



## **At a distance, united as never before**

Dear members,

### **We are all living an unexpected and astonishing situation**

The whole planet faces the same emergency, and Europe has become, after China, the centre of the Covid-19 dissemination.

All institutions, governments, communities, all of us are asked to act responsibly as individuals and as a community.

We have to change our life to protect ourselves and others. And, as explained to us, we have to act so that the health system can take care of people at the best of its capacities.

In Italy, citizens are already confined at home for more than a week. In the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Spain, similar measures were introduced in the last days. Many other countries are following, and drastic measures are going to be taken all over Europe.

### **We are acting the best we can with and for our communities and are proud of doing so**

Among our members, whatever the country, some have already been obliged to close their centres, their social and cultural activities, projects' implementation, their offices and headquarters.

We know that many have found creative ways to be useful to their communities, to offer social and cultural tools against isolation, to volunteer for providing support to the weak and vulnerable which often happen to be the poorest.

We can collectively be proud of it. At this moment, we feel more united wherever we live than ever before, even at a distance. We know that "solidarity with all" is the message that has to be transmitted in all our communities if we want tomorrow to be better than yesterday was.

Let us know what you are doing, let us know what you are asking to the institutions, let's share your challenges and difficulties, let's share the good things you witness. This will allow the ECF and its members to do their best to communicate and alert about the help needed.

### **We want the EU to be a major actor to organise solidarity in the crisis**

The European Civic Forum will work to give visibility to its members' actions concerning the present crisis and to support their demands in front of the European institutions.

Our countries are in various situations to confront the cost generated by tackling the crisis. Solidarity inside each country is not sufficient. The European Union must be an active and strong actor to face the health, social and economic crisis. Solidarity between member states is crucial.

### **The crisis tests European claimed values: let's pass this test successfully**

The cost of the crisis will be high, in terms of human life, of social and human suffering. It is a litmus test for the European claimed values. How the test will be passed depends on how people and institutions will address the situation faced by the most vulnerable part of the society in each country and at the European level.

At the same time, the challenge is much broader: a large part of the economic actors, including the social economy and third sector, will face problems of sustainability resulting from the confinement. This will affect tens of millions of workers in Europe. None of them has to pay this cost today nor tomorrow, whatever the country they live in.

We heard that the European Union's regulations and rules, that have been obstacles to public spending and public investments, are to be put aside. There should be no further delay in the implementation of the needed public policies that protect public health as well as in the immediate compensation for the loss of labour revenues.

**Dropping individualism and destructive competition:  
social and environmental security has to come first**

After decades of rising individualism and generalised competition, many citizens are rediscovering the profound links between individual and social responsibility, the absolute need for public services protected from markets' rules, for policies aimed at social cohesion, for care and solidarity. These are the basic elements for a democracy that delivers for the people.

The present health and social crises give a sad, critical, but crucial opportunity to change the economic dogma that has ruled the European project in the last decades, to regain consensus and trust among citizens, to come out from the crisis with a new vision and new policies aimed at actively creating human, social, environmental security and inclusion for everybody.

This is what the ECF has expressed during the last years with its motto "MEGA" for "Make Europe Great for All".

**Our thoughts for what is essential in the time of this ongoing crisis**

We all thank the public health and sanitary staffs that are tirelessly fighting to take care of all, and the workers in essential services who are putting themselves at risk to answer people's needs.

Our thoughts and active solidarity also go to the vulnerable people: the precarious workers, the homeless, the migrants – both undocumented and legally recognised – and asylum seekers, all the people constrained in collective spaces deprived of the best possibility to protect themselves from contagion.

We are sure that everyone of us will do its utmost not to leave anyone alone inside the crisis.

What we say for our EU and neighbouring countries is true for the global planet. Let' globalise the common good. Now!

We wish all of us courage, hope and positive energy. We must respect the distance today. But we will overcome the crisis more united than ever before.

March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Jean-Marc Roirant  
President, European Civic Forum

***Share with us your actions and information you wish us to include in ECF communication by filling in the form of the Civic Space Watch (<https://civicspacewatch.eu/report-to-us/>) or by writing to [gnegri@civic-forum.eu](mailto:gnegri@civic-forum.eu).***