



The Federation of Pensioners' Associations of Slovenia - ZDUS

Ljubljana, 14 June, 2020

SLOVENIA AND ZDUS IN THE CORONA CRISIS AND THE COVID 19 EPIDEMIC

1. How we acted

I would like to provide brief information on our efforts in the period of corona crisis and limited operating environment. And in addition a few thoughts on the present uncertain situation where restrictive measures are largely lifted, but the possibilities for action are narrowed.

From 10. 3. In 2020, the management of ZDUS formulated recommendations for action during the epidemic, which were updated each time according to the development of the situation of infection and morbidity with Covid 19 in Slovenia. The instructions and recommendations were harmonized with the instructions of the National Institute of Public Health and adapted to our situation, position and activities of our membership - our associations and regional associations. We forwarded them to all of them, to the working team at the headquarters of the association and published them on the ZDUS website. We stopped the implementation of membership assemblies, planned training and all meetings with the physical presence of stakeholders. We have introduced various forms of electronic communications and work from home and virtual meetings. Some of our colleagues, who administratively and professionally support the operation of the association, went on hold - after the measures taken by the government and the implementation possibilities at the Employment Service of Slovenia.

In our instructions and measures, we connected with a number of institutions: The National Institute of Public Health, the competent ministries, bodies at the municipal level, especially mayors and Civil Protection units, charitable organizations such as Charity and the Red Cross, and other voluntary organizations. We provided our membership with information of telephone and electronic connections with these institutions and with health care institutions at the national and regional level.

In practical approaches, the most important and also effective actions were at the local level, where we implement the program "Seniors help Seniors", which we did not stop throughout the epidemic, but adapted the operation. In this program, which also received the prestigious recognition of the European Parliament "Citizen of Europe 2017" in 2017, under the normal circumstances, by 3.500 volunteers, we cover 65% of persons over the age of 69, living at home. Even in epidemic conditions we were working intensively in assisting these older people. We have provided information on assistance needed to all above mentioned local authorities and institutions, so that younger volunteers could help people at home. Our volunteers were continuing their social connection - by electronic media, telephone, working at home and even personally realized some types of assistance on distance despite the fact that they themselves are vulnerable group.

As the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and professional institutions reacted quickly to the occurrence of infections, because the inhabitants were disciplined and complied with



the prescribed safety measures and restrictions, Slovenia had a relatively mild form of epidemic. The number of deaths (109 together) per 100 population is below the EU average. High above this average, however, was mortality in old people's homes - as many as 80% of all cases with a tragic outcome.

Currently, lively activities are underway to provide conditions that would prevent such events in nursing homes in the event of a possible recurrence of viral infections in the autumn. ZDUS is also involved in this process.

Now the restrictions on movement and unification by the state have been largely lifted. We continue the work in the usual forms. We still have to follow the safety recommendations of the medical profession - protective masks, washing and disinfecting hands...

A serious concern of our union, however, is now the question of how to streamline operations, how to spend a year with sharply reduced revenues. These are the result of the loss of two months of work and thus the loss of income of those few entities that co-finance our programs and our activities. The matter is even more serious in the expectation that the situation of the economy will deteriorate in the second half of the year.

2. Some details from the Report of "Seniors help Seniors" program*

The average age of our volunteers is 70, and many are over eighty! We run a program that is special among social welfare programs, as it is based on the mission of mutual assistance for older volunteers over the age of 69 living at home.

What is special about our volunteers is finding older users at their home, with the aim of identifying the quality of life of the elderly in a particular environment and their need for help.

The purpose of the program is to help older people stay in the home environment for as long as possible with organized help. The decision to enter or refuse entry into the program depends on each individual, of course, while respecting his or her dignity. The program is run by 276 retirement societies with 3500 volunteers. The program includes just over 193,000 users, or 65% of people over 69. In 2019, 86% of those visited received one of the 76,000 assistance provided.

When the pandemic was announced, concern for their safety dictated that we should take care not only of their safety but also of their care and assistance.

Due to the knowledge of the needs of the elderly, we immediately organized and agreed that the program coordinators should prepare data on users who live alone, and respectively, they will need help. We have liaised with Civil Protection staffs in 136 municipalities. (Almost two thirds of municipalities in Slovenia.) The delivery of humanitarian packages, food, medicines and other necessary assistance was taken over by younger volunteers. Our senior volunteers, however, keep them informed of those who still need help.



Older people enrolled in the program receive assistance or one or more types of services. They most need the delivery of prepared food, the delivery of groceries, assistance with housework, assistance with transportation, monitoring of walks and maintaining telephone contacts. We keep up to date with suggestions and initiatives on how to effectively ease the enclosure distress between four walls. We have shifted our activities from physical visits to contacts with older users over the phone. This is how volunteers called our users several times a week, who have previously personally visited and built trust with them, sometimes even friendships! These conversations are aimed at feeling connected, overcoming loneliness, anxiety, as well as fear, which is increasingly instilled in the psyche of individuals. Assistance needs also include the delivery of humanitarian packages. 86% of all forms of assistance and services were provided or organized by the volunteers of retirement societies involved in the program.

Many co-ordinators and volunteers have started to produce protective masks. Initially for its own use, but soon for users and locals alike.

We received many thanks from the Civil Protection staffs as well as the mayors for their help and valuable information. Some of our coordinators are now involved in the Civil Protection municipal staffs.

Jožica Puhar, Vice President of ZDUS

* The Seniors for Seniors program - also works in Quarantine, 9.4.2020, ZDUS Reports, Rožca Šonc, program manager