

Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic from Selected Countries by Region (up to 6 April 2020)

Africa and Arab Countries

Morocco

- **Paid sick leave:** Paid sick leave has been provided in the public sector and pledged for private sector workers too.
- **Wage support:** Employees covered by the National Social Security Fund will receive a monthly flat-rate 2,000 dirhams (EUR 180), family allowances and compulsory health insurance benefits through a Special Fund for the Management of the Coronavirus Pandemic.
- **Income support:** Informal sector workers will receive 800 dirhams (EUR 72) for a family of two or less; 1,000 dirhams for a family of three to four individuals; 1,200 dirhams for a family of more than four. A special fund that also includes private donations to contend with Covid-19 will provide 800 -1,200 dirhams for every head of household working in the informal sector whose activity was impacted by the lockdown.
- **Mortgage/rent/loan relief:** Employees who qualify for the monthly flat-rate payment may also see their bank loans deferred until the end of June.

Nigeria

- **Income support:** Food support is provided for those facing lockdowns: the Lagos state government has pledged to supply food for 200,000 indigent homes for two weeks. The Nigerian Ministry for National Relief is supplying food to the Internally Displaced Persons camps.
- **Access to health:** The Federal Government has given 15bn Naira (EUR 39m) to health services. The Lagos State Government has built a 100,000-capacity isolation centre and hired an additional 2,000 health workers.

South Africa

- **Paid sick leave:** The requirement for a medical certificate has been waived for the first 14 days of quarantine, during which a letter from the employer will do.
- **Wage support:** Employers forced to lay off workers or close temporarily may apply to the Unemployment Insurance Fund for payment of workers' wages up to 3500 Rands (EUR 170) per month. For reduced working hours, the fund will pay the difference in wages.
- **Mortgage/rent/loan relief:** Rebates of 1.5-3.5 months of Service and Conservancy Charges have been given to households in one-to-two-roomed public housing flats.
- **Access to health:** Universal public health care is available.

Tunisia

- **Wage support:** 300m dinars (EUR 94m) has been allocated to support income for workers in technical unemployment.

- **Income support:** 150m dinars has been allocated to support poor people with limited incomes, and those with special needs.
- **Mortgage/rent/loan relief:** Workers whose monthly wage does not exceed 1,000 dinars have had their loan repayments postponed for 6 months.

Americas

USA

- **Wage support:** USD 350 bn (EUR 350 bn) in forgivable loans have been provided for small businesses to cover payroll expenses, there is funding for unemployment insurance benefits for workers whose hours are reduced. and a refundable payroll tax credit for 50% of wages, available to firms or non-profits that partially or fully suspend operations.
- **Income support:** Weekly unemployment insurance benefits have been increased by USD 600 for four months; there are temporary Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits for the self-employed, quarantined and sick workers, and other workers ineligible for state unemployment insurance (including many in leisure and hospitality); and states have been provided funding to waive the 5 days before workers can collect benefits.
- **Mortgage/rent/loan relief:** Federal regulators, through the mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, are ordering lenders to offer flexibility to homeowners who have lost income or their jobs. The move covers about half of all home loans in the USA. But regulators hope that the entire mortgage industry will adopt a similar policy.
- **Access to health:** The CARES Act creates a USD 100 bn fund to reimburse healthcare providers for expenses or lost revenue due to the disease and a USD 27 bn fund for disease preparation and response, increasing Medicare payments to hospitals by 20% to treat Medicare patients with the virus. It also requires private insurance to cover the cost of all testing, fees associated with testing, and a future vaccine with no cost-sharing.

Asia-Pacific

Australia

- **Paid sick leave:** Some companies are required by law to offer an additional 2 weeks to impacted employees.
- **Wage support:** the JobKeeper programme provides AU\$ 1,500 a fortnight to employees (including casuals with a year's service) working for an employer suffering a 30% drop in turnover (50% for bigger firms), with a legal obligation to keep people employed. If the business is still operating, the employer has to top this up to the usual wage and if the usual wage is less than AU\$ 1,500 the employer must pay it over in full.
- **Income support:** The Jobkeeper programme is available to sole traders suffering a 30% drop in turnover. There is a top-up coronavirus supplement worth AU\$ 550 a fortnight on 8 allowances (jobseeker payment, sickness, youth jobseekers, parenting partnered, parenting single, partner, farm household, students and apprentices) for income below AU\$ 1,075.
- **Access to health:** universal access to healthcare.

Hong Kong

- **Paid sick leave:** For confirmed cases (but not those in quarantine), 80% of the salary is guaranteed without limit for up to 120 days, covering all employees working more than 18hrs/week.
- **Wage support:** Construction workers have received a single payment of US\$193, and government outsourced janitors US\$128 for at least 4 months.

- **Rent/mortgage/loan relief:** Residential property taxes up to HK\$ 1,500 a quarter have been waived for a year.
- **Access to health:** Hong Kong offers universal free health care. The government has announced a 35% increase in funding for the hospital authority, amounting to just under HK\$ 20bn.
- **Special features:** A one-off special allowance payable by the Anti-Epidemic Fund for approximately 200,000 low-income families and a cash payment of HK\$ 10,000 has been paid to each adult permanent resident of Hong Kong. Personal and wage taxes have been waived for last year benefitting 1.95 million taxpayers.

Indonesia

- **Income support:** Rp 1 million will be given to 5.6 million informal and micro-firm workers for 4 months, and income tax will be frozen for people on low incomes.
- **Access to health:** The government has allocated Rp 75 trillion to healthcare spending.
- **Special features:** The state-owned electricity company will supply free electricity to 24 million households with the lowest electricity consumption and a 50% discount for 7 million more in the next category, covering a third of all users for three months. Staple food relief will be extended to 4.8 million more people, on top of the existing 20 million recipients.

Israel

- **Income support:** Employees put on involuntary unpaid leave for at least 30 days are now entitled to unemployment benefits after 5 days, and the time required to have been employed to be eligible for them has been reduced from 12 to 6 months. A grant of up to NIS 6000 (about EUR 1,500) in March and NIS 8,000 in April is being made to the self-employed, as well as a grant of up to NIS 4,000 in March and April for people aged 67 and over who have lost their job during the crisis, in addition to the old-age pension.
- **Mortgage/rent/loan relief:** The Ministry of Finance has instructed banks to allow for a 4 month postponement of mortgage payments.
- **Access to health:** An extra NIS 11 billion has been allocated to health system including for the procurement of protective gear, medicine and respirators, and to increase the number of hospital beds for COVID19 patients and the number of tests for the virus.

Japan

- **Paid sick leave:** The already existing sickness and injury allowance will be paid to people on sick leave due to COVID19 (or in quarantine with or without symptoms, subject to a doctor's or employer's certificate) if the employer cannot pay their salary. It covers 60% of the salary for up to 1.5 years.
- **Wage support:** Firms with paid leave schemes will be given up to 8,330 Yen (EUR 75) per day for each worker who misses work to guarantee 100% wages.
- **Income support:** Self-employed people, as well as freelance workers who clear certain conditions, will receive a uniform EUR 185.
- **Mortgage/rent/loan relief:** The government established a COVID19 special loan program (at a cost of EUR 4.3 bn) and reduced interest rates, as well as provide real interest-free, unsecured financing support to micro, small and medium-sized business operators and others.
- **Access to health:** Universal access to health care.

Malaysia

- **Paid sick leave:** Employees as defined by the Employment Act receive sick pay.
- **Wage support:** A maximum 3-month wage subsidy of RM\$ 600 (EUR 130) will be paid to workers whose monthly salary is less than RM\$ 4,000 and whose employers have suffered a 50% drop in business this year.

- **Income support:** The same applies to platform workers, self-employed and freelancers.

Nepal

- **Paid sick leave:** Pay varies between 50% and 100% of previous earnings depending on local level regulation and does not cover self-employed or informal workers.
- **Wage support:** For private establishments and employees enrolled for 6 continuous months there has been no salary cut during the 14-day lockdown. The government funds the full 31% of basic salary contribution to the Social Security Fund.
- **Income support:** There is a subsistence allowance to the unemployed, migrant returnees and outgoing migrants unable to travel to their destination countries. Food support is available for daily wage earners and informal economy workers, electricity has been subsidised during the 14-day lockdown and the cost of school fees has been suspended for working families.

South Korea

- **Paid sick leave:** Self-quarantined workers (based on health authority advice) can claim an annual paid leave, guaranteed if their employer is receiving subsidies from the state under the Infectious Disease Control and Prevention Act. Sick pay is 130,000 KRW (about EUR 100) a day.
- **Wage support:** Two thirds to three quarters of the 70% of salary that is guaranteed from employers is refunded to them from the government shutdown allowance of up to EUR 50 a day for up to 180 days, but excluding workplaces of less than 5 people.
- **Income support:** The self-employed are getting relief of EUR 920 a month for up to 3 months. In addition, municipalities are paying a range of subsidies such as Basic Income for Disaster Relief in Jeonju-si of EUR 400 for 50,000 unemployed and non-regular workers; and cash relief in Gangwon-do of EUR 300 to 300,000 unemployed and small business owners.

Pan-Europe

Belgium

- **Paid sick leave:** Wages must continue to be paid by employers for the first 30 days to those suspected by doctors of infection, confirmed through a simplified certificate, after which social security benefits take over.
- **Wage support:** Sectoral collective agreements have raised the social security allowance for workers facing temporary unemployment from 65% of salary to 70% (capped at EUR 2,754.76 gross) per month, between 1 February and 30 June. Due to the large number of applications, everyone asking for it will receive an interim fixed amount of EUR 1,450 a month. In addition the social security contribution for companies and the self-employed (due for the first two quarters of 2020) has been suspended for 18 months and they have been exempted from paying interest in case of late payment.
- **Income support:** Fully self-employed workers who have to stay at home, or whose businesses were closed by government order or are shut for seven days receive payments ranging from EUR 1,291 and 1,600 per month.
- **Rent/mortgage/loan relief:** Extensive provisions have been made by the federal and regional governments with banks to make it possible for families and businesses facing difficulties because of COVID-19 to suspend loan payments until 30 September
- **Access to health:** Belgium already provides universal access to healthcare through an insurance model.
- **Special feature:** The Walloon government has arranged that people with a budget meter for energy utilities will no longer need to top up their cards while the containment measures are in effect. No new budget meter will be installed during this period and there will be no power or gas outages. In Flanders, energy bills are suspended for 1 month.

Finland

- **Paid sick leave:** The existing universal access system has not been changed.
- **Wage support:** From 1 April, laid off employees and those temporarily on short time working or temporarily laid off are entitled to unemployment benefit even if they are studying or engaged in business activities. Those unable to work because the government has closed their workplace receive full pay for two weeks and then unemployment benefit, while those unable to work because a child under 12's school or other facility has been closed receive full pay for the duration.
- **Income support:** Unemployment benefit is now paid from day one rather than after 5 days, and contribution conditions have been reduced. A six month-long scheme will provide sole entrepreneurs with up to EUR 2,000 a month from municipalities for expenses such as rent.
- **Access to health:** Universal access to health care.
- **Special features:** private sector pension contributions have been cut until June by social partner agreement to cut the costs of paying wages.

Italy

- **Paid sick leave:** Quarantine days are considered as sick leave.
- **Wage support:** The new "extraordinary temporary redundancy payment" (*cassa integrazione guadagni straordinari in deroga*) provides all workers in enterprises of every size with up to 70% of their lost income if their employer reduces their hours by 10% or more, or makes them redundant (although layoffs have been prohibited for 60 days. Part-time workers are guaranteed 80% of total pay for hours not worked by the government for up to 13 weeks, which can be extended up to 52.
- **Income support:** Non-standard workers such as artisan craftspeople, shop-owners, farmers and agriculture workers, seasonal tourism workers and entertainment workers will receive EUR 600 for March, and a specific fund of EUR 300m has been established for freelance workers and liberal professionals who are not eligible.
- **Rent/mortgage/loan relief:** A "loan solidarity fund" will pay to suspend instalments on the purchase of a first home by citizens who lose their job. It is also available to self-employed workers and professionals who, in the three months following 21 February 2020, have lost more than 33% of their turnover due to the closing or resizing of their business due to government COVID-19 restrictions.
- **Access to health:** Italy provides universal free health care to citizens.
- **Special feature:** The government has allocated EUR 400m for an extraordinary fund to help households most in need with food vouchers.

Netherlands

- **Paid sick leave:** Full sick leave is provided for COVID-19 victims and those quarantined and isolated.
- **Wage support:** The government covers 90% of the wage bill for employers in difficulty for 3 months. There is also a short-time work scheme (*werktijdverkorting*) where the employee remains employed and the income usually remains the same. The employers pay for the actual hours worked and the state pays the wages for the reduced hours to the employer for a maximum of 6 weeks (extendable).
- **Access to health:** The Netherlands provides universal access to health care.

North Macedonia

- **Wage support:** The government will pay workers in the public and media sectors earning less than 39,000 MKD the minimum wage (14,500 MKD) for April and May and will maintain employment numbers until September 2020. This also applies to elected and appointed officials at national and local level. It is intended that this will be replicated in the private sector. The monthly income for the unemployed will amount to 50% of their last six month's net salary, or 24 months for those becoming unemployed during the crisis.
- **Income support:** Athletes and sport workers along with some art sector workers will receive the minimum wage from the government and a fee of 7,000 MKD will be paid to people in the informal economy.
- **Rent/mortgage/loan relief:** Payments of bank loans will be suspended for six months, and lease payments for people using social housing have also been suspended.

Portugal

- **Paid sick leave:** Benefit is paid for sick workers and those in isolation from the first day rather than 30 days before the crisis, varying from 55% of earnings (up to 30 days) to 75% (if more than 30 days.)
- **Wage support:** Wages for suspended workers or those in isolation are covered. The amount funded ranges from 100% for the first 14 days, to 66.6% if it lasts as long as the suspension does. Workers facing a temporary reduction in working time for up to 6 months receive at least 66% of normal gross salary, between the national minimum wage and three times that sum along with any social security benefits they were already receiving.
- **Income support:** Self-employed workers who cannot continue to provide services due to the pandemic, and whose children are under 12 or disabled or chronically ill of any age meaning they have to remain home because of mandatory school closure (outside school holidays) may receive between EUR 438.81 and EUR 1,097.03. Self-employed workers who have seen their professional activity totally reduced receive up to EUR 438.81 depending on previous earnings. They have to continue paying social contributions but can ask for postponement until the support ends.
- **Access to health:** Portugal has universal free health care.
- **Special feature:** Portugal has granted all migrant workers the same status as existing workers during the crisis.

Spain

- **Paid sick leave:** Sick pay will be 75% of salary for people with COVID-19 or those in quarantine or isolation.
- **Wage support:** Workers laid off receive unemployment benefits and their employer must continue paying social security contributions. Under the Expediente Temporal de Regulación de Empleo, workers are entitled to partial unemployment benefits if their hours are reduced, or they are temporarily laid off, at a rate between 75% and 220% of the sectoral minimum wage applicable when compensation begins.
- **Income support:** Self-employed workers without employees will receive a sort of unemployment benefit for a month (possibly extended), regardless of their contribution record. It will pay 70% of their contribution base if activity has decreased by 75% in the previous month compared to the last 6 months 'average. Their contributions will be borne by the administration.
- **Rent/mortgage/loan relief:** First-home mortgage payments are suspended for those workers losing their jobs, or affected by temporary reductions in hours and for those self-employed workers with an intense drop in earnings.
- **Access to health:** Universal free health care.
- **Special feature:** The supply of utilities (water, electricity, and gas) will be guaranteed for vulnerable households, and the validity of social vouchers for energy provision has been extended until September.

Turkey

- **Paid sick leave:** Leave has been provided for those over 65, pregnant or who have chronic diseases, allowing those most at risk to self-isolate.
 - **Wage support:** Under a Short Work Allowance working times will be reduced by a third and workers 'wages will be subsidised from public health insurance, for a period of 4 months rather than the usual 2 months. Laid off workers on minimum wage will have their wage maintained.
 - **Income support:** TL 1,000 will be provided for 2 million families on low incomes.
 - **Rent/mortgage/loan relief:** All credit cards payments are postponed for 3 months.
 - **Access to health:** Turkey provides universal free health care and private medical facilities costs for COVID-19 patients will be free.
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