

Remarks by President Charles Michel on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Visegrad cooperation



First of all, I would like to thank you dear Mateusz (Morawiecki) for your invitation. It's a great pleasure for me to be here in Krakow for this very important moment, the anniversary of the Visegrad group.

Indeed, this is a critical time for Europe. Covid-19 is a very difficult challenge, and we need to work together, to cooperate together in order to make progress, to protect our citizens and also to succeed at the economic and social level. And today we had the occasion to discuss very important challenges that we have in common. We also identified our common goals. And I think for us, at the European level, there are certainly three important priorities.

First, we will never forget that our European political project is based on fundamental democratic values. This is an important priority for us and is also a constant debate in Europe and in the rest of the world. But it is important because it inspires our policy in different fields.

The second important priority for us is prosperity. How to improve the lives of our citizens everywhere in Europe. And we think that we need to identify the pillars in order to succeed at the economic and social level. Climate change and the digital agenda are difficult challenges, important challenges. These also have potential leverage in order to innovate and to make progress. We had the occasion to discuss those topics. We know and I know that it is important to take into consideration the different situations at the national level between the different Member States. We do not have exactly the same starting point. And that's why through the next European budget and through the Recovery Fund, we are trying to make the right choices. We will continue in the next weeks, in the next months, to discuss with all the Member States in order to decide together and to be able to reach the ambitious goals that will be decided by 2030 and on climate neutrality by 2050.

My third point was also mentioned by Mateusz, the importance for Europe to be a global player and to have more positive influence to guarantee our safety, our security, and to promote our values and to defend our interests. And thank you, because today we again discussed the important question of the Eastern Partnership. We think, with the other countries, our 27 colleagues, that it is really important in the next weeks and months to tackle this question.

And we will travel to Ukraine and to Georgia in the next weeks to reaffirm the European position – solidarity with the territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia. We need a strategic debate at the European level.

Finally, an important topic, Covid-19 and the vaccination campaign. It is very important to make progress together. We took the decision in Europe to ask the Commission to order vaccines on behalf of the 27 Member States. And we understand that right now the situation is difficult, everywhere in the world, and it is difficult in Europe. But I'm confident that we will work very hard to increase the production of vaccines, which is the priority number one. We have secured many doses of vaccines, but the priority number one is to make sure that we have enough doses as soon as possible. It is the task for the Commission, and again next week we will have an important videoconference, at the highest level with all 27 leaders, to improve cooperation, to improve coordination and to make sure that we are able to vaccinate our people as soon as possible. This is an important measure for the safety of our citizens, but also for our economic recovery. We want to be able to again have a more normal life with the potential positive consequences at the economic and social level, so we need to succeed. It's a difficult challenge, but we are very motivated and determined.

Finally again, Mateusz and dear colleagues, thank you for this exchange of views today, which in my opinion is very important because the first condition to make Europe stronger is to be united. It's never easy, being united requires constant effort and it requires us to listen to each other, to listen actively to each other, to be able to make strong and good compromises. And so it is possible to take decisions together in the interest of all our European citizens everywhere in Europe.