

Solidarity with most vulnerable and poor

Belgrade, 17 March 2020

Our fellow citizens are facing a new crisis, as many other people in different countries around the world. This time the crisis can not be predicted, neither in time, nor regarding its consequences. In this moment, the most important is to preserve the health and health system, and that is in major part the responsibility of the State. However, self-discipline and responsibility of each individual are helping both our nearest and society in general. Solidarity that we are calling for is not just the solidarity with the sick ones, but it is general social solidarity and above all, the solidarity with the most affected and vulnerable ones and with poor population.

We know, from the previous experience, that the poor ones are the most affected by every crisis. The most endangered are the ones that are engaged in informal economy, the ones who do not have access to drinking water, that are living in unhygienic settlements, the ones who do not have means to buy soap and alcohol, that can not afford to be in self-isolation, and that are, the less informed about the prescribed protection measurements... Endangered are all workers (blue collars), and especially the ones engaged in precarious, temporary and periodical jobs, that will first face firing and lack of means for living. Also, the single mothers are in danger of loose of their jobs as they are forced to stop working out of home in order to take care of children, in the situation when kinder gardens and schools are closed. The elderly population is extremely endangered, above all in the cities, as many of them have to stop additional work that is helping them survive with their law pensions. Besides food staples, purchasing of medicines and hygiene products is additional burden for their already small household budgets.

The Government of Republic of Serbia and, especially, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy should come out with a plan for protection of the most deprived in this epidemic, so that they can get appropriate financial aid, relevant information in time and timely access to doctors. Also, as we can now see all flaws of the Labour Law, it is necessary to, in a shortest possible period, establish the standards for work from home, which should define the rights and obligations of both employers and employees. This should be done in cooperation with experts, business representatives, labuor unions and NGOs that are working in the field of social and economic rights and with NKEU.

If the health is the most endangered category now, than the biggest responsibility lies on Ministry of Health to engage urgently additional health mediators, to employ them as additional health staff, instead of paying them 20,500 RSD per month per service contracts. Protection equipment should be provided for them, so that they can visit the most affected settlements in 48 hours, inform the inhabitants and distribute the protection equipment to them.

Center for Democracy Foundation will, in coming days, continue to appeal for solidarity of the rich and poor, young and elderly citizens, the most privileged ones with the ones that are endangered. We will inform the citizens about the labour rights in these conditions and will give our best to point out the problems and look for solutions.

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