

Implications of COVID-19 pandemic on Roma and Travellers communities

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1 Specific implications of the general measures taken to stop the COVID-19 pandemic on Roma and Travellers' communities?

1.1 Type of measures

Focus on:

- lockdowns of localities
- restriction of movement
- closure of businesses

1.2 Implications of measures

Focus on:

- Employment
- Health
- Education
- Housing
- Food security
- Water and sanitation

1.3 Estimates of the scale of the impact

Focus on:

- Number of communities affected by lockdowns
- Magnitude of pandemic-induced poverty
- Types of Roma and Traveller occupations affected hardest
- Difference of impact on Roma women and children

Restriction of movement

In **Romania**, the state of emergency (*stare de urgență*) was declared for 30 days, on 16 March 2020, by presidential Decree¹, and it was prolonged, also by presidential Decree², until 14 May 2020. The state of alert (*stare de*

¹ Romania, Decree on the establishment of the emergency situation on the territory of Romania ([Decret nr. 195 din 16 martie 2020 privind instituirea stării de urgență pe teritoriul României](#)), 16 March 2020.

² Romania, Decree on the prolongation of the state of emergency on the territory of Romania ([Decret nr. 240 din 14 aprilie 2020 privind prelungirea stării de urgență pe teritoriul României](#)), 14 April 2020.

alertă) was initially declared on 15 May 2020, by Decision³ of the National Committee for Emergency Situations (*Comitetul Național pentru Situații de Urgență*), for a period of 30 days. On 18 May 2020, new legislation⁴ specifically regulating the Covid-19 situation was enacted. Thus, the Government declared again the state of alert, for a new period of 30 days, through a Government Decision⁵, later endorsed, with amendments, by the Parliament⁶. Strict 'stay at home' orders were in place⁷ between 24 March 2020 and 15 May 2020, during the state of emergency. The measures adopted during the state of alert⁸ restrict traveling outside the locality or outside the metropolitan area, defined as the localities situated less than 30 km of a large urban pole.

In **Romania**, researchers from the Research Institute for the Quality of Life (*Institutul de Cercetare pentru Calitatea Vieții*) (part of the Romanian Academy) have analysed the impact of the Covid-19 crises on the social assistance system and on the quality of life in a series of policy papers published in April-May 2020. Two of the reports, 'Pandemia și standardul de viață. Politici de protecție socială'⁹ and 'Calitatea vieții în timpul pandemiei: probleme și politici de răspuns'¹⁰, are underlying the disproportionate impact of the restrictions of movement, on persons with a precarious socio-

³ Romania, Decision on approval of national alert, institutions and measures to prevent and control information, in the context of the epidemiological situation generated by the SARS-CoV-2 virus ([Hotărâre nr. 24 din 14 mai 2020 privind aprobarea instituirii stării de alertă la nivel național și a măsurilor de prevenire și control al infecțiilor, în contextul situației epidemiologice generate de virusul SARS-CoV-2](#)), 15 May 2020.

⁴ Romania, Law regarding some measures to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ([Lege nr. 55 din 15 mai 2020 privind unele măsuri pentru prevenirea și combaterea efectelor pandemiei de COVID-19](#)), 15 May 2020.

⁵ Romania, Decision on on the declaration of a state of alert and the measures to be taken during it to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ([Hotărâre nr. 394 din 18 mai 2020 privind declararea stării de alertă și măsurile care se aplică pe durata acesteia pentru prevenirea și combaterea efectelor pandemiei de COVID-19](#)), 18 May 2020.

⁶ Romania, Decision of the Parliament on approval of the state of alert and of the measures established by the Government Decision no. 394/2020 on the declaration of the state of alert and the measures applied during it to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ([Hotărâre nr. 5 din 20 mai 2020 pentru încuviințarea stării de alertă și a măsurilor instituite prin Hotărârea Guvernului nr. 394/2020 privind declararea stării de alertă și măsurile care se aplică pe durata acesteia pentru prevenirea și combaterea efectelor pandemiei de COVID-19](#)), 20 May 2020.

⁷ Romania, Military Ordinance no. 3 regarding measures to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 ([Ordonanța Militară nr. 3 din 24 martie 2020 privind măsuri de prevenire a răspândirii COVID-19](#)), 24 March 2020.

⁸ Romania, Decision on on the declaration of a state of alert and the measures to be taken during it to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ([Hotărâre nr. 394 din 18 mai 2020 privind declararea stării de alertă și măsurile care se aplică pe durata acesteia pentru prevenirea și combaterea efectelor pandemiei de COVID-19](#)), 18 May 2020.

⁹ Research Institute for the Quality of Life (2020), [Pandemia și standardul de viață. Politici de protecție socială](#), 25 April 2020.

¹⁰ Research Institute for the Quality of Life (2020), [Calitatea vieții în timpul pandemiei: probleme și politici de răspuns](#), 27 April 2020.

economic status. These persons are less likely to be able to observe the 'stay at home' measures for several reasons: they are involved in activities that can't be performed from home; they need to get out often in search of work or other sources of income; and they live in crowded households, unable to observe social distancing measures. Roma are given as example of the most affected groups, because up to 80% of the Roma are living in poverty, on precarious income, and in crowded households.

In **Romania**, in April 2020, the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) identified 690 marginalized, compact Roma communities, where 499,133 people live in precarious conditions¹¹, similar to those described by the researchers from the Research Institute for the Quality of Life (*Institutul de Cercetare pentru Calitatea Vieții*). The ANR report shows that, at least in these communities, most Roma face a lack of financial resources for their daily subsistence, and the restrictions of movement severely affected them. "The most affected are Roma living in compact communities who do not have access to water sources, who face a high degree of poverty and who are under the jurisdiction of local authorities who do not have sufficient financial resources to cover basic needs in emergencies", concludes the report.

In rural areas, the vast majority of Roma able to work were engaged in subsistence agriculture, unskilled work without legal forms, and day labour, and all these sources of income are affected by the measures associated to the pandemic, the ANR April report shows.

In the affected communities, 53,489 persons have other chronic diseases, and 61,263 persons are over 65 years old (the two categories may overlap). The access to healthcare services is problematic during pandemic, because it usually requires traveling in other parts of the locality or in other localities. The report of the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) enumerates several situations where the lack of access to health services is more problematic:

- The lack of sanitary materials to ensure the protection of members of Roma communities (protective mask, gloves, disinfectant and solutions for disinfecting living spaces);
- reduced access to medical services of members of Roma communities, especially people with chronic diseases and the elderly (people at risk of COVID 19 infection);
- lack of financial resources to cover costs of medicine;
- lack of protective equipment for health mediators and nurses, front-line staff in the process of communicating with community members in this crisis situation;

¹¹ Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), *Raport al Agenției Naționale pentru Romi cu privire la necesitatea intervenției autorităților competente în beneficiul membrilor comunităților vulnerabile cu romi în contextul implementării măsurilor de prevenire a răspândirii virusului COVID 19*, 16 April 2020, p. 3.

- lack of health education of the majority of the vulnerable population in the field of COVID prevention 19.

The report is also noting that “health mediators, community nurses and other human resources acting at community level and who are the main actors in the process of education to prevent the spread of COVID virus 19 are at very high danger and, without adequate protective equipment, they may act as agents for the spread of the virus among the vulnerable population¹².”

In **Romania**, restrictions to public transport have a disproportionate impact on Roma, as Roma rely on public transport for visits to doctors and pharmacies, shows a recent report from Open Society Foundations¹³. The same report states that confinement and physical-distancing measures have cut off the incomes of all the Roma who work as street vendors, and the lack of food forces the most vulnerable Roma to break the quarantine, which endangers their access to social aid and exposes them to police abuse. There is no data available on the number of Roma persons directly affected.

Lockdown of localities

In **Romania**, several localities were under lockdown, for various periods during the state of emergency and state of alert, to confine outbreaks of Covid-19. In addition to the general restrictions of movement, the lockdown/quarantine brings the interdiction of movement in and out the locality, with the exception of supplying and emergency transports. Although there is no official data of the specific situation of Roma in these localities, there are a few cases where large Roma communities were obviously affected, as shown by media reports, such as the town of Țândărei¹⁴ (approximate 15% of the 13.200 inhabitants are Roma), the village of Toflea¹⁵ (approximate 5.000 of the 6.000 inhabitants are Roma), and the

¹² Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agencia Națională pentru Romi*), *Raport al Agenției Naționale pentru Romi cu privire la necesitatea intervenției autorităților competente în beneficiul membrilor comunităților vulnerabile cu romi în contextul implementării măsurilor de prevenire a răspândirii virusului COVID 19*, 16 April 2020, p. 2.

¹³ Open Society Foundations (2020), [Roma in the COVID-19 Crisis: An Early Warning from Six EU Member States](#), 30 April 2020.

¹⁴ Romania, Military Ordinance no. 8 regarding measures to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 (*Ordonanța Militară nr. 8 din 4 aprilie 2020 privind măsuri de prevenire a răspândirii COVID-19*), 4 April 2020.

¹⁵ Romania, Decision no. 53 of the Galati County Committee for Emergency Situations (*Hotărârea nr. 53 din data de 24.05.2020 privind măsurile adoptate în cadrul ședinței extraordinare de lucru a Comitetului Județean pentru Situații de Urgență Galați*), 24 May 2020.

Postă neighbourhood in the city of Buzău¹⁶ (several thousand Roma inhabitants, the precise number is unknown). In all these cases, the outbreaks of Covid-19 were associated with the relatively high number of persons returning from abroad in the first days of the pandemic. The Romanian authorities do not collect ethnically segregated data, thus it is not possible to estimate how many of the returning citizens, during pandemic, are Roma.

The case of Țândărei was the most visible at national level, because the size of the town and because the decision was made by the Government, and not at the County level. The case is mentioned in the April 2020 report of the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), which adopts the prevalent narrative that Roma returning from abroad are to be blamed for the outbreaks¹⁷: "... in some communities, a large number of Roma came from abroad and do not respect isolation or quarantine. Through their unconsciousness, they represent a real danger for the whole community (see the case of Țândărei - Ialomița, where the Roma did not comply with the isolation regime and became the main culprits, in public opinion, for the spread of the virus throughout the locality)", the report says. The situation in Țândărei was presented in mass-media in racial terms. The main narrative, starting by a news agency, was that 800 Roma have returned from abroad, brought the disease and are refusing isolation, being a threat for everybody¹⁸. The same narrative was presented on television, including prime-time television¹⁹, prompting a public warning from the audio-visual arbiter, National Audiovisual Council (*Consiliul National al Audiovizualului*)²⁰. As expected, the narrative became viral on social media. One leading political sciences researcher and professor was sanctioned by the National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminarii*) for distributing an image with racist content, related to the Țândărei case²¹.

¹⁶ Romania, Decision no. 9 of the Buzau County Committee for Emergency Situations ([Hotărârea nr. 9/04.05.2020 privind aprobarea unor măsuri de prevenire a răspândirii COVID-19 la nivelul județului Buzău](#)), 4 May 2020.

¹⁷ Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), *Raport al Agenției Naționale pentru Romi cu privire la necesitatea intervenției autorităților competente în beneficiul membrilor comunităților vulnerabile cu romi în contextul implementării măsurilor de prevenire a răspândirii virusului COVID 19*, 16 April 2020, p. 3.

¹⁸ RADOR (2020), ['Orașul Țândărei este în prezent focarul infecției de coronavirus din județul Ialomița'](#), 4 April 2020.

¹⁹ Antena3 (2020), ['Sinteza Zilei. De ce sunt capabili infractorii violenți care s-au întors în România din țări europene'](#),

²⁰ Romania, National Audiovisual Council (*Consiliul National al Audiovizualului*), ['Comunicat de presă. Ședința publică a CNA din 07.05.2020'](#), 7 May 2020.

²¹ Romania, National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminarii*), ['Comunicat de presă referitor la hotărârile adoptate de Colegiul director al CNCD în ședința din data de 06 mai 2020'](#), 6 May 2020.

Closure of business

In **Romania**, there is no official data of research reports on how the closure of business may have affected the Roma.

In **Romania**, the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) noted in its April 2020 report that Roma people who practice traditional Roma crafts are deeply affected by the pandemic²² (the report does not enumerate the affected crafts, and it does not estimate the number of affected persons). In the context of social distancing measures, they are unable to exercise their activity, becoming inactive and vulnerable, without the possibility to benefit from social protection programs offered by the competent authorities (social assistance, emergency aid, etc.), because they are usually practicing their craft without being registered, thus they are not eligible for state support. In the context of the emergency, they are unable to earn an income and without any support, they have to find sources of funding that will allow them to live on a daily basis. The ANR report is not providing an estimation of the number of people affected.

Quarantine / self-isolation

In **Romania**, persons arriving from other countries, including EU countries, are subject to 14 days of institutionalized quarantine if they arrive from *red* zones, or 14 days of supervised home isolation if they arrive from *yellow* zones²³. The list of *red* and *yellow* zones is periodically updated by the National Institute for Public Health, and published on its website²⁴. Persons who do not have the possibility to meet the conditions for quarantine / isolation at home / other location or who request this in order not to expose their family may opt for the institutionalized quarantine measure, in specially designed spaces provided by local public administration authorities. Persons who do not comply with the quarantine / isolation measures at home / other location are placed in institutionalized quarantine for a period of 14 days and are obliged to bear the value of accommodation and food during the institutionalized quarantine.

According to the data of the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), by mid-April, 18,994 Roma were in home isolation, and 2,807

²² Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), *Raport al Agenției Naționale pentru Romi cu privire la necesitatea intervenției autorităților competente în beneficiul membrilor comunităților vulnerabile cu romi în contextul implementării măsurilor de prevenire a răspândirii virusului COVID 19*, 16 April 2020.

²³ Romania, Military Ordinance no. 3 regarding measures to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 ([Ordonanța Militară nr. 3 din 24 martie 2020 privind măsuri de prevenire a răspândirii COVID-19](#)), 24 March 2020.

²⁴ [The list of yellow and red zones on the website of the National Institute for Public Health.](#)

were in quarantine²⁵ (more recent data is not available). In many communities, the home isolation is hard to be respected because the lack of financial resources and/or lack of access to water, the report shows. Roma that leave isolation to find food or water may be subject to fining.

Closure of schools

In **Romania**, all schools were closed on 11 March 2020, and they will remain closed until September 2020, according to the announcement made by the President on 27 April 2020²⁶, enacted by the Government Decision on declaring the state of alert²⁷, and implemented through Order of the Minister of Education²⁸. All K-12 (pre-university education) and university students will complete the 2019-2020 school year using distance learning over the Internet. The Ministry of Education issued instructions on the development and/or the strengthening of the capacity of pre-university education through online learning²⁹. The instructions are describing the general framework for distance learning, explaining the role of each stakeholder. Article 11 of the instructions provides for the obligation of the parent or legal tutor to „take all necessary measures to ensure the access and participation of the pre-schooler/student in the online learning activities organized by the educational unit”. The provision was criticized by researchers³⁰, UNICEF³¹, and civil society³² because it discriminates against children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, because they do not have

²⁵ Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agencia Națională pentru Romi*), *Raport al Agenției Naționale pentru Romi cu privire la necesitatea intervenției autorităților competente în beneficiul membrilor comunităților vulnerabile cu romi în contextul implementării măsurilor de prevenire a răspândirii virusului COVID 19*, 16 April 2020.

²⁶ Romania, Presidency (*Administrația Prezidențială*) (2020), '[Declarația de presă susținută de Președintele României, domnul Klaus Iohannis](#)', press statement, 27 April 2020.

²⁷ Romania, Decision on on the declaration of a state of alert and the measures to be taken during it to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ([Hotărâre nr. 394 din 18 mai 2020 privind declararea stării de alertă și măsurile care se aplică pe durata acesteia pentru prevenirea și combaterea efectelor pandemiei de COVID-19](#)), 18 May 2020.

²⁸ Romania, Order on amending the school organization ([Ordin nr. 4.249 din 13 mai 2020 pentru modificarea și completarea Regulamentului-cadru de organizare și funcționare a unităților de învățământ preuniversitar, aprobat prin Ordinul ministrului educației naționale și cercetării științifice nr. 5.079/2016](#)), 13 May 2020.

²⁹ Romania, Order of the Ministry of Education and Research on the creation and/or strengthening the capacity of the pre-university education system for on-line learning ([Ordin nr. 4.135 din 21 aprilie 2020 privind aprobarea Instrucțiunii pentru crearea și/sau întărirea capacității sistemului de învățământ preuniversitar prin învățare on-line](#)), 21 April 2020.

³⁰ Florian, B. and Țoc, S. (2020) [Educația în timpul pandemiei. Răspunsuri la criza nesfârșită a sistemului educațional românesc](#), Bucharest, National School for Political and Administrative Sciences (SNSPA).

³¹ UNICEF Romania (2020) [Evaluarea rapidă a situației copiilor și familiilor, cu accent pe categoriile vulnerabile, în contextul epidemiei de Covid-19 din România](#), 29 April 2020.

³² Center for Legal Resources (CRJ) (2020), '[Ministerul elevilor nimanui](#)', 28 April 2020.

the necessary equipment and access to Internet. All critical voices are mentioning Roma among the most disadvantaged group.

UNICEF Romania is mentioning Roma children among the most vulnerable groups, showing that “online education deepens inequalities in access to education of children from disadvantaged families who fail to provide the necessary technological equipment or internet access”, and they are also losing access to specific programs aiming at fighting dropout and at providing remedial education³³.

The Human Catalyst Association, in a policy brief³⁴ published on 19 March, estimates that 31% of the total number of students, or 440,000 students, coming from the most vulnerable communities, will be disproportionately affected by the school closures, and that so far there are no measures to prevent this discrimination. Although the report is not referring specifically to the Roma, the communities identified by the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) largely overlap with those identified by the Human Catalyst Association.

2 Specific measures to address the implications of the pandemic on Roma and Travellers

2.1 Measures to tackle the spread of the virus specifically among Roma and Travellers communities

Please focus on:

- Medical testing
- Physical distancing
- Quarantine
- Provision of running water and sanitation to communities without it

2.2 Measures to support Roma and Travelers communities in regards to medical and social assistance

Please focus on:

- Any related phenomena in the key thematic areas addressed in question 1
- Highlight any measures specifically targeting women and children.

³³ UNICEF Romania (2020), '[Evaluării situației copiilor și familiilor, cu accent pe categoriile vulnerabile în contextul epidemiei de COVID-19 din România](#)', April 2020.

³⁴ Human Catalyst (2020), '[USER sau LOSER în vremea pandemiei POLICY BRIEF](#)', 19 April 2020.

2.3 Measures addressing the needs of Roma children

Please focus on barriers to education related to schooling in 'online classes' format.

In **Romania**, the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) monitored the situation of the Roma communities and recommended in April 2020 "developing and implementing a priority national program to respond to the epidemic situation, addressed to marginalized Roma communities and where local authorities do not have the opportunity to intervene³⁵". The National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) is developing, in partnership with the World Bank's mission in Romania, a real-time data collection tool on the problems of the Roma communities during pandemic³⁶. However, there is no evidence that any of the measures recommended by the Agency to the national authorities were implemented. In a response to a public information request, on 31 May 2020, the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) suggested to ask each respective institution if any measure was implemented.

In **Romania**, there are examples of positive practices at local level, concerning the response of the local public authorities to the problems faced by the Roma communities. The ROMACT programme of the Council of Europe presented a few such cases from Romania and Bulgaria³⁷. However, there is no visible effort to identify and promote similar cases nation-wide.

In **Romania**, on 20 February, the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) presented for public debate the draft of a new national strategy on Roma inclusion³⁸. The document has no reference to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact, and, by 6 June 2020, no update was made to include such reference.

In **Romania**, there were no specific measures targeting women, in general, and Roma women, in particular, during the Covid-19 emergency.

³⁵ Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), *Raport al Agenției Naționale pentru Romi cu privire la necesitatea intervenției autorităților competente în beneficiul membrilor comunităților vulnerabile cu romi în contextul implementării măsurilor de prevenire a răspândirii virusului COVID 19*, 16 April 2020.

³⁶ At 31 May 2020, the tool was still under development, according to the response of the Agency to a FOIA request.

³⁷ The ROMACT Programme of the Council of Europe (2020), '[ROMACT Municipalities' Solutions to Limit COVID19 Crisis Impact on Roma Communities](#)', May 2020.

³⁸ Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), [Recomandarea de politica publică în domeniul incluziunii sociale a membrilor comunităților cu romi din România pentru perioada 2021-2027](#), 20 February 2020.

In **Romania**, Roma may access general programs of support for vulnerable persons or groups, when their socioeconomic status makes them eligible. Examples of such programs are:

- Free access to Covid-19 treatment for all persons living in Romania, regardless of their health insurance status.
- The Government allocated RON 150 million (€30 millions) to purchase up to 250,000 mobile devices (tablets) for children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, in order to ensure their participation in distance learning³⁹.
- during the state of emergency, the local public administration authorities had the obligation to identify and keep records of homeless people, as well as to ensure their shelter and care⁴⁰.
- during the state of emergency (13 March – 14 May), local public authorities had the legal obligation identify persons over 65 years old, that have no support, and help them with the social isolation efforts⁴¹.
- a nation-wide network of civil society organizations and volunteers have offered support to vulnerable people, including (and mostly) older people, from shopping to psychological support. The portal RoHelp, developed by the National Authority for Digitization (*Autoritatea Națională pentru Digitizare*) is listing several hundred such initiatives⁴².
- the Minister of Labour and Social Protection (*Ministerul Muncii și Protecției Sociale*) has launched a project, financed from European Social Fund, aiming at offering direct support to 100,000 older people and people with disabilities affected by the isolation measures⁴³. The beneficiaries will receive direct financial support, psychological

³⁹ Romania, Decision on the approval of the National Program "Home School" and for the allocation of an amount from the Budget Reserve Fund at the disposal of the Government, provided in the state budget for 2020, for the Ministry of Education and Research ([Hotărâre nr. 370 din 7 mai 2020 privind aprobarea Programului național "Școala de acasă" și pentru alocarea unei sume din Fondul de rezervă bugetară la dispoziția Guvernului, prevăzut în bugetul de stat pe anul 2020, pentru Ministerul Educației și Cercetării](#)), 7 May 2020.

⁴⁰ Romania, Military Ordinance no. 3 regarding measures to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 ([Ordonanța Militară nr. 3 din 24 martie 2020 privind măsuri de prevenire a răspândirii COVID-19](#)), 24 March 2020.

⁴¹ Romania, [Military Ordinance no. 2 regarding some measures of first emergency regarding people gatherings and trans frontier circulation of goods \(Ordonanța Militară nr. 2 din 21 martie 2020 privind măsuri de prevenire a răspândirii COVID-19\)](#), 21 March 2020.

⁴² [RoHelp.ro](#)

⁴³ Romania, Minister of Labour and Social Protection (*Ministerul Muncii și Protecției Sociale*), '[Metodologie selectie proiect POCU "Sprijin pentru persoanele vulnerabile în contextul epidemiei COVID-19, cod MYSmis 137872"](#)', 26 May 2020.

support and other forms of tailored support, decided case by case. The project will be implemented in partnership with 116 municipalities from all counties.

In **Romania**, on 16 June 2020, the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) announced a call for proposals to finance projects developed by Roma NGOs aiming at promoting a healthy lifestyle for mothers and children in vulnerable Roma communities, through information, awareness-raising, and non-formal education. The activities may cover the Covid-19 context. The total budget of the program is 400,000 lei (approx. 82,000). The suggested activities include non-formal education sessions with children, fliers/brochures, and information sessions with adults⁴⁴.

3 Any negative public reactions targeting Roma and Travellers or positive change in attitudes towards them

3.1 Negative public reactions

Please focus on:

- Negative reactions in statements by politicians and public figures
- Hate speech in online and traditional media
- Any manifestations of antigypsyism or hate crime against Roma and Travellers.

In **Romania**, the National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*) reported that "Roma are currently in an extreme situation, especially in terms of the risk of racial hatred fuelled by the media and the online environment⁴⁵". The Agency submitted a series of complaints to the National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării*) but "the online environment continues to promote defamatory articles and posts that contribute to creating a negative image of Roma, especially those returning from abroad, considered as the main culprits for the spread of the virus in Romania". The Agency also noted that, in certain situations, "local authorities that ensure the implementation of measures provided for in military ordinances (local police, national police, gendarmes), commit abuses against Roma, unjustifiably sanctioning, in some cases, with very large fines, using unjustified force in the relationship with community

⁴⁴ Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), 'Finantari 2020', 16 June 2020.

⁴⁵ Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), *Raport al Agenției Naționale pentru Romi cu privire la necesitatea intervenției autorităților competente în beneficiul membrilor comunităților vulnerabile cu romi în contextul implementării măsurilor de prevenire a răspândirii virusului COVID 19*, 16 April 2020, p. 5.

members and creating a state of panic among members of the Roma community⁴⁶”.

In **Romania**, the National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminării*) sanctioned four discriminatory or hate statements against Roma during the state of emergency and the state of alert, including: a local newspaper⁴⁷, a member of the Parliament, a former president of Romania⁴⁸, and a university professor⁴⁹.

In **Romania**, the prejudices against Roma are surfacing in the time of emergency, according to human rights activists and specialists. In an interview in media, the president of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminării*) speaks about the rise of hate speech and racism targeting Roma in mass-media and on social networks⁵⁰.

A group of human rights NGOs voiced their concerns about the Roma minority becoming a scapegoat of the pandemic⁵¹, quoting cases of alleged abusive behaviour by the Police, as well as many situation of discriminatory discourse and hate speech in mass-media articles and statements of public persons. Examples of mass-media articles include:

⁴⁶ Romania, National Agency for Roma (*Agenția Națională pentru Romi*), *Raport al Agenției Naționale pentru Romi cu privire la necesitatea intervenției autorităților competente în beneficiul membrilor comunităților vulnerabile cu romi în contextul implementării măsurilor de prevenire a răspândirii virusului COVID 19*, 16 April 2020, p. 5

⁴⁷ Romania, the National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminării*), '[Comunicat de presă referitor la hotărârile adoptate de Colegiul director al CNCD în sedinta din data de 03 iunie 2020](#)', 3 June 2020.

⁴⁸ Romania, the National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminării*), '[Comunicat de presă referitor la hotărârile adoptate de Colegiul director al CNCD în sedinta din data de 20 mai 2020](#)', 20 May 2020.

⁴⁹ Romania, National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminării*), '[Comunicat de presă referitor la hotărârile adoptate de Colegiul director al CNCD în sedinta din data de 06 mai 2020](#)', 6 May 2020.

⁵⁰ Hotnews.ro (2020), '["Ura se răspândește mai repede și mai intens decât coronavirusul". Interviu cu Asztalos Csaba, șeful CNCD, despre riscurile crizei prin care trece România](#)', 25 April 2020.

⁵¹ Center for Legal Resources (2020), '[Minoritatea romă: tap ispășitor în vremea pandemiei](#)', 12 May 2020.

- The description of a traditional wedding that gathered more persons that allowed during state of emergency included derogatory terms towards Roma, in several newspapers^{52 53 54 55}.
- The story of two persons breaking the quarantine/isolation measures mentions and blames the ethnicity of the two persons⁵⁶.
- The story of 300 persons returning from Italy, and allegedly lying about it, includes references to their ethnicity⁵⁷.
- The story of a police raid in a community makes references to the ethnicity of the persons⁵⁸.
- An article about crowding during border crossing makes derogatory references to the ethnicity of some persons⁵⁹.

Another group of civic NGOs expressed⁶⁰ solidarity with the Roma community, showing several situation when the local public authorities and/or mass-media⁶¹ have used racist arguments against poor communities affected by the pandemic.

The case of the city of Țândărei (Ialomița County) is a vivid example of the problem. The city was placed in quarantine⁶² after a spike in the number of Covid-19 cases. Immediately, the mass-media incorrectly blamed the local Roma community, a situation mentioned by Roma activists⁶³, by the

⁵² Ziarul de Iași (2020), '[Nuntă cu lăutari, în Argeș, în plină epidemie de coronavirus](#)', 19 March 2020.

⁵³ Ora de Sibiu (2020), '[Paranghelie pe timp de pandemie – Nuntă de țigani, întreruptă de polițistii din Argeș](#)', 19 March 2020.

⁵⁴ Adevarul (2020), '[Nuntă în vremea COVID-19. Poliția a intervenit într-o comunitate de romi din Argeș pentru a opri petrecerea](#)', 19 March 2020.

⁵⁵ Fanatik (2020), '[Nuntă cu peste trei sute de invitați în plină epidemie de coronavirus! Majoritatea se aflau în izolare sau carantină. Petrecerea a fost întreruptă de mascați](#)', 19 March 2020.

⁵⁶ Ziare.com (2020), '[Coronavirus: Doi doljeni abia întorsi din Italia, cautati cu politia dupa ce un localnic a sunat la 112. Au fost gasiti la o vodca](#)', 23 March 2020.

⁵⁷ Digi24 (2020), '[300 de romi dintr-un sat din Suceava s-au întors din Italia de teama coronavirusului și au mințit la vamă că vin din Germania](#)', 24 February 2020.

⁵⁸ Ziarul de Iași (2020), '"Desant" al mascaților într-o comună de romi din Iași', 25 March 2020.

⁵⁹ Timis online (2020), '[Scandal în vama Cenad. Mai mulți romi veniți din Italia au refuzat să intre în carantină](#)', 10 March 2020.

⁶⁰ Centre for Public Innovation (2020), '[Solidaritate cu comunitatea romă](#)',

⁶¹ In the following localities: [Ponorâta / Tg. Lăpuș](#), [Liteni, Suceava](#); [Bujoreni, Vâlcea](#); [Vama Cenad, Timiș](#); [Teliu, Brașov](#); [Tărlungeni, Brașov](#); [Lerești, Argeș](#); [Moinești, Bacău](#); [Căzănești, Ialomița](#).

⁶² Romania, Military Ordinance no. 8 regarding measures to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 ([Ordonanța Militară nr. 8 din 9 aprilie 2020 privind măsuri de prevenire a răspândirii COVID-19](#)), 9 April 2020.

⁶³ Deutsche Well (2020), '[Cazul Țândărei: "Sunteți pe o pistă greșită, dragilor!"](#)', 8 April 2020.

president of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (*Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminării*)⁶⁴, or even by more neutral media reports⁶⁵. A report by Open Society Foundations mentions that fake news blaming Roma for the pandemic is also spread via social media⁶⁶.

Video footage of policemen shouting at a group of rounded-up Roma men lying on the ground while an officer repeatedly beats one of them has outraged human rights activists⁶⁷. The involved policemen are investigated by the prosecutors.

3.2 Positive change in attitudes

Please focus on

- Examples of changing narrative regarding these communities in public statements, media coverage
- Manifestations of social solidarity with Roma and Travellers
- Examples of and local initiatives transcending ethnic boundaries.

In **Romania**, the public perceptions on Roma remain largely negative during the Covid-19 pandemic, and there are no visible positive narratives regarding Roma communities. The International Roma Day, 8 April, prompted various public persons, starting with the President⁶⁸ and the Prime-Minister⁶⁹, to issue statements of solidarity with the Roma community. The statements were broadcasted by media, but they didn't lead to a strong current of opinion in support of the Roma community. Similarly, a group of watchdog NGOs expressed their solidarity with the Roma, while drawing attention to the difficulties they are facing⁷⁰. The message didn't get any traction.

⁶⁴ Hotnews.ro (2020), "["Ura se răspândește mai repede și mai intens decât coronavirusul". Interviu cu Asztalos Csaba, șeful CNCD, despre riscurile crizei prin care trece România](#)", 25 April 2020.

⁶⁵ Vice Romania (2020), '[Focarul de coronavirus din Tăndărei n-are legătură cu etnia, ci cu eșecul statului român](#)', 6 April 2020.

⁶⁶ Open Society Foundations (2020), '[Roma in the COVID-19 Crisis: An Early Warning from Six EU Member States](#)', 30 April 2020.

⁶⁷ Libertatea (2020), '[IMAGINI DE JUNTĂ MILITARĂ. Cum pedepsește Poliția Română un grup de bărbați din Bolintin. Romi culcați pe jos, cu mâinile la spate și bătuti. Explicațiile IPJ Giurgiu](#)', 23 April 2020.

⁶⁸ Romania, Office of the President, '[Mesajul Președintelui României, domnul Klaus Iohannis, transmis cu prilejul Zilei Internaționale a Romilor](#)', 8 April 2020.

⁶⁹ Romania, Office of the Prime-Minister, '[Mesajul premierului Ludovic Orban cu prilejul Sărbătorii etniei romilor din România și a Zilei internaționale a romilor](#)', 8 April 2020.

⁷⁰ TAMTAM - The Group of NGOs for the Citizen (*TAMTAM – Grupul ONG-uri pentru Cetățean*), (2020), '[Solidaritate cu comunitatea romă](#)', 8 April 2020.

The Aresel Platform (*Aresel - Enough* in Romani) initiated, on 27 March 2020, an appeal to the Government to allocate more funds for the poor communities, including Roma communities⁷¹. The appeal was signed by 21 civic groups and NGOs, and the associated petition was signed by 920 persons. No answer from the Government was recorded.

The Foundation Roma Education Fund Romania initiated a program called Solidarity School (*Școala Solidarității*), linking volunteers with children from rural areas in need of private tutoring (over the Internet)⁷². Over 20 volunteers, most of them Roma, participate in the program. The number of beneficiaries is not available.

A joint initiative of a Roma NGO Together Agency for Community Development (*Agenția de Dezvoltare Comunitară Împreună*) and a network of volunteers established to provide support and deliver goods and medication to those confined in their homes due to the isolation which was built by Geeks for Democracy, network entitled Groceries at Your Door (*Cumpărături la Ușa Ta*⁷³) brought needed food and hygiene products for 150 families from Țândărei during the lockdown⁷⁴. The two partners organized a similar transport for 166 families in Botoșani county in June 2020⁷⁵.

⁷¹ Aresel (2020), '[Apel către Guvernul României – acțiuni urgente în comunitățile defavorizate](#)', 27 March 2020.

⁷² Roma Education Fund Romania (2020), '[Școala solidarității](#)', April 2020.

⁷³ [Cumpărături la Ușa Ta](#).

⁷⁴ Libertatea, '[Imagini ale solidarității din Țândărei, acolo unde peste 150 de familii au primit pachete cu produse de igienă și alimente](#)', April 2020.

⁷⁵ Monitorul de Botoșani, '[Ajutoare de la București pentru 166 de familii nevoiașe din Albești și Cristești](#)', June 2020.