

Open letter to the attention of:

Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council

Mr. David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament

Brussels, 8 April 2020

European Philanthropy calls for effective solidarity across borders concerning COVID 19

Dear Presidents,

DAFNE and the EFC jointly represent more than 10,000 donors and foundations across Europe. This philanthropy sector is a vital part of Europe's civil society, providing 60 billion euros annually to the public good. We recognise that the COVID-19 outbreak is an exceptional crisis that is having an unprecedented impact on our society, and weathering this crisis requires the joint efforts of many actors, including philanthropy.

Philanthropic organisations have long been a crucial partner in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable segments of our society. Philanthropy is able to respond in real-time while simultaneously taking a longer-term view in areas from health, to the environment, to social well-being, to human rights, to upholding democratic values, and much more. Working alongside governments and the private sector, these organisations provide private resources for public good – harnessing the capabilities, scale and benefits of philanthropic investment to effect positive change.

One of the most alarming factors in this crisis situation is the fact that national policymakers are closing borders in Europe at a time when, more than ever, we need actors and solutions that bridge our societies in a spirit of solidarity and the promotion of the European idea. Philanthropic organisations want to give and run their operations in the most effective ways, whether that is domestically or across borders, and they want to collaborate with the partners that will bring the most impact. Therefore we call on you to overcome current impediments and to ease actions and operations for the philanthropy sector in Europe.

Philanthropy across Europe has been quick to respond to the outbreak of the pandemic, expressing solidarity with the wider civil society, pooling emergency funds and providing support to the most affected communities. Our members are on the front line responding to this emergency situation. Please find herewith just a few of many examples:

- **Pooled funding for emergency support:** e.g. the Italian organisation ACRI with its banking foundation members launched a 40 million euro fund at an early stage of the crisis to support hospitals, and provide protective material and medication.

- **Stepping up funding and support for services helping the most vulnerable people in our society in the current lockdown situation:** e.g. The Gulbenkian Foundation in Portugal has set up an emergency fund to support communities and provide medical equipment.
- **Increasing flexibility for their grantees:** i.e. introducing flexible deadlines, converting restricted grants to unrestricted funding and creating new funds for the most urgent needs – many foundations are currently signing the “**European Philanthropy Statement on COVID-19**” a [joint DAFNE/EFC statement](#) in solidarity and in support of their grantees.

As is happening in the business sector, institutional philanthropy is facing a major disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the work of philanthropy could be facilitated to enable the most effective response to the COVID-19 crisis, and we would like to make the following recommendations - see Annex “**Policy recommendations to enable philanthropy to respond effectively to COVID-19 crisis**” for more details:

- **We welcome measures taken by the EU and Member States that aim to lower the pressure on the financial markets** and provide breathing room for the people in need and the overall economy across Europe, but would appreciate if **emergency programmes could also respond to the needs of civil society** to continue its unique role of supporting the most vulnerable segments of our society. We also call on the EU and national policymakers to invest in solidarity to overcome the public health, economic and social crises brought on by this pandemic, specifically through a strong and ambitious **Multiannual Financial Framework MFF and a strong InvestEU programme**, which recognise the key role of philanthropy (Point 7 in the Annex).
- **We strongly welcome your call to protect European core values such as democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights** throughout the COVID-19 emergency situation and its recovery phase. We fully support your call on EU Member States to not introduce systemic changes that undermine the democratic principles of the EU (point 8 in the Annex).
- **We call on EU and national policymakers to enable and facilitate philanthropy also across borders, stimulate more private giving, and allow more flexibility for running philanthropic operations and managing governance** (points 1-5 in the Annex): philanthropic organisations are experiencing a situation in which some of their programmes are getting harder to implement. This means they need to make adjustments to their own operations and existing programmes, and find new and rapid ways to enhance collaboration with various stakeholders also across borders.
- **We call for getting your support for setting up matching funds** at national and European level to leverage pooled funding of foundations across Europe to respond to the emergency situation (point 6 in the Annex): Some donors and foundations in Europe are keen to go for public-private partnerships to tackle this crisis.

We would be grateful to discuss these policy recommendations with you and your team in more detail and see them reflected in the EU’s policy agenda.

We are at your disposal to continue this conversation that, we believe, will strengthen your leadership role in this crucial time for Europe and allow Europe's philanthropy sector to complement EU measures and national measures in the spirit of European solidarity.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Gerry Salole
EFC Chief Executive

gsalole@efc.be
ph.: +32 2 512 89 38
www.efc.be



Max von Abendroth
DAFNE Executive Director

max.abendroth@dafne-online.eu
ph.: +32 494 50 51 79
www.dafne-online.eu

Philanthropy Advocacy

The DAFNE and EFC joint advocacy project "Philanthropy Advocacy" acts as a monitoring, legal analysis and policy engagement hub for European philanthropy. Its main objective is to shape the national, European and international legislative environment by implementing the European advocacy roadmap for a Single Market for Philanthropy. Please find more information on <https://www.philanthropyadvocacy.eu/>

Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe (DAFNE)

DAFNE is Europe's largest network of donors and foundations associations. With 30 member associations with a collective membership of more than 10.000 foundations and grant-makers, DAFNE is a leading voice of European foundations. We are involved in advocacy, capability building, promotion of philanthropy and research.

Our aim is to strengthen the philanthropic sector in Europe and to enhance professionalism and effectiveness of national associations. DAFNE is a member of WINGS, an associate partner of OECD netFWD and an active supporter of #NextPhilanthropy. DAFNE and the EFC jointly lead the Philanthropy Advocacy project. Please find more information on www.dafne-online.eu

European Foundation Centre (EFC)

As a leading platform for philanthropy in Europe, the EFC works to strengthen the sector and make the case for institutional philanthropy as a formidable means of effecting change. We believe institutional philanthropy has a unique, crucial and timely role to play in meeting the critical challenges societies face. Working closely with our members, a dynamic network of strategically-minded philanthropic organisations from more than 30 countries, we:

- Foster peer-learning by surfacing the expertise and experience within the sector
- Enhance collaboration by connecting people for exchange and joint action
- Advocate for favourable policy and regulatory environments for philanthropy
- Build a solid evidence base through knowledge and intelligence
- Raise the visibility of philanthropy's value and impact

The EFC and DAFNE jointly lead the Philanthropy Advocacy project. Please find more information on www.efc.be