

**Lithuania** – information received from the Lithuanian Industry Trade Union Federation (LPPSF)

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A widespread quarantine in response to the coronavirus was introduced on 16 March. It is announced to last until end of April (or the lifting of restrictions will be considered). Since the beginning of the quarantine, the majority of shops are closed (except for food shops), companies and institutions cannot carry out economic activities as usual and various negative consequences are clear already.

Recently the Government of Lithuania has decided to endorse an economic stimulus.

The most concerning of all current issues is the vulnerability of workers – despite different tools, implemented by the Government, they are fired in mass numbers or forced to quit their jobs „voluntarily“. 17.600 employees have been laid off since the start of quarantine, about 80.000 have been put on unpaid leave, certificates of incapacity to work were issued for more than 253.000.

Atypical workers are very vulnerable regarding social protection. To employers/businesses, it is the „easiest“ group to get rid of. If there are no activities, they risk not getting any income and face problems sustaining their families. Especially the cultural sector is suffering (which is financially very vulnerable in general). Theatres, museums, music venues, entertainment institutions were closed and gatherings suspended. Those who are self-employed or freelancers will get a payout of 257 EUR a month if a person has paid social insurance fees at least 3 months in the last year (and does not work elsewhere with a traditional contract).

Strict rules regarding remote work in the public and private sector were introduced. Schools, universities, state institutions, cultural venues are closed and employees (if they can) work remotely. If there is no possibility to work remotely but the worker is prohibited to go to a workplace due to safety reasons, the work interruption is compensated so that people receive a guaranteed minimum monthly wage (40% by the employer + 70% by the state (gross 910,5 EUR)). Additionally, there is a newly confirmed list of special sectors. In these sectors, the state compensates 90% (gross 607 EUR) and the employer 10% of the minimum wage. So, minimum wages are guaranteed to ALL workers. Small and medium companies will have the most difficulties in amortizing financial losses.

Employers who have benefited from the subsidies must keep at least 50% of jobs for at least 3 months from the end of the payment of the grant.

Doctors face higher risks at work and need better protection which is still lacking. Higher salaries will be paid to workers who organize or provide healthcare to patients with particularly dangerous infectious diseases and carry out epidemic prevention measures in outbreaks during the quarantine. The salary fund for medical staff is increased by 18%.

According to the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania, businesses will be allowed to postpone tax payments, and recoveries will be suspended and the possibility will be provided to be exempt from paying the land and real estate tax. The Government also pledges to provide guarantees for working capital loans and partial interest compensation. Politicians also talk about subsidies and the possibility to use the long-term unemployment fund to help businesses.

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