



PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION



Background Note

Session 1

Presentation of the Priorities of the French Presidency

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Session 1

Presentation of the Priorities of the French Presidency

France will preside the Council of the European Union from **1st January to 30 June 2022**. This is the thirteenth French presidency, the last one having been thirteen years ago, from June to December 2008. France will succeed Slovenia and will mark the beginning of a trio of presidencies with the Czech Republic and Sweden.

The motto of the French Presidency is “**Recovery, Strength and a Sense of Belonging.**” Its priorities were presented by the President of the Republic at a press conference on 9 December 2021, during which he summarised his objective in a single sentence: “*we must move from a Europe of cooperation within its borders to a powerful Europe in the world, fully sovereign, free to make its own choices and master of its own destiny*”.

France intends to draw the outlines of the Europe of 2030 and the priorities it has defined for its presidency in three main areas:

- 1) a more **sovereign** Europe
- 2) a new growth model: a more **digital, greener** and more **social** Europe
- 3) a more “**human**” Europe that meets the expectations of our citizens

The President of the Republic will present these priorities in front of the European Parliament on **19 January in Strasbourg** and will engage in an exchange in January with the President of the Council and the whole college of European Commissioners. With almost 400 events to be organised all over the country, France is committed to an exemplary, carbon-neutral and environmentally-friendly presidency.

I. A more sovereign Europe

Following on from his speech at the Sorbonne in 2017, the President of the Republic has proposed an “**agenda of sovereignty**” aiming to reinforce Europe’s ability to hold its own in today’s world in order to defend its values and interests.

A. Reinforce Europe's ability to control its borders

France intends **to protect Europe's borders more effectively**, in order to ensure security for Europeans, overcome the migration challenge, and avoid the tragedies and severe tensions we have seen.

The aim is to avoid the right of asylum being used for purposes other than that for which it was intended and to organise migration, while defending European values. This objective will take the form of two initiatives :

1) *a reform of the Schengen Area focused on two priorities:*

- a) **introduce political steering of the Schengen Area**, based on the euro area model, with regular meetings of the ministers in charge of these issues;
- b) **create a border emergency support mechanism in the event of crises**, enabling any Member State faced with a crisis to count on rapid support from Frontex, and also solidarity and support from the other Member States.

2) *Progress on the project for a **European Pact on Migration and Asylum***

France intends to extend this legislative package beyond the sole question of protecting the external borders of the EU. The aim is also to:

- manage migration more effectively by working with the countries of origin and transit to tackle this trafficking;
- harmonise our rules on asylum and support for refugees or migrants who are on our soil;
- harmonise and simplify management and monitoring of secondary flows.

B. Define a strategic sovereignty for Europe in defence matters

On the basis of our initiatives over the past four years (European Defence Fund, European Intervention Initiative, structured cooperation and joint programmes), the French Presidency wants to enter a **more operational phase** by defining common interests and shared strategies.

At the **European Council of March 2022**, we will **officialise the "Strategic Compass"** launched under the German Presidency, which is to say a European white paper on defence and security, presenting the state of the threats and establishing the collective choices, directions and ambitions of the Union.

The purpose of this compass is to assert a **strategic sovereignty for Europe** based on a common analysis of the threats and new ambitions for the defence industry, while defining joint partnerships and a joint organisation for new areas of conflict: the

maritime area, space and cyber space. Joint positions will thus be defined with a view to the NATO Summit to be held in Madrid in June 2022.

C. Foster the stability and prosperity of the European neighbourhood

Two geographic areas will be the focus of key initiatives:

1) **Africa**

On **17 and 18 February 2022**, France, along with the Presidents of the European Council, Charles Michel, and of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, will organise a **Reform Summit between the leaders of the countries of the European Union and the African Union**. The aim of this summit is to completely overhaul the relationship between Europe and Africa and forge an **economic and financial new deal**, further to the Paris Summit of 18 May 2021 on the financing of African economies.

The French Presidency wishes to reinforce **solidarity** with Africans by rolling out an agenda in education, health and the climate, and updating investment mechanisms for solidarity with the African continent. The other objective concerns **security**. France wants to Europeanise its commitment and establish a security partnership between Africa and Europe. Such a partnership will open up the possibility of setting an agenda to organise chosen migration and step up the fight against human traffickers.

2) **Western Balkans**

A **conference on the Balkans** will be organised in June 2022 to provide short-term clarity for these countries at the heart of Europe and ease frictions. The conference will strive to establish a policy of re-engagement and investment in favour of this region that is facing new tensions, thereby contributing to the peace and sovereignty of Europe.

II. **A new European growth model: a more digital, greener, more social Europe**

The French Presidency also aims to develop a new European model for production and solidarity in order to uphold the European social model by creating jobs and contributing to the climate agenda.

On **10 and 11 March 2022**, France will organise a **summit of the 27 Heads of State and Government on the “new European growth and investment model”**, aiming to implement a **ten-year strategy** taking the form of concrete legislative

initiatives. This strategy will be in addition to the other major subjects defended by France (public health union, the fight against the manipulation of information, the future of farming and prohibition of pesticides, the challenge of the ultraperipheral regions, responsible capitalism, etc.) and will be based on **four pillars**:

A. Strong industrial sectors backed by a European investment plan

The French Presidency has defined an objective of **creating jobs and supports the construction of strong, integrated industrial sectors** (culture, the cloud, hydrogen, semi-conductors) backed by a European investment plan and new industrial alliances.

This growth and investment model will require **fiscal and financial rules** that are tailored to the digital and climate transitions, a **strategic discussion on investments** at the right level, and a renewal of the **fiscal framework** to address the digital and climate transitions.

B. Make a Europe a digital powerhouse

The French Presidency wants to create an **integrated digital market** capable of attracting talent and financing. It therefore aims to Europeanise its policy to support the digital sector, in order to foster the emergence of digital giants by supporting innovation and the growth of emerging actors in this area. This policy will be backed by **European funds to finance the most innovative digital start-ups and actors**, by mobilising institutional investors, as has been done with the Tibi funds developed in France.

To avoid being rule-takers and dependent on other powers, the French Presidency will pursue European efforts to define rules for the digital world. By spring, the ECOFIN Council will examine the texts applying the G20 agreement on the **taxation of multinational enterprises and the digital giants** at European level.

The French Presidency will also focus on the **economic regulation and accountability of digital platforms**. This ambition will take the form of discussion of two texts in the European Parliament: the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which aims to avoid the digital giants becoming monopolies, and the Digital Services Act (DSA), to establish a regime of liability of the major platforms for the products they sell and content they host.

C. Reconcile economic development with climate ambition: towards a greener Europe

Following the legislative package presented by the European Commission on 14 July 2021 and setting the ambition of carbon neutrality by 2050 and a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emission by 2030, the French Presidency wants to foster innovation on decarbonisation solutions, consolidate our commitment to carbon neutrality, and coordinate the trade and climate agendas of the European Union, while preserving the competitiveness of its industries.

The priority of the Presidency in this area will be the **creation of a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**, or “carbon tax” on imported products. It will also promote **mirror clauses** and the inclusion of environmental and social requirements into trade agreements, within the framework of World Trade Organisation reform.

It will also seek progress in the negotiations on the introduction of a **European instrument to combat imported deforestation**, which will aim to prohibit imports of soya, beef, palm oil, wood, cocoa or coffee if they contribute to deforestation and are harmful to biodiversity.

D. Make Europe more social

The French Presidency wants to **boost our collective ability to offer workers decent, qualified and better-paid jobs**, in order to protect the weakest among us from social dumping.

To do so, it intends to move forwards first of all on the future **directive on minimum wages**, in order to push low wages upwards thanks to a decent minimum wage. France will also be making a commitment to foster **gender equality** by promoting the **directive on pay transparency**, which aims to put an end to wage gaps between men and women, by finalising European texts on **quotas for company boards**, and by supporting the **introduction of a corporate duty of due diligence** at European level.

III. A more “human” Europe that meets the expectations of citizens

A. Rebuild Europe on the basis of the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe

The work of the **Conference on the Future of Europe** will come to an end in May 2022 and will mark the beginning of a movement to reshape Europe to be simpler and more democratic, to get Europeans more closely involved, and possibly lead to a reshaping of our treaties.



In France, the Government has implemented two schemes. 18 conferences with citizens drawn at random, organised in each of the regions in mainland and overseas France, and an extensive online consultation of some 50,000 young French people. The final contribution of these national debates was handed to the Government at the end of November 2021 and has been taken into account in defining the priorities of the French Presidency.

B. Defend the rule of law and European values

The President of the Republic has declared that he intends “to be uncompromising on our values,” which are not negotiable because they are existential and constitute the basis of the treaties. The French Presidency will therefore defend the rule of law and European values, not just by **sanctions** but also by **support**.

It will support the implementation of a strategy to fight racism and antisemitism, by extending the list of European offences to include hate crimes and speech, and by creating **EU legislation to fight violence against women**.

The French Presidency also wishes to establish a **European support fund for independent and investigative journalism**.

Finally, it wishes to uphold European culture and build an academic framework to carry out major **independent research work on European history**, prepared by an independent committee and due to begin in June 2022. A meeting between 40 European universities will also be organised in June 2022. The French Presidency will also support the creation of an “**Academy of Europe**,” bringing together one hundred or so thinkers in all fields from all 27 Member States, to inform European debates and forge a history and historiography of Europe.

C. Foster a Europe of Culture

An ambitious **cultural and artistic programme** has been designed, backed by the Ministry for Culture and the Institut Français, with a whole series of initiatives dedicated to young people in Europe.

There will be a number of high-profile cultural initiatives during the French Presidency, involving those countries, regions and towns or cities which wish to take part. These initiatives will expand access to operas, museums and works of art, and will promote our shared sensitivity through events.



D. Make 2022 the European Year of Youth

2022 will be a year of youth. Following up on the widening of the Erasmus programme to include apprentices, the French Presidency is proposing a **six-month European citizen service** open to all young people aged under 25 years for an academic or apprenticeship exchange, an internship or civil society work.