

## *Coronavirus is threatening Slovakia and the social state*

The beginning of 2020 brought a political campaign with its peak at the end of February. Due to the powerful marketing of liberals and populists who were defaming social advantages and the achievements of social democracy that have been accomplished in the last decade, Covid-19 was making its way to our lives and society without the majority noticing it, including the experts. Nobody expected what was ahead of us. The political party SMER – SD has always been pointing out the fact that only strong, functional and most of all, social state is able to help its citizens to overcome the time of crisis. As in 2008 when there was an economic crisis, the state managed to overcome it also because of the activity of social democrats. The same scenario could have happened with coronavirus. However, the virus was not a subject everybody was talking about at the beginning of the year, the issue started to be discussed in March, after the elections.

The populists and liberals with other new political faces without a strong sense for hierarchy of values and the international anchoring, got the majority of votes, unfortunately, in a bad time. The soon ex-prime minister to be Peter Pellegrini, who is the Vice- President of the party, took action at the very beginning of the year. He initiated the meeting of members of crisis team took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January to react immediately on the growing corona virus crisis. The goal of this meeting was to find out what was the current situation like in Europe and Slovakia itself in terms of being able to protect its citizens against this virus. The recommendation to avoid local markets where live animals are being sold and the contact with them was already valid in January. People were supposed to take the hygiene rules seriously, on a personal level and also on the level of food and manipulation with it. Passengers were asked to check their health, the temperature, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, in the 14<sup>th</sup> day period, starting from the day they returned from the areas that has been affected by the virus. If any of the symptoms appeared they were obliged to find the medical help. The government which was led by social democracy developed several preparations in order to overcome this pandemic. The first patient positive for covid-19 was announced on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, six days after the elections. New prime minister had an obligation to form a new government on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. By then SMER-SD had taken fundamental measures. The new government started to copy the decisions of the last government without responding promptly to the new issues that had started to occur, to prepare plans with particular solutions how to face and overcome not only the serious health threat, but also the employment problems and how to maintain the stability of the economy.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March a state of emergency was announced and since March 13<sup>th</sup> aquaparks and ski resorts have been closed along with the international transport. The government declared the state of emergency on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March for health service and they took new measures: all shops were closed for 14 days, restaurants included, except the groceries, pharmacies, banks and telecommunication operators. Hospitals had to postpone all surgeries. Since Monday, the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, all schools institutions have been closed as were the associations for leisure activities.

The new government in which the social-democratic prime minister had been replaced with a populist, did not change the measures and that resulted in the number of infected patients of 178, between the 6<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of March. In addition to that, by the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, the number of infected patients raised from 178 to 1243 new ones. After three days of the new government being in charge, a new law aimed to monitor citizens via mobile data, which was rejected by SMER - SD. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, social democrats asked the liberal president to submit a proposal on the Constitutional Court to evaluate this law if it is in order with the Constitution

of Slovak republic or not, since the president has already submitted a complaint about the 13<sup>th</sup> retirement pension being implemented. We provided arguments that if she is against the retirement pensions, she should be concerned with the rights of the citizens. The questionable provision of the populist liberal government which allowed the employer to order the employee to work 400 working hours more in this year (it is more than it is stated in the Labour Code) since the beginning of the obstacles prohibiting the employee to work was deleted from the Labour Code on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April. This happened right after the unionists and social democrats expressed their criticism.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of April SMER - SD deputies submitted a proposal on the Constitutional Court to start action due to the law allowing the government to monitor the citizens' mobile data. Even the European commission proved us right when they warned the governments to be aware of oppressing the basic rights of freedom. Our fight to defend the social state has not ended. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March the extraordinary meeting of the parliamentary social committee was held. We stated that the social service providers have to know clearly what are the particular solutions how the government is planning to help them. They were missing the safety equipment to prevent the spreading of the disease. We also stated that the government helps sketchily to the most endangered people. Recently, Robert Fico, the Chairman of SMER - SD, defined the current situation on the Official Work Holiday day: 'The government is not able to react on the huge economic crisis and it is even speaking about the encumber of the Slovak republic on 60%. The did not spend any money and that is why we can say that all of the negatives we see such as the growth of the unemployed people, are the responsibilities of the current right-winged government.' This unfortunate story of a pandemic that is drastically influencing our lives has yet not met its end. The same applies for the government which does not know what to next. Social democracy in the fight for the social state has not stopped and with its responsible oppositional politics is trying to show the reflection in mirror to the right winged liberal mixture whose only goal was to defeat SMER - SD.

Robert Fico  
The Chairman of SMER-SD