



SECURITIZATION OF ROMA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:
THE CASES OF ALBANIA AND SLOVAKIA

By

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Declaration of Authorship/Copyright Notice

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Abstract

This research was motivated by the current worldwide situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. By focusing specifically on the case of Roma in Albania and Slovakia, it answers the question if vulnerable groups were securitized during the emergency or not. The methodology used on this research is a mixed method approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative data. Initially, it presents an overview of securitization theory and the conditions that a state must have to indicate it securitized a problem. Based on these theoretical conditions and the data secured by primary sources, such as articles and NGOs, it concludes on what was securitization in Slovakia and Albania. Concretely, the major findings are that both countries have securitized the Covid-19 pandemic, but unlike in Slovakia, Albania has not securitized Roma community during the pandemic. Slovakia has securitized Roma and treats this vulnerable group as a threat for the further spread of the virus in the society.

Acknowledgements

This work is my first academic thesis written in English. Its writing has been unusual due to Covid-19 and the chaos it created over the world. In a way or another, we are all affected by this pandemic. Some of us had health problems, some were psychologically affected, some had to stay away from their beloved ones for months, some were financially affected, and for some this pandemic turned out to be even more fatal, losing their lives. Although we are all equal, we are not all the same, we do not all have the same health immunity, and we do not all have the same economic start to cope with a pandemic. Therefore, this virus and isolation have not affected everyone equally. That is why I decided to write this thesis. To show that Roma, unfortunately, do not have the same start as other part of the society to face such a pandemic or its post effects. Hoping that such a thing will be understood by the institutions and actors who have the power of bringing some change, I want to dedicate this work to all those Roma families who are facing the consequences of being disadvantaged.

There are many contributors to my academic life and this research. The two Albanian organizations, Roma Versitas Albania and Vish Këpucët e Mia, have a direct contribution to this paper, and I want to acknowledge their help and readiness to provide me the data.

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I. Introduction

During the five first months of 2020, the world faced one of the most mysterious pandemics of recent decades. Coronavirus disease, also known as Covid-19, is a virus that originated in December 2019 initially in Wuhan, China. There were some uncertainties regarding where it developed from, but it is spread through droplets of saliva or nasal mucosa and attacking the respiratory system of the human body. However, this disease rapidly spread on worldwide and, on March 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic and strongly appealed to every country for a national lockdown.¹ According to this institution, 216 countries have been affected so far, and the curve of confirmed cases has had many fluctuations.² The last update from 31 May 2020 shows 6,057,853 confirmed cases, 371,166 of which are confirmed deaths from Covid-19.

Table 1. Cases of Covid-19 Worldwide³

Confirmed cases	Recovered	Confirmed Deaths	Affected countries
6,057,853	2,637,496	371,166	216

The main research question is: have Roma in Albania and Slovakia been securitized during the Covid-19 pandemic? The research starts with an introduction of three theoretical basis: public health, the relation between pandemics with vulnerable groups, and securitization. The aim of this theoretical framework is to provide the idea of (1) how countries, including interstate actors, evaluate the threat of an outbreak, (2) how these countries securitize the problem of the outbreak, and (3) if they have or have not securitized a vulnerable group during the outbreak. The second part of the research focuses on the Roma population and two case studies: Albania and Slovakia. Based on public statements from respective governments, it is initially assessed if these countries

¹ World Health Organization *WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19* (2020, March 11). Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>

² WHO - *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak situation* (2020, April 17) Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

³ WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard. Retrieved on 2020, May 31 from <https://covid19.who.int/>

have securitized the problem of Covid-19. The main conclusion of this research stands on the question if Slovakia and Albania have securitized Roma population through a specific policy process.

II. Literature review and theoretical framework.

A. What is “Global Health”?

*“Global health is a humanitarian endeavor that seeks to improve the world’s health, including that of the most vulnerable peoples, while national security works to protect the interests of people within a given state. Thus, while the interests and objectives of global health and national security may at times overlap, it is important to recognize that they can also come into direct conflict.”*⁴

This definition refers to an escalation of liabilities between global and national institutions whose final goal is to secure and protect global public health. At the national level, the respective obligations of the institutions vary based on local government and the internal goals of each state concerning health security. In this circle, the interests and needs of all groups of society are involved, but vulnerable groups are emphasized.

For each country, the policy standards and directives on the healthcare system come from the World Health Organization (WHO) through International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005, which must also be executed from member states.⁵ This process aims to assess potential national hazards and prevent them from becoming global pandemics. According to the interpretation of Global Public Health Security (2007), the revised edition of IHR has initially changed the framework of infectious diseases of only three to a wider one; it includes every outbreak that might threaten the national public health and lead into an international emergency.⁶ The process of each occurring emergency starts by the member state reporting the situation to the experts’ committee of WHO, and it continues with the assessment and recommendations from this committee. This network consists of another innovation of IHR: focal points of each member state to improve the communication. After the risk evaluation of the occurred event, the WHO must assist the affected countries on restriction policies and maintaining public health by providing financial and logistical

⁴ Feldbaum, H., Patel, P., Sondorp, E. and Lee, K., 2006. Global health and national security: the need for critical engagement. *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 22(3), pp.192-198.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6829535_Global_health_and_national_security_the_need_for_critical_engagement

⁵ Organization, W., 2006. *International Health Regulations (2005)*. Geneva: World Health Organization.
https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43883/9789241580410_eng.pdf;jsessionid=223EC938AE4D916EA4BB3C5FD67FFB5A?sequence=1

⁶ Rodier G, Greenspan AL, Hughes JM, Heymann DL. Global public health security. *Emerg Infect Dis*. 2007; 13(10):1447-1452. doi:10.3201/eid1310.070732 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2851539/>

support and helping these countries with their surveillance resources. In conclusion, the most important response mechanism is the national capacities of the respective states to respond to the requirements of IHR and the needs of society, including vulnerable groups.

B. Pandemics and vulnerable groups

When analyzing the effects of pandemics on vulnerable groups, we can refer to Okland H. and Mamelund S. study regarding the consequences of H1N1 (Spanish Flu 1918-1920) on the African American community.⁷ Their main argument stands on the generally perceived theory that, during pandemics, vulnerable groups have been more exposed to the risk of infection. The article provides data on the condition created from this disease by quoting some studies conducted in 18 locations, different age groups and communities, and stating four findings. The studies note that the disease had several waves with different fluctuations of the curve. In 1918, the results indicate that the white community in the United States had higher morbidity and mortality than the black people community due to higher exposure to the disease. Later in 1919, the proportions went back to the initial theory of the race is an implication of higher morbidity and mortality. The authors suggest that one hypothesis behind this pattern is that black people who lived in the South, were living in crowded households where water access was missing, working under unfavorable conditions, lacking quality health access, suffering from malnutrition and segregation.⁸

Pandemics not only possess health consequences on vulnerable groups. A high risk of racial and financial degradation exists. “*The Racial Time Bomb*,” by Charles M. Blow, gives examples on how black people were predisposed to suffer the most during various diseases.⁹ The parallel line he builds on the Covid-19 case predicts that discriminative actions, stereotypes, rejections on healthcare access will become stronger towards marginalized (black) people.

Specifically, S. Walker reports for The Guardian: “*Europe's marginalized Roma people hit hard by coronavirus*” by indicating the high risk of outbreaks, the injustice, and the financial crisis this

⁷ Økland, H. and Mamelund, S., 2019. Race and 1918 Influenza Pandemic in the United States: A Review of the Literature. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16 (14) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6678782/>

⁸ Ibid, p.2

⁹ Blow, C. M. (2020, April 1). The Racial Time Bomb in the Covid-19 Crisis. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/01/opinion/coronavirus-black-people.html?fbclid=IwAR0prvu7xfuVhepi0_r2ABB--YVEo8mccEg3wxeDzilhwh1setw2kvc94mk

community faces in such periods.¹⁰ They point out the statistics of 80% of Roma in Europe live in overloaded communities with a serious lack of running water. Consequently, social distancing and hygiene maintenance become challenging or in the most escalated case, impossible. The government discrimination is taking place in many central European countries and not only. Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Slovakia represent cases of government institutions isolating Roma settlements by using military forces. They justify their actions with the aim of safety, stopping the virus' spread, and eliminating the creation of other centers of disease. This period also presents financial difficulties for Roma due to their informal work and uninsured by state and health institutions. Currently, they face difficulties in coping with the curfews and it is predicted that the economic recovery will require enduring time, persistent actions, and interstate actors.

C. Securitization and vulnerable groups

Why does it matter that some governments use military forces against Roma or during a crisis in general? **Critical Security Studies** – is an inclusive approach that refers to theories, methods, and practices for detecting when a state views an issue as a security threat.¹¹ The goal of this practice derives from the term “human emancipation”, which means that it is not only focused on the military realm of negative peace – the lack of war. Its expansion differs more on positive peace – a well-functioning government and balanced social interactions, with the combination of interstate actors as well. Therefore, this umbrella term includes seven pillars of security such as food, economic stability, health and access to the healthcare system, environment protection, personal security from the use of violence, community security on tradition and ethical values, and political stability and freedom, on the UNDP 1994 report.¹²

In emergency cases, the state can securitize an issue and maintain its welfare processes through three stages: (1) establishment of the character of the security problem by the government, (2) acknowledgment of the potential threat by the society, (3) creation of a policy potential to solve the problem.¹³ All of them require actors from government, civil society, and, in some cases,

¹⁰ Walker, S. (2020, May 11). Europe's marginalized Roma people hit hard by coronavirus. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/11/europes-marginalised-roma-people-hit-hard-by-coronavirus>

¹¹ Peoples, C. and Vaughan-Williams, N., 2015. *Critical Security Studies*. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, pp.35-37.

¹² Ibid., p.191

¹³ Ibid., p.28

military. When states securitize, they are claiming an issue, event, or even a group of people, is a threat to the state. This changes how they interact with the event or group of people, since they can then treat it as a case for militarized action.

III. Methodology

This theory-driven research originated from the current global situation on Covid-19 and the potential securitization of vulnerable groups. In March 2020, when the global pandemic was declared, one initial question which came up was: How are countries going to manage this situation with vulnerable groups? The specific question of this research stands on the case of the Roma population, and it analyzes how Roma communities were approached by governments, how they were affected by the outbreak in terms of morbidity, and the damages caused by the lockdown.

The chosen locations are Albania and Slovakia. The background of these two countries differs from each other in many aspects. For instance, Albania has lately gained the status of the “candidate country” to be a member state of the European Union.¹⁴ On the contrary, Slovakia is already an EU member state since 2004.¹⁵ Since each of them has applied a different approach to the Roma community, they have also given to this community a different role in the securitization process.

The methodology followed in this research is a mixed method one due to its traits and its main question of “Are vulnerable groups (Roma) securitized during the Covid-19 outbreak?”. Commensally, it assesses the relation of vulnerable groups with healthcare theories and critical security studies. Due to these general theoretical relations, the perspective shifts to the practices of countries by analyzing the current relationships between Roma and respective governments during the outbreak. Using the thematic analysis (see table 2), the expected results will consist of the question if governments have securitized their countries and which is the position of Roma in this process, meaning, whether they are considered and a threat or not. The Albania case looks into numerical data as well to understand in which other ways the Roma community has been affected.

¹⁴ European Neighborhood Policy And Enlargement Negotiations. (2020, March 26). Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/detailed-country-information/albania_en

¹⁵ Slovakia and EU. (n.d.) Retrieved from https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/slovakia_en

Phases of thematic analysis:

Phase	Description of the process
Familiarising with data	Transcribing, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Searching for themes	Gathering data and collating codes into potential themes.
Reviewing themes	Checking the themes in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine each theme and generate clear definitions and names for each theme.
Producing the report	Selection of vivid, compelling text extracts relating to the analysis to the research questions and literature, producing a scholarly report.

Note. Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 35).

Data collection for both countries is ensured by primary resources and the perspective of two main actors: governmental websites and documents; and NGO reports/ studies from respective countries. The communication with NGOs and obtaining reports from them has generally been informal, considering that this is an ongoing situation and most of these data are not published yet. The data by Albanian NGOs are based on surveys and assessments that they have done on the ground. It is also important noting that the timeline of the events and primary data used for this research is until 31 May 2020.

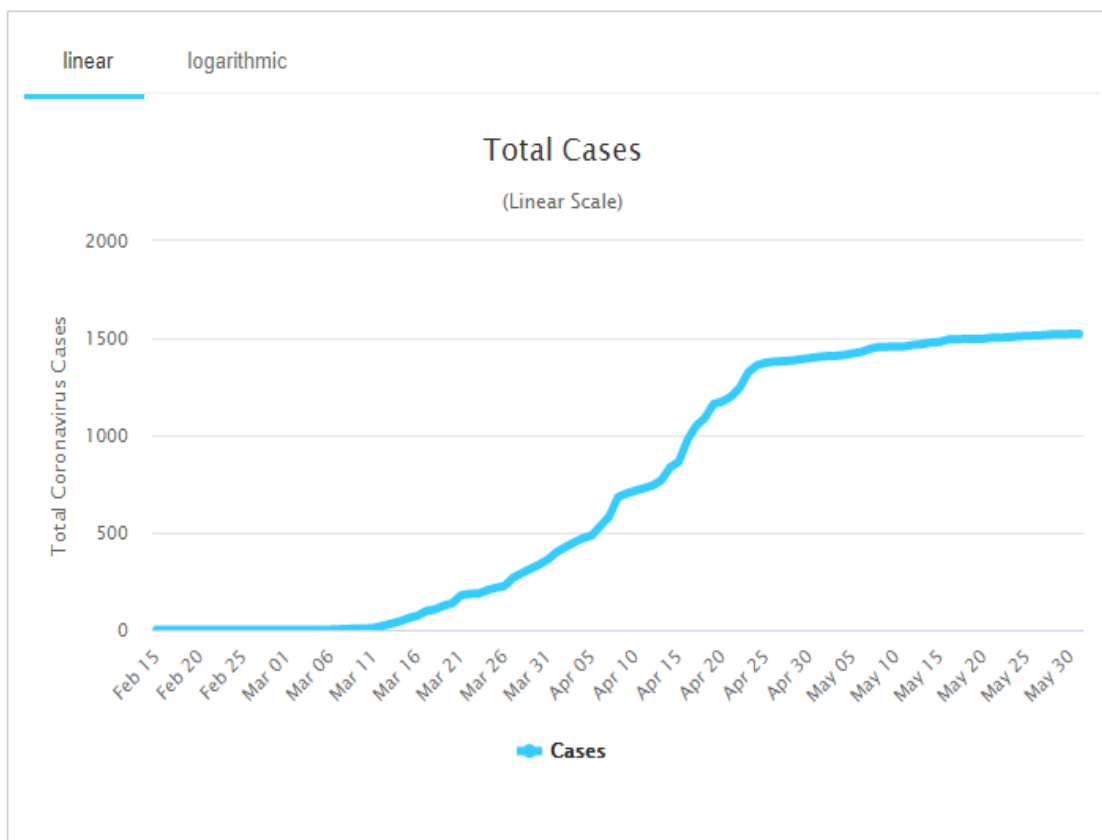
IV. Case studies

A. Slovakia

Table 2 Cases of Covid-19 in Slovakia¹⁶

Population of Slovakia	Confirmed cases	Recovered	Confirmed deaths
5.45 million (2018)	1,521	1,366	28

Table 3 Linear scale of Covid-19 cases in Slovakia¹⁷



¹⁶ Slovakia Coronavirus: 1,528 Cases and 28 Deaths - Worldometer. (2020). Retrieved May 31, 2020, from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/slovakia/>

¹⁷ Ibid. p1

On 11 March 2020, the Prime Minister (PM) of Slovakia, Peter Pellegrini, responded positively to WHO instructions by declaring the state of emergency¹⁸ and establishing national measurements.¹⁹ The governing board and its respective ministries established a new platform for state welfare. This platform included (1) the closure of state borders for foreign citizens, (2) home isolations and curfews, (3), applying home-schooling through online lessons (4) providing particular healthcare services during quarantine, and (5) administration of the emergency budget to support and compensate the business and their employees on their loss during the lockdown. These restrictive measures were then updated by gradually lifting them and intending to normalize the situation.

A.1 Slovakia and Roma

For thirty years, Slovakian Roma activists have organized their initiatives, events, NGOs, and political parties aiming for the promotion of Roma rights as human rights. However, all these actions did not stop the calls of Slovakian leaders and Neo-Nazi groups for promoting movements against Roma and for calling for the “death for Gypsies”.²⁰ Among the aggressive statements by the governmental actors is the latest declaration of the current governing board of Slovakia. Particularly the mayor of Kosice, Jaroslav Polacek, expressed the concern on the Covid-19’s massive spread from Roma due to their behavior as “*socially unadaptable people*”.²¹

On 1 April 2020, the Slovakian PM established the Covid-19 testing campaign on Roma settlements.²² The week ahead brought another statement from him declaring the complete lockdown of five Roma settlements using the reasoning of the virus’ further spread prevention.²³ In this case of isolation, he involved the state army as a crucial actor to barricade this community from distributing outside their households.²⁴ This decision of the Prime Minister was accompanied

¹⁸ NewsNow. Government Declares State of Emergency (2020, March 11) Retrieved from

<https://newsnow.tasr.sk/policy/government-declares-state-of-emergency/>

¹⁹ M. (2020). COVID-19: official measures and important information (updated continually) - IOM Migration information center. Retrieved May 31, 2020, from <https://www.mic.iom.sk/en/news/637-covid-19-measures.html>

²⁰ Minorities at Risk Project, Chronology for Roma in Slovakia, 2004, available at:

<https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38da1e.html> [accessed 2 June 2020]

²¹ International Roma Day: Overcoming prejudices during the Coronavirus crisis

<https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/international-roma-day-overcoming-prejudices-during-coronavirus-crisis>

²² Coronavirus: Slovakia to test Roma community <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52156976>

²³ K. (2020a, April 12). Slovakia orders complete lockdown of 5 Roma settlements to prevent coronavirus spread. Retrieved from <https://kafkadesk.org/2020/04/12/slovakia-orders-complete-lockdown-of-5-roma-settlements-to-prevent-coronavirus-spread/>

²⁴ Virostková, L. (2020, April 3). [Coronavirus] Slovak army deployed to quarantine Roma settlements. Retrieved from <https://euobserver.com/coronavirus/147970>

by some incidents where a police officer used physical violence against several Roma children in one settlement because they were playing outdoors their neighborhood.²⁵

Local Roma NGOs, one Roma politician and experts who deal with Roma issues have reacted regarding on forced isolation of five Roma settlements and the inclusion of the state army.²⁶ Peter Pollák, Member of the Slovak National Council (2020) and Member of European Parliament (2019), and Andrej Belak, a specialist in Roma health at the Slovak Academy of Sciences, both supported this decision of the PM by stressing it as a non-discriminatory action rather than a preventive one to maintain the public health. Contrarily, the local Roma NGOs described this decision of PM as discriminatory and inappropriate.²⁷ They also emphasized the government's lack of a plan to equip these communities with food and medical packages.

In conclusion, considering the transition from the normal state into an emergency one and government's attempt to reinstate the welfare, can be affirmed that Slovakia has securitized the Covid-19 pandemic. In the same conditions, it has also applied extraordinary policies that explicitly target the Roma community in Slovakia as a threat to the society during the outbreak, meaning, Slovakia also securitized the Roma community as a threat.

B. Albania

Table 4 Cases of Covid-19 in Albania

Population of Albania	Tested	Confirmed cases	Active cases	Recovered	Confirmed deaths
2.846 million (Jan 2020)	15,950	1137	232	872	33

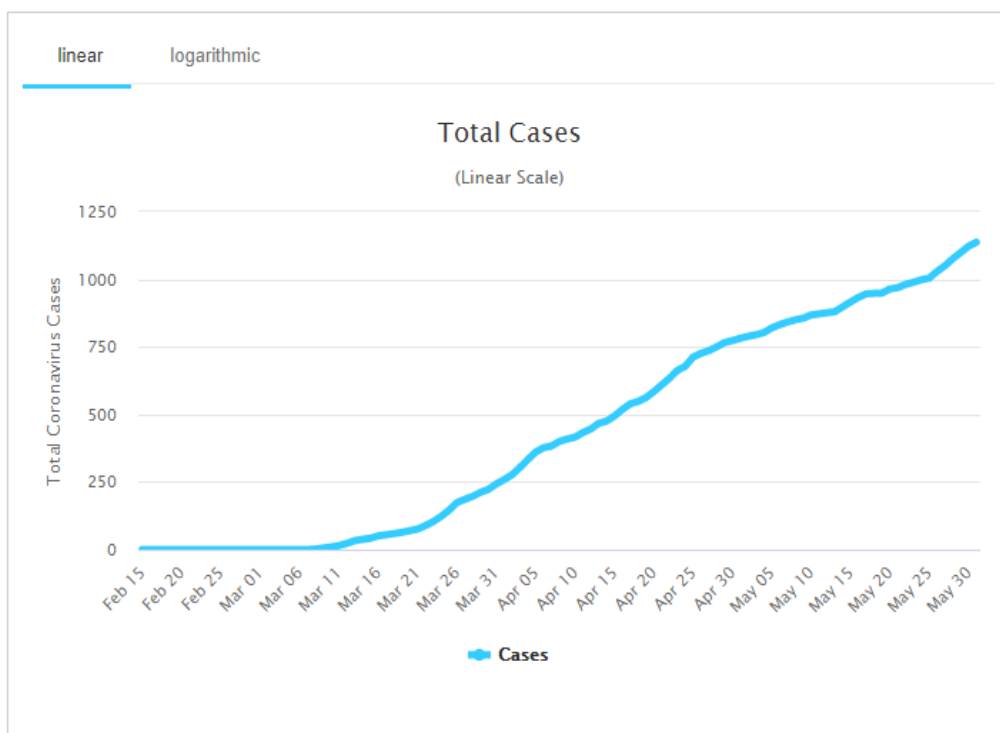
Source: Ministry of Healthcare and Social Protection, Albania²⁸

²⁵ Slovak police officer said to have beaten five Romani children in Krompachy settlement and threatened to shoot them - Romea.cz. romea.cz. (2020). Retrieved from <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/slovak-police-officer-said-to-have-beaten-five-romani-children-in-krompachy-settlement-and-threatened-to-shoot-them>.

²⁶ Holt, E., 2020. COVID-19 lockdown of Roma settlements in Slovakia. The Lancet Infectious Diseases, 20(6). <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S1473-3099%2820%2930381-9>

²⁷ Ibid, p. 1

²⁸ Ministry of Healthcare and Social Protection, Albania. 31 Maj 2020/ Updated information on Covid-19 [Informacion i përditësuar për koronavirusin COVID-19] Retrieved on 2020, May 31 from <https://new.shendetesia.gov.al/31-maj-2020-informacion-i-perditesuar-per-koronavirusin-covid-19/>

Table 5 Linear scale of Covid-19 cases in Albania²⁹

On March 11, 2020, the Prime Minister (PM) of Albania, Edi Rama, also responded positively to WHO instructions by declaring a state of emergency due to Covid-19 and establishing a national platform of measurements in order to prevent the further spread of the virus.³⁰ This platform has undergone through various changes during different phases, depending on the situation in the country. They consisted of: (1) focusing the public healthcare system on Covid-19 cases, (2) closing the state borders for foreign citizens, (3) obstructing educational institutions and delivering lessons through online platforms and National Radio television, (4) home isolation and curfew schedules, (5) applying the emergency budget to compensate the ensured employees (260ALL per person), (6) introducing *Green Zones*, (cities that do not have positive cases of Covid-19

²⁹ Albania Coronavirus: 1,232 Cases and 34 Deaths - Worldometer. (2020). Retrieved May 31, 2020, from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/albania/>

³⁰ Demiri, A. (2020, March 14). Urdhër për marrjen e masave të veçanta për parandalimin e përhapjes së infeksionit të shkaktuar nga COVID-19. Retrieved from <https://new.shendetesia.gov.al/urdher-per-marrjen-e-masave-te-vecanta-per-parandalimin-e-perhapjes-se-infeksionit-te-shkaktuar-nga-covid-19-2/>

anymore).³¹ In the two last communications of the PM, he declares the opening of border on 1 June 2020 and lifting most of the restrictions, except on public transportation, public gatherings, and tourism.³²

B.1 Albania and Roma

So far, unlike in the case of Slovakia, there have been no public statements nor explicit policies in Albania to isolate or securitize the Roma communities. Considering this, it is needed to explore and assess other ways vulnerable groups, in this case Roma, could be being affected. One main obstacle to this process is that there is a massive lack of data showing the level this disease is affecting the Roma population in Albania in terms of morbidity. Although this community is considered as the most disadvantaged one due to their living conditions, socio-economical level, and household locations, until now there is no empirical research or evaluation to analyze the potential exposure and risk vulnerable groups face in such pandemic situations, nor a number rate of Roma affected from Covid-19.

There are two documents released from the Council of Europe (CoE) to the Albanian government. The first document is a recommendation, in collaboration with Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination, aiming to raise the awareness of vulnerable groups.³³ CoE emphasizes the importance of paying special attention to them since these groups are disadvantaged even in normal conditions.³⁴ Roma are not mentioned specifically there, but they are in the second document.³⁵ CoE reports there its project of providing aid packages to 300 Roma families in four municipalities of Albania.³⁶

³¹ Komunikim publik i Kryeministrit mbi ecurinë e Fazës II dhe hapjes graduale. (2020, May 26). Retrieved from <https://www.kryeministria.al/newsroom/komunikim-publik-i-kryeministrit-mbi-ecurine-e-fazes-ii-dhe-hapjes-graduale/>

³² Komunikim publik i Kryeministrit Edi Rama për luftën ndaj COVID-19. (2020, June 2). Retrieved from <https://www.kryeministria.al/newsroom/39209-2/>

³³ Council of Europe. (2020, April). *Respektimi i demokracisë, shtetit të së drejtës dhe të drejtave të njeriut në kuadrin e krizës sanitare të COVID-19*. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/09000016809e2116>

³⁴ Ibid.

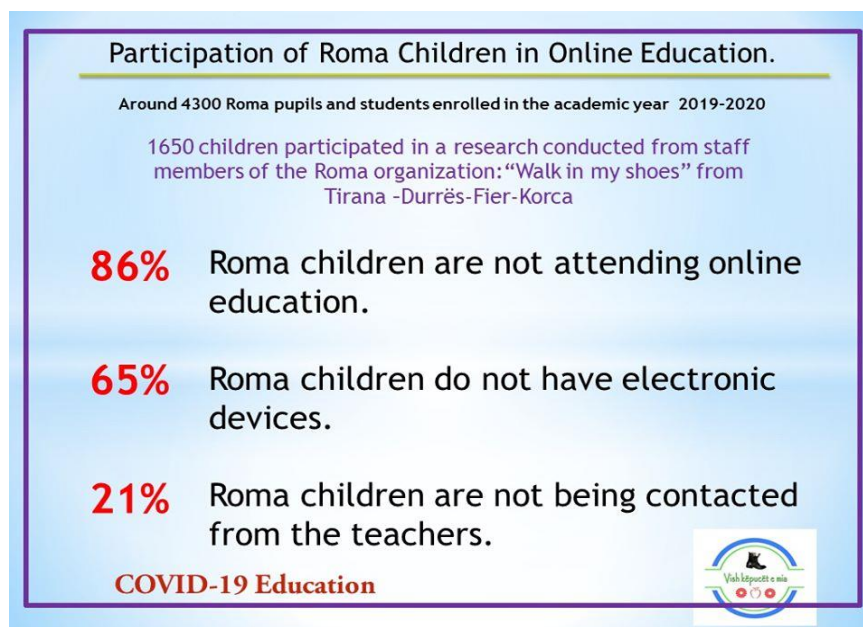
³⁵ Council of Europe, (2020, March 30) *Reaching out to Roma in Albania during Covid-19 - Short-term actions for making a difference* Retrieved from <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/roma-local-governance/-/reaching-out-to-roma-in-albania-during-covid-19-short-term-actions-for-making-a-difference>

³⁶ Ibid. p.1

B.2 The perspective of Albanian NGOs

“Walk in my Shoes (Vish Këpucët e Mia)” is a non-governmental organization based in Albania, which implements educational projects with Roma elementary and secondary students.³⁷ In April 2020, it has conducted a study on 1650 Roma children in four cities (Tirana, Durrës, Fier and Korça) aiming to evaluate these children’s participation in online education. The outcomes of the research show that 86% of Roma children are not attending online classes due to the lack of an electronic device (the main reason), or rather they are not being contacted by their teachers.³⁸

Table 6: Participation of Roma children in online education. Albania



Roma Versitas Albania (RVA) is a Civil Society Organization supported by Roma Education Fund (REF) working with Roma secondary and tertiary students to increase the number of these students in Albania.³⁹ During the Covid-19 outbreak, RVA contacted 65 Roma students of its program dispersed in eleven cities of Albania to conduct a survey on how these students’ lives are financially and socially affected by home isolation.

³⁷ “Vish Këpucët e Mia” [Walk in my shoes] <https://vishkepucetemia.wordpress.com/>

³⁸ Walk in my shoes [Vish Këpucët e Mia]. (April 22, 2020) Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/547561592242376/photos/pcb.1207907692874426/1207907349541127/?type=3&theater>

³⁹ Roma Versitas Albania <https://romaversitasalbania.org/>

Internet access⁴⁰: As lessons shifted to online platforms, students were asked if they have access to internet connection. Forty-four students (44), confirmed to have access to the internet connection. On the opposite, twenty (20) of them responded that they did not have such access.

Access to running and drinkable water: Since access to running water is crucial in such emergency situations, and not only, students were asked whether they have access to running and drinkable water. The results below show us that most of them have access to running water, but in most of the cases, it is not drinkable. Therefore, families of these students must buy it from the market, which is an extra cost for them.

Table 8 Families' access to running water - Albania

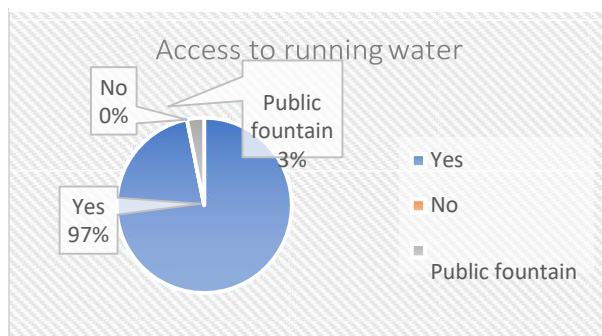
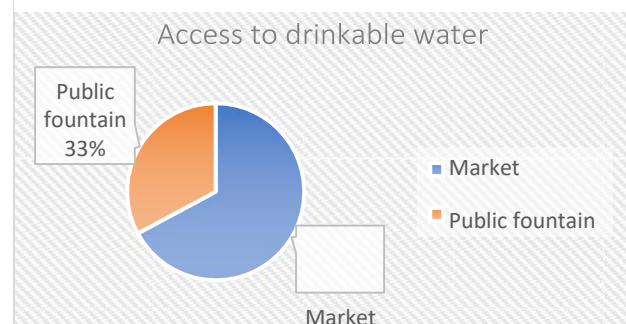


Table 7 Families' access to drinkable water - Albania

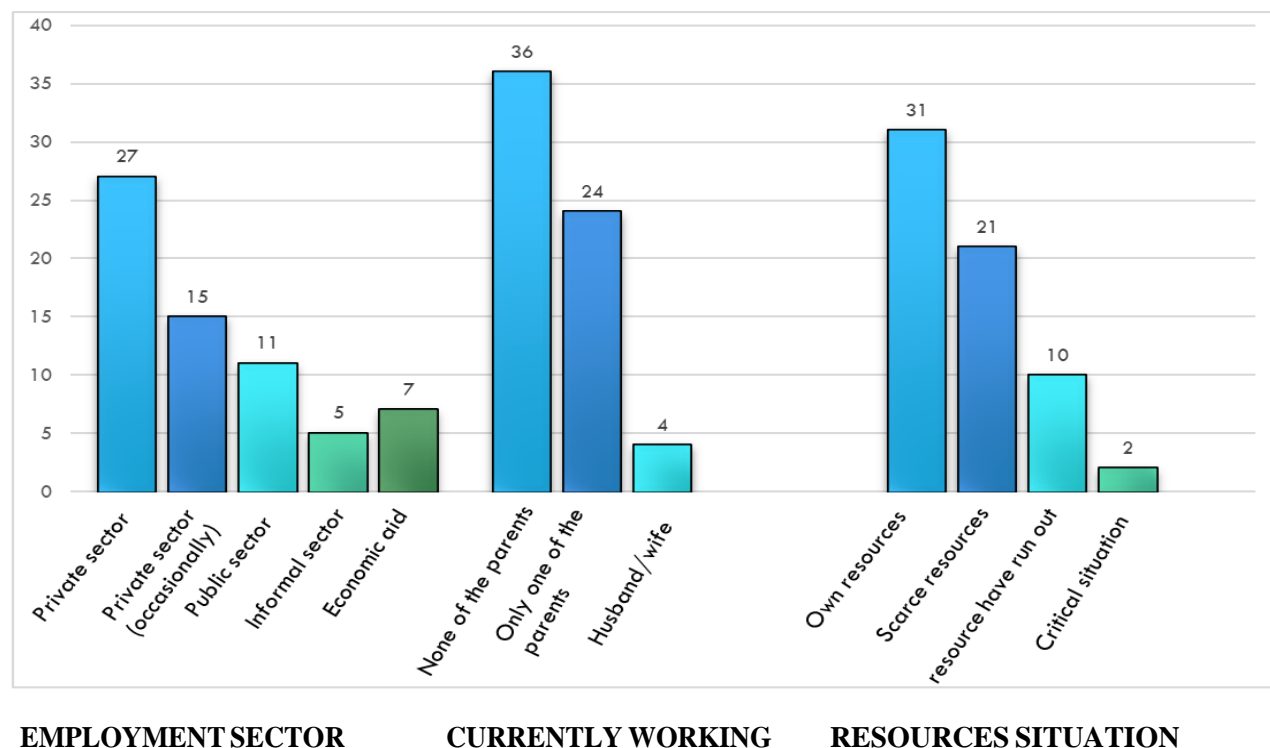


Employment and family incomes: Another main part of the research is the assessment of the economic situation of these students based on three indicators: employment sector their parents work, if any of their parents have returned to work since not all areas of employment are on lockdown, and how do they assess their current economic position in terms of resources to endure self-quarantine. As the charts show, around 50% of the students confirmed their parents have a sustainable job either in public or private sector. The other part of the students confirmed that their family incomes are secured either from informal and occasionally jobs or social economic aid that they receive from government.

⁴⁰ The following data comes from Roma Versitas Albania. It has not yet been published, but they plan to publish the report in 2020. Through personal communication with Mr. Emiliano Aliu (Executive Director) on May 25, 2020, I gained access to it. It is considered a primary source in this thesis.

Due to the quarantine, most of the employees seem not to work or are working from home. From the self-description that students have given, around 40% of them is dealing with their own recourse during self-isolation. On the contrary, the remaining part estimate their current economic situation negatively, as difficult or critical.

Table 9 Employment and incomes information - Albania



Food and hygiene-sanitary aid: Since self-isolation has negatively affected Roma families, many Roma and pro-Roma NGOs have implemented their campaigns on providing packages with food and hygiene-sanitary products. For instance: RVA supporting fifty-five (55) students of its program with these aid packages and 70 Roma families in Fier; “Amaro Drom” in collaboration

with Food Bank Albania⁴¹, has supported 100 Roma families in Fushe-Kruje; Roma Women Right Center has supported 120 Roma families in Fier.⁴²

In conclusion, the case of Albania during the Covid-19 refers outbreak to the example on which the state has securitized the issue of pandemic but there are no policies created to particularly securitize the vulnerable groups (Roma).

⁴¹ Amaro Drom (2020, May 26). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/390346691350044/posts/1127026211015418/>

⁴² Roma Women Right Center – Albania (2020, May 5). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/859709067439254/posts/3004362209640585/>

V. Findings and conclusions

Neither Slovakia nor Albania has officially submitted any government documents showing how exposed Roma have been to the risk Covid-19 pandemics and on what levels this community has been affected in terms of morbidity.

State securitization: Both countries, Slovakia and Albania, went from a normal state of governance to a state of emergency. This transition took place through the public statements of the relevant authorities who created and implemented a plan to respond to this emergency. The plans of the two respective states included concrete measures in the areas of health, education, economy, restrictive measures on social security, and more. The whole population acknowledged these measures and consequently went through self-isolation for approximately three months. Referring to the course of events and conditions of the securitization theories, it is worth noting that the governments of both countries have attained the goal of securitizing the Covid-19 pandemic in this emergency by applying particular security policies and using security rhetoric.

Securitization of Roma: When assessing the securitization of vulnerable groups, it is necessary to separately analyze the cases of both states. **Slovakia** created and implemented a policy process specifically for the Roma, which according to government, this was crucial for the prevention of the virus' further spread. The platform included testing campaigns to assess the concrete presence and risk of the virus spreading from these areas, various actors, and total isolation decisions on five Roma settlements. Although the test results for positive cases were not so high in the Roma community, according to the articles mentioned above, the Prime Minister still ordered the isolation of these Roma settlements, including the state army. The latter fact combined with reported cases of police violence against Roma children, means the situation of forced isolation targets Roma as a threat to society. All these events conclude to the fact that the Slovak government had securitized Roma during the Covid-19 pandemic and considered them a risk.

The case of **Albania** seemed to be less explicit, therefore it was needed to explore and assess other ways Roma are being affected. Initially, the measures taken by the Albanian state during the emergency period were generally for the whole society. So, there has been no concrete assessment of how disproportionately this community would be affected by pandemic or self-isolation. Here we can analyze two elements: education and the economic situation of Roma families. As NGOs have reported after their surveys, many Roma pupils and students have found it difficult or

impossible to attend online classes because they do not possess any electronic devices or access to internet connection.

On the other hand, although the government has applied the emergency payments for employees who are insured, Roma have been affected disproportionately financially. This is due to two factors: (1) most of them are not employed and provide their family incomes from casual (unsustainable) jobs, and (2) they are employed in a stable job but are not insured, as they work in the black market. Consequently, they cannot benefit from the emergency payments.

A. Conclusions

In emergency situations, such as Covid-19, human security and public health become primary. These are attained through the involvement of state and interstate actors to create and implement policies. From the cases examined, it is clear that both governments have securitized the Covid-19 pandemic in respective countries based on international guidelines but have chosen different approaches to manage the situation with vulnerable groups, specifically the Roma. However, in both cases, it turns out that the Roma are disproportionately affected by the situation of Covid-19 due to the location of their settlements, due to discrimination directly by the state denying them access to healthcare system, due to their economic situation and not only. After lifting the restrictive measures and gradually returning to normality, Roma find this process even more difficult as they have already been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 isolation.

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