



25 million Euro for Ghent's Relaunch Plan to overcome the corona crisis

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The City of Ghent mobilizes 25 million euro to overcome the corona crisis. The local economy, the most vulnerable people in Ghent and civil society have been hit hard. A 'Relaunch Taskforce' has determined on which priorities to focus in the short and long term.

A package of measures to deal with the impact of the corona crisis in the short term focuses on three main areas: support and shelter, economy and work and civil society. A budget of 15 million euro has been allocated to respond to the most urgent needs.

Support and shelter For the most vulnerable

The number of Ghent residents who are unable to make ends meet is increasing. The City of Ghent is therefore accelerating its work on a new system of additional financial aid, crisis support for the most vulnerable families and rent allowances.

Since 2015, the city has provided additional financial support to supplement a living wage in order to guarantee a decent income. The amount depends on the personal situation, and varies between 100 and 130 euros per month. The measure is now being extended to all residents of Ghent, regardless of their status. The additional financial aid is granted after a social and financial investigation.

In addition, the City of Ghent provides crisis support for the most vulnerable families who are already dependent on additional financial aid today. They are unable to bear the extra expenses that the health crisis entails, and are thus at risk of greater

financial difficulties. The City of Ghent also provides extra support for tenants who have difficulties paying their rent; the Public Centre for Social Welfare can do an advanced payment.

The City of Ghent plans extra funding for 21 initiatives that provide shelter and food for the homeless. All efforts are coordinated to ensure that initiatives run safely and that as many people in need as possible can be helped.

For children and youngsters

It is still unclear when the schools will open again. Whenever this happens, lots of children, and especially those with special needs, will have a hard time to catch up and adjust. A budget has been reserved so that all schools will get concrete assistance during the remaining part of the school year, but also during the summer holidays in preparation for the next school year.

During the current Easter holidays the city is also providing and coordinating childcare for 600 children at over 51 locations.

Tax package for local businesses

In addition to the Flemish and federal measures, the city provides an extra tax package to support the severely affected companies in Ghent. Corporate tax (and this includes for example the terrace tax, the tourist city tax or the taxes on business establishment) is waived for as long as the federal corona measures apply. With this, the city council wants to support small and larger companies in order to try to prevent cash flow problems.

The city will also look at how it can help the self-employed and small businesses that rent a building from the city. We also call on private landlords to take the same initiative.

An offensive approach on work

The City of Ghent, the social partners and VDAB (Public Employment Service of Flanders) are working together to take action in the short term, complementary to what is happening at the Flemish and federal level. Additional resources are provided.

The city council has opted for an offensive approach. People from Ghent who have lost their job because of the crisis are still close to the labour market and can therefore be used again quickly once the economy recovers. These people will be guided to a good job as quickly as possible and will get intensive tailor-made guidance.

Breathing space for civil society

All associations and organizations that are housed in a building of the City of Ghent receive a remission of rent for every month that the federal corona measures apply. This includes sports and youth associations, cultural organisations, social organisations, and associations of ethnic-cultural minorities.

The City of Ghent is pragmatic about subsidies that have already been allocated and will, in consultation with the associations, see which things can be picked up at a later time or where a recalibration of the objectives is appropriate. The city council wants to be a partner in this. Proven costs for cancelled events will not be recovered.

The city organisation

It is clear that the corona crisis also has a huge impact on our own city organisation and administration. For example due to the forced but necessary closure, museums and libraries of the City of Ghent are losing crucial incomes. Even after the closing period, visitors are not immediately expected to compensate for the loss. The City of Ghent therefore provides the necessary financial breathing space to help them.

The city also decided to suspend parking control. Due to the corona crisis LEZ (Low Emission Zone) fines are temporarily not issued. Of course this has a financial impact, but the measures were necessary to unburden the citizens, social workers and entrepreneurs in times of corona.

Boost Ghent

In addition to all the actions in the short term, the Taskforce is also developing a series of actions to revive Ghent in the longer term. The city council has allocated 10 million euros for this. Together with the affected actors and sectors, we will examine how the resources are best used and how they relate to Flemish and federal governments' support measures.

For example, the tourism sector will receive a substantial financial injection. Additional resources will also be needed for the cultural sector, associations and others. It will only be after the federal measures have been phased out that the work really begins.

More info?

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