NIS COVID Update. May 2020

The COVID wave is under control in most countries of the region. The state of emergency is lifted in most of the countries, though some restrictions are still effective. Public transport, some of the retail and services are reopened, as well as interregional transport. The governments are prioritizing preventive measures (such as social distancing, mask and gloves regimes, disinfection) to resume economies and reduce the risk of the second wave of the virus. If the latter happens the quarantine measures are to return. Unions are monitoring and assessing the governmental measures taken, the employers action, identifying unfair behavior towards the workers, continuing their regular work within social dialogue structures and on humanitarian aspects.

Updates by country, including union activities and positions re COVID19 available:

Azerbaijan

As part of the measures to combat the corona virus pandemic, Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation has created a special SMS notification system to establish communication with its trade unions and employees. The system is equipped with a special service channel. Decisions and measures taken by trade union organizations are quickly transferred to the mobile phones of the relevant persons. This is one of the principles of remote work in special quarantine conditions.

Recently, the Executive Committee of Azerbaijan Trade Union Confederation has adopted a new decision to distribute food aid to low-income families and pensioners in need of special assistance and care. For this purpose, it was decided to distribute food aid to 3,900 low-income families living in 76 cities and regions of the country.

Food gifts totaling 68 tons consist of everyday consumer goods that are important for every family. On April 29, a convoy of trucks organized by the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation left for the cities and regions of the country to deliver food aid.

Local trade union activists also took part in the action, which covered all regions of Azerbaijan. In the conditions of the corona virus pandemic, the provision of material and moral assistance by trade union organizations will be continued in the future.

<http://ahik.org/articles/view/ahik-respublikanin-76-seher-ve-rayonundaki-3900-azteminatli-aileye-67-ton-erzaq-sovqati-gonderdi?language=en>

<https://yadi.sk/i/XMwsw7I2Ejw3oA>

Armenia

KPA holds regular consultation with union members. Around 20 special programmes for social protection initiated, which have to be analysed now. Agreement with the employers to facilitate proper arrangements for distant work.

KPA Education centre issued a video on labour rights and obligations during force majeure.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNN3YoktQIg&feature=emb_title>

Belarus

President still does not admit COVID as a threat. The country held victory day parade. No proper data on infected people and deaths. Society divided between those who follow precaution isolation measures and those in denial. No proper protective equipment at the enterprises.

BKDP opposed the need for military parade during COVID-19 pandemia.

<http://www.bkdp.org/news/1/2406/ne-dopustim-prestupleniya-protiv-belorusskogo-naroda/>

Also there started an international campaign to reinstate union activist of an MNC German company Redpath Deilmann owned by Canadian Redpath Mining.

<https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=4329>

<http://www.bkdp.org/news/1/2408/bkdp-schitaet-chto-v-belarusi-dolzhen-byt-natsionalnyi-koordinator-mnk/>

Georgia

State of emergency is cancelled as of 22 of May, quarantine measures are easing up.

Restrictions for domestic tourism are to be lifted on June 15th, from July 1st the country will be open for foreign tourists. Tourism was supported by the government from the very start. Among measures taken– postponement of property and income tax payments. Small hotels (up to 50 rooms) got subsidies for 80% of bank credits for 6 months. Taxi and minibus drivers are to get financial assistance of 300 GEL.

Non-registered informal workers are entitled for lump sum of 300 GEL. The special system for them to register was set up, however one has to submit some proof of work anyway (including recommendation from the “employer”).

Ukraine

Quarantine till 22 of May, easing up already from 11 of May: to visit parks and recreational areas, to open hair studios and beauty salons, to open cafes for takeout services only, as well as non-food stores, car-wash services, etc. if quarantine measures are strictly met. Border points are gradually being opened.

According to the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the unemployment rate has reached 2.5-2.8 million people or 13.7-15.4% of the labor force, which is the highest rate in 15 years in Ukraine. According to the State Labour Service of Ukraine, as for 4 May, 457 thousand people have registered as unemployed in Ukraine. Meanwhile, the National Bank reported that almost no new vacancies are appearing on the labor market due to the lockdown.

Insurance for COVID-19 affected Healthcare workers

On 7 May, the Parliament of Ukraine adopted the Law "On Amendments to Article 39 of the Law of Ukraine "On Protection of Population from Infectious Diseases"(regarding additional guarantees of the rights of health and other workers engaged in the protection of population from infectious diseases and their families)." Accordingg to it, the insurance payouts are provided to healthcare workers of state and municipal health care institutions who are registered as a disabled person affected by coronavirus disease, in case of death of health workers and researchers who treated patients with COVID- 19, as well as in case of infection of health workers and their death from coronavirus during the quarantine. Insurance payouts totalling at least 300 times the amount of subsistence level (UAH 681 000 /EUR 22 000) should be provided to health workers if they are registered as disabled persons affected by coronavirus disease within one calendar year. In case of the death of a health worker or an employee of a state scientific institution who performs professional duties in conditions of increased risk of infection with pathogens of infectious diseases, such payouts should total at least 750 times the amount of subsistence level.

Also, the Law stipulates, that in case of death due to infection with COVID-19 during quarantine or restrictive measures related to the spread of coronavirus disease, a health worker is equated in status to a serviceperson doing military service who died as a result of injury, contusion, mutilation, disease related to the performance of military duties.

The family members, parents, and persons dependent will be able to enjoy all the rights and guarantees provided by law for servicepersons in such cases.

Now KVPU is advocating for classifying the COVID-19 as an occupational desease.

KVPU also tackling the issue of gender aspects of the pandemia impact, as well as domestic violence (through direct communication with women)

Workers from Ukraine now are allowed to return to work to the destination countries (some border points to Poland and charter flights).

FPU had a meeting with Minister of economy and minister of social policy to discuss economic implications and strengthening the social policy and defined contribution pension system.

Despite bans, protests at the parliament, as SMEs are desperate to start working. No funds for salaries, taxes etc.

Healthcare reform continued despite pandemia.

20% of COVID infected are medical workers. Local protests of medical workers because of low salaries.

On May 27, the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Social Policy and Protection of Veterans' Rights decided by a majority vote to recommend the Verkhovna Rada to adopt draft Law No. 2681, which, if adopted, would seriously undermine freedom of association and destroy the social dialogue system in Ukraine, as a basis and after that create a working group for its further preparation for the second reading.

<http://fpsu.org.ua/materialy/18242-shokuyuche-rishennya-komitetu-vr-z-pitan-sotspolitiki-shchodo-zakonoproektu-2681.html>

Russia:

The non-working days were finished by 12 of May, however the self-isolation regime was prolonged in many Russian regions (in Moscow till 14th of June), as well as mask and gloves regime was introduced.

There is a three stage deconfinement plan, each region defines the timeline for deconfinement in accordance with the COVID situation.

The President announced that if the self-isolation regime is continued salary has to be fully paid.

[FNPR Emergency Headquarters monitors among others the timeliness of salary, sick leaves payments, dismissals and stoppages related to COVID19.](http://fnpr.ru/n/241/19534.html) Stoppages are still wide spread, while the unlawful dismissals were mainly happening at the beginning of pandemia.

[However KTR received via its hotline over 3 thousand complaints about dismissals, redundancies and leaves without pay due to pandemia and the number will grow rapidly.](http://www.ktr.su/content/news/detail.php?ID=6872)

Special Federal additional payment was introduced in April for medical workers tackling COVID19 (80 thousand rubles (EUR1000) for doctors, 50 thousand rubles (EUR620) for paramedics, and 25 thousand rubles (EUR300) for nurses.
 However, only half of them received them in time. This required special attention of the President.

[Prior to that KTR affiliated medical workers’ union Deystvie launched a petition for these amounts to be actually paid and reach the medical workers throughout.](http://www.ktr.su/content/news/detail.php?ID=6865)

Insurance payments for COVID-affected medical workers were established.

In case of death of a medic from COVID-19, the relatives of the deceased will receive 2752452 rubles (EUR34000). If the health of a medical worker was harmed, temporarily became disabled, but this did not lead to permanent disability, he will be paid 68,811 rubles (EUR850).

If a medical worker has lost ability to work and is classified as disabled, then the amount of payment will depend on the disability group. Medics with a disability of group I will be paid 2064339 rubles (EUR25000), group II - 1376226 rubles (EUR 17000), group III - 688113 rubles (EUR8000).

Insurance payments will be made by the Social Insurance Fund of the Russian Federation.

[KTR has issued advice on the COVID-affected medical workers rights.](http://www.ktr.su/content/news/detail.php?ID=6867)

[FNPR submitted its proposal to the economy recovery action plan which is being developed by the government.](http://fnpr.ru/n/241/19627.html) The priority is to keep jobs, prevent bankruptcy of the strategic enterprises, provide adequate OHS measures, minimum wages should become a guaranteed minimum payments and not include stimulating benefits, decent pay for public service workers, etc.

On 28 of May Ministry of Labour submitted to Russian tri-partite commission a document on special regulations of labour relations during COVID19 pandemia, to be valid till the end of the year. While it regulates the stoppages related to pandemia and prescribes payments salaries, it also bears risks for workers, e.g. to be temporarily transferred to another type of job without his or her consent for the tree months (instead of the current one month).

Moldova:

The emergency was over on the 15th of May, however the situation is still grave.

CNSM info: Situation remains grave, many migrants returned to Moldova (over 500k people). At initial stage unions were part of the Medical commission. Before the emergency state was introduced were not ready for distant work. 30% of all COVID infected are medical workers. Unions draw attention to lack of protection and were criticized for being “non-patriotic”. Big budget deficit. As for emergency state and employment, initially 2/3 of salaries was paid as during stoppage, then some had to take unpaid vacation and then unions had to negotiate to simply keep the jobs. Sectoral union had to be flexible due to the risk of the enterprises to be bankrupt if salaries are kept. However, unions managed to keep labour code unchanged during these times, and fight off the attacks. Issued advice how it has to be applied. Joint letter with the employers to the Prime Minister, including the proper allocation of EU support to support economy and workers.

In Central Asia the emergency and quarantine measures are also easing up or lifted.

In Uzbekistan the Quarantine measures are being gradually lifted since April 26 (depends on the region). All businesses that started functioning (including commerce, car repair, gardening, construction shops, insurance agencies etc) have to abide to the strict rules of sanitary and epidemiological measures. As of 29th of May, Navoi region faced a rise in cases, the quarantine measures were strengthened and medical brigades to fight the outbreak.

In Kyrgyzstan the emergency state is still not cancelled, however starting from the 1st of June they restart the production, touristic resorts, audit companies etc – 95% of economy to be restarted, als since 8th of June internal flights will be allowed.

In the meantime some of Kyrgyz migrants are still stuck in Russia, despite the efforts to organize flights and other means of transportation. Also the problem of unemployment, including the need for jobs for the returning citizens is high on the agenda with the unions in the country.

In Kazakhstan, the quarantine is also eased up, economy is restarted including sports and cultural services, and tourism. Travelling between regions is restricted.

In the meantime a new law on meetings was adopted in Kazakhstan, heavily criticized by civil society. The meetings cannot be organized by foreign or unregistered organisations, can be held only in the special places defined by authorities. The municipality can decline the application based on 13 grounds.