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Shih-Jiunn Shi
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Taiwan's Social Policy Response to Covid-19: Protecting Workers, Reviving the Economy



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TAIWAN'S SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSE TO COVID-19: PROTECTING WORKERS, REVIVING THE ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

Taiwan has benefited from her timely response to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, which has limited the extent of economic and social damage the virus could have inflicted. Unlike many countries, economic activities and social lives in Taiwan have remained above water; and have shown signs of rebounding in recent months. Past experiences with public health crises such as SARS have offered valuable lessons for the government to cope with similar pandemic threats. Effective countermeasures have created favourable circumstances for the government to deploy social policy as a safety net. Almost all the major responses are of a temporary nature, and a programmatic extension of the existing social security institutions (e.g., social assistance and specific in-cash benefits targeted at specific occupational or population groups). In addition, the government granted financial support to those enterprises in difficulties to disincentivize them from dismissing their employees. All these measures have largely offset the adverse consequences of the pandemic crisis. Against this backdrop, Taiwan should be amongst those countries to recover first from the pandemic shock.

INTRODUCTION

On 31 December 2019, the Taiwanese government obtained information from an online forum about several suspicious pneumonia cases in Wuhan, Mainland China (hereafter China). This alerted the responsible health officials, owing to the traumatic experience of the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome; also originating from China) epidemic that Taiwan had gone through in 2003, which cost 73 lives (Wong, 2020; Taiwan Centres for Disease Control, 2020a).¹ In addition, China and Taiwan are geographically close-by with a large number of travellers crossing the borders. According to government statistics, the average daily number of visitors from China was about 7,436 in 2019 (Ministry of Transportation and Communications, 2020). Moreover, it was expected that a mass flow of Taiwanese citizens who had been working or studying in China would return home in January on occasion of the presidential election on 11 January and the Lunar New Year on 25 January, 2020. Upon learning about the Wuhan cases, the Taiwanese government responded with immediate measures including on-board screening of flight passengers from Wuhan and the setting up of an epidemic task force to observe and track the pneumonia outbreak in China. On 20 January, the day before the first case was confirmed, Taiwan established a Level 3 Central Epidemic Command Centre (CECC) to co-ordinate interdepartmental collaboration and public resources. The CECC was scaled up to Level 2 three days later and further to Level 1 (the highest echelon for very serious epidemic situations) on 27 February (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2020a).

Taiwan's prompt reaction stood in stark contrast to the advice of the World Health Organization (WHO) at that time which asked the member states to not close borders or limit international travel. Taiwan has been unable to join the WHO for decades, owing to China's blockade. Interestingly, this diplomatic isolation offered

1 37 citizens died due to SARS and the remaining 36 due to SARS-related symptoms.

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Taiwan a unique position to ignore the WHO's misleading information and to follow the expertise of domestic public health professionals. In terms of pandemic containment, the swift response and the prevention strategies adopted in Taiwan have proven very effective so far. As of 16 December 2020, Taiwan has recorded 742 cases and 7 deaths (Taiwan Centres for Disease Control, 2020b).² Judging by the fact that Taiwan is geographically close to China and cross-border travels between the two sides are frequent, this is an unusual outcome. The well-established public healthcare system in Taiwan serves as a key foundation, in terms of not only its capacity to provide public health services and containment measures, but also its ability to build a robust database for big data analysis to capture local pandemic development. In addition, the development of accessible information technology as well as transparent and timely communication mechanism are the essential factors for safeguarding the health of local communities at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic continues to rage worldwide (cf. Lin et al., 2020; Wang, Ng, & Brook, 2020; Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2020b).

The current state of the pandemic spread remains ominous worldwide. The virus threat and the associated containment measures have constrained socioeconomic activities substantially, plunging the global economy to the brink of recession. As shown in Table 1, the average GDP growth rate of OECD countries declined to minus 1.87% in the first quarter of 2020 and shrank further to minus 10.55% in the following quarter. Unlike the major economies that are struggling to keep head above water, social activities in Taiwanese society remain largely unfettered, and the economic performance steady (Table 1 and Figure 1). But, to be sure, Taiwan's economy and social activities have not escaped unscathed. Especially sectors such as airlines, travel, and gastronomy have been hit the hardest. The cases of unpaid leave or even lay-offs reported by enterprises have been surging over the last few months, showing the negative economic consequences of the pandemic crisis.

The Taiwanese welfare state is characterized by three institutional pillars of social protection.³ The first and foremost is the social insurance programmes covering all major social risks such as old age, illness, unemployment, and work injury. These programmes are differentiated according to major occupations such as civil servants and public school teachers, ordinary workers, farmers, as well as those inactive in the labour market (unemployed, housewives, etc.). The second pillar features social assistance that functions as the final safety net to alleviate the livelihood hardship of poor households. Finally, various social benefits and social service programmes target the needs of specific population groups (persons with disabilities, families with children, etc.). In the context of the East Asian region, Taiwan ranks as one of the most developed welfare states, peered by South Korea (Kwon, 2005; Peng and Wong, 2008). The solid institutional foundation of the welfare state offers a reliable buffer against the pandemic shock.

TAIWAN'S SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSE

The Taiwanese government laid out several emergency plans for social policy early on. Already on 20 February, the government proposed the Special Act for Prevention, Relief and Revitalization Measures for Severe Pneumonia with Novel Pathogens (嚴重特殊傳染性肺炎防治及紓困振興特別條例) with a special budget of TWD 60 billion to initiate a series of containment measures and social policy programmes.⁴ Amid the global situation that has brought economic activities to a halt, particularly manufacturing, tourism and international trade services as well as the convention and exhibition industries, the government offered related relief programmes to support the financial burden and livelihood of both owners and employees of affected enterprise. In addition, the government introduced a one-off payment scheme – the Triple Stimulus Vouchers (振興三倍券), in an attempt to stimulate local consumption and economic vibrancy. The Special Act was soon passed in the Legislature on 25 February. Since the global circumstances remained uncertain, on 23 April and 23 July, the government

2 The total population of Taiwan is approximately 23.57 million.

3 Historically, Taiwan was regarded as the prototype of the developmental state in East Asia after World War II, which actively pursued economic growth at the expense of social security. Families and individuals had to shoulder the responsibility for their own well-being as this was eschewed by the state. The quest for catch-up development did not change until Taiwan experienced political transition from authoritarianism to democracy during the 1990s. Since then, social provision by the state has grown considerably. For more information, see Ku (1997); Holliday (2000, 2005); Hort and Kuhnle (2000).

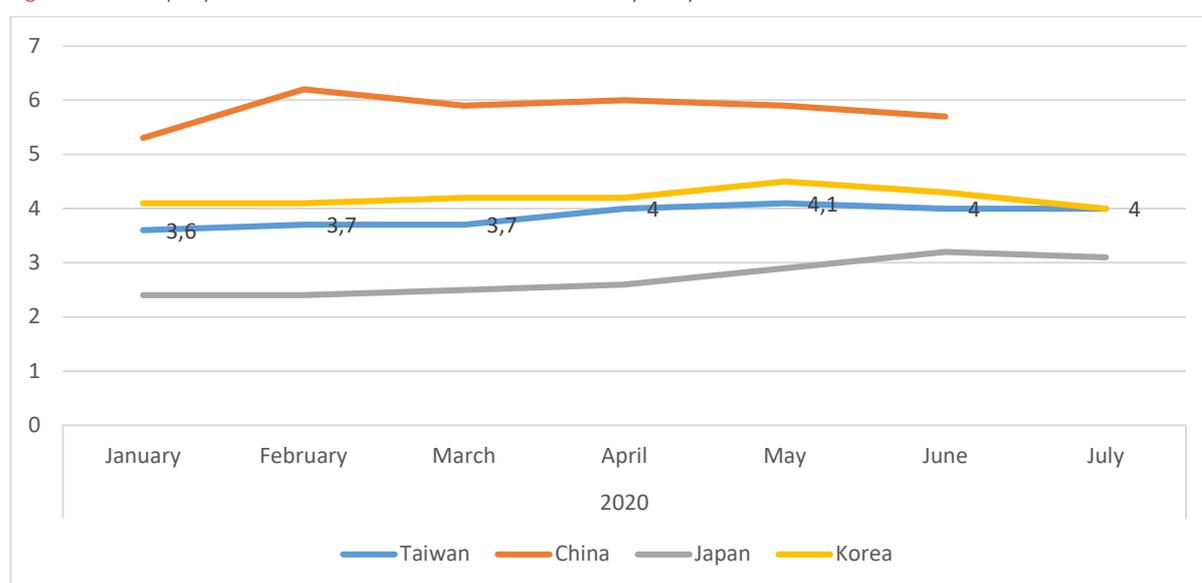
4 TWD 1,000 is equivalent to USD 36.10 or EUR 29.68 as of 16 December 2020.

Table 1. Quarterly growth rates of GDP (change over previous quarter)

	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3
Taiwan	2.51	0.35	3.92
China	-10.00	11.70	2.70
Japan	-0.57	-8.16	4.96
Korea	-1.28	-3.15	1.93
OECD	-1.87	-10.55	--

Sources: OECD, 2020; Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, 2020.

Figure 1. Unemployment rates (selected countries), January–July 2020



*China: The urban surveyed unemployment rate (城鎮登記失業率).

Sources: Korean Statistical Information Service, 2020; Ministry of Labour, 2020a; National Bureau of Statistics, China, 2020; Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2020.

proposed supplementary budgets for TWD 150 billion and TWD 210 billion, respectively, amounting to a total of TWD 420 billion, approximately 2.2% of 2019 GDP. Whilst the government strived to meet the needs of the people, most of the measures were of a short-term nature that temporarily raised benefits or extended the eligibility criteria of existing social programmes. In other words, Taiwan's social policy responses to Covid-19 have unfolded within the pre-existing institutions rather than initiating fundamental institutional reconfiguration.

Still, the legislative process of the Special Act was accompanied by some cacophony: Twelve versions of the Act vied with the draft proposed by the administration during its passage through the legislature. Despite their consensus on imposing penalties for spreading fake news and violating quarantine regulations, as well as on raising temporary payments for medical professionals, both ruling and opposition parties exchanged heated arguments about the implementation of Disease Prevention Childcare Leave. Whilst the opposition proposed to introduce the latter as paid leave, the ruling party stressed the regulations to prevent employers from either deducting bonuses or dismissing workers for taking leave. The government's calculus related to the fact that, as the Covid-19 pandemic showed no sign of abating, the opposition's proposal of paid leave subsidies might further exacerbate the public fiscal burden. Given the ruling party's parliamentary majority, the administration's draft was passed eventually. It is interesting to note that, whilst the bailout budgets won wide support in February and May,

respectively, the legislature also unanimously agreed the budget cuts of the Bill for the second supplementary budget in July out of concern for possible fraud or abuse by some private enterprises.

Table 2 presents a brief chronology of major legislation in response to the pandemic crisis. Note that these are overarching policy packages aiming to cope with all aspects of the pandemic-related problems. The major social policies presented later have taken shape within the scope of the Special Act.

Table 2. Timeline of the passage of the Special Act for Prevention, Relief and Revitalization Measures for Severe Pneumonia with Novel Pathogens and its supplementary budget

Proposed	Passed	Act/Bill
20 February 2020	25 February 2020	Special Act for Prevention, Relief and Revitalization Measures for Severe Pneumonia with Novel Pathogens (嚴重特殊傳染性肺炎防治及紓困振興特別條例) and Special Budget (中央政府嚴重特殊傳染性肺炎防治及紓困振興特別預算案), TWD 60 billion
23 April 2020	8 May 2020	Bill for first supplementary budget (中央政府嚴重特殊傳染性肺炎防治及紓困振興特別預算第1次追加預算案), TWD 150 billion
23 July 2020	23 October 2020	Bill for second supplementary budget (中央政府嚴重特殊傳染性肺炎防治及紓困振興特別預算第2次追加預算案), TWD 210 billion (The Bill was passed with a budget of TWD 209.95 billion)

Sources: Executive Yuan, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c.

Corporate and wage subsidies for employment protection

To mitigate the financial burden of the afflicted employers, and to stabilize domestic employment, the Taiwanese government provided corporate and wage subsidies in April. Financially stricken enterprises in manufacturing, technical services or convention and exhibition industries are entitled to public subsidies of up to 40% of the original monthly payroll, with a cap of TWD 20,000/month for three months. In addition, a one-off operating capital subsidy (一次性營運資金補貼) can be granted to business owners,⁵ conditional on the requirement that they refrain from enforcing lay-offs, pay-cuts, or unpaid leave on their employees. In addition, these employers must present proof of a 50% decline in their business sales compared to the same month/period of 2018/2019 (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2020a). Official information estimated that, by September, subsidies in this category to the value of about TWD 44 billion were dispatched to the hands of more than 901,228 applicants (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2020b).

Meanwhile, to support those who experienced an involuntary reduction in their working hours, the “Plan for Employment at Ease” (安心就業計畫) was introduced in March to subsidize 50% of the monthly salary gap. Workers whose hours have been reduced for more than thirty days are eligible to apply for the wage subsidies of up to a maximum of TWD 11,000/month for up to 6 months (Ministry of Labour, 2020b). According to the statistics on 30 September, more than 40,000 workers received the subsidies amounting to TWD 380.6 million (Ministry of Labour, 2020c).

In addition to a wage subsidy, workers may also opt to participate in the training programme “Recharge and Restart Training Programme” (充電再出發訓練計畫) during the period of reduced working hours to enhance their employability. A subsidy of TWD 158/hour will be granted with a ceiling of TWD 18,960/month (a total of 120 hours monthly). Furthermore, employers are encouraged to provide short-time workers with training opportunities, for which the government will grant subsidies to cover up to TWD 3.5 million of the programme fees (Ministry of Labour, 2020d). More than TWD 111 million worth of the subsidy was disbursed, benefitting about 11,000 workers and 600 enterprises by the end of September (Ministry of Labour, 2020c).

5 The amount of the one-time operating capital subsidy depends on the actual number of full-time workers with TWD 10,000 each.

Financial support for the self-employed

A temporary means-tested programme was launched in April to support the livelihood of the self-employed. Eligible workers receive a monthly subsidy of TWD 10,000 for three months (Ministry of Labour, 2020e). The programme ended on 3 June, benefitting more than 1.1 million self-employed workers (Ministry of Labour, 2020c). As for self-employed people with disabilities, such as visually impaired masseurs, they may receive a subsidy of TWD 15,000/month for three months. In addition, they may receive further subsidies amounting to TWD 20,000–50,000 to purchase protective materials and supplies (Ministry of Labour, 2020f). By September, about TWD 115 million was distributed to support visually impaired masseurs (Ministry of Labour, 2020c).

Public job creation

In April, the government introduced the “Start to Work at Ease Immediately” (安心即時上工計畫) programme to provide hourly public work opportunities to workers forced to reduce their working hours at their employers’ request. Job offers included environmental clean-up and disinfection jobs, documentation procedures, call centre operators, rank and file members or shoreline clean-up at both local governments and public institutions. As it is a costly programme, the government imposes a strict requirement that applicants had to participate in the Labour Insurance or Employment Insurance for at least two of the past six months prior to application, and their monthly insured salary had to stand below TWD 23,800. But these requirements proved too draconian in practice and were later loosened to ensure timely policy assistance to meet the need. Those with a membership record for the Labour Insurance for the past year – irrespective of their latest monthly insured income, are entitled to apply for the benefits. Eligible workers may receive TWD 158/hour, with a maximum of eighty hours/month (a total of TWD 12,640 monthly) for up to six months (Ministry of Labour, 2020g). By September, the government has registered more than 20,000 approved applications (Ministry of Labour, 2020c).

Individual financial loans

To alleviate workers’ financial burdens, a public loan programme was set up for those who had participated in Labour Insurance – or those who failed to present proof of insurance record but could submit their pay slips instead. This programme envisions a temporary public loan of up to TWD 100,000 with a zero interest rate for the first year (Ministry of Labour, 2020h). This programme ended on 3 June, with more than 910,000 beneficiaries (Ministry of Labour, 2020c).

Stimulus vouchers

The government introduced the Triple Stimulus Vouchers (振興三倍券) scheme aiming at boosting domestic consumption and supporting industries plagued by the pandemic. In fact, its forerunner was adopted in 2008 when Taiwan’s economy experienced considerable disruption during the financial tsunami. At that time, purchase vouchers worth TWD 3,600 each were distributed to every Taiwanese citizen unconditionally. However, later official analysis showed that the scheme made only a modest contribution to the economy, about a 0.28–0.43% increase in GDP, largely because of the substitution effect that most recipients utilized this subsidy in daily consumption instead (Council for Economic Planning and Development, Executive Yuan, 2009). Based on this past experience, minor modifications were made this time: citizens are required to “purchase” the vouchers with a value of TWD 3,000 at a price of TWD 1,000 to ensure the circular flow of money. For middle- and low-income households, the required TWD 1,000 deposit will be waived. Furthermore, the government imposes restrictions: Vouchers cannot be used to pay taxes or for purchases on most of the e-commerce platforms. Holders are otherwise free to spend the vouchers for travelling or all other purposes by the end of 2020 (Executive Yuan, 2020d). The scheme kicked off in July and, as of the end of September, about 22 million citizens – about more than 95% of the total population, had claimed the vouchers (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2020c).

Livelihood stabilization for disadvantaged groups

Since disadvantaged groups are particularly vulnerable to the decline in economic and daily activities, the government has extended its support to mitigate the pandemic's impact. In April, a three-month subsidy of TWD 1,500/month was introduced additionally to those vulnerable groups who have been receiving social assistance, such as the elderly and children in middle- and low-income households, as well as people with disabilities (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2020c). For those who were neither covered by any social insurance programmes nor granted any subsidies, the government extended its support with a means-tested emergency relief scheme, a one-off payment of TWD 10,000 (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2020d). The scheme ended on 30 June, about 370,000 people had received this subsidy (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2020e).

CONCLUSION

Overall, the majority of social policy responses in Taiwan feature one-off in-cash benefits targeted at various population groups in need – except for the Triple Stimulus Vouchers that carry with them the policy goals of reviving economic strength and rescuing those sectors hit by the pandemic. Thanks to the early recognition of the pandemic's severity and the timely intervention with preventive measures, the adverse impact of Covid-19 on economic and social activities was kept at bay. These favourable circumstances render the social policy option of a shock therapy unnecessary, and create ample leeway in policymaking for the government. This explains why almost all the major responses are of a temporary nature, and a programmatic extension of the existing social security institutions (e.g., social assistance and specific in-cash benefits).

Institutional continuity of social policy can be observed in the active labour market policy, where vocational training and employment services prevail. Similar to the experiences with the preceding financial crises, the common practice in Taiwan in response to an abrupt increase in unemployment is the provision of (limited) short-term public job opportunities or unemployment benefits, flanked by skill-training programmes and re-employment placement assistance (Kim and Shi, 2020). For those workers who are forced to take unpaid leave, temporary benefits to maintain their livelihood apply. Altogether, these measures have proven effective in the government's crisis management of the labour market.

Whilst many countries currently face the second (or even third) wave of the pandemic, the situation in Taiwan remains steady with few new cases of infection. Domestic consumption has begun to resume its pace although industrial manufacturing is still waiting for the world economy to rebound. It is reasonable to expect that, when the pandemic crisis abates, Taiwan should be amongst those countries to benefit first from the global economic recovery. Social policy responses are playing an essential role in supporting the livelihood of those households threatened by the pandemic crisis. Together with the public health containment measures, social policy offers the critical flank protection in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

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**APPENDIX 1: SOCIAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 BY POLICY AREA
(TAIWAN, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020)**

	Policy Area	Pensions	Healthcare	Long-term care and disability	Labor market	Education
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	No
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	No
	Policy Area	Family benefits	Housing	Social assistance	Other*	
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	Yes	
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	

* Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection, e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection.

APPENDIX 2: SOCIAL POLICY LEGISLATION IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (TAIWAN, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020)

This appendix covers all major national social policy legislation published between 1 January 2020 and 30 September 2020.

Law 1		
(1)	Number of law	Not Applicable
(2)	Name of law (original language)	嚴重特殊傳染性肺炎防治及紓困振興特別條例
(3)	Name of law (English)	Special Act for Prevention, Relief and Revitalization Measures for Severe Pneumonia with Novel Pathogens
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	21 February 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	25 February 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	25 February 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Yes
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Yes
(10)	Note on (7)-(9) (max. 300 words)	On 11 January, the 10th Taiwanese legislative election was held concurrently with the 15th presidential election. The term of the 10th Legislators began on 1 February, 2020. After a consultative meeting held on 14 February, the first session of the 10th Legislative Yuan was set on 21 February. Bills for deliberation and amendment included, but not limited to, the Special Act.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	Yes
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Nine, illustrated below

Law 1: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	Corporate and wage subsidies are provided to mitigate the financial burden of the affected employers, and to stabilize domestic employment. Enterprises in manufacturing, technical services or convention and exhibition industries that have experienced a 50% decline in their business sales compared to the same month/period of 2018/2019, are entitled to public subsidies of up to 40% of the original monthly payroll, with a cap of TWD 20,000/month for three months. In addition, a one-off operating capital subsidy (一次性營運資金補貼) is granted to the business owners, conditional on the requirement that they refrain from enforcing lay-offs, pay-cuts, or unpaid leave on their employees.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term

Law 1: Component 1		
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Seven months, till October 2020
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	Application should be submitted by 31 October 2020 (programme scheduled to end earlier due to limited funding).
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	TWD 44 billion (by September)
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	By September, subsidies to the value of about TWD 44 billion were dispatched to the hands of more than 901,228 applicants.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	partially

Law 1: Component 2		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	The "Plan for Employment at Ease" (安心就業計畫) was introduced for those who experienced a reduction in working hours. Workers whose working hours have been reduced for more than thirty days and have experienced 50% of the monthly salary difference are eligible to apply for the wage subsidies for a maximum of TWD 11,000/month for up to 6 months
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Ten months, till December 2020
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	Application should be made by 31 December 2020.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	TWD 380.6 million (by September)
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	According to the statistics as shown on 30 September, more than 40,000 workers were granted the subsidies, amounting to TWD 380.6 million.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Not Applicable

Law 1: Component 3		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	Workers whose working hours are reduced may participate in the "Recharge and Restart Training Programme" (充電再出發訓練計畫) to enhance employability and to maintain earnings stability. A subsidy of TWD 158/hour will be granted with an upper ceiling of TWD 18,960/month. Employers are also encouraged to offer training to short-time workers and the government will support a subsidy to cover up to TWD 3.5 million of programme fees.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Sixteen months, till June 2021
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	A similar programme was introduced in 2008 during the financial tsunami and the programme's regulation was formally established in 2011. The programme may be activated if major disasters occur or during an economic downturn.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	TWD 111 million (by September)
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	More than TWD 111 million was granted, benefitting about 11,000 workers and 600 enterprises by the end of September.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 1: Component 4		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	A temporary means-tested programme (自營作業者或無一定雇主之勞工生活補貼) was launched in April to support the livelihood of the self-employed. Eligible applicants may receive a monthly subsidy of TWD 10,000 for three months.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	About two months, ended on 3 June 2020
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	Programme ended due to limited funding.

Law 1: Component 4		
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	TWD 33.8 billion
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	The programme benefitted more than 1.1 million self-employed workers.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Not Applicable

Law 1: Component 5		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	Self-employed visually impaired masseurs may receive a subsidy of TWD 15,000/month for three months. They may receive additional subsidies amounting to TWD 20,000–50,000 to purchase protective materials and supplies
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Eight months, till December 2020
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	TWD 115 million (by September)
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	By September, about TWD 115 million was distributed to support visually impaired masseurs.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Not Applicable

Law 1: Component 6		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	In April, the government introduced the “Start to Work at Ease Immediately” (安心即時上工計畫) programme to provide hourly public work opportunities to workers who were forced to reduce their working hours at their employers’ request. Workers with a record of Labour Insurance membership for the past year are entitled to apply for the benefits. Eligible workers may receive TWD 158/hour, with a maximum of eighty hours/month (a total of TWD 12,640 monthly) for up to six months.

Law 1: Component 6		
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Nine months, till December 2020
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	A similar programme was once introduced in 2008 during the financial tsunami.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	TWD 698.2 million (by September)
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	By September, the government recorded more than 20,000 approved applications.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 1: Component 7		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	In April, a public loan programme (勞工紓困貸款及利息補貼) was set up for those who had participated in Labour Insurance or those who failed to present proof of insurance record but could submit their pay slips instead. Workers may apply for a public loan of up to TWD 100,000 with zero interest rate for the first year.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	About two months, ended at 3 June 2020
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	Programme ended due to limited funds.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	TWD 91.8 billion
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD

Law 1: Component 7		
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	This programme ended in June, with more than 910,000 beneficiaries.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Not Applicable

Law 1: Component 8		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	The Triple Stimulus Vouchers (振興三倍券) scheme aimed at boosting domestic consumption and supporting industries afflicted by the pandemic. Citizens are required to "purchase" the vouchers worth TWD 3,000 at a price of TWD 1,000 to ensure the circular flow of money. For middle- and low-income households, the required TWD 1,000 deposit is waived.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Six months, till December 2020
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	The scheme was once adopted in 2008 when Taiwan's economy experienced considerable disruption during the financial crisis. Every Taiwanese citizen received purchase vouchers to the value of TWD 3,600 unconditionally. However, later official analysis showed that the scheme made only a modest contribution to the economy, about a 0.28–0.43% increase in GDP, largely because of the substitution effect because most recipients utilized this subsidy in daily consumption.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	About TWD 42.6 billion was redeemed by September.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	At the end of September, about 22 million citizens (more than 95% of the total populations) had claimed the vouchers.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 1: Component 9		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	In April, a three-month subsidy of TWD 1,500/month was issued additionally to those vulnerable groups who had been receiving social assistances, such as the elderly and children of middle- and low-income households, as well as people with disabilities.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable

Law 1: Component 9		
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Fix-term
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Three months
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	3 months, till June 2020
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	TWD 4.1 billion
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Not Applicable

Law 1: Component 10		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component (max. 300 words)	In April, the government extended its support to those who were neither covered by any social insurance programmes nor granted any subsidies, with a means-tested emergency relief benefit – a one-off payment of TWD 10,000.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	About 3 months
(26)	Note on (23)-(25) (max. 200 words)	Application should be made by 30 June 2020.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(28)	Note on (27) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	TWD 4.9 billion
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not known yet
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	TWD
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31) (max. 200 words)	Not Applicable
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Not Applicable