



SOLIDARITY IS THE CURE

Reimagining a post-pandemic Europe



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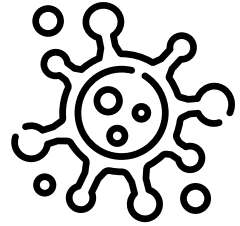
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INTRODUCTION



When the Covid-19 pandemic struck, firm and decisive action by European Union institutions was needed. However, the measures came late, lacked solidarity and were far from sufficient to deal with the magnitude and severity of this crisis.

The consequences of the EU's neoliberal policies and the absence of coordination and solidarity among Member States were exposed as the measures necessary to support Member States in severe difficulty, and to boost economic and social recovery, were not taken on time and of sufficient scale.

Sure enough, it has been workers who have been at the forefront of the battle against coronavirus. Health workers in hospitals and pharmacies, caregivers, cleaners, those who work in shops and many others were enduring a tough situation and often putting their lives at risk. Together with these workers, vulnerable citizens, and society as a whole, rightly demanded urgent solutions to respond to the gravity of the crisis and to repair the decades-long attack on public services by free market ideologues.

REIMAGINING EUROPE		
	FROM CRISIS...	...TO SOLIDARITY
 ECONOMY & JOBS	Failed stability & growth pact	Sustainable Development and Employment pact
 MONETARY POLICY	An ECB for Bankers	An ECB for People & Planet
 HEALTHCARE	Private Business, Private Profit	Public Health services for all
 TAXES	Working people pay for crisis	Corporations and wealthy pay their share
 CLIMATE	Weak rules for polluters	- 70% emissions by 2030
 CITIZENS	Reduce and violate civil liberties	Respect fundamental rights

A clear break from policies based on austerity, privatisation and deregulation that have been devastating for the health system and have hurt working people is essential.

The EU must take action in four key areas: to enhance public health, create jobs and strengthen social protection, counteract the economic and social crisis ensuring a green and socially just recovery, and to enforce fundamental rights.

When we emerge from this ordeal, the world will be different. We will not simply go back to how it was before and should not go back to the old system that got us here. We can learn the lessons and make different decisions for the future. Although the pandemic has been difficult and distressing, many communities have been brought together and eyes have been opened to the crucial work done by many previously under-appreciated workers. The solidarity that we have seen in local communities must be translated into change on a large scale. This means we must fight for a recovery with equality, rights, social justice and sustainability at its heart.

These months have shown that each of us is only safe when all of us are - we must therefore grab hold of this chance to strengthen our collective public health systems, to provide a safety net to all workers, and ensure that public investment during the recovery is in line with the social and green transition that we need.

A true cooperative response to the Covid-19 crisis, especially given its global dimension, is an opportunity to imagine and plan for a better future for all of us, to build egalitarian societies of progress and social rights, with climate justice and democracy for all.

Manon Aubry and Martin Schirdewan,
Co-Presidents of the GUE/NGL group
in the European Parliament

HEALTH BEFORE PROFIT



Protect lives, whatever the cost. We need a “whatever it takes” approach to public health and solidarity.

The EU, in close cooperation with international financial institutions over recent decades, imposed neoliberal reforms that drastically cut government spending. This had disastrous effects on public health systems. We need to reverse neoliberal policies and austerity, with strong investment and strengthened public health and social security systems. Immediate and decisive European cooperation and coordination are vital to address serious cross-border threats to public health such as Covid-19. Here’s what that involves:

- We need real **European health planning**, organising the requisition by the Member States of all treatment capacity; coordinating the supply of medical equipment and drugs, and organising the transfer of patients across borders in case of capacity overload.
- We need to preserve **public healthcare** systems and substantially increase their funding to ensure universal access to good quality hospitals, care facilities for the elderly, local health services and medicines. The rights of people with disabilities must be upheld.
- Member States should **nationalize or requisition** production sites when needed in order to produce all necessary medical devices; the European Commission needs to make full use of all the possibilities under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism to ensure adequate supplies in the future.
- The post-lockdown approach must be coordinated in order to avoid a rebound of the virus. The EU and Member States should **jointly develop criteria** for lifting the quarantine and other emergency measures, based on the preservation of human life, stating clear guidelines when a municipality, a region, or a state should lift measures.
- The Commission and the Member States must ensure **sufficient resources** for the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the European Medicines Agency and the European Food Safety Agency, now and in the future long-term budget.
- The Commission must ensure that, when EU public money is spent on **research**, the results of that research are free of intellectual property rights. Therefore, the Commission must take all relevant initiatives to guarantee and advance both the

**KEY ACTIONS
NEEDED:**

accessibility and availability of all safe and free vaccines against the coronavirus, as well as of treatments for Covid-19, using all necessary tools including compulsory licensing, patent pooling and compulsory open access research regimes.

- State control of key sectors, including **nationalising healthcare facilities, and other vital sectors** for the response effort must be supported. The re-localisation of production for strategic sectors which are too important to be left to the market, especially in the case of personal protective equipment, tests, medicines and medical devices, should also be provided for. This includes the establishment of publicly owned pharmaceutical companies.
- Member States must take additional protection measures in the face of massive increases in **violence against women** and children. Hotlines and services for all victims of domestic abuse are “essential services” and must be kept open.
- Safe and timely **access to sexual and reproductive health and rights** (SRHR) and the necessary healthcare services for all women and girls during the Covid-19 pandemic should be guaranteed by Member States. This means access to contraception, including emergency contraception, and to abortion care care, including access to medically supervised home use of abortion drugs.
- We need to strengthen the public **health systems** in both their curative and preventive dimension to be more equipped and financed to deal with the next epidemic. Public health should be in the hands of the public or non-profit sector.

WE NEED TO STRENGTHEN PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEMS IN BOTH THEIR CURATIVE AND PREVENTIVE DIMENSION

DEFENDING WORKERS' RIGHTS & SOCIAL JUSTICE



This crisis has highlighted the importance of workers who are generally underpaid, vulnerable, and all too often ignored. We need to honour them not only with daily applause but with respect, dignified working conditions, and improved rights and salaries over the long-term.

Many workers have proven to be essential for our societies and many have been hard-hit by lockdowns. The majority of frontline workers are women and are more at risk of being forced to carry the biggest part of the Corona burden. Our heroes deserve a pay raise.

Protective measures, employment and social rights must be safeguarded and advanced for all. To ensure the highest standards, our action should be guided by following:

- Member States must **save jobs and protect incomes by financing measures** such as wage subsidies or short-time work with full pay, extend paid sick leave and reduce working hours for workers taking care of children and dependant family members while maintaining full-time remuneration. To working parents, in particular single parents, without access to child care, additional parental leave should be made available, unconditional and paid for everyone.
- No one should be forced to work without protection or if at high risk. Non-essential activities should be suspended and workers advised to stay at home. Workers should have the option and means to **telework** to protect the health of workers within a regulatory framework. The right to disconnect must be respected.
- All employees should be protected from **dismissal**. Financial aid to private companies should be conditional on zero dismissals and protecting existing levels of working conditions. Attempts from some Member States and companies to take advantage of the situation and to attack workers' rights must be firmly rejected.
- The EU should accede to the revised **European Social Charter** and take immediate steps to guarantee the rights therein. All Member States should ratify the revised Charter while guaranteeing Member States to have higher standards if they wish to do so. The European pillar of social rights should be revised and improved in order to combat poverty and social exclusion.

KEY ACTIONS NEEDED:

- Member States must **invest in public services**, in particular healthcare, education, child, elderly and homeless care and housing. This way we can mitigate the social crisis and to improve the lives of disadvantaged groups, including those at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
- Member States must address the loss in income, social protection and pension entitlements for **women** as a result of the care burden.
- **Housing** must be ensured throughout the crisis and beyond. Member States must prohibit evictions, and allow all unemployed, and low to medium income borrowers to suspend payments on housing loans and rents during this crisis. We need to promote public housing and to cap rents after the crisis for the most disadvantaged.
- **Unemployment** benefits must be paid without conditionalities to those who have lost their jobs until full economic recovery has been achieved.
- We need a European **Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme** based on the principle of solidarity and need, not on loan conditionality, without touching and harmonising downwards national unemployment systems.
- Consultation of **trade unions, collective and tripartite agreements** are the best way to protect workers' rights, wages and employment. In addition it could cushion the impacts of the crisis and thereby avoid a prolonged recession.
- **Collective bargaining** is the best tool to guarantee increased working conditions and protection for all kinds of workers and work-relations. These systems must be strengthened, especially for workers in atypical and precarious employment, bogus self-employed workers, such as platform workers and especially where systems have been damaged by troika policies.

HOUSING MUST BE ENSURED THROUGHOUT THE CRISIS AND BEYOND.

- A huge public programme will be essential to make sure that jobs are not lost in the **tourism sector** and that sustainable connectivity in Europe is built up once the public health situation allows. Investment should come with strict conditions for environmental and social standards, as well as human rights due diligence throughout supply chains, and tax transparency.
- The **sports, cultural, media, and creative sectors** need financial aid, including through the Corona Response Investment Initiative. Sports, events, cultural professionals and other self-employed persons and freelance journalists need to have access to support and compensation measures.
- Member States should guarantee the **right to education**, including childcare services, ensuring digital access and PCs to libraries and for home-schooling; allowing the use of licenses of school software from outside the schools; ensuring examinations in non-discriminatory forms for pupils and students in 2020.

**INVESTMENT SHOULD COME
WITH STRICT CONDITIONS
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
AND SOCIAL STANDARDS.**



AN ECONOMIC RESPONSE FOR PEOPLE & PLANET

Effectively dealing with the pandemic means learning the lessons of previous failed and destructive austerity measures. The present moment requires a robust European response but the measures announced so far have proven inadequate. People should not have to pay the price of the crisis. A different path must be followed to promote solidarity and minimise the risk to which citizens and countries are exposed. The recovery must be green, in line with the commitments in the Paris agreement.

KEY ACTIONS NEEDED:

- The Growth and Stability pact should be suspended until it can be revoked and the European Semester and Macroeconomic Imbalance procedures suspended in the long-term, in order to give Member States the financial capacities to fund public services and recovery programmes. They should be replaced with a **Sustainable Development and Employment Pact**, based on social criteria such as decent and dignified work, safeguarding labour rights.
- EU institutions, particularly the European Central Bank (ECB), must act urgently to **prevent a new financial and sovereign debt crisis** from developing; the ECB must commit to acting as the lender of last resort for Member States. The immediate creation of Covid-19 bonds is needed, and EU Green Deal Bonds issued by the ECB or guaranteed by a purchase programme of the ECB must be unconditional and enable the Member States to rapidly recover from the pandemic crisis and transform their economies without leaving anyone behind; these Covid-19 bonds should be perpetual and interest-free as a form of permanent money creation in order to compensate for an extraordinary economic shock; these bonds can also be issued by the future European Recovery Fund or the EIB, as long as they are issued without macroeconomic or other conditionalities and immediately bought by the ECB.
- Sovereign **debt** related to Covid-19 must be **identified and canceled**, especially the part owned by the ECB, so as to make a fresh start on our economies and to overcome its economic and social impacts.
- We need a European Recovery Fund of at least €1.5 trillion financed through **perpetual bonds with zero interest rate**, which should be distributed in line with the cohesion rules within the

Member States and using grants without any macroeconomic or other conditionality. These bonds should be bought by the ECB and ignored for the purpose of compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact until it is repealed. This recovery investment plan, which should be set according to a “cohesion approach” must go hand in hand with the radical transformation of their economies, as is needed to tackle the environmental and biodiversity crisis without leaving anyone behind.

- The ECB and the Commission must propose a **revision of the bank’s statutes** in order to increase the bank’s capacity to support public spending and to make it consistent with the new tools used during the Covid-19 outbreak, including unconditional perpetual bonds.
- We need strict regulation of **financial markets** to prevent speculative attacks. Short selling, the distribution of dividends, bonuses and buy-backs must be banned in the short-term and strictly regulated in the long run.
- The EU and Member States will need to create new resources to fund the recovery. The recovery will not be socially just if not funded with progressive and redistributive fiscal resources. **Taxation targeting big companies** and wealthy individuals should be increased. We need to raise corporate income tax rates, with higher rates for the most profitable companies and create a net wealth tax targeting the wealthiest individuals, as well as a Financial Transaction Tax.
- The EU needs to scale up its fight against money laundering and **tax dodging** and urgently agree to implement tax transparency, a credible list of tax havens including EU countries, as well as a minimum corporate income tax rate.
- We need an immediate end to **sanctions and economic blockades** that compromise the health and wellbeing of people. Instead, we need international solidarity, as demonstrated by some countries outside the EU. Such solidarity must be extended in times of other crises. This is all the more important for the Global South, so as to address loss and damage, adaptation and climate finance.
- A European sanitary exception notified to the WTO should be included in all **trade deals** concerning access to patents on medical machinery and medicines to treat health differently from other commercial products. No restrictions should be imposed on the possibility for states to intervene in the public health sector.
- The crisis has underlined the need to restore production capacity in essential sectors. Leaving fundamental decisions to globalized market actors driven by profit motives has led to delocalization

and a loss of **democratic industrial sovereignty** over production. The European Green Deal should be used to put forward a sustainable and coordinated public investment plan to develop each Member State's sustainable productive sector. Strategic industries must be relocated. A new framework for competition policy, including for state aid should allow for a strong public sector, halting delocalization and trade agreements which lead to the complete disappearance of critical national industrial sectors.

- We need to drastically step up efforts to halt global warming and biodiversity and habitat loss, given their links to this health crisis, including a large-scale recovery plan with ambitious climate targets. This means **carbon neutrality** before 2040 and a rapid phasing out of fossil fuels.
- The crisis should not be used as an excuse to delay the Green Deal. Rather it should be seen as a recovery plan setting high climate targets with a **70% decrease in CO2 emissions** by 2030. What we need is a much more ambitious EU adaptation strategy.
- Public money should be used to **redirect companies' activities** toward more sustainable models, with clear social and environmental conditionalities on any bailout.
- A refocused emergency Contingency Plan can both protect the beneficiaries of EU programmes and contribute effectively to **mitigate the socio-economic impacts** of the Covid-19 crisis.
- A new and **ambitious Multiannual Financial Framework** 2021-2027 with increased funding for cohesion, climate, health and solidarity policies is needed.. The allocation of funds aimed for the defense industry and military missions should be cancelled. As a response to the crisis, a revised and extended EU own resources system is necessary.
- Extra funding must be allocated to all EU development and **humanitarian aid** tools to help developing countries reinforce their health systems.
- Reform the **CAP** to ensure European farming moves to a sustainable production and consumption model with decent incomes and protection for small farmers and agricultural workers that is climate-friendly and respectful of animal welfare. Covid-19 is a zoonotic disease, as are 75% of all emerging infectious diseases. To prevent future outbreaks, the EU needs to ban the import of, and international trade in, wildlife and move away from intensive livestock farming.
- The impact of Covid-19 has hit small-scale **fisheries** hardest. This sector has very limited access to EU funds. The European Maritime Fisheries Fund must be massively overhauled to ensure it is supported adequately.

UPHOLDING DEMOCRACY, FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW



The need for clear direction in this crisis is not a demand for authoritarianism, far from it. The need for cooperation and solidarity is essential in tackling this crisis. People are entitled to the protection of fundamental rights at all times, even in an emergency.

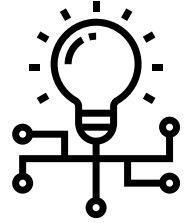
- **Nobody should be left behind:** there should be free access to high-quality, preventive and curative public health services on an equal and non-discriminatory basis, irrespective of social and immigration status.
- Respect for the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights must be upheld, including media freedoms. The attempt by authoritarian forces to exploit the emergency to destroy democracy, civil liberties and the rule of law must be promptly and categorically countered. Measures undertaken by Member States must be **proportionate, temporary and subject to parliamentary scrutiny**. They should not be misused as a cover for repressive action under the pretext of health protection. In this context, we can see deeply worrying trends in several countries, and unacceptable developments in Hungary and Poland.

**KEY ACTIONS
NEEDED:**



- The EU must condemn **discrimination, scapegoating and hate speech** against migrants, refugees and minorities, and focus particularly on the situation of Roma people, as they have been targeted by local and regional authorities and expelled from their communities in several countries.
- The **right to asylum** must be guaranteed. The EU and its Member States must halt deportations and release people from detention. Residence permits must be extended automatically and temporary residence permits to undocumented migrants granted. We must immediately evacuate the camps on the Greek islands by transferring people to safe and decent accommodation, relocating and ensuring family reunification of asylum-seekers to other EU Member States.
- **Persons in distress at sea must be assisted.** Member States have to promptly rescue ships in distress in line with international maritime law and provide a place for disembarkation in an EU port for people who have been saved at sea, including by civil society boats and merchant vessels.
- Measures taken at **external and internal borders** must be necessary, proportionate and based on the Schengen Borders Code, the Freedom of Movement Directive and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Member States have to allow people in need of international protection to enter the Schengen area, as stipulated by EU law. We urge the Commission to monitor the legality of all measures and ensure their ex-post evaluation. We need to return to a fully functional Schengen area and to the full respect of the right to free movement as soon as possible.
- The Commission must monitor **surveillance measures** adopted by Member States, such as the collection of location data or the development of smartphone apps to track population movements that can have a detrimental impact on our privacy and data protection. These measures must be evaluated in consultation with the European Data Protection Supervisor and should be lawful, effective, proportionate, transparent, and temporary: emergency initiatives must by no means lead to mass surveillance after the crisis.
- Member States must also protect the health of people in **prisons and detention centres**, while ensuring their right to communicate with their families and lawyers. Given that the situation is particularly dramatic owing to prison overcrowding, Member States should allow the early release of some categories of detainees, particularly the elderly and seriously ill people, and apply non-custodial measures.

REIMAGINING



After this pandemic, the world can, and should, be radically different from what it was before.

Covid-19 has highlighted a truth we knew before the current health crisis: the capitalist system does not work. Neoliberal dogma, climate catastrophe, the destruction of public services, attacks on workers' rights - all have been exposed as emblematic of dysfunction.

However, what is possible has also been revealed. This pandemic is a remarkable opportunity to conceive our system as it should be, if built on another logic, for a society that puts health, people, and the planet first, rather than profit

As solidarity becomes evermore vital, people are seeing that yesterday's leadership and their failed doctrines will not help us work towards the future we need.

That future is a healthy, equal, and ecologically just planet. Moreover, we cannot wait - the collective work to build it must start now.

This is why we affirm the need for another Europe. A Europe that cherishes rights, delivers sustainable progress, and values democracy. A Europe that stands for equality, freedom, and peaceful cooperation throughout the world.

A Europe of solidarity.



**AFTER THIS PANDEMIC,
THE WORLD CAN, AND SHOULD,
BE RADICALLY DIFFERENT
FROM WHAT IT WAS BEFORE.**

The Left in the European Parliament

Our group brings together MEPs standing up for workers, the environment, feminism, peace, democracy & human rights.

ANOTHER EUROPE IS POSSIBLE!



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