

CASE LAW MOSAIC

QUARTERLY INFORMATION BULLETIN OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN HUNGARY, 2021/3

Prejudiced, anti-Roma content in a cartoon series for children

The prejudiced, anti-Roma content in an episode of an online cartoon series with thousands of viewers has sparked outrage. In addition to the racist content of the tale, the organisations protesting against the story also complained that its content seriously offends the feelings and interests of adopted children and adoptive and foster parents. In the video, which is labelled as educational, a boy who is unhappy with his own family accidentally "finds out" because of a door swap that he has been adopted and, with the help of a child welfare worker who appears at his home, is taken away by his biological Roma parents to continue his life with them. The episode, which has been criticised by many, portrays the "biological" Roma parents in the worst stereotypes: they are shown as dirty, uneducated, who speak in a vulgar, primitive way.

The story was viewed 282,732 times within a few days of being uploaded. The channel is one of the most viewed cartoon channels on YouTube by families with young children, with over 800,000 subscribers.

The story is problematic not only because of its prejudiced and dehumanising portrayal of Roma, but also from a child protection perspective. As the protesting organisations have pointed out, the story also conveys a misleading and seriously prejudiced image of adoption.

Given the racist content of the cartoon and its explicit violation of the human dignity of Roma, the Minority Ombudsman is following the matter closely.

The Minority Ombudsman has already taken strong action against hate speech and hate content on social media sites. In view of the changing legal environment, the Minority Ombudsman is working in cooperation with the National Media and Infocommunications Authority to seek more effective action on racist stories and similar cases.