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Costa Rica's Social Policy Response to Covid-19: Strengthening Universalism During the Pandemic?

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Koen Voorend
Daniel Alvarado

Costa Rica's Social Policy Response to Covid-19: Strengthening Universalism During the Pandemic?

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Costa Rica's Social Policy Response to Covid-19: Strengthening Universalism During the Pandemic?

Koen Voorend *
Daniel Alvarado **

Abstract

With its strong public healthcare system and social security regime, Costa Rica was better prepared to face the Covid-19 pandemic than most countries in the Global South. However, the pandemic hit at a time when its social policy regime had already been weakened by three decades of neoliberal inspired policies. Since the first Covid-19 case was identified in March 2020, the country implemented a series of legislative and institutional measures in different social policy areas that sought to build on the country's institutional heritage to provide social protection to its population. In this report, we analyze whether these measures represented more focalized temporary "band-aid" measures or were inspired by the historic commitment to universal social policy. For this, we first describe the social policy measures taken during the Covid-19 crisis. Then we focus on three key policy areas – health, pensions, social assistance, to analyze whether these measures positively or negatively affect universalism in Costa Rica, understood as a multidimensional concept. We find that Costa Rica's initial quick, and later unsure measures took two paths: A first set of measures in explicit response to Covid-19, and a second set was aimed at guaranteeing the continuity of the country's universal social security system.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic took some time to set foot in Costa Rica. In the first week of March 2020, the first case of the virus was identified, after which there were several weeks with relatively few cases, mainly people who brought it in from abroad. It was not until the end of June that the number of cases increased to more than 100 per day, but since then, the number of positive tests grew exponentially, reaching its peak in September of more than 1,000 cases per day.[1] By October 2020, Costa Rica counted an accumulated total of 76,828 active, recovered, and deceased Covid-19 patients, and 917 casualties to the virus. According to the Johns Hopkins University's Coronavirus Resource Center (2020), Costa Rica went from being one of the countries with the lowest virus infection rates in the Global South in its first months (March, April) to being ranked by the end of October as the country in Central America with the second highest number of positive cases and deaths per 100,000 inhabitants.

Like elsewhere, the Costa Rican government implemented a series of gradual measures to control the rising curve of Covid-19 cases. Early on during the pandemic, one of the first measures included the closing of borders, limits to people's mobility, working from home and the general closing of or restrictions to sectors pertaining to the tourist sector, restaurants, and bars. The "Stay at Home" mantra, meant to flatten the curve of contagion, implied economic hardship for many citizens, like in most countries in Latin America (Blofield and Filgueira, 2020). In Costa Rica, it was principally meant to alleviate as far as possible the burden for the country's strong and public healthcare system, thereby buying time to prepare the system (for example, by preparing more intensive care units) for the expected wave of patients.

1 Costa Rica is a small country with just over 5 million inhabitants.

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The responses to the pandemic, particularly in social policy, came in the form of legislative and institutional measures in different social policy areas (health, pensions, social assistance, long-term care and disability, labor market, etc.). These responses were characterized by being rapid and intensive in the first few months of the pandemic in Costa Rica, and later by a commitment to the continuity and sustainability of these measures. However, social demands remained intense as the pandemic advanced and put the country's institutional framework under great pressure, as some of the adopted measures failed to meet the demands of the diverse spectrum of social groups who needed support during the crisis.

Although Costa Rica might have been better equipped to face the Covid-19 pandemic than many countries in the Global South, it faces an unprecedented challenge that will test its universal and solidary social policy system, and particularly its healthcare system. In the light of this critical juncture, the government's and legislative policies that were taken regarding social protection since the pandemic hit the country are of special interest. In this report, we analyze whether they represent band-aid emergency, typically focalized responses or whether they represent measures that strengthen the universal nature of the country's social policy system. For this, we borrow a working definition of universalism, loosely based on Fischer (2012) and Martínez-Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea (2013), which will be explained below.

After a short contextual section, we present a description of the main legislative and institutional responses in Costa Rica between January and September 2020. Then, we assess whether they are designed in a way that strengthens universalism in Costa Rica's social policy system. For this, we analyze in more detail three selected policy sectors in which important measures were taken: healthcare, pensions, and social assistance (cash transfers). The final section presents some critical evaluative reflections.

Pre-covid social policy: universalism in erosion

Costa Rica was expected to fare better in the face of Covid-19 than most countries in the Global South, because it has a longstanding history of a strong, universal social security regime and healthcare system that provide quality services for most of its inhabitants (Cecchini, Filgueira and Robles, 2014). Costa Rica has been hailed as a success story of "health without wealth" (Noy 2012) and, despite its status as a developing country, performs exceptionally well in healthcare indicators. For example, in 2018, general life expectancy was 80.1 years (men: 77.5 and women: 82.7) (World Bank, 2018), similar to some of the most developed countries, like Norway, Germany and The Netherlands (Voorend, 2019). The Costa Rican Social Security Fund (*Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social – CCSS*) is the institution in charge of the country's healthcare and pension system, through two legs of the same social security scheme. It was established in the early 1940s and expanded through the 1970s, and currently covers approximately 87% of the national population through its contributory social security regime, complemented with a non-contributory scheme for people who fall below the poverty line.

Despite this strong legacy, Costa Rica's social policy regime has come under pressure as the country cut back on public social expenditure following the 1980s debt crisis (Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea, 2013), and the ensuing structural economic and social transformations have left the country's healthcare system less robust than it once was. Indicative of this has been the development of per capita public social expenditure dedicated to healthcare, which almost doubled during the 1970s (from USD 100 to 200, measured in USD exchange rate of year 2000), but then decreased in the early 1980s back to about USD 120. It stagnated around USD 260 throughout the 1990s, and then grew slowly to an average of USD 350 well into the 2000s. By 2018, per capita healthcare spending was USD 658. This slow increase in nominal spending levels has implied, during the 1980s and 1990s, a real reduction in spending, which until now only had subtle effects on output indicators (Rojas, 2020; OECD, 2020a). For example, health insurance coverage among salaried workers was highest at just under 80% before the debt crisis but declined through the 1980s and 1990s to around 65% in 2005 (idem). Between 2000 and 2013, the number of doctors per 1,000 inhabitants fell from 1.33 to 1.11 (CEPALSTAT, 2015), and hospital beds decreased from 1.4 to 1.2 between similar years (World Bank, 2015).

A further indication of the erosion of the public healthcare system is the increase in private provision of healthcare. Between 2000 and 2009, the share of private healthcare spending (composed of out-of-pocket expenditures and private insurance expenditures) in total healthcare spending increased from 23% to 33% (Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea, 2013) and qualitative studies have documented a growing dissatisfaction with healthcare services (Dobles et al., 2013). Furthermore, the effects of the international financial crisis of 2008, but especially mismanagement and exponential increases in operating costs, left the CCSS with a worrisomely deteriorated financial situation which came to light in 2011 (Carrillo Lara et al., 2011; PAHO, 2011), and with which

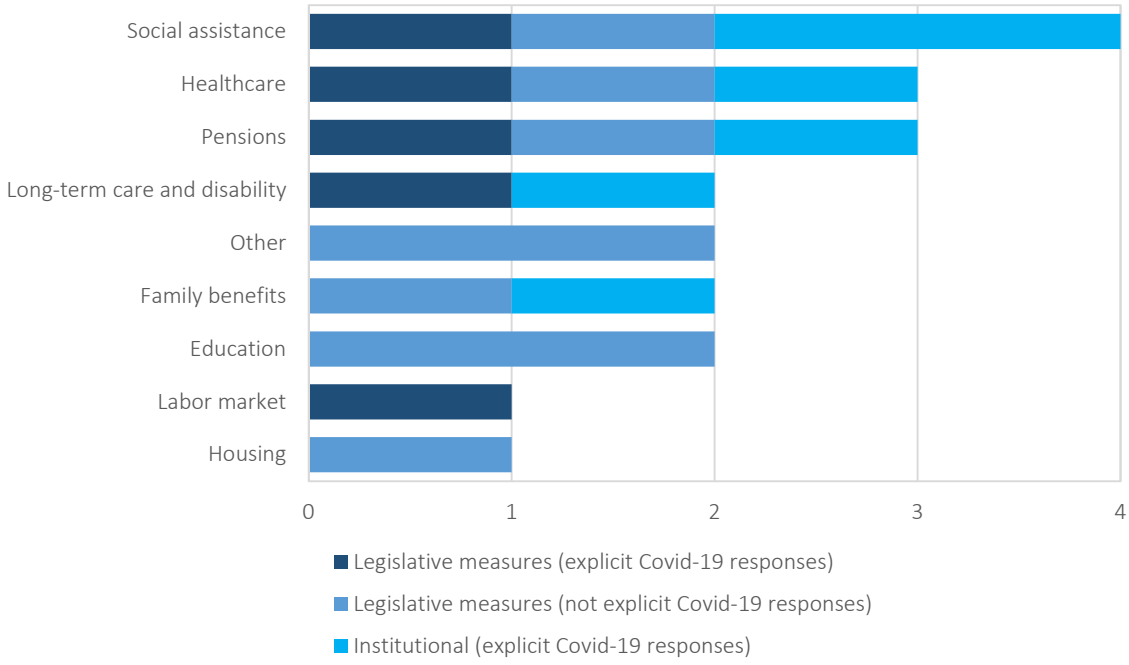
the country has struggled ever since. In this context, the social policy responses to Covid-19 in Costa Rica are particularly interesting, as they constitute an opportunity to strengthen the universal nature of social service provision.

Costa Rica's Social Policy Response

Based on primary and secondary sources, we identified 19 social protection responses (of which two covered multiple policy sectors) in Costa Rica between 1 January and 30 September 2020, over nine different policy sectors. The information included documentation of legislative actions, some of which were specifically Covid-19 related, while others did not make explicit mention of the pandemic or its effects. Also, we included key efforts that came as presidential decrees or measures by social policy institutions in explicit response to the Covid-19 crisis. In total, we mapped 14 laws and legislative reforms involving social protection taken by Congress of which five were explicitly designed to address situations in relation to the Covid-19 crisis, the other nine measures were policy plans that had already been underway, but at least for some of them approval was accelerated in light of the crisis. The remaining five measures were either presidential decrees (and therefore did not pass through the legislative assembly) or institutional policies, all designed explicitly to address the Covid-19 crisis. Each was systematically analyzed using a policy analysis template for the level of access and coverage, the inclusion of new benefits, the cost of the reform, and to what extent it has been implemented.

Figure 1 shows these policy measures by sector (pensions, healthcare, long-term care and disability, labor market, education, family benefits, housing, social assistance, and other policies).[2, 3]

Figure 1. Costa Rica: No. of legislative and institutional measures taken during the Covid-19 crisis (January - September 2020)



Source: Authors' elaboration.

2 The Agreement of the Board of Directors of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund to adjust financial support measures during 2020 in the face of a national emergency was implemented to ensure coverage of the population in both insurance regimes: social security (pensions) and health insurance. This measure appears twice in Figure 1 (once for each sector), hence the total of 20 measures.

3 The two laws that were catalogued as "Other" are one aimed at improving the processes of child adoption in the country and a law for the Conciliation of Family and Work Life.

The main social policy responses in Costa Rica pertained to social assistance, pensions, and the healthcare sector, which will be discussed in detail in the sections below. The three measures in the pension sector are closely linked to the healthcare sector, because of the specific design of the social security regime, which includes a health insurance and public pension pillar, both administrated by the CCSS. The logic of one of these reforms (Law 9839, 2020) was to create the possibility of freeing accumulated pensions earlier so people had cash flow to cover their cost of living. In the labor market, an important reform allowed employers to reduce the working hours (and consequently, the salaries) of their employees if the company's profits were reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This measure was meant to avoid massive layoffs of workers in the private sector. Also, a special subsidy was created by law to support people who lost their jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Other measures included the redesign of the implementation of already existing benefits. Exemplary of this was the education sector, where all in-person classes were suspended since 14 March (a measure that would continue until the end of the year 2020 at least). This suspension was implemented both in the public school system as well as in the country's many private schools. After a couple of days of weighing its options, the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) announced on 16 March its decision to move towards a "distance education model", based on the use of technological resources, and facilitating educational support for the delivery of printed materials and, where needed, technological devices with internet access to the homes of children who require it (Fernández, 2020).[4] Also, and most important in terms of social policy, a presidential decree was signed to enable the school food program, through the delivery of meals to the homes of students who were not going to their educational centers that were closed because of Covid-19 (MEP, 2020).

Table 1 summarizes the ten identified measures that were explicitly designed to respond to the Covid-19 situation. The other policy measures we identified but that were not explicitly designed in response to the pandemic, are listed in Appendix 3.

Table 1. Legislative and institutional measures in social policy adopted in Costa Rica in response to the Covid-19 pandemic

Date of publication	Policy Area	Measure	Brief explanation
20 March	Family benefits	Executive Decree. Distribution of food in public schools due to the suspension of lessons, following the national emergency caused by Covid-19.	Measure that guarantees the delivery of meals and food items to the beneficiary students of the Program of Food and Nutrition for Schoolchildren and Adolescents (PANEA), directly to their homes.
23 March	Labor market	Law 9832. Authorization for reduction of working hours in view of the National Emergency Declaration.	Allows private sector employers to reduce the working hours (and consequently, the salaries) of their employees if the company's profits were reduced due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
27 March	Pensions / Healthcare	Agreement of the Board of Directors of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS) to adjust financial support measures during 2020 in the face of a national emergency.	Group of measures to 1) facilitate the option of early payment of pensions, 2) facilitate overdue payments of contributions (for people in debt with the Fund) and 3) the automatic reduction of minimum contribution base.
3 April	Healthcare	Law 9837. Reform of Article 378 and addition of an Article 378 bis to Law 5395, the General Health Law of 30 October 1973.	Allows the Ministry of Health to impose penalties in the form of fines on persons who do not follow pandemic health orders. Specifically, those who disregard a Covid-19 isolation order.

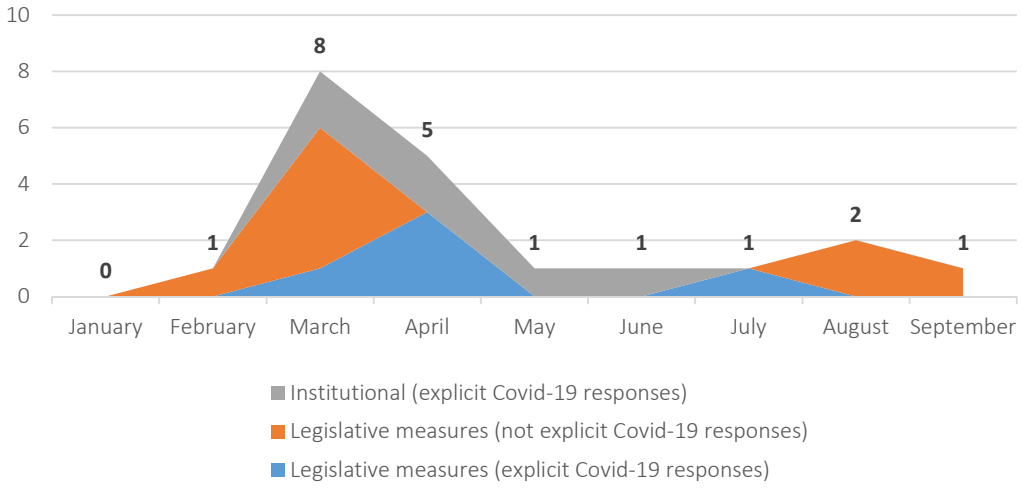
4 Although not the main focus of this report, it is important to mention that the Ministry of Public Education, together with the World Bank, generated medium and long-term projections of the change in the educational model. Among the different findings, they expect a decrease in the average skill and knowledge level of students, as well as the reproduction of socioeconomic gaps, with lower income students facing higher probabilities of a decrease in their educational level (MEP, World Bank, 2020).

Date of publication	Policy Area	Measure	Brief explanation
4 April	Pensions	Law 9839. Delivery of the Labor Capitalization Fund to workers affected by the economic crisis.	Legislative reform allowing for premature withdrawal of funds from an individualized pension fund known as the Labor Capitalization Fund (FCL), if a worker was fired or suspended due to the pandemic.
11 April	Disability	Official Statement. Special center for the care of people with disabilities who fall ill with Covid-19.	A Special Center for the Care of Persons with Disabilities with Covid-19 was enabled to provide immediate and quality care to people with disabilities, transforming and adapting a residential home of the National Council of People with Disabilities (CONAPDIS).
22 April	Social assistance	Law 9840. Protection of workers during the Covid-19 emergency.	Establish the creation by law of a temporary subsidy for addressing the condition of unemployment, temporary suspension of the work contract or reduction of working hours, for workers who have seen their income affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Apart from its official legal name, it was more commonly known as *Plan Proteger* (Protection Plan).
24 April	Social assistance	Executive Decree. Strategy for comprehensive care of the elderly affected by Covid-19	The government implemented a strategy to protect and address the needs of the elderly across the country in the face of the Covid-19 emergency. The measures range from the approach to mental health to attention on health and food services.
18 May	Social assistance	Executive Decree. Emergency humanitarian assistance operation.	Humanitarian assistance operation through local associations in the country, developing the collection of information on needy families, for the transfer of food packages and cleaning kits to their houses.
21 August	Long-term care	Law 9886. Law for the National Council of the Elderly to deal with the national emergency caused by Covid-19.	Allows the National Council of the Elderly to modify the budgetary items it deems necessary to address the Covid-19 pandemic emergency.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Costa Rica's social policy response to the crisis was rapid. Figure 2 shows the measures taken by month, evidencing the peak of measures in March and April, just when the Covid-19 crisis was only starting to hit the country. Seeing the horrific examples of overburdened healthcare systems in Italy and Spain, some of these measures were meant to prepare the public healthcare system for the expected wave of infections, while other measures were designed to avoid layoffs, or to ensure people's access to financial resources (social assistance, and early access to pension funds for example).

Figure 2. No. of legislative and institutional measures taken during the Covid-19 crisis (January - September, 2020), by month.



Source: Authors' elaboration.

Since July, no new laws were passed, nor decrees signed, or other policy measures taken in explicit social policy response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, whereas the initial social policy response to Covid-19 was swift, there was practically no additional response in August and September when the country reached the peak of the pandemic until then. This shows that the country aimed to provide a rapid response to the crisis in social policy areas to lay the foundations for dealing with the pandemic. Several of the laws and measures, such as the advance payment of pensions (Law 9839, 2020) or new social assistance measures created (Plan Proteger, Law 9840, 2020), have been repeatedly renewed since their creation. This shows a commitment to continuity or improvement of the initial responses, rather than to implementing new measures.

Policy Developments in Selected Sectors

For this section, the health sector, pensions, and social assistance were selected for their explicit importance to social protection in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. Policies pertaining to the health sector beg no extensive justification: the capacity of the public healthcare system to treat the ill and help slow the virus is fundamental. Besides, healthcare (together with education) is not only considered a human right but is arguably the most important social services for a State (Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea, 2019). The pension system is considered because of Costa Rica's particular social security system in which the public pillars of the pension system and the public healthcare system are managed by the same institution: the CCSS. Finally, social assistance is key to assisting people to confront the new social risks associated with the Covid-19 crisis, especially considering the high levels of labor market informality that characterize Central American countries like Costa Rica (ILO, 2020). In such contexts, cash transfers are key (temporary) mechanisms to avoid people falling below the extreme poverty line.

To analyze whether the Covid-19 responses in Costa Rice were designed in such a way that they strengthen universalism, we adopt a working definition of universalism based on Fischer (2012) and Martínez Franzoni and Sánchez-Ancochea (2013), who independently argue that universalism should be understood as consisting of several dimensions. Consolidating their contributions, we argue that universalism is made up of five dimensions: infrastructure; access/coverage; quality; price/costs; and financing.

First, *infrastructure* relates to the physical arrangements available for the provision of services. The construction of a new hospital, for example, would imply augmented infrastructure for health service provision. Second, *access/coverage* implies not only that all people access social services, but that they access these services without discrimination within the same institutions and organizations. Third, the *quality*, understood as the sufficiency of these services is crucial for universalism. If most people are covered by a policy program, but the services provided do not actually resolve people's social protection needs, this implies weaker universalism. Fourth, the *price/*

cost dimension relates to how the costs and prices of social service provisioning are determined. The stronger the universalism, the lower the fraction of the actual costs of services paid by the user at the moment of need. Finally, the *financing* dimension refers to the modality of financing of social services: indirect (i.e. not at the time of need) through progressive forms of taxation or directly at the time of need, through forms of payment which are mostly regressive, such as out-of-pocket payments for health services.

For each sector, we present a short explanation of the main measures taken during the Covid-19 crisis and present an analysis of whether these measures positively or negatively affect universalism.[5]

Healthcare

Before the pandemic hit Costa Rica, its historically strong public healthcare system had already been under pressure for decades. The Covid-19 pandemic caused concern about the system's capacity to deal with the pressure related to the emergency. Costa Rica responded with a series of measures, which are of particular interest, because historically, this sector and the institution managing its functioning, the CCSS, have been emblematic of Costa Rica's "exceptional" trajectory.

As a first measure, like in many other countries, hospital capacity was increased, including the building of new physical infrastructure. In April, the decision was made to transform the National Rehabilitation Center (CENARE) into a new hospital exclusively catering for the pandemic, called the CCSS' Adjacent Coronavirus Hospital (CEACO) (Presidency of the Republic, 2020a). In July, when the 88 bed-capacity of CEACO was filled, the Trauma Hospital was equipped to receive people with Covid-19 (Zuñiga, 2020). Also, a special center for disabled people who fall ill with Covid-19 was created, while freeing up resources for relevant institutions to ensure the well-being of this target population (Mora, 2020). Similarly, extensive purchases worth approximately USD 13 million of specialized protective material and supplies for medical personnel were made for the initial months (April, May and June) of the emergency (Presidency of the Republic of Costa Rica, 2020b).

Second, to alleviate the burden on intensive care units (ICU) as well as slowing the spread of contagion, a strict vehicular restriction was implemented for non-work and non-emergency purposes (Law 9838, 20202; MOPT, 2020). Related, the Ministry of Health was granted the power to impose isolation orders to persons entering the country or who were suspected cases of Covid-19, and to impose sanctions (in the form of a fine) for people who do not follow the health protocols and rules established in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic (Law 9837, 2020).

Third, in March, the CCSS communicated that any person who was suspected of a possible Covid-19 infection would be given a medical appointment, regardless of whether that person had up-to-date health insurance or not (Arce, 2020; Quesada, 2020).[6] This was done in recognition of the fact that, despite the universal guiding principle of health insurance, around 13% of the national population and higher percentages among migrants are without coverage (Voorend, 2019). As such, this measure was intended to increase coverage and access to the public healthcare system, albeit temporarily.

Fourth, faced with concerns that the ensuing economic crisis would cause many people to drop out of the social security system, thereby threating its financial sustainability and leaving people without public healthcare access, the CCSS took measures since March to automatically reduce the minimum contribution base by 75% for employers and by 25% with respect to February 2020 for independent workers and voluntary insured persons (CCSS, 2020a), making it easier to continue contributing to the public healthcare system. This measure was initially intended for three months (March, April and May) but extended to the end of 2020.

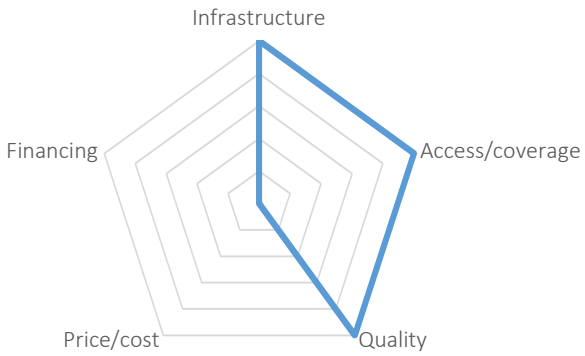
Together, the measures in healthcare were designed to maintain and even expand coverage of and access to public healthcare services, while also making investments in infrastructure as well as the quality of specialized services for the care of Covid-19 patients. The design of the pricing system was left unchanged, covered by the

5 For social assistance, we analyze the so-called Protection Plan. We understand it was not intended to be universal. However, for analytical purposes we do apply the lens to analyze with what idea/paradigm the measure was taken in the face of the pandemic.

6 This is based on internal institutional communications, on which there were journalistic records available to the public. However, since this was never communicated officially through a law, policy document or decree, it was not included in the 19 measures we identified for this study.

CCSS social security system, but was already a strong element in the universal nature of the design, as users pay only a fraction of the cost of healthcare through monthly contributions and thus not at the time of usage of the service. Finally, in terms of the financing of these measures, the costs were billed to the State. The reduction of the minimum contribution bases alleviated employers, independent workers and voluntary insured, but it remains to be seen what the consequences are for the financial stability of the CCSS and the additional fiscal debt the State incurs. For example, the measure to reduce the minimum contribution base is reported to have implied a reduction in the CCSS's income by approximately CRC 7 billion per month (around EUR 10 million) (Cordero, 2020).[7] In conclusion, the measures seem to have been designed to strengthen the universalist nature of Costa Rica's public healthcare system.

Figure 3. Healthcare responses to Covid-19 by dimensions of universalism



Source: Authors' elaboration.

Pensions

The Costa Rican pension scheme consists of four pillars, of which two are managed by the CCSS: the main contributory pillar, and the non-contributory pillar.[8] First, Law 9836 was enacted in March, constituting a financial strengthening of the pension system, especially its non-contributory modality, which covers about 8% of the population (Voorend, 2019; INEC, 2011).[9] The law had already been in discussion for more than a year, but with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting pressure on the public healthcare system, it was reinvigorated as a way to strengthen the social security system. Although at no time was it explicitly linked to the Covid-19 crisis, this reform is an example of how the country used a critical juncture to adopt measures to strengthen the financial stability of its social security system in the face of latent threats to its longevity. This reform allows for reinvestment of resources collected through the tax on the highest pensions in the country into the non-contributory pension fund. These non-contributory pensions constitute a basic pension coverage for elderly Costa Ricans and legal residents positioned below the poverty line who are not covered by any other pension or transfer regimes.

Second, since April (and at least until the end of 2020), the CCSS took actions for the Covid-19 crisis that can be divided into two categories. Firstly, it facilitated the advance payment of pensions for pensioners, freeing up these economic resources for these persons (CCSS, 2020b). Secondly, it took a series of measures to facilitate

7 The exchange rate was estimated on 20 October 2020 as EUR 1 = CRC 712.23.

8 The Costa Rican pension system has four pillars. Three are of a contributory nature: 1) the basic contributory pension, 2) the obligatory complementary pension and 3) the voluntary complementary pension. The fourth pillar is the non-contributory pension, officially managed by the Family Development and Allowance Fund (FODESAF), but in practice by the CCSS. It constitutes an assistance granted by the social security to those people who have not contributed to any regime (due to lack of resources or a social vulnerability situation) and meet the requirements to be able to receive it.

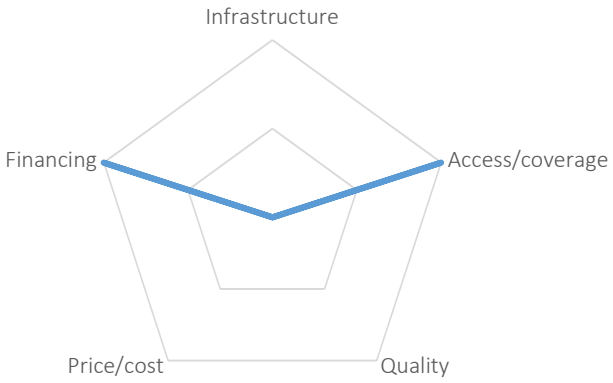
9 The contributory "old-age, disability and death regime" (IVM), covers just about 23% of the population. Another 40% of the population is covered by the indirect family insurance, which is linked to one family member's contributory health insurance. Around 13% is without insurance. The rest is either already pensioned, or under special insurance mechanisms, such as insurance by the State.

overdue payments of contributions (for people in debt with the CCSS) to the pension system. These payment arrangements allow people to resolve their debtor situation of overdue contributions to the CCSS in the middle of a difficult economic situation (CCSS, 2020a), so that they can maintain their affiliation to the pension system, but more importantly, to health insurance.

Finally, in late April, Law 9839 passed the Legislative Assembly, called the "Delivery of the Labor Capitalization Fund to workers affected by the economic crisis", which allowed premature withdrawals from the pension fund known as the Labor Capitalization Fund (FCL) if a worker was fired or suspended from work due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Law 9839, 2020). The Fund is comprised of mandatory deductions from a worker's salary as a means of insurance against future unemployment. Normally, it becomes available after five continuous years of work with the same employer, or when a worker retires or dies, in which case the money is paid to the worker's family. This reform allows people to withdraw these savings without necessarily fulfilling those requirements, if they can show they have lost their jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic emergency.[10]

The package of measures in the pension sector was meant to allow early access to pension funds that workers had already accumulated, without incorporating new benefits, or in the case of non-contributory pensions, funds they have already been deemed eligible for. In other words, the reforms facilitated access but did not seek to increase coverage. If anything, the usage of funds in the present situation may have negative implications for the quality (sufficiency) of their pensions in the future as it decreases funds and future interest earnings. With respect to the financing, one of the reforms strengthened the financial basis for the non-contributory pillar of the pension system, which represents an important, albeit relatively small pillar in Costa Rica. Furthermore, the measures do not depart from the "normal" structure of Costa Rica's social security system, which has been recognized as one of Latin America's longest standing and strongest (OECD, 2017).

Figure 4. Pension responses to Covid-19 by dimensions of universalism



Source: Authors' elaboration.

Social Assistance

Finally, it is important to look at Costa Rica's first responses to the Covid-19 pandemic related to social assistance. These measures included, on the one hand, a new temporary socioeconomic support mechanism for people who lost their jobs or had their working hours reduced by the Covid-19 pandemic, and on the other hand, a commitment to maintaining existing services (e.g. conditional monetary and non-monetary transfer programs) on an uninterrupted basis, which implied an adjustment to eligibility criteria.

First, given the economic crisis that ensued after the (partial) lockdown measures, 23% of the labor force was either unemployed or had their working hours reduced by half in the third quarter (June–August) (INEC, 2020).

10 In the same vein, at the beginning of October and therefore beyond the temporal scope of the present essay, Law 9906 was approved, which authorizes the accelerated retirement of the Mandatory Regime of Complementary Pensions (ROP) for those people who will retire within the next ten years (Law 9906, 2020). This is a savings fund similar to the FCL, which people normally could not access until the time of their retirement.

The tourism and services sector (restaurants, commercial establishments etc.) were especially hard hit with significant reductions in their incomes (Ugarte, 2020). To avoid massive layoffs, the first law that passed the Legislative Assembly, in March, was the "Authorization for reduction of working hours in view of the National Emergency Declaration (Law 9832)". This allowed private sector employers to reduce the working hours (and consequently, the salaries) of their employees by up to 50%, if the company's profits were reduced by at least 20%, compared to the same month last year. This as long as there was proof for the profit decrease due to the Covid-19 pandemic, by means of a sworn and authenticated declaration. The explicit purpose of the law is to "preserve the employment of workers, when the gross income of the companies is affected due to a declaration of national emergency" (Law 9832, 2020).

This reduction in working hours in the formal private sector, in addition to decreased incomes for many independent and informal workers, increased the pressure on the Costa Rican government to implement some support system for the thousands of families whose incomes were running low. As such, in late April, the "Protection Plan" (*Plan Proteger*) was created by Executive Decree No. 42305-MTSS-MDHIS, later reinforced by the issuance of the "Law 9840 Protection of workers during the Covid-19 emergency". It consisted of a cash transfer, known as *Bono Proteger*, with the objective to provide beneficiaries and their families with a basic income to temporarily (initially three months – April, May and June) help meet their basic needs (MTSS, 2020a).

This measure became the government's flagship measure in response to the pandemic, as it comprised an entirely new subsidy. The amount allocated for the plan was CRC 1 billion (around EUR 1,400 million), which is equivalent to 3% of GDP. The funds come from surpluses of several public institutions, the Latin American Development Bank (CAF), solidarity contributions from luxury pensions, a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) together with the French Development Agency (AFD), and the National Insurance Institute (INS). Since the applications considerably exceeded the assigned budget and many people were not able to receive the subsidy in the first three months, the Plan was extended with a three-month renewal, and more resources were freed up for the Plan's financing to achieve greater coverage of the program (Pérez, 2020). An important peculiarity of the Plan was that, especially during April through June, the application process for the basic income was completely online, to entice people to comply with the rules of social distancing. For that purpose, a technological tool had to be developed to meet the challenge of being able to process hundreds of thousands of applications in an orderly manner (MTSS, 2020b).

To be eligible, interested persons had to fill out an online form providing personal information, their employment status, and their bank account (MTSS, 2020b). People eligible included, first, people who had been fired or had their employment contract suspended because of the pandemic (a digital copy of their employer's layoff letter or reduction in working hours had to be uploaded).[11] Second, independent, temporary and informal workers affected by Covid-19, who were subjected to the same assessments of their socioeconomic situation the State already used for other programs. Each application was studied by the institutional authorities to determine eligibility. The amount per month of the basic income varied between CRC 62,500 (around EUR 89) for people who had their working hours reduced and CRC 125,000 (around EUR 178) for people who had been suspended, fired, or were unable to work because of the pandemic (MTSS, 2020b). The maximum amount of the cash transfer was established, according to the Law 9840, using as parameters the average cost of the Basic Food Basket (CBA) (CRC 47,266, around EUR 66), the average number of household members (3.16) and the average number of employed persons per household (1.31), based on data from the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of Costa Rica (INEC). To provide context for this amount, the minimum wage is CRC 316,964 (around EUR 426) and the national poverty line is set at CRC 112,317 (around EUR 151).

11 The Plan explicitly excluded 1) people working in the public sector (regardless of whether their working hours were reduced), 2) pensioners, 3) children under 15 years of age, 4) people who received an amount greater than CRC 50,000 (around EUR 70) in other cash transfers from the State and 5) people who had not been affected by Covid-19 in their employment status.

Table 2. Applications received for *Bono Proteger*, by sex and employment status of the beneficiaries*

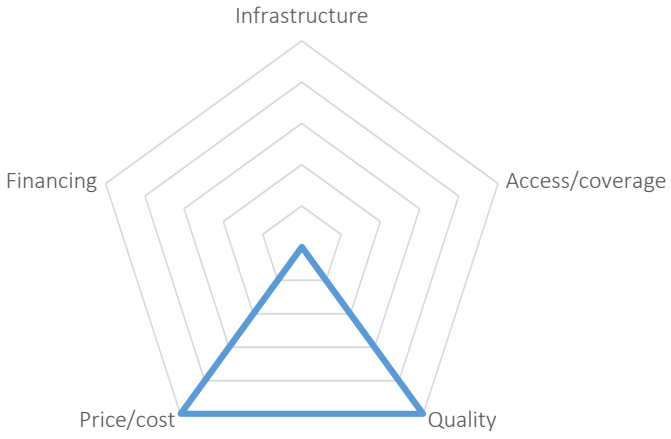
Total applications	1,007,262
Applications approved	684,735
Men	47.7%
Women	52.3%

Reason for application *(% of approved applications)*	
Layoff	22.5%
Contract suspended	6.8%
Reduction working hours	9.9%
Temporary or informal workers	23.0%
Self-employed workers	37.8%

** The data was last updated to 08 September 2020.*
Source: Authors' elaboration, based on the data of the Fifth Monthly Report of Follow-up to the Execution of the "Bono Proteger" (2020).

As can be seen in Table 2, the Plan provided considerable coverage. Nearly 700,000 people received the basic income (MTSS, 2020b). However, as the measure was specifically designed to alleviate the economic effects of the pandemic, this coverage was for a very limited time. The Plan never aspired to be universal in coverage and access but tried to address the negative effects of high unemployment by providing cash for sufficiency (quality). Although the Plan implied no cost for beneficiaries, the bureaucratic procedures implied with the application (especially opening a bank account for informal workers) created situations in which an investment of time and resources had to be made. Considering financing, the Plan, being an emergency measure, did not imply progressive contributions (as in the case of social security), but used funds drawn from the extraordinary budget of the Executive Branch, to a substantial extent financed with IDB loans, while other funds were freed up through budget reallocations, especially cuts in public spending, including the suspension of bonuses and salary increases in the public sector (Blofield, Giambruno and Filgueira, 2020).

Figure 5. Universality of the Protection Plan response for Covid-19 pandemic



Source: Author´s elaboration.

Second, the State committed to maintaining and reinforcing social programs that already existed but that needed adjustments to their implementation because of the lockdown situation. The country's conditional cash transfer program, *Avancemos*, for example, was adjusted to ensure students received their scholarships despite not physically going to school, with the same objective to promote retention in and return to secondary education.

Similarly, the school food program, i.e. the Program of Food and Nutrition for Schoolchildren and Adolescents (PANEA), was redesigned to deliver food items to students' homes on a monthly basis, instead of providing daily meals at school (Ministry of Public Education, 2020). As such, these services were maintained, even though in-person educational classes were suspended (IMAS, 2020a).

Other support and conditional transfer programs of the Joint Institute for Social Assistance (IMAS) as well as services such as the Care Network (REDCUDI) were sustained despite the difficulties brought by the pandemic (IMAS, 2020b). This was also the case for social assistance programs for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and disabled, where new measures were reinforced and implemented to ensure their proper functioning through the respective government agencies (National Council for the Elderly and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities) (Government of Costa Rica, 2020a). In this respect, a new strategy was developed for comprehensive care of the elderly during the Covid-19 crisis, which included local monitoring of the elderly to ensure their mental and physical health, as well as to assess whether they were in need of food or other support (Government of Costa Rica, 2020b).

Finally, the National Emergency Commission, in collaboration with several municipalities, developed and carried out a humanitarian aid program, which delivered food to people identified in the communities who needed such support (Government of Costa Rica, 2020c; 2020d).

Of course, such means-tested social assistance programs are, by their design, not universal in nature. However, they serve as important complements to universal social policy, to keep people who would otherwise fall off board, on board. The reactions in the face of the crisis regarding social assistance were aimed at maintaining the coverage of these programs and ensuring beneficiaries' access to these services on an uninterrupted basis. The already existing programs generally did not increase benefits or aim to expand coverage, save for specific exceptions.[12] Social assistance programs generally imply no financial cost to beneficiaries, although time commitments or conditions may apply. These programs are typically financed by indirect contributions, mainly from the State. For example, *Avancemos* is financed with money from various sources: contributions from public institutions and private organizations, etc., which are accumulated in a specialized fund administered by the Joint Institute for Social Assistance (Hernández, 2020).

The Politics Behind Costa Rica's Social Policy Response

The adoption of these social policy measures took place in a general political context that was marked by the historic erosion of the public healthcare system and social security regime over the last few decades. A constant topic of debate was the public spending involved with the social policy measures, and a parallel demand for the State to use economic resources in the most efficient possible way. As such, we identify two stages in the way Congress received the government's proposals and its willingness to approve the announce measures: the first stage took place in the initial months of the pandemic, during March, April and early May, when there was a high degree of agreement and consensus to speed up the adoption of measures, particularly with regard to the issue of supporting the private sector, the provisions regarding pensions and the approval of the Protection Plan. This was followed by a second stage, after May, during which the negotiations and dialogue between the government and Congress became substantially more complicated.

In terms of social policy, we have argued that the policy aim was to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the measures implemented in the first months and the pre-pandemic social assistance programs. However, the political discussions to pass the discussed measures were anything but straightforward, and endorsement by Congress was only granted after heavy debates regarding the efficiency of public spending and, in general, the country's financial capacity to sustain the measures (OECD, 2020b). Especially the Protection Plan was an example of this polemic, as the government had previously fallen short of funds to provide financial assistance on different occasions (Blofield, Giambruno and Filgueira, 2020). While the first round of transfers passed relatively quickly in April, albeit not without discussion, in May, for the first time after its approval, a budget authorization

12 The PANEA program or the measures for the elderly and people with disabilities successfully facilitated access to their benefits by implementing new measures.

was requested to extend cash transfers. The approval of this second round of transfers took approximately two months at the Congressional level after long debates. It finally passed because of a financial proposal that re-allocated existing and unused State funds from the National Insurance Institute (INS) to the Plan (Díaz, 2020). Later, in July, an extraordinary budget was requested to allocate more resources to the Protection Plan, but this time it was denied because there were too many concerns in Congress about the efficient use of the funds. In response, the government opted to "borrow" money from the Ministry of Finance to extend more transfers, but they pointed out that this would not be enough; and so, they opted to request a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). This loan, however, needed to be approved by Congress and here the same concerns arose about the efficient use of the funds (Ramírez, 2020). As a result, at the time of writing of this report (end of October 2020), the loan had still not been approved, and announcements were made saying that the Protection Plan could not continue in the coming months (Córdoba, 2020; Solano, 2020).

On the other hand, the country has also been under constant pressure, as elsewhere, to revive its economy after the initial restrictive responses to the pandemic. Associated with this, there has been growing criticism from different social groups (unions, small and medium entrepreneurs, social organizations, etc.) about the management of the pandemic, beyond the health aspect. This is mainly reflected in two aspects: first, a drop in popularity for the role of President Alvarado, going from a positive assessment of 65% in April to barely 26% by August (CIEP, 2020). Second, there was a significant increase in social mobilization between July and August, due to the controversial announcement that the government sent a letter of negotiation to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in which it reported that it would include new taxes to generate revenue for the State (Economic Council, 2020; Cota, 2020). Given this information, many social sectors reacted and criticized the government's focus on generating more taxes, instead of reducing other problems such as tax evasion, resulting in several days of social protests throughout the country (Cordero, Barahona and Sibaja, 2020; IIS, 2020). Following this societal pressure, in October, a series of discussion or dialogue tables were announced to resolve differences and brainstorm about "alternative" responses to the multidimensional Covid-19 crisis. These discussion tables were hosted by representatives of the government and were composed of representatives of the private/business sector, unions, cooperatives, agricultural producers, church, university students, municipalities, among others. Therefore, social pressure has been and promises to remain constant during the pandemic and around the adoption of all policy measures in Costa Rica.

Conclusion: An Opportunity for Strengthening Universalism?

The Covid-19 pandemic hit Costa Rica's social security system at not the best time in its history. Although the country is better equipped to face the pandemic than most other countries in Latin America, its historically strong social protection regime has been experiencing erosion for the last three decades and is now facing financial hardship and uncertainty about its future sustainability. This makes the social policy responses to the pandemic of special interest to understand the future.

Costa Rica was quick to react, but later unsure of sustaining that reaction. Direct institutional actions and executive decrees were taken early on in the pandemic's course in the country, while the most substantial changes have been legislative measures. The measures took two paths. First, like in other countries, new measures were implemented in explicit response to Covid-19. Second, the continuity of the country's universal social security system was guaranteed and strengthened. All measures were intended to prepare or strengthen the public healthcare system or to alleviate the economic burden the lockdown measures entailed for many families.

We analyzed whether the responses in three selected policy sectors were designed in such a way that they strengthen universalism. In social assistance, not universal (by definition), the aim has been to guarantee the continuity of existing cash and non-cash transfer programs, while creating a new flagship measure: the Protection Plan. While such measures target specific populations, our analysis suggests that they are conceived of as a crucial pillar of the country's universal social security system. In contrast, reforms in the pension system seemed to have a very clear short-term objective: creating the possibility for early withdrawal of accumulated pension funds. Although an extremely important band-aid measure, the policy measures in this sector did little to maintain or advance universalism. Finally, and most encouraging, reforms in the healthcare sector consisted of measures that advanced universalism, from ensuring care for anyone with Covid-19 symptoms and strengthening infra-

structure to several measures for ensuring coverage of health insurance and access to health services despite the economic downturn.

The Covid-19 pandemic positions Costa Rica at a critical juncture in its social policy trajectory. The country's social security system and its flagship institution, the CCSS, have been experiencing erosion since the 1980s, facing increasing difficulties in maintaining the historical commitment to high standard, universal social services. The current situation not only shows the importance of universal social protection, but also presents an opportunity to reflect on and recommit to universalism: high quality, subsidized social protection for all, with solid solidary financing for sustainability. The pandemic, despite all its hardship, may provide an unexpected impulse in this direction.

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Appendix 1: Social Policy Developments in Response to Covid-19 by Policy Area (Costa Rica, 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?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
(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?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	Yes	No	Yes	No	
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	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	

* 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 (Costa Rica, January–September 2020)

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

Law 1		
(1)	Number of law	9807
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Reforma de los artículos 1, 3, 4 y 7 de la Ley N°. 7372, Ley para el financiamiento y desarrollo de la educación técnica profesional, de 22 de noviembre de 1993.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Reform of Articles 1, 3, 4 and 7 of Law No. 7372, Law on the Financing and Development of Vocational Technical Education, November 22, 1993.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	03 May 2018
(5)	Date of law's enactment	16 December 2019
(6)	Date of law's publication	12 February 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No
(10)	Note on (7)-(9	The reform had already been under discussion for more than two years, and was approved prior to the first positive case of Covid-19 in the country.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 1: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Education
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The reform makes it possible to strengthen the financing of vocational technical education programs in the country. This is done by turning the accumulated surplus of the National Learning Institute (INA) over to administrative boards of professional technical colleges, professional community education institutes (IPEC) and integrated adult education centers (Cindea). The amount drawn represents the equivalent of 6% of the regular annual budget. INA is an independent autonomous entity, responsible for preparing people for productive work and generating companies with quality and competitiveness through the provision of training services.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Support for funding allows for increased coverage of professional technical education.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	It does not imply changes in the generosity of existing benefits; but it allows to increase the coverage of the programs.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable

Law 1: Component 1		
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Benefits unchanged. The reform gives more resources to increase coverage.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts to previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable, the legal reform is permanent.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Economic resources are reinvested, there are no associated costs for the State.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 2 (Is an executive decree – not a law)		
(1)	Number of law	Executive decree.[13] Resolution N° MEP-0555-03-2020.
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Distribución de alimentos en centros educativos públicos por la suspensión de lecciones, a raíz de la emergencia nacional por Covid-19
(3)	Name of law (English)	Food program at public schools due to the suspension of lessons, following the national Covid-19 emergency.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	20 March 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	20 March 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	20 March 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?	Not Applicable
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	This measure was taken as a presidential decree in reaction to the suspension of classes as a measure during the Covid-19 pandemic, not as a legislative project in the General Assembly. The suspension of classes in public schools meant that the School Food Program could not reach its beneficiaries. The operation was taken as a direct consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

13 Since it is an executive decree, some cells in this first section do not have the same meaning as with a law. For example, the date of a parliamentary motion.
Reference: Ministry of Public Education (2020) "Update of the general protocol for the distribution of food in public schools due to the suspension of lessons, following the national emergency by Covid-19." Direction of Equity Programs. VII delivery of food packages. Retrieved from: https://www.mep.go.cr/sites/default/files/page/adjuntos/vii-protocolo-general-distribucion-alimentos-centros-educativos-publicos.pdf

Law 2: Component 1 (Is an executive decree – not a law)		
(13)	Policy Area	Family benefis
(14)	Brief description of reform component	In view of the Covid-19 emergency, primary and secondary education was suspended from early March until at least the end of 2020. Many students from families considered socioeconomically vulnerable who are part of the Program of Food and Nutrition for Schoolchildren and Adolescents (PANEA), receive free school meals daily at their educational centers (lunch and some daily meals) in support of their educational process. This new measure guarantees the delivery of these meals and food items (perishable and non-perishable) to these beneficiary students. The meals are delivered directly to their homes, distributed from the educational centers. This ensures access to the School Food Program and ensures that people do not have to mobilize to get their meals, thereby warranting the "stay-at-home" instructions of the Health Ministry.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	As long as the Covid-19 emergency continues and education is virtual.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The measure is meant to guarantee continued coverage of the school food program.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	As long as the Covid-19 emergency continues and education is virtual.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The measure keeps the generosity in existing benefits, but establishes a new modality of delivery.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	No new benefits are introduced. The only difference is the modality of the delivery of free meals and food items (directly to the students' houses).
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts of previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not estimated.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The amount of the monthly food package cost per student is between CRC 10,907 and 11,322 (about EUR 16 per student). However, this cost was the normal cost of the program, so the decree implies an extra expense which constitutes the transportation cost of the delivery to students' homes, for which there is no concrete cost estimate.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 3		
(1)	Number of law	9824
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Reforma del artículo 12 de la ley general de salud número 5395 del 30 de octubre de 1973 y sus reformas, para proteger a la mujer embarazada, antes, durante y después del parto.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Reform of Article 12 of the General Health Law No. 5395 of 30 October 1973 and its reforms, to protect pregnant women before, during and after childbirth.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	01 November 2018
(5)	Date of law's enactment	21 January 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	21 March 2020

Law 3		
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The measure had already been under discussion for more than a year before the Covid-19 pandemic.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 3: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Healthcare
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The reform of Article 12 of the General Health Law allows for the strengthening of the protection of pregnant women against gynecological-obstetric violence. This is to ensure adequate medical care at the hospital level in the country for pregnant women. The rights of pregnant women were confirmed, such as receiving cordial and respectful treatment from medical officials, receiving timely and personalized attention, and receiving clear information about the different treatments, diagnoses, prognoses or possible medical interventions. The reform establishes care protocols for pregnant women and in this way humanizes health services, where pregnant women can have information about the form and conditions of labor, birth and postpartum, breastfeeding, immediate attachment and responsible care of the newborn. The protection of pregnant women against gynecological-obstetric violence needed to be strengthened in the country as it had been the subject of complaints in the past.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	The reform is established on a permanent basis.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Coverage in the country for the care of pregnant women is universal, through the public healthcare service, before and after this reform.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The legislative reform does not change the generosity of existing benefits, only strengthens the protection of pregnant women.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The protection of pregnant women against gynecological-obstetric violence was already implicit in the health law, but it is now explicitly expressed in this law to ensure compliance.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts to previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable, the legal reform is permanent.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188

Law 3: Component 1		
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	There are no associated costs for the State.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 4		
(1)	Number of law	9832
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Autorización de reducción de jornadas de trabajo ante la Declaratoria de Emergencia Nacional.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Authorization for the reduction of working hours in light of the National Emergency Declaration.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	18 March 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	21 March 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	23 March 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?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The authorization was given as a reaction to the projected economic losses by companies in the private sector following the Declaration of a State of Emergency regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, and the ensuing threat of mass unemployment (companies firing employees as a reaction to the economic downturn).
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 4: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The law allows private sector employers to reduce the working hours (and consequently, the salaries) of their employees by up to fifty 50%, if the company's profits were reduced by at least 20%, compared to the same month last year. The company must supply proof for the profit decrease due to the Covid-19 pandemic, by means of a sworn and authenticated declaration. The explicit purpose of the law is to "preserve the employment of workers, when the gross income of the companies is affected due to a declaration of national emergency." It was argued that enabling the option to reduce working hours was a viable option to avoid mass layoffs as a result of the economic losses from the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, this was a way of providing companies with support to keep their losses as low as possible, due to the impacts of the economic crisis that accompanied the health crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic. Noteworthy: A proposal for a law to reduce working hours in the public sector was also presented. However, to date it has not even been voted on by the Plenary, due, among other things, to flaws in its approach.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Retrenchment
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Three months, extendable for up to two equal periods.

Law 4: Component 1		
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The salaries of people who saw their working hours reduced suffered a retrenchment.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Retrenchment
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Fix-term
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Three months, extendable for up to two equal periods.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The reduction of working hours and salaries is temporary, for a period of three months, extendable for up to two equal periods. This is as long as the economic losses from the pandemic continue for the company. This reduction of working hours has implications for the payment of labor guarantees such as the Christmas bonus *(Aguinaldo)* – which is calculated on the basis of the average yearly wage – or layoff payments, which are now calculated from the worker's cut salary.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	No new benefits are provided.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Yes
(28)	Note on (27)	It is a temporary reduction, not a total cut to the salary.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not estimated
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Not Applicable
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 5		
(1)	Number of law	9820
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Ley para fortalecer el combate a la pobreza.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Law to strengthen the fight against poverty.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	17 January 2019
(5)	Date of law's enactment	03 February 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	24 March 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The law had already been under discussion for more than a year.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 5: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Articles 4, 9 and 13 of Law 9326, Tax on Motels and Similar Places, are reformed so that the funds coming from this tax are destined to social assistance programs. Fund administered by the Joint Institute of Social Assistance (IMAS), which is the institution in charge of fighting the problem of extreme poverty in the country, focusing human and economic resources to work on the national plan to fight poverty. Motels and related businesses must be up to date with the IMAS payments in order to carry out procedures with State institutions, such as: obtaining a tax exemption or incentive, public procurement processes, concession, permit or authorization to exploit goods and services, and to exercise lucrative activity that requires municipal authorization. The closing of an establishment is authorized when it is not registered as a taxpayer or is more than three months late in paying the tax.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The intention of the law is to provide more economic resources to social assistance programs to increase their potential coverage and impact.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	It does not imply changes in the generosity of existing benefits; but it allows to increase the coverage of the programs.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The legislative reform allows for an increase in coverage. Unchanged benefits.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27	There are no cuts to previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Tax collection is a profit for the State and not a cost as such. Likewise, it is a redirection of these resources within the same State, so it does not mean an additional cost for the State.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 6		
(1)	Number of law	9821
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Ley que autoriza el otorgamiento de un segundo bono familiar de vivienda para personas con discapacidad.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Law authorizing the granting of a second housing voucher for families with people with disabilities.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	01 July 2019
(5)	Date of law's enactment	11 February 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	24 March 2020

Law 6		
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The measure had already been under discussion before the Covid-19 pandemic.
(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?	The law is to facilitate access to a second housing allowance, but specifically for people with disabilities who had already received a first allowance. In this way, it impacts both the area of housing and the area of disability.

Law 6: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Housing
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Costa Rica provides through the *Banco Hipotecario de la Vivienda* (*Banhvi*) a housing allowance for people with disabilities or families with disabilities, but they could only be given once to a person or family. The reform allows the granting of a second family housing allowance, in special cases. This is in cases where, due to a natural disaster, fortuitous case or force majeure, the house built with initial allowance and granted to people with disabilities, was lost. Likewise, in cases where it is necessary to remodel, expand or improve the house, to maintain or improve the quality of life of the family or person with disabilities in that house. The second allowance only applies if the family or person still meets the requirements to qualify for the grant.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	It does not include new people, as it consists of an extension of a second allowance for justified cases: i.e. families that need a new allowance because of the beforementioned reasons.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	This second housing allowance allows for improvements in the housing of the beneficiary persons with disabilities, or the provision of a new house if they lost the first one for the established reasons.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The benefits do not vary.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts to previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not available
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable, the legal reform is permanent.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law

Law 6: Component 1		
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Conditions for housing vary and cannot be easily estimated, as some may require repairs and others total reconstruction for example. The destinations for this possible second housing allowance come from the normal *Banco Hipotecario de la Vivienda (Banhvi)* budget line for these purposes and do not mean an additional cost for the State.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	partially

Law 6: Component 2		
(13)	Policy Area	Long-term care and disability
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The housing allowance provided is exclusively for people with disabilities or families with disabilities. The reform allows the granting of a second family housing allowance in special cases and that only applies if the family or person still meets the requirements to qualify for the grant.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	It does not increase coverage (as it does not include new people, but is meant as an extension to the first allowance with a second one in specific cases), but it does increase sufficiency (more funds to meet demands).
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The reform allows for the expansion of benefits for the population with disabilities who had benefited from an initial housing allowance.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The benefits do not vary.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts to previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable, the legal reform is permanent.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The destinations for this possible second housing allowance come from the normal *Banco Hipotecario de la Vivienda (Banhvi)* budget line for these purposes and do not mean an additional cost for the State.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	partially

Law 7		
(1)	Number of law	9836
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Fortalecimiento financiero del Régimen No contributivo de la Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social (CCSS).
(3)	Name of law (English)	Financial strengthening of the Non-contributory Regimen of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS).
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	13 January 2019
(5)	Date of law's enactment	26 March 2020

Law 7		
(6)	Date of law's publication	27 March 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Don't know
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The measure had already been under discussion for more than a year, but with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting pressure on the public healthcare system, it was reinvigorated as a way to strengthen the social security system in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite this, at no time was it made explicit that it was for these purposes that the legislative reform would be approved. The Costa Rican pension system has four pillars. Three are of a contributory nature: 1) the basic contributory pension (obligatory contributions of the worker to the system to finance it), 2) the obligatory complementary pension and 3) the voluntary complementary pension (which are obligatory and voluntary savings, respectively, made by the worker for individual enjoyment). The fourth pillar is the non-contributory pension, which is an assistance granted by the social security to those people who have not contributed to any regime (due to lack of resources or a socially vulnerable situation) and meet the requirements to be able to receive it. This reform reinforces this non-contributory pension.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 7: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Pensions
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Legislative reform that modifies Article 4 of the Framework Law on Special Contribution of Pension Systems, so that the resources collected through the tax on the highest pensions in the country can be reinvested in the non-contributory pension fund. This is a follow-up to the "Law to redesign and redistribute resources for the social solidarity contribution" (Nº9796), which was approved in December 2019, and which applied solidarity contributions to three thousand retirees who had pensions of more than CRC 2 million (around EUR 2,800), generating annual savings of more than CRC 12 million (around EUR 16,900). The law in question directs the funds to the population in conditions of poverty, extreme poverty and multidimensional poverty, through non-contributory pensions. Non-contributory pensions are transfers in the form of a basic pension coverage for elderly Costa Ricans and legal residents positioned below the poverty line, and who do not qualify for any of the other pension or transfer regimes. In that regard, it is a redistribution of funds obtained from the highest pensions to strengthen non-contributory pensions and aims at expanding their coverage and benefits. This was originally intended as a mechanism to combat extreme poverty, but as the processing of the bill and voting coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, it was publicly mentioned as an effort to combat the ensuing adverse economic effects of the pandemic as well.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable

Law 7: Component 1		
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Almost 10,000 elderly adults in poverty will be able to access a pension thanks to the savings of more than three thousand luxury pensions. This means an increase in the coverage of these pensions.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The legislative reform implies that more people may be covered by the non-contributory pension scheme. However, the benefits do not vary, since they are the same.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	No new benefits are added.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	there are no cuts to previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	It is estimated that annually at least CRC 12 million (around EUR 16,900) will be transferred to the non-contributory regime. It is a reinvestment, there are no associated additional costs for the State.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable, the legal reform is permanent.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	News report
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Economic resources are reinvested from high pensions to non-contributory ones, there are no associated costs for the State.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 8 (It is an institutional policy – not a law)		
(1)	Number of law	Agreement of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS).[14]
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Acuerdo de la Junta Directiva de la Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social (CCSS) para ajustar medidas financieras de apoyo durante 2020 ante emergencia nacional
(3)	Name of law (English)	Agreement of the Board of Directors of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS) to adjust financial support measures during 2020 in the face of a national emergency
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion[15]	27 March 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	23 June 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	23 June 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?	Not Applicable

14 Since it is a directive agreement, some cells in this first section do not have the same meaning as with a law. For example, the date of a parliamentary motion.
Reference: CCSS (2020) "CCSS adjusts financial support measures during 2020 in response to national emergency". Retrieved from: https://www.ccss.sa.cr/noticias/servicios_noticia?ccss-ajusta-medidas-financieras-de-apoyo-durante-2020-ante-emergencia-nacional

15 The Agreement was made on 23 June, combining a series of small measures that were being taken by the CCSS since March on a month-to-month basis. With this Agreement, it was decided to extend these measures until the end of 2020.

Law 8 (It is an institutional policy – not a law)		
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	It is an institutional policy of the CCSS that brings together several small measures that were being taken at the beginning of the pandemic, to set them for the entire year 2020.
(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?	The Costa Rican Social Security Fund is responsible for two insurance regimes: social security (pensions) and health insurance. Contributions to the CCSS imply insurance for both schemes. These measures were implemented to ensure coverage of the population in both schemes.

Law 8: Component 1 (It is an institutional policy – not a law)		
(13)	Policy Area	Pensions
(14)	Brief description of reform component	For pensions, the Costa Rican Social Security Fund took the following actions: First, it facilitated the option of early payment of pensions in the months of April and May, for people who were in the non-contributory regime and in the old-age, disability and death regime (IVM) (two of the main regimes of the system, covering approximately 30% of the total population). The possibility of early pension payments frees up economic resources for people in need. Second, it took a series of measures to facilitate overdue payments of contributions (for people in debt with the CCSS) to the pension system. These payment arrangements allow people to resolve their debtor situation of overdue contributions to the CCSS in the middle of a difficult economic situation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	In June, it was decided that the measures would be extended to the end of 2020.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The measures were proposed to maintain access and coverage of social security services.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Fix-term
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	In June, it was decided that the measures would be extended to the end of 2020.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Especially the mechanisms for overdue payment arrangements allow people to normalize their situation with the pension system, avoiding that their debt with the CCSS grows further in the midst of the economic crisis caused by the pandemic.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Unchanged benefits
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts to previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	The measure to reduce the minimum contribution base is reported to have implied a reduction in the CCSS income of approximately CRC 7 billion per month (around EUR 10 million).
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable, the measures are only for 2020.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	News report
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The early payment of pensions does not imply additional costs for the State. For the overdue payment arrangements, as yet it is too early to estimate the costs implied for the State.

Law 8: Component 1 (It is an institutional policy – not a law)		
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 8: Component 2 (It is an institutional policy - not a law)		
(13)	Policy Area	Healthcare
(14)	Brief description of reform component	As a second component, the CCSS took measures to allow the reduction of the minimum contribution base by 75% for employers, and by 25% for independent workers and voluntary insured persons, with respect to reported wages in February 2020. Reductions were made automatically. The implied difference of this measure (i.e. the application of these minimum contribution bases for employers, independent workers and voluntarily insured – the original amounts) are billed to the State. The measures were designed to try to maintain health insurance coverage.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	In June, it was decided that the measures would be extended to the end of 2020.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Reducing the minimum contribution base makes it possible to maintain and eventually expand coverage, while lowering its costs.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	It does not incorporate more generosity of existing benefits; it reduces the cost of contributions.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Unchanged benefits
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts to previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	For the application of these measures, the State budgeted CRC 8.187 million in the CCSS (around EUR 11.5 million).
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable, the measure is only for 2020.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	News report
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The State assumes the reductions in contributions.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 9		
(1)	Number of law	9827
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Resguardo del interés superior del niño y la niña en los procesos de adopción
(3)	Name of law (English)	Safeguarding the best interest of the child in adoption processes.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	23 October 2018
(5)	Date of law's enactment	13 February 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	31 March 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No

Law 9		
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The measure had already been under discussion for more than a year before the Covid-19 pandemic.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 9: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Other (Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection (e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection)
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The law commits the institutional authorities in charge of adoption processes, the *Patronato Nacional de la Infancia* (PANI) and the Judiciary, to coordinate their actions to speed up the adoption processes of minors. There was a need to make these processes more agile, as they had been the subject of complaints in the past. The measure is reported to also imply a paradigmatic shift in these adoption processes, since children with certain special needs/conditions will not be allocated a "family" but will be sought a "home" that can meet these special needs of the child.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	The measure is established on a permanent basis.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The adoption processes are speeded up, but the coverage granted is not extended.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The measure does not change the generosity of existing benefits, it speeds up the adoption processes.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	No new benefits are added.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts to previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable, the measure is permanent.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	There are no associated costs for the State.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	Don't know

Law 10		
(1)	Number of law	9837
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Reforma del artículo 378 y adición de un artículo 378 bis a la ley 5395, ley general de salud, de 30 de octubre de 1973.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Reform of Article 378 and addition of an Article 378 bis to Law 5395, the General Health Law of 30 October 1973.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	31 March 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	03 April 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	03 April 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?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	Allows the Ministry of Health to impose sanctions in the form of a fine on persons who do not follow the health protocols and rules established in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 10: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Healthcare
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The law allows the Ministry of Health to impose penalties in the form of fines on persons who do not follow pandemic health orders. Specifically, those who disregard a Covid-19 isolation order which forces people not to leave their homes to avoid infecting other people. Any person who has an isolation order because of a suspected Covid-19 case, either because of contact with a person who tested positive or because of suspicious symptoms, is subject to a fine if they leave their home while the isolation order is in effect. This applies to all cases, with exceptions when the person is homeless or when an emergency situation requires them to leave their home, for which case-by-case evaluations will be conducted.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	As long as the Covid-19 pandemic emergency continues.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	This was a supportive measure to facilitate the work of the Ministry of Health in dealing with the pandemic.
(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)	It does not change any benefits.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	It does not change any benefits.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	It does not cut existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.

Law 10: Component 1		
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not estimated cost.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The resources obtained by the fines will be remitted to a special account in a common fund of the State (*Caja única del Estado*), which will be administered by the Ministry of Health, to attend to the national emergency situations that arise.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 11		
(1)	Number of law	9839
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Entrega del Fondo de Capitalización Laboral a trabajadores afectados por crisis económica.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Delivery of the Labor Capitalization Fund to workers affected by the economic crisis.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	25 March 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	03 April 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	04 April 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?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	This legislative reform was made in order to offer people who were fired from their jobs or had their work hours reduced because of the Covid-19 pandemic, an option to access to their restricted savings prematurely.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 11: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Pensions
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Legislative reform allowing for premature withdrawal of funds from the pension fund known as the Labor Capitalization Fund (FCL), if a worker was fired or suspended from work due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The FCL is a fund where employers make obligatory contributions, so employees can receive income in case of future unemployment. Normally it becomes available after five continuous years of work with the same employer, or when a worker dies, in which case the money is paid to the worker's family. This reform allows people to withdraw these savings without necessarily fulfilling those requirements, as long as they have suffered a suspension or have been fired from their jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic emergency.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Initially for three months, but can be continued as long as the Covid-19 pandemic emergency continues. This situation occurred and the law was extended at least until the end of the year 2020.

Law 11: Component 1		
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	It allows an early withdrawal of the funds, but only for those people who were already part of the pension system and withdrawing the amount according to their contributions. Therefore, it does not increase coverage.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Retrenchment
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not applicable.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	At the time of withdrawal from the fund, the benefits do not vary since it corresponds to the accumulated savings of each contributor. However, part of the logic of the FCL is to accumulate interest and premature withdrawal implies a decrease in such earnings.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The legislative reform facilitates early access to individual funds, but does not generate new benefits.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	The measure does not cut existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not estimated
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Since it is a withdrawal that each person can choose to make or not, there is no precise estimate of the total amount of the costs implied. However, the FCL is a fund that is mandatory by law to be funded by employers. So, there are no additional costs associated with the reform other than the (future) interest earnings the Fund loses if affiliates withdraw their individual funds early.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 12 (It is an official statement – not a law)		
(1)	Number of law	Official Statement of the National Council of People with Disabilities (CONAPDIS).[16]
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Centro especial para la atención de personas con discapacidad que enfermen de Covid-19.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Special center for the care of people with disabilities who fall ill with Covid-19.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	11 April 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	11 April 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	11 April 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?	Not Applicable

16 Since it is an official statement of CONAPDIS, some cells in this first section do not have the same meaning as with a law. For example, the date of a parliamentary motion.
Reference: Mora, A (2020) "CONAPDIS enables care center for people with disabilities who fall ill with Covid-19" Retrieved from: https://delfino.cr/2020/04/conapdis-habilita-centro-de-atencion-de-personas-con-discapacidad-que-enfermen-de-covid-19.

Law 12 (It is an official statement – not a law)		
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The operation was taken as a direct consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 12: Component 1 (It is an official statement – not a law)		
(13)	Policy Area	Long-term care and disability
(14)	Brief description of reform component	A Special Center for the Care of Persons with Disabilities with Covid-19 was established to provide immediate and quality care to people with disabilities, transforming and adapting a residential home of the National Council of People with Disabilities (CONAPDIS). For that purpose, an internal budget was redirected from the cut in other internal expenses. The Center is specifically for people with disabilities in situations of abandonment, who are on or are willing to enter the program of Family Coexistence of CONAPDIS. It has a capacity to receive up to 26 people with disabilities who are suspected or positive cases of Covid-19. Even if the people with disabilities do not present symptoms of Covid-19, but they were exposed to risk factors (because they were in hospital or because they are homeless and live on the street) they can be admitted to the Specialized Center. This is to limit the possibility of contagion in their homes/situations and enable the possibility of carrying out preventive quarantine in the Covid-19 center.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The creation of this Specialized Center allows for increased coverage for the population with disabilities.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Building this specialized center itself is an expansion in the generosity of existing benefits.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Indefinite
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The specialized coverage that can be given through this new center introduces new benefits for population with disabilities.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts of previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	The staffing of the Center required the direct hiring of residential, nursing and medical services personnel, for an amount of CRC 27,900,040 (approx. EUR 39,500).
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not estimated.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	News report
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The initial budget only guarantees the first month of operation of the Center. In order to comply with an extended period, it was stipulated that it will be necessary to draw from the fund of the National Commission for Risk Prevention and Emergency Care (CNE).

Law 12: Component 1 (It is an official statement – not a law)		
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 13		
(1)	Number of law	9840
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Protección a las personas trabajadoras durante la emergencia por la enfermedad Covid-19
(3)	Name of law (English)	Protection of workers during the emergency of the Covid-19 disease.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	02 April 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	22 April 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	22 April 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?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	This law, and the subsidy it enables, were created exclusively as a result of the economic and employment crisis brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Apart from its official legal name, it was more commonly known as *Plan Proteger* (Protection Plan / or Plan Protect).
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 13: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Seven articles establish the creation by law of a temporary subsidy for addressing the condition of unemployment, temporary suspension of the work contract or reduction of working hours, for workers in the private sector, informal workers and independent workers who have seen their income affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to note that prior to the creation of the Law, Executive Decree No. 42305-MTSS-MDHIS had been issued for the creation of the subsidy (officially published on 17 April 2020, five days before the Law). The Law reaffirmed the provisions of that Decree. There were basically five subtypes of people who could apply for this subsidy: 1) those who were fired because of the pandemic, 2) those who had their employment contract suspended because of the pandemic, 3) self-employed workers affected by Covid-19, 4) temporary or informal workers affected by Covid-19, and 5) people with reduced working hours. To access the subsidy, those who qualify must apply through an official website (protect.go.cr) that asks them to fill out a form with personal information and copies (if applicable) of the letter of suspension or cessation of their employment. For the independent workers, this last requirement was not necessary. Each application was received and studied by the institutional authorities to determine whether they would grant the subsidy to that person and the amount to be received, which varies between CRC 62,500 (around EUR 89) and CRC 125,000 (around EUR 178) per month for a period of 3 months.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes

Law 13: Component 1		
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Three months, with the option to be extended once for a maximum period of three more months.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The subsidy was originally granted for a period of three months (April to July), and later extended for three more months (August to October), already reaching six months of operation. It was projected that in the first three months, the subsidy would cover 612,000 people (in 68,000 households) who live in poverty conditions. After four months of its implementation it was reported that the subsidy had effectively reached a total of 588,820 people. The last available report, as of September 2020, indicates that the subsidy has reached a total of 684,735 people.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Fix-term
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	It was stipulated to last a maximum of six months (two consecutive three-month periods).
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The six months have already expired. Currently, there is discussion on the possibility to extend the subsidy for a longer period of time.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	It was stipulated to last a maximum of six months (two consecutive three-month periods).
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The subsidy is a completely new and exclusive social policy mechanism to assist people who became unemployed due to the Covid-19 pandemic or saw their income significantly reduced.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	The measure does not cut existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	The initiative originally had a budget of CRC 296,000 million (nearly EUR 420 million), and then received an additional CRC 90,000 million (around EUR 127 million) for the second period.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	It is not stipulated, at least for the moment, that the subsidy can be continued in 2021.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The reported amounts were shared by the government of Costa Rica.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 14 (It is an executive decree – not a law)		
(1)	Number of law	Executive Decree.[17]
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Estrategia para atención integral de persona adulta mayor por Covid-19.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Strategy for comprehensive care of the elderly during Covid-19.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	24 April 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	24 April 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	24 April 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes

17 Since it is an Executive Decree, some cells in this first section do not have the same meaning as with a law. For example, the date of a parliamentary motion.
Reference: Government of Costa Rica (April 24th, 2020b) "Government launches strategy for comprehensive care of the elderly during Covid-19". Retrieved from: https://www.presidencia.go.cr/comunicados/2020/04/gobierno-lanza-estrategia-para-atencion-integral-de-persona-adulta-mayor-por-covid-19/

Law 14 (It is an executive decree – not a law)		
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Not Applicable
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The strategy is implemented as a direct consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 14: Component 1 (It is an executive decree – not a law)		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The government implemented a strategy to protect and attend to the needs of the elderly across the country in the face of the emergency of Covid-19. The measures range from the approach to mental health to the attention on health and food services. This is done through a telephone follow-up and personal accompaniment of the elderly population to find out their health situation and basic needs, as well as the enabling of a telephone line (1322) for psychological counselling. Once their health situation and socioeconomic condition have been identified, several institutions take action. The Costa Rica Social Security Fund (CCSS) brings medicines to elderly people's homes, for which purpose the local governments made available more than 60 vehicles, in addition to municipal officials throughout the country. The Joint Institute for Social Assistance (IMAS) enabled the delivery of an emergency subsidy of CRC 125,000 (about EUR 176) for elderly people who request socioeconomic support to meet their basic needs. Finally, the National Emergency Commission (CNE), with the support of the Municipal Committees, brings food to the most vulnerable elderly based on data provided by National Council of the Elderly (CONAPAM).
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	The strategy is implemented for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The strategy should expand, or at least reinforce the coverage of the elderly population.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable.
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Specialized attention is provided for psychological, economic and social support to the elderly population during the Covid-19 pandemic.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	The strategy is implemented for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic.
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The strategy constitutes specialized attention that previously was not available to the elderly, and the delivery of food and mental health care is made more accessible for the elderly, in the face of the pandemic.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts of previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not estimated.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Not Applicable

Law 14: Component 1 (It is an executive decree – not a law)		
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 15 (It is an official statement – not a law)		
(1)	Number of law	Official statement of the Presidency of the Republic.[18]
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Operativo de asistencia humanitaria ante emergencia.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Emergency humanitarian assistance operation.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	18 May 2019
(5)	Date of law's enactment	18 May 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	18 May 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?	Not Applicable
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The operation was taken as a direct consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 15: Component 1 (It is an official statement – not a law)		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Humanitarian assistance operation promoted by the National Commission for Risk Prevention and Emergency Care (CNE), the National Directorate for Community Development (Dinadeco) and the National Confederation of Development Associations (Conadeco). Through local associations in the country, the measures propose the collection of information on families in need of the transfer of food packages and cleaning kits to their houses. The operation also enables local associations to create communal attention centers, communal dining rooms and communal food banks, if necessary. Likewise, the organizations are authorized to use resources from the Revolving Fund (2% of Income Tax) for attending to the emergency. Specifically, for the purchase of basic foodstuffs, cleaning kits, payment of fuel, public services, supervision and cleaning in the community care centers and community dining rooms. This as part of a plan for strengthening and expanding institutional and local capacities to address the needs of vulnerable populations in the face of the emergency.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	The operation is implemented for an indefinite duration as long as the Covid-19 pandemic continues.

18 Since it is an official statement of the Presidency of the Republic, some cells in this first section do not have the same meaning as with a law. For example, the date of a parliamentary motion.
Reference: Government of Costa Rica (May 2nd, 2020d) "3 thousand development partnerships strengthen emergency humanitarian assistance operations"- Retrieved from: https://www.presidencia.go.cr/comunicados/2020/05/3-mil-asociaciones-de-desarrollo-fortalecen-operativo-de-asistencia-humanitaria-ante-emergencia/

Law 15: Component 1 (It is an official statement – not a law)		
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Especially the strengthening and expanding of institutional and local capacities allows for an expanded coverage of existing benefits through the communal associations.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The communal associations have more power and resources to expand the generosity of the existing benefits that they facilitate.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Indefinite
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The transfer of food packages and cleaning kits to their houses are new benefits that the operation facilitates for needy families.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts of previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not estimated.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	News report
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	In addition to the financial contributions made by the State (through community organizations), the operation is part of the strategy *"Enlace de Esfuerzos"* and the publicity campaign *"Con vos podemos"*, which request voluntary, economic, material and human support from citizens and the private sector, in order to fulfill the objectives.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 16		
(1)	Number of law	9904
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Reforma de la entrada en vigencia de la ley 9747, código procesal de familia, de 23 de octubre de 2019.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Reform of the entry into force of law 9747, family procedural code, of 23 October 2019.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	20 April 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	15 September 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	29 September 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	Not linked to the pandemic by Covid 19, consists of postponing the entry in force of the Family Procedural Code
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 16: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Family benefis
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The Law postpones the entry into force of the Family Procedural Code to 1 January 2022, which was planned to come into force on 1 October 2020. This is because staff and users have not been trained in the proper use of the new instrument. The Family Procedural Code proposes a procedure to guarantee that the norms regarding family matters established in the Law are effectively followed. To this end, it grants faculties to the Supreme Court of Justice to apply, interpret and integrate the procedural norm in a timely and fair manner. Therefore, its application needs to be accompanied by a process of training and education that to date has not been carried out.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	It postpones the entry into force to 1 January 2022.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	No changes are expected
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	No changes are expected
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The law does not address the possibility of introducing new benefits.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	No existing benefits are cut.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not applicable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	There are no associated costs for the State.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 17		
(1)	Number of law	9903
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Reforma parcial de la ley 9617, fortalecimiento de las transferencias monetarias condicionadas del programa Avancemos, de 2 de octubre de 2018, y de la ley 5662, ley de desarrollo social y asignaciones familiares, de 23 de diciembre de 1974, y derogatoria de la ley7658, creación del fondo nacional de becas, de 11 de febrero de 1997.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Partial reform of Law 9617, strengthening of the conditional cash transfers of the *Avancemos* program, of 2 October 2018, and of Law 5662, law on social development and family allowances, of 23 December 1974, and repealing Law 7658, creation of the national scholarship fund, of 11 February 1997.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	09 April 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	15 July 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	30 September 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No

Law 17		
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Don't know
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	It was an internal organizational readjustment of the institutions offering educational scholarships that had been discussed prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it was mentioned (not explicitly in the law) that it was urgent to take action also to have more resources for the Covid-19 pandemic emergency.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 17: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Education
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The Law eliminates institutional duplication of grants by closing the National Scholarship Fund (FONABE), which granted scholarships to primary and preschool students, and centralizes all scholarships and transfers in the Joint Institute of Social Assistance (IMAS), for the creation of a single system of conditional cash transfers. In addition, the law provides for several transitionary articles to ensure that current beneficiaries are not affected in the future. All individuals who received post-secondary or merit-based scholarships from the closed Fund will keep that benefit until the end of their current school year, or for up to five years. Likewise, FONABE officers must pass to the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) or, if that is impossible, their employment relationship must be terminated. In addition, it sets the rules for the transfer of the database and other necessary administrative procedures.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	This is a permanent measure
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	No changes in scholarship coverage are expected, and the grants awarded by the closed Fund, were guaranteed to remain in force.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	This is a permanent measure
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	No changes in benefits are stipulated.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	This is a permanent measure
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The law does not address the possibility of introducing new benefits or scholarships.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	No existing benefits are cut.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	It is an internal readjustment, which does not imply additional costs. Actually, it is estimated that the closure of FONABE will allow savings exceeding CRC 1,000 million per year (around EUR 1.412 million).

Law 17: Component 1		
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	completely

Law 18		
(1)	Number of law	9820
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Ley para la Conciliación de la Vida familiar y laboral
(3)	Name of law (English)	Law for the Conciliation of Family and Work Life.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	31 October 2018
(5)	Date of law's enactment	28 May 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	11 August 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	No
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	No
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	No
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The measure had already been under discussion for more than a year before the Covid-19 pandemic.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 18: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Other (Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection (e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection)
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The Law establishes that the State will elaborate, execute and evaluate a public policy that promotes, in public institutions, in the private sector, in families and other instances of society, awareness as well as training and the adoption of concrete measures that make it possible to reconcile family life with working life, and family co-responsibility. In other words, the policy to be developed should guide actions and goals to achieve a better balance between the time the worker spends in his or her workplace and at home. This allows them to exercise both functions successfully and to assume the responsibilities due to each role. Additionally, it establishes 9 March as the National Day of Reconciliation of Family Life with Work Life and Family Stewardship.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Don't know
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	The measure is established on a permanent basis.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The policy that the State is required to elaborate should add or (at the least) reinforce benefits in order to reconcile family life with working life.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Don't know
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Although there is no policy in place yet, the bill could encourage policy to add to or reinforce existing benefits.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Don't know
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Indefinite
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable

Law 18: Component 1		
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Policy could add to or reinforce existing benefits.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	There are no cuts of previously existing benefits.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not applicable, the measure is permanent.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	For the moment, it is not possible to establish costs for the State; because the National Policy has not yet been designed and implemented.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	hardly at all

Law 19		
(1)	Number of law	9886
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Ley para que el Consejo Nacional de la Persona Adulta Mayor haga frente a la emergencia nacional por el Covid-19.
(3)	Name of law (English)	Law for the National Council of the Elderly to deal with the national emergency during Covid-19.
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	27 March 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	29 July 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	21 August 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?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	Budgetary support for the National Council of the Elderly (CONAPAM) in order to support vulnerable elderly populations in general, through a multidimensional plan, and specifically allows to use resources for the Covid-19 pandemic's effects on the elderly.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 19: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Long-term care and disability
(14)	Brief description of reform component	It allows the National Council of the Elderly (CONAPAM), to use revenues from taxes on liquor, beer and cigarettes (Law 7972) and from the Social Development and Family Allowances Law (No. 5672) to finance an Integral Plan for the Protection of the Elderly, as well as to collaborate in the protection of other vulnerable populations such as children at social risk, abandoned disabled people, or the rehabilitation of alcoholics and drug addicts. Also, to support the care of older adults in need, abandonment, or destitution, by programs conducted by public or private institutions. Finally, the Law allows the National Council of the Elderly to modify those budgetary items it deems necessary to address the Covid-19 pandemic emergency.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion

Law 19: Component 1		
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Budget and resource modifications are warranted for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic emergency.
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The additional economic and budgetary resources allow the National Council of the Elderly to increase coverage of beneficiaries with its programs and institutional actions.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Don't know
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The law gives the National Council of the Elderly more resources to sustain its programs and reach more beneficiaries but does not explicitly address the possibility of expanding benefits.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	*If fix-term*, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The law does not explicitly address the possibility of introducing new benefits.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	No existing benefits are cut.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Cost estimate unavailable.
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not estimated
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	CRC 188
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	It is an increase in the National Council's budget, redirecting tax incomes. The Law does not specify detailed expense item groups on which the extra funds must be spent.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Appendix 3: Legislative and institutional social policy measures adopted in Costa Rica, not explicitly designed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Date of publication	Policy Area	Measure	Brief explanation
10 February	Education	Law 9807. Reform of Articles 1, 3, 4 and 7 of Law No. 7372, Law on the Financing and Development of Vocational Technical Education, 22 November 1993.	The reform makes it possible to strengthen the financing of vocational technical education programs in the country. This is done by turning the accumulated surplus of the National Learning Institute (INA) over to administrative boards of professional technical colleges, professional community education institutes (IPEC) and integrated adult education centers (Cindea).
21 March	Healthcare	Law 9824. Reform of Article 12 of the General Health Law No. 5395 of 30 October 1973 and its reforms, to protect pregnant women before, during and after childbirth.	The reform of Article 12 of the General Health Law allows for the strengthening of the protection of pregnant women against gynecological-obstetric violence. This is to ensure adequate medical care at the hospital level in the country for pregnant women.
24 March	Social assistance	Law 9820. Law to strengthen the fight against poverty.	Articles 4, 9 and 13 of Law 9326, Tax on Motels and Similar Places, are reformed so that the funds coming from this tax are destined to social assistance programs. Fund administered by the Joint Institute of Social Assistance (IMAS), which is the institution in charge of fighting the problem of extreme poverty in the country, focusing human and economic resources to work on the national plan to fight poverty.
24 March	Housing / Disability	Law 9821. Law authorizing the granting of a second housing voucher for families with people with disabilities.	Costa Rica provides through *the Banco Hipotecario de la Vivienda (Banhvi)* a housing allowance to people with disabilities or families with disabilities, but they could only be given once to a person or family. The reform allows the granting of a second family housing allowance, in special cases.
27 March	Pensions	Law 9836. Financial strengthening of the Non-contributory Regimen of the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS).	Legislative reform that modifies Article 4 of the Framework Law on Special Contribution of Pension Systems, so that the resources collected through the tax on the highest pensions in the country can be reinvested in the non-contributory pension fund.
31 March	Other	Law 9827. Safeguarding the best interest of the child in adoption processes.	The law commits the institutional authorities in charge of adoption processes, the *Patronato Nacional de la Infancia* (PANI) and the Judiciary, to coordinate their actions to speed up the adoption processes of minors.
11 August	Other	Law 9862. Law for the Conciliation of Family and Work Life.	The Law establishes that The State will elaborate, execute and evaluate a public policy that promotes, in public institutions, the private sector, in families and other instances of society, awareness, guide actions and goals to achieve a better balance between the time the worker spends in his or her workplace and at home.
29 September	Family benefits	Law 9904 Decree. Reform of the entry into force of law 9747, family procedural code, of 23 October 2019.	The Law postpones the entry into force of the Family Procedural Code to 1 January 2022, which was planned to come into force on 1 October 2020. This is because staff and users have not been trained in the proper use of the new instrument. The Family Procedural Code proposes a procedure to guarantee that the norms regarding family matters established in the Law are effectively followed.

Date of publication	Policy Area	Measure	Brief explanation
30 September	Education	Law 9903. Partial reform of Law 9617, strengthening of the conditional cash transfers of the *Avancemos* program, of 2 October 2018, and of Law 5662, law of social development and family allowances, of 23 December 1974, and repealing Law 7658, creation of the national scholarship fund, of 11 February 1997.	The Law eliminates institutional duplication of grants by closing the National Scholarship Fund (FONABE), which granted scholarships to primary and preschool students, and centralizes all scholarships and transfers in the Joint Institute of Social Assistance (IMAS), for the creation of a single system of conditional cash transfers.

Source: Author´s elaboration.