**Contribution of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Family and Equal Opportunities**

In Slovenia the Covid-19 first wave of epidemic was declared on 12th of March 2020 and the second on 18th of October 2020. The Government reacted quickly and took a number of measures to mitigate its effects. The first *Intervention Measures to Contain COVID-19 Epidemic and to Mitigate its Consequences for Citizens and Economy Act* came into force on 11th of April 2020, followed by seven consecutive Acts aimed mainly at preserving jobs and liquidity of companies as well as at preventing the worsening of the social situation of our citizens, especially the vulnerable groups of population. The most recent Act entered into force on 5th of February 2021. In our contribution we will focus on key measures in the fields of work, social affairs and family to mitigate the economic and social impact of the pandemic.

First we would like to underline the measures that Slovenia has taken to safeguard jobs to the largest possible extent.

- **Wage compensation scheme**. Temporarily laid off workers at affected employers are entitled to wage compensation in the amount of 80 % of their average monthly wage for full-time work, but not less than the national minimum wage. This measure was prolonged until 30th of April 2021 with possibility of further prolongation of two times per one month by Government Decision. Companies that have not received over 1,8 mio EUR of state support, are entitled to receive 100 % of the amount mentioned above.

- **Subsidising shorter working time**. Employers who cannot provide at least 10 % of their workers with 90 % of regular working time per week (i.e. 36 hours) are eligible for subsidies covering 20-35 hours of working time weekly. During the course of receiving subsidies and for one month after this period, employers shall not initiate the procedure of termination of the employment contract. This measure applies from 30th of June 2020 until 30th of June 2021.

**- Temporary unemployment benefit** of 513,64 EUR is extended to those unemployed not entitled to unemployment benefit as conditioned by legislation and have lost their employment during the period of epidemic declaration. This temporary benefit is provided monthlyuntil the epidemic declaration is lifted (first wave 30th of May 2020, second wave still ongoing).

- All registered unemployed that have lost their job during the epidemics and are still unemployed as of 5th of February 2021 are entitled to a **solidary allowance** of 150 EUR.

- **Subsidising minimum wage scheme**. The state will allocate a subsidy of 50 euros to employers for the salaries of those workers whose salary without allowances does not reach the minimum wage. The subsidy is determined for work performed in the months from January to June 2021 inclusive. In the second half of 2021, the State will relieve employers of the burden of paying social security contributions for workers in an employment relationship.

- **Compensation of workers subject to quarantine measures**. Workers subject to quarantine after being in contact with an infected person should receive the same wage compensation as temporarily laid off workers, that is 80 % of their average monthly wage for full-time work during the past three months, but not less than the national minimum wage. In case that the contact with infected person occurred at work, the worker receives 100 % of his average monthly wage.

- **Compensation of workers who are absent from work due to childcare** because of the ordered quarantine for the child or because of the responsibilities of childcare due to the closure of schools and kindergartens (force majeure). They receive wage compensation of 80% of their average monthly wage.

- **Self-employed, farmers and religious officials** received a monthly basic income in the amount of 250 EUR for March and 700 EUR for April and May 2020. They were also exempt from social security contributions between 13. 3. and 31. 5. 2020. In the period between 1. 10. 2020 and 31. 3. 2021 they are entitled to receive a monthly basic income of 1.100 EUR however they need to cover their social security contributions. For that reason, religious officials receive 700 EUR.   
They are also entitled to 250 EUR refund of lost income in the case of ordered quarantine.

Secondly, the corona crisis has affected the most vulnerable groups of the population therefore Slovenia took several measures to protect them as well.

**Families:** Due to Covid-19 few measures were adopted in May 2020 to help families:

The solidarity benefit of 150 € is intended for the recipients of maternity/parental allowance below minimum wage, the recipients of parental benefit, the recipients of special childcare allowance, the recipients of partial payment for loss of income and foster parents. Families with one or two children, who receive child benefit in first to sixth income brackets, are entitled to 30 € per child. Large families with three children will receive, in addition to the allowance they already receive, a one-time allowance of 100 EUR and families with four or more children 200 EUR.

In December 2020 additional measures to help families were adopted:

All families with children, who have permanent or temporary residence and actually reside in Republic of Slovenia and are under 18 (and also students in secondary school over 18) are entitled to 50 EUR per child. Large families with three children will receive, in addition to the allowance they already receive, a one-time allowance of 100 EUR and families with four or more children 200 EUR. The solidarity benefit of 100 EUR for every month with declared epidemic is intended for the recipients of special childcare allowance. The solidarity benefit of 500 EUR is intended for the parents of new-borns from 1. 1. 2020 until one year after the end of epidemic with permanent residence in the RS.

**Financial social assistance beneficiaries, employees with low income:** Financial social assistance or protection allowance beneficiaries received the solidarity allowance of 150 EUR on 30th of April 2020.

Employees with low income whose last salary did not exceed twice the minimum wage received solidarity allowance of 200 EUR.

**Elderly:** Retirees with low pensions (below 700 EUR in March 2020 and below 714 EUR in January 2021) were entitled to the solidarity allowance paid in three different amounts depending on the amount of the pension (300, 230 and 130 EUR) which they received on 30th of April 2020 as well as on 11th of January 2021.

**Students:** Students with permanent residence in Slovenia received solidarity allowance of 150 EUR, including students who are studying abroad. They were allowed to re-enter the year of study if they couldn’t finish their exams in time due to the epidemic. Students were as well exempt of paying student residence that were closed during the epidemic. The costs are covered by the state.

To conclude, there are important challenges, as well as opportunities, ahead. A lot remains to be done in fighting against poverty and protecting the most vulnerable groups however we believe that the above measures helped to prevent the worst. We will constructively participate in creating and supporting a socially fair recovery and inclusive growth in the future as new measures are being prepared.