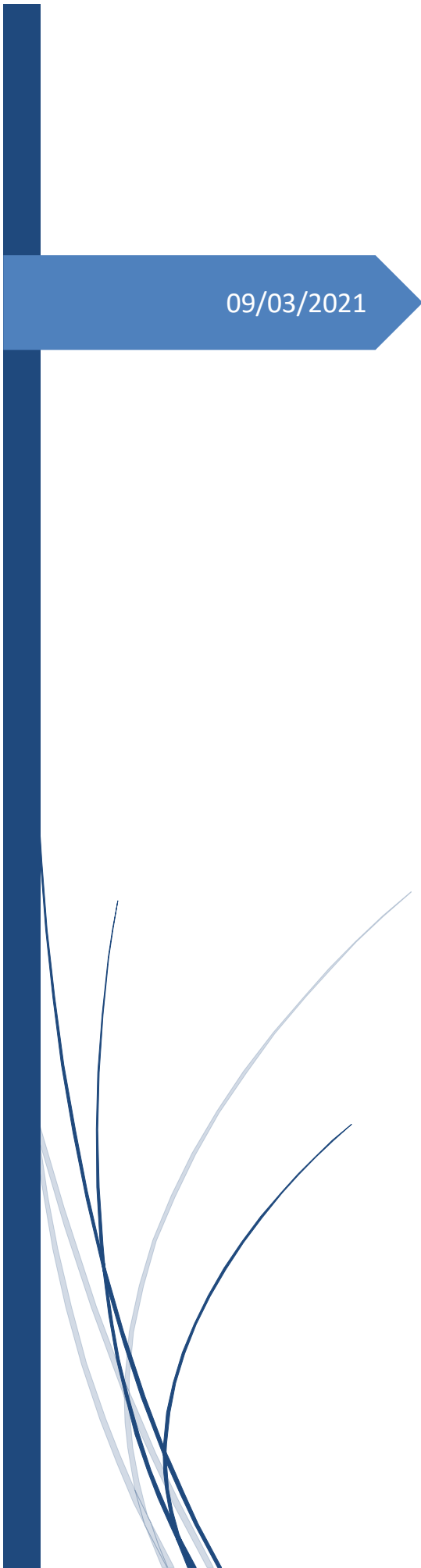


09/03/2021

**Responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in  
the fields of non-discrimination, diversity  
and inclusion**

**Promising and good practice examples**



# **Responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in the fields of non-discrimination, diversity and inclusion**

## **Promising and good practice examples**

This document contains a compilation of good and promising practice examples that member states of the Council of Europe have developed to uphold equality and protect disadvantaged groups against hate and discrimination during the Covid-19 pandemic. Unless otherwise indicated in the footnotes, these promising and good practices have been extracted from the replies that the CDADI received to a questionnaire on the anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion dimensions of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic in late spring 2020. The responses to those questionnaires have also been used for the study entitled: "[Covid-19: An analysis of the anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion dimensions in Council of Europe member states](#)". Updates to those responses were submitted by member states until the end of January 2021.

Further information on the examples provided by member states in this document may be obtained through their CDADI members.

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## I. Preparedness, outreach and information

### 1. Active outreach and assessment of needs on the ground

**ANDORRA:** The Government Equality Service has maintained close co-operation with the DIVERSAND association representing LGBTBI+ people. It established a referral and prevention protocol with that association to prevent and combat discrimination.

**BELGIUM:** A "Vulnerable Groups" Task Force composed of representatives of the Federal State, the Regions and the Communities was set up to monitor the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable and to propose appropriate actions. In the Flemish Community a Task Force on Vulnerable Families was set up at Community level with similar objectives. The Agency for Integration and Civic Inclusion made an analysis of the impact of the crisis on the legal situation of foreign nationals. In addition, the government is financially supporting a project of the NGO ORBIT which aims to inform local religious communities about prevention and vaccination against the virus.

**BULGARIA:** An NGO which is part of the online group initiated by the National Contact Point for Roma started an information campaign in all Facebook groups.

**DENMARK:** The Danish Department of Gender Equality maintained dialogue with representatives of Danish LGBTBI organisations on the effects of Covid-19 on LGBTBI communities.

**CYPRUS:** The mayor of Limassol maintained close contacts with the intercultural council and representatives of migrant communities through an online meeting convened to assess special needs and challenges.<sup>1</sup>

**ESTONIA:** The Ministry of Social Affairs has been in regular contact with the Estonian organisations working on human rights and LGBTBI issues to evaluate the needs of the community.

**IRELAND:** The NGOs BeLonG To and Pobal published "LGBTBI+ Life in Lockdown", which looked at the impact of the pandemic as well as the impact that public health measures had on the wellbeing of young LGBTBI+ people.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Intercultural Cities 2020, Covid-19: Challenges and Opportunities for Intercultural Local Authorities, Summary Report Online Meeting, 23 April 2020

<sup>2</sup><https://belongto.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/LGBTBI-Life-in-Lockdown-Key-Findings.pdf>

The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) established a vulnerable persons subgroup to monitor and advise on the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups.<sup>3</sup>

**FINLAND:** The Ministry of Justice conducted an unofficial survey among its stakeholders on the impacts of Covid-19 on equality and non-discrimination (March 2020). The survey was sent by email to the National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs (RONK), the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO) and the Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (VANE), as well as several civil society organisations (CSOs) working on minority rights.

In autumn 2020 the Finnish Institute for Welfare and Health launched a project to study the experience of persons with disabilities and immigrants during the pandemic with a view to better involving these groups in future planning. An additional survey is to examine the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Roma population in Finland.

**GREECE, BULGARIA, LATVIA, NORTH MACEDONIA, ROMANIA:** The role of Roma mediators has been highlighted for maintaining continuous and effective communication with local Roma communities, and in **SERBIA** and **HUNGARY** the role of minority self-governments was highlighted.

**GERMANY:** The newly founded “Competency network Public Health Covid-19” aims, among other issues, to address impact on and protection of vulnerable groups, including migrants, refugees, LGBTIQ, homeless people and socially deprived groups during the pandemic. Future Germany-wide surveys by the Robert Koch-Institute are to include instruments to assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic with regard to access to health care, health status and health information. The Regenbogenportal website <https://regenbogenportal.de> includes information and online offers for LGBTIQ+ people such as information on advisory services, calls for donations, neighbourhood help or virtual youth groups. In addition, Germany is financially supporting the creation of a community-based brochure that shows the effects of the pandemic on LGBTIQ+ and proposes specific recommendations for action for political decision-makers.

**ITALY:** The National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) carried out an analysis of the situation of Roma communities living in overcrowded camps and with limited access to the distribution of basic necessities, and involved the Roma National Platform in online meetings to evaluate the impact of the pandemic and design and implement bottom-up local interventions in favour of Roma. UNAR-funded action-research carried out by INMP-NIHPM, the National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty, emphasised critical issues concerning the shortage of food, basic necessities and PPE (medical devices, masks, sanitising gels, etc.) in settlements, as well as the limited access to online classes for

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<sup>3</sup>See also the "Report on Social Implications of Covid-19 in Ireland: Preliminary Assessment" published by the Department of the Taoiseach on 15 May 2020 and reports on the impact of Covid-19 across society, including vulnerable groups: <https://assets.gov.ie/74373/5cc1bbfe59b447d3b841fa43cefc79d.pdf>; a follow-up report was published in mid-June.

students living in marginalised areas. UNAR-financed need assessments addressed to Roma settlements in Milan, Rome, Naples and Giugliano and concrete interventions (food, educational aids for distance learning such as PCs & tablets, milk and diapers for babies, etc.) were carried out by Roma and pro-Roma Associations, involving a total of 2,750 Roma beneficiaries.

**LATVIA:** The Ministry of Culture launched a survey to identify the impact of the lockdown related to the Covid-19 pandemic situation on the activity of national minority NGOs, as well as to collect views and proposals from national minority NGOs on promoting effective participation by national minorities in the development of civil society (May 2020).

**LUXEMBOURG:** The government has developed a communication strategy to raise awareness and provide information to cross-border workers as well as to the resident population as a whole, including foreigners, immigrants and so-called vulnerable groups. To this end it has created a Covid-19 dedicated website.<sup>4</sup> Available in four languages, the site provides reliable and verifiable information on health measures and recommendations, protection measures, the PCR test campaign, etc. At the same time, regular communication has been maintained between the government and civil society, notably through press briefings available on social networks. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the government has also been co-operating with the Covid-19 Task Force in the field of interdisciplinary public research.<sup>5</sup>

**NORTH MACEDONIA:** Regular communication was maintained between the government and civil society through the Council for Cooperation between the government and the Civil Sector as well as by each line Ministry. Communication included the LGBTI NGO sector and Human Rights and Roma NGOs which are included in the National Government Body for non-discrimination issues.

**MALTA:** Consultation by the Human Rights department with the LGBTIQ Consultative Council focused specifically on the impact that Covid-19 was having both on the work of the organisations as well as on the LGBTIQ community in Malta.

**PORTUGAL:** The High Commission for Migration (ACM) was in contact with different local stakeholders and conducted a survey on the existing responses on the ground involving the CLAIM network (municipalities and civil society entities), Municipal Plans for the Integration of Migrants, Immigrant GIP (Professional Inclusion Office) Network, responses at the level of asylum seekers and refugees, Roma Communities (Municipal Plans for the Integration of Roma Communities, Roma Associations, ROMED Programme, Intercultural Municipal Mediators Project), Immigrant Associations and Portuguese For All Schools and Vocational Training. ACM also designated Focal Points in the North and Centre, Lisbon

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<sup>4</sup> <https://covid19.public.lu/fr.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://researchluxembourg.lu/covid-19-taskforce/>

and Alentejo and Algarve to give immediate and coordinated responses to emergency situations. At governmental level, five State Secretaries were assigned to five different regions to centralise responses addressed to the most vulnerable communities.

**ROMANIA:** The National Agency for the Roma (NAR), in collaboration with the local authorities, have carried out a survey among Roma communities and identified the communities most at risk. An early warning/reporting mechanism was instituted by NAR with regular communication with county representatives to get updates on the situation in Roma communities and to fill any possible gaps in communication with the central authorities in reporting developments.

The Department for Interethnic Relations (DIR) monitored attitudes of exclusion, intolerance and extremism toward national minorities in the context of Covid-19 and access for citizens belonging to national minorities to relevant information on the Covid-19 pandemic in their own languages. Specific recommendations were then sent to the relevant institutions to be considered in their further actions and regulations.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) sent letters to all social service providers requesting information regarding the situation of these entities (number of personnel, number of beneficiaries, their needs generated by the pandemic: PPE, hygiene products, etc.). Also, in May 2020 the MLSP issued a Protocol with recommendations for the social services applicable during the state of alert declared as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**SPAIN:** The Directorate General for Family Diversity and Social Services conducted a survey among the 17 Autonomous Regions, 2 Autonomous Cities (Ceuta and Melilla) and Local Entities regarding the impact of the social measures on Roma people at local level during the state of emergency.

**UNITED KINGDOM:** The government developed a communication and engagement strategy to reach out to ethnic minorities. It also engaged with faith leaders and other stakeholders from the Sikh, Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities. This included extensive media campaigns, using television and social media outlets to provide the latest information from the government. Regular webinars with LGBT community sector leaders were held by the National Adviser on LGBT health to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the community.

**SWITZERLAND:** From the first days of the Covid-19 crisis the federal authorities responsible for Traveller issues contacted the Yenish and Sinti organisations to assess their situation and respond quickly to their urgent needs. The authorities very quickly issued recommendations to the cantonal and communal services responsible for the reception areas to reduce the impact of the crisis on these groups and put health protection and economic assistance measures in place, including reducing or even doing away with parking fees.

## 2. Information for disadvantaged groups in the languages they speak and via the communication channels they use

**AUSTRIA:** Covid-19-related safety measures are provided in 17 languages by the Austrian Integration Fund (AIF/ÖIF). The AIF also operates a multilingual call-back information service by phone which provides information on a range of topics in 10 languages.

**BELGIUM:** Coordination was established between regions, communities and at the federal level to optimise the translation of information into several languages. The Agency for Integration and Civic Inclusion of the Flemish government publishes information on the guidelines and consequences of the pandemic in more than 30 languages.<sup>6</sup> These include: how to prevent infection; how to slow down the pandemic; advice for people who are isolated at home; and what to do when a family member feels ill.

In the Flemish Community the local religious communities cooperated to prepare an information leaflet on the organisation of celebrations during the confinement. Antwerp Local Police Mediation Teams familiarised the different communities with the Covid-19 measures and monitored their impact on them. Charleroi police had close contact and consultations with minority groups, including local religious leaders and "camp chiefs" in Roma settlements.

**CYPRUS:** The Mayor of Limassol convoked a teleconference meeting with the members of the Limassol Intercultural Council and representatives of the Russian community. This led inter alia to the setting-up of a multicultural team to resolve translation-related matters and the distribution of information material in various languages spoken in Limassol. As a result, the campaign on Covid-19 measures was communicated in over 40 different languages through the Limassol Intercultural Council's social media.

**DENMARK:** An information campaign about Covid-19 specifically aimed at ethnic minorities living in Denmark was launched and included the distribution of posters, booklets and online videos. "Mino Danmark" keeps minorities up to date with the latest news from the government's Covid-19 messages in 25 languages. A social media campaign aimed at young people was created. Efforts were made to ensure that those messages were made accessible to illiterate persons. The Danish Health Authority developed information material on Covid-19 for people with an ethnic minority background, the majority of whom are migrants, to counter higher infection rates among this population. The graphic material is available in 19 languages, with videos available in languages such as Arabic, Somali, Urdu and Farsi. The Danish Health Authority established

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.integratie-inburgering.be/corona-meertalige-info>



an expert group to advise it on how to communicate the new information to ethnic minority groups and help disseminate relevant material in their networks.<sup>7</sup>

**ESTONIA:** All important information was translated into Russian and English, the other most commonly used languages in Estonia. The government has created a special webpage in the three main languages.<sup>8</sup> Estonian residents are regularly informed by the government by e-mail and text messages. During the emergency situation the police informed people on the streets and in other public places about the rules and restrictions and made home-visits as well as phone calls to people who were quarantined.

**FINLAND:** The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare published information concerning Covid-19 on their website in 16 different languages and as audio recordings and videos in the Finnish and Finland-Swedish sign languages. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman gathered links to different sites that provide Covid-19 information in different languages.<sup>9</sup> The Sámi Parliament distributed information material prepared by the Prime Minister's Office and the National Institute for Health and Welfare in the Sámi community. Through a webinar the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health conveyed to the municipalities the message that it is essential to have multilingual information on the coronavirus. Furthermore, persons who were unable to search information online had access to a telephone and chat service (primarily available in Finnish and, where possible, also in Swedish and English) providing advice on Covid-19. Contact with the older Roma people has been maintained through regular telephone communication. A letter about the coronavirus was sent to every home in Finland; the letter to citizens is also available in Braille.

**GEORGIA:** The information web-portal [www.StopCov.ge](http://www.StopCov.ge) provides full information on all Covid-19 related issues. Over half a million printed copies of information material on Covid-19 management, prevention recommendations and regulations and the anti-crisis plan have been disseminated to ethnic minority populations. Apart from printed resources, online media and official social media pages of regional and local governments have been used to share information in ethnic minority languages. The most critical information on Covid-19 is shared with the population by text messages sent in the Armenian and Azerbaijani languages as well as in Georgian. The information hotline 144 also operated in Armenian and Azerbaijani. Bilingual volunteers trained on Covid-19 related issues subsequently conducted online information meetings with representatives of ethnic minorities.

**GERMANY:** With the "Zusammen gegen Corona" (Together against Corona) campaign the Federal Ministry of Health provides a wide-ranging catalogue of information and education measures on the coronavirus for various target groups on its website

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<sup>7</sup> [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-november\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-november_en.pdf):32

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.kriis.ee>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.syrjinta.fi/-/tietoa-koronaviruksesta-eri-kielilla>

[www.zusammengegencorona.de](http://www.zusammengegencorona.de). Articles on various topics provide information in German, English, Turkish and Russian. Information flyers about the coronavirus are also available in 22 languages and in Braille. Furthermore, information for Travellers returning to Germany is provided in German, English, French, Turkish, Polish and Czech at all service stations and rest stops.

The German Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) also provides material on Covid-19 in different languages on its website [www.infektionsschutz.de](http://www.infektionsschutz.de) for people from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Traveller-specific information is provided in several languages as well. Sign language videos, audio content and texts in easy language are also available.

**ICELAND** made information on Covid-19 available in eight languages; the authorities built new partnerships to reach out to the minorities and thus made diversity visible.<sup>10</sup>

**IRELAND:** All communication from the Health Service Executive Covid-19 team was shared with civil society. Communication to date has included material on Covid-19 available in over 20 languages. Additional funding has been provided to create Traveller-specific information about Covid-19 and social distancing measures.

**ITALY:** Meetings between UNAR and Roma associations have been held using online platforms; they were well attended by members of Roma communities and their representatives. This new communication channel registered high Roma participation, even from members less used to attending face-to-face meetings.

**LUXEMBOURG:** The "Covid-19 awareness-raising and information toolbox" is available in French, Luxembourgish, German, English and Portuguese, as well as in other languages such as Romanian, Bulgarian and Polish. In addition, a media campaign entitled "We are all part of the solution" has been launched in several languages to raise awareness, among minority groups, inter alia, of the current health measures. The campaign is running on TV commercials as well as on various other media: radio, YouTube, social networks, etc. It is also running on the Internet.

**NETHERLANDS:** Specific problems indicated that the anti-Covid-19 measures were not well known among people with Moroccan, Turkish and Somali origins, and that inaccurate information was circulating. In reaction to these signals, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment helped organisations with a reasonable support base to disseminate and interpret the anti-Covid-19 measures among their supporter base (television and online broadcasts, possibility to contact a helpline with volunteers from their own community, and other creative (local) initiatives).

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<sup>10</sup>Intercultural Cities (2020), Covid-19: Challenges and Opportunities for Intercultural Local Authorities, Summary Report online meeting 23 April 2020

**NORWAY:** The Directorate of Health and the National Public Health Institute took steps to provide accessible information to different communities and vulnerable groups. Information on Covid-19 was given in North Sami, South Sami and Lule Sami, in over 40 languages (main global languages) and in the languages of most minority groups. Furthermore, as migrants of Somali origin in Norway often do not speak Norwegian, the government allocated funds to open a “Covid Hotline” in the Somali language.<sup>11</sup> Cooperation with NGO's of ethnic groups, community-workers and health advisors who represent different ethnic or migrant groups is reported to be an efficient way to reach out to minority and vulnerable groups.

**REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA:** There is a Russian language version of the official website dedicated to Covid-19 updates. Information leaflets on the virus and related measures have been made available in Ukrainian, Romani and Gagauz.<sup>12</sup>

**PORTUGAL:** During the state of emergency face-to face attendance was always maintained by the services of the National Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants (CNAIM) and was complemented with the reinforcement of online services and the creation of specific email addresses and telephone support.

The High Commission for Migration (ACM) issued information on the different measures taken according to the situation of each region in nine languages besides Portuguese: Arabic, Bengali, English, French, Hindi, Mandarin, Nepalese, Romanian and Russian.<sup>13</sup> Videos from the Directorate-General for Health with recommendations for preventing Covid-19 contagion were made in Arabic, Bengali, Crioulo, Nepalese and Romanian. It also disseminated information to Roma NGOs, including through an awareness-raising campaign.

**ROMANIA:** The Romanian Broadcasting Company and Romanian Television adjusted their programmes dedicated to national minorities by translating and broadcasting in different minority languages all information related to the pandemic and the measures taken by the authorities. The police played an important role in disseminating information: in partnership with civil society, audio messages regarding prevention measures were recorded and disseminated by police patrols in settlements where the majority of the population speak Romani and Hungarian.

Social assistants from the integrated community teams which were set up by the ESF-funded project “Creating and implementing integrated community services for combating poverty and social exclusion” provided support (information, counselling etc.) to vulnerable persons in their communities and carried out social surveys.

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<sup>11</sup> Information collected during a CoE-seminar on online hate speech

<sup>12</sup> <http://gismoldova.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/b8a5ead53f214b649ac4ec45e4b4c65f>

<sup>13</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/index.cfm?action=furl.go&go=/news/portugal-more-multilingual-information-on-Covid-19-for-migrants>

The Department for Interethnic Relations (DIR) monitored several public institutions in order to provide an overview of the use of minority languages in communication on Covid-19-related measures. The results of the monitoring as well as the recommendations for the different entities, including public media providers, were published and sent to the relevant stakeholders to be considered in further activities and decisions.

Organisations representing various minority groups (Hungarian, Ukrainian, Polish, Serbian) have also been actively involved in providing relevant information on Covid-19 in their respective languages.

**SLOVAKIA:** The Plenipotentiary for National Minorities published an official statement about the translation of all relevant documents and measures adopted by the government into the languages of national minorities (Hungarian, Romani, Ukrainian, Ruthenian and German) and asked the government and other authorities to respect the law on minority languages, which requires them to publish all relevant information in minority languages.<sup>14</sup>

**SWEDEN:** The Public Health Agency has published general advice and recommendations on how to avoid spreading the disease. These are available in various languages, including Romani in some regions.<sup>15</sup> Religious leaders and mediators from the minority groups have been involved in disseminating information about the virus and how to protect oneself from being infected.

**SWITZERLAND:** A large number of documents and instruction videos are translated into many languages spoken by migrants. The Corona-Helpline and the official website of the Swiss Confederation devoted to the pandemic are available in ten languages.

**UNITED KINGDOM:** The government's public health messaging and guidance has been published in well over 600 publications, including those with a high proportion of ethnic minority readership. To reach as many people as possible, marketing materials are consistently translated into 10 different languages, with additional languages made available as requested by local authorities and external stakeholder groups.

Furthermore, the government announced a new "Community Champions" scheme, which provides funding of £25 million to local authorities and the voluntary and community sector to improve the reach of official public health guidance and other messaging or communications about the virus into specific places and groups most at risk from Covid-19.

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<sup>14</sup>[https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/slovakia-report-Covid-19-april-2020\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/slovakia-report-Covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf):10

<sup>15</sup><https://www.skane.se/en/Health-care/seeking-healthcare/Covid-19---other-languages/>

**TURKEY:** In Migrant Health Centres, migrants are trained on disease protection and containment measures. Materials such as posters and brochures are distributed in different languages.<sup>16</sup>

## II. Access to services

### 1. Health

In some countries, such as **BELGIUM, FRANCE, GERMANY (BERLIN), IRELAND, MALTA, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, SWITZERLAND and the UK**, undocumented people were able to access Covid-19-related health care.<sup>17</sup>

**BELGIUM:** The Federal Minister of Health has ordered a ban on the application of surcharges for single rooms in hospitals, as well as for protective equipment during the crisis. Moreover, the issuance of an urgent medical assistance certificate is not necessary for the state to cover the costs of care provided to persons in an irregular situation. At the initiative of the federal parliament, the income ceiling for obtaining an advance on maintenance payments from the SECAL (maintenance claims service) has been abolished.

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** The “BiH Women's Initiative” Foundation (BHWI) provides psychosocial support to vulnerable groups of women on the move (women travelling with family or alleged family members, single mothers and fathers, unaccompanied girls, the sick, those who cannot read or write, and illiterate girls). The psychosocial mobile team consists of social workers, psychologists, translators and cultural mediators who intervene in temporary reception centres for migrants in BiH. The BHWI staff perform multiple tasks: translation, recording, filling out forms, literacy, additional training, health care, occupational therapy, workshops (hairdressing, tailoring, sewing, knitting, make-up, jewellery making), sports and cultural activities, music and dance, preservation of mental health, psychological support, work with victims of some form of violence and more. Various needs assessments of families with children, women and girls were made in relation to gender-based violence in the context of mixed migration in BiH. The non-governmental organisation "Women from Una" (Bihać) has implemented a programme to help refugee women and migrants recover from trauma.

**BULGARIA:** The National Network of Health Mediators drew up guidelines for the work of health mediators to curb the spread of Covid-19, for approval by the Ministry of Health.

**ESTONIA:** All persons living/staying in Estonia, regardless of whether they have medical insurance, receive equal medical treatment if diagnosed with Covid-19. As 24.3% of Roma

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<sup>16</sup> <https://covid19bilgi.saglik.gov.tr/tr/> and <https://hsgm.saglik.gov.tr/tr/gocsagligi->

<sup>17</sup> <https://picum.org/whats-happening-to-undocumented-people-during-the-Covid-19-pandemic/>

living in Estonia are uninsured (compared to 14.7% of the general population), this is considered an important measure.

**FINLAND:** Central government increased support to municipalities and the local authority association was strengthened in 2020 and provided necessary services to the most vulnerable people in the most vulnerable areas.

**FRANCE:** A recommendation was made to use “traducmed” (<http://www.traducmed.fr>), a support tool for medical care. The site contains the Covid-19 explanatory sheet in 42 languages, the barrier measure sheet in 16 languages, containment instructions in 11 languages, and sentences in 38 languages to speak to patients.

**GREECE:** On 27 March 2020 the government allocated € 2,255,000 to 98 municipalities for the provision of medical supplies and equipment in Roma communities.<sup>18</sup>

**ITALY:** In the framework of an agreement between UNAR and the National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty (INMP-NIHMP), INMP is carrying out a project worth € 950,481 aimed at the local health authorities in 14 urban areas for the implementation of the "Roma Health Action Plan", which aims to improve equality for the Roma population in access to health care. Several activities have been carried out with the involvement of health care institutions in Naples, Rome, Milan, Salerno and Cagliari. They include: the creation of a repository of all health education materials, the development of digital tools to make information more useful, the design of training courses in health for Roma transcultural mediators, the development of a training course for health workers of the National Health System and the testing of intervention models. For LGBTI people initiatives have been taken to enhance/improve awareness of access to local health services. In addition, UNAR, in cooperation with the National Health Institute, has launched an experimental project to develop the first institutional web portal for transgender people (called INFOTRANS.IT).

**LITHUANIA** announced that foreigners without health insurance would be treated for health issues related to the coronavirus at the state's expense.<sup>19</sup>

**LUXEMBOURG:** The government created and consolidated various health hotlines, such as "Santé", "SOS Détresse" and "Kanner-Jugendtelefon", to offer anonymous, continuous and confidential help to so-called vulnerable people suffering socially and psychologically from the consequences of the health crisis. In addition to the official government website, in collaboration with civil society the authorities have also developed a website entitled

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<sup>18</sup><https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2020/protect-human-rights-and-public-health-fighting-Covid-19:32>

<sup>19</sup>[https://www.baltictimes.com/foreigners\\_emigrants\\_to\\_be\\_treated\\_for\\_coronavirus\\_at\\_state\\_s\\_expense\\_in\\_lithuania/](https://www.baltictimes.com/foreigners_emigrants_to_be_treated_for_coronavirus_at_state_s_expense_in_lithuania/)

"Coronavirus and mental health", which contains useful information on how to better manage and preserve one's psychological health during a health crisis.<sup>20</sup>

**NORTH MACEDONIA:** On 5 August 2020 the National LGBTI Helpline was launched by the Sexual and Gender Minorities Association "Subversive Front", in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and with EU and CoE financial support.

**POLAND:** Lublin municipal authorities took measures to ensure that migrants could obtain a social security number.<sup>21</sup>

**PORTUGAL:** The High Commission for Migration (ACM) had several members of its staff working directly with persons who were in isolation, providing awareness of the rules to bear in mind, diagnosing and providing for basic needs, establishing contacts with several institutions and providing translators. ACM was also involved in Covid-19 testing for asylum seekers, in this case mainly by providing interpreters.

The Health Directorate issued specific guidelines to the Regional Health Administrations to guarantee access for Trans people to clinical follow-up and drugs in the framework of specific hormone therapy. Also, through a partnership between the Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality and the National Pharmacy Association (ANF), a direct and privileged communication channel was created between the ANF and LGBTI associations and groups to identify and respond to needs related to access to pharmacies and the administration of injectables associated with specific hormone treatment.

**SPAIN:** The Ministry of Social Rights published a technical document with recommendations to social services on actions during the Covid-19 crisis in segregated settlements and highly vulnerable neighbourhoods.<sup>22</sup>

**UK:** Trans people may have gender affirming surgery and treatment cancelled or delayed as Trusts that host a Gender Identity Clinic are complying with national advice to prevent face-to-face contact unless urgent. This could have negative consequences for mental health. National Health Service England (NHS) has advised GPs on measures to ensure continued access to treatment and prescriptions wherever possible, such as via electronic repeat dispensing. The National Adviser on LGBT Health also worked across the health care system to ensure that LGBT-specific Covid-19 guidance is produced on matters such as accessing Gender Identity Clinics or getting mental health support.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.covid19-psy.lu/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.themayor.eu/en/how-to-support-foreigners-in-a-pandemic-lessons-from-lublin>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.fnmc.es/2020/03/31/documento-tecnico-de-recomendaciones-de-actuacion-de-los-servicios-sociales-ante-la-crisis-por-Covid-19-en-asentamientos-segregados-y-barrios-altamente-vulnerables/>

**TURKEY** provided all people in the country, regardless of whether they had social security or not, with free coronavirus-related treatment and medicine.<sup>23</sup>

## **2. Housing (enabling social distancing and respect of hygiene and social distancing rules)**

**FINLAND:** Provisions were made for asylum seeker reception centres to accommodate potential quarantine and isolation situations. The Finnish Immigration Service issued information leaflets for asylum seekers on Covid-19 in different languages.

**FRANCE, GREECE, IRELAND,<sup>24</sup> SWITZERLAND and UK<sup>25</sup>:** Instructions were given to ensure that additional sites were made available for Roma and Travellers and/or improve sanitary conditions.

**FRANCE, GERMANY,<sup>26</sup> HUNGARY,<sup>27</sup> ITALY, ROMANIA, and SPAIN<sup>28</sup>:** Evictions were suspended.<sup>29</sup>

**GREECE:** The Greek authorities continued to automatically renew asylum applicants' residence permits to avoid overcrowding at the Asylum Offices.<sup>30</sup>

**IRELAND:** Special measures were put in place to assist the Roma community in accessing services, including specific accommodation to facilitate social distancing and Roma-specific medical care. Additional funding was also provided to facilitate social distancing in Traveller accommodation and for international protection applicants in the Direct Provision system.

**LUXEMBOURG:** The government has developed a new system of primary reception, which allows systematic screening for SARS-Cov-2 for newly arrived applicants for

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<sup>23</sup><https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/coronavirus-treatment-in-turkey-is-free-35417/>;

<https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2020/04/20200414-16.pdf>

<sup>24</sup><https://www.paveepoint.ie/concerns-for-vulnerable-travellers-being-taken-on-board-by-government-in-plan-to-fight-Covid-19/>

<sup>25</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/882564/Covid-19\\_-\\_mitigating\\_impacts\\_on\\_gypsy\\_traveller\\_communities.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/882564/Covid-19_-_mitigating_impacts_on_gypsy_traveller_communities.pdf)

<sup>26</sup><https://www.thelocal.de/20200322/german-government-promises-relief-for-renters-amid-coronavirus-crisis>

<sup>27</sup><https://hungarytoday.hu/coronavirus-govt-suspends-enforcements-evictions/>

<sup>28</sup><https://www.deccanherald.com/international/world-news-politics/coronavirus-spain-bans-evictions-to-ease-virus-hardship-819858.html>

<sup>29</sup> See the Study "[Covid-19: An analysis of the anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion dimensions in Council of Europe member states](#)"

<sup>30</sup>[https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-november\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-november_en.pdf): 31



international protection before they are relocated to other accommodation facilities. Because of the health crisis and curfew measures the government also opened the accommodation facilities prematurely as part of its "Winter Action".

### 3. Education (online/distance learning)

**AUSTRIA:** Special schooling support programmes for Roma take place in an online setting (the Roma-Schulmediation in Vienna or the Lernbetreuung in the Burgenland). Lack of personal contact is reported to be a particular challenge.

**BELGIUM:** In the Flemish Community the office in charge of the recognition of foreign qualifications (NARIC-Flanders) remained open. The health crisis accelerated the "radical digitalisation" project; as a result, documents are only issued in digital form and equivalence decisions are signed electronically (in pdf). Thanks to the existing cooperation between NARIC Flanders and the reception offices for newly-arrived immigrants and refugees, the recognition of qualifications remains accessible to target groups that are (digitally) more difficult to reach.

**BULGARIA:** Educational mediators have assisted children from poor neighbourhoods, including Roma neighbourhoods, and offered help with on-line education. Mobile operators provided free internet in Roma neighbourhoods to support distance learning.

**CROATIA:** A survey was launched on the involvement of Roma students in distance learning activities with the aim of detecting gaps.

**FRANCE** distributed computer equipment (tablets and laptops) that would be available in schools and educational establishments, in agreement with the municipalities, departments and regions, in order to ensure continuity of education.<sup>31</sup>

**FINLAND:** in June 2020, the Finnish government introduced a wide-ranging package of measures, worth approximately 320 million euros, to promote the wellbeing of children and young people. It called it a "Wellbeing Package" and it covers the administrative branches of three ministries: the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. In vocational education and training 30 million euros were allocated to support students who have interrupted their studies or are in danger of doing so, and to provide study guidance for students who are about to complete their studies. Young people at risk of social exclusion were offered education, training and services that support them on the path towards a qualification or a job.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.education.gouv.fr/continuite-pedagogique-l-education-nationale-et-la-poste-mobilisees-pour-maintenir-le-lien-avec-les-303321>

**GEORGIA:** Access to education was ensured by a rapid shift to remote/online learning formats and the introduction of digital education platforms. A “TV School” project is in the implementation phase; it consists in broadcasting TV lessons in various subjects for schoolchildren and entry-level students, including ethnic minority representatives.

**GREECE:** students in refugee camps received weekly homework packages if unable to connect to online platforms by phone or Internet.<sup>32</sup>

Non-territorial or cultural autonomy bodies such as the National Roma Self-Government in **HUNGARY** and national minority councils in **SERBIA** have provided support with the delivery of education in minority languages.

**ITALY:** In Milan the “Casa della Carità” has allocated resources in the framework of educational projects for the purchase of 45 tablets; it continues to collect tablets. In Naples and several other municipalities some Roma families have been provided with recreational and educational material.

**LUXEMBOURG:** The government has created an educational website dedicated to Covid-19.<sup>33</sup> It includes, for example, a FAQ in five languages as well as reference documents, practical information on the management of the pandemic in schools and educational structures as well as a roadmap on the digitalisation of school learning. Two helplines have also been consolidated in the field of education, in order to be able to offer pedagogical aid, psychological advice and family support to so-called vulnerable individuals and households. In addition the government has developed a specific platform dedicated to information and key resources for home-based learning.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the authorities have created resources and methods for distance learning, in particular to ensure continuity in language learning as part of the linguistic integration of applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection as well as adult newcomers.

**NORTH MACEDONIA:** negotiations were held with telecommunication companies to subsidise connectivity<sup>35</sup> and the donation of mobile internet cards through the centres for social work. As part of the inclusion project for children in pre-school education a proposal was prepared to involve educators, Roma caregivers and mediators in the process of instructing and monitoring online education. This proposal considered the possibility of providing tablets to 103 children who did not have access to pre-school education.

**ROMANIA:** The public broadcaster (TVR) created special programmes for distance teaching, including classes for students belonging to national minorities conducted in their own mother tongue, in all school subjects.

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<sup>32</sup><https://oecdedutoday.com/immigrant-refugee-students-coronavirus/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://men.public.lu/fr/supoport/coronavirus.html>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.schouldoheem.lu/lu>

<sup>35</sup><https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IRB%202020-10.pdf>:5

The Ministry of Education, with support from county school inspectorates, private partners and NGOs, took steps to identify pupils who could not attend online lessons for lack of the necessary equipment. The Romanian government subsequently allocated funds to purchase electronic devices with internet connection for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Additional funding was allocated for the purchase of health protection materials and electronic devices for schools in disadvantaged areas. Furthermore, a micro-grant scheme devised in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the European Union was implemented to support the most disadvantaged schools in Romania.

**SERBIA:** In cooperation with the Vojvodina Radio Television Public Media Service and local and minority media, teaching content was broadcast in eight minority languages. Research was carried out on the participation of vulnerable groups in education through distance learning.<sup>36</sup> The data obtained was used for planning further measures to develop resources, increase coverage and improve the quality of distance learning. Similar research was done regarding access to distance learning for children in reception and asylum centres during the pandemic.

**SLOVENIA:** with the help of private donors, thousands of **electronic devices** were collected to support those **vulnerable children** who had no access to a computer.<sup>37</sup>

**TURKEY:** TV-based distance education via TRT EBA TV channels was put in place to ensure that every student had access to education. The capacity of the EBA Platform that was already in use was increased: while approximately 40,000 users were able to connect to the Education Informatics Network (EBA) at the same time prior to the emergency, the capacity was increased to almost 300,000; 50,000 classes could use the EBA network simultaneously.

In the framework of the “Building Tomorrow” project, based on cooperation between the General Directorate for Life-Long Learning and Concern Worldwide, WhatsApp chat groups have been established with parents in order to ensure regular communication with their children and provide information on accessing the Education Informatics Network system. The cash support (235 Turkish Liras monthly) was allocated without any condition during the distance education period, whereas it was initially planned to disburse it under the condition that Turkish and Syrian students regularly attended education and that the parents contributed to the education of their children and activities in the school.

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<sup>36</sup><http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/4.b-Prvi-izve%C5%A1taj-osestljive-grupe-u%C4%8Denje-na-daljiju.pdf>

<sup>37</sup><https://oecdeditoday.com/including-marginalised-roma-students-during-coronavirus/>

#### 4. Employment and mitigation of the economic impact of the crisis

**BELGIUM:** At the federal level the government decided in May 2020 to allocate an additional subsidy of 15 million euros and in June 2020 another 110 million euros to the Public Centres for Social Welfare to reach new target groups. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic temporary unemployment benefits were extended until 31 March 2021. For a period of three months these benefits were increased from 65 percent to 70 percent. In addition, unemployment benefits ceased to be degressive from 1 April to 31 August because of the Covid-19 pandemic and that measure was extended until 28 February 2021.

The Walloon Network for the Fight against Poverty (RWLP) launched a Social Emergency Task Force and created a “Social emergency” toll-free phone number (1718).

**FINLAND** amended its legislation to let foreigners already in the country take on work deemed “essential” if they were laid off. The amendment remained in force until 31 October 2020 and applied to work in the agriculture, energy, technology, chemical, food, maritime, logistics, social and health, communication, construction and infrastructure sectors.<sup>38</sup>

To keep all the entrepreneurs in Finland aware of the situation and restrictions caused by Covid-19, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment published information on the effects of the coronavirus on business activities, employment and security of supply in Finnish, Swedish, English, Arabic, Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, Russian, Estonian, Chinese and Somali. The Ministry has produced a multilingual information leaflet for asylum seekers on seasonal work possibilities.

**GERMANY:** Germany facilitated access to short-time work, increased the support, prolonged the benefit, opened up the scheme to temporary workers and enabled employees to earn a certain amount through short-time work with no deduction from the short-time-work allowance. Germany passed a new law (Arbeitsschutzkontrollgesetz) to improve working and housing conditions as well as occupational health and safety, in particular in the meat industry - a sector where many migrants work. The new law bans subcontracting in the meat industry from January 2021 and generally prohibits temporary work in the meat industry from April 2021 (with a narrow exception for the meat processing industry). In this way the law prevents slaughterhouses from delegating responsibility for workers’ occupational health and safety to subcontractors.<sup>39</sup>

**ITALY:** UNAR initiated a dialogue with some disadvantaged groups, such as Traveller workers (mainly Sinti), in extreme difficulty during the pandemic. Also through ANCI (the association of Italian municipalities), UNAR spoke with various stakeholders (Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Municipalities) to raise their awareness regarding the handling of

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<sup>38</sup><https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/Covid19-rights-impact-may-1>:30; Finland, Act No. 208/2020, Section 213 b, 9 April 2020: <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2020/20200208>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/arbeitsschutzkontrollgesetz-1772606>

critical situations. Activities concerning job inclusion for transgender people were also introduced.

**LUXEMBOURG:** The government programme to stabilise the economy includes a comprehensive package of Covid-19 support to enterprises, as well as measures to maintain employment and support the most vulnerable households.<sup>40</sup> For example, the cost-of-living allowance has been doubled for low-income households. In addition, the government has introduced family support leave for employed or self-employed workers who have to stop working in order to care for an adult with a disability or high dependency. Finally, the government has temporarily frozen rent increases on non-commercial leases for all households.

**NORWAY:** The new Integration Act tabled in Parliament put education, qualification and work at the centre of the integration process. Skills-enhancing measures were taken to support refugees and migrants. A package of measures totalling NOK 456 million was proposed to facilitate the inclusion of refugees and immigrants in the labour market.

**NORTH MACEDONIA:** Informal workers and others were included in the system to receive minimum guaranteed assistance based on the total amount of the incomes from all household members; the amount was calculated on the basis of the last month instead of the current three months.<sup>41</sup>

**POLAND** introduced a solidarity allowance for people who lost their jobs because of the Covid-19 pandemic, covering migrants, including those with a temporary residence permit or a visa issued in connection with work, recognised refugees, as well as beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, holders of permits granted for humanitarian reasons or tolerated stay permits, together with their family members.<sup>42</sup>

**ROMANIA:** During the entire state of emergency and until the end of the school year, without interruption, Romania granted welfare benefits which are normally conditional on attendance of educational courses by children or young people, or regular attendance of kindergarten in the case of pre-school children.

Measures were taken to pay an indemnity to persons who have suspended their activity during the Covid-19 pandemic, other than employees and professionals. Self-employed persons or persons in the daily labour force received a monthly indemnity ranging from 35% to 41.5% of the average gross salary. Paid leave days were granted to parents taking care of their children during the temporary closure of schools.

**SPAIN** launched a minimum income scheme for its most vulnerable families. From 26 June 2020 some 255,000 people started to benefit from the Minimum Living Income Scheme,

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<sup>40</sup> <https://meco.gouvernement.lu/fr/dossiers/2020/coronoavirus-entreprises.html>

<sup>41</sup> <https://bit.ly/2V2JnaG>

<sup>42</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/index.cfm?action=furl.go&go=/news/poland-solidarity-allowance-due-to-Covid-19-for-the-unemployed-applies-to-foreigners>

through which Spain's most vulnerable families, including migrant and Roma families, began to receive a minimum monthly payment of up to 700 Euros.<sup>43</sup>

**SWEDEN:** The Swedish government proposed extending the period for young migrants to find a job to support themselves, which they need to do to renew their residence permit and obtain a permanent one. The proposal concerned those who acquired residence permits to study in upper secondary education. It would extend the time young migrants have to find a job after finishing school from 6 to 12 months.<sup>44</sup>

**SWITZERLAND:** With a financial contribution from the federal authorities an advisory service was set up in co-operation with some NGOs to support Travellers in their applications for social assistance. Such assistance could take the form of vouchers, and in precarious economic situations rent or insurance bills could be included.

**TURKEY:** A series of measures were taken to prevent individuals from being dismissed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The measures were focused mainly on preventing dismissals to protect employment. Flexible working models were expanded. Employers' right to terminate employment contracts has been restricted except for specific reasons. In conformity with Laws no. 7226 and 7244, which entered into force during the pandemic, the requirements for the right to apply for short-time work were changed (receiving applications via e-mail in order to accelerate the procedure, processing applications within 60 days of the date of application). Monetary wage support was provided to people who could not receive unemployment benefits or who were on unpaid leave because they did not meet the required conditions. Measures to prevent foreign employees from losing their right to work - work permits for foreigners working in Turkey (including immigrants and foreigners under protection) - were taken on the basis of recommendations of the Science Board established in the Ministry of Health during the Covid-19 pandemic.

##### **5. Granting of (residence) status and access to (other) services (including access to welfare and food)**

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** During the Covid-19 pandemic certain funds allocated to the "Better Future" Association of Roma Women ('my Right, not Privilege' project) were reassigned to direct assistance to the Roma community.

**BELGIUM:** At the federal level, the Climate and Energy Committee of the House of Representatives voted to index the Gas and Electricity Fund, which provides grants to the

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/2020/06/26/spain-launches-minimum-income-scheme-for-its-most-vulnerable-families>

<sup>44</sup> [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-november\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-november_en.pdf):32

Public Social Welfare Centres (CPAS) to help people with their heating and electricity bills. This indexation for the years 2019 and 2020 guarantees the CPAS an additional €12 million to support people in a situation of energy insecurity. The distribution of food aid via the European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived continues during the confinement period, and the Public Programming Service for Social Integration asked its partner organisations to apply the allocation rules with more flexibility.

In the German-speaking Community language courses for migrants were organised at a distance; the budget for food aid has been doubled; laptops have been distributed to students who did not have the means to buy one; and the social aid fund for the Public Social Welfare Centres has been increased.

**CZECH REPUBLIC:** The government adjusted the rules allowing foreigners to enter the Czech Republic in exceptional cases for family reunification to also include partners in same-sex couples and their family members.

**ESTONIA:** Food assistance for persons in need was organised by local governments. Many local governments started cooperation with local grocery stores and pharmacies to deliver food, other necessities, medicines and in some cases technical advice to persons who needed assistance and those in Covid-19 risk groups. In many cases the local government paid for food and medicine delivery. Several good examples of food delivery solutions for persons in need emerged, with the perspective of finding a suitable model for the whole country.

**FRANCE:** The Ombudsman called for resumption of the registration of asylum claims.<sup>45</sup>

**FINLAND:** Third-country nationals residing in Finland with a residence permit or a permit under the Aliens Act (301/2004) have been granted permission to change employer and profession without applying for a new permit.

**GEORGIA:** To mitigate the negative socio-economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the population, the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality delivered 605 food parcels and hygienic items to the most socially vulnerable ethnic minority families and Roma communities.

**GERMANY:** The Bavarian Refugee Council called for the rehousing of refugees from mass accommodation to apartments or hotels, the extension of all residence permits and the release of migrants from immigration detention.<sup>46</sup>

**HUNGARY:** During the period of online/distance learning, local governments, non-state providers of public education and vocational training institutions provided meals for

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<sup>45</sup><https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/fr/Covid-19-et-urgence-sanitaire-le-role-du-defenseur-des-droits>

<sup>46</sup>[https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/germany-report-Covid-19-april-2020\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/germany-report-Covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf):10

children in public education and vocational training institutions in the form of take-aways or delivery at the request of a parent or other legal representative.

**ITALY:** The government provided for the possibility for about 200,000 undocumented migrant workers to receive residence and work permits.<sup>47</sup> Following complaints from many NGOs that a large number of municipalities gave access to the so-called "vouchers" or food solidarity funds only to legal residents (thereby excluding the social groups most exposed to the risk of poverty, such as homeless people, Roma and Sinti), the Director General of UNAR addressed a letter to the President of the National Association of Italian Municipalities calling for a "non-discriminatory and inclusive" approach in delivering aid. The Civil Protection authority also published specific guidelines for municipalities on food solidarity interventions in execution of order no. 658 of 29.03.2020, underlining the obligation to deliver food aid to all citizens, including those in irregular situations.

In the framework of the P.A.L. project funded by UNAR, food, educational aid for distance learning and products for children from 0-3 years (milk, diapers) were delivered in the city of Milan. In Naples and Giugliano, food packages, personal hygiene and house cleaning products and recreational and educational material were distributed by the associations "Chi Rom e Chi no" and "Arrevutammoce". Based on the needs identified, in May and June 2020 630 baby packs were distributed per week in Roma settlements in Rome. Those activities, which were continued until September 2020, involved Roma and non-Roma participants, a nutritionist and a paediatrician.

**LUXEMBOURG:** When the state of emergency was declared on 18 March 2020, the period of validity of visas, temporary residence permits, residence cards and residence permits expiring after 1 March 2020 was automatically extended until the end of the state of emergency (24 June 2020). Similarly, the residence of third-country nationals not subject to visa requirements, whose stay was intended to exceed 90 days, was declared lawful for the duration of the state of emergency. The period of validity of the certificates of submission of an application for international protection was also extended for the duration of the state of emergency. Access to the asylum procedure was ensured throughout the state of emergency. At the end of the state of emergency, certain temporary measures were extended, including the automatic extension of the period of validity of residence permits (until 31 August 2020) and the regularisation of the stay of third-country nationals holding a short-stay visa and those not subject to the visa requirement whose stay had exceeded 90 days after 1 March 2020 (until 31 July 2020).

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<sup>47</sup>[https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sante/maladie/coronavirus/il-y-aura-enfin-des-regles-en-italie-les-travailleurs-agricoles-clandestins-pourront-etre-regularises\\_3989763.html#xtor=EPR-2-\[newsletterquotidienne\]-20200601-\[lestitres-coldroite/titre6\]](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sante/maladie/coronavirus/il-y-aura-enfin-des-regles-en-italie-les-travailleurs-agricoles-clandestins-pourront-etre-regularises_3989763.html#xtor=EPR-2-[newsletterquotidienne]-20200601-[lestitres-coldroite/titre6]); <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/05/14/Italy-undocumented-migrants-work-permits>; <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/24720/italy-approves-temporary-changes-to-migrant-work-permits-after-weeks-of-political-disagreement>; <https://blogs.eui.eu/migrationpolicycentre/italian-plan-regularisation-real-progress-migrants-rights/>



Finally, for third-country nationals who had just arrived in Luxembourg the deadline for submitting applications for residence permits was extended.

**NORTH MACEDONIA:** The government adopted a decree removing the condition of regular school attendance for payment of the allowance for the third and fourth measuring period for the school year 2019/2020 (17,000 children concerned). The ban on social benefits applying to 3,000 Roma was removed and they gained access to welfare benefits with the help of the NGO ROMALITICO.

**PORTUGAL:** The government decided to treat foreigners with pending applications as permanent residents until at least July 1 to ensure access to public services during the Covid-19 outbreak. Applicants, including asylum seekers, only need to provide evidence of an ongoing request to qualify for access to the national health service, welfare benefits, bank accounts, and work and rental contracts.<sup>48</sup> Residence permits were extended until 31 March 2021; a simplified application procedure for the granting and renewal of residence permits was implemented in May 2020; exemption from fees in the event of diagnosis and treatment of Covid-19 was made applicable to all foreign citizens, irrespective of their legal status.

**UNITED KINGDOM:** On 17 February 2020 the government introduced automatic visa extensions for Chinese nationals who were unable to leave the UK to return home. On 24 March the UK extended that provision by introducing visa extensions for all nationals until the end of July. On 27 March 2020 the UK announced that those whose asylum procedure had been concluded would be supported in accommodation during the pandemic until the end of June. On 21 May 2020 the Prime Minister announced that independent health workers and social care workers would now be exempt from the Immigration Health Surcharge. On 9 June 2020 the government announced concessions for those applying to enter or remain in the UK on the basis of family and private life, including taking into account the impact of furlough on the minimum income requirement.

## 6. International co-operation and assistance<sup>49</sup>

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** The Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina coordinated assistance with the major international organisations and donors active in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which resulted in emergency assistance to CSOs dealing with gender-based violence and domestic violence.

**GEORGIA:** Assistance to ethnic minority groups through access to information and to basic subsistence items was ensured in close cooperation with USAID and UNICEF.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-portugal-idUSKBN21F0N7>

<sup>49</sup> See also under the thematic areas of access to services and domestic violence

**NORTH MACEDONIA:** The UNDP Office, in co-operation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, provided food aid, disinfectants and information material (leaflets) in Romani with visual graphically illustrated protection measures against the Covid-19 virus. The aid was distributed to 37 families housed in two locations (Ranka Milanovic and Vizbegovo) as well as to 43 families with children on the street.

**ROMANIA:** Emergency aid was activated from an EU dedicated programme and was distributed to persons with no income (distribution of food and sanitary material). Hygiene products purchased by the Ministry of European Funds that remained undistributed were donated at the request of the local public administration authorities, including to persons in vulnerable situations.

**SERBIA:** The government provided assistance through the Red Cross of Serbia delivering packages to Roma settlements across the Republic of Serbia. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, with the support of UNICEF and UNDP, it has distributed more than 2,700 hygiene packages along with information related to coronavirus protection. Additional distribution is ongoing for families living in poverty, children and young people living in residential care, foster families and refugee and migrant families.

**TURKEY:** Within the scope of the Solidarity Project in Turkey in Response to the Syrian Crisis, implemented in cooperation with the General Directorate of Life-Long Learning and the United Nations Development Programme, nearly 100,000 adults of foreign origin who received education in the Turkish language via the “Harmonised Education” model, which combines distance and face-to-face education, were informed about the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **III. Hate speech and different forms of violence**

#### **1. Prevention of and combat against hate speech and racist and LGBTI-phobic violence**

**AUSTRIA:** The Anti-Discrimination Office of Styria stated that on their “Ban Hate” app, where it is possible to report online hate speech, there had been an increase in posts blaming refugees in particular for the spread of the Covid-19 virus.<sup>50</sup> On 1 January 2021, the “Hate on the Net” legislative package came into effect, bringing more effective protection against hate postings on the Internet.

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<sup>50</sup>[https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin_en.pdf):33

**ESTONIA:** As part of the activities of the OpCode project (Open Code for Hate-Free Communication), the Estonian Human Rights Centre has conducted research into hate speech in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In **FRANCE** attention was drawn to the situation of foreign doctors, who are often underpaid and employed in precarious conditions.<sup>51</sup>

**GREECE:** The head of the ad hoc committee on the pandemic repeatedly emphasised that Roma are not a threat but a vulnerable group.

**ITALY:** A joint press conference between the Mayor of Torino and Chinese community leaders was held as early as February 2020 to counter Covid-19-related stereotypes and discrimination against the Chinese community. In addition, under the ES operational programme UNAR devoted a specific effort to fighting anti-Gypsyism and "Porrajmos".

Furthermore, a permanent consultation table for the protection of the rights of LGBT people was established in order to develop a strategic plan for concrete achievable actions in this field. This LGBT table is divided into plenary sessions and sectoral worktables and was attended by 48 associations that responded to the public call for expression of interest (with 42 territorial divisions of national associations).

**LITHUANIA:** The Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics started an investigation concerning one media report focusing on a Roma community refusing to wear facemasks in Kybartai.

**LUXEMBOURG:** The government launched an extensive awareness-raising campaign to inform the resident population about inter-sexuality and to combat the discrimination inter-sex people may suffer.<sup>52</sup>

In the framework of the National Action Plan for Integration, civil society projects aimed at combatting racism and discrimination are regularly supported and funded by the public authorities.<sup>53</sup> Examples include projects on the representation of Afro-descendants in the public space, socio-educational support for perpetrators of hateful comments, or the organisation of Master Classes open to all and targeting immigrant women who wish to become entrepreneurs.

**PORTUGAL:** Contacts were strengthened with Linha Internet Segura (service for reporting illegal content online) in order to facilitate a more effective action in the pursuit of combatting hate speech and racial and ethnic discrimination; several awareness measures to combat the spread of hate speech were taken in the context of the

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<sup>51</sup><https://www.france24.com/en/20200422-the-underpaid-foreign-doctors-battling-france-s-Covid-19-crisis>; <https://www.france24.com/fr/20200418-france-face-au-Covid-19-médecins-et-soignants-étrangers-demandent-leur-intégration>

<sup>52</sup> <https://mfamigr.gouvernement.lu/fr/campagnes/solidarite/Personnesintersexes.html>

<sup>53</sup> <https://mfamigr.gouvernement.lu/fr/le-ministere/attributions/integration/niveau-national/projets.html>

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

**ROMANIA:** The National Agency for Roma filed a complaint against a public official (Timis Prefecture) with the National Council for Combatting Discrimination for prejudicial public speech which effectively stigmatised the Roma communities as possible agents of contamination with Covid-19.

The National Council for Combatting Discrimination was notified of and reacted against a racist post on Facebook by a well-known academic. The offender was fined and later presented public apologies for the post.

The Department for Interethnic Relations developed a monitoring project regarding the phenomenon of hate speech towards minorities and its implications for society in the context of Covid-19, as well as the way in which potential conflict situations were reported in the press. It also monitored the measures taken by the authorities against discriminatory attitudes and hate speech toward minorities, in particular the Roma minority.<sup>54</sup>

**SPAIN:** The government condemned “any sign of xenophobia”.<sup>55</sup> On social media there were initiatives to counter racist and other hatred via hashtags, for instance through the “I am not a virus” campaign.

**UNITED KINGDOM:** Politicians and the press pointed out on many occasions that the British National Health Service (NHS) relies heavily on doctors and other staff with a migration background and that a number of foreign-born health workers have died on the front line.<sup>56</sup> The Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) were working closely with the National Police Chief’s Council to ensure that all police forces were providing reassurance to affected communities and encourage hate-crime reporting during the pandemic. The government continues to engage broadly with communities of all backgrounds to ensure that targeted support is provided to them.

## 2. Protection against domestic violence

**AUSTRIA:** The Federal Ministry of Justice set up a victim emergency number in cooperation with the victim protection organisation “White Ring”, which makes free and anonymous help from psychologists and professionally trained helpers available. In addition, it offers legal advice and connects callers with specialised support organisations.

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.dri.gov.ro/w/intelegerea-fenomenului-de-hate-speech-fata-de-minoritati-si-a-incidentelor-acestua-de-la-nivelul-societatii-in-contextul-sars-cov-2-propuneri-si-recomandari/>

<sup>55</sup> [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/spain-report-Covid-19-april-2020\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/spain-report-Covid-19-april-2020_en.pdf):8

<sup>56</sup> [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/06/coronavirus-crisis-nhs-not-drained-migrants-sustained-died-frontline?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/06/coronavirus-crisis-nhs-not-drained-migrants-sustained-died-frontline?CMP=share_btn_link)

**BELGIUM:** An inter-ministerial conference on women's rights was held by 12 Belgian ministries to address the urgent matter of domestic violence in periods of confinement. Following this conference, four working groups based on the 4 P's of the Istanbul Convention were set up in order to identify necessary measures.

At the initiative of the Secretary of State for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, the federal government adopted a federal action plan to combat gender and intra-family violence following the 2nd wave of Covid-19. It stipulates, among other things, that the curfew does not apply to victims of intra-family violence.

In the framework of the specific "Vulnerable Groups" working group, composed of representatives of the federal state, regions and communities, the federal government contributed 75 million euros. Funds will notably be allocated over several months to increase the reception capacity of the Brussels LGBTQI+ shelter by 15 places and create 10 new places in each of the other regions, as well as to support the 27 shelters for female victims of violence in the three regions.

In the Brussels-Capital Region French-speaking "Domestic violence and confinement" task forces have been set up. The number of places in shelters for victims of violence has been increased, a hotel has been made available for women, and pharmacists are involved in the deployment of local assistance. In addition, in view of the change and increase in demand, helplines have been adapted through adjusted schedules, increased human capacity and the development of online interactions via chat channels. Similarly, the activities of the sexual violence management centre were maintained during the confinement and curfew.

In the German-speaking Community the "Corona ist kein Grund für Gewalt" campaign (Corona does not justify violence) targets all forms of violence but particularly domestic violence. The Brussels-Capital Region continued to launch various calls for projects aimed at fighting violence against women, encouraging gender equality and supporting initiatives in favour of LGBTQI+ people. In addition, a project on the visibility of LGBTQI+ communities and the role of the chosen family and the biological family was carried out in the Brussels Region with the production of the documentary "Colours of the Rainbow: We are Family".

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** The Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina maintained regular contact with women's CSOs and gathered information on the increase of gender-based and domestic violence. The information shows an increase of around 50% in comparison with the same period in 2019. As a response, the Gender Equality Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted a needs assessment to identify gaps in the ability of the CSOs to respond to this crisis situation. Based on the assessment, the Gender Equality Agency provided additional funding for those organisations during 2020.

The Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina further issued a grant programme for CSOs with the aim of implementing the priority area of the BiH Gender Action Plan on improving the situation of groups of marginalised women. This includes support and assistance to women and girls in crisis and emergency situations, with a special focus on migrant women and girls and those seeking asylum. Those groups are the main beneficiaries of this programme.

**ESTONIA:** A large-scale campaign to tackle domestic violence was launched in May to raise awareness of risks related to the obligation to stay at home, in self-isolation. The campaign focused on different forms of domestic violence.

**FRANCE** elaborated an emergency plan to help young LGBT victims of domestic violence during the lockdown.<sup>57</sup>

**HUNGARY:** At the request of a working group of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Family Affairs, the police prepared a guide on “How to recognise abuse during online education and how we can help”. It provides guidance to teachers to help them recognise signs of abuse during digital education.

Together with the “Follow me” Agency, a two-week media campaign with the title #dontletit #thereishelp #askforhelp was launched on the topics of child abuse and domestic violence. The initiative was supported on a voluntary basis by a number of popular stars. With the help of 13 influencers, 153,949 young people were informed where they could ask for help.

**GERMANY:** In March 2020 the German government started a campaign called “Not Safe at Home?” as part of the nationwide awareness-raising initiative “Stronger Than Violence”. In November 2020, it initiated an action month on domestic violence to raise public awareness of the issue and the support available.<sup>58</sup> With the project “Sustainable technical empowerment of specialist services and women’s shelters during the Covid-19 pandemic – Helpsystem 2.0” the government allocated more than 3 million Euros to women’s shelters and counselling services. The National Violence Against Women Helpline continued its valuable support during the pandemic.<sup>59</sup>

**ITALY:** Several measures in favour of LGBTI people have been re-programmed (for example in the National Operational Programme “Inclusion”) to respond more effectively to needs related to the Covid-19 pandemic. One example is countering violence, including domestic violence against LGBTI people, by setting up a network of “Refuge Centres” that

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<sup>57</sup> [https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/04/24/schiappa-un-plan-d-urgence-pour-les-jeunes-lgbt-qui-vivent-actuellement-un-enfer\\_1786281](https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/04/24/schiappa-un-plan-d-urgence-pour-les-jeunes-lgbt-qui-vivent-actuellement-un-enfer_1786281)

<sup>58</sup> <https://staerker-als-gewalt.de/english>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/alle-meldungen/frauenhaeuser-und-frauenberatungsstellen-besser-ausstatten/161648>

provide protection, social inclusion and employment for LGBT victims of domestic violence.

**LUXEMBOURG:** In the framework of a government campaign to prevent and combat domestic violence,<sup>60</sup> information, prevention and awareness-raising activities on violence against women and the promotion of equality between women and men are organised in partnership with non-governmental organisations. In addition, a "Domestic Violence" hotline has been set up to offer anonymous listening, support and guidance to victims even during the health crisis.

**NORTH MACEDONIA:** The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Skopje, has prepared a prevention and protection campaign against domestic violence during the Covid-19 emergency, through which victims of domestic violence and the general public are taught to recognise all forms of domestic violence, where to turn and apply for help and what services exist to protect victims of domestic violence.

**PORTUGAL:** Specific services for LGBT persons regarding domestic violence continued operating during the pandemic and were involved in the #SegurançaEIsolamento campaign, translated into Arabic, Mandarin, English, French, Bengali, Hindi, Nepalese, Russian and sign language. Regulatory Decree 3/2020 extended the duration of emergency sheltering for victims considered more vulnerable, for example because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The national support network for domestic violence victims has established new monitoring mechanisms which include data broken down by sex, gender identity and nationality. On 5 November 2020 the National Support Centre for Migrants' Integration in Lisbon opened the first specialised support service for migrants and their descendants who are victims of domestic violence and/or harmful traditional practices. The purpose is to guarantee specialised support, information, and referral to relevant services, namely within the National Support Network for Domestic Violence Victims.

**ROMANIA:** The National Agency for Equal Opportunities between women and men (NAEO) has implemented two Covid-related action plans: the Plan on preventing and combatting domestic violence and the Action plan on preventing and combatting various forms of discrimination, including gender-based violence.

**UNITED KINGDOM:** A further £76m was allocated to support survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and modern slavery and to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and young people. Funding covered safe accommodation services, access to support services for survivors, community-based domestic abuse services and modern slavery services, and support for charities.

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<sup>60</sup> <https://mega.public.lu/fr/societe/Lutte-et-prevention-contre-la-violence-domestique.html>

**SWITZERLAND:** As of mid-March 2020 the federal and cantonal authorities jointly set up a task force against domestic violence. The task force ensures a regular exchange of information between professionals from counselling services, the police, the Confederation and the cantons. In the first weeks of the crisis several cantons adapted their victim support services and increased their accommodation capacities in shelters. A poster campaign in thirteen languages was organised by the Confederation, and the cantonal authorities launched a campaign on social networks aimed particularly at young victims of domestic violence.

## **IV. Prevention of discrimination and human rights violations, assessment and oversight**

### **1. Prevention of discrimination and human rights violations**

**BELGIUM:** In the French-speaking Community there is a partnership agreement between the Maison Arc-en-Ciel (MAC) of the city of Charleroi and the Charleroi Police regarding assistance to LGBT people. A reference police officer undertakes to receive people sent by the MAC in order to provide legal assistance and useful information. The management of investigations relating to gender reassignment in civil status records ordered by the public prosecutor's office continued during the confinement. In the Brussels-Capital Region an analysis of intra-family violence (IFV) during the Covid-19-related lockdown was carried out and the results have been published.<sup>61</sup>

**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** The BiH Agency for Gender Equality is coordinating the development of the first Action Plan for the equality of LGBTI people in Bosnia and Herzegovina with support from the Council of Europe. The Agency also issued recommendations for initiating policy changes with the aim of eliminating sexism and hate speech in the public and private spheres. One of the recommendations issued by the Agency concerns the need to take into account the different needs of women and men, as well as to pay attention to the difficult situation of persons subject to multiple vulnerabilities, such as Roma women and LGBTI people, when planning and implementing emergency support and assistance measures.

**GREECE:** The Greek Ombudsman launched an investigation into police officers for having abused their powers with discriminatory intent towards a Pakistani migrant, a Syrian asylum seeker and a Roma person.

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<sup>61</sup> <https://bps-bpv.brussels/fr/nouvelle-publication-les-violences-intrafamiliales-en-region-de-bruxelles-capitale-en-periode-de-confinement>



**ITALY:** Numerous reports from Roma associations evidenced the impact of isolation and other restrictions on the socio-economic situation, housing and health conditions and the exacerbation of subsistence problems of Roma families living in the most marginalised settlements (recognised and spontaneous camps, micro-areas, collective centres). They also highlighted the extreme hardship of so-called “de facto” stateless persons who are excluded from any kind of support and social security measures introduced to counter the current crisis.

**SPAIN:** The Council for the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination raised concerns about discriminatory bias in policing and the enforcement of restrictive measures, particularly regarding Roma. A report by the Spanish implementation team of the decade for people of African Descent and Rights International Spain analysed cases of alleged racial profiling linked to police enforcement of restrictions, including excessive use of force. It recommended the introduction of a clear ban on racial profiling and the adoption of stop-and-search forms for transparency purposes, and the publication of anonymised statistics on police stops.<sup>62</sup>

**LUXEMBOURG:** A qualitative and quantitative study on racism and ethno-racial discrimination was launched at the end of 2020. It aims in particular to draw up an inventory of the mechanisms and instruments in place and how well they are known and used, to list the resources available in the fight against racism and discrimination and to identify any needs in relation to diversity management. It also aims to identify "risk groups" and specific areas, situations and contexts of discrimination more precisely. In the meantime the government has consolidated the "Lëtzebuerg Diversity Charter",<sup>63</sup> a national commitment text proposed for signature by any organisation wishing to commit itself to act in favour of the promotion and management of diversity through concrete actions going beyond the legal and regulatory obligations on non-discrimination.

**UNITED KINGDOM:** The government provided clear police guidance that enforcement should be the last resort (four-step escalation principles of engage, explain, encourage, and then enforce). The police have followed the British model of policing by consent in the communities they serve and have acknowledged that measures will only work with broad public support and understanding.

## 2. Gathering of equality data

**BELGIUM:** The risk of stigmatisation of the Turkish community following the release of statistics on corona patients by ethnic group was mitigated by providing further socio-economic data to understand the said data. Explanations pointed to the fact that the

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<sup>62</sup>[https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-july\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-july_en.pdf):35; For the reports mentioned, see <https://asistenciavictimasdiscriminacion.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Informe-Servicio-de-Asistencia-Covid-19..pdf> and [http://www.rightsinternationalspain.org/uploads/publicacion/d0b782ac0452e9052241b17a646df19ad4e\\_df12c.pdf](http://www.rightsinternationalspain.org/uploads/publicacion/d0b782ac0452e9052241b17a646df19ad4e_df12c.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> <https://mfamigr.gouvernement.lu/fr/le-ministere/attributions/integration/entreprise.html>

number of Turkish-born patients with coronary artery disease was proportional to the number of Turkish-born citizens in the city of Genk. Emphasis was also placed on the fact that the first generation of migrants in Genk worked in the mines and therefore have weak lungs, which could explain the large number of Turkish patients in Genk.

Several data collection initiatives have been put in place, for example: the National Employment Office has published statistics on temporary unemployment during the crisis; the Crossroads Bank of Social Security has databases where the origin of the person and temporary unemployment can be combined; Sciensano also carried out crisis and health surveys, where questions related to domestic violence can be found.

**FRANCE:** The Inter-Ministerial Delegation for Accommodation and Access to Housing has drawn up statistics comparing the number of cases of Covid-19 in settlements/camps and the number in the general population.

**IRELAND:** The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) has established a vulnerable person subgroup to monitor and advise on the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups. Under the auspices of this group, an information-gathering exercise is under way to measure access to services related to Covid-19 by gender, disability and the Traveller and Roma communities.

**ITALY:** Through an agreement with ISTAT (the National Institute of Statistics), UNAR has pushed forward with an initiative that aims at conducting a qualitative-quantitative survey to determine the number of Roma living in abandoned settlements and prepare their transit to other forms of housing. In the framework of the survey, which was carried out in February 2020 and involved 745 municipalities with over 15,000 inhabitants, 126 cities declared that they had a total of 373 formal and/or informal settlements. Out of those, 42 cities had started 96 housing projects for the transition of Roma families to normal housing between 2012 and 2020.

**LUXEMBOURG:** In the framework of the Covid-19 Task Force, public research is compiling data to better assess the dynamics of the spread of the SARS-Cov-2 virus within the different population groups. Since May 2020 the task force has been developing a so-called "epidemiomic" model that simultaneously models the health and economic evolution of the impact of the pandemic. Through this modelling and the micro-simulations that result from it public authorities can, for example, simulate the effects of shocks affecting employees in different sectors and forecast job losses, lower incomes and socio-economic inequalities.

**NETHERLANDS:** Research was carried out on the impact of Covid-19, including on specific groups or communities referred to as people with a non-western migration background.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See research from the Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS):  
[https://www.cbs.nl/?sc\\_itemid=7dfe75ea-e638-4752-992e-3573e77c2227&sc\\_lang=nl-nl](https://www.cbs.nl/?sc_itemid=7dfe75ea-e638-4752-992e-3573e77c2227&sc_lang=nl-nl)

**NORWAY:** Authorities relied on registrations of place of residence and country of birth, which were then combined with data on the share of immigrants/minorities in municipalities/districts and on reported observations from hospitals and primary health clinics.

**ROMANIA:** The Department for Interethnic Relations collected and analysed data on the impact of measures imposed to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in national minority communities, including the way in which the legal provisions were observed, at national and local authority levels, and on the information of minority communities in their mother tongues.<sup>65</sup>

**UNITED KINGDOM:** The Public Health England (PHE) report compiling data that shows disparities in the risk and outcomes of Covid-19 evidences that members of black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) groups are more likely to be diagnosed with Covid-19, and that persons from certain communities (Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, other Asian, Caribbean and other black ethnicity) had higher risk of death than white British people. On 22 October 2020 the Minister for Equalities published her first quarterly report on progress to tackle the disparities in Covid-19 risks and outcomes highlighted by the Public Health England review. In addition, six projects to improve the understanding of the links between Covid-19 and ethnicity have been funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). These projects will seek to explain and mitigate the disproportionate death rate from Covid-19 among people from minority ethnic backgrounds, including ethnic minority health and social care workers. Diversity monitoring data by gender identity or trans status is not yet universally collected but the UK is working towards addressing this, including by adding questions to the 2021 National Census, working with the Office for National Statistics to develop a harmonised standard for monitoring both sexual orientation and gender identity.

### 3. Human Rights assessment and oversight

#### a. Parliaments

**UNITED KINGDOM:** An all-Party Parliamentary Group model has been set up with the **Joint Committee on Human Rights** reviewing government measures to tackle Covid-19. See in particular the Chair's statement: "As we approach the Coronavirus Act's six-month review there are a number of concerns that the government must urgently address. Confusion over what is law and what is merely guidance has left citizens open to disproportionate and unequal levels of punishment for breaking the rules, and unfortunately it seems that, once again, this is overtly affecting BAME individuals. The

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.dri.gov.ro/w/accesul-cetatenilor-romani-apartinand-minoritatilor-nationale-la-informatiile-relevante-despre-covid-19/>

government must learn from these mistakes to ensure that any additional lockdowns do not unfairly impact specific groups.”<sup>66</sup>

**b. Equality Bodies and National Human Rights Institutions (see under PART 1: Preparedness, outreach and information)**

In addition to replies to the CDADI questionnaire, multiple examples of interventions of Equality Bodies on alleged discriminations on various grounds, including race and ethnic origin, are available in the EQUINET database at <https://equineteurope.org/covid-19-response/#data>. Examples are also mentioned on the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions website [http://ennhri.org/covid-19/#here is how](http://ennhri.org/covid-19/#here_is_how). Some of these examples are reflected below.

**CYPRUS:** On 9 April 2020 the Commissioner, within the framework of her remit as a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), visited the Kokkinotrimithia Temporary Migrants Reception and Accommodation Centre to observe how the measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19) were being implemented and how the fundamental rights of persons deprived of their liberty were protected under these circumstances (EQUINET).

**GREECE:** On 27 March 2020 the Greek Ombudsman, acting as both human rights defender and equality body, sent a formal letter to the relevant government ministers recommending the adoption of specific protective measures for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as elderly people, those suffering from severe chronic illnesses, homeless people, Roma communities, immigrants or asylum seekers, prisoners and detained people or people living in institutions (EQUINET).

**FRANCE:** The Ombudsman called for a **resumption of the registration of asylum claims**.<sup>67</sup>

**IRELAND:** The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) called on the Oireachtas (Ireland’s national parliament) Committee on Covid-19 to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of the law and practice relating to the protection of human rights and equality. According to the IHREC gaps in Ireland’s legislation have left certain groups more exposed, and such gaps are “not cost free” because they “deliver real and meaningful impact to people’s lives”. The IHREC considered that a dedicated Oireachtas Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity was the most appropriate mechanism to examine the legal, social and economic rights implications of Covid-19.<sup>68</sup>

**LUXEMBOURG:** Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic the Human Rights Consultative Commission (CCHR) has examined the measures taken by the government,

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<sup>66</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/93/human-rights-joint-committee/news/119291/the-government-must-urgently-consider-the-human-rights-implications-of-Covid19-measures-says-joint-committee-on-human-rights/>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/fr/Covid-19-et-urgence-sanitaire-le-role-du-defenseur-des-droits>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.ihrec.ie/emergency-legislation-around-Covid-must-be-the-exception-not-the-norm/>

assessing possible discriminatory human rights impacts and issuing its opinions and recommendations. The CCHR supports the government's efforts to combat the pandemic and often invites the government to better define its catalogue of measures and to review it systematically in the light of the state of scientific knowledge in this field and of the principles of necessity and proportionality.<sup>69</sup>

**NETHERLANDS:** The Institute for Human Rights reviewed the discriminatory impact of the Covid-19 app and provided advice. The Institute points out that sufficient account must be taken of people for whom access to apps is not self-evident because of a lack of digital literacy or financial resources, or for reasons of health or disability. These groups should not be excluded from the Covid-19 application. The apps must also comply with proper safeguards to protect the right to private life.<sup>70</sup>

**SLOVAKIA:** The Centre for Human Rights called for an investigation following a complaint alleging police mistreatment and violence in a Roma settlement which had been placed in quarantine after several inhabitants tested positive for Covid-19. The complaint alleged that victims of such police treatment included minors. The Centre also highlighted the inadequacy and lack of justification of certain measures adopted to primarily test Roma communities to prevent the spread of the pandemic (EQUINET). After an entire apartment building was quarantined when one family tested positive, the Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Roma Communities called on the government to impose quarantine on entire Roma settlements only as a last resort.<sup>71</sup>

### c. Judiciary (no specific reference to disadvantaged groups)

**FRANCE:** The *Conseil d'Etat* delivered a decision according to which Prefects need to limit the obligation to wear a mask to perimeters in their municipalities characterised by a high density of people or difficulty in ensuring respect for physical distancing.<sup>72</sup>

**GERMANY:** The Federal Constitutional Court granted interim measures in cases involving local authorities' decisions restricting freedom of assembly. These rulings have been seen to "oblige local authorities to make contextualised assessments and take responsibility for their decisions, ensuring a minimum level of protection of fundamental rights in areas that are particularly sensitive"<sup>73</sup>.

**ROMANIA:** On the initiative of the Ombudsman, the Constitutional Court ruled that the

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<sup>69</sup> <https://ccd.h.public.lu/fr/avis.html>

<sup>70</sup> <https://mensenrechten.nl/nl/toegelijk/corona-apps-moeten-toegankelijk-zijn-voor-iedereen>

<sup>71</sup> [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-november\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-november_en.pdf):32

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.conseil-etat.fr/ressources/decisions-contentieuses/dernieres-decisions-importantes/conseil-d-etat-6-septembre-2020-port-obligatoire-du-masque-a-strasbourg-et-dans-12-communes-du-bas-rhin>

<sup>73</sup> <https://constitutionnet.org/news/coronavirus-lockdown-measures-german-constitutional-court>

emergency ordinance which increased fines for not observing state-of-emergency measures was unconstitutional because it lacked precision in defining the behaviour which would lead to sanctions.

#### **d. Co-operation mechanism**

**LITHUANIA:** The Ministry of Social Security and Labour reported that it was working to establish a cooperation mechanism between national and local institutions, as well as relevant stakeholders in the area of equal opportunities, which will be used to distribute and gather relevant information during the crisis.

#### **e. Independent research**

**FINLAND:** A Scientific Panel was set up by the government to assess the current and long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in Finland.<sup>74</sup> It consists of 13 academics from several disciplines.

## **V. Digitalisation, artificial intelligence and contact tracing**

### **1. Digitalisation of services:**

**ROMANIA:** The government approved an emergency ordinance regulating the submission by e-mail, or other electronic means of communication, of applications, declarations and documents concerning social benefits, social assistance rights, unemployment benefits and the granting of measures to stimulate employment. The ordinance further provides for the development of authorised professional training programmes and, under certain conditions, graduation exams, online.

**UNITED KINGDOM:** An emergency response called DevicesDotNow was designed to get the most vulnerable people online during the crisis so they could shop, get critical help and support and connect with others. Over 11,000 people are reported to have benefitted from devices, connectivity and support thanks to DevicesDotNow.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> [https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset\\_publisher/10616/tieteellista-tukea-koronakriisin-jalkihoitoon-Covid19-tiedepaneeli-asetettu](https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/10616/tieteellista-tukea-koronakriisin-jalkihoitoon-Covid19-tiedepaneeli-asetettu)

<sup>75</sup> <https://futuredotnow.uk/devicesdotnow>

## 2. Tracing and other tools

**BELGIUM:** The Data Protection Agency made recommendations on two draft royal decrees aimed at regulating tracing activities. These include providing further information on the means of collecting tracing data, the individuals who may access the data, and the purposes justifying data processing. The authority also underlined that data collected for the purpose of contact-tracing must not be processed for other purposes.<sup>76</sup>

**GERMANY:** A Corona Tracing App was released that meets the highest standards of security and data protection. The use of the app, which citizens can download free of charge, is voluntary. Absolute transparency, high IT security as well as comprehensive data protection and the greatest possible accessibility are essential features of the app. The Federal Office for Information Technology has accompanied its development with regard to security and data protection.<sup>77</sup>

**NETHERLANDS:** The Institute for Human Rights reviewed the discriminatory impact of the Covid-19 app and provided advice. The Institute points out that sufficient account must be taken of people for whom access to apps is not self-evident because of a lack of digital literacy or financial resources, or for reasons of health or disability. These groups should not be excluded from the Covid-19 application. The apps must also comply with proper safeguards to protect the right to private life.<sup>78</sup>

**SLOVAKIA:** The Slovak Constitutional Court put an end to the development of a contact tracing app that had triggered concern over the need for mass data collection.<sup>79</sup>

**UNITED KINGDOM:** The ethics board advising on the development of the app have warned that up to 21% of the UK population do not own a smartphone, and urged consideration of the extent to which the app could introduce or exacerbate inequities.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-may\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-may_en.pdf): 47

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/corona-warn-app/corona-warn-app-faq-1758392>

<sup>78</sup> <https://mensenrechten.nl/nl/toegelicht/corona-apps-moeten-toegankelijk-zijn-voor-iedereen>

<sup>79</sup> <https://privacyinternational.org/examples/3922/slovakian-court-declares-telecommunications-data-sharing-unconstitutional>

<sup>80</sup> <https://nhsbsa-socialtracking.powerappsportals.com/EAB%20Letter%20to%20NHSx.pdf>