

*Dear all,*

*I sincerely hope this message finds you in good health. We are all going through extremely challenging times.*

*The COVID-19 pandemic has now hit the majority of European Countries and measures have been taken to limit contagion.*

*One of the first measures taken by different governments was the suspension of lessons in schools. Schools, by their very nature, are places of accentuated socialisation and pronounced human contact. For some of our schools (Varese and Munich) all this happened even earlier than anticipated.*

*Therefore, "the School", earlier than many other organisations/services, have had to adapt to a dramatic situation never previously known. I would like to express my pride in the fact that the European Schools, their teachers, their staff, their management, their pupils and their parents have all done their best to cope with this historic crisis. I would like to thank you all for your professionalism and humanity.*

*We are all experiencing, as individuals, a dramatic moment in human society. Some people are experiencing this more directly and personally, and to them goes my highest respect. All this forces us to distance ourselves from our loved ones; in the most extreme cases, to lose them without even being able to see them again. I can only imagine the disorientation of the youngest amongst us who do not understand why all this is happening. And we, as adults, face the responsibility of explaining the inexplicable.*

*And yet, in all this, we have been able to find the strength to continue living and continue educating young people. Those who have chosen education as their profession cannot forget the needs of the youngsters; needs which are amplifying and changing at this dramatic moment. The objective is therefore to continue to offer them our help, to make them feel that we are present, even if we are physically elsewhere.*

*Of course, all this is not easy. There are many challenges to overcome, of varying difficulties. I remain convinced that the best tools at our disposal are creativity, organisation, cooperation, solidarity and unity.*

*The rapid turn of events has not allowed these changes to take place according to a clear design. Despite this, the image that one receives is that of a school community that does not give up and wants to succeed.*

*Despite the lack of notice, all the school communities of the European Schools, without exception, have managed to ensure continuity of service, even in the prohibitive present conditions. This is certainly thanks to everyone's contribution. We have admirable forms of solidarity: between colleagues, between parents, between pupils. Everyone is engaged in a virtuous race against the warnings of fate, so that human values may prevail.*

*We have no choice but to resort to our best resources, because we are all experiencing a situation whose dramatic and difficult nature is largely unknown to the majority of the generations involved.*

*In fact, the School and its communities, like other institutions, have an obligation and feel the need to make their own contribution to the challenge, although we all would have preferred not to have to do so.*

*It is not easy, at this time of deep insecurity, where anxieties and fears risk prevailing over the best and positive feelings, but it is in a way understandable, because we are all human beings.*

*Nevertheless, we must all help each other and give each other strength, because our own future depends on it.*

*Knowing about the widespread commitment, helps me personally to move forward, to receive the necessary daily energy to continue working with even more commitment and spirit of service, at a time that requires continuous decision-making, often rapidly, against an ever-changing background.*

*It is at a time of need that, too often unfortunately, one becomes more aware of the privilege to which we are accustomed in everyday life, however difficult and sometimes painful this awareness may be. We are all impatient to start living our lives again as we have, perhaps too unconsciously, always known them. A life when we will wake up in the morning to go to our place of work and study, to meet our colleagues, our pupils, our teachers, our course mates, our friends and share with them*

*carefree moments, together. All part of the school community. The School, first of all, School of life.*

*I thank everyone even though I am convinced that I can never do enough to make you all know how grateful I am. It is in the darkest moments of human history that the need for education, the foundation of every democratic society, is felt even more strongly. Service to which we are fortunately accustomed, but never to be taken for granted.*

*Sure of your continued and renewed commitment, I would like to close by embracing you all, virtually, at a time when not only hugs, but even meetings are forbidden to us, in the hope that in the very near future we will all be able to go back to living our lives in the way that best suits us.*

*Giancarlo Marcheggiano*