

MEETING INFORMATION

ROMA INTEGRATION EMERGENCY RESPONSE MEETINGS TO COVID-19

MONTENEGRO

Date: 14 April 2020, I informative meeting

Organized by: Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration 2020 (RCC RI2020)

Attendees: Governmental representatives, NCRP, EU Delegation, International organizations, Red Cross, OSF, Local and mainstream and Roma 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, in consultation with the European Union and the Open Society Foundations, 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.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION OF ROMA AND EGYPTIANS (RE) IN MONTENEGRO

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

Government/NRCP:

- The National Coordinating Body for Infectious Diseases (NCBID) and the Government of Montenegro are taking measures to answer to all the human needs at the moment. The applied quarantine measures are allowing one person per family to be at a time out for basic grocery and medicine shopping. So far solidarity and civil responsibility is well maintained. Discriminatory actions are not noted.
- For all the unemployed persons and pensioners with lowest income, besides the provided nutrition, hygienic and medical support, one-off payment of EUR 50 is provided by the Government under the economic measures.
- There will not be disconnection from energy and water supply in any household.
- National kitchen delivers food for all the people in the Konik area, populated with RE.
- Education and teaching classes are maintained via TV and mobile apps, the Ministry of Education is in coordination with media houses for the program delivery.
- The city of Podgorica ensured 50.000 EUR for the municipality of Tuzi to combat coronavirus as not all municipalities have enough funding for disinfection.
- The only RE few positive cases to COVID 19 were noted in Konik area (the former camp). Appropriate governmental measures were taken on time to mitigate the risk of further spread.
- The whole area of Konik, 243 families, is in self isolation. Red Cross reacted urgently to provide the main necessities and comfort the people.
- Pointing out the good cooperation and in coordination with the local Roma NGOs (Young Roma, Phiren Amenca) the Red Cross delivered the first aid cycle in 13 municipalities where mainly RE are living.
- According to list prepared by the Roma NGOs, in Konik, on daily bases, the Red Cross is distributing bread, milk and baby diapers to the most vulnerable.
- Due to the low socioeconomic status of residents at Vreli Ribnicki, Konik, water and electricity disruptions are frequent. All residents of the neighbourhood, however, have electricity and those who were disconnected due to accumulated debt were connected to the grid.
- Info leaflets on protection measures were translated in Romanes and Albanian and disseminated.

EU Delegation:

- 3 million EUR are allocated for short term responses, contract with UN is signed 10 days ago for purchase of medical equipment, expected to arrive in 2 weeks.
- 50 million EUR are being planned for long term responses on health and socio economic measures. Models for funds distribution is an ongoing discussion with the EU Commission.
- The measures to be supported from the EU funds are in line with the governmental strategic goals. We wait to see from the Government what those measures are.



- 32 million EUR subventions are planned to support the recovery of the most threatened sectors from this crisis, but it is not yet programmed how this can benefit RE and the informal workers.
- The communication between Brussels and the Government is managed by the NIPAC office and their role in the process of programming is very important as well as the Ministry of Finance.
- Everyone working on human rights and protection of minorities and vulnerable groups will make sure that certain amount is dedicated for measures targeting the most vulnerable.

2. Overview of the short term needs

- NRCP: Engaging the RE educational mediators are necessary to have better insight and data from grassroots. The mediators should also help the RE parents and children how to deal with the schooling trends existing at the moment. In addition, ensuring access to TV and mobile app for children (approx. 100 in Konik) is necessary.
- Access to internet in RE settlements is essential. The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and the Roma NGOs have a list of targeted areas.
- School materials to be delivered to children who have no access to TV and Internet, (approx. 100 in Konik), in Nikshic the Roma NGOs have the data. The Ministry of Education can secure more data from the teachers.
- Currently, the 2nd cycle of humanitarian aid needs to be planned and programmed.
- People without documents are excluded from all measures. The Government should include them as soon as possible and provide basic human treatment and long term solutions for their economic recovery.

3. Who does what and coordination of various stakeholders?

- The Red Cross is mandated by the NCBID to manage all the humanitarian aid.
- The NRCP is in coordination with Red Cross and the National Roma Council for aid packages delivery.
- NGO Young Roma through the Council of Europe secured 400 humanitarian aid packages and delivered in cooperation with the Red Cross in RE populated municipalities.
- NGO Phiren Amenca and HELP donor organization secured 600 humanitarian aid packages.
- The Ministry of Education, Red Cross and UNICEF, are initiating, all the vulnerable RE children without internet, TV and mobile apps, to receive school materials once a week. The RE leaders and the school mediators should be tasked to ensure proper delivery.
- The planning of the second cycle of humanitarian aid should take in consideration the needs of the communities.

4. Enduring synergies and complementarity

- The second cycle of aid packages delivery should be in a month as that depends on donations. The Red Cross should make sure to coordinate with the Roma organizations on data and people in need by municipality. The RCC RI2020 is in communication with the Roma NGOs, OSF, REF, CoE, Romacted, and other international donor organizations to point out the need of short term emergency donations.
- The Ministry of Education is calling the Roma School mediators, the Red Cross and UNICEF to coordinate and support the delivery of school materials in Konik. Around 100 children are in need, while approx. 500 have access to the TV and internet.
- The NGO Youth Roma and the education mediators to get in touch with teachers on data collection, how many children currently have no access to the provided methods of teaching at the moment.
- RCC RI 2020 can help the Ministry of Education to establish database and gather information on the most urgent needs of children and parents.
- NGO Young Roma and Red Cross to plan the distribution of the 2nd cycle humanitarian aid while the municipalities and the Government should allocate funds for the packages.

5. Proposed targeted and mainstream measures

- The NRCP is ensuring that there will not be any family in need of food, water and electricity; these mainstream measures will remain in place.





- There will not be relocation of budget for the implementation of the Strategy for RE integration. This may happen only in very urgent cases if ministries are in need but further relocation will be ensured if such need occurs.
- The National Coordinating Body for Infectious Diseases is receiving financing from private and business donations based on solidarity.
- The Ministry of Education has prepared educational material for children with no access to mobile phones, TV and internet. The materials should be delivered as soon as possible.
- The governmental measure to provide 50 EUR for social aid receivers and pensioners does not include and count the people who are not in any of these groups nor are registered job seekers. Since the measure is planned to be implemented through the Centres for employment and pension funds, this will not be beneficial for the RE people, therefore, NGO Young Roma is proposing the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights/NRCP to coordinate the process and provide information flow among relevant stakeholders. The NGOs will provide data on unregistered people that have to be taken in consideration.
- NGO Young Roma is proposing the budget planned for implementation of the National Strategy for Roma and Egyptians that remain unspent, to be relocated to measures identified by the Roma organizations in accordance with the community needs.
- Roma volunteers are organized by the Roma Council and NGO Young Roma for any emergency need.

6. Follow up

1. With a purpose to ensure Roma and Egyptians are taken into governmental strategic consideration when defining socio economic post COVID 19 recovery the NRCP should be in a position to provide short, mid and long term recommendations, that includes financial planning and implementation of the measures agreed with all the relevant stakeholders (NRCP, EUD, RI2020, NGOs).
To fasten up the process of programming of EU funds, the first follow up step, as outcome from this meeting is the RCC RI2020, the Ministry of Human and Minority rights/NRCP, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the EU Commission, the EU Delegation, the NIPAC office will have an online meeting during next week. The meeting should discuss adequate consideration of Roma and Egyptians in the mainstream measures and propose targeted long term socio economic measures.
2. Planning the financing and delivery of the second cycle of humanitarian aid.
3. Distribution of school materials for children without access to TV and internet.
4. Short term measures to benefit the people without documents to be taken in consideration immediately.
5. The budget planned for implementation of the National Strategy for Roma and Egyptians that remains unspent, should be relocated to measures identified by the Roma organizations in accordance with the community needs.

Participants:

1.Ministry of Human and Minority rights/NRCP	Leon Gjokaj
2.Ministry of Human and Minority rights	Mirela Ramcilovic
3.Ministry of Education	Anita Maric
4. Min. of Sustainable Development and Tourism	Radmila Lainović
5.EU Delegation	Mladenka Tesic
6.Open Society Foundations	Neda Korunovska
7.Open Society Foundations	Rahiel Mustafoska
8.Red Cross	Snezana Radenovic
9.Roma Council	Senad Sejdovic
10.Romacted/Young Roma	Samir Jaha
11.Center for Roma Initiatives	Fana Delia
12. NF Civic Alliance	Dushica Merdovic
13. Roma Integration team	Orhan Usein, Shejla Fidani, Aleksandra Bojadzieva, Mimoza Gavrani

