

# 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
- restriction of movement

In Greece, the general restrictive measures adopted by the Greek Government did not include special measures for Roma settlements and applied to the entire population. Special measures were only enacted on an ad hoc basis, following the emergence of COVID-19 positive cases in Roma settlements and specific locations.

According to the existing mapping and typological classification of Roma living areas, in 2017 there were 354 living areas in Greece with a total population of 104,210 inhabitants<sup>1</sup>. There are three types of settlements: type I – very underdeveloped areas, type II – mixed settlements and Type III – neighborhoods.

	<b>Areas</b>	<b>Inhabitants</b>
<b>Type I</b>	76	8.582
<b>Type II</b>	159	59.292
<b>Type III</b>	119	36.336
<b>Total</b>	354	104.210

Source: National Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2017-2021

Table: Number and type of settlements per Region

<b>Region</b>	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Settlements</b>			<b>Total settlements</b>	<b>% of total settlements</b>
		Type I	Type II	Type III		
<b>Attika</b>	30.363	12	13	19	44	12,4%

<sup>1</sup> Greece, National Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2017-2021, [https://egroma.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/LOW-%CE%95%CE%A0%CE%99%CE%A7%CE%95%CE%99%CE%A1%CE%97%CE%A3%CE%99%CE%91%CE%9A%CE%9F\\_SXEDIO\\_DRASHS\\_ROMA.pdf](https://egroma.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/LOW-%CE%95%CE%A0%CE%99%CE%A7%CE%95%CE%99%CE%A1%CE%97%CE%A3%CE%99%CE%91%CE%9A%CE%9F_SXEDIO_DRASHS_ROMA.pdf)

<b>East Macedonia-Thrace</b>	16,435	5	9	18	32	9%
<b>Central Macedonia</b>	15.374	11	22	14	47	13.3%
<b>Western Greece</b>	15.898	9	30	26	65	18,4%
<b>Thessaly</b>	14.534	2	7	4	13	3,7%
<b>Stereia Ellada</b>	4.958	9	16	11	36	10,2%
<b>Peloponnisos</b>	1.661	7	40	6	53	15%
<b>Ipiros</b>	1.500	4	4	3	11	3,1%
<b>Crete</b>	1.211	2	1	7	10	2,8%
<b>North Aegean</b>	755	4	9	6	19	5,4%
<b>Ionion</b>	639	6	6	3	15	4,2%
<b>South Aegean</b>	554	3	1	2	6	1,7%
<b>Western Macedonia</b>	328	2	1	0	3	0,8%
<b>Total</b>	104,210	76	159	119	354	100%

Source: National Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2017-2021

On 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020, 20 persons residing in a Roma settlement in Nea Smyrni in Larissa city were tested positive for COVID-19.<sup>2</sup> The settlement was immediately placed under a state of emergency including a complete

<sup>2</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας), Press release , 10 April 2020, available in Greek at <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/enimerosi-apo-ton-yfypoyrgo-politikis-prostasias-kai-diaheirisis-kriseon-niko-hardalia-kai-ton-14>

lockdown of residents and a complete ban of movement outside of the camp for 14 days<sup>3</sup>. Measures to secure the safety of the residents and the population around the camp included the distribution of food, antiseptics and medicine through specific routes. Outdoor fruit and vegetable markets throughout Thessaly were suspended, while the activity of street vendors was banned. 200 additional tests were ordered on residents of the settlement<sup>4</sup>. The temporary ban of movement applied to specific blocks of the settlement, positive cases would quarantine in a specialized institution and residents from vulnerable groups and with underlying conditions would be transferred to hotels for prevention<sup>5</sup>. Following a visit from the civil protection deputy minister and the chief coordinator for the coronavirus epidemic at the camp additional measures were announced<sup>6</sup>:

- the area remains in a state of emergency and quarantine for 14 days
- local markets in Thessaly are suspended as well as any form of street vendor activity
- preventive tests are to be conducted in the nearby towns of Tyrnavos, Farsala and Sofades where Roma settlements exist.
- mediators are to be appointed in the four municipalities to prepare Roma communities for eventual measures
- plans were made for food, medicines and protective equipment to be transferred to the quarantined areas in Nea Smyrni settlement
- strengthening of police forces, fire brigade and health services, closure of the migrants camp in Koutsochero

On April 15<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Minister for Civil protection announced a comprehensive operational plan in the Region of Thessaly following the tracing of contacts from Nea Smyrni. 1.200 tests were being conducted in

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<sup>3</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release , 10 April 2020, available in Greek at <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/enimerosi-apo-ton-yfypoyrgo-politikis-prostasias-kai-diaheirisis-kriseon-niko-hardalia-kai-ton-14>

<sup>4</sup> Greece, Naftemporiki, Roma settlement in central Greece quarantined after 20 Covid-19 infections confirmed, 10.04.2020, <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/story/1588787/roma-settlement-in-central-greece-quarantined-after-20-covid-19-infections-confirmed>

<sup>5</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (Ενημέρωση από τον Υφυπουργό Πολιτικής Προστασίας και Διαχείρισης Κρίσεων Νίκο Χαρδαλιά και τον εκπρόσωπο του Υπουργείου Υγείας για το νέο κορονοϊό, Καθηγητή Σωτήρη Τσιόδρα), 10.04.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/enimerosi-apo-ton-yfypoyrgo-politikis-prostasias-kai-diaheirisis-kriseon-niko-hardalia-kai-ton-14>

<sup>6</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (Ενημέρωση από τον Υφυπουργό Πολιτικής Προστασίας και Διαχείρισης Κρίσεων Νίκο Χαρδαλιά και τον εκπρόσωπο του Υπουργείου Υγείας για το νέο κορονοϊό, Καθηγητή Σωτήρη Τσιόδρα), 10.04.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/enimerosi-apo-ton-yfypoyrgo-politikis-prostasias-kai-diaheirisis-kriseon-niko-hardalia-kai-ton-14>

all Roma settlements in Thessaly including Larissa (Nea Smyrni, Tyrnavos and Farsala), Magnisia (Aliveri, Agia Paraskevi and Neapoli), Karditsa (Mavrika and Sofades in Nea Zoi) and Trikala (Kipaki, Pyrgos and Kalamaki)<sup>7</sup>. On the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020, it was announced that the results of 49 tests in Nea Smyrni in Larissa gave one positive result. In the remaining sites, (76 in Tyrnavos, 48 in Farsala, 46 in Trikala, 43 in Karditsa, 70 in Sofades and 25 in Magnisia) all tests were negative. <sup>8</sup>

On 13 May, the operational plan 'Plan Day 0- Day 7- Day 14' was initiated in the Roma settlement of Nea Smyrni in Larissa<sup>9</sup>, triggered by the growing number of positive COVID-19 cases. The operational plan included massive tests initiated on May 13th and provided for extended tracing and repeated tests within the settlement in 3 phases (day 0, day 7 and day 14), provided for specific procedures depending on the phase, including quarantines in settlement blocks and neighborhoods with a number of positive tests, transfer and isolation of positive cases without symptoms or with mild symptoms to a specialized medical center. The plan mobilised 17 units of the Region, the National Public Health Organisation, civil protection, the 5th Health region, the University hospital of Larissa, the General Larissa hospital, the municipality of Larissa and the police. The Prosecutor was informed about the plan and invited Rome mediators to inform them<sup>10</sup>. On May 14th, 35 positive tests in a total of 637 tests were found as a result of the operation in the Roma settlement of Nea Smyrni in Larissa. Positive tested cases were transferred to a Rehabilitation Center, while extended tracing of contacts

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<sup>7</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (Ενημέρωση από τον Υφυπουργό Πολιτικής Προστασίας και Διαχείρισης Κρίσεων Νίκο Χαρδαλιά και τον εκπρόσωπο του Υπουργείου Υγείας για το νέο κορονοϊό, Καθηγητή Σωτήρη Τσιόδρα), 15.04.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/enimerosi-apo-ton-yfyoyrgo-politikis-prostiasias-kai-diaheirisis-kriseon-niko-hardalia-kai-ton-18>

<sup>8</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (Ενημέρωση από τον Υφυπουργό Πολιτικής Προστασίας και Διαχείρισης Κρίσεων Νίκο Χαρδαλιά και τον εκπρόσωπο του Υπουργείου Υγείας για το νέο κορονοϊό, Καθηγητή Σωτήρη Τσιόδρα), 16.04.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/enimerosi-apo-ton-yfyoyrgo-politikis-prostiasias-kai-diaheirisis-kriseon-niko-hardalia-kai-ton-19>

<sup>9</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (Σε εξέλιξη το Επιχειρησιακό "Σχέδιο Ημέρα 0- Ημέρα 7- Ημέρα 14" στην συνοικία Ρομά της Νέας Σμύρνης Λάρισας), Press Release, 13/05.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/se-exelixa-epiheirisiako-shedio-imeras-0-imeras-7-imeras-14-stin-synoikia-roma-tis-neas-smyrnis-larisas>.

<sup>10</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (Ενημέρωση διαπιστευμένων συντακτών υγείας από τον Υφυπουργό Πολιτικής Προστασίας και Διαχείρισης Κρίσεων Νίκο Χαρδαλιά και τον εκπρόσωπο του Υπουργείου Υγείας για το νέο κορονοϊό, Καθηγητή Σωτήρη Τσιόδρα), 14.05.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/enimerosi-diapisteymenon-syntakton-ygeias-apo-ton-yfyoyrgo-politikis-prostiasias-kai-diaheirisis-12>.

continued. Further measures were decided to reduce the spread of COVID in the locality:<sup>11</sup>

- Restriction of movement from 22.00pm to 06.00am from 15-5-2020 and for 14 days. Movement was allowed only for important health reasons.
- A prohibition of gatherings of more than 10 persons and a strict supervision of the measure
- Obligatory use of face masks for everyone
- Street vendors and people working in local markets are allowed to exist the area of New Smyrni for work purposes if they have two consecutive negative tests that will be repeated every 5 days. It should be noted that several Roma are occupied as street vendors or work in local markets
- The Region of Thessaly will distribute 1500 face masks and antiseptic solution to each family
- On 15/05/2020 mobile health units will conduct tests to street vendors and those who were not at home during the previous tests and tracing of contacts for cases tested positive.

The enforcement of these decisions was entrusted on the police and the municipal police.

On April 13<sup>th</sup> 2020 an operation was conducted in Drosero in the area of Xanthi, where more than 5000 Roma reside. 335 tests were conducted in the Roma settlement in the area following a positive test from a 15-month old infant. The Deputy Minister reported good cooperation with local authorities and stressed the need for residents to stay at home. Social services distributed 700 packages of basic needs products and personal protection equipment to residents. However, 326 tests were all negative so no restrictive measures for the area were adopted beyond a strong recommendation for residents to stay at home until April 27<sup>th</sup> and abide to the general protective measures announced<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (35 κρούσματα σε σύνολο 637 δειγμάτων στη Νέα Σμύρνη Λάρισας - Σε κατάσταση ενισχυμένης επιτήρησης η περιοχή με απόφαση της Γενικής Γραμματείας Πολιτικής Προστασίας), 15.05.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/simantika-themata/35-kroysmata-se-synolo-637-deigmaton-sti-nea-smyrni-larissas-se-katastasi>

<sup>12</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (Ενημέρωση από τον Υφυπουργό Πολιτικής Προστασίας και Διαχείρισης Κρίσεων Νίκο Χαρδαλιά και τον εκπρόσωπο του Υπουργείου Υγείας για το νέο κορονοϊό, Καθηγητή Σωτήρη Τσιόδρα), 14.04.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/enimerosi-apo-ton-yfyoyrgo-politikis-prostasias-kai-diaheirisis-kriseon-niko-hardalia-kai-ton-17>

On June 4, further massive tests were announced in the area of Xanthi, although these did not target the Roma settlements exclusively<sup>13</sup>. On June 11 2020 special measures were announced for the broader area of Xanthi, following the identification of 15 positive cases<sup>14</sup>. The measures included horizontal measures for the entire area that included obligatory appointments for the use of public services, use of face masks, the suspension of local markets and street vending activities and special measures for the community of Echinós of the municipality of Myki. These included banning of public or private gatherings, ban of movement from 21:00pm - 07:00am; ban of commuting of workers in and outside the area, obligatory use of face mask, suspension of kindergartens and primary schools, minimum agricultural and breeders activities. The additional restrictive measures will be in operation from 12-06-2020 at 06:00am and for 7 days, until 06:00am on 19-06-2020, when they will be reassessed. Further, the operational plan 'Day 0- Day 7- Day 14' was set in operation involving extended testing.

The general measures adopted by the Greek Government in response to the COVID-19 epidemic included the obligatory closure of specific businesses. No specific measures for Roma were initially announced. These were enforced in an ad hoc way, following the identification of epidemic hot spots around the country. Closure of business that affected the Roma concerned mainly the suspension in the operation of local markets and the activity of street vendors.

## **1.2 Implications of measures**

Focus on:

- Employment
- Health
- Education
- Housing
- Food security

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<sup>13</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (Covid19 - Επιχείρηση μαζικού μοριακού ελέγχου για την αντιμετώπιση του επιδημιολογικού φορτίου στην ευρύτερη περιοχή της Ξάνθης), 04.06.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/simantika-themata/covid19-epiheirisi-mazikoy-moriakoy-eleghoy-gia-tin-antimetopisi-toy>

<sup>14</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (*Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας*), Press release (Λήψη έκτακτων μέτρων στην περιοχή της Ξάνθης λόγω αυξημένου επιδημιολογικού φορτίου, Press Release), 11.06.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/simantika-themata/lipsi-ektakton-metron-stin-periohi-tis-xanthis-logo-ayximenoy-epidimiologikoy>.



- Water and sanitation

The Roma community has been affected by the measures adopted in the response to the Covid-19 epidemic. Many Roma have lost their sources of daily income especially those whose livelihoods depend on daily or occasional work in the informal sector, for instance, collecting and selling scrap materials, small trade, etc. Work in the informal sector is excluded from response protection measures that focus primarily on the loss or suspension of formal jobs<sup>15</sup>.

**Ellan Passe**, the Panhellenic Confederation of Greek Roma, sent out an SOS call asking for help in order to support the communities practically with immediately effective means<sup>16</sup>. Their call is quoted below:

‘The COVID 19 outbreak extremely aggravated the Roma’s working status and conditions, taking into account that a big majority of Greek Roma populations are working in trade and tourist services, two sectors that had suffered devastating damages from the virus triggered crisis. After the general lockdown, imposed by the Greek government on March 22nd all commercial activity has been completely halted, a decision that had devastating repercussions on merchants and salesmen, while thousands of Roma working in the tourist sector lost their jobs or are about to lose them. As far as the tourism industry is concerned, according to the latest forecasts and taking into account that tourism accounts for almost 30 per cent of Greek GDP, the Greek economy is expected to contract by -9,7 per cent, as tourism sector will be severely hit this summer and thousands of jobs will be lost (European Commission’s Spring 2020 Economic Forecast, May 7 2020).

Unfortunately, we did not have to wait until summer to verify these ominous estimations and forecasts ... On many different humanitarian missions that have been organised and implemented by our Confederation in Roma communities during the COVID 19 outbreak, we have recorded that a big proportion of Roma populations lack even the staples means of living (in terms of food, sanitary and hygiene conditions, antiseptics and drugs, housing and amenities).

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<sup>15</sup> Greece, Euractiv, The Roma are among most threatened by coronavirus in Europe, 08.04.2020, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/coronavirus/opinion/the-roma-are-among-most-threatened-by-covid-19-in-europe/>

<sup>16</sup> Greece, Ronald SCHÖNKNECHT, The Roma communities in Greece and the consequences of COVID-19, 09/06/2020, [https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/roma-communities-greece-and-consequences-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR2rQYp6GTWS4B4xY2k9KHnCUyjHT8f00BFvomPFkSq9FenMNUeo\\_0tNVlg](https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/roma-communities-greece-and-consequences-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR2rQYp6GTWS4B4xY2k9KHnCUyjHT8f00BFvomPFkSq9FenMNUeo_0tNVlg).

Ellan Passe has been initiating and co-ordinating humanitarian campaigns in close co-operation with the Attica region (by far the biggest in Greece) and the General Secretary For Social Solidarity and Poverty Alleviation, providing food, antiseptics, drugs and clothing in some of the most deprived communities in Athens (Spata, Gerakas, Ilion, Acharnes, Mandra, Elefsina, Chalandri, Aspropirgos, Megara, Agia Varvara, etc.). During those humanitarian actions our means and provisions have very rarely proved enough in order to efficiently cover the deprived community members.

Meanwhile, we have received urgent messages and desperate calls on a daily basis from many Roma communities that are amidst a humanitarian crisis. Among them, over 2000 Roma in Western Achaia (Western Greece) and a similar number in Larissa (Central Greece) are completely out of any economic activity with most of them facing the threat of starvation. In Larissa city, when a 32-year old Roma was tested positive to Covid-19, the whole Roma settlement Nea Smirni was further quarantined and isolated and surrounded by riot police forces. As expected, many corporate media took the chance to misrepresent the reality about the local Roma people and to generally blame whole Greek Roma community.

Hundreds Roma on Lesvos island (Eastern Greece), dozens in Crete (Southern Greece) and thousands in the Thrace region (North-eastern Greece) are lacking even the staples facing literally the threat of starvation, while many thousands Roma living in Athens and in the wider Thessaloniki area have to cope with a complete lack of antiseptics and drugs, daily malnutrition or even starvation (Aspropirgos, Megara, Spata, Ilion in Athens, Menemeni and Tsairia in Thessaloniki, etc.).

Besides the need for urgent humanitarian aid, these populations have hardly any health service access amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result, many Roma communities are extremely prone to infection, without any provision, health prevention, healthcare or nursing.

After the outbreak in Greece (first days of March), Ellan Passe urgently called the Health Ministry and over 100 municipalities across Greece to act promptly in order to avoid the COVID-19 virus spreading, to increase the number of tests on vulnerable communities, and to take over the provision of health care in Roma communities as well as the distribution of food, antiseptics and other flu and antipyretic drugs. Ellan Passe meticulously stressed out for some of the most deprived communities trying to provide to the Ministry all the available relevant information and expressed its willingness to provide volunteers throughout the country for the successful implementation of any initiative or

action maybe would have been decided (as it actually happened, see below).

The Interior Ministry responded positively, providing a special amount of nearly 2.2 million Euros to 98 municipalities throughout the country in order to mitigate and tackle the COVID-19 outbreak in the most vulnerable Roma settlements. Nevertheless, this sum proved to be insufficient and inefficient as it had to cover an overall population of over 200,000 people. In addition to this, the results from the implementation of this initiative still remain dubious and controversial as every municipality was free to allocate this special amount according to the decisions made by every local municipality council. After a few weeks it became clear that many municipalities had done little or almost nothing to face the challenges of local Roma residents. Many municipalities have still not disclosed the allocation of the amount given, while many of them spent it to lateral and collateral actions that have little –or almost nothing– to do with the alleviation of Roma in humanitarian need.

Ellan Passe sent an official annotation to every one of the 98 municipalities, asking for more details about the kind of relief that was provided and the distribution of the amount. After 45 days, only 7 out of 98 municipalities have answered concretely, which only increases our concerns and verifies the grim and ominous information that we have received so far from our 8 regional Federations across the country.

According to our latest information some settlements (Western Achaia, Aspropirgos, etc.) are on the brink of uprising. The COVID-19 outbreak triggered another downward spiral for Greek Roma communities, only to reaffirm the inequalities between Roma and non-Roma communities, the incompetency and deficiency of Greek National Health Service system and the lack of willing from part of the State and many municipalities to really address, tackle and mitigate the profound problems of Roma communities.

As you can see, it would be urgently necessary that the concerned communities receive a quick and direct support that really reaches the people. In addition of the above described facts, we can add from our experiences of the last 13 years that general (and simple) hygiene measures like washing hands regularly are just not feasible in most of the Roma communities. Not to mention home-schooling or social distancing’.

The President of the Roma youth and women of Lower Achaia reported a humanitarian crisis in settlements in lower Achaia<sup>17</sup>. An urgent call for help to families in lower Achaia was sent by Ellan Passe on April 3<sup>rd</sup> to the competent ministries, the Region of Western Greece and the municipality, the Union of municipalities (KEDE), the Church, the General Secretariat for Solidarity and addressing poverty. The messages were reported to the MPs from all parties representing the specific region.

The call reported that 290 families of Greek Roma (2.321 persons residing in a settlement in lower Achaia) are in a very difficult condition, facing undernourishment and extreme poverty as a result of COVID-19 measures. There are 600-700 families in the entire settlement of lower Achaia and an additional 3000 families at Safieika, Piso Sykia and the limits of the municipality. Ellan Passe reported frustration due to the lack of basic food supplies. The local association 'Agios Georgios' proposed to the municipality to record the families in dire situation in order to address the crisis but reported a lack of communication and an inadequate response from social services. Programmes of the Greek Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (*Ταμείο Ευρωπαϊκής Βοήθειας προς τους Απόρους - FEAD/TEBA*)<sup>18</sup> programmes do not operate in the area and beneficiaries of Social solidarity Income (*Κοινωνικό Εισόδημα Αλληλεγγύης -ΚΕΑ*) cannot receive food, businesses cannot work and children cannot benefit from school meals<sup>19</sup>.

### 1.3 Estimates of the scale of the impact

Focus on:

- Number of communities affected by lockdowns
- Magnitude of pandemic-induced poverty

<sup>17</sup> Greece, Ellan Passe, [Σε ανθρωπιστική κρίση οικογένειες Ρομά στη Δυτική Αχαΐα](https://ellan-passe.blogspot.com/2020/06/blog-post.html?fbclid=IwAR0WQa28kX-eGsNSKvfyoIDiboFbRyj3NAWk4VrHF4NknkgHTCumiZ32Q7o), 10.05.2020, <https://ellan-passe.blogspot.com/2020/06/blog-post.html?fbclid=IwAR0WQa28kX-eGsNSKvfyoIDiboFbRyj3NAWk4VrHF4NknkgHTCumiZ32Q7o>

<sup>18</sup> Greece, FEAD/TEBA supports the distribution of food and basic material aid, in accordance with the support of accompanying measures that contribute to the social integration of the beneficiaries and are implemented across the country. The scope of TEBA is specialized in Greece through the "Food and/or Basic Material Assistance" Operational Program that runs until 31st December 2020. See <http://teba.eiead.gr/πρόγραμμα/>

<sup>19</sup> Greece, Ellan Passe, [Σε ανθρωπιστική κρίση οικογένειες Ρομά στη Δυτική Αχαΐα](https://ellan-passe.blogspot.com/2020/06/blog-post.html?fbclid=IwAR0WQa28kX-eGsNSKvfyoIDiboFbRyj3NAWk4VrHF4NknkgHTCumiZ32Q7o), 10.05.2020, <https://ellan-passe.blogspot.com/2020/06/blog-post.html?fbclid=IwAR0WQa28kX-eGsNSKvfyoIDiboFbRyj3NAWk4VrHF4NknkgHTCumiZ32Q7o>

- Types of Roma and Traveller occupations affected hardest
- Difference of impact on Roma women and children

Ellan Passe reported that the communities affected include some of the most deprived communities in Athens (Spata, Gerakas, Ilion, Acharnes, Mandra, Elefsina, Chalandri, Aspropirgos, Megara, Agia Varvara, etc.), over 2000 Roma in Western Achaia (Western Greece) and a similar number in Larissa (Central Greece). Hundreds Roma on Lesbos island (Eastern Greece), dozens in Crete (Southern Greece) and thousands in the Thrace region (North-eastern Greece) are reported to lack basic products, while many thousands Roma living in Athens and in the wider Thessaloniki are in lack of antiseptics and drugs, daily malnutrition or even starvation (Aspropirgos, Megara, Spata, Ilion in Athens, Menemeni and Tsairia in Thessaloniki, etc.)<sup>20</sup>.

## **2 Specific measures to address the implications of the pandemic on Roma and Travellers**

The General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty is the public policy body competent for the social integration of the Roma<sup>21</sup> under the light of the corresponding National Strategy 2011-2020. In the context of the epidemic, the General Secretariat addressed relevant documents to Civil Protection, the National Public Health Organization (EOΔΥ), the General Secretariat of Public Health, the Ministry of Interior and the Local Governments for the purpose of operational care due to their competent responsibilities concerning the Roma population living in camps and settlements<sup>22</sup>. These include instructions or information on measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to Roma populations<sup>23</sup>; measures to address the negative consequences of the appearance of the corona in Roma populations living in camps and settlements<sup>24</sup>; initiatives to address the negative

<sup>20</sup> Greece, Ronald SCHÖNKNECHT, The Roma communities in Greece and the consequences of COVID-19, 09/06/2020, [https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/roma-communities-greece-and-consequences-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR2rQYp6GTWS4B4xY2k9KHnCUYjHT8f00BFvomPFkSg9FenMNUeo\\_0tNVlq](https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/roma-communities-greece-and-consequences-covid-19?fbclid=IwAR2rQYp6GTWS4B4xY2k9KHnCUYjHT8f00BFvomPFkSg9FenMNUeo_0tNVlq)

<sup>21</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Greece, Response from the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Ministry of Labour on 15.06.2020

<sup>23</sup> Greece, General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Document 240 / 11-03-2020 addressed to General Secretariat of Public Health and National Public Health Organization (EODY) on "Taking necessary measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus to Roma populations living in camps".

<sup>24</sup> Greece, General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Document 252 / 16-03-2020 "Information on urgent measures to address the negative consequences of the appearance of the corona in Roma populations living in camps and settlements"

consequences of the negative consequences of COVID in vulnerable social groups<sup>25</sup>; urgent measures to address the negative consequences of the appearance of the corona in Roma populations living in camps and settlements<sup>26</sup>; measures at the Roma camp in Pelekas<sup>27</sup>; measures to be adopted by Municipalities with Roma camps<sup>28</sup>; measures to be taken in the Roma camps<sup>29</sup>.

In this context, by decision of the Ministry of Interior (20210 / 27.03.2020) the amount of € 2,255,000.00 was distributed to 98 municipalities in the country with Roma settlements and camps in order to take the necessary measures, such as disinfection, provision of drinking water where necessary, informing the population, providing antiseptics, etc<sup>30</sup>. Additional subsidies were granted from 2nd of April up to 6th of May to certain municipalities.

101 municipalities that received funding were asked to report to the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight against

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addressed to Roma Branches - Community Centers, Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Office of the President of KEDE.

<sup>25</sup> Greece, General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Document 256 / 16-03-2020 "Information on initiatives of the General Secretariat of Social Solidarity and Fight against Poverty to address the negative consequences of the negative consequences of the appearance of the corona in vulnerable social groups" addressed to the Home Secretary.

<sup>26</sup> Greece, General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Document 258 / 17-03-2020 "Information on urgent measures to address the negative consequences of the appearance of the corona in Roma populations living in camps and settlements" addressed to the Office of the Deputy Minister of Civil Protection, the Office of the Minister of Health, the Deputy Minister of Health, the Offices of the Regional Governors of Greece, the President of KEDE, the Office of the Secretary General of Civil Protection, the Office of the Secretary General of Health, Prevention & Volunteering, the President of EODY.

<sup>27</sup> Greece, General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Document 259 / 17-03-2020 "Taking necessary measures at the Roma camp in Pelekas" addressed to the Municipality of Katerini, the Secretary General of the Municipality of Katerini. This was sent to inform the European Economical Area /EEA, due to the preparation of the signing of the agreement and social integration of the Roma "in the framework of which a project is to be financed (EEA, budget: 2,300,000 euros) for the relocation of a Roma settlement in the Municipality of Katerini, according to the standards of social housing.

<sup>28</sup> Greece, General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Document 261 / 17-03-2020 "Taking necessary measures by Municipalities with Roma camps" addressed to the Offices of Mayors.

<sup>29</sup> Greece, General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Document 265 / 22-03-2020 "Proposal for measures to be taken in the Roma camps of the country, in the context of the suspension of the dispersal and spread of the corona" addressed to the Office of the Minister of Interior & Office of the Deputy Minister of Interior.

<sup>30</sup> Greece, Ministry of Interior, Ministerial Decision No 20210/ 27-3-2020, Έκτακτη κατανομή ποσού 2.255.000,00 €, από τους Κεντρικούς Αυτοτελείς Πόρους έτους 2020 σε Δήμους της Χώρας, προς κάλυψη αναγκών για την αποφυγή της διάδοσης του κορονοϊού COVID-19 σε οικισμούς και καταυλισμούς Ρομά. available in Greek at <https://bit.ly/2VRJNkA>

Poverty on the measures adopted. 75 municipalities responded<sup>31</sup> and the measures adopted are presented in the table below:

<b>Raising awareness in the population</b>	<b>Disinfection services</b>	<b>Disinfection to be conducted</b>	<b>Supply of drinking water</b>	<b>Antiseptics and relevant material</b>	<b>Food supply</b>
<b>75</b>	64	4	26	60	46

In addition, the Joint Ministerial Decision No. Δ1α / Γ.Π οικ 20036 "Imposition of the measure of temporary restriction of the traffic of the citizens in order to face the danger of dispersal of the coronavirus COVID-19"<sup>32</sup> includes a special provision for the Roma populations:

"Article two

Special regulations for the treatment of Roma, homeless, drug addicts and people fed on organized meals during the period of restriction of traffic

1. With special care of the relevant municipality, the Roma populations of each region are informed by all appropriate means, in order to remain throughout the temporary restriction of traffic within the camps, subject to the exceptionally permitted movements of par. 2 of article one. To this end, the municipal authority may request the assistance of the relevant police authority and use audio news messages to immediately inform these populations.

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3. The social services / structures of the municipalities take care of the home delivery of the daily meal to the beneficiaries of organized meals and beneficiaries of food and basic material assistance programs (TEVA). In case the beneficiary, for any reason, had not declared a residence address, it is declared by telephone by him to the competent department. ..."

<sup>31</sup> Greece, Response from the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Ministry of Labour on 15.06.2020

<sup>32</sup> Greece, Joint Ministerial Decision No. Δ1α / Γ.Π οικ 20036 "Imposition of the measure of temporary restriction of the traffic of the citizens in order to face the danger of dispersal of the coronavirus COVID-19"

Regarding education and employment issues, horizontal measures have been taken by the competent bodies, which apply to all citizens /residents in the country.

There was an extended closure of all universities and schools until 10 May 2020<sup>33</sup> and a phased reopening of them. During the closure were available educational television programmes every day from 10 am, mainly designed for primary school children. Secondary school pupils had been following live remote learning and most senior high pupils had been attending online classes with their teachers in preparation for university entrance exams in May. Lessons over the telephone were also another option being offered, to ensure students without reliable access to the internet would not fall behind. All relevant information on distance learning is available online through the special website of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs<sup>34</sup>. No special measures for the schooling of Roma children were identified or reported.

## **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 **Greece**, the General Secretary of Social Solidarity issued a circular addressing Mayors on 18 March 2020 requesting them to adopt special measures for the protection of the Roma populations from the spread of Coronavirus COVID-19.<sup>35</sup>

A circular from the General Secretariat of Public Health<sup>36</sup> on 16.04.2020 named specific preventive measures for the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in Roma settlements. The preventive measures refer to:

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<sup>33</sup> Greece, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, "Extension of prohibition of operation of educational units", ("Παράταση απαγόρευσης λειτουργίας εκπαιδευτικών δομών") , press release 20 April 2020 , available in Greek at <https://www.minedu.gov.gr/rss/44626-10-04-2020-dt-paratasi-apagorefsis-leitourgias-ekpaideftikon-domon-eos-kai-10-5-2020>

<sup>34</sup> <https://mathainoumestospiti.gov.gr/>

<sup>35</sup> Greece, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Circular "Necessary measures in Roma camps", 18 March 2020, available in Greek at <http://www.nomotelia.gr/photos/File/261-20.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Greece, Εγκύκλιος της Γενικής Γραμματείας Δημόσιας Υγείας αναφέρεται εκτενώς στα προληπτικά μέτρα κατά της διασποράς του κορωνοϊού SARS-CoV-2, σε προσωρινούς οργανωμένους χώρους εγκατάστασης και διαμονής ΡΟΜΑ, 16.04.2020, <https://www.moh.gov.gr/articles/health/dieythynsh-dhmosias-ygieinhs/metra-prolhpshts-enanti-koronoioy-sars-cov-2/7084-metra-prolhpshts-kata-ths-diasporas-toy-korwnoioy-sars-cov-2-se-proswrinoys-xwroys-egkatastashts-kai-diamonhs-roma>



## 1. Necessary hygiene infrastructure in Roma settlements

All Roma settlements should have :

- access to clean water, sufficient to cover the needs of the population. Potable water will be distributed via a water supply network, bottled water or in tanks. Quality should be in accordance with legislative standards.
- Hygienic waste management

This is achieved through sufficient number of toilets or chemical toilets to cover the needs of all users. The transfer and management of waste should be in accordance with legislation.

- possibility for individual cleanliness in baths and places for washing garments
- Electric power
- Bins for the collection of solid waste.

Regular controls of water supply and drainage should take place to restore any damage.

## 2. Disinfection instructions

## 3. personal hygiene instructions

- Avoid contact of hands with eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid common use of personal items
- When coughing or sneezing cover the nose and mouth
- Regular washing of hands
- Alternatively use of antiseptic solution or tissues.

## 4. Instructions for limitation of contacts - It is recommended to avoid

- contact with persons with COVID infection symptoms
- close encounters like handshakes, hugging and kissing
- gatherings and maintaining of a 1,5-2m distance
- contact with persons from vulnerable groups
- group activities.

Further, it is recommended to limit movement without serious reasons and to conduct any work with the smaller possible number of persons.

Extensive testing operations have been organised in Roma settlements where positive cases were identified and then extended to broader areas, in specific in the Region of Thessaly.

## **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.

Roma population in Greece is particularly vulnerable, living in extreme poverty, in unacceptable conditions, without access most of the time to basic goods such as drinking water, adequate food and energy<sup>37</sup>.

The Deputy Minister of Social Affairs, in charge of Welfare and Social Solidarity announced on April 13<sup>th</sup> that additional measures to alleviate vulnerable groups due to the pandemic were included in the new Act of Legislative Content adopted by the Government<sup>38</sup>. These included extension of free medical insurance for the uninsured until 31.05.2020, if the submitted extension applications have not been approved or if their validity expired after February 25, 2020 without submitting an application for renewal.

Extension of payment of disability benefits and postponement of meetings of KEPA health committees: Until May 30, 2020, the meetings of the health committees of the Disability Certification Centers (KEPA) have been postponed for the examination of applications for the extension of disability pension benefits. The payment of disability pensions and welfare benefits by OPECA is extended, as well as all allowances granted due to disability, provided that the beneficiaries have submitted a relevant application for extension, due to the expiration of the relevant opinions of the health committees of KEPA. No measures specifically applying to Roma populations were announced.

The Ministry of Interior issued a decision on 27 March 2020 to distribute €2.255.000,00 to 98 municipalities in Greece for the purpose of limiting the spread of Coronavirus COVID-19 within Roma residential areas.<sup>39</sup> The General Secretariat of Social Solidarity and Fight Against Poverty

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<sup>37</sup> Greece, Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, National Operational Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of the Roma 2017-2021 (Εθνικό Επιχειρησιακό Σχέδιο Δράσης για την Κοινωνική Ένταξη των Ρομά 2017-2021), <https://kekpa.gr/el/synolo-praksis-kentron-koinotitas/2903-ethniko-epixeirisiako-sxedio-drasis-gia-tin-koinoniki-entaksi-ton-roma-2017-2021>

<sup>38</sup> Greece, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Press Release 13.04.2020

<sup>39</sup> Greece, Ministry of Interior, Ministerial Decision No 20210/ 27-3-2020, Έκτακτη κατανομή ποσού 2.255.000,00 €, από τους Κεντρικούς Αυτοτελείς Πόρους έτους 2020 σε Δήμους της Χώρας, προς κάλυψη αναγκών για την αποφυγή της διάδοσης του κορονοϊού COVID-19 σε οικισμούς και καταυλισμούς Ρομά. available in Greek at <https://bit.ly/2VRJNkA>

corresponded urgently to address the situation coordinating all the relevant stakeholders (Ministry of Interior Affairs, Local and regional authorities, National Organization of Public Health, Civil Protection, Ministry of Health, Civil Society of Roma Community) while the NRCP is monitoring the implementation of these measures<sup>40</sup>.

Roma mediators working in the Roma support centres (run by the municipalities) have organised outreach activities and food deliveries. The Panhellenic Confederation of Greek Roma together with volunteers - among them JUSTROM team members too - has distributed food supplies to affected Roma families in the Attica Region<sup>41</sup>.

Roma organisations, for instance 'Roma without borders' were actively involved in awareness raising activities using duduks and horns (traditional musical instruments used by the Roma) and special spots on Youtube<sup>42</sup> to inform residents in Roma communities on the quarantine measures.

Several municipalities organised awareness campaigns on the protective measures targeting in specific Roma populations. One example comes from the Municipality of Chalandri in Attika that organised a visit to the settlement to inform the Roma about the restrictions in movement<sup>43</sup>. Solidarity teams

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<sup>40</sup> Greece, Overview of the Impact of Corona Virus Measures on the Marginalised Roma Communities in Greece – section on Greece, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/overview\\_of\\_covid19\\_and\\_roma\\_-\\_impact\\_-\\_measures\\_-\\_priorities\\_for\\_funding\\_-\\_23\\_04\\_2020.docx.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/overview_of_covid19_and_roma_-_impact_-_measures_-_priorities_for_funding_-_23_04_2020.docx.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Greece, Overview of the Impact of Corona Virus Measures on the Marginalised Roma Communities in Greece – section on Greece, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/overview\\_of\\_covid19\\_and\\_roma\\_-\\_impact\\_-\\_measures\\_-\\_priorities\\_for\\_funding\\_-\\_23\\_04\\_2020.docx.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/overview_of_covid19_and_roma_-_impact_-_measures_-_priorities_for_funding_-_23_04_2020.docx.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Greece, Roma Withou Borders (Ρομά χωρίς Σύνορα), With duduks and horns the Roma information campaign is continued (Με ντουντούκες και κόρνες συνεχίζεται η εκστρατεία ενημέρωσης στους Ρομά), 13.04.2020, [https://www.karditsalive.net/karditsa/anakinwseis/%CE%81%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AC-%CE%87%CE%89%CE%81%CE%AF%CF%82-%CE%83%CE%8D%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%B1-%CE%BC%CE%B5-%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%8D%CE%BA%CE%B5%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%81%CE%BD%CE%B5%CF%82-%CE%83%CE%85%CE%BD%CE%B5%CF%87%CE%AF%CE%B6%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%B7-%CE%B5%CE%BA%CF%83%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%AD%CF%81%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B7%CF%82-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%82-%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AC-%CE%B2%CE%AF%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B5%CE%BF%fbclid=IwAR15iBYG8\\_N1YuzXTRWORYV-cAp-iXfDMqPIEKHE3dQQqMQ8Jg8nymyB7A](https://www.karditsalive.net/karditsa/anakinwseis/%CE%81%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AC-%CE%87%CE%89%CE%81%CE%AF%CF%82-%CE%83%CE%8D%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%81%CE%B1-%CE%BC%CE%B5-%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%8D%CE%BA%CE%B5%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%81%CE%BD%CE%B5%CF%82-%CE%83%CE%85%CE%BD%CE%B5%CF%87%CE%AF%CE%B6%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%B7-%CE%B5%CE%BA%CF%83%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%AD%CF%81%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B7%CF%82-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%82-%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AC-%CE%B2%CE%AF%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B5%CE%BF%fbclid=IwAR15iBYG8_N1YuzXTRWORYV-cAp-iXfDMqPIEKHE3dQQqMQ8Jg8nymyB7A)

<sup>43</sup> Greece, SynEidisi online (ΣυνΕιδηση online), Information of the Roma on the protective measures against the coronavirus (Ενημέρωση των Ρομά για τα έκτακτα μέτρα προστασίας από τον κορωνοϊό), 26.03.2020, <https://syneidisi.com/%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%AD%CF%81%CF%89%>

were set up within the settlement to operate in rotation and ensure that food and medicines were brought in the community. The Social Grocery of the municipality would distribute food and personal protective equipment. A Roma mediator was part of the delegation <sup>44</sup>.

### **2.3 Measures addressing the needs of Roma children**

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

No specific measures were identified in relation to education and online schooling targeting Roma populations.

## **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.

There were several negative reactions and statements, especially in areas in proximity to Roma settlements. On one instance, the mayor of Larissa reported that Roma did not respect the protective measures and engaged in gatherings. He mentioned that he found one Roma at a local market and `collected him`. According to the mayor, individuals living within the quarantined blocks in Nea Smyrni (that go beyond the Roma settlement)

<https://syneidisi.com/%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%AD%CF%81%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CF%89%CE%BD-%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AC-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%AD%CE%BA%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%BC%CE%AD%CF%84%CF%81/>

<sup>44</sup> Greece, SynEidisi online (ΣυνΕιδηση online), Information of the Roma on the protective measures against the coronavirus (Ενημέρωση των Ρομά για τα έκτακτα μέτρα προστασίας από τον κορωνοϊό), 26.03.2020, <https://syneidisi.com/%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%AD%CF%81%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CF%89%CE%BD-%CF%81%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AC-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%AD%CE%BA%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%BC%CE%AD%CF%84%CF%81/>

are complaining because the Roma are disrespecting the measures. He mentioned 'I do not see calm and prudence in the Roma'<sup>45</sup>.

Media reports focused mainly on the alleged non-respect of restrictive measures by Roma in locations over Greece or their reactions to the lockdowns imposed. It was reported that in Irakleia in Serres the Roma organised gatherings to celebrate 'Ederlezi', a festivity that celebrates the arrival of spring<sup>46</sup>.

Reactions were also reported in response to the lockdown orders in specific Roma settlements where COVID-19 positive cases were found. In specific, the media reported alleged resistance and violent reactions from Roma residents in Nea Smyrni in Larissa to the lockdown orders. Members of the Roma community at the settlement of Nea Smyrni were reported to allegedly stage violent protests in response to what they call racial targeting. Dumpsters were set ablaze and a local journalist was brutally beaten, hit with stones and pummeled in the face. Health officials were chased away and residents refused to heed a 14-day lockdown order<sup>47</sup>. No arrests were made but police was on standby<sup>48</sup>. The Deputy Minister of Civil Protection and Crisis Management denied the reports on violent protests. He claimed that the Roma listened to the authorities and understood why they needed to be quarantined and what they had to do. He mentioned that there were few dissenting voices that were asking why measures were not extended to the rest of the settlement, but did not actually question the need for the measures<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> Greece, Iefimerida, Report by the Mayor of Larissa: the Roma did not respect protective measures in the settlement (Καταγγελία δημάρχου Λάρισσας: Οι Ρομά δεν τηρούσαν τα μέτρα προστασίας στον οικισμό), 13.04.2020, <https://www.iefimerida.gr/ellada/koronoios-dentiroyntan-metra-prostasias-roma-larisa>.

<sup>46</sup> Greece, Liberal, Roma celebration in Irakleia Serron despite the measures (Γλέντι Ρομά στην Ηράκλεια Σερρών παρά τα μέτρα), 25.04.2020, <https://www.liberal.gr/news/glenti-roma-stin-irakleia-serron-para-ta-metra/299025>.

<sup>47</sup> Greece, To Vima, The attack from Roma to Tsiodras and Chardalias in Larissa (Η επίθεση Ρομά σε Τσιόδρα και Χαρδαλιά στη Λάρισα), 10.04.2020, <https://www.tovima.gr/2020/04/10/society/vinteo-i-epithesi-roma-se-tsiodra-kai-xardalia-sti-larisa/>.

<sup>48</sup> Greece, VOA news, Fresh COVID Outbreak in Greek Roma Camp Sparks Violence, 16.05.2020, <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/fresh-covid-outbreak-greek-roma-camp-sparks-violence>; Iefimerida, The Roma settlement in Larissa is secluded – policy blocks (Αποκλεισμένος ο οικισμός Ρομά στη Λάρισα -Μπλόκα της αστυνομίας), 10.04.2020, <https://www.iefimerida.gr/ellada/koronoios-kroysmata-oikismo-roma-larisa-karantina> ; Lifo, A compelling image of Sotiris Tsiodras in the Roma settlement in Larissa (Μια συγκλονιστική εικόνα του Σωτήρη Τσιόδρα στον οικισμό Ρομά της Λάρισσας), 10.04.2020, <https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/277877/mia-sygklonistiki-eikona-toy-sotiri-tsiodra-ston-oikosmo-roma-tis-larissas>

<sup>49</sup> Greece, General Secretariat of Civil Protection (Γενική Γραμματεία Πολιτικής Προστασίας), Press release (Ενημέρωση από τον Υφυπουργό Πολιτικής Προστασίας και Διαχείρισης Κρίσεων Νίκο Χαρδαλιά και τον εκπρόσωπο του Υπουργείου Υγείας για το νέο κορονοϊό, Καθηγητή

Reactions were also reported in Drosero in Xanthi with citizens complaining on the Roma and the possibility of them being positive to the virus. Police patrols were present and the media. The Roma reacted saying they are not a 'health bomb' but no tension of violence took place<sup>50</sup>.

The Hellenic Ombudsman is currently investigating possible disciplinary liability by police officers in abuse of power with a discriminatory intent in three cases related to Covid-19 containment regulations, one of which concerned a Roma person. Disciplinary investigations by the Police are pending and the Ombudsman will review the relevant Police files before disciplinary decisions are adopted<sup>51</sup>.

### 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.

The head of the ad hoc expert committee for the pandemic, set up by the Ministry of Health to advise the Government<sup>52</sup>, referred to the Roma communities and their reaction in Nea Smyrni. In the daily information on COVID-19, he referred to the Roma community and to the need to improve the living conditions of many poor Roma in Europe. He visited Roma settlements and referred to the conditions that make them vulnerable such as the lack of access to water and the difficulty in applying social distancing measures in over populated residences. 'The Roma cannot be a scapegoat. They are not a threat, they are a vulnerable group. He highlighted that the protective measures are not about them but about the spread of the

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Σωτήρη Τσιόδρα), 10.04.2020, <https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/enimerosi-apo-ton-yfyroyrgo-politikis-prostasias-kai-diaheirisis-kriseon-niko-hardalia-kai-ton-14>.

<sup>50</sup> Greece, Newsbomb, coronavirus-Xanthi: Tension in the Roma settlement at Drosero – They shouted that there were no cases (Κορονοϊός - Ξάνθη: Ένταση στον οικισμό Ρομά στο Δροσερό - Φώναζαν ότι δεν έχουν κρούσματα), 14.04.2020, <https://www.newsbomb.gr/ellada/story/1072367/koronoios-xanthi-entasi-ston-oikismo-roma-sto-drosero-fonazan-oti-den-exoyn-kroysmata>

<sup>51</sup> Greece, Response from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and Fight against poverty.15.06.2020

<sup>52</sup> Greece, skai.gr, An expert group on coronavirus from the Ministry of Health. Who are the members (Επιστημονική ομάδα για τον κορονοϊό από το Υπουργείο Υγείας. Ποιοι την αποτελούν) 17.02.2020, <https://www.skai.gr/news/ygeia/epistimoniki-omada-gia-ton-koronoio-apo-to-ypourgeio-ygeias-poioti-tin-apoloun>

epidemic<sup>53</sup>. He said that the Roma will have equal access to health protection and that there is no room for discrimination, hate, fear and division.

The regular Epidemiological Surveillance Report of New Coronavirus Infection (COVID-19) by the National Public Health Organization makes no reference to ethnic origin of the cases<sup>54</sup>.

Other positive initiatives are identified. Since the initiation of the restrictions due to pandemic, the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty informed<sup>55</sup> the representatives of the Roma community (ELLAN PASE and the Union of Greek Roma Mediators and their Associates) about the seriousness of the situation, the relevant measures taken by the government, the individual and collective responsibility for public health and the need for cooperation.

On April 16, a teleconference was organised with representatives from the Roma community from different regions to discuss the problems<sup>56</sup>.

At the initiative of the Secretary General, the President of ELLAN PASSE was invited to participate in the first operational meeting in Larissa on April 10<sup>th</sup><sup>57</sup>, when the first cases were identified in the settlement of Nea Smyrni. In addition, at the suggestion of the Secretary-General, additional mediators were announced to facilitate the operational planning in the area and to

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<sup>53</sup> Greece, iefimerida.gr, Sotiris Tsiodras: the Roma cannot be a scapegoat- we support them and they support us (Σωτήρης Τσιόδρας: «Οι Ρομά δεν μπορούν να είναι αποδιοπομπαίος τράγος» -«Είμαστε μαζί τους και είναι μαζί μας»), 10.04.2020, [https://www.iefimerida.gr/ellada/sotiris-tsiodras-roma-apodiopompaios-tragos;\\_In.gr](https://www.iefimerida.gr/ellada/sotiris-tsiodras-roma-apodiopompaios-tragos;_In.gr), Tsiodras on Roma: They are not a threat but a vulnerable group (Τσιόδρας για Ρομά: «Δεν είναι απειλή, αλλά ευάλωτη ομάδα»), 10.04.2020, <https://www.in.gr/2020/04/10/greece/tsiodras-gia-roma-den-einai-apeili-alla-eyaloti-omada/; News247>, How Tsiodras beat racism against the Roma in few words (Πώς ο Τσιόδρας τσάκισε με δύο λόγια τον ρατσισμό σε βάρος των Ρομά), 10.04.2020, <https://www.news247.gr/koinonia/pos-o-tsiodras-tsakise-me-dyo-logia-ton-ratsismo-se-varos-ton-roma.7620925.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Greece, National Public Health Organisation (Εθνικός Οργανισμός Δημόσιας Υγείας), Epidemiological Surveillance Report (Έκθεση επιτήρησης COVID-19, 11.06.2020, [https://eody.gov.gr/0611\\_briefing\\_covid19/](https://eody.gov.gr/0611_briefing_covid19/).

<sup>55</sup> Greece, 253 / 16-03-2020 "Information on urgent measures to address the negative consequences of the appearance of the corona virus in Roma populations living in camps and settlements" - TO: President of the Greek Roma Intermediators and Associates, Mr. Paiteris; 255 / 16-03-2020 "Information on the urgent measures to deal with the negative consequences of the appearance of the corona virus in Roma populations living in camps and settlements" - TO: ELLAN PASSE - Panhellenic Confederation of Greek Roma.

<sup>56</sup> Greece, 253 / 16-03-2020 "Information on urgent measures to address the negative consequences of the appearance of the corona virus in Roma populations living in camps and settlements" - TO: President of the Greek Roma Intermediators and Associates, Mr. Paiteris; 255 / 16-03-2020 "Information on the urgent measures to deal with the negative consequences of the appearance of the corona virus in Roma populations living in camps and settlements" - TO: ELLAN PASSE - Panhellenic Confederation of Greek Roma.

<sup>57</sup> Greece, Response from the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Ministry of Labour on 15.06.2020.

manage the crisis properly in the community. The role of mediators has been extremely important in disseminating the required information to the community and informing the General Secretariat and other bodies from the field<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Greece, Response from the General Secretariat for Social Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, Ministry of Labour on 15.06.2020.