

Speaking points on CWP, BR and strategic foresight

- Firstly, thank you for accepting my invitation to speak at such short notice.
- As always, I value these conversations highly and I believe today presents an excellent opportunity for an informal discussion on certain issues ahead of the formal dialogue with my colleagues in the College.
- For my part, I would like to discuss a number of issues under my purview and how they affect our work together.
- With **President von der Leyen having put the social dimension at the core of our recovery strategy, this work is an essential joint effort.**
- First, deepening our use of strategic foresight will help guide our future actions in this regard.
- **Strategic foresight is the art of developing intelligence about the future to inform what we do today. It is an intrinsically collective and inclusive exercise, and the participation of all you will be of the utmost importance.**
- The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly added weight to our decision to **bring strategic foresight into the highest level of EU policymaking.**
- In the face of inevitable future trends and shocks, we must ensure we are best placed to take advantage of the twin green and digital transitions.
- In this context, the Commission adopted its first annual Strategic Foresight Report last month.

- In the report, we explain how the Commission plans to embed foresight into EU policymaking.
- We will **conduct foresight exercises to underpin major policy initiatives** and help identify potential pathways for the twin transitions.
- The annual report will help us **test issues of critical interest to Europe's future and analysing emerging trends and challenges** to inform our policy- and decision-making.
- This will feed into the Commission's work programmes and our multiannual programming exercises.
- The foresight processes we will launch will I'm sure lead to fruitful exchanges with all of you. **We need your future-oriented knowledge to make our continent more resilient and fairer.**
- We will also work with all European institutions, Member States, international partners and other stakeholders.
- The coronavirus pandemic has reaffirmed **the need to make our policies more evidence-based, future-proof and centred on resilience**. Hence, the 2020 Strategic Foresight Report provides a structural analysis of the EU's resilience along four interrelated dimensions: **social and economic; geopolitical; green; and digital**.
- Perhaps of the most interest here today, our analysis showed **how important the socio-economic dimension is for the EU's resilience**.

- For example, a key vulnerability exposed by the crisis is the **deepening of inequalities**, between poor and rich, young and old, women and men, those from urban and rural areas. The foresight report identifies **social partners as an important resource contributing to Europe's social and economic resilience**.
- Also, up- and re-skilling – especially for the vulnerable – will be essential for the twin transitions and our long-term future. They should be an integral part of the recovery.
- The **funding instruments are of course also essential** to pursue our socio-economic goals. The ESF+ will continue to support the improvement of skills and address social challenges. We are working hard to have a deal approved with the European Parliament soon to have legislation in place by the end of the year.
- **It is important that Member States continue to prepare for all the new funding instruments** and to have a solid strategic overview of the economic and social objectives to make the whole architecture of the funds clear, effective and efficient.
- In addition to these issues, the report identified other major cross-cutting issues to be addressed, including:
 - **Open strategic autonomy**, essential to secure Europe's long-term competitiveness and global leadership as an open economy while remaining true to our values.

- **The future jobs and skills that will be needed to power our green economy.**
- Exploring **how the green and digital transitions can better reinforce each other** and not lead to ever-increasing resource and energy use.
- **I invite you to share your views on this first foresight report and engage with the Commission on the next steps.**
- The Commission is committed to **better coordinating European strategic foresight capabilities across Europe**. That is why I intend to launch an EU-wide Foresight Network at the upcoming European Strategy and Political Analysis System (ESPAS) Conference next month. If you would like to participate, please let us know.
- **My second point today is regarding our work on a revision of the Better Regulation Guidelines and Toolbox**. This will be an opportunity to further clarify the rules about stakeholder consultation for initiatives requiring two-stage social partner consultations. We aim to publish them by the end of the year, following a Communication on Better Regulation.
- The Communication will **make proposals for rationalising our consultation process**, for example by merging roadmaps and public consultations into one 'Call for views and evidence'.

- It will also look at **simplification, burden reduction and the use of foresight in our assessments, as well as increasing the transparency of the evidence used and making our evaluations more relevant for policymaking.**
- I am interested in also hearing your views about this.
- Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has put our entire economy and society under a great deal of pressure. In response, the Commission has taken firm action launching strong measures including the SURE initiative, and these efforts will continue under the next Commission Work Programme.
- Early in 2021, we will present an **Action Plan** to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is set to be **endorsed by the other EU institutions** in May 2021.
- **Social Partners will take centre stage in this endeavour** but the European agenda is only one side of the coin. On the other one stands action at national, regional and local levels.
- We are also working to strengthen the social dialogue and develop key initiatives on minimum wage, platform and seasonal workers and skills, amongst others.
- For all of these, dialogue is key – which is why I am glad it is already underway.
- I will stop there, and I look forward to a fruitful discussion with you all.