



European Council
The President

Brussels, 23 March 2022

Dear colleagues,

Our European Council on 24 and 25 March will start with a session on Thursday at 4:30 pm with the participation of President Biden. Together we will address Russia's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine.

After the traditional exchange with the President of the European Parliament, we will pursue our exchange on Ukraine in a subsequent session, where we will be joined virtually by President Zelensky.

As the war progresses, we are seeing Russia increasingly attack the civilian population and target hospitals, schools and shelters. These war crimes must stop immediately. Those responsible, and their accomplices, will be held to account in accordance with international law.

In our meeting, we will discuss how to best support Ukraine in these dramatic circumstances. The Ukrainian people have bravely stepped up to defend their country. But humanitarian needs within Ukraine are growing dramatically. And millions have had to flee their homes and leave their loved ones behind. We must continue to provide humanitarian, political, financial and material support to Ukraine. We will also examine the specific support we can offer Ukrainian refugees and their hosts.

Sanctions are one of the main tools at our disposal to exert pressure on Russia to change its course of action. So far, we have adopted some of the strongest measures ever against Russia and Belarus. Along with our international allies, we have shown a united front. We must now ensure that these sanctions are not circumvented. We stand ready to move quickly on further coordinated sanctions.

Against this backdrop, our meeting will also be the occasion to prepare for the EU-China summit, to be held on 1 April 2022, where the war in Ukraine will be the main topic.

A further foreign policy issue I would like us to address is the political crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The war in Ukraine also gives rise to various challenges for us within the EU, not least in terms of our energy policy. At our meeting in Versailles, we agreed to phase out our dependency on Russian gas, oil and coal imports as soon as possible. We must now take immediate action to safeguard our energy supply for the coming winter. I would also like us to urgently tackle how, in the weeks and months to come, we can ease the pressure of high energy prices on our citizens and businesses.

Our European Council meeting will be an occasion to strengthen our Single Market, which continues to be our primary asset for sustainable growth, job creation and for accelerating our green and digital transitions. Addressing rising food prices and ensuring food security within our Single Market is also a critical issue for us to tackle.

During our discussions on Security and Defence, I expect us to endorse the Strategic Compass, which sets out a security and defence perspective for the next decade.

And lastly, on COVID-19, I would like us to briefly take stock of the latest coordination efforts to combat the pandemic.

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