



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic pointed out that Serbia is the first in Europe in terms of economic growth, which will be officially confirmed at the end of March, and that this was possible owing to the reform measures taken since 2014 and the rapid opening of the country after the first wave of corona virus.

The President pointed out that Serbia had a growth of 5.2 percent in the first quarter, while the Eurozone was at minus 3.2 percent, in the second quarter Serbia had a minus of 6.3 percent, while the Eurozone was at minus 14.7 percent, and in the third quarter, when the Eurozone was at minus 4.3 percent, Serbia's figure was only minus 1.4 percent.

Vucic stated that Montenegro, for example, recorded as much as 26 percent minus in the third quarter.

Furthermore, the President emphasized that hospitals were built and renovated in our country, and that two hospitals were built from the ground up in just four months.

He said that the state made significant efforts to procure respirators, masks, gloves, protective suits, medicines, everything that was needed, and pointed out that work was being done on 10 general hospitals throughout Serbia, adding that all these were major achievements that were only possible owing to the success of the 2014 reforms, the enactment of the Labor Law, which yielded excellent results, and also through fiscal consolidation measures.

"These are unprecedented results for Serbia. Was Serbia ever before the first in Europe in terms of growth rate? We will get the results on 31 March that will confirm that Serbia is number one in Europe. All that was possible thanks to people who believed in difficult changes", Vucic said.

According to the President, this year, as many as six highways will be built in Serbia at the same time, and in this regard, he noted that Bulgaria has announced that the highway from our border to Sofia will be completed by the end of the year, after which it will be possible to use motorway to travel to Istanbul, which is very important to ensure that our country is on a transport route.

President Vucic emphasized that in 2020, the so-called year of corona, our country had a net

inflow of foreign direct investment amounting to EUR 2.9 billion net, and three billion gross, which means that many foreign companies such as Toyota Tires, Boysen, ZTF and Brose have invested in Serbia even in this year of crisis.

The President said that Serbia has the highest average wages in the region, amounting to 511 or 512 euros, and that in February, due to the January increase, the average wage will be 535 or 536 euros, and that only in Belgrade in the last seven years the average wage increased by 180 euros or 40 percent.

That President said that Serbia was fourth in the region in terms of salaries before, and that today we are officially the first, and that the difference in relation to other countries will only increase faster. He also pointed out that the employment rate is growing in Serbia as well as that our public debt increased less than in most European countries. This is illustrated by the data that in Italy the public debt surged to 156 percent, in Germany to 87 percent, in France to 114 percent, in Croatia to 88 percent, while in Serbia it is at 57 percent.

The Serbian President announced that by Sretenje, 15 February, an additional package of assistance to the economy will be earmarked, and as he explained, it will be a new capital injection for companies, the trade, entrepreneurs, small, medium and large enterprises which, as he said, concerns 1,052,000 people within that system.

Vucic specified that it will most likely be help in the form of two or three payments amounting to half a minimum wage each, and that there will also be sectoral aid for tourism, hotel owners, travel agencies, guides, for bus carriers, through another half minimum wage payment.

The President added that efforts will be made to extend the guarantee schemes as well, which proved to be excellent, amounting to 1.5 billion, and this time, through the same system, two more portions amounting to 500 million each could be provided.

Vucic said that the first agreements with DFC worth 300 to 400 million dollars are expected in seven days.

He also stated that the state will endeavour to help pensioners further, in addition to increasing pensions by 5.9 percent in January, which will be reflected in their first checks in February, and added that pensioners should by March receive symbolic aid in the form of packages with vitamin C, D and zinc, which, as the President said, are small things, but they reflect the state's care and efforts made to protect health.

The President announced that negotiations on the procurement of the Chinese vaccine would be completed in the next seven to eight days, after the first quantities of the Pfizer and Sputnik V vaccines have arrived in Serbia, and pointed out that the Chinese vaccine was of exceptional quality, but probably the most expensive, which is why he wrote to the Chinese President and asked for a discount for our country.

Vucic thanked the Americans for deciding to sell the vaccine to our country and noted that no one in the region other than Serbia has received it, except for the small quantity that Albania got.

He pointed out that our state relied on itself and its own capacities, and that our state leadership anticipated that vaccines within the European COVAX plan would arrive late.

The President rejected the claims about bad results of Serbia in the fight against the corona virus and stated that our country has recorded the lowest corona virus mortality rate in the region.

He presented statistical information indicating that Slovenia had 144 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, North Macedonia 126, Bosnia and Herzegovina 123, Bulgaria 115, Montenegro 115, Hungary 110, Croatia 107, Romania 85, and Serbia 51.

"The mortality rate in the region is as follows: Bulgaria 3.9, Bosnia and Herzegovina 3.7, Hungary 3.11, North Macedonia 3.03, Romania 2.48. Slovenia 2.15, Croatia 1.99, Montenegro 1.4, and Serbia 1.0. This can be seen in the graphs and is no fabrication", the President stressed.

He said that the state will fight for vaccines, and that only Serbia, in the Western Balkans, received significant quantities of vaccines, other than a smaller quantity that Albania received, and added that in one day since the registration for vaccination opened, as many as 63,000 persons have registered.

President Vucic expressed his belief that the year ahead will be better than the previous one as well as that the corona virus will be defeated through vaccination of citizens.