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1 January to 30 June 2021



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Programme for the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union

1 January to 30 June 2021



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Introduction

The Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), which will take place between January and June 2021, happens at a particularly difficult time, with the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic consequences posing an unprecedented challenge for the EU and its Member States, requiring decisive and comprehensive action.

**We have the vision, the programme
and the financial instruments to move forward.
Our motto will therefore be:**

**'Time to deliver:
for a fair, green
and digital recovery'.**



Introduction

We will work on three main priorities:

I. Promoting a European recovery boosted by the green and digital transitions

We will do our utmost to ensure that a new cycle begins in this semester, with the entry into force of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027 and the implementation of the innovative set of tools that will make Europe's recovery and resilience possible. Approving and implementing the national recovery and resilience plans will be a priority.

The recovery must be sustainable and innovative. To this end we will prioritise implementing the European Green Deal and the commitments to reduce emissions in the fight against climate change, and strengthening the energy transition, sustainable mobility and the blue (ocean) economy.

We will work to accelerate the technological transition and promote European leadership in the digital economy and in the area of data and connectivity based on ethical values.

II. Delivering the European Union's Social Pillar as a key element for ensuring a fair and inclusive green and digital transition

The Presidency's mission will be to strengthen trust in the European social model, promoting a Union based on common values of solidarity, convergence and cohesion that is able to take coordinated action to recover from the crisis.

In that context, we will emphasise the European Pillar of Social Rights as a response to the social dimension of the crisis and as a way to strengthen the European social model and its capacity to keep pace with climate change and digital and demographic change.

We will support the creation of a European Health Union, strengthening capacity to respond to public health crises and efforts to produce and distribute safe vaccines accessible throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

III. Strengthening the strategic autonomy of a Europe that is open to the world

We will promote an open single market with high social, labour, environmental and safety standards, with a view to exploiting complementarities for the benefit of all Member States.

In this respect, we will defend Europe's autonomy on the basis of the development of a dynamic industrial strategy that promotes European value chains and pays particular attention to strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), creating cooperation networks in research and innovation (R&I) at European level and ensuring that access to the European market is gained on fair and equitable terms and with respect for the Union's values.

We wish to continue strengthening the EU's presence in the world, promoting multilateralism and diversifying global partnerships, in particular with the European Neighbourhood, Africa, the India-Pacific region and the entire transatlantic area.

Ours will be a Presidency that is active in building consensus, able to adapt to circumstances and driven by results. We will promote dialogue and the unity of the Member States

**ONLY TOGETHER
CAN WE EMBARK
ON A PATH OF
HOPE, TRUST
AND CREDIBILITY.**

Action lines of the Portuguese Presidency



Action lines of the Portuguese Presidency

1 – Resilient Europe

Promoting recovery, cohesion and European values

The Presidency will actively contribute to starting the implementation of the new MFF and Next Generation EU, with its Recovery and Resilience Facility. Both reflect the Union's ambition to recover from the crisis and to provide the basis for sustainable growth and job creation. In this context, **we will organise the high-level conference on recovery, to be held in Lisbon in June, to discuss the economic and financial situation, taking into account the national recovery and resilience plans.**

We will encourage greater consultation between Member States on the implementation of emergency measures dictated by the health situation, to ensure the free movement of persons within the EU – an essential element of the single market.

We will work towards modernising European infrastructure and connectivity policies and trade and agricultural, industrial and competition policies, so as to diversify European production, external suppliers and the EU's global supply chains. These elements are essential to reduce external dependence on critical goods and technologies and to increase food security.

We will pay particular attention to the economic sectors most affected by the crisis, including tourism and the creative industries.

We will promote the strengthening of the European economy by deepening the economic and monetary union (EMU) in all its dimensions, among other means.

We will follow up on the process of economic and fiscal policy coordination, with the aim of supporting an inclusive recovery, as well as initiatives under the banking union and the capital markets union.

We will highlight the role of economic, social and territorial cohesion policies as factors in promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and competitiveness, which are decisive for greater convergence between the economies of the Member States.

In developing a robust industrial strategy, we will pay attention to the promotion of integrated and transnational projects, and in particular to territorial cohesion, as well as to differences in the sizes of SMEs in each Member State.

We will help to strengthen the EU crisis management system, with the aim of increasing resilience and coordination in disaster response and protection of critical infrastructure. This will involve in particular strengthening the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism and enhancing capacity to monitor and respond to infectious diseases.

The EU's resilience is also built by upholding its core values. In that context, we will promote the defence and consolidation of the rule of law and democracy, the fight against all forms of discrimination, media pluralism and the fight against disinformation.

The Presidency will attach particular importance to the fight against terrorism and hate speech, which are cross-cutting phenomena that affect everyone and undermine fundamental European values.

We will follow up on the negotiation of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum with a view to a comprehensive and integrated European approach, reflecting a balanced vision between the prevention of irregular immigration, the promotion of sustainable channels of legal migration and the integration of immigrants, fostering the safeguarding of human rights. Cooperation with countries of origin and of transit is an essential component of this approach.

The Presidency will do its utmost to ensure that the Conference on the Future of Europe is an opportunity for a discussion involving institutions and citizens on the directions and results of European policies, seeking the best ways to move forward in the process of European integration and meet citizens' expectations.



2– Green Europe

Promoting the EU as a leader in climate action

The EU must be a global leader in climate action, increasing capacity to adapt to the effects of climate change and promoting the competitive advantages of a decarbonised and resilient economic model. To that end, the Presidency will hold a conference on climate change in March and a conference on green hydrogen (from renewable energy sources) in the energy transition in April, both in Lisbon.

We will prioritise the implementation of the European Green Deal, with a view to a sustainable economic recovery. **We will support all efforts to make Europe the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050, the objective of the European Climate Law. In this context, it is essential to secure a joint commitment to reduce CO₂ emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.**

The energy transition, which is essential to secure the EU's long-term objectives, requires the mobilisation of significant public and private investments. We will encourage the design and use of financial instruments that promote its implementation, making full use of the possibilities offered by the European Investment Bank (EIB). In particular, we will prioritise initiatives to ensure that environmental and social aspects are duly taken into account in private investment decisions.

As regards green taxation, and in line with the Paris Agreement, tax policy should be aligned with the objective of decarbonisation, facilitating the transition to a competitive and carbon-neutral economy and boosting sustainable growth, the circular economy and the blue (ocean) economy, as well as innovation and security of energy supply.

The Presidency will follow up on the various European instruments guiding climate action, including the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change, the initiatives which form part of the Circular Economy Action Plan, the chemicals strategy and the EU Forest Strategy.

The Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy is one of the most visible examples of local authorities' involvement in climate action, delivering voluntary commitments to reach and even exceed the targets set.

We will promote innovation, digitalisation and sustainable management of the natural resources of the rural world and we will prioritise the continuation of negotiations on the reform of the common agricultural policy.

We will promote the conservation and sustainable use of the resources of the oceans and seas by organising a high-level conference on sustainable oceans to be held in the Azores in June. We will give particular attention to the development of the blue economy, the integrated maritime policy and the implementation of the common fisheries policy.



3– Digital Europe

Accelerating the digital transformation for citizens and businesses

We will prioritise initiatives that help accelerate the digital transition as a driver of economic recovery and promote European leadership in digital innovation and the digital economy. In this context, **attention should be paid to the universal development of digital skills, so that workers can adapt to new production processes (teleworking), to the digital transformation of businesses and digital platforms, to the areas of e-commerce, payments and taxation, the promotion of health and disease prevention, and to distance learning in education and lifelong learning.**

We will encourage new digital solutions and strategies for the green transition, in the areas of health, research and innovation (R&I), industrial property, justice and mobility.

We will also promote better access to and sharing of quality data and information in order to make citizens' lives easier, in particular through the creation of a European digital identity.

The state should lead by example in this area, through more agile public administration, closer to citizens and businesses and capable of providing better services for them. We will therefore publicise the implementation of best digital practices, with a view to modernising public administration, including through the use of artificial intelligence. In this connection, we will organise a meeting of Ministers for Public Administration. We will promote the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) forum on 'Accessible Europe – Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for All' in Lisbon in March, prioritising the digital inclusion of European citizens.

We will pay particular attention to the modernisation of local government, highlighting the role of digitalisation in developing 'smart cities'.

We will advocate for a European vision of digital development, involving all actors in the digital ecosystem and reflecting all dimensions of the digital transformation, including the required follow-up to the White Paper on Artificial Intelligence. In this context, we will argue for technology that works for people, and a fair and competitive economy that fully respects the values of a democratic, open and sustainable society.

We will promote a comprehensive digital cooperation strategy aligned with the United Nations (UN) 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting the EU's role as a global actor and benchmark in terms of ethics and trust. In this context, the Presidency, jointly with the European Commission, will co-host the Digital Day in March, in Porto, and then in June, in Lisbon, the Digital Assembly that will promote a Declaration on Digital Democracy with a Purpose.

We will strengthen European entrepreneurship by creating a European Entrepreneurship Structure and by promoting the EU Start-up Nations Standard.

We will focus on the strategic creation of a European Data Entry Platform based on submarine cables, in particular for links between Europe, Africa and South America, to contribute to greater European digital autonomy, linking infrastructures and data. In June, the Presidency will inaugurate the *EllaLink* cable in Sines, which will link Europe, Africa and South America.

As part of the new EU Security Union Strategy, we will create the conditions for implementing interoperability of information systems as a tool for police cooperation.

We will also prioritise promoting a competitive space sector, integrated in the economy and maximising the use of space data and technologies by businesses and public policies.



4– Social Europe

Enhancing and strengthening the European social model

The EU must enhance and strengthen its social model, giving citizens confidence to recover from the crisis and embark on the climate and digital transformations, ensuring that no one is left behind. **Only a stronger, fairer and more inclusive social Europe will respond to the social consequences of the pandemic, ensuring intergenerational balance, the future of young Europeans and the well-being of all.**

The European Pillar of Social Rights must have a concrete meaning in citizens' lives.

The Porto Social Summit, which will take place in May, will give political impetus to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its action plan, emphasising its central role in European recovery and in adaptation to the climate, digital and demographic transitions. It will also be an opportunity to strengthen dialogue with social partners and citizens.

The Social Summit will be a pivotal moment for the Portuguese Presidency, with two key events: a high-level conference, with wide participation, and a leaders' meeting, at the invitation of the President of the European Council. **The summit will pay particular attention to the areas of employment, qualifications and social protection.**

We will encourage discussion on empowering citizens for the digital challenge by organising in May, a high-level conference on digital education. Other important topics will be the future of work, decent work, the negotiation of a directive on adequate minimum wages, and promoting the development of appropriate skills for a modern and digital economy.

We will take a cross-cutting approach to gender equality and policies on fighting discrimination, poverty and social exclusion, including specific protection of more vulnerable groups.

We will promote enhanced cooperation between Member States in the area of health by supporting the actions needed to increase the capacity of health services to respond to public health threats. We will also highlight the role of the EU in global health.



5– Global Europe

Promoting a Europe that is open to the world

Europe's openness to the world, its commitment to effective multilateralism and its geopolitical position as a global actor, a leading player on all important international agendas, requires a comprehensive agenda and a balance in relation to the other actors.

The pandemic has made even clearer the need for EU leadership in responding to global crises and emergencies. We will defend a European perspective, based on values and strong international partnerships, to tackle collective challenges.

We will work for a leadership role for Europe in consolidating an open and rules-based international trading system, promoting a strong and fair trade agenda, both in the framework of the modernisation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and in pursuing new bilateral or plurilateral trade agreements, as well as the effective implementation of existing ones.

The relationship between the EU and Africa is of central importance, with both sides aware of the need to maintain a strategic dialogue to address global challenges, be they peace and security, energy transition, trade, population flows or health crises like the one we are currently facing. We will participate actively in the preparation and organisation of the sixth EU-African Union Summit, with a view to consolidating a mutually beneficial intercontinental partnership. In this context, we will place emphasis on the green transition in Africa, which is essential for the future of the private sector and job creation on the continent, as well as for the fight against climate change. We will also highlight the conclusion of the new cooperation agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (Post-Cotonou Agreement).

Together with the European Investment Bank (EIB), Portugal will organise a high-level EU-Africa forum on the green economy and green investment, to be held in Lisbon in April. The aim will be to discuss strengthening investment between the two continents, with a particular emphasis on green investment and the energy transition.

The Portuguese Presidency will support the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (High Representative) in promoting the European external agenda by seeking to contribute to the implementation of all ongoing agendas and planned events, in the neighbourhood policy, the Eastern Partnership, and in Europe's engagement with Africa, Asia and the Americas.

We will strive to give new political impetus to the relationship with the Southern Neighbourhood of the Mediterranean, as well as to give attention to the challenges faced by Latin American partners and the development of transatlantic relations. In this context, **we will make every effort, during the Portuguese Presidency, to strengthen the dialogue with the United States, a strategic partner in all fields, with a view to fully realising the potential of the transatlantic relationship.** Emphasis should be laid on security and defence cooperation, strengthening multilateralism and the climate agenda, which will benefit from the USA's announced return to the Paris Agreement, and on the development of economic and trade relations.

We will promote the strengthening of relations with India by stepping up political dialogue and cooperation as well as economic and trade cooperation. This will include a meeting of European leaders with the Prime Minister of India, which will take place in Porto in May, at the invitation of the President of the European Council.

The Portuguese Presidency will prioritise the EU's future relationship with the United Kingdom, engaging in a comprehensive, fair and balanced partnership that respects the interests of the Union and its Member States.

European security and defence policy and cooperation between Member States in these areas will also merit attention. We will encourage reflection on maritime security, based on an updated assessment of threats in relevant maritime areas such as the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic. In May, the Presidency will formalise the launching of the Atlantic Centre in the Azores.

Implementation of the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024



Implementation of the Strategic Agenda 2019–2024

I. PROTECTING CITIZENS AND FREEDOMS

General affairs

The Portuguese Presidency will promote the coordination of the European response to COVID-19, seeking to minimise the impacts on citizens' lives and to safeguard the proper functioning of the single market. We will promote information-sharing and the development of common tools to ensure the Union's resilience, competitiveness and sustainable growth after the pandemic.

The Presidency will give priority to the EU's future relationship with the United Kingdom, engaging in a comprehensive, fair and balanced partnership that respects the interests of the Union and the Member States, with a special focus on the protection of citizens.

We will continue to pay attention to the various mechanisms put in place to strengthen the rule of law in the Union, including the new annual report published by the European Commission and its discussion in the Council. We will organise a high-level conference on the rule of law to be held in Coimbra in May.

Promoting equal opportunities and combating all forms of discrimination based on sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation will be cross-cutting priorities.

We will pursue the objective of the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, as established by the Treaty of Lisbon, and work on the revision of the strategy for the implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Regulation establishing the Fundamental Rights Agency. We will also follow up on the EU anti-racism action plan 2020–2025.

The Conference on the Future of Europe should enable the active participation of European citizens, especially young people. It should be an inclusive platform, contributing to the development of medium and long-term policies to address current and future challenges.

The Presidency will emphasise the principles of subsidiarity and multilevel governance by encouraging the collaboration of regional and local actors with a view to their greater involvement and ownership of decisions and policies, bearing in mind the diversity of the political and administrative systems in the Member States.

The participation of citizens, and in particular of young people, is a key component of the development of the European project. In this context, we will give visibility to the launch of the future European Solidarity Corps in Viana do Castelo in June.

In the area of preventing and countering disinformation, we will focus on the European Democracy Action Plan, pushing for the dissemination of timely, transparent and factual information to strengthen societal resilience and citizens' trust. We will pay particular attention to external threats to electoral processes in the Union and in the Member States.

The Presidency will also seek to enhance the confidence of citizens and organisations in Europe's ability to respond to hybrid threats and cyber challenges.

We will strive to ensure that the European Statistical System remains an indispensable aid to decision-making, in particular in the areas of good governance and sustainable development, as well as in addressing the information needs related to COVID-19.



Justice and home affairs

Migration, Schengen and border management

The Presidency will give priority to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and its initiatives, with the aim of establishing a common migration management mechanism that is effective, resilient and reliable and safeguards human rights, based on the fair sharing of efforts and obligations.

We will foster the deepening of partnerships between the EU and the migrants' countries of origin and of transit, including through constructive dialogue on the development of a policy to promote legal migration channels, which is a sustainable alternative and takes into account the objective of integrating migrants, especially unaccompanied minors.

The Presidency will aim to implement the Valletta Declaration and Action Plan, together with the accompanying regional dialogues, the Rabat and Khartoum processes, and to follow up on the global compacts for migration and on refugees. We will organise a ministerial conference on migration flows to be held in Lisbon.

The Presidency will contribute to the reflection on the future of Schengen and is committed to defending the free movement of persons in Europe. At the same time, we will continue the discussion on the effective control of our external borders. To this end, it is essential to put the new mandate of the European Border and Coast Guard (Frontex) into operation, with the launch of its standing corps in Lisbon in January. We will also pay attention to the interoperability of information systems and the implementation of the Entry/Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS).

Disaster management and civil protection

The Presidency will work to establish an ambitious and comprehensive EU disaster management system that, with a focus on solidarity and integration, will foster greater collective resilience in responding to emergencies, including the repatriation of citizens stranded in third countries. We will prioritise strengthening the Union Civil Protection Mechanism as well as establishing strategic reserves of essential supplies and supporting specific military capabilities to enable a more rapid, flexible and cross-cutting disaster response.

Priority will be given to strengthening joint preparedness and to the additional mechanisms for Member States' solidarity, increasing the capacity of rescEU (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) and enriching the European Civil Protection Knowledge Network.

The Presidency will foster local consular cooperation between Member States and EU delegations with a view to crisis preparedness.



Justice and home affairs

Police and judicial cooperation

Police and judicial cooperation is a key component of the area of freedom, security and justice in the Union, which needs to be further developed. Due to new criminal phenomena, notably in cyberspace, and the impact of COVID-19, we need to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement authorities and judicial systems to identify threats and mitigate their effects, especially on the most vulnerable. In this context, the Presidency will monitor the initiatives arising from the new Security Union Strategy and give priority to the development of the new internal security strategy for the EU, based on prevention and the protection of citizens and their rights, freedoms and guarantees.

We will also ensure that the current political cycle for the fight against serious and organised international crime is completed and the next cycle is launched, fostering a broad dialogue with all stakeholders. The implementation of the 2020-2025 EU Strategy on victims' rights will be a priority.

Given the complexity of the security and justice challenges posed by transnational crime, important areas will be prevention, training, joint risk analysis and information exchange, as well as enhanced cooperation between Member States and European agencies and with third countries.

The Presidency will attach particular importance to preventing and combating terrorism. Since this is a phenomenon that acuts across all areas, affects everyone and undermines fundamental European values, we will seek to implement the various aspects of the European initiatives to combat terrorism, including assessment of the threat from terrorism and extremism. Particular attention will be paid to radicalisation and violent extremism of various origins and orientations, including online activities. In this way, we will create incentives and conditions for the coordinated involvement of all actors responsible for preventing and combating the terrorist threat.

In the areas of judicial cooperation in criminal matters and police cooperation, **we will focus on coordinating the fight against organised and cross-border crime, particularly drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, crimes against women and children, cybercrime, including child sexual abuse, electronic evidence and hate crime, as well as on cooperation and the exchange of information on weapons and explosives.** We will organise a high-level conference on law enforcement cooperation between the EU and the countries of the Middle East and North Africa in Lisbon.

The revision of the Europol Regulation and the implementation of the EU action plan on preventing money laundering and terrorist financing will be priorities.

The Presidency will pay particular attention to the implementation of the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

The Presidency also intends to further reflect on the links between transnational organised crime and counterfeiting, and to follow the ongoing work on environmental crime with a view to strengthening police and judicial cooperation in these areas.

In the area of judicial cooperation in civil matters, multilateralism and closer relations with other international forums, such as the Hague Conference on Private International Law, the UN Commission on International Trade Law or the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, will guide the work of the Presidency.

The Presidency will also pay attention to community policing and promoting public security, including the protection of public spaces and safety and violence in sport.



Justice and home affairs

e-Justice and citizens' rights

The Presidency intends to boost the use of new technologies in the area of justice, which has become even more important with COVID-19. In this context, we will pay attention to the interoperability of European legal and judicial systems and the IT systems of the Member States. Stable management of e-CODEX as a digital tool to improve cooperation between Member States, and the continuity of the 2019-2023 action plan for European e-Justice will be important objectives.

The use of artificial intelligence in justice systems and the civil liability issues arising from its use will receive particular attention. We will organise a high-level conference on e-Justice in Lisbon in April.

Protection of vulnerable adults

Vulnerable adults face aggravated challenges and difficulties in exercising their rights, defending their interests and accessing justice. We will foster reflection on the current state of protection in the Union and on the need for legislative approximation and mutual recognition of decisions in the field of civil judicial cooperation, as well as on the exercise of rights in criminal proceedings. We will organise a high-level conference on the protection of vulnerable adults in Lisbon in March.



II. DEVELOPING OUR ECONOMIC BASE: THE EUROPEAN MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

Economic and financial affairs

The Presidency's top priority will be the implementation of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the Next Generation EU instrument, including the approval of national recovery and resilience plans, which are key to Europe's economic recovery. In this context, we will organise a high-level conference on recovery, to be held in Lisbon in June, to discuss the economic and financial situation, taking into account the national recovery and resilience plans.

Particularly relevant are: the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which will support national investment and reform plans defined in accordance with EU priorities and the country-specific recommendations for each Member State; the SURE temporary support instrument to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency; the sustainable finance strategy and related instruments; as well as the *InvestEU* Programme, which will also contribute to economic recovery and to achieving the objectives for the climate and digital transitions.

We will play an active role in the European Semester, which coordinates Member States' fiscal and economic policies; this will be crucial for economic and financial recovery, as well as for the convergence, cohesion and inclusion processes in the EU.

Deepening the economic and monetary union (EMU) is a priority of the Presidency. This will include the banking union initiatives, in particular the establishment of a European deposit guarantee scheme, and the capital markets union. Deepening the EMU is essential to ensure greater integration and resilience of the financial sector, and to create financing and capitalisation alternatives for companies, as well as to strengthen European competitiveness and the international role of the euro.

The Presidency will follow up on the Customs Union Action Plan in order to provide it with a stronger framework for the protection of citizens and the single market, highlighting the importance of developing the EU Single Window Environment for Customs.

As regards financial services, we will contribute to the finalisation of legislative initiatives aimed at improving the resilience of the financial sector; particularly relevant is the implementation of the new Basel Committee standards which supplement the 2009 post-crisis reform package.

With regard to the digital transition in the financial sector, we will advocate for an approach that boosts technological development and ensures financial stability, linking financial regulation and supervision, competition and data protection. We will prioritise initiatives on crypto-assets, the operational resilience of financial intermediaries, and payments.

The Presidency will address the challenges of European taxation, including the model for taxation of the digital economy, under the principles of fairness and tax efficiency. The aim is to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of taxation in a context of healthy competition, the strengthening of good governance mechanisms and global tax transparency, and to step up the fight against tax fraud, evasion and avoidance through non-cooperative jurisdictions. The Presidency will seek to create the conditions for reaching a political agreement on the revision of the rules on disclosure of information concerning tax on revenues for certain companies and branches. We will implement the EU action plan on preventing money laundering and terrorist financing.

As regards export credits, the Presidency will ensure coordination and synergy with the international forums in which the EU participates.



Competitiveness

Single market and industrial policy

COVID-19 has demonstrated even more strongly the importance of the single market and of a robust European industrial strategy. In order to increase European competitiveness, it is essential to strengthen the single market in all its dimensions, with a special focus on SMEs. A strong industrial policy with a level playing field, both globally and domestically, is also essential.

We will promote the necessary measures to restore and improve the functioning of the single market, in particular with a view to removing unjustified barriers to the free movement of goods and services. We will also prompt a reflection on the functioning of the single market in times of crisis. We will organise the closing session of the Single Market Forum (SIMFO), to be held in Lisbon in June.

We will pay particular attention to the promotion of digital services in the single market, notably through the Digital Services Act.

We will prioritise the new European industrial strategy, contributing to strong and environmentally sustainable European industries, based on innovation, added value, investment and reducing dependence on third countries, in particular with regard to critical goods and technologies. In this context, the Presidency will host, in partnership with the European Commission, the Industry Days in Brussels in February.

The recovery of European value chains should be considered within the perspective of economic policy in all of its three strands – industry, competition and trade – and should contribute to cohesion within the Union and to mitigating regional asymmetries, including through the implementation of important projects of common European interest, ensuring the broad participation of Member States, the reinforcement of the position of European producers, and a fair distribution of results. To this end, the Presidency will work on the concept of ‘industrial ecosystems’ and stimulate the creation of European clusters, exploiting synergies between sectors, value chains and Member States, and bringing knowledge production, technology and businesses closer together, strengthening the network of digital innovation hubs.

This will require a new framework addressing not only issues related to subsidies granted by third countries, but also compliance with European environmental, labour and social standards; it is essential to ensure compliance with these rules at Union level, together with a careful review of the Generalised System of Preferences.

SMEs will be the focus of the Presidency’s attention, notably in the debate on adapting the regulatory framework for SMEs to today’s reality, which should stimulate digitalisation, the uptake of advanced technologies and new, more efficient business models, as well as participation in global value chains and human resources development.

Consumers

Access to information is key to confidence among consumers, who in turn play a decisive role in the transition to a circular economy in which digital transactions, including for products from third countries, are also increasing. In this context, the Presidency will pay attention to product traceability and improved market surveillance as well as food safety.

We will work to implement the new Consumer Agenda and other legislative proposals to help citizens adapt to the climate and digital transitions. Together with the European Commission we will host the European Consumer Summit in Lisbon in March to further reflect on these issues. **We will also hold a high-level meeting on consumer protection in Lisbon in March.**

In the area of financial services, we will follow up on the consumer credit initiative.



Competitiveness

Tourism

The Presidency will give high priority to the implementation and monitoring of measures for recovery and job creation in the tourism sector, which has been particularly affected by the pandemic.

We will pay particular attention to SMEs, restoring consumer confidence and a better coordination of measures on the free movement of persons, as well as to promoting a sustainable, innovative and resilient ecosystem, including in related areas such as civil aviation and culture.

We will give a new impetus to sustainable tourism, highlighting the implementation of the results of the European Tourism Convention held in October 2020. The Presidency will hold a high-level forum on sustainability and tourism in Porto in May.

We will support efforts to create a European innovation network to sustain the digital transformation in the sector. In this context, we will launch a debate on big data and the free movement of such data as a source of tourism statistics, improving the supply of data available to businesses.

Better regulation

As a follow-up to the Communication on Better Regulation, the Presidency will highlight the contribution of the digital transformation, through artificial intelligence and data science, with a view to more efficient and flexible legislative procedures, which will help to improve impact assessment. In this context, we will pay particular attention to quantitative impact assessments, *ex-ante* or *ex-post*, including the 'one in, one out principle, which aims to counterbalance new burdens created by European legislation by removing other unnecessary burdens, and to qualitative assessments, foresight analysis and stakeholder involvement.

Industrial property

We will give visibility to the benefits of protecting industrial property rights and promote the industrial property system. In this context, we will promote innovative solutions, especially in the area of green technologies and artificial intelligence, as well as the fight against counterfeiting. In this area, we will organise a high-level conference on intellectual property and the digital transition to be held in Lisbon in February.



Competitiveness

Research and innovation

The Presidency intends to contribute to strengthening research and innovation (R&I) in Europe. To this end, it will encourage the coordination of efforts and synergies between European scientific, technological and innovation communities, giving priority to the science–employment–resilience nexus.

Reaching 3 % of GDP in research investment by 2030 (2/3 private sector, 1/3 public sector) is a target that must be addressed with renewed vigour. To this end, it is necessary to ensure a link between the national recovery and resilience plans and the European funds under centralised and decentralised management.

We will give visibility to the launch of the Horizon Europe programme in Lisbon, scheduled for February, the finalisation of the regulations necessary for the creation of the European partnerships and the launch of the missions, the latter being linked to major investments in R&I, with a particularly high impact and relevance for society as a whole.

COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of strengthening R&I policy, increasing and improving the links between Member States, supporting the creation of networks of excellence and renewing the European Research Area (ERA). The Commission Communication on the future of R&I and the ERA will strengthen European R&I systems and promote

more investment in research and development (R&D). In this context, we will host a debate on the 20th anniversary of the ERA.

We will encourage the continuation of joint initiatives under the new ERA, notably on the themes of green hydrogen (from renewable energy sources), artificial intelligence in the public domain and green supercomputing.

We aim to contribute to wider and more diverse access to science and research, enabling citizens to acquire skills. We will encourage citizens' involvement in setting scientific agendas and support European initiatives in the field of 'citizen science'.

We will prioritise the professionalisation of research careers and include them in the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework. In this context, we will look at interconnection, mobility and the review of evaluation systems, in order to improve working conditions and salaries and reduce precarious employment. We will promote the balanced circulation of talent in Europe and beyond.

Cooperation in R&I between the EU and Africa in the areas of space and higher education will be highlighted, with an emphasis on building the capacity of institutions and with a view to preventing 'brain drain'.

Space

The Presidency will support the launch of the European Union Space Programme, paying particular attention to the development of New Space, including the use of space technologies and applications in non-space sectors and public policies, in view of its impact on European productivity and competitiveness. In this context, we will organise the 4th New Space Atlantic Summit in June in Coimbra.

We will prioritise the promotion of New Space through the creation of new markets and the development of innovative platforms for the acquisition, management and processing of information based on satellite information. In this context, the development of new services based on space data and space technology is relevant. Emphasis will be placed on supporting SMEs, start-ups and new entrepreneurial activities.

We will promote the involvement of the private, public and institutional sectors in the creation of new markets, linking incentives to attracting investment and new business models.

The interactions between space, the Earth, the oceans and the climate, including in coastal areas, merit attention.

Particular emphasis will be placed on cooperation between the EU and Africa in the area of space. We will hold a high-level conference focusing on Earth observation, entitled Africa–Europe Science Forum for Earth Observation in Lisbon in April.



General affairs

Cohesion policy

Cohesion policy, as a permanent structural policy, is the only policy with the scope, capacity and proximity to citizens needed to respond to the three dimensions of Europe's transition: climate, digital and demography. By promoting convergence and cohesion, which are necessary to consolidate the European social, economic and ecological model, cohesion policy makes an important contribution to economic, social and territorial resilience. Together with the European Commission, we will host the ninth European Conference on Evaluation of Cohesion Policy in Porto in May.

We intend to promote the complementarities and synergies between cohesion policy and the Next Generation EU instrument, notably with the Recovery and Resilience Facility, as well as with the technical support instrument, Horizon Europe, *InvestEU*, the LIFE Programme and the Connecting Europe Facility.

We will promote the technical finalisation of the regulations and monitor the adoption of the *REACT-EU* reprogramming, the Partnership Agreements and the operational programmes for cohesion policy 2021-2027, pushing for the timely start of the next programming period.

Outermost regions

The outermost regions (ORs) constitute a unique European regional reality, with specific features expressly recognised in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). **These regions provide the Union with an essential maritime dimension and a strategic position of unquestionable importance in the Atlantic Ocean (in particular the archipelagos of the Azores and of Madeira), the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.**

Recognising the need for a balance between measures to compensate for specific constraints and structural deficits in the ORs and those aimed at promoting their development potential and opportunities, the Presidency will pay attention to their specificities across all EU policies, with a focus on cohesion policy.

Attention should be paid to the role of these regions with regard to the sea, including in the design of international ocean governance. Agricultural and rural development policies play a vital role for the ORs. Environmental policy, climate action and the circular economy are also important since the ORs are particularly exposed to extreme natural events while at the same time being exceptional sources of biodiversity.

With regard to transport policy, it is particularly important to bear in mind that the pandemic has again demonstrated the dependence of the ORs on air and sea transport and the need to reduce their accessibility deficit in relation to mainland Europe.

We will pay particular attention to the heavy reliance of many of these regions on tourism and the need for measures to ensure the robust recovery of the sector.

With regard to space policy, the geostrategic position of some of these regions should be enhanced.

We will work together with the Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions on the EU Strategy for the Outermost Regions, including with the Autonomous Region of the Azores, which holds the Presidency of the Conference in this semester.



Transport, telecommunications and energy

Transport

Economic, social and territorial cohesion and the objectives of economic recovery, decarbonisation and consolidation of the single market require a sustainable, innovative, resilient and accessible transport sector.

We will prioritise initiatives that help passengers, workers and businesses in the sector to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and that help to restore the movement of goods, services and persons. We will seek to ensure that recovery support measures also contribute to the modernisation and sustainability of the sector. In addition to these contingency measures, we will focus on initiatives that contribute to a structural reinforcement of the Union's transport system.

We will launch the European Year of Rail in Lisbon in March, a unique opportunity to further debate measures enabling both rail infrastructure and rolling stock to contribute to decarbonisation, modernisation and the safety of transport. In addition to fostering the attractiveness of rail for the transport of people and goods, we will promote intermodality with sea transport, through commercial ports and greater provision of services and information.

As regards the trans-European transport network, we will give impetus to the completion of the core network by 2030 and to augmenting its density within the Union, in particular through increased capillarity in outlying areas and greater connectivity for the ORs. Together with the European Commission, we will host the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Days 2021 in Lisbon in June.

With regard to air transport, we will follow up on the European Commission's legislative proposals, focusing on an effective Single Sky, passenger protection and other measures needed to bring stability to the sector following COVID-19, ensuring the full involvement of the Member States.

The Presidency will bear in mind that trust in transport services depends on inclusive and accessible mobility, a high quality of service, enhanced intermodality, the protection of passenger rights and appropriate protection of users' data.

Telecommunications

The Presidency will highlight infrastructure issues in telecommunications, including the challenges arising from the adoption of 5G networks and the revision of the Directive on the security of network and information systems (NIS).

We will monitor the issue of cybersecurity across all policy areas, taking as a reference the new EU Cybersecurity Strategy and contributing to the development of its main pillars, with a particular focus on the new NIS Directive, the establishment of the new Joint Cyber Unit and the revision of the Critical Infrastructures Directive and the Action Plan for European Diplomacy.

We will focus on the strategic creation of a European data entry platform based on submarine cables, in particular for links between Europe, Africa and South America, as well as on submarine cables for the Azores and Madeira. We intend to contribute to the Commission's strategy of building and affirming European digital autonomy, based on data protection and privacy. In June, the Presidency will inaugurate the *EllaLink* cable in Sines, which will link Europe, Africa and South America.



Transport, telecommunications and energy

Energy

The Presidency will give priority to achieving an integrated, interconnected, digitalised and operational single energy market, and will pay particular attention to the contribution of the sector to the transition to a carbon-neutral Europe.

The Presidency will pay particular attention to the revision of the Trans-European Energy Networks Regulation with a view to ensuring its consistency with the objective of carbon neutrality, highlighting the importance of energy interconnections.

The storage and development of energy systems and smart grids will also be addressed, as will the roles of alternative fuels and green taxation.

We will discuss the topics of renewable energy, self-consumption and energy communities. We will view the commitment to green hydrogen as a key factor in the energy transition and as an economic, industrial, scientific and technological opportunity, fostering the growth of the green hydrogen market and the associated regulatory conditions. The Presidency will host a conference on green hydrogen in the energy transition in Lisbon in April.

The example, unique in the EU, of a high penetration of renewable energy resources in the generation of electricity in the Azores, in particular through solar, wind and geothermal energy, should be underlined.

We will highlight the promotion of energy efficiency, with a special focus on tackling energy poverty, in particular in the context of the 'renovation wave initiative' intended to improve the energy performance of buildings and positively impact economic and social recovery.



III. BUILDING A GREEN, CARBON-NEUTRAL EUROPE

Environment

The Presidency will strive to mobilise the Member States behind the European Green Deal, with the aim of promoting an innovative and resilient carbon-neutral development model which will ensure that climate policy and the goal of carbon neutrality are fully integrated into the various sectoral policies. We will promote the objectives of decarbonisation, energy efficiency, the circular economy, sustainable mobility, and the conservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity.

In the area of defending and protecting the environment and natural resources, we will give priority to exchanging information and strengthening cooperation with third countries, in particular on combating the trafficking of protected species. We will aim to finalise the eighth Environment Action Programme and give political impetus to delivering on the new chemicals strategy.

Climate action

The Presidency will pursue the negotiation of the European Climate Law with a view to securing a joint commitment to reduce CO₂ emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

In the framework of the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change, we will encourage discussion on the links between policies, highlighting synergies between climate-change mitigation and adaptation measures. With a view to ensuring greater territorial cohesion and enhancement we will address

the fight against desertification, biodiversity conservation and sustainable water and forest management, highlighting nature-based solutions. We will also look at the growing use of artificial soil in Europe and its impact on ecosystems.

Also in the context of adapting to climate change, we will focus on water resources and the intensification of extreme events, including drought and water scarcity, and their impact on our ecosystems and economic activities.

Circular economy

Delivering on the measures set out in the Circular Economy Action Plan will be a priority. The Presidency will promote the sharing of national action plans and their results. We will encourage reflection at EU level on secondary raw material markets, waste management for existing goods and equipment (life cycle, product quantity), intelligent production and use (reduction of raw materials and greater innovation in product design), and prevention in terms of minimal use

of raw materials (including ecodesign), reusability, reparability and remanufacturing. We will aim to ensure links between different sectoral policies, including the consolidation of industrial clusters.

We will focus on reviewing the legislative framework for batteries with a view to improving the sustainability of the battery value chain, in view of its implications for industry, and the EU's strategic autonomy.

Biodiversity

The Presidency will support the fulfilment of the European and global commitment to biodiversity, engaging in preparations for the negotiations on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in the context of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), which will take place in the second half of 2021 in China.

Conservation of marine biodiversity will be an especially important topic for the Presidency, given Portugal's connection to the sea and the oceans, and the objective of promoting the conservation and restoration of marine ecosystems.



Environment

Forests

The Presidency will advocate for an integrated approach to the forestry sector through the new EU Forest Strategy. We will encourage reflection on sustainable management of the sector, the competitiveness and sustainability of forest-based industries, bioenergy and the green economy, the importance of forests in the context of climate change, the services directly or indirectly provided by ecosystems, and the development of innovative products with high added value.

We will support the establishment of a financial framework for forests which takes into account their multifunctionality and the long timescale for economic return on investment in this sector.

We will focus on defining a European programme to combat and mitigate biotic and abiotic agents to protect forests from threats such as rural fires and pests.

The continuation of negotiations to reach a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe will also merit attention.

We will support the EU's joint efforts with third countries, bilaterally and multilaterally, in particular in the framework of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), to tackle illegal logging and deforestation, as well as trade in timber resulting from those activities.

Water

The EU needs to improve water management through increased investment in treatment, reuse and/or recirculation solutions, as well as in the restoration of ecosystems and natural habitats.

The Presidency will contribute to increased EU-wide implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive, and to improving synergies with the marine strategy, the common agricultural policy and other sectoral policies.

We will promote an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to cross-border water management, adapting it to climate change, promoting sustainable water use, and improving flood risk management through better and faster information-sharing.

Citizen involvement

The Presidency will aim to reach a consensus on the legislative proposal to align the Union legal order with the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) before the next Conference of the Parties in 2021.



Agriculture

Common agricultural policy

The Presidency will prioritise the negotiations for the reform of the common agricultural policy and will strive to reach a political agreement.

Given the importance – made abundantly clear by the pandemic – of ensuring the agricultural sector’s resilience and ability to respond to crises, we will prioritise sectoral measures for the recovery and structural reinforcement of the European agri-food system.

Rural development

A functional and sustainable agricultural sector makes it possible to reverse rural flight, maintaining demographic stability and allowing for generational renewal, while also reducing the likelihood of natural disasters resulting from climate change and of forest fires. In this context, we will give prominence to the European Commission’s Communication on a long-term vision for rural areas, which is intended to combat depopulation and facilitate these areas’ economic development.

We will focus on the initiatives of the European Green Deal, which highlight the close link between food production, adaptation to climate change and biodiversity conservation. We will pay particular attention to the need to reward producers for managing ecosystem services. Emphasis will also be placed on sustainable production practices and organic farming.

Food security and safety

Particular attention will be paid to increasing food security and to the sustainability of supply chains.

We will also make the most of the contribution of the Farm to Fork Strategy, particularly in the areas of food safety, animal health and welfare and plant health, seeking to strengthen the plant protection measures that are substitutes for or complements to chemical control, including the marketing and use of biological control agents.

Agricultural innovation

The Presidency will give priority to innovation, knowledge transfer and the digitalisation of the agri-food sector to ensure sustainable management of resources, including soil and water, and to contribute to the maintenance and development of farming activity and demographic stability.



Oceans, the blue economy and fisheries

The sea is a major source of biodiversity and plays a vital role in sustainable development. The Presidency will enhance the preservation and sustainable use of ocean and sea resources, in line with the European Green Deal. In this context, we will encourage greater involvement of civil society.

The Presidency attaches great importance to the development of the blue (ocean) economy, including renewable energies, blue biotechnology, sustainable aquaculture, coastal and maritime tourism, green shipping, and maritime surveillance technologies for the protection of the marine environment. In this context, we will hold a ministerial conference on integrated maritime policy in Lisbon in June.

It is essential to continue the implementation of the common fisheries policy, ensuring sustainable management of fisheries resources and promoting the improvement of fisheries monitoring and control mechanisms to strengthen the fight against illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing.

The Presidency will pay particular attention to the international instruments focusing on sea-related matters, especially the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the regional conventions on the protection of the marine environment, regional fisheries management organisations and the fisheries partnership agreements with third countries.

Maritime security, which is essential to protect international trade routes, will also merit attention.



IV. BUILDING A FAIR AND SOCIAL EUROPE

Employment, social policy and health

Employment and social policy

The EU Social Summit to be held in Porto in May will be a pivotal moment for the Portuguese Presidency, with two key events: a high-level conference and a leaders' meeting, at the invitation of the President of the European Council. The Presidency will strive to do its utmost for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in line with the European Commission's action plan. Particular attention will be paid to the areas of employment, qualifications and social protection.

We aim to promote the inclusion of the social dimension across the board in the formulation of EU economic, industrial and digital policies and in the implementation of the national recovery and resilience plans.

We will promote a broad and cross-cutting focus on the future of work and decent work, with numerous links to competitiveness, economic reconversion, education, training, lifelong learning and social cohesion. There must be regulation of new forms of work, decent working conditions, safe workplaces and fair wages, and working hours suitable for reconciling work and family life, as well as social protection, irrespective of the employment relationship, always on the basis of social dialogue and collective bargaining. We will follow the negotiation of the Directive on adequate minimum wages and the discussion of the importance of strengthening social dialogue and collective bargaining.

We will prioritise the new European Strategy on Safety and Health at Work, which is a topic of paramount importance in the context of the response to the pandemic.

In the framework of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, we will pay particular attention to binding measures on pay transparency and to the proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance in company boardrooms. **We will promote reflection on the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality, in particular on labour market participation, incomes, and reconciliation of work, personal and family life.**

We will focus on fostering social cohesion, including the fight against poverty, in particular child poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, as well as on the social economy and social innovation, active ageing, inclusion of people with disabilities and promoting children's rights. In this context, the new Child Guarantee and the new EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child will be priorities. The Presidency will organise a high-level meeting on the inclusion of persons with disabilities, to be held in Lisbon in April, to discuss the new European Disability Strategy 2021-2030. We will follow up on the Green Paper on Ageing, which the Commission will present, specifically on cross-cutting treatment of ageing in public policies.

Particular attention should be paid to the establishment of a European cooperation platform to strengthen the EU's role in the fight against homelessness. We will hold a high-level conference on homeless people in Lisbon in June, aiming at the signing of a joint declaration.

The Presidency will also highlight the situation of Roma people, by adopting the proposal for a Council Recommendation in the context of the new Roma strategy for equality, inclusion and participation 2020-2025.

We will also support the establishment of mechanisms for action against hate crime and hate speech.

The Presidency will mark the tenth anniversary of the Istanbul Convention with a conference, to be held in Lisbon in April. The importance of combating violence against women and domestic violence, both recognised as human rights violations and forms of discrimination, will be emphasised.



Employment, social policy and health

Health

The Presidency aims to boost capacity with regard to preparedness for and coordinated response to public health threats and emergencies, both inside and outside the EU.

We will prioritise the development of the European framework for action on health, with the aim of creating a European Health Union, by negotiating proposals for enhanced cooperation between Member States and by strengthening the mandate of the European agencies. We will address the consequences of the increased pressure on health systems observed during the pandemic and will prioritise the implementation of the EU Health Programme (EU4Health).

We will contribute to the digital transformation of the health sector, by means including telehealth and telemedicine, with a view to improving the quality of health care and reducing inequality in access to health. We will promote the interoperability of electronic health records, with a view to boosting re-use of clinical information. The Presidency will organise a high-level conference on digital health (Portugal eHealth Summit) to be held in Lisbon in June.

We will seek to help ensure greater availability of affordable medicines and vaccines, as well as medical equipment and devices. In this context, we will hold a conference on access to medicines in Lisbon in April.

We will advocate an agenda based on three pillars: strategic autonomy (management, production and supply capacity in Europe, and robustness and security of distribution and production chains), sustainability (transparency throughout the value chain, effective information, price policies and regional collaboration) and accessibility (fair, cost-effective and adequate access to health technologies, in particular those which are innovative and support the sustainability of health systems).

We will lay emphasis on the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe and strengthening the role of the European agencies in coordination with networks of national agencies in the Member States.

As regards global health, we will focus on areas of convergence and on a health gains perspective, with a view to meeting the challenges of resistance to antimicrobial agents and vector-borne diseases. We will also attach importance to environmental health.

In terms of global health diplomacy, we will give particular attention to cooperation in the area of the EU-Africa agenda, holding an international conference in this area in Lisbon in March.

We will highlight the implementation of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan and we will organise the European Cancer Research Summit in Porto in May.

We will pay attention to actions in the field of mental health to promote inclusion and outreach to the community.



Education, youth, culture and sport

Education and youth

In the field of education and training, which are key pillars of the European social model, the Presidency will particularly emphasise lifelong learning, qualifications and skills recognition, innovative teaching methods, inclusion and citizenship.

We will advocate for the importance of inclusive access to education and training, and of creating the conditions for equality of opportunities and success. We will stress the importance of continuous investment in education, self-study and vocational and artistic training, with a focus on digital and environmental skills. We will promote discussion of digital education, distance learning and hybrid (online and face-to-face) teaching, and innovative teaching methods.

The EU is one of the best examples of global citizenship and working together for peace and cohesion. In this context, broad discussion of the role of citizenship training in education systems will be emphasised and encouraged.

We will promote the broadening of the higher education base to new segments of the public through the acquisition of new skills and upgrading of skills in adult learning, and the strengthening of higher education networks, with a focus on European University alliances and Universities of the Future.

We will pay particular attention to the area of mobility in education, including higher education and research careers, and to 'brain circulation'. In this context, we will focus on the establishment of the European education area (EEA) by 2025, the construction of a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, as well as initiatives under the New Skills Agenda for Europe and the new Digital Education Action Plan.

We will promote a rights-based approach to youth policies, with a special focus on young people's participation in decision-making processes and governance platforms, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (Space and Participation for All).

We will stress the importance and contribution of mobility and of youth and education policies. In this context, we will give priority to the launch of the Erasmus+ programme and the launch of the European Solidarity Corps, both in Viana do Castelo in June.

Culture and media

The Presidency's central objective in this area is to promote the recovery, resilience and sustainability of the cultural and creative sectors and the media. We will pay particular attention to the implementation of the EU recovery plan in the cultural and creative sectors and the launch of the Creative Europe programme in June in Lisbon.

We will promote a discussion on the diversification of sources and mechanisms for funding to safeguard Europe's cultural heritage.

Other focal points will be access to culture and participation in cultural life, based on the relationship between the arts and education, in a perspective of lifelong learning and of preparing future generations for, and raising their awareness of, culture.

We will hold a conference in Porto in May on the role of culture for social cohesion. As regards gender equality, we will give visibility to women artists.

We will support the Media and Audiovisual Action Plan and promote reflection on the future of journalism, bearing in mind the rapid development of artificial intelligence and the challenges facing a free press. We will therefore hold a high-level conference on artificial intelligence and the future of journalism in Lisbon in April.

These priorities take into account the New European Agenda for Culture and the Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022.



Education, youth, culture and sport

Sport

The Presidency will map innovation in sport and identify new trends in 'sport of the future' as part of the next EU Work Plan for Sport. Together with the European Commission, we will organise the EU Sport Forum.

Attention will be paid to sport as an instrument of the EU's external relations, with a particular focus on Africa and Latin America.



V. PROMOTING EUROPE'S INTERESTS AND VALUES IN THE WORLD

External relations

The Portuguese Presidency will support the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (High Representative), with a view to strong and coherent external action, enabling the Union to act swiftly and efficiently, in line with the defence of its interests and the projection of its values, in particular through effective multilateralism and a rules-based international order. We will pay particular attention to the promotion of the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

We will encourage the deepening of regional partnerships in the context of the UN and other multilateral organisations, prioritising the promotion, protection and realisation of human rights, particularly in the face of new global challenges. In this context, we will promote the implementation of the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. We will also prioritise efforts to abolish the death penalty and to implement the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2021-2025.

We will continue to promote EU drugs and drug addiction policy, on the basis of the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025, strengthening the Union's external advocacy capacity in this area with relevant international partners and based on a humanist vision of respect for human rights.

We will pay particular attention to the plan for implementing the Council conclusions on EU external action on preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism.

In line with the European Green Deal, we will advocate greater global ambition in tackling climate change, in promoting the decarbonisation of economies and in efforts to halt biodiversity loss and to preserve environmental systems, including ocean systems. The preparation of the second UN Ocean Conference and initiatives under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea will be a major focus.

We will promote a comprehensive digital cooperation strategy, highlighting the EU's role as a global actor and as a benchmark in terms of ethics and trust worldwide. Together with the European Commission, the Presidency will host the Digital Day in Porto in March, and then in June, in Lisbon, the Digital Assembly that will approve the Lisbon Declaration on Digital Democracy with a Purpose.

The economic recovery of lower-middle-income countries, particularly in Africa, will be a central priority during the Portuguese Presidency and should be based on creating mutually beneficial opportunities, notably in the areas of climate change, economic cooperation, inclusive and sustainable trade, and investment.

In the field of energy, we will continue EU initiatives on the evolution of the external dimension of energy policy, with a focus on Africa.

We will give prominence to cooperation in the areas of technical police skills and migration. To that end, we will organise a ministerial conference on migration flows to be held in Lisbon.

In the context of the deepening of the EU's relations with Asia, we will pay particular attention to relations with India. The informal meeting at Head of State or Government level with the Indian Prime Minister in May in Porto at the invitation of the President of the European Council will provide an opportunity to modernise the EU-India partnership, based on strategic cooperation and political and economic dialogue, reciprocity and mutual benefit.

The Presidency will support the High Representative in constructive monitoring of the challenges faced by Latin American partners, including in the consolidation of democratic institutions and the sustainable and equitable development of the countries in the region. In addition to revitalising a bi-regional agenda, we will promote relations with sub-regional blocs in areas of common interest. Particular attention will be paid to concluding the negotiation processes for the revision of the Association Agreements with Mexico and Chile, as well as that with Mercosur.



External relations

Relations with the United States should be revitalised and geared towards tangible responses to global challenges as the key element in a new alliance of partners with shared interests and values. In this context, security and defence cooperation, as well as the strengthening of multilateralism and international partnerships, should play a central role.

Sustainable economic recovery and the definition of common goals in relation to the climate agenda will be aided by the USA's announced return to the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Together with the High Representative and the European External Action Service (EEAS), we will seek to deepen the strategic partnership with the Maghreb region, complementing existing regional dialogue initiatives.

We will work actively to promote security, stability and development in the Middle East and North Africa region, building on the UN's dialogue with regional organisations, such as the League of Arab States and the African Union, with a view to finding long-term political solutions.

We will continue the process of enlargement to the Western Balkans on the basis of a new, more credible and more effective methodology, as well as the stabilisation and integration efforts in the region, supporting the European Commission as regards the ongoing reform processes in those countries.

The Presidency will work actively towards the organisation of the EU-Eastern Partnership Summit scheduled for February in Brussels. As regards Ukraine, we will back the efforts of the High Representative to promote a comprehensive political solution.

We will monitor the development of the relationship between the EU and Russia, based on a clear, consistent and united European position, taking into account the challenges and opportunities.

The Portuguese Presidency will prioritise the EU's future relationship with the United Kingdom, engaging in a comprehensive, fair and balanced partnership that respects the interests of the Union and its Member States.



Development partnerships

The Presidency will encourage a European model of development cooperation that is more strategic and better aligned with the Union's external policy priorities.

We will advocate for results-oriented international development partnerships, ensuring consistency of work with the European Commission and the EEAS. We will contribute to strengthening the partnership with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, enhancing the future Post-Cotonou Agreement, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument and the European Peace Facility (EPF).

We will prioritise the preparation and organisation of the sixth EU-African Union Summit and its outcome.

Together with the European Investment Bank (EIB), Portugal will organise a high-level EU-Africa forum on the green economy and green investment, to be held in Lisbon in April. The aim will be to discuss strengthening investment between the two continents, with a

particular emphasis on green investment and the energy transition. The objective is to foster an effective partnership for economic development and job creation in Africa.

We will prioritise the Working Better Together approach, guided by a principle of inclusiveness and enhancing the added value of the participation of all Member States, drawing on their different competences and resources.

We will drive the debate on development in transition by developing strategies to address the challenges faced by middle-income countries, with a particular focus on the transition from least developed to lower-middle-income country in Africa and Latin America.

We will promote the debate on human development, in particular in the areas of health and education, including a gender equality and women's empowerment perspective.

Humanitarian action

We will support measures to strengthen the response to the pandemic in the countries worst affected and with weaker healthcare systems, notably through the European response.

We will give cross-cutting emphasis to the correlation between humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding (the 'triple nexus'), safeguarding the mandates of each participant and respect for humanitarian principles.

In line with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, we will give visibility to the main emerging, protracted and forgotten humanitarian crises. We also aim to deepen the discussion on the impacts of climate change on humanitarian action.

We will promote a debate on protection and assistance for the most vulnerable populations, with a focus on forcibly displaced persons. In this context, we will pay particular attention to strengthening EU support for young refugees and forcibly displaced persons in higher education.



Trade

The Presidency will support the strengthening of a rules-based multilateral trading system and a modernised World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as a network of ambitious and balanced bilateral trade agreements with key partners.

Particular attention will be paid to reviewing the EU's trade policy. This objective will create the conditions for the diversification of global value chains, ensuring greater EU strategic autonomy and contributing to a faster recovery from the pandemic crisis.

The 12th WTO Ministerial Conference scheduled for 2021 and its outcome should give impetus to the WTO reform process, including the Appellate Body of the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism.

In the framework of the WTO, the Presidency will attach particular importance to multilateral negotiations on fisheries subsidies. Among the various multilateral initiatives, we will highlight those related to digital trade and the promotion of new initiatives, notably in the areas of climate and health.

We will monitor the implementation of existing agreements and the negotiation of new ones, notably with Australia and New Zealand, and the modernisation of the agreement with Chile, encouraging a trade and investment-friendly environment for European economic operators. **In view of the strategic interest, the Presidency will seek to contribute to creating conditions for the signing of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement and the modernised EU-Mexico Global Agreement.**

The consolidation of trade relations with the United States, as well as the finalisation of negotiations on the Agreement on Investment and the implementation of the Geographical Indications Agreement with China, will also be a priority. Trade and investment relations with India, in particular the possibility of an investment protection agreement, will also be important.

The deepening and modernisation of the existing Free Trade Agreements with the Southern Neighbourhood, and progress in the ongoing negotiations with other countries in the region, will be a political priority for the Portuguese Presidency.

We will work towards deepening the trade relationship with Africa, with a view to contributing to the progressive realisation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. We will support the process for Angola to join the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and negotiations on an EU-Angola investment facilitation agreement.

Bearing in mind the need to strengthen the EU's capacity to combat unfair trade practices and to promote a level playing field, the Presidency will closely monitor the implementation of the trade defence instruments and the development of complementary instruments such as the Enforcement Regulation and the new International Procurement Instrument.

The revision of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Regulation will provide an opportunity for the affirmation of European values, in particular environmental and social values.



Security and defence

We will prioritise a more operational orientation of the EU Global Strategy, through the common European Strategic Compass, with a view to defining its level of ambition and strengthening the security and defence dimension by enhancing the coherence and effectiveness of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) initiatives, complementing NATO.

The impact of COVID-19 is a test of Member States' resilience and solidarity, underlining the urgency of improving the EU's crisis response capacity. We will support the work of the task force set up by the EEAS to assess the response of Member States' armed forces to the pandemic, identifying gaps, challenges, best practices and ways of improving cooperation and coordination in response to complex emergencies, in particular the use of military capabilities to support the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

We will promote a reflection on the effectiveness of CSDP military missions and operations, incorporating lessons learned. We will prioritise strengthening the EU-Africa partnership on security and defence in an integrated, comprehensive and coherent approach, particularly in the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea, focusing on capacity-building, in cooperation with the UN and other multilateral organisations. In this context, together with the High Representative, we will host an EU ministerial meeting with African partner organisations on peace and security in Lisbon in March.

We will continue and give visibility to the implementation of the commitments made in the Civilian CSDP Compact, and promote an integrated and sustained approach to the nexus between internal and external security/defence, ensuring that cooperation in the CSDP and Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) areas is translated into operational results.

We will contribute to the deepening of European cooperation on capability development with a view to promoting the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) and the specific role of SMEs. We will propose a common approach to the European defence economy through an inclusive, diversified and sustainable methodology. Accordingly, we will advocate for the operationalisation of the European Defence Fund, focusing on the development of critical technology sectors. In this context, together with the European Defence Agency, we will host a high-level conference on the impact of disruptive technologies on security and defence, to be held in Porto in April.

We will attach importance to the nexus between climate change and security and defence, and advocate the inclusion of demanding criteria for adaptation to climate change in the Permanent Structured Cooperation, proposing a roadmap of measures in this area.

The Presidency will promote a reflection on maritime security, based on the latest threat assessment in key maritime areas such as the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic, and the operationalisation of new concepts such as Coordinated Maritime Presences, as well as capacity-building in third countries. We will develop a tool to implement the EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan. In May, the Presidency will formalise the launching of the Atlantic Centre in the Azores.

In the framework of EU-NATO cooperation, we will pay particular attention to the areas of hybrid threats, cyber defence, maritime security (including capacity-building for partners), military mobility and response to complex emergencies. From a cooperative security perspective, we will seek to deepen synergies with relevant regional entities in North Africa, the Middle East and the Sahel.



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