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Statement submitted by the Coordinadora Europea de Familias Numerosas (ELFAC), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

LARGE FAMILIES AND COVID-19

Large families' special needs and characteristics should be taken into account in their specificity: the number of children in a household should not be a matter of discrimination

The crisis caused by Covid-19 and the lockdowns had a very strong impacts on people. The impacts on families, in particular large families, was investigated through the survey "*Impact of the Pandemic on Family Life Across Cultures*" by The Covid-19 Family Life Study, in which our organization was one of the partners (<https://www.covidfamilystudy.org/>). It showed that children were particularly effected by the restrictions of the lockdowns, the difficulties to cope with digitalisation of education and the fear for the situation. All studies show that children were highly effected during the lockdowns, suffering of higher degrees of stress.

The report produced by the Portuguese Large Families Association and ELFAC with the title "*Measure to support families during Covid19*" proved that no specific measure for large families was taken by European Countries (<https://www.elfac.org/report-measures-to-support-families-during-covid-19/>).

Women mental health has been put under exceptional stress, requiring to be at once mothers, school teachers, carers, and workers 24/24. In problematic family's violence has increased. Families with works that were affected by the Pandemic fell into poverty and children poverty has increased in many countries. 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.

In particular, under exceptional circumstances, as the COVID-19 crisis is, it is essential to consider different contexts in which measures are applied. 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).

Large families experienced problems in acquiring the digital devices needed for distant education and remote working, broad band was often insufficient for the use of the whole family. The lockdown demonstrated the inequity of housing spaces in many urban settlements, where large houses are too expensive, gardens and balcony are often a real luxury. Urban nature (parks, playgrounds, bike and footpath) became most desirable for all.

The lesson learnt

The experience of the Pandemic has proved to be a resilience test for families all over Europe and the world. Families have gained a new role in society, that recognizes their strength and importance.

What we learned from the time of the crisis is that there are several issues that should be taken into account to facilitate life to families and in particular to larger households. Therefore, we propose:

- To recognize the specificity of large families, taking into account the number of dependants and the grade of dependency when establishing any kind of

measures addressed to families. This way measure will be more effective for the most vulnerable families, those with many small children, disabled children, elderly, according to Sustainable Development Goal n. 1,10.

- To facilitate the access to digital devices and broad bands, according to Sustainable Development Goal n. 4, 8, 10.
- To take care of the wellbeing and of the psychological impact of measures particularly on children and women, according to Sustainable Development Goal n.3
- To enhance domiciliary public care services and parenting education in order to prevent mental diseases, domestic violence and family breakups, according to Sustainable Development Goal n.3, 5, 10
- To help building houses and cities more apt to children's and families' needs, more liveable and closer to nature, for all, according to Sustainable Development Goal n.3, 10, 11, 15.

Conclusions

During the Pandemic family has proven to be the essential unit of society. It has been put under a severe stress, but the lesson learnt should help society to really “build back better”: a better, more welcoming and greener environment for all, in particular for families with small children and/or elderly people. Leaving no one behind.
