



**Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Sassoli and Prime Minister Janša on the presentation of the programme of activities of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU**

Strasbourg, 6 July 2021

Thank you very much Prime Minister,

Thank you President,

The Slovenian Presidency comes indeed at a pivotal point in time and let me highlight a few of the main topics we will be working on.

Of course, the next six months are mainly about consolidating the recent successes in our fight against COVID-19 and speeding up the recovery of our economies. To the first point: We have made remarkable progress what the vaccination is concerned. So I am confident that we will reach our objective, our goal of having enough doses delivered to vaccinate 70% of the adult population in the European Union in the course of the month of July.

This is good, on one hand, but by no means could we relax. Because, first of all, the Delta variant is spreading – this is worrisome. And if I look at the data we have, we see that more and more vaccine doses are left unused. And of course, part of this is linked to increased deliveries that we have, but part is certainly also linked to vaccination hesitancy, but also part of it is linked to organisational issues. The struggle is on to keep up a high pace of vaccinations, as we reach the more and more sceptical part of the population.

The next topic that will be of importance of course is NextGenerationEU and our economic recovery. We all understand that a good and stable epidemiological situation is a precondition for a sustained economic recovery. If we look at NextGenerationEU, here it is important – and you said it Prime Minister – that the Commission will work hand in hand with the Slovenian Presidency to ensure that as many national recovery and resilience plans as possible are being adopted before the end of July, and the rest as quickly as possible thereafter. Of course, here for the adoption, the quality is paramount – both in terms of the foreseen investments but also in terms of the reforms in the plans, and of course in terms of management and control systems. The Commission will use all the tools at its disposal to ensure that the quality is guaranteed.

We must also use the time of the Slovenian Presidency to start the discussion about the New Own Resources. Because we must make sure that the EUR 800 billion – in today's prices – that are being raised on the markets for NextGenerationEU are being paid back intelligently. New Own Resources are necessary, that reflect our policy priorities. In two weeks, the Commission will come forward with its proposal. And I count on the Slovenian Presidency to kick-start the discussion in Council as soon as possible. And I count, of course, on the President of the Parliament to ensure the same in the Parliament. Speed is of the essence.

The same goes for the next important phase of the European Green Deal. As you know, next week, we will present our proposal for systemic change on the road to 2030. There is a lot of work coming up to the Council formations and to the European Parliament to develop their positions. So we, as a Commission, count on the Slovenian Presidency to guide this work and to present, at the end of the Presidency, a progress report.

The Commission will also soon adopt the 2021 Rule of Law Report. I welcome the opportunity to debate this annual Report. The Report assesses the issues and the challenges each European country faces to uphold and to strengthen the pillars that sustain democracy. And let me be very clear: A strong and vibrant rule of law is an absolute precondition for all our other tasks, including a successful economic recovery and a successful transformation.

Let me finish with enlargement. This is a file, on which I know that we share the same objectives as the Slovenian Presidency. The Commission will support the Presidency in its ambition to ensure progress on this file. In particular, we will work together to convince Member States to boost the

accession process for Albania and North Macedonia. The European Union must keep its word.  
Thank you.

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