

TO *Ms Ursula VON DER LEYEN*
President of the European Commission

Mr Charles MICHEL
President of the European Council

Mr David Maria SASSOLI
President of the European Parliament

Mr Mário CENTENO
President of the Eurogroup

Mr Paolo GENTILONI
Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs

Mr Didier REYNDEERS
Commissioner for Justice and Consumers

Brussels, 3rd April, 2020

Subject: Consumers' appeal to safeguard European solidarity and to rebuild our future with "coronabonds"

Dear Presidents and Commissioners,

There is no longer any doubt; the coronavirus outbreak is the biggest socio-economic disruptor in Europe since the Second World War. As any extraordinary crisis, it calls for the implementation of extraordinary measures. Most European governments have now imposed severe lockdown measures. Businesses are closing, streets are increasingly deserted and most of the EU's population is confined to home. Citizens across Europe have been left wondering whether life will ever go back to normal.

In this unprecedented situation, Euroconsumers' member organisations, Altroconsumo in Italy, OCU in Spain, DECO Proteste in Portugal, Test Achats/Test Aankoop in Belgium (as well as Proteste in Brazil) are doing their best to manage the new challenges which consumers now face. This involves a significant ongoing effort on our part, as we are increasingly confronted with basic subsistence issues as a direct result of the virus' impact on individuals and society.

European solidarity is one of the fundamental values upon which the EU is constructed. **Euroconsumers therefore calls on European leaders to work together in these extraordinary times to establish common measures, including also dedicated debt instrument, such as "coronabonds"**. This financial instrument can help raise funds and ensure the long term stability of the Single Market. It would protect businesses, the healthcare system and the purchasing power of households.

We also call for the establishment of common guidelines at the EU level for the management of the coronavirus emergency. It is crucial that Member States share among themselves the latest medical and epidemiological information. It is also important to **develop a set of harmonised protocols to tackle the next phases of the pandemic.** Your priority should be to avoid creating first and second class citizens as a result of the pandemic.

It is critical to bear in mind that this economic shock is not cyclical; it is the consequence of an unprecedented crisis. Moreover, the resulting economic instability has not been caused by any individual Member State's weak financial management. Faced with an indiscriminate virus devastating entire communities, a disease which makes no distinction between rich and poor or North and South, European leaders must demonstrate strong leadership and ambition.

We see that consumers and citizens are increasingly under pressure due to the health, psychological, and financial impacts of the coronavirus crisis. In our recently published survey¹ we found that approximately half of EU households (in each of the EU countries where Euroconsumers is present) have already lost money due to the pandemic (50% in Belgium, 50% in Italy, 46% in Portugal and 54% in Spain) and these percentages do not include financial loss on investments. More specifically, "loss of professional income" was the most frequently cited reason in all countries (around 30% in Italy, Spain and Portugal). **According to our calculations, total losses due to the COVID-19 outbreak amount, to the present day, to €1.4 billion in Belgium, €12.3 billion in Italy, €1.4 billion in Portugal and €6.3 billion in Spain.** This is only the beginning. Every day the situation becomes more serious, with experts claiming the worst is yet to come.

Today, the EU Institutions have a responsibility to demonstrate that they are up to the challenge. **A strong statement on behalf of European leaders would help emphasise the intrinsic value of the European Union. Your leadership is essential for the survival of the Eurozone,** the welfare of its members, and most importantly, the livelihoods of the EU citizens who will be the most affected by this crisis. A failure of leadership will not only have devastating consequences for the integrity of the Single Market; indeed, if coordinated action is not undertaken to address this in the spirit of genuine solidarity with Europe's citizens, you risk compromising the entire EU project.

However the challenge the European Union faces will not end here. As much as the **COVID-19 crisis** pushes for critical decisions on how to revive our European economy, even more so it **urges us to face the fundamental question of what kind of future economy and society we want to live in.** In these times of crisis, we must reflect on our most basic assumptions and ask ourselves how we can guarantee a better future for ourselves and our children. For Euroconsumers it is clear that **when we recover from this crisis, we cannot go back to business as usual,** continuing to invest in the traditional brown economy which we have done for years. On the contrary, **we need to choose the greener path towards rebuilding a more sustainable future.**

The unveiling of the European Green Deal last December was an important step in this direction. Under no circumstances must the coronavirus pandemic be used as an excuse to shy away from the EU's green ambitions. Quite the contrary.

¹ [Living with the coronavirus: The consumer perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic](#) 25/03/2020

The COVID-19 crisis has not undermined the need for climate action. Rather, the wildly unpredictable nature of the coronavirus outbreak has shown that the key to building **a better future is to think and act less as individuals and more as a society.** We are in this together. That is why **Euroconsumers intends to become an even more effective open platform** for consumers, citizens, policymakers, businesses and other stakeholders, all of whom are equally persuaded that in 2020 we will need to join hands to secure the future of our planet.

Today our organisations are not only managing the many problems consumers face as a result of the COVID19 pandemic. To that regard, BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation, of which we are proud members, will share a more detailed analysis about the need for European action to protect and support consumers in the light of the coronavirus crisis.

As Euroconsumers **we are also ready to play a leading, accelerating role in rebuilding a more sustainable future, an economy and society that is “Approved by tomorrow”².** It will be a long and arduous journey, but Euroconsumers with its member organisations are ready to do their part. **We ask you, as leaders and EU Institutions, not to let us down.**

Yours sincerely,

Ivo Mechels,
Executive Director at Euroconsumers



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Country Manager at Altroconsumo



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Gathering five national consumer organisations and giving voice to a total of more than 1.5 million people, Euroconsumers is the world's leading consumer cluster in terms of innovative information, personalized services and defense of consumer's rights. Our organisations work closely together and with BEUC, The European Consumer Organisation, and Consumers International to ensure consumers are safe, that markets are fair and benefit from honest relations with businesses and authorities.

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² [Approved by Tomorrow Manifesto](#) 27/03/2020