

MEETING INFORMATION

**ROMA INTEGRATION EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**:: SERBIA ::**

**Date:** 15 April 2020, I Meeting

**Organised by:** Roma Integration 2020, Regional Cooperation Council

**Attendees:** Governmental representatives, National Roma Contact Point (NRCP), European Union Delegation, International organizations, Red Cross, Open Society Foundations, local mainstream and Roma organisations

**Technical info:** The meetings are held via the online meetings application Zoom, lasting 90 minutes, with up to 100 participants. The Policy Expert of the Roma Integration 2020 is responsible to coordinate the organisation of the meeting with the NRCP, invite participants and share the details for online joining the meeting.

**Objective:** 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.

**Actions of the Government, municipalities and independent state bodies:**

- The National Roma Contact Point is responding to requests from the field by **contacting relevant institutions** (so far mainly about humanitarian aid)
- Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-government is issuing **guidelines to municipalities** on distributing humanitarian aid
- Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-government yesterday issued guidelines to municipalities to **include Roma (local coordinators or others) in their local crisis headquarters**
- Red Cross is **distributing humanitarian aid** across the country (provided by municipalities, Government and donors)
- The Equality Commissioner is **monitoring the situation regarding discrimination** and special needs of various groups of people, receiving submissions by the citizens and accordingly reacts to the relevant government institutions (for example regarding elderly with dementia, persons with autism, single parents not allowed by employers to work from home, etc.)

**EU Delegation actions:**

- EU Delegation is relocating funds on ongoing projects (negotiating and amending contracts) and making plans for additional funding (from IPA 2018 on social housing and inclusion of 20 million EUR 3.5 is relocated for urgent response mainly for the health sector, out of which 100,000 EUR for help to Roma; from IPA 2016 still negotiated); Roma civil society is distributing this aid
- UNOPS (2,000 packages, total 100.000 EUR) and SCTM (probably 500 packages – under negotiation) are doing the procurement of humanitarian aid provided by the EU

**Other actions:**

- 30 **volunteers** engaged by UNDP/UNHCR help the distribution of packages with the local NGOs, contact local crisis headquarters and provide support to children for education
- UNDP considers to provide **transport** for the packages distributed by UNOPS
- UNDP is preparing funds for **small grants for recovery** after the crisis
- Open Society Foundations allocates or relocates funding for urgent **humanitarian aid** (around 50-60.000 USD in the first round); the first being distributed two weeks ago through the League of Roma; supported **production of a TV documentary on the situation of Roma and homeless**
- The NGO Romanipen will distribute 300 **humanitarian aid** packages in Kragujevac (through relocation of funds from a project funded by OSF)
- The **volunteers** of the League of Roma are distributing **humanitarian aid**, so far: 20.000 masks and the packages provided by OSF
- At the beginning of the crisis the League of Roma and Roma World shared **video clips** with **information** about the virus through social networks, thus contributed to the disciplined behaviour among Roma



- The League of Roma is providing **information** to the Roma members of the European Parliament, preparing Ms Livija Jaroka for the tomorrow speech
- The League of Roma provided **canisters** to some Roma settlements without **water**, and some municipalities are providing water, but it is not sufficient
- Opre Roma is selecting **information** from official websites of the institutions of the government only, translating into Romani language and distributing virtually and through activists on the field
- Opre Roma distributes **humanitarian aid** provided by OSF along with relevant information, in 14 municipalities where the organisation has its infrastructure, following community dialogue on the priority needs and the priority beneficiaries
- Opre Roma is also **mobilising the private sector** in the municipalities to join the action and add to the packages provided through the OSF funding
- Opre Roma received the information that the Roma community is also supported, to the extent possible, by Roma who work abroad
- Roma World works during the crisis on distributing **information** important for the Roma community, including in Romani language
- Romacted in Nis submitted **information and initiatives to the local crisis headquarter**: 1) network of activists in disposal to distribute aid in the Roma settlement (which is done, and they have lists of people in order to coordinate and ensure fair distribution); 2) request to relocate funds from the Roma integration action plan for humanitarian aid for Roma (food as most important); 3) request to disinfect Roma settlements (two settlements have been disinfected: 12 Februar and Chair
- From the Roma Centre from Gottingen financial aid was received, thus 70 Roma families were given **one-time financial support** in Nis (from various Roma settlements in the city as well as the villages)
- Young Roma from Berlin organised and gathered funding from which 150 **packages** have been distributed in the Roma settlements in Nis
- So far in Nis 3,000 **packages** have been distributed (in general, estimated 125 for Roma), mainly from the municipality
- The Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative (REDI) works to establish a **call centre** with volunteers to provide Roma with information on entrepreneurship and economic measures, as well as education and health;
- REDI distributes **information** online regarding economic measures to the Roma entrepreneurs;
- REDI prepares to distribute 1000 **masks and gloves to the waste collectors** (intend to purchase the masks from Roma sawing the masks – information on such possibility would be appreciated);
- REDI provides **legal aid** to the Roma entrepreneurs regarding the consequences of the crisis (closing the firm, reorganising the work, delaying loan rates with banks, etc.);
- REDI plans to **install public drinking fountains** in few Roma settlements that do not have water;
- Ombudsperson office is working and receiving submissions from citizens regarding alleged violations of human rights, providing also the [contact information](#)
- GIZ is preparing to distribute 270 **packages** of urgent aid (food and hygiene) for 75 poor families, among which 50 Roma families from 2 substandard settlement: Okretnica 75 (Novi Beograd) and Lacari (Zvezdara); along with the aid, information on prevention will be shared and protective equipment (masks and gloves) will also be provided; the project is expected to start at the end of April and last for 3 months
- GIZ is expecting a response from the donor for preparing and negotiating a project with Serbia for distribution of around 3.000 **packages** (food and hygiene) for around 900 socially deprived families, among which 800 Roma from substandard settlements in the 18 partner towns and municipalities<sup>1</sup> in Serbia; the project will also include information and prevention, as well as technical support to the local self-governments and purchasing masks and gloves; the project is planned for 3 months
- GIZ is expecting a response from the donor to prepare and contract a project with the Association of coordinators for Roma issues to perform **information and protection actions** in cooperation with the 18 partner towns and municipalities and participation of Roma civil society (lists of beneficiaries of humanitarian aid should be created within this project); the project will last for 3 months
- GIZ, three weeks ago, started a Virtual learning programme for meetings with partner organisations and their empowerment and exchange of information
- Initiative A11 prepared an [analysis and brief](#) on the violations of human rights during the state of emergency and maintains a [blog](#) on the human rights during the Covid-19 crisis
- Initiative A11 shares relevant **information** online (including in Romani language) and prepared and shared [information](#) on the way of payment of social aid and pension to persons older than 65 years

<sup>1</sup> Partner municipalities of GIZ are: Aleksinac, Apatin, Bač, Beograd, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Novi Beograd, Novi Pazar, Požarevac, Pirot, Raška, Sombor, Subotica, Valjevo, Vranje, Vršac and Zvezdara.





- Initiative A11 continues to provide **information and help** in accessing social and economic rights, most of which are for monetary social aid and one-time monetary aid
- In cooperation with the UNHCR, Initiative A11 distributed 230 **packages** (food and hygiene) for the most vulnerable internally displaced and Roma persons in 8 informal settlements or collective centres<sup>2</sup>

#### Additional information:

- Roma health mediators are not active, they are withdrawn from the field
- The Roma Health Mediators Association is apparently preparing humanitarian aid with UNICEF – to be confirmed (information received through indirect source)
- Teaching Assistants are instructed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development to work on the field, but because of lack of masks and gloves they are not working (information received through indirect source)

#### Assessed needs communicated with the authorities:

- The League of Roma wrote to the Government and the Prime Minister with a request to **provide water** to all Roma settlements that are not connected to water (with some success, but not sufficient); according to the League of Roma there are 5,334 families without access to water, but there is no information on their location (GIS contains such information)
- The League of Roma wrote to the Ministry of Health regarding Roma **health mediators** and particularly their **database** that can be used for distribution of aid, but without response
- Romacted in Nis submitted a **request to relocate funds** from the Roma integration action plan for humanitarian aid for Roma (food as most important)
- Initiative A11, with SIPRU and other civil society organisations, UNHCR and independent experts prepared a **list of proposed measures aimed at recovering from the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis for the most vulnerable**: Roma, disabled, homeless, beneficiaries of free food public services, persons without documents (that are almost exclusively Roma), internally displaced persons living in informal collective centres and other vulnerable groups. The measures are in health, social protection, housing and education. The document is submitted to the Government on 20 March 2020 (the document is provided as an annex).

#### Additional needs and efforts:

- The League of Roma attempts to **revive the Waste Collectors' Trade Union** in order to propose measures to address the situation of the waste collectors (70% of Roma families have their livelihood from collecting waste, and during the crisis they are not able to work because of the movement restrictions and because waste purchasing centres are closed, and waste is piling up in some Roma settlements, representing further health risk)
- The League of Roma is in contact and coordination at regional level to prepare **proposals for economic recovery of the Roma community** (through the Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative)

#### Coordination initiatives:

- The League of Roma has its **crisis headquarters** dealing with the emergency situation of Roma
- UN, in coordination with all the Roma networks and the SIPRU, collects information on the Roma families in need; the **database** contains information on around 218,000 persons in around 230 settlements and is now maintained by the SIPRU in order to be able to coordinate the humanitarian aid;
- The UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia is organising **weekly meetings** with the SIPRU, various UN agencies and other donors regarding the responses to Covid-19 (in general, not only for Roma)
- REDI organised **meetings** with relevant stakeholders in order to prepare a set of proposed measures to be submitted to the Government in order to **protect and recover the Roma entrepreneurship**, both formal and informal
- GIZ will prepare a **list of beneficiaries** from the 18 partner towns and municipalities
- Initiative A11 prepares an **online platform for exchange information** on the needs of and help to Roma and other vulnerable groups in order to coordinate aid and avoid overlap of activities, expected to be functional by the end of April, and it will allow for all stakeholders to upload information

#### Policy/measures proposals:

- **Central coordination, information, planning and governing implementation:**

<sup>2</sup> Čukarica-Čukarička suma-Obrenovački drum bb, Stara škola-Radnička 49, Kamp Čukarica-Vidikovački venac bb; Rakovica-Kamp Resnik-Podavalska 77; Voždovac-Bivši Lahor-Voždovački kružni put 9; Grocka-Kamp Grocka-Vojvode Stepe 2 i Zvezdara-Mirijevo-Ljubiše Miodragovića bb





- The government should develop a **comprehensive plan to address the situation of Roma** during and after the Covid-19 crisis
- The policy check-list prepared by the RCC should serve as a starting point (see annex 2)
- The policy proposals by Initiative A11 should be used to inform the plan (see annex 3)
- The Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit (SIPRU) of the Government should become the central institution for coordination, information, planning and governing implementation
- SIPRU should **coordinate** the government institutions, municipalities, international organisations/donors and civil society
- SIPRU should prepare the comprehensive **plan** including distribution of humanitarian aid, provision of public services and utilities (regular and specially designed to address the crisis), and recovery of the Roma communities (including in terms of building the necessary infrastructure and economic recovery)
- SIPRU should gather **information** regarding the situation on the ground, provision of aid, implementation of activities, results and impact from the action; SIPRU should request **access** to the **Geographic Information System** on Substandard Roma Settlements (in order to locate settlements / families without water, electricity, etc.) and the **database of the Roma health mediators**; SIPRU should continue **maintaining the table** developed with UN and Roma networks;
- SIPRU should present the comprehensive plan to address the situation of Roma to the Government, the Ministry of European Integration, the National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC), and the EU Delegation (in order to ensure the needs of Roma are incorporated in the mainstream plan and to secure public and EU funding for implementation)
- **Local coordination: Roma** (local coordinators) should be involved as **members** of the **Local Crisis Headquarters** established in the municipalities to decide on the responses to the crisis
- **Data collection:**
  - Concrete information on settlements to be collected, updated, monitored and made available to those implementing actions regarding the response to Covid-19 and consequences (as said above, coordinated by SIPRU)
  - The Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure to extract data from the Geographic Information System on Substandard Roma Settlements (established with EU funding) about localities without connection to water as a matter of urgency
  - The Ministry of Health to make the Roma health mediators database available to use for the purpose of planning the aid to Roma
  - The situation regarding distant education in the Roma settlements to be assessed (lack of connection to electricity, TV/internet, lack of devices for following the education, need for additional learning support, etc.)
  - Allegations regarding lists of humanitarian aid beneficiaries being prepared by political parties to be checked and if confirmed, to make sure there is no abuse of humanitarian aid for political purposes
- **Other specific recommendations:**
  - The Ministry of Health to provide information on the work of the Roma health mediators and the database of the Roma health mediators
  - Increase the capacities for distribution of humanitarian aid
  - To ensure humanitarian aid is distributed fairly, as most of the humanitarian aid so far goes to bigger towns where there are active NGOs, while smaller and rural municipalities are not covered
  - The decision of the Government not to postpone and to organise final exams online should be reconsidered for those children that did not have the ability to follow education during the crisis (besides Roma there are children in similar situation from other poor families, rural families, etc.)
  - Summer camps to be organised for the children that have not been able to follow education during crisis in order to catch up
  - Teaching assistants and health mediators to work in the Roma settlements in order to: assess the situation; provide information to the people on the measures during and after the crisis; assist people in accessing the relevant (previous and new) public services; alert the institutions on the needs
  - For Roma adults without education that can follow distant education to provide adult education (in order to increase their competences on the labour market)
  - The Government must include socially deprived persons in the regular and additional social aid (including humanitarian aid), including those that are not registered by the social centres





### ***ANNEX 1: Detailed information provided during the meeting***

#### **NRCP:**

- The Ministry of State Administration and Local Self-government (MSAL) has been issuing guidelines to municipalities in the past 20 days regarding distribution of humanitarian aid
- Humanitarian aid – packages for socially deprived persons is being distributed with the aim that all municipalities are covered
- The Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure negotiates with Electro-distribution (public company) to ensure all settlements where possible are connected to electricity – this has been done for some settlements, but not for all that need connection (for example settlement “12 October” is partially connected and partially not connected to electricity) – the negotiations are ongoing
- GIZ has contacted the NRCP in order to discuss relocation of 200.000 EUR for the purpose of distributing humanitarian aid packages with food, masks, and other necessary items, to be distributed through the Red Cross
- UNOPS has also contacted the NRCP with the intention to relocate funds for humanitarian aid from the ongoing IPA 18 project for housing of vulnerable groups of 20 million EUR, 3-4 million EUR are in question – these packages will be distributed by the EU separately from those being distributed by the Red Cross
- It is important to have such meeting and exchange information
- The NRCP is ready to help in terms of contacting, for example, the Ministry of Health, the Institute for Public Health “Batut”, or any other relevant institution, to acquire advice, help or any other need

#### **EU Delegation**

- 3.5 million EUR out of the 20 million EUR from the “Social housing and active inclusion” action from IPA 18 implemented by UNOPS has been relocated for urgent support to Serbia in combating the virus Covid-19; the support is used for purchasing medical equipment, respirators, masks, gloves and other necessities that are currently urgent for the health system in Serbia; out of the 3.5 million EUR, 100,000 EUR are allocated for sanitary-hygienic packages for the Roma communities; 2,000 packages will be distributed with this help in 4 towns in Serbia: Subotica, Valjevo, Nis and Belgrade – 500 each; UNOPS as an implementer deals with the logistics and implementation on the field; the EU Delegation insisted that the distribution is done through partner non-governmental organisations, thus UNOPS has contacted the organisations and next week the packages are expected to arrive
- The procurement of packages is problematic, because there is shortage of items that should be part of the packages (canned food, hygienic items, etc.)
- The IPA 16 project for housing for Roma implemented by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) is also being revised in order to allocate Covid-19 response funding, probably 500 humanitarian packages
- The EU Delegation understands that these reactions are short-term, and it starts the internal discussions on the needs for medium and long term; there are ongoing projects that can be adjusted and non-allocated funds that can be used for such purposes, so that funding is provided even by the end of this year
- It is important from the government part to have unified standpoint and a list of priority needs of Roma, including concrete information on settlements in need
- The additional aid that will be provided from the EU to Serbia shall be planned in a regular procedure, based on a proposal coming from the Ministry of European Integration and the National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC), stating the viewpoint of the Government on the needs and priorities for short, medium and long term; the information on the progress of preparing the proposal and coordination among institutions should be acquired from the Ministry of European Integration; SIPRU may be the institution to get involved in the process in order to make sure the needs of Roma are taken into account in the proposal;
- The vulnerable groups portfolio of the EU delegation, besides Roma, includes women, children and disabled persons, and for all the groups help is provided by relocation of funds from the ongoing projects; EU Delegation can provide information on all the groups
- The EU Delegation received a comprehensive proposal from the Initiative A11, with a list of short, medium and long term priorities for support to vulnerable groups that sound reasonable; the proposal was also submitted to the Government, and the EU Delegation expects the Government to communicate its viewpoints on those proposals and advice the EU Delegation where it can provide its support regarding the proposals

#### **Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities**





- SCTM is constantly communicating with its members – municipalities, and with the mobile teams for Roma inclusion at local level functioning under the project
- There are differences between municipalities (no information which are the differences)
- From the IPA 16 project (as mentioned) 500 humanitarian-hygiene packages will be provided; the procurement is ongoing and it is expected that the packages will be distributed two weeks from now; the locations for distribution shall be agreed with the EU Delegation; the packages are smaller than those provided by UNOPS, but are following the same logic (food, hygiene, etc.)
- The 10 mobile teams for Roma inclusion at local level are functioning on the field according to the operational plans for 2019, and the remaining funds that have not been spent will be relocated for the urgent needs of Roma, depending on the corresponding municipalities; the operational plans for 2020 are being prepared, and the focus is now put on the recovery from the crisis

#### UNDP and UNHCR

- The project engaging young Roma volunteers is implemented for the third year in a row and now 30 volunteers are in the process of being engaged from different municipalities – they are ready to support the activities on the field performed by NGOs and municipalities; some are in contact with the local crisis headquarters; provide support to children from the settlements in following distant education
- UNDP provides the transport for the medical equipment being purchased since the beginning of the crisis, and with the Association of Local Roma Coordinators it is considering the idea to provide support for the transport of packages provided by EU through UNOPS in the 4 towns
- UNDP is expecting to receive funds for small grants for recovery after the crisis
- There is a possibility to support informative campaigns at local level if such activities exist (not enough funds at UNDP to conduct full campaign on its own, but can support)

#### Equality Commissioner's office

- The Equality Commissioner is monitoring the situation
- By the decision on emergency situation and the regulations on the measures for protection from Covid-19 some of the rights of citizens guaranteed by the Constitution are suspended; the right to non-discrimination is not suspended
- There are many submission by the citizens from the beginning of the crisis:
  - o At the beginning when the schools and pre-schools were closed parents reacted, particularly single parents, asking advice on regulating their working conditions with the employers that have not allowed for work from home; consequently the Equality Commissioner submitted a recommendation to the Government to amend the decision in order to ensure possibility for work from home, particularly for single parents, without discrimination
  - o Many persons with disabilities, because of the curfew, moving and contact restrictions, are not able to receive the services of formal or informal personal assistants; the Equality Commissioner submitted a recommendation to the Government to provide for a solution for disabled persons to receive the necessary care and for the autistic persons to be able to perform their daily routines in order to avoid worsening of their situation
  - o Many elderly persons are also contacting – those whose movement are most restricted (from 65 years of age in urban and 70 in rural areas) because of inability to move and provide for their basic needs; thus initiative is submitted to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to carefully implement any punitive measures to the elderly, particularly those with diagnosed dementia

#### Open Society Foundation

- The Open Society Foundation has relocated some of its funds to respond to the crisis and contacted the Republic's Fund for Health Insurance regarding medical equipment
- Particularly concerned about the situation in the Roma settlements, after receiving information from the League of Roma and the Opre Roma organisations
- Thus, two weeks ago the Foundation allocated funds for urgent help: packages with food, hygiene items, masks, for the Roma settlements, distributed through the civil society organisations
- The projects funded by the Foundation are also relocating funds to provide humanitarian aid, particularly funds that cannot be implemented during the crisis (meetings, trainings, etc.) – Romanipen will distribute 300 packages in Kragujevac
- Opre Roma shall also relocate part of the funds for humanitarian aid and relevant information in 14 municipalities
- Opre Roma is also mobilising the private sector in the municipalities to join the action and add to the packages provided through the OSF funding
- In total the Foundation has allocated or relocated around 50-60.000 USD for this purpose





- The Foundation supported production of a TV [documentary on the situation of Roma and homeless](#) by Insider, broadcasted on N1 TV
- The Foundation attempted to support the Roma health mediators through their association, in acting upon prevention and informing people in Roma settlement regarding Covid-19; the Foundation was informed that the Roma health mediators are not working – they are withdrawn and despite the initial interest of the association they responded to OSF that they are preparing humanitarian aid with UNICEF and the support from the OSF is not enough, thus was rejected
- The Teaching Assistants informed OSF that they have been instructed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development to continue working in the settlements, and they felt discriminated since their colleagues are working at distance (from home), and most probably they are not working because of lack of protective equipment

#### League of Roma

- The League of Roma has its crisis headquarters dealing with the emergency situation of Roma
- The volunteers of the League of Roma are distributing humanitarian aid, so far: 20.000 masks and the packages provided by OSF
- At the beginning of the crisis the League of Roma and Roma World shared [video clips](#) with information about the virus through social networks, thus contributed to the disciplined behaviour among Roma
- The League of Roma wrote to the Government and the Prime Minister with a request to provide water to all Roma settlements that are not connected to water (with some success, but not sufficient)
- The informal Roma workers, primarily the 70% workable Roma that act as waste collectors, but also many others including open market retailers, home-cleaning service providers, etc. are not able to perform their economic activities during the crisis, and they are thus pushed into deeper poverty (in need of food and all other basic necessities)
- Waste purchasing centres are closed thus those who have decided to go out and work in lack of any other solution, cannot sell the collected waste
- The Waste Collectors' Trade Union with around 40,000 members is not functional and has not proposed any policy or measures to address the waste collectors
- The League of Roma is in contact and coordination at regional level to prepare proposals for economic recovery of the Roma community (through the Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative, Jasmina Usainovic is responsible for Serbia)
- The League of Roma is providing information to the Roma members of the European Parliament, preparing Ms Livija Jaroka for the tomorrow speech
- The League of Roma wrote to the Ministry of Health regarding Roma health mediators and particularly their database that can be used for distribution of aid, but without response
- The League of Roma provided canisters to some Roma settlements without water, and some municipalities are providing water, but it is not sufficient
- The lists of households to receive humanitarian aid are made (allegedly) not in social centres or other relevant institutions, but in the political parties, which has to be prevented

#### Opre Roma

- Opre Roma is selecting information from official websites of the institutions of the government only, translating into Romani language and distributing virtually and through activists on the field
- With the League of Roma and Roma World that started the information campaign, these activities continue, as they yield results (Roma generally adhere to the preventive measures)
- Opre Roma distributes humanitarian aid provided by OSF along with relevant information, in 14 municipalities where the organisation has its infrastructure, following community dialogue on the priority needs and the priority beneficiaries
- Opre Roma is also mobilising the private sector in the municipalities to join the action and add to the packages provided through the OSF funding
- Opre Roma received the information that the Roma community is also supported, to the extent possible, by Roma who work abroad

#### UN

- UN, in coordination with all the Roma networks and the SIPRU, collects information on the Roma families in Serbia at risk, including those lacking access to drinking water, electricity, informal workers; the database contains information on 218,000 persons and is now maintained by the SIPRU in order to be able to coordinate the humanitarian aid; the database is not comprehensive





- Most of the municipalities and the social centres are working well, but the registers of the social centres are incomplete, because many Roma in need are not registered as social beneficiaries, thus there is a risk not to cover them with the social measures
- The UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia is organising weekly meetings with the SIPRU, various UN agencies and other donors regarding the responses to Covid-19 (in general, not only for Roma)

#### Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit

- SIPRU is mandated by the Prime Minister to map the needs of all the people at risk, including homeless, beneficiaries of safe houses for women victims of domestic violence and the inhabitants of informal settlements; this is done in coordination with institutions and organisations on the field
- SIPRU maintains the mentioned database
- 8.000 packages with food and hygienic items have been distributed so far, mainly by the Red Cross
- UNICEF makes leaflets and posters with relevant information about the pandemic and prevention of different persons (pregnant women, elderly, etc.); SIPRU translates the materials in Romani language

#### Roma World

- Roma World works during the crisis on distributing information important for the Roma community, including in Romani language
- Romacted in Nis submitted information and initiatives to the local crisis headquarter: 1) network of activists in disposal to distribute aid in the Roma settlement; 2) request to relocate funds from the Roma integration action plan for humanitarian aid for Roma (food as most important); 3) request to disinfect Roma settlements
- The Roma activists in Nis are organised in an informal crisis headquarters in order to support distribution of humanitarian aid packages
- The Roma settlements are overcrowded and risky in terms of spread of the virus; 1 woman is in hospital and the urgent unit came yesterday for another person from a Roma settlement
- Two settlements have been disinfected: 12 Februar and Chair
- From the Roma Centre from Göttingen financial aid was received, thus 70 Roma families were given one-time financial support in Nis (from various Roma settlements in the city as well as the villages)
- Young Roma from Berlin organised and gathered funding from which 150 packages have been distributed in the Roma settlements in Nis
- So far in Nis 3,000 packages have been distributed (in general, estimated 125 for Roma), so far mainly from the municipality
- Romacted in Nis has lists of people and is able to coordinate the distribution of aid in order to prevent that some families receive more than once and other families do not receive aid at all

#### Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative

- The Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative (REDI) works to establish a call centre with volunteers to provide Roma with information on entrepreneurship and economic measures, as well as education and health;
- REDI distributes information online regarding economic measures to the Roma entrepreneurs;
- REDI prepares to distribute 1000 masks and gloves to the waste collectors (intend to purchase the masks from Roma saving the masks – information on such possibility would be appreciated);
- REDI provides legal aid to the Roma entrepreneurs regarding the consequences of the crisis (closing the firm, reorganising the work, delaying loan rates with banks, etc.);
- REDI plans to install public drinking fountains in some of the Roma settlements that do not have water;
- REDI organised meetings with relevant stakeholders in order to prepare a set of proposed measures to be submitted to the Government in order to protect and recover the Roma entrepreneurship, both formal and informal

#### Ombudsperson

- The Ombudsperson representative invited the participants of the meeting to share the information that the Ombudsperson office is working and receiving submissions from citizens regarding alleged violations of human rights, providing also the [contact information](#)

#### Written submissions

#### GIZ

- GIZ is preparing to distribute 270 packages of urgent aid (food and hygiene) for 75 poor families, among which 50 Roma families from 2 substandard settlements: Okretnica 75 (Novi Beograd) and Lacari (Zvezdara); along with the aid, information on prevention will be shared and protective





equipment (masks and gloves) will also be provided; the project is expected to start at the end of April and last for 3 months

- GIZ is expecting a response from the donor for preparing and negotiating a project with Serbia for distribution of around 3.000 packages (food and hygiene) for around 900 socially deprived families, among which 800 Roma from substandard settlements in the 18 partner towns and municipalities<sup>3</sup> in Serbia; the project will also include information and prevention, as well as technical support to the local self-governments and purchasing masks and gloves; the project is planned for 3 months
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- GIZ, three weeks ago, started a Virtual learning programme for meetings with partner organisations and their empowerment and exchange of information

#### Initiative A11

- Initiative A11, with SIPRU and other civil society organisations, UNHCR and independent experts prepared a list of proposed measures aimed at recovering from the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis for the most vulnerable: Roma, disabled, homeless, beneficiaries of free food public services, persons without documents (that are almost exclusively Roma), internally displaced persons living in informal collective centres and other vulnerable groups. The measures are in health, social protection, housing and education.
- Initiative A11 prepared an [analysis](#) and [brief](#) on the violations of human rights during the state of emergency and maintains a [blog](#) on the human rights during the Covid-19 crisis
- Initiative A11 shares relevant information online (including in Romani language) and prepared and shared [information](#) on the way of payment of social aid and pension to persons older than 65 years
- Initiative A11 continues to provide information and help in accessing social and economic rights, most of which are for monetary social aid and one-time monetary aid
- In cooperation with the UNHCR, Initiative A11 distributed 230 packages (food and hygiene) for the most vulnerable internally displaced and Roma persons in 8 informal settlements or collective centres<sup>4</sup>
- Initiative A11 prepares a platform for exchange information on the needs of and help to Roma and other vulnerable groups in order to coordinate aid and avoid overlap of activities, expected to be functional by the end of April, and it will allow for all stakeholders to upload information.

<sup>3</sup> Partner municipalities of GIZ are: Aleksinac, Apatin, Bač, Beograd, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Novi Beograd, Novi Pazar, Požarevac, Piroć, Raška, Sombor, Subotica, Valjevo, Vranje, Vršac and Zvezdara.

<sup>4</sup> Čukarica-Čukarička suma-Obrenovački drum bb, Stara škola-Radnička 49, Kamp Čukarica-Vidikovački venac bb; Rakovica-Kamp Resnik-Podavalska 77; Voždovac-Bivši Lahor-Voždovački kružni put 9; Grocka-Kamp Grocka-Vojvode Stepe 2 i Zvezdara-Mirijevo-Ljubiše Miodragovića bb

