



**Video message
from the Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
on the corona pandemic
on 26 March 2020**

"Fellow citizens,

Keeping our distance – from people we love and places that are important to us. Since the beginning of this week that is no longer a recommendation but the order of the day.

But what does this mean? What does that mean when we know that this day will last more than 24 hours. It could possibly last weeks.

It means refraining from doing things we want to do. It means refraining from visiting our parents and grandparents, meeting friends, going out for a meal or partying with them or simply sitting together in the sun after a long winter. Refraining from these things is difficult for all of us, including me.

However, only by making these sacrifices can we ensure that we do not lose what we love for ever.

The overwhelming majority in our country understand that and are acting accordingly. I would like to thank you for that.

We all sense that looking out for each other, our solidarity, is vitally important at present.

But what does that mean in practice?

At this time, solidarity means: keeping a physical distance – and yet being closer to each other than ever before.

Solidarity means realising that yes, the day-to-day lives of us all have been upset – and yet some of us have been especially hard hit. The taxi driver or the musician whose income has dried up overnight, not to mention the pub or restaurant owner. The single parent and her daughter who are at home all of a sudden, with no big house and without their own garden. And above all, the elderly and the sick who are particularly at risk and especially alone at this of all times.

I see and hear that many, very many of you are helping now; you are going shopping for your elderly neighbour, hanging bags of groceries for the homeless on special fences; and more than 40,000 of you put your heads together (in the virtual sense) at the weekend and came up with hundreds of creative solutions for the concerns and problems that have emerged in this time of crisis.

All of you are the heroes of the corona crisis. I have spoken to some of you on the phone this week: for example, to the supermarket manager who is doing a twelve-hour shift with her team so that the shelves do not stay empty. To the primary school teacher who is filming teaching videos in the attic for her pupils. To the social worker who has organised a telephone chain for those who feel lonely. And to the doctor, carer and pharmacist who are working past the point of exhaustion in professions which save lives.

And solidarity also means looking beyond our immediate neighbourhood. We are all heartbroken when we see the images from Italy. It is good that hospitals here in Germany are now treating seriously ill Italian and French patients. I hope to see more such examples of tangible solidarity in a European spirit.

No, the virus does not have a nationality and the suffering does not stop at borders. But neither should we. Researchers are cooperating around the world to develop a vaccine, treatment and counter-strategies. And the better politicians, the business community and researchers work together, the quicker these efforts will succeed.

No, our future does not lie in sealing ourselves off from each other. On the contrary, we have to share our knowledge. This can transform shared suffering into a shared future. So, let's learn from each other! Let's pool all the knowledge and experience, all the creativity and energy around the world! That is my appeal. I am centring my hopes on this.

All the best, fellow citizens, and let's look out for each other."