Corona and the Consequences

D-01NEU: Containment, Recovery and Renewal
Applicant: 1st Digital States Council

Containment, Recovery and Renewal

Text of the resolution:

The Coronavirus has placed humanity in a state of emergency. The world already
mourns over 200,000 dead and great suffering. To stop the pandemic, the
economic and social life of the entire world has virtually ground to a halt, with
dramatic consequences: People are losing their jobs, social stress and domestic
violence are increasing. The world is on the brink of a deep recession.

We are still in the middle of the pandemic. It is essential - with all our might - to
keep the number of victims as low as possible and at the same time to prevent a
social and economic collapse. To achieve this, we must continue to exercise great
caution and learn to live with the virus for a longer period of time, while at the
same time continuously combatting it better and more precisely.

Corona is a global challenge to which there must be a global response. No state
can meet it alone. This is especially true for us in Europe. We must think of ways
out of the crisis in a consistently European way. Only Europe can get us through
this difficult time, only together will we be able to fight the pandemic and get our
economy back on its feet. Europe's cohesion has already suffered great damage.
We must now do everything we can to ensure that the peace project Europe finds
its way back to the historic course of integration.

No one knows how long this global state of emergency will last; no one can truly
foresee the actual scope and impact. Nevertheless, the crisis has already
demonstrated how important it is to take forward-looking political action. Working
on our future viability and crisis resilience will ultimately make all the difference.

Adversity shows us what is important: A sense of community, solidarity and
humanity. The recognition that German and European interests are one; the
cognisance of strong international institutions. The robustness of the economy,
health and social systems and the preservation of our natural resources. The need
for stable general services. For the strength of those that are often not seen in
society: Truck drivers, harvesters, cashiers, cleaners and caregivers. For the
employees in the health authorities, hospitals and research institutes, in medical
product manufacturers, in doctors' practices, in the German armed forces, police
and fire brigades, the rescue services or the numerous crisis teams. For the many
women who keep everything going, not only in low-paid care professions, but also
in many families. We owe them all not only our gratitude, but a promise for the
future: Recognition, equal rights, better wages. A new security policy - preventive,
resilient, comprehensive and European. We need a new, sustainable promise of
security.
It is not self-evident that this insight will endure beyond the current crisis. We stand at a crossroads. Are we writing off an old policy, the old fragility, the old problems and creating new ones? Or are we courageously pushing ahead with the necessary changes and rebuilding the economy and society on solid ground? We are convinced that only a political awakening will lead us out of the crisis for the long term. Only if we change things fundamentally, only if we turn our commitment into reality, will we be able to master these and the other major challenges - above all the climate crisis. Being resistant to global crises is the key to a new security in the 21st century.

Corona and the fight against the virus will shape all our lives, social debates and politics for a long time to come. After the pandemic, our world will be a different one. But with every step forward, however small, a window into the future is opening.

Democracy proves its worth especially in times of crisis. It is a learning system in which responsible citizens freely discuss their future. That is the prerequisite for innovation. We can and must learn lessons for the future from current experience. With Corona, the political debates do not end, they begin anew.

II. Action during the pandemic

Germany has fought the pandemic resolutely and has so far protected the health system from collapsing. But nothing has been won yet. As long as a vaccine is not available, the Coronavirus will remain a permanent threat and we will probably have to live with far-reaching restrictions for a long time to come. We need to have an informed discussion about where and how to relax the current restrictions gradually and on the assumption that our health system will not be overburdened. The general immunity card planned by the federal government is counterproductive because it can be an incentive to become deliberately infected. In addition, its potential for social division is enormous; discrimination in private life, at work and in the public sphere could be its consequence. We reject it.

In this exceptional period, proportionality is the order of the day. It is the responsibility of the state to repeatedly review whether the massive restrictions on fundamental rights are proportionate and whether there are milder means of accomplishing this. Restrictions, as well as gradual easing, must be explained as transparently as possible with clear, comprehensible criteria in order to create understanding, acceptance and trust. The restrictions must be appropriate, necessary and proportionate, take into account the consequences, consider possible alternatives and weigh them thoroughly. They must be limited in time and justified again and again. While there was great unity in the lockdown, society is threatening to split apart during the phases of relaxation. Instead of wearing oneself out in slogans of perseverance and reopening, we need a different, more targeted strategy for combating the virus, one based on tests, rapid traceability of infections and protective measures. We must now work to create the conditions for this, especially in the sensitive areas. Relaxation must be based on the common good and must not depend on which lobby group has the most influence.

With the lockdown, the federal government and the states decided on the most massive encroachment on fundamental rights in the history of the Federal Republic
of Germany as well as unprecedented aid packages. BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN supported these measures in the Bundestag and at the level of the state governments, submitted proposals and thus contributed to rapid, united action. This was also a way to create broad confidence in the necessity of a lockdown. We are prepared to continue shouldering the burden. To that end, we are putting forward our own proposals where there is a need for action and applying the brakes where necessary. The federal and state governments must involve political groups and parliaments in the process. They are the place for democratic debate, even in times of crisis. It is our responsibility not only to accompany these processes critically now, but also to deal with them comprehensively, fairly and in a spirit of solidarity after the crisis has been overcome, to identify mistakes and to develop better concepts for the future.

Despite all the social cohesion, the political failures of the federal government are now becoming increasingly visible. With the same vehemence with which we went into the lockdown, a functioning, European-coordinated pandemic economy must be built up that is geared to global needs. Many companies in the country are prepared to help and to convert their production to basic protective goods. But if the German government does not coordinate this, it will not work. We need reliable figures on the necessary demand, purchase guarantees, investment assistance where necessary and coordination in the event of bottlenecks in the supply chains.

Test capacities and the supply of facial masks must be drastically increased. The provision of protective clothing is particularly necessary for social assistance institutions, for child and youth welfare services, women's counselling centres, first aid centres and collective accommodation for people seeking protection or for help for the homeless, now, not later. Like nursing homes, they must be equipped with protective masks. We need a data protection-compliant, pan-European, voluntary corona tracing app as an important element in the fight against the epidemic. The processes in the health authorities must be improved, accelerated and made more digital, and sufficient personnel are needed to follow infection chains and quarantine monitoring. A corona tracing app is another important component - also Europe-wide - for containing the virus. It must be available as quickly as possible, be based on unrestricted voluntary action, be open-source and interoperable, and meet the highest standards of data protection and IT security. The data may only be processed on the end devices. These principles must be safeguarded by law.

The crisis is fuelling social problems and shows who has no lobby: Families, especially single parents, and children. The closure of schools and kindergartens, for example, dramatically increases the inequality of opportunities for children. Between 'completely closed' and 'everyone back in immediately', there must be room for proportionality and pragmatic solutions - small group lessons by the day, student-teacher discussions. If shift systems are introduced in the company, this will also work in the daycare centre. The state has a duty of care for children and an educational mandate. When society comes under pressure, marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as refugees, people with disabilities and homeless people, feel the consequences of the Corona crisis. How a society deals with these groups and minorities is a seismograph for the strength of our democracy - not only, but especially in times of crisis.
Once again it has become dramatically clear how much our social life and thus our economic prosperity still depends on women looking after children, cooking and shopping or cleaning the home. But childcare may not become a private matter; families must be able to rely on the state. What is also needed is a large, comprehensive social protection umbrella that also protects those who are poor, homeless, exposed to stress, incitement in the Internet, domestic violence, depression or suicide.

The longer the pandemic lasts, the more the following question comes to the fore: How do we learn to live with the threat of the virus without subjecting public life to drastic long-term restrictions? Every day we have to deal anew - also with a view to a possible new wave of Corona - with how we organise education, care, business and trade, cultural and leisure activities and, last but not least, equal opportunities for participation in social and political life under pandemic conditions, while at the same time protecting people from infection as best we can.

II. Combat the climate crisis and Corona jointly

The world is facing a deep recession. The International Monetary Fund predicts that Corona will lead to the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. This is a profound economic, social and societal challenge that we in Europe must face together and with all our strength. In the national measures to combat the economic consequences of the Corona crisis, it is essential to prevent further social and economic disparities between the Member States. The economic stimulus packages must therefore be conceived as European or coordinated by Europe, for example linked via the Green Deal, so that all countries in the European internal market can develop together. Nobody will manage it alone.

There is no blueprint for this historic moment. The economic effects impact almost every aspect of life and almost all industries, but they affect them very differently. Some companies can almost continue as before the crisis began thanks to home offices, but they have fewer orders. Some may remain in lockdown for months and see few prospects for the future. Others can slowly reopen with significant restrictions, but their supply chains do not work. In addition, we must not allow economic policy measures to counteract health policy measures.

Unlike following the financial crisis, this time we in Germany will not be able to simply export ourselves out of the recession. Demand has collapsed globally. And we have to find an answer to the fact that old social imbalances are being exacerbated by Corona and new ones are arising.

In all this, the second major task of our time is to overcome the climate crisis. After two hot summers, we are already experiencing the next drought. Bone dry fields, forest fires in April - that is also the reality in our country. And there will be no vaccine against the climate crisis. Not this year or any other year. We will fail as a global community if the measures now planned accelerate the destruction of our livelihoods.

It is therefore crucial to set the right course now. There is no question that the recession must be fought with full force; jobs and competitiveness must be maintained. But if we do this with old policies and old means, we will create new
insecurities and be heading for huge social and economic damage. Our framework for action must be the Paris Climate Treaty and the global objectives for sustainable development.

Before the pandemic, a broad alliance of companies, the climate movement, trade unions, researchers and scientists had recognised the opportunities that lie in a new direction that brings together climate protection, economic dynamism and social balance. The guiding principle of our actions is clear: We need a consistent transformation in line with the principles of the circular economy towards sustainable materials, resource and energy efficiency.

Environmental services promote innovation and ensure future viability and opportunities in all markets. We have a double task and a double opportunity: To tackle the economic crisis caused by Corona and the climate crisis together. The European Green Deal must serve as the core principle of the exit plan from the crisis. We firmly oppose initial attempts to soften or postpone this under the guise of the Corona pandemic. The Green Deal must become a pact for the ecological and social transformation of the economy.

It will require massive efforts and unprecedented programmes to meet these challenges. Now is the time for great and creative responses and decisive action. On the one hand, we must stimulate and stabilise in the short term and, at the same time, set a course towards climate neutrality and sustainability. It is absolutely clear that such an economic stimulus package can only be implemented once in many years. This makes it all the more necessary to take a decisive and forward-looking approach to reconstruction.

III. Measure against the economic crisis – social and ecological

Direct aid is needed for the sectors that have come to a stand still during the lockdown and economic stimuli for those that are slowly starting up again.

It is clear that tax-financed economic aid in a recession must be linked to targets: When stock corporations pay dividends or managers’ bonuses, they cannot expect any help from the state. Companies that were supported with state funds during the crisis and want to pay out dividends again in the future, must return this aid to the state. Companies that apply for state aid should first have to disclose in which country they make which profit and how much tax they pay. Under no circumstances should public money be allowed to contribute to extending existing tax loopholes. State shareholdings in companies must be tied to the condition of environmental and social criteria for the respective industries. If the state uses taxpayers' money to invest in companies, it must also have a say and be able to influence corporate strategy, just as private investors do.

For this year, a German emergency economic stimulus programme of about 100 billion euros should be prepared, which can take effect quickly if the medical situation allows a stronger restart of economic life. Let us then quickly stimulate the economy, let us prevent millions of people in our country from falling into existential need as a result of the consequences of Corona, let us prevent waves of bankruptcies from leaving our inner cities desolate, and let us prevent that what we hold dear, culture, travel and avoid permanent damage being inflicted on that
which we cherish. We need support, especially for the weakest. The measures must be limited to the duration of the crisis management and must be continuously reviewed.

We propose the following key points for this emergency programme:

**Strengthen local retail – stop the wave of bankruptcies**

- The local retail trade and especially the owner-managed gastronomy and cultural institutions are suffering massively from the crisis. The structural change of the retail trade towards online has accelerated, brick-and-mortar businesses are threatened by a wave of insolvencies. In order to prevent the inner cities from becoming deserted, we are proposing a fund of EUR 20 billion for the second half of the year. With direct subsidies and purchase incentives in the form of on-the-spot purchase vouchers, we want to ensure the preservation of structures in retail, gastronomy and cultural life. In addition, we want to support specialised brick-and-mortar retailers and owner-managed stores in particular in digitisation and the structural, regional anchoring of digital business models. The introduction of additional free public transportation for shopping can also help to stimulate consumption. Gastronomy can also be supported by expanding outdoor bar areas that allow for the observance of distance regulations. To this end, public areas and parking spaces should be made available to the catering trade for a limited period wherever possible.

- There is also a need for a targeted fund for the still closed creative and event sector in order to ensure its continued existence; this is more effective and fairer than the exchange system planned by the federal government.

**Improve social security – retain purchasing power**

- In order to cover the increasing costs during the pandemic, a monthly supplement of 100 euros per month for adults is to be granted on the basic provisions (SGB II, SGB XII, AsylBlG). Instead of lunches by delivery service, as the federal government plans to do, we demand a monthly supplement of 60€ for eligible children and young people in accordance with the education and participation package, which will be paid automatically. The currently easier access to basic security must apply to all people in order to prevent a two-tier system. To this end, it must be granted as an individual benefit, without crediting partner income.

- We also want to temporarily open BAföG to students who would otherwise not be eligible for support, as they are currently often deprived of opportunities for additional income.

- As long as day-care centres and schools have not fully reopened, parents who are therefore looking after their children should have the opportunity to take parental leave and receive a Corona parental allowance in return. The parental allowance should be designed in such a way that it provides incentives for equal childcare.
The short-time work allowance is to be increased to 90 percent for incomes up to 1,300 euros and decrease to 60 percent for incomes up to 2,300 euros. We want to prevent small self-employed persons from having to apply for basic security. Therefore, in areas that experience a longer lockdown, a kind of short-time work compensation is to be paid. The benefit should be 55 percent of the respective taxable profit of the last years, at most 1,500 Euro/month.

We want to ease the burden on private and commercial tenants. The loss of domiciles due to the crisis must be prevented. In addition to the measures taken by the federal government, financial support for tenants with crisis-related loss of income is therefore needed in the form of a fund or programme by the KfW bank. Electricity, heating, water and telephone or Internet disconnections may not be completed during the crisis. Companies and businesses that are directly affected by the pandemic lockdown and can hardly catch up in terms of income should be given the legal opportunity to reduce or even suspend rents. The Austrian regulation can serve as a model for this, which in the General Civil Code allows the obligation to pay rent to be waived if the property cannot be used due to "extraordinary incidences", which also includes a pandemic. Landlords who are dependent on these rent payments should then receive state support. The Corona crisis may not lead to further market concentration of a few housing companies.

Trainees should be able to apply for short-time work benefits of 100 percent at any time. We want to prevent apprenticeships from falling victim to the current situation. In addition, it must be ensured that the time lost in lessons does not have to be spent in the company, but can be used entirely for independent learning.

**Accelerate the ecological modernisation of industry**

In order to help the industrial companies that are facing existential hardships due to the pandemic, we want to offer generous state support. At the same time, the investments should also serve the ecological modernisation that is necessary in any case, so that companies do not miss their entry into the climate-neutral age by taking the wrong turn now. Direct aid should therefore promote investments that serve one of the six EU environmental goals (taxonomy). And companies must comply with certain social standards. In addition, the proposal of the German government's Sustainable Finance Advisory Council should be taken up: If companies can prove that they operate in accordance with the Paris Climate Convention, they should be granted a partial waiver of the loans that the state now grants as aid at the end of the repayment period.

**Our proposals:**

- By directly promoting innovation and investment, we want to encourage investment in transformative CO$_2$-free processes and procedures through direct grants for so-called lighthouse projects. In this way, we want to supplement EU funding programs and also offer tax incentives by means of degressive depreciation of investments made in transformative CO$_2$-free industrial processes amounting to at least 25 percent.
We want to accelerate the entry into the green hydrogen economy. In this way we are driving forward climate protection and higher investments in industrial sectors such as steel and chemicals as well as in air, shipping and freight transport. To that end, we offer investment grants for hydrogen pipelines and creating innovation and experimental areas to better test various business models and applications.

With climate agreements we want to create investment security - especially in the climate-intensive industry. In this way, we want to reimburse the difference between the current CO₂ price and the actual CO₂ avoidance costs incurred by companies as a result of investments in new processes and technologies. To that end, the best projects are to be identified in a competitive tendering process and climate contracts (Carbon Contracts for Difference) concluded with the appropriate companies.

We want to reduce the price of electricity for citizens and in particular small and medium-sized enterprises by reducing the EEG (Renewable Energy Sources Act) levy by five cents per kilowatt hour from 1 July 2020. Wind and solar energy are the cheapest sources of energy today, thanks to the EEG. This technological development has also been made possible by electricity consumers. In addition to the electricity sector, however, the heating, mobility and industrial sectors must also be decarbonised with green energy, e.g. via electric mobility, heat pumps and much more. A lowered EEG levy, counter-financed by the federal budget, contributes to this. By the end of 2021, a purchasing power effect of 22 billion euros can be achieved. In the middle term, the measure is financed by the income from the CO₂ price.

Thanks to the now attractive costs, we can also provide economic impetus in the renewables sector by accelerating expansion - without incurring additional costs for the state. The photovoltaic cap of 52 gigawatts must be lifted immediately, more restrictive spacing regulations for wind turbines may not be introduced, and existing ones that are too far-reaching must be eliminated. Subsequently, we need an ambitious amendment to the EEG: instead of small changes, fundamental steps must be taken to accelerate the expansion of wind and solar energy, to promote sector coupling and to achieve a participatory energy shift that is close to the people.

To ensure that economic impulses have a lasting effect, we will create a resilient investment and refinancing framework for renewable and system integration technologies with a participatory energy market design. In this way, we unleash private innovative power, while at the same time taking advantage of private households' favourable capital costs and realising our claim to democratic participation.

The construction sector is at the heart of an economic recovery plan. Ambitious energy-efficient building refurbishment not only helps the climate - it also strengthens the economy and creates qualified jobs in the trades and in production. We need more effective support systems for the climate-friendly replacement of fossil heating systems and significantly more building insulation. In concrete terms, we will first double the
existing support for the replacement of oil-fired heating systems and set up
an equity fund for municipal utilities. We are also providing targeted
support for the construction or conversion of climate-friendly heating grids
or renewable heating concepts involving geothermal and solar thermal
energy.

- We will also launch an energy efficiency offensive in trade and industry
and set up a support programme and appropriate regulatory requirements to
steer the numerous upcoming reinvestments in the right direction.

- As was already the case during the financial crisis, a degressive special
depreciation allowance limited to two years should be introduced for
corporate investments.

- We provide financial support to help energy-intensive data centres reduce
their power consumption and switch to renewable energies and energy-
efficient water cooling systems. In this way, we are also making a
contribution to advancing the digital sovereignty of Europe.

The automotive industry is a key sector of our industry with massive significance
for hundreds of thousands of jobs and countless suppliers. Even before the Corona
pandemic, the automotive industry was in crisis mode, and this has now intensified
massively. Companies and employees are very uncertain as to how things will
progress, what market development will take place and whether jobs can be
secured. The industry must change fundamentally.

We propose a future alliance of companies, trade unions and environmental
associations to overcome the recession, advance the ecological transformation and
secure employment. This combines targeted short-term aid with the urgently
needed move towards sustainable mobility. This includes ecological purchase
incentives and financial aid for modernisation. The purchase incentives must be
focused on climate-neutral mobility, because it would be counterproductive in
terms of climate policy and industrial policy to continue to promote combustion
engines with billions in aid. In return, environmentally harmful subsidies must be
dismantled and a bonus-malus system must be introduced in the vehicle tax,
placing a greater burden on emission-intensive vehicles such as SUVs and a lesser
burden on lower-emission vehicles. In addition, quotas for emission-free mobility
must be introduced and the EU fleet limits must be adjusted in line with the Paris
Climate Treaty.

The economic stimulus measures that are now necessary offer a great opportunity
for an ecological turnaround, especially in the transport sector: Citizens who give
up their private cars and do not buy a new one can claim a mobility bonus to help
finance climate-friendly alternatives such as a BahnCard, an annual public
transport pass, a freight bicycle or, car or bike-sharing services. More cars are not
the solution. Municipalities will also receive a conversion bonus to promote
climate-friendly mobility offers, such as the expansion of urban bus networks, the
development of sharing services or an expanded bicycle path infrastructure. In this
way we ensure that climate-friendly transport services do not deteriorate as a result
of the crisis and that more people are persuaded to switch away from private cars
in the medium term.
Like the automotive industry, the aviation industry has also been hit hard. Like the automotive industry, government aid would have to be linked to regulatory requirements. As in other European countries, a CO\textsubscript{2} reduction strategy in line with the Paris climate targets for aviation must be presented in this context, which would reduce the overall volume of air traffic. This can be achieved, for example, by closing routes for shorter domestic flights, extending the ban on night flights or renewing the aircraft fleet with more efficient and less polluting aircraft.

**IV. Investments in the future**

We should now prepare a ten-year investment programme of 500 billion euros. In our local communities alone, there is a backlog of 138 billion euros in renovation work, and this does not even include ecological investments such as the expansion of public transport. What we need right now are strong local communities that are capable of taking action on the ground, be it in social services or women's shelters. State investment must therefore be increased not only during the crisis, but also on a permanent basis. The economic research institutes of companies and trade unions estimate that more than 450 billion euros are needed for investment. Added to this are investments in our healthcare system, the necessity of which was made clear to us by Corona. Our hospitals alone have an additional investment requirement of at least six billion euros per year. And the challenges the nursing care sector faces are also large.

Federal and state politicians should do everything possible to get these investments off the ground. This includes starting planning processes now and making planning law less bureaucratic or suspending regulations for a limited period. Especially now, the public sector should hire planners and project managers and increase the number of approval authorities so that the additional investments can be built. To that end, the federal government should, by means of an administrative agreement, set up a fund with the states from which additional planning offices can be paid over a period of at least five years. Many investments lie with the municipalities and many of them are overburdened by previous encumbrances.

The collapse of trade tax revenues is making this situation much worse. The federal and state governments must enable local communities to make a fresh start with an old debt fund by relieving them of a major portion of their old debts. They can be permanently refinanced at low and currently even negative interest rates. In addition, municipalities with particularly high social charges must be supported. To that end, the federal government must in particular assume a higher share of the costs of housing and heating.

This huge investment volume is money well spent, both to prevent a major global depression with unforeseeable social and political consequences and to build up more crisis-proof and sustainable new economic structures. Of course, it will increase debt. In the coming years, public budgets will be under pressure to repay these loans. At the same time, important investments in the future must not be sacrificed to the crisis and no cuts may be made in basic municipal services, infrastructure and social security. For sustainable financing of the costs of the Corona crisis, therefore, credit financing with very long and flexible repayment periods is necessary. And Germany is currently not paying interest on its debts.
Repayment too quickly and restrictively would jeopardise the state’s economic recovery and ability to invest.

We must therefore reform the “debt brake” to allow more credit-financed investments. Time and again, Germany has found special forms of burden-sharing after special challenges (Second World War, reunification). The crisis is exacerbating the social divisions in Germany and Europe. Mass unemployment and the consequences of a weak healthcare system will hit southern and eastern European countries particularly hard. More and more Europeans are facing existential questions, while a few have large assets and very high incomes. Over and above the debts created by the Corona crisis, a policy is needed to prevent this division. Once the acute crisis is over, we need effective instruments to mitigate the social consequences, to share the costs of the crisis fairly and to keep the EU together. Accordingly, we need a balance based on the principle that those who have strong shoulders can carry more.

V. Strengthening our healthcare system

The Corona epidemic has revealed the strengths and weaknesses of our healthcare system. Our healthcare system has a well-developed system of diagnostics, good acute care with numerous intensive care beds and good technical equipment compared to other European countries. At the same time, however, it has become clear that there are considerable deficits, particularly in the personnel situation in nursing care, in municipal healthcare, in access to the healthcare system, in digital networking and in the procurement and stockpiling of protective equipment, which need to be remedied.

Right now we have to strengthen our healthcare system as much as we can to get this epidemic under control. The provision of reserve capacity for emergencies and good, well-paid staffing must be a priority and must be at the heart of our efforts. This should certainly be done economically, but with safety first. In concrete terms, this means that we, as a society, must make investments in medical and nursing infrastructure and investments in pandemic management worth more than they have been to date. We need a significant upgrading and professional strengthening of nursing care, more attractive working conditions and better staffing. We must better equip the public health services, especially the health authorities, which have been thinned out over the years, and improve the working situation for people in the healthcare and nursing sectors. In order to improve wages in the nursing sector, the parties to the collective agreement are to continue the negotiations about collectively agreed pay in the nursing sector as soon as possible, so that an agreement can be made generally binding in the near future. If this is not achieved in spite of ongoing negotiations, legal measures will have to be taken. The next step could be to oblige the social nursing care insurance system to conclude agreements only with employers who pay collectively agreed rates.

The momentum in the digitisation of our health care system, which has been partly created by the crisis, must be used to expand telemedicine and other digital services that are useful for care management and research. Research data should be easier to exchange, while respecting the protection of personal privacy, as should medical logistics. We want an investment pact between the federal government
and the states to support hospitals, but also the public health service, in making the necessary investments in the digital infrastructure.

With digital epidemiology, the state of health of the population can be analysed in real time from a large amount of anonymised data, so that it is possible to intervene in a more targeted manner and better counter a future epidemic. This is not the only reason why the e-government of the administration in Germany must be developed at full speed. Our virologists are world leaders and so are our research institutions. If, on the other hand, health data still have to be sent from office to office by fax because it is technically impossible to do otherwise, this is now costing us valuable time in the fight against Corona.

VI. Right to education, even in the pandemic

The Coronavirus also holds up the mirror to education policy. There are the still enormous injustices that the German education system produces - visible, for example, in the different technical equipment available to pupils and their schools. There are the structural and sanitary conditions of educational institutions, which are inadequate in many places and cause even greater problems than usual in times of pandemics. Then there is the situation of pupils with disabilities or other special educational needs, which has become particularly acute during the crisis. There is a fixation on exams and achievement certificates that is not appropriate to the challenges of the future. This blocks the view of what is pedagogically and socially necessary and ties up resources that are needed elsewhere. And, last but not least, despite all the assertions, there is the still far too little emphasis placed on early childhood education, when again only the label "care" is used to talk about daycare centres. What is lacking in the first few years from an educational point of view can often hardly be made up for. Educational policy has so far failed to respond adequately to the challenges because it concentrates limited resources on fulfilling curricula and taking exams instead of absorbing the social consequences of the pandemic.

On the other hand, the commitment of many players is encouraging a real change in education. Those responsible for education, school administrators, local authorities, pedagogical specialists and teachers, but also parents and pupils are finding new, pragmatic and creative solutions in this difficult situation. In doing so, practitioners often take up what is actually the responsibility of politics and administration, namely the adequate handling of such a crisis by our educational institutions. For this we also owe them our gratitude.

Learning from the crisis is not just about a little bit of digitalisation; it is about orienting the education system in such a way that people can act in a self-determined, sustainable and enlightened manner. Once again, it is clear that the future of our education system lies in a paradigm shift. This requires a move away from a focus on plan fulfilment and reproducible, verifiable specialist knowledge to support personal development, the development of crisis resilience and the handling of uncertainties and ambiguities that characterise our time, even beyond the current pandemic, and will continue to do so.

Digitisation in schools needs long-term financial support from the federal government, not just a temporary funding pot once filled. The mega-task of
Digitisation in education can only be accomplished by the federal and state governments together. The willingness on all sides to connect the German education system to the digital world has never been greater. It must not be a matter of simply using digital tools for analogous thought and design in education. The window for real innovation in our education system is as open as never before. It is our task to use this window and to shape education in and for the 21st century under the conditions of digitisation, ecological and social challenges of the future.

Digitisation at universities and vocational schools must also be supported and improved and access to online lectures must be ensured for all students. Teachers must be supported in the use of digital tools. Without appropriate support, accelerated digitisation at universities threatens to exacerbate social inequalities. The Corona crisis must not lead to financial disadvantages for students who are dependent on BAföG. For this reason, the current semester should not count towards the standard period of study and thus towards BAföG.

In order to counteract the injustices in the education system, the further expansion of good all-day education and care services is central. This is where the crisis could possibly break open old blockades: If traditional education can only be provided to a limited extent for a longer period of time, day-care centres and schools should have the opportunity to create new learning and leisure facilities in an unbureaucratic and flexible manner. Schools should be given a budget for this purpose, which would come from federal funds as part of a social protection shield. In addition, a catch-up programme for schools in disadvantaged regions and urban districts will be more necessary than ever after the crisis, so that those who were already threatened with being left behind before Corona do not lose touch.

It is also urgently necessary that strategies for the period after the summer holidays are developed now within the framework of the Conference of Education Ministers. These strategies must take up the manifold effects of the restricted school operation in technical, pedagogical, but also emotional and social terms. Curricula and school law provisions must be made more flexible and relieved for the coming school year. As the current school year shows, average degrees can relieve the burden on all those involved.

VII. A New Opportunity for Europe

All of Europe is affected by the Corona crisis. Our continent is currently the region with the most infected people worldwide. Everyone is affected, some regions, such as Lombardy, Alsace, Madrid especially so. As in the last financial crisis and the refugee crisis, some European countries have lacked a spirit of solidarity and Europeanism in the Corona crisis. The actions of the federal government in financial policy issues and with the initial export restrictions on medical products have also further weakened confidence in European solidarity.

Together with its European partners, the German government must ensure that the divisions in the EU are not further aggravated by the pandemic. If Europe does not stand together now, others will jump into the breach and try to extend their geopolitical influence even further. The federal government must take a consistent European approach to crisis management so that no new social injustice, youth
unemployment or lack of prospects arise - especially in Southern and Eastern European Member States.

But there are many examples of European solidarity that encourage the belief that the European idea continues to exist: European patients are being treated in German hospitals, local help is being organised through European town twinning, many people from civil society have started personal initiatives. We must see this crisis as a turning point to deepen the sense of community. Then Europe can emerge even stronger from this crisis.

We intend to return to the open borders of the Schengen area as soon as possible. In combating Corona, Europe must stand by its values and remain open. Border controls and entry bans must be medically justified, coordinated and proportionate. Arbitrary border controls at the national level should be replaced by targeted restrictions at the regional level (which should then also apply across borders). The criteria do not have to be one hundred percent identical everywhere, but they must be equally effective. Where necessary, the focus at the borders must be on the question of the effective protection of health.

Europe needs to coordinate strategies for terminating the lockdown, also to prevent supply chains from being disrupted. A European pandemic economy should aim at a massive production of medical equipment and the best possible use of common testing and treatment capacities. States should jointly organise or coordinate procurement to avoid competition. European efforts in vaccine research should be reinforced. We call for an EU Corona Research Fund for drugs and vaccines which are then marketed under a public service licence. We need to be better prepared for the next pandemic. To that end, the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) must be strengthened and a European Health Corps must be established. The Health Corps is to consist of regular staff from European hospitals, who can be quickly mobilised in the event of a crisis and deployed in particularly affected regions so that no hospital in Europe is unable to provide adequate medical care to people who are not otherwise able to receive it. The forthcoming German Presidency of the Council should also be used to re-establish pharmaceutical production in Europe in order to avoid dependence on transcontinental supply chains in these vital areas. The Corona crisis once again shows how important sustainable management of supply chains is. It is good that the EU Commission has announced a binding supply chain law.

With the decisions of the European Central Bank (ECB), a new financial and currency crisis has been averted for the time being. Once again, the ECB had to step in because the heads of state and government were unable to decide on comprehensive measures for crisis management such as joint Corona Bonds. The package of ESM aid, corporate loans from the European Investment Bank and the European short-time working allowance that has now been agreed is a first step, but it is not sufficient.

If too little is done in countries like Spain and Italy for fear of over-indebtedness, this will not only impact the people there hard, but in the end all members of the Union will be affected. The German economy in particular is closely linked to these countries. If German products are no longer bought there, this will lead to a sharp rise in unemployment in our country. And if production cannot restart there
because of the pandemic, the interwoven supply chains in this country will bring the production lines to a standstill. Only if Italy gets back on its feet will Germany do so as well. China will try to shop around in the European economy in the coming recession and Putin will use the opportunity to destabilise European democracies. Only if Europe looks after its interests together will Southern and Eastern Europe in particular be able to reject these offers.

This European response must include a joint Recovery Fund, financed by mutual bonds, in order to shoulder the burden of the crisis together and in solidarity. Spending should be geared to the Paris Climate Protection goals and the Green Deal. The Recovery Fund should have a volume of at least one trillion euros and thus be commensurate with the seriousness and scale of the challenge. The debt should not count towards national debt ratios and should be shouldered according to economic performance. Such joint liability would allow for interest rates below inflation. The Recovery Fund must be subject to strict anti-corruption monitoring and parliamentary control.

While many companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises and the retail trade in the city centres, are currently suffering, large digital groups are making huge profits. At the same time, they pay less tax than comparable traditional companies. This is why now would be the time, at the latest, for the federal government to oppose this tax dumping and to abandon its blockade of the European Digital Tax. Even the EU Commission's proposal to tax the sales of large digital companies at three percent in the place where they operate would result in estimated revenues of five billion euros. If individual EU member states continue to block this step, a coalition of the willing is needed as a first step towards a European and global solution.

In this crisis, the German government's years of braking and refusal to act on central European issues is proving to be a significant encumbrance. After the crisis, the European Union must finally tackle the decisions that have been postponed for years on the completion of economic and monetary union, such as a separate EU budget with its own fiscal policy instrument, dealing with trade imbalances and the completion of the banking union. A larger EU budget from 2021 onwards would also mean a larger German contribution and more opportunities for the Union to generate its own revenues in order to structurally strengthen the EU. In order to reposition Europe, the federal government need not assume every proposal from other countries, but it must finally make its own constructive proposals to solving the problems and not just continue to refuse and, in the event of a crisis, shift the entire economic policy responsibility onto the European Central Bank. Among the necessary issues is the review of the Stability and Growth Pact.

The importance of one's own fundamental convictions is particularly evident in the crisis. The federal government must therefore also take a stand against the threatened dismantling of the rule of law, separation of powers and freedom of the press in some EU Member States – together with European partners, especially in the course of the forthcoming German EU Council Presidency. We call on the EU Commission to examine all national measures to combat the Corona pandemic in EU Member States to ensure that they comply with European law and, where necessary, to intervene accordingly. In order to discuss the EU's responses to the
crisis with all Europeans, the German government must work in the Council to ensure that the Conference on the Future of Europe is used to that end.

The world will only survive this pandemic well with a spirit of cooperation. As interconnected as the world is, most nation states continue to act shortsightedly and selfishly at present. If Europe acts in cooperation and solidarity, we will create a strong and irresistible counter-narration with a global impact. The whole world is fighting this Corona pandemic. That is why, in the pandemic, customs duties on products vital for survival must be abolished and export restrictions lifted. Seven billion people are waiting for a vaccine and drugs against COVID-19, and it must be ensured that both, once available, are available globally, quickly and at a reasonable price.

We must therefore think about relaxing the rules on intellectual property and call on intellectual property owners to offer favourable licences in an international patent pool coordinated through the WTO - especially for a newly developed vaccine or recognised therapy. The global recession threatens to become an accelerator of the debt crisis in developing and emerging countries, and thus of poverty, flight and conflict. Germany must work to ensure that the debts of the global South are cancelled. Furthermore, a significant increase in the Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund is needed to be better armed against the speculative flight of capital. The European Central Bank should examine to what extent it can assist developing and emerging countries with further currency swap agreements in the event of the flight of capital. The fight against illegal financial flows must be intensified. We must not allow global inequalities to become even worse. We need a global aid package against the Coronavirus and its consequences and a strengthening of the United Nations.

We support the UN Secretary General's call for global ceasefires. The German government should use its influence with European and international partners to work towards this goal. It must make quickly available sufficient additional funds for development cooperation and humanitarian aid. At the same time, the international community and German humanitarian aid and development cooperation may not relax measures in existing health programmes.

VIII. Stronger from the crisis

The pandemic makes us aware of what we miss and what we are determined to regain: Our freedom, social proximity and the complexity of our lives; public spaces; day-care centres, schools and universities; direct exchanges with colleagues at work; culture and colourful life, with bars, cinemas, concerts, lively city centres that we continue to miss and that are now struggling to survive; our united and open Europe.

The lockdown has also shown us what we need to value and promote more:

The wisdom of an enlightened society capable of taking preventive action; living in a functioning democratic constitutional state; our public services, a vibrant local community and a strong welfare state; independent quality media and public service broadcasting; people in solidarity and a state in solidarity; clean air even in the cities and congestion-free roads; the possibility of a home office; a
parliamentary cooperation between government and opposition that solves things together instead of just working against each other.

Last but not least, the Corona crisis shows us what we have missed in the past. There have been pandemic warnings and even pandemic emergencies with printed matter from the Bundestag, but in reality, as a society, we were not sufficiently prepared. We still have to learn resilience. This includes the fact that we cannot rely on the market alone when it comes to the production of medicines and key tools for combating epidemics. In Europe itself, we must be able to produce the key medical products and medicines, as well as food that we need to live in an emergency. This means that we must better protect critical infrastructures, for example from large-scale IT attacks. We must promote digitisation, we must strengthen Europe and multilateral institutions and we must understand that the overexploitation of natural ecosystems increases the risk of epidemics. For example, outbreaks of infectious diseases have been on the increase over the last 40 years. About two thirds of these are zoonoses, that is, diseases that have been transmitted from animals to humans. We must do more to combat the causes of zoonoses and at the same time prepare ourselves to better control epidemics in the future.

Only if we reflect self-critically can we better arm ourselves against future disasters. Politically, prevention is the most difficult thing of all. But Corona shows us every day how important it is. Accordingly, our aim in this paper is to adopt guidelines for the next steps beyond the immediate fight against the crisis and to draw the right lessons from the experience of recent weeks. We want to be faster than the virus, so that its worst consequences can be prevented and we can emerge from the crisis stronger than we entered it.