

Social Partners in Local and Regional Governments joint declaration on COVID19 and its consequences



(25 June 2020) The COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis. However, the tough but needed measures to contain the virus have led to an economic crisis and without the appropriate measures we risk exacerbating the emerging social crisis. Municipalities and regions are at the forefront of this crisis, whether in enforcing lockdowns, continuing to provide essential public services – above all healthcare and support for the most vulnerable – or in handling the gradual relaxation of containment measures. At the same time, many of their sources of revenue are falling due to the closure of public facilities and the general economic slowdown. During the COVID-19 pandemic the importance of well-functioning public services has once again been made very clear. Municipalities and regions are at the centre of the response to the crisis and many of the essential services are provided by municipalities and regions. For many years, local and regional government in

Europe have been operating in a very difficult economic and financial context. Structural reforms and austerity policies carried out in the years after the financial crisis have had a negative impact on the quality of public services. In some countries local and regional government was more heavily affected by cuts than the public sector as a whole and austerity measures have had a particularly negative impact on women. All measures taken in the post-COVID-19 pandemic would need to have a gender sensitive approach and promote gender equality and the eradication of gender pay gap. EPSU and CEMR strongly warn against repeating such austerity measures in order to recover from the economic crisis after COVID-19 and to avoid a social crisis.

Social Partners call on their affiliates to engage in social dialogue and collective bargaining on the national level as well as the workplace level to ensure safe working conditions and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus during the re-opening process, to explore and discuss the consequences prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of work organisation, working time, telework and work-life balance, and consider its impact on local and regional government and potential sectoral initiatives to be taken within the EU Social Dialogue Committee for Local and Regional Governments.

EPSU and CEMR call also on the European Commission and the Council to, among others, promote funding and investment in essential public services including health care and social services and to National Governments to fully compensate municipalities and regions for additional expenditure and loss of revenue caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

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