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Position Paper | 28.04.2020

Greens/EFA Recovery and Resilience Plan

More ambition, solidarity and cooperation are the key to building a new socially, economically and environmentally resilient model for the EU

The COVID-19 crisis, first recognised by the WHO on 31/12/2019, less than 3 months later became a global pandemic that has wrought unprecedented havoc on almost every nation on earth.

All over Europe thousands of families are confronted with tragic losses and fear for their health and that of their loved ones. Millions face the prospect of losing their livelihood and grave economic consequences. In many parts of Europe schools remain shut and the majority of the population is confined to their homes.

When the pandemic reached the European Union (EU) in February, **Governments and EU institutions alike were completely unprepared** for the devastating effect on health systems, food systems, society, the workplace and the wider economy. Only the outstanding courage and effort of nurses, doctors, firefighters and so many others saved our health systems from collapse.

In the initial phase **solidarity between EU Member States was regrettably lacking** when Italy rapidly saw its health system overwhelmed and was forced to shut down a large part of its economy and all of its education system and most Italians were confined to their homes.

Furthermore, even though there have since been bilateral cooperation initiatives to share information and the healthcare burden, despite the scale and EU-wide nature of the economic impact, **European leaders were unable to decisively agree on a fair way to share the economic burden**.

Also **regrettably lacking was coordination at EU-level** of the economic and social shutdowns intended to slow the spread of the virus. **Emergency powers** that curtail freedoms have been also been adopted without coordination or proportionality checks. Some appear necessary and proportionate, others such as those in Hungary, undermine the very values on which the EU is based.

The EU and its Member States will **urgently need to agree on a coordinated and responsible strategy for gradually loosening the public health measures designed to control the spread of the virus** and a **coordinated EU recovery and resilience-building strategy**.

The very **credibility of the EU will be irrevocably damaged unless solidarity and coordination are the basis for the massive effort** required to recover from the social and economic damage resulting from

the crisis and ensure resilience for the future.

This reconstruction must not only **ensure that lost livelihoods and damaged infrastructure are replaced** but that the **EU's social, economic and environmental sustainability is guaranteed**.

This means a **combined investment and socio-economic reform** program reinforcing the **robustness of health and other public services, ensuring fairness, solidarity and stability in the economic and monetary union and, above all, doing whatever it takes to avoid the environmental catastrophe** that is the biggest threat of all to our collective wellbeing.

These difficult few weeks have given all of us new insights into the strengths and weaknesses of our societies. We have learnt a lot about what keeps us going, but also what we have to change.

The agricultural policies conducted by Europe in recent decades, based on global trade, have shown themselves, in this health crisis, to be incapable of providing food sovereignty for our continent while endangering that of the countries of the global South. While agriculture is a cross-cutting issue, as its heavy impact on biodiversity, climate and health demonstrates, the COVID-19 crisis serves to underline the necessity and the urgency of in depth reform of the CAP, which represents more than 35% of the budget of the European Union and which remains a powerful driver of resilience and the transformation of agricultural and agrifood logic. Reforming the CAP could also be a powerful tool for the creation of jobs.

More than ever, we Europeans see **the importance of strong cooperation and solidarity** to face collective economic, social and environmental threats.

More than ever we Europeans understand the **immeasurable value of well-funded and well-run public services and safety nets that underpin stable and inclusive societies** and economies that truly work for all people.

More than ever we Europeans have seen the **crucial role that digitalisation plays in our society**: it has enabled many to keep working, socialising, accessing vital services and entertainment despite the lockdown and brought home the importance of **closing the digital divide** and **ensuring the respect of privacy and rights** in the digital world

More than ever we Europeans understand that the religion of **economic efficiency, that delivers cheap goods and disregards planetary boundaries, leads to structural vulnerability that results in socially and economically expensive crises**.

The crisis response must r**ecognise and address the roots of this lack of resilience**:

- Decades of focus on **austerity and keeping public budget expenditures low, including after the 2008 financial crisis,** have cut deeply into public sectors that are now regarded crucial for our society.
- The export-driven food strategy adopted by the European Union puts some of its citizens at risk of not having access to food, while the deterioration of nature as well as pesticide use worsen the quality of life of many.
- The effects on health are not properly considered in all policies and the growing privatization of our health systems have been detrimental to ensuring access to health care for all citizens. The lack of investments from governments into public health systems have put citizens at risk and weaken our abilities to face crises.
- the dogma that the **role of markets is mainly to ensure ever cheaper production**, has led to **over**

stretched and vulnerable supply chains and made the EU **dependent on countries like India and China for crucial medicines** and medical equipment, and has created monopolies in the pharmaceutical industry determining the price and ownership of potential vaccines.

- The same big companies that have been focusing on short-term profits instead of decently paying employees and building up resilience are now asking to be rescued with public money. It is clear that they must at least be required to address their shortcomings in return.
- The overexploitation of nature with destruction of habitat, killing biodiversity and unsustainable uses of natural resources - is a **direct cause of the transfer of viruses** from wild animals to humans. This is just one aspect of the danger of treating the planet as an infinite flexible resource. **The crisis has underlined the need for global action to respect the planetary boundaries that define the safe space for humans within nature**.

It would be a t**ragic failure of leadership and vision not to seize the moment to act decisively and collectively to build the greener, resilient, fairer, gender equal, more stable and democratic EU** that we need

It would be **abject surrender to invest scarce resources in returning to the "business as usual"** that has proved so fragile or put aside or cancel any of the EU's past achievements or existing ambitions.

Let us come together, now, to harness the incredible collective wealth of material and intellectual resources of the people in Europe to **turn the Green Deal, the Pillar of Social Rights and Sustainable Development goals, the Economic and Monetary Union, the Single Market, the Digital Strategy and a common vision for the Future of Europe into the most ambitious social, economic and environmental transformation the World has ever seen**.

READ OUR PLAN:

- **Protect our future: Greens/EFA Recovery and Resilience Plan (FULL PAPER)**
- Protect our future: Greens/EFA Recovery and Resilience Plan (SUMMARY)
- Protect our future: Greens/EFA Recovery and Resilience Plan (ANNEX)

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Attached documents

Protect our future: Green/EFA Recovery and Resilience Plan
Foreword - A resilient Europe : Building a recovery for all
Annex - A resilient Europe: Building a recovery for all

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