

Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President
Better Regulation, Inter-Institutional Relations,
the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS OFFICE

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Dear Vice-President Timmermans,

Discrimination against Romani children in the Czech school system – new research findings

The Commission is currently carrying out an infringement procedure investigating discrimination against Romani pupils in the Czech educational system, with a particular focus on the disproportional placement of Romani children in schools for pupils with “mild mental disabilities”, also referred to as “practical schools”. As the Commission prepares to assess the measures taken by the Czech Republic in response to its intervention, I would like to share with you Amnesty International’s newest research on discrimination against Roma in Czech schools.

Our report "***Must try harder. Ethnic discrimination of Romani children in Czech schools***", launched this morning in Prague, documents how the Czech authorities are continuously violating the human rights of Romani children in mainstream and special education across the country. Romani children are segregated in mainstream education in Roma-only separate classes, buildings and schools, or placed in “practical schools”. Those in ethnically mixed schools experience bullying and harassment, as well as discriminatory attitudes by educators.

The report shows that systematic discrimination by authorities against Romani pupils takes place beyond the disproportional placing of Romani children in schools for pupils with “mild mental disabilities” on which the Commission’s investigation is focusing. It shows in particular how ethnic prejudice impacts on the daily school life of Romani children even in mainstream schools and the quality of education they receive.

We therefore call on the Commission to also address discrimination against Romani children in mainstream schools when engaging with the Czech government. Measures by the Czech government should not be limited to a (necessary) legal reform of the educational system, but target also ethnic prejudice in the daily practice in schools.

I hope that you will find our research findings useful addressing these concerns. Please don’t hesitate to contact me for further information.

Yours sincerely,

Iverna McGowan
Acting Director and Director of Programmes
Amnesty International, European Institutions Office