

APRIL 2020

For a Europe that cares for all – during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond

DEMOCRACY – INCLUSION – JUSTICE – SOLIDARITY – SUSTAINABILITY

The COVID-19 pandemic is demonstrating all too well that unequal societies go hand-in-hand with human suffering, fragile economies and delicate democracies.

Solidarity must be the bedrock of Europe's response to this crisis: to fighting the pandemic and protecting all people, to managing the social and economic consequences, and to defending democracy. Solidarity goes beyond borders and should not be limited to European Union countries.

This is more than a public health crisis; it is a systems crisis. Like the climate crisis, and the many other crises we face, it affects everyone but hits some harder than others. The COVID-19 pandemic magnifies the inequalities in our societies. Inequality was already a global problem but it now risks growing to irreversible proportions. Alongside the millions of workers who have lost their jobs and income, those most affected include migrants at the borders, precarious workers, undocumented people, low income families, homeless people, elderly people, women, and people with disabilities or chronic illnesses – including many racial and ethnic minorities.

Health workers, and other essential service workers, are on the front line. We are witnessing the fundamental social and economic value of care work and basic services, work that is overwhelmingly carried out by women, and is too often ignored, under-valued, and always under-paid.

We, the undersigned European civil society actors, are committed to working together towards a shared vision of the future of Europe, one that is based on a socially just, feminist, sustainable, democratic and inclusive society. In this time of crisis, we stand ready, in solidarity, to act together.

We recognise that alongside international organizations, NGOs and governments, the European Union has attempted to respond to this emergency. However, it can and must go further.

We call on the European institutions and Member State governments to seize this moment to work towards fundamental change in our social, economic and political systems. We stand ready to support the transition away from the current social and economic model, which drives inequality and environmental destruction and leaves us unprepared when crises hit.

We call on European decision-makers to come together, across borders, to show the vision and courage to set Europe on the path to a sustainable future; a future of resilient democracies built on human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, human rights and the rule of law.

Europe must demonstrate it cares for all, through times of crisis, and beyond

The European Union must take action to:

- Build a solidarity-driven and comprehensive strategy to prevent infections, save lives and minimise the ongoing impact of the pandemic. This must include ensuring that any vaccine, or treatment, developed for COVID-19 is affordable and accessible to all, and that patent rules that put pharmaceutical industry profits before public health are overhauled.
- Raise awareness of, and help to counter, all forms of disinformation, in particular racist and sexist responses to the pandemic.
- Ensure that restrictive emergency measures serve the purpose of combating the pandemic only, are time-limited, and are compatible with the rule of law and the EU's fundamental values. Simultaneously, dialogue with, and support for, organised civil society must be maintained.
- Guarantee that any use of digital technologies, including apps and Artificial Intelligence, to monitor the spread of the virus and the behaviour of human beings is lawful, ethical, and strictly temporary. Private companies must not be allowed to access this data for commercial purposes.
- End the age of austerity in Europe, and work towards a macroeconomic framework that prioritises tackling inequality, and invests in human wellbeing and the preservation and protection of the natural environment that sustains us. Tax wealthy companies and individuals to help pay for the costs of the rescue and recovery packages.
- Strengthen workers' rights, safeguard employment, support people's income, and introduce measures to protect those left out of the labour market. Measures should address the situation in Europe and the EU's partner countries, and should especially consider health workers, care-givers and those in precarious work, the overwhelming majority of whom are women.
- Support health systems and people in the global South, and ensure basic services, in particular healthcare and access to water, are provided to all regardless of resident status, race, nationality, language or other factors.
- Fast-forward the transition to a just, sustainable future by increasing the ambition of the European Green Deal. This requires transformational solutions and investing in the Just Transition, including quality low-energy buildings and public transport, low resource-use models of production, and a robust and sustainable food system.
- Develop a more resilient, structured and permanent governance system at the EU-27 level for the management of health crises, which draws lessons from the current COVID-19 crisis.

Signatories

350.org

ACT Alliance EU

ActionAid International

Albanian Center for Population and Development (ACPD)

All Together in Dignity (ATD) Ireland

Amnesty International

Asociación Caminos

ATD Fourth World

CATRO Bulgaria

CEE Bankwatch Network

CIDSE

Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe

CONCORD Europe

Coordinadora de ONGD-España

Czechia Against Poverty and Inequality

Defend Democracy

End FGM European Network

Eurodiaconia

European Civic Forum

European Consortium for Emergency Contraception

European Disability Forum

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

European Oncology Nursing Society

European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

European Women's Lobby

European Youth Forum

Fair Trade Advocacy Office

Federación de Planificación Familiar de España

Friends of the Earth Europe

Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)

Greenpeace

Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)

International Planned Parenthood Federation, European Network

Know and Can Association

Le Planning Familial

Lithuanian NGDO Platform

Mighty Earth

Naturefriends International (NFI)

Open Society European Policy Initiative

Österreichische Gesellschaft für Familienplanung (ÖGF)

P&D Factor - Ass. Cooperação sobre População e Desenvolvimento, Portugal

Pistes Solidaires

Povod

Rehabilitation Center for Stress and Trauma - RCT

SOCIAL PLATFORM

Society for Education on Contraception and Sexuality (SECS) Romania

SOLIDAR

The Good Lobby

WeMove Europe

WWF European Policy Office (EPO)

YouAct - European Youth Network on Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Young Feminist Europe

Young Friends of the Earth Europe