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(CDDG)**

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND COVID-19

Compendium of the replies to the Rapid Response Service no. 38

Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the
Directorate General of Democracy
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AUSTRIA

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

The normal allocation of competences has not been modified, with the exception, that the Federal Minister of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection has been entitled to enact a ban to enter public places.

Response to the outbreak of communicable diseases and measures to mitigate consequences are tasks of the federal government, which are carried out by the authorities of the federal states. A separate law, which was adopted in the corona crisis, empowers the Federal Minister of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, the governors of the provinces and the district authorities to prohibit access to public places and business areas by ordinance.

On the regional and local levels of government measures according to their area of competence stipulated in the Federal Constitution were taken.

1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

Crisis management boards were established at national, regional and local levels and a national crisis response structure was set up under the coordination of the Ministry of the Interior which involves all relevant federal ministries, governments of the provinces, first response organizations, civil protection, health authorities and critical infrastructures. Coordination is ensured through daily meetings of a coordination committee and a permanent crisis management cell. These procedures were followed consistently in the course of the crisis.

There is a legal duty of information between the different levels of government to ensure co-ordination. Austria implemented daily routinely meetings of the National Disaster and Crises Management (SKKM) in the Ministry of Interior with the responsible health authorities in the federal states via videoconference. MoH consultates with the provincial health authorities via weekly telephone conferences. Additional telephone conferences are held if necessary.

Telephone calls and videoconferences are used at all levels.

1.3 *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

The national crisis management structure involves all relevant ministries, regional governments and first response organizations. As the structure is quite comprehensive all relevant players which were mentioned in the question are involved. Other organizations and private companies, mainly critical infrastructure providers, receive daily briefings by mail.

The National Disaster and Crisis Management (SKKM) meets once a day. The Federal ministries, Federal provinces, rescue organizations and the media are represented in this

coordination committee and exchanges information with all relevant stakeholders. The Federal Minister of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection works close together with the Red Cross and the federal states.

Example from a regional level of governance: Under the authority of the Governor of the Tyrol, a special staff has been established to be able to respond to the challenges brought along by the crisis; this staff comprises high-ranking representatives of the different fields and authorities involved (from the health, education, social, civil protection and so on sectors). This staff meets in permanence to steer the measures to be taken for the entire region. Similar measures have been taken in the other Austrian provinces.

- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

The answer will be given later according to the legal framework on the ongoing crisis.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

Communities (cities, villages, ..) have organized shopping services for people belonging to risk groups or for older people. Volunteers work.

- 2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

The federal structure allows both, to meet the specific challenges of cities/metropolitans and also of rural areas.

Cities, metropolitan areas and rural areas are represented in the above-mentioned special staff.

- 2.3. *Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?*

National cooperation: If needed, people can be transferred within Austria to the most suitable place for their treatment.

International cooperation: To help France and Italy, patients from these countries were transferred to Austria for treatment.

The strategy to now comprised the isolation of the single municipalities and cities of the Tyrol in order to limit the quote of infection. For this reason, inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency was not possible.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

- 3.1 *What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?*

Intensified coordination and information sharing among MoH of EU member states especially via the EU Health Security Committee, the Early Warning and Response System and video conferences of the European Commission. Regular information sharing among the WHO member states via mission briefings and information sessions (including country presentations) at the global and regional level.

Frontiers got closed, so cross-border co-operation could only take place by means of telephone and video-conferences. On political as well as on administrative level these means were used a lot to stay connected, get informed and provide help where necessary. Impacts on level of cross-border EU-Interreg programmes: As crossing of Austrian borders to neighbouring Member States (as for example Vienna: CZ, SK and HU) has been restricted, all planned in-situ meetings such as meetings of monitoring committees, bilateral working groups, etc. scheduled from mid March to end of June have been cancelled. They have been partly replaced by on-line meetings but communication is mainly working via written procedures and telephone. We assume that physical meetings will not take place until autumn.

Consequently, programming the new funding period 2021 -2027 is challenging without face-to-face discussions and further delays are unfortunately expected.

On level of EU-projects the impacts differ: projects targeting children, teachers or school authorities have difficulties in implementing their activities according to plan because of closing of kindergarten and schools. Also here, physical meetings are mostly replaced by on-line meetings. Some activities have been shifted, others had to be postponed. But long-term effects on key project outputs are difficult to predict at the moment.

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?

Through a joint procurement agreement at EU-level for cross-border health threats, a number of framework contracts have already been concluded with companies at reasonable terms and conditions and EU Member States can now conclude individual contracts. AT was actively involved in this process by participating in several committees.

This co-operation has been taking place on regional level, in particular in the framework of our EGTC Euroregion Tyrol – South Tyrol – Trentino. Furthermore we are co-operating with our co-members in the Working community of the Alpine Regions (Arge Alp).

The Programme management reacted very quickly to the changed situation and offered immediate support for project partners, e.g. in Interreg AT-HU a communication was published on the website

https://www.interreg-athu.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Media/Programme_news/20200313_COVID-19/Interreg_ATHU_COVID-19_info_sheet.pdf,

equally in Interreg AT-CZ

https://www.at-cz.eu/at/news/empfehlungen-der-verwaltungsbehorde-bei-moglichen-einschränkungen-in-der-projektumsetzung-in-zusammenhang-mit-covid_19-coronavirus

At the moment all three CBC programmes where Vienna is participating collect feedback from all project partners to have an overview on how they are affected by the COVID-19 crisis. All participating programme regions actively support the programme authorities and their measures to reduce burden on projects.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

- Scientists and experts took part in scientific/expert panel for the crisis (persons from universities, medical associations ...)
- In particular in the process of creating certain laws, university professors from jurisprudence are involved (law panels).
- Red Cross has supported the crisis management.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. *How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)*

There have been no disruptions or redesigns of essential services.

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

In particular digital solutions, online-services and remote working.

6. Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?

- Constitution of special COVID-19 crisis management groups in federal ministries, and nine federal countries just at the start of the crisis. Quick and good coordination of work between the different levels within the country.
- Broad and continuing information for the public about what happens and why.

BELGIUM (Flemish Region)

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE - INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE FLEMISH AGENCY FOR HOME AFFAIRS TO SUPPORT LOCAL AUTHORITIES DURING THE COVID19 PANDEMIC

Purchase of mouth masks by local authorities:

An offer of various model decisions, templates and practical examples that can help local authorities by the purchase and the distribution of reusable mouth masks.

Meetings of the bodies of local authorities:

- Drafting of guidelines that allow local authorities to allow the meetings of the local governing bodies to continue as well as possible during the Covid19 crisis. These directives are about the taking of a decision for the organization of meetings of the governing bodies and explain the possibilities of digital meetings of the local council and the board of the Public Centre for Social Welfare. The guidelines are constantly kept up to date and, where necessary, adapted and supplemented.
- Advising local authorities on specific issues relating to the meetings and the functioning of local authorities in Covid19 times.

Funeral ceremonies:

- Guidelines for funeral directors and crematoria for controlling infection risks in the treatment of the deceased who died due to Covid-19. These guidelines are constantly kept up to date;
- Approval by the Flemish Government of a derogation in the act on the cemeteries and the disposal of the dead, which allows hearses to carry several remains and abolishes the compulsory second opinion of a doctor if the death occurs in a hospital or in the case of a death outside the hospital, if the doctor states that the death is due to Covid19.

Worship services:

- Postponement for the recognized local faith communities to organize the (mandatory) elections of the governing bodies, until the Covid19 pandemic is formally over. The current members will remain in office until the new election of the members;
- Guidelines for the virtual assembly of the governing bodies of local faith communities;
- Guidelines on the maximum presence of persons and the distance rules at funeral ceremonies and religious ceremonies.

Public procurement:

- To provide information on the impact of the Covid19 crisis on new and ongoing public procurement of local authorities, by offering answers to frequently asked questions;
- Advising local authorities on specific advisory questions on public procurement and the Covid19 crisis;

Other information:

- A model regulation/model decision on vouchers. This allows local authorities to support their local traders during the Covid19 crisis. The voucher allows residents to shop at local merchants and in this way the local authorities support the local traders in their municipality during this Covid19 crisis.
- Recommendations to local authorities on supporting local associations, projects and events through local grants.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In order to help citizens and entrepreneurs through the Covid19 crisis as best as possible, the Flemish government has taken various measures in its areas of competence. Hereafter is an overview of the Covid19 measures per theme.

<https://www.vlaanderen.be/vlaamse-maatregelen-tijdens-de-coronacrisis>

These include the following domains:

1. [About the coronavirus](#)
2. [General measures](#)
3. [Public services](#)
4. [Shops and shops](#)
5. [Measures for cultural and sports activities](#)
6. [Measures for celebrations and events of life](#)
7. [Transport and travel](#)
8. [Working conditions in companies](#)
9. [Childcare](#)
10. [Measures for medical care](#)
11. [Measures for prisons](#)
12. [Animals](#)
13. [International](#)
14. [Mouth masks](#)
15. [Contact follow-up](#)

On the website Vlaanderen Helpen, numerous initiatives are listed by local authorities, in different areas: <https://www.vlaanderenhelpt.be/>

At the local level, many initiatives are being developed to support businesses and citizens. The examples are endless: cities and municipalities suspend local taxes, grant an additional local nuisance premium, adjust parking fees and car-friendly zones, eliminate cancellation costs for their lending services, develop one communication channel per target group, distribute laptops to disadvantaged families, etc.

Local economy

Examples of initiatives:

Zottegem: Scrapping the terrace tax 2020 for catering businesses and deletion of paying parking

Ghent: online trade initiatives and platforms around local buying and collection bundled on a single website <https://persruimte.stad.gent/187431-online-handelsinitiatieven-gebundeld-op-een-website-kooplokaal-gent>

Neteland (five municipalities, en. Grobbendonk, Herentals, Herenthout, Olen and Vorselaar): founded a project association and developed a particularly strong cooperation in a couple of years. The five mayors, together with their emergency planning officers (which are shared between the municipalities), communications officers, police, general practitioners and hospital staff, etc., meet every two days. Neteland also provided support for the care:

- 1) Setting up a volunteer operation;
- 2) Since 19 March 2020, the employees of the five municipalities and the many volunteers have been strengthening the Middenkempen Physical Triage Centre in the Academic Hospital of Herentals for administrative support;
- 3) On 21 March 2020, a call centre was launched to answer calls from citizens. This call centre is a support to the General Practitioners. It is staffed by staff from all the

municipalities of Neteland and volunteers. The call centre already serves the entire Zuiderkempen region. The call centre was fully equipped by municipal employees. The call centre also sets up appointments for suspected Covid-19 patients at the Middenkempen Physical Triage Centre, at the request of the general practitioner. There are drivers who transport GPs for a home consultation with suspected Covid-19 patients who are not mobile themselves;

4) Fulfilling transport, all kinds of logistical tasks (and coordinating the production of aprons and mouth masks) for four Kempen hospitals;

5) The distribution of mouth masks and FFP2 masks is also done by the technical services of Neteland;

6) Logistical and material support in making mouth masks themselves;

St Katelijne Waver: food shops can establish their premises on the public domain, with due attention to safety measures, like safe waiting area.

Boortmeerbeek is now also working out a platform to promote the local economy.

Pelt: Agreement with financial services: No coercive executions via bailiff - do not send reminders (except when statute of limitation looms) – show flexibility on payment plans – postponement of direct collection or extension of the payment period

Ichtegem (also e.g. Herentals, Ypres)/ The population is constantly called upon to buy locally on the basis of a list that the municipality creates and distributes on which feature all traders who are still open, who offer takeaways, who offer home delivery, where you can order online,...

Roeselare: Free floor stickers and posters for shops.
<https://www.roeselare.be/sites/default/files/bijlage/Affiche%20Corona%20handelaars.pdf>

Meerhout: The mayor has already organised a live session twice on facebook as part of the many questions (including from traders) where efforts were made to answer the many questions and sighs

Oudenaarde offers to buy healthy food in the vicinity

Kontich: annual environmental tax: forced recoveries are delayed until after the summer

Wervik: Thanks to the Wervikbon one can support the local traders and can get 20% extra thanks to the local government. More turnover for traders – more purchasing power for the people.

De Panne: Roll out of a "Pannebon": sale of purchase coupons with the local government - Emergency decision to release 1.5 million euros.

Zemst Municipality is freeing up €523,338 to support those hardest hit by the crisis.

Ninove: Emergency counter for merchants by mail and phone - Website with useful info for traders - Overview for the inhabitants of the shops that are open or accessible online

Haaltert provides for emergency care for the following children: children of parents who work in essential occupations (care, nutrition, distribution, safety). These are the same target groups as defined in school care outside the school holidays. To the extent that there is still room available for children of parents from other sectors who are unable to work from home and do not have an alternative care option. A certificate from the employer will be requested for this.

Aalst: Emergency Fund: Support measures for various business groups in terms of tax cuts/deferrals and fees + promotional measures for local economy.

Care and Health

Numerous municipalities: own employees and volunteers strengthen the triage centre/social response team: a triage team groups all the exceptional help questions from the welfare sector, looks at who can offer a solution and a team of welfare workers will start working concretely.

Lande and others: Support the roll-out of a care switching centre. The centre provides about 10 beds for non-Covid19 patients.

Begijnendijk and others: Carers living in the municipality can obtain a care card that gives them priority for pharmacists and supermarkets.

Herselt has started a chat line. People in need of a chat can contact the employees of the Public Centre for Social Welfare

Laarne: #Zicht on Laarne": an appeal was launched to the citizens to take a beautiful picture from the window and show what energy is currently being degenerated from.

Veurne: Skype possibilities to residential care centers. Family members who are not able to organise a video call from home to the residential care centers, can do this from the city office. This at specific times and with the support of the employees of the city of Veurne.

Dendermonde and others: The urban sewing workshop makes mouth masks for the care sector. Employees of other services closed by the measures, e.g. social restaurant, help with this.

Bruges launches "chat buddies" during lonely Covid19 period. The "Square Against Loneliness" action plan, launched in autumn 2017, is greatly expanding its operation. The city and Public Centre for Social Welfare of Bruges have a number of new projects ready to drive out the loneliness in Covid19 times. Some 70 employees of the Public Centre for Social Welfare now call some 4,500 over 85s in person. If you want to, you'll get a chat buddy. That's a volunteer who calls or Skypes several times with someone who feels isolated. Some also write letters or cards.

<http://www.kenniscentrumvlaamsesteden.be/Paginas/HT5.aspx>

Antwerp: The city of Antwerp wants to put extra effort into new technologies to develop solutions in response to the Covid19 pandemic. To this end, she launched a call for start-ups that could develop innovative digital solutions to the problems of the Covid19 crisis. A jury chose from 130 submissions 8 companies that are now receiving a financial contribution for their initiative, for a total of 250,000 euros. On top of that, 18 participants who surprised the jury with their proposal receive substantive support to further develop this. The most important selection criteria were the rapid feasibility, the relevant impact and the added value for residents, businesses or students in Antwerp. The city did not impose any themes or restrictions. The chosen companies will develop innovative digital solutions that will have an impact in the short term in healthcare, healthcare and the music sector, among others. No less than 7 of the 8 companies selected submitted a solution for the health or care sector. In the solutions, a chatbot that helps you decide to consult a doctor, technology that analyzes lung CT-scans through artificial intelligence, and a streaming platform for artists and their fans to organize online concerts or festivals.

http://www.kenniscentrumvlaamsesteden.be/Paginas/HT2020_7.aspx

Youth and leisure

Aalter and others: Collecting laptops and tablets for children living in poverty

Wingene: an alternative, digital Outdoor Playday

Ostend: The new digital music platform with Ostend bands brings music when you're at home, in your room. Learn more: <https://www.oostende.be/ostend-is-music-verspreidt-jouw-muziek-via-spotify>. Also from the city website all kinds of cultural tips are given to experience culture from your seat. More information: <https://www.oostende.be/de-nieuwe-uit-in-oostende-website-is-er> and <https://www.oostende.be/cultuur-vanuit-je-zetel-tijdens-de-corona>

Lebbeke: School-going children and young people without internet connection at home, have a harder time studying from home these days and staying connected to the school and teachers. The telecom company Telenet has looked at the options and worked out a solution: children who need the Internet for their schoolwork, but who cannot be provided with this at home, can request a login code via the Public Centre for Social Welfare, which allows them to log in for free. The free passcodes are intended for the specific target audience of probability-seeking students who don't have an Internet connection at home. With the codes, they can sign in to the Wi-Free signal and stay connected until the end of

June. This has been announced via the website of the municipality, the Public Centre for Social Welfare and social media.

Aarschot and others: the City Public Library has become a "Takeaway Library". No reservation fees are charged and loan (up to 60 days after loan date) can be extended online, by mail or by telephone. See also e.g. Take away library in Zwijndrecht: the municipal library is closed but organises a takeaway service for those who still need fresh books at home. There is also a delivery service at home for those who cannot make the move to the pick-up point.

Ruiselede: awareness-raising actions towards young people: adjusted posts on the facebook page; youth associations receive adjusted posters to share them digitally with their members. In addition, the associations also share the municipal facebook posts.

Koksijde: The youth service department posts something on Facebook several times a day such as e.g. #samentegenverveling. In addition, the other outdoor services/sub-entities (NAVIGO-National Fisheries Museum, Abbey Museum Ten Duinen, Arts Centre Ten Bogaerde, CasinoKoksijde Cultural Centre): contact and information via web pages and Facebook.

Blankenberge: Cancelling free of charge of city infrastructure. Blankenberge rents out halls to local associations for all kinds of events that can no longer go ahead. The rental price will not be charged and the amounts already paid will be refunded to the affected associations. This also applies to reservations at the lending service of urban equipment.

Alken: the library makes videos in which books for young children are read aloud.

Bales: Public Facebook group Balense Binnenpretjes with ideas to do at home.

Maldegem: trying to reach the vulnerable young people: provision of the necessary support: internet provision, toys, tablets...

Wevelgem: The youth builder continues to work in a location-oriented way.

Hasselt: Many associations are missing out on revenues during the Covid19 crisis. The city council is freeing up 100,000 euros to help the associations that have had to cancel events or activities. For this purpose, the city is working on a methodology to partially compensate the associations.

Seniors

Anzegem: Children who want to draw a drawing or want to do handicrafts for seniors can bring it into the town hall and Social House. Every 80-year-old gets a card from the senior advisory board.

Bierbeek: In addition to the platform 'Bierbeek helps', every 70-year-old receives a call offering help.

Deinze: All over-75s from Deinze are called to ask if they are okay and whether they can be helped. If they can't be reached, they'll get a postcard in the bus with the necessary information.

Poperinge: Call on the teachers of the urban academy for music and word to bring a musical song for the residents of a care home.

Beernem: help ranging from a chat to do the groceries to walking with pets.

Social actions

Temse: Neighbors help neighbors. On March 20, this action was started to encourage neighbors to help each other. People can download, print, supplement with personal data and put a ready-made postcard in the mailbox with help/help offerings.

Wachtebeke: Homework support for target groups

Hoogstraten: There is a system of distribution of food stamps and bread vouchers.

Meise: Children in a vulnerable home situation are registered in the school care, with the classroom teacher providing additional support.

Antwerp: The city of Antwerp launched the portal Antwerpenhelpt.be where people can go for all kinds of help requests. Due to the impact of the coronavirus, some residents can no longer go to the store, pharmacy or walk their dog. On this platform, initiatives can find each other

Zoutleeuw: Zoutleeuw organizes a shopping service (for purchase of food and purchases at the pharmacy) for at-risk groups and people quarantined during Covid19 measures. To this end, a call centre was set up within the Public Centre for Social Welfare where people who can no longer go shopping can go and ask for help. The groceries are done by a member of staff of the city and are delivered no later than the day after the order (not on Sunday).

Diest: Distribution of educational packages to vulnerable families.

Communication

Website of many local authorities: features a pop-up where attention is immediately drawn to the information about Covid19 (including a link to the theme page 'corona' and the most important contact details) social media coverage (facebook, twitter and instagram) – including follow-up of questions & notifications received through these channels - residents letter in each mailbox (general information – information about the customized service of the local government & assistance offer – contact details): notifications at the local government buildings (adjusted timetable and contact details) adapted format of the information sheet, intensive internal communication: keeping employees up-to-date on measures taken, guidelines on the safe functioning in the performance of tasks etc.

Additional information

The cities and municipalities are also an important engine of the restart of life and the economy.

The Flemish Region supports the local authorities in this:

1° The guide "Local governments as the engine of post-corona recovery" provides handles to draw up a local recovery plan.

This guide is based on the 4 four pillars on which a local recovery plan is based, namely quality of life, economy, solidarity and care. It also looks at the impact that the recovery can have on local government itself and how digital instruments can be used for the recovery.

It is a vision on the main points, because the local governments feel best what the needs of their citizens are within their specific local context.

They can do this alone, or in cooperation with other local governments in their area.

This plan is best drawn up in consultation with local stakeholders (e.g. in a task force or various expert groups by theme, with a focus on the representation of vulnerable groups). The guide is not complete and never will be. It's a living document, a work in progress. The Flemish Region therefore follows up on good examples and opens them up, so that local governments can learn from each other. Local governments can continue to pass on good practices through vlaanderenhelpt@vlaanderen.be. An updated version will be posted regularly on the site mentioned hereafter. This will create cross-pollination and local governments can inspire here too.

2° The policy space and financial clout of local governments are increased. This has been translated into Summer Schools, the support of local associations through the emergency fund and the local policy to combat poverty.

More information on all these topics can be found at:

<https://www.vlaanderenhelpt.be/lokale-relance>

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

Intergovernmental level: Benelux Union

At the political level, contacts are being made within the Benelux countries. In addition, where possible, the Secretariat-General of the Benelux Union (BSG) tries to facilitate consultation between the various ministries within the Benelux countries and this has already led to results in several areas. Furthermore, the BSG closely follows developments within the three countries and where possible and desirable, the BSG is prepared to play a facilitating role.

1. Transport

The three transport ministers have quickly advised transporters to use the Benelux digital freight letters. This not only led to benefits in terms of administrative simplification and faster control checks, but also contributes to the necessary social distancing to combat COVID-19.

<https://benelux.int/nl/nieuws/coronacrisis-overheden-raden-aan-om-gebruik-te-maken-van-benelux-digitale-vrachtbrieven>

2. Energy

At the strategic level, the three senior civil officials held a teleconference at the beginning of April to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the energy sector. The Pentalateral consultations with Germany-France-Switzerland and Austria, led by the Dutch Presidency, also continued in April and initially discussed the impact of COVID-19 on the energy sector. <https://benelux.int/nl/nieuws/strategisch-benelux-energie-overleg-houdt-vinger-aan-de-pols-covid-tijden>

3. Cross-border labour

In the Benelux region, numerous measures have been taken by the authorities to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. This caused a lot of questions, especially in the border areas by people working across the border. Although the countries' policy points were often very different from each other and the impact of the measures worked out very differently for employers and cross-border workers, official consultation and information between the Benelux countries and North Rhine-Westphalia has always continued on this.

It is essential that the border commuters in the event of a crisis have the right to up-to-date and official information. From the moment of the first measures, the BSG has continuously adapted its information portal "[Starting Point cross-border labour](#)" with information from the three countries, regions and neighboring areas.

From 16 March 2020, the portal has been used to create a special section of "coronameasures" enabling cross-border workers to easily find the most up-to-date and relevant official information that applies directly to them, such as documents necessary to facilitate access to the country as an essential worker. This information was obtained directly through the officially concerned ministries and partner organizations in the Benelux countries and North Rhine-Westphalia. In addition, the BSG has helped to provide information within the framework of the Cross-Border Labour Mobility Steering Committee to look for solutions on the impact of new measures for people working across borders within the framework of the existing treaties.

4. Crisis management

In the Benelux context, there is a very intense cooperation between the three crisis centers and this on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding concluded in 2006 on cooperation in the field of crisis management with possible cross-border consequences.

https://benelux.int/files/6913/9230/2871/MoU_crises_2006_NL.pdf

In this context, the crisis centers in the Benelux countries have also been in constant contact with each other during this COVID-19 crisis and information has been exchanged using the transmission system which provides for information on a crisis situation with cross-border consequences to be sent, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week.

5. Other: support for alignment at the border

The difference in measures between the Netherlands and Belgium in the early stages of the crisis led to confusion in border municipalities about its application, especially in the enclave municipality of Baarle. A number of municipalities have maintained direct contact with the BSG in order to make immediate use of the various (political) networks if necessary.

Intergovernmental level: Agreement between Belgium and the Netherlands about the taxation of cross-border labor

Belgium and the Netherlands have a tax treaty, by which the revenues of cross-border workers are taxed in the country where they work. Due to the Covid19 pandemic, lots of cross-border workers are "obliged" to work from home. The existing treaty doesn't foresee in an exception, which means that cross-border workers wouldn't be taxed in the country where they work, but in the country where they reside.

Belgium and the Netherlands have concluded a separate agreement in order to remedy this. The working from home days between 11 March 2020 until 31 May 2020 will be considered as days where the cross-border workers have worked in the country of work. As a result, the country of work continues to impose taxes on the revenues. This agreement can be extended beyond the 31 May 2020. There are also specific clauses about the taxation of temporary unemployment benefits due to Covid19.

Intergovernmental level - Cross-border labor between Belgium, France and Luxembourg. There is also consultation between Belgium, France and Luxembourg in order to avoid that cross-border workers feel the negative impact of the crisis.

Cross-border groupings: Euregio Scheldemond (Scheldt estuary, Flemish provinces of East-Flanders and West-Flanders and the Dutch province of Zeeland)

The current Covid guidelines and restrictions have a significant impact on the society and perhaps even more on the border region. Firstly, the measurements taken by the national governments and the support of cross border workers, employers or freelancers are rather complex and sometimes confusing or not definite enough for this group. Frankly, the Dutch and different Belgian governments are doing their utmost to get the cross border obstacles due to Corona clear and try to work them out. Secondly, since the 16th of March the Belgian-Dutch border has been closed by the Belgian government. For a border region that is interdependent and woven as the Euregio Scheldemond, this causes a several problems. Some of them, like the certificates for cross border workers, were quickly solved. Other reasons to pass the border, e.g. visiting your partner that lives just across te border, is still rather vague and undefined what evidence you've to show the border control for

passage. Because of undefined evidence or different interpretable guidelines, people feel passage in these cases is randomly judged by the border patrols. Some people may pass and others get their access denied, causing some couples to live in separation for over 5 weeks now.

Mostly the cross-border cooperation in the Euregio Scheldemond holds firmly and the structures and networks that have been developed over the past 30 years have their benefits. Mayors, police and fire departments know where to find each other to talk things through. Moreover there has been an example of the regional Belgian fire department that produced hand gel in a rather large quantity and they shared some with the colleagues on the Dutch side of the border([url: local news](#)). So yes, sometimes it's a bumpy road. However, because of the long tradition in cross border cooperation, we'll all get there in the end.

A Task Force has been formed with members from the Dutch, North-Rhine Westphalian and different Belgian governments to streamline several subjects. For instance the different euregions give input to the Task Force concerning cross border corona obstacles and they will streamline the communication to the involved departments. In this case the department gets one notice instead of one from every euregion. E.g. there've been taken several supporting measures for workers, employers and freelancers, but sometimes there're people who don't match the requirements. In a particular case concerning freelancers, several euregions and 'border-information-points' researched the obstacle and came to the same conclusion: there's a gap between the supporting acts of the two governments. One country follows the registered residence-principle and the other country follows the social security-principle, which causes a gap for cross border workers/freelancers in some cases. This has been brought to the attention of Task Force and the departments, and will be taken care in coming period.

The same goes for 'phase II' and decreasing the restrictions. The different key-players on the Euregion are being asked to give input on which specific domains or guidelines the governments should pay attention and take precaution when they ease the situation. E.g. Opening schools, with a closed border still, will generate more cross border obstacles concerning border passage to bring or pick up the children at school. This input goes to the Task Force, who then brings it under the attention of the central governments and crisis centers.

Another difficulty or side-effect is the nationalist reflex some people have: e.g. a Dutch nurse who works in a Belgian hospital stopped at a traffic light in Belgium, her car was spit on and she was rudely urged to get back to her own country ([url: local news](#)). This happens the other way around as well, a Belgian that lives in the Dutch part of the region, goes for groceries after work and gets remarks to buy his food in his home country.

Cross-border groupings: EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) Linieland van Waas en Hulst (cross-border cooperation between municipalities in the Flemish province of East-Flanders and the Dutch province of Zeeland): creation of a task force to resolve border bottlenecks. The aim is to share knowledge with input from municipalities, employers, educational institutions, security services, etc. With new insights, one can respond more quickly to practical problems with regard to Covid19 and it is clearer to municipalities what is going on over responses to Covid19 on the other side of the border.

BULGARIA

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

Special new law – **Act on the measures and actions during the state of emergency declared with the decision of the National assembly of March 13th, 2020** (In force from 13.03.2020 until the state of emergency is lifted) shall regulate the measures and actions during the state of emergency declared on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. According to art. 2 of the aforementioned Act "The Minister of Health may, in addition to the Health Act, introduce other temporary measures and restrictions set out by law as well. The act of the Minister of Health shall be subject to preliminary execution."

The overall governance is more centralized than before. Orders by central government are obligatory to the mayors and they have responsibilities in almost all spheres. At the same time coordination and communication can be better. National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB) as the national representative organization of all municipalities is very active in communication with the central government and advocating for local government rights.

- 1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

The aforementioned Act in answer of point 1.1. doesn't create new mechanisms, which are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency.

- 1.3. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

A good example of coordination mechanism is the Information System for Coordination and Control of People under Quarantine. At the same time, it was implemented in practice as of mid April. Until then coordination and information to some mayors about people under quarantine was being sent inconsistently or with delays by Regional Health Inspections. In addition according to art. 19 of the aforementioned Act in answer of point 1.1. "the Minister of Health may, by order, instruct inspections on the territory of an area, by state health inspectors from another area and / or by state health inspectors from the National Centre of Radiobiology and Radiation Protection (NCRRP) to observe anti-epidemic measures and restrictions. In case of established violations, the acts thereof shall be drawn up by the state health inspectors who participated in the inspection, and the penal decrees shall be issued by the Director of the regional health inspection, in whose territory the inspection is carried out."

- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

No targeted financing has been provided so far for municipalities. NAMRB advocates for support to local governments considering the decreased revenues and increased expenditures:

- To allocate part of the funds transferred from the EU Operational Programmes to the Bulgarian Health System for the needs of the municipal hospitals to comply with the new measures. All measures to comply with the Order of Minister of Health to ensure the conditions and number of beds in intensive and other care units in municipal hospitals were financed by the municipalities' budget or donations. It should be mentioned that the municipal healthcare system has been chronically underfinanced for years and a lot of the needed equipment or protective supplies had to be purchased.
- As a result of active lobbying of NAMRB the state decided to allow municipal hospitals to receive at least 85% of their monthly budgets, no matter the number of patients served (numbers of patients with different disease, beside COVID-19 have declined, due to the measures introduced with the state of emergency).
- NAMRB prepared and sent its position to the government concerning the amendment of the state budget, proposing:
 - ✓ Working mechanisms for targeted support to municipalities;
 - ✓ Loans, that can be partially covered by EU funds;
 - ✓ Preferential regime for granting temporal interest-free loans for municipalities;
 - ✓ Possibility for Municipal Commercial Enterprises to apply for credits before the Bulgarian Bank for Development;
- NAMRB also sought the support of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy to extend the scope of Decree No. 55 for payment of compensation to employers in order to preserve the employment of workers and employees during the state of emergency. The proposal is to also include employed in local museums, theatres, gyms, some municipal enterprises and units, service markets, parks, parking areas, etc. which ceased working. The decline of usual revenues have led to significant risk of redundancies in those entities.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

- Purchase and delivery of food, medicines and essential goods to lonely, disabled and elderly people without relatives is organized by almost all municipalities.
- Social Patronage Care is being extended, so it can encompass the rising numbers of people affected by the crisis. New call for projects has been announced under Operational Programme Human Resources Development for Patronage Care, which will support municipalities in their efforts to take care of elderly and people with disabilities.
- Programmes for provision of warm meals, in addition to the Target Programme of the Agency for Social Assistance are organized almost in all municipalities for people from vulnerable groups. Funds are provided by municipalities and donations and the delivery is supported by volunteer formations to the municipality and teams from the Bulgarian Red Cross or citizens.

2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

- All mayors are responsible for implementing the respective measures on the ground. The specific measures and activities are decided on an individual basis and assessment of the situation.

- It was decided that donations of fuel, protective equipment, disinfectants and others will be distributed through NAMRB to small and rural municipalities that are severely affected by the lack of revenues.

2.3. *Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?*

A special VIBER group has been created by NAMRB for mayors to share important information about the COVID-19 crisis. Through this group they also exchange their experience and practice, provide contacts to companies producing protective equipment or ask questions.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. *How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)*

There is no disruption in the provision of services. Municipalities had to adopt specific anti-epidemic measures: frequent cleaning of streets and public areas with specific disinfectants, disinfection of public transport and reorganization of its time-schedule, new organization of municipal markets (ensure 2 meters distance, one way passage and limited number of customers at one time), since 27 April parks are open again and municipalities had to ensure the conditions for the safe passage of citizens (sanitizers at the entrance and exits; routes for walking; no gatherings of people; no sitting on the benches or picnics in the green areas and no use of children playgrounds and sport facilities). Administrative centres in municipalities work under strict anti-epidemic conditions: limited number of customers, all employees are working with protective masks, gloves. Not more than 2 seniors over 65 years old are allowed in one service hall at once. Active campaign for provision of administrative services or payment online.

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

- According to art. 7, para 1 of the aforementioned Act in answer of point 1.1. „depending on the specific nature of the work and the possibility of securing it, the employers and the job appointing authorities may award outwork or telework to their workers and employees without their consent, except when this is not possible. The terms and conditions for the assignment, performance and control shall be determined by an order of the employer or the appointing authority.

- Administrative staff of different levels of government (national, regional, local), whose work can be done remotely are advised to work from home.

CROATIA

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?
- 1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?
- 1.3. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?
- 1.4. Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?

The declaration of the COVID-19 epidemic in the Republic of Croatia provoked a crisis situation, but it did not lead to changes in the division of powers. All levels of government (national, regional and local) acted within their statutory competencies, which did not change due to the situation.

The Republic of Croatia applies the subsidiarity principle in responding to the emergency related to Covid-19. Civil Protection Headquarters were established on all levels (national, county and local) in order to coordinate the response of different sectors and governmental bodies.

The Civil Protection Headquarters were established on all levels (national, county and local) in order to coordinate the response of different sectors and governmental bodies.

Within the context of the crisis situation caused by the declaration of the COVID-19 disease epidemic, it should firstly be noted that the treatment of such and similar situations in the Republic of Croatia is regulated by the Law on civil protection (Official Gazette 82/15, 118/18 and 31/20). The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the implementation of this Law.

According to this Law, civil protection is a system of organizing participants, operation forces and citizens to protect and rescue people, animals, material and cultural goods and the environment in major accidents and disasters and to eliminate the consequences of terrorism and war destruction.

The civil protection system includes measures and activities (preventive, planning, organizational, operational, supervisory and financial) which regulate the rights and obligations of participants, the structure and operation of all parts of the civil protection system and the way of connecting institutional and functional resources of participants. These resources create a single unit with a purpose to reduce the risk of catastrophes and to protect and save citizens, material and cultural goods and the environment on the territory of the Republic of Croatia from the consequences of natural, technical and technological major disasters and catastrophes, to eliminate the consequences of terrorism and war destruction.

The civil protection system is organized at the local, regional and national level, and connects the resources and capabilities of participants, operational forces and citizens into a single unit to reduce the risk of disasters, provide a rapid and optimal response to threats and dangers of large accidents and catastrophes and to mitigate their possible consequences.

Taking into consideration the situation of the COVID-19 epidemic declaration, a number of measures have been taken to ensure the proper functioning of all levels of government.

A number of regulations were passed to ensure the orderly execution of tasks within the scope of state administration bodies and within the scope of bodies of local and regional self-government units in the resulting emergency situation.

The following were adopted, among others: the Law on supplementing the Law on general taxation, Law on amending and supplementing the Law on income tax, Law on amending and supplementing the Law on corporation tax, Law on supplementing the Law on labour market, Law on supplementing the Law on professional rehabilitation, training and employment of persons with disabilities, Law on amending and supplementing the Act on investment promotion, Law on amending the Law on commerce, Law on amending the Law on the protection and preservation of cultural property, Law on amending the Hospitality and catering industry act, Act on amendments to the Sojourn tax act, Act on amendments to the Forestry act, Law on amending the Law on hunting.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia introduced packages of measures to boost the economy. These packages were directed towards entrepreneurs, workers, protecting the private sector. Just to name some of the measures – exemption from paying taxes and contributions until June, paying the net salary of 4.000 HRK to employees of businesses in order to preserve employment.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)
- 2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?
- 2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

As previously indicated, the Law on civil protection regulates issues related to dealing with crisis situations, and the competent authority for the enforcement and monitoring of the Law is the Ministry of the Interior.

The competent authority for the enforcement of the Law on local and regional self-government (Official Gazette, Nos 33/01, 60/01, 129/05, 109/07, 125/08, 36/09, 36 / 09, 150/11, 144/12, 19/13, 137/15, 123/17 and 98/19) is the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration. The Article 54 of the Law stipulates that two or more local self-government units may jointly organize certain tasks from its self-governing scope.

Furthermore, in this particular case, the possibility of joint performance of civil protection activities for two or more local self-government units that are spatially related or located in the same geographical area is also provided by Article 18 of the Law on civil protection.

In this regard, the competent civil protection headquarters issued recommendations aimed at encouraging the units to jointly organize activities related to the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

According to the available information, the local self-government units joined forces in the Civil Protection Headquarters in order to jointly enable the functioning of their units in the new conditions. The purpose of merging into common headquarters was primarily aimed at connecting the resources and capabilities of the participants, operational forces and citizens in a particular case in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 disease.

The local authorities followed the recommendations adopted by the National Civil Protection Headquarters. The local authorities followed the recommendations adopted by the National Civil Protection Headquarters.

Some of those measures are:

- isolation for all confirmed cases with medical conditions not requiring hospital treatment
- health recommendations for people over 60+ and persons with chronic diseases (vulnerable groups)
- protection measures for respiratory infections including SARS-CoV-2 – persons with chronic diseases and the elderly
- rational use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for Coronavirus disease
- rational use of personal protective equipment for Coronavirus disease – pharmacists
- cleaning and disinfection of areas without patients infected with COVID-19
- instructions for healthcare facilities for patients and accompanying persons
- recommendations for educational institutions (kindergartens, schools and student dormitories)
- recommendations for universities and universities of applied sciences
- recommendations for social welfare institutions and actions and protective measures in hotels (hospitality)/ tourism sector.

The Civil Protection Headquarters introduced passes to limit movements of the population in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

- 3.1 What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?
- 3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place ?

The impact of COVID-19 on cross-border cooperation was largely reflected in the facilitation of crossing the state border by cross-border workers, with the aim of ensuring the normal functioning of daily activities in the border zone and the retention of jobs. Also, intensive coordination was carried out during the transit of trucks and passenger vehicles through Republic of Croatia, in order to facilitate the flow of goods to the highest extent.

The cross-border cooperation was limited due to the restrictions imposed by neighbouring countries and was focused on receiving and providing international (humanitarian) assistance and vital cross border transport/transit.

There were examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency, given that, among other things, patients in medical emergencies and persons in need of personal assistance both in Republic of Croatia and in neighboring countries were provided with ambulance transport. There were many cases of emergency operations of foreign

nationals in the Republic of Croatia during the COVID-19 outbreak, where emergency medical transports were allowed, and there were also certain departures of Croatian nationals for treatment abroad, which was coordinated with the border police of neighboring countries at national, regional and local levels. High quality cross-border cooperation was achieved with neighbouring civil protection authorities relating to the exchange of information and humanitarian assistance.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, cross-border cooperation primarily depends on the epidemiological situation in the Republic of Croatia and in the neighbouring countries, and includes the application of all epidemiological recommendations and instructions issued by the Croatian Institute of Public Health.

A bilateral agreement was adopted between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19. Pursuant to the agreement, all local border crossing points between the two countries have been closed for traffic since 2 April 2020, including those where international passenger traffic was temporarily allowed by the decision of the Mixed Committee for monitoring the implementation of the Agreement between the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on border crossing points.

The Hungarian competent authorities adopted a unilateral decision according to which border crossing points with the Republic of Croatia were closed, starting from 1 September 2020, meaning that foreign nationals are not allowed to enter Hungary. Border crossing points Duboševica-Udvar, Terezino Polje-Barcs and Goričan-Letenye will be open for traffic. The following categories of passengers will be allowed to cross the border: freight traffic passengers, those travelling for official or business purposes, those travelling based on special request, frontier workers in a 30-kilometre zone, athletes participating in sport events and transit passengers.

The excellent cross-border cooperation that we have had so far will certainly contribute to efficient problem solving on national, regional and local levels in case of emergency.

International assistance was provided to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania in the form of protective equipment, as one of the types of cross-border cooperation in case of emergency, from 11 to 13 May 2020, pursuant to the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia of 28 April 2020.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

During the situation caused by the declaration of the COVID-19 epidemic, citizens were not prevented from participating in decision-making procedures in relation to the regular way of their participation, but due to decisions to ban leaving the place of residence and permanent residence, the emphasis was put on using available e-services.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- 5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have there been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

5.2. What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?

Pursuant to the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia on organising the work of state administration authorities during the COVID-19 outbreak caused by SARS-COV-2 virus (Official Gazette, No 32/20) of 19 March 2020, the Minister of the Interior adopted the Decision on the organisation of operations in the Ministry of the Interior on 20 March 2020, pursuant to which essential and urgent activities took place. In that regard, the issuance of documents for Croatian nationals, regulation of status and the issuance of documents to foreign nationals were organised in such a way so as to minimise immediate contact with the applicants, and all communication and submissions of applications were done electronically, wherever the applicants' presence was not absolutely necessary. In cases where the presence of applicants was essential, work of police administrations and police stations related to the issuance of documents to Croatian nationals and foreign nationals was organised in such a way so as to make it possible in justified cases and with previous agreement for arrival, while complying with all epidemiological measures. The continuity in providing essential services to the public was ensured. However, public transport was restricted only to persons with valid permits issued by the employers or local authorities. The administrative services made it possible for their employees to work from home. This did not apply to the medical staff, military, police and civil protection employees.

The digital e-government platform was enhanced with new features, and the measure of remote working was implemented.

In line with the amendments of the regulations related to organisation of national administration, the Central State Office for the Development of the Digital Society (SDURDD) took over and continued with the implementation of digitalization measures and projects.

In this regard, SDURDD, also became the competent authority for the state information infrastructure, and carried on with continuous provision of the state information infrastructure during the COVID-19 disease epidemic. Other state administration bodies can use that infrastructure to digitize their processes. If a state administration body wants to create a certain electronic service, the e-Citizens system is available with its components, namely the National Identification and Authentication System, which ensures secure user authentication, and the Personal User Box, which ensures communication with the user.

In addition, during this year the authorities have already been invited to count on new common components available with a still limited set of functionalities (but which are being further developed) - National Identification and Authentication System with extension for business users and the system e-Authorizations, as well as a module for connecting to electronic services with the e-Fees system.

Also, according to previous plans, the migration of certain systems of state administration bodies to the Shared Services Centre is ongoing.

At the same time, we must mention that the implementation of the e / m-Signature and e / m-Stamp project as a set of services for electronic signature and stamping of documents for the entire state administration continues. Officials who were issued a qualified signature certificate at the beginning of the epidemic may electronically sign acts in accordance with the provisions of the Law on the Implementation of Regulation (EU) No. 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and

trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93 / EC (OG 62/17).

Within its competence, SDURDD can offer further and continuous support in the development of electronic services so that their citizens and the economy can receive the highest quality electronic services.

State administration bodies have published on their websites and prominent places:

- Instructions to citizens to address state administration bodies electronically (e-mail addresses, electronic forms, etc. with detailed instructions for their use).
- Telephone numbers on which citizens will be able to make contact with civil servants regarding all areas within the scope of state administration bodies, indicating the time during which contact can be made.

In cases of deteriorating epidemiological situation, citizens were prevented from moving outside their place of residence or permanent residence. Having in mind the need of citizens to leave their place of residence / permanent residence in exceptional situations, the e-Pass system was designed. As of May 11, 2020, by the decision of the National Civil Protection Headquarters, the e-Pass system was temporarily put out of use due to the improvement of the epidemiological situation.

The system represented one of the services of the Shared Services Center (SSC), connecting the Ministry of the Interior, Tax Administration, Croatian Pension Insurance Institute, the health care system and the Civil Protection Headquarters.

The main goal of this system was to create a single place of access to issued passes, which reduces the possibility of misuse and facilitates the system of control of issued passes.

Citizens logged in to the system using the e-Citizens and NIAS services (National Identification and Authentication System).

In the event that individual persons did not have access to these services, they submitted a request via the e-mail address of the headquarters and primary health care physicians.

Data on issued e-Passes were available to the Ministry of the Interior with a maximum time lag of 1 hour (i.e. in near real time) for on-the-spot checks.

Consequently, the e-Pass system is certainly an effective form of cooperation between state and local authorities with end users, i.e. citizens.

Another project initiated and managed by the then Ministry of Public Administration is the project of creating a digital assistant, which is available at <https://andrija.ai>. It is a WhatsApp chatbot, digital assistant Andrija, which helps in the fight against coronavirus and can provide current information and recommendations to citizens quickly and efficiently enough. A team of experts led by Prof. DSc Branko Kolarić, epidemiologist, worked on creating the solution. The technical and IT support was provided by joint efforts of domestic companies Mindsmiths, Neos and Oracle Croatia, which are, along with Infobip, members of the Croatian Association for Artificial Intelligence CroAI.

All Croatian companies involved decided to contribute free of charge and to jointly participate in the national effort to combat the new coronavirus epidemic.

In the period during which personal access to administrative services was made difficult or impossible due to the intensive measures for limiting the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of the Interior took measures to provide services to the public in alternative

ways. Citizens were primarily directed to, wherever possible, do things electronically, by using e-Citizens system (e-Services system of the Ministry of the Interior). Focus was also on increased communication with citizens via e-mail and telephone, and when documents had to be physically delivered to citizens, those that could be delivered (such as passports and driving licences), as well as certificates on permanent and temporary residence address, were delivered, whenever possible, to the permanent residence address of the recipient. Furthermore, in urgent cases when it was inevitable for citizens to come to the premises of the Ministry of the Interior, their appointments were scheduled in advance by e-mail or by phone, in order to comply with the epidemiological measures. In April 2020, the relevant legislation was amended, prescribing that the validity of identity cards, passports and driving licences that were about to expire during the pandemic will be extended for up to 30 days from the day the pandemic is declared to be over.

The competent police administrations/police stations work regularly with citizens within the scope of their competencies pursuant to the Aliens Act.

The scope of administrative services that are available to citizens electronically has increased (e.g. applying for the issuance of stay and work permits, applying for temporary stay).

We would also like to point out that amendments to the Aliens Act and the Act on EEA Nationals and their Family Members were adopted in April this year, pursuant to which documents are still valid during the COVID-19 pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus and remain valid for up to 30 days from the day the pandemic is declared to be over.

As regards measures taken in Reception Centres for international protection applicants, the Ministry restricted access to Reception Centres, allowing entry only to those persons who are absolutely necessary for their normal functioning. International protection applicants are under constant medical surveillance and a physician is always available. According to the recommendations issued by the Croatian Institute of Public Health, parts of Reception Centres are used to quarantine new international protection applicants who arrive from countries with increased occurrence of COVID-19 cases, or applicants who show symptoms of the disease, or those who are infected with the virus.

In case of any suspicion of COVID-19, applicants are tested as soon as possible. Likewise, measures of protection are taken within Reception Centres (floor markings for social distancing, medical staff, taking temperature at the entrance to the restaurant). Increased efforts are in place to maintain high hygienic standards aimed at preserving the health of international protection applicants and also of the staff working in Reception Centres.

Even though the above mentioned represents a challenge for the everyday functioning of Reception Centres, we find it to be the most efficient way of preventing the spread of the disease and ensuring the material conditions necessary for reception.

In the field of education, the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with the Croatian Red Cross, ensured that children in Reception Centres have the possibility of following specialised TV programme for education and they are also provided with access to online school classes, in order to be able to maintain their educational activities in the same way as it is organized for Croatian citizens. We will also adapt to all the challenges which might arise during this school year.

In order to respond to the current situation, the Reception Centre staff and other staff working with international protection applicants perform their activities in two separate teams, one of which works from home and the other in the Reception Centre to ensure normal functioning in case of further spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Any decision which is made as a measure of preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, is primarily aimed to continuously ensure the material reception conditions for international protection applicants.

The procedures for granting international protection are performed regularly and within legal time limits.

6. Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?

CYPRUS

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

The COVID-19 pandemic is dealt with centrally by the national government and mainly the Ministry of Health

There has not been any change in the allocation of competences between central (national) government and local authorities in Cyprus.

- 1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

There is constant communication between the Ministry of Interior and the Unions of Cyprus Municipalities and Cyprus Communities in order to ensure coordination in actions and compliance with the relevant ministerial orders and decisions of the Council of Ministers. All relevant circulars issued by the competent Ministries (Health, Finance, Labour) are immediately forwarded to the Unions for implementation.

- 1.3 *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

Ministerial Orders issued by the Ministry of Health based on the relevant legislation on the protection of public health and/or Decisions of the Council of Ministers are issued and published immediately in the Official Gazette. A dedicated webpage has been created and is available in a number of languages by the Press and Information Office on COVID-19 <https://www.pio.gov.cy/coronavirus/en/> where all ministerial orders, circulars and other instructions, replies to frequent questions etc can be found. The Ministry of Interior is operating a dedicated call center for providing guidance on measures relating the pandemic.

- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency?*

- 1.5. *What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

Annual grants, under normal conditions, are transferred quarterly by the central government to local level. Due to the present conditions, the government already transferred the 50% of the grants, with the approval of the Ministers of Finance and Interior. Furthermore, the payment of a number of local authorities' financial debts towards the national government has been suspended for a period of six months.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

Local authority councils have proceeded in the formation of teams, in some cases with the help of volunteers from the community, in order to distribute food and/or medication to vulnerable citizens unable to leave their house.

2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

Local authority councils have proceeded with disinfection of public areas, following the instructions issued by the Ministry of Health

Municipal traffic policemen have been included in the staff designated through a Ministerial Order for the supervision of the compliance to measures included in these Orders

The central government provided those municipal/community councils operating retirement houses with consumables, such as face masks to be used for the protection of the residents who belong to high risk groups

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. *How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have there been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)*

Essential services such as those mentioned above continued to work as usual based on Ministerial Orders by the Ministry of Health

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

Remote working has been applied since the beginning of the covid-19 epidemic in Cyprus where applicable all over the Public sector and local authorities. This still continues for certain groups (groups facing high risk and parents of children under the age of 15).

An amendment of the legislation has allowed local council meetings via teleconference. In general teleconferencing is widely used for communication by making use of platforms such as Webex, Zoom, Teams etc

CZECH REPUBLIC

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

The division of competences between different levels of government follows from both general laws (Competence Act, Act on Municipalities, Act on Regions, Act on the Capital City of Prague) and special laws (Act on Emergency Management, Act on Public Health). These laws take into account in particular the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of specialisation.

- 1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

According to the Act on Crisis Management, the Government established the "Emergency Task Force" (ETF), headed by the Minister of Interior; the ETF co-ordinates activities of all three government levels in their fight against Covid-19. Co-ordination at the central level is ensured by the Government itself – the meetings are held much more frequently than in "normal times"; also, the Union of Towns and Municipalities and Association of Regions play a key role at their respective levels.

- 1.3. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

There are several specialised "working groups" under the ETF, each of them covering specific policy area (e. g., education, epidemiology, culture, sport, business etc.). Representatives of various concerned agencies, stakeholder groups or public bodies take part in their meetings and their conclusions are subsequently transmitted to the ETF or Government for further decision.

- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

There were no special financial transfers from the central to the regional and local level in connection with the emergency situation. However, the Government has helped to the municipalities in many other ways – materially (distribution of the face masks, respirators, disinfection and hand sanitisers etc.) or methodologically (e. g. how to solve practical situations such as council sessions, elections, information requests, issuing of ID cards and passports, weddings, local fees, offences, working hours, quarantine measures etc.).

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

Usually, the municipalities have been very active in relation to the needs of their citizens during the emergency situation. There are many examples of such activities – distribution of masks and disinfection means, assistance to the persons from the vulnerable groups (e. g. elderly, handicapped or socially excluded people), etc.

2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

There have been only minor differences in the overall policy concerning the fight against Covid-19 in relation to metropolitan or rural areas. The former have a higher population density, thus the measures were in some regard more “meticulous” in big cities than in small villages and medium-size municipalities. On contrary, the rural and remote mountain areas had certain difficulties in the process of distribution of protective tools and sometimes had to adopt “restricting measures” in respect to free entry into their area during the emergency situation (e. g. in abundantly visited tourist areas or villages with a significant share of recreation objects).

2.3. *Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?*

There are numerous cases of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency, e. g. in the field of mutual providing of services, distribution of protective tools, municipal police, waste management, personal assistance etc.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1. *What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?*

After closing the borders (16 March), any kind of cross-border co-operation was excluded, some projects thus had to be stopped, postponed or prolonged.

3.2. *Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?*

In the first half of March, there were some cases of such co-operation in the area of health care at local level.

However, there have been serious difficulties with frontier workers - people living in the border areas, working abroad and thus commuting daily across the border to one of the neighbouring states: Austria, Germany, Poland or Slovakia. These commuters have had to face a number of restrictions and changing rules, the situation was solved at the level of Government, in co-operation with the municipalities in border areas.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4. *Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency*

Citizens have been very active in assisting local authorities to overcome the pandemic, namely by helping with own production and distribution of protective tools (face masks, disinfection), aiding to elderly and handicapped people etc. However, the decision-making process in the emergency situation is usually of a directive nature and the civil participation is thus very limited.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. *How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services).*

Some of the services have been provided continuously (waste collection, postal services), some only in a limited extent (public transport, administrative services, cleaning services) and some were suspended (e. g. marriages, masses).

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

All the mentioned measures are used during the emergency situation. The emphasis has been put on electronic communication between the state authorities and their clients, the public sector employees could use the "home office" (remote working), the authorities restructure their organisation in order that they could concentrate to the most urgent tasks connected with the emergency situation and transfer their financial sources to these purposes.

FINLAND

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

It has been very much the same, normal allocation during the crisis. In Finland, there is not yet regional level in administration, so allocation is between State (central level and regional offices) and municipal level (municipalities and their co-operation bodies, which has a major responsibility in basic school, social and health services, including big University hospitals as well).

The special legislation, Emergency Powers Act, was decided to taken into force from 17.3.2020. (in Finnish <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2011/20111552>) This legislation gives authorities large possibilities to make extraordinary measures to control crisis, also in connection to pandemics. There is a special section for social and health authorities to arrange administration in exceptional circumstances, as well as to economy, schools, kindergardens. In many cases, the local authorities has a key practical role and they act in co-operation with central authorities guidance and decisions.

1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

It has been very much using existent co-operation systems of different authorities. At the department level of Ministry, there is greater emphasis on connection with big cities (over 100 000 habitants in Finland). Discussion and update of the situation has been a key issue. Special note has been given to Uusimaa region, which has the best connections to overseas and has about 1/3 of population.

Inside the Government, the co-operation of ministries and offices has been intense. On local level, there are special co-operation groups representing various authorities, collecting and changing information, and communicating on various levels.

1.3 *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

Authorities from local government and central government (regional offices) have typically had common meetings during the crisis and formed common situation reports and adapted measures and resources. There has been a strong need for them to get information and helpful guidelines and orders from the Government and that has been working quite reasonably.

Some key offices to provide information and material has been <https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en> Finnish institute for Health and Wellbeing – which works under Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and what has been a key information bank and a research center for epidemic knowledge, and sharing general knowledge of situation to the general public. Another important organisation has been National Emergency Supply Agency, with its key role to guarantee protective material with measures. Also very important public informant has been the biggest Hospital district, HUS – Helsinki Universal Hospital, which is a common co-operative body of municipalities in Uusimaa.

Perhaps the issue about mechanisms is that during this crisis, municipalities and authorities have found more use to different existing co-operation bodies. In the long run, this

hopefully would lead to better and more fruitful co-operation in other, more ordinary issues as well.

- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

The effects of the corona pandemic on individual municipalities have been very different due to the different income structures, economic structures, service structures, the number and geographical location of corona cases. In employment and entrepreneurship, from the perspective of the early stages of the pandemic in spring 2020, the effects were particularly pronounced in municipalities with a high economic, service, logistics and tourism sector, ie large cities and in smaller municipalities dependent on tourism.

The state has directly supported households, businesses and municipalities through a number of measures over the year. In amending budgets adopted during 2020, the support measures were aimed at securing the conditions for employment, economic activity and the organization of basic services in all municipalities and, in the case of support for municipalities, to ensure that the support is as targeted as possible to the municipalities and tasks affected by the crisis most strongly.

The most significant measure targeted at municipalities was in the fourth quarter of 2020 complementary measures for municipalities, as indicated in the amending budget support package. The measures in the support package were mainly targeted at 2020 and totaled approx. EUR 1.4 billion.

In connection with the autumn 2020 budget debate, the government decided to provide additional support to municipalities in the autumn 2020 amending budget. State contributions to basic services will be increased by a further EUR 400 million and a discretionary state subsidy of EUR 200 million for hospital districts. In addition, the autumn supplementary budget 355 million will be allocated by direct costs related to the coronavirus, such as full recompensation of corona testing cost. In Helsinki and Uusimaa Hospital District (municipal) the costs arising from the increase of testing capacity and analysis activities shall be reimbursed separately for a maximum of EUR 200 million.

In addition to hospital district support, there is also an extra discretionary State Grant for municipalities in economic difficulties – EUR 50 million. This is a grant that is traditionally distributed to smaller municipalities, usually rural areas.

“Government to provide more than EUR 1 billion to support municipalities during coronavirus crisis”
- Ministry of Finance 8.4.2020 14.57 | Published in English on 15.4.2020 at 13.17
PRESS RELEASE

The Government, in its discussion on spending limits, has decided to provide more than EUR 1 billion to support the country’s municipalities as a consequence of the coronavirus crisis. The Government is monitoring local government finances and is ready to add to the support package later this year if necessary.

“With this billion-euro support package, we want the municipalities to know that we are providing considerable support during the coronavirus crisis. The provision of healthcare and social welfare, education and early childhood education and care is the responsibility of the municipalities. The Government’s aim is to ensure that the provision of all key basic services remains possible during the crisis but also after it, when a lot of additional help will be needed for people suffering from the impact of the crisis,” says Minister of Local Government Sirpa Paatero.

The support package of at least EUR 1 billion decided in the government spending limits discussion is for 2020 and is to be implemented via the forthcoming third supplementary budget. The details of the support package will become clearer as the supplementary budget draws closer. The package consists of mutually complementary elements that take into account the needs of different municipalities during the crisis:

Central government will use discretionary government grants to reimburse hospital districts directly for the extra costs, such as spending on intensive care, caused by the coronavirus crisis. The municipalities' share of corporation tax revenue will be increased for a fixed period to the end of 2020.

Central government transfers to municipalities for statutory basic public services will be increased for a fixed period to the end of 2020.

Discretionary central government transfers will be increased.

The Government already made an earlier decision to compensate the municipalities for temporary 2020 tax losses arising from its decisions regarding tax payment arrangements for businesses. This will help municipalities temporarily, as the tax payments deferred through the arrangements will be correspondingly deducted from central government transfers to municipalities in 2021.

Government will also support municipalities later if necessary.

The impact of the coronavirus crisis on general government finances and local government finances is considerable. The crisis means increased municipal expenditure, on healthcare for example, while at the same time municipalities' tax revenues and fee income have fallen.

According to the Ministry of Finance's initial estimate, the coronavirus crisis will weaken local government finances this year by EUR 1.6–2.0 billion. This is a preliminary estimate, however, as the effects will depend on the extent and duration of the epidemic, and there is not yet any certainty over this. Moreover, there are different types of municipalities and the impacts vary accordingly. Consequently, the Ministry of Finance is following developments very closely.

In coming supplementary budgets and in the August government budget session, the Government will make an assessment of the effects of the coronavirus crisis on the municipalities and is committed to augmenting, as necessary, the package of measures targeted at municipalities as the details of the estimated impacts become clearer. Measures for 2021 will be decided as part of the process for preparing the 2021 budget.

Situation updates are prepared in collaboration with the municipalities, ensuring that account is taken of their different situations and the various impacts of the crisis on the activities of local government. The epidemic's effects on local government finances will be taken into account by the Ministry of Finance when it considers the need to initiate the procedure for municipalities in crisis, based on the 2020 financial statements, and when it assesses the municipalities' deficit coverage obligation.

Besides the immediate crisis support measures, the Government will review the outlook for the future of local government finances before the 2020 government budget session. At the same time, the tasks and obligations of the municipalities will be examined.

These measures have been actively discussed with the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities and they have helped municipalities to cope with situation and collected their views for processes.

<https://www.localfinland.fi/association-finnish-local-and-regional-authorities>

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

One of key issues is to guarantee local administration and decision-making during the restrictions. A special note to meetings and their risks was taken and some virtual local council meetings were introduced. The lately renewed Local Government Act (2015) allows these and let local arrangements be flexible in the times of pandemic as well. Municipal Association has had a key role to help municipalities to make changes or adaptations to their usual procedures.

Municipalities provide protecting masks for persons of vulnerable groups, with limited income. There has not been any threshold defined for "limited income". This has been implemented since august 2020.

2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?

The development of crisis was constantly evaluated. Because many virus cases were found in Uusimaa region, it was temporary declared as a region with restricted access for a period of some weeks. Same type of measures was evaluated in some other parts of country (Länsi-Pohja in Lapland, near Sweden and Kainuu) because they had so many virus cases compared their emergency service capacity. However, these were not declared as restricted access areas.

One of the key elements was protecting vulnerable groups, specially over 70 years old citizens. The situation of intensive care capacity and its use was carefully observed. These units are situated in big cities, as well as laboratories testing virus. The protective clothing supply was essential and a good co-operation with Maintenance and Supply Security Center has a key role to guarantee the material situation. This was not always done without some challenges due to the high global demand of protective clothing.

See point 1.4

A specific economic rule relief, most likely to affect rural municipalities, decided 5.10.2020:

The Government proposes that municipalities and joint municipal authorities may, upon application, receive an extension of the deficit coverage period and that municipalities that voluntarily merge may receive a discretionary merger allowance.

With a temporary amendment to the Municipal Act, a municipality or an joint municipal authority may apply to the Ministry of Finance for an extension of the deficit coverage period if it has become more difficult to cover the deficit within the deadline due to a coronavirus epidemic. An extension can be applied for up to six years instead of the current four years. The assessment procedure for a municipality in a particularly difficult financial situation can only be started after the extended deadline has expired.

The aim is to smooth out the effects of the corona epidemic on the municipal economy and to improve the ability of municipalities to adjust their finances due to the economic difficulties that followed the epidemic. The law is to enter into force as soon as possible and will remain in force until 31.12.2025.

2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

Finnish municipalities are very independent and used to work that way: these examples are quite hard to find. In city of Tampere and neighboring municipalities have worked in co-operation to get some common buying of protective clothing and sharing resources.

This is really helpful for smaller municipalities, who might otherwise have some problems with buying these equipments in the time of increased demand and scarcity of supplies. In Finnish system, the biggest co-operation example between municipals in the sector of health care and key treatment in virus contaminations is the joint municipal authority. All public hospitals are operated and administrated by municipalities together as joint bodies, providing services to their habitants. The biggest 5 hospitals also work as University hospitals for the most advanced medical treatment and serving other parts of country as well.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?

Since 20.3.2020 tighter border control between Finland and Norway, Sweden and Estonia was introduced. Only essential traffic of goods and returning citizens was allowed and pendel traffic restricted only to the specially defined workers (Ministry of the Interior). With the Russian border, the control is higher also in normal time. During the crisis, traffic and the opening hours of border control points were restricted.

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?

The Government had negotiations with other Governments and agreements were made to allow key workers, especially in social and health care to go across the border in daily traffic to guarantee the services in these areas. The risks were evaluated and it was noted the supply of workforce was essential for authorities to work properly, especially in border between Sweden and Finland. Between Estonia and Finland, traffic restrictions had a major effect on construction sector and their employees and their needs have been noted in negotiations.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

One of the problematic issues has been the home services for over 70-old people. There has been a need to arrange these to a new situation and there has been a need for extra capacity. These have been organised and innovated very well in many places with the help of NGOs and volunteers in co-operation with local authorities in food distribution, telephone support for needs, help online services etc.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

There has been a knowledge-based evaluation to concentrate on key functions and services. Of course, it has been challenging to do this one remote meetings and negotiations. One of key things is that in Finland municipalities have quite strong mandate to arrange these even by normal legislation. There are some key issues here that have proved to be problematic. Firstly, the threshold of using normal, not virus-related health services, has risen up, because of situation and instructions to citizens to prevent "unnecessary" use of services – this can lead to some problems in mid-term time – and

the personnel capacity has been so far sufficient even to provide normal services. Another problem has been the finance of public transportation – because customers do not use bus and metro in the same extent as usual, the co-operation traffic authorities has suffered from finance deficit and asked for help from the central government.

The main portion of State Grant extra support has been distributed to municipalities according to the age structure of the population, aimed to young and most vulnerable elderly people. In addition to that there is an 150 mill. € support for young person's services in education sector, extra support of 15 mill € to elderly care personnel and a package of 100 mill.€ for public transportation, 75 % of that aimed to City areas. Public transportation is usually arranged by municipal co-operation bodies or companies and their finance has been in trouble because wide use of e-working from home.

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

The use of remote working has been quite limited in Finland before the crisis, but has now been widely used and that will have quite big effect on working also after the crisis. In the same way, the situation control and forming a situation evaluated picture – methods are swiftly developing, for more effective use in leadership in the crisis. Using AI, developing data systems and sharing data have been also much developed during the crisis.

Perhaps one big lesson that must be evaluated after the crisis is the way how almost completely civil administration managed to tackle the crisis. The special legislation used is for most part designed for military crisis, and now this law was first time put under real case of implementation. The effectivity of decisions, organisations and implementation and situation analytics must be later put on evaluation to develop the system. There was some discussion during the early weeks of crisis to organise things more central-controlled, in a sort of more military fashion, but that was not put in reality.

The overall success of situation evaluation and control of measures can be said to be very successful. The number of deaths has been relatively low and the capacity of intense treatment in hospitals has been sufficient. Nor has there need to introduce new type of extra improvised hospitals for other buildings – however, there is still possibility to introduce them in short term, if situation needs that.

6. *Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?*

Annexed is 4.5.2020 Governmental decision to dismantle some restrictions.

"Government decides on plan for hybrid strategy to manage coronavirus crisis and for gradual lifting of restrictions" - Government Communications Department 4.5.2020 19.38 | Published in English on 4.5.2020 at 21.29 **PRESS RELEASE 308/2020**

On Sunday 3 May and today 4 May, the Government held an informal meeting to discuss an action plan for a hybrid strategy to manage the coronavirus crisis and for ways of gradually lifting the restrictive measures. The Government will adopt a related resolution at its plenary session where it sets out in detail the particular decisions taken. The Government's decisions are based on the first phase of the report put together by Ministry of Finance Permanent Secretary Hetemäki's working group on the coronavirus exit and reconstruction strategy.

In Finland, the growth of the coronavirus epidemic has been halted through restrictive measures and a clear improvement in hygiene behaviour. Although the spread of the epidemic has currently stalled, there is still a risk that it will escalate again.

The measures proposed by the Government have aimed and will aim to prevent the spread of the virus in Finland, to protect the capacity of the healthcare system and to shield and protect people, especially those who are most at risk. The aim of the hybrid strategy is to curb the epidemic effectively while minimising the detrimental impact on people, businesses, society and the exercise of fundamental rights.

In the hybrid strategy, this will involve a controlled shift from large-scale restrictive measures to more targeted measures and to enhanced epidemic management in accordance with the Communicable Diseases Act, the Emergency Powers Act and possible other statutes.

Moreover, the hybrid strategy focuses extensively on a "test, trace, isolate and treat" approach, alongside the controlled dismantling of restrictive measures. This will help curbing the spread of the epidemic. The approach can be further enhanced using a mobile application, with the precondition that it must be voluntary and ensure data protection.

The emergency conditions continue to prevail in Finland, and the Government has decided to issue decrees on the extension of the application of section 86 (direction of the operations of healthcare and social welfare units), section 87 (other direction and management of healthcare), section 88 (compliance with the time limits for the provision of non-urgent care, assessments of the need for social welfare services), section 93 (derogation from terms of employment), and section 94 (restricting the right to terminate employment) of the Emergency Powers Act.

In its meeting, the Government decided on the gradual dismantling of the following restrictive measures:

As of 14 May 2020, the statutory restrictions on border traffic will be lifted in cross-border traffic across the Schengen internal borders by allowing employment or commission-related commuting and other essential traffic.

For the time being, recreational travel abroad is not recommended, and the travel advice issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will be extended accordingly. The Ministry of the Interior will draft more specific guidelines on the gradual opening of border traffic. Finland considers it important that the lifting of the restrictions on border traffic be coordinated at the EU level.

The gradual opening of restaurants will begin on 1 June 2020, provided that this is supported by the effects of lifting the current restrictions and by the subsequent general epidemiological assessment. This requires legislative amendments that would enable imposition of restrictions on, for example, the number of customers and the alcohol serving hours. Legislative proposals to that effect will be brought for the Government's consideration no later than 13 May 2020.

Outdoor recreational facilities will be opened as of 14 May, subject to the restrictions on gatherings.

Sports competitions and series can be resumed with special arrangements on 1 June.

The borrowing of books and other material from libraries will be immediately permitted.

The following public indoor premises will be opened in a gradual and controlled manner as of 1 June: national and municipal museums, theatres, the National Opera, cultural venues, libraries, mobile libraries, services for customers and researchers at the National Archives, hobby and leisure centres, swimming pools and other sports facilities, youth centres, clubs, organisations' meeting rooms, day care services for the elderly, rehabilitative work facilities and workshops.

Large public events with more than 500 people are prohibited until 31 July 2020 in line with the Government's decision.

Restrictions on gatherings are still necessary. Based on an epidemiological assessment, it will be possible to ease the restrictions on the number of persons from the current 10 to a maximum of 50 from 1 June until further notice. The situation will be reviewed again by the end of June.

The 50-person limit applies not only to public gatherings (the recommendation-based guideline) but also to events organised by private and third-sector operators, to cultural, recreational, exercise and sports events and to religious events. As concerns indoor spaces and enclosed outdoor spaces, such as amusement parks, zoos, libraries and cinemas, safety will be ensured by limiting the number of visitors, ensuring safe distances and providing guidance on personal hygiene. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will issue a circular to the regional authorities on implementing these restrictions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease under the Communicable Diseases Act.

Restrictions concerning general upper secondary schools, vocational schools, higher education institutions and liberal education will remain in force until 13 May. From then on, starting on 14 May, the use of the premises of the above-mentioned educational institutions for teaching will be controlled through measures in line with the Communicable Diseases Act. Contact teaching can be resumed in a controlled and gradual manner. However, the Government recommends that universities, universities of applied sciences, upper secondary schools, vocational schools, liberal adult education and basic adult education institutes continue distance teaching until the end of the semester.

Restrictions on the organisation of basic education in the arts will remain in force until 13 May, after which their premises will be opened correspondingly for contact teaching.

The recommendation on working from home is continued until further notice. The recommendation will be reassessed after summer.

Anyone aged over 70 years should continue to avoid physical contacts as far as possible. The Government emphasises that those who belong to the risk groups should use own discretion in observing the guidelines.

The restrictions concerning visits to healthcare and social welfare units will remain in force until further notice and the matter will be next reviewed by the end of June. For example, care units are looking for new practices to enable safe social contacts.

https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/10616/hallitus-linjasi-suunnitelmasta-koronakriisin-hallinnan-hybridistrategiaksi-ja-rajoitusten-vaiheittaisesta-purkamisesta

There has been an increasing trend since August to politicise Government measures by the opposition – the first half of the year was quite different – there was more consensus of measures needed. Specially wearing of masks and limitations of business hours of bars and restaurant, and a support to some sectors of enterprises have been under heated political debate. The communication has not always been too clear: for example using masks has been much left to citizens themselves. Because of quite low level of use of masks, a couple of recommendations to use them in public places have been made lately.

When epidemic is in the early days of October in expanding mode, good thing is so far hospital capacity has been sufficient and very few death cases has been found, compared to the spring.

Very much discussion has been on how State and municipalities can in future cope with added loan burden caused partly by crisis, some worrying public debt level might rise above the EU rules. However, thanks to generous packet to municipalities, the economic situation for this year and 2021 is challenging and not severe. It is positive that the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities was quite happy with the balancing measures Government made for the municipal sector.

FRANCE

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

The health crisis has highlighted the role of the State as a coordinator throughout the country. An emergency law to deal with the Covid-19 epidemic was adopted by Parliament on 22 March 2020 and promulgated on 24 March 2020. It aims to give legislative expression to the measures announced by the President of the Republic and the Government to deal with this major crisis.

This law includes various measures relating to the governance, organisation and functioning of local authorities and their groupings. Under the Act, the Parliament empowered the Government to issue ordinances, some of which concern local and regional authorities.

Five ordinances have been adopted, which set out specific measures relating to local and regional authorities and their groupings: on 25 March, the creation of a solidarity fund for companies in sectors particularly affected by the consequences of the spread of the virus, budgetary, financial and fiscal continuity measures and measures to adapt the rules of procedure and the execution of public procurement contracts, and, on 1 April, measures relating to the functioning and governance of local and regional authorities and their groupings. The latest ordinance, dated 8 April, aims to guarantee the continuity of local executives during the state of health emergency.

These legislative provisions were accompanied by regulatory measures allowing for the implementation of specific adaptations to the management of the health crisis by the various authorities and state actors.

While the ordinary distribution of competences remains, certain adjustments have been put in place.

Example: the law allows municipal police officers, alongside national forces, to ensure compliance with containment measures in the context of a state of health emergency.

It should be stressed that all measures of interest to local authorities have been the subject of explanatory notes by the Directorate-General for Local Authorities, relayed by the State services at local level (prefecture) but also by the main associations of elected representatives in order to promote information for the various actors involved.

1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

The Government's impetus is provided by the ministries but also by local state bodies, mainly prefectures and regional health agencies. Prefects are the representatives of the State in the county (*département*). As a government delegate, they directly represent the Prime Minister and each of the ministers. They are in charge of national interests and responsible for the management of State services in the county or region. The county prefects are in charge of public order and the protection of the population. They direct relief operations and they have an essential role in the resolution of conflicts and tensions of all kinds, as well as in crisis management.

Under the principle of the separation of powers, prefects have no judicial or military powers, although they have a power of requisition for civil purposes.

The regional prefects represent the government only to the representative body(ies) of that territorial level and they head the State's administrative services in the region. They coordinate the action of the county prefects in areas of regional competence. This illustrates the complementarity of the territorial levels, for the purposes of coherent administrative action.

The regional health agencies are responsible for the regional steering of the health system. They define and implement health policy in the regions, as close as possible to the needs of the population. These regional health agencies are public institutions, morally and financially autonomous, placed under the supervision of [the ministries responsible for social affairs and health](#).

The steering of public health policy in the regions comprises three areas of intervention:

- Health monitoring and safety, as well as health observation.
- The definition, financing and evaluation of prevention and health promotion actions.
- Anticipation, preparation and management of health crises, in liaison with the prefect.

The management of health supply in the regions aims to better meet the needs and to guarantee the effectiveness of the health system. It covers the ambulatory (city medical services), medico-social (assistance and support for the elderly and disabled) and hospital sectors.

- In concrete terms, the regional agencies coordinate the activities and allocate the operating budget of hospitals, clinics, care centres and structures for the elderly, disabled and dependent persons.
- Regulation has a territorial dimension - for a better distribution of doctors and the supply of care on the territory - and an economic dimension - for a better use of resources and control of health expenditure.

Regulation is implemented in the different areas of responsibility of the agency, with the law providing the Director General of the ARS with various levers, including:

- Authorisation for the creation of health care and medico-social institutions and services, control of their operation and allocation of their resources.
 - The definition and implementation, with the health insurance organisations and the National Solidarity and Autonomy Fund (CNSA), of actions to prevent and manage health insurance risk in the regions.
 - The evaluation and promotion of the quality of training for health professionals.
- The creation of the regional health agencies in 2010 places the governance of the health system within a global framework, involving all health actors. They act in the field of health as a whole:
- Prevention and health promotion,
 - Sanitary surveillance and security,
 - Organisation of the offer of care in ambulatory (city medical services) and health institutions (hospitals, etc.),
 - Organisation of medical-social care.

Thanks to the transversal and territorial nature of regional health policies, the regional health agencies make it possible to bring together all the players in the territories, to develop a global vision of health and to decompartmentalise health pathways, while ensuring the quality, efficiency and safety of care and support in the health system. They operate as the single point of contact for all health stakeholders in the regions.

1.3 What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?

In an emergency, when the observed or foreseeable threat to public order, health, peace and safety so requires, mayors or local authority chairmen may contact the prefect so that the latter may use, if the situation justifies it, the power to requisition any goods or services necessary for the operation of the service provided for in Article L2215-1 of the General Local Authorities Code (CGCT).

In order to strengthen solidarity, the government uses the website <https://covid19.reserve-civique.gouv.fr/> to publish all announcements of vital missions requiring the support of new volunteers.

In the field of education, the closure of schools has made educational continuity a key issue. This has notably resulted in the "1000 books in the educational cities" operation, which has met with great success in the first 10 Educational Cities since its launch in mid-April. The operation consists in allocating an endowment of 1,000 children's books per city, which are distributed to children aged 3 to 18 years in order to strengthen educational continuity in priority neighbourhoods. A total of 20,000 new books are being distributed. The initiative is led by the Biblionef association and is based on the *Cities of Education* programme, launched by the Government in September 2019 to strengthen education in priority neighbourhoods, as well as on the association of elected officials *Ville & Banlieue* ("City & Suburbs"). The Minister in charge of cities and housing has decided to renew the operation in 10 additional cities.

Initiatives in more specific areas have also been launched to promote coordination between different actors.

For example: the Ministry of Solidarity and Health has created the website <https://www.desordispournosenfants.fr/>, a platform for donating computers to the Child Welfare Agency to enable children to have access to educational content in the context of confinement. Thus, companies can make donations via this platform.

1.4. Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?

The emergency law provides for the establishment of a solidarity fund for businesses. The financing of this fund will be shared with the regions, overseas collectivities, New Caledonia and any other territorial collectivity or public establishment. The ordinance of 25 March 2020 specifies the terms of application and provides for the creation, for three months, of a solidarity fund to assist companies engaged in an activity particularly affected by the economic, financial and social consequences of the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The three-month period may be extended by ordinance for a maximum of six months. This solidarity fund is financed by the State up to 750 million euros. The regions also participate in this fund with a voluntary contribution of 250 million euros. In addition, the local authorities of Saint-Barthelemy, Saint-Martin, Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, Wallis and Futuna, as well as any other local authority or public establishment for inter-municipal cooperation with its own tax system, will be able to contribute voluntarily. The amount and terms of the financial contributions are defined in an agreement concluded between the State and each voluntary local authority: unless their deliberative bodies decide otherwise, the executives of each local authority or public establishment for intermunicipal cooperation may sign this

agreement with the State. The scope of application of the fund as well as the conditions of eligibility and allocation of aid will be determined by decree.

Additional budgetary flexibility measures are introduced by the ordinances mentioned earlier, such as the possibility for the executive to subscribe to treasury lines or to grant subsidies.

In addition, several deadlines provided in the law are postponed in order to give elected officials more time to organise themselves:

- The adoption of the initial budget: deadline of 31 July 2020 instead of 15 or 30 April 2020.
- The stop of the administrative account 2019: deadline of 31 July 2020 instead of 30 June, 2020.
- Budgetary information for local elected representatives: the deadlines for the presentation of the budget orientation report (ROB) and the budget orientation debate (DOB) are suspended. They will be able to speak during the session devoted to the adoption of the initial budget.

In addition, in fiscal matters, more time is given to local elected officials to decide on local tax rates and tariffs:

- Voting on local tax rates and tariffs by local authorities (TFPB, TFPNB, CFE, TEOM, GEMAPI, etc.): deadline extended to 3 July 2020. In the absence of deliberation, the 2019 rates and tariffs will be extended.
- The adoption of the coefficient of the local tax on final electricity consumption (TCFE): date postponed to 1 October 2020 instead of 1 July 2020.
- The institution and fixing of the rates of the local tax on outdoor advertising (TLPE): date postponed to 1 October 2020 instead of 1 July 2020.
- The institution of the household waste collection fee (REOM) by the competent joint unions: deadline of 1 September 2020 instead of 1 July 2020.
- The registration fees and the land publicity tax (DMTO): the rate adopted by the counties before 3 July 2020 will come into force on 1 September 2020, instead of 1 June usually.

The emergency law also made it possible to provide for the non-inclusion of overruns in operating expenditure by way of derogation from the public finance control contracts, known as the "Cahors Contracts", for the year 2020.

For staff members (contract workers and civil servants working less than 28 hours on a non-full-time basis) placed on special leave of absence (ASA) for the care of their child(ren) under 16 years of age due to the closure of the establishments, part of their remuneration will be covered by the national health insurance fund as daily allowances. This measure alleviates the burden on local and regional authorities.

On Thursday 23 April, the government announced that it would release an additional 39 million euros for food aid for the most vulnerable, who have been hard hit by the consequences of the coronavirus epidemic and containment measures. This amount is equivalent to one third of the annual budget usually allocated by the State to associations for food aid.

This new €39 million budget is aimed more particularly at low-income households this time, which are victims of a drop in their activity and income due to the health crisis. An initial tranche of €25 million will be distributed to food aid associations which have seen, in recent weeks, an increase in demand which they sometimes find difficult to cope with.

At the same time, 14 million euros will be distributed in the form of emergency food vouchers in areas in difficulty in mainland France and its offshore territories. Entrusted to the prefectures, these vouchers will be distributed by the municipal social relief centers, for the equivalent of 105 euros per household identified.

A total of 2.9 million cheques will be distributed. They will be used in supermarkets and will enable the purchase of certain basic products.

For the off-shore territories, 4 million euros will finance emergency aid for Mayotte, French Guiana and Saint-Martin. This aid will take the form of emergency food vouchers (Mayotte) or food distributions (French Guiana and Saint-Martin).

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

See the item on continuity of services.

2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

State services and associations have taken combined measures to create additional shelters for people in need and 177,800 places have thus been opened to accommodate homeless people especially. An additional 10,800 hotel places have now been available throughout France since the start of the health crisis, in addition to the permanent places financed by the State all year round. In addition, 95 specialised sites have been opened, dedicated to homeless people affected by the Covid-19 but whose condition does not require hospitalisation (with nearly 3,500 places). An exceptional voucher distribution scheme enables homeless people to buy food and hygiene products during the health crisis. In addition, the Government is committed to working with local authorities to facilitate the resumption of the rollout of mobile telephone and fibre optic networks. This joint mobilisation of the State and all public authorities aims to facilitate the continuation of maintenance work on electronic communication networks and the gradual resumption of new deployments given their importance, especially in rural areas. Thus, the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion (ANCT), in liaison with professional organisations and local authority associations, has set up an online platform which will enable telecommunications operators and manufacturers involved in the deployment of the fibre optic and mobile telephone networks to discuss with local authorities any difficulties encountered in deployment work, thus facilitating the continuation of projects. The platform has been accessible since 19 April 2020 at the following link: <https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/difficulte-deploiement>.

The use of communication tools being favored by the context of the health crisis, it also appeared necessary to strengthen support for people having difficulties with the use of IT tools. In order not to increase their isolation, a website, www.solidarite-numerique.fr, and a telephone line, 01 70 772 372 have been opened to assist them in their administrative procedures. In particular, it enables simplified procedures to be carried out for people who have difficulty mastering the French language.

2.3. *Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?*

The community of cities called Sicoval (note by the Secretariat: an inter-municipal cooperation association of 36 smaller communes in the South-West, near Toulouse) has set up a unit which, in collaboration with the chamber of commerce, provides individual support to the very small enterprises (VSEs), in particular to inform them of the tools available to help them get through this period (relaying and accompanying companies towards the existing support systems set up by the government and the Region in particular). An action is currently being deployed (at the initiative of the Region) aimed at the territory's fruit and vegetable producers in order to network them, also with supermarkets and to set up different solutions for selling their products in the territory. Finally, in cooperation with the gendarmerie and municipal police forces, Sicoval has strengthened the surveillance systems set up within the framework of the Intercommunal Security and Delinquency Prevention Council for industrial and economic sites. Sicoval is thus performing as a platform for the transmission and dissemination of useful information for the municipalities (mayors, general directors of the municipal administration and their staff); the general directors of the municipalities are virtually brought together regularly by the intermunicipal body. A daily newsletter is produced for the mayors and general directors. A distribution of hydro-alcoholic gel has been set up for the communes (particularly at the time of the 1st round of communal elections in March); the intercommunal cooperation also provides support and legal advice for the communes.

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

3.1 *What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?*

It seems premature to establish the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border cooperation. Some areas have, in fact, been particularly topical, such as patient management and collaboration in the health field.

Moreover, certain cross-border issues are highlighted in the context of this crisis. One of the central issues is that of mobility, particularly for cross-border workers, or the interweaving of economic development zones.

It seems crucial that, when the various stakeholders are able to lean back again, a reflection should be undertaken in order to draw up guidelines.

3.2. *Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?*

Due to the nature of this crisis, it is the health sector that has given rise to most examples of cross-border cooperation. Cooperation in patient management (patient transfers to less saturated hospitals) or the usefulness of the Cerdagne hospital between France and Spain (set up by virtue of a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation – EGTC) should therefore be highlighted.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. *Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency*

Example: the Citizens' Climate Convention was to finalise its work at the beginning of April, before presenting it to the government. The Covid-19 has affected the agenda and its last session has been postponed *sine die*. But in order to contribute to the reflection on the

crisis exit plan, it held an extraordinary session online on 3 and 4 April - due to the confinement - with about 110 participants (out of 150 members) and then transmitted to the government on 10 April the first 50 proposals out of the 150 it had drawn up. A large number of them, concerning five thematic groups - housing, travel, food, consumption, production and work - are of interest to local and regional authorities. Its participants call in particular for the mobilised funding to be "socially acceptable, directed towards green solutions" and for "investment to be concentrated in climate-friendly sectors of the future".

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

Public services must be organised accordingly, while maintaining those that are essential to the lives of our fellow citizens. It is therefore up to the local authorities, which are responsible for applying the laws and regulations, to ensure that these instructions are properly implemented, by implementing them by decree at the local level, depending on the facilities and services of their commune, public establishment for inter-communal cooperation (EPCI), county or region. It is also up to the local authorities, in conjunction with the prefectures, to take the measures they consider essential to ensure the continuity of the listed essential services and to protect their staff and users.

Recommendations dated 13 April 2020 have been circulated.

1. General recommendations to stem the spread of Covid-19

a. Activate the municipal backup plan (PCS)

Municipalities that have a communal safeguard plan (PCS) can activate it to deal with this unprecedented health crisis. This makes it possible, in particular, to reorganise the administrative services and implement measures to inform the public, ensure continuity of services and protect vulnerable persons.

b. Informing the public and disseminating good practice

Local and regional authorities and their groups are encouraged to mobilise the various channels at their disposal to disseminate good practices as widely as possible: poster campaigns, messages on the website, sending SMS messages to citizens, communication on social networks, mobilization of the associative sector as a transmission relay, etc. The objective is to encourage a systematic appropriation by citizens of the barrier gestures likely to slow down the spread of the epidemic.

c. Ensure compliance with lock-down measures

In accordance with the Decree of 27 March 2020 supplementing Decree No. 2020-293 of 23 March 2020 prescribing the general measures necessary to deal with the Covid-19 epidemic in the context of the state of health emergency, the movement of any person outside his or her home is prohibited until 11 May 2020, unless justified on a ground provided for in article 3 of the aforementioned Decree of 23 March. Persons concerned must carry a supporting document, in paper or dematerialised form, and present it in the event of a control. The Emergency Act enables municipal police officers and park rangers, together with the national forces, to ensure compliance with the Act by giving them the power to draw protocols of contraventions. Travel in the exercise of their duties by local executives (mayors and their deputies, chairmen and vice-chairmen of EPCI, chairmen and vice-chairmen of county and regional councils) in the performance of their duties is treated as "business travel that cannot be postponed" within the meaning of 1° of I of article 3 of

Decree No. 2020-293 of 23 March 2020 prescribing the general measures necessary to deal with the Covid-19 epidemic, and as such is authorised. The travel of local elected representatives not exercising executive functions in the exercise of their office is also authorised in this capacity but must however be limited to strictly necessary trips.

d. The special case of food markets

Article 8-III of Decree 2020-293 of 23 March 2020, which provides in particular for the frameworks for authorising travel, stipulates that the holding of markets, whether indoor or outdoor, and for any purpose whatsoever, is prohibited. However, the representative of the State in the county may, after consulting the mayor, grant an authorisation to open food markets in order to meet a proven and reported need to supply the population, subject to compliance with certain conditions to ensure the health of traders and customers. A methodological guide for prefects and mayors has been prepared on the basis of contributions from the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Solidarity and Health. It is available by contacting the services of the prefectures.

2. Recommendations to ensure democratic continuity

a. Meetings of the deliberative assemblies

The deliberative assemblies were prorogued by the emergency law. Their power is not limited to the management of day-to-day business. They and their executives have full powers within the framework defined by the law. Measures were taken within the Ordinance of 1 April to ensure the continuity of the functioning of local institutions and the exercise of the powers of local authorities and local public establishments in order to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic to facilitate their meeting:

- each elected representative may hold two proxies instead of one at present and the quorum conditions are relaxed since only the presence of one third of the members is required,
- in order not to organise physical meetings, all means of proceeding by teleconference (videoconference, audio-conference) are authorised, provided that all participants are familiar with the technical arrangements for participating. An inventory of technical solutions for videoconferencing and audioconferencing for the attention of local elected officials has been published on the website of the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion and Relations with Local Authorities,
- all votes should be taken by public ballot, either by roll call or by electronic ballot, if possible (no secret ballot).

During the period of the state of health emergency, the obligation to consult the various consultative bodies in all their possible territorial variations is suspended. They simply have to be informed.

The meeting of the deliberative bodies of local authorities and standing committees may be held with one full day's notice, as provided for under ordinary law in cases of urgency.

b. Linking the strengthening of the executive's powers to a strengthening of information for the assemblies

In order to enable rapid decision-making during the period of a state of health emergency, the above-mentioned Order of 1 April provides that each local executive (mayor, president of a public establishment for intermunicipal cooperation (EPCI) with its own tax system, a territorial public establishment (EPT) or a mixed syndicate, a county council, a regional council or a community with special status) is automatically entrusted with all the powers that could previously be delegated to it by its deliberative assembly. It may itself delegate the signature of decisions taken in this context to another elected member of the executive or to certain staff members under the conditions of ordinary law.

The executive is required to inform the elected representatives, including those who were elected on 15 March last but who have not yet taken office, of the decisions it takes by delegation and to report back at the next meeting of the deliberative assembly.

The assembly, which must be seized of this matter at its first meeting, may decide to terminate all or part of the delegation to the executive or to modify it. Furthermore, one fifth of the members of the assembly may request a meeting of the assembly within six days. This meeting may be held remotely.

Finally, the acts taken within the framework of this delegation are subject to legality control. New procedures for the electronic transmission of documents have been introduced to facilitate the remote transmission of documents.

2. General recommendations for adapting public services that remain open

a. Update and activate a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) based on absences from the service

The purpose of these BCPs is to organise the operational response and ensure that essential activities are maintained. In this respect, the BCP determines the staff members who must be imperatively present, either physically or in active telework with suitable equipment, whether this equipment is made available by the employing body or by staff.

It is thus up to each local administration to identify a core group of people who will continue to carry out the vital functions of the community. Regularly surveyed and made up of several teams according to the needs of the community, they will work under the best possible protection to limit the risks of contamination. The implementation of this BCP must give priority to the missions mentioned in the following point (4.) as being to be maintained.

b. Restricting public reception arrangements

1. in the services for which a meeting in person is considered indispensable: restriction of contact time slots and meeting by appointment, implementation of flow management to ensure that barrier gestures are respected and in particular the physical distance of one metre between each person;

2. Increased use of telephone contacts instead of contacts in person;

3. organisation of remote follow-up for individual appointments, by telephone or e-mail;

4. maintaining home visits that are strictly indispensable for the evaluation of services for cases under investigation or urgent requests;

5. identifying priority missions and those which are less so (follow-up missions, control missions, etc.). *Example: setting up a short circuit for processing disability compensation benefit (PCH) claims at home for the return to the home of a person accommodated in an institution ;*

c. Maintain agent payroll services, operations connected with purchase orders and payment of invoices.

d. Maintain the operation of business economic support services.

e. Maintain the support services essential to ensure the smooth operation of priority public services (including: computer service, logistics and supply service, switchboard, etc.).

4. Recommendations made on a service-by-service basis

a. The closure of services

In accordance with the ministerial order of 15 March 2020 and the decree of 16 March 2020, the following establishments, which may be dependent on local authorities, must be closed down:

- multi-purpose halls, audition halls, conference halls, concert halls;
- libraries and museums, exhibition halls;
- indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including swimming pools;
- marquees, tents and structures;

- street performances and funfairs;
- open-air establishments;
- early learning, educational and training establishments, holiday centres, leisure centres without accommodation.

In order to avoid any gatherings of persons, it is recommended that the following should also be closed:

- parks and gardens;
- playgrounds;
- tourist offices.

Optional local public services, considered non-essential, may be closed by decision of the competent local authority, in particular :

- general information desks in town halls and premises of county and regional administrations;
- public service centres and "France services" areas.

As regards services such as those dealing with disabled people or other social action services, information on the new reception and processing procedures for requests must be provided to the public by any possible means.

b. Continuity of communal or intermunicipal services according to certain modalities

Priority should be given to the following services, which should continue to operate in an appropriate manner:

- o public utilities concerning water supply, sanitation, stormwater management (communal block), subject to a Business Continuity Plan (BCP). In addition, the suppliers and services distributing water on behalf of the competent authorities under Article L. 2224-7-1 of the General Local Authorities Code are concerned by the Order of 25 March 2020 relating to the payment of rents, water, gas and electricity bills relating to the business premises of companies whose activity is affected by the spread of the covid-19 epidemic. The conditions of application are specified in a decree dated 31 March 2020.
- o public service of waste collection and treatment, as well as all activities necessary to maintain sanitary conditions (communal block), subject to a BCP, in accordance with the recommendations made by the Minister of Ecological and Solidarity Transition, Ms. Elisabeth Borne, and the Secretary of State to the Minister of Ecological and Solidarity Transition, Ms. Brune Poirson, in their letter addressed to waste sector stakeholders on March 20.
- o public energy service: district heating, electricity and gas distribution (municipal block), subject to a BCP.
- o municipal bath-shower service (communal block), whose continuity is essential for the hygiene of homeless people.
- o reception areas for the mobile homes and caravans of travelling communities (who are not allowed to change parking areas because of the containment measures provided for in Article 3 of Decree No. 2020-293 of 23 March 2020 prescribing the general measures necessary to deal with the covid-19 epidemic). It is the responsibility of the managers of the facilities concerned, at communal level and elsewhere, to ensure their opening and operation via access to a continuous water and electricity supply with no immediate obligation of payment and/or prepayment, to facilitate the staggering or postponement of the recovery of the user fee, to ensure the regular removal of household waste, to ensure a telephone helpline service, to carry out urgent technical interventions, to suspend evictions of occupants due to non-payment and to display the official health information tools.

- The civil registry service, in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Justice of 18 March 2020, which are reproduced below:

- ❖ *The maintenance of a duty office for the registration of documents:* it must be possible to issue birth, recognition, lifeless child and death certificates under the conditions and in accordance with the procedures laid down by law. Indeed, the registration of these civil status records is subject to time limits (birth declarations) or must be carried out without delay in view of the imperatives of legal security and health or in view of the steps that may be taken after their establishment. Burial and cremation authorisations must also be transmitted without delay.

If necessary, all or part of the documents annexed to these civil status records could be transmitted by dematerialised means (in particular by fax or teletransmission as practised by many funeral operators for death declarations). Nevertheless, in order to ensure their authenticity, civil status records should bear the handwritten signature of the required persons (declarant and civil registrar) and then be delivered in paper form.

On the contrary, civil registrars may not ensure physical permanence for other types of civil status documents or applications. These could be:

- postponed, when the texts require the physical presence of the persons concerned: requests for a change of first name, joint declarations of change of name; procedures that are not urgent;
- processed only by electronic means or by post, in compliance with the texts in force (in particular the provisions of decree n° 2017-890 of 6 May 2017 relating to civil status): requests for full copies or extracts of civil status records, updates of civil status records and family record books, requests for rectification of material errors or omissions in civil status records, requests for matching of a family name obtained from a foreign civil status office (Article 61-3-1 of the Civil Code), etc.

It should also be noted that full copies and extracts of civil status records can only be issued by paper means (in this case by mail), so that the records issued can be considered authentic instruments.

- ❖ *Celebration of marriages and registration of civil solidarity pacts (PACS)*

In view of the measures restricting travel and the grouping of people in order to combat the health crisis, the celebration of marriages and the registration of PACS should in principle be postponed.

However, exceptions may be made to this rule on grounds justifying an urgent need to establish the matrimonial bond or partnership (for example: marriage in extremis or marriage of a military member before his or her departure to a theatre of operations). Civil registrars must first seek instructions from the public prosecutor.

- Funeral services (communal block). A document that can be consulted and is regularly updated on the website of the General Directorate of Local Authorities specifies informs about the public funeral service in the context of this epidemic, in particular for the probable or proven covid-19 dead, the role of the mayor as registrar of civil status in funeral matters, the organisation of funeral ceremonies, the definition of depositories as the possibility of temporary deposit of coffins, the transport of corpses, especially international transport, and finally, the authorisations in the funeral field.
- Nurseries and other childcare places (communes, counties)

Childcare in nursery is suspended from Monday 16 March 2020, except for childcare for the children of healthcare personnel indispensable to the management of the health crisis, in accordance with the "Guidelines for childcare for personnel indispensable to the management of the health crisis". As an exception, micro-nurseries and maternity homes will remain open when they accommodate a maximum of 10 children. Maternal assistants employed by an individual or an establishment or a family care service

(family nursery or multi-family establishment) continue to provide their services. Maternity assistants working at home (employees of private employers or nurseries) are allowed to take in up to 6 children under the age of 3 from 16 March until further notice. For those who are employed by an establishment or service, groupings are suspended from 16 March until further notice.

- Primary, secondary and high schools (communes, counties, regions)

These establishments are closed as of Monday, March 16, 2020. A minimum service must be set up by the national education system in conjunction with the mayor (nursery and primary school), the president of the county council (secondary school) and the president of the regional council (high school).

A reception service from the kindergarten to the 3rd grade is set up for the children of the health and medico-social personnel indispensable to the management of the health crisis, from Monday 16 March, in their usual place of schooling.

From 22 March 2020, the scheme will be extended to the children of staff assigned to child welfare missions under the authority of the county councils as well as associations and public establishments contributing to this policy if these staff do not have a childcare solution.

The services concerned are the child welfare (ASE) and mother and child protection (PMI) services of the county councils, as well as nurseries or social children's homes (MECS), open educational assistance services (AEMO) and specialised prevention services. The professionals working in these structures eligible for the scheme are: social workers, social and family intervention technicians (TISF), doctors, nursery nurses, childcare assistants, midwives and psychologists. As of Tuesday 31 March 2020, the reception system has been extended to other staff essential to the management of the health crisis on presentation of a certificate from the prefectural authority and within the limit of reception capacities. Specific directives are communicated via the prefectures and the regional education administrations. In addition, the communes and EPCI are encouraged to establish a minimum service for the priority public under the "extracurricular and extra-school activities" competence, according to the needs identified and the means available locally. School catering services are not considered essential and may therefore be closed. If this is the case, the parents concerned are asked to provide a packed lunch for their children.

- The public road service and work on buildings (communal block, counties) must be maintained, prioritising the necessary maintenance, particularly for bridges and engineering structures, and in compliance with barrier gestures and safety instructions applicable to worksites.

In close collaboration with the construction companies, the Professional Organisation for Building and Public Works Prevention has prepared a guide of health recommendations for the continuation of construction sites. It enables each company to define, adapt or reinforce its intervention protocols to ensure the protection of employees, in confidence with their customers. All types of worksites are concerned. A circular has been sent to the Prefects so that they can ensure the continuation and resumption of worksites, including provisions aimed at private individuals, in their capacity as project owners. Decentralised State services will contribute to informing and animating the sector locally. It is essential to ensure the continuity of activity and to avoid a total halt to construction sites, so as not to destabilise not only the companies concerned but also the entire economic chain.

- The public service of social action (communal block, counties) must be maintained, in so far as it enables the link with vulnerable people to be maintained and their needs to be met (carrying meals at home, ad hoc medical-social or psychological support, etc.). The mobilisation of local authorities is requested in order to determine, in conjunction with prefects and local actors, particularly associations,

the most suitable conditions for guaranteeing access to essential goods for vulnerable persons, while ensuring the health security of beneficiaries, volunteers and staff, in accordance with the instruction of 27 March addressed to prefects. In particular, in the area of food aid, the communal services for social aid and municipal officials may be mobilised to compensate for reductions in the activities of associations, as appropriate.

- Maternal and child protection centres and institutions, services and living places implementing child protection measures (counties) must continue to operate according to the BCP established by the community.

Various recommendations have been made by the Ministry of Solidarity and Health:

- On Child Welfare Assistance (ASE), the Ministry of Solidarity and Health issued a recommendation document for services and living places implementing child protection measures on 19 March 2020, and for family assistants taking in children and young people under child protection on 24 March 2020.

In addition, the Secretary of State to the Minister for Solidarity and Health, with responsibility for child protection, Mr Adrien Taquet, sent a letter to the presidents of the county councils on 21 March 2020, specifying various priorities (guaranteeing the continuity of the activity of the units for collecting information of concern and assessing situations of danger for children, guaranteeing the continuity of activity for child protection in the home, etc.), establish an educational hotline for child welfare missions, limit the rights of visits with accommodation (by court order if the child is under the supervision of a juvenile judge) and visits in the presence of a third party, extend child welfare care for minors over the age of 18 years in accordance with the Emergency Act, shelter unaccompanied minors).

By decision of Nicole Belloubet, Minister of Justice, the courts are closed to the public to prevent the spread of the virus. Business continuity plans, drawn up in each judicial court in accordance with the directives given, make it possible to ensure the handling of urgent litigation, particularly in the area of child protection.

"On-call" duties are maintained in the courts to take appropriate protection measures for children exposed to a situation of danger, including temporary placement orders if the situation so warrants.

- On Maternal Child Protection (PMI), a letter dated 24 March 2020 specifies the essential missions to be maintained in the context of confinement.

- County services dealing with the disabled (MDPH) must carry out their missions in accordance with the terms and conditions defined jointly by the State and the Assembly of French Counties (ADF), with the support of the National Solidarity Fund for Autonomy (CNSA). With regard to MDPHs, physical reception is suspended to avoid any risk of accelerating the circulation of the virus and contamination of persons with disabilities. Physical reception is limited to only those reception by appointment justified by an emergency situation. In order to ensure continuity of responses to the needs of people with disabilities in accordance with their continuity plans triggered in conjunction with county services, and to avoid isolation, the MDPHs are setting up a reinforced telephone reception service, for which each MDPH will provide a dedicated telephone number; they organise remote monitoring of requests using the means best suited to each situation (telephone, e-mail); implement a short processing circuit to support the return home of people with disabilities who have been accommodated in a medical-social institution (requests for disability compensation benefits must be processed without delay); adapt the operating procedures of the Commissions for the Rights and Autonomy of People with Disabilities (CDAPH) to the situation to allow for urgent decisions.

- The payment of users' social assistance such as the personal autonomy allowance (APA), the active solidarity income (RSA), housing assistance, etc. must continue (counties).
- The county fire and rescue services (SDIS) (counties). Special attention, in conjunction with the prefects, must be paid to their proper functioning, which is subject to a business continuity plan.
- The public mobility service, in a spirit of limiting travel to a maximum outside the home to work commute (municipal block, regions). In particular:
 - Public transport in built-up areas must be maintained with an adapted offer in accordance with the decree of 14 March 2020, to enable French people to make the strictly necessary journeys and healthcare personnel to access healthcare centres.
 - Adapted transport for people with reduced mobility must be maintained or introduced to enable the most vulnerable French citizens to make the strictly necessary journeys.
 - Longer-distance interurban travel is being gradually reduced, in accordance with national guidelines (TGV, Intercity and TER traffic).

In addition, the decree of 19 March, supplementing the amended decree of 14 March 2020 on various measures to combat the spread of the covid-19 virus, specifies in its 7th paragraph various measures applying to operators of public road, guided or rail public passenger transport (hereinafter referred to as "the company"):

- The company shall carry out disinfectant cleaning of each public transport vehicle or rolling stock at least once a day. Unless technically impossible, the undertaking shall take all appropriate measures to separate the driver from the passengers by a distance of at least one meter and inform the passengers accordingly.
- In road vehicles with more than one door, the undertaking shall prohibit passengers from using the front door and allow them to board and alight through any other door. However, the use of the front door shall be permitted when arrangements are made to separate the driver from the passengers by a distance of not less than one meter.
- The undertaking shall communicate to passengers, in particular by means of a display on board each vehicle or rolling stock, the measures for hygiene and social distancing, known as "barriers", defined at national level, including in particular the obligation for passengers to keep at least one meter from other passengers.
- The sale on board of tickets by an agent of the undertaking shall be suspended. The undertaking shall inform passengers of the means by which they can obtain a ticket.

Moreover, the national security and approval certificates for vehicles and staff of transport companies have been extended in application of the order of 25/03, which froze all validity periods since the beginning of the state of health emergency. Decrees will be issued on a case-by-case basis according to the maximum tolerances acceptable in view of safety issues and the availability of approval channels: this is already the case for technical inspections of heavy vehicles, which will be extended for a maximum of 18 days, the reopening of inspection centres having been ensured in parallel. A general information letter was sent to all transport stakeholders (employers' and trade union organisations) by the Secretary of State to the Minister of Ecological and Solidarity Transition in charge of Transport Jean-Baptiste Djebbari on 26 March.

- The County Analysis Laboratories, as certified laboratories, must be able to carry out the so-called priority analyses that come under official controls, in accordance with the instruction of the Director General of Food of 23 March.

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

The closure of administrative services or the implementation of a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) implies specific measures with regard to territorial public agents.

The provisions resulting from the briefing notes of the Directorate General of Public Service Administration (DGAFP) are applicable to territorial public agents (civil servants and contract employees).

All the resources concerning the impacts of covid-19 for employers and territorial civil servants (FAQs, fact sheets, guides) can be consulted on the website <https://www.collectivites-locales.gouv.fr/covid19> and on <https://www.fonctionpublique.gouv.fr/coronavirus-covid-19>. In addition, the Ministry of Labour has made available practical guidelines on ensuring the safety and health of workers, which can be downloaded from the internet.

Where telework is compatible with the job, the territorial authority must give priority to this solution and facilitate access to it.

The Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications, Posts and Press Distribution (ARCEP) has thus formulated six responses to specific problems in order to improve the Internet connection of teleworking employees.

Special leave of absence authorisations (ASA) have also been provided for. In view of the exceptional nature of the health situation and its impact on the individual situation of public employees, territorial employers are invited to maintain the indemnity scheme for employees placed on ASAs, including in the event that a decision is taken to abolish bonuses in the absence of actual service.

Any staff member presenting a medical certificate may be absent in accordance with the conditions laid down by ordinary law. Territorial staff members are placed on ordinary sick leave in accordance with the conditions laid down by ordinary law. Depending on the staff member's situation with regard to his/her entitlement to ordinary sick leave, s/he shall receive a full or half salary. Act No. 2020-290 of 23 March 2020 on emergency measures to deal with the covid-19 epidemic abolishes, with effect from the date of its promulgation (24 March 2020), the waiting period for all sickness-related work stoppages in all schemes (general scheme, agricultural scheme and special schemes including civil service) for the duration of the state of health emergency (article 8 of the Act).

Sick persons will therefore receive, exceptionally, a daily allowance or continued salary from the first day of work suspension. This is a derogation from the usual situation, which provides for a waiting period of three days for daily allowances and one day for the maintenance of salary in the civil service.

GERMANY

Note from the respondent:

The answers are primarily written from the perspective of Rhineland-Palatinate and thus exemplarily reflect the situation in a German state (Bundesland/Land). They are therefore subject to other regulations and conditions in other German states (Länder) and do not claim to be complete.

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?

The Federal Republic of Germany is a federal state with 16 states (Länder) as constituent parts. The exercise of state power is divided between the Federal Government and the Länder by the Grundgesetz (GG, Basic Law/German Constitution). Both the Länder as constituent states and the Federation as a whole have their own state authority. The Länder are states with their own state constitutions, parliaments, administrative structures and responsibilities. The Grundgesetz assumes in principle a competence of the Länder (Article 30, 70, 83 GG). In the areas of legislation, administration and jurisdiction, the Federation has competences only if they are expressly assigned to it in the Basic Law.

The municipalities are part of the Länder in terms of state organisation and are therefore not a "third level" in the federal state structure. With the constitutionally guaranteed right of self-administration, the municipalities nevertheless have a certain degree of autonomy, for they have the constitutionally guaranteed right to regulate all matters of the local community within the framework of the law on their own responsibility (Article 28 Abs.2 GG). In addition, the municipalities are entrusted with numerous legally assigned state tasks, which they perform as local administrative bodies of the Länder.

With regard to the Covid 19 pandemic, in the Federal Republic of Germany the provisions of the Infection Protection Act (Infektionsschutzgesetz, IfSG) form the legal basis for measures to be taken by the competent infection control authority. In the case of combating communicable diseases, § 28 Abs. 1 IfSG constitutes the relevant basis of authorisation. The authorization of intervention of § 28 Abs. 1 S. 1 IfSG is very broadly defined and allows the competent authority to order all necessary protective measures.

As a rule, an authority at the local level, i.e. the local public health department, is responsible for the enforcement of the Infektionsschutzgesetz. However, the respective Länder government can ensure a uniform approach to the coronavirus throughout the state by issuing instructions or by making use of the power to issue ordinances under § 32 IfSG. So far, Rhineland-Palatinate has made use of this right by means of 5 "Corona-Bekämpfungsverordnungen" and issued extensive protective measures. Other Länder have done the same.

In contrast, the federal government has no enforcement powers in the area of infection control law.

The distribution of competences shown above has not been changed as a result of the corona pandemic.

1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?

In the Federal Republic of Germany, conferences between the Federal Government and the Länder are held regularly to coordinate protective measures, at which the Chancellor discusses the challenges of the corona pandemic with the heads of government of the Länder. At these conferences, decisions on corona measures are taken between the Federal Government and the Länder. These decisions provide a framework and thus ensure a uniform nationwide response to the corona pandemic. The Länder are responsible for implementation and adjustments, taking into account regional differences, particularly in the incidence of infection.

1.3 What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?

In addition to the Federal Government-Länder level, the Länder and the local administrative authorities are also in close contact within the Länder. Numerous telephone and video conferences are used to meet the need for an exchange of information and experience. In addition to heads and employees of the authorities, representatives of municipal umbrella organisations and other stakeholders are also involved. In Rhineland-Palatinate, the Minister President has gathered more than 70 representatives of associations, organisations and institutions of the state in the "Corona-Bündnis Rheinland-Pfalz" (Corona Alliance Rhineland-Palatinate), which are relevant to the management of the pandemic and its consequences and which represent the social life. Together with the Corona Alliance, the Länder government is drafting an interdisciplinary future strategy for the successful development of the Land with regard to the Corona pandemic. At the first meeting of the Corona Alliance of Rhineland-Palatinate, an interdisciplinary exchange was established in order to look at the medium and long-term effects of the corona pandemic from the perspective of the associations and institutions and to actively shape responses to it together with them.

1.4. Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?

In Rhineland-Palatinate, emergency aid in the form of a fixed amount was made available to the municipalities in the supplementary budget to help them cope with the corona pandemic. The municipalities are free to decide on the concrete use of the funds totalling around 100 million euros (Rhineland-Palatinate). In other Länder the municipalities were provided with similar financial resources.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1. Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)

In order to support the health authorities, which have been heavily burdened as a result of the corona pandemic, staff from other administrative areas are being deployed in the

health authorities at municipal level. In addition, employees of the Länder have agreed to provide support. In addition, there are many volunteer helpers and specialists from the Medical Service of the Health Insurance Fund.

2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?

In essence, the protection measures do not differentiate between urban and rural areas. Nationwide, additional protective measures were implemented in individual hotspots at the municipal level in order to effectively counteract a selective occurrence of infection.

2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

Cooperation between institutions in the health sector - even beyond the borders of the Länder - is part of everyday life outside pandemic times and has so far worked well during the pandemic.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?

With regard to Rhineland-Palatinate (state border with France), it has been possible to remain in close contact with the French partners from the very beginning, even during the crisis. It is the declared aim to master the challenges together and in solidarity.

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?

Several hundred Covid-19 patients from other European countries were treated in German hospitals - mainly from France, Italy and the Netherlands. The treatment costs will be covered by Germany and are to be paid from federal funds.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

Citizens continue to enjoy the full range of participation rights enshrined in law. The homepages of the various levels of government provide comprehensive information on pandemic-specific administrative action and various offers of assistance. Topic-specific possibilities for direct contact with citizens in digital form have been set up. Furthermore, citizens have unlimited access to the legal possibilities to have their administrative actions reviewed by the courts. In a large number of cases, the various jurisdictions have already dealt with the pandemic-specific measures taken by governments at federal and state level in urgent decisions.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- 5.1. *How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)*

The protective measures taken by the state governments had and still have in mind the need to provide the population with basic services. It has been ensured that services of general interest continue to be fully guaranteed. For example, in the Corona-Bekämpfungsverordnungen, exceptions were made in all areas necessary for the supply of the population. Indirect consequences of the protective measures, especially as a result of the closure of schools and day-care centres, were offset for the systemically important occupational groups by emergency care services. Disturbances in the usual procedures of essential services for the public could thus be avoided across the board.

- 5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

In many areas, access to public administration has been switched to telephone and/or digital communication or existing digital possibilities have been expanded. Within the administration, public authority employees have largely been given the option of working from home on the move. Telephone and video conferences were established as possibilities for meetings within the administration.

In schools and universities, digital replacements for teaching and learning were taken and implemented.

GREECE

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?

As the management of the response to the pandemic related to all the activities developed across the country, the National Crisis Management Mechanism of the General Secretariat for Civil Protection (GSPP) was soon activated, which, by a decision of the Prime Minister, coordinated the general actions and agencies in order to fight COVID-19

The Deputy Minister for Civil Protection and Crisis Management participates on a daily basis to videoconference with the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Health and, when appropriate, with other relevant Ministries, for the management of the current state of emergency and for taking any measures deemed necessary.

The General Secretariat for Civil Protection cooperates on a daily basis with the National Organization for Public Health and the Representative of the Ministry of Health for COVID-19, for the provision of scientific advice and data, which are used during the decision-making process to manage the emergency and take any measures.

The Deputy Minister for Civil Protection and Crisis Management and the Representative of the Ministry of Health for COVID-19, hold daily press conferences to accredited journalists on the updates regarding the pandemic situation.

The General Secretariat for Civil Protection organizes and takes part in teleconferences, as well as exchanges information and data with all parties involved, at any level.

1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?

The legal basis for the imposition of all the necessary restrictive measures required for the control of the pandemic is provided by, the various Acts of Legislative Content issued, while the regulatory framework for the regulation of the issues set out in the Acts of Legislative Content is provided by Joint Ministerial Decisions and Ministerial Decisions.

In particular Acts of Legislative Content establish all kinds of measures to prevent and reduce the spread of the disease, including administrative, financial, labor, insurance and labor market measures. With the issuance of Joint Ministerial Decisions and Ministerial Decisions, more specific measures are defined, both preventive and repressive, of local or national character.

By the issuing of Circulars, specialized recommendations and instructions are provided for specific populations and organizations aiming at preventing and dealing with emergencies arising from the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Moreover, it is worth noting that, in the sector of health, by decision of the Minister of Health, the National Committee for the Protection of Public Health against Covid-19 was established, with the task to provide proposals to the political leadership of the Ministry of Health and any co-responsible Ministry or Government Body in order to assist them in taking every appropriate precautionary measure against the spread of COVID-19, in protecting the population.

Also, by decision of the Minister of Health, the Committee for the Treatment of Public Health Emergencies by Infectious Diseases Factors, was established, which is convened in a meeting at the invitation of the leadership of the Ministry of Health, having the task to offer its opinion regarding the country's preparation on public health emergencies such as COVID-19.

As regards the local administration, we should note that the Ministry of Interior, at the central level, has undertaken to coordinate the measures taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic, which are to be implemented by the local government entities of the country, in cooperation with the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece, the Union of Regions and other jointly responsible Ministries.

A typical example of the above-mentioned is the existence of a fully functional electronic document handling and distribution system (IRIDA) between the Ministry of Interior and Local Governments as well as Decentralized Administrations has greatly simplified the coordination between administrative levels, firstly because it significantly decreased the time needed for decision making and issuing of administrative documents on the measures against Covid19, and secondly because it has indirectly contributed to tackling the outbreak by reducing the need for transportations, mailing and courier services etc.

With the official launch of the teleworking model by the Ministry of Interior there was an immediate response from Local Government Authorities regarding the remote exchange of information, and data collection. A typical example of this is the Ministry's Interoperability Node, which continued its full time functionality with remote support from the staff of the Ministry and the cooperation of local governments, thus exemplifying the new working model.

1.3 What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?

In the sector of health, the administrative structure of The Ministry of Health is structured around seven Health Regions, comprising 125 Hospitals (NPDD), while 201 Health Centers and about 200 former Social Insurance Institute (IKA) polyclinics form the Primary National Health Network. In addition, there are 1,487 regional clinics in rural areas and 127 Local Health Units (TOMY) in urban areas, which have been established in the last two years.

The Ministry of Health is at the top of the NHS's administrative pyramid in order to achieve the purpose of the system, i.e equal and universal access to quality health services. The Ministry decides on the allocation of resources and determines the amount of funding under a broader planning for health policy implementation. It is responsible for evaluating the national strategy as well as for health professionals. Upon approval by the Cabinet, the recruitment of health personnel is determined. The Minister proposes amendments to the institutional framework and is responsible for enforcing laws and reforms, while the Health Regions/ Regional Health Authorities mainly play a supervisory and coordinating role.

The National Public Health Organization (EODY) develops and promotes actions aimed at promoting health, preventing chronic diseases and reducing, in general, the burden of non-communicable diseases. The main functions of the NPHO (EODY) include activities such as epidemiological surveillance, risk assessment, scientific consultation, preparedness and response, provision of reliable and comparable epidemiological data and statistics to national, European and international authorities; education and training in the field of public health, informing the public and health professionals about the risks of serious health threats and promoting public awareness-raising actions. NPHO is the operational center for the planning and implementation of public health protection actions, maintaining readiness

to respond to emergency health risks and adjusting its operations to the needs of the country and the international organizations with which NPHO collaborates.

Finally, the National Emergency Aid Center (EKAB) is responsible for the coordination of the hospital and pre-hospital care, developed in both the public and the private sectors, in cases of emergencies and crises, for the provision of emergency care and emergency medical care to citizens and for the transfer of such citizens to health care units, as well as for the coordination of the on-call systems of the hospitals of the National Health Service.

In order to deal with the pandemic of SARS Covid-19, the Ministry of Health, through the Directorate of Operational Readiness for Public Health Emergencies, updated the National Action Plan for the Treatment of Influenza Pandemic, with the code name "ARTEMIS", taking all necessary measures to ensure its effective management.

1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

In order to address the effects of the pandemic on the need for increased preparedness of the health system, the Ministry of Health has received special financial support, in order to strengthen its regional and local structures.

In relation to question 1.4 on the relevant measures on financial situation taken at the regional and local level, regarding the local government organizations, please find below **a number of legislative provisions** which are included in the relevant Acts of Legislative content. In particular:

1. Act of Legislative content of 11.03.2020 (A'55) "Urgency measures in response to the negative impact of coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak and the need for preventing further spread" Approved by article 2 of L. 4682/2020 – (A' 46/3-4-2020).

For the procurement of supplies and services, aimed at addressing the urgent need for measures to be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Municipalities and Regions may award public contracts by negotiated procedure without prior publication. The award of public contracts takes place by decision of the local Economic Committee. In case of inexistence or insufficiency of appropriations entered into the budget, by the same decision a binding proposal on reforming the budget is made, which, mandatorily, has to be approved by the local or regional council, in their first meetings, following the award. Provisions of this paragraph apply to local authorities' legal entities, accordingly.¹

Local government expenditures arising from cancellation of congresses because of the extraordinary measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID- 19, are deemed legal and regular and they are chargeable to the local budgets.²

2. Act of Legislative content of 14.03.2020 (A'64) "Urgency measures in response to the need for preventing the spread of coronavirus COVID-19 Approved by article 3 of L. 4682/2020 – (A' 46/3-4-2020)

¹ Par. 3b of article 10

² Par. 5 of article 10

Local government (first and second degrees) expenditures arising from cancellation of any kind of events because of the extraordinary measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID- 19, are deemed legal and regular and they are chargeable to the local budgets.³

3. Act of Legislative content of 20.03.2020 (A' 68) "Urgency measures in response to the implications from the risk of spread of coronavirus COVID-19, providing support to the society and entrepreneurship and ensuring the smooth operation of the market and public administration " Approved by article 1 of L.4683/2020 – (A' 83/10-4-2020)

Especially for 2020, the deadline, for which the budget of the previous year is valid, is extended for 2 months, until 31.5.2020.⁴

Budgets of local authorities of first and second degree, which are voted by the local councils, meet the agreement of the Observatory for Local Authorities' Financial Autonomy, for which, however, until the entry into force of this Act a special approval had not been issued by the decentralized administration , are immediately executed. These provisions apply accordingly for the budgets of local authorities' legal entities as well as for the budgets of solid waste management Entities.⁵

Within the context of the Programme of Granting Investment Loans, implemented by the Ministry of Interior which aims at the provision of goods and the construction of works in the fields of water supply, sewerage, anti-flood protection, remediation of damages caused by natural disasters, rehabilitation of unmonitored waste disposal sites, rural roads network and construction or renovation of municipal buildings , as well as the provision of goods and services of social protection, the protection of public health and, in general, social cohesion actions, local authorities of A and B degree and their legal entities may conclude investment loans with the Consignment Deposits and Loans Fund (CDLF).⁶

4. Act of Legislative content of 30.03.2020(A' 75) Measures in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and other urgent provisions, Approved by L. 4684/2020 (A' 86)

In case of proven failure of satisfying their operational needs between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2020 the Municipal Enterprises of Water Supply and Sewerage (DEYA) may ask for financial support from local authorities of first degree/ shareholders, assigning at the same time part of their future revenues, which corresponds to the amount received. The financial support provided to Enterprises of Water Supply and Sewerage, based on the present Act, is not deemed to be a grant. Municipalities may, upon a motivated request, receive extraordinary grants from the Central Independent Resources as part of the future grants they are entitled to, if they fail to respond to the financial support request. This grant is retained in eighteen (18) equal installments from the future grants to be given by the Central Independent Resources. The collective organs decisions, needed for the implementation of present provisions, are enforceable after their adoption in derogation of article 225 of law 3852/2010.⁷

In case of proven failure of satisfying the operational needs of contributory services, between March 1, 2020 and June 30, 2020, municipalities by decision of the economic committee have to reform their budgets through transfers of unearmarked funds so as to ensure the proper operation of their services. Municipalities may, upon a motivated

3 Par. 6 of article 24

4 Par. 2a of article 37

5 Par. 2b of article 37

6 Par. 11b of article 37

7 Par. 5a of article 43

request, receive extraordinary grants from the Central Independent Resources as part of the future grants they are entitled to, for the part of the unavailable appropriations. This grant is retained/ deducted in eighteen (18) equal installments from the futures grants to be given by the Central Independent Resources, starting from September 2020. In accordance with a joint Decision issued by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Interior, upon the request of a municipal authority, the number of installments may be increased up to seventy-two (72) to enable the smooth budget execution. The collective organs decisions, needed for applying the present provisions, are enforceable after their adoption, in derogation of article 225 of law 3852/2010.⁸

Loans are concluded between the Local authorities, the Associations of municipalities and local authorities' legal entities and the Fund, or loans are concluded between the Ministry of Interior and the Fund, which are, then, given to Local authorities in the form of direct financing.⁹

5. Act of Legislative Content of 14.04.2020 (A' 84) Measures in response to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic of corona virus COVID-19 and other urgency provisions. Ratified by article 1 of L. 4690/2020 (A' 104/30.5.2020)

The pay roll expenses (relating to the staff employed under fixed term contracts under private law and under work agreements, who are employed in local authorities of first and second degree and the legal entities of them, during the suspension of their operation, in the context of taking measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), and pay roll expenses relating to the staff employed in other services within the same legal entity or other service of the local authority or in a service within the legal entity of the local authority, in case of failure/incapacity of the authority to collect the consideration or other in return payments to be made by the entities, are covered by other unearmarked revenues or unearmarked balance of the local authority. The pay roll expenses for each month of employment are calculated on the average amount of the last three months pay, before the suspension. This Act may not entail any direct or indirect expenditure under the national budget.¹⁰

Especially for the 2020 budget execution, a maximum 50 % of the Central Independent Resources may be allocated, in order to meet the operational needs identified since the entry into force of this Act, which cannot be met through the regular or extraordinary revenues. A relevant budget reformation is required for the transfer of such allocations. This Act may not entail any direct or indirect expenditure under the national budget.¹¹

For loans granted exclusively from the resources of the CDLF to Local Authorities of the first and second degree, detaining of the next three (3) elevenths for interest bearing installments is suspended, starting from the installment to be paid in March 2020. The payment of the three installments which is suspended in accordance with the previous par. will incur, without any interest charges, within 2021, in eleven (11) equal monthly installments, starting from January 1, 2021.¹²

For the duration of the extraordinary measures applied for addressing the implications from the spread of COVID-19, all kinds of salaries and additional emoluments of the staff members employed with fixed term contracts under private law or work agreements, in the General Government entities are paid as normal, in accordance with the applicable provisions.¹³

8 Par. 5b of article 43, as amended by par. 1 of article 30 of Act of Legislative Content 14.04.2020

9 Article 44

10 Article 31

11 Article 33

12 Article 34

13 Par. 1 of article 37

For the staff employed under fixed term contracts under private law or work agreements which are implemented by the method of direct labor operations and funded by the national and community resources, the pay roll expenses incurred continue to fall under the credits of the relevant works.¹⁴

6. Act of Legislative Content of 01.05.2020 (A ' 90) Further measures to address the COVID-19 pandemic's ongoing impact and return to a normal functioning of the society and economy. Ratified by article 2 of L4690/2020 (A ' 104/30.05.2020)

By way of derogation from the provisions, in cases of proven failure to satisfy emergency needs which relate to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, until June 30, 2020 Municipalities can make use of revenues from fees and charges in return for the services they provide, so as to meet other needs, by reforming their budgets, on a binding proposal made by the Economic Committee.¹⁵

In addition, further special extraordinary legislative initiatives are taken, according to which:

- From March 1, 2020 to May 31, 2020, any rental commitments to municipalities for canteens rent within cemeteries are suspended.
- As of March 1, 2020 and for the duration they are locked down, for canteens within school units, no rentals are paid .
- Where a local authority is the lessor, the lessee of a property rent for running a business, in relation to which special measures of suspension or temporary lock down, apply ,due to the coronavirus, , for preventive or suppressive reasons, is exempted from the obligation to pay 40% of the total amount of rent for March and April.
- For businesses financially affected by the outbreak or spread of the coronavirus, the deadline for the payment of established receivable debts may be extended, also the payment of established receivable debts may be suspended, as well as the deadlines for paying settled installments / for facilitation of partial payment of debts established as being receivable may be extended . During the period of extension applying for the payment of established receivable debts or for installments , or facilitations of partial payment of debts established as being receivable, not any interest or increases are added to the sums due . Also, the payment and recovery of any debts established as being receivable and any outstanding amounts on 11.3.2020 for such businesses is suspended until 31.8.2020
- Any deadlines in relation to any kind of administrative remedies to be made before the administration authority as of 11.3.2020 for two (2) months are suspended . A deadline is set out for submitting requests to the Head of the financial services for exercising the right of partial payment of the fee calculated on the basis og gross income.
- For payments made in due time by businesses and individuals affected and provided for in the Act,a deduction of 25% of the installments of the established receivable debts which are registered by the Fiscal Administration, for a payment period March 30 to April 30, 2020 , is provided . The same discount rate applies for settled installments/ facilitation of partial payment of debts
- In case of proven failure of services of contributory nature to satisfy their operation needs , it is provided for actions to be taken by municipalities during the period between March 1 and April 30, 2020.
- By a municipal council decision, businesses that close down or reduce their operations , due to the measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 , which do

14 Par. 2 of article 37

not make use of public spaces may be exempted from the attributable fees for the period of time that the restrictions apply. The above decisions may also settle issues of offsetting in respect of requirements for fees to be paid if they have already been paid within the exemption period

- Municipal councils are given the possibility to exempt the businesses that close down due to the measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, from the payment of cleaning and electricity fees, for the period of time that the restrictions apply. This decision may settle issues of offsetting in respect of requirements for fees to be paid if they have already been paid within the exemption period
- Parents are exempted from daycare fees to be paid to municipal nurseries and childcare centers while the operation of such facilities is suspended. Also, a general exemption from payments is provided for municipal citizens making use of services in return and under consideration, for the time their operations are suspended
- All fees paid in return for services of berthing, mooring, staying in port for ships and floating crafts, as well as professional fishing vessels, with the exception of cruise ships, are reduced 20% for March, April and May 2020. The provision concerns the municipal port Funds, as well as the provision of article 68 concerning businesses entitled to make use of spaces in port areas, which is as follows: "Concessionaires of the rights of use of spaces in a port area for the establishment or operation of a business that falls under the special and extraordinary measures of suspension or temporary lock down, that are taken for reasons of prevention or suppression related to Covid -19, are exempted from the obligation of a consideration for the months of March, April and May 2020".

Moreover, the new Ministry of Interior Programme under the title "Antonis Tritsis", was legislated by the Joint Ministerial Decision no 22766/9.04.20 (B' 1386), includes Axis 1 "CIVIL PROTECTION-PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH -TECHNCIAL ASSISTANCE" which comprises, among others, the Category/ Priority "Actions to protect the population against the spread of the COVID -19 pandemic" (budget availability 100 million €).

Furthermore, other axis and sub- categories of the programme include actions which relate to addressing pandemics and other emergency situations. Part of their budget could be allocated to meet the needs resulted from the measures taken to address the coronavirus.

The new programme provides for smart actions and measures (smart cities) in all areas of everyday life of the citizens, in the sectors of administration (local authorities), health, education etc. A great number of such measures concern the provision of distance services to citizens, assistance and help to vulnerable social groups, monitoring and checking of the climate and environmental conditions in enclosed locations and overcrowded places

Also, within the limit of the appropriations entered in the budget this year in favor of Local Authorities (Central Independent Resources), Local Authorities of the first and second degree were allocated amounts so that they may address the Covid- 19 pandemic, as follows:

- A total amount of 91.520.000,00 € for supplies(aimed at providing adequate means of protection to the staff) and other services related to the urgent need for measures to be taken to prevent the entry and spread of COVID-19
- A total amount of 2.530.000,00 € for supplies and services related to the urgent need for measures to be taken to prevent the entry and spread of COVID-19 in Roma settlements
- A total amount of 1.480.000,00 € for meeting the needs related to the protection of small stray animals in the context of addressing the negative impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

- A total amount of 8.500.000,00 € for procurement of supplies , goods and other services in order to address the negative impact of the COVID-19 outbreak ; especially, in order to meet the needs related to measures to be taken to prevent the spread COVID-19 and in order to strengthen the social structures which implement food programmes, and
- A total amount of 400.000,00 € for expenditures incurred in relation to the programme of transportation-hosting- isolation of Greek citizens entering the country at the border post Khpoi -Evros, in the context of measures taken to prevent the entry and spread of Covid 19.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

- There has been a very good interaction among all the level of Government. The state has ratified the transfer of particular funds, to the regions and to the municipalities, after decisions that have changed the legal provisions and have simplified the procedure.
- Municipal authorities of the country organized the cleaning services at least in two shifts so as to ensure their proper operation under any circumstances.
- Social services within municipalities have taken action so as to provide social care services at home to vulnerable groups of population affected by the crisis who can not or are not allowed to move and leave their homes in order to meet their needs , through the "Help at Home" structures.
- Decisions issued by mayors provide for additional staff to be made available to the above services also defining the tasks and working hours of this staff
- To support the needs in blood, the municipalities have been hosting the volunteers in their establishments since the hospital areas should be avoided.
- The local government authorities (Municipalities and Regions) cooperated with the General Secretariat for Civil Protection, when quarantine restrictions were imposed in communities within their area of competence. In the special cases where quarantine restrictions (quarantine at home) were imposed in some communities for prevention of spreading of coronavirus, the General Secretariat for Civil Protection cooperated with Regions and Municipalities to ensure that specific basic needs are catered for (supply of food and basic commodities, as well as reinforcement of local health units with military medical personnel). A characteristic example is of Xanthi (Ehinos).

Based on the relevant Legislative Content Acts, the Directorate of Organization and Operation of Local Authorities of the Ministry of Interior issued the three following circular instructions, to facilitate the smooth function of the local government organizations:

1. The circular ref. no 18318/13.03.2020 (online publication number) : 9ΛΠΧ46ΜΤΛ6-1ΑΕ)"Meeting of collective organs of municipalities, regions and of the legal entities supervised by them , during the measures that have been taken to prevent the entry and spread of COVID-19"(article 10, of the Act of Legislative content of 11.03.2020 (OG 55A/11.03.2020),
2. The circular ref. no 18639/16.03.2020 (online publication number: Ω7ΡΧ46ΜΤΛ-Σ1Τ)"Information on the arrangements of the Legislative Instruments dated 11 March 2020 (Α' 55) and 14 March 2020 (Α' 64), on the organization and operation of municipalities and regions".

3. The circular no 40 (ref. no 20930/31-03-2020) (online publication number:6ΩΠΥ46ΜΤΛ6-50Ψ) "Information on the implementation of the regulatory framework for addressing COVID – 19, in relation to the organization and operation of municipalities" (concerning the implementation of the Legislative Instrument dated 20 March 2020 (A'68).

The above stated circulars inform the citizens and the Municipal authorities of the country on the following:

- the way collective organs have to meet in order to make their decisions.
In particular, with a view to facilitating the work of collective organs of local authorities, the circular provides that all municipal collective organs of administration (municipal council, executive committee, economic committee, quality of life committee, community councils in communities with a population of over 300 inhabitants, consultation committee, etc) can meet either through transmission of documents, or through teleconference (using any appropriate telecommunication means , such as social network applications with video calls, etc)
For meetings through transmission of documents the members of collective organs can vote in the way to be indicated by the president (email, fax, cell phone message).
For the case of meetings in person, the meetings of collective organs are held behind closed doors, applying the provisions of the legislative framework which provides for the measures to address the negative impact of COVID -19 and the need to control the spread of COVID- 19.
- the way municipal organs who exercise public powers have to move for carrying out their duties
Mayors and deputy- mayors of all municipalities were exempted from the temporary restriction of circulation imposed to all citizens throughout the national territory, for the specific period of time, as provided.
In addition, the temporary restriction of circulation does not apply to the movement of elected organs of municipalities and communities when, in the context of their duties, they commute to and from work (president of the municipal council, executive counselors, presidents of communities, etc) if their duties cannot be carried out otherwise. In this case, the movement is allowed following an attestation which is delivered by the Mayor.
- the extension of the mandatory legality control over the acts of local authorities from the body exercising the duties of monitoring
The exercise of the mandatory legality control over the acts of local authorities falling under par 1 article 225 of L.3852/2010 is not terminated within the limit of thirty (30) days, but within sixty (60) days from the receipt of such actions by the local decentralized administration authority.
- the suspension of deadlines for exercising the right of administrative appeals against decisions of the elected organs of local authorities.
As of 11 March 2020, the fifteen-day deadline for exercising the right of administrative appeals provided for in article 227 of L. 3852/2010, against local government actions is suspended for a period of two (2) months.

2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?

In order to be able to provide services to citizens affected by the crisis, municipalities were instructed to organize appropriate spaces, provide phone connections and access to internet, have available vehicles and any other supply or means needed for the operation of social services.

Small insular or mountainous municipalities, without such services, were instructed to set up and operate by decision of the local Mayor, temporary support services of social welfare and solidarity

In particular, these services have to fulfill the following tasks:

- a) to record the number of municipal population who cannot or must not leave their houses and are unable, as they say, to take care of themselves,
- b) to record the number of poor and economically disadvantaged municipal population who cannot or must not leave their houses and are unable, as they say, to take care of themselves,
- c) to provide services in relation to issues of medication and basic necessities to the population under a
- d) to care for the free transportation of medicines and basic necessities to the population under b
- e) to provide assistance to health services operating within the boundaries of the municipality, based on instructions given by them
- f) to operate a telephone switchboard service and a website in order to record the requests and the needs of population under a and b
- g) to process request of population under a and b (reception of requests- delivery of certificates) as far as all certificates provided by the Citizens Service Centers are concerned
- h) to fulfill any other task in relation to measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19'.

2.3. *Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?*

- As it was the case many times in the past, some municipalities have provided rubbish trucks to other municipalities.
- The solidarity Hub of KEDE (<https://www.kedke.gr/el/%CE%B7-%CE%BA%CE%B5%CE%B4%CE%B5/%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%B7%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%B3%CE%B3%CF%8D%CE%B7-%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BE%CF%8D-%CF%84%CF%89%CE%BD-%CE%B4%CE%AE%CE%BC%CF%89%CE%BD>) has been the base of a good inter-municipal cooperation in many other field.
- Also, the Region of Attiki and the Municipalities in its area of competence have proceeded to a common action of providing meals /food to citizens, which is funded by the Ministry of Interior.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 *What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?*

Despite a decline in cross-border movements of people, cross-border cooperation did not cease. Pursuant to Joint Ministerial Decisions, connections with some neighboring countries are provisionally restricted; restrictions have been put in place for citizens who enter

Greece coming from third countries (non-EU). However, Greece cooperates constantly with neighboring countries regarding entry, transit or repatriation of their citizens.

At the local level, there have been delays in every European project, due to the elimination of the staff and several amendments have been accepted, as far as the delay of the deliverables, and the deposit of money coming from the European funds are concerned.

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place ?

At the central level, an example of good cross-border cooperation in responding to the emergency is the unhindered receipt of in-kind assistance provided by other European countries during the recent activations of the European Civil Protection Mechanism (March and April 2020), due to the increased migration flows.

Moreover, there has been an ongoing and increased co-operation between the Ministry of Health and its supervised bodies, and International Organizations, the European Commission and counterpart Ministers of other States during the development of the pandemic, including exchange of information on a number of issues, monitoring the epidemic and scientific developments.

At the local level, it is worth mentioning that Many researches and surveys are being elaborated, coming from the international and European Organisations, describing good practices in this state of emergency. Relevant Hubs, at the international level, that are being informed in real time.

It should be noted, as an example, that **in the context of twinnings of municipalities**, the Municipality of Piraeus has received support which was provided by the Municipality of Shanghai through the dispatch of 20.000 masks.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

- Volunteerism. About 3.000 volunteers were gathered and supplied to the municipalities according to their recorded needs.
- Interaction in [Hubs](#) and <https://aitimata.kedke.gr> that have been designed especially to write down citizens needs

We should also stress that, during the first phase of restrictive measures in the country, the vast majority of citizens followed the measures, contributing greatly to the overall positive outcome.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

Public Services have never stopped working and we manage to maintain all functions active. The work is being carried out by the staff on the spot and the staff working from

home. The Public Services have adjusted in the best way in the state of emergency, under the light of the new priorities.

Particularly at the local level, and given that Local Authorities offer services in key sectors, which are of great importance for serving the main needs of the population, a Ministry of Interior (Directorate of Local Government Staff) circular no 18926/18-3-2020 (ΑΔΑ online publication number : 6BTN46MTΛ6-0Ξ7), with a view to protecting the health of the staff and the general public, lays down guidelines on the planning and operation, among others, of the cleaning, civil protection and social services so as they may remain in full operation, based on the available staff , establishing work rotation, shift -work and remote work through the use of electronic means. Furthermore, the exemption from a five -day work scheme is provided , per service, grade and number of staff, period of time or region, by decision of the mayor for the municipal staff or by decision of the president for the staff employed in the legal entities of municipalities. (Circular Ref No . 22494/8-4-2020, ΑΔΑ online publication number: 6XXX46NTΛ6-ΦΞΤ, issued by Ministry of Interior (Directorate of Local Government Staff).

Social services within municipalities have taken action so as to provide social care services at home to vulnerable groups of population affected by the crisis who can not or are not allowed to move and leave their homes in order to meet their needs, through the "Help at Home" structures. Such services were expanded to vulnerable groups of population who were not included among the beneficiaries of the Programme. Relevant circulars no 18659/17-3-2020 (ΑΔΑ online publication number: ΨB4E46MTΛ6-PYH) and 18919/18-3-2020 (ΑΔΑ online publication number: ΩX8Γ46MTΛ6-502 were issued by Ministry of Interior (Directorate of Local Government Staff).

In order to ensure the adequate staffing for the above services , par 2, article 10 of the Act of Legislative content of 11-3-2020 (Α' 55) provides for the employment in such services of staff employed in other organizational units or other legal entities within the same municipality, the operations of which were suspended (Centres for Senior citizens, daycare centres/ child centres)

These services may also employ staff of any specialty who may be recruited in accordance with par 2 of article 24 of the Act of Legislative content of 14-3-2020(Α' 64).

We would like to note that, in relation to the public transportation, as long as the danger of COVID- 19 spread persists, and for a duration which cannot exceed four (4) months , as of May 1, 2020, Local Authorities of the first degree as well as their associations may conclude contracts for the procurement of vehicles, the procurement of spare parts and maintenance services , especially for urban transportation activities ,carried out by the local municipality or the association , pursuant to provisions of par 1 article 29 of the Act of Legislative Content of 01.05.2020 (Α' 90).

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

A. PUBLIC SECTOR OPERATION

Following to 11th/3/2020 Legislative Act the Ministry of Interior issued a number of circulars making more specific the measures introduced dealing with **the way of operation of public sector** and the Civil Servants. The first Circular (DIDAD / F.69 / 108/ oik.7874) was issued on 12/3/2020, just one day after the Legislative Act and defined the overall framework within which all ministries were expected to continue their operations while safeguarding the health of public servants and of the staff employed in local authorities of the first and second degree, consequently their families and relatives as well as of the citizens who are served by central public services and local government services,

maintaining , these services in operation. This particular circular provided guidelines on the way Ministries and other public agencies will operate during the period the measures to combat COVID-19 dissemination will be in effect, while instructions were given to public services and the local government services (first and second degree) on the hygiene and safety measures to be applied in work places, in accordance with the instructions of the National Public Health Organisation (E.OD.Y.)

Following this initial circular, 4 additional circulars (DIDAD / F.69 / 109 / oik.8000, DIDAD / F.69 / 110 / oik. 8189 , DIDAD / F.69 / 111 / oik.8196, DIDAD / F 69/112/oik.8632) have been issued the following days providing further guidelines to central, regional and local government authorities on the implementation of measures to combat COVID-19 dissemination while continuing their day-to-day operation.

Briefly, the new circulars particularized the new measures adopted, such as **turn-based work in office, working from home**/distance working, **teleworking** and citizens' access to public services. The DIDK/F.38/oik.8192/20-3-2020 Ministerial Decision gave the guidelines on **teleworking** and **turn-based work in office**, for the employees of the Ministry of Interior.

With a view to further implementing provisions and instructions for the protection of health, and insuring the unhindered operation of public services, the use of means, such as teleconference, was recommended (e.g in the operation of collective organs) while a relevant Ministerial Decision was issued in relation to the use of the application developed by the Ministry of Digital Governance (e-presence). The Decision provides also for restrictions in, or suspensions of the official travels/movements away from the usual place of work, having in mind the instructions of the National Public Health Organisation (E.OD.Y.)

According to the regulation adopted, in the case of an imperative need for suspending or restricting the operation of a public service, at the discretion of the competent Minister or the competent administration service of the entity, the number of the staff who have to be present and provide work on the basis of a rotation system is determined. Also, a minimum number of staff, in order to ensure the operation of the service may be exceptionally, determined. In this case, all necessary measures are taken to enable, based on the nature of the issues dealt with in each service, the distance- working through the use of electronic means. Based on these provisions, the Minister or the competent administration service of the entity, has been called to prepare an emergency plan of action, having, especially, in mind the following:

- the mission, responsibilities and subjects of each organizational unit within the entity
- the legislative developments- developments on health issues etc- in the context of this emergency situation
- the need for preventing the spread of COVID- 19
- the protection and safety of the staff
- the protection and safety of vulnerable groups
- the defence of the public interest
- the number of the staff members who provide their services mostly those who can work either in person or through tele -working. It goes without saying that staff belonging to vulnerable groups, staff with special purpose leaves, as well as staff with long term leaves (sick leaves, unpaid leaves maternity leaves, pregnancy leaves because of threatened pregnancy etc) are not included in the staff members who provide their services.

Based on the above criteria, the Minister or the competent administration service of the entity has determined a) the services, within the entity, the operations of which may be fully or partially suspended, b) the services, within the entity, that have to be in full operation, even with a minimum number of staff and c) the minimum number of the staff required per organizational unit (at the level of Sections) where possible, or at level of Directions), that have to be in person at work based on a rotation system. Staff members are given the possibility to change their daily arrival and departure times, by deviation of the rule related to the working hours they had selected.

Also, instructions provide that, the staff employed in organizational units the responsibilities of which are not judged to be of extreme urgency at that particular moment or, have been temporarily suspended, may be asked to work in entities where the staff is not enough to meet the needs of the services, provided that they have the knowledge and experience required for exercising the tasks they are exceptionally asked to fulfill.

Moreover, in order to facilitate the **turn-based work in office and the relevant movement of civil servants of public sector** under the pre-mentioned circulars, the Heads of the Directorates of each public service have to provide its employees with special verifications of movement to and from work, since there was a general prohibition of movement, with some exemptions (including movement to work) has been imposed.

Finally, at one of the last circulars issued by the Ministry of Interior (DIDAD/F.69/113/9246/29-4-2020), it is worth noting that the measures taken dealing with civil servants will continue to be valid, despite the lifting of the total ban on traffic and the restart of certain sectors of the economy, as the priority of the Ministry is the protection of employees. In particular, teleworking and turn based work in the office (which has to be scheduled on a weekly basis) are maintained. In fact, due to the expected increase in public transport, it is possible for civil servants to come to their services at different times, ie 7am, 8 am and 9am, with the relevant checkout, ie 3pm, 4 pm και 5 pm, in addition to the standard working hours, in order to avoid the relative overcrowding within the public transport or within the services of public sector.

It is noted that based on the instructions of the most recent circular (ΔΙΔΑΔ/Φ.69/116/10486/26.05.2020), as of 01/06/2020 the work rotation ceases to apply and the appearance in person for all staff returns to 100%, with the exception of the staff with excused absences due to : a) any type of leave on the basis of fixed provisions or b) any type of facilitation provided within the context of addressing the pandemic. The appearance in person for 100% of the staff takes place , in accordance with the conditions laid down to ensure the rules to protect public health are respected.

Furthermore, a **special e-monitoring application has been established within e-Register of Human Resources of the Greek State (APOGRAFI)** which is updated on a daily basis by the HR units in each Ministry, in order to provide real time data regarding the number of public servants working in office or from home, are on special leaves as part of the measures to combat COVID-19 dissemination etc, necessary to evaluate and design appropriate the HR measures for the public administration employees. Circular DIDAD / F.69 / 111 / oik.8196 provided relevant guidelines on the e-monitoring system.

It should also be noted that a very important effort has been made by the National Center for Public Administration and Local Government, which is supervised by the Ministry of Interior and whose main responsibility is the continuous and uninterrupted training of civil servants and the students of **National School of Public Administration and Self-Government**. In particular, from the first day of the measures taken, the National Center for Public Administration and Local Government, utilizing its important experience, as well

as its tools in the field of digital education, began the **distance education of a large number of civil servants**, following all instructions and security protocols.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that special rules were laid down providing for the suspension of deadlines in relation to any kind of administrative remedies to be made before the administration authority as of 11.3.2020 for two (2) months.

B. FACILITATIONS PROVIDED TO THE STAFF EMPLOYED IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR /LEAVES

B1. SPECIAL LEAVE FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

A special leave is laid down for the public staff belonging to vulnerable groups/ high- risk groups, as such groups are defined by the committee set up within the Ministry of Health for addressing the COVID-19 crisis.

According to article 38, of the Act of Legislative content of 20.03.2020 (OG 68A/20.03.2020), if a staff member has to **be home isolated** because of the special measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, following the instructions given by the National Public Health Organisation (EODY) he/she may make use of an excused absence from work by having a special sick leave, and producing a solemn declaration. The number of days of this special sick leave are not deducted from the number of days for a sick leave the employee is entitled to. Also the employee is not required to refer back to the competent Health Committee. These employees are included in the employees who can offer teleworking through the use of electronic means.

In addition, the competent administration organ may, based on instructions given in relation to the public staff who live with people that belong to increased risk groups of infection, allow this staff to provide tele- working. In doing so, the health of the colleagues who will have to be present at work more often has to be protected as well.

B2. SPECIAL PURPOSE LEAVE

Article 2 of the Act of Legislative Content of 11.03.2020 (OF 55A/11.03.2020), provides for a special purpose leave for civil servants. In the event that public servants have children attending nurseries and kindergartens and school units whose operation is temporarily suspended, they may be absent from their service for the period of suspension of the operation of the educational units in which their children attend. For every 4 days of absence for the above purpose, the 3 days are recorded by the competent service as a justified absence due to temporary suspension of operation of the station or school where the employee's child is studying and during which pay is paid and 1 day of absence is regular leave. It has to be mentioned that if both parents are civil servants, only one of them can make use of this "special" leave.

Instead of using the special purpose leave, employees of public administration may, upon their request, work part-time, up to 25% per day, without a corresponding reduction in their salary.

It is worth mentioning that the special leave granted to civil servants whose children are obliged to stay at home due to the schools' closure was extended during Easter Holidays, in order to help parents stay with them, no matter the fact that the schools would have been closed anyway. Last but not least, at the very fresh last circular issued by the Ministry of Interior (DIDAD/F.69/113/9246/29-4-2020) this special leave continues to be granted to parents of children whose schools remain closed, since the school units gradually restart their operation.

In applying the rules related to the special purpose leaves provided for civil servants - parents, employed under any scheme of employment, in the Ministry of Health, in health provision services, in the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum and in the entities supervised by this Ministry, and for the uniformed services personnel, a reasoned decision of the competent organ is required.

C. RECRUITMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Moreover, the National Public Health Organization (EODY) was given the possibility to recruit for a maximum period of four (4) months medical staff, nurses and other auxiliary staff, by way of derogation from the existing staff selection provisions, including the Cabinet Act of 33/2006 (A' 280).

In addition, in relation to the staff employed in the sector of health, for addressing emergency needs, it is also laid down:

a) the possibility of extension for all contracts in force of the staff under the categories of medical staff, carers, staff employed in medical analysis laboratories, and paramedics employed in the NHS hospitals and in the primary care structures for a period of four (4) months, by way of derogation from the existing provisions

b) the possibility to recruit medical staff, nurses, auxiliary and other staff, by way of derogation from the existing provisions, in the NHS hospitals, the primary care structures and the entities supervised by the Ministry of Health, without the need for the special decision to be issued by the Committee provided for in the Cabinet Act 33/2006, as it applies, and the need for a prior commitment of funds, by the entities

c) the possibility, by way of derogation from the existing provisions, to recruit for the Central Service of the Ministry of Health, staff belonging to all grades and categories provided for in the organization provisions of the Ministry of Health, by means of fixed term contracts under private law, in order to meet temporary needs. The above staff may be recruited following a call for expressions of interest, issued by decision of the Minister of Health, based on the criteria set in article 21 of L. 2190/1994 (A' 28),, without prior approval from the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) or the Committee provided for in the Cabinet Act 33/2006

D. PUBLIC SECTOR and CITIZENS

It has to be mentioned that in order to avoid overcrowding, the obligatory telephone or electronic communication of the citizen with the service for the planning of his on-site transition by appointment was established and only in case his personal presence is necessary.

According to article 37, of the Act of Legislative content of 20.03.2020 (OG 68A/20.03.2020), in derogation from provisions in force and exclusively within the framework of taking measures to protect public health from COVID-19, by decision of the competent Minister or of the relevant body of administration of the entity, restrictions in or extension of the opening hours of public services for the public up to 50% may apply for a particular time period provided for in the decision as well as the full suspension of services provided to people in physical presence. Such services may be provided to the public in private meetings by prior appointments.

E. E-GOVERNANCE

Digital initiatives and measures against the COVID- 19 pandemic

Greece has started applying restrictive measures in order to address the Covid -19 pandemic , starting from March 11, 2020 by closing the school units at all levels of education, and stepping up, gradually, restrictive measures to the movement of persons on March 23, 2020. These measures, the majority of which have been applied, to a greater or lesser extent, in many EU countries, have created a number of obstacles which would have to be overcome and challenges to be met. Citizens are making more and more use of their digital devices for the purposes of working, socializing and having fun. Businesses and public administration services are based more on innovative digital solutions in order to continue their activities and provide services. This wide digital transformation has been shown to contribute significantly to tackling this crisis.

Broadband connectivity

The new situation resulting from the restrictive measures and from the use of digital platforms by citizens and businesses, in order to address the specific needs created by the measures taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic, increased the role of telecommunication infrastructures . Thus, an action plan established by the Ministry of Digital Governance in cooperation with the Directors in the telecommunications sector , ensures the effectiveness of the telecommunication solutions used by public entities and by a great number of private sector companies, as well as by all the relevant communication services offered to citizens. Some initiatives undertaken in this direction are the following:

Tele-conference Platform "e- presence": The Ministry of Digital Governance provided this platform to enable all public entities to organise and hold online teleconferences of high quality offering online interactivity and web conferencing security. (URL: <https://www.epresence.gr/>).

Use of distance learning platforms offered for free by mobile phone networks : The mobile phone operators responded to the Ministry of Digital Governance initiative and offered free access to digital distance learning platforms.

Tele working : Due to the urgent need for the unhindered operation of the Public Administration authorities , the Ministry of Digital Governance ensured for all public entities a secure tele-working environment. The aim is to ensure the unimpeded provision of distance services by the staff, so as to allow for the operation of crucial public administration services (operational continuity) . It is about a service that offers secure access by using a VPN (Virtual Private Network).The service is offered to up to 100.000 staff members employed in Public Administration. It is currently implemented, and VPN connections are provided.

Finally, in relation to the sectors of security of infrastructures and cyber security, the Ministry of Digital Governance has repeatedly issued guidelines for citizens, through official online sources and media, on the responsible use of telecommunication networks and services. The Ministry also made recommendations on the safe access to the internet and on safe remote working. Guidance has been given to citizens on addressing disinformation and staying safe from online scams. In addition, instructions were given to the users of the digital platform to change their Taxis-net passwords, as a means of protecting digital transactions between citizens and businesses and the State, given that the use of Taxis-net credentials has expanded to a great degree, especially with the opening of the single public portal "Gov.gr". Taxis-net credentials are used for the identification of citizens in the new portal and in other public digital platforms

The Greek mobile and fixed telecommunications networks have been resilient and able to address the increased demand. The preliminary data collected from third parties show that the efficiency of the infrastructure has not been much affected. The bandwidth available for both mobile and fixed users was able to address the increased demand which was determined by means of data-intensive applications used for remote working and distance learning applications

Use of internet Services by citizens (Platforms of solidarity, support and information)

The following platforms have been set up, based on a joint initiative of the Ministries of Digital Governance, Interior, Health and of the National Documentation Centre, so as these platforms may become points of reference, solidarity, information and entertainment, both for businesses and for citizens. Please find below an integrated presentation of them:

#DigitalSolidarityGR: An initiative guided, designed and implemented by the Ministry of Digital Governance which aims at addressing new conditions that resulted from the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes information on the access of citizens to remote work, education and entertainment through the provision of digital services and goods either for free or at a lower price by foundations, individuals and businesses. The services provided may be grouped into the following sectors: a) remote work, b) information/ entertainment, c) e-learning and d) connectivity and data. (URL address: <https://digitalsolidarity.gov.gr>).

#CitySolidarityGR: This is a Ministry of Interior Initiative, in cooperation with the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece and the support of the Ministry of Digital Governance, aimed at providing assistance to citizens belonging to vulnerable groups through supplies and services offered by services and companies which expressed their interest in contributing to this effort. (URL: <https://citysolidarity.gov.gr>)

ethelontes.gov.gr: The Ministry of Digital Governance, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, developed this programme and the respective Platform. This volunteering Programme has been designed to support the health structures of the country so that they can meet the needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing the possibility for volunteer work. It is addressed to all those who wish to offer their services eg physicians, nurses, paramedical staff, psychologists, students and pensioners of the health sector, who volunteer based on their qualifications. (URL: <https://ethelontes.gov.gr>).

covid19.gov.gr: Official Information website comprising the legislative and other measures adopted by the Greek government and implemented by the Ministry of Digital Governance, as well as information, for citizens and businesses to address the COVID-19 pandemic, grouped by each government sector. (URL: <https://covid19.gov.gr>)

Community on Viber for Covid-19 information: *This is the government community on Viber for the official information of citizens. The official community of the Greek government on Viber is available to all users of the platform so that they can be informed through their cell phones on the relative developments. It should be noted that on 23-04-2020 the community had more than 320.000 members and the information takes place on a daily basis. This initiative has been implemented in cooperation with the Government Presidency and the Ministry of Digital Governance*

#AnimalSolidarityGR: It is a Ministry of the Interior Initiative, in cooperation with the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece and the support of the Ministry of Digital Governance, focused on pet well-being, through the offer of products and services by foundations, businesses and vets (URL: <https://animalsolidarity.gov.gr>).

3d-makers.gov.gr: An initiative of the Ministry of Digital Governance and of the Ministry of Health, addressed to the "community of 3d makers" aimed at the production and supply of assistive devices, such as face masks and hands-free kits. (URL address : <https://3d-makers.gov.gr/>).

COVID -19 the Greek response: An Action for the creation of a volunteers community, with technological and scientific basis, aimed at exploring and designing practical solutions to address the crucial problems resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The available solutions are open and free .The National Documentation Centre operates as the mentor and supporter of this Initiative (URL: <https://www.covid19response.gr/>).

"Thematic exhibitions " : A new unit on the Greek Aggregator for cultural heritage content SearchCulture.gr, designed and presented by the National Documentation Centre. It presents 13 collections with items contributed by 65 cultural institutions on SearchCulture.gr. Available in Greek and English, the new unit is particularly useful for educational and scientific purposes. (URL: <https://www.searchculture.gr/>).

#Antivirus Crowdhackathon: The first remote innovation marathon for the development of digital applications and methodologies for economy and society to tackle the negative impact of the pandemic. Organised by the Region of Attiki, with the support of the Ministry of Digital Governance, public entities, companies and collective organs, it takes place every two weeks . (URL: <https://crowdhackathon.com/antivirus/>).

#HackCoronaGreece: The main aim of this hackathon is to find solutions for the national health system. it is organized by ehealthforum (URL: <http://www.ekt.gr/el/news/24010>).

#COVIDhackGR: The competition / challenge is an initiative of the Ministry of Digital Governance.It aims at pursuing innovative ideas to address the needs of the National Health System against the COVID-19 pandemic and an action for mature digital solutions with a potential of immediate implementation (URL: <https://covidhackgr.gov.gr>).

Digital Public Services (including in the sector of e- health)

In relation to the digitalization of public services during this period, a great number of decisions and initiatives have been made and taken to speed up the connection of existing systems in order to enable the electronic process of applications by citizens. Such initiatives are the following:

- The Ministry of Digital Governance presented the interoperability of e-EFKA , which was linked to "Citizens Register" providing all vital events for the citizens registered in the Ministry of Interior Information System. Vital events such as birth, death, marriage, cohabitation, birth and family certificates, as well as information on the number of children will be provided through the "Citizens Register" e-EFKA for the issuance of relative certificates.
- Automation of the process of issuing tax information in the form of Integrated Information Systems of public services.

Also all digital services of the State obligatorily have to be provided through the single digital portal gov.gr following a uniform design. The new digital solutions developed during this period are as follows:

Portal gov.gr: The central government portal (gov.gr) by the Ministry of Digital Governance brings together services (507) digitally provided by the State. Also, any new service to be digitalized in the future will be included in the platform. Citizens may have access to electronic services by using the TAXISNET credentials, which will be transformed and improved by means of a *two-factor authentication mechanism* based on *OTP* to be set forth in the near future (URL: <https://www.gov.gr>).

e- Exousiodotisi, e-Dilosi applications: These are new electronic applications implemented and provided through the gov.gr Platform. The " e-Exousiodotisi" application allows citizens to fill in and sign electronic licenses (url: <https://www.gov.gr/ipiresies/polites-kai-kathemerinoteta / upeuthune-delose-kai-exousiodotese / ekdose-exousiodoteses>). The "e-Dilosi" application offers citizens the possibility to complete a solemn declaration (URL: <https://dilosi.services.gov.gr>). Identification takes place through the Taxis-net code number and the documents to be issued through gov.gr will have a unique identity verification/ authentication number and an electronic seal.

forma.gov.gr: A webpage for "purpose of movement 'declarations, so that citizens can leave home and move during the application of the restrictive measures of movement , offering the alternative choice to make use of mobile phones for sending free messages to the specific number (13033), and receiving a confirmation of movement by SMS, which could be presented to the authorities, as appropriate (police, municipal police etc) .

Public Servants may be remotely linked to the Central IT Application of the Single Payment Authority and proceed to the payment of the staff as usual: The relevant applications and systems have been modified so that Public Servants may be remotely linked to their internal environment and proceed with their everyday work. In other words, an application for 2.500 authorized officials was implemented in the public sector so that these officials may be remotely linked to the central IT system of the Single Payment Authority, which is provided by the Ministry of Digital Governance and proceed to the payment of the staff as usual, so as to avoid disruption at salary payments.

Electronic movement of the Cabinet documents: A new platform concerning the digital signature and electronic movement of the Cabinet documents was launched by the Ministry of Digital Governance. The platform may be used by the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the members of the Cabinet. This action accelerates the work of the executive and modernizes the State. It contributes to enhanced transparency and publicity, since the above documents will be published in a clearly legible form and they will be accessible to the public , replacing scanned documents which are difficult to be read, commented and consulted

The Ministry of Digital Governance offered, again, an infrastructure for these specific information systems to ensure their availability and efficiency. A great number of public information systems are included in the g-cloud infrastructure developed within the General Secretariat of Information Systems of Public Administration (GSISPA). Public entities- owners were called to provide modifications to a number of these information systems so that they can meet the increased needs which relate to the provision of services to citizens and the needs for remote working of their staff. Therefore, GSISPA proceeded to a redeployment of the structure for these specific information systems to ensure their availability and efficiency. ERGANI is an example for this : the design of the infrastructure has been modified so as to enable increased efficiency of the applications with a view to meeting the increased needs which resulted from the urgent measures to address COVID-19.

Digital certificates issued by the court authorities- Simplification of procedures of applying for, issuing and receiving certificates issued by the courts: Within the context of the digital transformation of the State , the Ministry of Digital Governance, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, proceeded to the pilot digital production (24 April 2020) of certificates through the solon.gov.gr portal .In particular, the General Secretariat of Digital Governance and Simplification of Procedures and the General Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights , through coordinated action, have completed the task of the digital collection of a series of certificates issued by court services. During

the first phase, this task relates to the collection of three types of certificates. Gradually the platform will comprise all the courts across the country and all the certificates issued by them, with priority being given to solvency certificates. For the duration of measures taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic, the submission of applications by citizens and the issuance of certificates by the court authorities will take place without the requirement for them of being stamped with the big seal .

In order to provide completed services and help people who do not have the appropriate means and/or skills to be linked to the Gov. gr platform, the Ministry of Digital Governance offers citizens, through the Citizens Service Centers, the possibility to apply by phone calls for certificates, which are delivered to them for free by post or courier services.

In the sector of electronic health the following initiatives were taken:

Paperless electronic prescription: The possibility of a paper- free electronic prescription system was exclusively applied and entered into force in an electronic way in the Primary Care System. The relevant instructions have already been issued by IDIKA to activate the platform. (URL: <https://www.gov.gr/ipiresies/ugeia-kai-pronoia/phakelos-ugeias/aule-suntagographese>).

Issuance of remote e- prescription of medicines for chronically ill patients. The possibility is established for e- prescriptions for cases of repeated prescriptions which relate to chronic illnesses, thus enabling vulnerable groups of population to take advantage of the service without the need for their physical presence in any practice.

The relevant instructions have already been issued by IDIKA to activate the platform (URL: www.e-syntagografisi.gr/p-rv/p).

Establishment and operation of a National Covid-19 patients Register: The establishment and launch of a National Covid-19 patients Register aims at protecting the population against the implications of the pandemic , focusing on the need for recording epidemiological data and respecting individuals' right to privacy.

COVID-19: Scientific information: A digital initiative of the National Documentation Centre: A portal to the most recent scientific knowledge related to COVID-19, updated on a daily basis. Scientific publications, lists, WebPages, e- learning opportunities are accessible not only to scientists and research fellows but also to the general public. Until 10/04/2020, the web page was visited by more than 20.000 unique visitors and 43.100 Facebook users (URL: <http://www.ekt.gr/el/covid-19>)

Reference system (B.I.) for medical supplies: A Reference system (B.I.) on the available beds in hospitals for covid19 patients (Intensive care unit (ICU) beds and other beds)as well as on the available means/ health care equipment

Tele- consultation tool for health professionals concerning the Covid- 19 patients remaining at home : A tele- consultation platform will be available soon , allowing for monitoring Covid- 19 patients who remain at home. Through this platform, patients will be able to have access to services such as : contact a Medical Coordinator to receive information on their health, or submit a communication request or ask questions, complete questionnaires on a daily basis related to their health, access to information material, provision of information about their temperature blood pressure oxygen, to the physician who treats them through the Medical Coordinator , possibility of reexamine the communication and the available stuff during the distance treatment.

6. *Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?*

As regards digital initiatives, Greece has developed two digital platforms to facilitate the health care system and civil protection function including:

- a. tracking and geographical identification of cases, as well as in the categorization and availability of beds in hospitals and clinics
- b. observing the quarantine of persons who are self-isolated Greece intends to further develop the above tools and/or create new ones.

- The expansion of the "ASSISTANCE AT HOME" Project.
- In cooperation with private automobile companies, about 350 cars have been provided to the municipalities to cover their needs during this period.
- In cooperation with big super markets lots of goods to cover the basic nutritional needs have been supplied.
- Private funding was furnished to cover the medical needs that have been revealed by the interactive HUB that the Union is holding in its site to record all needs in the Greek Municipalities (<https://aitimata.kedke.gr/>).
- About 3.000 volunteers were gathered and supplied to the municipalities according to their recorded needs.
- The ANIMAL SOLIDARITY Project is being implemented
- A special HUB ON SOLIDARITY was designed in KEDE site to record the needs in social services and to support the interaction among Municipalities.(<https://www.kedke.gr/el/%CE%B7-%CE%BA%CE%B5%CE%B4%CE%B5/%CE%B1%CE%BB%CE%BB%CE%B7%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%B3%CE%B3%CF%8D%CE%B7-%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BE%CF%8D-%CF%84%CF%89%CE%BD-%CE%B4%CE%AE%CE%BC%CF%89%CE%BD>)
- The PLATFORM FOR THE TELE-CONFERENCES of KEDE have been open to the Municipalities to hold their own tele-meetings.

HUNGARY

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

According to the Fundamental Law of Hungary, the Government declares a state of emergency in the event of a natural or industrial disaster endangering the safety of life and property and may introduce emergency measures specified in a cardinal law in order to prevent the consequences. In the event of an emergency situation, the Government may issue a decree with which, as defined in a cardinal law, it may suspend the application of certain laws, deviate from legal provisions, and adopt other extraordinary measures. A decree of the Government adopted pursuant to this paragraph shall remain in force for fifteen days, unless the Government, based on the authorization of the National Assembly, extends its effect. The Government Decree is repealed upon the cessation of the emergency. (Article 53, paragraphs 1 to 4)

Act XII of 2020 on the Containment of the Coronavirus was adopted by the Hungarian Parliament on 30 March 2020. It expressly provides the National Assembly with the power to revoke the authorisation at any time, either in general or in the case of specific measures. According to the Act, the Government shall regularly provide information on the measures taken to eliminate the state of danger until the measures are in effect at the sittings of the National Assembly to the Speaker of the National Assembly and the leaders of the parliamentary groups.

On the 11th of March 2020, the Government of Hungary declared a state of emergency for the entire territory of Hungary in order to prevent the consequences of a human epidemic causing a mass illness and endangering life and property and to protect the health and life of Hungarian citizens.

Pursuant to Section 46(4) of Act CXXVIII of 2011 on Disaster Management and Amendments to Certain Related Acts at the time of the declared emergency the duties and powers of the representative body of the local government and the capital or county assembly are exercised by the mayor and the mayor of the capital city, the chairman of the county assembly.

On 27 March 2020, the Government ordered a curfew restriction. In this context, as an extraordinary provision for the Easter holidays, the Government stipulated that for the period from 00.00 am on 10 April 2020 to 24.00 am on 13 April 2020, the local government or, in the area directly managed by the municipality of the capital city, the Municipality of Budapest and in other areas of the capital city the local government of the district may also adopt a by-law establishing stricter rules for restricting movements in the settlement or the district of the capital than those contained in the government decree.

On the basis of this authorisation, a number of mayors ordered stricter regulations than those of the government, and the practical experience was favourable. Subsequently, due to the favourable experience and the positive reception, the Government issued a separate decree authorising the local governments to set stricter rules than those contained in the Government Decree on curfew for a specified period of the given weekends, typically from 00.00 on Saturdays to 24.00 on Sundays.

1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?

At the end of January 2020, the Hungarian Operational Body was formed pursuant to Government Decision 1012/2020. The Operational Body is led by the Interior Minister and the Minister of Human Resources, and includes the Surgeon General, the Director of Security Department of Interior Ministry, the National Police Leader and the directors of National High Directorate of Disaster Management, Anti-Terrorism Centre, Central Hospital of South Pest, National Healthcare Supplying Service and National Ambulance. After its formation the Operational Body has immediately announced its plan for security against the spread of the novel coronavirus.

In order to efficiently tackle with the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2020 the Government has also set up ten action groups tasked with the following matters:

1. Education
2. The construction of a mobile epidemiological container hospital
3. Safety of corporations of vital importance
4. International co-ordination
5. Communications
6. Special legal order
7. Public finances
8. Restarting the economy
9. Research group tasked with finding a cure for COVID-19
10. Border control

1.3 What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?

The defence committees of Capital Budapest and Hungary's 19 counties hold sessions in the interests of coordinating and assisting the work of organisations taking part in efforts to protect against the coronavirus epidemic. The meeting of county and Budapest defence committees was convened in the declared state of emergency so that they may support the fulfilment of the regional tasks set out by the Operational Body, to coordinate the work of organisations involved in protecting the life and health of people, and particularly that of the public health bodies of government offices, the police, the Hungarian Defence Force (HDF), local governments and the ambulance service, and facilitate the flow of information between organisations. The defence committees are chaired by government representatives, and include the county heads of disaster management, the police and the HDF, the county and Budapest chief medical officers, the mayors of cities with county rights and county council chairpersons, and in the case of the capital, the Mayor of Budapest. Committee sessions are also attended by the heads of district offices, including the chairpersons of local defence committees, in addition to which county representatives of the ambulance service also have permanent invitations to attend the meetings.

- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

In order to ensure the necessary financial resources of responding the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic effects the Government decided to create an Epidemic Defence Fund and an Economy Defence Fund. The financial sources of the two funds – in line with the principle of the burdens bore jointly - are coming from both the public and private sector. In the case of the public sector approximately 2,86 billion euros has been reallocated from the central budget to the Funds mentioned. On the other hand, local taxes on motor vehicles (approximately 98,5 million euros) have also been reallocated to the Funds. The financial resources of the Funds are redistributed at all level in order to respond the pandemic and its effects.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

Pursuant to Section 46(4) of Act CXXVIII of 2011 on Disaster Management and Amendments to Certain Related Acts (hereinafter: Disaster M Act) at the time of the declared emergency the duties and powers of the representative body of the local government and the capital or county assembly are exercised by the mayor and the mayor of the capital city, the chairman of the county assembly. Within this framework, they may not take a position on the reorganisation, termination, supply and service areas of a local government institution, if the service also affects the settlement.

The mayor (mayor of the capital city, chairman of the county assembly) may also issue a decree in this power. In making decisions, they must take into account, e.g., the requirements of necessity and proportionality, as well as whether or not the decision in question can be postponed.

The most important public services provided by local governments (e.g., social tasks, social catering, public administration) are also provided during the emergency, of course, in compliance with the safety rules and regulations governing the emergency.

Providing care for those in official home quarantine, as well as for persons over the age of 70 who cannot leave their places of residence or stay voluntarily is a new task for local governments (mayors).

In the case of schools, child catering is provided by the municipalities even during the emergency. Of course, the service is provided only on demand, with delivery.

According to the provisions of the law, in the case of institutions providing nursery and kindergarten care, the mayor of the local government may order an extraordinary break. The mayors actually ordered a break in that capacity, providing for duty care strictly in small groups.

- 2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

The specific circumstances of the metropolitan areas are continuously being considered when the Government makes decisions on releasing measures. For example, there is no curfew in the rural areas from 4th of May. Capital Budapest and Pest County are an

exception in this respect as the regulation on curfew is still in force due to the higher number of infections in these areas.

2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

In order to support the work of local governments, a multi-channel information system is operated by the local government field of Ministry of Interior's portfolio. Current information is sent directly and immediately via a unique, separate mail system.

In addition, the Ministry of Interior also compile methodological materials, analyses and selections of legislation in electronic newsletters, which also help their work. The electronic newsletter is published on the government portal, and it is also distributed directly and electronically to the mayors and clerks of the municipalities. Since the declaration of the emergency, there have been 8 extraordinary newsletters compiled.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?

Interregional programmes:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, as the Managing Authority for 4 cross-border co-operation programmes in Hungary has taken all necessary actions related to programme implementation affected by the COVID-19 pandemic without any delay. The almost immediate closure of the national borders have had a substantial impact on the implementation of cross-border programmes with the participation of Hungary. At first place, travels to the partner countries had to be cancelled, making meetings with cross-border project partners impossible in person. Organization of different events, seminars, conferences have become also impossible in person, not only in cross-border terms, but also within Hungary. Furthermore, certain project activities linked to the delivery of equipment or the fulfilment of works activities have become also seriously negatively affected in terms of delivery time and contractual deadlines. These factors eventually have led to the reassessment of project activities, timing, schedule and in some cases project outputs by project partners. In general, a slower project implementation can be expected and project activities have to be adjusted to the new circumstances. Project prolongations, project modifications, in some cases temporary suspension of subsidy contracts have become the solutions in order to adapt to the new situation. Each cross-border co-operation project is different in terms of activities, composition of partnership, budget, schedule, etc. therefore the level of impact can be also different in case of each project and as a consequence, tailor-made solutions need to be found.

European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTC)

As a Central European country, Hungary is in a special situation having three different types of neighbours: the countries, which are part of the Schengen area; the countries, which are members of the European Union, but not part of the Schengen area; and the countries, which are not part of the Schengen area nor member of the European Union. The rules of the border controls are different in all three cases.

In March 2020, due to the impact of the Covid-19, Hungary just like other countries closed its borders. Very soon after the closure, Hungary and its neighbour countries faced a need for partial opening of the borders to ensure the movement of goods and cross-border workers.

That was a new challenge for cross-border co-operation of the countries to detect the most relevant border crossing points and to ensure for the freight traffic and cross-border

workers to cross the borders while trying to slow down the spread of Covid-19. As the result of the cross-border co-operation the cross-border freight traffic is allowed regarding all the seven neighbours of Hungary at the appointed border crossing points and with six of the seven neighbours there is an agreement about the border crossing of the cross-border workers. The negotiations and the co-operation with the neighbour countries about the gradual border openings are still ongoing until the current pandemic situation is over.

The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade as approval authority of European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTC), is in close contact with EGTCs having been registered in Hungary or having Hungarian members. Extraordinary government decrees have made it possible for EGTC decision making bodies to meet virtually and vote electronically.

Also, as restrictions entered into force on both sides of the given borders, many employees started to work from home where it was possible. Nevertheless, based on bilateral agreements, in duly justified cases, people were allowed to cross the border up to 30 km (so that employees can get to their office, etc.).

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?

Interregional programmes:

1) **General warning.** As a first measure, as soon as the pandemic was officially pronounced, the programme bodies (Managing Authority, National Authority, Joint Secretariats, First Level Control Bodies) have started communicating to the Beneficiaries of cross-border co-operation Programmes to respect the measures undertaken by the partner countries as to security and safety. The Joint Secretariats (JS) used standard communication tools for it, telephones, emails, website and social media posts.

2) **Checking of Lead Beneficiaries (LB-s) for COVID impacts** on project implementation. The JSs has ascertained that all projects that have closed the latest in the year 2019 and are thus not affected by the crisis, due to no ongoing project activities. Similarly, projects selected later and that are still in the contracting phase, the question of COVID impact on the project implementation periods can be discussed with the Beneficiaries individually, and the best solutions can be found on a project-by-project basis. E.g. project starting dates can still be delayed into the second half of 2020. LB-s and JS members are in constant contact, and project partners requesting modifications to the project implementation dates are handled on a case-by-case basis.

3) **Guidance of the Managing Authority, National Authority and JSs** with regard to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on projects was issued on 17 March 2020, providing instructions on queries related to cancelled events, travels, undelivered equipment etc. In many cases, the questions were linked to the eligibility of related expenditure. (Please find an exemplary guidance uploaded to the website of the Hungary-Croatia Cross-border Co-operation Programme: <http://www.huhr-cbc.com/en/news/guidance-of-the-managing-authority-with-regard-to-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/301>)

4) **Temporary internal guidance to programme level procedures** are elaborated and after approval of the MA will be applied in order to ease the conclusion and modification of Subsidy Contracts for the EU contribution, as well as the verification of Project Reports and Applications for Reimbursement.

5) **Temporary internal guidance to national control procedures** have been introduced in case of Hungarian Beneficiaries for facilitating the First Level Control (FLC) activities in order to be implemented smoothly and without delay during the period of temporary procedures. Certain simplifications are also applied. Similar procedures have been introduced also on the partner countries' side. We pre-discussed those processes also with the audit authority.

6) **Any Monitoring Committee meeting in the near future** would be organised by a combination of written procedures and online national coordination meetings with MC members, to replace a standard conference meeting in person.

7) Regarding the preparation of the new, 2021-2027 programming period, instead of the thematic workshops **webinars are planned to be organised** with stakeholders in order **to finalize the territorial analysis** of the programming area.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. *Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency*

The National Economic and Social Council:

The National Economic and Social Council (hereinafter referred to as NESC and Council) works independently from the Parliament and the Government and is a consultative and counselling body, comprising six sides (side of employers, side of employees, NGOs, representatives of scientific life, and the arts, as well as the representatives of the established churches), which provide opinions on different topics and raises questions to the government bodies.

According to the relevant legislation, the NECS holds plenary sessions, which are to be convened at least twice a year. In 2017, there were 4, in 2018, there were 3, and in 2019, there were 4 plenary sessions. In advance to the plenary sessions, the presidents of the different sides and the presidency itself agrees on the crucial questions to be discussed at the plenary. The plenary can be assembled the earliest ten days following the presidents' consultation.

We think that this forum gives an opportunity to hold structured dialogues in between the plenary sessions as well. The active participation of the government organs in the work of the Council is a guarantee that an adequate dialogue can emerge between the different sides and the sides of the Council may obtain a wide range of information in relation to the government instruments.

Other than the plenary session, the Council gives opportunity for a more detailed elaboration of a few topics in the form of so called expert groups. Recently an expert group on education and vocational training was set up, and earlier there has been expert groups working on the topics of poverty, and the operation of the Council itself. In accordance with the above, we do not plan to initiate any legislative or operational changes; instead, we strive to increase the efficiency of the current system within the existing framework. At the plenary debates, besides the various experts, the permanent guests are the ministers or the deputies thereof. The opinions of the Sides of the Council have a clear impact on government decisions.

The Council discussed the enlisting of Good Friday among the national holidays; the legislation was later passed by Parliament, the Council also regularly discusses the minimum wage and the lowest personal income rate, and later the defined wages – earlier

published in a government decree – have to be consented by the Council. In 2017 the Council unanimously accepted two Statements; one on Health Care and one on the policy regarding Hungarian affairs outside the Hungarian borders. In 2020, the Council issued a statement of consent regarding the measures taken by the government due to the coronavirus disease (Covid-19 pandemic).

The National Economic and Social Council issued a statement on 23rd March, 2020, concerning the state of emergency declared by the Government:

The presidency of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) welcomes the instruments aiming at the protection of life, health, economy and workplaces, announced by the Government of Hungary, in order to mitigate the consequences of the state of emergency caused by the coronavirus-disease. Employers are exempt from paying the employer taxes until 30th June, 2020, and employees contributions are also significantly reduced, both of which contribute to the rapid normalization of the Hungarian economy and society. It is the opinion of all the chairpersons of the side of employees, the side of economic actors, the side of churches, non-governmental organizations and representatives of the academic and arts sector, together with the current chairperson of the NESC that government actions so far announced are beneficial and necessary. These sides, more precisely the NESC itself represent the highest level of social and economic dialogue; in fact, it is the only such forum, designated in a separate act.

The NESC is open to the further discussion of action plans and packages in the future as well. The presidency of the NESC is confident that in order to combat this difficult time, every citizen should participate trustfully, patiently and with self-discipline in this real social cooperation, which is indispensable in almost all spheres of life. In the sake of this cooperation, we find it of utmost importance that people keep the health safety measurements and we ask for the support of the everyday lives of children and the elderly.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

The continuity in providing public services is essential and has a key importance during the pandemic such as in every day life. Therefore the Government and the local governments (some of the services for example public transport belong to the competency of LGs) did pay particular attention to ensure the provision of public services. For example public transport can be used only by wearing facemasks all over the country. Moreover, the public transport vehicles and stations – especially in the bigger cities – are disinfected on a daily basis. The schedule and the headway of the public transport vehicles are planned to guarantee the possible place for passengers to keep the 1.5 meter distance from each other during the travel.

5.2. What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?

Providing public services during the COVID-19 pandemic is essential, therefore the Government took several measures to not just to ensure the continuity but to make the public administrative procedures easier and more accessible to the clients. In this respect the Government extended the validity of personal documents. If there are further administrative issues arisen the customers still have the possibility to visit the integrated customer service offices (Government Windows), but only by using the date reservation

system. Therefore, the Government provides access to the date reservation system by using the personal online surface (Clients Gate) or the free to call telephone line 1818. In addition, the completed documents are delivered by post office in this period to minimize the personal contact between customers and officials. Furthermore, simplification measures have been introduced in the field of procedural law to ensure legal certainty.

ICELAND

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?

When assessing state contributions to support local authorities in Iceland it is important to note that the share of local public sector activity is just 1/3 (33). Tasks such as health care, hospital operations, upper secondary schools and service for elderly are wholly or partly with the state. In Iceland, there are only two administrative levels, the state and municipalities.

The municipalities are responsible for the provision of basic welfare services and technical infrastructure to their residents, as set out in numbers of different laws. The primary and pre-schools are by far the largest task of the Icelandic municipalities. On average about 50% of the municipal budget goes to the running of the schools, 40-70%, depending on the size of the municipality.

It is also important to have mind the total income source of Icelandic municipalities which is divided as follows; Income tax 61%, property tax 12%, Equalation fund 13% and other income 14%. For further information see a following Appendix nr. 1

The allocation of competences between different levels of government, the state and the municipal level has not been changed in response to the emergency. The national government decides and implements, inter alia, the overall crises response, which is partly implemented by municipal authorities, such as limits set on schools.

The Directorate of Health is responsible for the implementation of disease control under the supervision of the Minister of Health, according to the Epidemiology Act (No. 19/1987).

The Chief Epidemiologist at the Directorate of Health is responsible for organizing and coordinating measures against infectious diseases. He has extensive authority to respond pandemics if necessary. The Chief Epidemiologist submits proposals to the Minister of Health for confirmation. The approval of the Cabinet is not required, but in practice such proposals are presented there. Until now all proposals from the Chief Epidemiologist on disease control have been approved by the Minister.

Civil Protection in Iceland falls under the Ministry of Justice. Civil Protection responsibilities at the national level are delegated to the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police (NCIP). The NCIP runs a Department of civil Protection and emergency management (DCPEM) which is responsible for daily administration of Civil Protection matters. It maintains a national co-ordination/command center which can be activated at any time and to be in charge of the center for emergency situations. Municipalities carry out civil defense in the district, in co-operation with the central government.

The DCPEM is responsible for responding to consequences of a pandemic together with the Chief Epidemiologist according to a specific the national **pandemic response plan**. This includes the management of general measures to keep social infrastructures operable and support for official national against pandemics.

The DCPEM raised Iceland's first-ever gathering ban was implemented, limiting gatherings to 100 people or less and instituting a 2-metre social distancing rule.

1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?

1.2.1. A **Civil Defense Team**, composed of the Chef Epidemiologist, the Director of Health and a representative the National commissioner of Police from Civil Defense (the Trio for short) has held televised press conference each day until June 2020, giving reports on the pandemic and answering journalists' questions. They were often accompanied by other guests such as the Director of the State Hospital, the Chairman of the Association of Senior Citizens etc. These press conferences were resumed in autumn 2020 when the 3rd wave of the pandemic hit. These meetings have played a major role in uniting the nation in the concerted effort needed to tackle the pandemic and helped coordinate implementation of public policies.

These meetings resumed this autumn when the 3rd wave of the pandemic hit.

1.2.2. In March, the Althing passed **amendments to the Local Government Act**, which are intended to create scope for municipalities to respond to emergencies and ensure that local governments become operational. The amendments stipulate that the Minister may grant local governments a temporary authority to deviate from certain provisions of the Local Government Act so the local government to be operational in an emergency and to facilitate decision-making.

This was done in response to the situation created by the pandemic, and it was considered appropriate to extend the rules on teleconferencing in local governance without complicating local government decision-making.

As has been stated before, the responsibility for disease control measures lies with the Medical Director of Health on the one hand and Civil Defense on the other. These institutions are under the authority of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Government and the Civil Defense team has stressed the importance of comprehensive information to the nation. And the media, both the traditional and social media have been systematically used for the purpose.

1.3 What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?

Please note the above answer to question nr. 1.2 but to highlight the uniqueness of municipalities in this regard, it is appropriate to emphasize that The Local Government Act contains provisions on consultation between the local government level and the state in matters concerning local government (Art. 128) which states

- “- The government shall ensure formal and regular collaboration with municipalities on important state matters that relate to the position and the duties of municipalities. Formal collaboration shall take place e.g. in the submission of legislative bills that relate to the municipalities and on the management of state finances, division of responsibilities between the state and municipalities and other important matters that concern the interests of the municipalities or their finances”
- The Government aims to compensate municipalities for the loss of income, that can be traced to the effects of the pandemic and has emphasized on working in consultation and consultation with the municipalities.”

These measures must of course be budgeted and approved by Althing.

- 1.3. Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?

The Government of Iceland has announced various measures to mitigate the economic and societal effects of the coronavirus outbreak.

A large part of them are general measures that affect the entire economy and the population including the municipalities and their inhabitants. It should be noted that The Government submits its proposals to Althing where they are discussed, sometimes changed and finally approved.

Below are examples of the first general measure, but for further information, please refer to the following website of the Prime Minister's Office.
<https://www.government.is/government/covid-19/>

- The first "response package" from March 21st was estimated to cost ISK 230 bn (USD 1.6 bn) or just under 8% of Icelandic GDP. The Government's aim was to safeguard the economic livelihood of people and businesses, protecting the welfare system and creating a strong demand in the economy.
- In April the Government announced additional support for businesses and an extension of part-time unemployment benefits. Icelandic companies that have suffered substantial revenue losses due to the COVID-19 crisis were given the opportunity to apply for government support to pay a portion of salary costs during the employee notice's period, This protected employee's income and preventing a wave of corporate insolvencies. Support which allows workers to go part-time and receive top up payments from the government were extended until the autumn, with amendments. Simpler rules on financial restructuring of businesses were adopted enabling firms to seek protection more easily.
- The Government has proposed special measures to meet the needs of the municipalities, which have suffered significant loss of revenue and costs. Such as authorization granted for local governments to temporarily deviate from the financial rules in points 1 and 2. Paragraph 2 Article 64 Local Government Act, no. 138/2011, in the years 2020–2022. The aim of the amendment is to ensure that municipalities have more scope to make increased investments and meet the impending operational problems due to the unexpected and sudden circumstances that the COVID-19 pandemic has for the Icelandic economy and public finances.
- Taxpayers of real estate tax on commercial real estate may defer due dates. The provision stipulates that municipalities are obliged to comply with the postponement of due dates if the applicable conditions of the bill are met.
- In order to obtain the best possible information on the effects of the pandemic, the Minister of Local Government appointed a special working group consisting of representatives of the state and municipalities. The task was to analyze the overall impact of the pandemic on local government finances. The results were presented in late summer and highlighted very different situations of municipalities regarding their financial status, from being almost unchanged to a complete collapse in income. The results led to special contribution to meet the needs of those municipalities that were worst off due to a complete drop in revenue that can be traced to the collapse in the tourism industry. Decisions and agreements on the state's general contributions to special projects have been based on the results of this analysis. (See Appendix no. 1)
- On October 1. 2020 an agreement was reached in ongoing negotiations between the Government and municipalities on financial relations.

Please note

An appendix to this questionnaire contains a detailed Excel document showing the Government's financial contributions to municipalities and its premise and it reflects the results of agreements from 1 October.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)

Local authorities and civil defense committees have taken measures in cooperation with the Chief Epidemiologist and Director of Health to prevent or reduce further transmission of Covid-19 among the population as a result of a group infections. Examples include the closure health clubs and stricter rules for visits to homes for the elderly, in some cases going beyond the general preventive measures, (e.g. isolation of residents and staff). A special effort was made in infection tracking and screening tests, in collaboration with the Chief Epidemiologist and the Director of Health. Specialized staff were sent to assist with nursing and care in residential homes for the elderly where local staff were either quarantined or isolated.

The operation of primary schools and kindergartens is the responsibility of municipalities. Throughout the Government has kept schools and nursery schools open, but there has been strong emphasis on infection control (distance control, maximum number of groups, demarcated areas, etc.) The decisions were taken in consultation with the Association of Icelandic Municipalities.

It is the task of the principal of each school, in collaboration with local authorities and the Chief Epidemiologist, to implement the pandemic restrictions that are in force at any given time. If and when a child or teacher becomes infected, sometimes the whole school must be closed, sometimes certain children and teachers are sent home to be in home quarantine for up to 14 days and then screened.

- 2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?

See the answer above (2.1)

- 2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

It should be noted that the capital area is defined as one quarantine area and from 7th of October stricter rules to combat infection in the metropolitan were authorized by the Minister of health upon the recommendations of the Chief Epidemiologist and will remain in force until 19 October. On this web-site these restrictions are listed and explained. <https://www.covid.is/categories/could-you-be-infected>.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

- 3.1. What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?

Iceland is in a special situation, not sharing borders with any other country. The main border crossing point is Keflavik international airport. There is also a ferry service to the Faroes and Denmark. Iceland is part of the Schengen area and cooperates on cross-

border issues with its members which include all the Nordic countries. During the COVID-19 crisis monthly meetings are held with relevant border control authorities.

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place ?

Iceland cooperates both with the EU and individual countries on Covid-related issues, such as purchases of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, including China and Sweden.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency.

TO LIVE WITH THE VIRUS - OPEN WORKSHOP

- 4.1. The Minister of Health, in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Justice, arranged an open workshop on Thursday the 20th, where ongoing measures in the long term regarding Covid-19 were discussed. This meeting was held in accordance with the proposal of the Chief Epidemiologist. The workshop was streamed, and the results were published in The Government's consultation portal. The aim of the meeting was to formulate emphases and guidelines that can be used in ongoing work to formulate actions for Covid-19 in the coming months. It is not known how long the coronavirus will be influential in society and we must prepare to live with it for a long time. Extensive consultation is therefore important.
- 4.2. The private company Decode Genetics has influenced the public policy debate on Covid and provided great support to testing for the disease.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- 5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

Please note the above answer to question nr. 2.1.

The response of the Icelandic authorities and the objectives of the COVI 19 measures taken have been clear from the outset. Essential services to the public have not been interrupted during the Covid pandemic. This has been made possible because of strong prevention measures against Covid infection taken by the Government.

See also the website: <https://www.covid.is/sub-categories/icelands-response>. -

- 5.2. What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?

The use of remote working has been quite limited in Iceland before the crisis but has now been widely used and that will have quite big effect on working also after the crisis. Public institutions of the state and local authorities that can possibly organize their work in this way have both done and encouraged the staff to make friends from home. This also applies to companies such as banks and other financial companies. This has led to

more extensive and improvements in the use of digital forms of work. Teams-meeting, Skype meetings, chat rooms etc.

6. Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?

A contact tracing team consisting of police and health care staff was assembled to identify those who had been at risk of infection. The team has been one of the most important factors in controlling the spread of the pandemic. Everyone who has been in contact with an infected person is contacted and interviewed by a team member and instructed to go into home quarantine for up to 14 days and at the same time receive instructions on how to behave, in addition to which they are advised that all information in this regard is available. The website of the Medical Director of Health and others. At the height of the pandemic, the team involved 60-70 people calling everyone who could have possibly been at risk and quarantining them.

Here is a website where all Government actions are listed by date and each of them is accompanied by further explanations.

<https://www.government.is/government/covid-19/#actions>

ANNEX ICELAND

AutoSave Off Covid Support Iceland - Read-Only - Excel

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Comments

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Population in Iceland #####

Covid has affected the income of municipalities directly since a large proportion of income is linked directly to the performance of the Economy. Income tax has decreased in real terms by 9% and Equalisation fund is down by 30% since the year is as well linked directly to the performance of the Economy. Income tax and VAT (tax) has increased in real terms by 10% since the year. The State has had to fund indirect actions to protect the income of the Economy. Direct support to Tourist companies to enable salaries and higher unemployment salaries

EUR million	A-part Core operation	per capita
Income tax.....	1.348	618
Property Tax.....	276	126
Equalisation fund.....	285	133
Other income.....	304	145
	2.213	100%
		6.472 EUR

A-part is the core operation of Local government
 Primary schools (not elementary age 16-18)
 Social services, Kinder garden and people with disabilities

EUR million	A + B	per capita
Income tax.....	1.342	41%
Property Tax.....	275	8%
Equalisation fund.....	285	9%
Other income.....	335	10%
	2.837	100%
		8.294 EUR

A+B part is in addition to A part Utility, Harbour
 Transport, Waste

Hospitals, health care, Elementary schools, Elderly care, Nursing homes
 are State responsibility

Total Governmental support	27 m EUR	79 EUR
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Governmental support to municipalities

A. People with disabilities: Awarded 670 m.kr. (4.2 m EUR) an extra contribution that will be spent on contributions to municipalities for the purpose of disabilities. It is estimated that the contributors of the Settlement fund for the purpose of disabilities will be about 670 m.kr. lower than expected at the beginning of the year. The reasons are the decrease of the year's response and the lower contributions of state fund to the project.

B. Social support assistance: Awarded 720 m.kr. (4.5 m EUR) a contribution to municipalities where the cost of social support is over more specific limits. According to the annual financial statements of the municipalities for the year 2019, the expenditure of municipalities of social support amounted to ISK 3.7 m.kr. (23.1 m EUR) last year. The Icelandic local authorities are estimating that the expenses could increase 30%, nationally and the contribution is intended to support this increase.

C. Municipalities - operation support: Awarded 500 m.kr. (3.1 m EUR) a contribution to support the municipalities that are facing the greatest financial difficulties due to the Covid-19 outage. The contributions will be provided in cooperation with the monitoring committee of municipalities finances. The analysis of the government's work group resulted in a mismatch of the financial state of the municipality. Many of them can deal with the challenges while others have weaker finances.

D. Municipal sustainability: Awarded 935 m.kr. (5.9 m EUR) a contribution that supports the government's policy-oriented plan and its increased sustainability program.

The source for changes in municipal authorities has the aim of tying the minimum population of municipalities to 1,000 residents. New rules provide a large support for the Settlement fund of municipalities of the mergers. The rules include substantial financial incentives for municipalities to merge, but the support can either be used

E. Loans from the Real estate fund of the Settlement fund: To authorize the use of 1,500 m.kr. (9.3 m EUR) from the Real estate fund of the Settlement fund of municipalities to weigh this year and next years, reduction of general income and expense settlement contributions.

Additional state fund contributions for a total of 4,325 m.kr. (27 m EUR)

ITALY

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to respond to the emergency?*

The ordinary division of competences, as provided for in the Constitution, has not been modified to respond to the urgency of COVID-19:

- the State is responsible for health policies (in particular for related emergency situations) and for the general framework of the response: establishing "red" zones for warning purposes or limiting individual mobility, putting an end to lock-down measures, etc.
- the Regions are responsible for guaranteeing the functioning of ordinary and extraordinary health structures or for establishing additional protection measures or stricter collective security measures than those decided by the central level ;
- Mayors are responsible (under the strict supervision of Prefects) for ensuring - with regard to the territories for which they are responsible - the implementation of prohibition, social distancing and/or containment measures and for ensuring the safety (health and food) of families and socially and economically vulnerable people (elderly people, economically weak families etc.).

1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

With regard to coordination mechanisms between the different levels of government, since the constitutional reform of 2001, there has been a Conference of States and Regions (Conferenza Stato-Regioni) which serves to harmonise relations between these two levels of decision-making. During the crisis, the Conference has thus ensured good coordination between the State and the Regions. The debate was sometimes heated given the seriousness of the moment, but the crisis was finally a good test to confirm or improve the system. There is also a Conference of States and Cities (Conferenza Stato-Città), which provides a similar way of managing relations between local authorities and the State. Finally, the Unified Conference carries out a synthesis of the two above-mentioned Conferences in order to harmonise the relationships between cities, Regions and the State.

1.3. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

The system of Conferences (State-Regions, State-Cities and Unified) has also allowed for sectoral coordination. Thus, the daily meetings of the Civil Protection (which is under the authority of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers) have also been attended by the Presidents of the Regions, but also by mayors and their deputies through the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI).

1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

Financial resources have been transferred from the central level to the regional/local level in order to provide them with additional resources to respond to the situation, especially for the benefit of the rescue/emergency services and social security. Other measures have been taken; for example, in the area of taxation, deadlines for the payment of local taxes (concerning households and businesses) have been postponed by four or six months as appropriate.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

Of course, the role of local authorities and mayors has been central to the ad hoc organisational efforts in the territories, particularly in addressing the needs of people belonging to vulnerable groups.

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

- 3.1 *What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border cooperation?*
- 3.2 *Are there examples of good cross-border cooperation to respond to the emergency? At what level of government did this cooperation take place?*

No information was received on any difficulties encountered in cross-border cooperation.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- 5.1. *How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)*

At the beginning of the crisis there were isolated episodes of uncertainty in the actions of some town councils. Subsequently, thanks to directives from the Regions, which were advised in this respect by Scientific Committees and by the Higher Institute of Health (a scientific research and certification body of the Ministry of Health), these uncertainties were clarified.

Everywhere, cleaning and waste disposal services worked well, and even more so, given the increasing volumes of waste from family dwellings.

Citizens were informed of the precautions to be taken when using public transport. The major cities have introduced so-called ZTLs (Traffic Restricted Areas), allowing people who are obliged to travel to their place of work to cross city centres. In its behaviour, the population has shown responsibility, as evidenced by the fact that the public spaces of the cities have remained empty of people and there have been no blatant situations of circumvention of restrictions imposed in relation to COVID-19.

- 5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

With regard to the measures taken at the level of public administration to continue to operate and provide essential services, teleworking (or smartworking) has been strongly encouraged and used by all public organisations but also by private sector entities.

LATVIA

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

On March 12, 2020, the Cabinet of Ministers issued an [order "On Declaring a State of Emergency"](#), which stipulates that from the entry into force of the order until June 9, a state of emergency has been declared in the country to limit the spread of Covid-19. The adopted order sets out a series of measures to be implemented or prohibited during the emergency. The division of competences between the state and local governments is not affected. During an emergency situation, state and local government institutions shall evaluate and, as far as possible, ensure the provision of on-site services remotely.

Cooperation

Existent co-operation systems involving different authorities have been used. Inside the Government, the co-operation between ministries and offices has been very intense. At the local level, cooperation takes place between municipalities and the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments and also between municipalities, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments and different ministries.

The Cabinet of Ministers order of 12 March 2020 gives the Ministry of Health the task to coordinate the activities of the institutions having responsibilities in emergency situations. The State Operational Medical Commission of the Ministry of Health is entitled to adopt decisions binding on health sector institutions regarding epidemiological safety measures.

All public administration institutions - ministries according to their competence and local governments according to the performance of their functions - are involved in the coordination of the emergency situation. The most important decisions related to the restriction of the spread of Covid-19 were taken at the meeting of the Crisis Management Council chaired by the Prime Minister. Further implementation takes place through the responsible ministries and their subordinate institutions. In Latvia, a [website](#) has been set up, where residents can access information related to the spread of Covid-19 in the country. All decisions taken by the government to limit the spread of Covid-19 are immediately disseminated to the public through the media.

Since the declaration of the state of emergency in Latvia, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments has been actively participating in the work of the Crisis Management Council, ensuring coordinated action of state and local government institutions. Every day, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments of Latvia compiles information on the needs and problems of local governments and informs the public. Every week, informative video conferences are organised for local governments, in which ministers and senior officials of responsible institutions participate, and cities and counties receive materials.

Budgetary and financial measures

On 30 April 2020, at an extraordinary meeting, the government supported the proposal of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to increase the municipal borrowing limit by 150 million euros to mitigate the economic consequences of Covid-19.

This decision increases the municipal borrowing limit for 2020 by 150 million euros in order to be able to invest in high-readiness projects co-financed by EU funds and other foreign financial assistance with economic significance, as well as investment projects submitted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MEPRD).

In these projects, with the approval of the responsible ministry, it will be possible to review the project's eligible and ineligible cost planning, increasing the amount of eligible costs.

The MEPRD will develop amendments to the regulatory enactments, which will determine the criteria and procedures for local governments to be able to apply for their investment projects and apply for opportunities to receive a state budget loan.

At the same time, a positive opinion of the MEPRD on the compliance of these projects with the administrative-territorial reform and sustainable development of the municipalities will be required.

Additional funding will come from a loan received from the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB). Municipalities will be able to receive loans for the implementation of projects from the Treasury on favourable terms.

In order to respond promptly to the economic consequences of the Covid-19 crisis and to provide support to industries, companies and their employees, A Law On Measures for the Prevention and Suppression of Threat to the State and Its Consequences Due to the Spread of Covid-19 has been adopted, which provides for a number of support measures for companies, their employees and economic operators. One of the most important is the payment of idle time allowance to employees of idle time companies.

Idle time benefits are granted and paid by the State Revenue Service (SRS) in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 165 "Rules for employers affected by the Covid-19 crisis who qualify for downtime allowance and for the payment or deferral of payment of arrears for up to three years", which allows this type of support to be available to companies harder hit by the crisis, regardless of their sector of activity.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

One of key issues is to guarantee local administration and decision-making during the restrictions.

An amendment to the legislation has allowed local council meetings via videoconference. In general videoconferencing is widely used for communication by making use of platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

During the emergency situation, local governments continue to perform their functions, which are specified in the Law "On Local Governments" - including providing social assistance to the population, education process of the population (the educational process takes place remotely).

There was special law "On the Operation of State Authorities during the Emergency Situation Related to the Spread of COVID – 19" issued during the emergency situation. This law stated that the chairperson of a local government council may determine by an order that meetings of the local government council and committees may take place remotely, conforming to the following conditions:

- 1) videoconferencing is used in the course of a council or committee meeting (a real-time image and sound transmission);
- 2) draft decisions of the council and committees, opinions thereon, and informative materials are sent to all members of the council and committee to their electronic mail address or using other means of electronic communication not later than three working days before a regular meeting and not later than three hours before an extraordinary meeting;

3) it is ensured that individual vote of each member is recorded and reflected in the minutes of a council or committee meeting.

After taking of a decision of a local government council or committee and drawing up the minutes of the meeting in writing, they shall be sent to each member who has participated in the relevant meeting. A member shall confirm his or her vote electronically on the received document.

In Latvia, the highest prevalence of Covid-19 is observed in large cities, the capital Riga has the most cases, but however, no special restrictions are set in the municipalities most affected by the disease. All municipal government restrictions are implemented in the same way.

Cooperation between local governments during an emergency situation takes place through the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, which organises video conferences between local governments and state administration institutions on topical issues of local governments.

During the emergency situation, residents in difficulty had the opportunity to apply for municipal crisis benefits. Entitlement to municipal crisis benefit is determined for the duration of the emergency and one calendar month after the end of the emergency, i.e. also in July.

The municipality grants a benefit from its budget to a family (person) who, due to an emergency situation, is unable to provide for his or her basic needs in a crisis situation. Half of this expenditure will be reimbursed to the municipality by the state, but not more than 40 euros per month for the benefit granted to one person for a period of three months. The amount of crisis benefit varies from municipality to municipality. In most municipalities it is 80 euros. But it is also bigger.

The municipality grants a supplement of 50 euros to the recipient of the crisis benefit for each child under 18 years of age. This allowance is reimbursed by the state.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

A good example of civil participation is the delivery of food parcels to people at higher risk of infection with Covid-19, such as the elderly or people with chronic illnesses. Food parcel delivery is organized by volunteers, via social network or by phone. The food package is left at the person's doorstep to avoid the risk of infection.

Volunteer movements are organized not only for food but also for other needs.

Another example of good practice is donations for medical meals, which can be made by bank transfer or via donation phones.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

During the emergency situation, state and local government institutions evaluate and, as far as possible, ensure the provision of services remotely.

Until now no serious disruption of services has been identified during the emergency.

Remote working has been used since the beginning of the Covid-19 emergency where possible throughout the public sector.

Currently, the government is gradually easing the restrictions and plans to lift the state of emergency in the country after June 9, 2020, by adopting a special regulation that will set measures to limit the spread of Covid - 19.

With the end of the emergency situation, on June 10, 2020, the Law on the Suppression of Consequences of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection entered into force. The purpose of the Law is to restore the general legal order after the end of the specified term of the emergency situation, providing for a set of appropriate measures for the suppression of consequences of the spread of COVID-19 infection and the special support mechanisms and expenditures directly related to the containment of the spread of COVID-19 in order to ensure the improvement of the economic situation of the society and to promote the stability of the national economy.

Simultaneously with this law, Cabinet Regulation No. 360 entered into force On Epidemiological Safety Measures for the Containment of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection. The Regulation prescribes the epidemiological safety measures to be taken for the containment of the spread of COVID-19 infection

In October as the distribution of COVID - 19 increased in Latvia, amendments were adopted to the regulations, which set stricter gathering restrictions.

On October 13, the government decided that from October 14, face masks will be used in public transport, shops, museums, exhibitions and other places. From October 17, there will be additional restrictions on interest education, private events and sports. There will also be stricter conditions in public catering.

In October due to the rapid spread of Covid-19 and a large number of infected people in 8 municipalities in Latvia, stricter safety measures were imposed in these municipalities.

In State and local government institutions, where possible, services are provided remotely or only by prior appointment and in compliance with the epidemiological safety measures established by the state.

MALTA

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

In Malta, many of the essential public services, such as Health, Education, social issues and national security are within the competence of central government. With respect to responding to the COVID-19 emergency, regulations, directives, policies and coordination are issued through the Superintendent for Public Health, under the responsibility of the Ministry for Health. All Government and non-Government entities respond to the COVID-19 emergency in line with such directives.

The normal allocation of competences between central and local government has not been modified.

This notwithstanding, Local Government in Malta has taken an active role in the provision of essential non-statutory services to local citizens and coordination with the national authorities. These initiatives are, however, in line with the directives of the national health authorities.

1.2 *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

In order to achieve co-ordination between the different levels of government, the Local Government Division within the Ministry responsible for Local Government (Ministry for National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government) issues circulars and directives in line with the policies and directions issued by the Ministry for Health through the Superintendent for Public Health as well as administrative directives in line with ministerial policies.

With respect to Local Government, it is the ministry responsible for Local Government and the Local Government Division that act as the intermediate level between central Government and Local Government.

It is pertinent to state that at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Malta, the ministry responsible for Local Government issued a Press Release with 5 key directives: (i) the suspension of stalls in open air markets other than those selling food items and the keeping of distance between one stall and another; (ii) the closing of all locality health clinics (not Polyclinics) after consultations with the Ministry for Health; (iii) the closing of all Day Care Centres; (iv) use of electronic services rather than face to face services; and (v) the postponement of all Local Tribunal sittings.

1.3 *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

As indicated in reply to question at para. 1.1 above, the areas of health, education, social issues and civil protection fall within the remit of central Government. In this respect, co-ordination is done either by means of Directives issued to public entities by the Principal Permanent Secretary with respect to administrative issues (such as modalities for teleworking) or the Ministry for Health with respect to issues relating to health measures.

The interface between the central authorities and Local Government is done through the ministry responsible for Local Government.

- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

Special financial assistance has been given to local authorities by the Ministry responsible for local government through an 'ad hoc' contingency fund to be expended on any COVID-19 related extraordinary initiatives that are required from time to time. One such initiative was the erection of protection screens on the front desks of the local council administrative offices.

In the remote cases where a Local Council contractor could not honour his contractual obligations, delegation of power from the Minister to the Director responsible for Local Government was made in order to expedite requests by local authorities to obtain temporary service through a direct order.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

Several measures were introduced for the protection and safety of the Local Councillors and staff. These included the facilitation of teleworking for council employees who can perform duties from home, as well as legal amendments enacted to allow for council and annual locality meetings not to be open to the public but be live streamed.

In addition, by means of a circular issued by the director responsible for local government, it is being ensured that all Local Councils continue to provide the necessary services without any interruptions. All Local Councils continue to deliver services, in certain instances promoting more the use of online services (such as online permits) with a considerable reduction of persons calling at the council administrative offices.

An initiative called *YouSafe* was created as a Community Support Platform in view of the fast developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic. 68 Facebook Groups (one for each Local Council), are linked with the Page, one for each Local Council, managed and moderated independently by the respective Local Council team. This Platform enables the strong Local Councils' team of over 500 people from employees and executive secretaries to elected councillors and mayors to keep in contact with their community at all times during the crisis. It also ensures that the elderly are not forgotten, citizens are safe, and that our communities stay in good health. YouSafe also creates a dialogue between the Council and its residents, the business community, NGOs, civil society networks as a means of support to communities to help each other.

Specific initiatives taken by Local Councils to support local citizens include:

- The posting of messages by the Minister for Local Government about the important function of Local Government particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic
- the posting of press briefings by the health authorities
- live discussions between Local Councillors, Regional Presidents and the Local Councils Association

- Information to residents about bank services
- Sharing of tips of what one should do when told to self-isolate
- Online initiatives for kids, such as drawing competitions
- An initiative whereby youths call elderly relatives on a daily basis to check how they are and offer help if they are in need of anything
- Posting of online messages on how to keep fit and enjoy a healthy mind
- Information to residents about shops offering home deliveries

2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

Whilst concentrated efforts are done with respect to the major cities (mainly the capital city and the old cities), in particular with respect to fumigation of public areas that are more frequented (such as near pharmacies, food outlets, etc), zones within rural municipalities are also being fumigated on the specific request of the Local Council of the locality. Given the size of the country, however, it is pertinent to state that all localities are given their due importance, irrespective of whether they are villages, towns or cities.

2.3. *Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?*

Inter-municipal co-operation is mainly done through the YouSafe initiative and the interlocution of the Local Government Division and the Local Councils Association, whereby good practices and good examples are shared between all councils. With respect to administrative issues, these are shared and discussed through the Local Government intranet platform.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. *Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency*

Civil participation is encouraged through social media, such as the Local Councils' Facebook or internet pages, the Local Councils Association's Facebook, the YouSafe Facebook pages and Local Government social media.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. *How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have there been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)*

The essential services provided by the Local Councils have continued uninterruptedly. These include:

- The collection of all household waste, including organic, recycled and mixed waste
- The provision of bulky refuse services given free of charge to requesting citizens
- The upkeep and maintenance of parks and gardens
- The provision of street lighting maintenance
- The provision of street upkeep and maintenance
- The issuing of permits
- The provision of customer support

Measures introduced by the Local Government administration in order to continue to provide services uninterrupted include:

- Facilitation for the approval of telework by Local/Regional Council Executive Secretaries and council employees
- Introduction of roster between council employees in order to ensure uninterrupted provision of services
- Facilitating the increased use of online applications and processing of permits for the public.

6. *Additional good practice/information*

A **Contingency Plan** was immediately set up once the pandemic became apparent. The Contingency Plan made by the ministry responsible of Local Government took into consideration the worst case scenarios, such as having a reduction of public services due to worker problems encountered by the contractors, the protection of Local Councillors, staff employees and the citizens calling at Local Council administrative offices, as well as the allocation of a Budget to assist local authorities with respect to additional measures necessitated by them as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ongoing consultation and discussions by the ministry and the Local Government Division are held with the key Local Government stakeholders, in particular the Local Councils Association (representing elected Councillors) and the ANSEK (representing the Local/Regional Council Executive Secretaries). This ongoing consultation process also served to tackle issues as they would crop up in order to address concerns in an expedient manner as well as taking into consideration all the options available.

Citizen involvement and provision of information are deemed as key ingredients to ensure good democratic governance, and of particular importance is communication between the local authorities and the citizen. The use of the Local Council Facebook pages and the YouSafe Facebook page have served as an ideal means for this purpose.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

In order to ensure an optimal and efficient management of situations within the provisions of the normative framework, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic declared by the World Health Organization on 17.03.2020, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova adopted amendments to the Law 212/2004 *on the state of emergency, siege and war regime*. According to the Law, the competences of the central and local public administration are established. Thus, at the central level, the planning, organization and coordination of the implemented measures are entrusted to the Commission for Emergency Situations of Moldova (headed by the Prime Minister and includes representatives from all ministries and departments), while the coordination of the implementation of the necessary measures is entrusted to the Civil Protection Service, within the Ministry of the Internal Affairs. At the local level, measures are taken by the commission for emergency situations of the local public administration authority, which operates under the leadership of the Commission for Emergency Situations of Moldova. Therefore, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Security and Intelligence Service of Moldova, with the support of the National Army, are responsible for coordinating the implementation of the necessary measures.

Following the adoption of the amendments to the above Law, as well as the declaration of the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19) by the World Health Organization on 11th March 2020 and the introduction of the national red code in connection with the epidemiological situation caused by the infection COVID-19 by the Extraordinary National Commission on Public Health on 13th March 2020, at the proposal of the Government, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova declared a state of emergency on 17th March until 15th May 2020 throughout Moldova (Parliament Decision No. 55 of 17.03.2020). The decision entered into force on the date of its adoption and was immediately communicated to the public through mass media and was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova informed the UN Secretary-General and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe about the decision and the reasons for its adoption. According to the document, it was established that, during a state of emergency, the Commission for Emergency Situations of Moldova will issue regulations on the implementation of the necessary measures to prevent, diminish and eliminate the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

In the period before the declaration of the state of emergency, decisions on the prevention and management of emergency situations in the public health field were taken by the Extraordinary National Commission for Public Health, headed by the Moldovan Prime Minister. All the decisions of the commissions are published on the Government's official website <https://gov.md/ro/content/informatii-privind-coronavirus>

Additionally, it can be mentioned that preparedness for and response to public health emergencies is part of the national civil protection system and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection is responsible for health components and preparedness for a possible pandemic. Preparedness for and response to public health emergencies is based on a comprehensive, cross-sectoral, cross-cutting network responsible for supervision, inspection, monitoring, communication and enforcement.

1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

In addition to those mentioned in point 1.1, in order to provide information on the decisions of the state leadership, upon the request / decision of the Supreme Security Council, of which the President of the Republic of Moldova is the head, the following structures were involved: the Permanent Cell for monitoring the crisis caused by COVID-19 and the Single Command Center of the Emergency Situations Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At the same time, according to the decision of the Supreme Security Council, the Government developed a plan with four potential scenarios of the epidemic caused by Codiv-19.

As an inter-ministerial structure supporting the decision-making of the Commission for Emergency Situations, there is a Centre for Management in Emergency Situations, whose activity is regulated by the government's Decision 803/2018, and which includes representatives of the General Inspectorate for Emergencies, General Inspectorate of Police, General Inspectorate of the Border Police, General Inspectorate of Carabinieri, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, Ministry of Defense. If necessary, representatives of other institutions may be requested.

The Center has started its activity since March 17, 2020 simultaneously with the territorial control points for emergency situations of the commissions for emergency situations in the districts, Chisinau municipality, Balti municipality and ATU Gagauzia, as well as the local control points for emergency situations of the commissions for emergency situations in villages (communes), cities (municipalities).

At the same time, the General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs maintains an interactive map regarding the number of people in the self-isolation regime, which allows monitoring and recording them all over the country. Also, it includes the systematization and analysis of data related to the suspected cases of COVID-19, contains all data on persons who have entered and continue to enter the territory of the Republic of Moldova and who are obliged to observe self-isolation within 14 days.

1.3 *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

- According to the Law No. 212/2004 *on the state of emergency, siege and war*, as well as Government Decision No. 2. 1340/2001 *on the Commission for Emergency Situations of the Republic of Moldova*, the Commission coordinates the activity of the commissions for exceptional situations of the local public administration.

Also, the central and local public administration authorities inform the Commission about the real situation through the General Inspectorate for Emergencies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

- At the same time, on the basis of the Government Decision No. 820/2009 *regarding the Extraordinary National Commission for Public Health*, the Commission coordinates the activity of the territorial emergency commissions for public health, to which it provides, upon request, informational, organizational and practical assistance in the implementation of measures for prevention, reduction, response and liquidation of emergency situations.

- In order to ensure support in the organizational process of effective measures for preventing and combating the spread of infection, an operative exchange of information was organized between the representatives of the Ministry of Interior and medical

institutions, with the technical support of the General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Interior, web site - <https://casper.mai.gov.md/>

1.4 *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

With regard to the financial spending on pandemic prevention, mitigation and response, we highlight the following.

- Under the Decree No. 1 of March 18th, 2020, the Commission for Emergency Situations of Moldova decided to finance from the prevention fund of the National Health Insurance Company the purchase of protection means (gloves and medical masks) worth two million lei.

On 25th March, the Government decided to allot 36 million lei to the Health, Labour and Social Protection Ministry from the government's reserve fund, in order to purchase special protective equipment (protective screens and respirators) meant to prevent and combat the spread of infection COVID-19. On 28 March 2020, the Commission for Emergency Situations decided to allot an additional 19.5 million lei from the state intervention fund for this purpose, in order to purchase respirators.

In order to provide means of protection to the employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in accordance with point 4 of the Decree No. 8 of March 28th, 2020 of the Commission for Emergency Situations of the Republic of Moldova, it was prescribed the derogation from the provisions of article 2, paragraph (1) letter a) of the Law No. 131/2015 *on public procurement* and paragraph 2 of the Regulation on low value public procurement, approved by the Government Decision No. 665/2016, during the state of emergency and allowed the Ministry of Internal Affairs to purchase, using an agreed procedure, without prior notice the antiseptic products and personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, protective screens, protective coveralls) necessary to prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 infection, worth up to 1 million lei, including without the value added tax, estimated by the number of employees.

In line with paragraph 15 of the Decree No. 10 of 31st March 2020, the Commission for Emergency Situations decided to allocate from the government's intervention fund to the Health, Labour and Social Protection Ministry 5.4 million lei for the purchase of protective suits, through the Centre for Centralized Public Procurement in the public health sector. Also, in order to prevent and combat the spread of infection, including in medical institutions, the Cabinet decided to earmark another 35.7 million lei from the compulsory health insurance fund, in line with point 10 of the Commission for Emergency Situations, No 13 of 3rd April 2020, for the purchase of tests to detect Covid-19 infection.

Under the Decree No 14 of 6th April 2020, the Commission established a single surcharge for employees of public health institutions in case of infection with Covid-19 while performing their duties, which will be covered from the Government's intervention fund (see *points 14-16 of Decision No 14 of 6th April 2020*).

In particular, we note that the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its subordinated administrative bodies have incurred expenses worth 2,197,830.36 lei from the state budget and 2,624,819.36 from donations.

The Ministry of Defense spent 476.0 thousand lei in financial means to purchase disinfectants and protection equipment from the budget allotted to the authorities for 2020.

Also, from the Defense Ministry's stocks were used 2,781 litres of diesel fuel, 612 litres of petrol and 76 kilograms of oil, worth 50,800 lei, to develop patrolling activities, transport doctors and patients.

The Justice Ministry and its subordinated administrative bodies spent 347,747.09 lei from the state budget to purchase personal protective equipment, disinfectants and other items to prevent and diminish the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

At the same time, in order to perform the necessary actions, the goods previously purchased from the state budget were used, taking into account the specifics of the subordinated administrative bodies (latex gloves, medical masks, disinfectant wipes, etc.). It is worth mentioning that Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims "Memoria" provided the National Penitentiary Administration with a batch of disinfectants worth 21,146.00 lei free of charge. Important donations of tests, PPE and other medical goods have been provided by WHO, SDC, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the European Commission, Turkey, the United States of America, Romania, UNDP, UNICEF, etc.

- The Government has launched a fundraising campaign in the form of donations to combat coronavirus (COVID-19). The Ministry of Finance opened 3 bank accounts for this purpose, in Moldovan lei, as well as in US dollars and euros. On April 28, in the accounts opened by the Ministry of Finance, funds were collected in the total amount of 21.8 million lei. In accordance with the Law on Public Finance and Fiscal Budgetary Responsibility, the above-mentioned financial means are transferred to the Government Intervention Fund, and used as needed, based on Government decisions.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1. Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)

- Territorial Emergency Commissions have established (by decision/ decree) cells for continuous monitoring of the development of infection COVID-19. There is a good communication and coordination between central, regional and local authorities in terms of taking needed decisions to introduce, suspend or cancel isolation and / or quarantine measures at local or community level based on analysis of every day situation related to Covid 19 outbreak.

- The mayors' offices have been warned and informed by various means (official website, local television, etc.) about the need to ensure the health of the population and avoid trips to them, establishment of emergency telephone lines, as well as the current epidemiological situation in the area, and measures necessary to ensure the safety of the population in the territory.

For example, the Chisinau City Hall has addressed to the elderly, people with disabilities, people living alone and facing difficult emergency situations, requesting assistance through sectorial emergency telephone lines.

At the same time, in order to cope with the epidemiological development, some mayors' offices launched fundraising campaigns to prevent and combat the Covid-19 virus and provided material assistance, distributing food to the elderly, lonely people and people with special needs.

- Due to the temporarily closing of the educational institutions, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) decided to ensure the distance education process in quarantine conditions and approved the "Methodology of continuing the distance education in quarantine conditions" –

https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/ordin_mecc_metodologia_invatamant_distanta.pdf?fbclid=IwAR34rYKYQLpQrKbgKvdLXBbMzhzxNexex26ixYelUtD5Nu-8WaHNZkRS04M

The regulatory document provides for the use of electronic and online resources, as well as other forms of remote communication.

As a territorial / municipal initiative launched during the Covid-19 Pandemic on the organization of distance education, it can be mentioned the joint project of the City Hall of Chisinau and MECR - Online Education. The Online Education project is implemented by the Chisinau City Hall and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, with the support of the Soros Foundation-Moldova, Technical University of Moldova, Edu Tolk Show, Crunchyroll, National Association of ICT Companies and the Academy of Innovation and Change through Education. The number of lessons that were filmed within the project is 1817. The lessons are already accessible on Youtube channels in Romanian and Russian, as well as on TV, at the operators: Moldtelecom, StarNet and Arax. At the same time, on April 30, the TV operator TV Sat started broadcasting the lessons at regional level.

Other main actions undertaken by MECR with the support of development partners to ensure the process of distance learning are: provision of equipment and Internet connection to teachers and students without computer technologies, training of teachers in the use of digital resources, monitoring of the educational process, distance learning, development of video resources to prepare students for state final exams, organization of psychological assistance to children/students, parents and teachers, etc.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries have redirected their activities into virtual space to provide students with sources of information. In this way, students can request information from several libraries in the country as well as from several blogs and online platforms during an emergency situation.

2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?

In the context of temporary closing educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread/disease of the COVID-19 pandemic, the educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova faced a number of difficulties. The biggest challenge is the provision of computer technologies for teachers and students to develop the distance learning process. Thus, at the request of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, the executive authorities have allocated financial support to purchase computer technologies in order to provide primary, secondary and higher education institutions of the country (in the amount of 20 million lei from the redistribution accounts between budget items).

We note that pupils who do not have computer technologies for online classes (4.4 per cent) have not been left out of the education process. The teachers, in cooperation with the administration of the educational institutions, identify solutions for the enrollment of pupils in the educational process: consulting students and parents through fixed telephony; distributing multiplied materials at the students' gates; teaching parents the educational process when they come back from work.

2.3. *Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?*

There is a good inter-municipal cooperation in providing healthcare services to patients. In case if a municipality is under quarantine, patients from such locality are taken and treated in the medical facility/hospital from neighboring municipality. For example, with the establishment of a quarantine regime in the municipality of Sorooca, as well as in the medical emergency substation Sorooca, the emergency calls from this area were taken by teams of doctors from the Floresti town.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 *What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?*

The Republic of Moldova, like other states, has imposed restrictions on border crossing. During this period, the Inspectorate General of Border Police, as an advanced body on measures to prevent and control risks related to cross border transfers with negative impact on public health (Government Decision nr. 531/2014), implements measures to prevent and respond to epidemiological situation.

Each person crossing the state border has to:

- fill in the epidemiological file;
- sign a declaration of his/her responsibility for his/her compliance with the quarantine regime within 14 days;
- sign a declaration of his/her responsibility regarding the obligation to purchase a national medical insurance coverage for 2020 (in case of absence);
- not leave the quarantine area;
- report immediately the following symptoms to the family doctor or National Emergency Service: fever, cough, runny nose or difficulty breathing.

Persons who do not take measures to prevent and/or control epidemiological diseases are informed that they are responsible according to the following:

- Art. 80 of the Contravention Code - fine from 22 500 to 25 000 lei or
- Art.215 of the Criminal Code - fine from 36,000 to 50,000 lei or imprisonment for up to 7 years.

Also:

- all regular flights to and from the Republic of Moldova are suspended, except those that have the right to fly to/from Chisinau International Airport;
- repatriation of Moldovan citizens by road is allowed only after agreement and coordination with the Commission for Emergency Situations;
- access to the border zone by persons, vehicles, as well as economic and other activities is restricted.

At the same time, a number of preventive measures are implemented at border, namely:

- temperature measurement, checking of all persons crossing the border both at entry and exit from the Republic of Moldova;
- all quarantined persons are included in the national surveillance list and are prohibited from leaving the country;
- identification at border controls and documentation of persons who have violated the quarantine measures;
- daily information on the compliance of air carriers with the requirements to stop regular and charter flights, as well as on the termination by the Moldovan railway company of international routes for passenger traffic.

At the same time, daily information is exchanged with the border authorities of the neighboring countries on measures taken to reduce the risk of spreading the respiratory syndrome caused by the new COVID-19, as well as on cases of identifying infected persons.

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?

There is good cross-border cooperation with Romania and Ukraine. The diplomatic missions of the Republic of Moldova in the respective states are in permanent contact with the representatives of the Border Police, which provide constant support in organizing the transit corridors for the repatriation of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. In the same context, MFAEI and IGPF offer the same support to the Diplomatic Missions of Ukraine and Romania.

Diplomatic efforts to mobilize foreign aid have paid off. At this stage, it was possible to get assistance in COVID-19 combating from several states. At the bilateral level, several states that were unable to respond positively to Moldova's requests for assistance because of their own difficulties in supplying health systems demonstrated openness by including Moldova in the list of exceptions for export (Romania's example), offering assistance in fast processing of customs procedures, providing information on equipment manufacturers (South Korea), provided sets of medicines (Japan), or cooperated in the repatriation process of Moldovan citizens (Romania, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Turkey, Belarus, the Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Germany).

The Romanian Government has sent a team of 52 people on a support mission, including specialists in primary care, emergency care, internal medicine and intensive care, who will work with doctors in Moldova in the context of managing the epidemiological situation. The mission will last 15 days, starting on April 30, 2020. The Romanian medical mission aims to support medical staff in the Republic of Moldova, in order to manage COVID-19 infection. Also in this context, the Republic of Moldova is going to receive aid in the form of medical equipment and medicines from Romania.

The European Commission has decided to include the Republic of Moldova in the list of countries that will benefit from a new package of EU macro-financial assistance to reduce the negative effects of the crisis caused by Covid-19. The provision of a loan of 100 million euros - on advantageous terms and on prompt terms - launches a strong message of EU solidarity towards the Republic of Moldova. We also note the amount of EUR 87 million offered to the Republic of Moldova in the form of a grant to counteract the consequences of the pandemic, which are reallocations of funds not yet consumed for assistance projects, as well as those being scheduled for this year. In the next period, with the support of the EU Delegation in Chisinau, the destinations of these funds will be determined, meant to cover both the needs of the health system and the overcoming of the economic and social consequences. In addition to the amounts mentioned above, the Republic of Moldova will also have access to funds for the EU's neighborhood, which amounts to up to 700 million Euros, primarily for SMEs throughout the region, through international financial institutions.

It is crucial that in the process of managing the COVID-19 crisis, countries have concluded that interaction and solidarity are real solutions to overcoming the pandemic and its consequences. In this regard, it is appropriate and welcome the decision of the European Commission adopted on April 24, 2020 at the proposal of Romania, in agreement with other Member States, on launching in 2021 an Operational Program dedicated to health, with a budget of about 4.5 billion euro.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

- **Study COVID-19 Tracker-** addressed primarily to the Moldovan authorities involved in planning and coordinating efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Likewise, the study data are addressed to experts in various fields who make efforts to predict the evolution of the pandemic, the media, and, obviously, for information purposes to the entire population of the Republic of Moldova.

This study is conducted by the Center for Social Studies and Marketing "CBS-Research" with conceptual and expertise support provided by the Center for Health Policy and Analysis.

The study was made possible by financial support from the Eastern European Foundation from resources provided by Sweden.

In the context in which the authorities and all those involved in combating the pandemic need evidence and up-to-date information to coordinate measures and efforts, this study comes with measurements of population behaviour following social distancing recommendations to avoid COVID-19 infection.

The study is being performed on daily mini-samples to ensure and evidence in the dynamics.

- Alarmed by the situation in the country, young volunteers from the Network of 44 Youth Centers in the Republic of Moldova, with the support of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), launched **an online mobilization campaign** to support the fight against the spread of the Coronavirus epidemic (COVID-19). They have taken the authorities' urge to stay home and are trying to persuade their friends, relatives, especially grandparents, to do the same.

The online mobilization campaign will continue until the end of April and will involve famous people and young people known to reach as many people as possible.

- Civil society organization Promo-LEX launched **a civic monitoring platform in the context of combating the COVID-19 pandemic**

The state of emergency involves the restriction and limitation of human rights. During this period, cases of abuse or even violations of certain rights are possible and citizens often need a consultation, advice, to overcome a situation or to report a problem that seriously and unjustifiably infringes their rights. man.

Out of the desire to contribute to informing society about the problems faced by citizens, including patients, doctors, police, but also relevant public authorities in the context of combating the COVID-19 pandemic, the Promo-LEX Association launched the platform www.monitor.md to contribute to this much-needed effort to our society which has been in isolation for more than 3 weeks.

Starting from April 3, 2020, anyone can report various problems, violations related to the establishment of the state of emergency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This platform offers the possibility of placing a signal with a short description and locating it on an interactive online map.

Moreover, the platform contains free standard forms that provide legal guidance for those who would like to notify the competent authorities of certain abuses. The Promo-LEX Association considers that this platform could be especially useful during the state of emergency. The media is encouraged to take the information of

public interest from this platform to bring it to the attention of society and the authorities, to the extent that the information will be available and proven properly, to self-report to stop certain violations or provide necessary assistance to citizens.

The platform also contains resources accessible on the Internet regarding different groups, organizations and / or people who offer or collect in various forms help (informational, material / financial, psychological, technical, etc.) for people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- American Chamber of Commerce in Moldova conducted and presented the results of the study "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Moldovan businesses: realities, expectations, actions" in a meeting hosted by the Economic Council to the Prime Minister. The purpose of the Study was to identify the main factors generated by COVID-19 pandemic that are negatively affecting entrepreneurial activity. The meeting was attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure and Ministry of Finance, representatives of other public authorities and by numerous business associations. The study was based on the survey questionnaire responded to by 315 companies from more than 20 industries, being conducted in the period March 30 – April 6 among Moldovan businesses. The results were taken into account by the Government in adopting the support measures to business community.
- Since the onset of the crisis, **proposals on what measures are necessary from business associations** are continuously collected and assessed. More than 300 proposals were collected up until now. Tendency observed: businesses now better understand their needs. Proposals are shared with all the ministries, asked to take them into considerations when formulating policy response.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have there been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

International and interurban transport were suspended from 10 March, public transport in urban areas is restricted for some hours during working days and during weekends.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova decided to offer fiscal support for enterprises and individuals, as well as postponing interest on loans. Education has moved to using alternative on-line education platforms.

A range of additional packages of socio-economic measures to support the population and businesses during the state of emergency was approved on 21 April. The measures include an increase in the amount of unemployment benefit by almost 55% and the extension of eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits. The large number of labour migrants returned to the country after losing their jobs abroad will be automatically entitled to this social allowance. The state safety net level (minimum guaranteed monthly income), designed to support low income families, has been increased by almost 20%. For businesses which stopped their activities due to the pandemic, the government has announced state subsidies to cover social and health insurance contributions and other taxes. For patent holders who ceased their activities during the state of emergency, an exemption from patent payment has been guaranteed. An extension period for payment for all types of local taxes until the end of July is foreseen.

Public authorities and business environment have united their efforts to identify optimal solutions for developing digitization programs for business processes, to rationalize the use of resources and to apply new methods of business organization.

In accordance with Decision No. 86/2020 of the Board of Directors of the National Agency for Energy Regulation (ANRE), it has been banned license holders from suspending energy supply services or any penalties applied to consumers for non-payment of bills for electricity, heating, natural gas or drinking water, during the state of emergency. Except when the interruption of supply is done to avoid endangering human life or property damages.

In order to monitor the situation in the field of electronic communication services in the context of an exceptional situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Information Technology (ANRCETI) approved a number of normative acts:

- ANRCETI Administrative Board approved Decision No. 05 of 16.03.2020 on Emergency Measures related to providers operation and provision of publicly available electronic communications and postal services;
- ANRCETI Administrative Board approved Decision No. 06 of 24.03.2020 on the implementation of the provisions of the Commission for Emergency Situations of the Republic of Moldova No. 3 of March 23, 2020
- Decision no. 9 of April 9, 2020 regarding the provision of publicly available electronic communications services during the emergency situation.

SE Posta Moldovei ensured the distribution of pensions and social benefits at home for old people and in difficulties.

In accordance with Decision No. 81/2020, the Executive Board of the National Bank of Moldova (NBM) approved a decision that allows licensed banks to postpone or change the payment deadlines and/or the amounts of due payments on loans granted to economic agents until 30 June 2020. The decision refers to the legal entities whose financial situation is temporarily affected due to the state of emergency and the economic consequences generated by COVID-19.

In response to the serious impact of the national and international transport sector after COVID-19, the Commission for Emergency Situations of the Republic of Moldova has identified priorities and solutions for the re-launch the transportation activity in the post-COVID period. One of the first steps taken by the Commission was to ensure effective permits for entry, departure and transit access of aircraft operated for repatriation of Moldovan citizens and other eligible persons from foreign countries. In addition, in order to ensure transparency and fair treatment of transport users, requirements and procedures for obtaining permits for international passenger traffic have been established. The most important priority is the rationalization of basic transport services, and in particular, ensuring the supply of basic medical supplies, agricultural products and other external goods and services, as well as the settlement of failures in regional supply chains. With regard to national public transport services, during a state of emergency they were provided in strict compliance with imposed hygienic regulations. However, the measures taken could not address the clear negative impact of the Covid-19 crisis on public transport flow.

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

At the local level, the Chisinau City Hall has launched an online platform to monitor patients infected with COVID-19 in mild form, undergoing treatment at home, in self-isolation or quarantined by family doctors. The project is implemented starting April 29, 2020, by all institutions subordinated to territorial medical associations in Chisinau, in order to facilitate the process of monitoring by family doctors of patients infected with coronavirus, with mild forms of infection. The territorial medical associations report to the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Health on the health status of patients on the basis of data obtained from the platform.

6. *Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?*

Among the best practices, we can mention the initiatives of economic agents during this period, namely:

- **Orange Moldova** publicly launched the National Campaign "Solidarity for Moldova", which includes social responsibility actions that support authorities and society in the emergency situation caused by the global pandemic Covid-19. Thus, from the first days of the emergency to ensure communication, all clients of the company received an exceptional bonus of 5 GB of Internet traffic. At the same time, approximately to 3,000 health workers from all over the country, working in 200 public and private health facilities, have been offered 360 minutes free of charge, while 116 public institutions used 1 free month of "Voice and Internet". For the education system in the country, 5,000 teachers were offered free mobile trainees, 50 GB each, for two months, to those teachers who are involved in distance learning but do not have access to the service.

At the same time, the company donated 15 thousand protection kits for medical workers (gloves, suits, protective screens, reinforced protective masks, and disposable boots) and provided support for the connection needs of the Covid-19 Chisinau center located at MoldExpo.

- **Moldcell** offered electronic communication services to teachers and medical staff as Internet traffic and/or minutes for calls. Moreover, the Internet traffic was transmitted to the patients of the State Medical and Sanitary Institution Covid-19 and to 500 students from ATU Gagauzia with lack of access to Internet in order to benefit from online classes.

- SE "**Moldovagaz**" has developed a mobile application (Viber), which allows collecting data on monthly gas consumption by home consumers, in order to exclude home visits of the company's employees responsible for recording natural gas consumption.

- **Taxis** (Itaxi and partner companies) provided medical staff with about 900 taxis for free trips to and from the most important hospitals in Chisinau. At the same time, taxi companies joined the campaign to support elderly people by delivering food to their homes. Thus, 30 drivers, accompanied by volunteers and social workers, visited the homes of more than 400 elderly people and handed in the necessary food. Also during this period, the "Courier Service" option was launched in Chisinau, observing the safety rules and taking necessary preventive measures.

- **The Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection**, with the gratitude has posted on the official website the list of donations made during this period, <https://msmps.gov.md/en/content/donations-received-support-healthcare-system-during-covid-19-pandemic>

- In order to meet the needs of the state, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, on the basis of CES decisions, established special mechanisms for the activity of foreigners in projects of national importance;

ensured the legal restoration of the rights of foreigners in Moldova, who due to the state of emergency were unable to ensure the submission of documents; the sanction against foreigners who voluntarily leave the country within 30 days after the state of emergency was lifted was eliminated.

Also, joint activities and coordination of measures with international structures were ensured at a distance (through the network). For example: through UNHCR, the problem of providing food packages to asylum-seekers who were accommodated in the Open Asylum Centre but who were prevented from working at their place of work due to movement restrictions was resolved. Thanks to coordination with civil society, the products were purchased and distributed to the Centre's tenants.

Ministry of Internal Affairs in partnership with a chain of shops supported socially vulnerable families and the elderly in quarantined premises. Thus, on Professionals' Day, with the support of fellow carabineers, MIA rescuers transported 400 packs of food for residents of 4 quarantined settlements and towns.

MONTENEGRO

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

An outbreak of infectious coronavirus disease was officially declared in Montenegro on 26 March 2020. The management of this crisis is centralised, and its focal point is the National Infectious Disease Coordination Body (NKT). The NKT has five operational areas of responsibility for:

- 1) coordinating measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- 2) conducting activities regarding the return of Montenegrin nationals from abroad,
- 3) supporting the economy for duration of measures to prevent coronavirus spread;
- 4) withdrawal and coordination international assistance, and
- 5) managing donations.

It includes 17 members, representatives of institutions and public companies at managerial level.

Within the NKT there is a Crisis Medical Staff, with representatives from different health institutions, and within the Crisis Medical Staff there are three additional teams (for the formation of temporary hospitals, for the formation of respiratory centres, for the provision of medical equipment and supplies) the number of members of which varies from four to seven.

Cooperation between the national and local level was generally good. It was particularly important in view of consensus on quarantining an entire municipality.

The Ministry of Public Administration is in constant communication with the municipalities and according to the submitted information and interviews, the municipalities reacted immediately after the entry into force of the Order for the implementation of measures to prevent infection caused by COVID-19, carrying out activities and regularly informing citizens.

Appropriate orders and decisions on the implementation of the new way of organising work, instructions and recommendations for citizens have been issued, crisis teams have been formed and appropriate measures are being implemented.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The work of municipalities runs smoothly. Special measures have been introduced to allow some categories of staff to take special leave: parents with children under 11, persons over 60, pregnant women and other sensitive categories, etc. In addition, rotating on-call duties and home-based work have been introduced where possible.

In offices which receive the public, enhanced measures of hygiene and protection have been introduced, with strictly controlled and prescribed implementation of security principles regarding the presence of more people in a confined space and with repeated advice to citizens not to come in person without need but to use e-government and electronic communications services.

Municipalities also provide information and guidance to citizens on their websites, through social networks, local public broadcasters and other systems, encouraging them to use electronic means of communication and to comply with security measures.

Special services such as Municipal Police and Inspection Services etc. carry out continuous patrolling and remind citizens to adhere to the preventive measures.

Almost all municipalities have set up special telephone lines and e-mail addresses where citizens can get all the necessary information twenty-four hours a day, both regarding the

work of local self-government and the exercise of their rights and about COVID-19. Some municipalities already have special systems and applications for communication with citizens while others have created special communities on social networks. All have highlighted adequate information on their websites.

Municipalities have taken a number of additional measures, including setting working methods for local public offices and businesses, closing some public facilities, discontinuing sporting and cultural events, regulating public transport, and establishing separate/isolated reception rooms for citizens with suspected coronavirus in some health facilities, etc.

Municipalities have simplified administrative procedures and enabled citizens to use electronic services, so that the need for citizens to come to the premises and leave their homes is reduced to the necessary minimum.

Municipalities, through the Red Cross, provided and distributed food packages, paid significant funds to the account of the National Coordination Body as aid to fight COVID 19, and to the Red Cross as aid to socially vulnerable categories of the population. In cooperation with other relevant institutions, the delivery of food, medicines, access to water and other necessary means was provided on a daily basis, and all challenges were solved in a timely manner and without delay.

The National Kitchen (a social service) in Podgorica and in some municipalities provided meals for nearly 1000 users every day, organising its work in compliance with the prescribed measures to protect the population. Accordingly, citizens received meals at their home address, without having to pick them up themselves.

All municipal services have adapted their work to the new epidemiological situation. In addition to regular activities, the primary task was to make a full contribution to compliance with the prescribed measures. The Protection and Rescue Service, the Communal Police and the Communal Inspection continuously monitored the observance of the prescribed measures in the field. A high level of hygiene was maintained in cities, with regular disinfection of all public areas and adequate treatment of waste from persons who were in self-isolation. Employees in municipalities and public services performed work tasks respecting the prescribed measures and equipped with protective equipment, thus protecting personal and public health. Communication with citizens is ongoing, all requests are resolved without delay, and the Municipal Protection and Rescue Team was available to citizens who were in rural areas. In addition to the above, the requests of citizens who were outside their place of residence at the time when the ban on intercity traffic came into force were also successfully resolved.

The Deputy Mayor of the Capital was the representative of the Union of Municipalities in the Operational Team of the National Coordination Body, whose role is to coordinate the work of all local governments in Montenegro. The daily communication of the administrations of all municipalities or representatives of the municipal protection and rescue teams has contributed to successfully facing and solving all challenges. As an epidemiological situation such as this does not know territorial restrictions, it was necessary to act in a coordinated manner. All preventive activities were implemented equally in all municipalities. Special attention is paid to high-risk areas, as well as municipalities that at one point had quarantine status. All of them approached the execution of all tasks with special care and a high degree of solidarity.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

With the entry into force of measures proposed by the National Coordination Body for Infectious Diseases to combat the spread of coronavirus infection, the implementation of cross-border projects involving Montenegrin local governments has been put in a situation of accelerated decision-making on further feasibility of project activities. Projects are implemented to the extent that the implementation of individual activities is possible in local conditions, without the need for physical participation of professional or managerial staff from partner or third countries, and without the need for public procurement in which interested bidders would be prevented from participating due to temporary public health measures. , since this would prevent market competition under the same conditions for all participants, and the desired achievement of the best value for money. Given that many project activities involve the free movement of people and goods or the cross-border provision of services, project activities have in many cases been suspended with the intention of being restarted as soon as public health and market opportunities allow. Cross-border project teams meet through available internet platforms, and in this way meetings are held with professional staff engaged in project implementation. Cooperation on the preparation of cross-border project proposals continued with the necessary adjustment of planned implementation activities to the new public health reality. The biggest challenge in the planning, preparation and implementation of international projects is the impossibility of predicting the duration of the new situation, and precisely defining deadlines for delaying the implementation of already adopted action plans, as well as for detailed and precise planning of new activities.

As for cross-border cooperation projects, they take place as far as possible at the local level. Project team meetings are held online. On most projects, a number of activities have been postponed until the conditions for their implementation are created.

Regarding the example of cross-border cooperation at the local level in the fight against Covid-19, as an example of cooperation it can be stated that at the regional level, at the level of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of Southeast Europe (NALAS), once a week all member associations exchange information on the situation. with Covid-19, measures of national authorities, as well as activities of local authorities and their associations in this field.

We also emphasise the good international cooperation of the Capital, which can be represented by the example of the support of the Capital of the People's Republic of China with a financial donation during the epidemic in this country, while the People's Republic of China responded by donating protective equipment to the Capital when Podgorica and Montenegro faced an epidemic.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

The activities of NGOs were not particularly visible to the public. Most NGOs have changed their work patterns, i.e. they have been predominantly working from home, which narrows the scope of work, while the pandemic has affected almost all other topics that the NGO sector is addressing.

The government did not include representatives of the civil sector in the bodies dealing with the current crisis.

Organisations targeting marginalised and vulnerable groups which were particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic continued their activities, namely those working with Roma, persons with disabilities and victims of domestic violence.

Civic activism has also come to the fore through a huge number of individuals who have shown solidarity and willingness to volunteer of their own initiative or through some organised forms. "Some of them are organised in informal associations of citizens, such as the "Hero of the Neighborhood" who are primarily focused on helping the elderly and the most vulnerable citizens. Also encouraging is the large number of Red Cross volunteers, and the fact that at no time was the number of volunteers below real needs.

MEASURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MOVEMENT AND LOITERING

1. Ban on leaving the housing facility every day from 23:00 until 5:00 the next day. Persons who take their pets out for a walk may stay in the public place for up to 60 minutes.

This prohibition does not apply to persons who carry out permitted regular tasks, persons employed in foreign diplomatic missions and consular posts and persons who provide services of public interest and are necessary for life and work of citizens (health, inspection bodies, police, military, fire services, utilities, media - including persons coming to media shows, agricultural activities on farms, etc.), as evidenced by certificate issued by the employer. As well as persons caring for persons who, due to illness or injury, are unable to independently carry out daily life activities, as evidenced by the certificate issued by the chosen doctor of these persons.

This measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

2. Children with autism spectrum disorders and wheelchair users, accompanied by one person, are allowed, for a maximum of 60 minutes a day, to be in a public place during the ban on leaving the housing facility.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

3. Gatherings of citizens in indoor and outdoor public places (public gatherings, public events, sports, political, religious, cultural and artistic, and private gatherings, ceremonies and events in line with the law) are prohibited.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

4. Ban on presence and loitering of more than one person in public places, except for a child under 12 years of age, a child with autism spectrum disorders and other disabilities and wheelchair users, with the presence of one parent, guardian, adoptive parent, foster, companion or other adult member of the family household. This prohibition does not apply to persons who perform their regular work tasks permitted by the orders. Members of the common family household are exempted from the prohibition of movement and detention in all public places of more than one person, with the obligatory keeping of a physical distance of at least two meters in relation to other person.

This measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

5. **Ban on presence and loitering of persons on beaches** (river, lake and sea), landscaped and unregulated bathing areas and picnic areas.

This measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

6. **Prohibition of sports and recreational activities in all public areas**, except for individual recreational physical activities, while staying at least 2 meters apart.

This measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

7. Civil servants and state employees employed in state authorities, state administration authorities, administrative authorities, and officials and state employees employed by local self-government authorities are prohibited from traveling abroad. Civil servants and state employees may make exceptional trips abroad, when traveling is of state interest, with the prior consent obtained from the head of authority.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

8. **It is prohibited to transport more than two adults in a passenger vehicle at the same time**, except for members of a shared family household. This prohibition does not apply to vehicles of legal entities carrying employees, vehicles of media representatives and vehicles used for the needs of emergency services (health, police, military, fire services, etc.).

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

9. Ban on visiting persons who are receiving hospital treatment in health care institutions and persons accommodated in social and childcare institutions.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

10. **Ban on visiting persons deprived of their liberty and detainees**, except for lawyers and court experts under the court decision and on visiting persons who are serving a prison sentence.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

11. Persons who have been or are suspected to have been in contact with persons with novel coronavirus disease or with persons suspected of having the disease, as well as persons coming from countries with high levels of local transmission of virus **must be quarantined**. Persons who have been in contact with persons sick with the novel COVID -19, must be alone in the quarantine room.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

12. **Ban on wedding gatherings**

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

13. Only immediate family members are allowed to attend funeral services.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

14. Obligation of religious communities to adapt their activities to the current epidemiological situation and **perform religious ceremonies in religious buildings without the presence of believers.**

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

15. Gatherings in housing facilities are prohibited for persons who are not members of the shared household.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

TRAVELLING

16. Suspension of public transport of passengers in intercity, suburban and urban bus and van transport, except for organised transport of employees.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

17. **Ban on intercity passenger transport,** except for passenger motor vehicles carrying out activities essential for the traffic of goods, supply and delivery of medicines, ambulance, utilities, supply of fuel and electricity, transportation of employees, transportation of persons residing outside the place of residence in order for them to return to a place of residence.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

18. Suspension of public transport of passengers in domestic railway transport.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

19. Suspension of taxi services.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

20. **Suspension of international passenger traffic,** except for the arrival of Montenegrin nationals, through diplomatic and consular missions, announced to the Operational Staff of the National Coordination Body for Communicable Diseases, with mandatory quarantine accommodation, in accordance with the decision of the health and sanitary inspection.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

21. Suspension of public transport of passengers in international road, rail and air traffic except for irregular charter transport, organised for returning of Montenegrin nationals and foreign nationals back to their home country, with the consent of the National Coordination Body for Communicable Diseases.

The measure is valid until 1 June 2020.

22. Closure of border crossings for passenger border traffic to:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Šćepan Polje - Hum, the Plužine - Foča road; Šula - Vitina, the Pljevlja - Foča road;
- Republic of Albania: Grnčar - Baškim, the Plav - Shkoder road; Sukobin - Murićani, the Ulcinj - Shkoder road;
- Republic of Croatia: Kobila - Vitina, the Herceg Novi - Vitina - Dubrovnik road;
- Republic of Serbia: Ranče - Jabuka, the Pljevlja - Prijepolje road and Vuče - Godova, the Rožaje - Tutin road.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

23. Suspension of crossing the border crossing:

- Sitnica - Župci (Herceg Novi - Trebinje road),
- Meteljka - Metaljka (Pljevlja - Čajniče road),
- Čemerno (Pljevlja - Priboj road).

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

24. Ban on all cruisers and yachts from entering nautical tourism ports - marinas and commercial ports open to international traffic: Bar, Budva, Kotor, Kumbor-Portonovi port and Tivat (Gat I and Gat II), **except for organised reception and management of foreign vessels and their vessels crews, respecting self-isolation measures.**

Self-isolation of a foreign vessel, with crew, implies a berth in the port for 28 days, with health and sanitary supervision by the competent health institution, in accordance with the recommendations of the Public Health Institute of Montenegro, based on the decision of the health and sanitary inspection.

The charterer or concessionaire of a nautical tourism port - a marina and a commercial port open to international traffic is obliged to take measures to prevent the introduction into the country, suppress and prevent the transmission of a novel coronavirus, based on the recommendations of the Public Health Institute of Montenegro

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

25. Citizens of Montenegro are prohibited to travel to:

- Japan,
- France,
- Germany,
- Switzerland,
- Denmark,
- Austria.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

26. Ban on travelling from Montenegro to:

- Italy,
- Spain,
- South Korea,
- Iran; and
- China – Hubei province.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

27. **Tightened border control** will be carried over passengers in international traffic arriving from countries with detected cases, without the widely established local COVID-19 transmission.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

28. **Foreigners are prohibited from entering** the country, except foreigners with permanent or temporary residence in Montenegro, foreign seafarers in transit embarking or disembarking at ports Bar, Budva, Kotor, Kumbor-Portonovi port and Tivat (Gat I and Gat II) and foreigners who operate motor vehicles used for traffic of goods, with special measures of health and sanitary supervision, based on the decision of health and sanitary inspection.

The transport of goods for the needs of Montenegro and for transit remains smooth, with special measures of health and sanitary control; while transit of foreign seafarers is carried out with special measures of health and sanitary supervision, in accordance with the recommendations of the Public Health Institute of Montenegro.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

29. **Arrangement of all student tours, excursions, educational meetings, etc. abroad is prohibited.**

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

QUARANTINE AND SELF-ISOLATION

30. Compulsory self-isolation for all Montenegrin citizens, as well as for foreigners who have permanent or temporary residence in Montenegro, who come from abroad, based on the decision of the health and sanitary inspection.

Self-isolation means staying in family household, while the health status of this person, as well as all members of the household is monitored by the competent hygienic and epidemiological service, for 14 days.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

31. Undertaking continuous measures of monitoring the persons in self-isolation coming from countries with moderate and low levels of transmission and who did not come by organised transport, with strict adherence to this measure and control by the competent authorities, who are **obliged to file a criminal complaint for non-compliance with this measure, in accordance with the law.**

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

32. For persons who have been prescribed with self-isolation measure (in a family household or other facility), based on the decision of the Health and Sanitary Inspection, **after 14 days of self-isolation, measure is extended for another 14 days.**

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

33. Persons who have been quarantined by a decision of the sanitary inspection (in a facility designated by the Government of Montenegro for quarantine) and did not have symptoms of the novel coronavirus during the quarantine, shall be placed after the quarantine in the self-isolation in the family household for 14 days. The transport of these persons to family accommodation, will be carried out in line with the prescribed measures for prevention of coronavirus infection.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

34. The Health and Sanitary Inspection and the Police Directorate are tasked to monitor, to the maximum extent possible, activities of all persons who have been ordered a self-isolation, their household members, as well as persons who brought them from the border crossing to their place of residence. If they find that these persons do not act in accordance with the imposed measure, the Health and Sanitary Inspection and the Police Directorate will immediately file a criminal complaint with the competent state prosecutor's office for committing a criminal offense of failing to comply with the health regulations for the control of a dangerous contagious disease, for which imprisonment of up to one year is prescribed.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

35. Self-isolation of persons (in a family household or other facility), who have been in contact or are suspected to have been in contact with persons suffering from the novel coronavirus and who did not have symptoms of this disease, shall be extended by a decision of the Health and Sanitary Inspection for 14 days.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

36. Compulsory institutional isolation for persons who have been quarantined or self-isolated and are tested positive for the novel coronavirus, if they must be isolated from healthy persons and cannot be provided with self-isolation in family household; for patients who have been hospitalized, have recovered and have no symptoms of the disease, but have not yet had two consecutive negative results from samples taken at intervals of 24 hours; as well as for persons who came from abroad and tested positive for the novel coronavirus in quarantine.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

TRADE

37. **Banning the work of retail facilities**, except pharmacies and facilities where food, beverages, hygiene products, motor fuels, construction products, plant protection products and planting products, animal nutrition and treatment products are traded.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

38. **Ban on providing retail and catering services in shopping malls.**

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

39. **Limiting the number of customers**, based on the area of the retail outlet – only one person on 10 square meters. Regardless of the area, no more than 50 consumers are allowed to be in a retail outlet at the same time. Exceptions are farmer's markets and bazaars, where the number of customers who can be in the facility at the same time is limited to 100.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

40. **Responsible persons in retail outlets are obliged to maintain distance** of at least 2 meters between people in front of the facility, cash registers or sectors where goods are served by employees.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

41. Responsible persons in **retail outlets** are obliged to ensure that their **employees** implement **health protection measures** prescribed by the Public Health Institute of Montenegro.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

42. Responsible persons in the retail outlets are obliged to **display at the entrance of the facility notice on the maximum number of persons allowed to enter the facility at the same** and to organise the implementation of this measure.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

43. **Allowing pharmacies to deliver medicines and medical supplies to the home address of citizens with restricted movement.** Delivery may be made for medicines and medical supplies that meet the requirements for retail trade. The pharmacy performing

the delivery is obliged to keep records in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Pharmaceutical Activity.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

44. Ban on organising delivery of groceries and medicines to home addresses without the consent of the Operational Staff of the National Coordinating Body for Communicable Diseases.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

45. Pharmacies, food, beverage and hygiene facilities, specialised facilities for the sale of baby equipment, construction products, plant protection products and planting materials, animal nutrition and treatment products, agricultural machinery, and funeral equipment are **obliged to organise working hours from 07:00 to 22:00**, except delivery to the customer's address, which can be done during business hours, which the vendor points out in accordance with the regulations.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

46. Pharmacies, food, beverage and hygiene facilities, newsstands, specialised facilities for the sale of baby equipment, construction products, plant protection products and planting materials, animal nutrition and treatment products, agricultural machinery, and funeral equipment are allowed to organise working hours from 07:00 to 22:00, except delivery to the address of the buyer, except delivery to the customer's address, which can be done during business hours, which the vendor points out in accordance with the regulations.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

SPORT, ECONOMY, ENTREPRENEURS

47. Ban on providing catering services in hotels, except for the registered guests.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

48. Closure of disco clubs/bars and nightclubs/bars.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

49. Closure of catering facilities - cafes, pubs, cafeterias, restaurants and bars, except catering facilities that deliver food and offer takeout, with a ban on guests to stay within the facilities.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

50. The owners and tenants of restaurants and cafes are obliged to **make the outdoor furniture inaccessible for use**.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

51. Closure of **children's playrooms**.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

52. Closure of **fitness centres**.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

53. Closure of **casinos, betting shops and gambling houses**.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

54. Work of **indoor and outdoor sports and recreational facilities and swimming pools** is prohibited.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

55. Closure of **hair and beauty salons**.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

56. **Ban on organising sports events with the presence of the audience**, eventual arrival of sports teams from the most affected areas with the novel coronavirus is delayed until further notice.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

57. **Legal and natural persons performing construction works are obliged to organise work in a manner that ensures adherence to epidemiological measures**, especially respecting the social distance between employees and other measures to ensure health protection.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

58. Companies, other legal entities, or entrepreneurs who carry out the construction works and are responsible for the execution of construction works on the facility, i.e. for the execution of certain works are obliged to **put notice, in a conspicuous place on the construction site, on the temporary prevention and control measures against the novel coronavirus**.

The measure is valid until 15 May 2020.

59. Companies, other legal entities, or entrepreneurs who carry out the construction works and are responsible for the execution of construction works on the facility, i.e. for the execution of certain works are obliged to **ensure that all employees performing construction work, during their organised transportation to and from the construction site, as well as during their stay and work on the construction site (except during the mealtime), use personal protective equipment - masks and gloves**.

The measure is valid until 15 May 2020.

60. Companies, other legal entities, or entrepreneurs who carry out the construction works and are responsible for the execution of construction works on the facility, i.e. for the execution of certain works are obliged to **prohibit all employees who carry out construction work on the construction site, during working hours, from leaving the construction site to procure food, etc.**

The measure is valid until 15 May 2020.

61. Companies, other legal entities, or entrepreneurs who carry out the construction works and are responsible for the execution of construction works on the facility, i.e. for the execution of certain works are obliged to **provide food delivery to employees performing construction work on the construction site.**

The measure is valid until 15 May 2020.

62. Companies, other legal entities, or entrepreneurs who carry out the construction works and are responsible for the execution of construction works on the facility, i.e. for the execution of certain works are obliged to **ensure social distance during the organised transportation of employees from and to the construction site (bus or van).**

The measure is valid until 15 May 2020.

63. Companies, other legal entities, or entrepreneurs who carry out the construction works and are responsible for the execution of construction works on the facility, i.e. for the execution of certain works are obliged to organise work in several groups of 20 or less employees at larger construction sites (with 40 or more employees), bearing in mind that groups cannot be changed, while ensuring social distance at the construction site and avoiding to the greatest extent possible physical contact between these groups after leaving the construction site. This obligation also applies to the organisation of collective accommodation of employees, their transportation, area intended for food consumption at the construction site, the time distance when arriving at the construction site, which must prevent the merging of employees divided into groups.

The measure is valid until 15 May 2020.

64. Companies, other legal entities, or entrepreneurs who carry out the construction works and are responsible for the execution of construction works on the facility, i.e. for the execution of certain works are obliged to organise the work of the principal, responsible and other engineers indoors in such a way as to provide greater social distance with the mandatory use of personal protective equipment - masks and gloves.

The measure is valid until 15 May 2020.

EDUCATION

65. **Suspension of work** at public and private **educational institutions** .

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

66. During suspension of work at public and private educational institutions, one of the parent / guardians/ foster parents/ adoptive parents or a single parent of a child not older than 11 years of age, shall be granted the right to paid absence, except for employees in the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defence, the National Security Agency, the Ministry of the Interior, the Police Directorate, the Customs Administration, the Directorate for Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Affairs, institutions for accommodation of persons in the area of social and child protection, the Directorate for Execution of Criminal Sanctions, protection and rescue services and other authorities and services, which activities are assessed by the National Coordination Body for Communicable Diseases, as necessary for the duration of these measures.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

HEALTH SYSTEM

67. Modification of the health system functioning when providing health services, as follows:

- to provide specialist examinations for emergency patients based on the proposal of the chosen doctor with the label "urgent" at the Clinical Centre of Montenegro, general and specialised hospitals, as well as institutions in the Health System Network. Pre-scheduled specialist examinations will be performed once epidemiological conditions are met;
- to provide all medical services on a continuous basis for hematology/oncology patients at the Clinical Centre of Montenegro according to the established schedule;
- to delay screening programmes for colon, breast and cervical cancer while measures last;
- to suspend the operation of dental practices, with the obligation to arrange on-call emergency services for emergency patients;
- to oblige all community health centres to implement measures that will allow the rational and efficient use of human resources under current epidemiological conditions;
- to oblige the Health Centre Podgorica to open a checkpoint for patients "suspected of infection with COVID 19" in the Tološi-based health facility;
- to provide referral and transportation of patients for treatment outside Montenegro, only in life-threatening cases;

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

68. The temporary incapacity to work, determined by the competent medical commission, shall be extended until 15 May 2020, and the temporary incapacity to work up to 30 days, at the request of the insured person and based on the instructions of the chosen doctor, shall be extended by the competent medical commission until 15 May 2020.

The measure is valid until 15 May 2020.

STATE ADMINISTRATION

69. State authorities, state administration bodies, local self-government bodies and local governments are obliged to consider expired personal documents issued after 2008 (**identity card, passport and driver's license**), held by citizens, on the basis of which they exercise their rights or fulfill their obligations before these authorities, as **valid**.

The measure is valid until 1 June 2020.

70. State authorities, state administration bodies, bodies of local self-government and local government, legal entities exercising public authority and public services are obliged to **deliver by post all decisions in the proceedings before these bodies to the parties.**

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

71. Closure of the public offices of the Ministry of the Interior and the Real Estate Administration.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

72. **The number of citizens at the public service counters** in the units and branches of the Ministry of the Interior and other state administration bodies **is limited**, so that the maximum number of citizens allowed cannot be higher than the number of existing public service counters, regardless of the room surface.

The measure is valid until 4 May 2020.

73. Suspension of work of social-medical commissions of first instance in the social welfare institutions, in the field of social and child protection.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

74. Ensuring regular work and provision of services by legal entities established by state or local self-government, which perform tasks of public interest and are necessary for life and work of citizens.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

75. **Suspension of fee collection** (in the amount of EUR 2) for citizens who ordered the issuance of birth certificates and certificates from the register of Montenegrin citizens at www.dokumenta.me.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

76. Expired **sanitary booklets** by certain persons shall be considered valid until 30 June 2020.

The measure is valid until 30 June 2020.

77. The community police officer is also authorised to file criminal charges for determining criminal liability for failure to comply with the provisions of orders on temporary measures to suppress and prevent transmission of a novel coronavirus relating to:

- ban on providing catering services in hotels, except for registered guests;
- closure of disco clubs/bars and nightclubs/bars;
- closure of catering facilities - cafes, cafeterias, restaurants and bars, except catering facilities that deliver food and takeaway caterings, while guests' stay in these facilities is

prohibited;

- closure of shopping malls;
- ban on gathering of the population in indoor and outdoor public areas (public gatherings, public events, sports, political, religious, cultural and artistic, private gatherings, ceremonies and events, in accordance with the law);
- closure of children's playrooms;
- closure of fitness centres;
- closure of indoor and outdoor sports and recreational facilities and swimming pools;
- closure of casinos and bookmakers;
- suspension of public transport of passengers (suburban and urban) by bus and van;
- closure of hair and beauty salons;
- ban on the operation of commercial facilities, except pharmacies and facilities where food, beverages, hygiene products, motor fuels, construction products, plant protection products and planting products, animal nutrition and treatment products are traded;
- suspension of taxi services.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

78. Competent authorities that control and regulate the traffic on the roads are obliged to **consider traffic licenses which have expired valid until 1 June 2020** if the driver, along the license, possesses a valid insurance policy and proof of performed technical inspection of the vehicle.

The measure is valid until 1 June 2020.

79. State authorities, public administration bodies, local self-government and local administration authority, companies, public institutions and other legal persons, entrepreneurs and natural persons are obliged to **consider expired permanent residence permit, temporary residence permit and temporary residence and work permit of foreigners**, on the basis of which they exercise their rights or fulfill their obligations before these authorities, as **valid until 1 June 2020**.

The measure is valid until 1 June 2020.

80. Reports on the health status assessment, i.e. ability of employees in workplaces with special working conditions, or with increased risk, which have expired, shall be considered valid until 30 June 2020.

The measure is valid until 30 June 2020.

81. Licenses, a copy of licenses and other documents for the public transport of passengers and freight in international, domestic and local road transport, which have expired, shall be considered valid until 30 June 2020.

The measure is valid until 30 June 2020.

82. Inspection bodies, which supervise the implementation of regulations governing road transport, are obliged to increase the intensity of controls on illegal public transport of passengers and freight and own-account transport.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

OTHER

83. The Property Administration is obliged to procure additional quantities of hygiene products, as well as supplies for disinfecting hands, workplaces and equipment, according to the priorities, primarily for the needs of educational institutions and health care institutions.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

84. The Property Administration and the competent services of local self-government units are in charge to procure, on the urgent basis, additional quantities of hygiene products, means for the disinfection of hands, work space and equipment for the needs of state authorities, state administration bodies, administrative authorities and the local self-government. Procurement should be carried out in line with the recommendations of the Public Health Institute of Montenegro.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

85. Municipalities, the Capital City and the Old Royal Capital are obliged to identify, in cooperation with the municipal crisis staffs, potential facilities which would be used for the implementation of quarantine measures, in line with the Rulebook on closer conditions and methods for organising and implementing health surveillance and quarantine and the conditions that the quarantine facilities must meet (Official Gazette of Montenegro 13/20) and propose to the Ministry of Health for further quarantine determination procedure.

The measure is valid until 18 May 2020.

86. Making stocks of protective equipment and disinfectants owned by wholesale drug stores available to the public health system of Montenegro, with financial compensation at market prices.

The measure is valid as long as there is a risk of import or spread of an infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

NORWAY

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

The allocation of competences between different levels of government is regulated in the Act Relating to the Control of Communicable Diseases (In Norwegian - *Smittevernloven*). The intention of the Act is to protect the population from communicable diseases by preventing their occurrence and hindering them from spreading among the population, and by preventing such diseases from being brought into Norway or carried out of Norway to other countries. The Act helps to ensure that the authorities are able to implement infection control measures and coordinate infection control efforts.

The allocation of competences between different levels of government has not been changed in response to the emergency. The national government decides and implements, inter alia, the overall crises response. This includes rules and regulations, recommendations and measures involving hospitals, schools, prisons, and the functioning of the courts etc.

The regional and local levels of government implement the regulations and recommendations from the national government, inter alia, the partial closing of schools. In addition, they to some extent decide on measures to contain the virus, for example local rules against the infection. The regional and local authorities have also responsibility with regard to public services such as transportation, schools and primary health care.

The Norwegian Government has taken a number of measures to prevent transmission of the coronavirus and protect the population. On 12 March far reaching measures were announced, including the closing of schools and children's day care centres. In addition a number of public services have been closed, among them the administrative services provided by the police.

The Parliament has enacted a temporary law that gives the executive government wide-ranging powers to change existing laws and regulations to deal with consequences that follow from the crises. However, in using this competence the Government has to notify and inform the Parliament and a minority in the Parliament can repeal the laws and regulations. Any law has to be in conformity with human rights that follows from the Constitution and national law.

In addition to the regulations and recommendations from the national government, some municipality has taken local measures to ensure that the necessary preventive measures, opportunities to be examined, treatment and care are available to everyone domiciled or temporarily residing in the municipality. Some municipalities has also taken local measures to prevent the coronavirus from being brought into the municipality.

1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

The Act Relating to the Control of Communicable Diseases shall ensure that the different levels of government coordinate their efforts to control the emergency. It enacts the responsibilities of the administrative agencies, such as the municipalities, municipal

medical officers, counties, Norwegian Directorate of Health, National Institute of Public Health and Norwegian Board of Health.

The Ministry of Health and Care Services may by regulations issue provisions concerning cooperation and concerning which responsibilities and which tasks municipalities and counties shall have pursuant to this Act, the Municipal Health Services Act and the Hospital Act. Furthermore, The Norwegian Directorate of Health may decide that the local authorities shall carry out specific measures, cooperate in joint efforts and follow specific guidelines to ensure the satisfactory and effective implementation of the national measures. Both of these mechanisms are being used to ensure coordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency.

The Norwegian Board of Health has a general responsibility for supervising that the municipal, county and central government activities are in accordance with the Act Relating to the Control of Communicable Diseases and with regulations or individual decisions pursuant to this Act.

1.4. Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?

As of July 2020, local governments have received additional grants of 8 480 million NOK (4 900 million to municipalities, 3 580 million to counties). For municipalities the extra funds are mainly distributed as a compensation for increased expenditure. Out of the 4 900, 1 000 million is distributed as a compensation for reduced user fees in kindergartens and after-school programmes.

The extra funds for counties are partly distributed as a compensation for reduced ticket revenue from public transportation (3 100 million NOK). 300 million NOK is distributed in order to strengthen the counties' capacity to support competence building and training in local businesses.

In addition, altogether 800 million NOK is allocated to the county governors as discretionary grants, to cover additional expenditure related to the COVID-19 outbreak, including expenditure relating to infection control measures. The county governors will distribute these funds to municipalities according to needs.

In order to increase activity in the construction sector the central government has also distributed 2 500 million NOK to municipalities as an earmarked grant, reserved for municipal purchases of maintenance services on municipal buildings and constructions (incl. roads). The grant can only be used for financing projects that were not part of the municipality's original annual budget, and in addition, the projects must be initiated in 2020.

A working group has been established to consider the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on local government revenues and expenditure. The working group consists of members from several central government ministries and from the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). The working group will finalise its work and submit its final report by 1 April 2021, and possibly deliver partial reports to the central government throughout its period of activity.

One of the consequences of the coronavirus outbreak has been turmoil in the capital markets, and a number of municipalities have experienced difficulty in refinancing their loans in the market. The equity capital of Kommunalbanken (KBN) has been increased with

NOK 750 million “to help the markets to function as well as possible and to prevent municipalities’ refinancing of short-maturity securities from contributing to further stress in the markets”. KBN is a state-owned limited company and the largest provider of debt financing to Norwegian municipalities. KBN is defined as a state instrumentality, having a public policy mandate from the central government to provide low cost financing to the Norwegian local government sector. The capital injection will enable KBN to refinance a significant amount of the local government sector debt that is due to mature between April and the summer of 2020.”

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

Some municipalities decided to refuse owners of holiday properties to stay on their properties because they feared they would not have the capacity to handle many cases of Covid-19. Some municipalities also enacted local quarantine rules to prevent the coronavirus from being brought into the municipality.

The Government later came up with regulations relating to prohibition against staying at holiday properties. Persons were prohibited from staying overnight at a holiday property in a municipality other than where they were registered as residing. The Government also came up with guidelines that discouraged the municipalities from enacting local quarantine rules.

2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

In cities and metropolitan areas, the local authorities have taken a number of measures to prevent transmission of the coronavirus. For example the City of Oslo decided to prohibit all pubs and restaurants from serving alcohol, starting 21 March. The ban on serving alcohol was enacted in addition to the national ban on serving alcohol for vendors where food is not served. The ban on serving alcohol in Oslo also apply for vendors where food is served, and was introduced because some of the pubs and restaurants were not able to keep to the infection-prevention rules, such as social distancing. The City of Oslo recently decided to lift the ban on serving alcohol, starting 6 May. The gradual lifting of the ban only apply for vendors where food is served. At the same time, all premises must follow strict rules to ensure that the infection-prevention measures are upheld.

In areas with fewer confirmed cases of Covid-19, the local authorities has taken measures to prevent the coronavirus from being brought into the area by persons travelling from the cities and metropolitan areas. For example some municipalities has enacted local travelling restrictions, quarantine rules and refused persons from staying at holiday properties.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. *How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have there been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)*

The municipalities are obliged to provide important services to the inhabitants, such as accessible shelters for residents who are exposed to domestic violence.

To be able to keep important institutions open during the crisis, like hospitals and old peoples home, the Norwegian Government has decided that certain employees are defined as personnel in critical social functions. This means that these employees are allowed to send their children to kindergarten and school, even if kindergartens and schools are closed (for the majority of the children).

The priority given to the treatment of Covid-19 has given less attention to other groups of patients and planned operations.

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

Some employees in the ministries and other public agencies have earlier had the possibility to work from home. Now however, most of the employees have started to work from home. This has led to more extensive and improvements in the use of digital forms of work. Skype meetings, chat rooms etc.

Two examples of health services are that health personal as well as primary and specialized services for mental health problems, disorders and substance abuse are still available, but mostly based on on-line and telephone consultations to reduce risk for contamination. Maternal health services are also still available, but the Norwegian Directorate of Health recommends municipalities to present the local telephone line operated by nurse/ midwife on their home page.

6. *Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?*

- **Measures taken by the Police Directorate**

When the Government introduced measures to prevent transmission of the coronavirus and protect the population, the Police Directorate immediately established an apparatus for identifying and handling the consequences of the pandemic and the measures introduced. Measures taken by the Police Directorate are:

- The National Criminal Investigation Service (NCIS) has been commissioned to prepare weekly intelligence reports describing the most likely developments. Already in the first report NCIS wrote as follows: *"The incidence of physical and mental violence in close relationships is likely to increase, especially if the situation becomes prolonged. In vulnerable families, problems are likely to intensify."*
- Weekly statistics on reported crime, including domestic violence, are issued.
- The police website has been updated, especially with information on how the public can get in contact with the police. Media is also used for spreading information. The police districts have actively used the "Police online patrol" to provide up-to-date information.
- The Police Directorate has given clear guidelines to the police districts to pay special attention to cases of domestic violence, both new cases and cases already under investigation.
- The police districts are requested to work closely with local authorities on measures, especially with the child welfare services.
- There has been a strengthened dialogue between the Police Directorate and different departments in the police districts, such as the centres for crime victims, the "Barnahus", the police online patrols and the SARA coordinators, to exchange experiences and knowledge on measures implemented locally.

- The Police can be reached by the emergency number (112), the nationwide telephone number (02800) or the police district telephone number. The Police Directorate is gradually considering reopening the public receptions. This will increase availability and opportunity for personal attendance.

POLAND

Introduction

The Global SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic¹ significantly affected not only Polish entrepreneurs, but also the public sector, which was forced to look for new legal and organizational solutions to ensure efficient provision of public services and access to them for every citizen. The local government undoubtedly found itself in a special situation, while implementing the principle of subsidiarity, as the entity closest to the citizens, it was confronted with a number of new actions, obligations and restrictions related to preventing and combating COVID-19 and thus became one of the main "victims" of the pandemic and its effects.

The legal solutions and mechanisms for counteracting the effects of the SARS-CoV-2 crisis presented below are based primarily on the coronavirus special act of March 2, 2020, amended many times, on special solutions related to the prevention, counteraction and control of COVID-19, other infectious diseases and those caused by them, as well as on the regulation of the Council of Ministers of October 9, 2020. on the establishment of certain restrictions, orders and bans in connection with an epidemic².

AREA 1: MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to respond to the emergency?*
- 1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*
- 1.3. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*
- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

Not applicable

AREA 2: THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

¹ The World Health Organization (WHO) on January 30, 2020 announced an outbreak of international reach for the new SARS-CoV-2 virus, (WHO Coronavirus Infection Report 30/01/2020, <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200130-sitrep-10-ncov.pdf> (accessed 10/11/2020) while on March 11, 2020, the status of the disease development was described as a pandemic (Statement of the WHO Director General of March 11, 2020 (<https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19> , 11-march-2020, accessed: 11/10/2020).

² Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1758, hereinafter the regulation of the RM on the do's and don'ts in connection with the epidemic.

A number of actions taken by local authorities during the coronavirus pandemic are aimed at increasing the efficiency and speed of services provided, as well as supporting the local community, including entrepreneurs, in overcoming the negative effects of the crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic. The solutions presented below can be divided into three groups. Firstly, these are the mechanisms of financial support for members of local government communities and entrepreneurs, secondly, the mechanisms of non-financial support for members of local government communities and entrepreneurs, and thirdly, the changes introduced to the administrative and court-administrative procedure in connection with the COVID-19 epidemic. In each of these three categories, there are legal solutions addressed to people from groups particularly vulnerable in the face of the socio-economic crisis, i.e. people with disabilities, people using social assistance, people who lost their jobs due to the pandemic, entrepreneurs.

1. Mechanisms of financial support

The decision-making body of a local government unit may, by resolution, decide to reduce the annual fee for perpetual usufruct of real estate belonging to the commune, poviát or voivodeship real estate resources, respectively, or withdraw from collecting rent, lease and usage fees (Article 15jd of COVID).). This solution applies only to real estate used for business purposes.

Reduction of the fee for perpetual usufruct may be enacted in relation to entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, social cooperatives and state legal persons with a decrease in economic turnover as a result of COVID-19. The annual fee is reduced in proportion to the number of days in this year in which the epidemic threat was in force and the state of the epidemic due to COVID-19. The condition for taking advantage of such a reduction is the payment of the fee in the reduced amount by the indicated entity to the competent executive body of the local government unit by 31 January 2021 and no arrears in paying tax liabilities and social security contributions.

Withdrawal from the collection of rent, lease and perpetual usufruct fees due to a local government unit for the next three months in 2020 applies to real estate for which lease, tenancy or use agreements have been concluded, respectively, for a period of at least three months with entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, cooperatives social and state legal persons with a decrease in economic turnover as a result of COVID-19. The indicated entities should report the payment of receivables, excluding the receivables for the period of the next three months indicated in the application, to the competent executive body of the local government unit or the head of the local government organizational unit for which permanent management was established. In addition, the recipients of the exemption must show that there are no arrears in paying tax liabilities, social security contributions, health insurance, the Guaranteed Employee Benefits Fund, the Labor Fund or the Solidarity Fund by the end of the third quarter of 2019.

The communal council may also optionally enact exemptions from tax on real estate (land, buildings, structures) related to running a business for entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations and social cooperatives, whose financial liquidity has deteriorated due to negative economic consequences due to COVID-19 (Art. 15p u.COVID). Another possibility that the commune council has is to extend the payment of real estate tax installments for the above-mentioned entities, instead of complete exemption from paying the tax. The extension of installment payments is made by way of a resolution for entities whose financial liquidity has deteriorated due to negative economic consequences due to COVID (Article 15q of COVID). The property tax installments for April, May and June 2020 may be extended until September 30, 2020.

The decision-making body of the local government unit may also, by resolution, withdraw from the recovery of civil law claims due to the local government unit, its budgetary units, local government budgetary establishments and state and local government cultural institutions from entities whose financial liquidity has deteriorated due to negative economic consequences due to COVID-19 (Art. 15zzzf u.COVID). The condition for withdrawing from the recovery of such claims is the submission of an application by an authorized entity. The decision-making body of the local government unit may also grant reliefs in the repayment of cash receivables due to the unit e of the local government or its organizational units (budgetary units, local government budgetary establishments, state and local government cultural institutions) for renting, lease or use of real estate for the period of an epidemic threat or state of an epidemic (Article 15zzzg of COVID). As part of these reliefs, receivables may be remitted, their repayment dates postponed or spread out into installments by the head of the commune, mayor, city president, poviast board or voivodeship board. Importantly, at the request of the entity whose financial liquidity has deteriorated due to negative economic consequences due to COVID-19, the head of the commune, mayor, city president, poviast board or voivodeship board may decide not to pursue such claims.

Another optional entitlement of the governing bodies of municipalities is the possibility of adopting a resolution on the exemption from the 2020 fee for the use of alcohol permits or definitely extending the deadline for submitting it until December 31, 2020 (Article 31zzca u.COVID). This mechanism cannot be applied to authorizations for the sale of alcoholic beverages intended for off-site consumption, as such sales are not subject to restrictions introduced by the coronavirus epidemic, unlike the sale of alcohol intended for consumption at the point of sale, as this mainly concerns restaurant activities, which have long been banned and are still subject to numerous restrictions¹. When analyzing this instrument, it is also important that all funds received by local governments from fees for issuing permits for the sale of alcoholic beverages (the so-called cork fund) may be used until 31 December 2020 for activities related to counteracting COVID-19. In the period before the coronavirus epidemic, the cork fund could be used by local government units only for the statutory purposes². In the case of voivodships, the boards could allocate these fees to perform tasks specified in the voivodship program for the prevention and resolution of alcohol-related problems, constituting part of the voivodship strategy in the field of social policy, taking into account the operational objectives for counteracting alcohol addiction, set out in the National Health Program; tasks specified in the Provincial Program for Counteracting Drug Addiction and tasks carried out by the daily support facility under the provincial programs for the prevention and resolution of alcohol-related problems and the Provincial Program for the Prevention of Drug Addiction Revenue from fees for permits issued by municipal authorities could be used in non-coronavirus circumstances for the implementation of municipal programs for the prevention and resolution of alcohol-related problems and Municipal Programs for Counteracting Drug Addiction and tasks carried out by the daily support facility as part of the municipal program of prevention and resolution of alcohol-related problems and Municipal Programs for the Prevention of Drug Addiction.

Summarizing this group of mechanisms for counteracting the effects of the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic, it is worth noting that many solutions received by local governments are optional (voluntary). This means that each local government independently decides whether the granting of appropriate allowances, tax exemptions, etc. is rational from the point of view of its budgetary situation. Therefore, it is important that the authorities constituting local government units properly balance the necessity to support the local community, local entrepreneurs and the arguments related to the self-government obtaining financial resources necessary for the ongoing implementation of public tasks, especially cost-intensive in the time of the COVID-19 epidemic.

2. Mechanisms of non-financial support

Mechanisms of non-financial support concern, among others modifications to the procedures specified in the Act on social assistance³. The special coronavirus act allowed for reasons related to counteracting COVID-19 to resign from conducting family community interviews¹ or updating them in people or families who were quarantined due to suspected infection or contagious disease (Article 15 of COVID). The community interview or its update may be made on the basis of a telephone conversation with a social worker, and in the case of disabled persons due to hearing impairment, using means supporting communication², as well as documents or statements, their copies, including electronic ones, obtained from a person or family applying for assistance and information provided by other entities (e.g. courts, the Police, the Social Insurance Institution, the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund, probation officers, schools, kindergartens, universities, non-governmental organizations). If a person or family uses permanent forms of assistance, and their data has not changed, the family community interview should not be updated, even when the statutory deadline for its preparation has expired. In such cases, the update of the environmental interview will be carried out immediately after the epidemic threat or epidemic status is canceled. This solution is intended to prevent the spread of the coronavirus among residents and to prevent safe activities performed by social workers themselves.⁴.

Anti-crisis solutions also support people using family benefits and those entitled to receive alimony. If, as a result of counteracting COVID-19, such persons show a reduction in remuneration due to employment or other gainful work or a reduction in income from non-agricultural business activity, then this reduction can be treated as a loss of income taken into account when applying for benefits or alimony (Art. .COVID). The purpose of this regulation is undoubtedly to support households that have lost their income in the face of the epidemic. It is beneficial for beneficiaries to extend the validity of this instrument to the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 benefit periods. This means that even individuals and families whose income did not yet qualify for benefits can now reapply for benefits based on a recalculation of their income.⁵.

Another way of supporting the local community is not to comply with executive orders ordering the emptying of a dwelling during the period of the epidemic threat or epidemic state announced due to COVID-19, unless the enforceable title relates to a person using domestic violence (Article 15zzu u.COVID).

The special coronavirus law also amended the law on crisis management¹ adding to it after Art. 21a art. 21b, in which the commune head, mayor, city president, for the purposes of ensuring the protection of the local community in a crisis situation or the possibility of a crisis situation, defines specific forms of providing assistance to the local community. The commune's executive body must draw up a list of specific forms of providing assistance to the local community and inform the inhabitants about it, in a customary manner, about the possibility of including them in this list. This mechanism aims to support the most deprived people. Appropriate management in this matter has already been issued by the executive bodies of municipalities⁶.

³The Act of March 12, 2004. on social assistance (uniform text in Journal of Laws of 2019, item 1507, as amended).

⁴P. Maczyński, Tarcza antykryzysowa 2.0 w pomocy społecznej, LEX/el. 2020, p. 5.

⁵ Ibidem p.4

⁶As examples of practice, the following ordinances on special forms of providing aid can be indicated: Ordinance No. 35/2020 of the Head of the Człuchów Commune of April 2, 2020 on specifying specific forms of providing aid to the local community related to preventing, counteracting and combating COVID - 19 in the Człuchów Commune (accessed on October 12, 2020, [https://ugczluchow.pl/aktualnosci/zarzadzenie-nr-342020-wojta-gminy-czluchow-z-dnia-31-marca-](https://ugczluchow.pl/aktualnosci/zarzadzenie-nr-342020-wojta-gminy-czluchow-z-dnia-31-marca)

Another important mechanism for supporting people from particularly vulnerable groups are the changes introduced to the law on free legal aid⁷. According to them, free legal aid and free civic counseling are available to an entitled person who is unable to bear the costs of paid legal aid, including a natural person running a sole proprietorship who did not employ other persons in the last year. Legal aid may therefore be provided to certain entrepreneurs also in matters related to running a business. Importantly, in the event of an epidemic emergency, an epidemic or the introduction of a state of emergency, free legal assistance may be provided via means of distance communication and outside the premises of the point.

The mechanism that directly supports entrepreneurs, as a particularly vulnerable group in the face of the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic, is the regulation under Art. 15qa u.COVID. All issued permits for the sale of alcoholic beverages intended for consumption at the point of sale or outside the place of sale which expire during the period of epidemic threat or epidemic state, remain valid for an additional 6 months from the date of expiry of the original permit validity period¹. This means the convenience for entrepreneurs in the form of extending the possibility of using the already-held permit for the sale of alcoholic beverages, without the need to complete formalities related to applying for a new permit, which may cause a number of restrictions and difficulties in submitting the application during the period of coronavirus risk. The condition for using this facility is, however, the payment of a proportional fee for issuing the permit before the expiry of the original permit validity period. Taking into account the intention of the legislator, it should be noted that this provision is beneficial not only for the entrepreneurs themselves, but also for local government units, which, thanks to the extension of the validity period of the permit, obtain additional income, which is very important in the context of counteracting COVID-19.

3. Changes in the administrative and court-administrative procedure

The state of the epidemic threat and the current state of the epidemic also had a significant impact on the ongoing administrative and court-administrative proceedings. The reasons for this are, of course, the difficulties with the shortage of employees caused by the disease and, importantly, the need to minimize contacts in the relationship between the authority (authority employee) and the party (parties) to the administrative procedure. The reaction to such circumstances was the introduction of numerous solutions to the special coronavirus act to modify, change and adapt the administrative and court-administrative procedure to the challenges of the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic.

A fundamental change for the administrative procedure is the so-called "Loosening the regime of administrative proceedings" under Art. 15zzzzn u.COVID, which modifies the application of general rules of administrative procedure. General rules of administrative

2020-rw-sprawie- defining-specific-forms-of-providing-help-for-the-local-community-related-with-preventing-counter-and-combating-covid-19-in-commune-czluchow.html), Order 151/20 of the Suwałki Commune Head of April 2, 2020 on the determination of specific forms of assistance to the local community in the Suwałki Commune related to the prevention of COVID-19 (accessed on October 12, 2020, <http://www.gmina.suwalki.pl/kat/ogloszenia/zadzenie-151-20-wojta-municipalities-suwalki-of-2-April-2020-r> - in- on-specific-forms-of-aid-for-local-community-in-the-community-suwalki-related-with-prevention-covid-19), ORDINANCE NO 134 / VIII / 20 MAYOR OF THE TRZCIANA COMMUNE of April 21, 2020 on special forms of providing assistance to the local community of the Trzciana commune in connection with the occurrence of a crisis situation or the possibility of a crisis situation in the commune of Trzciana resulting from the spread of the SARS virus - CoV-2 (accessed on October 12, 2020, <https://bip.malopolska.pl/ugtrzciana,a,1757522,zarzadzenie-nr-134viii20-wojta-gminy-trzciana-z-dnia-21-kwietnia-2020-rw-sprawie-szczegolnych-form-.html>).

⁷Ustawa z dnia 5 sierpnia 2015 r. o nieodpłatnej pomocy prawnej, nieodpłatnym poradnictwie obywatelskim oraz edukacji prawnej (tekst jedn. Dz. U. z 2019 r., poz. 294 z późn. zm.).

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procedure indicated in Chapter 2 of the Code of Administrative Procedure⁸ can be divided into three groups. Firstly, these are the principles expressing the idea of a lawful decision to apply the law by public administration bodies, secondly, the principles of administrative culture and, thirdly, technical principles of conduct⁹.

According to Art. 15zzzzzn u.COVID, during the period of an epidemic threat or state of an epidemic, in particular when the administration office serving the public administration body performs its tasks in a way that excludes direct service of clients, the public administration body may depart from the principle expressed in art. 10 § 1 of the Code of Civil Procedure also when all parties have renounced their rights; may provide the party with access to the case files or individual documents constituting the case files also by means of electronic communication to the address indicated in the register of contact details or another address indicated by the party; may perform an action in the course of proceedings requiring, in accordance with the provisions of the law, personal appearance, also by providing his image in real time by the party or another participant in the proceedings, via audiovisual transmission, provided that it is in the interest of the party and the authority conducting the proceedings has agreed .

The cited provision therefore introduces three changes. The first one concerns the possibility of withdrawing from the application of Art. 10 § 1 of the Code of Administrative Procedure, i.e. the principles of active participation of a party in the proceedings. Pursuant to this principle, public administration bodies are obliged to ensure that the parties are actively involved in every stage of the proceedings, and before issuing the decision, enable them to comment on the collected evidence and materials and on the requests submitted. Importantly, this rule is not absolute, as pursuant to Art. 10 § 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure public administration bodies may depart from the rule expressed in § 1 only in cases where the settlement of the case is not delayed due to the danger to human life or health or due to the imminent irreparable material damage. The derogation introduced by the special coronavirus act (Art. 15zzzzzn point 1) is not the same as the derogation from Art. 10 § 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure, because the code exception clearly indicates the final stage of the proceedings in a given case by the use of the words "when a case is resolved without delay". However, the exception from the special act applies to the entire course of the proceedings until the conclusion of the decision, with the proviso that not earlier than from the moment of notifying each party about its initiation¹⁰. The administration authority, whether or not it will apply the exception of art. 10 § 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure or Art. 15zzzzzn points 1 u.COVID is obliged to record in the case files, by means of annotations, the reasons for departing from the principle of active participation of a party in the proceedings. An important issue of the correct application of Art. 15zzzzzn u.COVID is a waiver by all parties of their right to actively participate in the proceedings. It will be easy to obtain a waiver, above all, in proceedings where there is only one party, while proceedings in which there are several parties, often with disputed interests, will be less likely to obtain consent to the exclusion of the rule under Art. 10 § 1 of the Code of Civil Procedure It is also worth emphasizing that the party's resignation from the right to active participation in the course of the proceedings does not prevent it from fully acting in its own case in the course of the proceedings. In this case, it is only about exempting the authority from taking actions aimed at informing the party on an ongoing basis about the actions taken in the case, in particular in the scope of evidence and explanatory proceedings.¹¹.

⁸Ustawa z dnia 14 czerwca 1960 r. Kodeks postępowania administracyjnego (tekst jedn, Dz. U. z 2020, poz. 256 z późn. zm.), dalej k.p.a.

⁹ Wprowadzony podział w oparciu o B. Adamiak, J. Borkowski, Postępowanie administracyjne i sądowniczoadministracyjne, Warszawa 2019 r., s. 44 i n.

¹⁰ E. Szewczyk, Modyfikacje postępowań administracyjnych prowadzonych w okresie stanu zagrożenia epidemicznego lub stanu epidemii, Samorząd Terytorialny 2020, No 6, p. 20-21.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 23.

The next two changes from Art. 15zzzzzn u.COVID provide for specific solutions, which in the relations between the party and the authority are aimed at improving the conducted proceedings. The mechanism provided for in Art. 15zzzzzn points 2 u.COVID gives the public administration authority the possibility of making the case files available in whole or in part by means of electronic communication. It is therefore, on the one hand, about the use of IT tools implemented in offices, including electronic document management (EZD), on the other hand, about the possibility of electronic communication with the website. The presented solution gives the public administration authority new tools in contacts with the party, which become particularly important when the party renounces its active participation in the course of the proceedings pursuant to Art. 15zzzzzn point 1 u.COVID¹².

The third instrument from Art. 15zzzzzn u.COVID facilitates the obligation to appear in person in administrative proceedings, as the withdrawal from it has been replaced by the possibility of audiovisual communication between the party and the authority. Therefore, this solution has a direct impact on reducing the spread of SARS-CoV-2 virus, while remaining fast, safe and cheap.

Moreover, the legislator made it possible for the Council of Ministers to suspend, by way of a regulation, administrative enforcement proceedings of pecuniary receivables (Article 15zzk of COVID). The regulation should provide, in particular, for the territorial scope of suspension of these proceedings and the period for which such suspension takes place, taking into account the duration of the epidemic threat and epidemic status in connection with COVID. No such regulation has yet been issued.

Apart from the changes introduced to the administrative procedure, the court-administrative procedure has also been modified (art. 15zzs4 of the COVID Act). Firstly, during the period of the state of epidemic threat or epidemic state announced due to COVID-19 and within one year of the appeal of the last of them, the Supreme Administrative Court may, provided that a party has not waived the hearing or another party has requested a hearing, recognize a cassation appeal in closed session. All parties must give their consent to this within 14 days from the date of delivery of the notification that the case was sent to a closed session. The NSA then adjudicates in a panel of three judges.

Secondly, both provincial administrative courts and the Supreme Administrative Court, during the period of the epidemic threat or epidemic state announced due to COVID-19 and within one year of the last of them, may conduct hearings using technical devices enabling direct transmission of video and audio to distance. Persons participating in such a hearing do not have to be in the court building. Conducting a traditional hearing is possible only if it does not cause an excessive threat to the health of the participants. The aim of the legislator in this case was therefore to ensure the health protection of both court employees and all persons participating in the trial, regardless of their status in the case.

The third case concerns a situation where the chairman of the adjudicating panel deems the examination of the case necessary, and it will not be possible to conduct a hearing, whether it is due to the possibility of causing an excessive threat to the people participating in it, or it will not be possible to conduct it remotely with direct transmission of the image and sound. In such a situation, he may order a closed session, at which the court will adjudicate in a panel of three judges.

When presenting the solutions introduced for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic in the administrative proceedings, it is also worth pointing to the mechanisms that were in force at the beginning of the epidemic and have now been withdrawn from legal circulation.

¹² Ibidem, p. 25.

In this case, it is about the provisions of Art. 15zzr, 15zzs and 15zzt u.COVID concerning the course of material and legal deadlines. These regulations entered into force on March 31, 2020, but they concerned the state from March 14, 2020. Pursuant to these regulations, the legislator decided that during the period of an epidemic threat or epidemic, the course of procedural, judicial and substantive-law deadlines does not start, and when started is suspended. These articles were repealed on May 16, 2020, as a result of which, under the transitional provisions, deadlines that have not started or have been suspended start or continue to run, respectively, from May 24, 2020.¹³.

Examples of local initiatives

1. activities in the field of informing residents about the current epidemic situation, and about initiatives taken in the commune in response to the epidemic

a. in many cities and communes (among voivodship cities, such a solution was quickly implemented by 13 centers), dedicated websites or subpages dedicated to the pandemic were launched, which include, among others:

- current information on the state of the pandemic,
- information materials on safety rules,
- information on possible forms of support, e.g. for entrepreneurs, seniors,
- information on specific procedures, e.g. reporting domestic violence during a pandemic,
- information on the methods and procedures for dealing with official matters online (in most communes),
- information on grassroots initiatives of residents regarding the provision of aid, support during a pandemic and community fundraising.

The availability of this information contributed to ensuring the continuity of public service provision, but also an appropriate response.

b. information policy taking into account the needs of social groups in a special situation:

- an information bulletin of the city hall with home delivery for people who do not use the Internet, mainly the elderly
- information for foreigners in English and Ukrainian on the functioning of the city during the pandemic.

2. activities improving the transparency of the political decision-making process in local government units

- organization of live meetings on social media by some local government authorities

¹³The issues of the course of material and procedural time limits specified in Art. 15zzr, 15zzs and 15ztt u.COVID has been and is still the subject of numerous judgments of voivodeship administrative courts and the Supreme Administrative Court, e.g. the decision of the Provincial Administrative Court in Poznań of 30/09/2020, II SA / Po 592/20, Lex No. 3057659; Decision of the Provincial Administrative Court in Kraków of September 21, 2020, II SA / Kr 886/20, Lex No. 3054901; Decision of the Supreme Administrative Court of 17/09/2020, II GSK 804/20, Lex No. 3060922; Decision of the Supreme Administrative Court of 17/09/2020, II GSK 805/20, Lex No. 3061019; Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Poznań of September 16, 2020, II SAB / Po 59/20, Lex No. 3057792. The doctrine also presented its position on this issue. Cf. e.g. M. Karciarz, Conducting administrative proceedings in the period of coronavirus (COVID-19), taking into account the provisions of the special coronavirus act, Lex / el. 2020 or M. Makowski, Terms of administrative law and administrative court proceedings according to the special coronavirus act, Lex / el. 2020.

3. Promotion and support of cooperation with the local community and non-governmental organizations in the field of providing aid during the epidemic

a. promotion on the website of the commune office, addressed to residents, concerning initiatives of non-governmental organizations Its aim is to involve them in the activities of organizations supporting the fight against the epidemic or inform them about the possible support offered by organizations during the epidemic,

b. the program of micro-grants for non-governmental organizations for assistance activities aimed at groups most affected by the pandemic and for activities activating residents, helping to build neighborhood communities,

c. promoting attitudes of solidarity and helping the residents, e.g. the Department of Education and Social Policy in Czeladź organized a competition for residents over 60: Fri: "A local hero of the pandemic time",

d. aid programs for non-governmental organizations and social economy entities.

4. Social participation in the decision-making process on-line

- enabling residents to participate in a remote session,
- in many communes it was decided to continue submitting projects and voting for projects within citizens' budgets. The procedures were adapted to the sanitary requirements in force at the time of the epidemic and the poviats and were carried out remotely or in writing,
- some municipalities conducted remote public discussions.

5. Taking action to counteract the digital exclusion of seniors in the face of an epidemic, when the lack of knowledge about new technologies may make it difficult, for example, to access information or use the services of the city council.

The Center for Senior Citizens' Initiatives in Poznań has launched the Digital Advice Telephone, under which the Center's consultant provides seniors with advice on new technologies three times a week. The support includes solving problems with a computer, tablet, smartphone or camera.

2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?

Both Polish cities and the Polish countryside have been deeply affected by the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to a number of daily tasks, responsibilities and problems, including financial problems, they have to face new challenges related to counteracting and combating the SARS-CoV-2 virus, performing numerous public tasks, including providing ongoing services to their residents. The time of the epidemic threat and the current period of the COVID-19 epidemic have forced towns and villages to change their style of functioning and management. On the one hand, these entities were obliged to implement a number of provisions of the Special Coronavirus Act and numerous regulations to it, on the other hand, on the other hand, they independently started the implementation of their own projects and initiatives, which are aimed at both modernization and digitization, as well as direct support for members of the community in this difficult time. local government.

During the coronavirus epidemic, Polish cities implemented and are still implementing numerous interesting initiatives aimed at combating the negative social and economic effects of the pandemic. For example :

- suspension of fees for nurseries during the pandemic;

- the self-government purchases intensive therapy beds for hospitals and disinfection devices
- preparation of information for foreigners staying or living in Poland on all recommendations and changes related to the epidemic threat, including English, German, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian and Ukrainian;
- supply of medical personnel during a housing epidemic from municipal resources;
- purchase and distribution of reusable masks among residents;
- granting loans to local micro and small entrepreneurs affected by the epidemic.

An overview of initiatives taken by Polish cities in the era of the coronavirus epidemic can also be found on the website of the Association of Polish Cities¹⁴.

With regard to the specific challenges of metropolitan areas in the Polish realities, one should first of all refer to the situation in the Śląskie Voivodeship, where under the Act of March 9, 2017 on the Metropolitan Union in the Śląskie Voivodeship¹⁵, establishment of a metropolitan union was allowed. Metropolitan Union "Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia" was established by the regulation of the Council of Ministers of June 26, 2017 on the establishment of a metropolitan association in the Silesian Voivodeship under the name "Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia"¹⁶. The metropolitan union is an association of communes of the Śląskie Voivodeship, characterized by the existence of strong functional connections and the advancement of urbanization processes, located in a spatially coherent area inhabited by at least 2,000,000 inhabitants. The union performs public tasks in the following areas: shaping the spatial order; social and economic development of the metropolitan area; planning, coordination, integration and development of collective public transport, including road, rail and other rail transport, as well as sustainable urban mobility; metropolitan passenger transport; cooperation in determining the route of national and provincial roads in the area of the metropolitan association; promotion of the metropolitan union and its area.

During the coronavirus epidemic, the relationship also faced new challenges and tasks. The most important activities and initiatives of the union include:

- Transfer of a special-purpose subsidy to the Zagłębie Center of Oncology in the amount of PLN 698,700.00 to co-finance the task entitled "Purchase of apparatus and medical equipment in connection with the announced epidemiological state"¹⁷;
- Disinfection of city benches in Katowice using the Heracles V8ASD dronoid¹⁸;
- The organization, together with the European Metropolitan Authorities network, of the 2nd European Metropolitan Webinar "Metropolitan Talks: How to reborn after COVID-19. Defining common problems, universalising differences"¹⁹;
- The metropolis is also seeking additional support from the state budget for investments related to zero-emission public transport and solutions that will increase the comfort and number of trips made by bicycle or on foot²⁰.

¹⁴<https://www.miasta.pl/kategorie-aktualnosci/miasta-wobec-epidemii> (access 12.10.2020).

¹⁵Journal of Laws 2017 , pos. 730 with later amendments

¹⁶Journal of Laws, pos. 1290.

¹⁷<https://metropoliagzm.pl/2020/08/04/zaglebiowskie-centrum-onkologii-z-dotacja-metropolii/> (access: 12.10.2020.).

¹⁸<https://metropoliagzm.pl/2020/06/30/dronoid-zdezynfekowal-rynek-w-katowicach-w-przyszlosci-takie-technologie-moga-byc-standardem/> (access 13.10.2020).

¹⁹<https://metropoliagzm.pl/2020/06/30/metropolie-w-czasach-pandemii-wspolne-problemy-i-sposoby-wyjscia-z-kryzysu/> (access 13.10.2020).

²⁰<https://metropoliagzm.pl/2020/10/02/metropolia-podpisala-apel-do-premiera-o-wsparcie-transportu-publicznego/> (access 13.10.2020).

The coronavirus epidemic did not spare rural areas as well. The main problems that farmers had to face were, among others suspended exports of goods due to restrictions introduced in EU countries, closure and restrictions on the operation of restaurants and other catering establishments, restrictions on the functioning of agritourism services, difficulties in recruiting seasonal workers. All these factors resulted in a decrease in agricultural production and, consequently, a significant reduction in farmers' income. A number of measures were taken to eliminate the negative effects of the epidemic. Among the most significant, it is worth mentioning the amendment to the act on supporting rural development with the participation of the European Agricultural Fund²¹. About PLN 1 billion from the unused funds of the Rural Development Program for 2014-2020 was allocated to aid for farmers. The aid was addressed primarily to farmers and breeders working in the agricultural production sectors such as: beef cattle, dairy and combined type cows, pigs, sheep, goats, slaughter poultry, laying poultry and the cultivation of ornamental plants (in heated greenhouses or in heated foil tunnels).

Farmers were also provided with support based on the special coronavirus law. According to Art. 4a of the COVID Act, they could receive (until June 28, 2020) care allowance due to the need to personally care for a child up to the age of 18, a child with a severe or moderate disability certificate up to the age of 18, or a child with a certificate of disability or a certificate of the need for special education. The allowance was paid in the event of the closure of a nursery, children's club, kindergarten, school or other institution attended by the child, or the inability to provide care by a nanny or day caregiver due to COVID-19. The amount of the allowance for each day of personal childcare was 1/30 of the basic pension²².

Insured farmers and their household members, in a situation of compulsory quarantine, epidemiological supervision or hospitalization in connection with COVID-19, are entitled to an allowance of 50% of the minimum remuneration for work (Article 31, 3 of the COVID Act)²³. In addition, farmers were exempted from paying contributions for retirement and disability pension insurance for the second quarter of 2020 (Article 31zz u.COVID).

Examples of local initiatives

In cities and metropolitan areas, public transport was particularly challenged. It was one of the first areas where interventions were undertaken.

In the first phase of the pandemic, local government public transport operators decided to reduce the number of courses and suspend school lines in order to increase safety and reduce financial losses resulting from the reduction of the number of passengers (especially during off-peak hours). In the next stage, the frequency of runs was increased in response to the government's introduction of restrictions on the number of passengers on buses and trams. Regardless of this, almost half of the cities at that time introduced further cuts on lines where passenger traffic was negligible. Some cities have decided to set up additional bus lines providing the necessary connection to the main industrial areas. In some local governments, public transport lines have been created exclusively for medical personnel traveling to hospitals. There were also offenses plaguing residents in connection with the epidemic of free public transport.

In the field of shared mobility, a quick response was made to the new situation that arose from the epidemic. All the entities that still offer their services today started by adopting

²¹Act of February 20, 2015 on supporting rural development with the participation of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development under the Rural Development Program for 2014-2020 (consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2020, item 217 as amended).

²²Basic pension is 882,56 zł.

²³Minimal wage in Poland is 2600 gross.

additional security measures to limit the spread of the virus. The frequency of cleaning the fleet and disinfection was increased, guards were installed in cars to separate passengers from drivers, and new safety instructions for drivers and users were implemented. The remaining entities operated without major changes in the scope of their activities. Some companies joined the help and offered free services to eg hospitals and volunteers. Suppliers also began to implement system solutions, e.g. by promoting the integration of mobility services with MaaS platforms or developing other areas of activity, e.g. in the field of food supplies.

The second particular challenge for cities was the support for entrepreneurship, with local economy support programs being implemented by local governments at all levels. Voivodship self-governments allocated 42.6% of funds transferred from the Regional Operational Programs to the fight against the coronavirus to support entrepreneurs - 33.6% of this amount was planned for direct subsidies for companies and support for people losing their jobs, and 9% for low-interest loans for companies to save them from losing liquidity during social quarantine (Grant Thornton, 2020) 1.

Entrepreneurs who have found themselves in a difficult economic situation due to the coronavirus pandemic may apply for non-returnable subsidies for maintaining jobs (the so-called compensation vouchers). Another form of support under the Shield is the possibility for entrepreneurs to apply for loans on preferential, anti-crisis conditions.

The most common actions taken by municipalities in the area of supporting entrepreneurs during an epidemic include: relief or exemption from local taxes (eg on real estate, on means of transport); discounts, exemptions or postponements of the dates of rent payments for the rental of premises owned by the city; economic consulting, etc.

Numerous cities have taken steps to promote local businesses, e.g. by launching a database of restaurants offering food ordering and delivery on their websites, or portals dedicated to remote services.

Rural communes experienced greater financial problems than cities due to the decrease in budget revenues, especially from PIT and CIT revenues (in April 2020, PIT revenues were 40% lower and CIT revenues were 31% lower than in the previous year for of all communes, at the turn of June and July, the impact was lower by 10-15%), due to their under-financing even before the pandemic (low own incomes). The Union of Rural Communes of the Republic of Poland has applied to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Development, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as parliamentary and senate self-government committees for the establishment of a Commune Investment Voucher.

In response to the request, the Governmental Fund for Local Investments² was launched, which offers funds for subsidies for local government units. In total, it is PLN 12 billion for the entire country. The first pool was 6 billion. PLN. and was addressed to communes (PLN 5 billion) and poviats (PLN 1 billion), the second pool amounted to another 6 billion. PLN. and was addressed to communes, poviats and voivodships.

Over PLN 2.6 billion from the Fund will go to rural and rural municipalities. The amounts of subsidies for individual self-governments will result from the ratio of property expenditure and the wealth of communes and poviats. The source of financing for the project is the COVID-19 Fund. The support is non-returnable.

2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

Local government units may cooperate with each other in two public-law forms, i.e. union and agreement. The legal basis for such cooperation are the relevant provisions of Chapter

7 of the Act on Municipal Self-Government¹ and Chapter 7 of the Act on Poviats Self-Government.²⁴ Unions may be established for the joint performance of public tasks or for joint operation. Depending on the entities included in the union, we can distinguish: inter-commune unions, poviat unions and poviat-commune unions. A characteristic feature of the union is the creation of a new entity with legal personality, which has its own organs (the union's assembly as the constitutive body and the union board as the executive body). The union accepts the public task assigned to it by its members, which it then performs on its own behalf and under its own responsibility²⁵.

Agreements, on the other hand, are concluded on entrusting one of the parties to the agreement with a specific public task. Like unions, agreements may be concluded only by communes, only by poviats and by communes with poviats. The essence of the agreement is the performance of a public task covered by the agreement by the host entity, which at the same time takes over the rights and obligations of the other parties to the agreement related to the entrusted task, and the entrusting entities are obliged to share in the costs of performing the entrusted task²⁶.

So far, no cooperation has been recorded aimed at responding to a crisis situation caused by COVID-19 as part of a public task performed by local governments. However, it should be emphasized that if local government units cooperated with each other before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, e.g. in the scope of performing the task of organizing local public transport, then during the epidemic they should fulfill all obligations imposed on public transport organizers in relation to preventing and counteracting COVID - 19 and are obliged to comply with all guidelines and recommendations regarding the sanitary regime.

Examples of local initiatives

- Within the metropolitan association "Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia" support is granted to the member communes in their activities aimed at combating the effects of the pandemic. One of such actions taken by GZM in this regard was the transfer of financial support to a total of 18 hospitals in the Metropolis area.
- As a result of cooperation initiated and coordinated by both the Union of Polish Cities (ZMP) and the Union of Polish Metropolises (UMP), similar solutions were introduced in cities at similar times. The Association of Polish Cities has prepared the publication "Guide for cities" 3, which contains information on initiatives, cooperation and activity of cities taken during a pandemic. The second initiative is a joint project of the Association of Polish Cities and the Polish Development Foundation - Anti-Crisis Platform for Technological Solutions. The platform is to combine the needs of local governments with the solutions of technology companies. Its aim is to help city authorities find a technological partner who will help solve the most the urgent problems of the city in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic. Currently, there are three technological solutions on the platform

²⁴Act of 5 June 1998 on poviat self-government (uniform text in Journal of Laws of 2020, item 920).

²⁵For more on the legal nature of associations of local government units in Poland, see, for example, P. Łazutka, 25 years of cooperation of local government units in Poland in the form of a special purpose union. Analysis of the current legal status and de lege ferenda postulates [in:] B. Jaworska-Dębska, R. Budzisz (ed.), Legal problems of local government from the perspective of the 25th anniversary of its functioning, Wyd. C.H. Beck, Warsaw 2016, pp. 465-481.

²⁶ For further information on the legal nature of public-law agreements in Poland, see, for example, P. Łazutka, Public-law forms of cooperation between municipalities in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Poland - comparative law analysis, Łódź 2017

<https://dspace.uni.lodz.pl:8080/xmlui/handle/11089/23331?show= full>, p. 215-257

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(document management and internal communication management twice). The initiative also includes free webinars for cities.

- exchange of good practices - as part of the Association of Communes of the Lubuskie Voivodeship, an exchange of experiences on solutions implemented during the epidemic in member communes was initiated. They are published on the website [www. association](http://www.association).
- initiatives of transnational cooperation of cities - the Mayor of Kielce initiated the signing of a declaration aimed at emphasizing the mutual solidarity of cities and indicating the direction of cooperation in extraordinary circumstances. The initiative was joined by the authorities of Budapest-Csepel (Hungary), Flensburg, Gothy (Germany), Orange (France) and Vinnitsa (Ukraine). In the signed declaration, the authorities of 6 European cities declared to tighten cooperation and increase efforts to develop economic exchange in order to overcome the negative effects of the pandemic. During the restrictions introduced, they will support and initiate economic cooperation on-line, and after the end of the threat, they will enrich it with mutual meetings.

AREA 3: CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 *What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?*

3.2 *Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place ?*

Not applicable

AREA 4: CIVIL PARTICIPATION

Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

With the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Polish society was very actively involved in the implementation of a number of very important and socially desirable civic initiatives. According to the results of the Havas Media Group study "Charity and COVID-19", 60% of Poles declare that they took part in charity campaigns during the epidemic. The percentage of people helping people outside their family and the circle of their relatives and friends increased. More people also started helping financially, not through personal commitment or time²⁷.

The Ombudsman, wanting to present wonderful examples of social activity that are worth supporting, imitating and joining in, proposed the action "Wielkoduzna Polska". As part of it, the RPO website presents initiatives and social activities aimed at preventing and combating the negative socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 epidemic, which are the best example of the power of bottom-up ideas and the continuous evolution of civil society.

Among the presented social activities, there are a number of initiatives aimed at helping healthcare personnel, ranging from sewing masks and protective clothing, to providing meals for doctors and nurses, and providing psychological help. Examples of social assistance for medical personnel include the activities of the participants of the Occupational Therapy Workshop "You are Needed" the Bielsko Artistic Association "Grodzki Theater", who undertook sewing protective clothing for the Provincial Hospital in Bielsko-Biała. The workshops used for occupational therapy and rehabilitation of people with

²⁷ <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/webinarium-bohaterowie-codziennosci-dobroczynosc-covid-19> (access 13.10.2020).

disabilities turned into cutting rooms and sewing rooms, thanks to which hundreds of protective clothes for medics were cut and sewn.

Another example of an extremely important initiative that allows deaf and hard of hearing children to get used to reality is a fairy tale for children in Polish sign language prepared by the School and Education Center in Wejherowo for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Wejherowo. The fairy tale is recorded entirely in sign language and allows children to understand what the coronavirus is and why they cannot leave the house. The action takes place in the Kingdom of Peace, in which mysterious crowns began to appear on the heads of the inhabitants. They were heavy, uncomfortable, and made life difficult. Everyone who had one had to stay home for a while²⁸. The prepared material also includes practical advice for parents and guardians on how to explain to the youngest concerns related to the epidemic and the situation around²⁹.

Other examples of initiatives could be helping seniors³⁰, giving students IT equipment for distant learning³¹, or online support for those in need.³²

AREA 5: PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have there been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

With regard to the provision of public services by local government units, it cannot be indicated that there are disruptions in their performance due to the COVID-19 epidemic. It should be emphasized, however, that the requirements for the prevention and counteraction of the SARS-CoV-2 virus forced some kind of deliberate and temporary redesign of the provision of public services, taking into account the introduced restrictions and the sanitary regime.

Waste management is part of the municipalities' own tasks. Municipalities perform this task in accordance with Art. 2 u.s.g. on his own behalf and under his own responsibility, using the attribute of independence, which is subject to judicial protection. A significant change provided for by the special coronavirus act concerned the possibility for the voivode to issue orders binding for all government administration bodies operating in the voivodeship, state legal entities, local government bodies, local government legal persons and local government organizational units without legal personality (Article 11 of the COVID Act). These orders were issued by way of an administrative decision subject to immediate execution upon their delivery or announcement and did not require justification. The purpose of these instructions was the intention to counteract COVID.

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtHuGIHND8o&feature=youtu.be>
(access 13.10.2020).

²⁹ <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/niedamysie-bajka-o-tajemniczych-koronach-rpoprzedstawia>
(access 13.10.2020).

³⁰ <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/wielkoduszna-polska-studenci-seniorom-rpo-przedstawia;>
<https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/wielkoduszna-polska-telefony-wsparcia-dla-seniorow-slask-rpo-przedstawia>
<https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/niedamysie-senior-w-domu-rpo-przedstawia-Poznan>
(access 13.10.2020).

³¹ <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/wielkoduszna-polska-komputery-dla-uczniow-rpo-przedstawia>
(access 13.10.2020).

³² <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/Wielkoduszna-polska-wsparcie-psychiczne-rpo-przedstawia>
(access 13.10.2020).

On the basis of the so-formed power to issue orders, the voivode pursuant to Art. 11a, 11b and 11c of u.COVID could directly contribute to shaping the waste management policy in communes. Firstly, if in the voivodeship there was no technical and organizational capacity to neutralize medical waste with infectious properties generated in connection with counteracting COVID, the voivode could issue an order regarding the management of this waste, which was determined by: the entity or entities obliged to manage waste; place, authorized method and conditions of disposal, including transport and storage of waste before its processing; the obligation to keep quantitative and qualitative records of waste in paper form, provided that it is possible to keep such records through the BDO; duration of the instruction (art. 11a u.COVID). Importantly, issuing such an order was possible only when the entity with the obligation to manage waste had appropriate technical and organizational capabilities for its implementation. Supervision over waste management carried out on the basis of the voivode's order was exercised by the competent voivodeship environmental protection inspector.

Secondly, the voivode could issue orders also with regard to the management of waste generated in connection with counteracting COVID-19 other than medical waste with infectious properties (Article 11b of the COVID Act).

The third very significant power of the voivode in the field of waste management was the possibility of issuing orders to amend or exclude the requirements for selective collection of municipal waste, which were specified in the regulations on maintaining cleanliness and order in municipalities (Article 11c of the COVID Act). At the request of the commune head, mayor or city president, the voivode could change the frequency of collection of municipal waste and the manner of providing services by selective municipal waste collection points³³. If in the area of a given voivodeship or part of it, the voivode has issued an appropriate management, this is the same as excluding the obligation to apply the requirements for separate collection of waste in this area. This means that the requirements specified by the voivode will take precedence over statutory standards. This applies to the exclusion of the application of all statutory standards of requirements for separate collection of municipal waste, regardless of the scope in which the voivode issued the ordinance³⁴.

Another extremely important task related to the provision of basic public services for the local community is the organization of collective public transport. In times of an epidemic, collective public transport provided mainly by communes, poviats and inter-commune, inter-poviat and poviat-commune unions faced numerous challenges related to the necessity to provide passengers with an appropriate sanitary regime. Pursuant to § 26 of the Regulation of the Council of Ministers on doings and prohibitions in connection with the epidemic, public public transport as part of municipal passenger transport, municipal transport, poviat-communal passenger transport and poviat passenger transport should be provided in the red zone³⁵ 50% of the number of seats or 30% of all seats and standing positions specified in the technical documentation or operation and maintenance

³³As an example of practice, one can indicate the ordinance of the Małopolska Voivode, item no. reg. 142/20 of April 3, 2020 on the change of frequency of collection of the fraction of municipal waste in the city and commune of Myślenice (Journal of Laws of Małop. item 2701).

³⁴Cf. M. Bursztynowicz, Uchwały śmieciowe w czasie epidemii koronawirusa, Lex/el. 2020.

³⁵In order to counteract the spread and prevent COVID-19, the legislator introduced the division of Poland into three types of zones (green, yellow and red). The color of the zone symbolizes the level of risk associated with SARS-CoV-2 and has a set of do's and don'ts to increase the level of anti-virus protection. A green zone is an area where the public can function according to pre-epidemic rules. Currently, there are no green zones in Poland, and the entire territory of the country is located in the yellow zone. The list of poviats belonging to the red zone constitutes an appendix to the Regulation of the Council of Ministers on doings and bans in connection with the epidemic. The aforementioned regulation also assigns a catalog of restrictions and orders for each zone.

documentation for a given type of means of transport or vehicle, while leaving at least 50% of the seats in the means of transport or vehicle unoccupied. Outside the red zone, these requirements have been relaxed. According to them, 100% of the number of seats or 50% of all seats and standing places specified in the technical documentation or technical and operational documentation for a given type of means of transport or vehicle should be guaranteed in means of public transport, while staying in the means of transport or vehicle at least 50 % of seats are vacant. Additionally, in means of public transport, the mouth and nose should be covered with clothing or its parts, mask, mask, visor or helmet.

5.2. What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?

The coronavirus pandemic directly affected the functioning of Polish offices. Staff shortages related to COVID-19 cases or the need to care for children during the closure of schools, kindergartens and nurseries as well as the sanitary regime in contacts with citizens made the local government administration apply new solutions when organizing the work of offices. Digital solutions have been actively and willingly used, such as the e-government service, which provides citizens with electronic official services available around the clock. Remote work and resource transfer proposals as a response to the insufficient number of employees became popular.

One of the biggest changes in the functioning of offices during the epidemic was allowing officials to perform remote work. This possibility was introduced by the special coronavirus law. The employer, pursuant to art. 3 u.COVID may instruct an employee to perform work specified in the employment contract for a specified period of time outside the place of its permanent performance (remote work). Remote work may be performed only during an epidemic threat state or an epidemic state announced due to COVID-19 and within 3 months after their cancellation. The employer does not have full freedom in the case of outsourcing remote work, because when issuing an order to the employee in this matter, he must take into account and assess whether the employee has the technical and local skills and capabilities to perform such work and whether the type of work allows it. If the employer's assessment of the possibility of performing work in this formula is positive, the employee may not refuse to execute the order regarding remote work³⁶. In the event of refusal to comply with the instruction, the employer may impose a sanction on the employee. Importantly, the employer is obliged to provide tools and materials for remote work and logistics services for remote work. When performing remote work, an employee may use their own materials tools, but they must allow respect and protection of confidential information and other legally protected secrets, including business secrets or personal data, as well as information the disclosure of which could expose the employer to damage. Remote work also does not exempt the employer from the obligation to provide the employee with safe and hygienic working conditions and take care of his life and health, so in the event of an accident during remote work, he will be classified as an accident at work³⁷.

The form of remote work (remote deliberation mode) is also used by collective bodies of local government units, metropolitan associations, regional chambers of audit and local government appeals colleges. The remote deliberation mode consists in summoning and holding deliberations, sessions, meetings, assemblies or other forms of operation of the relevant indicated bodies, as well as making decisions, including resolutions using means of distance communication or by correspondence (Article 15zzx of COVID). This mechanism should be considered at the time of the coronavirus epidemic as an important alternative

³⁶ J. Marciniak, *Praca zdalna*, Lex/el. 2020, p. 2.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

to stationary meetings of collective bodies of local government units, which provides councilors both the ability to perform their local government duties, as well as safety and protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection.³⁸The time of the epidemic as a result of staff shortages and overload with tasks related to counteracting COVID-19 forced offices to reorganize their activities, including the transfer of employees between workplaces within one office, between workplaces within different offices, and job changes by officials , changes in the conditions of work.

The first example of the transfer of employee resources is the possibility that in an epidemic emergency or an epidemic, the head of the commune, mayor, city president, staroste and voivodship marshal would order an employee of his office to temporarily transfer, and to the head of an organizational unit subordinate to him, a temporary transfer of an employee of this unit (art. u.COVID). In this case, it is a transfer to perform a job other than that specified in the employment contract, however, it must be a job that complies with the qualifications of the employee, thus this transfer applies only to local government employees employed under an employment contract. The transfer may, in accordance with Art. 2 of the Act on local government employees¹, be submitted to: marshal offices and voivodeship self-government organizational units; powiat starosts and powiat organizational units; commune offices, auxiliary units of communes, communal budgetary units and local government budgetary establishments; offices (and their equivalents) of associations of local government units and local government establishments established by these unions and offices (and their equivalents) of administrative units of local government units. Such work may be provided in the same locality as the original job or in a different locality. The period of such a transfer may not exceed 3 months. Moreover, the employee may not receive a lower remuneration for this period than the remuneration specified in his employment contract. In the case of pregnant women, an employee caring for a child until the age of 4, or a person who is the sole carer of a child under 15, the employee's consent is required for temporary transfer to work in another unit³⁹.

The second example of the transfer of employee resources in connection with COVID-19 is the possibility of temporarily transferring a local government employee to perform another job. This entitlement materializes during the period of the epidemic threat or epidemic state. According to Art. 15zzz1 u.COVID of a local government employee may be temporarily transferred, with his consent, to perform a job other than that specified in the employment contract, consistent with his qualifications, in an organizational unit of social assistance in the same or another town. Contrary to Art. 3a u.COVID, the possibility of temporary transfer applies to all local government employees, i.e. employed on the basis of election, appointment and employment contract, and not only employed under an employment contract. On the other hand, the units to which such transfer may take place have been limited, because in this case, as above, it is not the full catalog of Art. 2 of the APS, only social welfare organizational units. Such a transfer may not violate the important interest of the entity that hitherto employed a local government employee and must argue for the transfer of important needs on the part of the receiving entity. The period of work has been significantly extended in relation to Art. 3a u.COVID (max. 3 months), because the employee, pursuant to Art. 15zzz1 u.COVID may be transferred for a period not longer than 30 days from the date of cancellation of the state of epidemic threat or state of the epidemic. Taking into account the introduction of the current state of the epidemic for an

³⁸ For more information on the remote session, see: J. Glumińska-Pawlic, B. Przywora, Exercising the competences of the decision-making and control body of a local government unit in the state of epidemic, *Local Government* 2020, No. 7-8, pp. 129-138, A. Miszeko, Remote session of collective bodies of local government units, *LEX / el. 2020*.

³⁹More on the transfer of a local government employee to perform another job see: M. Karciarz, Temporary transfer of a local government employee to perform another job during an epidemic emergency or epidemic, *Lex / el. 2020*, I. Baranowska, Temporary transfer to work in another unit, *Lex / el. 2020*.

indefinite period, it can be presumed that the employees transferred on this basis will perform a new job throughout the entire period of the epidemic, unless they do not agree for such a long period. This solution undoubtedly results from the nature of the tasks provided by social assistance units and their additional burden in relation to preventing and combating COVID-19.

Transfer of an employee pursuant to Art. 15zzz1 u.COVID is made by agreement of the units (the employee's previous employment unit and the host unit). It should include: an indication of the legal basis for the transfer; employee data and qualifications as well as the current job position; definition of a new job position; specification of the date on which the transfer, commencement and termination of employment will take place; information on remuneration, in the amount not lower than the current one; a statement that the transfer does not violate the important interest of the entity that previously employed the employee; identifying the needs of the host entity justifying the transfer and defining the rules of liability of the entity that previously employed the employee and the host entity for obligations resulting from the employment relationship⁴⁰.

In the case of employees of social welfare units providing services around the clock, the special coronavirus act allowed for the possibility of introducing changes in the conditions of work. According to Art. 4f u.COVID, during the period of declaring an epidemic threat or an epidemic, the employer running an organizational unit of social assistance providing 24-hour services, may, after obtaining the prior consent of employees, for a specified period of time: change the system or schedule of employees' working time; order employees to work overtime in the necessary amount; instruct employees to exercise the right to rest in a place designated by the employer without the possibility of leaving it; suspend the application of Art. 133 of the Labor Code⁴¹, according to which an employee is entitled to at least 35 hours of uninterrupted rest each week, including at least 11 hours of uninterrupted daily rest. The introduction of such changes must be justified by ensuring the safety of people using the services of these units, the continuity of care and functioning. If the working conditions change, the employer is obliged to provide the employee with accommodation and meals necessary to meet the basic living needs of the employee outside the working hours. The value of benefits consisting in accommodation and meals is not included in the calculation basis for social security contributions and does not constitute income within the meaning of the provisions on income tax from natural persons.

An important solution in connection with the inability to perform tasks by the office in whole or in part during the period of the epidemic threat or epidemic state is the possibility of entrusting the voivode by ordering the performance of the tasks of this office in whole or in part, within a specified period, to another administration office public or an entity performing public tasks. On the one hand, this solution may cause difficulties for residents with access to the office transferred to, for example, another town, but taking into account the workload of offices with current tasks and those related to counteracting and combating COVID-19, as well as the remote work by officials, the mechanism introduced by Art. 15zzy u.COVID can be a serious alternative to the reorganization of the work of public administration, which will be positively assessed by the local community.

In order to ensure the continuation of the tasks by the executive body of the commune, key even for the implementation of tasks related to COVID and the ongoing management of the commune, which, unlike the collective management boards of poviats and voivodship boards, is monocratic, the special coronavirus act provided a mechanism in the event of incapacity to work of the head of the commune, mayor, the city president (art. 15zzz

⁴⁰More on the transfer of an employee pursuant to Art. 15zzz1 u.COVID see: E. Podgórska-Rakiel, Temporary transfer of a local government employee to perform another job in connection with the coronavirus epidemic, LEX / el. 2020.

⁴¹The Act of June 26, 1974, the Labor Code (consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1320, as amended).

u.COVID). If, during the period of an epidemic threat or state of epidemic, there is a temporary obstacle in the performance of tasks and competences of the head of the commune, mayor, city president, caused by incapacity to work due to an illness lasting up to 30 days, his tasks and competences are taken over by where more than one deputy has been appointed, the first deputy.

In connection with the prevention and counteraction of COVID-19, public administration offices have been subject to additional sanitary regimes. Pursuant to the Regulation of the Council of Ministers on orders and prohibitions in connection with the epidemic, until further notice, the performance of tasks by a public administration office or an organizational unit performing tasks of a public nature may be limited by performing only tasks necessary to provide assistance to citizens. The permissible number of applicants staying at the same time in one room of the office may not be more than 1 person per one service post, with the exception of persons performing tasks in the field of client service. People staying in the office are required to cover their mouth and nose.

Examples of local initiatives

Continuity of service provision to the population

Education:

- organization of distance learning in schools by communes and poviats - in communes and poviats throughout Poland,
- providing sanitary safety filters in educational institutions (temperature measurement, disinfectants, masks) - in municipalities and poviats throughout Poland from September 2020,
- tests for the presence of coronavirus among teachers and employees of nurseries and kindergartens,
- purchase of computer equipment for students,
- preparation of detailed guidelines for education for schools and kindergartens in the commune during the pandemic,
- organization of training courses for teachers in the field of distance learning,
- providing verified teaching materials developed by educational institutions for students, parents and educators on the websites of city offices and school principals

There were temporary closures of kindergartens and nurseries, their operation was restored in June this year.

Culture:

- most of the municipal / city community centers offered their inhabitants an online offer of music and art classes, vernissages, workshops, concerts, performances - online culture,
- booking and ordering library collections via e-catalog, by phone or e-mail
- safe, self-service book return systems in municipal libraries,
- subjecting returned library materials to a 7-day quarantine - in most libraries
- ensuring sanitary safety filters in communal community centers and libraries - all over Poland

In the first phase of the epidemic, some local government units had limitations in the activities of these institutions (especially rural and urban-rural ones), classes, workshops and events were temporarily canceled, and the institutions were closed. Restrictions were introduced in the use of additional services: reading room, on-site press, catalogs and computers.

Healthcare:

- Many local governments decided to buy masks and distribute them free of charge among their residents (usually one mask per 1 person),
- some municipal governments provided financial support for the health care system,
- most often funds are spent on the purchase of medical equipment and appliances (medical and diagnostic apparatus), especially intensive care equipment, ventilators, ultrasound machines, ECG machines, computer tomographs, defibrillators and other equipment of intensive care units, and the purchase of ambulances adapted to transport of people infected with coronavirus, personal protective equipment, tests for diagnosis of medical personnel. (Grant Thornton, 2020). Part of the funds is allocated by local governments to the necessary renovation and construction works aimed at adapting hospital rooms to provide appropriate care to people infected with coronavirus, and at the same time ensuring appropriate safety conditions for the staff,
- telephone advice for patients of communal Public Care Institutions has been introduced throughout Poland
- in some cities, free telephone psychological support programs for residents have been introduced,
- in some cities, support and psychological help have been introduced for employees who help others during an epidemic and need support themselves,
- non-contact hand disinfection stations were launched in playgrounds.

In the first phase of the epidemic, there were limitations in local government units in the activities of communal Public Health Care Centers. With time, telephone consultations for patients began to be introduced.

Social assistance:

- purchase by communes and poviats of personal protective equipment (masks, aprons) and disinfection equipment and equipping communal nursing homes with them - in all communes in Poland,
- closure of communal nursing homes for visitors - in all communes in Poland,
- communal and municipal social welfare centers (social workers) provided voluntary help to lonely, elderly, disabled people or people in quarantine with food and essential products, as well as with necessary life activities. For this purpose, local governments also collaborated with volunteer fire brigades, rural housewives' associations, non-governmental organizations and volunteers in order to provide adequate support to people and families needing help; determining the personal, family, income and property situation is based on a telephone conversation with a social worker and documents
- in all communes in Poland, guides on reporting domestic violence were developed, systematic monitoring of seniors aged 90+ and veterans was introduced,
- telephone monitoring of the situation of families in which the Blue Card was introduced was introduced,
- special rooms are provided for victims of violence,
- special rooms are provided for the homeless, in which they pass through isolation before being accommodated in a homeless shelter,
- the situation of families covered by support / families with care and education problems was monitored by phone by family assistants,
- 24-hour telephone service has been introduced for the elderly, people with disabilities, who have no other relatives in their environment, where they can report the need for support, including, inter alia, the need to do shopping through volunteers,
- coordinators for support and assistance for the elderly were appointed,

- The obligation to conduct both the family community interview and its update (April 2020) has been abolished, replacing it by a telephone interview.

Administrative services

- remote service of residents, limitation of direct service - in all communes in Poland, telephone service for residents, additional telephone lines have been launched, for example dedicated to seniors
- innovative solutions: an official parcel machine used to transfer documents to the office without entering the building and direct contact with officials,
- innovative solutions: CityBoxOffice "- mobile - container - customer service point adapted to the epidemic, in which residents are served by videoconference,
- virtual clerk,
- transfer of human resources from the city hall to powiat labor offices in order to support and accelerate the processing of applications for financial aid for entrepreneurs under the government anti-crisis shield and to the Sanepid,
- legal and civic advice provided by phone or e-mail,
- In many communes, a temporary restriction or even suspension of admitting applicants has been introduced.

Public transport

- ensuring sanitary safety filters in public transport - in all communes in Poland,
- providing filters for sanitary safety of public bicycle systems - in most cities in Poland,
- increasing the number of journeys on selected routes in order to reduce the number of passengers in vehicles - in all municipalities in Poland,
- some cities have chosen to organize dedicated bus lines for medical personnel,
- There have been temporary redesigns of public transport services - travel restrictions at the start of the epidemic. On March 14-16, more or less half of the provincial cities reduced the frequency of public transport runs or suspended school lines. Subsequent changes were forced by the government's decision, which reduced the number of passengers on buses and trams from March 25. Public cycling systems have been temporarily closed.

Waste management:

- some municipalities have introduced procedures for handling municipal waste from quarantine or other places where there has been a confirmed coronavirus infection - special red bags or labeling of mixed waste containers and their frequency were used with the right to receive them,
- in some communes, telephone notifications of waste collection from people in isolation in the commune have been introduced,
- appeals to residents to make informed and reasonable purchasing decisions so as not to generate more waste than usual during an epidemic,
- There were temporary closures of selective waste collection points, and the collection of waste from separate collection was temporarily suspended in some municipalities.

Order and public safety:

- the use of drones to monitor public order, comply with the obligation to wear masks,
- the use of monitoring in the form of advanced vision cameras to detect human clusters,
- disinfection of urban infrastructure with the help of self-flying robots.

6. Any additional good practice / information that you would like to share?

Among other important information and good practices, it is necessary to point out the support solutions for local governments relating to their financial management, which was affected by numerous problems due to the coronavirus epidemic. In order to reduce the negative effects of the epidemic, including the introduction of partial financial support for local governments that bear the lion's share of the costs of fighting COVID-19, several financial mechanisms were introduced in the special coronavirus law.

First, according to Art. 15zn on COVID, in order to ensure the proper implementation of tasks related to counteracting COVID-19, the head of the commune (mayor, city president), the poviát board or the voivodeship board may: make changes to the budget income and expenditure plan of a local government unit, including transfers budget classification divisions; make changes to the long-term financial forecast and the plan of expenditure of the budget of the local government unit related to the introduction of new investments or investment purchases by the unit, provided that the change does not deteriorate the budget result of this unit; change the purpose of the special-purpose reserve created in the budget of a local government unit without obtaining the opinion of the committee responsible for the budget of the body constituting this unit; create a new special-purpose reserve without obtaining the opinion of the committee responsible for the budget of the body constituting this unit, transferring the blocked amounts of expenditure to it; change the limit of liabilities due to credits and loans taken and issued securities.

Secondly, the introduced provision of Art. 15zoa u.COVID means that in 2020 the requirements of the financial management of the local government unit in terms of balancing the current side of the budget of the local government unit will be relaxed. Therefore, this provision makes it possible to not keep the budget balance in the amount of the actual loss of tax revenues in relation to the plan before the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic in 2020 and in the final implementation of the budget. The loss in the income of the local government unit resulting from the occurrence of COVID-19 is the decrease in income, calculated as the difference between the unit's income planned in the budget change and the planned income indicated by the unit in the budget report for the first quarter of 2020.⁴²

Thirdly, a mechanism securing the finances of local government units has been introduced, indicating that at the end of the budget year 2020, the total amount of debt of a local government unit may not exceed 80% of the total revenue of that unit in that budget year.

In order to counteract COVID-19 more efficiently, it was decided to transfer to local government units in 2020 the installments of the educational, equalizing, balancing and regional general subsidy on dates earlier than those specified in the Act on local government income.⁴³

In addition, in June and July 2020, local government units with above-average tax revenues could not pay installments of the so-called Janosikowy. No interest was accrued on the unpaid amounts, however the unpaid amounts had to be paid in equal parts in August-December 2020, together with the installments due for these months.

Another important solution supporting overloaded local government units is the change of the deadlines for submitting the report on the condition of the unit until July 30th, 2020 and extending the deadlines for the discharge procedure by 60 days, up to August 29th, 2020.

⁴²M. Karciarz, Pakiet osłonowy dla samorządów w tarczy antykryzysowej 4.0, LEX/el. 2020, p. 1-2.
⁴³Act of November 13, 2003 on the income of local government units (Journal of Laws 2020, pos. 23 with later amendments.).

ROMANIA

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

In Romania, the competencies regarding the provision of public services are exercised on 2 levels: central and local.

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and to achieve the management of the consequences, related to the evolution of the epidemiological situation in Romania, the President of Romania issued Decree no. 195/2020 consisting in the establishment of the state of emergency on the entire territory of Romania.

Thus, according to the provisions of the above-mentioned normative act, the integrated coordination of medical and civil protection response measures to the emergency situation generated by COVID-19 is performed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, through the Department for Emergency Situations, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and with the other institutions involved, in accordance with the provisions of Government Decision 557/2016 regarding the management of risk types.

The content of GD 557/2016, Annex 1 describes: types of risk, associated risks, responsible authorities and areas of action.

From this perspective, regarding *the Epidemics*, the main responsible authority is the Ministry of Health, while the secondary responsible authority is the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Thus, in case of epidemics, the role of prevention is assigned to the following central institutions: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration, while the role of operational coordination is assigned to the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Internal Affairs.

At the same time, the local public administration authorities participate, together with other central public authorities, and/or non-governmental organizations, as cases may arise, in the following types of actions: support missions, investigation/evaluation and restoration of the state of normality.

Local public administration authorities have an important supporting role, including the role of identifying and enforcing the sanctions included in the legislation adopted to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

During the state of emergency, the normal allocation of powers has not been changed. However, according to Annex 1 to Decree no. 195/2020, to the initial emergency measures with direct applicability, we find the following provisions, according to which it was specified that some of the public services subordinated to the local public administration authorities are operationally subordinated to the central public administration authorities:

- The Local Police is operationally subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- Community public records services are operationally subordinated to the territorial police units, who will establish the support activities they carry out;
- Voluntary fire services (emergency situations) are operationally subordinated to the territorial units for emergency situations, who will - in turn - establish their responsibilities and mode of action.

Another measure was that the public ambulance services are operationally subordinated to the emergency inspectorates.

1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?

As indicated above, the allocation of competencies between the central and local levels has not been changed during the state of emergency; as such, the mechanisms used for coordination between the 2 levels are the same.

1.3 What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities adminis at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?

In case of an epidemic, the main entities responsible for operational coordination are the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, together with the structures under subordination, coordination, or under their authority, structures that can be found in each county in Romania: public health departments, county inspectorates for emergency situations, gendarme inspectorates, etc.

The operational management of emergency situations at national level is carried out through the National Center for Coordination and Management of Intervention, established at the level of the General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, which permanently ensures the flow of information for the Government Operational Command Center.

At the same time, for the management of large scale and high complexity emergencies, at the level of each county in Romania, the County Centers for Coordination and Management of Interventions were made operational.

Within those Centers there are representatives of all institutions responsible for epidemic management, as well as other experts and specialists from the local economic operators for functional support, such as: public health directorate, county inspectorate for emergencies, the institution of Prefect, the county police inspectorate, the gendarmes inspectorate and the county ambulance service etc.

On the other hand, in order to ensure the unitary application of its policies in the territory, the Ministry of Education and Research has in subordination, at the level of each county in Romania, a school inspectorate.

Thus, at the level of each county, all the above-mentioned institutions act together under a single command.

1.4. Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?

According to the provisions of Decree no. 195/2020, during the state of emergency, transfers between the budgets can be made between the Ministry of Health and the Single National Health Insurance Fund (in both directions), as well as between the different budget lines of the Ministry of Health or the Single National Health Insurance Fund according to needs.

Financial increases for the medical and non-medical staff of the public health units and of those entities that have as sole partner the administrative-territorial units are supported

from the Single National Health Insurance Fund budget (Title VI - Transfers between public administration units).

By order of the Minister of Health are established all measures to support isolated persons at home. As a result of the measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 and the support measures implemented by the local public administration authorities, and the necessary expenses are provided by transfer between the state budget, through the budget of the Ministry of Health and the local budgets.

Following, we will present, by way of example, other measures that are implemented during the state of emergency:

For the field of public order:

- the institutions within the National System of Defense, Public Order and Security may hire, without competition if necessary, for a determined period of 6 months, personnel from external sources or personnel gone into reserve, whose institutional services have ceased.

For the economic field:

- the Government can adopt measures to support economic operators in the areas affected by COVID-19;
- in order to combat the spread of COVID infections, central public authorities may requisition production facilities that produce materials and equipment needed to combat this epidemic;
- central public authorities, as well as legal entities in which the state is the majority shareholder, can directly purchase materials and equipment necessary to combat this epidemic;
- the validity of documents issued by public authorities, due to expiration during the state of emergency, will maintain validity.

For the field of health:

- in the structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in the health units, and in the social assistance services, new hiring of staff, auxiliary staff, pharmacists, laboratory staff and other categories of contract staff may be employed without competition, if necessary, for a fixed period of 6 months;
- medical services for the treatment of COVID-19 cases and their complications are granted to all persons on the territory of Romania and are financed from the budget of the Single National Health Insurance Fund;
- payment amounts in the budget of the Ministry of Health, for the purchase by the county public health directorates of necessary materials during the pandemic, will be made available by transfers from the Ministry of Health, and the acquisitions will be made by the public health directorates through direct procurement procedure.
- payment amounts in the budget of the Ministry of Health, for the purchase by the health units of materials and medicines needed during the pandemic, will be made available by transfers from the Ministry of Health, and purchases will be made by the health units through direct procurement procedure;
- Ministries with their own health system can make direct purchases for their own health units both from the budgets of their own Ministries and from those of the health units.

For the field of Labor and Social Protection:

- The Government can aid employers and employees affected by the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, by derogating from the actual, legal provisions;

- by order of the Minister of Labor and Social Protection, social protection measures are established for employees and their families in the economic sectors whose activity is affected, totally or partially stopped, by decisions of public authorities, during the state of emergency;

- during the state of emergency, the provisions of Law no. 19/2020 on granting days off to parents for child custody, in case of temporary closure of schools, will not apply to certain categories of employees: employees of the National Defense System, employees of prisons, staff of public health units and other categories established by order of the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Economy, Energy and the Environment, and the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communications, as appropriate;

Other measures:

- during the state of emergency, courses in all educational units and institutions are suspended;

- during the state of emergency, the central and local public administration authorities will take measures to organize the activity in such a way as to avoid, as far as possible, direct contact between persons, including through the use of electronic means of communication.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

In reference to the ongoing situation, caused by the spread of Coronavirus infection, we mention the digital project *stiriofficiale.ro*. - carried out within the Code for Romania Task Force in partnership with the Government of Romania through the Authority for the Digitization of Romania and the Department for Emergency Situations.

Code for Romania is an independent, politically unaffiliated and apolitical non-governmental organization.

The project is designed to encourage the Romanian population to be vigilant in the way they access, assimilate and distribute the bursts of news presented in the media. Out of panic and / or lack of knowledge, users who have either good or bad intentions can spread erroneous information in the online or traditional media (print, radio or TV etc.). In emergency situations, this can lead to wrong actions and can increase the level of fear and uncertainty among the population.

In this context, a correct source of information was created, not fed by panic and the information published on *stiriofficiale.ro* represents the official source of information for the public and the media representatives.

The digital project *stiriofficiale.ro* is part of an ecosystem of several digital solutions developed by Code for Romania volunteers, meant to fight the effects of COVID-19 and functions as a central information point about the situation in Romania.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have there been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

The Decree no. 195/2020 provides for the provision of measures to ensure continuity in supply, respectively extraction, production, processing, transport, distribution, supply, maintenance, maintenance and repair of the resources and raw materials and / or semi-processed materials needed for the proper functioning of the national energy system as well as ensuring the continuity of its operation and of all public utility services (water supply

and sewerage, heat supply in centralized system, sanitation, local public transport and public lighting).

Another provision refers to the fact that during the state of emergency, the prices of medicines and medical equipment, food of strict necessity and public utility services may be capped (electricity and heat, gas, water supply, sanitation, fuels etc.), within the average price of the last 3 months before the declaration of a state of emergency.

Central public authorities methodologically coordinate decentralized public utility services provided by local public authorities - each in its own area of competence.

In this respect, no significant interruptions in the provision of public services and public utilities were reported during the state of emergency.

5.2. What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?

According to the provisions of Decree no. 195/2020, central and local public institutions and authorities, autonomous administrative authorities, autonomous utilities, bodies, national companies and corporations and companies in which the state or an administrative-territorial unit is the sole or majority shareholder, companies with private capital introduce, where possible, during the state of emergency, work at home or in telework, by unilateral act of the employer.

At the same time, the Decree no. 240/2020 on the extension of the state of emergency on the Romanian territory regulates a series of relevant measures aimed at issuing documents in electronic system, respectively the online school:

For the civil status field:

- public institutions and authorities which, in the exercise of their powers under the specific legislation, require the presentation of civil status certificates, in original and / or photocopies, are obliged to accept extracts for official use from the civil status documents transmitted in electronic format by the local community public service for the registration of persons or by the civil status office within the town halls where the local community public record service does not work;
- during the state of emergency, the primary documents underlying the registration of birth and death certificates are transmitted by the issuers to the local community public service for the registration of persons / the competent civil registry office by fax or by electronic means administered by the authorities of the Romanian state;
- providers of electronic communications services have an obligation to establish technical and organizational measures to ensure the integrity of electronic communications networks, to ensure the continuity of the provision of electronic communications services and to avoid possible situations of interruption of voice and / or data traffic in public electronic communications networks for users of military and civilian authorities.

For the field of education and research:

- during the state of emergency, all teaching activities that require the physical presence of ante preschoolers, preschoolers, pupils and students are suspended in educational units and institutions;
- during the state of emergency, pre-university education units organize, as far as possible, carrying out activities in the curricula, in online format;
- during the state of emergency, higher education institutions in the national education system, based on university autonomy, with respect to the quality of the didactic act and

with the assumption of public responsibility, will use alternative methods of teaching-learning-assessment, in online format.

6. *Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?*

During the state of emergency, a series of measures were taken, including the organization and development of the activity of central and local public administration authorities to avoid the spread of SARS-VOC2 coronavirus, including those with express reference to limiting the movement of persons.

In this respect, at the meeting of the Romanian Government on April 30, 2020, was adopted an Emergency Ordinance aimed at:

- stimulating the use of any electronic means for the participation of local councilors in the meetings of the local council, respectively of the county councilors in the meetings of the county council and clarifying that they are considered present;
- the establishment by the National Agency of Cadastre and Real Estate Advertising, of measures regarding the activity of receiving and resolving, also in online format, for the applications for receipt and / or registration in the land book - formulated by notaries public, lawyers, executors and by individual and juridical entities, authorized to perform cadastral works;
- the possibility that, during the establishment of the state of siege or the state of emergency, certain deadlines (aiming at the issuance by the Ministry of Public Works, Development and Administration of a point of view on the draft decisions of the local / county councils regarding the attestation of the inventory of the goods that make up the public domain of the administrative-territorial units, respectively consulting the central institutions of public administration to verify if the goods overlap with public or private goods of the state) be interrupted and continued after the cessation of that condition.

This will allow both compliance with the procedures and measures put in place to prevent the spread of SARS-VOC2 coronavirus, as well as the realization of the necessary verifications in order to avoid the attestation in the centralized inventory of the goods from the public domain of the administrative-territorial units for those goods that are in the public or private domain of the state.

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?

According to Act no. 387/2002 Coll. on state management in crises outside the time of war and state of war crisis management bodies include the government, ministries and other central state administration bodies, district offices in the seat of the region, district offices and municipalities. Each of these bodies shall establish crisis staffs, which is the executive body of the crisis management body, whose task is to analyse the risks of a crisis, propose measures to address it and coordinate the activities of its components during a crisis. The government establishes a central crisis staff, which coordinates the activities of state administration bodies, local self-government bodies and other components intended for resolving a crisis in a period of a crisis. The Chairman of the central crisis staff is the Minister of the Interior of the Slovak Republic.

At first, some initial measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 disease were introduced by municipalities or self-governing regions (e.g. the Bratislava self-governing region and the city districts of Bratislava closed all schools of which they are the founders). Subsequently, however, all other measures and regulations were issued by the government in cooperation with the central crisis staff and the Public Health Office of the Slovak Republic.

- 1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?

Representatives of associations representing municipalities and regions in Slovakia have become members of the permanent crisis staff. This ensured that local authorities could comment on the planned measures to prevent the spread of the virus and also to improve coordination and communication between government and local government.

- 1.3. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?

- 1.4. Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?

In connection with the negative development of the economy of municipalities and self-governing regions in 2020, influenced mainly by the pandemic of the COVID-19 disease, the Government of the Slovak Republic is interested in compensating for the loss of income to territorial self-government entities. Responding to a significant decrease in the collection of personal income tax interest-free repayable financial assistance will be provided to territorial self-government entities for the performance of their self-governing competencies. Repayable financial assistance will be provided at the request of the municipality or self-governing region up to the amount of the loss of personal income tax for the year 2020.

The Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic has published an appeal to mitigate the consequences of the corona crisis. The appeal is aimed at municipalities, cities, regions and higher territorial units, to support small projects and help to launch regional activities aimed at mitigating the effects of the crisis. Applicants can receive a grant for the project from 10,000 to 50,000 euros.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)

From the beginning of the crisis, municipalities were taking care of their most vulnerable citizens. For example almost every municipality has decided to ensure the purchase and distribution of food and medicines for the elderly living in their municipality, so they don't need to go to the shops themselves and to be exposed to a higher risk. Later, they also became obliged by a government resolution to set up a special telephone line for elderly on which they ordered this service by making a list of things they need to buy. Subsequently, the purchase was secured by civic associations operating in the municipality, local businesses or the employees of the municipality themselves.

Many municipalities, especially the smaller ones, produced and distributed handmade masks for their citizens through volunteers and municipal employees. Each citizen had the opportunity to report to the municipal office the required number of masks, which were then delivered to them. In most cases, it was necessary to pay a small amount for the used material, but in some municipalities, especially for the most vulnerable groups, these masks were free.

- 2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?

In Slovakia, as in almost every country, there were more infected people in larger cities. Many small municipalities did not record a single case of COVID-19, but nevertheless, all measures to limit the spread of coronavirus were applied to the entire territory of Slovakia, regardless of the size of the municipality or the number of infected inhabitants. However, in the ongoing second wave of coronavirus, the government is introducing measures only in the specific municipalities/ regions which are most affected.

- 2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

- 3.1 What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?

The area of cross-border cooperation was one of the most problematic areas during the first wave of coronavirus. Closed borders caused problems to people, who usually cross borders every day because of work/school/living/healthcare etc. It was possible to cross boards only for people who had work or home up to 30 kilometres from the borders. It still caused a lot of problems when the concrete situations were not covered by adopted rules. Coordination on the borders was quite

problematic and in some cases the every border crossing point had slightly different rules. Also due to this problems in the first wave right now during second wave of coronavirus is government reluctant to restrict the free movement across borders.

- 3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place ?

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

- 4.1 Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

One of the best practice on civil participation during pandemic was project "Who will help Slovakia". It was project funded by individuals and business sector as a support to mainly healthcare and social care systems to provide all necessary equipment and supplies in time of its shortage. They managed to collect and distribute help in amount more than 1 300 000 euros.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- 5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have there been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

The Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic sent a recommendation to the municipalities that during an emergency, the municipalities limit office hours to prevent the spread of the virus.

Due to the restriction of traveling of citizens by public transport and the need to save public finances, some municipalities have reduced the frequency of departures of public transport.

- 5.2. What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?
6. Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?

SLOVENIA

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

When Slovenia declared an epidemic based on the Communicable Diseases Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 33/06 and 49/209) on 12th March 2020 due to an increasing number of cases of coronavirus infections, the division of responsibilities between the state and municipal level did not change. The decision did not affect the constitutionally guaranteed autonomy of local self-government and did not change the legal position of municipalities. The decision to declare the epidemic, however, influenced the communication process between the government and the municipalities; they in the first weeks specifically needed adequate and professional information regarding the spread of the disease and appropriate measures to curb the one. Coordination of measures in cooperation with competent ministries was first taken over by the Civil Protection Service of the Republic of Slovenia by activating the national plan, which facilitates the implementation of certain activities and the coordination of measures. The actual Government of the Republic of Slovenia, which was appointed on March 13th this year, has since been taking several measures to stem the spread of coronavirus infection. Following the most urgent steps to slow down and curb the COVID-19 epidemic, the Government has accelerated the preparation of the first comprehensive legislative package to help the population and the economy.

1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has been closely monitoring the situation at all levels, the national and European and global levels since the outbreak of the coronavirus. The management of the situation and the long-term reduction of adverse effects on the economy and the population were approached with a two-stage system:

- with immediate intervention measures that can be implemented in a short period of time, and
- developing strategic measures to support the population and the economy.

1.3 *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

Just to prepare strategic measures, an advisory group was formed within the Government of the Republic of Slovenia to assist all the ministries in drafting the first legislative package (called "first corona package") with the priority of rapid financial assistance to the population to prevent and mitigate the effects of the epidemic. The advisory group developed the guidelines that formed the basis of the legislation in following areas:

1. Job protection measures
2. Measures to improve the social situation of people
3. Measures to provide exceptional assistance to the self-employed people
4. Measures to maintain the functioning of the companies
5. Measures to improve corporate liquidity and support research projects to combat the epidemic
6. Reduction of attendance fees, for officials

- 7. Aid to agriculture
- 8. Public procurement measures

1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

The most comprehensive anti-COVID-19 law package adopted in early April (Act Determining the Intervention Measures to Contain the COVID-19 Epidemic and Mitigate its Consequences for Citizens and the Economy, Official Gazette of the RS, No. 49/20) contains number of measures designed to protect employers and workers economically, employee social protection enables more than 100,000 sole proprietors to survive, as well as resolving the plight of the population (such as deferring credit obligations). Regarding the transfer of financial resources from the central to local level, adopted Act ensures the transfer of funds from the state budget to the budgets of municipalities in several areas, such as: salaries for employees of municipal public institutions, remuneration for civil servants for work in dangerous environments and the like. The Act provides grants for the operation of local self-government at the time the epidemic is declared. The Act also provides for temporary measures to mitigate the effects of the epidemic in the area of work and payment of social security contributions, health care and health insurance, social security, rights from public funds and the exercise of rights related to parental care, taxes, public finances, wages and salaries, public sector and direct and indirect majority state-owned companies, agriculture, forestry and food, water management, environmental protection, culture, science and research, anti-money laundering and terrorist financing, insurance and financial instruments markets, public procurement, contractual penalties, enforcement and personal bankruptcy, performance of public services, corporate financial affairs, insolvency proceedings and forced termination, exemption from payment of the National Radio Television (RTV) signal services and additional police powers.

At the time of completing this questionnaire (end of April), the Government is preparing the "second corona package" legislation, which opens a 2 billion € credit line for businesses, businesses and individuals engaged in economic activity, while addressing the problem of underdevelopment at the level of local government, and therefore raises lump sums for municipalities that are played an extremely important role during the epidemic. The increase of municipal revenues is valid for 2020, municipalities will receive the difference for first four month of the year by the end of May 2020.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

Since the outbreak of the epidemic, local communities have been actively involved in informing citizens. In all stages of the epidemic's expansion, the most important for the population was up-to-date and professional information on how to deal with such circumstances. To this end, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia has set up a special website for the general public to obtain the necessary information (<https://www.gov.si teme/koronavirus>). The website serves as the official source for all activities of the Government of the RS in the fight against the epidemic. Ministry, responsible for local self-government established an information base for contacts with the mayors of all Slovenian municipalities immediately after the epidemic was declared.

It is important to emphasize that local authorities immediately responded to the new situation. In the municipalities, the mayors, with the help of central regional and local civil protection services, prepared all the necessary activities to inform and protect the population, especially the elderly as the most vulnerable group. Non-governmental and humanitarian organizations (Slovenian philanthropy, Red Cross and Caritas, for instance) have also significantly increased their activities. It has not been observed that the provision of public services in local communities is restricted, except those banned for the epidemic reasons (kindergartens, schools).

In all activities, it is necessary to mention also all three associations of municipalities, which have been since the beginning of the epidemic actively involved in the preparation of emergency legislation.

2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?

In general, government actions are aimed at the entire population and there is no difference between the urban and the rural environment. In other words, all measures are the same for large municipalities as small rural ones.

2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

There were no specific new cases of inter-municipal cooperation in responding to emergencies at the formal level, but solidarity between municipalities at several levels is observed, especially when providing protective equipment. Namely, civil protection is organized at local and regional level, so it is predestined to work across municipal borders. Other forms of inter-municipal cooperation (i.e. waste treatment, waste disposal, ..) operates normally.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?

Covid-19 stopped all cross-border cooperation activities which include personal contacts. The Ordinance on the temporary suspension of the operation of border crossings for border traffic at the border with the Republics of Croatia, Italy, Austria and Hungary, temporarily closed the borders of the Republic of Slovenia with neighbouring countries, stopped all traffic until the cancellation. As a result, all cross-border co-operation activities are currently halted.

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?

One of the examples of newly started cross-border co-operation is provision of medicines (drugs and pills) for individual patients living in Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. It is organised and provided by Red Cross organisations of mentioned countries and includes providing pills which are not available in countries in which patients are situated.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have there been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

To a limited extent, public service providers provide public services most of the time. No disruption occurred as users adapted to the truncated activity. Contractors who do not provide public services during the epidemic (for example, public transport by road or rail) do not charge their services.

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

Already in March, on 20th, an Act on provisional measures for judicial, administrative and other public matters to cope with the spread of infectious disease SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19 (Official Gazette of RS, No. 36/20) was adopted by the National Assembly. It's important from the administrative point of view. This act provides for temporary measures to prevent the spread of viral infection, protect the health and life of people, and ensure the functioning of individual state bodies, self-governing local communities and holders of public authority and to ensure the exercise of rights and obligations, measures in relation to judicial, administrative, other public law matters and criminal enforcement cases.

The state has also prepared detailed instructions for employees working from home (remote working) and using information technology on remote distance. Pupils in primary and secondary schools were given the opportunity to teach online. The ministry responsible for local self-government has proposed to supplement the Local Self-Government Act to allow municipal council meetings to be held using video conferencing systems.

In addition, the above-mentioned Act provided temporarily possibility of relocation of civil servants between public institutions in case of need for additional personnel. Temporarily relocations can be done without consent of civil servant.

6. *Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?*

The measures are generally considered appropriate and proportionate by the experts, as the results are good. Compared to many other countries, Slovenia is one of those who regulate crisis management relatively uniformly, hand in hand with health professionals, with the cooperation of the Government and the National Assembly and an incredibly broad understanding of people for advice, recommendations and regulations.

There are some examples of good practices in Slovenia, i.e.:

1. Government call centre: a good example of cooperation among state bodies during an epidemic.

The Government's call centre for information, which was established on the initiative of the Government's Communication Office and in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Infectious Diseases Clinic in Ljubljana, has answered many questions since the beginning of March. Information on coronavirus, covid-19 disease, preventive measures and relaxation measures is given to callers by 66 senior students of the Faculty of Medicine, who are professionally assisted by two doctors from the Infection Clinic, a representative of the National Institute of Public Health, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a representative of the Civil Protection, and occasionally also a representative of the Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia and a representative of the Police and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. The call center received more than 42,000 calls during this period - an average of about 600 calls a day and set a daily "record" twice when they received more than 1,200 calls.

In June 2020, the President of the Republic awarded the Call Center with the "Apple of Inspiration".

2. National Institute of Public Health is also an example of active participation and good practice during an epidemic.

The National Institute of Public Health is a central national institution whose main purpose is to study, protect and increase the level of health of the population of the Republic of Slovenia through public awareness and other preventive measures. In addition to its central role in public health, the Institute activities in Slovenia has the main professional role during corona crises. The Institute also represents an expert level to support decisions made by the state at the national and local levels that have a direct or indirect impact on health and human behaviour.

All materials, related to the epidemic (posters, leaflets and video content) are collected in one place for the general and professional public. The documents are in PDF format and can be downloaded to devices, printed and used for awareness in local environment. What is important is, that professional current information and instructions are available on the coronavirus disease COVID-19 website in four languages: Slovene, English, Italian and Hungarian. From this point of view, we would like to state that the publication of all documents in Italian and Hungarian consistently respects both the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the constitutional provision obliging municipal authorities to conduct positive discrimination against members of the Italian and Hungarian national communities in the Republic of Slovenia. Therefore, insisting on the consistent use of bilingualism in everyday practice is crucial for the realization of the special rights of both communities and therefore an example of good practice in times of health crisis.

3. Quick response of local authorities and intensive cooperation between Ministry of Public Administration and municipalities.

Mayors of Slovene municipalities have dealt with the Covid19 virus epidemic most face-to-face. Immediately after the outbreak of the epidemic, mayors took matters into their own hands, organized municipal Civil Protection headquarters, and began enforcing measures to curb the spread of the infection. In the first weeks after the outbreak of the epidemic, the Ministry of Public Administration, responsible also for local self-government, was devoted to the important challenges of the operation of the entire public administration and local self-government in special conditions. The epidemic took up all that time and overnight it was necessary to deal with completely different issues. Instead of planning future projects, it was necessary to establish sustainable conditions for the smooth operation of all subsystems of state and local government. Plans and work programs had to be changed immediately in the light of current epidemic developments and adapted to the new situation. It turned out that the local self-government works well even in emergencies.

During this time, the Ministry of Public Administration prepared legal frameworks for the operation of public administration in new circumstances. Thus, in cooperation with other state bodies, the Ministry drafted an act that stopped deadlines in administrative proceedings and court proceedings. With the amendments of the Act on Providing Additional Liquidity to the Economy for Mitigating the Consequences of the COVID-19 Epidemic, more systemic funds were provided for the implementation of mandatory municipal tasks, as the lump sum expenditure from EUR 589.11 was increased to EUR 623.96. The act also gave mayors a legal basis for exemption from paying rent for business premises owned by municipalities. On May 1st, the Act Amending the Act on Intervention Measures to Contain the COVID-19 Epidemic and Mitigating its Consequences for Citizens and the Economy came into force, with which the National Assembly amended the Local

Self-Government Act by enables the convening of a municipal council session with the help of videoconferencing systems, which enables the smooth operation of municipal bodies even in times of emergency.

4. Application #OstaniZdrav; (#StayHealth)

The introduction of the application on August 18th, 2020 is an additional preventive measure and protects both the health of individuals and public health. Its use is of great help to epidemiologists in controlling the spread of the virus. We install the application on smartphones completely voluntarily, but in our everyday life, the main role continues to be strict compliance with other preventive measures: maintaining a enough distance from each other, regular washing and disinfection of hands and wearing protective masks indoors and in public transport. As it is voluntarily, it is so far used only by some 100.000 inhabitants, still increasing.

The #StayHealth app helps curb and control the spread of infections with the new coronavirus, reduces the burden on the health care system and thus allows the country to control the virus with milder measures. The app alerts user that he/she has been in contact with an infected person, so there is a higher risk that the individual has become infected.

5. Working group Local Self - Government

In June 2020, Minister of public administration, responsible as well for the local self-government, established a Working Group for Local Self-Government, which deals with issues in the field of local self-government in formulating policies of the ministry and other state bodies in the field of local self-government. The Working Group shall consider:

- measures for the implementation of the ministry's policy in the field of local self-government,
- draft regulations affecting the functioning of local self-government and other important decisions in the field of local self - government, and
- other topics that the working group considers to have a significant impact on the functioning of local self-government.

The members of the working group are primarily the presidents of all three representative associations of Slovenian municipalities and representatives of other state bodies.

6. Gradual introduction of intervention legislation

In order to prepare strategically oriented measures, a consultative group was formed to assist ministries in drafting the first legal package with the priority of rapid financial assistance to the population to prevent and mitigate the consequences of the epidemic. The Consultative Group developed guidelines that formed the basis of the guidelines for the first anti-corona measures (#PKP or #ACP = Anti Corona Package in English):

- Measures to preserve jobs (new arrangements for co-financing wage compensations, rewarding employees and those activated in critical activities during the epidemic, compensation for sick leave, additional co-financing for already subsidized employment)
- Measures to improve the social situation of people (status of workers not working due to force majeure, unemployment benefit from the first day of unemployment, no payment for public services not provided, solidarity allowance for pensioners)
- Measures for extraordinary assistance to the self-employed (extraordinary assistance, monthly basic income in the amount of 70% of the net minimum wage, write-off of contributions while maintaining rights, deferral of advance payment of personal income tax)

- Measures to maintain the functioning of companies (all contributions for pension insurance of employees in companies operating are taken over by the state)
- Measures to improve the liquidity of companies and support scientific research projects to combat the epidemic (purchase of receivables from Slovenian companies, freezing of advance payment of corporate income tax and payment of income tax from activities for sole proprietors, shortening payment deadlines for payments to private suppliers from the public sector, diversion of unused European ESF funds)
- Reduction of attendance fees, salaries and exemption from payment of distribution services
- Aid to agriculture (financial aid, reduction or cancellation of pension and disability insurance contributions, reduction of cadastral income tax payment for 2020, compensation of fishery payments of 40% of the total compensation, reduction of water reimbursement of 40% to aquaculture farmers)
- Measures in the field of public procurement (change of limit values, independence of municipalities in the implementation of public procurement).

The state has so far passed a package of four acts (so called "Measures to mitigate the effects of the epidemic (# PKP1, # PKP2, # PKP3 and # PKP4) to curb the spread of the epidemic and mitigate the consequences". In addition to these acts, several ordinances were adopted, which specify the implementation of individual legal act. All, however, are based on the Communicable Diseases Act. The following are just important acts:

6.1. Act Determining the Intervention Measures to Contain the COVID-19 Epidemic and Mitigate its Consequences for Citizens and the Economy, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No 49/20 and 61/20 (#PKP1)

This Act lays down temporary measures to mitigate the effects of the epidemic in the field of work and payment of social security contributions, health care and health insurance, social protection, rights from public funds and the exercise of rights from parental care, taxes, public finances, wages and salaries. public sector and companies directly and indirectly majority state-owned, agriculture, forestry and food, water management, environmental protection, culture, science and research, prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing, insurance and financial instruments market, public procurement, contractual penalties, execution and personal bankruptcy, provision of public services, financial operations of companies, insolvency and winding-up proceedings, exemption from payment of RTV (national TV) signal services and additional police powers.

With the amendments of the Act on Providing Additional Liquidity to the Economy for Mitigating the Consequences of the COVID-19 Epidemic, more systemic funds were provided for the implementation of mandatory municipal tasks, as the lump sum expenditure from EUR 589.11 was increased to EUR 623.96. The retroactive difference will also be paid. The act also gave mayors a legal basis for exemption from paying rent for business premises owned by municipalities.

6.2. Act Providing Additional Liquidity to the Economy to Mitigate the Consequences of the COVID-19 Epidemic (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No 61/20) (#PKP2)

It includes measures to ensure the liquidity of the economy and adjustments to #PKP1. Government measures to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic published for the second package of measures to mitigate the effects of epidemics.

From the point of view of local self-government, mentioned act also amended Article 35 in the Local Self-Government Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 94/07, 76/08, 79/09, 51/10, 40/12, 14/15, 11/18, 30/18, 30/1861/20 and 80/20), to enable, in

the event of a natural or other serious disaster, epidemic or other extraordinary circumstances, if the holding of a meeting with personally present members of the municipal council poses a risk to the health and safety of members of the municipal council, and this is necessary to make decisions convene a meeting remotely using information and communication technology. Thus, the act now enables the convening of a municipal council session with the help of videoconferencing systems, which gives the smooth operation of municipal bodies even in times of emergency.

6.3. Act Determining the Intervention Measures to Mitigate and Remedy the Consequences of the COVID-19 Epidemic, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No 89/20) (#PKP3).

This act also amended the Financing of Municipalities Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 123/06, 57/08, 36/11, 14/15, 71/17 and 21/18, 80/20), in Article 10.b. The second paragraph is amended that a municipality may borrow in the current budget year if the repayment of liabilities from loans (principal and interest), financial leases and commodity loans (instalments) and potential liabilities from issued guarantees for the fulfilment of obligations of indirect budget users and public companies, of which the municipality is the founder, in an individual year of repayment does not exceed 10% of realized revenues from the balance of revenues and expenditures of the municipal budget in the year before borrowing, reduced by received donations, transfer revenues from the state budget for investments and received funds from the European Union budget.”.

This act, #PKP3, also amended Local Self-Government Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 94/07, 76/08, 79/09, 51/10, 40/12, 14/15, 11/18, 30/18, 61/20 and 80/20), Article 86.a, whit new article, that unless otherwise provided in the act, the association (of the municipalities) shall be represented by one of the mayors of member municipalities, and members of management and supervisory bodies may be, in addition to mayors, other officials of member municipalities.

6.4. Act on Intervention Measures to Prepare for the Second Wave COVID-19" (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No 98/29) (#PKP4)

The goal of fourth package of intervention legislation (#PKP4) is to further protect human health, prevent the spread of infection and respond to the real needs of the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia. It therefore brings measures to prepare Slovenia for the second wave of the new coronavirus. Temporary measures to mitigate and eliminate the consequences of the epidemic in the field of labour, employment, scholarships and social protection are being amended and supplemented.

6.5. At the time of writing, a fifth anti-corona package (#PKP5) is prepared.

The draft proposal covers measures in the fields of health, labor, social protection, the economy, education, the enforcement of criminal sanctions and justice, agriculture, the economy and food and infrastructure. The package of measures reintroduces or extends existing measures. It thus extends the measure of 100% compensation of salary in the case of ordered quarantine due to contact with an infected person at work. From September 1st, 2020, it will be possible to claim 80% compensation in the event of absence from work due to child protection.

Although many of these measures are aimed at the economy and employees, this also has indirect positive consequences for municipalities. Every unemployed person means a certain financial burden for municipalities, and insolvent companies cannot pay property tax as the second most important source of municipal revenue.

SPAIN

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

Information provided by the Ministry of Territorial Policy and the Civil Service:
In a decentralized state like Spain, there are both:

- Coordination mechanisms: An administration, normally the State with respect to the Autonomous Regions, exercises direction by setting guidelines to be followed by the rest of the actors involved, and
- Cooperation mechanisms: The administrations involved adopt decisions of common interest by consensus.

As a general rule, in almost all areas of public policy, decisions must be taken in the form of both coordination and cooperation, due to the distribution of competences. The State lays down guidelines on which the Autonomous Regions have scope to take decisions in their area of autonomy.

To provide further information in relation to this first question, it should be noted that the 1978 Constitution establishes a territorial model based on a decentralized State, where the State and the Autonomous Communities assume different competences according to articles 148 and 149 of the constitutional text, without prejudice to the competences of local entities, whose institutional guarantee of their autonomy is also guaranteed.

With regard to the COVID-19 emergency, due to its national and international dimensions and its multisectoral nature, many areas of action of the public authorities have been affected and therefore, several competences, both state, autonomous and local, have been exercised to face this emergency.

Thus, the State has taken measures in the area of defence (article 149.1.4), economic activity (149.1.13), health (article 149.1.16) or public security (article 149.1.29), among other matters.

The Autonomous Communities have also adopted measures in the areas of health (article 148.1.21), education and social assistance (article 148.1.20).

As it regards local entities, in accordance with Law 7/1985, of 2 April, regulating the bases of the local system, have also adopted measures such as the closure of parks or the increase in social assistance for vulnerable persons.

The declaration of the State of Alarm, establishing "the single command", directly affects some of the direct powers of local governments, an example is that of the Local Police, which remain under the direct orders of the Competent Authority as long as their services are necessary for the protection of persons, goods and places, and may impose extraordinary services due to their duration or nature.

With respect to the second question, changes have been made to the legal system as a result of the health emergency, the main measure adopted being the declaration of a state of alarm by means of Royal Decree 463/2020, of 14 March, declaring a state of alarm for the management of the health crisis situation caused by COVID-19.

This declaration has its constitutional basis in articles 55 and 116 of the Spanish Constitution. Specifically, article 116.2 states that "the state of alarm shall be declared by the Government by means of a decree agreed upon by the Council of Ministers for a maximum period of fifteen days, reporting to the Congress of Deputies, which shall meet immediately for this purpose and without whose authorization this period may not be extended. The decree shall determine the territorial scope to which the effects of the declaration are extended".

This article 116 has been developed by Organic Law 4/1981, of 1 June, on the states of alarm, exception and siege.

This legislation forms what legal doctrine and constitutional jurisprudence call "Emergency Law". As indicated in STC 83/2016 "the effects of the declaration of the state of emergency are projected in the modification of the exercise of powers by the Administration and public authorities and in the establishment of certain limitations or restrictions. As far as the foreground is concerned, the competent authority is the Government or, by delegation of the Government, the President of the Autonomous Community when the declaration affects exclusively all or part of its territory. Under the direct orders of the competent authority are all the civil authorities of the public administration of the territory affected by the declaration, the members of the police forces of the Autonomous Communities and of the local corporations, as well as the other workers and officials of the same, and they may be required to perform extraordinary services due to their duration or nature".

Thus, the declaration of the state of alarm in March 2020 has meant the automatic attribution of a single command to the Spanish Government with four delegated authorities.

Specifically, Article 4 of Royal Decree 463/2020 states that

- "1. For the purposes of the state of alert, the competent authority shall be the Government.
2. For the exercise of the functions referred to in this Royal Decree, under the superior direction of the President of the Government, the competent authorities shall be delegated, in their respective areas of responsibility:*
- a) The Minister of Defence.*
 - b) The Minister of the Interior.*
 - c) The Minister of Transport, Mobility and the Urban Agenda.*
 - d) The Minister of Health.*

Likewise, in areas of responsibility not falling within the competence of any of the Ministers indicated in paragraphs a), b) or c), the Minister of Health shall be the delegated competent authority.

3. The Ministers designated as the competent authorities delegated in this Royal Decree are empowered to issue the orders, resolutions, provisions and interpretative instructions which, in the specific field of their action, are necessary to guarantee the provision of all services, ordinary or extraordinary, for the protection of persons, goods and places, by adopting any of the measures provided for in Article 11 of Organic Law 4/1981 of 1 June 1981.

The acts, provisions and measures referred to in the preceding paragraph may be adopted ex officio or at the reasoned request of the competent regional and local authorities, in accordance with the legislation applicable in each case, and must pay attention to vulnerable persons. To this end, no administrative procedure shall be required.

4. During the period of validity of the state of alert, the Situation Committee provided for in the first additional provision of Law 36/2015, of 28 September, on National Security, is activated as a support body for the Government in its capacity as the competent authority".

In accordance with article 5.1 of Royal Decree 463/2020, "members of the State Security Forces and Corps, the Police Forces of the Autonomous Communities and local corporations shall be placed under the direct orders of the Minister of the Interior, for the purposes of this royal decree, in so far as this is necessary for the protection of persons, goods and places, and may impose extraordinary services on them on account of their duration or nature".

Thus, the Royal Decree reserves certain powers to the Spanish Government that are fundamentally linked to the limitation of mobility and the adoption of other special measures that have been adopted since March 2020.

In particular, Article 7 of that Royal Decree states that

"1. During the period of validity of the state of alarm, persons may only circulate on the roads or spaces of public use to carry out the following activities, which must be carried out individually, unless they are accompanied by disabled persons, minors, the elderly, or for another justified reason

a) Acquisition of food, pharmaceutical products and basic necessities, as well as acquisition of other products and provision of services in accordance with the provisions of Article 10.

b) Assistance to health centres, services and establishments.

c) Travel to the place of work for the purpose of carrying out their work, professional or business activities.

d) Return to the place of habitual residence.

e) Assistance and care for the elderly, minors, dependents, disabled persons or particularly vulnerable persons.

f) Travel to financial and insurance entities.

g) Due to force majeure or a situation of need.

h) Any other activity of a similar nature.

2. Minors under 14 years of age may accompany an adult responsible for their care when the latter carries out one or more of the activities set out in the previous section.

3. Similarly, private vehicles will be allowed to drive on public roads to carry out the activities referred to in the previous sections or to refuel at petrol stations or service stations.

4. In any case, the recommendations and obligations issued by the health authorities must be respected in any journey.

5. The Minister of the Interior may decide to close down roads or sections of roads for reasons of public health, safety or traffic flow, or to restrict access to certain vehicles on those grounds.

When the measures referred to in the previous paragraph are adopted ex officio, the Autonomous Communities' administrations exercising powers to enforce State legislation on traffic, vehicle circulation and road safety shall be informed in advance.

The State, regional and local authorities responsible for traffic, vehicle traffic and road safety will ensure that the public is made aware of measures that may affect road traffic.

6. The Minister of Health may, in view of developments in the health emergency, issue orders and instructions relating to the activities and journeys referred to in paragraphs 1 to 4 of this Article, with the scope and territorial area determined therein".

Therefore, the health emergency management structure is headed by the Government of Spain and the four delegated Authorities, establishing a general competence in favor of the Minister of Health in the absence of specific competence, in accordance with article 4.2. Royal Decree 463/2020 which indicates that "*in addition, in areas of responsibility that do not fall within the competence of any of the Ministers indicated in paragraphs a), b) or c), the Minister of Health shall be the delegated competent authority*".

However, each Administration, as stated in Article 6, "shall retain the powers conferred on it by the legislation in force in the day-to-day management of its services to take the measures it deems necessary within the framework of direct orders from the competent authority for the purposes of the state of alert and without prejudice to the provisions of Articles 4 and 5". **This complements the framework of competencies during the state of alarm in a co-governance scenario.**

Royal Decree 463/2020, of 14 March, declaring the state of alarm for the management of the health crisis situation caused by COVID-19 has been extended four times. The four extensions have been authorised by the Congress of Deputies in accordance with Article 116.2 of the Constitution. The latest autorisation was approved on May 6th. ¹

As indicated in previous paragraphs, the main measures adopted have been the limitation of mobility and other specific measures aimed at both preventing the transmission of the disease and mitigating the subsequent economic impact. These measures are set out in a number of ministerial orders and in various Royal Decree-Laws adopted to date (Royal Decree-Laws 6 to 16/2020 as of 29 April 2020).

According to the information available both in the BOE (https://www.boe.es/biblioteca_juridica/codigos/codigo.php?id=355&modo=2¬a=0&ab=2 and https://www.boe.es/biblioteca_juridica/index.php?modo=1&tipo=C) and in the Office of the Prime Minister (for more details <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/covid-19/Paginas/index.aspx>) the main measures adopted by the state government are as follows :

A) Health care:

- All civil health authorities of the public administrations of the national territory, as well as the other civil servants and workers in the service of the same, shall remain under the direct orders of the Minister of Health insofar as this is necessary for the protection of persons, goods and places, and may impose on them extraordinary services due to their duration or nature.
- Setting the maximum retail price of surgical masks.
- Temporary requirements and mandatory personal benefits.
- Purchase of medical and surgical material.
- Provision of clinical diagnosis centres to the Autonomous Communities.
- Suspension of the opening to the public of tourist accommodation establishments
- Optional and non-optional recruitment measures
- Measures for the reintegration of retired health professionals.

¹ https://twitter.com/Congreso_Es/status/1258068505179586561

B) Mobility and security:

- a. First measures:
 - Mobility must be on an individual basis and be limited to essential activities or travel to the place of work.
 - Priority will be given to remote working.
 - Officials of the authority (under the direct orders of the Minister of the Interior) may carry out checks on persons, goods, vehicles, premises and establishments as necessary to verify and prevent suspended services and activities from being carried out. To that end, they may issue the necessary orders and prohibitions and suspend the activities or services being carried out.
 - During the state of alarm, a reduction in the supply of passenger transport was established.
 - The supply of food and products necessary for public health is guaranteed.
 - Hotels and restaurants may only provide home services and premises where cultural, artistic, sporting and similar activities are held must be suspended.
- b. More recent measures:
 - Order SND/370/2020, of 25 April, on the conditions of children's mobility during the health crisis caused by COVID-19 has been approved.
 - The Council of Ministers, on 28 April 2020, adopted an Agreement approving the Plan for De-escalation of the Extraordinary Measures adopted to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Further information is available at <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/referencias/Paginas/2020/refc20200428.aspx#DESESCALADA>

C) Education²:

- Face-to-face educational activity is suspended in all centers and at all stages, cycles, grades, courses and levels of education.
- Postponement of the annual university entrance exam.
- Cancellation of the diagnostic evaluation tests established by the law in force (Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December, for the improvement of educational quality), for 3rd and 6th grades of Primary and 4th grades of Compulsory Secondary Education.

D) Administration and Judicial administration:

- Suspension of procedural and administrative deadlines.
- Suspension of the statute of limitation and expiration periods.
- Extended time for appeal.
- Working days 11 to 31 August 2020 for urgent legal proceedings.
- Preferential processing of certain procedures.
- Refinancing agreements.
- Special regime for the application for the declaration of the insolvency proceedings.
- Holding of procedural acts through telematic presence.
- Extension of deadlines in the area of the Civil Registry.

E) Economic and employment areas main measures adopted:

- For citizens:
 - Workers affected by the illness: the leave is considered Temporary Disability, assimilated to work leave due to Accident at Work.
 - Limitation of dismissals.

² Several of these measures have been adopted within the Sectoral Conference on Education between the State and the Autonomous Communities.

- Recoverable paid leave for employees who do not provide essential services.
- Temporary extraordinary allowance for domestic employees.
- Extraordinary allowance for workers with temporary contracts.
- Suspension of evictions, rent moratorium, and micro-credits for tenants
- Mortgage moratorium.
- Suspension of the obligations derived from the credit contracts without mortgage guarantee.
- Guaranteed supply of water, electricity and natural gas to vulnerable consumers.
- Suspension of deadlines for the return of products.
- Extension of the validity of the National Identity Document.
- For self-employed workers:
 - Advanced tax payment.
 - Extraordinary benefit for cessation of activity for self-employed workers.
 - Reduction of instalments payable in personal income tax and value added tax by discounting the days of alarm status in the first quarter of 2020.
 - Measures to make the procedures for suspending contracts and reducing working hours (ERTEs: Temporary Suspensions of Employment, furlough) due to force majeure more flexible.
 - Guarantee line.
 - Extension of the financing of the Official Credit Institute (ICO).
 - Line of financing to cater for companies and self-employed persons in the tourism sector and related activities affected by COVID-19.
 - Mortgage moratorium and non-mortgage debt.
 - Moratorium on social security contributions and payment of social security debts for the self-employed.
 - Availability of pension plans.
 - Moratoriums or aid in relation to the rental income of the habitual residence.
 - Deferment of the payment of rent for commercial premises.
- For companies:
 - Extension of the financing of the Official Credit Institute.
 - Line of financing to assist companies and self-employed persons in the tourism sector and related activities affected by COVID-19.
 - Subsidized deferment of tax payments.
 - Possibility of making payment of tax debts conditional on obtaining financing through the Official Credit Institute Endorsements' Line.
 - Tax bonus for workers with contracts fixed discontinuous.
 - Alignment of interim revenues to the revenue forecast for 2020 and not to the 2018 results.
 - Measures to make the procedures for suspending contracts and reducing working hours (ERTEs: Temporary Suspensions of Employment/ furloughs) more flexible due to force majeure.
 - Reduction of instalments to be paid in personal income tax and value added tax by discounting the days of the alarm state in the first quarter of 2020.
 - Limitation of dismissals.

F) State level and local level governments: remote meetings new legal provisions adopted.

- It should be noted that the Spanish Government has also adopted measures to make it easier for local authorities to exercise their ordinary powers in this extraordinary situation.

In this regard, Royal Decree-Law 11/2020 has reformed Law 7/1985 of 2 April, regulating the bases of the local system, making it possible to hold telematic

meetings for the holding of plenary sessions, which has been established that "In any case, when exceptional situations of force majeure, serious collective risk, or public catastrophes occur that impede or make disproportionately difficult the normal functioning of the face-to-face regime of the sessions of the collegiate bodies of the Local Entities, these may Once the situation described by the Mayor or Chairman, or whoever validly substitutes them for the purpose of the call in accordance with the regulations in force, has been assessed, meetings may be held and agreements adopted remotely by electronic and telematic means, provided that the members participating in the meeting are in Spanish territory and their identity is proven. Likewise, communication between them must be ensured in real time during the session, with the necessary means being provided to guarantee the public or secret nature of the same as is legally appropriate in each case.

For the above purposes, valid electronic means are considered to be audioconferences, videoconferences, or other technological or audiovisual systems that adequately guarantee technological security, the effective political participation of their members, the validity of the debate and the voting of the resolutions adopted".

- And with regard to the functioning of the Council of Ministers itself, a new third additional provision has been introduced to Government Act 50/1997 of 27 November:

"1. In exceptional situations, and when the nature of the crisis so requires, the President of the Government may decide, with reasons, that the Council of Ministers, the Delegated Commissions of the Government and the General Commission of Secretaries of State and Under-Secretaries may hold meetings, adopt resolutions and approve minutes remotely by electronic means, provided that the participating members are in Spanish territory and their identity is proven. Likewise, communication between them must be ensured in real time during the session, with the necessary means being provided to guarantee the secret or reserved nature of their deliberations.

2. For this purpose, audio and video conferences are considered valid electronic means".

1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?

1. Information provided by the Ministry of Territorial Policy and Civil Service.

The decision-making forum is the sectoral conferences: collegiate bodies of a political nature, led by a minister responsible for the subject and members of the Autonomous Regions' Governing Council for the same subject. Depending on these, there are sectoral committees, led by a Secretary of State and with lower levels in each Autonomous Community, and thirdly, there are various working groups or papers where decisions at a technical level are worked on collectively, which are approved by delegation from their political leaders or prepared for submission to the sectoral conference.

These forums are of a sectoral nature and have met on an extraordinary basis on the occasion of the health crisis, as detailed in the following point.

Above them all and of a multilateral nature is the Conference of Presidents, formed by the President of the Government of the nation with the Presidents of all the Autonomous Communities and the Cities of Ceuta and Melilla. It is regulated by Law 40/2015, which defines it as a multilateral cooperation body whose purpose is the deliberation of matters and the adoption of agreements of interest to the State and the Autonomous Regions.

This body was created in 2004, constituting a major political and institutional initiative. It met six times between 2004 and 2017. In 2019, preparatory work for a new Conference began, which was interrupted by the holding of elections in April of the same year. One of the objectives of the new legislature was to intensify the meetings of this body by strengthening the Preparatory Committee and the Promotion and Monitoring Committee provided for in the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of Presidents and which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Territorial Policy and the Civil Service.

A total of eight telematic Presidents' Conferences have been held between March and April 2020. These Conferences of Presidents are, first and foremost, a space for dialogue and cooperation. These conferences have also been attended by the Ministers of Health, Defence, the Interior and Transport, Mobility and the Urban Agenda, in their capacity as a committee for managing the state of alert. The Minister of **Territorial Policy and the Civil Service, in her capacity as Secretary of this body, has also joined them.**

At the sectoral level, the effort made by all the sectoral bodies whose competences have been particularly affected is very noteworthy. The bodies have met much more regularly, and ad hoc bodies have been created. In addition, there has been a considerable increase in the flexibility of working methods, without prejudice to formality in those cases where it has been necessary to adopt decisions of a formal or binding nature. Video conferences have been held without prior experience and without technical difficulties or rejection. The deadlines for convening all bodies have been shortened. Any obstacles and bureaucratic difficulties have been eliminated, and in no case have the actors expressed rejection or challenged these new forms.

In general, all (17) Autonomous Communities and, in their fields, other stakeholders involved in the collaborative bodies have expressed their gratitude to the heads of the ministries for the speed with which they have convened bodies and meetings and for keeping information channels open.

The general rule has been cordiality in all meetings and, in general terms, it can be stated that the governance system is working properly using the means available.

Finally, within the framework of the De-escalation Plan, Order SND/387/2020 of 3 May³ was approved, regulating the process of co-governance with the Autonomous Communities and cities of Ceuta and Melilla for the transition to the new normality. This is an important milestone in the field of governance since it is not often that this type of procedure is so explicitly reflected and published. It reflects a commitment by the Spanish government to reach a set of decisions in the management of the health crisis jointly.

The mechanism set out in this Order grants decision-making power to the Ministry of Health, which has the powers as a result of the declaration of the state of alarm. The Order, however, guarantees constant dialogue with the Autonomous Community for the declaration of all phases of de-escalation.

2. Information provided by the Ministry of Health.

The Interterritorial Council of the National Health System, as a permanent body of coordination, cooperation, communication and information of the health services, among them and with the State Administration, has met in urgent, extraordinary and monographic plenary sessions on more than 20 occasions during this period, analysing and assessing at

³ <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2020/05/03/pdfs/BOE-A-2020-4792.pdf>
*Overview of the replies to the Rapid Response Service no. 38
 [CDDG(2020)10 Addendum I]*

each moment the current situation of the epidemic caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) and adopting Agreements to face it.

In relation to local governments, different mechanisms and instruments to facilitate multilevel coordination have been put in place since the declaration of the State of Alarm decreed by the Spanish Government on March 14, 2020, among others:

- Since March 15, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces has been part of the Security Coordination Centre (CECOR), and participates in its daily meetings (from this participation, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces has transferred to all the City Councils that can constitute their Coordination Committees for Security COVID-19).
- Since 23 April, the creation of a Permanent Working Forum with the Government of Spain has been underway to address the de-escalation process, with weekly remote meetings for the fluid exchange of information, experiences and knowledge.
- From 23 April, fortnightly remote meetings are taking place between the President of the Government and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces to address the implementation of the de-escalation phases.

1.3 What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?

1. Information provided by the Ministry of Territorial Policy and Civil Service.

The first steps in the management of the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic were taken in early February 2020.

- Inter-territorial Council of the National Health System -CISNS Since February 4, 2020 and to date 04/05/2020 it has held a total of 24 meetings (Ministers / Councillors of the Autonomous Communities). All the Autonomous Regions participated in all of them, in the vast majority at the level of Councillor, and only exceptionally at the level of Deputy Councillor or General Director due to the impossibility of an agenda.

- This body has traditionally been one of the most active Sectoral Conferences, with a greater frequency of meetings. In 2019 it held a total of five meetings, one of the most active years. In the period 2015-2019 it held a total of 15 meetings.

- The first urgent and extraordinary meeting due to the Covid-19 health crisis was held on 4 February, and the second on 25 February.

- In the month of March, 12 meetings of this body were held, which became daily in the week of 9 March. Urgent meetings were held on Sundays. Decisions of greater significance and complexity (such as the closure of the schools in Madrid, and certain areas of the Basque Country and La Rioja, on March 9) were promptly conveyed to the Councillors prior to their public announcement. In April there were 10 meetings. In May there were two on 4/5/2020.

- Bilateral meetings have been held with all the Autonomous Communities, as well as constant contact by the means available. There is even a Whatsapp group between the Minister and the Councillors to report on all the measures.

- From the outset, the Minister of Health has offered his support and endorsement of the most difficult decisions to be taken by the advisors, especially those relating to the closure

of events and others in the early stages of the pandemic, before the declaration of a state of alarm.

- The Minister has been in daily contact with the Councillors, including through a whatsapp group.

- NHS Human Resources Commission. A first meeting is scheduled for 5 May 2020. In 2019 it had not met, although work is being done on this matter at the technical level and decisions are being taken, if necessary, by the Sectorial Conference. The main issue before this body is the qualification of health professionals in training, with the aim of examining and qualifying final year residents and facilitating the entry of first year residents who passed their exam in February to take up the Residence.

- Social Services. At the Social Services level, the cooperation body is the Territorial Council of Social Services and the System of Care for Dependency. On March 17, 2020, the Second Vice President and Minister of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 met for the first time with the Councillors of the Autonomous Communities. This meeting was not considered a formal Territorial Council and its aim was to make initial contact in order to set in motion the dialogue and mechanisms required within the framework of the management of the health crisis and the state of alarm.

- On 20 March 2020, the Territorial Council was formally convened to distribute the funds approved by the Government (Articles 8 and 9 of Royal Decree-Law 7/2020 of 12 March, approving urgent measures to respond to the economic impact of COVID-19). This is aid for families to meet the basic right to food of children in vulnerable situations affected by the closure of educational establishments.

- 300,000,000 were also distributed in application of the provisions of Article 1 of Royal Decree Law 8/2020 of 17 March on urgent and extraordinary measures.

- At this meeting, the councillors were asked for their opinion on the adoption of certain measures which, falling within the scope of their competencies, were considered important to be adopted in a coordinated manner, and in particular: the opinion and observations regarding the consideration of the social and health services as essential in the framework of the declaration of the state of alarm.

- Equality. The following meetings between the State and the Autonomous Regions have been held in the area of equality:

- The Sectorial Conference on Equality was held on 4 May 2020, with an extensive agenda that included the distribution of funds for policies against gender violence and the Contingency Plan against Gender Violence in the face of the COVID-19 crisis.

- At the technical level, two meetings of the Technical Committee of the Sectorial Conference on Equality were held in April, led by the Government Delegate for Gender Violence. The main item on the agenda at these meetings was concern for the adaptation of resources in the area of assistance to victims or potential victims of GBV in the situation of confinement. All the Autonomous Communities reported on their adaptation plans with the reinforcement of telephone and telematic assistance, where appropriate, but also the reinforcement of infrastructures such as reception flats where necessary. Specific measures have also been taken to protect children, or in terms of family meeting points.

- As a reference, the sectoral conference in 2019 held two meetings, and in the period 2015-2019 it had met a total of 8 times.

- Education. The education sector is also a sector in which the State and the Autonomous Regions share competence, and the latter have an important role to play in its management. However, the closure of schools has implications for the exercise of several fundamental rights over which the State has jurisdiction: the fundamental right of access to education, and the establishment of equal conditions for students to obtain qualifications valid throughout the national territory.

The closure of schools since March in all the Autonomous Regions therefore posed several challenges: first, to ensure that the right to education was maintained in the best possible conditions, considering, among other factors, that not all pupils had the telematic means to access educational alternatives. Secondly, the establishment of equal conditions for promotion (to the next grade) for all, without undermining the aforementioned equality. Thirdly, the conditions for qualification (at the end of the cycle / stage). The celebration of the EVAU (evaluation test for access to university) was also addressed

A technical document was worked on with the agreement of the Sectoral Commission over several days, which achieved, not without effort, the agreement of almost all the Autonomous Regions on these three points. The agreements adopted can be consulted on the Ministry's website.

- The collaborative effort is also noteworthy in this policy: three meetings of the sectoral conference were held between February and April, whereas in 2019 there was only one meeting and between 2015-2019 there were a total of nine meetings.

- Universities. In Spain, university subjects have recently been assigned to a Ministry other than the Ministry of Education, although both work closely on certain matters of state competence such as the management of scholarships. In the case of the universities, in addition to the autonomous management, similar to that existing in education, there is the principle of the autonomy of the universities, which can make their decisions by exercising an autonomy and freedom of teaching recognized in the Const.

Coordination and cooperation in this area has therefore maintained two channels of dialogue: with the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE), with whom several meetings have been held, and at the level of the Sectorial Conference, which has met twice, with a third meeting planned for 7 May.

The CRUE is not a state participation body, and in a strict sense it is a private association, but it must be considered representative of the interests of all the universities and the defence of their autonomy. It is not a consultative body as such and its decisions are rather recommendations that are passed on to the technical commission and/or the sectoral conference.

The main issues facing the University are similar to those of education, concerning the discontinuation of face-to-face teaching, the requirements for obtaining degrees. The issue of scholarships for the coming year, issues relating to the suspension of enrolment to resume the next academic year for those who, as a result of the crisis, have not been able to continue their studies, and measures relating to the PAS have also been addressed.

- As a reference, this sectoral conference in 2019 did not hold any meetings and between 2015 and 2018 it met only twice.

- Employment. One of the areas in which action was taken most rapidly after the declaration of the State of Alarm was employment, with measures being adopted almost immediately by Royal Decree Law. The Autonomous Regions were informed of these measures at the technical level by the Directorate-General for Employment.

- The Sectoral Conference on Employment and Labour Affairs was held on 1 April. At this conference, information was given on, among other things, all the measures adopted in recent days in the field of employment.

- As a reference, the Employment Sectoral Conference held 3 meetings in 2019. In previous years it had held four and five meetings, respectively, increasing the previous average, which used to be two per year.

- Tourism. Tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the declaration of the State of Alarm. Two meetings of the Sectorial Conference have been held, the first one immediately after the declaration of the state of alarm. In its second level composition (commission) it met once. This sectoral conference had met only once in the whole of 2019, and a total of three times between 2015 and 2019. In addition, intensive work is being carried out in all the Autonomous Regions with the various sectors.

The main strategic objective is to achieve a series of guidelines, in accordance with the Health Ministry's indications, which will enable de-escalation to be carried out uniformly throughout the state, avoiding situations of inequality between Autonomous Regions.

- Domestic trade. On 29 April, the sectorial conference on internal trade met, which had previously held two meetings at committee level. Meetings were also held with the sectors affected. In this area it is particularly important to convey the sector's demands in order to guarantee an equal de-escalation throughout the territory.

- Agriculture. Sectoral Conference on 30 April with an extensive agenda where all the outstanding issues were addressed. Some decisions had been taken in lower-level working groups. Like Health, this is a particularly active sectorial conference that holds an average of 4/5 meetings per year (through both the Sectoral Conference and the Advisory Councils for Community Affairs), and which in this context has not seen a significant increase in frequency.

- Justice. The distribution of powers in the justice system is asymmetrical, since not all the Autonomous Regions have assumed powers in the management of the administration of justice. The general framework was regulated by Order SND/261/2020, of 19 March, for the coordination of the professional activities of members of the civil service bodies regulated in Book VI of Organic Law 6/1985, of 1 July, on the Justice Administration, during the state of alert.

Several meetings have been held which have resulted in the approval of several resolutions for the management of the crisis:

- Meetings of the Secretary of State for Justice with the Autonomous Regions with jurisdiction over justice matters on 12, 13 and 16 March and 10 April, approving the following resolutions Resolution of the Secretary of State for Justice on essential services in the administration of justice (14 March 2020), Resolution of the Minister of Justice on safety in the administration of justice during the COVID-19 pandemic (23 March 2020), y Resolution of the Minister of Justice in application of Order SND/272/2020 of the Ministry of Health on exceptional measures for civil registration during the pandemic (23 March 2020), as well as the Resolution of the Minister of Justice of 13 April adapting the provision of public justice services to RD 487/2020, of 10 April (13 April 2020).

- The Minister, in turn, met with the Autonomous Regions on 20th and 27th March and 3rd April. As a result of this meeting, the Resolution of the Minister of Justice was adopted, adapting the coverage of essential services of the Administration of Justice to Royal Decree-Law 10/2020 of 29 March (30 March 2020).

- Meetings were also held with the Attorney General's Office and the General Council of the Judiciary, as well as with other groups in the justice sector. All decisions, resolutions and protocols adopted can be consulted on the Ministry's website.

2. Information provided by the Ministry of Health: coordination and inter-ministerial meetings, and at different levels of administration, bearing in mind the competences attributed.

3. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces:

The participation of Local Governments in specific areas for emergency response is being carried out through the participation of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces in the Sectoral Conferences and other meetings of a sectoral nature that have been convened, for example in relation to health issues, waste management, citizen security, gender violence and the management of social services, among others.

At European level, the FEMP is part of the working group created by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), in order to coordinate a joint response of European local governments to the decisions adopted by the European Institutions. In this sense, we also participate in the meetings of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE).

1.4. Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?

1. Information provided by the Ministry of Finance.

First question:

The health crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Spanish public administrations as a whole, requiring a series of measures involving the transfer of financial resources to the Autonomous Communities and Local Bodies. Details of these measures are included in the Stability Programme which the Kingdom of Spain, as required, sent to the Community authorities before 30 April, and which is summarised below:

- In the case of the Autonomous Communities, the effects will undoubtedly be substantial, taking into account that they assume responsibility for ordinary health management in their respective territories, as well as, in general, those corresponding to social services. Public policies on health and public health are the backbone for tackling the pandemic, and health care is the fundamental policy to be used to solve the main effects generated on citizens' health.

But, in addition, the consequences of the health crisis also affect other types of public policies developed by the Autonomous Communities which, in addition to social services, include aspects as diverse as education, transport or support for the regional industrial and business fabric.

These circumstances have required a significant strengthening of the public resources that the Autonomous Communities allocate to cover these needs.

Furthermore, as is understandable, the budgetary impact of the health crisis on the Autonomous Communities is not without its own major uncertainties, as it unquestionably depends on the evolution of the pandemic, the levels of saturation experienced by the health system and the economic effects that may result from the period of inactivity or confinement.

Among the measures adopted by the State, it is important to highlight the immediate provision of additional resources to the Autonomous Communities by means of Royal Decree Law 7/2020, of 12 March, which adopts urgent measures to respond to the economic impact of COVID-19, updating the deliveries on account of the resources of the Autonomous Communities' Financing System, which has meant a significant volume of additional funds for the Common Regime Autonomous Communities, which have been available in March and April, ensuring the stability and certainty of their main source of resources.

Likewise, the distribution of additional resources in the area of social services has been agreed upon, through the Extraordinary Social Fund, and benefits in favour of families receiving aid or canteen grants. Additional contributions have also been made in health matters, as well as additional contributions in the area of the 2018-2021 housing plan.

In addition, it is important to note that a special non-refundable fund of 16.000 million euros will also be approved for the Autonomous Communities for reconstruction after the coronavirus.⁴

- In the case of Local Bodies, the measure in relation to the use of the 2019 surplus to finance social expenditure (Social Services and Social Promotion) should be highlighted, in accordance with article 3 of Royal Decree Law 8/2020 of 17 March, supplemented by article 20.1 of Royal Decree Law 11/2020 of 31 March.

Second question:

- In the case of the Autonomous Regions: the measures in the area of taxation stand out:

- the adoption of provisions relating to the exemption and rebate of taxes, public prices and other revenue recorded in Chapter III of the budget of the Autonomous Communities' revenue;
- the measures affecting gambling taxes with tax relief of varying scope, or regulating the suspension of licences for new premises and other complementary measures in the area of gambling and betting, are noteworthy.
- with respect to the water tax, the reduction of 50% of the water tax in some cases and the extension of free water to all sections for users of the social tax during the months of April and May, as well as the non-application of minimum billing in relation to hotel and similar establishments, are noteworthy;
- the effects of certain measures in relation to the exemption from payment of certain rental income in publicly-owned or promoted properties should be indicated;
- the measures to suspend the deadlines for tax proceedings set out in Article 33 of Royal Decree-Law 8/2020 of 17 March and the DA 8 and 9 of Royal Decree-Law 11/2020, which establish, among other measures, and in order to make it easier for taxpayers to comply with their obligations and exercise their rights, the suspension of deadlines in the tax sphere, the extension of the period for filing appeals for reversal or economic-administrative claims, and the suspension of limitation and lapse periods, are also applicable to the tax authorities of the Autonomous Regions. These measures were approved with temporary validity until 30 April or 20 May 2020, depending on the case, and their term has been extended to 30 May, in accordance with Royal Law 15/2020;

⁴<https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/actividades/Paginas/2020/060520-presidentecongreso.aspx?qfr=1>

- Most of the Autonomous Regions have approved regulations that seek to facilitate taxpayers' compliance with their tax obligations in the face of this exceptional situation. In general, the Autonomous Regions have adopted measures to extend the deadlines set for the filing of self-assessments in respect of those taxes to which their powers extend. Thus, the deadlines for filing self-assessments and for payment of Transfer and Stamp Duty and Inheritance and Gift Tax have been extended. In the area of gambling taxes, some Autonomous Regions have established suspensions of instalment payments, rate reductions and bonuses. In the area of own taxes, many Autonomous Regions have also established the suspension of the deadlines for filing self-assessments and some of them have established deferrals, allowances or other tax benefits.

- In the case of the Local Entities: Article 50 of Royal Decree Law 11/2020 of 31 March sets out the possible extraordinary postponement of the timetable for repayment of loans granted by local authorities to entrepreneurs and self-employed workers affected by the health crisis caused by the COVID-19. These can request the postponement of the payment of principal and/or interest to be paid for the rest of 2020. The acceptance by the Local Entities of the requested measure will entail the modification of the repayment schedule, respecting the maximum term of the loan, and the deferred payments can be divided, which will accrue the interest rate fixed for the loan or credit subject to the deferment.

2. Information provided by the Ministry of Health:

First question:

In order to minimise the social impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having, especially on the most vulnerable families, the government considered it a priority to strengthen the basic benefits of primary care social services by addressing the new situations that the health crisis is causing in Spanish society.

To this end, on 18 March 2020, the BOE published Royal Decree-Law 8/2020 of 17 March on extraordinary urgent measures to deal with the economic and social impact of COVID-19, which approved a Contingency Fund and the granting of a credit supplement in the Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030, amounting to 300.000,000 to finance the basic social service benefits of the Autonomous Communities, provincial councils, or local corporations, whose sole purpose is to deal with extraordinary situations arising from COVID-19.

Second question:

Articles 8 and 9 of Royal Decree Law 7/2020, of 12 March, which adopts urgent measures to respond to the economic impact of COVID-19, provides for the granting of aid to families in order to address the basic right to food of children in vulnerable situations who are affected by the closure of educational establishments.

To this end, a credit supplement of 25 million euros (to be paid by the Contingency Fund) was made available in application 26.16.231F.453.07 of the Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 in the "Programme for the protection of the family and attention to child poverty. Basic social services benefits".

3. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces

First question:

Among other measures being discussed, local entities have received, under criteria of population, resources from the Extraordinary Social Fund endowed, as indicated above, with 300 million euros approved by Royal Decree Law 8/2020, March 17, to address situations arising from the COVID-19. These resources are to be used to finance basic social service benefits exclusively aimed at dealing with extraordinary situations arising from the COVID-19.

Second question:

The Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces has sent the Spanish Government a document⁵ containing 19 extraordinary economic measures to face the crisis. Some specific measures, which have been introduced, are:

- Local Governments may allocate up to 300 million of the 2019 surplus to finance investment expenditure in the area of social services and social promotion as set out in Royal Decree Law 8/2020 and which includes a wide range of measures to address the economic and social impact of COVID-2019. In its article 3, this regulation contemplates the measures of a budgetary nature that benefit Town and City Councils, Provincial Councils, Island Councils and Town Councils. And in article 1, it details the measures for Autonomous Communities and also for these, in collaboration with Local Bodies.
- Authorisation by the Ministry of Finance of exceptional procedures for the processing of financial sustainability reports and applications for authorisation of debt.
- Local entities may allocate the funds corresponding to them under the State Pact against Gender Violence to implement all preventive and assistance projects or programmes which, in the context of the state of alert, aim to ensure prevention, protection and care against all forms of violence against women.
- Subsidy for the provision of the collective urban public transport service in the year 2020 with an allocation of 51.05 million euros.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1. Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)

1. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces reports the following:

Local governments, with their workers, actors and institutions, are making enormous efforts to maintain services and activities, and are counting on the participation of the citizens and the social and business fabric of their territories. Fighting to guarantee the health and rights of all people.

Many initiatives have arisen in each rural community or city related to food, employment, mobility and parking, leisure and culture, citizen participation, social services, volunteering, equality, security or to facilitate administrative procedures and access to new technologies.

Below are some examples of small and medium sized cities:

a) Community initiative for the care of the most vulnerable

Errenteria City Council (Gipuzkoa) ⁶ has launched an initiative arising from the willingness of citizens and the willingness expressed by many people to carry out community work consisting of

- Using the 010-telephone number of the Town Hall to request home transport of purchases, medicines or other essential items.
- People over 70 years old will be phoned to know their situation, give them emotional support and ask them if they need something to take home.

b) Guide to COVID-19 for older people and their families.

⁵http://www.femp.es/sites/default/files/multimedia/np-medidas_de_hacienda_femp_junta_de_portavoces_2_abril_2020_1.pdf

⁶ <https://errenteria.eus/es/en-marcha-la-iniciativa-comunitaria-para-el-cuidado-de-las-personas-mas-vulnerables/>

The Rivas City Council (Madrid)⁷ has published a small guide with advice and preventive measures against the COVID-19 coronavirus for the elderly in the municipality, which can be downloaded from the website. It is also published in paper format so that it can be mailed to all the homes of the elderly who go to the municipal centres for the elderly, some 3,000 in the town (the city has 93,000 inhabitants).

c) Municipal Social Plan against the coronavirus "Utebo en red sin virus".

The City Council of Utebo (Zaragoza) has promoted a Social Plan to face the coronavirus health crisis with weekly objectives and open to constant evaluation.

d) Local solidarity network

The City Council of Doña Mencía (Córdoba), in response to the citizen's initiative, and with the aim of preventing the spread of the coronavirus as far as possible and attending to people in need, has organised a local network of solidarity where the following actions will be carried out: Volunteering for the care of the elderly, disinfection of public spaces or the manufacture of masks, among other initiatives that may arise.

e) #Cuidemnosmontornès

The City Council of Montornes del Valles, launches the initiative. The volunteer network for the attention and support to the emergency of the COVID-19.

f) The City Council of Vigo has developed a specific website⁸.

g) The Bilbao City Council has launched, among others, an initiative for economic and business recovery⁹.

h) The City Council of Soria¹⁰ launches a battery of economic measures for the recovery of vulnerable sectors such as tourism and local commerce, and communication measures to make visible the specific problems of rural areas.

i) The Barcelona Metropolitan Area¹¹ has launched various initiatives in relation to transport, conciliation and others.

j) Zaragoza City Council: Socio-demographic maps related to COVID-19.

Zaragoza City Council has developed a website¹² that collects updated socio-demographic data on the impact of COVID-19 and offers specific information on measures of the city.

k) "Solidarity Network"

The San Fernando de Henares City Council has launched the 'Solidarity Network' campaign, in which "many organisations, groups and individual residents are participating, and we are very proud of them. We are channelling many donations through the Town Hall, mainly to the Henares Hospital and the Residences in our city".

l) Barcelona City Council has, among other things, adopted measures for the maintenance and protection of public contracts and jobs.

m) Network of Cities and Communities Friendly to the Elderly

This Network is promoted at world-wide level by the WHO that in Spain counts on more than 200 adhered municipalities - the interchange of experiences and friendly municipal initiatives with the older people in the crisis of the COVID-19 has acquired special relevance. The specific actions of 45 municipalities can be consulted at: https://ciudadesamigables.imserso.es/InterPresent1/groups/imserso/documents/binario/newsletter_n33_2020.pdf

2. Information drawn up by the Deputy Directorate-General for European and International Relations (Ministry of Territorial Policy and Civil Service).

⁷ <https://www.rivasciudad.es/noticias/mayores/2020/03/13/una-guia-sobre-el-covid-19-para-las-personas-mayores-y-familiares/862600127244/>

⁸ <http://hoxe.vigo.org/oconcello/covid19.php?lang=cas#/>

⁹ <https://www.bilbao.eus/>

¹⁰ <https://www.soria.es/actualidad/el-ayuntamiento-pone-en-marcha-lineas-que-respondan-las-peticiones-de-los-sectores-de>

¹¹ <http://www.amb.cat/en/web/area-metropolitana/covid19/espai-public>

¹² <https://www.zaragoza.es/sede/portal/coronavirus/geocovid19>

2.1 MADRID CITY COUNCIL.

The Department of Samur social and Care for the Homeless during the COVID-19 health crisis has applied the following measures adopted by the Madrid City Council, some of them in close cooperation (multilevel governance) with the state level government and the Autonomous Community of Madrid (regional level), with the aim to "leave no one behind" (Agenda 2030):

- Madrid City Council has reorganised resources to be able to offer homeless people who are positive for COVID-19 or simply have symptoms of the virus safe places during the quarantine.

- Thus: It has been made possible for all users of centres in the network for the homeless to, voluntary, remain in the centres 24 hours a day; the current cold campaign for the homeless has been extended until 31 May and the decision has been taken to use the two largest shelters to locate the isolation places.

- On 20 March, the pavilion at the convention centre IFEMA was opened with 150 places for homeless people (men) without symptoms. This space has been fitted out by the Madrid City Council (SAMUR social and care for the homeless and Group 5) and the Military Emergency Unit, for the so called "escudo social" 13 ("social shield") approved by the state level government, included measures regarding the homeless: information, security kits... Civil Protection professionals (regional level), the Armed Forces and the State Security Forces, accompanied by Social Services personnel (local level), will participate in the daily monitoring of the homeless, the reinforcement of social centres, the distribution of food, the provision of social canteens and the fitting out of the necessary spaces.

- Homeless people with a confirmed positive diagnosis are referred to hospitals and, if they have mild symptoms, to a hotel with 120 beds available for this purpose, with the cooperation of the Red Cross.

- Protocols/procedures on COVID-19 have been approved for homeless centres and to coordinate regional and local emergency services

- Information posters have been placed in the centres for homeless people and socio-educational measures have been developed for self-care habits, personal hygiene, COVID-19 prevention...

- If before Covid-19 there were 1,800 places for the homeless, almost a thousand more have made available.

2.2 CITY COUNCIL OF SEVILLE

Due to the advance of the pandemic caused by the Covid-19, the Seville City Council has established at all times as its main criterion the coordination with the competent administrations (Government of Spain and Andalusia) and the strict monitoring of their indications and recommendations both in terms of measures and the deadlines within which they should be adopted. Action has always been taken within the scope of municipal competences.

The City Council set up a committee to monitor the coronavirus crisis, chaired by the Mayor and coordinated by the Delegation of Government and Major and the area of Social Welfare, Employment and Coordination of Comprehensive Plans. It has functioned as a working and internal coordination group since the beginning of the crisis, before the approval of the Royal Decree of State of Alarm. This monitoring committee has been taking coordination decisions through daily meetings.

13 <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/notasprensa/presidencia/Paginas/2020/160320-serviciossociales.aspx>

For the first time since the approval of the Municipal Emergency Plan, level 1 has been activated and the specific monitoring committee has been set up, which is included in its application manual and is chaired by the Mayor of Seville.

To promote communication and transparency, a space has been set up on the municipal website focusing on the health crisis and messages have been channelled through the social networks of the Seville City Council and Emergencies, as well as through information bulletins sent to citizens.

Several measures have been adopted, particularly some of a social and economic nature:

a) Social care:

-Homeless people: The City Council has increased the number of available places to 700 by offering housing resources at all times to ensure compliance with the State Decree on the Alarm by the central government. All places have 24-hour assistance. Two sports pavilions have been set up in collaboration with the Red Cross and Obra Social de La Caixa.

-Home help: The Andalusian Regional Government and the Central Government are working to provide local councils with prevention equipment to guarantee this essential service in safe conditions in the face of the pandemic caused by the coronavirus. While obtaining these resources, the City Council has established priorities to guarantee an adequate response to large dependents and elderly people without family support networks. For the rest, a temporary telephone support and psychological support service has been established.

Work is being done, in coordination with the central and regional administrations, to extend this service and to recover the care of more dependent people, for which a request for prevention materials has been sent to the Andalusian Regional Government, following the indications of the Ministry of Health.

-Food guarantee: The Seville City Council has placed itself at the disposal of the Andalusian Regional Government to implement the necessary support measures to guarantee food resources for minors in the face of the lack of educational centres. According to a communication from the Regional Government, the program will start on Friday, March 20, in the number of schools determined by the Territorial Delegation of Education. The proposal of the regional administration is that the distributions will be made twice a week. Similarly, it is in collaboration with the various soup kitchens in the city with which the City Council collaborates. In any case, work is being done to facilitate the collection of food at specific points so that families themselves can later move it to their homes. Similarly, food aid benefits for households have been reinforced and are coordinated by the Social Services through vouchers for the purchase of products in food establishments.

b) Economic measures:

The City Council of Seville will approve reductions and deferrals in taxes and fees, implement aid for the self-employed and businesses and carry out a strategy for economic revival and promotion of the city.

Urbanism will suspend ex officio the fees for candlesticks, trinket kiosks and street vending corresponding to the period of the State of Alarm and will open the deadline for requesting the suspension of newsstands that have closed and works that are paralyzed.

The Seville City Council will reduce the rents to the tenants of the Municipal Housing Company with serious economic problems due to ERTes (Temporary Suspensions of Employment/ furloughs), closures or sick leave due to the health crisis of the coronavirus COVID 19.

Seville City Council is offering a moratorium on rent payments to the premises, offices and workshops of the Municipal Housing Company affected by the health crisis caused by COVID-19.

The metropolitan water company has established the necessary prevention and safety protocols to ensure adequate supply and sanitation in the city of Seville. This company is facing the sanitary crisis caused by the COVID-19 with a contingency plan and guarantees the supply to the most vulnerable population and deferrals in next bills corresponding to the period of the Alarm Decree for companies and self-employed that had to close.

2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

1. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces reports the following

In these circumstances the usual way of working among most of the local public employees is the Telework. This is also the case for elected officials, but not many public institutions at the national level were prepared for this contingency.

Specific regulations, legislative modifications and security recommendations have been developed and approved to allow the continuation of the work and the exercise of public responsibility.

The Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, through its website <http://covid19.femp.es/faq-municipios-rurales/>, collects specific information on these issues, such as

1. Regulatory references to the legislative modifications carried out to enable the holding of telematic plenary sessions and other meetings of this type by Local Corporations;
2. Aid from supra-municipal bodies for the holding of telematic plenary sessions;
3. List of experiences of procedures for the organisation of telematic plenary sessions;
4. List of experiences of local administrations that could help in the adoption of an internal model for the organisation of plenary sessions in each administration according to characteristics and size. Two examples:

- Teleworking Protocol of Alcobendas City Council.¹⁴

- Resolution of the Asturian Consortium of Technological Services, which regulates the provision of the service in the non-presential modality, through the telework formula.

Teleworking in town councils in rural areas, in addition to the communication of specific approved regulations, has been carried out:

- 1) Telework Training Day for small municipalities, and
- 2) Safety recommendations for teleworking situations

Remote commercial activity and supply of rural areas without commercial premises. It is of vital importance to ensure the supply of basic necessities for small municipalities and rural areas, and the compliance of street and/or itinerant vendors with government recommendations. Two guides have been published for this purpose and for the development of the activity of selling products on-line, by telephone and itinerant sales in municipalities that do not have commercial premises.

2. Information drawn up by the Deputy Directorate-General for European and International Relations (Ministry of Territorial Policy and Civil Service).

2.1 Essential services of local entities.

Royal Decree Law 10/2020 of 29 March, which regulates recoverable paid leave for employees who do not provide essential services, in order to reduce the population's

¹⁴ <http://covid19.femp.es/formacionteletrabajo/>

mobility in the context of the fight against COVID-19, lists the essential services during the state of alarm. Of these, those corresponding to Local Bodies are the following:

- Local Police.
- Firefighters and Civil Protection.
- Garbage collection.
- Collection, management and treatment of hazardous waste, as well as solid urban waste, both hazardous and non-hazardous.
- Collection and treatment of waste water, decontamination activities.
- Street cleaning.
- Home assistance.
- Remote assistance.
- Gender violence.
- Water and supply network.
- Public lighting.
- Cleaning of municipal buildings and facilities.
- Social Services (attention to citizens and vulnerable population).
- Citizen's attention (telephone and telematic).
- Computer service.
- Maintenance services for emergency attention in roads and public spaces.
- Secretary's office.
- Intervention.
- Treasury.
- General Registry.
- Works Service.
- Funeral Services and Cemetery.
- Responsible administrative units.
- Transportation.
- Service of attention and protection to the animals.

2.2 Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda.

In this crisis, cities are at the head of the most contagious areas, so the actions have been addressed with this circumstance in mind, focused on the primary objective of preventing the spread of the virus.

The state of alarm declared due to COVID-19 has the fundamental objective of stopping the contagion and the spread of this pandemic in the population, limiting the mobility of people. Many challenges relating to the mobility of people and goods, as well as care for people in vulnerable housing situations, have been addressed within the scope of the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and the Urban Agenda.

By way of example, the following measures can be mentioned:

- Adapting the supply of public transport services to the new demand: operators of public transport services have reduced their services to adapt them to the demand, facilitating mobility only for work purposes and essential needs. Thus, the level of supply ranges from 0 to 30% during off-peak hours, and from 30% to 70% during peak hours for the country's cities and metropolitan areas. This criterion also applies to Public Service Obligations, with the exception of suburban railways for which it establishes a reduction of 20% in peak hours and 50% in off-peak hours. The demand in the suburban service is at 10%. Likewise, a large part of public transport services have been eliminated, both in urban and rural areas. In interurban transport serving rural areas, the adaptation of supply to demand has been facilitated. In general, the level of supply has been maintained at between 40 and 80%. In all cases, the supply must also meet requirements for limiting the occupation of vehicles or trains.

- Rental subsidies in vulnerable situations: Granting of rental subsidies, through direct award, to tenants of permanent housing who, as a result of the economic and social impact of the COVID-19, have temporary problems paying part or all of their rent.
- Suspension of the eviction procedure and of the launches for vulnerable households without a housing alternative and extraordinary extension of the regular housing rental contracts.
- Provision of catering and accommodation services for transporters, health workers and staff in essential sectors : With regard to accommodation, a ministerial order has been issued declaring certain tourist lodgings as essential services and, although they have remained closed to the general public, they have allowed the accommodation of those workers who were required to carry out work linked to essential activities. With regard to catering, a ministerial order has determined that all fuel supply points and loading and unloading centres must provide access to toilet facilities for transporters, in addition to catering services if available. For information on these services, the information point for catering and accommodation services for transporters has been put into operation, among other measures.
- Maintenance of essential connectivity between the peninsula, the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands, Ceuta and Melilla: Minimum air and sea services have been established to maintain basic connectivity between the entire national territory.
- Daily analysis of mobility with Big Data technology : An analysis of data from telephone operators has been used to monitor the evolution of the disease, evaluate the effectiveness of the mobility restriction measures adopted, as well as to support decision-making during the de-escalation period.
- National Geographic Institute viewer¹⁵ to help citizens plan their outings during the state of alarm: During the first phases of de-escalation, children are allowed to leave, accompanied by an adult, at a maximum distance of 1 km from their residence. To encourage these outings, a map display application has been published.

2.3 Metropolitan areas.

In metropolitan areas, they are joining forces to combat the pandemic by gathering information on the various services implemented by the municipalities in their area of action as well as taking various measures.

The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona has compiled a list of available services that are being implemented by local and supra-municipal administrations and social and economic agents in order to tackle the current health crisis, a crisis that is affecting the productive and service fabric of the business world, as well as the life of society as a whole and, in particular, the most vulnerable people in the metropolitan territory.

It has also agreed a series of measures, among others, in the area of

- Housing: The Barcelona Metropolitan Area has established a moratorium on the collection of rent for flats and premises during the months of April and May which, in the event that the exceptional situation of paralysis of activities derived from COVID-19 is extended, would be considered to be extended. When the current situation is overcome, the cases of the most vulnerable families for whom it is impossible to pay all or part of the rent will be dealt with, so that no one is deprived of their housing.

¹⁵ <https://www.ign.es/resources/viewer/calculadora1km.html>

- Water supply: Companies with fewer than 50 workers and an annual turnover of less than 8 million euros will not have to pay the water bill or the TMTR. These bills will be financed without interest when the crisis ends. Families with difficulties in paying their water bill due to the COVID-19 crisis can apply for the Barcelona Metropolitan Area's social tariff
- Energy: Barcelona Energy will allow the postponement of the payment of bills for the second quarter of 2020 (April, May and June) to all users who request it. Once this period has ended, the deferred amount will be charged in six equal instalments from July to December 2020, without interest, with a separate charge on each month's bill.

In another area, the institutions and companies of Metropolitan Bilbao are working to promote aid for the benefit of the groups of people who make up the Metropolitan Area of Bilbao.

Bilbao Metropoli-30 is working on proposals for projects to be developed as part of the Reflection Metropolitan Bilbao 2035 as a result of the health alert caused by the COVID-19. With these tasks they seek to respond to the emergency in the cities, in order to maintain the social cohesion, economy and infrastructures of their territories.

They echo the Cities for Global Meath initiative, co-led by Metropolis and the AL-LAs alliance, and which is part of "Live Learning Experience: beyond the immediate response to the outbreak", developed by UCLG with the support of UN-Habitat and Metropolis. Bilbao Metropoli-30 has compiled a repository with international benchmarking news showing different initiatives that expose the role of cities in the COVID-19 crisis.

2.4 Rural areas.

- Health.

In rural areas, the impact of the health crisis has been less, although the confinement and protection measures have been the same.

However, the special features of remote population centres have been taken into account, as detailed below:

In order to guarantee the supply of food and basic necessities to all villages and areas of population far from urban centres, in the case of municipalities that do not have establishments selling food and basic necessities, itinerant or travelling sales of these products may be carried out. House-to-house sales will be prioritized to avoid crowding in the street and, if this is not possible, the distance of one meter between customers and between customer and vendor must be guaranteed in any case.

The Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians has emphasized care in rural areas.

- Education.

The "digital divide" has also been taken into account in education, and the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with Radio Televisión Española, has set up a special five-hour daily programme, "Aprendemos en casa" (We learn at home), with educational content aimed at students aged 6 to 16. This initiative aims to facilitate learning during the suspension of classroom activity, especially for students from socially vulnerable families, those living in areas with difficulties connecting to the network and students who have problems sharing bandwidth due to confinement conditions.

- Agriculture, Fishing and Food.

Two major groups of measures have been implemented by the competent Ministry:

1. Measures adopted in relation to COVID-19.

The Central Government has taken measures to ensure the functioning of the food and beverage supply chain and, with it, agriculture, livestock, agro-food industries, as well as the distribution of food to the consumer. Customs transit has also been guaranteed.

In this framework, extraordinary urgent measures applicable to the agricultural sector have been adopted to address the economic and social impact of COVID-19:

- Extraordinary benefit for self-employed or autonomous workers due to cessation of activity.
- 20 billion credit line guaranteed by the State.
- Aid in the form of direct subsidies, reimbursable advances or tax benefits to those companies and SMEs that have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis.
- Deferral of the 2017 drought credits.

During this state of alert period, the activities that participate in the market supply chain and in the operation of the services of the centres of production of goods and services of first need, including food, drinks and animal feed, are considered as essential services, allowing the distribution of these from the origin to the final destination.

Also included are all the related activities that are essential for the maintenance of these essential activities (productive activities of the manufacturing industry that provide the supplies, equipment and materials necessary for the correct development of the essential activities).

Similarly, support measures have been adopted for the self-employed, such as moratoriums on the payment of social security contributions in exceptional circumstances or requests to defer payment of their social security debts.

The latest measures adopted so far are the urgent temporary measures for agricultural employment: they will ensure that labour is available to meet the needs of farmers. Their aim is to ensure harvesting on farms, the flow of production to the subsequent links in the chain and the supply of the population in the face of the sharp decline in the supply of labour that usually takes care of agricultural work as seasonal workers in the Spanish countryside, due to health limitations on travel from their countries of origin as a result of the COVID-19.

2. Flexible measures: agricultural sector

As a result of the application of the state of alert declared by Royal Decree 463/2020 of 14 March, certain measures relating to agri-food activity and the administrative management thereof have been made more flexible:

- The deadline for submitting the single application, for the year 2020, has been extended to 15 May (work is currently underway to extend it to 15 June).
- Some measures contained in the Support Programme 2019-2023 for the Spanish wine sector are made more flexible.
- The subscription periods for Agricultural Insurance Lines, which were to be contracted before 16 April 2020, are extended.
- The Net Yield Indexes applicable in 2019 in the objective estimate system for personal income tax (or modules) are reduced for farmers and livestock breeders. Spanish farmers affected by the drought in 2019, as well as by the damage caused in September by the DANA storm (isolated high level depression), will benefit from this measure.

As another group of additional measures, under development, in view of the specific difficulties that the health crisis is causing in certain sectors, the Ministry is developing measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the economic and social level:

- A measure to support the lamb and goat meat sector due to marketing difficulties during the months of March and April is being designed and prepared, with a budget of 10 million euros, to be paid as a supplementary payment to the sheep and goat premium.

- Application and implementation of the European Commission's market regulation package, in the form of private storage of beef, sheep and goat meat, skimmed milk powder, butter and cheese, support measures for the wine sector under the sectoral programme, flexibility measures in the operational programmes for fruit and vegetables, the beekeeping programme and the school milk and fruit programme, as well as support for producers and SMEs in difficulty through the rural development programmes.

- Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces.

Also, in the rural area, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces is doing important work insofar as the thousands of municipalities in the rural area require a specific information channel adapted to their social and territorial reality: geographical isolation, an aging population and lack of resources. The Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces aims to respond to all those questions that mayors are asking themselves these days in order to protect their populations and continue to guarantee minimum services to the population.

Since the crisis began to give its first signs, when the coronavirus was a few days away from being called COVID-19 and qualified as a pandemic by the WHO, Spanish Local Governments and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces were put on alert. And as soon as the state of alarm was decreed, Town Halls, Provincial Councils, Island Councils and Town Councils adjusted their services to the regulations.

Since then, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces has fulfilled its obligation as a representative of the Local Administration and has acted as a transmission belt between the competent authority - the Government of the Nation - and the Local Governments, a transmission that has circulated in both directions, on a daily basis, with the assurance that #EsteVirusLoParamosEntreTodos (#togetherweshallstophisvirus)

The Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces has confirmed to the Executive the full willingness of towns and cities to collaborate in controlling the spread of the pandemic; to support with their social services, local police or lines of attention to citizens the fulfilment of the confinement measures, that "Stay at Home" that has been shown to be the most effective brake on contagion. But it has also transmitted proposals, observations and needs of Mayors to the Government in the search for greater effectiveness during this exceptional situation.

From the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, updated, necessary and timely information has been and is being sent to Local Governments through circulars and numerous communications, part of which derives from the participation of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces in forums such as the Centre for Operational Coordination in Security matters, where the Federation represents all Local Governments. The Centre for Operational Coordination in Security Matters has been holding daily meetings and setting the guidelines for action by the State Security Forces and Bodies and also by the Local Police.

Web sites as <http://covid19.femp.es/> and www.femp.es, together with social networks (i.e. @fempcomunica) have been intensively used by FEMP to disseminate updated information on COVID-19 responses (state, regional and local level) and to give support to municipalities and provinces. Dissemination of contents of the Network of Local Entities for Transparency and Participation of the FEMP has also been very active via @REDFEMP_TyP

2.3. *Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?*

1. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces:

Local governments are demonstrating their commitment and solidarity to face the difficulties and new needs generated by this crisis, among many other formulas, by generating alliances and closer collaboration among them, agreeing on and undertaking actions within the framework of their competencies.

Through local cooperation networks, associations, consortiums and networks of municipalities, channels are established for the exchange of knowledge and good practices which, in many cases, are replicated in the territories that make up the network.

An example of inter-municipal cooperation:

- Network of Municipalities for the Social and Solidarity Economy: www.xmess.cat

Since the beginning of the alert, it has become a key catalyst for the municipalities that are part of the Network. The initiatives launched help to coordinate efforts with the rest of the local public administrations and to mitigate the effects of the COVID- 19. Mutual support and intercooperation are essential instruments that are even more essential in this situation.

2. Information drawn up by the Deputy Directorate-General for European and International Relations (Ministry of Territorial Policy and Civil Service).

Several examples can be cited of how municipal coordination has been strengthened in the face of the progress of Covid-19.

2.1 COMARCAS DEL BAJO ARAGÓN.

The counties of Southern Aragon have formed Regional Operational Coordination Units (UCOCAL), aimed at coordinating and promoting action measures linked to the needs of the population in a health emergency as a result of the coronavirus, in order to offer the presidents of the counties a structure, an organisation that coordinates all actions, optimises actions and resources and has a visible head who takes command of these actions in the counties.

These coordination units, presided over by the president of each of the counties, would be made up of a member of the State Security Forces and Corps; a member representing Public Health; a member representing the Social Services and a member representing psychotherapeutic issues.

The objectives of these units are as follows:

-Coordination of resources from the regional area where different situations are defined and decided and the needs and actions to be taken.

-Organisation of logistics and supplies, transfers and transport of goods and people in difficulty.

-Coordination of the psychosocial assistance of the citizens.

-Establishment of a chain of command and coordination with the different or actors involved.

-Analysis and assessment of each of the actions to be carried out and who carries them out.

The priority actions are aimed at social assistance, food at home, supply of basic products (purchases), supply of medicines, and home help for those who do not have this service.

In the area of family assistance, actions such as the dissemination of children's programmes, videos, computer games and even storytelling competitions related to the coronavirus are also intended, as well as care for minors from families with conciliation difficulties.

Finally, the psychosocial teams will have as their priority work to transmit messages of tranquillity, help for the elderly, disseminate advice on how to overcome isolation and communicate the good practices that are being carried out in the regions.

2.2 COMARCA ALTO GALLEGO.

The municipalities and the Comarca Alto Gallego have woven a network of volunteers who help all groups and sectors of the population to overcome confinement.

They have focused their efforts on meeting these demands:

Preparation of health gowns. The Shire provides a kit with the necessary material and dressing instructions. If necessary, it also organizes a route with regional vehicles to deliver and collect the material.

Preparation of sanitary masks. They are being made by a group of volunteers who have 3D printers.

Manufacture of cloth masks. They are being made by various associations and individuals. This material is being sent to neighbours in the different municipalities of the region, residences and health centres.

There is a register of 200 individuals, as well as several associations and companies that have offered their help.

2.3 MANCOMUNIDAD RIBEIRA ALTA¹⁶.

This Mancomunidad has intensified its efforts in response to the emergency situation.

The Mancomunidad de la Ribera Alta, entity that groups all the municipalities of the Ribera Alta, has intensified the actions of its departments and in a special way all those services related to the social services field.

The Social Services of the Mancomunidad work at full capacity to help the most vulnerable groups.

At the same time, the Addictive Behaviour Prevention Unit and the Childhood and Adolescence Intervention Team have made themselves available to the basic primary care services of the municipalities to provide psychological support and help resolve possible situations of family and emotional conflict.

In addition, the Agency for Equality and Coexistence of the Mancomunidad is carrying out a campaign, through the member municipalities, for the prevention of gender violence and action against it. A document has also been drawn up on guidelines for compliance with the custody and visiting arrangements established by the courts for minor children during the state of alarm caused by COVID-19.

Other areas of action have been campaigns aimed at young people, consumers and users, and attention to companies and self-employed workers. Finally, it is worth mentioning the purchase of hygienic masks for the population of the joint municipalities.

2.4 CONSORCIO "PACTEM NORD".¹⁷

The PACTEM NORD Territorial Pact for Job Creation Consortium is a public body. The framework for action is the comarca of Horta Nord (in the autonomous community Comunitat Valenciana).

The Consortium has a population of 224,164 inhabitants and is made up of local councils in the region, the UGT, CCOO, USO trade unions and the business associations ASIVALCO, AUPIM and AEMON.

¹⁶ <https://manra.org/es/>

¹⁷ <https://www.consorci.info/webempleo/>

Pactem Nord's team of professionals continues to work with the unemployed, entrepreneurs and companies in the region through the various communication channels that have been set up during the emergency situation. In addition to individualised attention, useful teaching materials have been produced to help people who consult them to carry out the most common procedures during these days, with the collaboration of Labora in its support programme for the Territorial Employment Pacts.

The objective is to be close to the citizens to help them resolve doubts regarding the procedures that must be carried out by the unemployed, as well as to facilitate access to the job offers that are emerging at this time of crisis.

Since the state of alert was declared, 625 people (123 men and 502 women) have been attended to or contacted to participate in the job offers being processed: 83 people (17 men and 66 women) are currently in these selection processes, which have so far concluded with 6 new temporary work contracts, all of them for women, in the fields of nursing, hospital cleaning and physiotherapy.

With regard to the accompaniment of companies in the territory, it should be noted that in this period almost 500 companies have been contacted, in close collaboration and with specific actions coordinated with ASIVALCO and AUPIM, and personalised advice has been given to 23 companies on matters related to aid to companies by covid-19.

With regard to the attention to entrepreneurs, from March 1st to April 20th a total of 95 people have been attended in the regional program of entrepreneurship, 55 of them women, with 281 consultations resolved and a total of 6 companies created (4 promoted by women).

It is important to highlight the close collaboration with the professionals in the areas of employment of the municipalities in the consortium, councils and mayors' offices in order to offer better services to citizens.

2.5 DIPUTACIÓN PROVINCIAL DE BADAJOZ.

The diputaciones provinciales are the governing bodies of the provinces, which are administrative districts that make up several municipalities. These demarcations are enshrined in the Spanish Constitution of 1978.

The measures put in place by the Badajoz Provincial Council fall into various sub-divisions, which include actions and advice of interest to citizens and the institution's own workers.

- Firstly, the Provincial Council has joined the fight against Covid-19 by establishing aid for the province's municipalities with the aim of helping to alleviate the urgent needs that municipalities, smaller local entities and districts are having to meet as a result of the pandemic. To this end, a decree has been signed for the presentation of modifications to actions of the Cohesion@ Plan after a request was made to change the use of funds from the Cohesion@ Plan to actions to combat the health crisis.

- On the other hand, during the state of alarm, and in view of the current extraordinary health emergency caused by the pandemic, the Provincial Council's Consortium for Fire Prevention and Extinction has created a special cleaning and disinfection group.

And special attention is being paid to smaller municipalities and local entities with lesser management capacity, providing them with a comprehensive disinfection service, which allows them to act on the critical points most exposed to infection, such as old people's homes, pharmacies, shops and markets and other similar ones.

- The Provincial Institution continues to work with all the human and material means at its disposal, designing an Extraordinary Action Plan, with respect to the works that are being carried out, on the occasion of the declaration of the state of alarm, established by the Government of the Nation, which consists of three different parts.

- Injection of liquidity to companies in the construction sector

- protection of the health of the workers on site.
- The Development Area has promoted the development of Royal Decree-Law 8/2020, of 17 March, on extraordinary urgent measures, to deal with the economic and social impact of COVID-19, which allows for the suspension of works due to the viral pandemic, in the corresponding cases and with the corresponding legal consequences.
- Due to the health crisis, the Badajoz Provincial Council, through its Development Area, has also activated a protocol of measures that guarantee the normal use of provincial roads and free circulation, without prejudice to the measures that the National Government Authority may take depending on the evolution of the pandemic.
- Other documents of interest relate to psychological recommendations to explain COVID-19 to children between 4 and 10 years of age, a basic guide to identify false news, the report on utilities and correct use of masks and gloves, advice on emotional health, how to cope with confinement or how to tell children about the death of a relative in this situation.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?

1. Information provided by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and the Urban Agenda.

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on cross-border cooperation, understood in a broad sense:

- Spain has intensified its relationship with border regions and countries.
- The main impact of COVID-19 on borders is the strengthening of controls and restrictions on movement, in line with measures adopted at national level.
- As decided by 15 other EU Member States and Schengen partners, Spain has established controls at its internal land borders with France and Portugal (which have also taken this measure) to limit and prevent the spread of COVID-19 . The common legal basis is Article 28 of the Schengen Borders Code. Since 17 March, cross-border cooperation has been permanent, at operational, administrative and political level, between Spain/Portugal and Spain/France.
- In turn, all EU Member States and Schengen Associated States, except Ireland, have introduced temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU at the external borders. The border with Andorra and the police checkpoint at La Línea de la Concepción have been exempted.
- In all cases, cross-border cooperation has favoured the transport of goods, crossings by health personnel and cross-border workers, without any unjustified delays being detected. Border control measures are not applied to the transport of goods.

2. Information provided by the Autonomous Community of Extremadura.

As in other areas, the closure of the physical border between Spain and Portugal since 15 March - with the exception of the transit of goods and the passage of cross-border workers - and the confinement of the population caused by the pandemic, have had a significant impact on cross-border cooperation.

This situation is causing a significant delay in the actions planned in practically all the cooperation projects between Extremadura and Portugal. Many of them worked on the organisation of actions, courses, conferences or seminars of a cross-border nature which have not been able to be carried out due to the closure of borders and the confinement, and for the same reason, all the cultural, musical, artistic and sporting activities programmed have been suspended. Cross-border activities such as business forums, border Olympics, or meetings between schoolchildren from one side of the border to the

other, which were part of a policy of bringing the communities closer together and increasing their knowledge, are some examples of the many cross-border cooperation events that have had to be suspended.

Likewise, within the framework of these projects, numerous tenders for the contracting of works, services, and awareness and communication studies have been halted, since their processing has been temporarily suspended in order to channel administrative efforts into the measures that have been published by the Autonomous Community to deal with CoVid-19.

On the other hand, the decrease in economic activity, given that the confinement decrees are very similar on both sides of the border, has also had a strong impact on economic and commercial relations in the border areas which, at this point, is difficult to calculate.

At the Badajoz-Caya border crossing alone, in the last month and a half, the National Police have prevented some 1,000 vehicles from crossing.

The Foreigners and Border Brigade estimates that currently some 2,000 heavy vehicles and some 800 to 1,000 light vehicles (cars and vans) pass through the Caya border daily in the direction of Madrid. The number of lorries coincides with the usual capacity in order to ensure supply, but the number of passenger cars is much lower, having reduced the passage of light vehicles by 90% compared to the latest data published by the Ministry of Development, referring to 2018.

On the other hand, the opening of only nine border crossings along the entire Spanish-Portuguese border - only three between Extremadura and Portugal - has meant that some cross-border workers have had to travel many kilometres to get to their jobs, as it forced them to make 173 km journeys of more than three hours to cover the barely 15 km distance between Mourão (Portugal) and Villanueva del Fresno (Spain), although this circumstance has been resolved and from 4 May, employees and employers across the border will be able to pass from one side of the border to the other in two time slots of the day. In this way, the Government is meeting the demand of the municipality of Villanueva del Fresno and the Regional Government of Extremadura, and from 4 May, dozens of Extremadura and Portuguese workers will be able to access their jobs through a key border crossing point that has been closed since mid-March.

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?

Yes, detailed information is provided below:

1. Information provided by the Ministry of the Interior.

Examples of good cross-border cooperation in emergency response are known on a daily basis, as crossings have been limited to those that are essential and thus the spread of the virus has been prevented.

Cross-border cooperation in border control has been carried out at the level of Ministers of the Interior. From an operational point of view, the implementation of the measures has been mainly the responsibility of the respective "border police".

2. Information provided by the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda.

In addition to the examples of cross-border cooperation at the level of the Spanish Government given below, it should be noted that at the regional level, the Autonomous Communities work closely and in coordination with the Spanish Government on all matters relating to cross-border cooperation.

It is also worth noting the importance and usefulness for the phase of lifting the restrictions of all cross-border cooperation that Spain has carried out so far. It is therefore essential to continue this cooperation, especially once border controls have been eliminated and international passenger traffic has resumed.

At the level of the Spanish Government and depending on the way cooperation takes place, the following good examples of cross-border cooperation can be highlighted:

- Bilateral:

- Fluid and continuous communication and contact with Portugal and France to coordinate measures in the transport sector in response to Covid-19.
- Agreement with Portugal for border control. There is cooperation on the establishment of nine border crossings to allow road traffic of goods, cross-border workers and emergency vehicles.
- Fluid and frequent communication between Portugal and Spain on the measures taken in each country to facilitate road transport.
- Intensification of the usual communication between France and Spain to coordinate measures relating to transport in response to the Covid-19
- Spanish participation in the joint proposals with France, Ireland, Italy and the United Kingdom to ensure the flow of goods and passengers in maritime transport during the coronavirus crisis.

- Multilateral:

- Cross-border cooperation on border control has been carried out at the level of Ministers of the Interior. From an operational point of view, the implementation of the measures has been mainly the responsibility of the respective "border police".
- Spain strongly supports the coordination at European Union level of the measures adopted by Member States to facilitate cross-border transport.
- Spain implements the:
 - European Commission guidelines on "Green Corridors".
 - European Commission guidelines on border management measures to protect health and ensure the availability of essential goods and services
 - European Commission guidelines to facilitate air freight operations.
 - European Commission practical guidelines to ensure the free movement of critical workers
 - European Commission guidelines on EU emergency assistance in cross-border cooperation on health care related to the COVID-19 crisis.
 - European Commission guidelines on health protection, repatriation and travel arrangements for seafarers, passengers and other persons on board ship.
- Spain is an active participant in the European Union's Network of National Transport Contact Points.
- Spain uses benchmarking to learn about best practices from other countries and regions in response to the emergency. In this sense, the collaboration in the Network of National Contact Points of Transport of the European Union, or the European Conference of Road Directors, stands out.

3. Information provided by the Autonomous Community of Extremadura.

Border closures and confinement make cooperation extremely difficult. Nevertheless, we can cite some examples of cooperation that have occurred in response to the emergency that may be useful.

- The state of emergency has led to the publication of numerous provisions and regulations both in Spain and Portugal, as well as at European level. In order to collect all the available information and offer it to citizens, workers, employers, etc. on both sides of the border, the EUROACE website www.euro-ace.eu has created a section where official information is being updated on regulations and provisions that, due to the COVID-19 crisis, are being published by the national authorities of Portugal and Spain, the regional authorities of Extremadura and those of a European nature.

The page contains direct accesses to the websites of the CCDR of Alentejo and Centro, as well as to the websites of the Ministry of Health of Spain and the Ministério da Saúde of Portugal, where all the data provided by these institutions can be consulted. In addition, from the Extremadura Office in Brussels, a document is updated every week which includes the measures that the European Union has been implementing since the beginning of this pandemic crisis, and from the Directorate General for External Action of the Government of Extremadura, a document is updated which includes all the measures that the Official Journal of Extremadura has been publishing in recent weeks with regard to COVID 19 and which affect not only the field of health and public health but also Public Administration, Education, Culture, Employment, Business and Trade, Finance, Agriculture or Environment.

- The cross-border Eures, despite having reduced the number of consultations that take place under normal circumstances, is carrying out important work by attending to consultations by cross-border workers who, from one day to the next, had to justify that they were working on the other side of the border, when there is no specific documentation to prove their status as cross-border workers, and since it does not exist, the authorities could not demand it either. Other consultations received were to resolve doubts of persons affected by dismissals, by ERTES (Temporary Suspensions of Employment/ furloughs) in Spain or LAY-OFF in Portugal, or other types of dismissals and suspensions of employment.

The usual consultations on the management of job offers have come to a standstill during this period.

4. Information provided by the Autonomous Community of Galicia

The Autonomous Community of Galicia points out that the Covid-19 is having a strong impact on all sectors, mentioning both the restrictions on mobility resulting from the declarations of the States of Alert in Portugal on 13 March (and that of Emergência on 18), and that of the State of Alarm in Spain on 14 March were in fact a serious blow to cross-border cooperation relations and the closure of borders decreed on 16 March.

It should be noted that the borders were only closed in a similar but anecdotal way because of Pope Francisco's visit to Fatima in May 2017.

He points out how the border closure with nine border crossings led in the first days to queues of several hours and detours of workers to access the border crossings.

Thus, all the cross-border institutions opted mostly for teleworking.

For example, for the monitoring of the Spain-Portugal Interreg VA (POCTEP), telephone and video-conference contact was maintained with all the Galician project beneficiaries as well as with the other members of the project management committee. The possibility of remote access to the programme's platform allows for further work on the projects.

The EGTC of the Euroregion Galicia - North Portugal also continues to work remotely. The outbreak of the crisis coincided with the stays of Galician and Portuguese teachers and researchers in the Universities and Technological Centres of the Euroregion (from the other

country: Galicians in Portugal and Portuguese in Galicia) that are being carried out under the IACOBUS programme. In this case, the closure of these centres caused the suspension of these stays and the return of all of them to their respective homes.

Other actions, such as cultural exchanges under the NORTEAR programme were suspended, with the exception of those (such as the 6th edition of the literary competition for young people) which can still be carried out telematically.

Also (with the tag #QuedaNaCasa) the confinement is being used to reinforce the communication of actions in progress, and to disseminate, through its social networks, the indications of the institutions (mainly the European Commission, the Spanish and Portuguese governments and the Xunta de Galicia) regarding the Covid-19 and the cross-border workers.

The EGTC is also responding to queries from citizens of the Euroregion, mainly Portuguese citizens, on the situation in Galicia (on health and labour issues) and vice versa.

Another institution, the Eures Transfronterizo Galicia - Norte de Portugal (EURES-T) is teleworking and attending to consultations, mainly on the situation of cross-border workers who may be affected by TEREs, and on the possibilities of border crossings for employment reasons, both by workers and employers (on how to apply for ERTEs (ERTEs: Temporary Suspensions of Employment/ furloughs) unemployment benefit) and on border closures and border controls (in the first month around 300 consultations were attended to). EURES-T produced a report on the consequences for the mobility of cross-border workers of the measures taken to combat Covid-19, which was disseminated, inter alia, on the Eures-T and EGTC Euroregion websites. The report is attached.

The Chaves-Verín EGTC is teleworking (its headquarters is now the operation in charge of the surveillance of the Feces de Abaixo border crossing) and continues with the implementation of its projects (such as the POCTEP), within the possibilities of the current circumstances.

The Rio Miño EGTC) is also teleworking, and with meetings by videoconference. On 26 March, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Schengen Treaty, they planned to organise an event on the bridge between Cerveira and Tomiño, which had to be replaced by a declaration from their management team, which highlighted the importance of the cross-border territories in the face of the situation triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic and advocated strengthening cooperation in their territory. On April 16, they launched an "emergency" study on the possible socio-economic impact of this border closure (mainly through telephone interviews with local mayors and businessmen). They have just called for the reopening of the borders (or at least the extension of open border crossings).

The Eurocities (in the Euroregion Galicia-North Portugal there are four: Chaves-Verín; Tui-Valença; Salvaterra-Monção and Tomiño-VilaNova da Cerveira) are maintaining a similar activity, with telephone meetings between the mayors of the two sides. They are also providing registration certificates to speed up border crossing (since the closure of the border, border workers crossing over the Goian bridge between Tomiño and Cerveira have to go to Tui-Valença, making a detour of more than 30 km, but there are cases where the detour is longer than 100 km).

As regards good examples of cross-border cooperation, several cases have been mentioned throughout the previous text. In addition to those mentioned, two more can be added:

The IACOBUS university exchange programme (aimed at fostering academic cooperation and mobility in the Portuguese-Galician university area to promote the pooling of training

and scientific research projects through the mobility of teaching, research and administrative staff between both sides of the border, with the aim of promoting the exchange of experiences, joint research, scientific dissemination and knowledge transfer) and is managed by the EGTC of the Euroregion, intends to give priority, in its call for proposals this year, to those projects that can contribute to the fight against the virus and its consequences from all fields: health, social, economic, urban planning, legal, etc.

Another specific experience is the one carried out in the "Valornature" project (financed by POCTEP). Within the framework of this project, the Galician Agency of the Forest Industry (dependent on the Ministry of Economy and Industry of the Xunta de Galicia) started to produce protective screens from wooden hangers. These protection screens, approved for use by health professionals, will be donated to the Galician Health Service (Sergas) and to social entities.

Finally, cooperation has taken place at all levels. Exchanges and collaboration, as well as communication (telephone, videoconferences...) is a constant, both at local and regional level and at all levels, both technical and political.

Furthermore, the Xunta de Galicia and the EGTC of the Euroregion kept in touch with the main institutions in the border area (Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte de Portugal -CCDR-N-, other EGTCs, Portuguese consuls in Vigo and Spanish consuls in Porto), among other institutions.

5. Information provided by European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs)

5.1. Border EGTCs (information provided by Eurocity Chaves-Verin)

They point to an impact of the COVID from several perspectives:

From the institutional perspective of the grouping itself, it should be noted that the Eurocity has been kept operational at all times by means of teleworking with a very high level of telematic meetings for political and technical coordination between the two municipalities. Joint planning work has also been carried out for a post-Covid scenario through working groups in areas such as tourism, culture, work, education and sport, the environment and sustainability.

As for the perspective of multi-governance, they point out concern about the bilateral closure of borders that has especially affected the Eurocities and about the phases of de-escalation where they consider that there may be asymmetric responses in the return to normality in both countries. They suggest a differentiated application for these urban conurbations.

From the citizen's perspective, they highlight that they have suffered the impact of the COVID crisis from the point of view of mobility, pointing out the permeability between citizens on both sides of the border using essential and basic services on either side of the border, leading to difficult situations between many neighbors in towns or villages on the border.

On the other hand, the Chaves-Verin Euro-city EGTC has been forced to suspend the cross-border services that it was keeping operational, such as the TUT (Transporte Urbano Transfronterizo) that links the urban centres of Chaves- Verin; or the Euro-citizen card, which allows access and use with special prices and advantages to services on both sides of the border regardless of nationality; or the monthly issue of the joint Agenda of Events.

From a productive perspective, the closure of borders decreed as a result of the COVID-19 crisis has affected the productive development of the Eurocity to the extent that many services and businesses on both sides of the border have had to close their doors. Even those not forced to close, such as supermarkets and basic services, have had to do so since their majority clientele is made up of residents who, on one side or the other of the border, went to do their daily shopping because of their proximity to their homes. The border crossing restrictions have forced the population of these border towns to go to commercial establishments and services of their own states, much more distant from their homes, breaking the dynamic of taking advantage of the economies of scale existing in the Eurocity.

The sector that has suffered the most is tourism. The EGTC jointly promotes the tourism resources of the cross-border tourist destination Eurocity Chaves-Verín.

In the catalogue of the joint offer of the Eurocity, the tourist products stand out (which combine - through joint tourism packages - an offer of services on both sides of the border) or the hotel offer of more than 3,200 beds.

All tourist services have closed, which means that an unprecedented crisis is expected in the sector that will affect the whole territory, since the strategy that has been adopted over the last 6 years has been the promotion and marketing of cross-border tourism.

The primary sector has hardly been affected since the cross-border transport of goods has perfectly assured the supply of the products of the countryside.

As for cross-border workers, who have authorisation to pass through, they have been hindered by the closure of secondary crossings and have been forced to go to authorised crossings which are often more than 100 km from their homes.

The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) Eurocidade Chaves-Verín during this crisis COVID-19 has continued to serve the population of the Eurocity and has implemented, within its competences, some concrete measures to face the crisis and the post-COVID-19 scenario. Among them, it is worth mentioning:

- One-stop information service on the state of alert in both countries. A compendium of the decrees regulating the state of alarm in Portugal and Spain has been carried out to inform citizens about the rights of cross-border workers and the security measures to be adopted in the two countries. Likewise, the consultations received have been referred to the corresponding competent bodies in Spain and Portugal, always taking into account the principle of facilitating contact for the specific resolution of legal and administrative issues on both sides of the border.

- A post-COVID-19 working group was set up, made up of politicians, technicians and business associations from both sides of the border and coordinated by the EGTC to define a joint strategy in response to the post-COVID-19 crisis.

- Launch of the "EurocityTalks" project, online web seminars to bring Eurocitizens closer to cross-border cooperation and to analyse joint responses in the post-COVID-19 scenario.

- Launch of the Webinar "Iberian Eurocities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic". The objective was to share a space for dialogue and reflection with the mayors of the Iberian Eurocities to find out what the impact of the COVID-19 has been on cross-border cooperation, how the state of emergency and the closure of borders has affected the citizens of the different Eurocities and the measures to be implemented to strengthen their proximity relations after the crisis. The mayors of the seven Iberian Eurocities took part in the meeting: Eurocity Cerveira- Tomiño, Eurocity Tui-Valencia, Eurocity Salvaterra

Monçao, Eurocity Chaves-Verin, EGTC, Eurocity Elvas-Badajoz, Eurocity Ciudad Rodrigo-Fuentes

5.2. It is also worth mentioning the signing, on 28 April 2020, of a joint declaration by 13 Spanish and Portuguese mayors on the impact of COVID-19 on the territory of the cross-border Miño River, addressed to the regional and state provincial administrations, in which they describe the situation on the border and make a series of suggestions to the regional and state governments.

6. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces.

Disaggregated data is not available, but border closures, with the limitation of mobility that they imply, have caused an extra impact in socio-economic terms in the border territories than in the others. Moreover, taking into account that the phases of deconfinement of the border countries (Spain, Portugal, France, Morocco) will be done at different speeds, it is expected that the return to "normalcy" will also have an extra negative impact that has to be foreseen in relation to the recovery measures that will be adopted both at national and European level.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. *Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency*

1. Information provided by the Ministry of Health.

Civil society initiatives have been channelled through the volunteer platform, which, under the coordination of the public social services, has assessed the situations and actions required.

Permanent contact with the Children's Platform, State Council of the Roma People, Third Sector Platform, State Council of Non-Governmental Organizations.

2. At the local level: examples of civil society participation.

2.1. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the solidarity of citizens, and many civic initiatives have been launched to support those most vulnerable to this pandemic: the elderly, the homeless, minors, the self-employed, etc.

This has strengthened the joint work between local governments and citizens' platforms, setting up initiatives such as that of the Fuenlabrada City Council (more information here) which has organised with the University Rey Juan Carlos Volunteers network a support service for carrying out duties and helping with training for the most vulnerable families. Initiatives such as the platform "decide Madrid"¹⁸ of the Madrid City Council or the transparency portals of some local governments that have become the main channel of communication and participation between citizens and local government, such as the city of Valencia and the Soria City Council or the Seville City Council. Granollers City Council has developed different initiatives, including, in coordination with social entities such as the Red Cross, support for the most vulnerable by providing food and clothing, among others.¹⁹

¹⁸ <https://decide.madrid.es/legislation/processes/116/proposals>

¹⁹ <https://www.citiesforglobalhealth.org/initiatives>

The FEMP invites the realization of intergenerational solidarity campaigns, with the participation of the neighbours, to carry out the opportune follow-up from the nearby environment of the neighbourhood or the community of neighbours, and to alert before situations of abandonment or lack (always following the indications in the matter emitted in the matter of Health). All of this is done with the aim of guaranteeing that this highly vulnerable population group has adequate social protection.

2.2 Information drawn up by the Deputy Directorate-General for European and International Relations (Ministry of Territorial Policy and Civil Service).

a) Madrid City Council:

- The Madrid City Council's participation portal (decide.madrid.es) has launched #Madridsalealbalcón, civil society initiatives for solidarity to fight COVID-19; as well as two other initiatives of a more than participatory, informative nature: Compartimos Barrio - Ecosistema de proximidad-, and Conectados. Live meetings with experts.

- REACTIVA Madrid has been launched (<https://www.reactivamadrid.es/>)

Hackaton or competition to select and implement projects for the visualisation and analysis of information related to the COVID19 pandemic and its impact on the economy, mobility and society. REACTIVA Madrid is aimed at professionals, experts, startups, entrepreneurs, students, researchers, with no restrictions on participation for adults in general.

b) Generalitat Valenciana (regional level): #SUMATEALRETO

The Generalitat Valenciana has launched a call for the agents of the Innovation System of the Valencian Community to propose innovative solutions in the fight against the coronavirus. The initiative is therefore aimed at all those companies and research centres in the Valencian Community that have mature innovative solutions, not yet available on the market for immediate purchase, but which can be implemented in the short term and in areas directly related to the fight against COVID-19.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

1. Information provided by the Ministry of the Interior

- Security, public order and national civil protection service. Security and public order are essential services to the public that have been and are being maintained in Spain during the health crisis. The Security Forces and Corps in Spain are making a significant effort in terms of resources to continue guaranteeing security and public order throughout the national territory. In addition, during the health crisis, services have been reinforced in areas that have demanded special attention due to the circumstances of the health crisis, especially with regard to care for victims of gender violence and other vulnerable groups; the surveillance of establishments open to the public on which crimes of robbery with violence or intimidation could be focused, as well as the prevention and investigation of cyber-crime.

- In addition to maintaining the provision of security and public order services, with the particularities mentioned above, the Security Forces and Corps have also been assigned specific missions in the health crisis, which can be summarized as: monitoring compliance with measures restricting movement and other health measures during the state of alarm; support to health authorities for the protection of public health; services to ensure food

supply, as well as the operation of essential services and critical operators; control of the entry and exit of persons from the national territory. In order to guarantee all these functions with the necessary coordination, the State Security Forces and Corps, the Police Forces of the Autonomous Communities and the Local Corporations were placed under the direct orders of the Minister of the Interior (Order INT/226/2020, of 15 March, establishing action criteria for the Security Forces and Corps in relation to Royal Decree 463/2020, of 14 March, declaring the state of alarm for the management of the health crisis situation caused by COVID-19).

- National Civil Protection System. Order INT/228/2020, of 15th March, establishing criteria for the application of Royal Decree 463/2020, of 14th March, within the framework of the National Civil Defence System, was approved, pursuant to which an extraordinary State Coordination Committee was immediately set up, chaired by the Minister of the Interior, with the participation of the Government Delegates in the Autonomous Communities, and the emergency management bodies were activated at the highest level in all the Autonomous Communities and Cities.

Since the entry into force of the state of alert, the extraordinary ECC has met on five occasions, with the participation of the Government Delegates, the Councillors of the Autonomous Communities and Cities responsible for Civil Defence, the General-Chief of the Military Emergency Unit, a representative of the Ministry of Territorial Policy and Public Function, the Director of the Department of National Security, and the President of the Spanish Red Cross.

In the State Coordination Committees, the adequate coordination and good functioning of the whole National Civil Protection System has been verified. In addition to the State Coordination Committees, videoconferences have been held with the heads of the Territorial Civil Protection Units of the Government Delegations.

2. Information provided by the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda.

The declared state of alarm due to COVID-19 has the fundamental objective of stopping the spread of this pandemic in the population, limiting the mobility of people. As far as Spain is concerned, during its validity, citizens will only be able to circulate on public roads to carry out activities that require basic needs: purchase of food, assistance to health centres, cases of force majeure or situations of need, etc. Based on this, the following measures have been adopted:

- The operators of public transport services will reduce the total offer of operations by at least 50%. Subsequently, by means of a Ministerial Order, this reduction has been at least 70%. There are even services that have been completely interrupted. This criterion also applies to Public Service Obligations, with the exception of Suburban (Railways) for which it provides for a 20% reduction in peak hours and 50% in off-peak hours.
- The Autonomous Communities, City Councils and Transport Consortia have reorganised public transport services. In general, supply has been adapted to demand (around 10% of the total in an equivalent day in 2019), bringing forward the peak hour, reinforcing the services that provide coverage to health centres and eliminating journeys with low demand (these are especially high in rural areas).
- Taxis and Driven Tourist Vehicles have been readapted to the new demand: offering services to the demand for public transport in rural areas and support to health services throughout the country.
- During the 14 most severe days of the pandemic, between 30 March and 12 April, activity was reduced to a minimum throughout the country in order to reduce the impact on the national health system. In this context, public transport services were reduced as much as possible in line with the new demand.
- Measures have been taken throughout public transport to inform citizens of the importance of respecting social distance (media, messages at stations, signs on

vehicles, etc.), 10 million masks have been distributed with recommendations for their use on public transport, payment by telematic means has been recommended, vehicle cleaning work has been increased and protection measures for transport sector personnel have been reinforced.

- Road maintenance is considered an essential activity. Therefore, the necessary human and technical resources have been made available to ensure the safe movement of persons and goods.
- In addition, different cities have committed to sustainable mobility for short journeys in the urban environment. To this end, the circulation of vehicles has been limited in certain streets to increase the surface area for pedestrians and bicycles. This measure also helps to comply with social distancing measures. Public bicycle rental systems have also been put in place and to increase safety, the use of gloves is mandatory and vehicles will be cleaned daily.
- On 28 April the Plan for the transition to a new normality was announced.²⁰

3. Information provided by the Ministry of Health.

The Essential Social Services were established with the aim of guaranteeing social services during the crisis by Order SND 295/2020 of 26 March adopting human resources measures in the field of social services in the face of the crisis situation by COVID19.

The Institute for the Elderly and Social Services (Imsero) and the Autonomous Communities in their respective fields of competence in the field of social services may adopt the necessary measures for the protection of persons, goods and places, and may impose on social service workers the provision of extraordinary services, either on account of their duration or their nature. The measures adopted shall contribute to the proper provision of the social services which are the subject of this order and shall make rational use of available human resources. They must also comply with the principles of necessity and proportionality. This order is applicable to all centres and entities providing any of the services contained in the Reference Catalogue approved by Agreement of the Territorial Council of Social Services and the System for Autonomy and Care for Dependency on 16 January 2013.

4. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces.

The services determined by the FEMP as essential are:

Local Police; Fire Brigade and Civil Protection; Garbage Collection; Street Cleaning; Home Assistance; Remote Assistance; Gender Violence; Water and Supply Network; Public Lighting; Cleaning of Municipal Buildings and Facilities; Social Services (Citizen and Vulnerable Population); Citizen Services (Telephone and Telematic); Computer Service; Maintenance services for emergency care in roads and public spaces; Secretariat; Intervention; Treasury; General Registry; Works Service; Funeral and Cemetery Services; Responsible administrative units; Transport; and Animal Care and Protection Service

In order to present these essential services, following the recommendations of the health authority, it has been necessary to redesign schedules, frequencies and fleet reduction (in the case of urban transport), and to reassign staff.

Some examples of "readjustment" in the area of social services:

- Measures to guarantee home care for vulnerable people: Guaranteeing continuity in the care of basic needs; Reconfiguring care contents; Modifying actions according to priorities; Combining with other services (tele-assistance, home-delivery, etc.);
- Detecting cases and protecting workers
- Actions for the protection of the homeless: The municipal social services have reinforced and reorganised their management in order to meet the needs of this

²⁰ https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/resumenes/Paginas/2020/280420-consejo_ministros.aspx

<https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/paginas/enlaces/280420-enlace-desescalada.aspx>

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population: providing adequate and sufficient accommodation places; avoiding situations of overcrowding, and, as far as possible, fitting out new provisional spaces for compliance with basic hygiene and social separation measures.

- Social services in segregated and vulnerable settlements: the municipal social services have reinforced and reorganized the existing resources for the attention of individuals and families living in these environments, guaranteeing social and health monitoring.

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

1. Information provided by the Ministry of Health.

- Essentiality of social services.

- Reconversion of care modalities to the different service benefits established in Law 39/2006, of 14 December, on the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and Care for Dependent Persons.

-Transfer of budgetary items to cover:

a) Reinforcing local services of a domiciliary nature to guarantee care, support, links to the environment, safety and food, especially those aimed at the elderly, disabled or dependent persons, thus compensating for the closure of canteens, day centres, occupational centres and other similar services, considering the greater risk assumed by these persons in the event of contagion. These services include home help in all of its modalities and any other of a similar nature that is provided in the user's home address.

b) Increase and strengthen the operation of home telecare devices so as to increase the rate of verification contacts and the monitoring of the population benefiting from this service.

c) To transfer to the home environment, when considered necessary, rehabilitation services, occupational therapy, hygiene services, and other similar services, considering the suspension of day care in centres.

d) Reinforce the care arrangements for homeless people, with the appropriate personnel and material means, ensuring that both they and those who care for them are duly protected, and making it possible to extend them, both in terms of the length of stay and in terms of intensity.

e) To strengthen the staff of Social Services centres and residential centres in the event that replacements are necessary due to prevention, contagion or the provision of new services or overloading of the staff.

f) Acquisition of prevention resources (EPI).

g) Extending the provision of items intended to guarantee sufficient income for families, to ensure coverage of their basic needs, whether these are emergency or integration needs.

h) Reinforce, with adequate services and devices, respite services for caregivers and conciliation measures for those families (especially single-parent families) with low income who need to go to work or leave their home for justified and/or urgent reasons.

i) Other measures that the Autonomous Communities, in collaboration with the Social Services of the local entities, consider essential and urgent to attend to people who are especially vulnerable due to this crisis, and which are duly justified.

2. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces.

The Law Regulating the Bases of Local Regime (LRBRL) has been modified in order to make it possible for the collegiate bodies of the Local Entities to carry out their activities at a distance (holding of Telematic Plenary Sessions) and by valid electronic means, when exceptional situations of serious crisis do not allow the normal functioning of a face-to-face regime.

With regard to maintaining the provision of services, most local governments have adopted the following measures to comply with these obligations:

- Teleworking for those municipal activities that allow it.

o This has meant a new work culture and new forms of organisation, as well as the provision of the necessary technological resources for public employees to carry out their work.

o Training courses in teleworking have been developed specifically for small municipalities.

- For those municipal activities that cannot be developed at a distance:

o Implementation of shifts; provision of individual and collective protection measures; adaptation of workspaces and/or means to health recommendations;

- Reassignment of human resource tasks to respond to the emergency.

6. Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?

1. Information provided by the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda

- Frequent public appearances of the Minister of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, open to questions from the media, to inform about the measures taken by the Government in the field of Transport and Housing.
- Daily television appearances by the General Secretary of Transport and Mobility, open to questions from the media, to report on the situation in public transport services and on roads, ports, airports and railways.
- Collaboration and frequent contacts of the central government with the Autonomous Communities and local entities in the field of transport.
- Collaboration with other Ministries in the drafting of regulations with an impact on aspects within the competence of the Ministry of Transport. This includes measures to protect against vulnerability in the leasing of commercial premises and measures to suspend specific building rehabilitation activity when there may be interference between the people working and those living in the buildings.
- Weekly analysis by the Ministry of Transport of international good practices in response to the COVID-19 crisis in the field of transport, both at the country level and at the urban level, to help with decision-making. Evaluation and adoption of those with positive effects in Spain.
- Reacting promptly and swiftly to incorporate the recommendations of the European institutions.
- Elaboration of a mobility analysis based on Big Data technology to know the mobility patterns of the population and to be able to adopt, if necessary, measures adapted to the detected needs.

- Collaboration with the Government Delegations in the Autonomous Communities in the disinfection of public roads in urban environments using the Ministry of Transport's road maintenance vehicles.
- Collaboration between the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of the Interior in establishing traffic controls on the main road arteries of the State Road Network.
- With respect to other services provided by the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and the Urban Agenda, teleworking has been promoted, with administrative activity continuing mainly through this system.

2. Information provided by the Ministry of the Interior.

1.1 Campaigns:

- Awareness campaign to promote help for the most vulnerable people, especially the elderly. Carried out in collaboration with the Spanish Red Cross, #YoHagoPorTi, broadcast on social networks and TVs.
- Campaign of psychological support to the population due to the situation of confinement, carried out in social networks.

1.2 Other actions:

- Distribution of 10.5 million masks to support the return to work of non-essential service workers, carried out by the National Civil Protection Service throughout the national territory according to the population of right of each Autonomous Community.
- Activation of Red Cross Immediate Response teams (psychosocial assistance) in field hospitals and similar (Madrid, Soria and Segovia).
- Activation of the European Mechanism for Civil Protection (and distribution of 500,000 masks provided by the European Mechanism to the Spanish Red Cross, State Security Forces, Military Emergency Unit, and Cáritas).
- Organization, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, of 23 repatriation flights for Spanish citizens abroad, 17 from Latin America, three from Africa, and three including Asia and Australia (around 3,600 returned citizens). On May 2nd another one is chartered to Bogota (Colombia).

3. Information provided by the Ministry of Health.

Activation of the Military Emergency Unit, in the face of extremely serious social situations, at the request of the Autonomous Communities.

4. Information provided by the Ministry of Territorial Policy and Civil Service.

The Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) is an association of local entities that groups together town councils, provincial councils, councils and island councils. The FEMP was established under the fifth additional provision of Law 7/1985, of 2 April 1985, regulating the bases of the local system, and was declared a public utility association by the Council of Ministers on 26 June 1985.

Among its foundational and statutory purposes, it is worth mentioning:

- The promotion and defence of the autonomy of local entities.
- The institutional representation and defence of the general interests of local entities before the rest of the public administrations, and specifically before the institutions of the State
- The development and consolidation of the European spirit at local level based on autonomy and solidarity between local authorities.
- The promotion and encouragement of relations of friendship and cooperation with local authorities and their organisations at international level.
- The provision, directly or through companies or entities, of all kinds of services to local corporations or their dependent entities.

The important work that this federation has been carrying out both in the defence of the interests of Spanish municipalism and in its efforts to coordinate and cooperate with other State Public Administrations is worthy of note. However, with a view to the future, it is also worth highlighting the incessant and prompt activity that it is carrying out and that the Government is echoing in order to examine its contributions "to continue in the common task, as the President of the Government pointed out in his appearance on the Plan for the Transition towards a New Normality, of rebuilding together the economic fabric and social vitality of Spain without leaving anyone behind".

However, in the current panorama produced by the incidence of the COVID-19 and after the declaration of the state of alarm, the FEMP starting from the premise "It is time to face this challenge with unity and determination" elaborated a document that it transferred to the Government. In this document, and as a prelude to the implementation of a package of measures that they propose, they make a general assessment of the function and the means, of all kinds, that the local world has at its disposal, of the outstanding role that it is playing in the crisis caused by COVID-19 and of the role that it has to play, together with other public administrations, in order to face its consequences. Justifying its proposals in the following reasons:

- The active role of the local world from the first minute of the crisis, highlighting the effort it is making in the front line of the fight against the pandemic for essential municipal services.
- The basic pillars represented by the Local Entities to overcome the crisis and the need for more resources and empowerment, through a framework of competence and financial sufficiency.
- The cooperation and dialogue with the rest of the Public Administrations to attend to their demands for resources and decentralisation.
- Compliance with fiscal rules, as demonstrated by their commitment to budgetary stability.
- The interest of the Local Entities in participating in the balanced solution of the crisis, through the economic reactivation.
- The demands to rethink local action in various areas, such as sustainability, climate change, digital divide, teleworking and culture.
- The defence in the European Union for the elaboration of a European Shock Plan and the reorientation of the European Funds programmes.

In this context, on 20 April the President of the Government, together with the Minister who is speaking to you, held a telematic meeting with the FEMP in which, in addition to considering the role of the Local Bodies in the current situation, he expressed the Government's willingness to examine its proposals, as well as its intention to maintain a constant dialogue with the FEMP, for which purpose he expressed his intention to hold periodic meetings to address the different issues.

5. Information provided by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces:

The FEMP has set up a specific website with all the official information and which also incorporates a consultation service at the service of the more than 8.000 Spanish local governments. The website is: <http://covid19.femp.es> and the consultation mailbox: covid19@femp.es

The FEMP has disseminated to all local entities the documentation prepared by the Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 with recommendations on their competences in the field of social care on how to deal with the coronavirus COVID-19 within the framework of the different social services.

Likewise, the FEMP has adopted an institutional declaration²¹ and a document with 19 Extraordinary Economic Measures to face the COVID-19 crisis²² and has contributed to the CEMR Response to the European Communication on the EU response to the coronavirus crisis.

On the other hand, the European and global local government associations have also created tools to promote the exchange of experiences before the COVID-19 and in which there are examples of measures taken by Spanish local governments:

- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG): <https://www.citiesforglobalhealth.org/es>, and <https://cities-today.com/covid-19-resource-portal-reaches-more-than-100-cios/>
- Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) <https://ccre.org/en/activites/view/42>

²¹ <http://www.femp.es/comunicacion/noticias/19-medidas-locales-para-combatir-el-covid-19>

²² http://www.femp.es/sites/default/files/multimedia/np-medidas_de_hacienda_femp_junta_de_portavoces_2_abril_2020_1.pdf

SWEDEN

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

The Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament), which has the power to pass legislation, represents the people at national level. The Government governs Sweden by executing decisions taken by the Riksdag and initiating new laws and legislative amendments. Some central government agencies are also supervisory authorities. In this way, the State scrutinises and supports the work of the regions and municipalities.

Sweden is divided into 21 counties, all of which have a county administrative board, which is a central government coordinating authority, a service authority, an appeal body and a supervisory body.

Sweden is divided into 21 counties at regional level. Their main task is providing health care services, but they are also responsible for public transport (for example). Sweden has 290 municipalities at local level. The municipalities are responsible for preschools, schools, social services and care of older people (for example).

There has been no fundamental change due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. However, the Government has been given greater powers by the Riksdag to issue provisions that may entail restrictions and rules of conduct for both individuals and regions and municipalities. The municipalities and regions have also been given temporary assignments that they do not normally have.

1.2. *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?*

The county administrative boards have regional responsibility and can therefore gather aggregated information about aspects that span across several areas of activity. The county administrative boards' coordination also covers other actors in the county, such as municipalities and government agencies, and dialogue with the business sector. The county administrative boards draw up regional status reports, hold several daily collaboration conferences, report to the national authorities, and develop and coordinate crisis communication in collaboration with local, regional and national actors.

Other government agencies adapt their activities and hold dialogues with municipalities and regions. The Government steers the government agencies through assignments and appropriation directions, just as it normally does. Agency dialogues are an opportunity for discussion and information exchange. There is also a close dialogue with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (a membership organisation for all municipalities and regions).

1.3 *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

A dialogue is held between the government agencies, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the county administrative boards, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the regions. The government agencies can also steer

activities using regulations. Regarding the distribution of protective equipment and medico-technical equipment, the government agencies have an overarching role to play in facilitating distribution between the regions.

- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

As a recession is expected to follow in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has proposed that the Riksdag decide in June on general additional funding of SEK 15 billion in 2020 to mitigate the uncertainty, contribute to stability in the sector and improve the municipalities' and regions' chances of securing access to quality health care, schools and social care.

The Government has also allocated SEK 5 billion for municipalities and regions to be able to apply for compensation for the additional costs associated with health and medical care linked to COVID-19. Moreover, the conditions for some targeted, performance-related government grants to the regions' health and medical care services have been changed so that the regions have the opportunity to use these resources more freely.

Additional funding of SEK 6 billion in 2020 as well as support in the amount of SEK 3 billion for regional public transport to mitigate the effects of reduced travel has been announced. From 1 April to 30 September 2020, central government will cover the entire cost of employers' sick pay. These measures benefit all employers, including municipalities and regions.

The Government has tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare with distributing hand disinfectant free of charge to care of older people and home-help services throughout the country.

THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. *Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)*

Several municipalities and regions have made use of the option in the Local Government Act to allow members to take part in board and assembly meetings from a distance.

To guarantee pharmaceutical supplies related to COVID-19 in Sweden, all 21 regions and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions have established a national model for the purchase and distribution of pharmaceutical products. Four regions have been tasked by the other regions with purchasing pharmaceutical products considered the most crucial and critical based on growing needs.

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions and Sobona (the employer organisation for municipal companies) have drawn up a special collective agreement that regulates conditions and (higher) remuneration for workers in a crisis situation. The aim is to provide greater flexibility in terms of the obligation to work, working hours and conditions in general. Stockholm Region has activated the agreement through a decision at political level. A separate and identical decision to activate the agreement has since been taken by the boards of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions and Sobona.

2.2. *How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?*

Recommendations, regulations and general advice from the Public Health Agency of Sweden about travel, for example, apply throughout the country. Examples of measures for businesses and organisations to prevent the spread of the virus:

- put up information for members, staff, customers and other visitors;
- mark the floor with distance markings;
- rearrange furniture or in some other way create space to avoid crowding;
- hold digital meetings;
- offer hand-washing facilities with soap and water, and offer hand disinfectant;
- prevent lots of people gathering, especially in small spaces;
- ensure that public transport can run to the extent needed to reduce the risk of crowding;
- limit the number of people per vehicle; and
- inform passengers about how they can reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 *What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?*

Large numbers of people commute to work, particularly from Sweden to Norway. Since 16 March, the border to Norway has been closed and temporary border controls have been introduced. However, the entry ban does not apply to Swedish citizens who live or work in Norway. This is an important exception to enable workers to commute between the two countries. Regarding cross-border trade, Norway's decision means that people are not permitted to enter the country just to shop. Both the Norwegian and the Swedish foreign ministries have advised against all non-essential travel to other countries.

The responsible minister had a meeting with the border regions at the end of March in which it emerged that workers appeared to be commuting without any major problems. Cross-border trade and tourism have been badly affected by the restrictions. The transportation of goods is functioning, but the number of transports is lower than normal. Business owners on the Swedish-Norwegian border are in a very difficult situation.

It is difficult to say at the current time how cooperation between the border municipalities will be affected. In terms of collaboration projects, meetings and other cooperation being postponed, the hope is of course that all activities can return to normal as soon as the situation allows.

3.2 *Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?*

The abovementioned exception, which is dealt with at national level, from the ban on entry for Swedish citizens who live or work in Norway. This exception has enabled workers to continue commuting between Sweden and Norway.

The National Board of Health and Welfare (a government agency) is looking into whether/how the ICU places that Finland has offered other Nordic countries can be used if necessary. So far this has not been necessary as the national need for places has been met.

CIVIL PARTICIPATION

4.1. Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

More than 50 per cent of Sweden's population are involved in voluntary work in one of the country's approximately 250 000 non-profit organisations. Civil society organisations provide jobs to more than 180 000 people.

Broad dialogues have been held at ministerial level with civil society. The Prime Minister took part in the meeting for leaders of faith communities.

The Government has decided to provide government grants to non-profit organisations working during the COVID-19 pandemic with children in vulnerable situations, women, children and LGBTI people subjected to violence, and people subjected to intimate partner violence and honour-related violence and oppression. Additional measures have been put in place to strengthen associations and organisations working to support people who are in particularly vulnerable social situations and to combat loneliness and isolation among older people.

PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

No particular problems have been highlighted with such services, apart from the large drop in revenue for public transport due to a lack of advertising and reduced passenger numbers.

5.2. What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?

Distance working from the home has been applied across the board following a recommendation from the Public Health Agency of Sweden.

A number of reporting requirements linked to agreements for 2020 between central government and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions concerning municipalities and regions have been dropped. This measure is intended to make things easier for municipalities and regions.

School governing bodies have been given the opportunity, pursuant to an ordinance, to adapt school activities, for example by offering distance learning when a school is open as usual but pupils or teachers are at home due to the recommendations from the Public Health Agency of Sweden concerning COVID-19.

The National Agency for Education is to produce and disseminate examples of how work can be organised with the help of the new provisions, recommendations and regulations that the Government and the Public Health Agency of Sweden have drawn up as a result of COVID-19. The National Agency for Education is also to design support that gives school governing bodies, education providers and headteachers guidance in organising activities in a way that offers a reasonable working situation for preschool teachers, teachers and other staff.

6. *Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?*

The National Board of Health and Welfare has published new support for the responsible authorities for health and medical care and care providers containing principles for prioritising resources in health and medical care services during the COVID-19 pandemic in the event that the need for care exceeds the available resources.

The Government has decided on a ban on visits to all care homes for older people in the country in order to prevent the spread of the virus, and the National Board of Health and Welfare has published support material on working methods during the COVID-19 pandemic for people with dementia in special forms of housing.

Public gatherings and events with more than 50 participants are still not permitted. The ordinance applies until further notice but will be repealed when the prohibition is no longer needed. County administrative boards have been given the opportunity to issue regulations forbidding public gatherings and events with fewer than 50 participants.

SWITZERLAND

MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

On 16 March 2020, the Swiss Federal Council declared an "extraordinary situation" under the Federal Law of Epidemics.

According to the Swiss Pandemic Plan, the Federal Council is responsible for determining the strategy and issuing the necessary provisions and instructions. The cantons support the measures taken by the Federal Council and ensure their implementation through coordinated action.

The impact caused by the emergency on the economic and social life is manifold. Switzerland considers it neither necessary nor appropriate to legislate in detail at the federal level. The existing room for manoeuvre allows regional particularities to be considered and diverse solutions to be found. In the final analysis, the centralisation of competences - imposed by the extraordinary situation - is combined with the advantages of federalism, which favours autonomous action and problem-solving in partnership.

Overcoming this crisis requires close cooperation between the Federal Council and cantonal governments, between the cantons as well as between these and the municipalities. Regular special meetings are held under the coordination of the Conference of Cantonal Governments (CdC), and the Secretary General of the CdC is a member of the Confederation's crisis staff group. This arrangement enables the cantons to report to the Confederation on the difficulties they are facing during implementation. The cantonal police forces monitor implementation of the measures.

Many companies are being hit hard by the crisis and their survival depends on the federal government's aid programme. Many cantons have rapidly taken additional measures tailored to their needs and aimed at supporting the regional economy: emergency financial aid for companies directly affected, loan guarantees, interest-free loans, extension of the deadline for tax payment, assumption of salaries and training costs for apprentices in companies, etc.

The cities are working to ensure compliance with the federal and cantonal safety guidelines, to inform the population through a variety of channels, to support the local economy, to protect municipal staff and particular groups at risk, and to ensure that basic public services continue to function despite the crisis. Initiatives taken by the communes [1] include, for example:

(a) In the field of information: Information on social networks including video messages; information campaigns, e.g. with posters or information boards; setting up of hotlines; information in the municipal bulletin or newspaper; advertisements in local newspapers;

(b) Support for the economy: Financial support for businesses in need (e.g. guarantees for bridging loans; extension of deadlines for the payment of certain bills, extension of deadlines for the submission of tax returns, etc.); special funds for culture and sport; rent reductions for the retail trade; support for the self-employed and temporary employees; temporary relaxation of the rules on public procurement contracts; tax relief for operators of market stalls or terraces in public areas; dedicated sites for SMEs providing for instance information on short-time working, guarantees, delivery services, etc.; publication of a list of businesses which are still open or which offer alternative sales services such as home delivery;

(c) Social policies: Advocacy by the Initiative of Cities for Social Policy to the Confederation and the cantons; municipal measures to improve the situation of accommodation for the homeless; various projects to provide local assistance for the elderly and people at risk;

d) In the field of public transport: Additional funds (CHF 100 million) for public transport subscribers; free parking spaces for basic service employees in some cities;

d) Security / measures to enforce federal directives: Many cities and municipalities have set up a management team within the administration to take the necessary measures and coordinate them; increased police checks in various cities and intervention in the event of excessively large gatherings; encouraging the reporting of companies or individuals who do not comply with the instructions; closure of parks and other places of assembly; police warnings on Twitter when there are too many people on a sports field and social distancing is not complied with; closure of construction sites for which the city is the owner;

e) Waste and wastewater: The Swiss Association for Municipal Infrastructure compiles a list of measures temporarily applied with regard to companies and communes/municipalities or planned in the case of a deterioration of the situation;

(f) Civil service / parliamentary functioning: suspension of activities of municipal assemblies; postponement of municipal elections; video streaming of press conferences; adjustment of opening hours of the counters, various services can only be reached by telephone; creation of a "pool" where municipal employees who no longer have enough work can register to help out in departments that are overburdened.

CROSSBORDER COOPERATION

Solidarity across borders is particularly valuable in times of pandemic. Several Swiss cantons have agreed to take in French Covid-19 patients to help overburdened hospitals in the Grand Est and Franche-Comté regions, notably at the initiative of a local elected representative, the President of the Departmental Council of Haut-Rhin (France). Switzerland has not received a similar request for patient care from Italy.

Requests for the transfer of patients from abroad are now centralised at the Federal Office of Public Health (OFSP). No specific agreement has been concluded between the Swiss government and the French government and no counterpart has been negotiated.

Switzerland is in regular contact with its neighbouring countries in order to coordinate measures to combat the coronavirus and to quickly resolve specific problems. The borders remain open for cross-border commuters, which is particularly important for hospitals in certain regions of Switzerland.

The Neuchâtel Hospital Network reports that 60% of the acute care staff in intensive care units are cross-border commuters. At the Jura Hospital, 30% of the medical and nursing staff reside in neighbouring France. In total, more than 30,000 French cross-border commuters work in the health sector in Switzerland. The situation of border residents has been fully resolved since 19 March.

A framework agreement on cross-border health cooperation was concluded between the two countries. It entered into force on 1 October 2019. This document emphasises, among other things, that the costs of care are borne by the patient's country of origin.

[1] Examples of dedicated online pages created by the municipalities and regularly updated: Aarau, Basel-City, Bellinzona, Bern, Biel-Bienne, Coire, Frauenfeld, Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne, Lugano, Lucerne, Sion, Saint-Gall, Thoune, Winterthour, Zoug, Zurich

UNITED KINGDOM

AREA 1: MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. *What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?*

Existing emergency management responsibilities

UK Government leads on overseeing government emergency management, within the framework of primary legislation ([Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)) and the National Security Strategy. The Act sets out a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. The nature and severity of the emergency determines the need for the involvement of the sub-national and national tiers and the location of the emergency determines the nature of the engagement between central and devolved government.

Existing emergency powers to deal with the spread of infection are set out in different legislation for the four nations of the UK. Major public services affected by the pandemic, particularly public health services and education, are also the responsibilities of the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In Scotland and NI, policing and justice are also devolved.

Emergency legislation

New emergency primary legislation ([the Coronavirus Act 2020](#)) was introduced to grant extraordinary powers to assist the authorities in providing a consistent and effective response to the crisis.

The measures cover;

1. increasing the available health and social care workforce – for example, by removing barriers to allow recently retired NHS staff and social workers to return to work (and in Scotland, in addition to retired people, allowing those who are on a career break or are social worker students to become temporary social workers)
2. easing the pressure on NHS and local authority resources – for example by allowing for certain assessments to be delayed in relation to adult social care, by reducing the number of administrative tasks they have to perform, enabling local authorities to prioritise care for people with the most pressing needs, allowing key workers to perform more tasks remotely and with less paperwork
3. containing and slowing the virus – by reducing unnecessary social contacts, for example through powers over events and gatherings, strengthening the quarantine powers of police and immigration officers and suspending individual port operations, the power to require the temporary closures of school or registered childcare providers, provisions for remote participation in certain court proceedings
4. managing the deceased with respect and dignity – by enabling the death management system to deal with increased demand for its services
5. supporting people – by allowing them to claim Statutory Sick Pay from day one, by supporting the food industry to maintain supplies and by protecting tenants
6. postponing elections – local, mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections due in May 2020 have been postponed for one year, and the terms of office for those elected in the 2021 elections will be adjusted by one year to serve for three years instead of four. Any by-elections to local, regional, devolved or national legislatures have been postponed to May 2021

Government made two sets of regulations under the Coronavirus Act 2020 in relation to the continued upholding of democratic principles. The first set enables all local authority meetings before 7 May 2021 to be held remotely and removes the requirement for the

annual meeting this year. The second set postpones until 6 May 2021 local by-elections and other polls, either scheduled or which would otherwise arise before that date.

The regulations aim to give local authorities greater flexibility to redeploy their resources to focus on meeting the many new challenges they face in responding to the pandemic whilst maintaining critical front-line services. The regulations on meetings will enable essential decision-making to continue whilst upholding democratic principles and enabling all to comply with the public health guidance. The elections regulations also ensure that unnecessary risks to voters, the officers who run polling stations and counts, and campaigners are avoided.

Powers and Parliamentary oversight

Some provisions of the Act take effect on Royal Assent, but others only take effect when a Minister makes a regulation to switch that power on. Regulations may also be made to turn some measures on and off as needed and different regulations may be made for different purposes or areas.

The exercise of powers in the Act is subject to different levels of Parliamentary scrutiny. Most of the legislation is time limited and will expire after two years. Some provisions, including certain provisions relating to the emergency registration of health professionals and indemnity of health service activity do not expire after two years.

The legislation is subject to continued Parliamentary scrutiny. Parliament has the opportunity to express a view on the continued operation of the Act's temporary provisions every six months. If Parliament votes to against keeping the provisions of the Act in force, the government must make regulations to prevent provisions having effect within 21 days. If the Government wishes to extend the legislation beyond that date it must enact new legislation.

The government is required to publish a report every two months on the use of the non devolved aspects of the legislation.

If the key provisions of the Act remain in force in one year, a parliamentary debate must be held on non devolved aspects of the Act, in both Houses of Parliament.

Devolved legislatures

The decision to impose restrictions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic was taken on a UK-wide basis and therefore most of the legislative provisions are the same or very similar across the UK. The emergency legislation conferred new powers on devolved ministers in areas such as health, education and justice empowering them to take specific measures in relation to the response.

In Wales and Northern Ireland devolved Ministers have made regulations under these emergency powers and under powers that already exist in public health legislation. ([Coronavirus regulations Wales](#), [Coronavirus regulations NI](#)).

In Scotland the devolved legislature has also passed primary legislation which includes emergency measures ([Coronavirus legislation Scotland](#)) to ease the duties on public services in respect of reporting and freedom of information, protections for renters in their homes and measures to alleviate pressures on business and consumers and to ensure the justice system is able to deliver essential services. The provisions expire six months after coming into force and they can be extended with the approval of the Scottish parliament

up until September 2021. Scottish Ministers are required to produce a report on the Act every two months to review whether the emergency provisions remain necessary.

Local measures to enable local lockdowns

Local authorities in England have been given new powers to act quickly in response to coronavirus outbreaks in their areas. Provided that certain conditions and procedures are met, the relevant regulations give local authorities the power to:

- restrict access to, or close, individual premises
- prohibit certain events (or types of event) from taking place
- restrict access to, or close, public outdoor places (or types of outdoor public places)

To address more serious and wider-spread cases, ministers are now able to apply their existing powers to implement more substantial restrictions at a local level. This could include:

- closing businesses and venues in whole sectors (such as food production or non-essential retail), or within a defined geographical areas (such as towns or counties)
- imposing general restrictions on movement of people (including requirements to 'stay at home', or to prevent people staying away from home overnight stays, or restrictions on entering or leaving a defined area)
- imposing restrictions on gatherings – limiting how many people can meet and whether they can travel in and out of an area to do so
- restricting local or national transport systems – closing them entirely, or introducing capacity limits or geographical restrictions
- mandating use of face coverings in a wider range of public places

1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?

The principle of subsidiarity emphasises the importance of local decision making, supported where necessary, by coordination at a higher level.

Coordination between central and devolved governments

A Cabinet Committee structure was established to deal with the health, economic, public sector and international impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak on behalf of the whole of the UK. Ministers from the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are regularly invited to participate in these discussions, to ensure the highest level of co-ordination and effective working, to tackle this crisis on a UK wide basis. At this level, Ministers have considered the impact of the pandemic on schools and children's services; the police; the Prison and Probation Service; the courts; the food supply chain; the welfare system; charities; and support for the most vulnerable.

Through a four nations approach, more has been achieved that would have been possible as separate nations:

- the measures provided to protect the economy and jobs are of a scale beyond what an individual nation could offer;
- the UK's welfare system is able to absorb the unprecedented economic shock of C-19 and support people across the UK
- the resources of the Armed Forces have been invaluable in supporting communities and health services; and

- the global reach of the UK put us in a far stronger position in the international procurement of vital equipment.

Coordination between national and local government

The functions and responsibilities of local government in each nation vary.

In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the devolved governments are responsible for supporting local mechanisms. The UK Government is in regular contact with the devolved governments to coordinate a UK-wide response to the crisis as set out above.

In England, UK Government works directly with local government in each of the nine English regions, supporting their response to the Covid-19 emergency and longer-term recovery through bespoke engagement.

The engagement mechanisms have evolved as necessary, including a Ministerial led board, alongside conversations through existing networks and with the local government associations and representative bodies. These mechanisms build a trusted two-way flow of information and advice on the full range of issues facing councils in all areas.

The metropolitan mayors (M9) have provided important leadership in their regions by linking to their business communities on the Government support package in place and by redirecting funds devolved to city regions to support their business, community and voluntary sectors.

UK Government has worked closely with the M9 mayors and other local leaders to maximise the effect of collaboration across tiers of government, for example by establishing an economic recovery working group, chaired by the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, attended by several mayors, local authority leaders and local enterprise partnership chairs.

Data Sharing

Government and local authorities are also able to draw on the information and resources provided by the Joint Biosecurity Centre, which was established to provide analytical support on outbreak control measures.

Specifically, the JBC acts as an independent analytical function to provide data and analysis to government and to local authorities. It brings together experts on disease incidence and control with other analysts from across government to give Ministers joined up advice on decisions about managing the disease. This helps with identifying outbreaks at an early stage and responding accordingly, such as in the following examples:

- In Bradford & Blackburn with Darwen, the Government identified troubling trends in the data and worked closely with the local authorities to increase testing. In Blackburn with Darwen, the local authority also made further recommendations for residents (which differed from the national guidelines) aimed at preventing a local lockdown.
- In Leicester, the Government instituted a local lockdown in order to bear down on high rates of infection.
- The Government and local authorities also worked together after an outbreak was identified in the North of England (parts of greater Manchester, East Lancashire and West Yorkshire), acting quickly to impose and communicate local restrictions.
- Following a rise in cases in Luton, the local authority agreed with the Government to pause the further relaxation of lockdown measures (specifically the reopening of gyms, swimming pools and fitness studios). The Council also agreed with

Government to increase their testing capacity. This means that anyone in the town is able to book a coronavirus test, regardless of whether they have symptoms.

- 1.3 *What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?*

The local responders are the basis of the response to any emergency in the UK.

In England, at a local level the principle mechanism for multi-agency co-operation is the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The 38 LRFs in England are generally geographically organised on local police areas. They bring together all the organisations who have a duty to co-operate under the Civil Contingencies Act, along with others who would be involved in the response including the transport, health, business, voluntary, faith, communications, utilities and environmental sectors, as well as emergency services and local authorities. The Act requires responders (emergency responders, local authorities, health) to maintain plans for preventing emergencies; reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of emergencies; and taking other action in the event of emergencies. This local multiagency response is coordinated through a Strategic Coordinating Group.

Information and intelligence from all Local Resilience Forums is reported into national government. In response to the current crisis, significant work has taken place to develop data processes and technology to pull together this information and create a bespoke and relevant national picture.

Similar structures exist in Scotland (3 Regional Resilience Partnerships), Wales (4 Local Resilience Forums) and Northern Ireland (Emergency Preparedness Groups) and are the responsibility of the devolved governments in that nation.

The devolved governments inform central government in a similar way to local resilience forums to ensure coordination and to maintain an accurate national picture.

At the level of national and devolved government, direct engagement also takes place with key public bodies, agencies and representative groups and industry and business leaders. This engagement is bespoke and covers the whole suite of public services. Mechanisms include round tables, task groups and regular scheduled calls at senior levels across government.

- 1.4. *Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?*

The UK Government initially announced a package of support in respect of public services and individuals and businesses. The areas of UK-wide support include measures to protect the wages of employees and the self employed, increases to welfare benefits and the extension of Statutory Sick Pay, business loan schemes, and tax deferment.

Additional resources for devolved administrations

Some areas of this package related to matters which are devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Devolved measures include health expenditure, local government expenditure (resulting from business rates relief schemes and small business grants administered via local authorities in England) and transport expenditure (to support train

and bus operators). The devolved administrations decide how to respond to Covid-19 in devolved areas.

The additional spending by UK Government in these areas resulted in consequential funding for the devolved administrations using a population-based formula (known as Barnett consequentials). The UK government has so far announced almost £7 billion of funding to the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This means £3.5 billion for the Scottish Government, £2.1 billion for the Welsh Government and £1.2 billion for the Northern Ireland Executive. The devolved administrations can use this funding as they choose and are not required to replicate the UK Government scheme from which it was derived.

In addition, although health is devolved, the UK Government and devolved administrations have exceptionally agreed that some urgent health priorities will be funded by the UK Government's Department of Health and Social Care on a UK-wide basis, including the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment and tests.

Additional resources for local government in England

The Government has provided £4.3 billion to councils to help them meet the immediate spending pressures they are facing. This funding includes:

- £3.7 billion of unringfenced funding. This means that councils have the flexibility to choose how to use it in their areas.
- £600m to ensure care homes can continue to halt the spread of coronavirus by helping them cover the costs of implementing measures to reduce transmission.

In addition, the Government has announced a co-payment scheme that will compensate councils for irrecoverable income losses from sales, fees and charges. They will be expected to absorb the initial 5% of losses compared to planned income from these sources. Thereafter, there will be a cost splitting arrangement where 75p in every pound of relevant losses will be compensated for by the government.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) published a report on 22 June exploring how the coronavirus pandemic has impacted local authorities' financial risk and resilience. The authors praised the work of the government to help local authorities. They pointed out that the extra grant money and changed timing of payments to support cash flow are said to have helped authorities combat the crisis, and without it, the situation could have been a lot worse.

The UK Government is fully committed to levelling up all parts of the UK, ensuring that our towns, cities and rural areas receive the investment they need to improve their local economies. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the need to do this has clearly never been so great. This is why central government will ensure that local authorities have the tools, resources and structures to deliver for their communities. We will do this by:

- Implementing new devolution deals in England to unlock significant amounts of investment and strengthen local institutions.
- Completing and investing in new City and Growth Deals in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These growth deals enable the UK Government to work with the devolved governments to support local partners to achieve local growth.
- Supporting local areas across England to develop innovative regeneration plans through our £3.6 billion Towns Fund.

Other measures to make the economic situation easier

The UK Government initially provided a total of £12.3bn in grants available for small and medium businesses. Local authorities are responsible for receiving and distributing this funding. The round of reporting up to and including 3 May showed 697,515 business premises have received grants, totalling over £8.6bn.

On 8 July, the Government set out a 'Plan for Jobs' that will spur the UK's recovery from the Coronavirus outbreak. The Chancellor announced a package of measures to support jobs in every part of the UK, give businesses the confidence to retain and hire, and provide people with the tools they need to get better jobs. The plan will also create tens of thousands of jobs through bringing forward work on £8.8 billion of new infrastructure, decarbonisation and maintenance projects.

The UK Government is providing support directly to people and businesses in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland through the UK-wide measures in the Plan for Jobs. The devolved administrations are also receiving funding through the Barnett formula to provide further support in devolved areas.

In addition, up to £617 million has been made available to local authorities to fund small businesses that rent space in shared offices, industrial units or innovation centres, regular market traders, bed and breakfast establishments that pay a 'Council Tax' to their local authority rather than business rates, and also to support small charities. Local authorities are responsible for defining precise eligibility for this fund and may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need.

Case studies of business grant funds impacting at the local level;

- *In Hillingdon, West London, the small business grant helped Cocafina Limited transform from a bricks-and-mortar organic food distributor to an e-commerce business overnight. Adapting quickly to changing demand allowed them to grow online sales 4000% and the business is now connecting digitally with old and new customers.*
- *In Newcastle upon Tyne, North East England, Nebula Labs, a small technology start-up has been able to pay its suppliers – many of whom are local small business, freelancers and SMEs – as well as look at their business development and adapt to the remote access world, including supporting employee homeworking.*
- *In Dorchester, South West England, a retail, hospitality and leisure grant to Japanese restaurant Myra's Kaiseki's has enabled the owners to keep operating during the pandemic including: starting a takeaway delivery and collection service; supporting isolated older customers with grocery shopping; providing free meals for staff in the local hospital. In Newark, East Midlands England, Gracegentle sells home accessories and giftware and the grant has helped the business owner keep staff, pay suppliers and to put things in place for when they re-open.*

£6.1 million funding has been provided to Business Improvement Districts (these are business led partnerships which deliver additional services to local businesses and allow the business community and local government to work together to improve the local trading environment). This funding will cover the equivalent of core operational costs for three months. The Coronavirus Act 2020 included clauses to enable BIDs to extend the maximum duration of their arrangements by up to one year.

This will allow business to focus on recovery from economic shock before deciding whether to participate in future BID arrangements for the following 5-year period, and allows BIDs to coordinate their local high streets' and town centres' recovery.

The Chancellor announced an initial £330 billion of guarantees to support business lending, which is available to landlords. All commercial tenants and landlords are encouraged to engage with one another as early as possible on the repayment of rent and to come to arrangements where possible to resolve issues. There have been many positive examples of landlords and tenants working closely together to the benefit of both parties during this period.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 makes provision for a three-month moratorium on the ability of landlords of commercial properties to exercise any right of forfeiture that they may have due to the non-payment of rent by tenants. The provision simply delays the right of forfeiture; it does not otherwise impinge on a landlord's right to claim forfeiture at the end of that period. This is not a rental holiday and Landlords are still owed rent and, should this not be paid once this clause of the legislation has lapsed, will be able to claim for forfeiture.

The approach encourages businesses that are in a position to make their rent payment to do so, whilst providing three months' grace to those that are struggling. The objective of the clause is to provide much-needed certainty to those businesses hit hard by Coronavirus and worried about security of tenure during this difficult period.

UK Government has also introduced temporary new measures to further safeguard the high street and millions of jobs by helping to protect them from permanent closure through aggressive forms of rent recovery during this time. Statutory demands and winding up petitions issued to commercial tenants will be temporarily voided and changes will be made to the use of Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery, building on measures already introduced in the Coronavirus Act.

Government continues to work with the sector to ensure it is adequately supported, including: monitoring the impact of the moratorium on forfeitures; ensuring business support programmes are adequate and asking lenders and investors to consider how debt obligation can be met in a way that does not put unnecessary pressure on creditors.

AREA 2: THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1. Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)

Local authorities in the UK are showing innovation and resilience while upholding the principles of democratic governance.

The Government identified around 1.85 million people with underlying severe clinical conditions that needed protection through staying at home and 'shielding' during the pandemic. This data was provided to local authority 'hubs' who along with commercial food distributors are helping government to provide food parcels and other essential items to vulnerable and isolated people in their communities in an unprecedented national effort.

In Sheffield, a city in South Yorkshire, North East England, 7 Locality Community Response Teams have been set up to work closely with the Voluntary, Community and Faith sectors and mutual aid groups. Each team's main purpose is to connect, facilitate and enable the Covid-19 response across Sheffield as it progresses. The teams communicate daily across all sectors of their communities. Set up by and staffed by public officials from Sheffield City Council, the teams are enabling the join up of services, bringing together a range of integrated expertise to local communities. The teams coordinate frontline workers and

volunteers delivering shopping, medication and doing check and chat calls on vulnerable citizens as well as supporting local community organisations in their localities.

In response to the pandemic and government's call to local authorities on keeping safe vulnerable homeless people during the pandemic, East Suffolk Council have placed 26 homeless people in emergency accommodation to prevent them from sleeping rough. The emergency accommodation consists of social housing stock, self-contained hotel rooms and private housing which has been furnished with the essentials, including furniture, white goods and food parcels. The quick response to the government's request was made possible by the council's Housing Needs, Tenancy Services and Repairs and Maintenance teams, who worked together closely, supported by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, to ensure that homeless people were allocated vacant accommodation at short notice. All teams continue to work closely with public bodies, partners and organisations to ensure that those placed in emergency accommodation will continue to receive the support they need including food parcels. The council has also transformed a former sheltered housing property to help accommodate vulnerable people. The council's repair and maintenance team worked with local contractors to bring the property back into use in just seven days. This included installing water cylinders in all flats and reinstating the heating, lift and electrical and fire detection systems. All the flats underwent safety inspections, deep cleaning and various repairs and were fitted with the necessary furnishings, cooking facilities and white goods to ensure they were up to the standard required. The flats are being allocated to those who are particularly vulnerable at this time, such as rough sleepers and those at risk of becoming homeless.

2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?

UK Government works closely with the Mayoral Combined Authorities to support the specific needs to cities and metropolitan areas as they tackle the outbreak of Covid-19. The responsible Ministry holds weekly meetings with MCA Chief Executives to discuss areas of priority, voice concerns and plan for recovery.

A working group has also been created to bring together local leaders from across the country to discuss how central government can support recovery and growth in local areas according to their specific needs. It is crucial to bring the expertise and geographic diversity of local government to bear on those discussions.

The Government has deployed dedicated military planning support to every local resilience forum to help co-ordinate and protect local services and supplies, with additional support from senior government officials and named resilience advisers in regional hubs.

All upper tier local authorities were asked to develop local outbreak control plans based on the based on the existing statutory responsibilities of their Directors of Public Health and the specificities of their communities.

2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

Local authorities and regions have taken an approach of "mutual aid" to address many challenges posed by Covid-19. Where there have been shortfalls of PPE supply in certain areas, we have seen high levels of co-operation to ensure that equipment has reached the necessary people. An example of this is Essex Council who have made their PPE sourcing service available to all local councils free of charge. We have also seen West Midlands and Warwickshire LRF hold joint Strategic Co-ordination Groups, for streamlined and more effective working across administrative boundaries.

A new project involving all 32 London boroughs has seen food hubs across London come together to feed vulnerable residents. The collaboration between the city's three largest food redistribution charities, The Felix Project, FareShare and City Harvest, will work to stock hubs before being distributed to local communities. It is being co-ordinated by the Strategic Co-ordination Group –the body leading London's response to the Covid-19 outbreak—alongside boroughs and the London Food Alliance. The project also depends on teams of volunteers, who receive food deliveries, package them into parcels and deliver them to individual doorsteps, local food banks, charities and community centres.

Buckinghamshire Council (South East England) and the London Borough of Camden have joined forces, alongside a digital transformation consultancy firm, to create new code in support of their COVID-19 response. The code provides a prototype for online services, which people can use to search and request COVID-19 related support in their area e.g. the delivery of groceries and prescription items (for people who are self-isolating). This code has is shareable between local authorities and is now available to councils.

AREA 3: CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

3.1 What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?

The Covid-19 crisis has strengthened and given renewed focus to cross- border cooperation between the UK and its land and sea neighbours and further afield. This cooperation initially focussed on dealing with immediate issues such as the repatriation of citizens when restrictions were initially put in place and has evolved to address medium-term priorities such as keeping borders open for freight flow and industry and medical supply chains.

3.2 Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place?

At the UK's only land border, a memorandum of understanding has been established to promote public health cooperation and collaboration on the Covid-19 response between Ireland and Northern Ireland. This agreement has been made between the Ministers of each government's Department of Health and extends to the agencies of those departments. The commitments therein focus on the key areas of modelling, public health and non-pharmaceutical measurers, common public messages, behavioural change (including outreach and engagement with civil society across the border), research, ethics and any other areas considered to be of mutual benefit.

AREA 4: CIVIL PARTICIPATION

Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency.

The UK Government has worked with the devolved administrations to develop a UK-wide programme to support those who have been identified as clinically vulnerable as well as wider groups. Many local community organisations have stepped forward to help and this has been welcomed and supported by Government. More than 750,000 citizens signed up to a volunteer responders programme to help with tasks such as collecting shopping, providing telephone support, transporting patients and helping with supplies for the NHS. The Government has launched online tools to signpost people to existing support whether that is local, national or voluntary.

The Civil Justice Council has commissioned an independent review to gather feedback on the impact of Covid-19 measures on the civil justice system. There have been significant changes in the operation of the civil justice system, particularly the swift expansion of the use of remote hearings. The review is particularly interested in gathering feedback from

court users to assess the experience of remote hearings and this information will be used to offer practical recommendations on the ongoing response to Covid-19.

Regulations have been made to enable councils to conduct meetings remotely during the pandemic. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, in South East England, selected an online application for public council meetings to enable democratic participation for residents while maintaining social distancing. The chosen application allows for meetings to be live streamed and uploaded to YouTube and has the ability to have all councillors on screen to ensure that debates and voting are fully transparent.

Local councils have been compelled to rapidly shift their communications online and interact with the public in different ways. For example, the City of York, has hosted a live online #AskTheLeaders Coronavirus question and answer session for the public. Residents were able to participate by commenting on the live video or by submitting questions in advance by email. The questions were answered by councillors, offices and representation for the areas health care services who each responded according to their role, experience and portfolio.

Bilingual meetings in Wales

Organisations under Welsh language standards are required to offer the opportunity for people to speak Welsh in public meetings, and external meetings. Holding bilingual meetings and inviting people to contribute in the language of their choice is an established way of operating in Wales.

In the context of Covid-19, Welsh organisations have ensured that this has continued. The Welsh Parliament was one of the first to hold a bilingual plenary session online, and organisations including the National Museum Wales have also pioneered by using Zoom and similar technology.

To support more organisations to arrange bilingual meetings during the current circumstances and to promote democratic participation, the Welsh Language Commissioner has published new guidance and shared best practice.

AREA 5: PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)

Many local services to the public have been closed, adapted or adjusted to comply with the Government's directions on social distancing in line with specific guidance that has been published by the respective Department.

Continuity in democratic decision making

Government's response to the outbreak of Covid-19 has focused sharply on upholding democratic principles and ensuring the continued exercise of democracy across the country.

As alluded to above, essential principles of democracy such as the holding of elections, and the requirement for councils to be open and accountable through annual meetings have been provided for by the making of secondary legislation. The regulations mean that elections can be held at a point in time where public safety can be ensured, while also allowing councils to continue to hold meetings necessary for transparency remotely, to ensure the safety of councillors and members of the public.

Guildford Borough Council, South East England, held its first 'virtual' committee meeting on 1st April, a meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee. Since then, virtual Executive and Planning Committee meetings have been regularly broadcast on the Council's website.

Warwick District Council broadcasted their first live Committee meeting on 7 May 2020. To date, the council has broadcasted 21 live formal meetings over 24 different feeds on YouTube. In addition to people watching live, to date, there has been a total of over 2,900 views of the council meetings (averaging 134 per video). This flexibility allows people to engage with broadcasts live or retrospectively at their convenience. The Council also received positive feedback from the public about their experiences of both speaking at meetings and watching them online.

The City of York Council has created new opportunities for the public to directly interact with Councillors on the issues caused by Covid-19. On Tuesday 28 April, residents were invited to watch and interact with a live Coronavirus question and answer session on City of York Council's Facebook page. The session was attended by the Leader and Deputy of the Council, the lead member for Climate Change and Environment along with the Head of the Paid Service, Director of Public Health and the Executive Director for Primary Care & Population Health from Vale of York clinical commissioning group. With a city-wide population of around 200,000 and a Facebook following of 11,000 the Live Q&A reached over 11,600 people and received engagement from over 1,000.

Refocusing services

Local authorities have worked individually and jointly across administrative boundaries to minimise disruption, support the most vulnerable and provide information to keep people safe and informed.

In some matters, central and local government have needed to work in partnership with charities and other public organisations such as the health service, or police to redesign or refocus efforts to meet citizen's specific needs during the pandemic.

For example, following a call to action from Government, over 90% of rough sleepers known to local authorities in England, have been offered safe accommodation in just under a month. This has ensured that some of the most vulnerable people can stay safe during the pandemic. Local councils have worked together to achieve this, for example Manchester City Council and Liverpool City Council secured agreements with local hotels to provide rooms for rough sleepers and people in shared accommodation during the outbreak. The individuals will continue to be provided with food and welfare support.

Public service providers are working jointly to maximise their efforts. In the London Borough of Islington, the CCTV monitoring teams have been working with the Police to keep empty shops and businesses safe during the Covid-19 outbreak. The partnership has already successfully foiled several burglaries.

Adjusting services

In the London Borough of Hounslow steps have been taken to preserve the safety of waste collection and disposal crews. These steps include deep cleaning the vehicle each day, mandatory use of PPE, and each route being manned by the same 5-man. Lambeth Council (London) have produced an emergency plan focused on restricting traffic and widening pavements to support people making essential journeys while maintaining social distancing.

The City of Lincoln Council has created a new system to protect the safety of staff and residents, which has helped to ensure that people can access vital services at the council while observing social distancing measures. The council have implemented an online booking system to prevent people waiting in queues or waiting areas. The booking system has also helped to minimise the number of staff required in City Hall, while maximising the use of resources. To accommodate residents that face access difficulties or who have reservations about entering public facilities, the council have offered alternative contact channels, such as the option to video call for appointments.

5.2. *What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?*

Central government has played a vital role in developing and publishing guidance on operating essential services safely during the pandemic and in directing resources to those services most needed by the public during these unique times. Guidance has been prepared and is regularly updated by the respective Government department to cover matters relating to the adjustments that have been required by public service providers; such as access to regular health care and the provision of remote education during school closures.

The UK Government launched a GOV.UK Coronavirus information service on WhatsApp to provide official, trustworthy and timely information and advice about Covid-19 and to further reduce the burden on NHS services. The automated 'chatbot' service allows the British public to get answers to the most common questions about Covid-19 direct from government, the latest advice, and myth busting facts.

Local councils have embraced the use of technology to deliver their core business through remote access and to continue transparent democratic decision making. For example, South Staffordshire Council delivered a Planning Committee meeting with councillors, key officers of the local authority and a number of public speakers. Learning from this successful event has led to the development of a new programme of online events for local businesses to ensure there is communication in place with the council and between businesses, that businesses are able to access the support they need and the Council can be as responsive as possible to their specific needs.

New measures at a local level

Coordinated information campaigns - As part of the UK Government's determined effort to "stay home, protect the NHS, save lives", all employers were encouraged to ensure people work from home unless absolutely necessary.

Use of means of communication such as video conferences and internet messaging has hugely increased during the lockdown in all areas of public administration. Norfolk County Council (East England) have developed and shared a Video Conferencing & Messaging Guide with all local authorities to promote best practice.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (South East England) closed its seafront car parks and acquired a traffic order enabling road closures if necessary, to support the campaign which for this tourist destination means that visitors are not welcome at this time.

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council (East England) have published videos featuring members of the community reading public health advice in different languages. The recordings are also being used by partner organisations such as Cambridgeshire Police, whose officers are playing the translations on their mobile devices

when they are on the streets meeting people who are not following the stay at home guidance.

In areas with high infection rates and larger BAME communities, such as Bradford and Leeds, plans and local guidance have been co-produced between local authorities and faith leaders to reinforce public health messages. In Bradford, a community champion model has also been adopted to spread messaging.

Support with messaging regarding re-opening of businesses & public spaces –

Medway Council have introduced 'Greeters' in town centres to help people stick to the rules by providing guidance and support, rather than negative enforcement. They want shoppers to feel safe and enjoy shopping again.

Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council have launched BCP beach check, an app that shows real time information about how busy the beaches are in the area, to allow visitors to choose quieter stretches.

Wakefield Council launched a district wide "Enjoy it. Safely does it" campaign to help restart their local economy safely. This included outdoor advertising which ran alongside a social media campaign plus direct to business communications. A business restart pack was also produced which pulls together all the Government's key guidance for reopening as well as checklists for cleaning and social distancing.

Supporting community groups - Newark and Sherwood District Council is supporting a community kitchen to deliver meals to the homes of local residents. Two members of council staff have been redeployed to assist volunteers with their catering and delivery efforts and meals are free of charge to people in need.

Supporting residents in need – Kent County Council (South East England), alongside local and national partners, launched a new county-wide 24-hour helpline, 'Kent Together', to support people who need urgent help, supplies or medication. The helpline is being coordinated by the county council, which will feed the information through Kent's network of volunteers, district and borough council teams and local support groups so that they can respond to requests in their area.

In collaboration with local bus companies, West Sussex County Council announced that pensioners and vulnerable people with the council's bus passes can use them earlier than previously – before 9:30am on weekdays. This will make it easier for them to access the dedicated hour for elderly and vulnerable customers at their local supermarket. Staffordshire County Council also made this arrangement in their area.

Supporting mental health in young people and children - Hull City Council's HeadStart Hull programme provides early intervention for young people's mental health and has played an important role since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak. The website, which has been coproduced with young people in Hull, is a trusted source of information on emotional health and wellbeing and offers resources and information for young people, parents for professionals.

In supplying these resources and information, HeadStart Hull have sought to provide young people and parents tools to address mental health difficulties which, for many, have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The website has also provided a platform to update young people, parents and professionals on changes to service delivery where needed (including disruptions during the lockdown) and offers a space for young people to write blog posts

about their experiences with mental health. Feedback from a number of those who have posted indicates that this has proven a helpful activity.

Supporting cultural activities & education - Reading Borough Council's Culture Education Partnership has sought to ensure every child and young person in Reading has the opportunity to participate in quality cultural activities during the current pandemic. The strategic partners have collaborated on an art pack initiative – providing the materials needed to be creative at home. The art packs have gone to children that have been identified with an Education Health Care Plan or other significant needs. In total, nearly 1000 children and young people should benefit.

Job matching and business support - Stockport Council launched a new job matching website to connect employers across the borough who have urgent temporary or permanent vacancies with applicants who are immediately available and in need of employment during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Cheshire East Council launched a new scheme to help businesses across the borough support each other during the COVID-19 outbreak. The online scheme connects businesses in need of help to those that are in a position to help with, for example: staffing, delivering services or goods, mentoring phone calls or advice. The council had already developed a scheme to match people who are vulnerable and/or isolated and in need support with people, organisations or businesses willing to help.

Bury Council announced that market traders will receive a two-month 'rent holiday' dated from mid-March, with the possibility of further support if the crisis continues beyond this period. Businesses renting premises from the council will also be awarded a rent holiday of up to two months if they can demonstrate need.

Lewisham Council announced that businesses will receive a four-month reduction on annual business parking permits from 1st April 2020.

Providing additional funding – Many councils are pooling funds to support their communities through the current crisis in different ways.

The Greater London Authority and the City Bridge Trust have also established a new emergency fund, London Community Response, to provide resources and funding to voluntary organisations that are facing resource shortages (including a lack of access to volunteers and staff and financial difficulties) due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The fund was kickstarted by an initial donation of £1m by each of the Greater London Authority and the City Bridge Trust members. Hackney, Islington, Hammersmith and Fulham councils have joined the fund in the time since, bringing the total number of funders to 60 (as of June 2020). London Community Response has provided civil society groups with funding to continue operations, such as food and essentials distribution. It is the intention of the funders that, as the emergency scheme develops, the nature of support provided will continue to diversify.

To help deal with the impacts of the Coronavirus outbreak, the Lancashire COVID-19 Community Support Fund has been launched which provides grants of up to £5k to voluntary, community and faith organisations (as well as parish and town councils) across Lancashire. This support fund has been made available from £220k which has been provided by the Local Authorities in Lancashire, as well as £783k which has been sourced from the National Emergencies Trust. In addition, personal and business donations are made possible via an online website. As of 5 June 2020, 227 grants had been paid out to local voluntary, community and faith organisations. This equates to £900k of funding, which is now being used to support some of the most vulnerable people in Lancashire.

Lambeth Council's (London) crowd fund page has previously operated to provide access to funding for projects that promote inclusive growth, inequality and "strong and sustainable neighbourhoods", with a precondition that the owners of the project are able to put forward funding equal to that which they are requesting. These criteria have been adjusted for present circumstances. Residents are now able to apply for funding for projects that aim to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 within their communities – from food and prescription delivery services to information sharing – and it is anticipated that that a degree of flexibility may be exercised with regards to the criteria around matching funding levels. Residents are eligible to apply for up to £5000 through this scheme.

Manchester City Council unveiled a new set of measures to support people in the city facing financial struggles during the COVID-19 outbreak. These include: £700,000 to help pay for lunchtime meals for school-age children who need them before the national scheme comes into effect on 20th April; £500,000 for emergency Council Tax Support for people facing hardship who may not be eligible for the existing scheme; £200,000 to support emergency food provision; and £200,000 to support carers.

Coventry City Council launched a match-funded grant in partnership with Crowdfunder to support the city's self-employed, small and micro businesses in the sports and culture sectors. The grant requires the businesses selected after application to continue to advance sales of goods or services and reach a project target. Once reached, funds of up to £1,000 will be released.

Croydon Council established a new Voluntary and Community Sector Covid-19 Emergency Fund. It will give voluntary and community organisations financial support to continue their work in responding directly to the pandemic, above and beyond their normal activities. The maximum bid amount is £10,000 for established organisations and up to £5,000 for new smaller-scale or informal groups, with no minimum.

Tewkesbury Borough Council also announced the creation of a COVID-19 Emergency Community Fund. Charitable organisations across the borough (and voluntary and community groups with charitable aims) can now apply for a grant of up to £1,000 to deliver projects or services that meet the Tewkesbury Borough COVID-19 Emergency Community Fund criteria.

6. Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?

Other actors in society

In the area of education, many Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have come together in an effort to minimise disruption to young people from school closures. In Leeds, for example, Leeds Museums and Galleries have been making resources available on-line to support home-learning for children and adults. The Leeds Discovery Centre has been using Facebook to deliver videos by their Learning and Access Officer, examining artefacts from the city collection, enabling her to interact with online visitors, with opportunities to ask questions about the objects and vote on which objects to examine. The City Art Gallery is also making videos available about artists, their styles and techniques. This is part of the award winning Leeds Curriculum, hosted on the online education website MyLearning. Originally designed to support KS2 teachers, it is now available and promoted to parents as a home schooling resource covering a range of subjects. An additional £750million has been made available to charities to support them during the pandemic.

To support key public service workers, many independent shops and supermarkets have taken the decision to dedicate the first hour of trading to NHS and other frontline workers to help ensure that they are able to buy sufficient food and essential supplies. Similar schemes have been made available for the elderly.

Economic recovery

The UK Government is committed to support areas to recover and to maximise their growth opportunities to renew and 'level up' local areas and this overall mission is undimmed. The crisis is hitting hard in many of those towns and places that funds had already been committed to supporting but the UK Government is committed to seize the opportunity to build stronger and greener local economics. The Metropolitan Mayors are instrumental in leading work on recovery and renewal in their local areas; working collaboratively with local partnerships. Government has begun discussions with local areas to understand their priorities to effectively co-design a cohesive approach to recovery and renewal. This work has continued remotely, taking forward discussions on local government reforms and devolution to improve local accountability.

In West Yorkshire for example, the council has been keenly aware of the importance of progressing discussions on devolution with appropriate levels of local consultation. They have given careful consideration to their use of technology, timeframes and how to reach different parts of their community, to maximise their consultation exercise. They also monitored responses regularly during the consultation exercise to review the impact and reach.

The Government will bring forward full plans and a White Paper on Devolution and Local Recovery later in the year. The White Paper aims to set out the Government's plans for transformative reforms of local institutions in England aligned to a comprehensive plan for investment in every region and nation of the UK.

Local areas have already been instrumental in responding with innovative interventions. Manchester City Council in North West England has announced it will pedestrianise part of the city centre. London borough councils will widen pavements to encourage more walking and cycling; driving forward a green, clean recovery and renewal.

The Government has confirmed its commitments to infrastructure improvements remains and will work with these towns and places intensively as the recovery begins.

Other matters of importance

It is also remains important not to conflate other significant issues with the public health measures. For example, in the UK, as in many other European states, there has been a strong public response on civil matters expressed through anti-racism protests. Largely peaceful demonstrations involving 1000s of people have taken place in most major cities across the whole of the UK. In preparing for these and responding to extremist groups who took advantage of the situation, Ministers and Local Authorities have worked closely with the police and community groups to facilitate protests in a way that both upholds public health measures and also protects and seeks to advance the civil liberties of all citizens.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

AREA 1: MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

- 1.1. What is the allocation of competences between different levels of government (national, regional, local) in responding to the emergency? Has the normal allocation of competences been modified to response to the emergency?
- 1.2. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between different levels of government in responding to the emergency?
- 1.3. What mechanisms are being used to ensure co-ordination between the authorities – at different levels – and other public bodies and agencies involved in responding to the emergency in specific areas (such as health, education, social issues and civil protection)?
- 1.4. Has there been a transfer of financial resources from the central to the regional and/or local level to provide additional resources to respond to the emergency? What other measures have been introduced to make the economic situation easier at regional and/or local level?

AREA 2: THE FRONTLINE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 2.1. Please mention one or more significant initiatives in the area of democratic governance taken at the level of local authorities (for instance responsiveness, effectiveness, provision of services, meeting the needs of persons from vulnerable groups, etc.)
- 2.2. How have the specific challenges of cities and metropolitan areas been addressed? And the specific challenges of rural areas?
- 2.3. Are there examples of inter-municipal co-operation in responding to the emergency?

AREA 3: CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

- 3.1. What has been the impact of Covid-19 on cross-border co-operation?
- 3.2. Are there examples of good cross-border co-operation in responding to the emergency? At what level of government has this co-operation taken place ?

AREA 4: CIVIL PARTICIPATION

Please mention one or more significant examples of civil participation in decision-making relating to the response to the emergency

AREA 5: PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- 5.1. How has continuity in providing essential services to the public (public utilities, waste disposal, cleaning of public spaces, public transport, administrative services, public order and safety, etc.) been ensured? (Please specify whether there have been disruptions or purposeful and temporary redesigns of services)
 - 5.2. What new or different measures has the public administration taken to continue to provide services (for instance, new digital solutions, remote working, restructuring, transfer of resources)?
- 6. Any additional good practice/information that you would like to share?**