

MADS SAMSING

During the Covid-19 pandemic the importance and high value of well-functioning public services has once again been made very clear.

Municipalities and regions are at the forefront of the crisis and at the centre of the response to the crisis as many of the essential services are provided by municipalities and regions.

Whether in enforcing lockdowns, continuing to provide essential public services including healthcare and support for the most vulnerable, or in handling the gradual relaxation of containment measures that we are starting to see now.

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During the Covid-19 crisis, occupational health and safety has been under a huge pressure, there have been a lack of personal protective equipment and labour inspection has been non-existing or on a bare minimum.

Covid-19 is still among us and will be so for a long time. Therefore, it is essential that the re-opening is done in a slow and controlled manner, ensuring minimisation of risks to citizens and workers.

During the re-opening, there must be a strong focus on occupational health and safety.

Personal protective equipment must be ensured in a full and prompt fashion, and access to public institutions and workplaces must be organised in a way that contains the spread of the virus.

The best way to deal with the re-opening is through social dialogue, information and consultation and agreements at all levels including workplace social dialogue.

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For many years, local and regional government have been operating in a very difficult economic and financial context. Structural reforms and austerity policies carried out in the years after the financial

crisis have had a negative impact on the quality of public services. In some countries local and regional government was more heavily affected by cuts than the public sector as a whole and austerity measures have had a particularly negative impact on women.

The reforms carried out in the years after the financial crisis have also meant a serious setback for social dialogue in many countries, collective bargaining coverage is reduced, and social protection has been weakened.

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The Covid-19 pandemic is a health crisis. However, the tough but needed measures to contain the virus have led to an economic crisis and without the appropriate measures we risk exacerbating the emerging social crisis.

As I mentioned in the beginning, the importance of well-functioning public services has once again been made very clear during the Covid-19 crisis. Quality public services are just as important when it comes to recover from the health crisis and to avoid a social crisis.

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Although, we do have different interests in many case, we do have a shared interest in defending and promoting quality public services. As majors and city councils and as workers and citizen. And as social partners in local and regional government.

The sectoral social partners at the European level are finalising a joint statement where we strongly warn against repeating structural reforms and austerity measures that was carried out in the years after the financial crisis.

Instead, allocation of economic resources to municipalities and regions are needed to further develop sustainable, inclusive, socially just and well-funded public services that respond to the needs of citizens, workers, communities and businesses.

Municipalities and regions are suffering great economic losses due to the Covid-19 pandemic, without a consistent allocation of economic resources, there is a risk of being unable to continue to provide quality services to their communities.

Allocation of economic resources to municipalities and regions will also have a positive impact on job retention and job creation.

Municipalities and regions are large employers and of great importance to the local economy and to the local community, and the major part of public procurement of goods and services is carried out at local level. Therefore, we also have the chance to impact the quality of jobs in private businesses through socially responsible public procurement.

We should make use of this possibility to promote the ILO decent work agenda that includes job creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue, with gender equality as a crosscutting objective. In the public sector as well as in the private sector.

We must strengthen quality public services, social dialogue in all its forms including collective bargaining and social protection to recover from the health crisis, the following economic crisis and to avoid a social crisis.

Thank you for your attention.