Your Excellency Cardinal Parolin, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, it is an honor for me to be with you today. Thank you very much for this discussion, which is highly relevant as it allows us to identify common actions, as the Governor has just said so well. First of all, I would like to begin once again by taking stock of the current crisis that we are experiencing due to the coronavirus pandemic which has led to a major and multidimensional crisis, an economic slowdown, growing social inequalities, and pressures on our national health services. These are just some of the most obvious negative consequences. But the crisis is also a crossroads where important decisions must be taken that bring with them both the need and the opportunity for change. This crisis has highlighted the need to get prepared not only for natural hazards - climate change is the Commission's number one priority - but also for a health disaster. It has also brought about serious social challenges as well as the risk of aggravating social inequalities between individuals and countries. And this is why I would like to start with the main lessons that my team and myself have learned during the crisis from the point of view of research, innovation, education, culture, and youth. Five lessons to learn. The first is that science and education are key to meeting global challenges. If we want to combat climate change, if we want to respond to the challenges of digitalization, if we want to have an inclusive society, we need to consider the role of science and education. Secondly, to meet the challenges and facilitate recovery in Europe, we need targeted investments and flexibility in the instruments that are made available. We need targeted investments in strategic areas with an added value, but we also need enough flexibility so that every region and every Member State can benefit. Thirdly, cooperation. International cooperation is crucial. It is through cooperation that, at the European Union level, together with the Ministers of Research, we set up an action plan in April called "European Research Area versus Corona", which has enabled us to coordinate our research and innovation efforts on vaccines, treatments, and tests. Fourthly, we need openness, we need to be able to exchange data in real-time. That's why we need open science, open access, to be able to move forward together quickly. Just to give you an example; we created the Covid-19 research platform which has been accessed by more than 2.7 million users so far. The fifth lesson is that we must associate, empower, and involve our youth from the very outset of this recovery plan. The youth is the best investment we have for our future and in general; we are talking about our citizens here. Citizens are, in fact, at the heart of our initiatives, at the heart of our policies. Now, the crisis has not only taught us lessons, it has also brought us face to face with the obvious, for instance, digitalization. It is no longer a question of tomorrow, it is part of our daily lives now. Digitalization has allowed the educational process to continue, it has enabled some companies to survive during this crisis, while others have benefited too much from it. At the same time, we have also seen that technology cannot replace human contact, like teachers, for instance. We have to face challenges, for example: to ensure connectivity in rural and remote areas, some students and young people don't have tablets or laptops. There is a risk of exclusion here, a risk of increasing divisions, and thus we must act. I see this crisis as a window of opportunity. It's a momentum to be seized if we want to develop new approaches and solve problems. As

Einstein said: "we cannot solve problems with the same thinking we used when we created them".

And that's why my team and I have adopted two main principles in trying to meet these challenges:" no one left behind and think out of the box." These two expressions for me also translate the values that education, research, and innovation promote in our European society.

And therefore, as European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, and Youth, we are launching a series of initiatives to respond to the challenges of a more human economy. As President Von der Leyen said in her State of the Union address: "We want a human economy that links ecology, economy, social structures, and culture with the common good as its pivotal and unifying principle. And in this context, I would like to emphasize the role of education, which is crucial for the inclusion and integration of all learners and the promotion of their social participation. Education is key to achieving the preservation of our fundamental values and more inclusive and cohesive societies. Education plays a decisive role in promoting the centrality of the human being because education is the foundation for personal development, employability, and active and responsible citizenship. Therefore, education is important for an approach to the world that does not only aim at a profit but rather at the dignity of all human beings and solidarity. Today in Europe 25 million children are at risk of poverty or exclusion. Youth unemployment remains a worrying issue. Socio-economic factors have an impact on school achievements. In this context the role of parents and teachers is fundamental. We must support them and promote good practices. What is the response at the European level? Three initiatives. Three initiatives that for us form a whole. We would like to create synergies between the European Research Area, the European Education Area, and the Digital Education Action Plan. In fact, all these plans aim to develop a true European strategy for knowledge and each of them provides concrete responses to the challenges I just mentioned. First of all, we want to develop the European Education Area by 2025. Six keywords: quality, inclusion, green and digital transition, teachers and trainers, higher education, and the geopolitical dimension. The European Education Area promotes the multidimensional nature of education, highlighting the role of education for peace, values, sustainable development, and skills in a true European educational ecosystem. We need to work harder to have true ecosystems. Here are some examples of the European Education Area. We want to have a climate coalition. I strongly believe in the role of the educational community and we need to work all together to not only understand the challenges of climate change but, first and foremost, to learn how to act and what are the good practices. And, therefore, I am counting on this initiative to start working in this direction in January. Second example: European university alliances. We have 41 alliances at the moment, 280 European universities are working together, but with a different approach. From now on, the approach is to work from the very outset together both with the private sector and civil society to face challenges (challenge-based approach). We aim at maximum flexibility so that our young people, our talents can perceive Europe as their true home. Third example: we want to create European academies of teachers. We want European teachers to work together, to develop quality online resources and share them, and thus, together, address

the challenges of climate change and digitalization. Therefore, the European Education Area will work in synergy with the Digital Education Action Plan. As we know, digital technology is an opportunity but also a risk. And that is why we need to address very specific questions. Example: we are going to have a "Connectivity for schools" initiative. We need to ensure that rural areas and all people living in these remote areas can have access to the same opportunities for their personal and professional development. And then…..

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I want to give you a second example: artificial intelligence. It is undeniably the next game-changer. We need to establish ethical guidelines that show how artificial intelligence should and can be used in education. And here I insist that we need more girls with skills in artificial intelligence so that we don't reproduce discrimination and bias. Thus, two key messages: a "human-driven" approach for the digital world, respect for fundamental values and principles as an added value, building ecosystems for maximum inclusiveness, and solidarity. These two initiatives, the European Education Area and the Digital Education Action Plan, go hand in hand with the European Research Area. We need a true European Research Area because we are excellent in science. Excellence will always remain at the heart of European science, but we must provide access to excellence. Today the division in Europe in the areas of research and innovation is a fact. And I don't think that we can assert true European leadership if all our Member States, all our regions, all our talents are not included. Second: Europe must more rapidly transform the excellence of its scientific results into products and services. We are lagging behind other continents in the field of innovation and that is why we are proposing for the first time to draw up technology roadmaps where industry and academia can work together to identify strategic areas and invest in them. Artificial intelligence, health, hydrogen, these are topics that will enable us to address the challenges of climate change and transition. I'll now turn to the last part of my presentation: cooperating, maximizing, anticipating. All of this will not have the same value without citizens, without the human being at the center from beginning to end. This brings me to my last example, the great novelty of the Horizon Europe program: missions. The missions of the Horizon Europe program are inspired by the Apollo 11 mission. We have chosen five topics that affect every citizen and for which we want every citizen to feel a difference in his or her daily life because of the actions undertaken at the European level. Each of these missions aims at creating public good and in this, they go beyond research and innovation. One mission is to fight cancer: we propose to save 3 million human lives by 2030. Then, the mission on climate change: by 2030 we want to attain progress on climate issues in 200 European regions. We also have a mission for the health of oceans and waters. We know to what extent biodiversity is at the basis of our lives. We have a mission on soil and food and finally a mission on smart, climate-neutral cities. So, I will conclude by saying that, looking at the concept of integral ecology, placed at the heart of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment, I am confident that our missions can contribute, lay a stone in our common home, Europe, where everything is connected, placing economic and digital transitions at

the service of the human being. With these value-centered policies, the European Commission is striving to contribute to a more inclusive society, a society which, aware of its weaknesses, is capable, through research, education, innovation, and its youth, of transforming them into strengths that will enable us to give more adequate responses to current challenges. However, what really counts is that all this is not just nice words but facts; we can do it, as demonstrated by this high-level conference today. We are united and together we act. Thank you.