

## Letter to our European friends

Dear friend,

The Coronavirus health outbreak is an existential threat to the fabric of the European Union. What started as a health issue is quickly escalating into an economic and social tsunami that is shaking the foundations of the European edifice. For reasons we do not understand well yet, Italy started first among European countries to pay a heavy human (and increasingly economic and social) toll to the corona virus. Because of this unlucky “primacy” people in Italy are by now well aware of the impact of this crisis and of how difficult it is to overcome it. But the rapid diffusion of this pandemic is progressively exacting its dramatic price in every other country in Europe and the world. People in Spain were next in this tragic line, but very quickly no other country is being spared.

This unexpected tragedy is challenging all of us individually and collectively. Shall we be up to this call?

Understandably, each national government is trying to respond to the crisis by stretching to the extreme its resources and capacities to react and to prepare the recovery once the virus is defeated. But the magnitude of the event makes it clear that these resources and capacities are weak and that large sectors of our societies will suffer.

The question we cannot escape today in Europe is whether we shall try to save us individually, each country for itself, or, on the contrary, we shall recognize we are all on the same boat, we are part of a Union which is not just a common market, but also a political community. Even more a community of values.

The crises of the past decade should have made us aware of the centrifugal tensions that insufficient, timid and botched up responses (too little too late) have triggered in our Union. Are we going to repeat today the past failures?

How technically and financially to address these challenges are important themes, but preliminary to any discussion about the instruments to be employed today, there is a fundamental choice: do we acknowledge a common European responsibility in containing the current crisis with its devastating human toll and in building later the conditions for an economic and social recovery, or should each country think for itself and turn its back to neighbouring countries? This choice will have existential consequences for the EU.

Over the years we, as scholars and academics, have enjoyed the benefits of an open research space with significant European resources. Is it not today our responsibility to raise our voice where we can make it heard? Is it not the time to remember that Europe is not only our common economic space but a community of destiny and that nothing less than the soul of Europe is at stake? Hasn't the time come for decisive and courageous action toward a Union with a higher level of solidarity?

If you agree with the spirit of this letter please sign it and circulate it to your friends and colleagues (please acknowledge your signature to [cotta@unisi.it](mailto:cotta@unisi.it)).

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