



KONFEDERATA E SINDIKATAVE TË SHQIPËRISË
CONFEDERATION OF THE TRADE UNIONS OF ALBANIA

Tirana, on 29.03.2020

Directed to: Ms. Petra Winkler

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From: Kol Nikollaj, President of KSSH

Subject: Letter of Information on COVID-19 pandemic situation in Albania

Like all over the world, our country has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Many activities have been suspended since March 10 and the movement of people and goods has been restricted. Political activities, public gatherings have been suspended, and a considerable part of the public administration remains at home. Tourist activities have been suspended, pubs, restaurants, bars, hotels, etc. have been closed. Shops and industrial markets are closed, only supermarkets, grocery, fruit, vegetable, water, and bread and pharmacy operate. Immediately all kindergartens and schools at all levels were closed and teaching began to take place on-line from home. All flights from airports and passenger cruises from ports or inter-city urban transport were suspended.

KSSH sent an urgent letter to the Government and Prime Minister Rama on 10 March, presenting a platform of 10 points. We demand the protection of workers who lose their jobs, as well as other vulnerable social strata affected directly, as well as taking administrative,

organizational, health and economic measures for labor standards and increased health care for the on-going employees and manufacturing companies.

The government took some urgent measures through several acts and swiftly circulating decisions and on 24 March 2020 took decision No.243 on "Declaring the state of natural disaster" A decision which deepened the measures and made them more drastic in order to secure of social distancing as a necessary measure to disrupt the Covid-19 infection chain. Actually normal activity has been shut down across the country, bringing about the economic chain disruption, financial liquidity failure, and so on. If this situation lasts, employees' salaries could be seriously endangered, we will have to pay taxes and other financial liabilities, and then have negative effects with a chain effect throughout the national economy. What these consequences will be in the economy no one knows, nor can predict for the moment. But it will all depend on the length of the Covid-19 situation.

Currently we have the official 13% unemployment rate. We have an unemployment benefit of 7,200 lek / month for every unemployed job seeker. The figures are shaking at once. Mandatory financial support is required in order to prevent the whole economic system from collapsing. Today as of this writing, 28.03.2020 have infected and hospitalized 197 people. Covid-19 has lost 10 lives and 33 people have recovered from the infection. Despite the pain we feel today, we are proud of the solidarity and support shown by 30 Albanian doctors and nurses who set out in aid of Italian brothers in Bergamo.

Our government has approved the list of occupations that will stop working and those that will continue to work in the framework of the measures taken on March 18th. Of the 140 occupations, 39 were banned from work. New rules were put in place to work very strictly as for disinfection, protection equipment, masks, gloves, goggles, thermal cameras. Measures

were taken to guarantee the individual's 1.5 meters distance from the individual, the capabilities of workers' vehicles were added, etc. Part of the workforce was reduced to staying at home where they could work from home, especially companies that had technological capacities or those with custom materials in the fasons. Currently over 40% of Call Centers, Fasons, IT companies, telecommunications companies etc. work from home. While construction, energy, oil, mining companies and a number of call center companies are still in operation, but with strict surveillance and social distancing measures they are forced to 1.5 meters.

KSSH has requested that all Occupational Safety and Health Councils be more efficient than ever and every day we request information we share with state law enforcement agencies.

The government in the early days decided on an urgent economic package worth 60 million euros. This package doubles the economic value of social benefits for the poor and the unemployed, and in collaboration with the State Bank of Albania, they set about freezing and postponing bank loan interest rates for 3 months for interested individuals and businesses. The government has undertaken to pay for 3 months for self-employed and small business employees who have closed the activity the value of the minimum wage for each formalized person. There are currently 102,000 self-employed who are not working. Even the Fason business works with 60% of its full capacity. But this business has not yet received government support. For big business, the government has approached 100 million Euros as a sovereign guarantee that they will be easily financed by banks to pay workers' salaries or other necessary liquidations. The government recently decided to index all pensions nationwide at a value of 7 million euros.

The Government has set up the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Civil Emergencies. This committee includes many other civil actors such as NGOs, business organizations, religious institutions, but unfortunately the two national confederations have not been involved. Would be in our interest that ILO suggested to the Albanian Government to include trade unions as well. Currently, people's movements are directed and only with the permission of the competent authorities, while retirees are strictly prohibited from leaving their homes. The government has arranged with the Albanian banks and post office to send to pensions, medicines, food and everything they need at home.

Oil consumption has decreased by 90%. Only authorized means of forced labor movement - home, patrol police and army vehicles, and health and furnishing equipment of supermarkets and grocery stores are allowed. Metallurgy and metal processing have banned activity until April 6, despite being on the list of approved professions allowed to work. Crude oil production continues, but is being penalized by falling international stock prices. The transport sector that accounts for 3% of GDP is one of the worst hit by Covid-19. The tourism sector is almost closed. It is the first economic sector to be immediately eclipsed. Telecommunications works at 50% of its capacity.

The banking system is trying to create favorable conditions for other sectors of the economy, but if the situation lasts, it is deteriorating, as it is projected to have significant losses. Whereas in the agricultural, livestock and forestry and fisheries sectors the impacts appear smaller at present. The high prices and concentration on food consumption will continue to increase the prospects of farmers and agro-processors for higher profits. Farmers continue their seasonal work and market normalization. The countryside and agricultural and rural areas for their very nature of social distancing are less vulnerable to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Wishing this emergency pandemic situation to pass as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to write to us about everything.

We currently work all on-line from home. But this has made us stay in touch, sharing information to be in service to our Albanian workers and partners, our cooperators and friends 24 hours a day on 24-hour non-stop !!!

With solidarity,

Kol Nikollaj

President of KSSH