



European Commission - Speech [Check Against Delivery]



Speech by Vice-President Šefčovič at the launch of 'Spain 2050'

Brussels, 20 May 2021

Dear President Sanchez, dear distinguished participants,

Thank you for inviting me here today for the launch of **España 2050**.

I am very impressed by **the great work carried out by Spain** in embedding foresight into the country's long-term strategy.

The coronavirus pandemic has challenged us in many ways. But – on the positive side – the crisis has also offered us a **unique opportunity to reflect on and rethink** our way of 'making' policy.

Foresight is not about the **next election** but about **this and the next generation**. And this is well encapsulated in this report, Mr President.

To look at the **long-term needs and goals of a country** – both for its people and its economy, and across generations, as is done here today – **requires political courage and scientific rigour**.

We can neither predict the future, nor expect it **to be less disruptive**: new trends and shocks will inevitably emerge and affect our lives.

Strategic foresight can however help anticipate these profound changes and ensure we are – collectively – **better equipped**.

In 2019, President **von der Leyen** asked me to lead the Commission's efforts to **put foresight at the heart of EU policy-making**, to strengthen our shared culture of preparedness and evidence-based anticipatory policy-making.

This is particularly key in **our journey towards long-term objectives** of a greener, more digital and resilient Europe.

On **green jobs**, I particularly welcome **Spain's priority focus on better education and successful reskilling of the population** to accompany these transitions.

Green jobs include other areas related to the green transition, such as low-carbon and smart transport, manufacturing, building adaptation, circular economy, retail and sustainable agriculture.

Yesterday I held a citizens' dialogue with young people **on the future of jobs and skills in the context of the green transition**. It is clear that the twin green and digital transition will require **strong investment in upskilling and reskilling** – to support young people in entering the job market, to help existing employees acquiring new skills and to ensure that those who lost their jobs because of changes in the labour market will be able to find new opportunities.

The Commission **is currently exploring future scenarios for green jobs and skills** needed for the transition, and how drivers of change might impact the skills of the future and our investment policies.

But the future starts now: yesterday we also launched the **EBA250 Academy** with the Spanish Government, our EU Incubator (InnoEnergy), universities, trade unions and companies – **to train up to 150,000 workers** by 2025 to meet the fast-growing needs of the batteries ecosystem, so that our automotive industry can stay in the lead.

Of course, the Commission cannot do all this alone. In order to be successful, **Europe needs engagement from all Member States**.

At the start of this week, with support of the Portuguese Presidency, we launched the first meeting of the Foresight Network at ministerial level, with 27 **'Ministers for the Future'**.

In this process, **Spain is an example to follow**.

España 2050 is a major contribution to our joint strategic effort. I am convinced it will serve as a blueprint for other Member States to follow suit.

I very much support its **strong ambition** across the nine challenges or areas identified as priorities, including:

Building better growth into shaping the twin green and digital transitions, improving education and reskilling the population, preparing the welfare state for longer life expectancy, reducing poverty and inequality – including territorial disparities – to reactivate social mobility, and expanding the foundations of future wellbeing. All these topics are surely **relevant for Spain's future, but are also of key importance for our entire Union.**

Moreover, **strategic foresight needs to be actionable.** And this is precisely what your report is proposing with 200 initiatives that, altogether, form a realistic roadmap to the most desired convergence scenario.

The España 2050 Strategy aims to foster our collective resilience so that we can emerge stronger.

I see this is **not as a top-down endeavour but rather a bottom-up process**, i.e. a starting-point for an open and inclusive debate. I therefore very much support today's launch of a national dialogue with all stakeholders.

This is **also what we plan to do with the 2021 Commission Strategic Foresight report.** It will focus on the EU's open strategic autonomy to reduce our vulnerabilities, with scenarios as to where the EU aims to be by 2040 – **to be discussed in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe.**

This should enable us to draw **collective and actionable conclusions.**

It should also allow us to start testing an important working assumption, as also set out in **España 2050**, in the table of 50 quantitative targets and indicators: that **GDP alone does not provide a comprehensive picture of citizens' wellbeing.** Therefore, further efforts are required across sectors for the development of a strong common approach to measuring wellbeing.

It seems to me that the ambition that España 2050 offers is one of both **competitive sustainability** and **a robust welfare state** – one that puts Spain firmly on par with the most advanced economies.

This is **aligned with our ongoing work on how we can make the EU more resilient** – from a holistic, i.e. social, economic, green, digital and geopolitical, perspective.

I commend this important project and can assure you we will **continue to work hand in hand** with your team and government, Mr President, **to help Europeans take their future into their own hands.**

Thank you.

SPEECH/21/2582

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