



Brussels, 20 October 2021

Dear colleagues,

I would like to invite you to our European Council meeting on 21 and 22 October.

During our first working session, we will address the current hike in energy prices which is challenging the post-pandemic recovery and severely affecting our citizens and businesses. Building on the Commission's recent communication, we will look closely into what can be done at the EU and national level, both in terms of short term relief for those most affected as well as measures for the medium and long term.

We will also discuss the current COVID-19 situation. The pandemic is not over yet and figures are on the rise in several Member States. Vaccination has brought significant progress in the fight against COVID-19 but more still needs to be done, especially regarding vaccine hesitancy and disinformation. We will touch upon international solidarity, to ensure the speedy delivery of vaccines to countries most in need. We must also take action to ensure we are better prepared for pandemics in the future.

We will also touch upon recent developments related to the Rule of Law during our working session.

Over our working dinner we will have a strategic discussion on trade. When it comes to the EU's global influence, trade remains the most effective instrument in our toolbox. We will discuss how to best make use of this instrument, both in terms of the objectives we seek and in terms of the process for the involvement of Member States, in light of experiences over the last few years.

Another topic will be the preparations for important upcoming summits such as COP 26 and COP 15 on biodiversity. Looking ahead to the COP 26 summit, we need an ambitious global response to climate change. All major economies should set ambitious targets and meet their commitments on climate finance. We will also prepare the upcoming ASEM and Eastern Partnership Summits.

On Friday, we will come back to the topic of migration, to follow up on the implementation of the June European Council conclusions on the external dimension of migration, in particular when it comes to financing. Our external borders need to be effectively controlled. We should also sustain our efforts to reduce secondary movements.

We will then turn to Europe's digital transformation, which is a key driver for economic growth, job creation and competitiveness. We will provide additional guidance on the digital agenda, including cyber security and connectivity, and give a political push to work on existing and future proposals and initiatives.

I am confident that we will have a productive meeting, in a spirit of trust and dialogue. As demonstrated in the past unity is our strongest asset.

I look forward to seeing you in Brussels.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, overlapping loops and lines, characteristic of Charles Michel's signature.

Charles MICHEL