

A Roadmap to European Stability: Implementing a Strategic Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Foreign Policy and Migration Issues

December 2020

The European Commission affirms its resolve and commitment to address the needs of our citizens during a period of unprecedented global turmoil. The COVID-19 pandemic is a human tragedy and an urgent health crisis. In this trying year, Europeans have demonstrated fortitude, resilience, and sense of duty despite constant reminders of the fragility and mourning all around us that will endure long after this pandemic passes. Yet, the coronavirus crisis has also showcased the consequences of lack of cooperation among European nations. It also highlighted once again the importance of developing a comprehensive 'European' response to transnational problems and strengthening our institutions.

Thus, we are committed to working with member states to ensure a coordinated response—including consideration of national emergency measures—that utilizes all available EU resources to protect lives and financial livelihoods throughout the pandemic. We also maintain our conviction to marshal the full power of this Union to address ongoing foreign policy and migration issues that are critical to preserving EU security and maintaining the rules-based international order. **To address these broad range of policy matters, the following stipulations are proffered for collective consideration:**

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS the European Union (EU) has consistently sought to deepen integration among member states and declare our shared commitment to promoting democratic principles, the following should be considered:

- 1) That we are a broad, diverse community historically divided by conflict and misgivings for centuries, now dedicated to jointly overcoming strategic challenges.
- 2) That the EU is an institution that stands for human freedom, democratic principles, the rule of law, and the upholding of fundamental rights.
- 3) That closer integration between member states will strengthen our shared values and create greater benefits for our citizens.
- 4) That this bloc will continue to build economic, political, and social partnerships that enhance Europeans' standard of living and reinforce the EU's global influence.
- 5) That we adopt policies that position Europe to withstand future economic, public health, and political crises through sound economic reforms, responsible foreign policies, technological cooperation, and investment in science and research.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Prioritizing Our Public Health Response:

WHEREAS the EU mourns all loss of life during the COVID-19 crisis and remains committed to limiting the spread of the virus to protect the health and safety of all citizens in our member states. The pandemic is the biggest challenge this Union has faced since the Second World War and has reinforced the need for enduring public health cooperation between member states and EU agencies.

WHEREAS Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides the legal basis for the EU's actions in the field of health. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the European Medicines Agency, the European Food Safety Authority, the European Chemicals Agency, and the European Safety and Health at Work Agency all have a key role to play in Europe's prevention and crisis management defense against serious cross-border health threats and pandemics.

WHEREAS we worked with European industry to increase the production of masks, gloves, tests, and ventilators. Our Civil Protection Mechanism ensured that medical professionals and critical medical supplies seamlessly traversed between member states to the most vulnerable areas.

WHEREAS this body is committed to ensuring that the EU remains the healthiest region in the world, retains all possible tools to address health challenges at national and EU levels, and is prepared for any new emerging health threat. We are committed to prioritizing health systems' readiness to provide state-of-the-art care and preparedness to cope with epidemics and other unforeseeable health threats in line with international health regulations.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that we call on all member states to stress the value of real-time information-sharing to ensure access to the best and latest public health intelligence, improving prevention strategies and mitigation measures. By pooling epidemiological and other data to better understand and fight the virus, we will maximize access to the latest information, including on vaccine development.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Commission will implement its strategy to accelerate the development, manufacturing, and deployment of vaccines against COVID-19. We call on EU bodies and member states to work jointly to ensure production of vaccines in the EU and sufficient supplies for member states through Advance Purchase Agreements with vaccine producers. In addition, we must work to adapt the EU's regulatory framework and enact regulatory flexibility to accelerate vaccine development without sacrificing standards for vaccine quality, safety, and efficacy. Finally, we pledge to support international calls to guarantee equitable vaccine access globally.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that member states clearly and transparently revise guidelines for border management measures as the crisis evolves to protect health and ensure availability of goods and services, maintain temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU, and carefully consider any restrictions placed on the free movement of workers, especially in the health and food sectors. In addition, the Commission remains committed to informing the public and working with industry partners to promote authoritative content on COVID-19 and remove misleading, illegal, and harmful content online that threatens public health.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that any measures taken by member states that restrict free movement are coordinated and transparent, ultimately prioritizing public health interests while minimizing further disruptions of already fragile economies. We call on member states to establish common criteria whether to introduce new travel limitations based on total number of newly identified COVID-19 cases per 100,000 and percentage of positive cases. In addition, we urge EU states to map the aforementioned criteria using a commonly agreed upon color code to maximize compliance, implement a common approach when dealing with travelers coming from 'high-risk' zones, and provide as many details to the public as possible concerning upcoming restrictions to free movement or the lifting of travel restrictions.

Mobilizing Economic Instruments to Address the Outbreak:

WHEREAS we resolve to use all policy instruments, including monetary and fiscal measures, to support workers, companies, and economic sectors most affected in the crisis to mitigate downside risks. EU leaders agreed earlier this year to a €750 billion recovery effort, Next Generation EU, to help member states. Together with funds already in place and contributions to the long-term EU budget, member states have committed at least €2364 billion to support the EU's recovery from the pandemic.

WHEREAS the EU established multiple safety nets earlier this year, including up to €100 billion to cover loans to member states related to the creation or extension of national work programs to help EU citizens retain their jobs during the crisis. The European Investment Bank (EIB) established a €25 billion pan-European guarantee fund to provide loans up to €200 billion for small- and medium-sized companies. The European Stability Mechanism set up a Pandemic Crisis Support to provide loans to all Euro Area member states up to 2 percent of their GDP, up to a total of €240 billion.

WHEREAS the EU has amended its 2020 budget multiple times, adding at least €9 billion to purchase and distribute medical supplies, including protective gear and ventilators; boost testing kit production; enhance financial assistance to hospitals; and accelerate development and deployment of a COVID-19 vaccine.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that member states take advantage of the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) and the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus (CRII+) to use cohesion policy funds to finance crisis-related actions with maximum flexibility, such as by transferring money between different funds and requesting up to 100 percent financing from the EU budget for pandemic recovery efforts.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Commission calls on member states to expand use of the temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) program to provide financial resources to fight the negative economic and social consequences of the coronavirus outbreak. We also call on national authorities and social partners to make a renewed effort to protect the rights of seasonal workers in member states regardless of EU citizenship. We shall expand EU programs to stabilize the agri-food sector and guarantee stable food supplies by providing storage aid in the dairy and meat sectors and authorizing select exceptions from EU competition rules in hard-hit sectors to allow flexibility in crisis management measures.

Post-Pandemic Planning:

WHEREAS the pandemic has revealed inequalities in health status among population groups, countries, and regions, and access to affordable, preventive, and curative health care treatment. This is especially apparent in the uneven distribution of health care systems' capacity, including the numbers of health care workers in some member states.

WHEREAS we must build a stronger European health union, with a future-proof and properly funded EU4Health 2021-2027 program to fill gaps pertaining to the development and manufacturing of medical products, maintenance of hospital equipment supplies, retention of medical human resources, investment in digital tools and services that enable continuity of care, and distribution of essential goods and services in times of crisis.

WHEREAS the pandemic has created lasting challenges in education and training, and member states must increasingly examine possibilities for innovation and accelerated digital transformation, such as intensifying the development of teachers' digital skills and competences.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Commission pledges to partner with member states to ensure that EU4Health Program implementation efforts are based on national needs, in concert with close cooperation with third countries and international partners. EU4Health will become the largest health program in history in monetary terms (€9.4

billion investment) and will provide funding to EU countries, health organizations, and NGOs to boost preparedness efforts, increase surveillance of health threats, and make medicines and medical devices available and affordable.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that we enhance our efforts to strengthen health systems in our countries and globally. We intend to step up investment in the European Regional and Development fund to improve regional health infrastructure, European Social Fund Plus to support vulnerable groups in accessing healthcare, Union Civil Protect Mechanism to create stockpiles for emergency supplies, and Digital Europe to create more effective digital health tools. We fully support the World Health Organization in its global mandate to lead on disease outbreaks and emergencies with health consequences, leaving no geographical vacuum, and encourage all countries, international organizations, and the private sector to assist global efforts such as the Global Preparedness and Response Plan.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that we call on member states to establish a European Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority to improve our capacity to respond to cross-border threats, including emerging infectious diseases, pandemics, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats. This organization would lead efforts to transition medical countermeasures, such as vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics, from research through advanced development for ultimate safety approval.

Foreign Policy and Migration Issues:

EU-Turkey Relations and the Situation in the Eastern Mediterranean:

WHEREAS this Union expresses its full solidarity with Greece and Cyprus over the growing tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean over maritime boundaries and oil and gas drilling rights. We urge Turkey to cease its provocative maritime operations in the area and call on all parties to de-escalate. The EU is ready and eager to mediate the disputes, in consultations with key international partners, including the United States and NATO.

WHEREAS the tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean highlights the importance of European cooperation and consensus building over bilateral geopolitical disputes. The disputed region is an area of strategic importance for the EU and a key area to ensure the peace and stability of the entire Mediterranean and Middle East regions. The EU has a vested interest in ensuring stability on its southern flank, constraining the potential for NATO partners to clash over energy resources, and minimizing the risk for a wider conflict that draws in other member states and Middle East powers.

WHEREAS the EU seeks to expand its strategic relationship with Turkey and views Turkey as an ally and economic partner. Nevertheless, we reaffirm our previous conclusions regarding Ankara's illegal drilling activities in the area and call on our Turkish partners to renew their commitment to EU values and reforms. We remain concerned about Ankara's democratic backsliding, including failing to deliver on pledges to strengthen the independence of its judiciary.

WHEREAS planned exploratory negotiations between Greece and Turkey—stalled following a four-year suspension—represent a historic opportunity to build confidence between the parties and reach a terms of reference to ultimately resolve the disputes over the contested waters, potentially through additional third-party arbitration or referral to the International Criminal Court.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Commission calls on Turkey, as an EU candidate country, to fully respect the law of the sea and the sovereignty of Greece and Cyprus over their territorial seas, as well as all their sovereign rights in their maritime zones. Turkey is an important partner of the EU and is expected, as a candidate country, to uphold the highest standards of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, including in its compliance with international conventions.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that we welcome our forthcoming EU-wide summit on Turkey and urge consideration of additional multilateral conferences to resolve the ongoing maritime and drilling disputes. The EU pledges support to NATO-led efforts to mediate between Greek and Turkish military leadership to prevent the use of force in the Eastern Mediterranean. We remain concerned that heightened tensions and miscues, such as the collision between Greek and Turkish vessels in mid-August, could inadvertently trigger more serious hostilities.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the EU seeks dialogue but reserves the right to impose new sanctions—including serious economic constraints—on Turkey unless Ankara demonstrates its commitment to reducing the stalemate and avoiding a military escalation. We call on Turkey to refrain from pursuing naval and scientific activity in non-delineated waters and to cease its caustic rhetoric until more concerted negotiations occur.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the escalation of tensions undermines prospects for furthering ongoing EU-Turkey cooperation. Provided constructive efforts to stop illegal activities vis-à-vis Greece and Cyprus are sustained, the EU is willing to launch a positive political EU-Turkey agenda with a specific emphasis on the modernization of the Customs Union and trade facilitation, potential easing of visa requirements for Turkish travelers to the EU, high-level dialogue, and continued cooperation on migration issues, in line with the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement.

Moving Forward with a New Pact on Migration and Asylum:

WHEREAS over the EU has failed to overcome the stalemate on migration issues over the past five years and has instead relied on ad-hoc solutions. Key societal issues—demography, climate change, security, and economic change—all affect migration, and the 2015-2016 refugee crisis highlighted major shortcomings in EU external border management policies. The Commission's New Pact on Migration and Asylum seeks to design improved and faster migration and asylum procedures, more equitable burden sharing among member states, and mutually beneficial partnerships with third countries.

WHEREAS the EU has observed a decrease in illegal border crossings (1.82 million to 142,000) and asylum applications (1.28 million to approximately 700,000) from 2015 to 2019. Member states continue to cope with large-scale numbers of refugees arriving by land and sea, overpopulated reception centers, and high volumes of unauthorized migrant movements. In response, this body seeks to establish a new, durable European framework to unify EU migration, asylum, and border management policies and ensure that no member states shoulder a disproportionate responsibility.

WHEREAS it is now incumbent for the European Parliament and Council to examine and adopt the full set of legislation necessary to enable a common EU asylum and migration policy. A credible legal migration and integration policy will benefit European societies and economies, more effectively integrate labor and skill needs in the EU, strengthen resettlement efforts, and promote other complementary pathways.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the Commission calls for integrating swifter pre-entry screening, asylum, and return procedures for all non-EU citizens crossing European external borders without authorization. Pre-entry screening for all irregular arrivals should include identification, health and security checks, fingerprinting and registration in the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database, and quick adjudication of asylum claims with low chances of being accepted without requiring legal entry to member states' territory.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that we call on implementation of a new solidarity mechanism to help stabilize the overall system with a focus on relocation or return sponsorship to create greater fairness and burden sharing in the EU asylum system. In respect of member states' different situations and of fluctuating migratory pressures, the Commission proposes a system of flexible contributions from EU states, ranging from relocating asylum seekers from the country of first entry to taking over

responsibility for returning individuals with no right to stay to providing various forms of operational support.

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the EU seeks to promote tailor-made and mutually beneficial partnerships with third countries to address migrant smuggling and develop more effective readmission agreements. Our proposals seek to establish a newly appointed EU Return Coordinator—supported by a High-Level Network for Return—to provide technical support in managing returns. We anticipate that the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps deployment by 1 January 2021 will provide speed, scale, and flexibility to member state law enforcement activities.