

# WELCOME WORDS

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*Dear Colleagues and Friends,*

*we are about to engage together in yet another round of dialogue on pressing issues that profoundly impact on our Union. A year has passed, and the Prague European Summit (PES) is here once again, convened at the heart of the continent, and instantiating, once again, an agora where statesmen meet experts, businessmen, NGO representatives and young leaders who will shape the fates of Europe in the decades to come.*

*Only, this year, it is all different. Europe, like the rest of the world – living, perhaps for the first time ever, through such a common experience synchronised in the real time –, has met with a silent and insidious enemy. We will prevail, no doubt. The cost, however, will be enormous, and while we may not yet see the future, but rather contemplate the possible futures after (or with) COVID-19, it is safe to say that significant pressure on political leadership, economic welfare and social cohesion lie ahead. All against the backdrop of pre-existing issues, further compounding the instability and insecurity at a potentially global scale. Notably, the increased geopolitical competition that will confront the EU with dilemmas of (dis)engagement; societal divisions and the rise of ethnonationalism preying on the false dream of autarky and isolation; or the climate catastrophe.*

*COVID-19 brings about challenges that demand resources and resolve we are yet to mobilise. Perhaps, it also opens new opportunities to adapt for the world to come by not only recovering, but effectively redesigning our polities and economies. It may even inspire a growing sense of a global and cosmopolitan community of “terrestrial fate” which the French philosopher Bruno Latour sets against the futuristic, posthumanist hypermodernisation or the surge in the experience of ethnic national identity.*

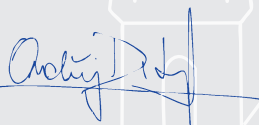
*At a time like this, it is imperative we develop a vision for not only the EU's role in the life of its citizens but also in the world. We must set the EU on a path of effective recovery and build resilience in the face of (inevitable) future shocks, perhaps even becoming more antifragile (distributed and diversified) in nature, rather than just build better defences (of protectionism). It is now that such changes are more important than ever. We need to also consider the participative dialogue about how to best design the EU's recovery and resilience policies, how to invest in a better and sustainable future, or how precisely to set the EU's *boussole strategique* in the making, possibly to the point of arriving, as Josep Borrell would wish, to something akin to a common strategic culture.*

*PES has been a place for such dialogue for years, and even with challenges of our own regarding how to ensure that the conversation is ongoing, we have not yielded. Instead, our team has been working day and night to make it possible – and to do so in a variety of new, innovative ways. We are honoured to have so many distinguished guests lined up to take part in the discussions; seeing, as we do, the importance of publicly engaging issues of the day spanning from more immediate responses to COVID-19 to democracy and rule of law, green transition, trade and industrial policy for the future to the dynamic of Transatlantic relations after the U.S. presidential election. And we are grateful to all of you, who even at this difficult time when we, among other, cannot meet you in the grand halls of the Czernin Palace, take time to participate in the conversation. For it is only by means of an open, responsive and participative dialogue that we may dream of a better world after COVID-19. A world made not just of the pieces of the old glued together, but one united and inspired by a vision of common fate that ultimately provides a horizon to our being.*



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