



Remarks by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Michel on the EU response to the coronavirus crisis

Brussels, 15 April 2020

Bonjour à tout le monde,

Toute l'Union européenne, et de nombreux autres pays en Europe et dans le monde, sont dans une forme de confinement. Les mesures restrictives prises par les États membres ont été cruciales pour réduire le nombre de nouvelles infections. Cela a aidé nos systèmes de santé à faire face, mais ces mesures ont un prix énorme.

Des millions de personnes sont coincées chez elles, trop souvent dans de petits logements, elles doivent jongler entre le télétravail et la vie familiale. Les enfants doivent s'adapter à apprendre à la maison et sont limités dans leurs activités. Les personnes âgées sont isolées pour les protéger.

Et à ces difficultés générales s'ajoute une longue liste de difficultés économiques pour nos citoyens. Les magasins, les restaurants, les usines, ils ont tous fermé. Ils ont perdu la plupart de leurs activités. Le commerce a énormément ralenti partout dans le monde. Les gouvernements utilisent tous les moyens disponibles pour renforcer les systèmes de santé, et pour soutenir les entreprises et les travailleurs indépendants. Tout cela a un coût gigantesque.

Déjà, ces actions représentent dans l'Union européenne près de 3 000 milliards d'euros, et d'autres mesures vont venir, comme le montre le résultat de l'Eurogroupe de la semaine dernière. Dans ce contexte, les autorités publiques doivent évaluer soigneusement le meilleur moment pour commencer à lever les mesures de restriction l'une après l'autre. C'est une tâche très difficile. Les pays de l'Union européenne ont été touchés de manière différente, en ce qui concerne l'intensité et le calendrier de la pandémie.

And therefore, there does not exist one 'size-fits-all' approach, but it has to be a tailor-made approach in every individual Member State.

Heads of State or Government tasked us with a Roadmap to ensure a coordinated exit from the confinement measures. Today we deliver on this request. I want to make sure that this is not, it is not a signal that confinement, containment measures can be lifted as of now, but it intends to provide a frame for Member States' decisions. In general, we recommend a gradual approach. Every action should be continuously monitored, it should be continuously monitored whether the virus flares up again or the spread of the virus stays stable – below a certain threshold. And therefore, our recommendations focus on three main pre-conditions before starting to lift restrictive measures:

The first one is: There should be a sound epidemiological criterion that shows that there is a significant decrease in the spread of the virus over a sustained period of time. The second important pre-condition is – and it is combined to the threshold that is kept with the spread of the virus – that sufficient health system capacity is needed. There needs to be a reserve. This refers not only to the necessity to have intensive care treatment capacity for COVID-19 patients but also for the other patients like the chronically ill or those with other acute diseases.

And the third pre-condition is – and it is self-explaining if you have the threshold of the virus and the capacity in the healthcare system – you need sufficient surveillance and monitoring capacity in the form of large-scale testing.

These pre-conditions are accompanied in this Roadmap by a series of recommendations, to ensure a gradual, consolidated and a coordinated exit across the European Union. For example, just to pick a few: Awareness campaigns should continue to encourage the population to keep up the strong hygiene practices acquired. They are very simple, but they are very effective. Or general measures should progressively be replaced by targeted ones. And the restart of the economic activity should be phased in carefully.

Let me turn to a second point that is the global dimension of this crisis – also and mainly concerning strong countries, but also vulnerable countries. As we all know, the virus knows no borders. It can only be defeated through international cooperation and coordination – what goes for the European Union also goes for the globe. The G20 has made this its focus and I welcome that.

On the health side, the key element is to cooperate and to improve our pandemic preparedness. And this includes how to accelerate the work on diagnostics, on treatments and on the development of a vaccine. And if we have a vaccine, when we have a vaccine, then on the deployment of the vaccine all over the world. This is our collective best shot at beating the virus.

To support this global initiative, funding is needed. And to this end, I decided to host an online pledging conference on 4 May. This will help address the immediate funding gaps to come up with innovative and equitable solutions. We have started the preparations, in cooperation with renowned organisations, such as the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, or the platform CEPI, GAVI, the Wellcome Trust and the Gates Foundation. Obviously, this will be done in close coordination with the WHO. And I hope that countries and organisations all over the world will respond to this call.

And finally, to conclude, let me stress the strong link between a successful recovery from the health crisis and the effectiveness of our economic response. As you know, we have made available significant funds to support health systems, businesses, and the livelihood in general. I welcome the Eurogroup's endorsement last week of the Commission's proposals, in particular the creation of SURE to keep people in jobs, and the flexible use of cohesion funds.


The Eurogroup concluded that 'the next EU MFF will play a central role in the EU economic recovery'. Ich stimme dem voll und ganz zu. Ich habe öfter bereits gesagt, dass Europa einen Marshallplan braucht. Wir werden massive öffentliche und private Investitionen brauchen um die Wirtschaft wieder zu beleben, aufzubauen und um neue Arbeitsplätze zu schaffen und diese Investitionen müssen rasch kommen.

Der Schlüssel dazu ist ein kraftvoller neuer europäischer Haushalt. Der Haushalt hat Vorteile. Er genießt das Vertrauen aller Mitgliedstaaten, er ist transparent, die Regeln sind klar, er hat sich bewährt als Innovationsmotor, und er hat sich bewährt als Investitionsinstrument. Aber dieser neue siebenjährige Haushalt muss sich deutlich von den bisherigen unterscheiden. Er wird anders sein, er wird die europäische Antwort auf die Corona-Krise sein müssen. Er muss in den ersten Jahren enorm viel leisten: Er muss den gemeinsamen Markt wieder in Schwung bringen, eine Fragmentierung dieses gemeinsamen Marktes verhindern, und er muss die wirtschaftliche Widerstandskraft Europas stärken. Er wird Investitionen fördern müssen in unsere Zukunftstechnologien – das sind die digitalen, das sind die umweltfreundlichen Technologien – auf denen unser Wohlstand in der Zukunft beruhen wird.

Thank you.

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