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Second EU-wide Foresight Network of Ministers for the Future

Joint Note by the Council Presidency and the Commission

The European Union has put the **green and the digital transitions** at the top of its agenda. While the long-term priorities and objectives are clear for each transition, their **twinning**, or capacity to reinforce each other and create synergies, deserves closer examination also in light of current geopolitical shifts. The negative environmental impacts of digitalisation is large and growing, creating tensions between the transitions. Wider use of digital technologies and rebound effects may increase their carbon footprint, overall energy consumption, demand for critical raw materials, and electronic waste. On the other hand, emerging digital technologies and solutions can enable and speed up the decarbonisation of the most polluting sectors, improve energy efficiency, and galvanise the circular economy. By 2050, half of the greenhouse gas reductions will come from technologies that are now only at the demonstration or prototype phase, with a key contribution from horizontal technologies like quantum, cloud and space infrastructure, digital twins, and advanced artificial intelligence.

Against this background, the **second meeting of the EU-wide Foresight Network** will take place on 12 April 2022 at the level of the **27 Ministers for the Future**. Chaired by **Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič** and organised in close cooperation with the **French Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, it should be regarded as yet another important step towards building a worldwide example of good, anticipatory and participatory governance.

The main agenda item will be **understanding the twinning between the green and digital transitions**, the topic of the **2022 Strategic Foresight Report** to be adopted by the Commission in June. It will present a forward-looking and holistic perspective on the interactions between the green and digital transitions towards 2050 and, on that basis, it will aim to identify areas of action where the transitions can mutually reinforce each other, including through the use of emerging technologies. The synergies will have to be identified taking into account the long-term implications of the **Russian military aggression against Ukraine**, which changed the geopolitical context, requiring the EU to drastically accelerate the twin transitions and strengthen its **strategic autonomy**. Broad short, medium and long-term consequences for the twinning will come from Europe's quest for reducing its energy dependency, first and foremost from Russia, and securing access to critical raw materials and key technologies; from rising energy prices and high inflation rates; from risks of cyber threats and to the functioning of supply chains. This geopolitical angle of the twinning will make the Commission's 2022 Strategic Foresight Report closely intertwined with the topic of the 2021 edition.

The second meeting of the EU-wide Foresight Network will help answer the crucial questions: *in view of the current geopolitical context and of long-term megatrends, what policy actions will be needed to ensure an effective twinning between the green and the digital transitions in Europe towards 2050? In addition to those already mentioned, which other emerging technologies could foster mutually beneficial transitions?*

A shared understanding of this challenge for Europe will play a key role in our preparedness and in designing and implementing policies that are fit for future.