

Paris, April 7th 2020

Mrs Christine Lagarde
President
European Central Bank

Sent by e-mail

Dear Mrs. President,

It has been a long time since mankind has experienced such a serious and uncertain period.

In 1950 Robert Schumann, in his famous declaration, in which the dream of a European Union was initially expressed, said that Europe *“will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de-facto solidarity”*.

However, today, 70 years later, it is clear that the European Union has not shown yet its ability and will to stand united against such a serious common threat. At a time when this terrible crisis offers us the opportunity to be together, European solidarity has not been demonstrated in a relevant action.

Europe has reacted with considerable delay to the coronavirus threat. It should not do likewise in the combat against the coming economic collapse. The ECB, like the Fed, is applying the old methods used during the economic crises that broke out in 2008 and 2011, by buying back government and private bonds in large quantities. The ECB has promised € 750 billion, in addition to the previous measures, i.e., a total of more than € 1,100 billion over the year. These measures, aimed at strengthening the banking system to ensure greater financing capacity for the economy, are necessary but not enough in the current context. National Central Banks, headed by the ECB, must also change their image to the citizens of the European Union, by being closer to the citizens' concerns.

Banca d'Italia donated nearly € 65 million to health services. The Bank of Greece has also made a similar donation of € 5 million and the Bank of France € 1 million. These initiatives are generous indeed but, once again, they appear on a national level and not at a large scale ESCB level as we would hope. Therefore, on behalf of SCECBU¹, I have the honour to propose the implementation of an ESCB-wide donation based on a percentage of the ECB's profits (€ 2,366 million – € 790 million more than 2018) to the World Health Organisation.

¹ The SCECBU is the most representative organisation at ESCB level and is composed of 45 NCBs Trade Union Organisations and Staff Associations. It represents more than 85% of ESCB trade unions having a seat in the different fora of ESCB social dialogue: ESCB SD, SSM SD and Banknotes SD.

Last, but not least, as President of a Trade Union representing thousands of workers, I hereby express my worries about the situation pertaining to many European citizens that, due to this unpleasant situation, have been losing their jobs.

As your predecessor Mario Draghi recently wrote, today *“the priority must not only be providing basic income for those who lose their jobs. We must protect people from losing their jobs in the first place. If we do not, we will emerge from this crisis with permanently lower employment and capacity, as families and companies struggle to repair their balance sheets and rebuild net assets”*.

The ECB and all the European institutions should use their credibility, their influence and their role to do their best to save jobs.

We strongly believe that these initiatives would bring out the image of a benevolent institution at all levels that we think the ECB should be, and, by upholding the core values of the European Union, the solidarity of all our citizens will help us overcome the current crisis.

Yours truly,

Thierry Desanois
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Desanois', with a stylized flourish at the end.