



BULGARIAN SOCIALIST PARTY

National Council

Sofia, 15th of May 2020

Dear comrades, dear friends,

We are faced today with an unprecedented crisis – a pandemic, which has brought to the whole world challenges unseen before. COVID-19 has shaken our whole lives. Facing a new test are not only our healthcare systems, but also our economies, social fields, politics and even our way of living.

It is still our primary and most important task to protect the lives and health of our citizens. As politicians we must be reasonable and forward-looking, active and uncompromising in our efforts to restore our healthcare systems, revitalize the economy, protect employment and secure a decent existence to our citizens, who were affected by the crisis as quickly as possible. COVID-19 has made us reevaluate the model of our health, social and educational systems.

Today, even though the state of emergency in Bulgaria, which was introduced on the 13th of March, has been lifted, in front of the general public a number of issues remain open and unresolved. The government hasn't been able to present a clear plan for what is going to happen from here on. Instead, we have a simple suggestion to remove the word "state of emergency", but for the measures to continue. To this day we do not have a clear concept for an exit strategy from the current crisis. The actions regarding the reopening of the economic activity are short-sighted and ill-conceived without there ever being any concept for future steps, as well as the support, which the state has to provide for those most affected by the crisis.

Thus far, we still do not have a report from the government on the impact of the measures taken so far. There is no analysis on how they impact the crisis management, the saving of lives, the containment of the disease. There are no accounts regarding the current condition of the healthcare system, the model for the functioning of the hospitals in Bulgaria, as well as the payment, creation and the development of staff in the health system.

We, the Bulgarian Socialist Party, call for an analysis on what impact have the current measures had in an economic, social and financial aspect. What are the economic downturns, what revenues are projected for the budget? We receive divergent reports about the financial situation of the country, about what really happens to the budgetary surplus. There is no transparency on how the state funds are being allocated to overcome the crisis. The government has adopted a budget update with the possibility to access credit up to 10 billion Levs (5.5 billion USD), without giving an explanation on it

actually necessary and what for.

This analysis is needed today when we adopt a plan for our future steps. It has to be a basis for future decision-making.

We, at the BSP, have discussed and tabled in Parliament a plan for exiting the crisis. The measures, proposed by us, are concentrated in three main areas: measures, oriented towards those who were most affected by this crisis. Secondly, state support for those sectors of the economy which are able to generate GDP growth and develop the economy. And third – measures, aimed at increasing consumption, as an essential pillar for economic growth.

We believe that while making decisions about the future, we must accurately take into account the social aspect of the crisis, as the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented shock on the labor market. Nearly 150 thousand people have turned out in front the labor offices, due to the fact that they have been dismissed from their jobs because of the state of emergency. That is why we have submitted a proposal for the state to provide the citizens who lost their jobs and were not covered by the labor offices or are on unpaid leave in order to look after their children, with a minimum salary, including their social security benefits. Ensuring a minimal income for the people affected by the crisis is an urgent measure and is a show of solidarity and support.

Before our colleagues and before the Bulgarian people we raised another important matter regarding the public spending and transparency. BSP has tabled a proposition about creating a Temporary Committee composed of members from all parliamentary groups whose task is to establish how the funds allocated for the management of the crisis, as well as its consequences, are being spent. This committee is to question ministers at its hearings and give reports, summarise all the information and make it public. We have proposed this committee to be headed by the opposition, as is the practice around the democratic world.

Special attention must also be paid to the small and medium-sized enterprises and the role of the state in supporting the economy through tax reductions, as well as direct support, aimed at preserving jobs and so on. Unfortunately, in Bulgaria this support is expressed mainly by providing bank loans which have to be repaid by the people who are faced with uncertainty about their future. This takes place while in other parts of Europe the governments provide grant financial assistance on top of other measures.

Our common goal should be aimed at building a better, secure and fair future for our societies. This crisis has shown in a dramatic way that when we are united we can face the dynamic challenges of today`s world. The Bulgarian Socialist Party joined the calls from left parties all around the world for solidarity, unity and equal treatment in overcoming this crisis. We will continue to work for the assertion of these principles. We rely on your solidarity and support in this extraordinary situation!

Best regards,

KORNELIA NINOVA
CHAIRWOMAN