



Brussels, 23 March 2021

Dear colleagues,

Given recent developments with regard to the epidemiological situation in Member States, we will hold our meeting by videoconference on Thursday and Friday.

Following extensive consultations with all of you, we will discuss COVID, international relations, as well as our economic and digital agenda.

I am also delighted that we will be able to virtually welcome President Biden on Thursday evening, who will share his views on our future cooperation.

On COVID, our top priority is to speed up vaccination campaigns across the EU. To this end, the ongoing work to boost vaccine production, increase vaccine deliveries and ensure more transparency and predictability of supplies should be intensified. In addition, we will address COVID certificates and the international dimension.

On international matters, we want to defend our interests, uphold our values and actively contribute to shaping the global future. Our unity is a precondition to asserting our influence. As regards Russia, I propose to have an information point and will share with you the outcome of my latest contacts with President Putin in advance of a more strategic debate on the matter at our next physical European Council meeting.

In relation to the Eastern Mediterranean, we will consider, with a view to our meeting in June, stepping up our engagement with Turkey in a phased, conditional and reversible manner.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the case for our digital transition even stronger, and the need for a resilient European industry more acute. It has also shown us, once again, how crucial the Single Market is to our economies. We will further develop our approach on these issues following our discussions last autumn. On digital we want to strengthen our ambition. We aim to strike the right balance between building our digital sovereignty and maintaining an open economy, while ensuring that nobody is left behind.

As to the practical proceedings, our videoconference will start at 1pm on Thursday with the traditional exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament. After a report by Prime Minister Costa on the work in the Council, we will address COVID-19 and relations with Russia and Turkey.

On Friday, we will start our video-conference at 9:30 a.m. and discuss the economic and digital agenda. For the subsequent VTC in inclusive Euro Summit format, we will be joined by the Presidents of the ECB and of the Eurogroup to discuss the international role of the euro.

I look forward to seeing you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, overlapping loops and lines, characteristic of a cursive or semi-cursive style.

C. MICHEL