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On Wednesday 22 April from 10:00 to 11:30 (Brussels time) via Zoom, TEPSA hosted its first teleconference, a debate on the effects of COVID-19 on the European Union and the requirements of an EU response.

The aim of the debate was to mobilize the expertise present in the TEPSA network across 37 European countries in order to shed light on national perspectives on the crisis response measures launched, the proposals currently on the table and the main issues at stake in the member states' debates on the eve of the European Council of 23 April.

The starting point for the discussion were a number of measures and proposals such as the European Central Bank's EUR 750 billion Pandemic Emergency Purchase Programme, the European Commission's proposal of a EUR 100 billion "SURE" scheme for EU borrowing and on-lending to Member States to help finance wage subsidies, the Eurogroup's green light to the possibility of loans from the European Stability Mechanism for Eurozone members' health-related expenditure, the guarantee fund sponsored by the European Investment Bank, and the (most controversial) idea of common debt issuance at the European level beyond what can be provided by the ESM and EIB.

These proposals have given rise to a discussion within member states but also within the expert community on key issues such as the use of the EU framework vs. intergovernmental solutions, (including the possible use of differentiated integration), the future of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), as well as the implications of the current situation for European solidarity and for the overall debate on the Future of Europe.

Against such backdrop, the TEPSA network is in a privileged position to contribute towards a better understanding of the national perspectives on the EU response to the pandemic. Therefore, TEPSA researchers from Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands were invited to shed light on the debates ongoing in their countries around policy responses to the Covid-19 crisis.

The discussion was moderated by Paul Schmidt, Director of the Austrian Society for European Politics (ÖGfE), and featured presentations by:

- Ilke Toygür, Analyst at the Elcano Royal Institute (Spain) and member of the TEPSA Board
- Adriaan Schout, Senior Research Fellow at the Clingendael Institute (The Netherlands)
- Funda Tekin, Director of the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) (Germany) and member of the TEPSA Board
- Eleonora Poli, Researcher at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) (Italy).

Overall, through this debate TEPSA contributed to an improved understanding of the COVID-19 crisis across EU member states and its immediate political implications. At the same time, the discussion helped with forward-looking reflections on what kind of European Union we would like to have once the storm has calmed down.