

Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council ahead of their special meeting of 24 and 25 May 2021



It is my pleasure to invite you to our special meeting of the European Council in Brussels on Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 May.

Our Monday evening dinner will be dedicated to foreign policy issues.

As agreed during our videoconference in March, we will hold a strategic debate on Russia. Russia's illegal and provocative steps have continued both within EU Member States and beyond, most recently with the so-called "unfriendly states" list. A future discussion among ourselves could usefully be framed by a report from the High Representative and the Commission, in line with the five guiding principles for EU-Russia relations.

We will also address relations with the UK following the entry into force of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement on 1 May 2021. This agreement, as well as the Withdrawal Agreement and its Protocols, should be fully and effectively implemented, in the interests of a mutually beneficial relationship and close partnership. This includes ensuring that the UK respects the principle of non-discrimination among Member States.

As to other foreign policy issues, we will briefly address the situation in the Middle East as well as preparations for the upcoming EU-US institutional Summit mid-June.

Our discussion on Tuesday will revolve around the pressing issues of COVID and climate.

On COVID-19, we are entering a new phase as the pace of vaccinations is increasing across the EU and we seek to prepare for a reopening ahead of the summer. The recent agreement on the Digital COVID Certificates is a welcome step. We should continue our coordinated approach to facilitate free movement throughout the EU. It is nevertheless of utmost importance that we maintain our vigilance regarding new variants and that we are prepared to take action as necessary.

We should also discuss international solidarity in fighting the pandemic. As a leading vaccine producer, exporter and contributor to COVAX, the EU is at the forefront of efforts to help meet global needs. We should now address how, and to what extent, we can further step up our sharing of vaccines with the rest of the world.

In December 2020, we agreed to increase our climate ambition for 2030. On that occasion, we also agreed to revert once again to the matter before the

Commission's Fit-For-55 package proposal. This will be a good occasion for everybody to state their key priorities and concerns in this respect.

As to the practical aspects of our meeting, we will begin at 7pm on Monday 24 May with our usual exchange with the President of the European Parliament. We will resume on Tuesday morning at 9:30am. I look forward to seeing you in Brussels.

[Visit the meeting page](#)