



Warsaw, 16th March 2020

Mr.

Mateusz Morawiecki

Prime Minister

All – Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ) constantly analyses the current crisis situation in Poland. Already in January we saw signs of an economic slowdown and threats resulting from the current pandemic. This is why we called for initiating a discussion at the Council of Social Dialogue¹.

We are aware that today we foremost should focus on activities related to the protection of health and life. However, we must not forget that many workers may lose their income in the near future. For this reason, we ask the social partners and the government to take the necessary action.

We propose to introduce the following anti-crisis measures:

- 1) Support for employers with the funds of the Guaranteed Employee Benefits Fund (GEBF) and the Labour Fund in order to maintain jobs in the case of the so-called economic downturn or reduction of working time. Establishing a rule different from the one which was introduced by the First Crisis Act² whereby an employee shall receive a salary of at least 50 per cent of the current remuneration, but no less than the applicable minimum wage. The state shall contribute to this amount with the equivalent of 100 per cent of unemployment benefit with the fund coming from the GEBF. The employer shall receive a refund from the Labour Fund of part of the paid remuneration (e.g. up to 50 per cent). At the same time, it is necessary to prohibit employers from terminating employment contracts for reasons not related to the employee's performance during the period of receiving support and 6 months after the end of this period.
- 2) Prolongation of the deadline for payment rent to housing associations and housing co-operatives along with the establishment of the state subsidy mechanism for rents.
- 3) Suspension, without legal and financial consequences, of repayment of households' loans to banks and para- banking institutions .
- 4) Prohibition of disconnecting utilities for households related to delay in payment for those utilities.
- 5) Extension of the option of settling the annual tax return for taxpayers of personal income tax.

¹ Polish Tripartite Body.

² Introduced in 2009 as a response to the economic crisis.

- 6) Acceleration of the refund of overpaid personal income tax after submission of an annual tax declaration.
- 7) Extending the refund period for underpayments in personal income tax.
- 8) Extending the period of preparation and submission of the annual financial statements by trade unions.
- 9) Support of state for workers in the form of vouchers.
- 10) Exemption from personal income tax the above vouchers.
- 11) Increasing the amount of exclusion from the calculation of pension and disability insurance contributions for food vouchers and introducing an appropriate tax exemption in this respect.
- 12) Extending the range of free legal advice for workers.
- 13) Preferential loans for employers to organise remote work (including equipment) for workers.
- 14) Lowering VAT rates.
- 15) Reducing the tax wedge.
- 16) Preparation of a package of solutions reducing the negative financial and organisational effects concerning the beneficiaries of European projects, including:
 - the intermediary institutions responsible for European project should have a flexible approach to accounting for expenses that have already been incurred or result from long-term contracts, including the qualification of fixed costs related to the maintenance of offices and project teams, but also expenses incurred in connection with the preparation of events that will not be finalized in the projects (e.g. trainings, conferences),
 - introduction of quick and simple procedures for suspending projects and suspending their implementation period,
 - if requested by the beneficiaries a possibility to amend billing periods,
 - if requested by the beneficiary a possibility of extending the project implementation period and eligibility of expenditure (also in those cases where the implementation period was imposed by selection criteria in competitions),
 - verification of the scope of projects and flexible introduction of changes, e.g. regarding the form of support (e.g. change from stationary to remote),
 - possibility of renegotiation of assumed project indicators (also those imposed by selection criteria in competitions),
 - undertaking by the government of measures at European level to extend the eligibility period for expenditure in operational programs financed from the 2014-2020.
- 17) Enlarging the group of beneficiaries of additional care allowance stipulated by the "Special act of the parliament" of 5 March 2020 to:
 - parents and guardians of children with disabilities
 - workers employed under civil law and self-employed contracts.
- 18) Modification of the rules for granting sickness benefit financed from the Social Insurance Fund – by for instance considering granting the right to benefit from 14 days of inability to work in a calendar year instead of remuneration stipulated by art. 92 of the Labour Code, which is paid by the employer from its own resources.

- 19) Adaptation of the solutions from the Act of 11 October, 2013 on special solutions related to the protection of jobs to the current situation, including among others extending the forms of support and their scale.
- 20) Simplification and acceleration of procedures for the protection of remuneration from the (GEBF) in the event of employers' bankruptcy.
- 21) Increasing unemployment benefits to the level stipulated by the ILO Convention 102, that is to at least 50% of the last salary.
- 22) Extension of 6 months for the validity of preventive examinations at work and compulsory training, including health and safety.
- 23) Organisational and financial support, especially in sectors particularly exposure to infection (including retail, public transport, post offices, public institutions, banks, pharmacies), in order to ensure the proper quality and quantity of personal protective equipment.

We hope to begin a constructive discussion on the presented proposals and to work jointly on solutions that will improve the situation of both workers and entrepreneurs.

Andrzej Radzikowski
OPZZ President