



European Council
Cabinet of the President

SGS 20 / 002209

Brussels, 04. 06. 2020

Dear Ms Drieskens,

President Charles Michel has asked me to thank you for your letter of 19 February 2020 concerning support for families and family carers during the Covid-19 pandemic. I would like to assure you that the European Union is indeed mindful of the needs of families, carers and vulnerable groups in its response to this difficult challenge.

On 26 March 2020, the Members of the European Council issued a joint statement, pledging to do everything that is necessary to protect our citizens and overcome the crisis and stressing the need to tackle both the threat to citizens' health and the socio-economic consequences of the crisis in a spirit of solidarity. The Joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures¹ presented by the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission on 15 April drew specific attention to the need to protect vulnerable groups, in particular through access to care. On 21 April, the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission presented a Roadmap for Recovery² which noted that the future MFF will be a key instrument to support a lasting recovery and a fully functioning and modernised Single Market, will have to take into account the effects of the crisis on regions and affected sectors, and should provide support to the member states' recovery plans, as well as a framework for sustained investment in the EU's strategic objectives.

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¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication_-_a_european_roadmap_to_lifting_coronavirus_containment_measures_0.pdf
² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/43384/roadmap-for-recovery-final-21-04-2020.pdf>

The "Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII)," which entered into force on 1 April, aims, inter alia, to mobilise investments in the member states' healthcare systems. On 22 April, the Council adopted "CRII+", a second legislative act amending the rules on the use of EU structural funds, allowing the member states to refocus resources on crisis-related operations. The act temporarily gives member states more flexibility to transfer money between funds and between regions, so as to meet their particular needs in mitigating the social and economic damage caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Council of the EU has also adopted new rules intended to minimise the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on the most deprived persons. The amendments to the regulation on the fund for aid to the most deprived (FEAD) will make it easier for member states, partner organisations and other parties involved to access the fund and protect their staff involved in distributing the food aid and other basic assistance. Around 13 million persons in the EU benefit from the fund each year.

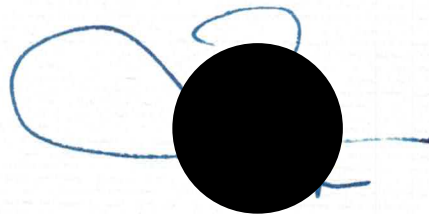
May I also add that, as part of its emergency support package to tackle the economic impact of the crisis, the EU has also put in place a temporary instrument to help workers keep their jobs. On 19 May, the Council adopted SURE, a temporary scheme that can provide up to €100 billion of loans to member states. It will enable member states to request support from the EU to help finance the sudden and severe increases of national public expenditure related to national short-time work schemes and similar measures, including for self-employed persons, or to some health-related measures, in particular at the workplace, in response to the crisis.

The social dimension and the wellbeing of all citizens is of course a priority, now more than ever. The Commission tabled on the 27 May 2020 amended MFF proposals related to the Recovery from the current crisis. These include proposals to redirect the ESF+ also towards youth employment and tackling child poverty. In addition the Commission proposed to increase the resources for the structural funds including the Fund for European Aid for the most Deprived for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022.

The Council is currently examining all these proposals and the President started consultations with Member States to ensure a timely agreement on the whole package. The President remains committed to support families, carers and vulnerable groups through the European budget as a key element for the socio-economic recovery.

Thank you once more for your letter and for raising many vital issues at this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,



François ROUX
Head of Cabinet

C.C.

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Parliament David Sassoli

Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit

Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms Elisa Ferreira

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides