



European Council
The President

Brussels, 13 March 2025

Dear colleagues,

I would like to invite you to our March European Council. The centrepiece of the agenda for this meeting will be competitiveness. We will also follow up on the Special European Council held on 6 March, notably by addressing recent developments in relation to Ukraine and the next steps on defence following the presentation of the White Paper on the Future of European Defence, ahead of the June European Council. On Thursday, we will also hold a working lunch with UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

Our continued support to Ukraine, the need to invest in our defence and our competitiveness are closely interlinked. A more competitive Union will be a stronger Union, better able to protect its citizens, its interests and its values on the global stage.

In the light of my consultations with you and of our exchange during the informal retreat on 3 February, I have identified three priority areas for our competitiveness debate on which we should now decisively move forward: simplification, energy, and the Savings and Investments Union. Of course, building our competitiveness requires advancing also in other areas, including improving the Single Market, fostering talent and skills, and working on our industrial policy. We will specifically address the Action Plans for the automotive, and the steel and metal sectors.

In addition, we will hold a first exchange of views on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and new own resources. We need an overarching approach to expenditure and revenue. Given the challenges that we face, it is important that we all approach this debate with an open mind and in a spirit of collective responsibility. My objective is that this input can be taken into account by the Commission ahead of its proposals for the MFF package, expected before the summer.

In this light, I would suggest the following guiding questions:

- How do we address the main financial equation of the next MFF, i.e. how do we ensure that the budget will have the necessary resources for the European Union to achieve the goals it has set itself?
- What will be the role of new own resources in the next MFF, particularly in light of the future reimbursement of Next Generation EU?

We will also have a number of other important topics on the agenda, including migration, which remains a key priority for us: we will review the ongoing progress, such as on returns, on the basis of the input from the President of the Commission in her letter. We will also discuss the latest developments in the Middle East. During our working lunch with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, we will address multilateralism and other global issues, in particular preparations for the Third UN Ocean Conference and the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development.

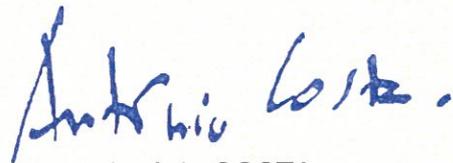
We will start our meeting on Thursday at 11:00 with our traditional exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament. We will also have the possibility to hear from President Zelenskyy.

After lunch, President Christine Lagarde of the European Central Bank and Eurogroup President Paschal Donohoe will join our discussions on economic issues and competitiveness in the framework of a Euro Summit in inclusive format. Over dinner we will hold an exchange of views on the next MFF and new own resources.

I will endeavour to hold our meeting in one day, but given the uncertainty surrounding possible international developments, I cannot rule out the possibility that we may need to continue on Friday morning.

I look forward to our meeting.

Yours sincerely,



António COSTA