



Brussels, 10 December 2021
(OR. en)

14441/21

POLGEN 191

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Taking forward the Strategic Agenda
18-month Programme of the Council (1 January 2022 - 30 June 2023)

Delegations will find attached the 18-month programme of the Council, prepared by the future French, Czech and Swedish Presidencies and the High Representative, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Council.

The programme**I. INTRODUCTION**

The three Presidencies - France, the Czech Republic and Sweden - will strive to find common solutions to challenges and tasks ahead. The crisis provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes an unprecedented challenge. The trio will do everything necessary to enable the Union to overcome the economic and social shock. This will be achieved by implementing the Recovery Plan, notably through investing in the green and digital transitions, revitalising the Single Market, strengthening the EU's resilience, competitiveness as well as convergence, and ensuring economic policy coordination in line with the pace and strength of the recovery to strengthen the European Union, including the Economic and Monetary Union. In that endeavour, the trio is also determined to protect the rights of Union's citizens and uphold Union's values.

The priorities set out in the Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024 remain fully relevant. At the same time, the pandemic and its consequences have reinforced and accelerated some of the challenges to which the EU must respond. The trio will therefore endeavour to address all of them.

Among the challenges that have emerged, health deserves particular attention. The current pandemic has underlined the need for a strong European Health Union and improved coordination at EU level in this area: threats to Member States' health systems can have significant cross-border implications.

The trio also considers it important to give a new impulse to relations with strategic partners, including our transatlantic partners and emerging powers. These relations are a key component of a robust foreign policy.

The three Presidencies will also work towards a stronger and result oriented Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) through the endorsement and implementation of the Strategic Compass.

Conference on the future of Europe

Launched on 9 May 2021 in Strasbourg, the conference on the future of Europe provides a unique opportunity to give citizens a say on what matters to them. It will provide a new space for debate with citizens to address Europe's challenges and priorities.

National and European citizens' panels and plenary meetings of the conference on the future of Europe will be held for almost 10 months to take into account debates and contributions from citizens, especially the youth, with the objective of formulating recommendations on the Union's future policies and ambitions. Within the executive board, France, the Czech Republic and Sweden will work together to make the conference a success by promoting the engagement of citizens and thereby a more concrete citizenship of the Union.

At the same time, the trio will make sure that the scope of the work of the conference reflects areas where the Union has competence to act or where its action would be to the benefit of its citizens.

By March 2022, the three Presidencies, in their role as members/observers in the executive board, will contribute to the report on the outcomes of the various activities and citizens' recommendations. Based on the political conclusions of the conference, they will begin implementing them, as appropriate.

Multilingualism

The trio considers respect for multilingualism essential. Multilingualism, translation and interpretation services will be promoted, in order to reflect the linguistic diversity of Member States and to bring people with different linguistic backgrounds closer to each other, including by encouraging the study of foreign languages by citizens.

II. PROTECTING CITIZENS AND FREEDOMS

Respect and protection of EU's common values: democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights

The three Presidencies are determined to promote the EU's values and strengthen the rule of law in the Union with the help of the various mechanisms put in place. This includes the effective implementation of the rule of law dialogue in the Council, based on the annual rule of law report, and the new regulation on a general regime of conditionality to protect the EU budget.

The trio is also committed to strengthen media pluralism and European democracy. It will examine the Commission's proposals aiming to protect the integrity of elections, promote democratic participation, ensure greater transparency in paid political advertising and foster media freedom. It will also take work forward on the European Democracy Action Plan, including to counter hybrid threats, malicious cyber activities and disinformation, in particular in electoral processes. In this regard, it will develop further reflections as well as concrete initiatives, demonstrating the solidarity between Member States, and ensure that law enforcement and judicial authorities are able to exercise their lawful powers both online and offline.

The trio will engage in strengthening the protection of EU citizens travelling and residing abroad, in particular through the review of the rules on consular protection.

The three Presidencies will engage in promoting gender equality, including by addressing women's economic empowerment, and in fighting against gender-based stereotypes, making the Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 a reality for all. The trio will also take forward discussions on the initiative from the Commission on gender-based violence.

When it comes to the fight against all forms of discrimination and promotion of equal opportunities, the trio will give special attention to the EU's LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025, anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 and strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030. It will also examine the need for further measures, as appropriate.

Moreover, the three Presidencies will step up action to actively prevent and combat antisemitism in all its forms, building on the EU strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life 2021-2030.

The three Presidencies will step up efforts at EU level to better protect children, in particular against poverty, sexual abuse, including online, and to ensure that they enjoy equal rights and opportunities in all aspects of their lives.

They will also strive towards ensuring effective protection of vulnerable adults who are not in a position to look after their own interests.

Migration, Schengen, police and judicial cooperation

The three Presidencies intend to strengthen the Schengen area as a space of free movement without internal borders. An effective protection of external borders, reinforced Schengen evaluation mechanism and improved governance are essential to that effect.

The trio will take work forward on the Pact on migration and asylum with a view to further developing a fully functioning comprehensive asylum and migration policy. It will ensure the full mobilisation of all relevant agencies and instruments. Concerning the internal dimension, an agreement based on a balance of responsibility and solidarity is necessary. The trio will support efforts to avoid loss of life and ensure international protection to those who need it. It will continue and deepen the Union's cooperation with countries of origin and transit to fight illegal migration and human trafficking, ensure effective returns and a full implementation of readmission agreements and arrangements, using the necessary leverage.

The three Presidencies will do their utmost to strengthen the Union's security. In particular, they will resolutely combat all forms of terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism and improve the efforts in better protecting victims of terrorism.

The trio will ensure the follow-up of the initiative on the extension of the list of EU crimes in Article 83(1) of the TFEU in order to prepare the Council decision that would allow the Commission to put forward a legislative initiative aiming at criminalising hate speech and hate crime.

The trio will contribute to the fight against organised crime, notably human, drugs and arms trafficking, address the issues of money laundering and asset recovery, and take work forward to prevent crimes against cultural heritage and to combat environmental crimes.

It is also important in that regard to identify and disrupt high-risk criminal networks active in the EU and improve security through the deployment and interoperability of Union's information systems. Law enforcement and judicial authorities should be able to retain and access the relevant data so that they can exercise their lawful powers to combat crime. The trio aims to find an agreement on the legislation that ensures effective and direct access to e-evidence to judicial authorities within the EU. With that in mind, the trio will also support research and innovation to provide law enforcement with adequate tools to efficiently combat crime, whilst ensuring the protection of fundamental rights in full compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU's data protection *acquis*.

It will also strengthen e-Justice and support the development of digital information exchanges between judicial authorities. Furthermore, the trio will work on the proposal for a new legal instrument on the transfer of proceedings.

Crisis management and civil protection

The three Presidencies are determined to increase solidarity, preparedness and response efficiency in crisis management in cases of natural, man-made and health disasters. They will take into account cross-border dependencies and vulnerabilities, new risks as well as climate change related impacts, and address increasing challenges in the area of crisis management and critical infrastructures' resilience.

In particular, the trio is committed to enhance the Union's collective preparedness, response capability and resilience to future crises, drawing from the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Ensuring an effective recovery for green and sustainable growth

The trio underlines the vital role of supporting the recovery of EU economies by implementing national recovery and resilience plans and other temporary instruments introduced in the context of the crisis provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Union should invest in the green and digital transitions, renewing the basis for long-term sustainable and inclusive growth. Whilst doing so, it will strengthen cohesion in the Union and achieve upward convergence of our economies.

In this regard, the three Presidencies will focus on ensuring the successful implementation of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) and Next Generation EU (NGEU) programme. They will notably take work forward on the roadmap on the new own resources as called upon by the European Council meeting of 17-21 July 2020, and ensure an effective and efficient management of the MFF and recovery package.

Furthermore, the trio is committed to the implementation of the European Semester of economic policy coordination, including in conjunction with the adopted Recovery and Resilience Plans. It will also follow-up on the Commission's review of economic governance.

As regards the annual EU budget, the three Presidencies will ensure a smooth adoption and implementation process, whilst promoting further improvements to the EU budget performance framework.

Strengthening the single market and developing an assertive, comprehensive and coordinated industrial policy to foster growth and innovation

The three Presidencies are determined to develop a more integrated approach to the single market by connecting all relevant policies and dimensions. To this end, they will promote the deepening and strengthening of the single market and its four freedoms, the removal of remaining unjustified barriers, particularly in the area of services, and the need to avoid new ones. Furthermore, they will contribute to the design of an EU industrial policy fit for the future, taking into account the Commission's updated industrial strategy, and steering efforts towards supporting the green and digital transitions. In addition, they will take work forward on the Commission's proposal on the Digital Services package (the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA)) to reinforce a single market for digital services and to ensure a safer online space and fairer online markets. Together with the Commission's proposal on general product safety regulation, the DMA and DSA will also reinforce the safety of products in the single market, online and offline.

When it comes to designing an ambitious industrial policy fit for the future, the trio considers it important to improve the regulatory framework for SMEs, reduce vulnerabilities due to the Union's strategic dependencies on third countries, make the European industry more sustainable, green, globally competitive and resilient in the medium and long-term, and promote a global level playing field. In this regard, it is committed to implement the EU's SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe. It will also explore ways to diversify current and future production and supply chains; to produce locally, where appropriate; to ensure strategic stockpiling; and foster favourable conditions for production and investment in the Union. While fulfilling the objectives of the European Climate Law and EURATOM, the trio will also take work forward on transparent and inclusive alliances, strategic value chains and, when necessary to overcome market failures, Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI). It considers that the proper enforcement of competition rules is essential on a global level and is determined to take work forward on the Commission's proposal on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market.

Whilst ensuring effective enforcement of single market rules and market surveillance, the trio will also explore new directions for the single market to enhance its contribution to the green and digital transitions and continue work on the revision of the competition and state aid framework.

The three Presidencies will give special attention to developing fair and simple taxation, in line with the globally agreed standards, without unjustified tax exemptions; and to combating tax evasion and tax fraud. They consider it important to make the tax environment more transparent and strengthen the exchange of relevant information in the EU and beyond. Strengthening the Customs Union is another important priority and the trio will promote the effective implementation of the Customs Union Action Plan.

Finally, the three Presidencies will engage in finding new ways to invest in the acquisition, preservation and development of skills to facilitate the green and digital transitions, anticipating the evolving needs in the labour market. They will also continue work on the implementation of the initiatives arising from all focus areas of the Commission's intellectual property action plan, in order to put EU companies on track towards economic recovery and the Union's green and digital leadership at a global level.

Accompanying the digital transformation and reaping its full benefits

The three Presidencies are committed to ensuring the Union's digital sovereignty in a self-determined and open manner, promoting cultural content and a strong media sector, reliable industrial solutions and strengthening the Union's cyber resilience and responsiveness. They will support a robust and innovative digital ecosystem for businesses, excellence in research in the field of new technologies and digitalisation of SMEs. Digital development must safeguard our values, fundamental rights and security, and be socially balanced.

Fostering the development of technologies, including supercomputers and quantum computing, blockchain, Artificial Intelligence and semi-conductor chips will contribute to that objective. The trio also considers it important to strengthen the international outreach efforts of both the Union and its Member States with a view to promoting EU digital standards and developing global digital rules. This requires close cooperation with like-minded partners, both bilaterally and through the relevant fora and organisations.

The three Presidencies will follow-up on the Commission's communication '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the 'Digital Decade' and in particular take work forward on the EU's regulatory framework. This will include preparatory work on digital skills and education. One of the main objectives is to improve access to, sharing, pooling and re-use of data, whilst creating a level playing field to foster innovation, competitiveness and cultural diversity. In this regard, the trio will finalise the revision of the regulatory framework for online platforms, in order to create a safer digital space and step up the fight against illegal content online by reinforcing their responsibilities. It will also take forward the work on the Commission's proposals on European electronic identity, the Artificial Intelligence Act and the forthcoming Data Act. In the field of cyber, it will advance work on security of network and information systems, resilience of critical entities and the cyber diplomacy toolbox. It will also strive to improve the EU's cybersecurity crisis management framework and establish common cybersecurity standards for products.

Another priority will be to address the challenges of international business taxation arising from the globalisation and digitalisation of the economy. In this respect, the three Presidencies are committed to work on the proposals that are expected to be tabled by the Commission, following agreement in the Inclusive Framework of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In line with the OECD implementation timeline, they will endeavour to find an agreement on these proposals in the Council as swiftly as possible.

They will also encourage work on simplifying and modernising the Union's VAT rules, which should be better adapted to digital technologies.

Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union, and financial services, company law and corporate governance issues

The trio is determined to deepen the Economic and Monetary Union in all its dimensions and will strengthen the international role of the euro and develop strong, competitive and stable EU financial markets. It will work towards achieving a more innovative digital finance sector, reinforcing the fight against money laundering and financing of terrorism, and developing sustainability in corporate governance. The objective is to enhance our strategic autonomy in economic and financial matters, while preserving an open economy.

In particular, the three Presidencies will contribute to the completion of the Banking Union and the progress towards a true Capital Markets Union. They will also support work on the development of sustainable finance, including the implementation of the EU taxonomy framework, and more efficient and resilient payment systems.

When it comes to corporate governance, the trio will promote the establishment of due diligence obligations regarding human rights and environmental impacts and support the setting up of EU standards for corporate sustainability reporting in order to promote an EU model of responsible business.

Increasing EU autonomy and competitiveness in the space sector

The three Presidencies underline the importance of reinforcing functional relations between key EU actors for a successful implementation of the EU Space Programme. They will support research, development and industrial applications, promote the EU flagship programmes Galileo and Copernicus worldwide, develop possible new initiatives, including secure space-based connectivity, and continue advocating for responsible behaviour in space, in particular within the United Nations.

Supporting research, education and our youth

The three Presidencies will continue discussions on deploying the European Research Area. They will contribute to defining and implementing research and innovation policy to address existing societal and economic challenges to the benefit of the Union's citizens. The objective is to strengthen the research infrastructure landscape and the research effort (fundamental, applied and disruptive) in the Union.

The trio will aim at further developing the European Education Area, including through cooperation and exchanges in the Erasmus+ programme and European universities, as well as recognising the fundamental role of quality investment in education. In this regard, it will continue the work on the skills agenda and in particular on the successful, inclusive and secure digital education and advancement of digital skills in education and training.

The trio will also support work for the benefit of the youth, improve the dialogue with young people and encourage their participation in policy decisions. In this regard, the trio will notably promote the activities scheduled during the 2022 European Year of the Youth.

In addition, the three Presidencies will support work towards the recovery of the sports sector. With this in mind, it will promote its role in society and its power to contribute to the improvement of health, the wellbeing of citizens and a more inclusive society.

Supporting the development of regions

The three Presidencies consider it important to foster convergence between EU Member States and regions and territorial development through cohesion policy. This process will be strengthened with the contributions of synergies and complementarities of the Recovery and Resilience Facility and other relevant instruments. At the same time, the specific needs of outermost, peripheral, maritime and border regions, urban areas as well as regions in transition should be borne in mind, including in the context of the European Green Deal.

Strengthening consumer protection

With a view to strengthening consumer protection, the three Presidencies will promote the adaptation of EU consumer protection policy to the challenges of green and digital transitions as well as further effective market surveillance. Combating counterfeiting and guaranteeing equal access to quality are important in that regard.

Bringing culture to the fore

The three Presidencies will prepare and start implementing the new work plan for culture, focussing in particular on the importance of culture for the economy, artistic freedom and the effects of digitalisation on culture. In this regard, they will promote culture and media as the foundation of the European model, and investments in culture and cultural heritage.

In addition, the trio will underline the importance of securing a fair remuneration for creators and a sustainable environment for independent media. It will notably follow-up on the media and audio-visual action plan.

Strengthen and promote tourism in the EU

The trio will do its utmost to provide conditions for the recovery of the sector after the crisis provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the development of new forms of tourism. It will also address the issue of sustainability.

IV. BUILDING A CLIMATE-NEUTRAL, GREEN, FAIR AND SOCIAL EUROPE

Building a climate-neutral and green Europe

The three Presidencies are determined to put the EU on a path towards climate neutrality by 2050 with a view to increasing economic competitiveness, job creation, welfare and health. They will do so by taking forward the ‘Fit for 55’ package in line with the Paris agreement goals, including by pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees, while leaving no one behind. They will take work forward on all related legislative proposals with the aim of concluding the negotiations with the European Parliament, notably by strengthening the ETS and by setting up a WTO-compatible carbon border adjustment mechanism to prevent carbon leakage. These efforts will be essential for increasing the social acceptability of the climate transition and building a climate resilient society.

Further work is needed on supporting the development of low carbon and renewable energy, all low-emission technologies, and increasing energy efficiency in order to implement the EU’s enhanced climate objectives for 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050 with an emphasis on technological neutrality, fostering resilience and innovation and ensuring just transition and energy at affordable prices. The single electricity and gas market will need to be completed, whilst ensuring the secure, sustainable and undistorted supply of strategic raw materials to the Union. The trio will follow up on the studies to be presented on the functioning of the gas and electricity markets, as well as the EU ETS market. The trio will also support efforts towards high quality building renovations based on a cost-effective and sustainable approach.

The trio will promote the transition to a toxic-free environment and a circular economy, the development of sustainable products, as well as a more climate-friendly and transparent taxation of energy products. It will also promote and incentivise the bio-economy, whilst allowing for regional and local differences, as an essential part of achieving of the European Green Deal and a key feature in the transformation to a fossil-free and resource efficient society.

The three Presidencies are committed to protecting nature and biodiversity by restoring degraded ecosystems, taking forward the implementation of the EU's biodiversity strategy and the urgent upscaling of restoration efforts for damaged ecosystems at sea and on land. In implementing the new EU forest strategy, the sustainability and multi-functionality of the European forests are essential, notably through sustainable forest management, and while respecting both the division of competencies and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. It is also important to protect the forests outside the EU, in particular by taking forward the work on a dedicated new EU instrument to minimise the risk of deforestation and forest degradation associated with products placed on the EU market.

The trio will support the transition towards sustainable agriculture and food systems through the implementation of the EU's 'Farm to Fork' strategy and the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) whilst taking into account Member States' different starting points, circumstances and conditions, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. In particular, it will promote a reduced use of pesticides and fertilisers, animal health and welfare, as well as organic agriculture through clear and simple food information to customers, thereby ensuring healthy food for the Union's citizens. The trio will promote a sustainable and balanced management of fisheries' resources, in particular in the context of the EU's relations with the United Kingdom. It will also encourage the development of sustainable aquaculture.

Moreover, the three Presidencies reaffirm their commitment to develop sustainable, safe, smart and digital transport, shift to zero and low-emission mobility, and make transport systems more sustainable, smart and resilient. This will contribute to the proper functioning of the internal market and ensure attractive working conditions for workers in the sector. Improving transport connectivity in Europe remains also a priority.

The trio is also committed to reduce the climate impact in the construction and real estate sector taking forward new initiatives within the sector, and to promote an integrated maritime policy for the EU. It will support the creation of a European maritime area with a high social and environmental ambition.

The Union's efforts and accomplishments in building a climate neutral and green Europe will continue to be the basis for its efforts to encourage global partners to follow its lead in implementing the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda.

Building a fair and social Europe

The trio considers it important to strengthen the European social model. With this in mind, it will facilitate the further implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, notably through relevant legislative and non-legislative work to be taken forward at EU and Member States level and through the European Semester. It will promote social inclusion and upward social convergence, whilst fully respecting national competences and the variety of labour market models in the Union, notably by defending fair wages and decent jobs, provisions for minimum income, and social dialogue. In addition, it will seek to advance the development of the social economy to allow for a better integration of vulnerable groups in the labour market.

The three Presidencies will also seek to ensure that the Union is equipped to address the impacts of demographic changes. They will place a special focus on older people and persons with disabilities, whose rights and inclusion in the labour market and society as a whole remain essential. They will also promote active and healthy ageing, as well as the accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare and long-term care, including through enhancing support for formal and informal carers.

The trio is committed to improve working conditions, including in the digital economy and for people working through platforms. It will take steps to improve safety and health at work and tackle gender inequalities in the labour market, including through measures to close the gender pay gap and through the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men to reconcile work, family and private life. It will promote ways to better integrate people with disabilities in the labour market and use their potential.

The three Presidencies will furthermore seek to enhance training, job creation and job-to-job transitions, notably seizing the opportunities provided by the green and digital transitions and the proper use of structural funds. In view of existing labour market challenges, further action will also be needed to develop labour market policies, as well as a culture of lifelong learning (including working towards an individual right to lifelong learning), and to combat youth unemployment, especially through the mobility of apprentices. The trio will also promote digital, as well as Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), skills within the Union and the development of rural and remote areas.

Building a Europe that protects health

The trio will step up efforts at European level to promote a “one health approach”, with the objective to ensure health protection for EU citizens and the EU's capacity to respond to health challenges: from research to production and through improved coordination at EU level in response to cross-border health threats.

The trio will conclude negotiations and support the implementation of the European Health Union package, including the HERA (the European Health Emergency preparedness and Response Authority) proposal.

The three Presidencies will continue work to ensure the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, access to medicines by securing a more robust supply chain for medicinal products and support work on upgrading legislation in the field of medicinal products based on the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe.

The three Presidencies will promote the strengthening of health policies, including by focussing on measures for disease prevention and the promotion of healthy environments and lifestyles. In particular, the trio will focus on the implementation of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.

The three Presidencies will work on the Commission's proposal on the establishment of a European Health Data Space.

The three Presidencies will also support the 'one health approach' by encouraging further measures to tackle antimicrobial resistance and strengthening the EU's Action Plan against antimicrobial resistance.

The three Presidencies will contribute to multilateral action in the field of health and support efforts on global health, mainly with the WHO to strengthen its capacity to deal with global health challenges, and other relevant UN agencies.

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

The three Presidencies remain committed to implementing the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 by pursuing a more strategic course of action and increasing the EU's capacity to act autonomously to safeguard its interests, uphold its values and way of life, and help shape the global future. The EU will remain a driving force behind multilateralism and the global rules-based international order, ensuring openness and fairness and the necessary reforms. It will support the UN and key multilateral organizations.

In a rapidly changing and unstable world, the trio will seek political unity and mobilisation of EU instruments, working in support of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy and in close coordination with the Commission.

Defending and promoting multilateralism and responding to major challenges and international crises

The trio reaffirms its firm commitment to promote multilateralism and a rules-based international order with international law and the UN at its core. It will work towards strengthening the Union's influence in the multilateral system to better defend and promote our values and interests.

It will actively promote respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Promoting diversity, gender equality, women's and girls' full enjoyment of all human rights, as well as the empowerment of women and girls, will be a priority in all external action. The three Presidencies will strive for the full implementation of EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy and Gender Action Plan (GAP) III, and use all relevant tools, including the EU global human rights sanctions regime. They will also actively promote respect for sexual and reproductive health and rights and fully implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Strengthening the EU's capacity to support civil society, independent media and other non-governmental actors in third countries also remains a key priority. The trio will enhance cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in this area.

The three Presidencies will ensure that the Union plays a leading role in responding to global challenges, and give special attention to further developing the "Team Europe" approach. Emergencies, such as pandemics, pose new challenges. The trio will promote the EU's resilience through global solidarity, and a significant EU contribution to global recovery and sharing of vaccines.

Climate diplomacy will be a central feature of foreign policy and a standing item on the agenda of all major summits. The trio will also maintain the priority given by the EU in international fora to sustainable development, particularly in the context of the Green Deal.

The EU will also need to direct more attention to how technology affects Europe's place in the world and how it can maintain sufficient technological and scientific ability to safeguard its autonomy. The trio will promote EU's lead in standard-setting, especially in the area of emerging technologies.

The trio will support raising EU and Member States ability to engage in public diplomacy and strategic communication, counter disinformation, information manipulation and hostile interference, wherever it comes from.

The trio will furthermore encourage work on strengthening the implementation and effectiveness of EU restrictive measures including by ensuring that EU citizens and companies are protected against the application of hostile and coercive third countries' measures.

Moreover, the EU will address international crises and tensions through a comprehensive approach. It will closely monitor international developments and actively engage, including through diplomatic efforts.

Trade

Trade remains one of the most powerful engines for growth, supporting millions of jobs and contributing to prosperity. The three Presidencies want to contribute to shape the new system of global economic governance based on an ambitious and balanced free trade agenda with the WTO at its core, complemented by a bilateral trade agenda, while protecting the European Union from unfair and abusive practices and ensuring reciprocity.

The three Presidencies will promote a robust Union trade policy, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, recalling that the Commission submitted a Trade Policy Review in this regard. Supporting the EU's green and digital transitions and promoting more resilient, diversified and accountable value chains remain in this regard key priorities.

The trio will furthermore strive to contribute to reform the WTO in its various components and strengthen compliance with multilateral trade rules. It will develop mutually beneficial partnerships that will help pursue the EU's economic and sustainability objectives. It will work on ensuring the efficient implementation and active enforcement of existing trade agreements with our partners. It will also promote a level playing field by developing the EU's autonomous instruments, such as the International Procurement Instrument or the control of foreign subsidies in the single market.

Relations with partners

To achieve its objectives, the EU needs to work with all those sharing them, including its strategic and likeminded partners. In this respect, the three Presidencies reaffirm their commitment to develop the Union's relations in the light of its values, principles and interests.

The EU's neighbourhood

The trio will implement a strategic approach in relation to the Western Balkans. It will pay attention to the advancement of economic integration among the countries themselves, the recovery, as well as the continued provision of security by the EU. It will continue the accession process in accordance with the enhanced enlargement methodology by supporting deep and transformative reform in key areas such as the rule of law, democratic institutions, free media and economy. The trio will seek to reinvigorate and enhance the regular political dialogue with the region. An EU-Western Balkans summit will be held in 2022.

The trio will renew, reinforce and further develop the strategic partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood. The trio will support implementation of the commitments taken at the Eastern Partnership Summit of 2021, and partner countries' reform agendas, as set out in their respective agreements with the EU.

The EU has a strategic interest in a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean, and aims for a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with Turkey, based on the framework decided by the European Council.

The trio will support the implementation of the five principles guiding relations with Russia, in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council of June 2021.

The three Presidencies will promote cooperation through the OSCE to enhance security and stability in Europe, making full use of its potential.

Cooperation with the European Economic Area (EEA)/European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) on all issues of mutual interest will be continued. The aim of the trio is also to make substantial progress with a view to concluding negotiations on an association agreement with Andorra, Monaco and San Marino. It will also pursue the ongoing reassessment of the EU-Switzerland relationship.

The trio will remain vigilant on the full implementation of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and Withdrawal Agreement. It will take forward the work on the Commission's legislative proposal regarding the Union's internal modalities for adapting autonomous measures foreseen by the TCA.

Africa

The trio reaffirms the need to develop comprehensive and mutually beneficial partnerships with Africa.

The February 2022 EU-African Union (AU) Summit will aim at renewing and deepening the partnership in order to jointly develop an area of solidarity, security and prosperity bringing together the territories, populations and organisations of both continents. Based on the promotion of shared values, key priorities include security and cooperation in the field of defence as well as sustainable and inclusive economic development, including the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the trio is committed to implementing the EU-Sahel strategy and the EU strategy for the Horn of Africa.

Americas

The trio will support a strong mutually beneficial long-term strategic partnership with the United States, in line with the Council Conclusions of 7 December 2020 and implement the Joint Transatlantic Agenda with the United States emanating from the EU-US Summit on 15 June 2021, including within the Trade and Technology Council (TTC). The trio will also further deepen the strategic partnership with Canada.

The trio will support relations with Latin America and the Caribbean through EU high-level engagement, and engagement with sub-regional organisations, as well as with strategic and other partners.

Asia-Pacific

The trio will ensure the implementation of the multi-faceted approach endorsed by the European Council regarding relations with China, mindful of keeping EU unity.

Regarding EU relations with India, it will support the implementation of the EU-India statement of 8 May 2021, and in particular the Commission's re-launch of negotiations for an ambitious trade, investment protection and geographical indications agreements.

The trio will also support the implementation of the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, following the Council conclusions and the Joint Communication published on 16 September 2021 by the European Commission and the High Representative, in particular in the areas of human rights, sustainable development and connectivity, security and defence, and supply chains. The trio will also further deepen engagement with like-minded countries.

A commemorative and inaugural EU-ASEAN Summit is planned on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of EU-ASEAN relations. The trio will also support dialogue and cooperation through the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Connectivity

The trio will support the EU strategic approach to connectivity globally, on the basis of the Global Gateway Connectivity Strategy.

Development and humanitarian aid

The trio intends to reinforce international partnerships for development, through the implementation of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe) and the strengthening of the European financial architecture for development. It will focus notably on green and inclusive global recovery, addressing the consequences of COVID-19, and on increasing resilience and investing in human development.

The trio will accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), using a Team Europe approach where appropriate. The trio will strive to strengthen the nexus between stabilisation, humanitarian and development activities.

Strengthening effective development cooperation will remain a key priority, with a special emphasis on anti-corruption.

In the area of humanitarian aid, the three Presidencies will promote the Union's leading role and strengthen efforts to advance principled and efficient action.

Security and defence

The trio reaffirms that, in the face of increased global instability, the EU needs to take more responsibility for its security.

The three Presidencies aim at endorsing by March 2022 a bold and actionable “Strategic Compass” to enhance and guide the further implementation of the EU level of ambition in security and defence regarding crisis management, resilience, capabilities and partnerships. They will strive to ensure the implementation of the “Strategic Compass” and its deliverables according to the agreed timetable.

The trio is committed to enhancing CSDP with the goal of maintaining the role of EU as a responsible, capable and reliable actor and global partner for peace and security.

The three Presidencies will support responsive, robust and flexible European missions and operations and closer cooperation, coordination as well as developing links between Member States’ operational engagements and civilian and military CSDP missions and operations. The trio will ensure the robust implementation of the European Peace Facility (EPF), in accordance with the Council Decision of March 2021.

The trio is committed to fostering security and defence partnerships with international and regional partner organisations, in particular with a view to enhancing EU/NATO cooperation and improving EU/UN cooperation on the basis of agreed frameworks, and to further developing bilateral relationships with partner countries, based on a more strategic and tailored approach. With respect to EU/NATO cooperation, the trio remains fully committed to the implementation of the related joint declarations.

The three Presidencies will continue working towards the full implementation of the civilian CSDP Compact by early summer 2023 and towards laying the ground for a continued ambitious civilian CSDP in the years to come.

The trio will moreover promote better coherence amongst the EU defence initiatives: the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the new European Defence Fund. These initiatives should be implemented also with the objective of reducing critical capability shortfalls and strategic dependencies, particularly with regard to emerging and disruptive technologies and critical value chains. This will pave the way for a strengthened European defence technological and industrial base.

Further work will also be needed on strengthening the Union's and Member States' resilience, as well as their ability to counter hybrid threats, including disinformation and information manipulation. The trio will advance the ongoing work on developing a hybrid toolbox.

Furthermore, securing the Union's access to the global commons (including space, cyberspace, the air domain and the high seas), including further strategic reflections on the EU space and security and defence dimensions, and improved military mobility across the Union remain important priorities. The trio will also pursue strengthening the EU's contribution to maritime security, notably through the updating of the EU strategy, as well as the further development of the Coordinated Maritime Presences concept and cooperation with coastal states.
