

Emerging stronger from the crisis together

**For a competitive, innovative and
resilient European economy**

*Priorities of the Federal Ministry for Economic
Affairs and Energy for the German Presidency of the
Council of the EU*





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Preface



Dear fellow Europeans,

Holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union is a special honour for every Member State, but it also represents a great challenge and responsibility. This is all the more true in these days as the coronavirus pandemic has fundamentally changed all our lives in Europe.

During Germany's Council Presidency, it will be incumbent on me as Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy to preside over the Ministerial Council for competitiveness, trade, energy, telecommunications/digital affairs and cohesion. In all these Council configurations, we shall discuss important forward-looking topics and help to chart the future course of EU economic policy.

I want a speedy recovery for our economy and society. Also, we can and must take action now to ensure the European economic model will remain a success in the long term. As for myself, guided by the spirit of European solidarity, I shall put all my energies into making sure the EU will emerge stronger from the crisis.



Therefore, my aim for Germany's six-month Council Presidency is to pave the way for European industry, the SME sector and Europe's many bold entrepreneurs to remain competitive in the future. Open markets, rules-based trade and fair play both within and beyond the EU are essential in this endeavour, which is why they are another of my priorities. We should also work together to grasp the opportunities offered by digitalisation and the European Green Deal.

I am convinced that if we learn the right lessons from the coronavirus crisis and take smart decisions now, we will live up to our Presidency slogan – “Together for Europe's recovery”.



Peter Altmaier

Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy

The Federal Government's programme for the Council Presidency

In its national Presidency Programme, the Federal Government defines the objectives and priorities for the six-month period under Germany's Council Presidency (1 July to 31 December 2020). The Federal Government's programme for the 2020 Council Presidency is entitled

"Together for Europe's recovery".

This publication provides further details about the economic-policy priorities for the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy under the umbrella of the national Presidency Programme.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Presidency of the Council of the EU – What does this entail? | Each semester, a different EU Member State holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU. Germany took over this role from Croatia on 1 July 2020, and will exercise it for the second semester of 2020. The Member State holding the Council Presidency must play a neutral role, that of an arbiter: It must be an honest broker of compromise and seek to find solutions that work for all member states. The success of a Council Presidency is therefore measured not in terms of how much the member state holding the Presidency manages to advance its own national interests, but in terms of the level of agreement achieved with the other Member States and in terms of the results obtained within the Council of the EU.

As a general rule, the Member State holding the Council Presidency chairs the various meetings of the Council – be it ministerial meetings or preparatory committee and working group meetings. The Council Presidency also represents the Council vis-à-vis the European Commission and the European Parliament, other international organisations and third countries.

The guiding principles of Germany's Council Presidency are as follows:

- overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic permanently, as well as the economic recovery
- a stronger and more innovative Europe
- a fair Europe
- a sustainable Europe
- a Europe of security and common values
- a strong Europe in the world.

Much room in the Federal Government's programme for the Council Presidency is dedicated to economic policy items:

"We will place measures to overcome the social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic at the centre of our efforts. To this end, we want to pursue a sustainable and inclusive growth strategy that seeks to strengthen the economy and safeguard jobs as well as to promote Europe's social cohesion. We are committed to ensuring that the transition to a sustainable economy on the basis of the European Green Deal is accomplished and that the digital transformation plays a key role in this regard. Strengthening the single market is key to recovery."

(Excerpt from the chapter "Europe's response to the COVID-19 pandemic")

The Trio Programme



Germany, Portugal, and Slovenia, which form a Trio Presidency together, have drawn up a joint programme for that period. This so-called 18-month Programme of the Council (or Trio Programme) was adopted by the Council in June 2020. It sets out the priorities for the next eighteen months of deliberations within the Council.

Economic policy plays an important role in the Trio Programme:

“The three Presidencies will do their utmost to restore and further deepen the Single Market, take forward the Green transition and the Digital transformation, strive for digital sovereignty, ensure the strategic autonomy of the EU through a dynamic industrial policy, support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups, screen foreign direct investment, build more resilient infrastructure in particular in the health sector, and produce critical goods in Europe to reduce over-dependency on third countries – in line with the key recommendations of the recovery roadmap.”

(Excerpt from the introduction to the Trio Programme)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is a Trio Presidency? | Three successive Council Presidencies together form a ‘Trio Presidency’. Germany’s Trio partners are Portugal and Slovenia, and the trio stretches from 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2021. Portugal will take over from Germany in January 2021. Six months later, in July 2021, the Council Presidency will then be taken over by Slovenia. Back in 2007/2008, the same three countries formed the first Trio Presidency in EU history.

For further information on the programmes, please consult the Federal Government’s Presidency website:

eu2020.de



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The COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions are creating the greatest economic and social challenges ever faced by the European Union (EU). Mastering these challenges requires a joint European response. We need to join forces to build a strong, robust Europe.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is the Council of the European Union? |

Together with the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, also called the Council, is responsible for setting legislation at the level of the EU. Following a proposal by the European Commission, the Council works with the European Parliament to deliberate and adopt EU Directives and Regulations.

Each Member State has one representative on the Council of the EU. This representative must have been authorised by his/her government to take binding decisions on the government's behalf. Depending on the agenda, the Council meets in different formations. In the case of the Energy Council, for instance, the meeting will be attended by the national ministers in charge of energy – in the case of the Federal Republic of Germany this is currently Peter Altmaier, the country's Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy. Minister Altmaier also represents Germany in the Competitiveness Council, the Telecommunications Council, the Trade Ministers' Council, and the Cohesion Council.

As the Presidency of the Council of the EU, we intend to help shape this path forward in a proactive manner based on solidarity. We need to draw the right conclusions from the crisis and press ahead with the recovery in an ambitious and resolute manner. Our aim is to improve the competitiveness, innovative capabilities and resilience of the European economy on a sustainable basis.

The core element of the EU, the European Single Market, must be restored immediately and fully. We want to maintain and boost the global competitiveness of our economy. In addition, we aim to strengthen Europe's sovereignty in important areas through the establishment and expansion of pan-European value chains. Digital and ecological change, strengthening the industrial base and SMEs, a balanced development of the regions and open markets based on strong international trade rules are key elements of a modern, global European economic area and thus also important fields of action on the way out of the crisis.



We need more joint European efforts so that Europe can emerge from the COVID-19 crisis with renewed vigour. We are therefore pursuing a clear focus on joint projects which create added value for Europe and boost cohesion within the EU. This includes the provision of public goods (e.g. health, education). The Social Market Economy serves as a guiding principle here.

As the Presidency of the Council of the EU, we want to contribute to specifying and implementing the European Commission's recovery plan quickly, but also diligently and giving appropriate consideration to the interests of all the EU Member States.

The next Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021 – 2027 is a key element to strengthen Europe where we need joint responses. The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy therefore advocates a quick conclusion of the negotiations on the basis of a fair, balanced and forward-looking deal.

Our priorities

The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy will pursue an ambitious economic policy agenda during the Council Presidency in the second half of 2020. Our primary goals are:

- to lead European business back to strength
- to keep markets open and create a level playing field
- to strengthen the digital sovereignty of the EU
- to shape structural change and harness the opportunities offered by the European Green Deal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Möbius strip | At the heart of the logo for Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU is one of the most fascinating geometrical objects of all, the Möbius strip.

Its indefinite twist lends the Möbius strip a multiplicity that is impossible to pinpoint in space, meaning that different people approaching the Möbius strip from different angles or perspectives will always eventually meet on the same side of the strip.

In the context of the logo, the strip stands for a Europe that is both innovative and integrated, and which uses exchange to forge commonalities from even the most disparate of interests. In other words: a strong strip that binds together a united Europe.





1. Leading European business back to strength



Europe's economic strength is rooted in the performance and innovative capabilities of its companies. Our aim is to work together to lead a strengthened European economy out of the COVID-19 crisis and to boost competitiveness, innovative capabilities and resilience.

Breathing new life into Europe's industrial base and setting it on course for the future

European industry is the driving force of the economy and makes an important contribution towards overcoming the economic crisis caused by COVID-19 and towards shaping the digital and ecological transition. The revival and strengthening of the competitiveness of European industry on the basis of the European industrial strategy and taking account of the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and family-run businesses is therefore a central goal of the German Presidency of the EU Council.

At the informal meeting in October of the ministers responsible for competitiveness, we wish to discuss how we can successfully lead Europe's industrial sector out of the crisis and make it fit for the future, how we can strengthen the Single Market, optimise the policy framework, address governance issues, and successfully shape the digital and ecological transition for industry. We wish to anchor the results in the form of Council conclusions at the formal Competitiveness Council in November, where we will primarily focus on industrial policy issues.

In order to promote the settlement of fundamental areas of industrial production in Europe and to build up our technological sovereignty, we wish to strengthen appropriate initiatives to strengthen European strategic value chains. The Important Projects of



Common European Interest (IPCEIs) are a central instrument to facilitate a greater number of basic innovations "made in Europe". In order to progress these, we are looking to build further alliances with as many participants as possible and to roll out IPCEIs more quickly, especially in the fields of battery cells, microelectronics and hydrogen. To this end, we will actively support the new Industry Forum from the outset.

We intend to discuss possibilities for pan-European cooperation on hydrogen technologies and digital industry platforms at the informal meeting of the ministers responsible for competitiveness in October. At the end of November, we plan to host a high-level conference in Berlin to discuss lessons learnt and best practices in the field of battery cell manufacturing. At the Space Council in November, we aim not only to discuss how we can revitalise and boost the competitiveness of the European space sector, but also to agree on guidelines that will level the playing field in the global space industry.



Also, we will look into initiatives like the use of shore-side electricity in ports throughout the entire EU.

Creating a better framework for Europe's SMEs

The small and medium-sized enterprises, the backbone of Europe's economy, are particularly badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our aim is therefore to further develop the European SME Strategy presented by the European Commission in March in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, we will be hosting a high-level conference in Berlin in mid-November. In addition to coping with the direct consequences of the crisis, we aim to boost the resilience and economic potential of the SMEs. This involves a coherent and effective dovetailing of industrial policy, SME policy, digital and innovation policy, and a systematic linkage of these with other fields of economic and social policy. Our particular attention is devoted to those companies which could be forced out of the market as a result of the crisis.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Competitiveness Council | The Competitiveness Council is tasked with strengthening the EU's competitiveness and economic growth within the EU. It deals with the Single Market, the industrial sector, research and innovation, and space. For the time of Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU, the sessions relating to the Single Market and Industry as well as space will be chaired by the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy. In addition to current topics relating to the Single Market and industrial policy discussions will also cover SME policy and measures to be taken in this field. The Competitiveness Council also covers space technology and holds some of its meetings on these together with the ESA Council in a formation called the EU-ESA Space Council.

Another decisive lever to tackle the crisis and to boost competitiveness and growth is to make the regulatory framework as efficient, innovation-friendly and future-proof as possible. It is important to relieve the burden on companies, citizens and administrations, and to offer them the best possible policy framework. To this end, we intend to give a key boost to stepping up the work on better regulation and cutting bureaucracy at EU level. In particular, we want to reduce unnecessary compliance costs via an effective implementation of the 'One in, one out' rule, to boost innovative capabilities via the systematic use of experimentation clauses and regulatory sandboxes, and to improve the regulatory framework for SMEs via rigorous SME tests.

Fully restoring and strengthening the Single Market

With its four fundamental freedoms, the Single Market is at the heart of the EU. Its smooth functioning is key for the EU's economic recovery and political cohesion. In order to make full use of its potential, the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital, which is currently drastically curtailed in some areas due to national measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, must be fully restored.

Correspondingly, we as the Council Presidency will advocate a coordinated approach to the regular review of the epidemiological need for and the gradual lifting of all national restrictions. A particular focus will be on the rapid restoration of the Single Market for services and of freedom of movement for workers. Also, with a view to boosting the resilience of the Single Market and preventing future crises, we wish to establish a regular exchange of information between the EU Member States and the European Commission on national measures which restrict the Single Market.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Cohesion Council | In the field of cohesion policy, the Council takes decisions about fundamental questions relating to economic, social, and territorial cohesion. The objective here is to foster harmonised development throughout the EU and to bridge the developmental gaps that exist between individual regions. Together with the European Parliament, the Cohesion Council adopts the legal acts creating the framework for funding from the EU structural funds. These provide the necessary financing to allow European regions to invest in growth and employment and thereby strengthen Europe's competitiveness. Cohesion policy has a highly positive effect on local communities as it helps create jobs, supports manufacturing in SMEs, and fosters research and development.

We want to develop key forward-looking aspects of the Single Market and, in this context, advocate effective implementation and enforcement of the Single Market rules and a removal of remaining unjustified barriers in the Single Market. We aim to anchor our shared priorities in the field of Single Market policy and the next steps towards their implementation in the form of (Council) conclusions at the formal Competitiveness Council in September.

We wish to bring the negotiations on the Single Market Programme to a successful conclusion as quickly as possible in order to ensure that the new programming period can start on time.

Using the EU structural funds to stimulate the economic recovery

European cohesion policy plays a key role as we cope with the crisis and rebuild the economy. It strengthens the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU and, as a horizontal task, complements other European policy fields like industrial and SME policy, digitalisation and energy policy.

In the short and medium term, the European regions are to receive the support for investment that they need to restore their economic potential via the new REACT-EU initiative proposed in the context of the European Commission's recovery plans. As the Council Presidency, we are working for the legal basis to be rapidly put in place so that the funding can soon be provided and deployed via the EU structural funds.

Another key issue is to conclude the ongoing trilogue negotiations on the package of legislation on the EU structural funds as quickly as possible so that the new programming period can begin on time or as soon after as possible. We need a modern and pro-innovation European structural policy which promotes investment in forward-looking technologies and strengthens the competitiveness of the European regions. Our focus here is on modernisation and simplification.





At the high-level cohesion conference in Halle (Saale) at the end of September, we aim to engage in dialogue with the EU Member States on the role of the EU structural funds in tackling the crisis and rebuilding. The focus is on strategies to implement the new priority objectives, and in particular the innovative and smart economic transition, as well as climate change mitigation and environmental protection as driving forces for innovation.

Modernising competition law

Against the background of increasing globalisation and digitalisation, there is a need for a review and modernisation of European competition law in order to ensure that competition takes place fairly and on a level playing field.

During the European Competition Day in September, we want to discuss how we can modernise the framework of competition law. Not least, the distortions of competition in the Single Market due to state-subsidised and state-controlled companies from third countries must be resolutely countered; it is necessary to prevent European companies weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic from becoming take-over targets for highly subsidised rivals from third countries.

Against this background, we will take an ambitious approach to taking up and continuing the negotiations on the European Commission White Paper on foreign subsidies in the Single Market that proposes options for an instrument against distortions of competition by state-subsidised or state-controlled companies from third countries (level playing field instrument).

The adaptation of the State aid framework also plays a central role in coping with the economic crisis. We want to work with our European partners to discuss whether and to what extent crisis-related relaxations in the form of the Temporary Framework might be made permanent or replaced or supplemented by new measures in order to be able to meet current and

future challenges and to ensure a level playing field within and outside the EU. We welcome the European Commission's announcement that it will revise the State aid rules and adapt the environment and energy guidelines in order to expedite a sustainable transformation of the economy. The future State aid rules should permit the EU Member States to pursue an ambitious energy, environment and climate policy whilst maintaining the international competitiveness of European companies.

Utilising the potential of efficient public procurement

We will undertake an ex-post analysis of public procurement activities during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to identify possibilities to optimise the processes and to improve European coordination. Building on this, we want to draw up blueprints for future crisis situations. Further to this, we will discuss how the potential of public procurement can best be used to stimulate the EU economy, taking account of the economic, social and environmental sustainability goals, but also to boost innovation. The procurement conference in October is intended to provide an important contribution to the debate on both aspects.







2. Keeping markets open and creating a level playing field

Against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, we want to engage in a positive discussion on globalisation and international value chains. As the Council Presidency, we will work proactively to maintain open markets, a rules-based EU trade and investment policy, and competitive conditions that are comparable and enforceable. We need to counteract isolationist tendencies.

Safeguarding rules-based trade

The multilateral trading system centred on the World Trade Organization (WTO) remains the foundation of EU trade policy. We want to use the informal meeting of EU trade ministers in September to back the modernisation of the WTO. Our aim is to prepare an EU proposal for WTO reform by the end of 2020. We want to take an ambitious approach to advancing the negotiations on the plurilateral WTO initiatives, and particularly on digital trade. We want to hold the trilogue on amending the enforcement regulation at the beginning of our Council Presidency.

Making it possible to diversify supply chains, improving market access

In addition, we will press ahead with the work on ambitious and balanced trade and investment agreements and on preparations for the reform of the Generalised System of Preferences. We are aiming at an agreement on an ambitious EU-China Investment Agreement by the end of 2020, which must substantially remove existing asymmetries in market access and competitive conditions. And we are committed to

rapid progress on the finalisation of the agreement with MERCOSUR and the modernised agreement with Mexico.

Pressing ahead with the reform of investment protection

In order to maintain internationally attractive conditions for investment and to safeguard public acceptance of trade and investment protection agreements, we will work intensively towards the modernisation of the rules and institutions of investment protection. The benchmark for all new investment protection agreements by the EU should be the EU trade agreement with Canada (CETA), with its investment court system. We support the EU's initiative for a multilateral investment court. With regard to investment in the EU, there is a need for a follow-up mechanism for bilateral investment protection agreements between EU Member States which ensures a high level of protection.



Creating a level playing field

Open markets and free trade require the existence of a comparable policy framework for domestic and foreign market participants (a level playing field). We are calling for a modernisation of the international rules on export credits which takes account of the change in the market environment and the increasing integration of non-OECD countries into the global economy. In order to give European companies more effective protection against unfair competition in foreign trade, we will also advocate effective application of the modernised trade-defence instruments.

Further to this, we are aiming at the liberalisation of procurement markets in third countries.

We will further develop the rules on export control in the field of dual-use goods, oriented to the current foreign and security policy interests of the EU and its Member States. We wish to complete the trilogue on the new version of the Dual Use Regulation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Trade Ministers' Council | The Trade Minister's Council is in charge of shaping the EU's trade policy. Responsibility for trade policy rests with the EU. This means that only the EU as a whole is able to adopt trade-related legislation and conclude international trade agreements. This is why the European Commission develops its trade policy in close coordination with the Member States. The European Parliament also has an important role to play in this process. It is the Trade Minister's Council that adopts international trade and partnership agreements with individual states or regions. The Council also gives the European Commission mandates for starting negotiations on international trade agreements. It additionally takes decisions on export policy.

We want to progress the EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy to the benefit of the European economy and the partners in third countries, in order to create new market opportunities for EU companies, particularly in large-scale strategic projects in third countries.

Further deepening trade relations with third countries

We want to shape a future relationship between the EU and the United Kingdom which is as close as possible. Our goal is an ambitious, broadbased, deep and flexible partnership. In the economic field, we wish to see free trade that is as frictionless as possible whilst maintaining a level playing field. The integrity of the Single Market, the indissolubility of the four fundamental freedoms and the EU customs union are the indispensable foundations of any agreement.

We want to shape comprehensive and proactive cooperation between the EU and the U.S. and to constructively drive a positive and mutually beneficial transatlantic trade agenda. The United States is our closest foreign and security partner outside Europe.

The close ties between the states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the European Single Market are a success story which we wish to maintain and deepen. Close and partnership-based cooperation with these countries is more important than ever in the context of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the relationship between the EU and Switzerland, we are committed to the maintenance and consolidation of the relations via the establishment of an institutional framework.

3. Strengthening the digital sovereignty of the EU



The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences have reminded us once again of the vital benefits of digitalisation for society and the economy. At the same time, the crisis has given a boost to digitalisation in many areas. However, it has also shown that providers from third countries, particularly from the U.S. and China, dominate in some areas. As the Council Presidency, we have therefore set ourselves the goal of positioning and strengthening Europe as an innovative centre for a digitally sovereign economy and society.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Telecommunications Council | Where telecommunications are concerned, it is the Council's role to work with the European Parliament to create legal provisions that govern electronic communications networks and services and their interoperability, and to otherwise set the right framework and issue guidance. A prominent example of this work is the Roaming Regulation. Beyond this, the objective of EU policy is to foster competition in the telecommunications sector, improve cybersecurity levels, and support innovation. Many aspects of digitalisation, including Artificial Intelligence, the data economy, and the Internet of Things, also fall within the scope of this Council formation.

It is in our fundamental interest, as a continent with a strong research community and broad industrial base, to utilise and develop our innovative capabilities in fair competition. Together, we want to work to ensure that Europe disposes of its own cutting-edge capabilities in key enabling technologies whilst maintaining the openness of the Single Market. At the same time, we need to build and safeguard high-performance, secure and sustainable digital infrastructure and develop common European standards for new technologies. We need to transfer our set of European values into the digital age.



A rapid roll-out of digital infrastructure

We need high-performance digital infrastructure so that Europe's citizens and companies can make use of the opportunities offered by the digital transformation.

The GAIA-X project is a significant initiative oriented to the entire EU for the establishment of secure and trustworthy sovereign European data infrastructure. Working together, we aim to develop this project as the foundation for a vibrant digital ecosystem and to attract other European partners on board. As the Council Presidency, we also wish to continue and coordinate the European activities and measures in the field of 5G security, and to ensure the greatest possible EU-wide availability of gigabit networks.

By the end of 2020, we want to finalise the negotiations on the EU's Digital Europe funding programme, which is to include numerous measures in support of Europe's digital sovereignty.

In order to protect our consumers, we will press more strongly for a binding minimum level of IT security for (IoT) products connected to the internet.

Using possibilities offered by Artificial Intelligence and ensuring sufficient data availability

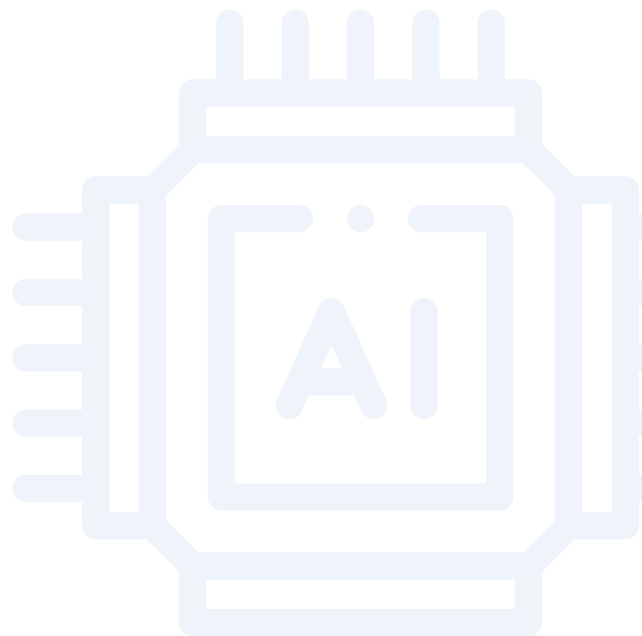
Our aim is to make Europe a global leader in the development and mastery of applications using Artificial Intelligence (AI). This includes a coordinated European concept for a human-centred approach and the related ethical aspects of AI. This is because successful technological leadership in the field of AI will be crucial for Europe's future economic growth and prosperity. AI also makes a major contribution to crisis management, e.g. in the field of medical research or the fight against fake news.

Further to this, we need clarity about how non-personal data can be used and shared more with a view to the development of new technologies and business models. A precondition for the successful use of AI in the EU is improved availability and usability of data, not least for research and further applications. It is important to establish uniform data quality for interoperable solutions so that important findings can help us to cope with crises.

We also want to enable innovative and competitive digital platforms to emerge and grow in the EU – platforms that enjoy global success. It is important, whilst upholding data protection, to build up access to data, to support start-up and innovation ecosystems, to facilitate access to venture capital, not least during the phase of internationalisation of business models, and to ensure that there is a level playing field for internet platforms.

We want to use the informal meeting of the ministers responsible for telecommunications and digital affairs in October to progress the topics of Artificial Intelligence, the platform economy and digital sovereignty.

We want to continue ambitious negotiations on the ePrivacy Regulation with a view to achieving a general approach in the Council.






4. Shaping structural change and harnessing the opportunities offered by the European Green Deal



Notwithstanding the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are committed to the shared goal of making the EU the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Against this background, we welcome the European Commission's proposal for a European Green Deal. We aim to combine an ambitious climate policy with a fresh stimulus for growth and innovation.



This can only be achieved if we have an innovative and competitive European industrial sector. The debate about targets must therefore take place on the basis of a sound and robust impact assessment. This will ensure that the European Green Deal can live up to its goal to be a growth strategy.

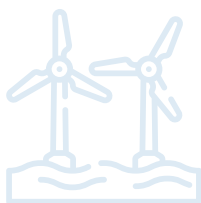
In order to support the economic recovery, we will particularly focus on measures in the European Green Deal which offer relief or a boost in the short term. We need to avoid additional burdens on Europe's companies and citizens, as well as carbon leakage.

The transition to a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy creates a very great need for investment. This can only be met by the public and private sectors together. The implementation of the investment plan for a sustainable Europe and of the mechanism for fair structural change, including the Just Transition Fund, is therefore of great importance. Here, the scarce budget funding needs to be deployed as effectively as possible.

Developing high-growth fields of technology and contributing to climate change mitigation

The shift towards a climate-friendly, secure and affordable energy supply opens up economic potential which can make an important contribution towards leading the European economy out of the crisis and developing new, forward-looking areas of growth. For example, offshore wind projects and hydrogen technologies not only make an important contribution to energy policy, in order to attain the EU's ambitious energy and climate targets, but also offer major opportunities in the field of industrial policy.

Cross-border cooperation amongst the EU Member States is vital if we are to leverage the potential offered by renewable energy quickly and cost-efficiently. However, we currently lack a positive European policy framework for joint projects by the EU



Member States, particularly in the field of offshore wind energy. Our goal is to adopt Council conclusions which take account of the strategy on offshore renewable energy announced by the European Commission. At the heart of this, there should be elements of an EU enabling framework which fosters the implementation of joint projects.

Hydrogen technology offers enormous potential in terms of the economy and energy policy. In view of this, we welcome the hydrogen strategy announced by the European Commission and the strategy on energy system integration. Europe has a vital interest in a secure and future-proof supply of gaseous fuels and is determined to make use of their potential for decarbonisation. The relevant European and global markets and infrastructure need to be built up so that natural gas can successively be replaced by hydrogen, and so that other areas of use for hydrogen can be developed. Here, we are aiming to adopt Council conclusions. We want to use a high-level conference in early October in order to progress the debate on the development of an EU Single Market for hydrogen which also gives consideration to the global dimension.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

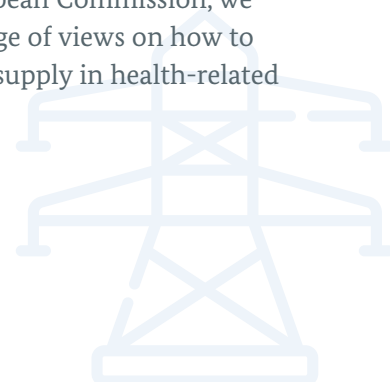
The Energy Council | In the field of energy, the Council is responsible for working with the European Parliament to create legal provisions on the functioning of the energy markets that safeguard energy security, promote energy efficiency and new and renewable sources of energy, and foster interconnection between the energy networks. European solutions are of the essence when it comes to reconciling the objectives of energy security, competitiveness, and climate protection as the energy transition is progressing. An important recent example of this is the EU's 'Clean Energy for All Europeans' package.

Ensuring the attainment of the EU 2030 targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency

On the basis of the findings of the assessment by the European Commission of the National Energy and Climate Plans, we intend to consider how the EU's 2030 energy targets for the improvement of energy efficiency and the expansion of renewable energy can be attained. Here, we are advocating a market-based, technology-neutral approach. We would like to discuss the following instruments in particular in terms of their contribution towards achieving the targets and their implications for the energy sector: pricing of emissions in the heating and transport sectors, initiative of the European Commission to boost the pace of renovation in the buildings sector (renovation wave), and a supportive framework to mobilise investments in renewable energy projects.

Exchanging lessons learnt on how to uphold a stable and secure supply of electricity in a crisis

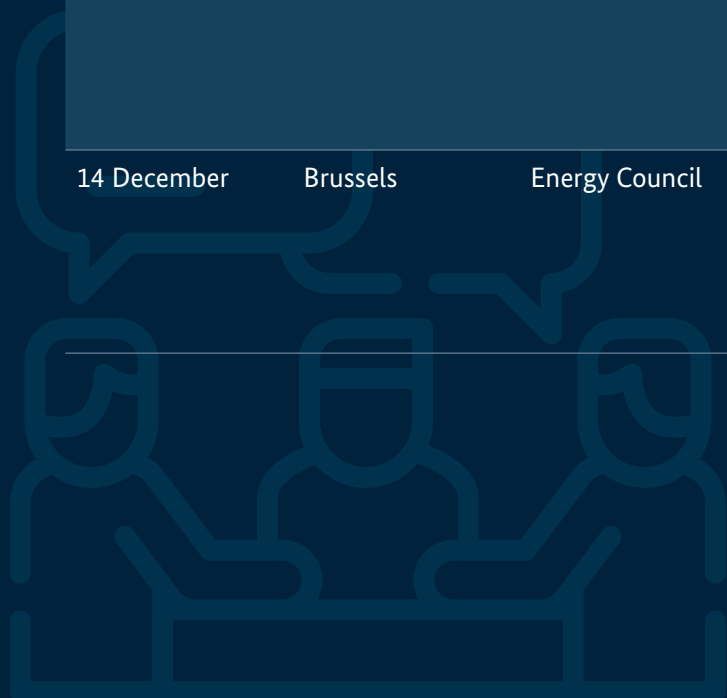
A stable and secure supply of electricity is key to dealing successfully with any sort of crisis. Essential services depend on a stable and secure supply of electricity. In order to ensure that the people working in the electricity sector can continue providing their much-needed services, and in order to further improve the exchange of information between system operators and regulatory authorities, as well as Member States and the European Commission, we wish to continue our exchange of views on how to best maintain the electricity supply in health-related crisis situations.



Events

Events

Date	Location	Title	Focus of the event
Formal Council meetings			
24 September	Brussels	Competitiveness Council (Internal Market, Industry)	Discussions will centre on how to strengthen the Single Market, the EU economy's international competitiveness and industrial resilience, and on how to improve the framework for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – in particular the European Commission's SME strategy.
09 November (tbc)	Brussels	Trade Ministers' Council	This Council meeting will focus on WTO reform, trade relations with the U.S. and China, and other bilateral trade relations, e.g. with MERCOSUR and Mexico.
poss. 12 November	Brussels	Cohesion Council	Depending on the progress made in the various negotiations, the agenda is to focus on legislative projects for the Cohesion package for 2021 – 2027, the Just Transition Fund, and the contribution cohesion policy can make to crisis management and economic recovery in times of COVID-19.
19 – 20 November	Brussels	Competitiveness Council (Internal Market, Industry, Space)	The debate will centre on the competitiveness of the European industrial sector, the role of the industrial sector for future growth and employment, on better regulation and cutting red tape, and European space policy.
7 December	Brussels	Telecommunications/ Digital Council	This formation will focus on the ePrivacy Regulation and the Governance framework for shared European dataspace. Beyond this, the provisions that will govern the establishment of the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre and Network of Coordination Centres will be prepared. Another item high up on the agenda will be the Regulation on the establishment of the Digital Europe programme (2021 – 2027).
14 December	Brussels	Energy Council	Discussions are to focus on recent issues related to EU Energy Policy, particularly with regard to the integration of energy systems and the work undertaken to reach the EU targets for renewable energy and energy efficiency.



Date	Location	Title	Focus of the event
<i>Informal meetings at ministerial level</i>			
20–21 September	Berlin	Informal meeting of Trade Ministers	Ministers will discuss current challenges for trade policy, also against the backdrop of the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis and the work being undertaken to overcome this crisis. There will also be discussions about the continuation of WTO reform, which is to strengthen rules-based trade and open markets.
5–6 October	Berlin	Informal meeting of Energy Ministers	Featuring on the draft agenda for this meeting are discussions about decarbonising the gas sector, about the framework for an EU market in hydrogen, and about Member States' cross-border co-operation on offshore wind projects.
14–15 October	Baden-Baden	Informal meeting of Telecommunications and Digital Policy Ministers	The agenda is to consist of topical issues touching on European telecommunications and digital policy – with a special focus on the data economy and Artificial Intelligence.
22–23 October	Königswinter (close to Bonn)	Informal meeting of the ministers in charge of competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry)	This informal meeting will be dedicated to the EU's economic recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Events

Date	Location	Title	Focus of the event
High-level conferences			
7 – 8 September	Berlin	European Competition Day	Participants will discuss ideas on how to level the playing field between European companies and state-backed or state-controlled companies from third countries, challenges for competition policy that arise during international crises (such as COVID-19), and potential designs for a competitive framework for the digital economy.
29 – 30 September	Halle (Saale)	Cohesion Conference: “The role of EU cohesion policy in times of the coronavirus crisis”	An exchange of opinions about the role of the EU structural funds against the backdrop of the COVID-19 crisis is to take place as part of the conference. Most importantly, the objectives for the next funding period are to be discussed, along with suitable instruments for supporting economic recovery and regional competitiveness, and for building resilience against future crises.
5 October	Berlin	High-level conference on the eve of the informal Energy Ministers’ Meeting	The plan is for this conference to be dedicated to the role that hydrogen can play in the efforts to decarbonise the gas sector.
21 October	Berlin	Conference on Public Procurement	The aim of this conference is to shed light on political decision makers’ and European experts’ expectations with regard to public procurement, and to also factor in the impact of COVID-19, the European Green Deal, and digitalisation.
22 – 23 October	Friedrichshafen	19th European Tourism Forum: Prospects for tourism – ways towards recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, development of a resilient tourism industry	As the tourism sector has been one of the worst affected by the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, this year’s conference during the German Presidency of the Council of the EU will be dedicated to overcoming the crisis and to recalibrating the tourism sector in Europe. Most importantly the focus will be on making tourism in Europe more resilient.
28 October	Berlin	Framing Creative Futures. Forum meets ECIS 2020	The plan is to discuss European and national questions pertaining to policies affecting the creative industries during and after COVID-19. The focus is to be on the future: what can be done to make industry and civil society more aware of the creative industries, and what are the crucial points where more cooperation is needed?



Date	Location	Title	Focus of the event
High-level conferences			
3 – 4 November	Berlin	Conference on Better Regulation (DEBR)	The conference provides a forum for strategic discussions on developing better regulation and cutting red tape at European level. It is likely that this conference will be largely about the focal issues of the Presidency in this field, i.e. cutting red tape, ‘one-in, one-out’, and ‘experimentations clauses and Regulatory Sandboxes’.
10 – 11 November	Berlin	European Cluster Conference	This conference is designed to facilitate a high-level exchange on challenges facing cluster policy and discussions at the level of cluster initiatives within the EU. Among the key issues debated will be ways in which European supply and value chains can be supported and safeguarded.
16 – 17 November	Berlin	SME Assembly	This conference, which takes place every year, is the main event of the European SME week. It brings together representatives of the European Commission, the Member States, science and academia, European and national associations, and from business for discussions on the latest developments in EU SME policy.
23 – 24 November	Berlin	Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan Conference	This conference will highlight ways in which innovative energy technologies can help progress towards carbon neutrality. The focus here will be on a positive interplay between the different elements of the energy systems at the technical level and beyond.
23 – 24 November	Berlin	European Networking Conference on Battery Cell Production	This event marks the start of the two “Important Projects of Common European Interest” (IPCEIs) that are being launched along the value chain for batteries. It provides a forum for networking, expert discussions, and the initiation of cross-border cooperation.

Faces of the Presidency

A large number of staff in the various Directorate-Generals of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy are working for the success of the German Presidency of the EU Council. All these activities are coordinated by the Directorate-General for Europe and by the division “German Presidency of the EU Council, 2nd half of 2020”. Germany’s Permanent Representation to the EU is the key centre of the Federal Government’s EU network for the Council Presidency.

At the political level, the Federal Minister, the State Secretary in charge of European policy, and the Parliamentary State Secretary in charge of European policy are representing the ministry with regard to all matters related to European policy that are dealt with by the Presidency. From among all the ministry’s staff, we would like to introduce to you some of the main players who will be shaping Germany’s Presidency of the Council in terms of economic policy.

Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy



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Federal Minister for
Economic Affairs and Energy



Claudia Dörr-Voß
State Secretary for
European policy



Marco Wanderwitz
Parliamentary State Secretary in
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Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union



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Dr. Norbert Schultes
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Dr. Susanne Hegels
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“German Presidency
of the Council of the EU,
2nd half of 2020”

