



Recovery, Strength and a Sense of Belonging

**Programme for the French Presidency
of the Council of the European Union**

1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE 2022

This is a time for Europe.

In facing the public health crisis, the climate crisis, the digital revolution, migration challenges and rising powers, the best response is a European response. Our Union has always been at its best when working together in solidarity to protect its values and interests. For proof, look no further than the European response to the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath.

Throughout this crisis, the European model has proven its strengths.

It is a model of democratic freedom, solidarity, economic growth and social protection. It is what defines the European identity and is the strength of our nations. To uphold and advance this model, Europe must assert its sovereignty, be free to make its own decisions, have control over its own destiny and engage with its partners to address global challenges, with the support of united Europeans.

The programme for the French Presidency has three ambitions:

➤ **A more sovereign Europe:**

- by strengthening the Schengen area, protecting European borders, controlling migration and improving the asylum policy, in line with Europe's values and its international commitments;
- by building a stronger Europe which is more capable of action in the fields of security and defence;
- by taking action for the prosperity and stability of its neighbours, particularly through its engagement in the Western Balkans and its renewed relationship with Africa;
- and by bringing forth solutions to global challenges.

➤ **A new European model for growth:**

- to make Europe a land of production, job creation, innovation and technological excellence;
- in which economic development is aligned with climate goals;
- that supports innovation and the growth of European digital players and sets its own rules for the digital world;
- and that offers high-quality, high-skilled and better-paying jobs.

➤ **A humane Europe:**

- that listens to the concerns expressed by its citizens through the Conference on the Future of Europe;
- that defends the rule of law and upholds its values;
- that takes pride in its culture, trusts in science and knowledge, and is committed to fighting discrimination and securing a future for the next generation.

More details on the priorities of the French Presidency are presented in the programme that follows.

These priorities follow on from the achievements of the Slovenian Presidency and are in line with the broader programme of the trio of presidencies co-developed with the upcoming Czech and Swedish presidencies. These priorities are based on the European Commission's work programme for 2022. They were developed in close collaboration with the President of the European Council, the European Parliament and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions and social partners were also consulted. Implementation of the programme will take account of developments in the ongoing public health situation.

The Presidency will make every effort to promote multilingualism in the work of the Council and at meetings held in France.

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General affairs

The Fight Against COVID-19

The French Presidency is committed to **maintaining close cooperation in response to the public health crisis and reinforcing the European Union's resilience in the face of future crises.**

It will continue the coordination efforts at European level of national responses to **combat the COVID-19 epidemic**, focusing on the need to stabilise the epidemiological situation and anticipating potential epidemic waves due to variants. In this context, the Presidency will promote the common goal of achieving the highest possible level of vaccine protection in the EU, through sharing best practices and information on vaccine policies, with respect for the responsibility of Member States in terms of public health. Regarding mobility, it will ensure that all restrictions are based on objective criteria and do not disproportionately hinder free movement internally or travel to the European Union. The Presidency is committed to strengthening the EU's vaccine production capacities and will simultaneously pursue international solidarity efforts, especially with regard to Africa, for access to vaccines for low- and middle-income countries, in particular thanks to the COVAX Facility. Lastly, it aims to draw lessons from this pandemic in order to prepare to respond in a coordinated manner to any new crisis that may arise in the future, in particular through strengthening European public health.

Strengthening European Democracy

Reinforcing European democracy will be a priority. The French Presidency, as co-chair of the Conference on the Future of Europe, as well as its executive board, will actively contribute to the conference. A report on the work will be presented during a high-level event in Strasbourg in May. It will be important for the conference results to be based on the recommendations of citizens, civil society and national parliaments. The Presidency will seek to ensure that the reflections on the future of Europe identify the EU's priorities of future action and lead to the most concrete measures possible in order to identify the means to implement them.

Strengthening European democracy will also entail improving the **legislative framework in preparation of the next European elections**. The French Presidency will contribute to advancing work to revise the regulation on the **statute and funding of political parties**, regulate **online political advertising** and amend the **Electoral Act**. The French High Authority for Transparency in Public Life will contribute to the reflections through a symposium on the themes of ethics and transparency on 3 March 2022.

In the **fight against hybrid threats**, the French Presidency is committed to reinforcing the EU's prevention and response capacities, by working to develop a hybrid toolbox using a large selection of existing European instruments or creating them, and providing a political framework for a coordinated response against hybrid activities that affect the European Union and its Member States. It will continue efforts to combat the manipulation of information.

Building on actions aimed at increasing the security of networks and information systems, the Presidency, together with the High Representative will organise a cyber exercise to test the EU's preparedness and response capability when faced with large-scale cyber incidents affecting several Member States.

The Presidency will continue to support the strengthening of the security of European institutions, in particular by advancing work on the proposed regulation on cybersecurity of European institutions announced by the Commission.

Strengthening the Rule of Law and Protecting Fundamental Rights

The Presidency will resolutely contribute to **strengthening the rule of law**, an essential prerequisite to the proper functioning of the Union, based on mutual trust and legal security in the application of our shared rules.

In accordance with the preventive instruments, the Presidency will continue **the dialogue underway on the basis of the Commission's annual report**, including a specific discussion focused on five Member States over the first half of the year. It will ensure the open and constructive nature of this dialogue for a better understanding of each situation, a collective identification of difficulties and sharing experiences that are helpful to all.

It will support the Commission in its role as guardian of the EU Treaties and, by drawing on the instruments provided for by **Article 7 of the TEU**, in the search for a solution to identified problems through maintaining open and constructive dialogue. Lastly, the Presidency will seek to ensure the swift and proper implementation of the **mechanism of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget**, insofar as the conditions of its application are met.

A symposium on the dialogue between courts and the rule of law will be held on 22 February 2022 at the initiative of the French supreme courts.

The Presidency will promote **the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the protection of fundamental rights within the European Union**. It will follow up on the Commission's first thematic report on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights that will focus on digital concerns. It will support the negotiations underway in Strasbourg on the European Union's accession to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and will devote particular attention to the EU's internal procedural mechanisms, designed to support this accession with respect for its autonomy.

Relations with the United Kingdom, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Member States, and Andorra, Monaco and San Marino

The French Presidency will attentively follow developments in the EU's relationship with the United Kingdom. It will seek to the preservation of the unity of the Member States and to the United Kingdom's compliance with its commitments to the European Union, in particular the Protocol to the Withdrawal Agreement on Ireland and Northern Ireland, fair competition and fisheries. Lastly, regarding the internal governance of the European Union, the Presidency, after receiving the Commission's proposal, will endeavour to move negotiations forward as much possible on the draft regulation on the Union's adoption conditions of certain measures specified in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

The Presidency will seek to make progress on the negotiations underway with Andorra, Monaco and San Marino and will contribute to the ongoing work evaluating the EU's relationship with Switzerland.

Enlargement

The Presidency will ensure continued negotiations with candidate countries in keeping with the new methodology endorsed in the Council conclusions of 15 March 2020. It will support the EU's work in the Western Balkans, promoting far-reaching, transformative reforms in key areas such as rule of law, democratic institutions, freedom of the press and economic reforms, which will facilitate the incorporation of the European acquis.

Reacting to crises and ensuring EU resilience

The French Presidency will give high importance to enhancing the EU's capacity to manage and boost its resilience to crises by improving its preparedness, response capacities and by drawing lessons from the response to the pandemic. It will undertake work to re-examine the Council's crisis response mechanism (IPCR), with an aim to strengthen it.

Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion

The Presidency will work to assess the progress made in terms of **economic, social and territorial cohesion** as the new generation of programmes under the 2021-2027 cohesion policy begin to be implemented. It will prepare the Council's conclusions on the matter building on the 8th report on the cohesion policy that will be presented by the Commission, and will more specifically focus on territorial challenges in terms of innovation, reduction of carbon intensity, connectivity, social cohesion, democracy, citizen engagement, good governance and funded projects' adherence to the EU's values. In addition, the Presidency will organise discussions on an effective, suitable management and implementation system for all funds for the 2021-2027 period.

Through the informal ministerial meeting to be held on 1 March 2022, the Presidency hopes to promote a long-term European vision for rural areas, and to take into account the challenges faced by the inhabitants of these regions as well as those in territories undergoing industrial change, regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions. These exchanges will notably take place as part of the discussions on the 8th report and on the infra-regional dimension of the cohesion policy.

The Presidency will place particular emphasis on the specific situation of outermost regions as is recognised by Article 349 of the TFEU, which allows for European standards to be adapted for these regions. It will be firmly committed to ensuring that their respective characteristics and constraints are fully taken into account and that their potential for development is boosted. It will prepare conclusions following the Commission's presentation of its new strategy.

Foreign affairs

The French Presidency will strengthen the capacity of the European Union to take action to defend its values and interests, boost its resilience and its preparedness for the threats and challenges it faces and contribute to achieving peace and security at a global level. It will support the action of the President of the European Council as well as that of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The French Presidency will ensure the proper implementation of the decisions taken by the European Council and the Council of the EU, in close coordination with the European External Action Service (EEAS).

Africa

In close cooperation with the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the French Presidency will contribute to renewing the partnership between Africa and the EU, in preparation for the European Union-African Union Summit taking place in Brussels on 17 and 18 February 2022. The goal will be to establish an ambitious and forward-looking alliance with Africa in order to foster the creation of a space of solidarity, security, lasting prosperity and stability.

This summit will focus on highlighting ambitious, foundational projects, supported by an Africa-Europe investment package centred around the triple focus of prosperity, peace and security, and migrations and mobility. With regard to prosperity, the Summit could focus in particular on African public health resilience including through supporting local vaccine production, economic recovery, the development of sustainable infrastructure to facilitate the energy and digital transitions, the role of Euro-African trade partnerships to support Africa's economic resilience, food and nutrition security through a partnership strategy to develop protein supply chains and agroecology in connection with the Great Green Wall initiative and educational and employment opportunities for young people. With regard to peace and security, the Summit could help reinforce structural cooperation on crisis management and support the actions of Africans on their continent. Lastly, the Summit could contribute to develop an updated mobility framework (students, researchers, volunteering schemes, etc.) that takes into account the issue of migration, combining reflection on legal migratory channels and the fight against irregular migration. In preparation for this summit, the Presidency will also hold a ministerial conference on **the new trade partnerships between Europe and Africa**.

Indo-Pacific Region

Following the communication presented in September by the Commission and the High Representative, the Presidency will be fully committed to implementing the EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, which was supported by the European Council meeting of 21 and 22 October.

Together with the High Representative, the Presidency will hold a ministerial forum on 22 February 2022, bringing together the Member States, the European Commission and Indo-Pacific partner countries. The forum will address specific challenges related to security and defence, and digital and connectivity issues in the context of the Global Gateway initiative to develop infrastructure worldwide, as well as global challenges such as global health, climate change, biodiversity and the protection of oceans.

Relations with the United States

The Presidency will contribute to strengthening ties with the United States, particularly within the framework of the Energy Council and the Trade and Technology Council (TTC), while respecting the EU's decision-making autonomy.

It will support a deeper dialogue with the United States with regard to foreign policy, in particular concerning China and the Indo-Pacific region.

Relations with Russia, China and Turkey

With regard to Russia, the Presidency will continue to support the work of the European Council, building on the positions set out on 24 and 25 June 2021, for a united, long-term and strategic European approach based on the five guiding principles. It will continue to implement the approach chosen with regard to EU-China relations. It will also ensure the implementation of the European Council's conclusions concerning Turkey.

Southern Neighbourhood

Promoting a more sustainable, ecological, stable and prosperous Southern Neighbourhood is a shared strategic priority and fundamental interest for both the European Union and its partners, in order to meet shared challenges and benefit from joint opportunities thanks to heightened cooperation. Further to the conclusions adopted by the Council and European Council, the Presidency will see to the implementation of the different measures and actions in anticipation of a progress report on the renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood and the new agenda for the Mediterranean region in spring 2022.

Eastern Neighbourhood

The French Presidency is committed to the implementation of the Eastern Partnership following on from the summit held on 15 December, and to reinforcing resilience, stability and sustainable connectivity in the region. It will support the commitments of the President of the European Council, the High Representative and the Commission to these efforts.

Western Balkans

The French Presidency will organise a conference on the Western Balkans in June 2022. It will support the deepening of concrete cooperation projects with the Western Balkans, in particular to foster regional cooperation and stability.

Development and Humanitarian Aid

Development

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic has further reinforced the need to make European collective action more strategic, visible and influential in support of the EU's foreign policy priorities and its ability to act. The emergence of the Team Europe approach, first in response to the pandemic, then as a new mode of action, and the NDICI-Global Europe instrument entering into force on a global scale are two significant developments.

The Presidency will support these developments to promote European interests and values and a more geopolitical relationship with our partner countries, based on the financial and operational strength of the development cooperation policies of the European Union and its Member States. It will strive to solidify the EU's position as a development power by focusing on **concretising Europe's offer through its funding projects**

and the Team Europe approach with partner countries. The Summit of the European Union and the African Union will illustrate this approach. In the same spirit, the Presidency will seek to advance discussion on the **EU's renewed partnership with less developed countries**, which have been severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, to support their economic recovery efforts and help them reach their sustainable development goals. Lastly, the Presidency will focus on the finalisation of the **Post-Cotonou Agreement**, with a view toward implementing a modernised partnership between the EU and its Member States and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

Humanitarian Aid

The European Union and its Member States together are the leading donor of humanitarian aid in the world, a concrete and visible demonstration of European solidarity. The Presidency is thus committed, together with the Commission, to furthering the promotion of and compliance with international humanitarian law, preserving the humanitarian space and fighting against the impunity of perpetrators of attacks against humanitarian workers. The Presidency will also prioritise better incorporation of the impact of climate change and environmental issues into humanitarian action.

Together with the Commission, the Presidency will co-organise **the first European Humanitarian Forum**. It will in particular provide a forum to promote the Call to Humanitarian Action, aiming to mobilise the international community to better implement international humanitarian law.

Trade

The French Presidency seeks to **bolster the contribution of trade policy to European prosperity and sovereignty**, drawing on the Communication from the Commission of 18 February 2021 on “An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy”.

It will support EU initiatives to **safeguard and reform the multilateral trading system** with an eye to restoring its full effectiveness and allowing it to play its full role. To this end, together with the Commission, it will continue to **prepare the Twelfth WTO Ministerial Conference**, in particular the work on **reforming the organization**, and will back European calls for sustainable development issues to be fully included in WTO rules, especially as regards the agreement on regulating fisheries subsidies.

It will strive to ensure that **trade policy imperatives take better account of sustainable development and the achievement of the objectives of the Green Deal** by driving forward discussions on the **revision of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)** and by backing **the revision of the approach to sustainable development in trade agreements** that has been initiated by the European Commission. In this respect, the instrument to **combat imported deforestation** and the future initiative on **sustainable corporate governance** will play an important role. In addition, continued work will be done on the measures to

ensure that imported products are subject to the manufacturing standards in force within the EU, whenever this is necessary, to heighten protection of health and the environment, in compliance with WTO rules (“mirror measures”).

The French Presidency will move forward with talks on the EU’s autonomous instruments: the regulation on the international procurement instrument and the **regulation on the protection of the Union and its Member States from economic coercion** by third countries. The aims will be to generate greater opportunities for the European economy, to better defend European interests from the unfair or coercive practices of non-EU countries and to ensure reciprocity in trade. It will arrange to hold a conference on the contribution of trade policy to European strategic autonomy.

The Presidency will also lead the work to protect European citizens from the **effects of the extra-territorial application of certain legislation** adopted by third countries by, inter alia, strengthening European tools, including through amendment of the blocking statute.

Defence

The Presidency will contribute to work on **the common defence and security policy** and will endeavour to have the European Strategic Compass endorsed by the European Council on 24 and 25 March 2022 on the basis of the draft presented by the High Representative. This document will help underpin the EU's objectives in terms of security and defence, in particular regarding crisis management, resilience, capability development and partnerships. Against this backdrop, the Presidency will be responsible for preparing the Council's position on the Commission's initiatives within the Defence Package, expected in early 2022, and will support the efforts of the High Representative, the Commission and the Member States to roll out the Strategic Compass and the tangible concurrent measures. It will ensure that the commitments made are reviewed on a regular basis.

The EU's access to contested strategic areas will also be a priority. The Presidency will provide special support for the action to be taken in the maritime field through the expanded application, in early 2022, of the Coordinated Maritime Presence in a new area of the Indo-Pacific and will start, as requested by the Council, work to update the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) to meet current and future challenges. It will also contribute to the efforts to provide the EU with a space strategy for security and defence, and the implementation of

the roadmap on critical technologies and the reduction of strategic dependencies. It will be involved in setting up and scaling up the European Peace Facility, and revising the Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Compact by 2023.

Lastly, a stronger and more operational European defence, which is complimentary to NATO, will contribute to global and transatlantic security. The Presidency will strive to expand **the EU's relations with its partners** in the security and defence fields. It will be involved in implementing the 2022-2024 priorities of the UN-EU Partnership. Looking ahead to the NATO Summit in Madrid, it will support the strengthening of EU-NATO cooperation in areas of mutual interest and according to agreed principles. The Presidency will back the holding of the first EU-US defence and security dialogue and will work to strengthen partnerships, in particular in Africa and the Indo-Pacific.

Economic and financial affairs

The French Presidency will concentrate on three main areas: guaranteeing the coordination of post-crisis economic policies for the entire success of the European recovery plan, financing future growth, and helping to build a responsible capitalism by putting finance to work for the dual climate and digital transition while countering financial crime. It will support joint thinking on a new European model for growth, investment and employment at an informal meeting of Heads of State and Government on 10 and 11 March.

Recovery and Growth

The Presidency will see to **the full deployment of the recovery plan** in the Member States, ensuring that funds are swiftly disbursed and to organising the oversight and adoption of the national recovery and resilience plans. The French Presidency will make every effort to see through the emergence of a **coordinated strategy for investment and structural reforms**, in particular with respect to investments in future growth sectors.

It will take forward discussions on **the review of the EU's economic governance framework**, including analysis of the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis on the European economy and on challenges it faces, **fiscal rules** and the **macroeconomic imbalances procedure**, with the aim of preventing any stifling of growth and enabling the necessary investments to be made in the green and digital transitions to build the European economic model for 2030. The public consultation on economic governance, relaunched by the communication from the European Commission of 19 October 2021, will inform a debate on the initial conclusions that the Commission draws from its consultation at the (Economic and Financial Affairs) Council meeting in March 2022. The Presidency will also launch discussions on the targeted revision of **the EU Financial Regulation** in order to fully align it with the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework. More generally, the French Presidency will promote the work on **green budgeting**.

In keeping with the roadmap approved by the three institutions in December 2020, the Presidency will steer work on the creation of new own resources geared towards the climate transition based on proposals presented by the Commission in December 2021.

Financing Future Growth

The Presidency will contribute to ensuring **the financing for a more competitive and innovative economy in support of the recovery** and speeding the pace of work to develop **financial sovereignty**. It will take forward Council negotiations on **banking and insurance prudential regulations** (Solvency II and Basel III) with a view to guaranteeing the resilience and competitiveness of financial establishments and will draw up conclusions taking stock of the implementation of the communication from the Commission of 19 January 2021 regarding “The European economic and financial system: fostering openness, strength and resilience”.

The Presidency will actively undertake to **make progress with the Capital Markets Union**, focusing in particular on the negotiations regarding a single access point for financial and non-financial information, the long-term investment funds framework and the review of the Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive. The Presidency will work in support of deepening the **Banking Union** based on the progress expected within the context of the Eurogroup.

Building a Responsible, Sustainable Capitalism

The French Presidency's work will focus primarily on **the environmental legislative proposals** put forward by the Commission on 14 July 2021, in particular the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**, which will enable this transition to be implemented for all European industries while preserving the EU's competitiveness.

The Presidency will seek to put in place fairer, effective taxation. It will take forward work on the proposal presented by the Commission in December 2021, writing into European law the **agreement on Pillar Two** reached with the OECD on 8 October 2021, with entry into force set for 1 January 2023. Work on the proposed **Energy Taxation Directive** will also continue and a first appraisal of the 1 July 2021 reform of **e-commerce VAT** rules will be prepared in order to consider the next steps to be taken ahead of the proposal that the Commission plans to make in the second half of 2022. Lastly, the Presidency will undertake work on future initiatives designed to strengthen administrative cooperation between Member States and action to counter tax evasion and avoidance.

The Presidency will seek to develop sustainable finance in support of the climate transition and to **make Europe a leader in sustainable finance**, which calls for further progress to be made with green finance such as the adoption

of the green bond standard. The subjects of green finance, industrial transition, green budgeting and greening official export support policies will be raised at a ministerial conference in March 2022.

The Presidency will prioritise work on a **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)**, which will increase corporate transparency in environmental and social matters as well as in the areas of fundamental rights and anti-corruption. An ambitious implementation timeline will enable the EU to position itself as a forerunner in an environment of strong normative competition.

A high priority will be placed on **protecting financial transactions against cyber and criminal threats**. The Presidency will make the maximum possible progress with the work on **regulating digital finance** (Regulation on Markets in Crypto-Assets – MiCA – and Digital Operational Resilience Act for the financial sector – DORA –) and with **anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism** (creation of a European supervisory authority, revision of rules on transfers of funds in order to guarantee the traceability of crypto-assets, enhanced due diligence for persons who present a risk, harmonisation of internal control requirements, etc.). It will hold a ministerial conference on sovereignty in the face of financial crime on 21 January 2022.

Justice and home affairs

The French Presidency will take action to proceed with the reform of the Schengen area, continue work on asylum and migration and will work to strengthen the security of European citizens by heightening police cooperation and to strengthen European coordination in civil protection. Furthermore, the French Presidency will stress the importance of combatting all forms of hate and discrimination. Lastly, the Presidency will take action in various areas in order to adapt judicial cooperation to the digital age, including with regard to electronic evidence.

Reform of the Schengen Area

Priority will be given to ensuring the improved functioning of the **Schengen area**. The French Presidency will ensure that the upcoming reform of our shared area will introduce efficient protection mechanisms for the external borders of the EU, draw lessons from the COVID-19 crisis and, with regard for our principles, provide solutions to the instrumentalisation of migration by certain third countries. It will examine means of strengthening cooperation arrangements to support Member States confronted with specific challenges at the EU's external borders, including means such as border guards and aerial surveillance. The reform must also allow for the prevention of irregular migratory flows within the Schengen area. At the same time, it will ensure the proper implementation of decisions taken, for example concerning European information systems and their interoperability.

Improving **the governance of our shared area is also an important aspect of reforming the Schengen area**. The French Presidency will work towards strengthening the Council's role of political steering. The ongoing revision of the Regulation on the Schengen evaluations, which the Presidency will strive to finalise, is an important element in this regard. The Regulation will enable simpler, more reactive and thus more efficient methods of evaluation, and will guarantee prompt responses in the event of serious deficiency.

Continuing Work on Asylum and Migration

The Presidency is committed to supporting a European response to the challenges faced by the EU regarding migration and asylum. Drawing upon the Pact on Migration and Asylum proposed by the European Commission, solutions to the most pressing issues must be defined while building the trust required.

In particular, the Presidency will strive to develop **the external dimension of migratory policies**, in accordance with the conclusions of the European Councils of June, October and December 2021. The aim will be to strengthen cooperation with the main third countries of origin or transit, on the basis of action plans that set out clear objectives and concrete actions based on the available instruments and levers including those that are financial or related to visa policy. These actions must contribute to preventing irregular departures, improving the efficiency of returns and strengthening the capacities of third countries to efficiently manage migratory flows and to combat trafficking. To this end, the Presidency will encourage the creation of an operational structure to ensure effective coordination and steering.

As regards **the internal dimension**, the Presidency will suggest proceeding in accordance with a gradual approach. It will ensure that each step has a satisfactory balance of protection of external borders, responsibility and solidarity. In this context, the presidency will continue negotiations on the corresponding legislative texts. The Presidency will therefore also strive to identify the support that could be provided to the Member States that ensure the protection of the external borders, as well as the means of achieving a unified European policy on returns, which will support the actions of the Member States.

The launch of **the European Union Agency for Asylum** in January 2022 will also mark an important step in European asylum policy. The Presidency will support the work of the agency to promote the alignment of national practices relating to asylum, information exchange between national authorities and better processing of multiple asylum applications, to guarantee better application of the European acquis and to better prevent secondary migratory movements.

Security for European Citizens

The French Presidency will work on **strengthening police cooperation** in the EU in order to ensure a high level of security for European citizens, in particular by continuing to make European information systems interoperable. The Presidency will commit to bring forward negotiations with the European Parliament concerning **the revision of the Europol Regulation**, which is a key element in the fight against organised crime and terrorism. The Presidency will engage in discussions on the police cooperation aspect of the Schengen reform, with the revision of the **Prüm decision**, which will allow for significant improvement in information exchange between European police forces regarding investigations, the Directive on information exchange and the recommendation for a police cooperation code.

The Presidency will also further efforts underway in **the fight against terrorism and radicalisation**. Measures will be examined to better protect the European territory, in the face of the threats posed by the return of foreign terrorist fighters and the evolving situation in Afghanistan, as well as to improve the detection of terrorist individuals within the Schengen area.

Furthermore, the Presidency will promote current reflection on the project of an EU Knowledge Hub for the prevention of radicalisation. The Presidency also intends to combat the behaviour of individuals and entities who, though their words and actions, incite radicalisation and acts of violence.

To strengthen legal instruments for **combatting online child sexual abuse**, the Presidency will carry out negotiations on the upcoming proposal of the European Commission on **preventing and combatting the sexual abuse of minors**.

The Presidency will hold trilogues with the European Parliament on the resilience of critical entities for the protection of critical infrastructure, parallel to work on recasting the NIS Directive on the protection of digital infrastructure.

Lastly, it will step up the **fight against drug trafficking**, by addressing it in its duality as a security and health issue. The revision of the mandate of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction should contribute to achieving this goal.

Civil protection

The Presidency will aim to build a **strong European response as regards civil protection**, as an extension of the recent revision of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. It will notably work to construct a common vision of the risks and capability requirements for 2030 and to promote the development of EU centres of excellence, including the one in Nîmes.

Uphold the Values of the EU and Adapt Judicial Cooperation to the challenges of digital technology

The French Presidency intends to promote **the values of tolerance** which underpin the construction of Europe by focusing on **combatting hatred and all forms of discrimination**. With this goal, it will support the Commission's proposal to extend the **list of offences covered by Article 83 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union regarding hate speech and hate crime**.

With this same objective, the French Presidency will prepare **conclusions of the Council on the fight against racism and anti-Semitism** so as to follow through with the European Commission's strategy on combatting anti-Semitism and fostering Jewish life. The Presidency will also work on the upcoming proposal of the European Commission on **preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence**. It will also continue to support the Istanbul Convention, which remains an international reference on the matter.

The Presidency will also promote the **protection of the rights of victims of criminal offences** within the EU. A symposium will be held in March 2022 to address this matter. With regard to child protection, the French Presidency will also resume work on abduction alert systems, so as to better coordinate Member State reactions in the event of a child suddenly going missing.

Environmental protection will also be at the heart of the efforts of the French Presidency in the area of justice. This is a crucial fight for the generations to come, and the French Presidency intends to make headway in negotiations on the proposed revision of the 2008 Directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law.

The Presidency wishes to drive forward the work on the **digitalisation of judicial proceedings**, which is a decisive factor in the effectiveness of justice systems.

It will work towards finalising negotiations with the European Parliament on draft regulations and directives concerning **access to electronic evidence**, in compliance with fundamental rights and while implementing procedures that guarantee judicial authorities of the EU Member States swift access to electronic evidence, which is often a determining factor in criminal investigations. The Presidency will pay particular attention to the draft **regulation on the exchange of information relating to terrorism**, which meets an identified operational need. It will also promote the establishment of a **Joint Investigation Teams collaboration platform**.

The Presidency will continue work on strengthening judicial cooperation in civil matters both within the EU and outside its borders by closely following the ongoing work at the Hague Conference on Private International Law and at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

**Employment,
social policy,
health and
consumer affairs**

Health

The French Presidency will prioritise strengthening European public health through promoting **responsiveness**, **coordination** and **solidarity**. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for more effective measures for health emergency preparedness, anticipation and response. It has also accentuated the need to reinforce supply chains for health products. Lastly, our interdependence in terms of public health, both within the EU and with the rest of the world, has revealed the importance of the principle of solidarity in the management of the epidemic, to ensure that everyone has timely access to medical countermeasures. The French Presidency will continue the discussion undertaken by the previous presidencies on the development of European public health with a view toward the emergence of a true European Health Union.

These goals will be pursued through the conclusion of negotiations on the legislative package on “Building a European Health Union”, in particular trilogues on the proposed regulation on serious cross-border threats to health. This legislative package promotes the creation of a European Health Union based on the ability to face future pandemics in solidarity, on better coordination of actions promoting health and prevention, and on strengthening the European health security system. In this regard, a ministerial conference on the resilience of health systems will be held in January in particular to analyse the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on health systems and healthcare.

Building on efforts already undertaken to extend the mandate and resources of the principal European agencies in the field of health, the Presidency will support the establishment of the **European Health Emergency preparedness and Response Authority** (HERA).

The Presidency will also be committed to strengthening European health sovereignty by promoting an industrial strategy for health. To this end, it will support the goal of an Important Project of Common European Interest (IPCEI) to reinforce the EU’s industrial policy in the health sector and its strategic positioning in this sector by fostering innovation in the various segments of the healthcare industry. These initiatives will be highlighted during a ministerial conference on strengthening the European Union’s sovereignty and competitiveness through building a common industrial policy for health.

The Presidency will initiate negotiations on the revision of the **directives on the safety and quality of human blood and on the safety and quality of human tissues and cells**, in order to allow a more flexible adaptation to scientific and technological developments and to take into account lessons learned from the pandemic.

Developing **digital health** will be a central focus of the French Presidency’s work. It will open negotiations on the Commission’s proposal for the European Health Data Space. This initiative will ensure balance between

facilitating interoperability between the European health systems, with the goal of improving the continuity of care especially in cross-border contexts, on the one hand, and the respect of high ethical standards for protecting sensitive data, on the other. A ministerial conference will be held on 2 February on the themes of citizenship, ethics and health data.

Lastly, the French Presidency will work to reinforce the European Union's actions in the field of health, including its contributions to **global health**, in cooperation with other international bodies. The Presidency will follow the

work on setting up an international treaty to combat pandemics. It will notably step up efforts on the prevention and fight against cancer, antimicrobial resistance, and the mental health of vulnerable young people, which will be the subject of a ministerial conference on 7 March. It will also prepare the revision of the EU's pharmaceutical legislation during a ministerial conference on 28 February on rare diseases. It will also hold a ministerial conference on 18 January devoted to the resilience of health systems to support cooperation on a European scale.

Employment, Social Affairs and Equality

The French Presidency will continue strengthening **the Social Europe** following on from the European Pillar of Social Rights declared on 17 November 2017 at the Social Summit in Gothenburg, and from the commitments made at the Porto Social Summit on 7 and 8 May 2021. The measures set out in the Action Plan to implement the Pillar, presented by the Commission on 4 March 2021, will contribute to achieving the target figures by 2030.

The French Presidency will commence negotiations with the European Parliament concerning the proposed directive on **adequate minimum wages in the EU**. It will also initiate discussions on the proposed directive on improving **the working conditions of people working through digital labour platforms**.

The Presidency will place accompanying large economic transitions at the heart of its priorities, in order to support employment in the context of European recovery. It will work towards the Council's adoption of recommendations on **individual learning accounts** and on the **social impact and impact of the climate transition on the labour market**. These topics will be placed on the agenda of **the informal Council meeting** held in Bordeaux on 15 February 2022. A ministerial conference on the social economy will also be held on 17 and 18 February in Strasbourg,

in partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

The French Presidency will therefore pay particular attention to the issues of lifelong training, employment transitions and social dialogue, in particular at the Tripartite Social Summit, in order to provide support during the changes brought about by the digital and climate transitions.

The EU's Gender Equality Strategy, presented by the Commission in March 2020, sets out key actions to end gender-based violence and stereotypes; ensure equal opportunities in the labour market, including equal pay; and achieve gender balance in decision-making. At the intersection of several legislative initiatives, women's **economic empowerment**, as well as concretely achieving gender equality, will be a particular focus for the Presidency addressed during a ministerial conference on 31 January.

In light of the persistent gender pay gap in the EU, the Presidency will move forward negotiations through trilogues on the proposed directive on strengthening the **application of the principle of equal pay for equal work, or work of equal value, between men and women** through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms in order to improve access to employee information. The Presidency is committed to advancing discussions on

the proposed directive on improving gender balance on **company boards**. As part of the EU's follow-up on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the French Presidency will propose that the Council adopt conclusions on gender-based violence.

With regard to social inclusion, the French Presidency will seek to promote the EU's action in order to better take into account fundamental rights and the fight against the economic and social exclusion of vulnerable persons. In light of the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, the Presidency will hold a ministerial conference in early March to discuss how action can be taken to improve **the social and economic participation of persons with disabilities as well as their access to rights**. This conference will in particular be an opportunity to review progress on the employment package aimed at improving the employment situation of people with disabilities, as well as to discuss challenges related to European research on autism.

The French Presidency believes that social policies should address all ages in life. It will encourage discussion on children's access to essential services, a principle included in the Council recommendation establishing the **European Child Guarantee**, as well as on the mental health of vulnerable young people and on preventing the loss of autonomy, which will be addressed through ministerial conferences.

Lastly, with a view towards eradicating homelessness by 2030, the Presidency will seek to give new impetus to this policy goal via the European platform to combat homelessness and the Housing First policy.



Competitiveness

Strengthening the EU's strategic autonomy will be central to the work of the French Presidency. It will endeavour to promote a knowledge-based and industrial Europe that is more sovereign, more innovative and that makes progress towards the digital and green transition. In this respect, the "Fit for 55" package, which will be a priority for the French Presidency in the Council configurations in which it is discussed, also includes major industrial challenges such as the move to a low-carbon model for certain industries or the development of new key sectors.

Internal Market and Industry

With 2022 marking the 30th anniversary of the internal market, the French Presidency will aim to deepen this market to fully cover fiscal and social convergence objectives, and to make a contribution to the EU's dual green and digital transition.

The French Presidency will continue with the action already taken to remove unjustified obstacles to the single market for products, services and capital. It could draw on the Commission's review in its **second Annual Single Market Report** in order to channel the work towards improved application of internal market rules. To take account of lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis in the internal market, the French Presidency will begin work on the Commission's proposal for **a single market emergency instrument**.

The French Presidency will prioritise the reform of the digital world. As regards content regulation, it will move as far forward as possible with talks with the European Parliament on the **Digital Services Act (DSA)**, which will introduce a bold, effective and proportionate legal framework applying to content moderation by digital platforms and to increased obligations for online marketplaces. Concerning the economic regulation of major digital platforms, the French Presidency will take forward negotiations for the **Digital Markets Act (DMA)** so that the EU has a specific ex-ante regulation instrument for these gatekeepers

to ensure that digital markets are contestable and fair.

The Presidency will also promote initiatives to provide citizens and businesses with the means to become involved in environmental and climate-based efforts. As an example, the Presidency will support **enhanced consumer information on the environmental features of the products** they purchase and their protection when faced with unfair commercial practices such as planned obsolescence. This will draw on a legislative proposal to be put forward by the Commission. The French Presidency will also work on stepping up the contribution of procurement to the digital and green transition.

To ensure that the single market continues to protect consumers, the French Presidency will move discussions on the **revision of the General Product Safety Directive** along. This will increase the singularity of the supervisory framework for the product market by adjusting product safety requirements to the new technologies and risks, and by ensuring that the resulting obligations for economic operators are aligned. It will continue with the **revision of the Consumer Credit Directive** to tailor EU legislation to address the changing practices brought about by the development of digital technology and the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also begin discussions on the **revision of the Directive on**

Distance Marketing of Consumer Financial Services by factoring in technological innovations and subsequent sector-based regulations. On 10 and 11 February, a ministerial conference on consumer protection will be organised in Strasbourg in conjunction with the Commission.

The European regulatory framework is essential to the expansion of European industry and the Commission's **standardisation strategy** plays a part in achieving this goal. The Presidency will continue working on the various projects that will contribute to a harmonised framework within the single market whilst guaranteeing robust consumer protection. A prime example is the proposal for a **common charger** which would make life easier for users and meet an environmental objective. The French Presidency will also move on with talks on the **Machinery Regulation** and will start work on revising the Regulation laying down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products and the legislative proposal to establish a harmonised framework for **access to in-vehicle data**. Lastly, the Presidency will look into drawing up a **new European emissions standard for all pollutants, except CO₂, for the placing on the market of new vehicles** (Euro 7).

The Presidency will continue the work begun by the Commission as part of the May 2021 update of the Industrial Strategy by capitalising on the EU's

industrial strengths in the global context. It will strive to glean material results from this strategy to further the EU's strategic autonomy. This means that it will endeavour to make European industrial ecosystems more resilient, to support their green and digital transition, and to ensure improved management of our dependencies, particularly by developing new European manufacturing capabilities.

The Presidency will strive to initiate and fast track tangible industrial cooperation facilitated by the **Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs)** instrument with a view to structuring value chains, key sectors and technologies for health, hydrogen, electronics and cloud computing at European level. The Presidency will also ensure that other current Europe-wide instruments are taken into account. These include **industrial alliances** and **Horizon Europe's joint undertakings** which further develop public-private partnerships focusing on strategic research issues to be forged, with the public contribution being funded directly from the EU's budget. The Presidency will begin work on the proposal for a **European Chips Act** once it is published by the Commission. It will continue to bolster the EU's legal framework in respect of combatting unfair practices by making progress with the discussions on the **proposal for a regulation on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market**.

In respect of intellectual property, the Presidency will start work on the Commission's proposal on **industrial design** in order to upgrade the system and boost its appeal, especially for SMEs. It will then focus on rolling out an **improved EU-wide system for the protection of geographical indications**, thus stemming the fragmentation of the regulatory framework, ensuring that the EU complies with its international obligations and securing a commitment from our trading partners, over time, that they will protect European non-agricultural geographical indications. Lastly, the Presidency will support the setting up of the **Unified Patent Court (UPC)** in response to strong demand from European businesses.

As regards literary and artistic property, the French Presidency will launch discussions on the effectiveness of copyright in a globalised environment in light of the circumventing practices of certain stakeholders such as buyout clauses, and on safeguarding the competitiveness of its creators and cultural industries in such an environment. It will also back the Commission's initiatives to combat the piracy of live sporting events and, more broadly, the live broadcasting of cultural content.

With the Commission's publication of **a document on the transition pathway for tourism**, the French Presidency will also concentrate on the recovery of this sector and on strengthening its resilience to future crises. An informal meeting of tourism ministers will take place in Dijon on 26 and 27 January to discuss ways in which Europe can become the global destination for sustainable tourism and how to promote tourism for Europeans in Europe. The Presidency will also institute talks on the **proposal for a regulation on short-term rentals**.

The Presidency is convinced of the need for **first-rate European legislation** and will continue with efforts to raise awareness of its benefits whilst avoiding the pitfalls of overregulation and red tape for citizens, government departments and businesses, especially SMEs.

Research and Innovation

The Presidency will have three goals in the fields of **higher education, research and innovation**:

➤ to promote an EU knowledge policy to buttress the recovery through **synergy between higher education, research, innovation and services to society**;

➤ to shape the **international dimension** of European higher education, research and innovation policies to contribute to the EU's global strength and to heighten the draw of the European research sector by offering appealing career opportunities and setting up major European university campuses;

➤ to nurture a **sense of belonging to Europe**, especially among young people.

The French Presidency will continue to encourage potential synergy between higher education, research, innovation and services to society to contribute to the EU's recovery. This will encompass actions under the recast political agenda of the **European Research Area**. The Presidency will also back the building of a real **European Innovation Area**. The aim of the European Innovation Council (EIC) is to make the EU a trailblazer for breakthrough innovation by combining research into emerging technologies, an Accelerator Pilot and a special fund to fast track the expansion of VSEs-SMEs and innovative start-ups. A conference on Europe as a

leader in breakthrough innovation will be held on 11 May.

Against the backdrop of the new European Strategy for Universities, which is scheduled to be presented by the Commission in late January 2022, special attention will be paid to the synergy between research and the higher education policy.

With a view to consolidating an open Europe of excellence, the Presidency will continue with the roll-out of the Horizon Europe programme. **Horizon Europe's missions** will help improve citizens' daily lives and enable major issues to be addressed. The Presidency will monitor the Commission's innovative approach with regard to five missions on cities, oceans, soil, adaptation to climate change and cancer. This will allow for tangible responses to the issues facing European citizens. It will supervise proper coordination at European, national and local levels, as this is a prerequisite for the success of the missions, and the synergy between funding programmes. A ministerial conference on citizen participation in Horizon Europe's missions will be organised in late March in Paris and Council conclusions will be tabled.

The approach to **partnerships** between private and public stakeholders, which have decisively contributed to development and innovation, is being overhauled in Horizon Europe. The

Presidency will endeavour to foster the launch of partnerships which will take effect during the first six months of 2022.

The Presidency is adamant about the benefits of **international cooperation in research and innovation** and will strive to promote balanced cooperation with non-EU countries. It will underscore the need to uphold the EU's values and interests, as well as the requirement for global standards, in particular for intellectual property, to assert the EU's role as a driving force and initiator of these standards. A conference on this topic will be held in Marseille on 8 and 9 March.

The Presidency will support and extend ongoing initiatives to maintain and develop skills in the nuclear field, in particular as part of the Euratom research programme, in order to keep up momentum and promote European expertise and the professions in this sector. In this respect, the role of the Joint Research Centre and the research infrastructure could be highlighted.

Space

The Presidency will provide an opportunity to move the EU's space policy forward. Over the years, the EU has acquired a specific space programme and a number of projects (Galileo, Copernicus) which have become global benchmarks. Under the impetus of the French Presidency, the EU will continue to build on these initiatives, whose spillover fosters European innovation and strategic autonomy, and the consolidation of its international competitive position.

The Presidency will work with its partners to outline **the Secure Connectivity constellation** initiative tabled by the Commission with an eye to the roll-out of new secure communication satellite infrastructure. It will also work on determining a common European position on **space traffic management**.

The Presidency will initiate discussions on the **future of Copernicus** and the strategic and environmental changes that will inform the technical and operational choices needed to ensure the programme's effectiveness up to 2035.

These issues will be addressed at the informal meeting of space ministers, and at the Copernicus symposium to be held in Toulouse on 16 February.

Transport, telecommunications and energy

Digital Technology

The French Presidency will aim to push forward a number of strategic areas for **European digital sovereignty** in relation to **data protection, artificial intelligence development, security, and network and infrastructure reinforcement for greater resilience**. It will also promote the introduction of a horizontal framework making it easier to access, store and safely share high-quality data.

Enhancing cybersecurity will be a core focus for the Presidency. By forcing Europeans to adjust the ways in which they work and communicate, the public health crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted our dependence on networks and thus the importance of enhancing the Union's cyber resilience. With this in mind, the French Presidency will endeavour to push forward the negotiations on revision of the NIS Directive.

The Presidency will also make development of reliable human-centred **artificial intelligence** a priority. It will continue examination of the regulation on this subject with a view to establishing a balanced regulatory framework enabling innovation to flourish whilst ensuring adequate protection of fundamental rights. This initiative is an important opportunity to give the Union an innovative, enabling environment for development of both an ecosystem and European solutions that are competitive and able to act as a benchmark globally.

The Presidency will seek to **develop a secure, coherent and balanced legal framework** that strikes a balance between preservation of citizens' rights, protection of the interests of the Union and its Member States and development of innovative uses and services by business and government. It will continue work on the ePrivacy Regulation concerning the respect for private life and the protection of personal data in electronic communications, which clarifies and complements the General Data Protection Regulation whilst protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals and legal entities with regard to the supply and use of electronic communications services. Data sharing and large-scale data processing – enablers of growth, innovation and competitiveness for our businesses and research centres – can also guide public policy by central and local government. The Presidency will begin work on the Data Act, which, together with the Data Governance Act already adopted, will help create a reliable legal framework enabling data exchange whilst ensuring that sharing mechanisms are secure.

In order to produce practical results for European citizens, the Presidency will continue work on creating a **European digital identity** in order to promote dependable digital identities for all Europeans and will begin work on **reviewing the Broadband Cost Reduction Directive**, which will expedite the roll-out of ultrafast broadband if the revised Directive is published in the first half of 2022.

Europe's digital transition is a cornerstone of the recovery and a vital factor in enhancing our sovereignty through adequate funding of research and innovation in key digital technology (artificial intelligence, cloud, quantum computing, etc.) and support to develop start-ups. **The important project of common European interest on next-generation cloud infrastructure** and services will thus be an important element in supporting development of the European cloud infrastructure and services needed for the digital transition. Lastly, the Presidency will endeavour to strengthen European cooperation on the basis of the **digital policy programme** proposed by the Commission and a **future interinstitutional declaration** that will lay down the Union's overarching principles in the digital field.

A ministerial conference on digital sovereignty will be held in early February, while the Digital Assembly 2022 will be held in late June.

Energy

The goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 cannot be achieved unless the European energy sector, which is responsible for 75% of greenhouse gas emissions, undertakes a major transition, implementing energy conservation and efficiency measures, increasing use of renewable and decarbonised energy sources and developing technological innovation. These objectives will be pursued whilst ensuring affordable energy for European citizens and businesses.

The Presidency will continue work on the proposals for the Fit for 55 legislative package in connection with energy. To achieve this dual objective, it will endeavour to speed up **the development of renewable energy**, encourage **energy saving** and increase **energy efficiency in the EU, in particular by accelerating the pace of building renovation and promoting the use of decarbonised energy sources**. The Presidency will thus seek to push forward discussions on the renewable energy and energy efficiency directives and begin discussions on the revision of the Directive on the energy performance of buildings. These measures are also vital to support economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic. The French Presidency will focus on the energy efficiency of housing and issues relating to tackling energy poverty at a ministerial conference on housing to be held in Nice in early March.

In addition, the Presidency will start work on the **gas package**, revising the Regulation on conditions for access to decarbonised gas transmission networks, including hydrogen, following on from the Council conclusions of December 2020, and the directive regulating decarbonised gas markets. It will also initiate discussions on the proposal for a regulation on **methane emissions in the energy sector**.

Rising energy prices will continue to be discussed in depth by the Council during the French Presidency. Following on from the European Council conclusions of 21 and 22 October 2021, the Presidency will take action on the findings to be delivered by the European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) and the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) in the first half of the year.

Convinced that nuclear energy is vital to decarbonising European industry, meeting our emission reduction targets and enhancing our energy sovereignty and self-sufficiency, the Presidency will hold a ministerial conference on decarbonisation in this respect in early March. It will ensure that EU regulations remain consistent with development of nuclear energy.

Transport

The transport sector is crucial to achieving climate neutrality in the Union by 2050 and to the Union's recovery. The Presidency is convinced of the need to create a timeline that is both ambitious and tenable in order to decarbonise our various modes of transport, increase the appeal of the sector, particularly regarding working conditions in maritime and air transport, and break new ground to ensure that the ecosystem as a whole can plan for the future. It will thus work on legislation for and implementation of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy put forward by the Commission in December 2020.

With regard to the European Green Deal, the French Presidency will actively continue work on the Fit for 55 package: the proposal for the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR) setting **mandatory targets for infrastructure deployment** for alternative fuels for each mode of transport; the proposal for the "FuelEU Maritime" regulation on the **use of renewable and low-carbon fuels in maritime transport** and the proposal for the "ReFuelEU Aviation" regulation on ensuring a level playing field for sustainable air transport and seeking in particular to boost the uptake of **sustainable aviation fuels**.

The Presidency will begin work on the "efficient and green mobility" legislative package. It will conduct initial negotiations on review of the

Regulation on Union guidelines for the development of the **trans-European transport network (TENT)**, and in late June it will hold, in association with the Commission, the tenth edition of the TEN-T Days bringing together all stakeholders in the network. It will also concentrate on revising the **Intelligent Transport Systems Directive**.

In the field of maritime transport the French Presidency will start to examine revision of the **Directive on specific stability requirements for ro-ro passenger ships**. It will also begin work on proposals for revision of the Directive on compliance with flag State requirements, the Directive on port State control and the Directive on the investigation of maritime accidents. At international level, the Presidency will prepare submissions to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in the fields of environment and safety, including proposals for medium-term measures to decarbonise shipping, and an official proposal to create an emission control area for sulphur oxides for the whole of the Mediterranean (Mediterranean SECA area).

In the field of aviation the Presidency wishes to continue reform of the **single European sky** regulations. At international level, in addition to preparing for sessions of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council and Assembly, the Presidency will monitor negotiation of air agreements with non-EU countries.

Agriculture and fisheries

The French Presidency's priorities of European sovereignty, fight against climate change and the promotion of sustainable development will be actioned in the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors. Meeting the European Union's Green Deal objectives goes hand in hand with the development of more sustainable agricultural and fisheries sectors.

Agriculture and forestry

The Presidency's work on sovereignty and food self-sufficiency in the agricultural sector will focus on three priority areas.

Firstly, it will encourage **Council discussions on reciprocal environmental and health production standards** for European products and products imported from third countries with the aim of subjecting imported products to certain production requirements applied in the European Union where necessary, to strengthen the protection of health or the environment on the largest possible scale, in keeping with World Trade Organization rules ("mirror clauses"). This work will prioritise the introduction of sectoral mirror clauses. The Presidency will also launch work on the regulation on deforestation-free imports, which will be a significant step towards greater account being taken of production standards for imported products.

Secondly, **particular attention will be paid to low-carbon agriculture and carbon sequestration in agricultural soils** to mark a step change towards the construction of a European mechanism to introduce recognised low-carbon labels Europe-wide and compensate climate change actions taken by farms and forestry holdings.

Thirdly, the French Presidency will promote initiatives to accelerate **the agroecological transition** and thereby **reduce the use of pesticides**, which is an integral part of the Farm to Fork Strategy for fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food systems. It will launch work on revising the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive (SUD) to speed the reduction in the use of pesticides in the European Union and promote and deploy an increase in the use of alternatives, taking care to ensure that no farmer is left without a solution. The purpose of this work is to achieve a more consistent definition of goals and enforcement of rules in the European Union and to preserve the EU's food sovereignty, including in terms of reciprocal production standards.

In addition to these initiatives, the Presidency is preparing to take forward work on the proposal for a regulation on **statistics on agricultural input and output** in order to obtain an agreement among co-legislators on updating the regulatory framework governing such data collection; work on **revising European legislation on geographical indications** in order to strengthen this globally unique model protecting European product quality and geared to the sustainability of production methods; and work on **revising the EU's agricultural product promotion policy** in order to strengthen this key policy while ensuring its consistency with the objectives of the European Green Deal.

The Presidency welcomes the June agreement obtained between the European Parliament and the Council under the Portuguese Presidency for a **new, more sustainable Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** and the work accomplished under the Slovenian Presidency to publish the three founding regulations for the future CAP. It will ensure that ministers are fully engaged in the implementation of this reform and, in particular, in the approval process for the national strategic plans (NSPs) by the European Commission, and that they are able to debate the issues.

The French Presidency also intends to **promote the European Union's influence in multilateral bodies regarding issues relating to agriculture, broadly speaking, and food**. Here, it will support the transition to sustainable food systems and will ensure the consistency of these international bodies' strategies, decisions and standards with the European Green Deal, its associated strategies and European regulations.

Last but not least, the Presidency will initiate thinking on **the strategy for the prevention and control of highly pathogenic avian influenza** and experience sharing among Member States regarding **farm animal welfare**. It will also address the **developments needed for the Plant Health Law** with respect to import control activities and certification of plant trade between Member States.

Oceans, blue economy and fisheries

The sustainable development goal will also be actioned in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. The Presidency will focus on the revision of the Fisheries Control Regulation. It will propose a political debate on the Common Fisheries Policy and its implementation. In addition, the French Presidency will take forward work on extending the general rules governing access to waters.

In the area of **multilateral and bilateral cooperation with third coastal states and sustainable fisheries partnership agreements**, agreements with Mauritius, Madagascar and Liberia will be prioritised. The Presidency will also take part in annual meetings held by **Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)** wherever necessary.

Lastly, the Presidency will stress the importance of ocean governance (BBNJ talks), knowledge of the oceans, the blue economy, strengthening marine protected areas, combatting marine pollution (especially plastic), and developing blue finance with the holding of the **One Ocean Summit in Brest**.

Environment

The French Presidency will continue to enforce the Green Deal and will coordinate work around four main components: accelerating the transition to a decarbonised economy to become climate neutral by 2050; bolstering measures to preserve biodiversity; promoting a more circular and sustainable economy; and achieving the transition towards healthier environment by reducing the impact of pollution on the environment and on health. This work will fall under the EU's international commitments, in particular the Paris Agreement and the WTO rules.

Towards a Decarbonised Economy

The **European Green Deal**, presented in December 2019, aims to make the EU the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050. The European Climate Law adopted in June 2021, enshrines in European law the obligation to achieve climate-neutrality by 2050. It also sets the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

Presented on 14 July 2021, the **“Fit for 55” legislative package** sets out a detailed vision of Europe’s new climate ambitions for 2030 in all economic sectors while ensuring both the social acceptability of the new European and national measures and the sustainability of the transition for the industrial sectors. The Presidency will **further negotiations on this package**.

The French Presidency will continue the work underway on the **revision of the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS)** and on the revision of its proper harmonisation with the global mechanism for the offsetting and reduction of carbon emissions in aviation, the **Effort Sharing Regulation**, and the **contribution of the land sector and forestry (LULUCF)**. It will also continue the ongoing work to effectively combat carbon leakage. It will also work on the Commission’s proposal to **establish a Social Climate Fund**. Lastly, it will continue work on the **Regulation on CO₂ emission performance standards for vehicles**. The work of the other Council work streams on the implementation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), decarbonising transport and renewables and energy efficiency will ensure that these sectors contribute to achieving emission reduction targets.

In terms of international climate policy, the French Presidency will start preparing the negotiations for the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP) to be held in Egypt and will follow up on the sectoral and thematic commitments made at COP 26.

Biodiversity

The Presidency will make as much progress as possible in the negotiations on the proposal for a **Regulation on deforestation-free products**. This initiative will enable the European Union to prevent products resulting from deforestation being placed on the European market, to bolster efforts to reduce its environmental footprint and to encourage the protection and restoration of forests at the global level, in line with the agroecological transition the EU is promoting within its borders. The Presidency will ensure that the EU steps up its efforts to preserve and restore **biodiversity** and will begin discussions on the **draft regulation aimed at establishing a new legal framework on the restoration of healthy ecosystems**.

The Presidency will prepare Council conclusions to define an ambitious EU position for the second phase of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), to be held in Kunming in 2022. It will also prepare for the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) on trade in endangered species (CITES) and the protection of wetlands (Ramsar Convention), scheduled for late 2022. It will organise a ministerial conference on nature and biodiversity in cities at the end of January in Strasbourg and will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Natura 2000 network at the end of February in Strasbourg.

Circular Economy

The Presidency will speed up negotiations on **the Batteries Regulation**, which responds to major industrial challenges and has a high level of ambition in terms of reducing the carbon footprint of Europeans and the strategic autonomy of the EU. It will continue to examine the revision of **the Regulation on transboundary waste shipments** in order to reinforce the circularity of the European economy in this domain, by promoting the reuse and recycling of waste within the internal market.

The development of a truly circular economy depends in part on the way in which products are designed and consumed. Thus, the Presidency will begin negotiations on the **Sustainable Products Initiative**, which will include several legislative proposals aimed at strengthening the ecodesign of goods and protecting consumers by ensuring that environmental claims are substantiated. It will also follow up on the Commission's Strategy for **sustainable textiles**, which will support the sector in its recovery while respecting circular economy requirements. A ministerial conference on the circular economy will be organised with the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee in early March.

At international level, the Presidency will endeavour to defend a high level of European ambition within the framework of the 5th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5), which will take place at the end of February and which should enable progress towards a global agreement to initiate negotiations on a binding international treaty on marine litter and plastic pollution.

A Healthier Environment

As part of the implementation of the Zero Pollution Action Plan presented in May 2021, the Presidency will contribute to accelerating the transition to **a healthier environment** by initiating discussions on the initiatives that the Commission will present in the areas of chemicals, allowing all European legislation to better address endocrine disruptors, and in the area of pesticides, emissions of pollutants, waste management and urban waste water. As part of the **Zero Pollution Action Plan**, the Presidency will begin work on the revision of ozone-depleting substances and the Regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases.

The Presidency will continue the work launched at the end of 2021 on **persistent organic pollutants** in order to enable the development of the circular economy while taking care to avoid the negative consequences on health and the environment of these dangerous substances of concern. European ministers will be invited to discuss the management and negative consequences of chemicals at a ministerial conference in May.

At international level, the Presidency will coordinate negotiations at several major international meetings (Conferences of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions on chemicals and waste).

**Education, youth,
culture and sport**

In the fields of education, youth, culture and sport, the French Presidency will focus its work on measures aimed at supporting young people, improving their mobility and incorporating sustainable development as a cross-cutting issue.

Education

Education and skills must be placed at the centre of public action, as the Heads of State and Government reiterated at the Porto Social Summit in May 2021.

With regard to **higher education**, the **European Universities initiative** will be a priority for the French Presidency. It is committed to making progress on the proposals made by the Commission as part of its European strategy for universities. The Presidency will lead the work on **the recommendation for deeper and sustainable international cooperation in higher education** in Europe in order to provide a framework for European action. This will also involve addressing the issue of the statute of alliances between institutions, such as European Universities, and identifying synergies between European programmes to jointly recruit PhD students, researchers and professors and thus offer more attractive careers. A forum of Universities for the Future of Europe will be held in late January.

An event will also be organised in mid-January to celebrate **35 years of the Erasmus programme**. It will highlight the diversity of projects and people supported by Erasmus+ in France in the sectors of school education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult learning, youth and sports.

The Presidency will also seek to promote intellectual debate at European level by setting up **an independent committee on the history of Europe** and the creation of **an Academy of Europe** which will bring together intellectuals from the 27 Member States from every discipline.

To contribute to achieving the European Education Area by 2025, the French Presidency will initiate discussions on **the European area for teachers' training and career paths**, with the aim of facilitating the mobility of teachers and supporting the European initiative of Erasmus Academies for Teachers. A conference on this topic will be held in early March.

Following the discussions led by the Finnish and Slovenian Presidencies, the French Presidency will also push forward the issue of **investment in education**, by organising a ministerial conference in mid-February to highlight the positive externalities linked to investing in education. A joint meeting of education and finance ministers will also be held on this topic at the Council meeting on 4 and 5 April, in order to highlight the contribution of investments in education to the Union's potential growth.

Lastly, the French Presidency will lead discussions on the Council recommendation on education and sustainable development.

Youth

The French Presidency will make **youth** a priority, in connection with the agenda of the Commission and European Parliament for the European Year of Youth. It will promote initiatives in support of youth employment during the post-pandemic recovery, as well as the mobility of apprentices, the implementation of the European Skills Agenda and the launch of the new ALMA (Aim, Learn, Master, Achieve) initiative. The Presidency will work towards setting up a European civic service.

The French Presidency will strive to see through the **recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers**, which will focus on reinforcing young people's mobility after the pandemic, including to undertake activities to serve the general interest, as well as on enhancing the potential of European youth programmes, and on synergies between the European Solidarity Corps and national volunteer programmes. The "Let's Embrace Mobility!" conference, scheduled for mid-January will enable reflection on developing more inclusive and better-recognised mobility.

The French Presidency will strongly focus **on the involvement and inclusion of young people in favour of sustainable development**, in order to better take young people's opinions into consideration and support their efforts to promote sustainable development and fight against climate change through volunteer work and entrepreneurship. Centred around this theme, the European Youth Conference which will be held from 24 to 26 January 2022, with our presidency trio partners, the Czech Republic and Sweden, will open the 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue.

Culture

As the culture sector has been severely affected by the economic and public health crisis, it is vital to place it at the heart of the recovery in Europe.

In keeping with the Media and Audiovisual Action Plan published by the Commission in December 2020, the French Presidency will promote a new **European strategy for Cultural and Creative Industries**, to encourage innovation in the cultural sector and support export strategies for European cultural businesses. The French Presidency will focus on **developing intercultural exchanges in the European area**, through mobility for artists and professionals in the cultural sector and through multilingualism in the digital environment.

In addition, the Presidency will devote consideration to European cultural diversity in the digital environment, through protecting and promoting media pluralism and the diversity of digital cultural content. It will work to create a European support fund for independent and investigative journalism.

It will stress the importance of dealing with new challenges for the policy on protecting and promoting cultural heritage at European level, in particular concerning efforts to digitalise European heritage and the fight against the trafficking of cultural artefacts.

The European Union's cultural diversity is also reflected through the promotion of multilingualism as a key factor in mobility and dialogue. This topic will be the focus of a forum taking place from 7 to 9 February 2022. Particular emphasis will be placed on digital innovation that contributes to facilitating translation, and thus to promoting multilingualism.

Sport

The French Presidency will focus on **sport as a lever for sustainable development and transformation**, so as to better recognise the role of sport in achieving sustainable development goals and to encourage Member States, and sport organisations to give greater consideration to issues of sustainability and social and environmental responsibility in the various sporting activities. A ministerial conference with the theme “Toward a Green Deal for Sport”, will take place on 3 March, with the aim of moving toward a common base of environmental and sustainability goals to achieve in the sports sector.

A ministerial conference on **sports in childhood** will be held on 7 and 8 February. It will provide an opportunity to share best practices and expertise on the role of physical activity and sports in the various development phases of children and adolescents, in particular with regard to their developing an understanding of sustainable development challenges.

These initiatives will go hand in hand with the continuation of the Council’s debate on the European Sport Model, building on the work of the Slovenian Presidency. This debate will be based on the results of the study commissioned by the European Commission to be published in early 2022.



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