

MEETING INFORMATION
ROMA INTEGRATION EMERGENCY RESPONSE MEETINGS TO COVID-19
KOSOVO*

Date: 16 April 2020, 1st informative meeting

Organized by: Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration 2020

Attendees: Governmental representatives, NRCP, EU Delegation, International organizations, Red Cross, OSF, KFOS, ROMACTED, Local and mainstream and Roma-led organizations.

Objective: The current situation of Covid-19 pandemic urged the governments in the region to undertake a number of overarching measures. Both the pandemic and the measures significantly influence the Roma communities in the region. In such situation the governments, and accordingly the Roma Integration 2020, need to adjust to the circumstance in performing their mandate for the best possible outcome for Roma within the given possibilities. Hence, the Roma Integration 2020 finds it necessary 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.

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INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN KOSOVO*

1. Overview of existing measures taken at national and EU level for the most vulnerable Roma

Government/NRCP:

- The measures to prevent potential outbreak of the COVID-19 virus have affected the overall population, but among the most directly affected ones are social cases and the three most vulnerable communities in Kosovo*: Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians.
- Ministry of Finance has taken a decision on 3 April 2020 for the Operational Plan on Emergency Fiscal Package for which all institutions and respective units are obliged to propose extra decisions and take all necessary measures for its implementation.
 - o Measure 9 within this Plan - Support of initiatives and projects aiming the improvement of lives of non-majority communities, which have been hit hardest by the public health emergency situation, amounted up to two million (2,000,000.00 €) euros.
 - This measure will be implemented by the Office of the Prime Minister - Office for Communities, in consultation with municipalities and the Red Cross. The Red Cross has the will and capacity to cooperate in realizing this measure. Considering the aggravated economic situation of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, this measure will have a special focus on them, but without excluding other non-majority communities. All organizations that have programs and projects to address this measure, should apply to the Office of the Prime Minister - Office for Communities until 15.05.2020. The Office of the Prime Minister - The Office for Communities will review the applications and will finance relevant projects and programs, no later than 25.05.2020.
 - o Measure 15 - Payment of monthly assistance in the amount of one hundred and thirty (130 €) euros for citizens with severe social conditions, declared as unemployed at the competent institution, who are not beneficiaries of any monthly revenue from the budget of Kosovo*, for April, May and June, amounted up to three million (€ 3,000,000.00) euros.
 - Families who do not have anyone employed (public and private sector) and do not receive any regular monthly payment from the budget of Kosovo* (pension or other social assistance) can benefit from this measure; The amount of 130 Euros is allocated for a family, for the period April - June 2020, based on preliminary verification. Verification is performed every month, whereas application only once. In order to benefit from this scheme, the family representative should file a written application that should contain the data of the representative/beneficiary, a statement that none of the family members have a monthly revenue and does not benefit from

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



social schemes and pension, and proof of registration as unemployed in the Agency/Employment Institution serves as evidence in support of the application but is not indispensable at this time. However, the application to the employment institution can also be completed electronically, through the methods which will be notified by the Employment Agency through its communication channels.

- Education is continuing in the form of home schooling and classes are maintained via TV and mobile app, the Ministry of Education is in coordination with National Radio Television media houses for program delivery.

EU Delegation:

- 5 million EUR are approved for the health sector to combat COVID-19 mainly for medical equipment.
- For Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, the EU office has re-directed the support within the frame of the already existing projects, the two main ones are the Project of Returnees and Reintegration-RRK5, implemented through the Ministry of Communities and Returnees in 12 different municipalities. There are 252 packages (87, 500, 00 €) on food and non-food items distributed targeting the most vulnerable including Roma and non Roma.
- The Community Stabilization program will be activated for the post-crisis period to help families to start up self-sustainable employment with small agricultural initiatives, mechanics and other types of working.

2. Overview of the short term needs

- The NRCP is in coordination and follows the measures from the Office of Prime Minister-OGG, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- The NRCP highlights that Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians are facing more difficulties in the economic aspect and access to food and hygienic supplies because of their living conditions in small households and large families.
- The lack of coordination and information sharing is present and there is need for coordination, which the OGG should conduct, including with the local municipalities.

3. Who does what and coordination of various stakeholders

- Kosovo Foundation for Open Society - KFOS has allocated funds in providing aid in 8 different municipalities through their local partner organizations and learning centres to tackle education. The support packages contain food, hygienic products, school materials and these will be delivered during the week of 13-17 April 2020.
- Since access to information is missing, KFOS is currently implementing informational campaign on protective measures to fighting COVID-19 in collaboration with National Television of Kosovo* - RTK
- KFOS will provide support with internet access in 8 municipalities for the next two months that will enable children to have access to education through their learning centres.
- ROMACTED is working in the field since 17 March 2020 through their already established mechanisms at the local level: 1. Institutional working group (local authorities) and 2. Community action groups, where special attention have single mothers, children and families in need of social assistance.
- ROMACTED provided support to more than 500 individuals with packages of food and other products and distributed more than 2000 masks and gloves.
- RomaVersitas is working through an online platform with students and providing mentoring classes online. RomaVersitas is also operating a call centre where families can directly communicate their needs and problems that they have.

4. Enduring synergies and complementarity

- KFOS is expecting to receive a larger amount of funds to continue providing support towards overcoming COVID-19 implications for the period after the crisis.





- KFOS is conducting an advocacy campaign through a network of organizations at the local level, aiming to identifying the needs from the grassroots level and re-directing their needs with concrete support in food, health etc.
- The Charitable association “Rahmeti” has supported all the municipalities with the three basic elements: flour, bag of potato and beans which complimented the support of ROMACTED.
- KOSINT is working on assisting the communities with their needs and suggests continuing to work at the grassroots level in a table or any form that will be accessible for all stakeholders.
- VORAE acknowledges the support and fast intervention of the Government towards mobilizing measures and actions for protecting Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians from COVID-19. VORAE is also working at the national and local level in close coordination with municipalities and other important stakeholders.

5. Proposed targeted and mainstream measures

- Communities must be informed in their own languages and have access to information on the protective measures and information using local media
- Municipalities must have budget approvals from the central level to enable Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians to benefit. So far, most of the budget support is allocated from different donors.
- There is a need for concrete statistics from the local level that will be accessible to all stakeholders. Having exact figures will help better planning for the current period (necessities from the field) and the period after the crisis (planning and programming long term measures).

6. Follow up

- The NRCP strongly recommends continuing several types of coordination meetings between institutions, civil society and other respective agencies.
- The Roma Integration 2020 should support the Government to provide technical assistance in coordinating, preparing plans, gathering information, preparing budgets based on the needs for recovery after the crises.
- KFOS proposes to continue these types of meetings and find ways to share information in a form of table or template as a way to coordinate the work.
- ROMACTED members of the communities must be part of the emergency responses in collaboration with the relevant Ministries, where the respective municipalities have already been signalled to include members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.
- KOSINT is already in contact with internet providers and suggests intermediating the process of providing access to internet for the communities.
- VORAE is working on an advocacy plan, to ensure that the needs of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians are appropriately addressed especially by the European Commission and the government, with special focus on enabling basic infrastructure in these communities.
- UNDP suggests continuing organizing and co-hosting this format of meetings with the NRCP – OGG and create mechanisms for monitoring the results.
- UNDP suggests having live streaming of the meetings in the National Television-RTK to enable the community have access on information and developments.

Participants:

1.National Roma Contact Points (and their deputies and staff)	Habit Hajredini and Keriman Sadikay
2.Ministry of Regional Development Deputy Minister	Fridon Lala
3. Ministry of Internal Affairs	Jahe Tolaj





4. Ministry of Environment	Merita Dalipi
5. Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare-Social Policies	Mentor Morina
6.EU Delegation	Stefano Gnocchi and Pleurat Kurti
7.Ministry of Health-Head of the Division for citizens' rights to health care	Sanie Kijmari
8.Open Society Foundations	Neda Korunovska
9.Kosovo Foundation for Open Society-KFOS	Vera Pula
10.Red Cross	Agron Humolli
11. RomaVersitas	Avni Mustafa and Genc Broci
12.Romacted	Sakibe Jashari
13. Siry I Vizionit	Vlora Latifi
14. Balkan Sunflowers	Gentina Jusufi
15. Roma and Ashkali Documentation Center	Dritan Shaipi
16. Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians	Isak Skenderi
17.UNDP	Ferdinand Nikolla
18. RCC Roma Integration team	Elda, Kalaja Orhan Usein, Shejla Fidani Aleksandra Bojadjeva, Mimoza Gavrani, Rada Krstanovic

