

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

In **Hungary**, there were no lockdowns of localities ordered in relation to the Coronavirus pandemic.

- restriction of movement

In **Hungary**, on 27 March 2020, the Government issued a decree on restricting movement, including provisions on physical distancing. This was first in effect between 28 March and 10 April;¹ however, it was extended until 3 May 2020 in the country and until 17 May 2020 in Budapest.² The Governmental Decree ordered everybody to keep social connections to a minimum and to keep at least 1.5 metres of distance from others.³ People could only leave their homes if it was justified by a cause listed in the Decree (e.g. going to work, in need of medical care, visiting local markets, practicing religion).⁴ As a result, many Roma lost their chance to earn an income as many of them have no registered jobs.⁵ According to the Central Statistical Office (*Központi Statisztikai Hivatal*), only 45% of Roma people were employed in 2017. Among those employed, every fifth person was engaged in public employment which provided for less job security and smaller

¹ Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 71/2020 on restricting movement(71/2020. (III. 27.) Korm. rendelet a kijárási korlátozásról), 27 March 2020, available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0071K_20200410_FIN.pdf.

² Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 95/2020 on extending the restriction on movement (95/2020. (IV. 9.) Korm. rendelet a kijárási korlátozás meghosszabbításáról), 9 April 2020, available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0095K_20200424_FIN.pdf.

³ Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 71/2020 on restricting movement(71/2020. (III. 27.) Korm. rendelet a kijárási korlátozásról), 27 March 2020, Article 1, available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0071K_20200410_FIN.pdf.

⁴ Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 71/2020 on restricting movement(71/2020. (III. 27.) Korm. rendelet a kijárási korlátozásról), 27 March 2020, Articles 4-5, available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0071K_20200410_FIN.pdf.

⁵ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 5., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

salaries. Moreover, in 2017, every second Roma employee had short-term employment contracts.⁶

In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations set up an assessment as an early warning to authorities in six EU Member States, among them, Hungary.⁷ The assessment is based on information collected through the Open Society Roma Initiatives Office's network of advocates, based on their experiences. The study concludes that the lack of a system for ethnic data collection and the fast-changing government responses make it impossible to provide a quantitative analysis. According to the Open Society Foundations, one of the Roma's sources of income is the collection of recyclables on the streets which was affected by the measures on restriction of movement.⁸ Another profession in which Roma are often engaged is the music business which was shut down due to the restriction on movement that put a ban on all events.⁹

In **Hungary**, Amnesty International coordinated the setting up of a report on the negative impact of COVID-19 on women, LGBTQI persons, Roma and disabled persons. The report is specifically addressed to employers to direct their attention to the special situation of these vulnerable groups and to articulate suggestions on how employers may help these groups in the pandemic situation. Amnesty International (chapter on gender equality) teamed up with Salva Vita Foundation (*Salva Vita Alapítvány*) (chapter on disabled), Background Association (*Háttér Társaság*) (chapter on LGBTQI), and Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) which wrote the chapter on Roma.¹⁰ Bagázs Public Benefit Association reported that during

⁶ Central Statistical Office (*Központi Statisztikai Hivatal*) (2018), 'Labour market overview 2014-2018' (*Munkaerőpiaci helyzetkép, 2014-2018*), p. 8., available at: <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/munkerohelyz/munkerohelyz17.pdf>.

⁷ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁸ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 7., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁹ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 7., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

¹⁰ Nyitottak Vagyunk – Amnesty International – Bagázs – Háttér Társaság – Salva Vita (2020), 'What can the employer do? – Report on the impact of COVID-19 on women, LGBTQI

the restrictions, Roma had no chance to work at distance or from home, since they are typically engaged in blue-collar occupations (e.g. working at construction sites or in agriculture), mostly in the grey sector of economy.¹¹

In **Hungary**, except for Budapest and Pest County, the decree on restricting movement was lifted from 4 May 2020.¹² As of 4 May 2020, all stores can open without restrictions and all services can be provided without restrictions, but with the need to apply physical distancing and sanitary measures.¹³ Starting from 18 May 2020, Governmental Decree no. 211/2020 on protective measures in the capital lifted most measures on restriction on movement in Budapest as well.¹⁴

- closure of businesses

In **Hungary**, while the restrictions only obliged catering facilities (e.g. restaurants, bistros, coffee shops) to stay closed for visitors, many businesses in the services sector (e.g. beauty salons, hairdressers, massage salons, motels, cleaning services) decided to shut down their operations due to the decreasing number of people who visited them during the restrictions.¹⁵ As a consequence, according to Bagázs Public Benefit

people, Roma and people with disabilities' (*Mit tehet a munkaadó? – Beszámoló a COVID-19 hatásáról a nők, LMBTQI emberek, romák és fogyatékossgal élők helyzetére*), 22 May 2020, available at: https://share.hsforms.com/1Owe2IWhpS_qNHZKHN5MZfA1jwe4.

¹¹ Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) (2020), 'On the situation of Roma' (*A romák helyzetéről*), In: Nyitottak Vagyunk – Amnesty International – Bagázs – Háttér Társaság – Salva Vita (2020), 'What can the employer do? – Report on the impact of COVID-19 on women, LMBTQI people, Roma and people with disabilities' (*Mit tehet a munkaadó? – Beszámoló a COVID-19 hatásáról a nők, LMBTQI emberek, romák és fogyatékossgal élők helyzetére*), 22 May 2020, p. 12., available at: https://share.hsforms.com/1Owe2IWhpS_qNHZKHN5MZfA1jwe4.

¹² Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 168/2020 on protective measures (*168/2020. Korm. rendelet a védelmi intézkedésekről*), 30 April 2020, Article 1(2), available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0168K_20200518_FIN.pdf.

¹³ Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 168/2020 on protective measures (*168/2020. Korm. rendelet a védelmi intézkedésekről*), 30 April 2020, Articles 4(1) and 4(6), available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0168K_20200518_FIN.pdf.

¹⁴ Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 211/2020 on protective measures in the capital (*211/2020. Korm. rendelet a fővárosi védelmi intézkedésekről*), 18 May 2020, available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0211K_20200519_FIN.pdf.

¹⁵ Portfolio (2020), 'Coronavirus: Several big clothing chains ask for help from Viktor Orbán' (*Koronavírus: Orbán Viktortól kér mentőövet több nagy magyar boltlánc*), 10 April 2020, available at: <https://www.portfolio.hu/ingatlan/20200327/koronavirus-orban-viktortol-ker-mentoovet-tobb-nagy-magyar-boltlanc-422396>.

Association (a civil society organisation established in 2011 aiming to contribute to an inclusive and accepting society in which Roma have a chance to achieve their goals), lay-offs at workplaces started to take place which had a more serious impact on Roma who are typically undereducated and are employed only part-time.¹⁶ According to data provided by the Central Statistical Office, the unemployment ratio in the active population in Hungary increased by 26.5% by the end of April 2020 (altogether cc. 331,000 registered unemployed) compared to the figures in April 2019.¹⁷ In March, around 56,000 people lost their jobs.¹⁸ Statistics are not available on the ratio of unemployed in the active Roma population for the first half of 2020.

- closure of schools

In **Hungary**, public schools (primary and high schools) were ordered to ban pupils and students from their premises as of 16 March.¹⁹ The Government ordered public schools to provide for distance learning to pupils and students.²⁰ The closure of schools resulted in Roma people with no computers, televisions, printers, and other technology not being able to

¹⁶ Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) (2020), 'On the situation of Roma' (*A romák helyzetéről*), In: Nyitottak Vagyunk – Amnesty International – Bagázs – Háttér Társaság – Salva Vita (2020), 'What can the employer do? – Report on the impact of COVID-19 on women, LMBTQI people, Roma and people with disabilities' (*Mit tehet a munkaadó? – Beszámoló a COVID-19 hatásáról a nők, LMBTQI emberek, romák és fogyatékossgal élők helyzetére*), 22 May 2020, p. 13., available at: https://share.hsforms.com/1Owe2lWWhpS_qNHZKHN5MZfA1jwe4.

¹⁷ Central Statistical Office (*Központi Statisztikai Hivatal*) (2020), 'Flash report on unemployment, February-April 2020' (*Gyorstájékoztató, Munkanélküliség 2020. február-április*), 27 May 2020, available at: <https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/gyor/mun/mun2004.html>.

¹⁸ Central Statistical Office (*Központi Statisztikai Hivatal*) (2020), 'Flash report on employment, January-March 2020' (*Gyorstájékoztató, Foglalkoztatottság, 2020. január-március*), 28 April 2020, available at: <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/gyor/fog/fog2003.html?fbclid=IwAR3OuyNimKp0TwsKk3KnrlTdcR3GNz-F-hL5v68SqVJMRO4WcnET8nHJwY>.

¹⁹ Hungary, Governmental Decision no. 1102/2020 on introducing a new work order in the public education institutions due to the Coronavirus (*1102/2020. (III. 14.) Korm. határozat a koronavírus miatt a köznevelési és szakképzési intézményekben új munkarend bevezetéséről*), 14 March 2020, Article 1(a), available at: http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=218513.380693.

²⁰ Hungary, Governmental Decision no. 1102/2020 on introducing a new work order in the public education institutions due to the Coronavirus (*1102/2020. (III. 14.) Korm. határozat a koronavírus miatt a köznevelési és szakképzési intézményekben új munkarend bevezetéséről*), 14 March 2020, Article 1(b), available at: http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=218513.380693.

benefit from distance learning programmes.²¹ National statistics are not available on the number of Roma children who live in households with no access to the Internet or where there is no computer at home. Bagázs Public Benefit Association conducted research in two Roma communities in Hungary (Bag and Dány) covering 200 Roma people in 2017 that showed every fourth Roma household had typically only one computer and only one fifth of the households had access to the internet.²²

1.2 Implications of measures

Focus on:

- Employment

In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations reported many Roma face increasing unemployment and bankruptcy that pushes them deeper into poverty.²³ According to data provided by the Central Statistical Office (*Központi Statisztikai Hivatal*), the unemployment ratio in the active population in Hungary had increased by 26.5% by the end of April 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.²⁴ Statistics and estimates, however, are not available on how many Roma lost their jobs in March and April when restrictive measures in containment of the Coronavirus were the most serious. The Open Society Foundations found that many Roma are not covered by social welfare and most of them are informal

²¹ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 6., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

²² Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) (2017), 'Basic research, Bag' (*Alap kutatás, Bag*), p. 15., available at: <https://bagazs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Bag-beszámoló-végleges.pdf>; Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) (2017), 'Basic research, Dány' (*Alap kutatás, Dány*), p. 12., available at: <https://bagazs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/DÁNY-beszámoló-végleges.pdf>.

²³ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 5., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

²⁴ Central Statistical Office (*Központi Statisztikai Hivatal*) (2020), 'Flash report on unemployment, February-April 2020' (*Gyorstájékoztató, Munkanélküliség 2020. február-április*), 27 May 2020, available at: <https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/gyor/mun/mun2004.html>.

workers who are not eligible for the special benefits and aids that the Hungarian Government introduced in relation to the pandemic.²⁵ The National Roma Self-government (*Országos Roma Önkormányzat*) addressed a letter to the Minister in charge of the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister (*Miniszterelnökség*) on 23 March 2020 regarding recommendations on what specific initiatives the Government should implement to help Roma communities overcome the difficult situation that the restrictive measures forced them into. In this letter, the Self-government claims that an increasing number of Roma is expected to lose their jobs they had earlier in the black and grey economy and become unemployed. These people could not take advantage of the special aids and benefits the Government introduced in relation to the Coronavirus outbreak. The Roma Self-government believes that, despite the protective measures that the Government introduced to save jobs, Roma will be affected by the lay-offs first, given that they typically stand in the lowest position in the work hierarchy.²⁶ According to the Open Society Foundations, a significant share of income for Roma comes from the collection of recyclables and from musical performances, both of which have been made impossible due to the restriction on movement that put a ban on all events and only allowed people to leave their homes for clear purposes.²⁷ In April 2020, the European Roma Institute of Arts and Culture (ERIAN) launched a survey among Roma artists on the impact of Covid-19. The survey states that it is targeting artists, scholars, cultural entrepreneurs, journalists and all others working in the broadly understood cultural domain. Some of the questions of the survey are:

- To what extent have the government measures in your country impacted your activities in the arts and culture field?
- How long can your individual or institutional cultural activity /cultural entrepreneurship/organisation survive with your current reserves?

²⁵ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 5., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

²⁶ National Roma Self-government (*Országos Roma Önkormányzat*) (2020), 'Letter to the Minister Gergely Gulyás' (*Levél Gulyás Gergely Miniszter Úrnak*), 23 March 2020, available at: <https://www.oronk.hu/2020/03/23/tajekoztatas-4/>.

²⁷ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 7., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

- Has the government / national cultural fund, the city or municipality cultural department (or any other entity) in your country contacted you for provision of any support as a result of this crisis?

The survey is directed explicitly to individuals and organisations working in the field of Roma arts and culture.²⁸ The survey is still open, therefore, findings and conclusions of ERIAC have not been published yet.

In Hungary, the media reported, Roma typically work precarious day jobs in agriculture and construction or in the hospitality sector such as street musicians, hotel maids or in restaurant kitchens. The media article states that “figures for income and unemployment among Roma are not available; however, anecdotal evidence suggests they are much more prone to joblessness and have only a small fraction of the country’s average income to share among large extended families”.²⁹

In **Hungary**, Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Közhasznú Egyesület*) reported that during the Coronavirus crisis Roma had no chance to work. Lay-offs at workplaces have a more serious impact on Roma who are typically undereducated and are employed only part-time. For these people, losing their work results in hopelessness and privation for the whole family.³⁰

In **Hungary**, the media reported Roma have begun to report increased tensions, including discrimination, as lay-offs begin to hit the economy. In one case a Roma employee of a fast food restaurant in Szeged, a town in the southeast of Hungary, was laid off while all other co-workers were retained, including more junior and less experienced colleagues.³¹ In an

²⁸ European Roma Institute of Arts and Culture (ERAC) (2020), ‘Questionnaire on COVID-19 impact on Roma arts and culture’, available at: <https://www.surveymonkey.de/r/KLJWXJ2>.

²⁹ Reuters (2020), ‘Living on margins, Hungary’s Roma feel especially exposed to coronavirus’, 7 April 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary-roma/living-on-margins-hungarys-roma-feel-especially-exposed-to-coronavirus-idUSKBN21P238>.

³⁰ Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) (2020), ‘On the situation of Roma’ (*A romák helyzetéről*), In: Nyitottak Vagyunk – Amnesty International – Bagázs – Háttér Társaság – Salva Vita (2020), ‘What can the employer do? – Report on the impact of COVID-19 on women, LMBTQI people, Roma and people with disabilities’ (*Mit tehet a munkaadó? – Beszámoló a COVID-19 hatásáról a nők, LMBTQI emberek, romák és fogyatékosokkal élőkhelyzetére*), 22 May 2020, p. 13., available at: https://share.hsforms.com/1Owe2IWhpS_qNHZKHN5MZfA1jwe4.

³¹ Reuters (2020), ‘Living on margins, Hungary’s Roma feel especially exposed to coronavirus’, 7 April 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary-roma/living-on-margins-hungarys-roma-feel-especially-exposed-to-coronavirus-idUSKBN21P238>.

interview published by the media on 6 April 2020, the interviewee, a former Roma expert to the Government in the period of 2002-2004, claimed that the livelihood of several tens of thousands of Roma families are at stake as many previously employed Roma were dismissed from businesses they worked for in Budapest and in the western part of the country. These people are forced to go back to their homes in segregated village communities and have no idea when they would be able to work again. The expert stated that there are no exact data available on the number of villages affected; however, the number of communities where Roma complain about the lack of help coming from the local government and the lack of information on available benefits or aids are increasing. The expert claims there are several villages where Roma stepped up violently against the leaders of the local government. These villages are typically found in counties that have a significant Roma population, mainly in the North-eastern part of Hungary.³² The Order of Malta's Hungarian Charity Service (*Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat*) reported on 12 May 2020 (when the Governmental restriction on movement has already been lifted) that, since the weather is mild and people are able to get out more, seasonal agricultural work can continue, thus keeping down the unemployment rate.³³

- Health

In **Hungary**, the media reported that many Roma in the country have pre-existing lung infections or diabetes that elevate the risk in case of infection with COVID-19.³⁴ An academic article on the health conditions of Roma published in late 2019 also reached the conclusion that chronic

[coronavirus-hungary-roma/living-on-margins-hungarys-roma-feel-especially-exposed-to-coronavirus-idUSKBN21P238](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary-roma/living-on-margins-hungarys-roma-feel-especially-exposed-to-coronavirus-idUSKBN21P238).

³² Mandiner (2020), 'Social tensions may grow – István Forgács to Mandiner' (*Nőhet majd a társadalmi feszültség – Forgács István a Mandinernek*), 6 April 2020, available at: https://mandiner.hu/cikk/20200531_forgacs_istvan_leokezasra_var.

³³ Order of Malta (2020), 'Covid-19 Commitment doubled for Roma children in Hungary', 12 May 2020, available at: <https://www.orderofmalta.int/2020/05/12/covid-19-commitment-doubled-roma-children-hungary/>.

³⁴ Reuters (2020), 'Living on margins, Hungary's Roma feel especially exposed to coronavirus', 7 April 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary-roma/living-on-margins-hungarys-roma-feel-especially-exposed-to-coronavirus-idUSKBN21P238>.

diseases are common in the Roma communities.³⁵ While, according to the figures provided by the Government, the North-eastern part of Hungary, where hundreds of thousands of Roma are concentrated, has been mostly spared from the pandemic, “any spread of the epidemic into Roma communities could wreak havoc”.³⁶ The official information website that the Hungarian Government set up to provide authentic information and statistics on the spread of the virus and on measures that the Government implements shows that the North-eastern counties had some of the lowest number of infected people in the country. While in Heves county only 14 infected were identified, in Nógrád 51 and in Borsod-Abaúj Zemplén 62 infected were reported until 22 June 2020. There are, however, no statistics on the number of Roma infected by the virus.³⁷

In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations reported a significant proportion of the Roma population is excluded from testing given that testing for COVID-19 in Hungary is conditioned on health insurance coverage.³⁸ According to Act LXXXIII of 1997 on mandatory health care services, health care services are financed from the central budget (social insurance) only if the person is considered insured in accordance with the social insurance law.³⁹ In order to be considered insured, the person has to be employed, or a student, or registered as a job-seeker receiving job-

³⁵ Ádány, R. – Sándor, J. (2019), ‘Health behaviour and health status of the Roma population living in segregated colonies in the north-east Hungary’, In: Vokó, Z. –Poór, Gy. (2019), ‘Health and social characteristics of the Hungarian Roma population, and opportunities for closing the gap’, Akadémia Press, Budapest, available at: https://mersz.hu/dokumentum/matud_674/.

³⁶ Reuters (2020), ‘Living on margins, Hungary’s Roma feel especially exposed to coronavirus’, 7 April 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary-roma/living-on-margins-hungarys-roma-feel-especially-exposed-to-coronavirus-idUSKBN21P238>.

³⁷ Koronavirus.gov.hu (2020), ‘Verified people infected by COVID-19 per county’ (*Igazolt COVID-19 fertőzöttek száma megyénként*), available at: <https://koronavirus.gov.hu/terkepek/fertozottek> (accessed on 22 June 2020).

³⁸ Open Society Foundations (2020), ‘Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States’, 7 May 2020, p. 4., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

³⁹ Hungary, Act LXXXIII of 1997 on mandatory health insurance services (*1997. évi LXXXIII. törvény a kötelező egészségbiztosítás ellátásairól*), 1 January 1998, Article 5/B(a), available at: http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=30386.384703.

seeking aid, or a private entrepreneur or an agricultural primary producer.⁴⁰

In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations claim the measures implemented to decrease the frequency of public transportation in many towns of Hungary during the restrictions on movement resulted in only Roma with chronic illnesses or in special circumstances (e.g. pregnancy) could get access to essential medical care since a significant proportion of Roma rely on public transport for visits to doctors and pharmacies. Those suffering from chronic illnesses or in special circumstances could turn to other means of transportation, typically by calling an ambulance.⁴¹

- Education

In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations reported that the closure of schools resulted in Roma people with no computers, televisions, printers, and other technology not being able to benefit from distance learning programmes. The Foundations added that half of those who do have access to such technology are unlikely to be able to use them for meaningful learning.⁴² The National Roma Self-government (*Országos Roma Önkormányzat*), in its letter addressed to the Minister in charge of the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister (*Miniszterelnökség*) on 23 March 2020, estimated that the number of Roma children who have no access to the Internet in Hungary is several tens of thousands.⁴³ The Order of Malta's Hungarian Charity Service (*Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat*) claims that among the roughly 300,000 people, mostly Roma, who live in

⁴⁰ Hungary, Act LXXX of 1997 on Mandatory Social Insurance, Private Pension and the Contributory System (1997. évi LXXX. törvény a társadalombiztosítás ellátásaira és a magánnyugdíjra jogosultakról, valamint e szolgáltatások fedezetéről), 1 January 1998, Article 5, available at: http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=30360.376556.

⁴¹ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 4., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁴² Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 6., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁴³ National Roma Self-government (*Országos Roma Önkormányzat*) (2020), 'Letter to the Minister Gergely Gulyás' (*Levél Gulyás Gergely Miniszter Úrnak*), 23 March 2020, available at: <https://www.oronk.hu/2020/03/23/tajekoztatas-4/>.

the most disadvantaged areas in Hungary, almost two thirds have no electricity in the house.⁴⁴ Furthermore, as the Open Society Foundations mentions in their report, the success of distance learning scenarios in elementary schools rely on parental supervision. Many Roma parents do not have access to e-mail which is a common method for teachers to send tasks to children.⁴⁵ Also, according to an academic study, in many cases, Roma parents are uneducated, therefore, very little help can be expected from them to support their children in studying.⁴⁶ Bagázs Public Benefit Association adds that Roma children are likely to experience bigger drop-out in the future given that they cannot effectively benefit from distance learning scenarios.⁴⁷

- Housing

In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations reported that, with no cash savings, many Roma face increasing unemployment which jeopardises the payment of rent and public utilities.⁴⁸ The Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 2011-2020 states that around 75% of the Hungarian

⁴⁴ Order of Malta (2020), 'Covid-19 Commitment doubled for Roma children in Hungary', 12 May 2020, available at: <https://www.orderofmalta.int/2020/05/12/covid-19-commitment-doubled-roma-children-hungary/>.

⁴⁵ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 6., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Uszkiewicz, Erik (2020), 'Roma during the pandemic' (*Romák a járvány idején*), Lendület MTA-ELTE Spectra, available at: https://spectra.elte.hu/media/4a/8d/36fb6c89842602ac057e1f0b482901e5e5111ba24aea15abc570edf4e64d/Uszkiewicz%20Erik_Romák%20a%20járvány%20idején.pdf.

⁴⁷ Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) (2020), 'On the situation of Roma' (*A romák helyzetéről*), In: Nyitottak Vagyunk – Amnesty International – Bagázs – Háttér Társaság – Salva Vita (2020), 'What can the employer do? – Report on the impact of COVID-19 on women, LGBTQI people, Roma and people with disabilities' (*Mit tehet a munkaadó? – Beszámoló a COVID-19 hatásáról a nők, LGBTQI emberek, romák és fogyatékossgal élők helyzetére*), 22 May 2020, p. 14., available at: https://share.hsforms.com/1Owe2IWhpS_qNHZKHN5MZfA1jwe4.

⁴⁸ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 5., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

population had insufficient or no cash savings in 2009.⁴⁹ While the Strategy did not provide for exact figures on cash savings of Roma, it stated 70% of Hungarian Roma lived in poverty in 2009.⁵⁰ Bagázs Public Benefit Association reported that Roma typically experience bad housing conditions. Around 30% of Roma people in Hungary live in dilapidated houses. Hygienic conditions are also not sufficient in these houses; therefore, Roma are more exposed to the spread of the virus. Furthermore, keeping the recommended physical distance from others is difficult to achieve as many Roma, sometimes different families, live in overcrowded houses.⁵¹

- Food security

In **Hungary**, the media reported that the panic shopping triggered by the state of danger resulted in prices being increased for some of the most basic groceries (e.g. flour, yeast, tinned food).⁵² The increasing prices and the temporary lack of supply (flour, yeast, tinned food disappeared from the shelves of many stores in March and April due to the high demand)⁵³

⁴⁹ Ministry of Human Capacities (*Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma*) (2014), 'Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 2011-2020' (*Magyar Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkózási Stratégia II.*), September 2014, p. 20. available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_hungary_strategy2_en.pdf.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Human Capacities (*Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma*) (2014), 'Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 2011-2020' (*Magyar Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkózási Stratégia II.*), September 2014, p. 25. available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_hungary_strategy2_en.pdf.

⁵¹ Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) (2020), 'On the situation of Roma' (*A romák helyzetéről*), In: Nyitottak Vagyunk – Amnesty International – Bagázs – Háttér Társaság – Salva Vita (2020), 'What can the employer do? – Report on the impact of COVID-19 on women, LGBTQI people, Roma and people with disabilities' (*Mit tehet a munkaadó? – Beszámoló a COVID-19 hatásáról a nők, LGBTQI emberek, romák és fogyatékkal élőkhelyzetére*), 22 May 2020, p. 12., available at: https://share.hsforms.com/1Owe2IWhpS_qNHZKHN5MZfA1jwe4.

⁵² Index (2020), 'Masks and disinfectants are running out, and even canned food is popular due to the coronavirus' (*Fogynak a maszkok és a fertőtlenítők, de már a konzerveket is viszik itthon a koronavírus miatt*), 26 February 2020, available at: https://index.hu/gazdasag/2020/02/26/koronavirus_kezfertotlenito_tisztitoszer_elelmiszer_konzerv_aruhazak/.

⁵³ Index (2020), 'Masks and disinfectants are running out, and even canned food is popular due to the coronavirus' (*Fogynak a maszkok és a fertőtlenítők, de már a konzerveket is viszik itthon a koronavírus miatt*), 26 February 2020, available at:

make it more difficult for Roma to get access to safe food.⁵⁴ Also, the media reported that Roma could not or would not obey restriction on movement as families were starving at home as a result.⁵⁵ The National Roma Self-government (*Országos Roma Önkormányzat*), in its letter addressed to the Minister in charge of the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister (*Miniszterelnökség*) on 23 March 2020, recommended that the Government provide for seeds and seedlings to Roma people living in the poorest villages of the country. They claim this measure would be of high importance given that many people who lost their chance to find seasonal work could starve due to the lack of money.⁵⁶

In **Hungary**, the media reported they found four towns (Tápiószele, Dobos, Kömlő, Emőd) in April where, due to the protective measures implemented to fight the pandemic, the government suspended the EU programme on distributing monthly food packages to poor families with children. In one town, Tápiószele, the public authority called off the programme on 18 March 2020 and took the food packages back to the central storage facility. In the early days of April, the authority reached out to the local government and promised to supply them with the food packages if the local government managed the distribution. Finally, the local government took over the distribution and delivered around 40 packages to poor families, among them many were Roma.⁵⁷ The article states people cannot even barter with each other to get the food (e.g. salt, flour) anymore as most of them have nothing left to offer in

https://index.hu/gazdasag/2020/02/26/koronavirus_kezfertotlenito_tisztitoszer_elelmiszer_konzerv_aruhazak/.

⁵⁴ Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

⁵⁵ Reuters (2020), 'Living on margins, Hungary's Roma feel especially exposed to coronavirus', 7 April 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary-roma/living-on-margins-hungarys-roma-feel-especially-exposed-to-coronavirus-idUSKBN21P238>.

⁵⁶ National Roma Self-government (*Országos Roma Önkormányzat*) (2020), 'Letter to the Minister Gergely Gulyás' (*Levél Gulyás Gergely Miniszter Úrnak*), 23 March 2020, available at: <https://www.oronk.hu/2020/03/23/tajekoztatas-4/>.

⁵⁷ Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

exchange.⁵⁸ The media article reported that in Emőd the local store had run out of basic food and disinfectants by April.⁵⁹

- Water and sanitation

In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations reported that the preventive measures (hand washing, keeping a protective distance) are much more challenging for Roma as many of them live in conditions of extreme poverty: people do not have access to tap water and many of them live in dense neighbourhoods and overcrowded housing.⁶⁰ As an example, the leader of the local Roma minority government in the town of Emőd (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, North-east part of the country) stated that in many Roma households people use the same glass to drink.⁶¹ In addition, the Open Society Foundations claimed that the Hungarian Government did not supply Roma neighbourhoods with disinfectant and failed to implement specific disinfection measures there.⁶² The Foundation added there have been no measures in Hungary to address the lack of access to water in many Roma communities during the pandemic.⁶³

⁵⁸ Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

⁵⁹ Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

⁶⁰ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 4., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁶¹ Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

⁶² Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 4., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁶³ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 5., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

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

In **Hungary**, statistics and figures on the magnitude of pandemic-induced poverty are not available in the public domain. Also, no research targeted the different impact of measures on Roma women and children. The Open Society Foundation states that, among the occupations that Roma people are typically involved in, the collection of recyclables and musical performances were affected the hardest.⁶⁴ As during the restriction on movement all events were prohibited and catering facilities were closed, Roma musicians had no opportunity to perform and earn an income. The media adds that Roma in Hungary “typically work precarious day jobs in agriculture and construction or in the hospitality sector such as street musicians, hotel maids or in restaurant kitchens”.⁶⁵

In **Hungary**, there were no lockdowns in Roma communities. The restriction on movement and the protective measures have been applicable to everybody under the very same conditions. Bagázs Public Benefit Association estimates the number of Hungarian villages and towns with a significant Roma community to be around 1,600 where between 280,000 and 315,000 Roma people live in poverty. They might have been the most affected by the restrictions.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Open Society Foundations (2020), ‘Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States’, 7 May 2020, p. 7., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Reuters (2020), ‘Living on margins, Hungary’s Roma feel especially exposed to coronavirus’, 7 April 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary-roma/living-on-margins-hungarys-roma-feel-especially-exposed-to-coronavirus-idUSKBN21P238>.

⁶⁶ Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) (2020), ‘On the situation of Roma’ (*A romák helyzetéről*), In: Nyitottak Vagyunk – Amnesty International – Bagázs – Háttér Társaság – Salva Vita (2020), ‘What can the employer do? – Report on the impact of COVID-19 on women, LMBTQI people, Roma and people with disabilities’ (*Mit tehet a munkaadó? – Beszámoló a COVID-19 hatásáról a nők, LMBTQI emberek, romák és fogyatékkal élőknél*).

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

In **Hungary**, there have been no special measures taken to tackle the spread of the virus specifically among Roma communities at the national level.

In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations reported that medical testing is only available to those with health insurance coverage, therefore, most Roma are excluded.⁶⁷ According to Act LXXXIII of 1997 on mandatory health care services, health care services are financed from the central budget (social insurance) only if the person is considered insured in accordance with the social insurance law.⁶⁸ In order to be considered insured, the person has to be employed, or a student, or registered as a job-seeker receiving job-seeking aid, or a private entrepreneur or an agricultural primary producer.⁶⁹

In **Hungary**, the media reported that the Holy Cross Association (*Áldott Kereszt Egyesület*), a Roma religious civil society organisation, urged Roma

helyzetére), 22 May 2020, p. 12., available at: https://share.hsforms.com/1Owe2lWhpS_qNHZKHN5MZfA1jwe4.

⁶⁷ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 4., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Hungary, Act LXXXIII of 1997 on mandatory health insurance services (*1997. évi LXXXIII. törvény a kötelező egészségbiztosítás ellátásairól*), 1 January 1998, Article 5/B(a), available at: http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=30386.384703.

⁶⁹ Hungary, Act LXXX of 1997 on Mandatory Social Insurance, Private Pension and the Contributory System (*1997. évi LXXX. törvény a társadalombiztosítás ellátásaira és a magánnyugdíjra jogosultakról, valamint e szolgáltatások fedezetéről*), 1 January 1998, Article 5, available at: http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=30360.376556.

to stay at home and follow mass on the television and radio instead of visiting churches or religious sites.⁷⁰

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.

In **Hungary**, the Government postponed mortgage and credit payments;⁷¹ however these measures do not cover non-financial and short-term lenders, which are otherwise key sources of credit for Roma.⁷² An academic research project conducted between 2007-2010 concluded that Roma in segregated communities often rely on usury loans to finance their living expenses.⁷³ The Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy II. 2011-2020 published in 2014 also stresses that those living in deep poverty often rely on usury loans.⁷⁴ RefoRom, a Budapest-based Roma college claimed that the measures the Government introduced to help ease the situation of debtors in the pandemic may help some Roma; however, it is still typical that Roma

⁷⁰ Demokrata (2020), 'The members of Roma communities are also encouraged to stay at home' (*Otthonmaradásra biztatják a roma társadalom tagjait is*), 19 March 2020, available at: <https://demokrata.hu/magyarorszag/otthonmaradasra-biztatjak-a-roma-tarsadalom-tagjait-is-218452/>.

⁷¹ Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 47/2020 on immediate measures necessary for alleviating the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on national economy (47/2020. (III. 18) Korm. rendelet a koronavírus világjárvány nemzetgazdaságot érintő hatásának enyhítése érdekében szükséges azonnali intézkedésekről), 19 March 2020, available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0047K_20200507_FIN.pdf.

⁷² Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 6., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁷³ Messing, V. – Molnár, E. (2010), 'Living strategies of poor families in regional and ethnic sections' (*Szegény családok megélhetési stratégiai regionális és etnikai metszetekben*), available at: http://real.mtak.hu/11897/1/67898_ZJ1.pdf, p. 65.

⁷⁴ Ministry of Human Capacities (*Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma*) (2014), 'Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 2011-2020' (*Magyar Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkóztatási Stratégia II.*), September 2014, p. 37. available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_hungary_strategy2_en.pdf.

households obtain money from usurers rather than from financial institutions.⁷⁵

In **Hungary**, the Government suspended evictions to solve the housing problem;⁷⁶ however, according to the Open Society Foundations, it is only a temporary solution as the evictions will resume on the 15th day after the end of the state of danger.⁷⁷ The state of danger was terminated on 17 June 2020,⁷⁸ and the Government declared epidemiological preparedness.⁷⁹ The transitional rules for the period after the termination of the state of danger resume evictions as of 1 July 2020.⁸⁰

In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations reported that recipients of social aid and energy benefits were given food packages in April provided by the Government.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Reforum (2020), 'What impact the Coronavirus pandemic has on disadvantaged Roma communities?' (*Milyen hatása van a koronavírus-járványnak a hátrányos helyzetű roma közösségekre Magyarországon?*), 30 April 2020, available at: <http://www.reforum.hu/2020/04/milyen-hatasa-van-a-koronavirus-jarvany-nak-a-hatran-yos-helyzetu-roma-kozossegekre-magyarorszag-on/>.

⁷⁶ Koronavirus.gov.hu (2020), 'The Government suspended money collections and evictions' (*A kormány felfüggesztette a végrehajtásokat és a kilakoltatásokat*), 24 March 2020, available at: <https://koronavirus.gov.hu/cikkek/kormany-felfuggesztette-vegrehajtásokat-es-kilakoltatásokat>.

⁷⁷ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 6., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.

⁷⁸ Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 282/2020 on terminating the state of danger declared on 11 March 2020 (*282/2020. (VI. 17.) a 2020. március 11-én kihirdetett veszélyhelyzet megszüntetéséről*), 18 March 2020, available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0282K_20200618_FIN.pdf.

⁷⁹ Hungary, Governmental Decree no. 283/2020 on introducing a state of epidemiological preparedness (*283/2020. (VI. 17.) Korm. rendelet a járványügyi készüeltség bevezetéséről*), 18 June 2020, available at: https://njt.hu/translated/doc/J2020R0283K_20200618_FIN.pdf.

⁸⁰ Hungary, Act LVIII of 2020 on the transitional rules related to the termination of the state of danger and on the epidemiological preparedness (*2020. évi LVIII. törvény a veszélyhelyzet megszünésével összefüggő átmeneti szabályokról és a járványügyi készüeltségről*), 18 June 2020, Section 153(2), available at: http://njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=220120.384679.

⁸¹ Open Society Foundations (2020), 'Roma in the COVID-19 crisis – An Early Warning from Six EU Member States', 7 May 2020, p. 5., available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/2f2efd8a-8ba5-4ac4-8aee-ae0dcd2933ca/roma-in-the-covid-19-crisis-20200428.pdf>.



In **Hungary**, the Open Society Foundations reported that some local governments in towns provided free masks and disinfectants for the inhabitants; however, these were typically measures that larger towns implemented and where Roma population is not significant.⁸² The media, however, reported on cases where masks or other products have been distributed in small towns and villages as well. According to an article from 27 April 2020, in the small village of Emőd (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén country in the North-east of Hungary) where a significant share of the population is Roma, the city mayor distributed self-made masks to Roma.⁸³ Also, the National Roma Civil Council (*Országos Roma Civil Tanács*), a newly established civil society organisation that originally planned to provide for cultural programmes to Roma communities, started to help Roma communities in need with food, home-made masks and firewood. In March and April, the volunteers of the Council visited around 3,000 families in more than 300 small towns of Hungary.⁸⁴

In **Hungary**, the media reported that in several towns with a significant Roma population, the local governments implemented measures either at the cost of the local government or at the cost of the city mayor to provide for monthly food packages to the families with the lowest income. In the town of Dobos, the local government provides hot meals once a day to those in need.⁸⁵ In the town of Kömlő, the local government recruited people who were discharged from their jobs to sew masks, and the city mayor paid for 2,000 kilograms of chicken to be distributed among the inhabitants. In Kömlő, the members of the city council offered their one-month salaries to finance the distribution of food packages.⁸⁶

In **Hungary**, the National Roma Self-government (*Országos Roma Önkormányzat*), in its letter addressed to the Minister in charge of the

⁸² Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

⁸³ Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

⁸⁴ Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

⁸⁵ Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

⁸⁶ Direkt36 (2020), 'Now nobody can give a piece of bread' (*Most senki nem tud adni egy darab kenyeret sem*), 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.direkt36.hu/most-senki-nem-tud-adni-egy-darab-kenyeret-sem/>.

Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister (*Miniszterelnökség*) on 23 March 2020, proposed several measures that the Government should consider to help Roma communities:

- The Government should consider giving, along with the April family support, an extraordinary one-time payment of 5,000 HUF (cc. €14) per child to families in the poorest regions.
- The Government should widen the scope of providing free hot meals to the poorest Roma communities.
- The Ministry of Human Capacities (*Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma*) should make an agreement with the National Roma Self-government on the basis of which medical assistance can be provided at home more effectively to Roma living in socioeconomically disadvantaged towns and villages (involving travelling doctors), access to pharmaceuticals can be provided to all in need, and pregnant women can be monitored more frequently.⁸⁷

There has been no update on the reactions of the Government.

In **Hungary**, no specific measures were taken to support Roma women and children in regard to medical and social assistance during the pandemic crisis at national level. On 7 April 2020, when responding to a question of the media about specific measures that could help the Roma, the Government's spokesman stressed that loans, training, tax and wage programmes are in the interest of all Hungarians; however, he mentioned no specific measures targeting Roma.⁸⁸

In **Hungary**, the Hungarian Pentecostal Church's Hungarian Gypsy Missions (*Magyar Pünkösdi Egyház Országos Cigánymisszió*) launched a campaign in April 2020 to recruit volunteers who are willing to provide for care to the

⁸⁷ National Roma Self-government (*Országos Roma Önkormányzat*) (2020), 'Letter to the Minister Gergely Gulyás' (*Levél Gulyás Gergely Miniszter Úrnak*), 23 March 2020, available at: <https://www.oronk.hu/2020/03/23/tajekoztatas-4/>.

⁸⁸ Reuters (2020), 'Living on margins, Hungary's Roma feel especially exposed to coronavirus', 7 April 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-hungary-roma/living-on-margins-hungarys-roma-feel-especially-exposed-to-coronavirus-idUSKBN21P238>.

elderly Roma and Roma in need during the pandemic, and who are willing to help operate a telephone hotline that provides for psychological care.⁸⁹

2.3 Measures addressing the needs of Roma children

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

In **Hungary**, the Ministry for Innovation and Technology (*Innovációs és Technológiai Minisztérium*), under the programme titled 'Digital Collaboration' (*Digitális Összefogás*) provided 30 laptops to families designated by the National Roma Civil Council (*Országos Roma Civil Tanács*). These laptops were given to the families in need to support children in joining the distance learning programmes of the schools.⁹⁰

In **Hungary**, the President of the Democratic Union of Teachers (*Pedagógusok Demokratikus Szakszervezet*) reported in an interview that several schools in towns with significant Roma populations (Tarnabod, Heresznye, Pálmajor, Alsóbogát and Bélavár) print materials and tasks out and deliver them to the houses of students twice a week.⁹¹ Upon delivering new materials, previously assigned tasks are also collected. Feedback on the completed assignments are given to students when the next round of materials is distributed.⁹²

In **Hungary**, The Order of Malta's Hungarian Charity Service (*Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat*) reported that the Hungarian Government asked them in

⁸⁹ Hungarian Pentecostal Church's Hungarian Gypsy Missions (*Magyar Pünkösdi Egyház Országos Cigánymisszió*) (2020), 'Coronavirus' (*Koronavírus*), available at: <https://remenyhir.hu/koronavirus/>.

⁹⁰ Kormany.hu (2020), 'There are more than 350 donations under the Digital Collaboration action' (*Már több mint 350 felajánlás a Digitális Összefogás akcióban*), 4 May 2020, available at: <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/innovacios-es-technologiai-miniszterium/hirek/koronavirus-mar-tobb-mint-350-felajanlas-a-digitalis-osszefogas-akcioban>.

⁹¹ Eduline (2020), 'Twice a week on paper – this is how towns facing socioeconomical disadvantages solve distance learning' (*Kétszer egy héten papíron – így oldják meg a hátrányos helyzetű települések a távoktatást*), 6 April 2020, available at: [https://eduline.hu/kozoktatás/20200406_tavoktatás_nehez_korulmenyek_kozott](https://eduline.hu/kozoktatás/20200406_tavoktatás_nehez_korulmenyek_kozott;);

⁹² Eduline (2020), 'Twice a week on paper – this is how towns facing socioeconomical disadvantages solve distance learning' (*Kétszer egy héten papíron – így oldják meg a hátrányos helyzetű települések a távoktatást*), 6 April 2020, available at: https://eduline.hu/kozoktatás/20200406_tavoktatás_nehez_korulmenyek_kozott.

2019 to coordinate an initiative – called Long-Term Development Programme for New Settlements – for the most disadvantaged areas in the country, where some 300,000 mostly Roma people live. Particular attention is paid to the educational aspect of the project under which the Charity Service has provided digital devices to schools to support distance learning. To respond to the challenges of the sudden switch to distance learning, the Charity Service claims the schools that they manage have been printing texts, worksheets and exercises for the children. Moreover, the colleagues of the Charity Service occasionally collect educational material and distribute it daily together with food packages. They carried out a survey in all the schools in the 32 settlements where they work to know exactly which families have problems with Internet communication. In these cases, teachers and pedagogical assistants visit families to help the children. The Charity Service also launched a pilot project in the town of Tarnabod (where 110 pupils study in eight classes, many of them being Roma children): the Charity Service has provided tablets and Internet access to all the pupils in three classes.⁹³

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 **Hungary**, Bagázs Public Benefit Association believes that racism and hatred targeting Roma may increase due to the pandemic since many Roma lost their jobs in Western Europe and had to return to Hungary. This may make some people believe that Roma brought the virus home and they are responsible for spreading the virus in Hungary.⁹⁴

⁹³ Order of Malta (2020), 'Covid-19 Commitment doubled for Roma children in Hungary', 12 May 2020, available at: <https://www.orderofmalta.int/2020/05/12/covid-19-commitment-doubled-roma-children-hungary/>.

⁹⁴ Bagázs Public Benefit Association (*Bagázs Egyesület*) (2020), 'On the situation of Roma' (*A romák helyzetéről*), In: Nyitottak Vagyunk – Amnesty International – Bagázs – Háttér Társaság – Salva Vita (2020), 'What can the employer do? – Report on the impact of COVID-

In **Hungary**, the media reported that a research institute, SentiOne, conducted research analysing all comments posted in Hungarian in the popular social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, forums) in relation to the pandemic. The research found that every second comment blames some ethnic group for the pandemic. SentiOne found around 22,000 comments blaming ethnic groups; among them Roma were mentioned the least, in only 548 cases. Still, 55% of the comments related to Roma were very negative and racist in tone (e.g. “Dear virus, I hope you kill all Roma”), while for other groups (Chinese, Iranian, Italian, elderly people) the share of negative comments were below 25%.⁹⁵

In **Hungary**, no negative reactions targeting Roma could be identified in statements by politicians and public figures.

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 **Hungary**, there have been no reports on positive changes in attitudes toward the Roma.

19 on women, LMBTQI people, Roma and people with disabilities’ (*Mit tehet a munkaadó? – Beszámoló a COVID-19 hatásáról a nők, LMBTQI emberek, romák és fogyatékossgal élők helyzetére*), 22 May 2020, p. 14., available at: https://share.hsforms.com/1Owe2IWhpS_qNHZKHN5MZfA1jwe4.

⁹⁵ 24.hu (2020), ‘It is surprising, but in addition to the Chinese, Hungarians commentators found another scapegoat responsible for the Coronavirus’ (*Meglepő, de a kínaiak mellett egy másik bűnbakot is találtak a magyar kommentelők a koronavírusért*), 12 May 2020, available at: <https://24.hu/belfold/2020/05/12/koronavirus-magyarország-vilagjarvany-kinai-zsido-cigany-komment/>.