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4 Human rights

4.3 Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI)

b. First implementation report on the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025)

Item to be considered by the GR-H at its meeting on 15 February 2022

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR ROMA AND TRAVELLER INCLUSION (2020-2025)

First Implementation Report

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1. Introduction

The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted in 2010¹ provided a strong impetus for co-ordinated and concerted action of governments and European stakeholders to support national, regional and local level authorities in their efforts towards improving the social and economic situation of Roma and Travellers². The Declaration was complemented by the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) whose 2019 final implementation report revealed that in the four main areas in which action had been undertaken – access to education, employment, healthcare and housing – further action and co-ordination was needed. It is also recalled that the European Court of Human Rights and other Council of Europe monitoring bodies closely monitor the situation of Roma and Travellers and deal with discrimination and other human rights issues.

Following the assessment of the implementation of that Action Plan, and in order to address the current key challenges for Roma and Traveller inclusion as identified during Council of Europe stakeholder consultations (intergovernmental and civil society), the current Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) is structured around three main lines of action:

- combating antigypsyism and discrimination and supporting real and effective equality;
- supporting democratic participation and promoting public trust and accountability; and
- supporting access to inclusive quality education and training.

In addition, the intersectional needs of specific groups of Roma and Travellers who are particularly vulnerable or suffer from multiple discrimination, were taken into account as a cross-cutting issue in all action under this Plan.

This Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) (“the Strategic Action Plan”), approved by the Committee of Ministers on 22 January 2020, translates the strategic objectives of the Council of Europe regarding the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law into a policy framework for the social and intercultural inclusion of Roma and Travellers in Europe. The Plan provides a framework that is flexible and adaptable to country-specific conditions, serving as a roadmap and practical tool for the design, implementation and adjustment of programmes and actions. The objectives of the Plan are to promote and protect the human rights of Roma and Travellers, to combat antigypsyism and discrimination, and to foster inclusion in society.

The Council of Europe’s actions draw on the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and build upon the findings and recommendations of the monitoring bodies, in particular the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the European Committee for Social Rights of the European Social Charter, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Support was provided by the Organisation to member States through the action plan in order to ensure better outcomes in relation to the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised Roma and Travellers and to sustain and build upon the results achieved through the implementation of the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019).

2. Progress report on the Implementation of actions in the three priority areas

This report aims to provide an overview of the achievements and activities under each priority area from the Plan’s adoption on 22 January 2020 to 31 May 2021. Particular attention is paid to the activities and achievements of the Council of Europe from the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on Roma and Travellers. These special circumstances posed challenges to the implementation of planned activities which could not be foreseen during the drafting of the Strategic Action Plan. The pandemic required the Council of Europe to urgently revise its priorities and workplans, and to devise mitigating implementation strategies regarding the impact of the Covid -19 pandemic on Roma and Travellers across Europe.

¹ CM(2010)133-final Strasbourg Declaration on Roma adopted at the Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma, Strasbourg, 20 October 2010.

² The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

2.1 Strategic Objective 1: Combating antigypsyism and discrimination and supporting real and effective equality

Roma and Travellers in Europe continue to suffer from widespread and persistent antigypsyism, which has been recognised by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)³ as a specific form of racism fuelled by prejudice and stereotypes. In addition, Roma and Travellers remain victims of various forms of discrimination, including school segregation, a forced sedentary lifestyle, hate speech and hate-motivated violence in many member States. Antigypsyism creates a barrier to efforts aimed at improving the living conditions and full social inclusion of Roma.⁴

Anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes require a combination of the following measures:

- Legal responses and standard-setting work (for example, on combating hate speech and hate-motivated violence) and other intergovernmental co-operation (for example, peer reviews, thematic visits and thematic reports);
- Training of the legal profession, public authorities and law enforcement in Council of Europe standards and relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights;
- Capacity-building of national, regional and local level authorities and civil society, including through the Council of Europe Dialogue meetings with Roma and Traveller civil society;
- Specific empowerment for particular groups, such as Roma women and youth; and
- Awareness-raising actions for the general public.

The Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM) has commissioned a study on the causes, prevalence and consequences of antigypsyism and possible responses thereto, taking into account the findings and recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), with a view to giving guidance to the CDADI in this field. The work was entrusted to Dr Iulius ROSTAS, expert consultant.⁵

The following gives an overview of the activities carried out to reach Strategic Objective 1.

2.1.1 *A legal instrument on a comprehensive approach to addressing hate speech within a human rights framework is developed*

The Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS) has been working throughout the reporting period on drafting a new Committee of Ministers Recommendation on combating hate speech. The draft includes important provisions for combating *inter alia* hate speech targeting Roma and Traveller groups in Europe and is expected to be adopted in 2022.

The Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM) contributed to the drafting process by submitting written drafting proposals, background information and examples of good practice. The ADI-ROM Rapporteur on Antigypsyism and Hate Speech participated in the ADI/MSI-DIS meetings. The conclusions and recommendations of the 10th meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society (26-27 November 2020), devoted to combating hate speech, were also submitted to the ADI/MSI-DIS, and the Ad hoc Rapporteur of that Dialogue meeting participated in exchanges of information with the ADI/MSI-DIS, the ADI-ROM and the CDADI.

Members of the ADI-ROM and the Council of Europe Secretariat presented and discussed ways and means of combating hate speech against Roma and Travellers at the Conference “UNBOXING HATE SPEECH – European Impulses for Respect and Solidarity on the Web”, organised by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the German Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection in the framework of Germany’s Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and at the Workshop on “Hate speech against marginalised groups”, organised by the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), held online on 18 February 2021, as well as at the International Conference “Hate Speech and Antigypsyism in the Media”, also organised by ERIAC and held online on 10-11 March 2021.

³ ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on combating antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma in Europe.

⁴ State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. A democratic renewal for Europe, Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2021; Roma and Travellers in six countries. Roma and Travellers Survey, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020; A persisting concern: anti-Gypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018.

⁵ The report will be finalised and approved at the 4th ADI-ROM meeting in October 2021 and submitted to the CDADI for its 4th meeting in December 2021, with a view to its endorsement and authorisation of publication.

The EU/Council of Europe Joint Programme “Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED II)” assisted the Albanian Government in the drafting of a chapter on antigypsyism in the new Action Plan for the Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2020-2025. The JP ROMACTED II also provided assistance in the consultations with Roma civil society and local authorities in the second half of 2020 and assisted in the development of the new Action Plan for Roma Inclusion 2021-2025 in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first half of 2021.

During 2020 and 2021, the Council of Europe Action Plan Project “Strengthening the protection of national minorities, including Roma, and minority languages in Ukraine – Phase II” assisted the Ukrainian Government in developing the draft new Roma Inclusion Strategy (post-2020) by organising public consultations with regional administrations and providing assistance in evaluating the previous Roma Inclusion Strategy 2013-2020 (jointly with UN Women).

In January 2021, the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe prepared a report on Ethnic Profiling in Europe: a matter of great concern (rapporteur Boriss Cilevičs, Latvia, SOC), which was adopted by the Assembly as Resolution 2364 (2021). The report (adopted in committee on 27 November 2020) deals extensively with the ethnic profiling of Roma.

2.1.2 Awareness of Roma and Traveller issues of the general public is increased through awareness-raising activities

The Council of Europe aims to raise the awareness of the general public through participation in information or awareness-raising events, for example, the online Round Table “Roma and Travellers in Europe and Ireland”, organised on 31 March 2021 by the German Embassy in Dublin in the framework of the German Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The event involved the German Ambassador to Ireland, the first female Irish Senator of the Irish Traveller community, the member on behalf of Ireland in the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Executive Director of ERIAC and the Secretary to the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM).

Awareness-raising activities also include the production, publication and dissemination of information and teaching materials such as the Factsheets on Roma History or the books on the representation of Roma in major European museum collections such as the Louvre and the Prado. The Roma and Travellers Team operates a dedicated website, as well as Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Part of this strategic intervention is also aimed at the inclusion of an antigypsyism focus on the activities of the Joint Programmes and at mainstreaming anti-discrimination in civic education and school curricula. This also includes co-operation activities with the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAN).

In April 2021, the JP ROMACTED II, jointly with the Council of Europe Office in Tirana, organised a virtual debate on “Combating antigypsyism: a forward-looking perspective in Albania”, organised in co-operation with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the EU, and the German CM Presidency. Participants included ROMACTED stakeholders. ROMACTED outcomes and publications were presented.

ROMACTED II mobilised Roma communities and participating municipalities by raising awareness of the importance of the commemoration of International Roma Day and the flying of the Romani flag on the municipal flagpoles. Activities took place in April 2020 and April 2021. Roma history factsheets were disseminated to the seven beneficiaries of the JP ROMACTED II during the first half of 2020; the pedagogical book “Romani Legends and Fairy Tales” was published and disseminated in Albania at the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021.

In April 2021, ROMACTED II, together with the Council of Europe Office and ERIAC Serbia in Belgrade, held a commemorative session under the theme “Overcoming Antigypsyism in Europe” with the presence of the Executive Director of ERIAC, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, the German (CM Presidency) Embassy in Belgrade and the Portuguese Embassy (EU Presidency) followed by the launch of a virtual exhibition and visit to ERIAC Serbia in Belgrade.

The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights carried out an online dialogue with the Portuguese authorities on rising racism against Roma and violence against women. The Commissioner also sent a letter to the Speaker of the Czech Parliament concerning the proposed law on the compensation scheme for the women victims of forced sterilisation. The letter was read out in the Czech Parliament on 10 March 2021.

The draft *Report on discrimination against Roma and Travellers in the field of housing (14590)* was prepared by the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and debated in the Standing Committee in May 2021. The report highlights the following points:

- Antigypsyism and anti-nomadism as the root cause of the problem;
- Staging of evictions by politicians;
- Intersectional issues.

It also points to a lack of good examples and successful initiatives in housing in Council of Europe member states and the failure of National Roma Inclusion Strategies in this field.

2.1.3 Performance of institutions dealing with Roma and Traveller rights is enhanced through training of law enforcement professionals; access to justice by Roma and Travellers is increased through capacity-building activities

In 2020, the Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Team published the Toolkit for Police Officers: Council of Europe standards on racially motivated crimes and non-discrimination including relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights with the aim of supporting police officers to better understand, investigate and prosecute human rights violations.

The Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Unit of the Council of Europe worked closely on Roma and Traveller issues and implemented training sessions on policing hate crime against LGBTI persons (including against Roma LGBTI persons) for law enforcement officials in Romania.

Part of the capacity-building objectives was the updating of the training module on Roma within the online European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP). In December 2020, the EU/Council of Europe Joint Programme "Roma and Traveller Women's Access to Justice (JUSTROM)" finalised the HELP module on Roma. The English version was developed, including IT tools for it. Currently, the English version is being translated and adapted by the four JUSTROM countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, and Romania.

This strategic intervention also includes the implementation of JUSTROM, including tailor-made training modules for law enforcement and legal professionals. In February 2020, JUSTROM provided training for legal professionals on anti-discrimination, gender equality and Roma issues, training of facilitators on anti-discrimination and gender equality, and training for national coordinators on gender and Roma mainstreaming issues.

From June 2020 to January 2021, JUSTROM, in partnership with the European Law Students' Association (ELSA) Italy, the Association for Legal Studies on Immigration (ASGI), the Naples Bar Council, LUMSA University, and the Rome Juvenile Court, organised a series of training sessions for legal professionals in Italy, focusing, inter alia, on raising awareness of the work of the JUSTROM programme, in the context of the new challenges presented by the Covid-19 global pandemic for vulnerable Roma communities, especially with respect to access to legal services. Other relevant topics discussed included the Italian framework of the human rights of ethnic minorities and Roma, the issue of statelessness, and relevant legal proceedings in Italy to achieve regularization and access citizenship status for members of the Roma community.

In March and April 2021, JUSTROM created a pool of trainers in implementing countries, which institutions could tap into for training in the future. Moreover, under JUSTROM, Training for Trainers (ToTs) were held for legal professionals in Greece on Gender Based Violence (GREVIO) and on European Court of Human Rights standards on Roma and women.

The Strategic Action Plan also aims to improve the reporting of discrimination and hate crimes. In this regard, the Council of Europe Ukraine Action Plan Project developed and rolled out a training course for Odessa University together with the Ministry of Interior on “Protection of vulnerable groups in policing”. The training was included in the University’s teaching curricula in 2020. During the second half of 2020, the project also facilitated dialogue between Roma NGOs and law enforcement agencies to discuss ways of improving prevention and reporting of hate crimes targeting Roma in Ukraine.

2.1.4 Visibility of Council of Europe actions, incl. the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the findings and recommendations of the monitoring bodies, is increased

This strategic objective relates to the work of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and the European Committee for Social Rights, as well as of relevant monitoring bodies, such as ECRI or the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

The Roma and Travellers Team has widely disseminated judgments concerning verbal or physical violence against Roma, particularly by law enforcement officials and lack of effective investigation (see, for example, *X and Y v. North Macedonia*, no. 173/17, 5 November 2020 and *R.R. and R.D. v. Slovakia*, no. 20649/18, 1 September 2020),⁶ as well as cases concerning the living conditions of Roma populations, namely eviction without any offer of alternative accommodation for Roma living in an unauthorised camp (see *Hirtu and Others v. France*, no. 24720/13, 14 May 2020)⁷ and allegedly insufficient measures to ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation for Roma communities (*Hudorovič and Others v. Slovenia*, nos. 24816/14 and 25140/14, 10 March 2020)⁸, or *Terna v. Italy*, where the Court examined the applicant’s complaint about taking care of her granddaughter, who she had custody of since birth, and failure to implement visiting rights. An important recent judgment where the Court found a violation of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 8 concerning state obligations affords redress to Roma individuals for discriminatory public statements by a politician (*Budinova and Chaprazov v. Bulgaria*, no. 12567/13, 16 February 2021).⁹ Finally, another important decision is the case of *Lacatus v. Switzerland* which concerned the fine imposed on a poor and vulnerable Roma woman for unintrusive begging, and subsequent imprisonment for five days for non-payment, where the Court found a violation of Article 8.

The Directorate of the Jurisconsult of the ECtHR continues to monitor Roma-related cases and the Press Unit continues to update the Factsheet on Roma and Travellers.

In November 2020, the Commissioner for Human Rights made a submission to the Committee of Ministers in the context of the supervision of the execution of the 2007 ECtHR judgment in the case of *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic* about school segregation of Roma children. She also made a submission on the case of *Yordanova and Others v. Bulgaria* about the planned eviction of Roma people from an informal settlement in Sofia.

15 complaints on Roma rights and their implementation status were received by the Secretariat of the European Social Charter in the reporting cycle concluded on 24 March 2021; and three new collective complaints on Roma rights have been received since then.

Since January 2020, several monitoring reports of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) have been adopted. 16 out of 19 Resolutions adopted by the Committee of Ministers since January 2020 on the FCNM implementation included Roma-related recommendations. Several new topics were addressed by the Advisory Committee, including:

1. Impact of early marriages on school absenteeism and dropouts (reports for Croatia, Cyprus, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, and Spain);
2. Compensation for past sterilisation of Roma women in the Czech Republic¹⁰;
3. Historical revisionism in relation to the Roma and Sinti Holocaust (Croatia);
4. Impact of Covid-19 on national minorities (Croatia, Czech Republic¹¹);
5. Derogatory wording in official language dictionaries in Spain.

⁶ CASE OF X AND Y v. NORTH MACEDONIA and CASE OF R.R. AND R.D. v. SLOVAKIA

⁷ AFFAIRE HIRTU ET AUTRES c. FRANCE

⁸ CASE OF HUDOROVIČ AND OTHERS v. SLOVENIA

⁹ CASE OF BUDINOVA AND CHAPRAZOV v. BULGARIA

¹⁰ The 5th Opinion on the Czech Republic was adopted by the Advisory Committee; it will however be made public in October 2021.

¹¹ Ibidem.

This strategic objective also looks at follow-up activities in Council of Europe member States on CM recommendations and the promotion of ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on combating antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma. ECRI has included the issue of begging in several recent monitoring reports. A partial monitoring visit of ECRI in Hungary was carried out and will be followed up to monitor the situation of Roma in the country. A compilation of recommendations and follow-up on Roma issues in ECRI monitoring is available on ECRI HUDOC.

In March 2020, the Ukraine Action Plan Project provided online training for the State Service for Ethnic Policy of Ukraine about Council of Europe standards for combating discrimination, including Council of Europe standards and tools for the inclusion of Roma.

This intervention also aims to develop further non-binding legal instruments to combat the violation of Roma and Traveller rights. In Ukraine, the Ukraine Action Plan Project facilitated access to identity documents by providing assistance to the State Migration Service of Ukraine in devising and implementing the fast-track ID procedure, as well as a chatbox responding automatically to questions from potential applicants and guiding them through the new simplified procedure. Other activities under the project included assisting in the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on the Roma Inclusion Strategy and in organising its first meeting in Ukraine in April 2021. The project also facilitated the first online exchange of international best practices for Roma inclusion by the Ombudsoffices of 18 Council of Europe member states with a large Roma population (event organised under the auspices of the Office of the Ombudsperson of Ukraine in May 2021).

2.2 Strategic Objective 2: Supporting democratic participation and promoting public trust and accountability

The participation of Roma and Travellers in political and public life has increased over the past decade. However, it does not yet adequately reflect the demographic weight of Roma and Traveller communities, particularly at local level. Evidence has shown that Roma and Travellers, particularly women and youth, encounter a variety of social barriers and prejudices that severely impede their capacity to effectively participate in public and political life.¹² Consequently, they are largely absent from local or national political arenas and decision-making processes. This invisibility undermines their potential to reverse embedded marginalisation and discrimination. It is essential to enhance their participation and representation in public and political life in order to bring them closer to local, national and European decision-making bodies and improve their active participation and interaction with public administration as well as their presence in the public sphere.

2.2.1 *Participation of Roma and Travellers in public and political life at local, regional, national, and European level is increased*

The Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) has produced a study on the active political participation of national minority youth in Council of Europe member states.

In 2020, the JP ROMACTED provided training and capacity-building activities for local Roma community members, officials and staff of local authorities in the 61 participating municipalities of the programme in the Western Balkans and Turkey through presential, on-line and hybrid meetings. ROMACTED also implemented a small grants scheme supporting 49 projects of local development initiatives including preventive measures and direct emergency responses to needs resulting from the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, such as:

- Maintaining contact with local and central authorities to highlight the precarious situation of their Roma citizens;
- Participation in crisis management teams and other similar actions at local level and coordination of actions at national level;
- Initiation and implementation of actions by respective support organisations jointly with other relevant stakeholders and actors.

¹² Empowerment of Roma and Traveller women: a change under construction. Towards a roadmap for advancing gender equality of Roma and Traveller women in Council of Europe member states, by Zora Popova, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2021; Participation of young women and girls from disadvantaged groups in political and public decision-making processes at local level. Toolkit for local authorities and civil society organisations, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2020; Study on the active political participation of national minority youth in Council of Europe member states, Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) assisted by Zsuzsanna Rutai (consultant), Strasbourg, 2021.

Achievements of the JP ROMACTED during the first phase can be found at: ALBANIA BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA_KOSOVO* MONTENEGRO NORTH MACEDONIA SERBIA TURKEY.

In the second half of 2021, ROMACTED II aims to establish Community Action Groups (CAGs) and Institutional Working Groups (IWGs) in the 70 participating municipalities.

From January 2020 to April 2021, the JP "Building up political will and understanding of Roma inclusion at local and regional level (ROMACT)" worked with local communities and local authorities by actively contributing to building the capacity of Roma communities via Community Action Groups (CAGs) to participate in local decision-making processes. Between January 2020 and April 2021, 49 CAGs were established. CAG members are representatives of Roma communities actively participating in the process initiated by the Programme at local level. During the given period, the following activities were implemented and contributed to the participation of Roma in public life:

- Bulgaria: 20 coaching sessions were conducted for CAG members (152 participants - 87 men and 65 women) in 15 different municipalities, covering topics such as advocacy and negotiation skills; monitoring the Municipal Action Plan for Roma Integration; assessing and prioritising community needs; participating in the municipal budget drafting process, etc. Moreover, 4 training sessions (86 participants - 46 men and 40 women) gathered together CAG representatives and local authority representatives from 18 municipalities on topics such as project planning and management; conducting community surveys; approaches for working with and within the Roma community; and participation of CAG members in the municipal budget process.
- Romania: 16 coaching sessions for CAG members (76 participants - 27 men and 49 women) were organised in 13 municipalities, focused on project planning and implementation, including the implementation of ROMACT small grants schemes.

Between January 2020 and April 2021, the JP ROMACT promoted inclusive democratic governance at local level while ensuring that Roma people are integrated in the measures and services provided by administration. During the given period, ROMACT contributed to building the capacity of local authorities to engage in effective and inclusive policy responses for the needs of Roma communities in 13 municipalities in Bulgaria and 36 municipalities in Romania. During the same period, 16 municipalities issued official decisions for the establishment of Municipal Taskforce Groups for Roma Inclusion, gathering together Roma Community Action Groups members, municipal representatives and other relevant stakeholders at local level, in view of preparing Joint Action Plans for Roma inclusion.

In order to increase the representation and participation of Roma women and Roma youth in public decision-making processes through their inclusion in relevant training courses and related activities, as well as the creation of specific training modules for their participation, the Roma and Travellers Team organised the Roma women Leadership Academy in Kosovo*¹³ between September and November 2020.

On 15 March 2021, the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly adopted the draft resolution on "Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making", including recommendations and (in the report) extensive analysis on promoting Roma women's political participation.¹⁴

On 8 April 2021, the PACE General Rapporteur on combating racism and intolerance, Momodou Malcom Jallow (Sweden, UEL) made a statement for International Roma Day 2021, "Give a voice to Roma youth and civil society organisations in Parliaments."

The Youth Department under the relevant steering committee prepared the first draft of a Committee of Ministers Recommendation for supporting Roma youth participation and combating antigypsyism, to be presented in 2022 to the Committee of Ministers.

A Roma perspective on the effects of climate change was presented during a webinar organised in the framework of the World Forum for Democracy on climate change and minorities by a Roma speaker.

¹³ All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

¹⁴ The Resolution was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 23 June 2021.

In October 2020 and April 2021, the Roma and Travellers Team undertook Roma pro-vote campaigns including the production of pedagogical videos focusing on voting procedures with Roma communities in Albania and Portugal.

This strategic objective will also be achieved through the organisation of international Roma women's conferences and related meetings. Two meetings with Roma and Traveller women were held online in September and December 2020, respectively, in preparation for the 8th International Roma Women's Conference (IRWC), scheduled to take place in Skopje on 24-26 November 2021, to be hosted by the Government of North Macedonia. About 10-12 women participated in each preparatory meeting and the preliminary draft conference programme was developed.

2.2.2 The capacity of national and local authorities is enforced to perform their roles and responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner when designing and implementing plans, policies and projects, particularly active inclusion measures that improve the situation of Roma and Travellers

Workshops for locally-elected officials were organised focusing on key principles, responsibilities and motivation for engaging in effective policy responses to local development needs of Roma. Until December 2020, the JP ROMACTED organised a series of workshops and webinars on Roma Responsive Budgeting at local level to train municipal officials in Albania and Serbia on the use of the methodology.

In April 2021, the ROMACTED Handbook was published and is currently available in Albanian, Bosnian, English, Serbian and Turkish in print and online (via the ROMACTED website), translated and adapted to the respective contexts. Additional methodological and pedagogical tools and a series of situation analyses, assessments, and studies were produced. To pave the way for the implementation of one of the priorities of Phase II, a pilot Guideline on Roma Responsive Budgeting at Local Level, presenting the lessons learnt from testing this approach in Albania in 2020, was published.

From March 2020 to January 2021, the JP JUSTROM held Roma women mentoring programmes in Bulgaria, Greece and Italy. JUSTROM facilitators identified 37 Roma women to be trained and mentored to become community leaders in order to represent their communities. The Roma women were trained on topics such as basic principles of human rights, provision of legal aid, family law issues, children's rights and statelessness, social and health rights, and others. They also benefited from mentoring sessions on opportunities in education and employment, on how to set up an NGO, on vocational guidance, and on Roma women's participation in decision making. Information days were organised in all JUSTROM implementing countries, with municipalities or other local actors targeting both municipal civil servants and Roma women to promote mutual understanding and remove barriers and problems faced by Roma women to enhance provision of services and rights.

The JP ROMACT focused on building the skills and commitment of local authorities, supporting them to work better with Roma communities, to plan more effective actions for improving the living conditions of disadvantaged people and to access and make better use of funding. During the reporting period, the following relevant activities were conducted for the representatives of local municipalities which participate in the programme:

- Bulgaria: 2 coaching sessions/workshops were organised for municipal representatives on the functions and tasks of Roma Inclusion Working Groups and on the monitoring of the Municipal Action Plan for Roma Integration.
- Romania: 29 coaching sessions/workshops were organised for 127 municipal representatives (38 men and 89 women) in 9 municipalities, focusing on project planning and implementation (including projects funded by the ROMACT small grant scheme), as well as on the elaboration of local development strategies.

The JP ROMACT also included a small grants scheme aiming to support the implementation of short-term priorities of the Roma communities involved in the process at local level. During the reporting period, ROMACT disbursed a total of 86 small grants to municipalities, local NGOs representing the CAGs, and schools in the most deprived locations of the ROMACT municipalities. Moreover, in view of improving and supporting the effective implementation of different policies and regulations at local level, ROMACT experts provided technical assistance to municipalities to develop and apply procedures related to legalisation of informal settlements or illegal housing and to obtaining IDs.

From January 2020 to April 2021, based on evidence from the ground, ROMACT published a number of analytic reports and guidelines on topics of concern at local level for the improvement of inclusion policies and strategies, facilitating links with relevant institutions at regional and/or national level (to be found at Resources | ROMACT (Council of Europe-romact.org)).¹⁵

The Ukraine Action Plan Project is also aimed at enhancing participation of national minorities, including Roma, in the decision-making process at local level. At the beginning of 2021, five pilot local communities with a high number of ethnic minorities, including Roma, residing in these communities were selected and started working on the draft local action plans, based on the adapted ROMED/ROMACTED methodology. During the second half of 2020, the project produced an evaluation report on the impact of the decentralisation reforms on national minorities, including Roma in Ukraine, assessing the access to local-level decision making processes. Awareness-raising campaigns on promoting the participation of national minorities, including Roma, in the decentralisation process and decision-making processes at the local level were conducted in 2020.

A research paper entitled “Empowerment of Roma and Traveller women: a change under construction. Towards a Roadmap for Advancing Gender Equality of Roma and Traveller Women in Council of Europe member states” was presented by the author, Dr Zora POPOVA, to the ADI-ROM at its 2nd meeting on 8-9 October 2020, followed by the presentation and discussion of an addendum on good practices at the 3rd ADI-ROM meeting on 16-17 March 2021.

2.2.3 The capacity of local authorities to access and use national and international funding, particularly EU funds, to support their Roma inclusion strategies, is increased

Since 2020, a total of 37 project applications for funding were prepared with the technical assistance of ROMACT experts (22 in Bulgaria and 15 in Romania). Municipalities partnering under ROMACT regularly received training and coaching on how to access different funding schemes and how to develop good projects, including funding from Structural and Cohesion Funds or the EEA/Norway Grants. While screening for available funding sources is carried out systematically for all ROMACT municipalities, a comprehensive document was prepared in Romania on the upcoming EU funding that would be relevant for the marginalised Roma communities: *ROMACT review Operational Programmes proposed for Romania in the programming period 2021-2027*.

2.2.4 The level of Roma and Traveller expertise and understanding across the Council of Europe Secretariat is increased

The holding of regular Inter-Secretariat meetings and other relevant internal information events on Roma and Traveller issues contributed to the sharing of expertise and understanding across the Council of Europe. A Task Force on the Implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) furthers the mainstreaming of Roma and Traveller issues in all relevant policy areas of the Organisation and assures coordinated stocktaking of implementation activities. It also serves as a platform to ensure synergies and co-operation when designing and implementing relevant initiatives. The first meeting of the Inter-Secretariat Task Force took place on 4 March 2020 and included a presentation of the final version of the Action Plan to other departments of the Council of Europe Secretariat, as well as an exchange of information on all past, present and future Roma and Traveller-related activities with all participating departments. At the second Task Force meeting, held on 11 March 2021, an update on relevant activities was presented and a methodology for the elaboration of this first implementation report was devised.

Similarly, the regular biannual meetings of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society contribute to achieving the above-mentioned result. The 9th meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society (29-30 October 2020) focused on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025), as well as the impact of the Covid-19

¹⁵ Guide on social housing criteria for local authorities (RO); Initial developments in the CLLD approach in 9 urban communities (RO); Toolkit: Possible solutions for informal settlements (RO); Guide on local information & awareness raising campaigns on the protection of children with parents going to work abroad (RO); Analysis of Municipal Development Plans and Integrated Reconstruction & Development plans of municipalities participating in ROMACT (BG); Report on the analysis of legal provisions regarding the social component of public procurement (RO); Brief on Romanian legislative framework on socially responsible public procurement (RO); Report on the situation of Social Economy Structures in ROMACT municipalities (RO); Guidelines for conducting public procurement with social criteria in ROMACT municipalities (BG); Guidelines for permanent address registration and issuance of an ID (BG); Guidelines for obtaining a sustainable status of housing construction papers (BG).

crisis on Roma and Traveller communities. The 10th meeting (26-27 November 2020) focused on combating hate speech directed against Roma and Travellers. The meeting took stock of the characteristics and prevalence of hate speech faced by Roma and Traveller communities and the impact of the Covid-19 crisis in this context. Participants were also invited to present and discuss different civil society and member state measures and good practices in combating hate speech. The 11th meeting (29-30 April 2021) took stock of the characteristics and prevalence of antigypsyism and the impact of the Covid-19 crisis in this context. Participants were also invited to present and discuss different civil society and member State measures and good practices in combating antigypsyism.

Activities also focused on awareness-raising with Council of Europe Permanent Representations and Council of Europe staff, especially on important days related to Roma history and culture (8 April - International Roma Day, 16 May - Romani Resistance Day, 2 August – European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, 5 November - World Day of Romani Language).

From 7-9 April 2021, the Conference “Roma Youth: Together for Emancipation and Empowerment. The role of history in the integration of young Roma today” was jointly organised by the Roma and Travellers Team and the Youth Department, under the aegis of the German Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, and in co-operation with the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), the European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network, the Phiren Amenca International Network, the International Roma Youth Network “ternype”, and the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma.

A flower casting ceremony took place on 8 April 2021 in Strasbourg (Passerelle de l'Aubépine, near the European Youth Centre) on the occasion of International Roma Day, and in commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the First World Romani Congress held near London in 1971. The ceremony was conducted by a Council of Europe delegation headed by Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy.

2.2 Strategic Objective 3: Supporting access to inclusive quality education and training

Common challenges for many educational institutions across Europe when it comes to Roma and Traveller children include non-enrolment, early school leaving, school dropouts, and irregular attendance. The Organisation's work on inclusive education continued to raise awareness of the need to ensure the legal prohibition of segregated schooling policies and practices, supported member States in the development and application of desegregation strategies in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, and promoted parental participation for quality education and schooling through civil society and stakeholders at the local level. The EU/Council of Europe Joint Project “Inclusive Schools – Making a Difference for Roma Children (INSCHOOL)” was instrumental in this process.

2.3.1 *The removal of concrete obstacles to equal access to quality education is supported at national and school level; the capacity of teachers to manage diversity and adopt inclusive teaching methods is enhanced*

Obstacles to equal access to quality education are reduced through coaching and support of school staff and members of the co-ordinating group through the JP INSCHOOL. From October 2019 to June 2021, the JP INSCHOOL provided 2-3 interventions per school per month by facilitators with the objective of providing support/coaching in inclusive education teaching to schoolteachers, teaching assistants and teaching staff through the use of the “Index for Inclusion: A Guide to School Development Led by Inclusive Values” by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow, the main project methodology. The facilitators also assisted in the preparation and readjustment of Inclusive School Development Plans by the Coordinating Groups based on which grant applications were prepared and grant agreements with inclusive education activities were concluded.

From March to June 2021, an INSCHOOL international training course was designed and implemented to raise participants' understanding of the benefits of inclusive education. It was also aimed at developing their professional competences in methodological and pedagogical work with the intention of organising and implementing high quality and inclusive educational activities for all children, specifically for Roma children, and other groups having different learning and educational needs. The training ran until the end of June 2021.

The JP INSCHOOL also developed training resources and produced the Czech and Romanian translations and graphic redesign of the Index for Inclusion: A Guide to School Development Led by Inclusive Values to enable a better understanding of the main values and approaches for inclusive education among teachers and education professionals. In the long term, the Index translations will be scaled up nationally for the Czech Republic, Romania and the Slovak Republic in co-operation with the ministries in charge of education.

In Ukraine, under the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan Project, the Council of Europe, in co-operation with ERIAC, supported the Ukrainian authorities in enhancing the quality of teaching in the Romani language. The Council of Europe provided assistance in establishing the inter-agency Working Group for the codification of Romani and in codifying a dictionary of 700 words in Romani, which will serve as a basis for the development of teaching materials. In the course of 2021 and 2022, assistance will be provided in the development of a curriculum and of teaching materials in the Romani language for primary schools.

The Youth Department translated and published the manual "Mirrors: Manual on combating antigypsyism through human rights education" in German, Russian and Ukrainian and the handbook "Right to remember" in German.

ECRI published six monitoring reports in 2020, many of which include topics on inclusive education and on the issue of home schooling for Roma children. On 30 June 2020, ECRI held a webinar on inclusive education during Covid-19, including on how to mitigate the issue of distance education for Roma and migrant children. A teacher from the Slovak Republic spoke about her experience.

Several opinions of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted in 2020-2021 include recommendations on improving access to quality education for Roma pupils and students (Albania, Latvia), fighting school segregation (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine) and further reducing school absenteeism and early dropouts (Cyprus, Latvia, Portugal, Serbia, Spain).

The Education Department of the Council of Europe acts as International Partner Organisation in the EEA/Norway Grants Programme in Bulgaria, Romania and the Slovak Republic, supporting the social inclusion of vulnerable groups with a focus on Roma. The three programmes assist municipalities and civil society organisations in implementing measures aimed at the social inclusion of children and youth at risk, including Roma, through education and youth work, as well as integrated measures for Roma inclusion. Specific advice and support have been provided to the three beneficiary countries in designing open calls for projects, selecting the projects for funding, and monitoring their implementation. Links and communication channels with relevant Council of Europe standards such as CM Recommendation (2012)13 on ensuring quality education, the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres, were provided, complementing activities implemented by the JPs INSCHOOL and ROMACT.

2.3.2 The teaching of Roma history and the Roma Holocaust is promoted and included in school curricula and textbooks, including through training of trainers and teachers

On 1 July 2020, the CM Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials was adopted by the Committee of Ministers. The text is available on the websites of the Committee of Ministers and the Roma and Travellers Team in 22 languages.

In 2020 and at the beginning of 2021, the Roma and Travellers Team published the following awareness-raising and teaching materials in order to support the implementation of the aforementioned recommendation:

- Analytical Report on the Representation of Roma in European Curricula and Textbooks
- The representation of Roma in major European museum collections: Volume 1 – The Louvre
- The representation of Roma in major European museum collections: Volume 2 - the Prado

In 2020, it also supported the production and publication of a trilingual (English, Albanian, Romani) volume of Romani legends and fairy tales by the Albanian artist Sead Kazanxhiu.

In its opinions on Portugal and Spain, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities recommended the authorities promote the teaching of Roma history for all students and referred to the above-mentioned CM Recommendation.

In addition, the teaching of the Romani language is promoted by the Council of Europe. On 5 November 2020, the World Day of Romani Language, the Chair of the Committee of Experts for the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and a representative of the Romani Language Programme in the Education Policy Division of the Council of Europe Secretariat contributed to the International Conference "Safeguarding our Romani Language", organised by ERIAC.

3. Cross-Cutting Issues

It is increasingly recognised that there can be several – intersecting - grounds for discrimination at play in a given case. A person who is a victim of racial discrimination might also suffer discrimination on any other ground covered by Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, amongst others, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity, age or disability. These different forms of discrimination are not mutually exclusive; multiple discrimination requires multi-layered responses. Unfortunately, neither the concepts of multiple discrimination nor of intersectionality have yet been integrated into legal remedies, policy making or data collection.

In line with the 2010 Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, which highlights women's rights and gender equality, the Council of Europe remains sensitive to multiple discrimination and intersectionality as cross-cutting issues which permeate all specific actions in a horizontal way. The capacity of the Organisation to address multiple discrimination and intersectionality was greatly enhanced by the creation of a new intergovernmental structure (CDADI) with a broad anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion mandate.

Specific cross-cutting activities undertaken by the Council of Europe include the legal empowerment component of the JP JUSTROM, which has an intersectional approach, focusing on Roma women's rights. The mentoring programme and the information days are activities of the programme also carried out with this approach.

Following the JUSTROM mentoring programme, Roma women leaders organised a total of 239 outreach activities across various settings, including schools and their communities. The activities varied in nature and were a first important step for Roma women community leaders to put into practice the skills learnt during the mentoring sessions.

The Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination prepared the draft report *Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making* (4503) and the draft report *Addressing inequalities in the right to a safe, healthy and clean environment*, debated in June 2021, will take into account environmental racism.

The latest GREVIO (Istanbul Convention) monitoring report on Spain pointed to the fact that increased access to support services for Roma women was needed and that the National Strategy did not include measures to address the exposure of Roma women to violence. Furthermore, adequate and sustainable funding was needed. Monitoring visits of GREVIO to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland and Romania would also assess the situation of Roma women in these countries.

The Drafting Committee on Migrant Women (GEC-MIG), a subordinate body to the Gender Equality Commission (GEC), was tasked by the Committee of Ministers to draft a Recommendation on migrant and refugee women on the basis of Recommendation Rec(79)10 concerning women migrants. The resulting draft recommendation on migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls is planned to be adopted by the GEC in due course. The GEC also continued the dissemination of its Sexism: See it. Name it. Stop it! Campaign, which includes an intersectional perspective. Tools are available in 22 languages.

4. Activities carried out in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in order to alleviate the negative impact of the health and sanitary crisis on Roma and Traveller communities

Activities to alleviate the negative impact of the Covid-19 health and sanitary crisis on Roma and Traveller communities were originally not foreseen in the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025), approved by the Committee of Ministers before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Europe.

Nevertheless, many departments in the Council of Europe adapted their work programmes to take account of the crisis, ranging from activities to safeguard and promote the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law in times of crises, to the actual and very practical provision of support and assistance in cash or in kind to communities in situations of particular vulnerability. These activities are listed hereafter.

Since April 2020, the JP JUSTROM has undertaken the following activities:

- Direct participation in local and national emergency campaigns in line with instructions from relevant national or local sanitary authorities;
- Information dissemination (Facebook, WhatsApp support groups, phone calls, flyers, etc.), distribution of hygiene products, material and food, translation and distribution of healthcare/ Covid-19 related national brochures/instructions in minority languages, distribution of educational material to Roma children;
- Facilitating access to Roma communities by actors leading prevention and/or emergency actions (municipalities, NGOs, Red Cross, Civil protection, etc., depending on the context);
- Assisting Roma women community leaders involved in or initiating activities in the community to prevent, mitigate and/or overcome the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Legal consultation and information on access to healthcare;
- Legal monitoring of possible abuses during the crisis period and reporting to the relevant national authorities and/or the Council of Europe;
- Advocacy work towards relevant local authorities for the provision of public services, in particular access to healthcare, water, and municipal services;
- Raising the awareness of Roma communities about their rights regarding access to healthcare and sanitary services.

From April 2020 to April 2021, the JP ROMACT awarded 46 small grants to different stakeholders in partner municipalities in Bulgaria and Romania, focusing on awareness-raising and material aid aimed at overcoming the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable in the Roma communities. The projects included information campaigns, distribution of protective items, food items and hygiene products, as well as disinfection of public spaces.

Between May and June 2020, the JP INSCHOOL alleviated the difficulties faced by schools following the outbreak of Covid-19, following a needs assessment, by re-adjusting its granting scheme by offering grants of up to €2,000 to five schools in Romania. More specifically, the action was aimed at:

- Capacity-building of school staff and teachers in using ICT and online platforms for more effective learning and pupil engagement;
- Support and coaching of teachers and schools in improving remote contact and communication with parents and children;
- Emotional and psychological support for teachers, parents and students in overcoming anxiety due the confinement and physical isolation;
- Effective and post-lockdown support for children and teachers in their transition back to schools.

In the first half of 2021, at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Roma and Travellers Team established co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Research of Romania through a Memorandum of Understanding with the main aim of ensuring support to schools in their ability to provide access to inclusive quality education and training within the Romanian educational system. As a result, 20 microgrants were provided to schools in vulnerable situations in 2020 (during the first wave) and another 19 microgrants during the second wave. The total funds provided amounted to nearly €46,000 under the first wave of the pandemic. Activities took place in November-December 2020 and continued from March to September 2021.

During the second half of 2020, the Ukraine Action Plan Project provided assistance to the Office of the Ombudsperson in preparing the report on “The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Roma Community in Ukraine”, which was presented to the public in December 2020. Materials of the Ministry of Health related to the prevention of Covid-19 were translated into the Romani language and disseminated in Ukraine.

The Children’s Rights Division organised a “Covid-19 and children’s rights” webinar in March 2021 through the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF), focusing on “Overcoming educational challenges” and covering the challenges relating to ensuring access to distance education and learning for all children, including children from ethnic minorities, children in care and other vulnerable groups; the report and presentations are available at: <https://www.CouncilofEurope.int/en/web/children/-/Covid-19-and-children-s-rights-overcoming-education-challenges>.

In Spring 2020, the Gender Equality Division started to gather information, in co-operation with the GREVIO Secretariat, on the gender equality-related impact of the Covid-19 crisis. In October 2020, a conference on this topic was organised together with the Greek CM Presidency. Analysis has shown that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected women and men differently. From the rise in gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence, to effects on paid and unpaid work, women, especially women from disadvantaged groups such as Roma, are more negatively impacted than men in the enjoyment of their basic rights and economic independence.

On 29 May 2020, the Advisory Committee adopted a Statement on the Covid-19 pandemic and national minorities in which it expressed its deep concern that the Covid-19 pandemic had exacerbated the vulnerability of certain national minorities, Roma and Travellers in particular, and deepened the already existing inequalities in many Council of Europe Member states. Since March 2020, the Advisory Committee has requested information from state authorities about the impact of Covid-19 on national minorities, in particular on the most vulnerable ones, including Roma and Travellers. On 18 May 2020, the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (COMEX) expressed concern over the lack of communication in regional or minority languages during the health crisis, and on 3 July 2020 published a statement on regional or minority languages in online education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 22 April 2020, the European Committee of Social Rights, the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the European Social Charter, issued its *Statement of Interpretation on the Right to Protection of Health in Times of Pandemic*. This statement emphasizes the interrelation of the right to protection of health with other rights enshrined in the European Social Charter, such as the right to social and medical assistance, the right to housing, the right to freedom from poverty and social exclusion, and the right to safe and healthy working conditions.

On 27 March 2020, the PACE Rapporteur on Discrimination against Roma and Travellers in the field of housing, František Kopřiva (Czech Republic, ALDE), made a [statement](#) on the impact of the pandemic on these groups “COVID-19: Rapporteur denounces discrimination against Roma and Travellers”.

On 8 April 2020, PACE General Rapporteur on combating racism and intolerance, Momodou Malcom Jallow (Sweden, UEL) made a [statement](#) for International Roma Day 2020, “Covid-19/International Roma Day: honouring resilience and resourcefulness in the face of anti-Gypsyism and discrimination” (Parliamentary Assembly – Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination).

The Standing Committee on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly prepared a report by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, which was adopted by the Assembly as Resolution 2339 (2021) on Upholding equality in times of crisis and pandemics: gender, equality, and non-discrimination (rapporteur Petra Stienen, the Netherlands, ALDE). The report (adopted in the committee on 10 July 2020) deals extensively with the impact of the pandemic on Roma and Travellers.

At the Parliamentary Assembly’s Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, a hearing took place on 2 February 2021 with the participation of a representative of a Roma organisation and a member of the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Team, as part of the preparation of the report of Edite Estrela (Portugal, SOC) on addressing inequalities in access to environmental rights.

On 29 March 2021, the Sub-Committee on the Rights of Minorities and No Hate Parliamentary Alliance of the Parliamentary Assembly held a Webinar on “Environmental rights and climate change in Europe: hearing the voices of minorities and indigenous peoples”, including examination of environmental racism against Roma, as part of the preparation of the report of Edite Estrela (Portugal, SOC) on addressing inequalities in access to environmental rights.

On 19 April 2021, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted Resolution 2368 (2021) and Recommendation 2198 (2021) on Preserving national minorities in Europe (rapporteur Elvira Kovács, Serbia, EPP/CD). The related report (adopted in committee on 27 November 2020) deals inter alia with issues concerning Roma as national minorities.

As of Spring 2020, the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issue (ADI-ROM) has placed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Roma and Traveller communities as a recurrent item for topical and urgent debate on the agenda of its meetings. In the related debates, it has shared experiences and examples of good governmental practice to mitigate the risks.

It also contributed to the study conducted in 2020 by the CDADI on “Covid-19: an analysis of the anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion dimensions in Council of Europe member States”, which led to the preparation and adoption of 2021 Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on upholding equality and protecting against discrimination and hate during the Covid-29 pandemic and similar crises in the future.

5. Conclusions and way forward

The implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) in the reporting period allowed for making significant progress in the three priority areas and in better mainstreaming Roma and Traveller issues across the work of the entire Organisation. Since March 2020, however, the work has been impeded by the Covid-19 pandemic which has posed unprecedented challenges in the sphere of human rights protection. In particular, the circumstances of vulnerable groups already discriminated against, such as Roma and Travellers, have become even more dire, including through the increase of hatred and xenophobia, diminishing employment and growing numbers of Roma and Traveller children dropping out of school, due to limited access to distance learning.¹⁶

Still, the Council of Europe was able to make a difference for Roma and Travellers by advocating for changes in the member States and supporting them in their endeavours. The main achievements of this first reporting period include most importantly the strengthening of the capacities of local authorities to respond to the needs of Roma and Travellers, enhancing effective participation of Roma and Travellers in decision making processes, monitoring the situation of Roma and Travellers during the Covid-19 pandemic and strengthening the resilience of Roma and Traveller communities and individuals, as well as the capacities of member States to respond to the pandemic, especially by supporting local level initiatives and strengthening inclusive education.

The work on several new Council of Europe standards relevant to the protection and inclusion of Roma and Travellers has commenced during this reporting period, such as the new CM Recommendation on combating hate speech or the work on supporting minority youth participation and combating antigypsyism.

During the reporting period, the planned peer-to-peer exchanges and intergovernmental face- to-face meetings suffered from the lockdown and travel ban across Europe. However, many were replaced with online meetings and webinars to the extent possible and with working more closely with local communities most affected by the consequences of the pandemic.

During the upcoming reporting period, all departments of the Council of Europe Secretariat are invited to continue focusing on the three priority areas: combating antigypsyism and discrimination, supporting democratic participation, and access to inclusive quality education, while providing member states with effective remedies to counter the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups such as Roma and Travellers.

¹⁶ State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. A democratic renewal for Europe, Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2021; COVID-19: an analysis of the anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion dimensions in Council of Europe member States, study prepared for the CDADI by Stéphanie Cramer Marsal et.al., Strasbourg 2020; Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on upholding equality and protecting against discrimination and hate during the COVID-10 pandemic and similar crisis in the future, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 5 May 2021; OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the COVID-10 Pandemic, OSCE/ODIHR, 2020; The impact of the coronavirus crisis on Roma and Travellers, European Parliament at a glance, European Parliamentary Research Service, 2021; Coronavirus pandemic in the EU – impact on Roma and Travellers, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Bulletin No. 5, 2020; Economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Roma communities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine, Craig Willis, European Centre for Minority Rights (ECMI) Research Paper No. 122, 2020; Roma rights in the times of COVID, European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), 2020; Roma in the COVID-19 crisis. An early warning from six EU member states, Open Society Foundations/Open Society Roma Initiatives Office, 2020; The impact of COVID-19 on Roma communities in the European Union and the Western Balkans. Survey, European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network, 2020.

6. Appendix

List of acronyms

ADI-ROM	Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues
CDADI	Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion
CDENF	Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child
CM	Committee of Ministers
ERIAC	European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture
INSCHOOL	EU/Council of Europe Joint Project “Inclusive schools: making a difference for Roma children”
JUSTROM	EU/Council of Europe Joint Programme “Roma Women’s Access to Justice”
JP	European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
ROMACT	EU/Council of Europe Joint Programme “Building capacity at local level for the integration of Roma”
ROMACTED	EU/Council of Europe Joint Programme “Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level”