

ELFAC PAPERS

European Large Families Confederation

Number 4 - November 2020

Measures to support families during Covid-19



Photo by freepik.com

By Vitória Salvado, Studies Department of Portuguese Large Families Association (APFN)

A research made by Portuguese Large Families Association (APFN) on measure set to support large families in Europe during the pandemic has confirmed that few, if any, of the policies were addressed to large families.

The measures taken have not proved effective in solving the problems of families with children, particularly those with younger and with more children.

The burden of managing normality (work, school, health, nutrition, entertainment...) in critical conditions, and the necessity to balance work and family, fell completely in families and the relief provided was not effective.

All the same, families have shown resilience and, even in fatigue and difficulties, have managed to ensure the continuation of the system.

The [full study](#) has been published on the website of the European Large Families Confederation.

Measures addressed for families

To mitigate the effects of the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Governments created some measures addressed for families. With the collaboration of several associations of large families adhering to European Large Families Confederation (ELFAC) Portuguese Large Families' Association could identify and categorized the measures adopted in each country^[1] (cf. Graphic 1).

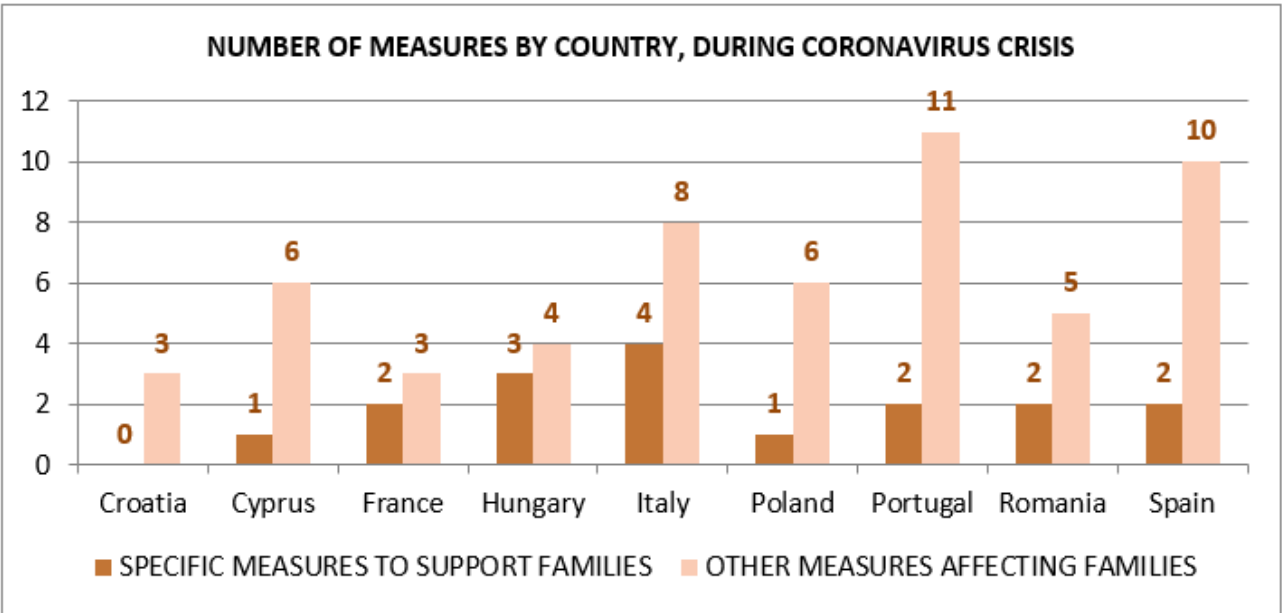
The most common measures adopted by the countries analysed were wage compensation, parental leave (adjustments), and measures related to loans. Measures related to sick leave (adjustments), to rents, suspension of evictions, and price controls were also frequent among these nine countries (cf. Graphic 2).

The measure implemented by all countries is related to wage compensation for all workers who have seen their jobs affected by the COVID-19 crisis. This measure safeguarded some income (covered by Government partially or totally), and protect jobs (in some countries, it was expressly forbidden to dismiss people) to all workers whose companies were affected by this COVID-19.

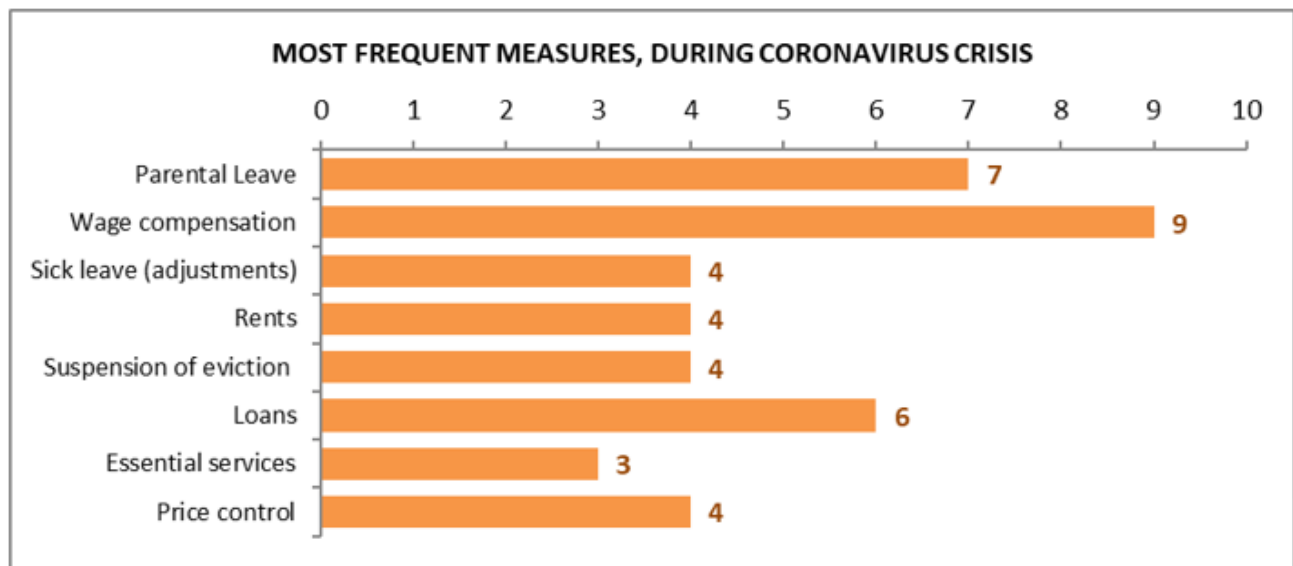
A common measure implemented was the leave to take care of children at home once the schools had to close due to Government or health authorities' decisions. This measure, under different circumstances, was adopted by seven out of the nine countries analysed. This measure was essential to enable parents to find at least one solution for their children, but this solution is not always possible, especially if you could work from home.

Other different measures were taken in order to relieve the expenditure of individuals and to increase individuals' liquidity: related to loans, related to rents, and related to essential services. Some important measures were specifically

A research made by Portuguese Large Families Association (APFN) on measure set to support large families in Europe during the pandemic has confirmed that few, if any, of the policies were addressed to large families.



Graphic 1



Graphic 2

created and addressed to support families in need dealing with the crisis effects.

Measures to conciliate work and family

In terms of conciliating work and family, parents had two measures: A. Working from home (with the kids) and B. Parental leave.

A. Working from home (with kids):

Working remotely, whenever possible, was the primary measure recommended and adopted all over the world. It was an essential measure to stop the spread of COVID-19, and many other positive things emerged from this measure (such as IT improvements, lower pollution levels, new working practices). But for some families working from home was very challenging; for some others, it was simply unsustainable when nurseries, schools, and daycare centers closed. Two main factors have not been considered in most measures.

Degree of dependency of dependents. Since dependents have different degrees of dependence, it is not adequate to expect the same work productivity from a caregiver with a two year old child (with a very high degree of dependency) and a caregiver with a child of ten years old (with a lower degree of dependency).

Family's dimension: In general, the more dependents (ascendants and/or descendants), the more dedication of the caregivers is needed. And it is not adequate to expect the same work productivity from a parent with one dependent than a parent with three or more dependents.

B. Parental Leave: Parents, during the lockdown, could stop working to take care of their children (usually specifying the age limit). This measure envisages an allowance in some

countries, but only under some circumstances, e.g., generally not applicable to the ones in teleworking. Solutions to ensure the care of children were created only to the professionals of essential services.

The problem happens whenever parents are forced to work from home and are forced to take care of their dependents (due to closure of schools and care centres) at the same time, and they have no choice in

terms of conciliating work and family. If they are not capable of managing work duties with the care of (numerous) dependent(s), what should they do? **Parental leave without income, when possible, is, most of the time, not viable for the household budget. So, the most affected families were the families with more dependents and/or families with dependents with a higher degree of dependency.**

The problem happens whenever parents are forced to work from home and are forced to take care of their dependents (due to closure of schools and care centres) at the same time, and they have no choice in terms of conciliating work and family

Main conclusions:

We could see that the measures implemented by Governments are not sufficient to guarantee the adequate conditions to families with kids, and to large families, to overcome the challenges imposed by COVID-19. For most Governments, a family with one child was treated the same way as a family with three, five or more children.

Under exceptional circumstances, as the COVID-19 crisis is, it is essential to consider different contexts in which measures are applied and consider them whenever measures are defined. Measures could have been much fairer if they had contemplated the degree of dependency of dependents (age of children, existence or not of disabilities, ...) and the dimension of the family (including ascendants and descendants). Working hours' flexibility should apply to all workers with dependents.

Additionally, extraordinary combinations of working hours with the maintenance of income (supported by companies and Government) should have been possible depending on the family structure, during the lockdown.



(1) Croatia, Cyprus, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain.



Photo by freepik.com