

PRESS RELEASE

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Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council ahead of their video conference on 23 April 2020

Dear colleagues,

I would like to invite you to our fourth videoconference dedicated to the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and its negative effects. We have moved quite some way over the past weeks, and I would really like to thank you all for your constructive spirit and bold actions so far. But there is still a long way to go to overcome this crisis.

The health of our citizens remains our top priority. We mourn the many lives lost and express our condolences to all the families who have lost a loved one. This pandemic touches all of us in every Member State and in every household. It knows no boundaries and calls for even more coordination and unity. It is my conviction that we must show even greater determination in overcoming our differences.

Health workers and doctors have worked relentlessly and tirelessly. We cannot show them enough gratitude. They represent the best of Europe. We commend the dedication of those who are at the forefront to combat the virus and those who are providing essential services to the population.

Restrictive measures, including limitations on some of our fundamental freedoms, continue to disrupt the daily lives of our citizens and our economies, but we will continue to do all that is necessary to combat the virus and to protect the health of our people. At the same time we have to prepare for the constraints to gradually end.

With that dual objective in mind and in line with the mandate you gave us three weeks ago, last week Ursula and I issued a Joint European **Roadmap towards lifting of COVID-19 containment measures**, charting the best way towards lifting the exceptional constraints without causing negative spill-over effects. The situation should be followed closely and there should be as much coordination as possible to meet the challenges ahead of us linked to the lifting of the restrictions, especially with regard to the summer season.

I now attach to this invitation a **Roadmap for recovery** with a strong investment component, which sets out some important principles and defines four key areas for action. I believe that these roadmaps provide a coherent and useful framework for our joint action towards overcoming the crisis and moving forward.

At our last videoconference, we also tasked the Eurogroup in an inclusive format to present proposals to tackle the socio-economic consequences of the crisis. On 9 April, the Eurogroup agreed on a package worth €540 billion, with three important safety nets for sovereigns, for private companies and for the protection of employment. We should give the go-ahead to these important initiatives and insist on them becoming available as quickly as possible. The aim should be for these three safety nets to be in place and operational by 1 June.

The comprehensive economic response to the crisis also includes a fourth element that was discussed by the Eurogroup, but not yet agreed, namely the idea of a European Recovery Fund. My suggestion is that we agree to work towards establishing such a fund as soon as possible. It should be of sufficient magnitude, targeted towards the sectors and geographical parts of Europe most affected, and be dedicated to deal with this unprecedented crisis. To this end, I propose that we task the Commission to analyse the exact needs and come up with a proposal that is commensurate with the challenge we are facing. The Commission proposal should clarify the link with the MFF, which will in any event be at the heart of the EU's contribution to recovery and will need to be adjusted to deal with the current crisis and its aftermath.

It is critical that we discuss these issues openly among ourselves and urgently move ahead in order to make progress.

For other matters of common interest, whether international or internal to the EU, that are less directly related to this specific crisis, we continue to closely monitor the situation and will tackle them together in due course.

The videoconference will start at 15:00 on 23 April with the traditional exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament David Sassoli. We will then move to our discussion, in the presence of the President of the European Central Bank Christine Lagarde and the President of the Eurogroup Mario Centeno.

I look forward to our discussion.

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