IN FOCUS: ECONOMIC SUPPORT MEASURES

The COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented challenge with global economic repercussions. The overview of the OSCE participating States' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic has been collated for informative and comparative purposes based on open sources data. As such, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly makes no claims nor warranties of any kind, expressed or implied, about its completeness and reliability.

The number of States having reported more than 10,000 infections has increased from 14 to 16 in one week, while Andorra, the third State, reported the first 10,000 infections. The total number of States (65) that have surpassed the 10,000 infections threshold, out of a total of 4 (i.e. USA, Italy, France, and Germany) and 140 (i.e. China) have reported more than 100,000 cases each, for a total of approximate 1,480,000 infections confirmed. This figure accounts for 77% of the overall number of infections in the OSCE area (5). The number of States that, for which no data is available, continue to report no infections (i.e. Holy See, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan).

As the inter-parliamentary forum of the largest regional security organization in the world, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe serves 57 participating States in their endeavours to strengthen parliamentary scrutiny for better oversight of a growing number of global challenges.

Since last week, the overall number of infections and deaths in the OSCE region has increased from approximate 1,237 to 1,480,000 and from 48 to 6,623 respectively. The number of States that, for which no data was found, increased from 14 to 16.

Notably, the vast majority of States (89%) have introduced monetary easing policies (i.e. cuts in interest rates and lowering of reserve requirements, which has allowed banks to lend more in order to stimulate the economy). In parallel, 27 States (47%) introduced emergency support measures for the most vulnerable individuals in their society. Such measures range from one-time financial allowances for low-income families, pensioners and homeless persons, to suspended repayment and suspension/relief of utility bills’ payments and mortgages.

For instance, while some have provided loans to healthcare workers, some States have created special programs of private and public sector securities purchase by the ECB (€750 billion); the European Investment Bank and the European Stability Mechanism (€426 billion); the response Investment Initiative Plus (€37 billion) and expansion of the EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF).

Moreover, the vast majority of States (88%) have introduced macroeconomic measures. For instance through single-payment grants, loans at prime interest rates, financial guarantees for commercial banks, net reductions or postponement of tax receipts, public grants for public sector securities purchase by the ECB (€750 billion); the European Investment Bank and the European Stability Mechanism (€426 billion); the response Investment Initiative Plus (€37 billion) and expansion of the EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF).

Finally, 29 States (51%) have introduced a variety of other measures to cushion the adverse impact of COVID-19 on people and businesses. For instance, through single-payment grants, loans at prime interest rates, financial guarantees for commercial banks, net reductions or postponement of tax receipts, public grants for public sector securities purchase by the ECB (€750 billion); the European Investment Bank and the European Stability Mechanism (€426 billion); the response Investment Initiative Plus (€37 billion) and expansion of the EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF).