Social protection responses to the COVID-19 crisis around the world

Key points

This note summarizes the results of the Social Protection Monitor that tracks announcements of social protection measures responding to the possible impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

We will update this note as new data and information become available in this rapidly evolving situation.

Disclaimer: Owing to the exceptional circumstances generated by this global health pandemic, there has been intense activity in terms of the breadth of national responses and therefore not all information contained in this document could be fully confirmed with reference to official legislation or legal bulletins, nor all measures reflected.

Consult our website for regular updates from the world of work response to the COVID-19 crisis.

ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus
The ILO Social Protection Monitor

Between 1 February and the 28 October 2020, 208 countries and territories announced at least 1,518 social protection measures in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The overall response rate in the world is 92.4 per cent (of out 222 countries and territories).

Europe and Central Asia is the region with the highest number of responses when measured as a share of the region’s countries; 98.3 per cent of the region’s countries have announced measures, followed by Americas (91.8 per cent), Arab States (91.7 per cent), Africa (90.9 per cent), and Asia and the Pacific (87.0 per cent).

China announced its first set of social protection responses on 12 February and the number of countries and territories that announced responses quickly jumped from 17 in February, to 111 in March, and to 209 as of August 11th.

Most measures entail the introduction of new programmes or benefits (55.0 per cent), followed by social protection programme adjustments (21.3 per cent), social spending adjustments (12.1 per cent) or improvements in administration (8.2 per cent). Recently, some new measures or benefits are receiving adjustments (3.4 per cent), such as extention of their duration.

Overall, 75.8 per cent of all measures are of non-contributory nature, especially introduction of new programmes and benefits (90.6 per cent), while contributory nature of measures is observed in programme adjustment (34.4 per cent) and spending (32.9 per cent). It is also worth to note that 81.7 per cent of countries and territories in Europe and Central Asia could rely on measures of contributory nature for COVID-19 responses, in contrast to a 56.9 per cent globally or 32.7 per cent in Africa.

Click here to access the interactive data visualization dashboard on COVID-19 responses.
In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the measures announced cover all functions of social protection. Around 16.2 per cent of the responses in the period are related to special social allowances/grants, followed by measures addressing income/job protection (14.0 per cent), several social protection functions (11.7 per cent), health (11.0 per cent), and unemployment protection (10.6 per cent).

Measures addressing housing and basic services (9.0 per cent) and the allocation of food (8.4 per cent) have been also widely adopted. These are followed by the provision of benefits for children and families (7.9 per cent), as well as adjustments in pensions (5.6 per cent), sickness benefits (3.8 per cent), access to education (0.7 per cent), maternity or parental benefits (0.4 per cent) and employment injury benefits (0.2 per cent).

Among the top 10 most frequent measures, a total of 231 aim to introduce benefits specifically for workers and/or their dependents, while 215 measures introduced benefits for the poor and vulnerable population groups.

ILO’s Social Protection Monitor is based on a systematic analysis of media/news published online. The Monitor tracks announcements of social protection measures, defined as any policy decision that affects the functioning of a social protection system, from minor parametric adjustments to major developments and reforms, as well as social subsidies. While the Monitor provides the most comprehensive list of announced social protection measures and a snapshot of current global trends, it does not replace the thorough analysis provided by the ILO’s Social Security Inquiry and the World Social Protection Report.


ILO Social Protection Department
- Contact: socopro@ilo.org
- ILO website: www.ilo.org
- Social Protection Platform: www.social-protection.org

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- COVID-19 and the world of work
- Social Protection Response to the COVID-19