

Research of the FADA at a glance: Between indifference and rejection – Population's attitudes towards Sinti and Roma

Overview of the expert opinion

For the first time, the expert opinion offers comprehensive data on the attitudes of the total population towards Sinti and Roma which have not yet been sufficiently examined thus far. For the purpose of this study, 2,001 adult persons in the entire Federal Republic of Germany were interviewed on the phone from May until June 2013. Subsequently, qualitative interviews were conducted with 20 other persons.

Authors, title and publication year of the expert opinion

Centre for Research on Anti-Semitism and Institute for Prejudice and Conflict Research: Between indifference and rejection - Population's attitudes towards Sinti and Roma (2014).

The results

The study concludes that the attitudes towards Sinti and Roma range between pronounced indifference and clear rejection. The population is not familiar with Sinti and Roma. Many of the respondents do not have any cognitive and emotional connection with this topic. In spite of the existing rejection, it cannot be stated that the populace has a clear enemy concept. However, a clear enemy concept is not needed to express an extreme rejection towards Sinti and Roma in particular situations. Derogatory stereotypes and the existence of prejudice can be found in all segments of the population. The results in detail:

Knowledge and imparting of knowledge

- The survey shows that there is a lack of interest in and knowledge about Sinti and Roma among the citizens.
- The large majority knows the terms 'Sinti' and 'Roma', but does not make any distinction between the two.

Associations with the term 'gypsy'

- Residential restlessness ('travellers'), crime and begging are associated with the term 'gypsy'. Romanticizing images are only rarely found nowadays.

Only a very small proportion of the respondents (6 percent) reflects on the use of this term or rejects it completely.

Perception of the media coverage regarding Sinti and Roma

- Only 40 percent of the respondents registered the current media coverage.
- A large majority of the respondents (74 percent) answered that these topics were not of any interest to them for discussion.
- Persons who already have a more negative attitude towards Sinti and Roma – i.e. about 8 percent of all respondents – more carefully follow the media coverage.

Commemorating the crimes against Sinti and Roma in the period of National Socialism

- The vast majority of the respondents (81 percent) is informed about the crimes against Sinti and Roma during the period of National Socialism. Among respondents of younger age groups, however, the knowledge about these incidents is decreasing.
- Whereas the population largely accepts the commemoration of crimes against Sinti and Roma, a 'historical' responsibility of Germany towards Sinti and Roma is endorsed more seldom.

Perception of and contact with Sinti and Roma

- 31 percent of the respondents hold the view that they could recognize members of this minority from their outer appearance and the way they behave - for example in a context of begging and appearing in groups. Due to this stigmatisation of Sinti and Roma as being 'foreigners' identifiable by their appearance, only those persons who comply with the expected visual image are perceived as belonging to that minority .
- Private contacts with Sinti and Roma are reported by only a few individual respondents.
- The minority is labelled as 'non-German' and associated with migration, and the majority considers Sinti and Roma as foreign, despite their German citizenship.

Antipathy and social distance – group comparison

- As compared to the attitudes of the population towards other minorities (e.g. Muslim women and men, asylum seekers, citizens from Eastern Europe), the group of Sinti and Roma ranked lowest in the so-called ethnic hierarchy. There is no other group which continuously showed similar average values. They are met with the least degree of sympathy, they are least appreciated as neighbours, their lifestyle is considered to be extraordinarily different.

Assessment of the living conditions

- In Germany, the situation of Sinti and Roma is consistently estimated to be rather bad, and their situation in Europe is considered to be even worse. A significant share of the respondents blames this minority for part of their situation in Eastern Europe.
- With regard to measures for a decent coexistence, an ambivalent impression is revealed: On the one hand, Sinti and Roma are considered as a group which is to be supported by integration measures. On the other hand, they seem to be a menace which should rather be met with exclusion and monitoring measures.

Conclusions by the authors

Against the background of the population's ignorance and indifference towards the minority of Sinti and Roma, the authors come to the conclusion that there is a need for action on the part of society and politicians as well as the sector of education and research.

Society and politics

- Politics and society have to firmly counter the ethnicization of social problems.
- The elaboration of a periodic report on racism and forms of ethnic discrimination in Germany as a basis for the anti-discrimination work is advisable.

Education and research sector

- A more comprehensive consideration of the history of Sinti and Roma at school is required to bridge the wide social distance between the majority of the population and this minority.

More information

The expert opinion is available (in German language only) => [here](#).

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