

Inleiding gesprek EP, 7 mei

Introduction

- We are facing an unprecedented crisis.
- The images of this crisis are on top of our minds:
 - overcrowded hospitals
 - medical staff working overtime
 - the elderly and the vulnerable who have to live in isolation for their own protection.
- Nobody has ever experienced this and nobody knows how this crisis will continue.
- The COVID-19 crisis does not stop at borders.
- This crisis hits every country in Europe.
- And we can only fight this virus together.
- This requires unorthodox measures, both nationally as well as on the European level.

National

- The Netherlands has implemented a wide range of measures.
- First, we did everything to confine the outbreak and to provide all the necessary medical care.
- Second, we implemented a massive emergency package to support jobs and fundamentally sound companies.
- We will extend this package and implement additional measures if necessary.
- Third, we are thinking about how to design a swift, effective and sustainable recovery.

Europe

- As this crisis does not stop at borders, we should stand and act together.
- Countries most hit by the virus should be assured of the support of other countries.
- The European economies are closely interlinked.
- Therefore, the future of any European country depends on the future of Europe as a whole.
- This is why solidarity within Europe is key in solving this crisis together.
- Nevertheless, it is also our duty to act responsibly with tax payers' money.

Europe – support package

- At the Eurogroup on April 9th we have agreed to a huge, unprecedented, economic European support package.
- It was by then already an addition to proposed measures by individual countries, the ECB, the EIB and the Commission.
- This package rests on four crucial pillars:
 1. First, we agreed to make Pandemic Crisis Support available at the ESM to cover the health costs.
 2. Second, we have also agreed to set-up a new instrument (SURE) that can provide financial assistance to countries, for instance to cover unemployment costs.
 3. Third, we have agreed to strengthen the activities of the EIB by setting up a dedicated pan-European guarantee fund, to provide support to mainly SMEs.
 4. Finally, we have agreed to further work on how to recovery the European economies, in light of the MFF.
- This has been followed-up by the European Council that tasked the Commission to analyze the exact needs and come forward with a proposal.

- In all, Europe has shown its ability to act and deliver, in particular in times of crisis.

Europa – longer-term

- For the longer term, we should focus on making our economies more sustainable, resilient and fit for the 21st century.
- This requires both investments and reforms to achieve longer-term sustainable growth.
- This will also help to address the issue of divergence in economic outlook.
- Part of the existing divergence is the direct result of slow pace in reforms or the lack of them.
- We need solidarity underpinned by reforms.
- This means that we should not lose sight of our common strategic agenda: green and digital transformation of our economies and a real push to deepen our internal market.
- We need continued strong EU leadership on this.

Final words

- As mentioned, we should stand and act together to fight this COVID-19 crisis and its economic impact.
- And we should strive to make our economies more resilient and future-proof.
- This requires European coordination and solidarity.