



**Televised address by Federal President
Frank-Walter Steinmeier on the coronavirus pandemic
at Schloss Bellevue,
on 11 April 2020**

Good evening, fellow citizens,

In a few hours, Easter festivities will begin. Outside, nature is in bloom. We yearn to go outdoors - and spend time with each other, to see those we hold dear - friends and family.

That's what we used to do. That's how it always was. But this year, everything is different. It hurts having to do without visiting our parents. It breaks grandparents' hearts that they cannot at least hug their grandchildren at Eastertime. And many other things are different this year, as well. There are no colourful crowds mingling in parks and street cafes. Many of you have had to give up your long-awaited holiday. For restaurant and hotel owners, there is no sunny start to the season. Believers cannot join in prayer. And all of us are asking ourselves the nagging question: What will tomorrow bring?

Of all times, at Easter - during the festival of the resurrection, when Christians around the world celebrate life's victory over death - we must restrict our activities, so that disease and death do not claim victory over life.

Many thousands have died. Here in our country. As well as in Bergamo, Alsace, Madrid and New York - and many other places in the world. The images are deeply moving. We mourn those who die alone. We think of their loved ones, who cannot even gather and say goodbye. We are grateful to the tireless health care workers whose job it is to save lives. And, even though all our worlds have been upended, we think of those who are particularly hard hit by the crisis - those who are sick or lonely, and those who are worried about losing their job, or their company; the freelancers and artists who are losing their income; the families and the single parents who live in small apartments without a garden or a balcony.

This pandemic is showing us that we are indeed vulnerable. Maybe for too long we thought ourselves to be invincible, that the future would take us faster, farther and higher. That was a delusion. But that's not the only thing this crisis is revealing. It is also showing us how strong we are - and what we can build on!

I am deeply impressed by the great feat our country has accomplished in recent weeks. We have not yet put the danger behind us. However, already today, it is clear that each and every one of you has radically changed your life, and each and every one of you has thereby saved lives. And you are saving more, day by day.

It is a good thing that the state is now taking vigorous action - in a crisis that has taken us into uncharted territory. I ask you all for your continued trust - because those in government at Federal and Länder level are aware of their tremendous responsibility.

But what exactly lies ahead, or when and how restrictions can be eased - these things are not up to politicians and experts alone. Rather, this will be determined by us all, by our patience and our discipline - especially now, when this is most challenging for us.

The great feat that we are accomplishing these days is succeeding not because we are being forced by an iron hand - but because we are a thriving democracy, with responsible citizens. A democracy in which we trust one another to listen to facts and arguments, to be wise and do the right thing. A democracy in which every life counts, and in which everyone is making a difference: as a nurse or the Federal Chancellor, as a committee of scientists or a visible or invisible pillar of our society - sitting at a supermarket cash register, or at the wheel of a bus or a lorry; working in a bakery, on a farm, or in rubbish collection.

So many of you are going above and beyond - thank you for that.

Of course, I know that we all yearn to return to normality. But what exactly does that mean? Getting back as soon as possible to our old routine and habits?

No, the world that lies ahead will be different. What will it look like? That is up to us. Let us learn from everything - the good and the bad - that all of us are experiencing day by day in this crisis.

I believe we are at a fork in the road. Already now, in this crisis, it is clear that we have two options: Will it be every man and woman for him- and herself, with us elbowing our way through life, gathering what we can and making sure our own needs are met? Or will we keep up our newly found dedication to each other and to society? Will we maintain the creativity and willingness to help that has burst onto the scene? Will we stay in touch with the elderly neighbour whom we helped with his shopping? Will we continue giving the cashier and the postman the appreciation they deserve? What is more, when the crisis

is over, will we remember how much we should value the essential work that is being done by caregivers, those who supply our needs in daily life, and those working in social professions, nurseries and schools? Will the ones who survive this crisis economically intact help those who have been hardest hit?

And will we join up around the world to search for a solution - or will we fall back into isolation and everyone going it alone? Let us share all knowledge and research, so that we can more rapidly find a vaccine and therapies. And let us form a global alliance that works to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable countries also get access. No, this pandemic is not a war. It does not pit nations against nations, or soldiers against soldiers. Rather, it is a test of our humanity. It brings out the worst and the best in people. Let us show each other our best side!

And let us do so in Europe, as well. Germany cannot emerge from the crisis strong and healthy if our neighbours do not also become strong and healthy. This blue flag is here for a reason. Thirty years after the reunification of Germany, and 75 years after the end of the war, we Germans are not only called on, but are actually obligated, to show European solidarity!

Solidarity, I know, is a lofty concept. But is not each and every one of us now experiencing, in a very personal and existential way, what solidarity means? My actions are essential for the survival of others.

Let us hang on to that precious realisation. The solidarity that you are currently showing every day is what we will need even more of in the future. After this crisis, we will be different as a society. We do not want society to become anxious or distrustful. Instead, we can be a more trusting, considerate and confident society.

Am I expressing too much hope - even considering it is Eastertime? This is something over which the virus holds no sway. It is solely up to us.

Many things will certainly not get easier in the weeks and months to come. Yet we Germans are not really known for taking the easy way out. We demand much of ourselves, and we have great faith in one another. We can - and we will - grow, also through this experience.

Happy Easter, all the best - and let's take good care of each other!