverty and that society has a responsibility to instead offer social support to these people while they are in Sweden.

In order to get a deeper understanding of the vulnerability of migrant EU-citizens who make a living through begging in Malmö's street environment, it is important to look at what we know from research into begging. In part 4, Erik Hansson, a researcher at Uppsala University, analyses the dissonance between the perceived self-image and the upsetting feelings provoked by meeting a person begging. Erik uses insights from his newly published doctoral thesis (Hansson 2019). Part 4 also includes a theoretical framework, with a summarised literature review, about views on groups of individuals living on the edge of society, often from minority groups, who make a living by begging. This historical overview can help to better understand the mechanisms behind today's fierce debate around begging and its consequences for the project's target group.

All in all, this literature review aims to be a starting point for the project's overarching goal of combating hate crime against Roma migrants who make a living on the streets of Malmö.

For more information about the project visit: <https://www.skanestadsmission.se/hatbrott/>.

## **2. HATE CRIME AGAINST ROMA EU-MIGRANTS IN MALMÖ**

This chapter presents the results of a study carried out by Skåne Stadsmission during the period March – May 2019. The study aimed to answer the following questions: 1) What is the incidence of hate crime against migrant EU-citizens of Roma ethnicity living in homelessness in Malmö? and 2) What experiences of hate crime do these people have?

### **2.1. METHODOLOGY**

A baseline survey was conducted during the period March – May 2019, by the project team, among migrant EU-citizens living in homelessness in Malmö. In total, 96 people belonging to the group were interviewed based on a short questionnaire. The survey was designed to gather data about the incidence of hate crime against the group and was also part of a rights-based information campaign, with the purpose of raising awareness about hate crime.

The survey was carried out in several locations: at Crossroads, at Faktum's selling point in Malmö (Faktum is a magazine focusing on social issues, which is sold by socially vulnerable people), as well as many other public places in the city where the project team found migrant EU-citizens during their field work. The respondents were asked if they knew what hate crime was and to explain in their own words what they thought it was. A discussion followed in which the interviewer clarified the concept using examples. The respondents were then asked if they had been a victim of hate crime during the past twelve months in Sweden.

The respondents who answered that they had been victims of hate crime during the past twelve months were asked whether they wanted to give details about their experiences. 25 respondents (out of 54 who answered that they had been subjected to hate crime) agreed to give details. They were then interviewed using a longer documentation form that included questions about their experiences of hate crime, their trust in the police and the judicial system in Sweden, as well as whether they wanted to report the incident to the Police or not. This documentation process is ongoing and will continue throughout the project period. The project team will work in order to motivate the group to report hate crime, if not to the police, which is our objective, then at least to us. Therefore, the results presented here are preliminary.

## 2.2. RESULTS

### 2.2.1. DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 96 migrant EU citizens were interviewed, 35 percent were women and 65 percent were men. With regards to ethnic identity, 84 percent responded they were Roma and 16 percent that they were not.

Of the 25 respondents who reported being subjected to hate crime and agreed to fill in the documentation form, 10 were women and 15 were men; 22 identified themselves as Roma and 3 as non-Roma and all were Romanian citizens. The majority, 16 respondents, were between 30 and 50 years old, only one respondent was below 30 and 8 respondents were above 50. The most common occupations were begging (20 respondents) and collecting cans/bottles (17); followed by casual work (6) and street entertainment (1). It is interesting to note that 14 of those begging also reported that they occasionally collect cans and bottles.

### 2.2.2. AWARENESS AND INCIDENCE OF HATE CRIME

When it comes to awareness about hate crime, half of the respondents answered that they knew what it was and half that they did not. However, when asked to explain hate crime, only 34 percent of the respondents gave correct answers. This shows a relatively low awareness about hate crime among the group.

A majority, 54 respondents (or 56 percent), answered that they had been a victim of hate crime in Sweden during the past twelve months. Those who identified themselves as Roma were more likely to have been subjected to hate crime. A little less than half (7 out of 15) of the non-Roma respondents, compared with a majority (58 percent) of the Roma respondents, answered that they had been victims of hate crime. According to our study, men and women seem as likely as one another to be exposed to hate crime.

### 2.2.3. EXPERIENCES OF HATE CRIME

Table 1 presents the **offences** reported by the 25 respondents who stated that they had been subjected to hate crime and agreed to fill in the hate crime documentation.



**Table 1.** Number of respondents according to type of offence reported.

Type of offence	Number of respondents
Harassment (threatening, abusive, annoying or intimidating behaviour that is committed on more than one occasion).	15
Threats (with the intention to cause pain, injury or damage).	6
Verbal abuse	20
Sexual abuse	3
Physical assault	7
Damage to property	4
Discrimination	6
Other: spitting	6
Other: kicked begging mug	4

*Note: Respondents could tick more than one alternative.*

The most commonly reported offences were verbal abuse (reported by 20 respondents) and harassment (reported by 15 respondents); though it is important to note that 7 respondents reported physical assaults (being hit, kicked or dragged; or having objects thrown at them) and 6 respondents reported threats; 4 respondents reported being injured and 5 having suffered material damage.

When it comes to verbal abuse, 9 respondents were called "Gypsy" and 8 respondents were told "Go home!", "Go Romania!", or similar. Respondents reported hearing various abusive, insulting and/or obscene language or gestures, including that they stink.

*"He called me Gypsy and put his hand to his nose in a gesture that suggests that I smell bad or that Gypsies smell bad."*

Asked **how often** they experienced hate crime, most respondents (15), answered that they experienced hate crimes several times per week (6 respondents answered every day) and 9 respondents experienced hate crimes several times a month or more seldom.

Respondents described feelings of fear, stress and helplessness; as well as humiliation, degradation and shame when asked **how they felt** during and after such offences.

*"It's not enough that I humiliate myself sitting down and begging, this kind of people come and make it worse. I'm feeling degraded, ashamed, with a heavy soul."*

*"I feel very bad. I have panic attacks; I'm scared. I'm afraid for something even worse to happen. I'm afraid he will kick me in my face or do something to destroy me. I'm crying"*

*all the time.”*

We also found interesting results regarding the context in which hate crimes were committed. Most respondents (19) reported that the crimes happened while they were begging, whereas only 5 respondents experienced it in other contexts, such as while collecting cans or bottles or walking on the street. The majority of the respondents (20) stated that the perpetrator(s) committed the crimes as private person(s), whereas 3 respondents answered that the perpetrator was an employee on duty (guards at a mall and train station, as well as a restaurant employee).

When asked about the **perceived motive** of the hate crime the respondents answered as follows in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Number of respondents according to perceived motive

Perceived motive	Number of respondents
Ethnicity or race	17
Skin colour	3
Livelihood	11 (9 = begging; 2 = collecting cans and bottles)

*Note: Respondents could tick more than one alternative.*

17 of the 25 respondents considered that they were victimised due to their ethnicity or race; whereas 11 respondents considered that they were victimised due to their livelihood. It is interesting to note that 9 respondents ticked both alternatives, meaning that they considered both ethnicity/race and their livelihood to be motives.

#### 2.2.4. TRUST IN THE POLICE AND LEGAL SYSTEM AND WILLINGNESS TO REPORT

Table 3 summarises the answers about the respondents' trust in the Swedish police and legal system. Generally, we can see a relatively high trust in both.

**Table 3.** Trust in Swedish police and legal system

Question	Low (1-2)	Moderate (3)	High (4-5)
Trust in Swedish police	6	5	10
Trust in Swedish legal system (prosecutor, court etc.)	4	8	10

*Note: Respondents were asked to grade their trust on a scale from 1 to 5.*

Only 7 of the 25 respondents agreed to report, with our help, the incidents to the police and received assistance in doing so. The reasons stated for not wishing to report were: "I am used to it" (6 respondents), "I don't have proof, evidence or witnesses" and previous experiences

with the police (5 respondents respectively); "I am afraid", "I don't want to go to court", "I do not want to get involved" and "I don't think anything would be done about it anyway" (4 respondents respectively).

### **2.3. CONCLUSIONS**

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- There is a relatively low awareness about hate crime among the group (34 percent of respondents gave correct answers when asked to explain what it was). Despite the low awareness, after the meaning of hate crime was explained, 56 percent of the respondents stated that they had been victims of hate crime in Sweden during the past twelve months. Respondents who self-identified as Roma were more likely to have experienced hate crime.
- The most common offences that respondents were subjected to were verbal abuse and harassment. 7 of the 25 respondents, who filled in the hate crime documentation form, reported physical assault and 6 reported threats and discrimination. Most respondents experienced hate crime several times a week while they were begging, and it was committed by private persons.
- When it comes to the perceived motive of the offence, most respondents (17) stated ethnicity or race and a smaller but substantial number (11) livelihood. This preliminary result seems to support a recommendation for a change in the interpretation of the Swedish legislation on hate crime to include homelessness, poverty and livelihood as motives of hate crime.
- Only 7 of the 25 respondents agreed to report, with our help, the incidents to the police and they received assistance in doing so. Although a seemingly low number of hate crime police reports were filed, this is nevertheless a good result for the project's first five months when compared with only two police reports being filed during the previous year.

### **3. ATTITUDES TOWARDS ROMA MIGRANTS WHO BEG IN MALMÖ**

*Simon Wallengren*

The mapping exercise presented in this chapter studies the attitudes towards socially vulnerable EU citizens of Roma origin who make a living through begging in Malmö. In addition, the study aims to investigate to what extent the group is perceived as disturbing public order and residents of Malmö favour a ban on begging.

#### **3.1. METHODOLOGY**

A quantitative attitude survey was conducted among adults who live in or commute to Malmö and come in contact with EU citizens who make a living through begging. A random sample of 150 respondents was selected using a multi-stage cluster sampling method (Bryman, 2004). In the first stage, 15 out of the 236 areas of Malmö were randomly selected. These were: Ribersborg, Rönneholm, Hyllievång, Almvik, Kronborg, Östervärn, Rörsjöstaden, Södervärn, Svågertorp, Annetorp, Bunkeflostrand, Fridhem, Inre hamnen, Nydala and Johanneslust. In the second stage a shop or a geographic location where there was a begging person was randomly selected. In the third step, the third adult person coming out of the shop was asked if they wanted to participate in the survey.

Respondents were asked to fill in a questionnaire on the spot comprising 36 statements about attitudes in regard to Roma EU citizens who beg, whether they perceive the group as disturbing public order, whether they sympathise with people committing criminal or offending acts against the group and finally, to what extent they agree with various measures taken towards the group. The respondents were asked to what extent they disagreed/agreed with the statements on a five-point scale (1 = "I don't agree at all" and 5 = "I totally agree"). For this report the answers were concentrated in three groups: 1) those who do not agree at all or partially, 2) unsure and 3) those who agree partially or totally.

#### **3.2. RESULTS**

##### **3.2.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS**

150 respondents participated in the survey of the 416 adults who were asked. This gave a response rate of 36 percent, which is low when put in the context of generalisability. There were more women than men who participated in the survey (59 percent women, 39 percent men and 2 percent other/no answer). The average age of the respondents was 43 years (higher than the general population as only adults participated in the study). The education level was high with 71 percent of the respondents having completed higher education, 25 percent secondary education and only 4 percent primary education or lower. About 70 percent of the respondents answered that they were either working or studying (59 percent worked, and 11

percent studied). The remaining 30 percent were either unemployed or retired. Most of the respondents were born in Sweden (70 percent) and a minority were born abroad (30 percent).

All in all, the sample gives a relatively good reflection of the general population of Malmö, although the respondents were better educated and more women than men agreed to participate in the survey (SCB, 2018). This must be considered when judging the generalisability of the results of the study.

The following section will give a description of the respondents' preconceptions and attitudes towards Roma EU citizens who beg. This presentation has been structured in three sections. In those cases where statistically significant correlations were found with the background of the respondents these are presented in the relevant section.

### 3.2.2. PRECONCEPTIONS ABOUT ROMA MIGRANTS WHO BEG

Table 4. shows a summary of the respondents' answers related to their preconceptions about Roma migrants who beg.

**Table 4.** Summary in percent of the respondents' preconceptions about Roma migrants who beg.

Question	Disagrees partially or totally	Unsure	Agrees partially or totally
Those who beg are Roma.	33	37	38
Roma who beg are poor.	18	22	59
Roma who beg do this because they do not find work.	25	23	50
Roma who beg do this because they do not want to work.	69	17	13
Roma who come to Sweden to beg are organised <b>in</b> illegal gangs.	57	23	18
Roma who come to Sweden to beg are organised <b>by</b> illegal gangs.	51	27	20
Most Roma who come to Sweden are exploited in organised crime for begging, prostitution and theft.	36	37	25
Roma who come to Sweden are rich in their home countries and have expensive cars and houses.	72	19	8
Roma who beg receive social benefits.	73	19	3
One cannot trust the Roma.	58	25	11
One cannot trust that the Roma who beg tell the truth about their poverty and life situation.	49	25	19
Most Roma are criminal.	73	15	6
Most Roma migrants who come to Sweden from other EU countries are criminal.	72	15	7

*Note: The sum for each answer is not 100 percent because non-responses were not included.*

When it comes to the question about whether those who beg are Roma the answers were relatively evenly distributed across the three alternatives (33 percent disagreed partially or totally, and 38 percent agreed partially or totally). In this case it is reasonable to assume that the respondents were unsure about the background of those who beg.

A majority, 59 percent, agreed with the statement that those who beg are poor, whereas 18 percent of the respondents did not. Asked whether Roma who come to Sweden are rich in their home countries, only 8 percent agreed whereas 73 percent did not.

Asked whether Roma who come to Sweden to beg are organised **in** illegal gangs or whether begging is organised **by** illegal gangs, most of the respondents did not agree (57 and 51 percent respectively); 18 and 20 percent respectively agreed with this statement. However, when asked whether they thought that most Roma who come to Sweden are exploited in organised crime, more respondents were unsure and only 36 percent disagreed, while a relatively large group agreed (25 percent).

The absolute majority, 72 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement that Roma who come to Sweden receive social benefits. Only 3 percent agreed with the statement.

3.2.3. THE RESPONDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF THE GROUP AS DISTURBING PUBLIC ORDER

Table 5. summarises the respondents’ answers regarding whether they perceive the Roma who beg as a public disturbance and their sympathy towards people who commit offending acts against them.

**Table 5.** *The respondents’ perceptions of Roma migrants who beg as disturbing the public order*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Disagrees partially or totally</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Agrees partially or totally</b>
I am afraid of Roma who beg.	82	7	5
I am provoked by Roma who beg.	70	13	11
It happens that I get angry with people who beg.	75	8	11
The beggars are a nuisance.	63	12	18
I sympathise with people who shout at Roma who beg.	85	5	5
I sympathise with people who spit at people who beg or kick their cups.	87	3	4

*Note: The sum for each answer is not 100 percent because non-responses were not included.*

A significant minority of the respondents agreed that the beggars are a nuisance (18 percent). It was statistically more common among older respondents, women, lower educated and those born abroad to agree with this statement; whereas younger respondents, those with higher education and those born in Sweden tended to disagree.

A small proportion of respondents, 5 percent, agreed with the statement that they were afraid of the Roma who beg. Here again, it was mostly older respondents, women, lower educated and those born abroad who agreed.

11 percent of the respondents stated that it happened that they became angry with a Roma who begged. This was more common among older respondents, men and people born abroad.

When asked if they sympathise with people who shout at Roma who beg or people who spit at them or kick their cups, a very small proportion answered that they agree (5 and 4 percent respectively). The only significant correlations we found with these sympathies were with the respondents' sex and place of birth; men and those born abroad were more likely to answer that they sympathise with such acts.

The conclusion is that a relatively small proportion of the respondents answered that they consider Roma who beg to be disturbing public order, that they are afraid or provoked by the groups' presence or that they sympathise with people who commit illegal or offending acts against the group.

3.2.4. OPINIONS ABOUT POLITICAL MEASURES TARGETING ROMA MIGRANTS WHO BEG

Table 6. gives a summary of respondents' opinions regarding Sweden's political responsibility for Roma migrants who beg in public spaces and the measures that should be taken vis-à-vis the group.

**Table 6.** *The respondents' opinions about political measures targeting Roma who beg.*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Disagrees partially or totally</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Agrees partially or totally</b>
Roma who beg don't really have the right to be in Sweden.	64	21	13
Sweden has a responsibility for Roma who come from other EU countries and beg.	38	23	33
The Roma who beg should be sent home.	54	15	14
Begging should be banned.	49	14	33
Begging should be restricted in certain areas.	56	14	21
I would feel comfortable if my employer decided to employ a Roma person who previously begged on the streets.	20	25	54

*Note: The sum for each answer is not 100 percent because non-responses were not included.*



The respondents' opinions were divided when it comes to Sweden's responsibility for the Roma who come from other EU countries (38 percent disagreed whereas 33 percent agreed). The same applies even when asked if begging should be banned. Nearly half of the respondents disagreed, whereas 33 percent agreed partially or totally. The respondents were less positive regarding a restriction of begging in certain areas, the statement that Roma who beg do not have the right to be in Sweden and that Roma who beg should be sent home. In addition, the majority, 54 percent would feel comfortable if their employer would employ a Roma who had previously begged. This result is interesting in light of a previous survey from 2015 which showed that 87 percent of Swedes and 61 percent of Romanians surveyed would have felt comfortable working alongside a Roma colleague (Special Eurobarometer 437: p. 24).; most of the Roma begging in Malmö come from Romania. Our study shows a more negative attitude towards Roma who beg compared to Roma in general in Sweden. We argue that this has to do with the perception of begging itself.

Consistent with the rest of the analysis is that women, the young and more educated people, as well as those born in Sweden are less likely to support a ban on begging compared with men, the elderly, those with lower education and born outside of Sweden.

In conclusion, the study results show more positive attitudes towards Roma migrants who beg when compared with previous studies.

### **3.3. CONCLUSIONS**

This report presented the results of a survey about Malmö residents' preconceptions and attitudes about Roma migrants who beg, as well as their perceptions of the group as disturbing public order and their opinions about political measures that should be taken vis-à-vis the group. The following conclusions can be drawn:

- Generally, the respondents had a relatively realistic picture about Roma migrants who beg. Most respondents showed good knowledge about the group. The majority answered that Roma migrants beg not because they are lazy or unwilling to work but because of the situation in which they find themselves, one of social vulnerability and marginalisation. In addition, most of the respondents reported that they did not think that Roma who beg are organised in or by criminal gangs.
- Few respondents answered that they had been angry with (11 percent), provoked by (11 percent) or afraid of (5 percent) Roma who beg. There were also few who sympathised with people who in one way or another committed offensive acts against the group (4-5 percent). It was however, rather common that respondents considered the Roma who beg to be disturbing public order (18 percent). This study did not investigate what it was that respondents considered to be disturbing. In order to minimise the friction between Roma who beg and the wider population it would be interesting and necessary to determine what certain people consider to be disturbing.

This can presumably be explained by motivations coupled with the interaction between those who beg and passersby.

- The opinions are divided regarding Sweden's responsibility towards Roma migrants who come from other EU countries and beg (38 percent considered that Sweden does not have any responsibility, whereas 33 percent considered that Sweden has a responsibility). However, relatively few respondents considered that Roma who beg, "don't really have the right", to be in Sweden (13 percent), that they should be sent home (14 percent) or that begging should be restricted in certain areas (21 percent).
- Compared with other opinion surveys relatively few respondents showed support for a ban on begging, 33 percent compared to 62 percent by NOVUS' latest survey (Eriksson 2018). The explanation for this could lay in non-response bias, in other words in that the sample of this study included more women and people with a higher level of education than average. As shown previously women and people with a higher level of education tend to be more positive towards the group. Another explanation could be the way in which the question was framed. NOVUS' survey asked respondents if they supported a begging ban without mentioning anything about the ethnicity of the beggars, whereas in our survey the question came in a context in which the ethnicity of those begging was emphasised.
- In general, the analysis showed that older people, men, those born abroad and with a lower level of education, have more negative and prejudiced attitudes towards Roma migrants who beg as compared to younger people, women, people born in Sweden and those with higher level of education.

## 4. WHY HATE PEOPLE WHO BEG?

*Erik Hansson*

In my newly published doctoral thesis, I look at the reactions of Swedish society towards *begging*, in order to distinguish the historical and psychological prerequisites of contemporary anti-Roma racism, which affects vulnerable EU-citizens who travel to beg on the streets of Europe (Hansson 2019). My thesis focuses on aggression towards “beggars”, rather than on hostility towards Roma, even if both essentially affect the same people: those who beg often are, or are defined as, Roma. My analysis is based on 1329 media articles published between 2014 and 2016; as well as social media (blogs, Facebook comments and Flashback comments), about 50 interviews and spatial observations (auto-ethnography).

### 4.1. A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE AVERSION TO BEGGING

Racism against *Roma and travellers* has existed for centuries and it has many expressions. It includes the contempt, dislike, angst and hate of *impoverished people who beg*. Anti-Roma racism and an aversion to “beggars” and their begging, have much in common in terms of their conceptualisation and expression. However, from an analytical perspective it is important to make clear the distinction between the two. Otherwise, we risk falling into the trap of equating begging with “Roma culture” as well as assuming that “beggars” are hated only because they are Roma, which would be a false conclusion from a historical perspective. It would also lead to the unfortunate reinforcement of the link between begging and the Roma, as if they were indistinguishable.

Many Roma from Romania and Bulgaria who beg in Sweden are subjected to racism as a historical structure, i.e. structural discrimination rooted in the past, which is still active today. However, the aversion to Roma people begging in Sweden can be understood as taking place as a reaction to the deviant acts of begging and sleeping outside. Racism and hostility towards the Roma are reproduced when these practices in turn are made sense of as being *deliberately* carried out by people *who are not “Swedish”*, to say that they are “*not us*”. These people are then categorised exclusively as Roma, which they often are. This happens when actions, such as begging and sleeping in public spaces, which are driven by poverty, are collated with their assumed ethnic identity. The perceived deviant behaviour is then interpreted as being intentionally disturbing and provocative. In this case, if the behaviour is also seen as being intentionally directed towards an individual or the wider community to which they belong, aggression, hostility and fear are more easily provoked.

As such, “vulnerable EU citizen” in Sweden are subjected to multiple layers of hostility. Institutional and historical racism, which positions the Roma as immoral, lazy, criminal and ill-minded is applied to individuals who are homeless and begging. The point is that the aversion to the deviant, ‘homeless beggar’, represents a dangerous societal antipathy in its own right.

In the U.S.A. homeless people are being attacked regularly (NCH 2009); in hundreds of cases homeless people have been murdered. Similarly, a homeless Romanian man named Gica was murdered in Huskvarna, Sweden in the autumn of 2018. The homeless who are harassed and murdered in the U.S. do not always belong to ethnic minorities.

People who beg either willingly, as in those who are not subjected to human trafficking, or unwillingly do so because they cannot find another sustainable means of income. This has been the case for thousands of years and it has not only been the Roma who have been forced into begging. The historical lesson is that those most likely to start begging, are those whose previous livelihoods are taken away from them through radical social, political and economic processes of transformation. They are also denied access to social welfare by wider society; what is seen today as a fundamental right to the social safety net. In Sweden, as recently as the 1800's, one could encounter Sami people who were begging on the coast of Norrland (SOU 2006:14). These people were often called, "poor-lapps" ("fattiglappar"), and were travelling, landless Sami who owned no reindeer and had no secure livelihood. When they did not beg, they made a living as casual farm and forestry labourers. These Sami began begging as a consequence of the Swedish Crown's colonisation and exploitation of Upper Norrland for economic purposes.

Begging seems to always have been met with ambivalence by the wider population. This was so as far back as the Middle Ages. During the Swedish famine of 1867-1869, members of poor farming families, especially children, were forced to beg in their vicinity. The recorded reactions by the wider population are often condemnatory and moralising (Västerbro 2018). As late as the 1990's, when "beggars" "reappeared" in Swedish cities, as a consequence of psychiatric care reforms and widespread cuts to the social welfare sector, the subway police in Stockholm registered begging as an offence of "disorderly conduct" ("förargelseväckande beteende") (Beijer 1999; Peruzzi 1998).

Several constants can be drawn from the history of begging, about the way in which people who beg, are spoken of and treated. Regardless of space and time, a distinction is usually made between the "deserving" and "undeserving" poor who beg (Geremek 1991; Erskine & McIntosh 1999). Those understood to be deserving, are those who are unable to work. Those undeserving are considered able to work, "if only they wanted to" and/or are defined as "strangers". A tradition can be traced, of distinguishing between "our beggars" and "others' beggars", whereby, "our beggars", are those that a society presumes to take responsibility for; whereas "others" should be driven out. As such, people who beg have often been "strangers", migrants, coming from other places. They have travelled to new places, to find new givers, when the old ones grew tired. Finally, throughout history, people who beg seem to have been ascribed a bad reputation rooted in the suspicion that they are not that which they want to appear to be. They have been suspected of belonging to secret gangs of bandits or immoral cultures, of deriving pleasure from not having to "work" as all other people. All three historical constants presented here are also relevant in Sweden today, when talking about the new East-European

Roma "beggars".

Also recurrent throughout history are the notions and myths about how "beggars" are not really poor, implying that they beg out of some evil motivation, a desire to disturb and harass other people. Precisely these sorts of tales and slander, have followed the Roma across Europe for centuries. Often the Roma have lived nomadically and sometimes have had to make a living through, among other means, begging. However, once again, I argue that there is no support for equating the two historical sentiments. Instead, the similarity shows how fear and angst for that which is "different" are not only manifested and expressed as racism; they can also be expressed as fear and angst for "different" manifestations of poverty.

## **4.2. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CAUSES OF HATE**

It is useful to try to understand the psychological causes of the malice, offence and violence EU-citizens who beg and are often Roma, are subjected to by Swedish citizens. We know already that the Roma, regardless of their nationality are still, to this day, subject to structural discrimination and hate crime, but this fact alone does not provide a satisfying explanation for the hate expressed so violently against Roma people who beg.

The violence and humiliation exercised against begging and homeless EU-citizens is often expressed as an act of vengeance, as a way to "hit back" or "fight" the people in question. It is about "pushing away" the people, from oneself or from a place, so that they might disappear from one's surroundings. The aggression, leading to humiliation and violence, must be understood as a way of the individual defending themselves against something. There is no intrinsic value in a person being upset without reason, anger is caused by a feeling of provocation or being threatened by something. What is this "something" that is aroused inside certain people and becomes the unconscious cause of aggression against Roma people who beg and are homeless in Sweden? Based on my analysis of texts and comments about EU-citizens who beg in Sweden, three expressed causes of hate, violence and indignity against the group emerge:

### **4.2.1. THE MYTH THAT "BEGGARS ARE CRIMINALS"**

The first expressed cause is related to "beggars" being criminals; the belief that they are organised in or by gangs when they beg. Even if some people who beg are being exploited and a minority are involved in criminal activities, these labels are no more representative of "beggars" as a collective than they would be if applied to the general population. The notion of "beggars" as criminals does not explain why some people hate them with such a frenzy. Those to be considered victims of criminality are those who are exploited for begging – not those who meet the begging act. If one seriously thought that the "beggar" in front of them was a mafia boss, would it not be risky to provoke a gang member by spitting at or hitting them? My explanation for this recurring motive for detesting, hating or being afraid of the "beggar", is that the motive expressed here, namely criminality, is a projected metaphor. The

"beggar" as criminal is a metaphor for the "beggar" as an "evil person". Criminals are, according to collective social morality and the law, bad individuals because of their actions. Why would the "beggar" be an "evil person"? Because there is confusion between an individual's own feelings and those of the other person. The "evil" in question is presumably the feeling awakened by having to meet the other person's begging.

Typically, someone begging asks a passer-by for material help. Often, it is enough that the "beggar" says, "hi", or just sits there, for another to react as though the "beggar" wants something, such as money. Regardless of one's moral thoughts, about whether the "beggar" deserves help or not, one feels that they must react to the "beggar's" demand, often expressed by their mere presence; one must decide about how to behave towards the person. Without any violence or coercion involved, one feels forced to take a stand against the begging person, even if one chooses to ignore them. I argue that many people probably experience the "beggar" as an intrusion or violation of their private sphere and are provoked simply by the act of begging. One must relate, in one way or another, to this other person, your fellow human, whether you want to or not. I argue that this potential feeling of intrusion can in many cases be that "something" that is registered as a provocation or threat by the passer-by. In a sense, the "beggars'" asking for attention, can be understood as the person begging occupying space in the consciousness of the passer-by.

In turn, registering "the other" as someone who violates my private sphere can unconsciously be transformed into a feeling that the self is threatened. This happens because the normative lines defining how one should interact with others are temporarily breached. An unknown person comes too close and the lines between the self and our surroundings become indistinct.

This feeling can then be dealt with in two ways: through a manoeuvre of either evoking sympathy or antipathy towards the person begging. The feeling is transformed either as compassion/empathy or frustration/anger. The feeling that the other "occupies space" can be neutralised by establishing an understanding of the other as a person with a history and intention behind their way of seeking contact.

Both manoeuvres aim at unconsciously redressing the balance, the distance between the experienced self and the world. The problem is that if the manoeuvre steers towards antipathy, the confusion between the bad feeling and the imagined bad person can lead to increased frustration. If then, there are generally held racist beliefs in a society, for example about the Roma, they can confirm this image of the "other's" intention to disturb me and hostility towards the person in question is even more likely.

When it comes to the Roma EU-citizens in question, there is no lack of stories, rumours and myths proclaiming that the bad feeling is provoked by the "beggar's" bad intentions. The initial feeling of intrusion is transformed into a malicious feeling about how the Roma disturb ordinary citizens in their daily life.

There may be an inherent story of how "they" take over the public space, by being so overtly present in the cityscape. This enhances the often unconscious imagining of the other's provocation and disrespect towards ones-self as an ordinary, innocent, citizen, who has not asked to be affected by these dissonant sensations.

#### 4.2.2. "THE BEGGAR INVADES THE EVERYDAY LIFE"

Now, the second pronounced explanation of the malice, is about an idea of how "the Roma", in an unfair manner, occupy the public space by begging. How they disturb individuals in a way that it feels as though they should not have the right to do; how the "beggar", by begging, intrudes upon everyday life.

According to several texts I have read, it seems that simply the presence of "beggars" on the streets, just sitting down begging and saying hello to people passing-by, is enough to evoke sentiments of provocation and intrusion for some. In my opinion, this is connected to the feeling of being forced to relate to strangers who are perceived as unjustly wanting something. This in turn means that there are norms regarding what constitutes an acceptable interaction with other strangers in the public space.

The individual citizen perceives themselves as having a right to not have to be disturbed in the way in which "beggars" are perceived as disturbing. The feeling of provocation is present even here. In addition, the one disturbing is defined as being a foreigner and this foreigner is also defined as Roma.

Now the aggressive feeling that comes from having been "wrongfully" disturbed can develop into a hostility towards the "stranger". This "stranger" not only lacks the right to disturb the person - they should not be here at all.

#### 4.2.3. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

The final recurring explanation for aversion, which can lead to hatred and even to violence, is about the consequences of homelessness. By lacking access to reasonable housing and therefore sanitation, many EU citizens are forced to use public spaces as though they were private. They set up settlements in parks, in parking lots and in nearby natural areas. In this way they are perceived as upsetting normative and aesthetic arrangements, about what should "take place" and where (cf. Sibley 1995). Littering and unsanitary conditions are social problems in their own right, but in the case of "EU migrants" these problems are due to the fact that they usually do not have anywhere else to live in Sweden.

The condition of homelessness, brought about by poverty and not having anywhere else to live, is distorted by many citizens and interpreted as a matter of respect or lack thereof, for the surroundings. The fact that a person needs to live under health-hazardous and dirty conditions is distorted to the fact that it is the person themselves who is dirty and their character must

therefore be flawed - the person must deliberately live in this way. "They" become "disgusting". Not only that, through this understanding of the situation, homelessness is also perceived as a provocation. The order of places, the established structure of each thing in its place, is destroyed; it is felt, by many, to be deliberately destroyed.

### **4.3. CONCLUSIONS**

To sum up: a tangible cause behind the violence and violations affecting "beggars" and homeless EU-citizens in Sweden, is that the consequences of poverty are registered by many people as being a threat to their own emotional investment in their material surroundings and their place within them. The "push factor" making violent acts more likely is that the impoverished people in question are defined as "strangers" (i.e., aliens and / or Roma) who are perceived as destroying these emotional investments and arrangements, more or less, intentionally.

Such a mental dimension of the problem is difficult to access in order to combat the hate crimes against "vulnerable EU citizens" in Sweden. However, there are two types of measures that could prevent violence. One is that Swedish authorities begin to work actively to ensure the basic human rights of the vulnerable EU-citizens in Sweden.

Providing people with access to reasonable living conditions and sanitation, as well as education and sustainable livelihoods, would not only be effective poverty reduction but also in harmony with human rights conventions, which Sweden has committed to follow (Amnesty International 2018). It would also be a way to reduce the spatial presence of the consequences of poverty: if people did not need to sleep outdoors or beg to the extent that they do now, fewer citizens would have problems with the public presence of poverty.

The second measure would be to revise hate crime legislation; in order to improve access to justice in cases of violence and violation, where it cannot be proven that it is the victim's ethnicity that constitutes the motive of the crime. In the case of "vulnerable EU-citizens", it often seems that the intention behind a hate crime can be a mixture of ethnic hatred and the individual's condition of being homeless and in poverty.

*For more information and sources, please see Erik Hansson's' doctoral thesis: "**Det känns fel**". **Om svenska samhällets reaktioner mot tiggande EU-medborgares närvaro, 2014–2016** ("It feels wrong" - About Swedish society's reactions to the presence of begging EU citizens, 2014–2016).*



## 5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMENDATIONS

- Despite a relatively low awareness about hate crime among migrant EU-citizens making a living on the streets of Malmö, after understanding what hate crime is, 56 percent of the respondents stated that they have been victims of hate crime in Sweden during the past twelve months. Self-identified Roma respondents were more likely to have experienced hate crime.
- The most common offences migrant EU-citizens in the study were subjected to were verbal abuse and harassment. In addition, 7 of the 25 respondents who filled in the hate crime documentation form reported physical assault and 6 respondents reported threats and discrimination. Most respondents experienced hate crime several times a week while they were begging and that it was committed by private persons.
- Only 7 of the 25 migrant EU-citizens in the study agreed to report, with our help, the hate crime to the police and they received assistance in doing so. Although a seemingly low number of hate crimes were reported to the police, this is nevertheless a good result for the project's first five months, when compared with only two police reports being filed during the previous year.
- Generally, the respondents in the attitude survey among Malmö residents had a relatively realistic picture of Roma migrants who beg; most respondents showed good knowledge about the group. The majority answered that they believe Roma migrants beg because of social vulnerability and marginalisation, not because they are lazy or unwilling to work. In addition, most of the respondents reported that they do not think that Roma who beg are organised in or by criminal gangs.
- The opinions are divided, among Malmö residents, regarding Sweden's responsibility towards Roma migrants who come from other EU countries and beg. However, relatively few respondents considered that Roma who beg "don't really have the right to be in Sweden" (13 percent) or that they should be sent home (14 percent). In comparison with other surveys, relatively few respondents showed support for a ban on begging (33 percent).
- Few respondents answered that they have been angry with, provoked by, or afraid of Roma who beg. There were also few who sympathised with people who in one way or another committed offensive acts against the group. It was however, rather common that respondents considered the Roma who beg to be disturbing public order (18 percent). The general population seems to have an established idea about what constitutes their surroundings; how they should appear and what should take place within them. They are emotionally invested in this idea and it is built into their sense of self. The tangible consequences of poverty are felt, by many, to be a threat to this idea and therefore, themselves. This feeling is rooted in a historical and psychological perspective and constitutes a motive behind the violence affecting beggars and homeless EU-citizens in Sweden. A measure that could prevent violence is Swedish authorities beginning to work actively to ensure the basic human rights of vulnerable EU- citizens in Sweden. Emancipating vulnerable EU-citizens, would contribute towards alleviating their state of poverty. A strong stance taken in

this respect, by authorities, would challenge negative perceptions and acknowledge people as already being a part of society, not alien to it.

- When it comes to the perceived motive of the offence, most migrant EU-citizens in our study (17) stated ethnicity or race and a smaller but substantial number (11) stated their livelihood (begging or collecting cans/bottles) as being the perceived motive. The second type of measure would be to revise hate crime legislation; to consider that states of homelessness and poverty can make people targets for hate crimes that are not necessarily motivated exclusively by the victims' ethnicity. A more nuanced understanding and application of hate crime legislation would lead to more prosecutions and greater respect for the seriousness and prevalence of the issue. There is an apparent undercurrent of antagonism towards the homeless and those living in poverty, regardless of ethnicity, that must be challenged.

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