



**Sixth video message
from Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier
on the coronavirus epidemic
22 April 2020**

Fellow citizens,

From this week, the first shops are being allowed to reopen in many places. This represents just an initial tentative step down the long road leading out of the crisis. But it is a step that gives us hope and helps us to look to the future. I appeal to all of us: let us continue to behave considerately and responsibly so as not to jeopardise this progress!

In these days, many people in our country are anxious and extremely worried about their financial future. They are asking themselves: what's going to happen with my job, my company, my plans for life?

Yes, this crisis is affecting all of us, but it is not affecting everyone to the same extent.

- Home office is maybe not what most people would wish for – but it is certainly not as bad as being put onto short-time work with 60 percent of your salary or, even worse, finding yourself out of a job.

- Hardly anyone enjoys staying at home when the sun is shining – but there is a difference between living in a house surrounded by greenery and being cooped up in a small flat with four children and no balcony.

Businesses, too, are not all affected in the same way. Some sectors are being hit especially hard. And many small businesses, restaurant and hotel owners, freelancers and culture professionals in particular do not know how long they can stay afloat.

At the same time there are many examples in industry of assistance being offered to those facing difficulties. Some family firms are helping staff who are having problems repaying mortgages as a result of short-time work. Some owners of small and medium-sized

enterprises are doing without part of their salary to show solidarity with their employees. And some companies are paying into a fund to tide over individual members of staff who are suffering particular hardship.

My hope is that those of us who come through this crisis unscathed will continue to be willing to support those who are having to navigate difficult financial waters as a result of the coronavirus.

Many of you have also demonstrated your solidarity with shops and restaurants in your neighbourhood during the past few weeks by placing orders over the phone or purchasing vouchers. In many cases it is perhaps this situation that has really made us aware of how much the little toy shop or the greengrocer around the corner means to us. This crisis is showing us afresh how important such places are.

In this crisis we are also experiencing how indispensable politics is. The business sector and trade unions are proceeding responsibly. And we are seeing how powerfully our state can act. It has rolled out a strong safety net to support as many people as possible who are in danger of an economic crash. Reduced hours compensation benefit, assistance for self-employed people, guarantees, state aid – all this, too, is a form of solidarity that is unprecedented in the history of the Federal Republic in its scope. Of course, there were initial teething troubles. But in recent weeks, some desperate entrepreneurs could hardly believe how quickly and unbureaucratically our state was able to provide aid.

This powerful state, that is all of us. All of you, together, have earned the funds it is now able to distribute. And the funds that are now being borrowed will subsequently have to be paid back. We will need to decide democratically after the crisis how this is to happen. One thing is clear: The solidarity we are now witnessing is not just something we need during the crisis; we will need it even more in the future. We will also need solidarity to deal with the consequences of the coronavirus.

We are also seeing a new attitude of reflection which is asking whether every routine from pre-coronavirus times really needs to be re-instigated, whether every appointment we drove or flew to was actually as important as we considered it to be. Which is asking whether there are not less costly options for understanding and communication.

But above all, we are also experiencing how the crisis is sparking creativity and innovativeness. How suddenly things are possible that before the crisis seemed years away. Many sectors are experimenting, improvising, undertaking digital transformation – in both large and small companies. Many employees are trying out new forms of interaction. And within a very short space of time, many companies

have renewed their range of products and services, transformed their production processes or developed their sales formats.

The crisis is hitting our society hard, and it will continue for some considerable time. We cannot afford to ignore dangers or gloss over expected difficulties. This is not the time to be playing down the situation. But neither is it the time for the bleakest prophecies of doom.

Certainly, this period will not pass us by without leaving its mark. We will have to sacrifice some of the wealth we have accumulated together. But we are and remain a strong economy – with millions of people who are continuing to pull their weight or who are eager to get back to work. Just as together we want to overcome the virus, we will also work together with diligence and wisdom to bounce back economically.

All the best to you. And let's look out for each other.