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European solidarity at stake COVID-19 crisis and EU's response

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Little has yet been said, since most countries are barely in the middle of their efforts responding to the covid-19 outbreak. Though it is a common feeling that a range of structural establishments on economic and social policies, that used to be the core of decision-making in European politics, are already into contest. A growing number of economic analysts stress out that the following repercussions of the pandemic are expected to outreach those of the 2008's crisis, drawing our attention to the free fall of economic activity that will most certainly lead to millions of job positions at risk.

While still in the combat against the spread of covid-19, a number of existing insufficiencies concerning member-states' health systems have been largely witnessed and called for adopting and even reinforcing inter european established ways of cooperation in such crises. However, some EU member states have witnessed a significant lack of solidarity from other members. For example, Italians question European solidarity, as other member states declined to assist them with medical necessities and equipment when urgently needed. In particular, according to Reuters, Italians who feel their country's EU membership as a disadvantage have risen to 67 per cent, in contrast to last November's 47, and almost 90 per cent of them believe that the EU has done too little assisting their country's fight against covid-19 (Monitor Italia).

There is even more to say, when it comes to the medical and pharmaceutical private sector's standpoint on the issue. In most cases, and most countries, necessities such antiseptics and masks have been vastly overpriced. Similarly hospitalisation costs in private health centers have been said to be on the rise, making it impossible for the low income citizens to have full access to needed services due to covid-19 situation. To that end, some member-states, like Spain, have introduced interventional policies, from price-controls to the requisition of private Intensive Care Units, for the sake of public health. Moreover, the discussion over EU's economic taboos rearises, since many states, increasingly, are once again in need of financial tools in order to support their economies.



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The recent tele-EU Summit on March 27,2020, did not end in a consensus. A wide block of member-states backed by ECB's President, including France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Portugal and Greece, proposed that the EU should initiate brave economic measures, in fact asking the ECB to issue special bonds to support a coordinated fight against the coronavirus crisis. The outcome was defined by the Summit's denial, as in accordance to its prior strict monetary philosophy. As Ursula Von der Leyen said right before the Summit "when Europe really needed to prove that this is not only a fair weather union, too many initially refused to share their umbrella". The executive president's comment unfortunately holds validity still afterwards.

In this context, as an active part of the European civil society, EKO decided to introduce a discussion over the new era of European developments in decision making, economic institutions, societal values, and citizen's lives. Your response and feedback can strengthen the democratic dialogue we all wish for in these critical times for our society and hopefully generate the means for sustainable solutions.

- Can the European Union act in terms of mutuality in the greatest crisis of our times?
- Are nation-states apt to fight public health threats, in a globalized world (noting epidemiologists' concerns over global warming effects on possible virus outbreaks)?
- Is a centrally coordinated European health system the answer to crises such fighting against coronavirus spread and cure?
- Is it the time to talk about a EU welfare state?
- Is education in Europe in a position to raise consciousness, shape attitudes, cultivate a sense of individual responsibility and increase solidarity among citizens, among member states?



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