

Taking stock of Germany's Council Presidency in the field of economic policy

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Economic Affairs and Energy*



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Preface



Dear Europeans,

Germany took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at a difficult time. The coronavirus pandemic dominated the content of the agenda and the way in which the events under the Presidency were held. For this very reason, it was important for us as Council Presidency to strengthen the cohesion of the Member States and to develop joint, coordinated solutions to tackle this unprecedented challenge. The European Union has proven its ability to act. In working together, the Council succeeded in taking the necessary measures to deal with the crisis and its consequences and to draw the right lessons from it for the future.

In the five Council formations I have chaired, it was very clear that all of the Member States are also determined to see the current difficult situation as an opportunity in a quest to emerge from the crisis stronger together – and to ensure that Europe's economy remains competitive, innovative and resilient in the long term. We have agreed to put the green and the digital transformation at the heart of our efforts to boost the economic recovery. And we are united in our ambition to drive forward these transitions with resolve and to consistently grasp the opportunities held by them. In the future, the European Union will also take an even more active role in promoting a level playing field in a changed global environment.

This brochure contains an overview of the progress and results that we have achieved during the German Council Presidency in the areas of responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

"Together for Europe's recovery" was both the title and the aspiration of our Council Presidency. We were able to lay important foundations for the recovery of the European economy and its direction for the future. It is now the task of our Trio partners Portugal and Slovenia to continue to drive forward the projects we have started together for the benefit of Europe's citizens and the European economy.

I will do all I can to support them in this endeavour.



Peter Altmaier
Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy

PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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 during 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.

Results in the field of economic policy

The main focus of Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU has been to pave the way for **economic recovery** in the wake of the coronavirus crisis while enhancing the **resilience of European business**. This includes boosting competitiveness and innovative capacities, keeping markets open and opposing protectionism, pushing ahead with the transition towards clean growth and strengthening the EU's digital and technological sovereignty. Special consideration has been given to the competitiveness of Europe's many small and medium-sized, often family-run companies as well as the industrial sector.

An important milestone was marked when the Council of the EU and the European Parliament agreed on the next **Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021 – 2027** and on the temporary **European Recovery Instrument**. In addition to securing the financial basis for the reforms that are needed to confront the current crisis, the agreement has also laid the foundation of a successful structural transition towards a digital and green economy that will be vital to future growth, prosperity and employment.

In 2020, the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic has presented the European Union and its Member States with an unprecedented challenge. Apart from the burden it has placed on people's lives and society, the pandemic has also led to the most severe economic downturn in the EU's history. This historic crisis requires a European response that is both resolute and vigorous. Therefore, Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2020 has remained committed to fostering **cohesion and solidarity** among Member States in an effort to strengthen the EU as a whole. Drawing on the achievements of Croatia's Presidency during the first half of the year, Germany has been working together closely with its Trio partners Portugal and

Slovenia, the other EU Member States and European institutions in order to draw the right lessons from the crisis and to set the stage for a **EU that will continue to be competitive, innovative and economically robust**.



“30 years ago Germany faced societal and economic challenges but began the task with optimism and deep belief for a better future. Today, we also face an unprecedented challenge. The effects of the corona crisis are deep and affect our daily lives, our livelihood and our prosperity. We have acted rapidly and provided needed support to citizens and businesses in these difficult times. And we take this opportunity to build a better future, to change towards a more green and digital economy. Of course, such a transformation is only possible as a joint endeavour. So it was very inspiring for me, amongst several events hosted by the German Presidency, to participate in the Informal Competitiveness Council and the European Competition Day, together with Minister Altmaier and to discuss the way forward.”

Margrethe Vestager
Executive Vice-President of the
European Commission in charge of
‘A Europe Fit for the Digital Age’

I. Leading European business back to strength

In the field of economic policy, Germany's Council Presidency has sent out a signal of a new start. It has managed to boost the **modernisation of Europe's economies** with a view to safeguarding the long-term **competitiveness of European business**. Through in-depth discussions, the Council of the EU has given impetus to important concerns such as the digital and green transition.

In order to strengthen the EU's economic base, a **functioning and future-proof Single Market** is essential. Under Germany's Council Presidency, heads of state and government have acknowledged **Council conclusions** by the Competitiveness Council that help to improve the enforcement of Single Market rules, remove unnecessary barriers and increase the resilience of the Single Market. In these conclusions, Member States call on the European Commission to present a strategic report on the progress that has been made and on the need for any further regulatory and non-regulatory measures. Further to this, the conclusions identify key fields of action for a future-proof Single Market: the green and digital transition, a Single Market for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), free and fair competition, and structural reforms in Member States that aim to enhance competitiveness.

The successful conclusion of negotiations on the **Single Market Programme** marked another important milestone on the path towards a stronger internal market. A total of about €4.2 billion has been earmarked for this programme throughout the next seven years. It will not only strengthen consumer rights, but also increase the competitiveness of businesses, especially SMEs. To this end, the 'Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises – COSME' will be optimised and continued. Also, continued support is to be given to instruments such as the SOLVIT problem solving service, effective market surveillance and harmonised technical standards for the Single Market.

European industry has a major role to play in speeding up economic recovery and improving the EU's resilience. Under Germany's Council Presidency, discussions on industrial policy have focused, among other things, on how the innovation environment can be enhanced and what technologies can pave the way forward in this context. The **Council conclusions adopted on industrial policy** contain a clarion call for action: in order to speed up the green and digital transition as well as the move towards greater resilience, the Commission needs to take measures to strengthen the economic potential of European industry.

The Council conclusions on industrial policy also highlight the importance of **pan-European cooperation in the effort to promote innovative enabling technologies**. Germany's Council Presidency has seen considerable progress on instruments such as 'Industrial alliances' and 'Important Projects of Common European Interest' (IPCEIs), especially in the fields of battery cells and hydrogen technologies. The IPCEI on microelectronics and communication technologies will help to put European hardware technology on a much broader basis.

Aside from efforts to relieve the immediate impact of the crisis, SME policy has largely been focused on measures to strengthen the resilience and economic potential of small and medium-sized enterprises. Discussions have explored the question of how to integrate **SME policy** more coherently and effectively with other policy fields – including industrial, digital and innovation policy – and how to strengthen its links with economic and social policy issues.

In order for crisis management and economic transformation to be successful, a pro-innovation framework – especially for the industrial and SME sectors – is of the essence. Therefore, Germany has pushed ahead with the EU's agenda on **Better Regulation** by advocating a consistent implementation of the 'One-in, One-out' principle at European level and by calling for a stronger SME test.

In its **conclusions**, the Competitiveness Council calls on the European Commission to make greater use of experimentation clauses in EU legislation and to allow latitude for the testing of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and block-chain in regulatory sandboxes.

Given its overall economic importance, the field of **public procurement** can make a major contribution to speeding up the recovery of a European economy that is both sustainable and resilient. Again, the adoption of **Council conclusions** has set the stage for the required debate at EU level that will help to make public procurement more efficient and enable a quick and appropriate response to potential crisis situations.

The adaptation of the State aid framework plays a central role in coping with the economic crisis. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission has adopted a **State aid Temporary Framework** relaxing EU rules on State aid. The framework was developed under Germany's Presidency in close consultation with its European partners. The European Commission has extended and expanded the scheme until 30 June 2021 in order to be able to cope with ongoing challenges.

The discussions on the **modernisation of competition law** have been centred on the European Commission's White Paper on levelling the playing field as regards competition in the Single Market between European companies and state-subsidised or state-controlled companies from third countries. Further to this, they have explored possibilities of **regulating the digital economy** and limiting the market power of large online platforms. The debate launched by Germany's Council Presidency is to prepare the ground for legislation to be proposed by the EU on these issues.

The German Presidency of the Council has initiated intensive discussions on how the **tourism sector**, which has been hit particularly hard by the

coronavirus crisis, can be strengthened, reoriented and future-proofed. In the short term, it is vital to safeguard business activity and employment in the EU. This requires regaining trust and predictability for travellers and the travel industry alike. The long-term goal is to make tourism more sustainable, support the drive for digitalisation and enhance the sector's resilience.



“Germany took over the Presidency of the Council during the most difficult months of our recent European history. It has placed the Competitiveness Council at the centre of our joint efforts to manage the crisis, preserve the integrity of the Single Market, and steer our collective recovery. Our discussions underlined that the Single Market is the pillar for the resilience of our industry and our services – which have become increasingly interlinked. We held valuable discussions on the implementation of our EU industry strategy, and the fact that the crisis has accelerated the transition to a green, digital, resilient economy. In this context, the Presidency rightly set the goal of strengthening Europe as an innovative centre for a digitally sovereign economy and society. Data, microelectronics and connectivity will act as enablers for other technological developments and support our industry's competitive edge.”

Thierry Breton

European Commissioner for Internal Market

A debate has also been launched on **standardisation**. The issues in this field require solutions and improvements at European and international level. By dividing their responsibilities in a reasonable manner, private-sector standardisation bodies and policymakers are to create uniform and coherent product requirements for the European Single Market and support European policies such as the Green Deal and Digital Europe. The EU Standardisation Regulation provides a basis for this work. Strategic consultations can be continued beyond Germany's Presidency in the Council's **reactivated Working Party on Technical Harmonisation** (Standardisation). In the interest of innovation, it is crucial that European businesses and SMEs in particular be involved in the process of setting international standards.

As regards the **space industry**, EU and ESA ministers have agreed on a common understanding of 'Orientations on the European contribution in establishing **key principles for the global space economy**'. Also, the negotiations on the new **regulation on the space industry** have been concluded. For the first time, this regulation will unite all EU space programmes, including Galileo and Copernicus, under a single overarching programme.

II. Keeping markets open and creating a level playing field

The coronavirus crisis has once again highlighted the benefits of open markets and rules-based trade. It has also exposed risks that may arise from one-sided dependencies or unfair trade practices.

From the outset, Germany's Council Presidency has therefore placed a strong focus on discussing ways of **reorienting European trade policy**. EU trade ministers have signalled their firm commitment to open markets, rules-based trade and an enforceable level playing field. They have engaged in in-depth discussions in search of a unified European response to a variety of new global challenges.



"I thank the German Presidency for its strong commitment to advancing the interests of the European Union in this exceptionally challenging year. The Presidency spearheaded the collective European response to the coronavirus crisis, helping to put our economy on the path towards recovery. My special thanks to Minister Peter Altmaier for his leadership as we drove forward a dynamic European Trade Agenda within the EU and globally."

Valdis Dombrovskis

Executive Vice-President of the
European Commission in charge of
'An Economy that Works for People'
and European Commissioner for Trade

Great emphasis has been placed on the development of a proposal for the **reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)** as the focal point of the multilateral trading system. The EU's unified voice in the **selection process for appointing the new WTO Director-General** strengthens both the WTO and the EU's commitment to multilateralism.

Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU has been resolute in calling for a **diversification of trade relations** that offers prospects for broad-based and resilient supply chains. Intensive discussions have been conducted with all stakeholders and possible courses of action explored with a view to finalising the trade agreement between the EU and MERCOSUR. Further to this, Germany's Council Presidency has supported the European Commission in working towards a speedy conclusion of the ongoing negotiations on trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand. The group of trade ministers have also devoted intensive discussions to the preservation and **future orientation of Europe's steel industry**.

There have also been careful deliberations on **EU trade relations with the United States of America** and the **People's Republic of China**. The emphasis remains on the goals of shaping trade relations in a positive way and bringing the EU-China Investment Agreement to a successful conclusion while upholding the interests of the EU. The **'lobster deal'** negotiated with the United States and its speedy implementation represents a major success in strengthening transatlantic relations. For the first time in two decades, tariffs between the two economic areas have been reduced or eliminated.

The Presidency's achievements in the field of legislation include the agreements reached with the European Parliament on the **Enforcement Regulation** and the **Dual-use-Regulation**. The amended Enforcement Regulation will enable the EU to impose countermeasures in response to violations by third countries of international trade law – including in the absence of a binding WTO dispute settlement decision. The revised export rules for

dual-use goods help to reconcile competitiveness and security interests with the protection of human rights. In addition to stricter controls of surveillance technology, the new rules seek to ensure closer cooperation among Member States and also envisage certain improvements for companies. By controlling the export of specific goods pursuant to its **Anti-torture Regulation**, the EU is making a major contribution to preventing torture and capital punishment in the effort to safeguard human rights. Backed by the Council, the evaluation of the regulation by the European Commission has been finalised during Germany's Presidency.



"In the last few years, multilateralism has increasingly come under pressure due to protectionist tendencies. Trade policies are also clearly being pulled in different directions within the EU. We have nonetheless been able to achieve successes during the German Presidency of the Council of the EU: the reform of the Dual-use Regulation updates the rules on export control, while the Enforcement Regulation ensures that we will remain capable of action in the light of the paralysed WTO dispute settlement mechanism. At the same time, the EU-China agreement to protect geographical indications shows that we in Europe are able to conclude contracts on complex issues, even with difficult trading partners. These are encouraging signs."

Daniel Caspary

Member of the European Parliament

Furthermore, EU Member States have agreed on an ambitious proposal for a **revision of the OECD rules on export financing**. The proposal has been submitted to the OECD members. The EU seeks to modernise the rules on financing conditions, transparency rules and the scope of application – an important contribution to making the EU's export industry more competitive.

Moreover, the negotiations on the **International Procurement Instrument (IPI)** as a lever for opening up third-country procurement markets have been continued.

Breaking a two-year deadlock in the Council, the unanimous adoption of a consensus on transparent **proceedings for the election of judges to serve in the EU investment court system (ICS)** marked a major step towards an overall reform of EU investment protection legislation.

Another central concern of the German Council Presidency has been the strengthening of the **partnership with European neighbours** that are not members of the EU. In their **joint declaration**, the members of the Council of the **European Economic Area (EEA)** have highlighted the importance of close relations between the EU and the EEA/EFTA countries of Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. Furthermore, the legislative process on the extension of **trade preferences for the Western Balkans** has been concluded.

In its capacity as Council Presidency, Germany has been firmly backing the **negotiations of the European Commission with the United Kingdom** on the future relationship, promoting the interest of the EU and its Member States and in particular advocating open market access without tariffs and quotas, a level playing field and good enforcement of the law and dispute settlement.

III. Strengthening the digital sovereignty of the EU

It is not least due to the COVID-19 pandemic that digitalisation is picking up speed in many areas, bringing considerable benefits to citizens and businesses. The goal of the German Council Presidency has been to strengthen the EU's digital sovereignty, promote secure and lasting high-performance digital infrastructures, establish the EU as an international standard-setter and transpose European values to the digital age.

Eighteen EU Member States have signed a **joint declaration on a European initiative in the field of microprocessors and semiconductor technologies**. By aiming to significantly increase Europe's share of the total volume of the semiconductor market, the new initiative is to reduce the dependence on microchips from third countries with lower IT security requirements.

EU Member States have unanimously adopted a **joint declaration on a next-generation European cloud – the 'European Cloud Federation'**. The aim is to create a superstructure for investment, standardisation and interoperability in the field of cloud technology and data. On Germany's initiative, the **GAIA-X project** has become a focal point of European efforts to set up a sovereign European infrastructure for data that is both secure and trustworthy. The preparations for a 'European Alliance on Industrial Data and Cloud' are to feed into large-scale public and private-sector investments.

Under the German Presidency, EU ministers responsible for telecommunications and digital policy have come to the agreement that there is a need for a unified **European approach to artificial intelligence** which places a particular focus on innovation and trustworthiness. Thus, they have made a substantive contribution to a future European framework for artificial intelligence, which will be the subject of a proposal to be submitted by the European Commission in the first quarter of 2021.

Moreover, the German Council Presidency has successfully initiated negotiations on the **regulatory framework for the governance of common European data spaces**. The debate has centred on the question of horizontal guidelines that are to strengthen data use across all stakeholders and boost trust in the sharing of data. Discussions in the Council have helped to create a common understanding among EU Member States.

In the legislative arena, political agreement has been reached on the **Digital Europe programme**. The aim is to promote the digital transformation of European economies and societies. In addition to boosting the creation and expansion of capacities in key fields of digital technology at EU level, the programme supports the dissemination and acceptance of digital technologies across areas of public interest and in the private sector, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises. Funding worth around €7.6 billion has been allocated to the programme for the duration of the next seven years.

Under Germany's Presidency of the Council, intensive deliberations on the **regulation to combat online child abuse** led to the speedy adoption of a negotiating mandate for the Council. The trilogue negotiations were taken up immediately after the European Parliament's negotiating mandate had been issued.

The intensive discussions on the **ePrivacy Regulation** have been continued. Germany will continue to work towards a successful conclusion of the negotiations.

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

European economies are undergoing a profound structural transformation in response to increasing globalisation, advances in digitalisation and the target to turn Europe into the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 in line with the Paris Climate Agreement. The ongoing processes of economic adaptation have been given added impetus by the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU structural funds have a key role to play in efforts to overcome the crisis and successfully transform Europe's economies. Under Germany's Council Presidency, the foundation has been laid for a modern EU structural policy that promotes investment in forward-looking technologies, supports economic transformation and strengthens the competitiveness of European regions.



"The new EU cohesion policy is being fundamentally modernised to tackle the challenges of the future. In order to overcome the COVID-19 crisis, approximately 50 billion euros will be made available in the context of a new flexible instrument. Ambitious climate targets and a new fund for a just transition towards a climate-neutral economy will help make it greener. And finally we are paving the way for many forward-looking projects in the Member States. My thanks go to the German Presidency for its commitment!"

Elisa Ferreira

European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

The broad political agreement reached with the European Parliament on the **legislative package for the EU structural funds** represents a major achievement of Germany's Council Presidency. It has paved the way for a timely launch of the new programming period (2021 – 2027) and speedy completion of the work on the required partnership agreement and the operational programmes. The focus of the new funding period will be on innovative and smart economic change as well as climate action and environmental protection.

Within the framework of the **REACT-EU** programme, some €50.6 billion will be made available to the regions for the next two years with a view to investments in green and digital innovation as well as crisis response measures. This includes investments in the working capital of SMEs, in health systems and in measures to safeguard jobs.



“The German Presidency of the Council of the EU had the historic opportunity to play a major role in shaping the regional policy for the coming seven years. In the future, regional policy will be one of the key instruments to respond to crises. Whether the refugee crisis, the health crisis or the climate crisis – in the last few years, we have seen how important it is for the EU to be able to respond to such challenges quickly and flexibly. We have to support the regions and people, and we need a strong regional policy to launch a sustainable and fairer transition for Europe.”

Constanze Krehl
Member of the European Parliament

Moreover, the **Just Transition Fund** is to provide regions with an additional €19.3 billion for the next programming period. It is primarily aimed at mitigating the economic and social consequences of the transition to a carbon-neutral economy.

With a volume of around €217.1 billion earmarked for the next funding period, the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** is the flagship among the EU structural funds. An additional €48 billion has been allocated to the **Cohesion Fund**. The ERDF is aimed at improving economic structures and acts as an important lever for investment and innovation. The Fund is targeted at regions across Europe that are structurally weak, seeking to enhance their competitiveness in key economic sectors. Again, the focus is on small and medium-sized enterprises. Within the framework of its **Interreg programmes**, the EU promotes greater cooperation between neighbouring border regions as well as transnational and interregional cooperation projects in the field of spatial planning. To this end, some €9 billion from ERDF funds will be made available for the upcoming programming period.

Further to this, Germany's Presidency of the Council has enabled important steps at political level that have set the stage for a future shaped by economic prosperity and – from 2050 onwards – carbon neutrality. The goal is to reorient the economy **towards clean growth** by means of innovation and climate-friendly technologies (**‘clean economy’**).

EU energy ministers have discussed how to join forces and develop unified European approaches with a view to attaining the **EU's energy targets for 2030**. Special consideration has been given to the role of carbon pricing and the extension of European Emissions Trading to include heating and transport. The aim is to promote energy efficiency, the renovation wave, sector coupling and the expansion of renewable energy.

Another major concern of Germany's Council Presidency has been the topic of hydrogen. Offering enormous potential in terms of the economy and energy policy, **hydrogen technology** links ambitious climate policy with sustainable economic growth. As highlighted in the corresponding **Council conclusions**, it is necessary to create European and global markets and infrastructures for hydrogen.

If the EU's energy and climate targets for 2030 and 2050 are to be achieved, it is vital to **expand renewable energy across borders**, especially in the field of offshore wind energy. The **conclusions** of the Energy Council contain the requirements jointly set out by Member States with a view to improving the overall environment for cooperation projects at European level. The envisaged improvements relate to guidelines for Member States, financing instruments and EU electricity market rules. It is welcome that the European Commission has already integrated some of the key requirements of the Council conclusions into its strategy on offshore renewable energy.

Finally, the German Presidency has managed to reach political agreement on four **regulations in the field of nuclear power**. By allocating almost €1.18 billion from funds of the upcoming programming period to the dismantling of nuclear reactors, and through its work on the Regulation on the European Instrument for Nuclear Safety (EINS) and the Regulation establishing the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for the period 2021–2025, the EU has made a major contribution to **promoting nuclear and radiological safety** both within Europe and beyond.



“The German Presidency took place at a crucial time: after President von der Leyen announced our climate neutrality commitment for 2050, we had to set the path towards reaching that goal. At the same time, we were facing a devastating pandemic. Our priorities were well-aligned, for example when it comes to tapping the potential of hydrogen and offshore energy. In October, we had an excellent exchange of views on the more ambitious 2030 climate target – a crucial issue not only for the energy sector. I was especially glad to see the Presidency put this in the context of the economic recovery after the pandemic, which needs to be a sustainable one.”

Kadri Simson
European Commissioner for Energy



Results at a glance

I. Leading European business back to strength

- ✓ Adoption of Council conclusions on the future of the Single Market
- ✓ Political agreement on the Regulation on establishing the Single Market Programme
- ✓ Adoption of Council conclusions on the Industrial Strategy
- ✓ Adoption of Council conclusions on Better Regulation
- ✓ Adoption of Council conclusions on public procurement
- ✓ Extension and widening of the Temporary Framework for state aid by the European Commission
- ✓ Launch of IPCEI on Hydrogen by the signing of a joint 'manifesto' and notification of the 2nd Battery Cell IPCEI ('autumn IPCEI')
- ✓ Momentum for the adjustment of EU competition policy to the needs arising from globalisation and digitalisation
- ✓ Adoption of Council conclusions on key principles for the global space economy
- ✓ Political agreement on the Regulation on the EU Space Programme
- ✓ Momentum for the system of European harmonised standards to support European policies

WHAT ARE 'COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS'?

Council conclusions are joint positions of the EU Member States to define the future political course of the European Union in individual areas. Council conclusions are usually adopted during Council meetings of the Ministers responsible for the respective area. In the case of video conferences of the Ministers, the conclusions are endorsed at political level on this occasion and formally adopted in another procedure prior to or following the respective video conference.

II. Keeping markets open and creating a level playing field

- ✓ Backing for the discussions on the Trade Policy Review
- ✓ Coordination of a uniform EU position on the selection process for the post of Director-General of the WTO
- ✓ Continuation of the coordination process between the European Commission and the EU Member States on potential options for finalising the EU-MERCOSUR agreement
- ✓ Strategic deliberations on EU trade relations with the United States of America and the People's Republic of China
- ✓ EU Regulation implementing the EU-US 'lobster deal'
- ✓ Political agreement on an update of the Enforcement Regulation
- ✓ Political agreement on new rules for dual-use items
- ✓ Progress report on the Regulation on the access of third-country goods and services to the Union's internal market in public procurement (International Procurement Instrument, IPI)
- ✓ Backing for the evaluation of the Anti-torture Regulation
- ✓ Joint declaration of the Members of the Council of the European Economic Area (EEA Council)
- ✓ Firm backing for the negotiations for an agreement on future relations with the United Kingdom
- ✓ Conclusion of legislative process on the extension of trade preferences for the Western Balkans
- ✓ Adoption of a consensus on a transparent procedure for the selection of judges to serve in the EU investment court system (ICS)
- ✓ Agreement on a proposal for a revision of the OECD rules on export financing; tabling of the proposal within the OECD





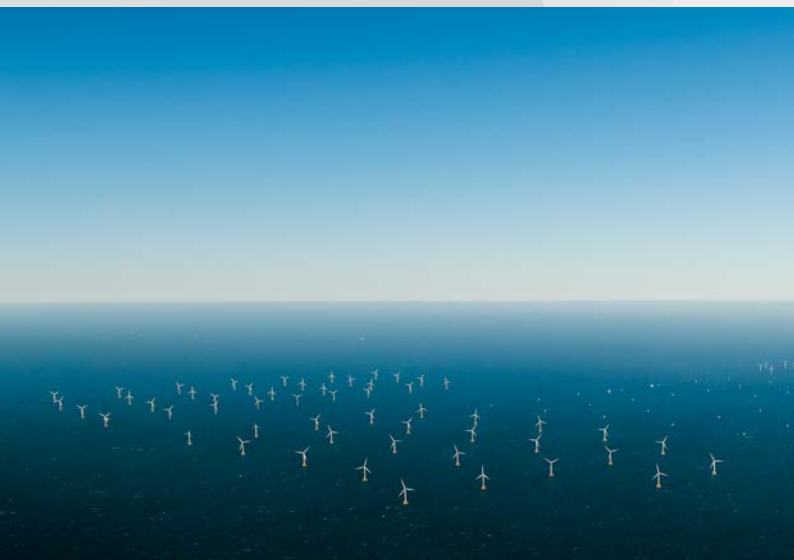
III. Strengthening the digital sovereignty of the EU

- ✓ Adoption of a joint declaration on the European Cloud Federation
- ✓ Strengthening Europe's digital sovereignty by laying the basis for the establishment of federated cloud and data infrastructures, notably GAIA-X
- ✓ Political agreement on the Regulation establishing the Digital Europe Programme
- ✓ Adoption of a joint declaration on 'A European Initiative on Processors and semiconductor technologies'
- ✓ First discussion on a general framework for artificial intelligence
- ✓ First discussion of the draft Regulation on European data governance
- ✓ Negotiating mandate of the Council regarding an Interim Regulation to combat online child abuse and launch of trilogue
- ✓ Progress report on the ePrivacy Regulation



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

- ✓ Broad political agreement on the operative part of the legislative package for the EU Structural Funds for the 2021 – 2027 period
- ✓ Conclusion of legislative process on REACT-EU Regulation
- ✓ Political agreement on the Regulation establishing the Just Transition Fund
- ✓ Discussion of the assessment of the National Energy and Climate Plans and the instruments for the EU to deliver on 2030 climate and energy targets
- ✓ Adoption of Council conclusions establishing an EU hydrogen market
- ✓ Adoption of Council conclusions on Fostering European Cooperation in Offshore and other Renewable Energies
- ✓ Discussion of energy systems integration with a focus on the legislative dossiers scheduled for 2021 and a potential tightening of the energy targets for 2030
- ✓ Political agreement on two Regulations on EU financial aid for the dismantling of nuclear reactors and the Regulation on the European Instrument for Nuclear Safety (EINS)
- ✓ Political agreement on the Regulation on Euratom research programme



Facts and figures

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Active Council working parties

WHAT IS A 'COUNCIL WORKING PARTY'?

The meetings of the Ministers in the Council of the European Union are prepared in the context of working parties and committees. There are around 145 Council working parties dealing with specific issues, 19 thereof within the competence of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. The Council working parties are the first level at which EU initiatives, including European Commission proposals for legislation and Council conclusions, are dealt with before they are submitted to the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper) and afterwards to the respective Ministerial Council. During the German Presidency, the meetings of the working parties were headed by staff of the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU or by staff of the competent Ministry at working level.

1

Ministerial meeting
in Germany

10

Video conferences
of the Ministers responsible for
competitiveness, trade, energy,
telecommunications/digital policy,
space and tourism



220

Sessions of Council
working parties and committees:

32 %

on-site

68 %

online



7

Appearances at senior political level
before committees of the European Parliament



82

Trilogue sessions
on legislative acts (at political and
technical level)

19

High-level conferences
under the German Presidency

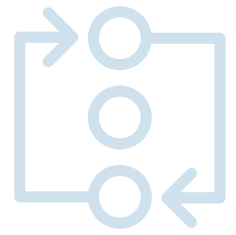
WHAT IS A 'TRILOGUE'?

Trilogues bring delegations of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission together to work towards agreement on European legal acts. The respective Presidency of the Council of the EU heads the trilogue negotiations on behalf of the Council. The Council and the European Parliament define their negotiating positions in advance. After agreement is reached in the trilogue, the legal act needs to be adopted formally by the European Parliament and the Council.



3

Exchange at ministerial level
with the Trio Presidency partners
Portugal and Slovenia



THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION IN BRUSSELS

The Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union in Brussels represents Germany vis-à-vis the various institutions of the European Union. One of the core tasks of the Permanent Representation is to prepare the decisions in the Council. During Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU, the German Permanent Representative to the EU and the German Deputy Permanent Representative to the EU headed the weekly sessions of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper), the Council's major preparatory body. Many Council working parties were also headed by staff of Germany's Permanent Representation to the EU. In addition, the Permanent Representation keeps up the contacts with the Council Secretariat, the delegations of the other EU Member States in Brussels, the European Commission and the European Parliament. At present, around 350 staff work in the Permanent Representation of Germany to the EU, approx. 36 thereof in the economic department, and 26 of these in the area covered by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

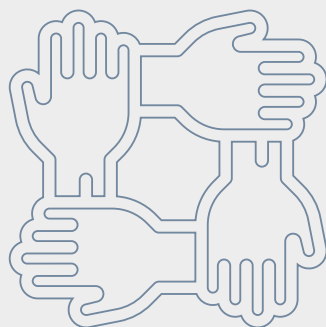


Timetable of events

2019

18 September

Coordination with the Trio partners
Portugal and Slovenia on the joint
programme of the Trio Presidency
at a meeting in Berlin



2020

January until June

Trips to European capitals and bilateral meetings
of Minister Altmaier and EU ministers in
preparation of the German Presidency of the
Council of the European Union





1 July

Start of the
German Presidency of the
Council of the
European Union

Presentation of the
economic policy priorities
of the German Presidency



2 July

Exchange between members of the Federal
Government including Minister Altmaier and
the European Commission on the German
Presidency



10 July

Meeting of Minister Altmaier with
members of the European Commission
in Brussels to coordinate the frame-
work for the German Presidency



15 July

Presentation by Minister Altmaier of the
priorities of the German Presidency
within the **European Economic and Social
Committee**



7 / 15 / 16 July, 3 September

Presentation by Minister Altmaier of the **economic policy priorities of the German Presidency** within the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO), the Committee on Regional Development (REGI), the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and the Committee on International Trade (INTA) of the European Parliament



7 September

Discussion on issues of the current EU competition agenda at the **European Competition Day in Berlin**



11 September

Reception of a delegation of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in Berlin



18 September

Exchange on a deepened internal market at the **video conference of EU ministers responsible for competitiveness**



20/21 September

Discussion on the future direction of European trade policy and the situation of the European steel industry at the **informal meeting of EU trade ministers in Berlin**



28 September

Exchange on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the tourism industry at the **informal video conference of EU ministers responsible for tourism**



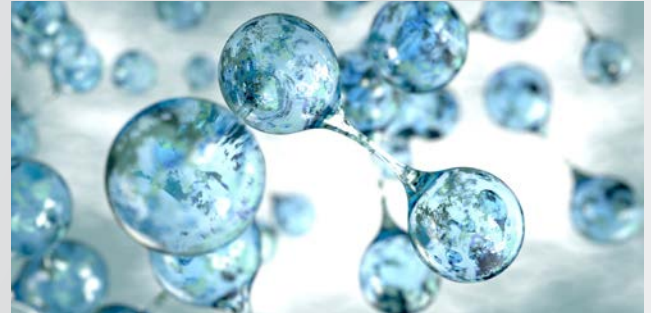
29 September

Exchange on the contribution of structural policy to crisis management and to growth and employment in European regions at the **Cohesion Conference**



5 October

Exchange on common framework conditions for the creation of a competitive market for hydrogen at the **'Hydrogen in the Energy Industry conference'**



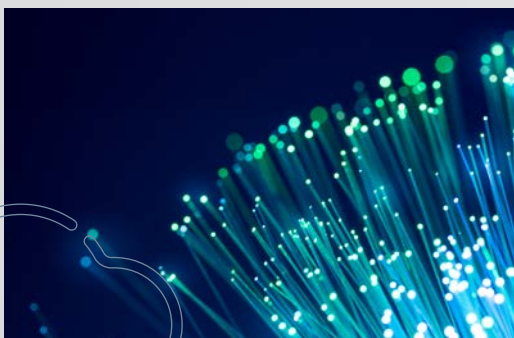
6 October

Discussion on joint measures to achieve the EU energy targets for 2030 at the **informal video conference of EU energy ministers**



15 October

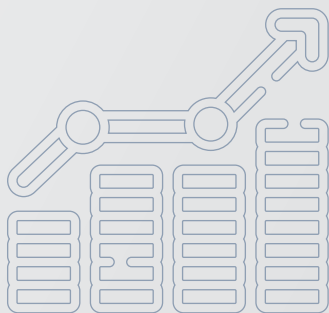
Exchange on the data economy and artificial intelligence and signing of a joint declaration on the European Cloud Federation at the **informal video conference of the EU ministers responsible for telecommunications and digital policy**



21 October

Discussion on public procurement as a driver for a sustainable and resilient economy at the **European Conference on Public Procurement**

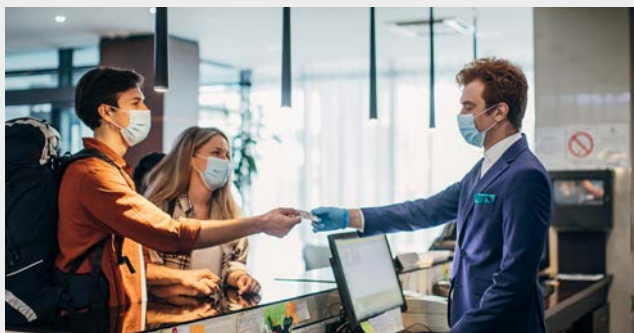




23 October

Discussion on the role of industry as an engine for economic growth and recovery at the **informal video conference of EU ministers responsible for competitiveness**

Exchange on crisis management and reorientation of European tourism at the **19th European Tourism Forum**



28 October

Discussion on developments in the European creative industries during and after the coronavirus crisis at the **'Framing Creative Futures' conference**



3 November

Discussions on better regulation and cutting red tape at European level at the **Conference on Better Regulation**





4 November

Discussions on the future of market surveillance at the **EU Market Surveillance Conference**



9 November

Discussion on current trade policy challenges and conclusions from the coronavirus crisis at the **video conference of EU trade ministers**

10/11 November

Networking of experts of industrial ecosystems and value chains at the **European Cluster Conference**



16/17 November

Discussion on current SME policy issues and presentation of the European Enterprise Promotion Awards at the **European SME Conference**



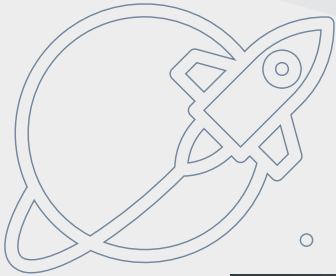
19 November

Discussion on the green transformation of industry at the **video conference of EU ministers responsible for competitiveness**



20 November

Formulation of guidelines for European space policy at the **video conference of EU ministers responsible for space and at the Tenth EU-ESA Space Council**



23 / 24 November

Presentation of innovative energy technologies to promote carbon neutrality at the **Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan Conference**

24-26 November

Discussion on challenges and opportunities for the aviation sector at the **Aerodays 2020**



24-27 November

Networking of experts from industry, research and government at the **European Conference on Battery Cell Production**



7 December

Exchange on data governance and signing of a declaration on the European initiative on microprocessors and semiconductor technologies at the **video conference of the EU ministers responsible for telecommunications and digital policy**



7-11 December

Networking of experts from industry, research and government at the **European Space Week**



14 December

Discussion on better integration of the energy system for a climate-neutral EU at the **video conference of the EU energy ministers**

16 December

Video conference with the Trio partners **Portugal and Slovenia** on the continuation of joint projects within the framework of the Trio Presidency



17 December

Event marking the launch of the “Important Project of Common European Interest” (IPCEI) in the field of hydrogen and on further IPCEIs



31 December

Handing over the Council Presidency to Portugal



Words of thanks and outlook



Germany's thirteenth Presidency of the Council of the EU – and the fourth for me personally – has been entirely different than anything we could have imagined a year ago. When we took over the Presidency in July 2020, we were still hoping for a return to some semblance of normality over the course of the six months that lay ahead. Since this has proved impossible, we have made a virtue of necessity – as had the Croatian Presidency in the first half of 2020 – and demonstrated that the EU is capable of taking forward-looking decisions without holding face-to-face meetings in Brussels. The current circumstances are far from ideal, of course, and like many others I am looking forward to being able to get together with my European colleagues in person again in the not too distant future.

However, the ongoing pandemic situation has also given rise to valuable insights and experience that may be useful going forward. Digitalisation offers a great deal of convenience and considerable benefits. Within a remarkably short period of time, EU institutions and Member States have significantly expanded their digital capabilities and capacities. I am convinced that this will make our work easier in the future.

I would like to thank all those from the other EU Member States, the European Commission and the European Parliament who have worked with great flexibility and stamina to help the German Council Presidency make major progress on economic policy issues despite the difficult circumstances we have found ourselves in. My particular thanks go to our colleagues in the Council Secretariat and in our Permanent Representation in Brussels who have done an excellent job in keeping business going in the face of great adversity. And of course, I also extend my thanks to the staff of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

We are now going to hand over the baton to our Trio partner Portugal. Times remain turbulent, the challenges remain great. I wish our Portuguese and Slovenian colleagues good fortune and the best of success for their Council Presidencies in 2021. We will be happy and eager to lend our support where we can – in line with our Presidency motto ‘Together for Europe’s recovery’.

Claudia Dörr-Voß,
State Secretary for European Policy at the
Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy



Germany
as of 1.7.20



Portugal
as of 1.1.21



Slovenia
as of 1.7.21



„These challenging times have shown us that only with a strong and solidary EU will we be able to move ahead, together, on the global stage. Our Trio Presidency sets the goal to reinforce Europe’s resilience, supporting the economic recovery through the green and digital transition. During the Portuguese Presidency, I will aim to pursue the work already initiated by Germany, as regards the EU Single Market, industrial competitiveness and resilience, support to small and medium-sized enterprises, European and strategic value chains, competition, digital agenda, while preserving the European social model and values.“

Pedro Siza Vieira

Minister of State for the Economy and
the Digital Transition, Portugal



„Slovenia appreciates all the efforts and achievements of the German Presidency regarding the fight against the Covid pandemic. It has created an additional challenge for European companies and therefore we are looking forward to the revised industrial strategy in spring 2021. We would like to thank the German Presidency for its commitment to maintaining and deepening the functioning of the Internal Market. During the Slovenian Presidency, we intend to further build on the work done by our Trio predecessors Germany and Portugal and pursue the implementation of our Trio Programme. We will focus on a green and digital transition and on the role of the trade policy in strengthening the rules-based system with special attention on trade and sustainable development and small and medium-sized enterprises. We sincerely hope, that we will be able to meet in person in beautiful, green and active Slovenia.“

Zdravko Počivalšek

Minister of Economic Development
and Technology, Slovenia

