



To
The President of the European Commission
The President of the European Council
The High Representative of the European Union

27 March 2020

Honourable President von der Leyen,
Honourable President Michel,
Honourable High Representative Borrell,

We recognize your difficult task and acknowledge your efforts to jointly fight the COVID 19 pandemic by strengthening coordination and solidarity among member states, neighbours and partner countries.

We would like to ask for your attention and urgently propose concentrated action in the face of instrumentalisation of the current crisis by countries with adversarial geopolitical ambitions.

We are seriously concerned about current disinformation and propaganda efforts coming especially from China and Russia. It is clear to most of us observing the situation that there is an effort to undermine the EU and sow mistrust among the local population and European neighbours towards the EU, its democratic values and institutions. Recent findings of the East StratCom Task Force also have indicated this and we should continue to build on their longstanding expertise to unveil propaganda myths and disinformation strategies. Considering the COVID 19 pandemic, we fear that current attempts are seriously risking our unity and stability in the long term and will hinder us from overcoming the crisis, its consequences and to face our future challenges jointly.

Unfortunately, these efforts have been able to take advantage of the initial nationalistic responses by European countries, as well as of the lack of transparent communication on the EU institutions' efforts. It is time to mitigate this geopolitical instrumentalisation of the crisis.

Thus, we urge you, EU institutions and EU member states to act along three dimensions

- European Humanitarian Dimension: to increase efforts towards more effective assistance to all our member states, foremost to the most severely affected ones like Italy, Spain, some regions in France, as well as to our neighbours and partner countries. Such measures should go beyond financial instruments and should include tangible and visible assistance, like imports of equipment and qualified personnel,

hosting sick patients. The massive deployment of even more financial, economic and medical assistance is desperately needed.

- European Transparency Dimension: to install a strategic and systematic transparency and communication strategy to highlight such assistance, in order to counter misinformation and to signal to the citizens of the EU that solidarity among them is ongoing, is possible and is feasible. This is also necessary to motivate and mobilize our citizens and civil society to join the combat against COVID19 as a joint European project. We need a comprehensive, regularly updated overview of all assistance, the EU and member states are providing to fight COVID 19, which should be easily accessible and largely promoted to increase knowledge and information among European citizens.
- European Geopolitical Dimension: to establish a strategy to face and recognize geopolitical realities in times of crisis and thus to acknowledge and mitigate the attempts by foreign governments to exploit the COVID 19 crisis to the detriment of the EU.

Thank you for considering our letter and we are looking forward to your reply and our future cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

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