

Covid-19: Responses and measures taken by Social Employers members

Social service employers across Europe are experiencing a lot of pressure related to the increase of measures aiming at fighting the spread of the Covid-19 infection. This document is a collection of actions and recommendations from the Social Employers members, which may help others who are facing or may face similar challenges related to Covid-19. **This document contains measures responding to the situation as it is presented today and acknowledges that it is evolving on a daily basis.**

Current EU action

The European Commission has set up a coronavirus response team with a [dedicated webpage](#), providing information about the Commission's activities in response to the virus and presenting the main policy actions taken.

- [On the economic impact of the Covid-19 outbreak and financial aids](#): A Commission communication on the negative economic impact of the Covid-19 outbreak proposes actions to ease the impact on employment, such as a "Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative" (CRII) directing EUR 37 billion, taken from European structural and investment funds, to the support of Member States.
- [Supply of personal protective equipment](#): To ensure the supply of equipment such as masks, protective spectacles and face shields, the Commission implemented a regulation that makes exports of such equipment outside of the EU subject to an export authorisation by Member States.
- [Border measures](#): On 16th March, the Commission presented guidelines to Member States on health-related border management, such as measures on transport of goods and services and the introduction of systematic checks of all EU and non-EU nationals entering the Schengen area.

Current responses from Social Employers members

FONSS, Romania

- FONSS has organised an emergency group, trying to support their members.
- In Romania, schools are closed until 23rd March, but as the peak of infections could occur during Easter, schools seem prepared to remain closed until May or June. This will have a highly negative impact on the economy.
- All non-profit day care centres and rehabilitation centres in their Federation are closed, as are all public ones.
- Finding **solutions for residential centres** is very challenging. Staff does not want to come to work anymore. As many of them spend a lot of time on public transportation, they are **afraid of contagion**. The fear is generated by the poor quality of the medical services. People remain quite immune to the general panic, but they see that the medical system is not fully prepared to face the large number of patients.
- Many of the **employees remain at home** using annual leave, but not that many days of leave are possible in this case.

- The state does not treat help for NGOs and the support of employers as a priority. So far, the law requires the **employers to pay 75% of the salary** of each person in situations of **force majeure**. But FONSS colleagues depend on the presence of their clients to get the money from the subsidies or from the contracts with funders. So, when the clients do not come in for the service, the funders do not pay.
- In this situation, all employers in the Federation highlighted the fact that they can manage this financial situation for one month. After this, they will be **incapable of paying the salaries**.

What FONSS already did:

- They asked the Government to **include NGOs on the list for possible compensation**. But as there is currently no formed government in Romania, all processes are more complicated.
- FONSS asked the funders to accept some payments even for people working from home or those working less. There was no answer yet, as everyone evaluates the consequences.
- FONSS tries to organise counselling services for people, online or at home and to deliver services at home for elderly and disabled persons.

Support needed:

- The most important support would be an emergency funding line for NGOs, from the European Commission. FONSS could help organise the entire funding process, through a joint coordination of all major federations. FONSS submitted an application to the [Norwegian funds](#), for the creation of the Social Platform in Romania, the platform of European Social NGOs. FONSS has coordination capacities, in case of solutions of this kind.

FONSS website: <https://fonss.ro/en/>

ActiZ (the Netherlands)

- ActiZ provides information to their members through a daily newsletter, while being in close daily contact with the health care department and inspection.
- They have postponed or **cancelled all meetings** and seminars of 20 persons and more. If care workers would attend, such events are postponed or cancelled.
- Social care staff is **asked to keep working**, also in case they have mild symptoms (such as coughing, but no fever), because otherwise the social care system might collapse.
- **Leave and holidays for care workers:** Health care workers are now urgently advised not to travel. If, as a result of official instructions and guidelines regarding the coronavirus, an employer changes (or withdraws) an employee's already planned holiday period, the employer is obliged to compensate the employee for damage caused by this change.
- **Visiting advice for nursing homes:** The advice is to strongly limit visits to nursing homes. Visitors should not come at all if they have any flu symptoms. It is also strongly advised not to let young children come into contact with this vulnerable group.

On www.actiz.nl/corona visitors find the latest news on coronavirus and impacts on care provision.

WRZOS (Poland)

- **Closure of all day-support facilities** such as day care homes for the disabled or day care homes for the elderly.
- There are problems related to **homeless people and shelters**; regarding overcrowding, a lack of protection measures, and a problem of understaffing.
- There are also currently problems of the recommendation limiting the release of food from **food banks** to shelters for the homeless.
- While many employees are asked to work from home, those employed on mandate and **non-regular work contracts** face a problem of receiving pay.

WRZOS website: <http://www.wrzos.org.pl/>

COPAS (Luxembourg)

- COPAS asked the Labour Minister to authorise their employees to **work longer hours**, i.e. above the statutory limits, since they anticipate that many workers will become sick and will no longer be able to work, meaning that COPAS members will no longer have sufficient available care givers.
- Since all schools and nurseries (day care for small children) in Luxembourg will be closed as of Monday, 16th March, COPAS asked the Government to organise the care/ask specific nurseries to stay open to take care of the staff's children.

COPAS's website: <http://www.copas.lu/>

APSS CR (Czech Republic)

- There are several recommended procedures and guidelines for the social services sector published by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Department of Social Services and Social Work. Those measures include, among others:
- **Closure of day care centers:** all providers of social services have to isolate nursing homes from 16th March onwards.
- Introducing a **work obligation for students** for provision of social services: all full-time students in the social services field are asked to work. The social service provider shall inform the region and the capital about the number of missing employees. The regions will request from higher professional and secondary schools in their district a list of students whose study focus corresponds to the shortage reported. The Region and the City of Prague will mediate on the basis of this information students to individual social service providers.
- APSS also **reduced the activities** of all social services to a minimum to secure life and health of the clients, including closing all ambulant (day care) social services.

APSS CR's website: <http://www.apsscr.cz/>

Nexem (France)

- **Care for children and persons with disability:** Smaller structures for young children (less than 10 children) stay open. In-home day care providers will be allowed to care for up to 6 children.
- Structures for **children with special needs** are still open, but with limited capacities. When possible, those facilities will be closed, and homecare will be favoured. Carers could get allowances if they have to take leave.
- **Elderly care:** Nursing homes stay open but with measures limiting going out and general contacts, visits are forbidden. When at home, visits are strongly discouraged.
- While schools are closed, there will be an exception for **children of care personnel** considered as essential for crisis management. This concerns healthcare professionals and social workers working in nursing homes for the elderly, and in organisation accommodating persons with disabilities.
- **Support teams** have been solicited to provide help, such as medical students and retired doctors and nurses.
- NGOs alerted authorities of the **vulnerability of inadequately housed persons and the homeless.**
- **Face shields:** a national strategy has been put up to provide face shields, with a priority to healthcare professionals.
- Relevant websites:
 - o Coronavirus [online prevention tools](#) for healthcare professionals and the general public by Santé Publique France.
 - o Measures for the [protection of workers](#)

- For updated official information on French situation:
<https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr/>
- Recommendations by the French Government for a common and coordinated
[response in the epidemic phase of Covid-19 with health and social services](#)

Nexem's Website: <https://nexem.fr/>

UNIPSO (Belgium)

- UNIPSO has put together useful information and links for the sectors on their website and social networks, with the evolution of the situation and the referral to their sectoral federations.
- They also sent an email to their member federations to inform them that UNIPSO also functions as contact point, in addition to the federation's direct links, to raise issues from institutions to the Walloon Government.
- They are also linked to UNISOC, which manages the federal government.

UNIPSO's website: <http://www.unipso.be/spip.php?rubrique847>

Thank you to all contributors! Please feel free to add to this list and keep us informed.