

MEETING INFORMATION
ROMA INTEGRATION EMERGENCY RESPONSE MEETINGS TO COVID-19
ALBANIA

Date: 12 May 2020, 2nd informative meeting

Organized by: Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration 2020

Attendees: Governmental representatives, National Roma Contact Point (NRCP), EU Delegation, International organizations, Open Society Foundations (OSF), Open Society Foundations Albania (OSFA), Roma Versitas Albania, Local and mainstream and Roma-led organizations.

Objective: Roma Integration 2020 finds it necessary within its mandate to facilitate a broad societal dialogue regarding the response to the Covid-19 crisis and its consequences to the Roma community in order to ensure broad needs assessment, proper short, medium and long term response, and adequate consideration of Roma in the mainstream measures. Specifically, to coordinate information and ensure transparency of information regarding the assessed needs from the field, the actions undertaken by various stakeholders, to propose targeted and mainstream measures, and to ensure the needs of Roma remain on the political/decision-making agenda.

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INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN ALBANIA

Actions of the Government, municipalities and independent state bodies

Government/NRCP:

The Government of Albania working on the annual report for implementation of National Action plan covering period until May 2020.

- The Government of Albania initiated the process of drafting the new Roma integration action plan for the period 2020 and 2021-2025
- General Directory of Social Policies Ministry of Health and Social Protection and NRCP are attending consultations in commissions on passing the “*protection of anti- discrimination law*”, still needs to be amended for the future.

The Government of Albania decided to support Roma families with 129 EUR or (16000 Lek) that were not part of Economic Aid scheme because of not fulfilling technical conditions to benefit while applying from July 2019 –April 2020.

- There were 26 Roma/ Egyptian families in Berat,10 Roma/Egyptian families in Diber,16 Roma/Egyptian families in Durres,38 Roma/Egyptian families in Elbasan,39 Roma/Egyptian families in Fier, 60 Roma/Egyptian families in Gjirokaster,14 Roma/Egyptian families in Korca,1 Roma family in Kukes,39 Roma/Egyptian families in Lezha,9 Roma/Egyptian families in Shkodra,132 Roma/Egyptian families in Tirana and 10 Roma/Egyptian families in Vlora. With this measure the number of benefiting families from Roma families reaches 5100 families.
- The Government of Albania is planning include the Roma and Egyptian families to the recovery plane and priority for social protection for the period 2020-2025.
- The Ministry of Defense in collaboration with the municipalities will continue to deliver food packages to families and vulnerable groups.
- The Government of Albania is coordinating work with SCO’s in the field of child protection how to manage the cases and create standard for home services for all vulnerable groups.
- The Government of Albania has opened a free green line for calls available to offer medical and psychological support to people in need and isolated during the crises.



- The Government of Albania /NRCP are offering virtual training in local authorities to manage cases for child protection and victims of violence.

EU Delegation:

- Approved small allocation of funds 9000 EUR with ANTARG organization for food hygiene and emergency packages.
- EU contributing with facilitation to the *protection of anti- discrimination law* proving expertise and give opinion on the current proposed law.
- EU emphasized the fund available for protection and work with children available for the future including, children from Roma communities. This funds will have priority areas such as education and online learning.
- EU expressed flexible approach for SCO's and redirecting their fund based on the analyses and identified needs for mediate support.

Overview of the short term needs

1. The Ministry of Education, local educational authorities and Roma SCO's should corporate together to avoid lack of compliance and discrepancy, they should respect measures on providing Roma children with access to education according to the current home schooling system and report accordingly.
2. The situation regarding distant education in the Roma to be assessed (lack of connection to electricity, TV/internet, lack of devices for following the education, need for additional learning support, etc.)
3. Mutual joined contribution needed in filling valuable information from several authorities in the data base/ questionnaire established by Roma Integration 2020 as essential mechanisms to use for the purpose of planning the aid to Roma.

Who does what and coordination of various stakeholders

- Ministry of Education in collaboration with local education offices was updated the questionnaire prepared by Roma Integration. After processing these information it resulted at least 70% of Roma families and 90% of the Egyptian families have attended the classes in the pre university level during pandemic crises.
- Ministry of Education ensured to have **5000 mobile** phones from Vodafone and other donors where 196 Roma children benefited directly and 494 Egyptian children.
- The online classes from Roma children have been delivered from all social media available and other classes from academia site provided by Ministry of Education.
- There is a lack of compliance and visible discrepancy between of what the local educational offices are reporting and what SCO's are claiming.
- OSF Albania, offered direct food support for **1,300 families**, some municipalities were incentivized to provide food supplies (multiplying the quantity provided from our partner CSO-s with the support of OSFA), hygiene accessories and conducted the disinfecting of the neighborhoods.





Enduring synergies and complementarity

- Urgent need for Roma children to be provided with internet access, smart phones, tablets and computers to have access to education.
- OSF Albania urges to work on advocacy effort demanding from the government to design a specific economic recovery package to support informal workers/and informal or semi informal economic activities which have been significantly affected by the pandemic measures or that would be affected (collecting recycling materials will not be allowed any longer) by the post Covid19 measures and protocols. The purpose is to help community members to restart their business and provide incentives to formalize their economic activity while on the other hand build resilience in order that the re-emerging businesses are capable to respond to the post Covid19 economy and handle potential public health emergency in the future.
- Roma Versitas Albania was conducted a survey on the current situation of education and their work impact with Roma students, currently waiting from Roma Education Fund (REF) to have re-destination of the budget to buy logistic materials (smart phones and internet) for education.
- ROMACTED Albania anticipated actions with addressing direct letters to the mayors before the lockdown and immediate information was provided through their working municipalities: Fier, Vlora, Korca, Pogradec, Permet and Elbasan.
- ROMACTED Albania provided support directly in response to the needs received from the municipalities, offered **467 food** packages in several neighborhoods in Municipalities of Korca, Roskovec, Fier and Elbasan.
- ROMACTED Albania upon the preparation of the Guideline on Roma Responsive Budgeting at Local Level in Albania, the Ministry of Finance and Economy endorsed the ROMACTED recommendations and the objectives for Roma and Egyptian minorities have been included in the official Guideline on the "*Preparation of the Medium-Term Budgeting 2021-2023*" for local self-government units.
- Centre for Social Advocacy mentioned that Roma children are not attending kindergarten schools for the moment and the only access on education is through national TV classes provided from Tirana Municipality. This will be the only method to education for this target since some parents are not decisive yet in allowing their children to have access on mobile phones.

Follow up

- The Government of Albania will share annual report for implementation of National Action by the end of May 2020.
- The Government of Albania, NRCP recommends having better coordination among international organization and reporting mechanisms that will contribute to planning, preparation and better information to the Roma community for the later stage of repetition of the same virus.
- NRCP highlights the importance of coordination and contact with local authorities to manage cases for child protection and victims of violence.
- Roma Versitas Albania addressed the high need for Roma students at all level to be provided with technical equipment's to have access on education and good results at school.
- Centre for Social Advocacy highlighted the necessity need of having access on education for Roma families to assist their children at kindergarten level.
- Based on the survey conducted by Centre for Social Advocacy, out of **1000** Roma children **974** have no access on internet at all.
- ROMACTED Albania addresses the long term solution in coordinated actions towards Roma responsive budget





- ROMACTED Albania will start organizing Roma responsive budgeting webinars with local government units and Albanian School of Council and Administration. The aim is to coordinate the work with the seven partner municipalities in Albania and contribute to the integration of Roma and Egyptian priority projects into the annual budgeting process for 2021 and the medium-term budgeting for the 2021-2023 period.
- The RCC Roma Integration team expressed their availability for providing technical assistance to support the Government to design program and project ideas and develop them in full proposals. The proposals should involve direct recovery actions that lead towards Roma integration and absorption of the current available reprogramming of the EU funds.
- RCC Roma Integration 2020 will organize meetings with line ministries, ministries of Finance and EU delegations, to have discussed in a concrete developed plan.

Participants:

1.National Roma Contact Point	Merita Xhafaj
2. Department: Social Inclusion Directory Roma Specialist	Ina Kokedhima
3. Ministry of Education and Sports Roma Focal Point	Besnik Rama
4. Ministry of Finance -Roma Focal Point	Mimoza Hasani
5.Department for Civil registration	Edmond Gjoleka
6.EU Delegation	Alessandro Angius
7.Open Society Foundations-RIO	Neda Korunovska
8. Open Society Foundations Albania	Dritan Nelaj
9.Municipality of Tirana-Roma Focal Point	Kaludjo Taho
10. Centre for Social Advocacy	Romina Sefa
11. Individual	Xhenson Cela
12. Roma Active Albania	Adriatik Hasantari
13. Roma Versitas Albania	Emiliano Aliu
14.Member of the State Committee for Minorities	Erion Xhaibra
15.ROMACTED	Orsiola Kurti
16.Institute of Romani culture in Albania (IRCA)	Bledi Taho
16. European Commission DG NEAR	Dorthe FORS
17. European Commission	Detlev Boeing
8.Open Society Foundations	Rahielia Mustafovska
19. RCC Roma Integration team	Orhan Usein,





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