



# PUBLIC OPINION AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY IN THE CORONA PANDEMIC

## Key findings

European and global cooperation is needed to tackle the corona pandemic. Such cooperation includes support for particularly affected countries within Europe, but also in poorer regions outside Europe. But given the crisis at home and the foreseeable high costs of dealing with the pandemic and its consequences, to what extent does the population of Germany support such a cooperative and solidarity-based policy?

DEval has pursued this question in the latest survey wave of the *COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring* (COSMO) from 21 to 22 April 2020. The study included questions on European and global solidarity, development policy measures and underlying motives for support for development policy. In addition, the survey included questions about charitable giving for development causes and intentions to donate money.

- In principle, large parts of the respondents support the approach of a cooperative and solidarity-based policy towards more affected countries.
- However, comparatively many respondents are sceptical about financial support for other countries within the EU. So-called corona bonds receive little approval.
- Internationally, the majority of respondents see so-called developing countries as the most threatened by the current situation. 44% of the respondents agree to stronger financial and technical support for developing countries. On the other hand, the respondents consider debt relief to be less sensible.
- More than a quarter are willing to donate to help other countries overcome the crisis. 10% of those surveyed say they have already made a donation.
- Since the national and international COVID-19 situation is subject to rapid changes, the questions

dealt with here will be asked again in future waves of the COSMO study and analysed by the DEval opinion monitor team.

## The European and global political dimension of the corona pandemic

The corona pandemic poses a challenge to cooperation within the European Union (EU). Large EU countries such as Italy, Spain and France have so far been more affected by the spread of the coronavirus than Germany. Moreover, they are financially less well placed to deal with the consequences of the pandemic. Although an EU aid package of around 500 billion euros has been put together, the demand for joint borrowing (so-called "corona bonds") to cope with the pandemic and mitigate its economic and social consequences remains on the agenda. The question also arises, among other things, as to whether scarce medical supplies will be made available to healthcare systems in European countries that are reaching their limits as a result of the corona pandemic.

Outside Europe, people in developing countries are particularly threatened by the coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Africa, for example, is only at the beginning of the pandemic (*WHO, 2020*). Weak healthcare systems, poor hygienic conditions and an often close cohabitation are only some of the factors that make a particularly rapid spread and resulting health ramifications more likely. At the same time, the economic consequences of the global recession associated with the pandemic are likely to be severe in these countries. For example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that almost 100 million jobs will be lost in developing countries (*ILO, 2020*). In order to counter the pandemic, these countries are now to be given greater financial support, including debt relief.

In Germany, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) therefore launched a "Corona Emergency Programme" with a volume of 1 billion euros on 23 April 2020 (BMZ, 2020). The Federal Foreign Office has also pledged 300 million euros in humanitarian aid (Federal Foreign Office, 2020). Other bilateral donors and multilateral organisations such as the World Bank (World Bank, 2020) started to set up corona programmes to provide rapid support to affected developing countries.

In view of the foreseeable high costs of coping with the pandemic and its consequences not only in Germany, but also within Europe and worldwide, the question therefore arises to what extent the German population backs the support of other countries in Europe and worldwide. Against this background, DEval contributed relevant items to the *COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring (COSMO)* survey.

**Figure 1** Measures against the corona pandemic in other EU countries



Note: Data source: COSMO survey, Wave 8, 21-22/4/2020; N = 1,014; own visualisation.

The COSMO survey is carried out weekly and comprises around 1,000 people who are interviewed online. The samples are drawn in such a way that they correspond to the distribution of age, gender and federal state among the population. Participants answer various questions about their current life, their psychological situation and how they deal with the corona pandemic.

The survey is led by the University of Erfurt in consortium with the Robert Koch Institute, the Federal Centre for Health Education and others. DEval is a cooperation partner in this network for the topic area of international cooperation and feeds questions about European and worldwide solidarity and development policy into the survey.

### Cooperation in the EU desired, financial support is viewed critically

Figure 1 shows that respondents are in favour of closer cooperation between Germany and other EU states. Around two-thirds agree with the statement that *Germany should cooperate more closely with other EU states to deal with the corona situation*, while only 13% disagree (mean value 5.1). The remaining 21% position themselves in the middle of the scale.

However, respondents are much more sceptical about concrete measures and especially financial support. They tend not to see corona bonds as part of the solution to the corona situation. Less than one-third agree with the statement that *Germany should take on debt together with other EU states to deal with the corona situation (so-called "corona bonds")*, while around 45% disagree and 25% are positioned in the middle of the scale (mean value 3.5).

The respondents are somewhat more positive about support provided in the form of medical material. 43% agree with the statement that *Germany should provide medical material (e.g. respiratory masks, ventilators) to those EU states that are most affected by the corona situation* (mean value 4.1). At the same time, 31% of those surveyed disagree with the statement; around 26% position themselves in the middle of the scale.

### Approval for support to developing countries, but with restrictions

The respondents are divided on the question of the extent to which Germany should support developing countries financially and technically (0). On the one hand, 44% agree with the statement that *Germany should support developing countries with more money and know-how to help them cope with the corona situation and its consequences* and thus advocate greater support. On the other hand, one third do not agree (mean value 4.1). In this question, too, about 25% of the respondents position themselves in the middle of the scale.

On the other hand, the respondents see debt relief for developing countries as a less appropriate measure. Around one third agree with the statement that *Germany should waive debt repayment for the poorest countries due to the corona situation*. 43% disagree with this statement and 23% position themselves in the middle of the scale (mean value 3.7). The respondents are divided on the question of whether Germany should give more support to the refugees in Syria and its neighbouring countries. Only 35% agree with the statement that *Germany should do more in the corona situation to stabilise the living situation of Syrian refugees within Syria and its neighbouring countries*, 42% disagree with this statement, 24% choose the middle of the scale (mean value 3.7).

### High risk for developing countries – global challenges need global solutions

50% of the respondents agree with the statement that *Developing countries are the most affected by the current crisis* (mean value 4.6; see Figure 3). Only 24% do not agree, 25% position themselves in the middle of the scale. Similarly, more than 70% agree with the statement *Global challenges such as the corona situation require global solidarity and cooperation*, while less than 10% disagree (mean value 5.5). 18% position themselves in the middle of the scale.

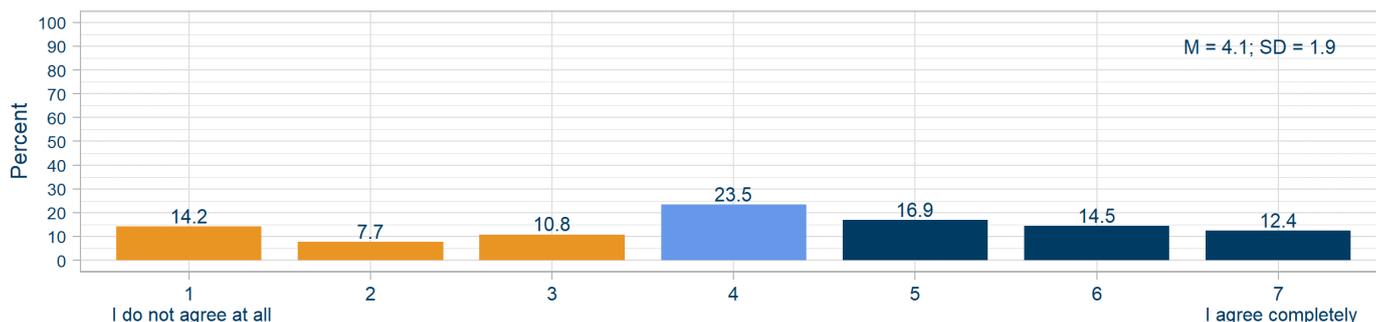
What are the possible motives for endorsing measures designed to support developing countries. Although a large proportion of respondents is aware of the global dimension of the crisis and considers global solidarity to be necessary to counter the current situation, only around 45% agree with the statement that *Germany is morally obliged to help more severely affected countries* (mean value 4.2). 32% disagree, 23% choose the middle of the scale. However, the respondents also do not

clearly place self-interest in the foreground. Around 36% of those surveyed agree with the statement that *Germany should only cooperate with other countries if it directly benefits German interests (e.g. to protect the EU's*

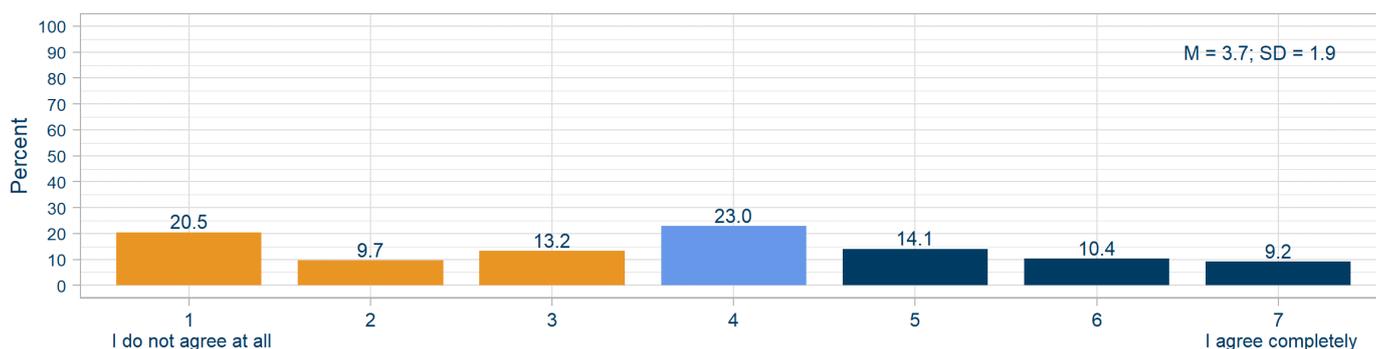
*external borders)*, while 43% disagree with the statement (mean value 3.8). 23% position themselves in the middle of the scale.

**Figure 2 Measures against the corona pandemic in developing countries**

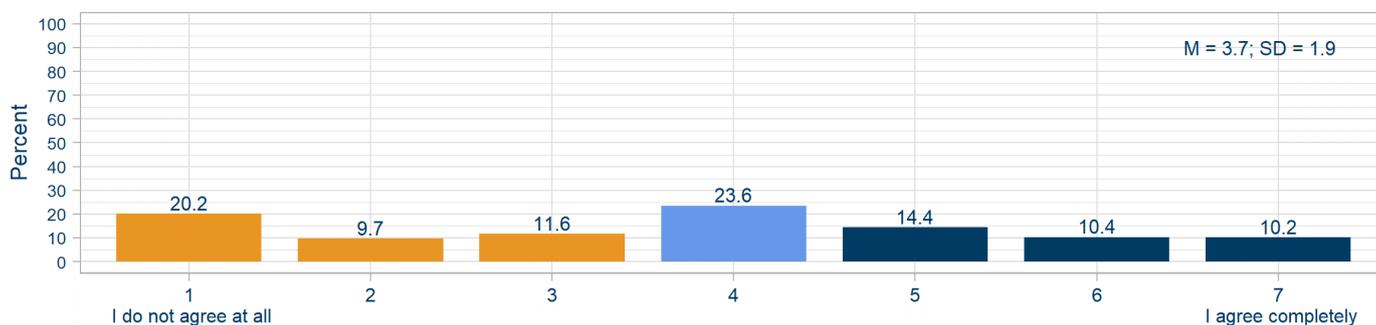
1) Germany should support developing countries with money and know-how to help them cope with the corona situation and its consequences.



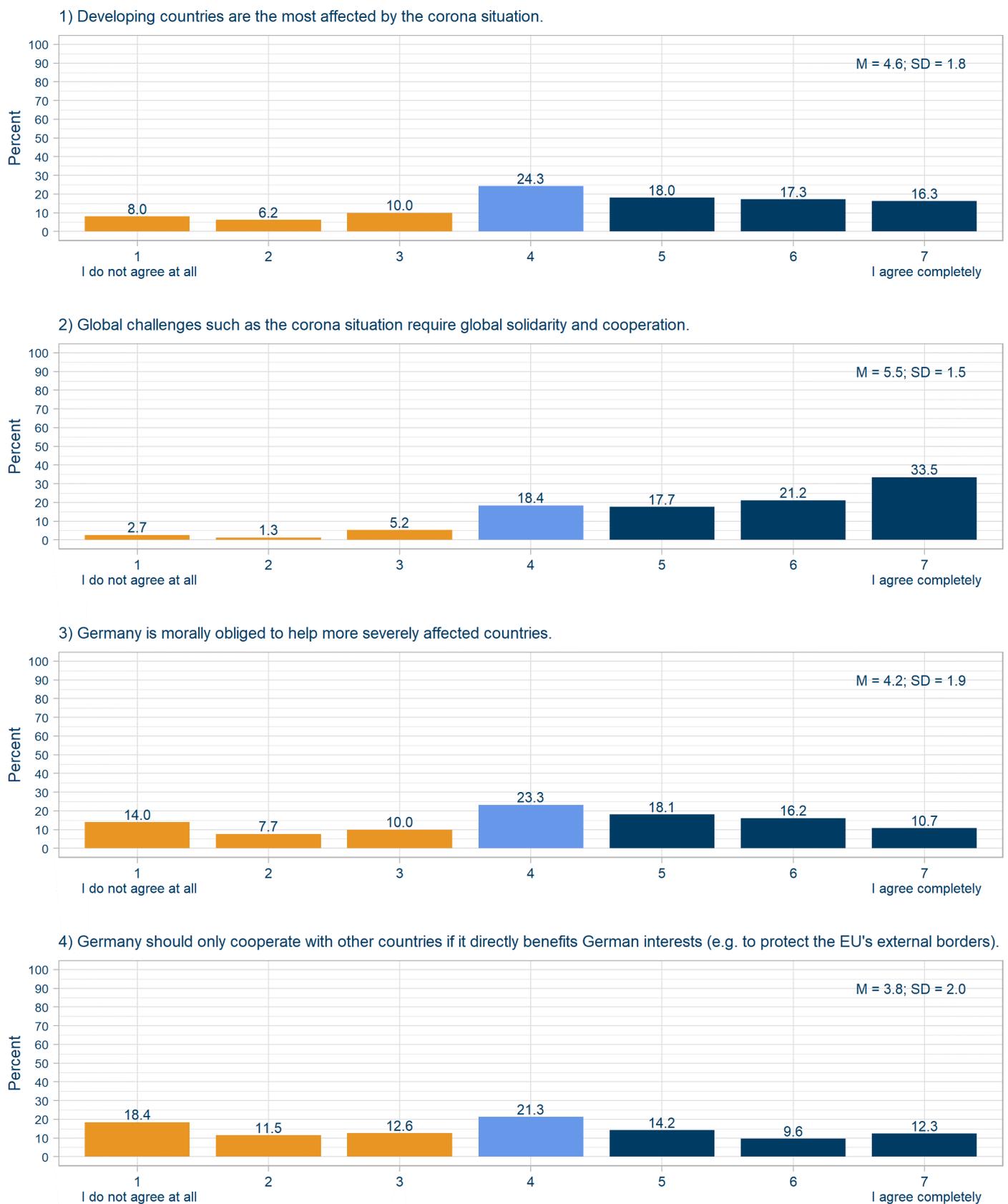
2) Germany should waive debt repayment for the poorest countries due to the corona situation.



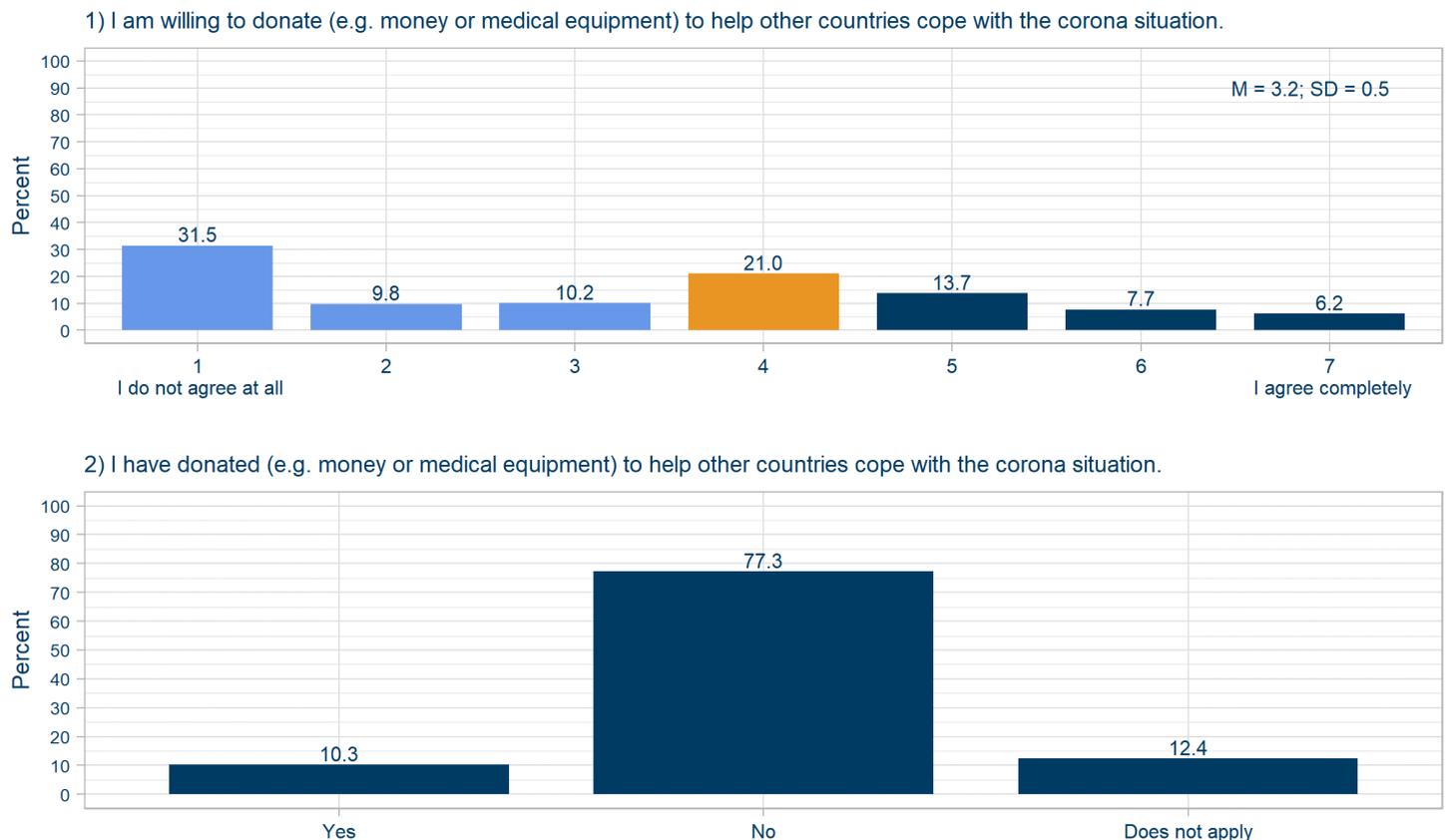
3) Germany should do more in the corona situation to stabilise the living situation of Syrian refugees within Syria and its neighbouring countries.



Note: Data source: COSMO survey, Wave 8, 21-22/4/2020; N = 1,014; own visualisation.

**Figure 3** Motives for supporting global measures against the corona pandemic

Note: Data source: COSMO survey, Wave 8, 21-22/4/2020; N = 1,014; own visualisation.

**Figure 4 Donating as a contribution to cope with the corona pandemic**

Note: Data source: COSMO survey, Wave 8, 21-22/4/2020; N = 1,014; own visualisation.

### Willingness to donate to fight the pandemic

The increasingly worsening situation in developing countries begs the question to what extent the population itself is willing to support these countries with donations. 10% of the respondents state that they have already donated (Diagram 2 in Figure 4). However, the general willingness to donate is higher: 28% agree with the statement *I am willing to donate (e.g. money or medical equipment) to help other countries cope with the corona situation* (mean value 3.2). A little over half of the respondents disagree with this statement, 21% are undecided and choose the middle of the scale.

### Outlook

Since the COVID-19 situation is subject to rapid change and a spread of the corona virus is considered likely, especially in developing countries, the questions will be asked again in future waves of the COSMO study. The DEval opinion monitor team will therefore provide information at regular intervals on how public opinion on the European and global political dimension of the corona pandemic is developing.

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The German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) is mandated by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to independently analyse and assess German development interventions. Evaluation reports contribute to the transparency of development results and provide policy-makers with evidence and lessons learned, based on which they can shape and improve their development policies.