

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

- **restriction of movement**

Since 18 March 2020, all non-essential travel outside of **Belgium** has been prohibited and all residents were obliged to stay home with a few exceptions, such as to attend funerals or marriages (see Bulletin nr. 2). It was prohibited to be out on public roads and in public places, except for urgent reasons such as to access medical care, professional travel and to provide assistance to vulnerable persons (see Bulletin nr. 1).¹

The process of deconfinement has begun and since 8 June 2020, the obligation to stay home has been lifted. It is also permitted to visit family members living in neighbouring countries, as well as to shop in a neighbouring country.² The Walloon Government specified that with regard to Travellers' communities, this entails that travelling in Belgium from one place to another is also allowed from 8 June 2020 onwards.³ From 15 June 2020, it is permitted to travel to all countries of the European Union, of the Schengen zone and to the United Kingdom, and to travel from these countries to Belgium.⁴

- **closure of businesses**

The **Belgian Government** decided that as of 13 March 2020 all private and public activities of a cultural, social, festive, folkloric, sporting and recreational nature were prohibited. All related establishments were to remain closed as well.⁵ As of 18 March 2020, all businesses and shops

¹ Belgium, Ministerial Decree of 18 March 2020 on urgent measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus COVID - 19 ([Ministerieel besluit houdende dringende maatregelen om de verspreiding van het coronavirus COVID - 19 te beperken](#)) Published in the Belgian Official Gazette 18 March 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

² Belgium, Ministerial Decree of 5 June 2020 amending the Ministerial Decree of 23 March 2020 on urgent measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19 ([Ministerieel besluit van 5 juni 2020 houdende wijziging van het ministerieel besluit van 23 maart 2020 houdende dringende maatregelen om de verspreiding van het coronavirus COVID-19 te beperken](#)), Published in the Belgian Official Gazette 5 June 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

³ Belgium, Wallonia, 'Covid-19: travel for Travellers' ([Covid-19: Déplacements des Gens du Voyage](#)), 8 June 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

⁴ Belgium, Ministerial Decree of 5 June 2020 amending the Ministerial Decree of 23 March 2020 on urgent measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19 ([Ministerieel besluit van 5 juni 2020 houdende wijziging van het ministerieel besluit van 23 maart 2020 houdende dringende maatregelen om de verspreiding van het coronavirus COVID-19 te beperken](#)) Published in the Belgian Official Gazette 5 June 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

⁵ Belgium, Ministerial Decree of 13 March 2020 on urgent measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19 ([Ministerieel besluit houdende dringende maatregelen om de](#)

remained closed, with the exception of essential shops, such as food stores and pharmacies (see Bulletin nr. 1). Markets were prohibited, except for food stalls in areas which do not have commercial food infrastructures.⁶

From 11 May 2020, non-essential businesses were allowed to reopen on the condition that they adhere to applicable rules of hygiene and social distancing.⁷ As of 18 May 2020, municipal authorities can authorise daily, weekly and fortnightly markets containing a maximum of 50 stalls under the following conditions: maximum of 1 visitor per 1.5 metres at the stall; anyone operating a stall must wear a mouth mask; the municipal authority provides the necessary hand hygiene supplies at the entrances and exits; vendors provide staff and customers with hand hygiene supplies; no consumption of food or beverages at the market; system in place to check the number of visitors present; a one-way traffic plan. Flea markets, however, are not allowed.⁸ **Belgian Prime Minister** Wilmès also clarified in the media that reopening market stalls is only possible for street vendors who would be allowed to reopen at their usual location with an authorisation from the local authorities.⁹

On 3 May 2020, the National Security Council announced that all gatherings including carnivals and fairs remain prohibited until 1 August 202 and may then be resumed gradually.¹⁰

1.2 Implications of measures

- **Employment and income**

[verspreiding van het coronavirus COVID-19 te beperken](#)) Published in the Belgian Official Gazette 13 March 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

⁶ Belgium, Ministerial Decree of 18 March 2020 on urgent measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus COVID - 19 ([Ministerieel besluit houdende dringende maatregelen om de verspreiding van het coronavirus COVID - 19 te beperken](#)) Published in the Belgian Official Gazette 18 March 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

⁷ Belgium, Ministerial Decree of 8 May 2020 amending the Ministerial Order of 23 March 2020 on urgent measures to combat the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19 ([Ministerieel besluit van 8 mei 2020 houdende wijziging van het ministerieel besluit van 23 maart 2020 houdende dringende maatregelen om de verspreiding van het coronavirus COVID-19 te beperken](#)) Published in the Belgian official gazette 8 May 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

⁸ Belgium, Ministerial Decree of 15 May 2020 amending the Ministerial Order of 23 March 2020 on urgent measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus COVID-19 ([Ministerieel besluit houdende wijziging van het ministerieel besluit van 23 maart 2020 houdende dringende maatregelen om de verspreiding van het coronavirus COVID-19 te beperken](#)) Published in the Belgian Official Gazette 15 May 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

⁹ L'Avenir, 'Markets probably reopening on 18 May' ([Une probable réouverture des marchés le 18 mai](#)), L'Avenir, 18 May 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

¹⁰ Belgium, National Security Council (2020), 'Measures of the National Security Council of 3 June 2020' ([Maatregelen van de Nationale Veiligheidsraad van 3 juni 2020](#)), 3 June 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].



The organisation 'La défense des forains belges' (DFB) reported in the media that fairground people (*forains*) in **Belgium**, which includes many Travellers, are disappointed that fairs and carnivals are not allowed to reopen until August, contrary to amusement parks which can reopen on 1 July 2020. DFB notes that a large part of the season has already been lost and they hope to be able to save the summer. The sector is therefore counting on the goodwill of local authorities for events that would have been cancelled in August, so that they can still take place.¹¹ A group of circus artists also reported in the media that they face difficulties as their circus had been prohibited from doing any shows and they were confined to a car park in Gembloux for more than a month already. The group had not had any financial income for weeks, yet continued to have to provide for the artists and feed the animals. In addition, due to confinement, training for future shows was difficult or impossible.¹²

The organisation 'Rom en Rom' stated in the media that during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, Roma communities in **Belgium** often lack information about their rights and steps to take for support. Including, for example, on financial support measures that are essential as Roma communities lost a significant part of their income. According to the organisation, many follow news channels of their country of origin, thereby missing out on useful information in their country of residence.¹³

The **Brussels** organisation Foyer notes that many Roma begging on the streets left for Romania due to the Covid-19 outbreak. They are now slowly returning to Brussels. For those who were employed, the pandemic often resulted in their unemployment. Many Roma worked with a temporary employment contract (such as newspaper deliveries and seasonal work) which was stopped or not renewed due to Covid-19. Many do not benefit from temporary unemployment benefits introduced by the Government as they have not worked long enough in Belgium to be entitled to it. After 3 months without employment, their E-card (long-term residence card) is withdrawn. Those who worked while waiting for an E-card and lost their job

¹¹ L'Avenir, 'Coronavirus: Fairground people disappointed not to be able to restart at the same time as amusement parks' (['Coronavirus: Les forains déçus de ne pas pouvoir reprendre en même temps que les parcs d'attractions'](#)), L'Avenir, 3 June 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

¹² Belgium, Menten, M. and Lejeune, A., 'Circus hit hard by the confinement: in Gembloux, a troupe calls for generosity' (['Le cirque frappé de plein fouet par le confinement: à Gembloux, une troupe lance un appel à la générosité'](#)), RTL Info, 20 April 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

¹³ Belgium, Roubaud, J. (2020), 'Health crisis makes living conditions for Roma in Europe more difficult' (['La crise sanitaire rend les conditions de vie des Roms plus difficiles en Europe'](#)), Le Vif, 14 May 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

also have to go through the process of looking for employment and applying for long term residency in the municipality all over again.¹⁴

- **Access to social assistance**

The **Belgian REYN Network** (Romani Early Years Network) and the equality body Unia issued a press release on 8 April 2020, noting that social support services targetting Roma communities are under even more pressure during the pandemic. Much of the support, assistance and mediation that many need in order to survive is partly unavailable as various organisations and aid workers have had to withdraw temporarily. Because of this reduced support, many feel even more left to their own devices. A survey conducted among a number of social support services shows that due to social distancing measures and travel bans it was difficult to physically reach these groups.¹⁵

The CSO Minderhedenforum also notes that social assistance services were not able to reach Travellers' communities during the health crisis due to confinement and social distancing measures. Consequently, their situation has become even more dire than before the pandemic.¹⁶

- **Health**

The **Belgian Government ordered** mouth masks for residents which are distributed through local pharmacies as of 15 June 2020.¹⁷ Since the COVID-19 outbreak several municipalities decided, however, to order their own mouth masks and to send them to residents' permanent address by post.¹⁸

- **Education**

The organisation Foyer notes that distance learning during the lockdown was not easy for Roma families in **Belgium**. Many families were very difficult to reach through digital communication platforms. Consequently, they did not receive all information about class content, day care and other measures.

¹⁴ Belgium, [Foyer vzw](#), email of 9 June 2020; Belgium, Act of 15 December 1980 on access to the territory, residence, establishment and removal of foreigners ([Wet van 15 december 1980 betreffende de toegang tot het grondgebied, het verblijf, de vestiging en de verwijdering van vreemdelingen](#)) Published in the Belgium Official Gazette 31 December 1980 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

¹⁵ Belgium, Belgian REYN network and Unia (2020), 'Don't let Roma and travellers down during this corona crisis!' ([Laat roma en woonwagenbewoners in deze corona-crisis niet in de steek!](#)), 8 April 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

¹⁶ Belgium, [Minderhedenforum](#), telephone consultation of 15 June 2020.

¹⁷ Belgium, Federal Government, 'The federal government's mouth masks: Practical guidelines' ([De mondmaskers van de federale overheid: Praktische richtlijnen](#)), 8 June 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

¹⁸ Belgium, Bruzz, 'As of Monday 25.000 residents of Berchem receive mouth masks by post' ([Vanaf maandag krijgen 25.000 Berchemnaren mondmaskers per post](#)), 7 May 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].



Some families also did not have access to a computer altogether, so distance learning was not possible. The continuation of the school year after the lockdown also constitutes obstacles. Even though children of Roma families were allowed to return to school in May, most of them decide not to do so for fear of infection. Consequently, the lockdown due to COVID-19 will cause Roma children to fall behind in school. In addition, many families have left for Romania and Bulgaria during the lockdown. Completion of the school year is not possible at all for those children. Finally, Foyer notes that all languages courses and other training with the aim of preparing for employment were halted, which have an impact on access to work for Roma.¹⁹

According to Minderhedenforum, children of Travellers' communities also face difficulties accessing education during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many do not have access to computers or internet. Moreover, fear of infection prevents parents from having their children return to school once confinement measures were loosened.²⁰

- **Housing**

Media reported that for Travellers' communities in **Belgium**, being confined to caravans is particularly difficult. Travellers are forced to find a fixed place to settle due to COVID-19 measures. One family who settled on a parking lot in an industrial area explains that they do not have a house or any outside space, there are rats and the sewers are clogged.²¹ Media also reported that at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the president of the National Committee for Travellers (*Comité National des Gens du Voyage*) asked the Walloon Minister of Health, to suspend evictions of mobile homes for the duration of the pandemic. The president noted that within the Traveller community anxiety for the virus was on the rise and there were insufficient parking lots available for them to settle.²²

Media reported that police intervened when travellers (*Gens du Voyage*) wanted to settle on a site in the municipality Jumet. Several drivers were fined by the police for violating confinement measures as their travel was considered non-essential.²³ Media also reported that Travellers (*Gens du*

¹⁹ Belgium, [Foyer vzw](#), email of 9 June 2020.

²⁰ Belgium, [Minderhedenforum](#), telephone consultation of 15 June 2020.

²¹ Belgium, Harrouch, H. (2020), 'Coronavirus in Belgium: confinement in caravans is particularly difficult for gens du voyage' (['Coronavirus en Belgique: pour les gens du voyage, le confinement en caravane est particulièrement difficile'](#)), RTL Info, 18 April 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

²² Belgium, de Marneffe, A. (2020), 'Gens du voyage demand the end of evictions: "chasing us out in the middle of a pandemic is unacceptable"' (['Les gens du voyage demandent la fin des expulsions: "Nous chasser en pleine pandémie du coronavirus est inadmissible"'](#)) DH Net, 17 March 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

²³ Belgium, Sud Presse (2020), 'Fined for unjustified travel' (['Verbalisés pour déplacement injustifié'](#)), 6 April 2020.

Voyage) who arrived in a city Amay had been forced to leave as they had not acquired authorisation to settle there. Local police tried to block the road to prevent Travellers from entering the site, but were too late. The police then wrote down license plate numbers, identified the individuals and issued fines. It is reported that the mayor of Amay, declared that their arrival had been a serious violation of the rules of confinement.²⁴ The community was summoned by the police to a meeting with the travellers' Mediation Centre. They were given until 1 p.m. the following day to leave Amay, escorted by the police, back to Pont-à-Celles where they came from. When asked why they left Pont-à-Celles during the lockdown, they explained that there were too many of them on that site.²⁵

The Belgian National and Walloon Committee for Travellers issued a press release raising concerns about reports of several groups of travelling communities (*Gens du Voyage*) - settled in different Walloon communities - being forced to leave by local authorities. The organisations noted that "entire villages are being forced to move. Evictions are currently under way." In addition, they received reports that some municipalities that have signed an agreement with Traveller communities allowing them to stay are now refusing to them on their territory even though they had been previously authorised to do so. The organisations therefore called on local authorities to allow travellers to stay where they have settled until the end of the lockdown, and to ask municipalities to uphold future reservations.²⁶

1.3 Estimates of the scale of the impact

According to Minderhedenforum, the group most affected by COVID-19 related measures in Belgium are Travellers' communities. Facing evictions and lack of access to social support services makes their situation during the pandemic especially difficult.²⁷ Travellers' children as well as Roma children are affected particularly by the online learning measures due to a lack of access to a computer and/or internet (see 1.2).

²⁴ Belgium, Sudinfo, 'Gens du voyage that settled in Amay Friday afternoon have been evicted: "their arrival was a complete lack of respect for confinement"' (['Les gens du voyage qui s'étaient installés vendredi après-midi à Amay ont été expulsés: "Cette arrivée était un non-respect total du confinement"'](#)), Sudinfo, 16 April 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

²⁵ L'Avenir (2020), 'The travellers have left' (['Les gens du voyage sont partis'](#)), L'Avenir, 17 April 2020 [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

²⁶ Belgium, Comité national des Gens du Voyage and Comité wallon de Défense des Gens du Voyage-La verdine (2020), 'Gens du Voyage and tackling the coronavirus pandemic' (['Gens du Voyage et lutte contre la pandémie du coronavirus'](#)) [Last accessed 14 June 2020].

²⁷ Belgium, [Minderhedenforum](#), telephone consultation of 15 June 2020.

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

- **Information and prevention**

The **Belgian Government** published information online on how to prevent COVID-19 infection in many languages, including in Romanian, Bulgarian, etc. Information is provided both in written text and audio files. Publications include information on the virus itself, how to wash your hands and how to wear a mouth mask.²⁸

In Flanders, the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration (*Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering*) posted posters, information sheets and audio messages about the most recent Government measures as well as prevention guidelines in multiple languages.²⁹

The **Walloon Government** posted a document with Frequently Asked Questions regarding COVID-19 and related Government measures aimed specifically at Travellers. The document includes information on prevention of infection and links to relevant websites with information on testing and what to do in case of infection.³⁰ The recommendations, validated by the Walloon Government, were drawn up by the administration in consultation with the Mediation Centre for Travellers and Roma in Wallonia (*Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie*).³¹

In **Wallonia**, the Minister of Social Action and Minister of Local Authorities issued guidelines for local authorities on 15 May regarding the application of deconfinement measures to Travellers. Recommendations include regularly informing Travellers about hygienic and social distancing rules. When distributing mouth masks, local authorities are also asked to ensure they distribute them among Travellers settled in their area.³²

The Mediation Centre for Travellers and Roma in Wallonia (*Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie*) published a poster

²⁸ Belgium, Federal Government, 'Coronavirus Covid-19: Information in multiple languages' ([`Coronavirus Covid-19: Meertalige informatie`](#)), [last accessed 14 June 2020].

²⁹ Belgium, Flanders, 'Coronavirus: information in multiple languages' (*`Coronavirus: meertalige informatie`*) [last accessed 14 June 2020].

³⁰ Belgium, Wallonia, 'FAQ Covid-19: Travellers' ([`FAQ Covid-19: Gens du Voyage`](#)), 8 June 2020 [last accessed 14 June 2020].

³¹ Belgium, Walloon Public Service for Interior Affairs and Social Action, E-mail of 15 June 2020.

³² Belgium, Wallonia, 'Covid-19: Recommendations regarding reception of Gens du Voyage in the context of progressive deconfinement' ([`Covid-19: Recommandations relatives à l'accueil des Gens du Voyage dans le cadre du déconfinement progressif`](#)), 15 May 2020 [last accessed 14 June 2020].

with guidelines on how to protect yourself against infection with COVID-19. It includes guidelines and pictograms referring to the particular way of life of Travellers, such as avoiding group discussions in front of the caravans.³³

- **Quarantine**

As regards Travellers, the **Belgian Government** announced that permanent residents can stay on their sites. Moving from one plot of land to another is not considered an essential move, so local authorities were asked to take the necessary measures to facilitate their stay until the end of the COVID-19 crisis.³⁴

On 23 March, the **Walloon** Minister of Housing issued a circular with specific recommendations as regards Travellers for local authorities. Travellers currently settled on official or unofficial sites must be able to remain there without hindrance either in the exercise of their rights or in the fulfilment of their obligations. In addition to maintaining the current facilities and allowing extended occupancy, the necessary measures should be taken to ensure that Traveller groups do not travel during the period of confinement. This applies both to the movement of groups within Walloon territory and to movement between countries. Local authorities are asked to suspend the execution of current or future eviction procedures.³⁵

In **Wallonia**, the Minister of Social Action and Minister of Local Authorities issued additional guidelines on 8 June regarding movement of Travellers. In order to reduce the risk of infections, local authorities are recommended as of 8 June (when travel within Belgium is allowed again) to give priority to welcoming small groups of caravans and to authorise temporary stays lasting longer than the usual fortnight during the summer period, i.e. temporary stays of more than one month. Local authorities are also asked to give priority to reception on the official sites for Travellers present in Belgium since March 13, 2020, and to welcome Travellers coming from a foreign country on other grounds than the sites already occupied by Travellers present in Belgium since 13 March 2020. The Walloon Government also recommends local authorities to inform Travellers in an accessible and clear way about new COVID-19 related measures and to involve the spokesperson of the group in the measures to be taken or to be adhered to.³⁶

³³ Belgium, Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie (2020), 'Protect yourself' (['Se Protéger'](#)), [last accessed 14 June 2020].

³⁴ Belgium, Coronavirus Covid-19: What are the current measures?' (['Coronavirus Covid-19: Quelles sont les mesures actuelles?'](#)) [last accessed 14 June 2020].

³⁵ Belgium, Wallonia, Minister of Housing, 'Coronavirus – Travellers' (['Coronavirus – Gens du Voyage'](#)), 23 March 2020 [last accessed 14 June 2020].

³⁶ Belgium, Wallonia, 'Covid-19: movement of Travellers' (['Covid-19: Déplacements des Gens du Voyage'](#)), 8 June 2020 [last accessed 14 June 2020].

No similar measures were taken in **Flanders**. According to Minderhedenforum, this might be due to the lack of a specific policy aimed at Roma and Travellers at the Flemish level. The organisation, together with Unia and other civil society organisations, requested specific consideration of Roma and Travellers' needs and to communicate to local authorities accordingly, yet this has not been taken up by the Flemish Government.³⁷

- **Provision of running water and sanitation to communities without it**

The **Walloon** Minister of Housing recommended local authorities to organise access to water and electricity for Gens du Voyage. These measures apply for the duration of the confinement as decided by the Federal Government. In the event of a prolongation or aggravation of the exceptional health circumstances, these measures are tacitly extended for as long as movement is restricted and containment imposed.³⁸

No similar measures were taken in **Flanders**.

2.2 Measures to support Roma and Travelers communities in regards to medical and social assistance

- **Information and social assistance**

In **Brussels**, Foyer notes that it mainly focused on contacting and providing information to Roma communities on: Covid-19 measures in Belgium; information from schools on alternative teaching packages, possibilities for day care, deconfinement, etc.; information on temporary unemployment benefits, entrepreneurship etc. The organisation worked by phone, but also to great extent with social media (whatsapp-groups, messenger, ...). They also posted online videos to inform Roma families about all kinds of topics (education, work, health).³⁹

In **Wallonia**, the Mediation Centre for Travellers and Roma in Wallonia is tasked to provide travelling communities with social and administrative assistance, including during the pandemic.⁴⁰

- **Housing**

The **Belgian Federal Minister for Poverty Reduction** allocated 652,050 euros to extend the federal winter shelter for homeless persons in Brussels,

³⁷ Belgium, [Minderhedenforum](#), telephone consultation of 15 June 2020.

³⁸ Belgium, Wallonia, Minister of Housing, 'Coronavirus – Travellers' ('[Coronavirus – Gens du Voyage](#)'), 23 March 2020 [last accessed 14 June 2020].

³⁹ Belgium, [Foyer vzw](#), email of 9 June 2020.

⁴⁰ Belgium, Walloon Public Service for Interior Affairs and Social Action, E-mail of 15 June 2020.

including many Roma who are homeless, by two months, until 31 May.⁴¹ To ensure that homeless persons can continue to have access to shelter, as many other organisations closed down. In the centre, that provides shelter to 250 persons, 15 isolated rooms have been created to isolate persons who may be infected with the coronavirus. In addition, the Minister allocated the cities of Ghent, Antwerp, Liège and Charleroi a subsidy totalling 200,000 euros to enable them to open up places where sick homeless persons can be housed in a safely and in quarantaine.⁴²

2.3 Measures addressing the needs of Roma children

Minderhedenforum notes that informal consultations with schools and persons working with Roma show that in the cities, school mediators ('brugfiguren') manage to reach out to Roma students. These mediators pass by parents and students at home. Schools also indicate that a similar mechanism, however, is missing to reach out to Travellers. Children in those communities are often no longer being educated as schools do not have the means to provide suitable support.⁴³

3 Any negative public reactions targeting Roma and Travellers or positive change in attitudes towards them

3.1 Negative public reactions

As noted above, the National and Walloon Committee of Travellers raised concerns about several groups of Travellers in different Walloon communities were being forced to leave. They therefore called local authorities not only to let them stay, but also to raise awareness among its residents on the need to do so and to reassure them.⁴⁴

3.2 Positive change in attitudes

⁴¹ Belgium, Cabinet of [Brussels Minister Elke Van den Brandt](#), Email of 10 June 2020.

⁴² Belgium, Federal Minister of Poverty Reduction Nathalie Muylle, 'Extra means so food banks have sufficient basic products' (['Extra middelen zodat voedselbanken over voldoende basisproducten kunnen beschikken'](#)), 26 March 2020 [last accessed 14 June 2020].

⁴³ Belgium, [Minderhedenforum](#), telephone consultation of 15 June 2020.

⁴⁴ Belgium, Comité national des Gens du Voyage and Comité wallon de Défense des Gens du Voyage-La verdine (2020), 'Travellers and tackling the coronavirus pandemic' (['Gens du Voyage et lutte contre la pandémie du coronavirus'](#)) [last accessed 14 June 2020].

On International Day of Roma, civil society organisations expressed their support for and solidarity with Roma and Travellers.⁴⁵

In a joint press release, the Belgian REYN Network and Unia state that they see some hopeful initiatives such as organisations joining forces to inform Roma families about the online registration system for education and creative ways have been found to be able to register these children in the digital education platform as well. Service providers are also trying to distribute the necessary corona information in all possible languages, including Romanes, via social media.⁴⁶

On 2 June 2020, a group of Travellers arrived in the Walloon community of Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve, even though rules of confinement were still in place. The local Alderman for human rights decided, however, to authorise the Travellers to settle on the site. As they had no other option and the group included 10 children, the Alderman wanted to avoid the group being at risk of eviction elsewhere.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Belgium, Unia, 'Roma are fully-fledged citizens' (['Roma zijn volwaardige burgers'](#)), 8 April 2020 [last accessed 14 June 2020].

⁴⁶ Belgium, Belgian REYN network and Unia, 'Don't let Roma and travellers down during this corona crisis!' (['Laat roma en woonwagenbewoners in deze corona-crisis niet in de steek!'](#)), 8 April 2020 [last accessed 14 June 2020].

⁴⁷ L'Avenir (2020), 'Emergency solution for travellers' (['Solution d'urgence pour les gens du voyage'](#)), L'Avenir, 4 June 2020 [last accessed 14 June 2020].