



**FMA VISIT TO BERLIN IN THE CONTEXT OF
THE GERMAN PRESIDENCY
26 - 27 OCTOBER 2020**

FMA Secretariat

Office JAN 2Q73

European Parliament

B-1047 Brussels

Tel : +322.284.07.03 Fax : +332.284.09.89

E-mail : formermembers@europarl.europa.eu

Content

I. Germany.....	3
1. History.....	3
2. Culture.....	5
II. Germany's EU Presidency 2020	9
1. Programme of the Presidency.....	9
2. Priority Dossiers under the German EU Council Presidency	28
3. German Presidency priorities discussed in parliamentary committees	31
III. Politics in Germany.....	33
1. Political System	33
2. Brief history of the parliamentary institution.....	38
3. Recent political context	39
IV. Political Actors.....	43
1. Presidency of Germany.....	43
2. Federal Chancellor of Germany.....	44
3. Presidencies of Parliament	46
4. Cabinet of Germany (as of July 2020).....	47
5. Main Political Parties.....	48
6. OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Final Report	51
V. Economy in Germany.....	58
1. Commission Country Report Germany.....	58
2. Standard Eurobarometer (Key Indicators) - Germany.....	63

I. Germany

1. History¹

Ununited Germany

In its long history, Germany has rarely been united. For most of the two millennia that Central Europe has been inhabited by German-speaking peoples, such as the Eastern Franks, the area now called Germany was divided into hundreds of states, many quite small, including duchies, principalities, free cities, and ecclesiastical states. Not even the Romans united what is now known as Germany under one government; they managed to occupy only its southern and western portions. In A.D. 800 Charlemagne, who had been crowned Holy Roman emperor by Pope Leo III, ruled over a territory that encompassed much of present-day Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, but within a generation its existence was more symbolic than real.

Medieval Germany

Medieval Germany was marked by division. As France and England began their centuries-long evolution into united nation-states, Germany was racked by a ceaseless series of wars among local rulers. The Habsburg Dynasty's long monopoly of the crown of the Holy Roman Empire provided only the semblance of German unity. Within the empire, German princes warred against one another as before. The Protestant Reformation deprived Germany of even its religious unity, leaving its population Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist. These religious divisions gave military strife an added ferocity in the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), during which Germany was ravaged to a degree not seen again until World War II.

Peace of Westphalia

The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 left German-speaking Europe divided into hundreds of states. During the next two centuries, the two largest of these states—Prussia and Austria—jockeyed for dominance. The smaller states sought to retain their independence by allying themselves with one, then the other, depending on local conditions. From the mid-1790s until Prussia, Austria, and Russia defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Leipzig in 1813 and drove him out of German territory, much of the area was occupied by French troops. Napoleon's officials abolished numerous small states; as a result, in 1815, after the Congress of Vienna, German territory consisted of only about 40 states.

Revolutions for Unification and Democracy

During the next half-century, pressures for German unification grew. Scholars, bureaucrats, students, journalists, and businessmen agitated for a united Germany that would bring with it uniform laws and a single currency and that would replace the benighted absolutism of petty German states with democracy. The revolutions of 1848 seemed at first likely to realize this dream of unity and freedom, but the monarch who was offered the crown of a united Germany, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, rejected it. The king, like the other rulers of Germany's kingdoms, opposed German unity because he saw it as a threat to his power.

¹ <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/History/Germany-history.htm>

Otto von Bismarck

Despite the opposition of conservative forces, German unification came more than two decades later, in 1871, following the Franco-Prussian War, when Germany was unified and transformed into an empire under Emperor Wilhelm I, King of Prussia. Unification was brought about not by revolutionary or liberal forces but rather by a conservative Prussian aristocrat, Otto von Bismarck. Sensing the power of nationalism, Bismarck sought to use it for his own aims, the preservation of a feudal social order and the triumph of his country, Prussia, in the long contest with Austria for pre-eminence in Germany. By a series of masterful diplomatic manoeuvres and three brief and dazzlingly successful military campaigns, Bismarck achieved a united Germany without Austria. He brought together the so-called "small Germany," consisting of Prussia and the remaining German states, some of which had been subdued by Prussian armies before they became part of a Germany ruled by a Prussian emperor.

Prussian hegemony

Although united Germany had a parliament, the Reichstag, elected through universal male suffrage, supreme power rested with the emperor and his ministers, who were not responsible to the Reichstag. The Reichstag could contest the government's decisions, but in the end the emperor could largely govern as he saw fit. Supporting the emperor were the nobility, large rural landowners, business and financial elites, the civil service, the Protestant clergy, and the military. The military, which had made unification possible, enjoyed tremendous prestige. These groups were pitted against the Roman Catholic Center Party, the Socialist Party, and a variety of liberal and regional political groups opposed to Prussia's hegemony over Germany. In the long term, Bismarck and his successors were not able to subjugate this opposition. By 1912 the Socialists had come to have the largest number of representatives in the Reichstag. They and the Center Party made governing increasingly difficult for the empire's conservative leadership.

The World Wars

In World War I (1914–18), Germany's aims were annexationist in nature and foresaw an enlarged Germany, with Belgium and Poland as vassal states and with colonies in Africa. However, Germany's military strategy, involving a two-front war in France and Belgium in the west and Russia in the east, ultimately failed. Germany's defeat in 1918 meant the end of the German Empire. The Treaty of Versailles, the peace settlement negotiated by the victors (Britain, France, and the United States) in 1919, imposed punitive conditions on Germany, including the loss of territory, financial reparations, and a diminished military. These conditions set the stage for World War II.

Weimar Republic

A republic, the Weimar Republic (1919–33), was established with a constitution that provided for a parliamentary democracy in which the government was ultimately responsible to the people. The new republic's first president and prime minister were convinced democrats, and Germany seemed ready at last to join the community of democratic nations. But the Weimar Republic ultimately disappointed those who had hoped it would introduce democracy to Germany. By mid-1933 it had been destroyed by Adolf Hitler, its declared enemy since his first days in the public arena. Hitler was a psychopath who sensed and exploited the worries and resentments of many Germans, knew when to act, and possessed a sure instinct for power. His greatest weapon in his quest for political power, however, was the disdain many Germans felt for the new republic. Many Germans held the Weimar Republic responsible for Germany's defeat in World War I. At the war's end, no foreign troops stood on German

soil, and military victory still seemed likely. Instead of victory, however, in the view of many, the republic's Socialist politicians arranged a humiliating peace. Many Germans also were affronted by the spectacle of parliamentary politics. The republic's numerous small parties made forming stable and coherent coalition governments very difficult. Frequent elections failed to yield effective governments. Government policies also often failed to solve pressing social and economic problems.

Hitler as chancellor

A modest economic recovery from 1924 to 1929 gave the Weimar Republic a brief respite. The severe social stress engendered by the Great Depression, however, swelled the vote received by extreme antidemocratic parties in the election of 1930 and the two elections of 1932. The government ruled by emergency decree. In January 1933, leading conservative politicians formed a new government with Hitler as chancellor. They intended to harness him and his party (the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazis), now the country's largest, to realize their own aim of replacing the republic with an authoritarian government. Within a few months, however, Hitler had outmaneuvered them and established a totalitarian regime. Only in 1945 did a military alliance of dozens of nations succeed in deposing him, and only after his regime and the nation it ruled had committed crimes of unparalleled enormity known as the Holocaust.

The Post-war Era and Unification

Divided by the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France, Germany came to consist of two states. One, East Germany, never attained real legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens, fell farther and farther behind economically, and had to use force to prevent its population from fleeing to the West. The other, West Germany, was resoundingly successful. Within two decades of defeat, it had become one of the world's richest nations, with a prosperity that extended to all segments of the population. The economy performed so successfully that eventually several million foreigners came to West Germany to work as well. West German and foreign workers alike were protected from need arising from sickness, accidents, and old age by an extensive, mostly nongovernment welfare system. In 1990 German unification overcame the geographic separation of the two German states, including an infamous wall between West Berlin and East Berlin, but economic integration still has not been achieved satisfactorily. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the forces of globalization are posing a renewed challenge to the social-market economy in place throughout the nation.

2. Culture²

Germany (officially the Federal Republic of Germany) is a central western European country with the second biggest population in the region. It was split into 'East Germany' and 'West Germany' until 1990 when the two states reunified to form a greater continuation of West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany). The German people have remained stoic through the massive changes of the last century, adapting to the evolving social climate of the country as needed. One can attribute much of Germany's recent prosperity to its mastery of organisation and critical thinking (*kritisches Denken*). These qualities have arguably helped the society reconcile the impacts of the World Wars and the Cold War. Germans have been distinguished as particularly pragmatic (*pragmatische*) and honest (*ehrliche*)

² <https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/german-culture/german-culture-core-concepts>

people. However, generalisations of the standard German character have their limits when one takes into account the strong regional differences of the country and the different experiences individuals have had in the East compared to the West. Regional identities usually affect people's socio-cultural understandings. However, most Germans have strong moral sensitivity based on lessons of the past that have taught them to understand and respect these differences.

Language

The official language of Germany is 'Deutsch' (German). Most Germans are taught 'Standarddeutsch' (standard German) in school, also known as 'Hochdeutsch' (High German). However, there are varying regional accents and dialects across the country. For example, those in many areas of northern Germany speak a West Germanic variation known as 'Plattdütsch' (Low German). The pronunciation and features of this dialect have similarities with the language spoken in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, the Germanic dialect of the southern border, 'Bayrisch' (Bavarian), is similar to the Austrian Germanic dialect. Despite some differences in phrases and meanings, Germans from all regions can usually understand one another.

Regional Diversity and Local Patriotism

A foreigner's visualisation of the 'typical German' often conjures images of beer, lederhosen, Oktoberfest and bratwurst. However, these are actually cultural emblems particular to one state (or principality) in the south of the country (Bavaria). Such cultural characteristics differ between regions and cities within Germany, visible in the way traditional heritage, foods, architecture and celebrations vary across the country. Germans may also talk of social distinctions based on clichéd personality traits attached to each region. For example, Germans often describe people from the southwest as stingy. Meanwhile, Rhinelanders in the west are generally thought to have a very laidback attitude.

Accents, social attitudes, religious affiliations, traditions and practices also vary between those living in the cities and those living in rural areas. For example, some of Germany's metropolises are renowned for their alternative lifestyles and tolerant social attitudes. They tend to attract more unconventional Germans, as well as migrants. Meanwhile, rural townships generally receive less internal migration and follow more conventional lifestyles in accord with their tradition. The capital of Berlin is particularly noticeable for being a cultural outlier within the country. This unique hub differs significantly from the areas surrounding it.

Germans are generally very proud of their regional identities. It is quite normal for people to show more patriotism and loyalty to their local area than their nation. Each of the cities and states of Germany have their own emblems. There are over 50 coats of arms for urban and rural districts within the state of North Rhine-Westphalia alone. It is often more common to see regional flags and coats of arms in public than the national flag.

Social Distinctions between the East and West

Some of the most pronounced social distinctions are noticeable between the western two-thirds of Germany, and the other eastern third. From the end of World War II until 1990, the nation was divided as two separate countries under different systems of rule. West Germany was administrated under a capitalist system as the *Federal Republic of Germany (FRG/BRD)*, whilst East Germany was occupied under Soviet Communist rule as the *German Democratic Republic (GDR/DDR)*. West Germany became

more cosmopolitan and industrialised, aligned with Western Europe and North America. Meanwhile, East Germany was ruled under a strict socialist ideology.

The two states reunified in 1990 to create a larger version of West Germany (FRG). As modern-day Germany has been unified for less than 30 years, the dividing line of the inner German border that once separated the East from the West is still visible in the geography of some places, and the remaining communist architecture often shows which towns were in the former GDR. Temporary separation has also entrenched language differences that are subtly noticeable in the different names used to describe single objects. For example, the word for plastic is '*Plastik*' in the West and '*Plaste*' in the East.

There is also a faint cultural division noticeable in the social differences between the East and West. For example, the Eastern population is markedly less religious, older on average and is less multicultural (*Statistisches Bundesamt*, 2014). Social attitudes regarding political ideals can differ significantly depending on whether one lived in East or West Germany. For example, some people's experience under communism has influenced them to be strongly opposed to leftist world views.

The economic disparity between the East and West is also still quite obvious and pronounced. It is perhaps one of the differences spoken about most frequently, as West German states pay a financial support tax to East Germany. East Germany suffered more material hardship over the course of its Soviet rule. After the reunification of Germany, most of the young and skilled East Germans migrated to the prosperous West. This continued to drain the East's economy, which remains slightly weaker today. The East has a higher unemployment rate and less disposable income on average per person (*Statistisches Bundesamt*, 2014). Some Germans may express resentment about this disparity and the measures to amend it. The differences between East and West Germany often lead people to draw certain social conclusions about one another.

Privacy and Socio-Relational Boundaries

Privacy is highly valued in Germany. People tend not to divulge a lot of personal information about themselves or discuss their political and social views when first meeting strangers. Some people may also prefer not to invite acquaintances to their homes on a regular basis, unless they have a close relationship. To foreigners, this can make Germans come across as distant. However, one can understand why privacy is so important when considering how it has been invaded by governments in the past. For example, those living in Germany during the Cold War were subjects of one of the most expansive and repressive secret citizen surveillance networks in human history (the *Staatssicherheit* or *Stasi*). As such, some people are sensitive to sharing their personal information and take precautions to protect their privacy to the degree they feel personally comfortable with.

Personal privacy is also important to maintain the socio-relational boundaries between people's professional and personal lives. Germans tend to compartmentalise leisure and work time, distinguishing their relationships with people into one of these spheres. The social boundaries in this sense are quite strong. People generally keep a certain social distance from those they work with. For example, if talking about something personal in a colleague's life, one may hear a German say "*Das geht mich nichts an*" (That's not my business). Individuals are expected to downplay any personal friendships they have with colleagues whilst in the office to detach their emotions from business. It

can take some time for people to break through this social perimeter of privacy and the formality of the professional realm. This may give foreigners the impression that Germans are quite aloof. However, these boundaries dissipate among friends.

Germans are renowned for being very honest people, sometimes to the point of being bluntly critical of others' actions. This assertiveness combined with their reserved approach to strangers can produce a misjudgement of them as having a standoffish public demeanor. Nevertheless, Germans usually become very open and personal once they find a common denominator with someone. From a German viewpoint, reserving warmth and friendly energy for those who are truly important to them gives their relationships greater integrity and value. Personal friendships are deeply prized. The time and sincerity involved in building such relationships can make them particularly durable and loyal.

Organisation and Directness

Germans are known for being industrious, orderly and punctual. The German expression "*Ordnung muss sein*" ("there must be order") reflects the cultural preference for organisation and methodical planning. Indeed, it also explains the preference for having one's socio-relational boundaries clearly defined. People generally like to understand the context to interactions and what is required of them in certain scenarios. Germans generally arrange to meet one another by clarifying exactly when and where they will be meeting, for how long and what they will be doing. Things are rarely left to chance. Matters that proceed without a scheduled plan are likely to be directed by a relevant rule, regulation or social norm. This aspect of the culture is not so different from many industrialised cultures wherein people lead busy lives. However, it has produced a cliché of the typical German as highly efficient and matter of fact. This is likely due to the fact that such organisation is coupled with a very direct approach. In task-oriented cultures such as Germany, people do not always feel the necessity to build personal relationships in order to achieve a joint goal (see more information in *Business Culture*). While they are still courteous, they generally do not linger on small talk. Germans tend to be exceptionally honest and straight-to-the-point.

Demographic Changes

Germany classifies its citizens between ethnic Germans (meaning people with two parents of mostly or full German ancestry) and those of a migrant background (*Migrationshintergrund*). According to the Federal Statistical Office, the portion of the population with a migrant background has peaked for the fifth time in recent years. The 2016 microcensus reported that 22.5% of the country's residents, or more than 18.6 million people, were of immigrant or partially immigrant descent (*Statistisches Bundesamt*, 2017). However, it must be noted that ethnic German repatriates are included in this figure. Most people with a migrant background reside in the western states of Germany and Berlin. The eastern portion of Germany has fewer foreigners relative to the total population.

Germany has generally embraced its identity as a multicultural (*Multi-Kulti*) country. The nation has undergone some very big population shifts in the past 30 years. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, roughly 3 million ethnic Germans have returned from former Soviet countries. The country has also received big influxes of non-German migrants and refugees, particularly from Eastern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Indeed, Germany is the second biggest migration destination in the world (United Nations Population Division, 2015). The country has been a key flashpoint in Europe's migrant crisis, receiving over a million asylum seekers

since 2015. Such migration has been putting social and political stress on the country. The country is struggling to balance its national interests with international obligations. Ultimately, one cannot assume a German's position on this matter or the current shifts occurring throughout Europe.

Past Experiences and Current Attitudes

In the past few decades, Germany has become recognised as an outward-looking nation, seeking to keep Europe united and help other countries and people in need. Indeed, Germany has transformed itself into a largely peaceful, forward-thinking and productive member of the global community of nations. However, the country may never be completely free of the spectre of its roles in the World Wars. It has undertaken a long process to overcome the guilt of its past. The word '*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*' describes this struggle to come to terms with the country's negative history. Many Germans continue to be acutely aware that foreign perceptions of them take into account their country's history. However, the ethos of German character has changed considerably from what it was during the early 20th century.

II. Germany's EU Presidency 2020

1. Programme of the Presidency³

Introduction

The European Union is facing a decisive challenge with the COVID-19 pandemic. During Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union, we will do all we can to meet this challenge together and in a forward-looking manner, and to help Europe to recover. It is more important now than ever before to set clear priorities and to join forces. Germany is well aware of its responsibility for the European Union.

Only by containing the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the long term, investing in Europe's economy, fully exploiting our innovative potential and strengthening social cohesion can the European Union and its Member States overcome the crisis effectively and permanently. We must act together and in a coordinated manner, in a spirit of European solidarity and on the basis of our common values. Together, we can take steps to ensure that Europe – while upholding the principle of subsidiarity – becomes stronger, fairer and more sustainable.

Crises have always been an opportunity in the EU to call things that are considered a given into question and to be even better prepared to face the challenges of the future. Our common task goes far beyond the immediate efforts to overcome the current situation. To this end, we must focus our attention on the major transformation processes of our time such as climate change, digitalisation and the changing world of work. In an increasingly polarised world, European policy must strengthen Europe's ability to act globally in order to defend European interests and to live up to our responsibility in the world. We are committed to an international order based on rules and human rights and want Europe to play a role in shaping standards and norms worldwide.

³ <https://www.eu2020.de/blob/2360248/33da95cb0900b1e4d26a44f35c9c97c0/pdf-programm-en-data.pdf>

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

One of our major priorities will be to work to ensure a rapid conclusion of the negotiations on the EU's multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the period from 2021 to 2027. The EU budget must, on the one hand, be geared to the current challenges in connection with the COVID-19 crisis and, on the other, to the European Union's long-term strategic goals in a changing world.

Our objective: together for Europe's recovery.

I. Europe's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest global challenges of our age. Within the EU, we can only master it successfully together and face this global challenge with our partners around the world.

Emerging from the crisis – together and in a coordinated fashion

Effectively containing the COVID-19 virus in Europe and around the world is a fundamental prerequisite for overcoming the crisis permanently. Only in this way can we address the numerous other challenges facing our Union and help others effectively. We must support each other in the European Union with European solidarity in action and pool our resources, whether with coordinated aid deliveries of medical supplies, mutual support in treating patients or in upholding and safeguarding supply chains. We want to overcome the pandemic together and in a coordinated fashion. We will work to ensure that we gradually lift the restrictions imposed in the Schengen area as a result of the pandemic, taking into account the epidemiological situation. We want to return to regular processes in a coordinated manner also with a view to the protection of our external borders and with regard to visa procedures. We want to lift the crisis-related restrictions in cross-border transport and for the single market in a coordinated and gradual way in order to create the conditions for economic recovery. The European Union's ability to take political action and reach decisions on the basis of orderly procedures must – also under difficult conditions – be safeguarded; we will also work to ensure this during our Presidency.

Sustainable economic and social recovery

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. We are committed to the rapid establishment of a temporary recovery instrument with a specific focus, one that is embedded within the multiannual financial framework (MFF) and implemented within the framework of the European Semester. The future MFF will make a major contribution to supporting recovery in the long

term as we invest in the future of our continent. The EU Structural Funds are important elements in this regard for cushioning the economic and social repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and for stimulating economic recovery in the regions. We want to conclude the legislative acts to this end during our Council Presidency so that the funds for this are available as soon as possible. A decisive precondition for recovery in Europe is the economic recovery of European enterprises. We want to improve their resilience and competitiveness and to strengthen strategic European value chains. This applies to industrial production, and to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in particular. Consumer policy is likewise an integral part of the strategy for economic recovery. We attach great importance to keeping markets open and to strengthening trade and investment on the basis of international, enforceable rules and are strongly opposed to protectionism and trends targeted towards renationalisation. The temporary adjustment of the framework for state aid as an important element of economic crisis management should be assessed on an ongoing basis in order to ensure a level playing field both within and outside the EU. Protecting EU citizens is our number-one priority. Particularly in times of crisis we have an obligation to live up to this responsibility with a sustainable social and employment policy in a spirit of solidarity. We welcome the fact that the European Social Fund (ESF) is also to be strengthened with funds from the economic recovery fund.

We want now to systematically implement priorities of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) that are relevant to crisis management. These include the development of an EU framework for national minimum income protection systems, an EU framework for minimum wages and strengthening the role played by social partners. Furthermore, we want to work together with the European Commission and our EU partners to tackle unemployment and youth unemployment in the EU head on the basis of a European Social Fund Plus that is capable of taking action. The pandemic is turning the spotlight on the vulnerabilities of global supply chains and the people working in them. A comprehensive risk management system for enterprises that is in line with the global agenda for sustainability can help to increase the resilience of supply chains. Greater support for partner countries in the area of development cooperation policy is also necessary. We are committed to an EU action plan to strengthen corporate social responsibility in global supply chains that promotes human rights, social and environmental standards and transparency, and which takes the experiences and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic into account. This supports the coherent implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights of the United Nations and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

Drawing the right conclusions for Europe from the crisis

We must learn from our experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and work together to lay the groundwork to ensure that the EU is even better able to respond to future challenges. To this end, we commit to improving the EU's crisis management instruments. This includes the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR), the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), the Health Security Committee (HSC) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), as well as pandemic prevention with a cross-system exchange of information. In the case of health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen that measures require sound epidemiological support. We want to strengthen the ECDC by improving forecasting capabilities, creating a comparable database of Member States and developing a digital early warning system. The new healthcare instrument within the framework of the economic recovery fund will also play an important role with a view to achieving these objectives.

We are striving to create an EU-wide contact tracing and warning system with the help of cross-border, interoperable tracing and warning apps utilising a minimum level of data whose use is on a voluntary basis and which must be in line both with data protection legislation and stringent IT security standards.

We want to strengthen the EU's Disaster Risk Management and pursue the further development of rescEU and the EU Civil Protection Pool. We will, to this end, promote the establishment and expansion of an EU knowledge network on disaster risk reduction in order to foster the cooperation between the various disaster risk authorities and services of the Member States.

Moreover, as part of a lessons learned process, we want to evaluate during our Council Presidency how the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI) has performed and whether it can be deployed in an even more targeted and coordinated manner in the future.

We should strengthen the EU's ability to take action and shape events with European sovereignty in mind, particularly in strategic areas of industrial production in Europe. During our Council Presidency, we will therefore discuss approaches to further improving the supply of pharmaceuticals, medical products and personal protective equipment in the healthcare sector. Together with the Member States, we want to reach agreement on tangible measures to achieve greater autonomy in the EU with respect to safeguarding the supply of medicines. It is particularly important to us to ensure the quality of agents, as well as a higher level of transparency and diversification of supply chains and European cooperation in the expansion of the production of agents for critical medicines. We also want to assess whether the Joint Procurement Agreement (JPA) can be better deployed for preparedness planning with a view to improving the speed of our response to supply bottlenecks as they arise. We want to strengthen the agricultural and food industry in its capacity as an essential sector with a view to safeguarding supplies of agricultural products and food for Europe's population. European research and development play a key role in the prevention of and efforts to overcome healthcare crises. We are therefore committed to making the European Research Area even more dynamic and targeted in a spirit of solidarity with respect to tackling the pandemic. Moreover, we want to discuss how the ERA vs Corona Action Plan can be further developed.

We want to strengthen the single market and also to develop mechanisms that improve its resilience in crisis situations. The EU should be more resolute in its opposition to market distortions caused by state-controlled and subsidised companies from third countries. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, this also applies to the protection of European companies that could be the target of takeovers. In the Council, we want to hold discussions on how EU regulations regarding public procurement can be tailored even more effectively to future emergencies and overcoming economic crises in order to promote sustainable growth.

With regard to cooperation in the Schengen area, we want to launch a debate with the objective of safeguarding the unimpeded functioning of the Schengen area by improving the coordination between the Member States in times of crisis and by strengthening common external borders. In the area of the judiciary, the issue of access to justice – especially in the digital domain – has taken on a new dimension owing to the COVID-19 pandemic also at the EU level and is an issue that we will address during our Presidency. Moreover, it has become clear that looking after especially vulnerable

people is bound up with particular challenges in times of crisis. We will therefore lend our active support to the new EU Strategy for Victims' Rights announced by the European Commission.

Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic give rise to a particular need for information among the population. We are therefore committed to strengthening the resilience of societies in dealing with false and misleading information on the internet in order to counteract the polarisation of public debates – also by external actors as well as targeted disinformation. We want to discuss this in the Council in connection with the Commission's EU Democracy Action Plan. Safeguarding the freedom of opinion and media diversity continues to be essential.

Our international responsibility in the COVID-19 pandemic

Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU is called upon to an unprecedented extent also around the world to demonstrate its ability to act as well as its responsibility as a strong international partner in a spirit of solidarity. We support the Team Europe approach with close European and international cooperation and coordination for the comprehensive and joint efforts of all EU institutions and Member States to successfully get to grips with the repercussions of the crisis. Germany will work resolutely to ensure its strategic operationalisation as well as its effective, tangible implementation. In line with the integrated approach, our efforts must encompass all phases of conflict as well as close cooperation with all relevant actors. Continued close coordination with the United Nations (UN), the World Bank (WB) and regional development banks is necessary with a view to overcoming development and food policy challenges. We want to continue to expand the active role played by the EU in global healthcare as well as our contribution to food security and, in particular, to strengthen multilateral organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), in addition to joint platforms with business and civil society. A coordinated approach to safeguarding fair access to and the transparent distribution of COVID-19 diagnostic tests, vaccines and therapeutic drugs based on epidemiological criteria in particular is of paramount importance. We are supporting these efforts by, among other things, strengthening the WHO as well as expanding the ACT Platform (Access to COVID-19 Tools).

In the context of tackling the pandemic, we will place a particular focus on the long-term optimisation of the EU's external crisis prevention and response capabilities. This also comprises improved and more resilient structures and processes, as well as tangible projects in the area of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). At the same time, the EU's comprehensive security policy engagement as an anchor of stability must be maintained in view of the destabilising impact of COVID-19 on pre-existing conflicts. We must ensure that its operations and missions continue to be carried out to the greatest possible extent, taking into account the necessary regulations.

II. A stronger and more innovative Europe

We must come up with a common European response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our political domains, economies and societies. At the same time, we consider the necessary measures to be an opportunity to achieve an accelerated, sustainable and digital transformation that is both forward-looking and based on values. We are committed to an innovative Europe that is founded on the key pillars of expanding digital and technological sovereignty, enhancing competitiveness and shaping a sustainable and stable financial architecture.

Expanding the EU's digital sovereignty

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown more clearly than ever that Europe must achieve sovereignty in the digital domain in order to remain capable of action on its own also in the future.

We therefore want to establish digital sovereignty as a leitmotiv of European digital policy and, during our Council Presidency, to work together on responses for approaching technical developments such as artificial intelligence and quantum technologies to ensure that, in the context of fair competition, we increase our prosperity, protect our security and uphold our values. We want to work to ensure that Europe has state-of-the-art skills in the field of key digital technologies while preserving the openness of the European single market. This includes consolidating a monitoring system for European digital capacities, a high level of public and private investment in strengthening digital capacities and a common understanding among the EU Member States regarding the definition of and path towards greater digital sovereignty. This also includes the establishment of a high-performance, sovereign and resilient European digital infrastructure. This is the only way in which we can achieve equivalent livelihoods in urban and rural areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has once again underscored the importance of a secure and trustworthy, sovereign European data infrastructure. We therefore want to hold intensive discussions among the Member States on initiatives such as Gaia X, as well as on the impact of crises on network capacities and broadband targets.

Europe must become better able to take action and shape events in the field of new technologies. Common European standards and norms must support the development of these technologies. Our European values and fundamental rights remain the basis we are championing, also in the digital age. We also want to harness the opportunities posed by the digital transformation to achieve greater stability and to keep the energy and resources consumed by digital infrastructures to the lowest possible level. We are committed to the responsible, and human-centric development and use of artificial intelligence (AI) which serves the good of society in the EU. We should harness the potential of this key technology in the measures to promote economic recovery in all sectors. The use of AI in the healthcare sector has an important role to play in this regard. AI applications should always be developed with the good of our liberal democratic society in mind.

In Europe's data policy, we want to place the focus on innovation, access to data, responsible data use, data skills and security. We want to advance the discussion launched by the European Data Strategy on rules and guidelines for the governance of common European data spaces. Moreover, we want to continue the debate on the appropriate use of high-quality datasets for digital services. In order to be in a position to manage future EU-wide health crises even more effectively, we will work to improve pan-European access to and the exchange of health-related data. We want to lay the groundwork for a transparent European healthcare data space that provides legal security and, with the help of Council conclusions, to set in motion efforts to draft a code of conduct for the use of healthcare data in line with data protection legislation. We also want to promote the shared use of data, for example in the agricultural sector and in the transport sector and with a view to achieving an enhanced circular economy. The protection of personal data, data sovereignty and consumer protection law must be ensured at all times in this regard. To ensure our citizens' data sovereignty, they must be able to store data securely on their devices without it being accessed by third parties. To this end, we want to create the legal conditions for ensuring that all devices feature secure storage options or standardised secure elements.

A well-functioning single market also in the digital sphere is an important precondition for ensuring the EU's competitiveness and for its economic recovery after the coronavirus crisis. We are committed to a modern digital regulatory policy that underpins the accelerated digital transformation with economic policy frameworks and which, at the same time, shapes it in compliance with competition rules, as well as in a consumer-friendly, social and sustainable manner. The single market should be strengthened with improved security provisions for the platform economy and digital services, as well as in the area of consumer protection. We intend to adopt Council conclusions on the issue of ecode-sign. We are committed to a coherent overall strategy for the EU for the protection of intellectual property in order to promote the protection of innovation and fair access rights as well as with a view to promoting creativity.

With respect to the implementation of the EU strategy for the digital age, we want to place a focus on strengthening the digital inclusion of citizens, on ensuring decent working conditions and social security in the context of the future of work – including in new forms of employment such as platform-based work – as well as on providing skills and competencies for the digital age. We want to discuss the European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan in the Council also with respect to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector and intend, while upholding the principle of subsidiarity, to adopt Council conclusions on this issue.

Enhancing competitiveness

The EU's unified economic area without internal borders is the bedrock of our prosperity, social security and cohesion. We want to continue to develop the single market for key areas of the future – without losing sight of priorities to date – and are committed in this regard to the effective implementation and enforcement of the single market rules as well as to the elimination of remaining unjustifiable barriers in the single market. We are committed to an efficient, innovation-friendly and future-proof regulatory framework. We want to expand evidence-based legislation, further strengthen regulatory impact assessments, extend the use of experimentation clauses as well as living labs and work to ensure the effective implementation of the one-in, one-out rule.

A competitive European industrial sector and vibrant small and medium-sized enterprises are essential for mastering the digital and environmental transformation. Against this backdrop, we want to continue to develop the European Commission's industrial and SME strategy in a forward-looking manner with the objective of strengthening European cooperation in innovative key technologies in particular. Within the framework of Council conclusions, we want to inject impetus into strengthening the competitiveness of both European industry and small and medium-sized businesses. We are, to this end, discussing suitable framework conditions and the promotion of forward-looking innovations, as well as measures relating to financing, a substantial reduction in red tape and SME-friendly regulations. At an SME conference in November, we intend, among other issues, to discuss cross-border approaches to strengthening entrepreneurship, the digital transformation and innovation.

During our Council Presidency, we intend to work to modernise European state aid legislation to ensure a level playing field and to support the implementation of the European Green Deal. State aid and cooperative projects supporting the creation of infrastructures such as broadband and mobile phone networks as well as the implementation of climate protection measures should be facilitated

under simplified conditions. Moreover, we intend to put in place measures to avoid carbon leakage to third countries, to support regions affected by the phasing out of coal-based power and the economy as a whole, as well as to review the state aid regulations applying to environmental and energy subsidies. In the area of competition law, we are committed to ensuring that, in the area of merger control proceedings, the situation with regard to global competition is kept in mind and that companies are afforded greater legal certainty for cooperative partnerships. The supervision of abuses in the area of competition law should be further developed with a view to platform markets.

We are committed to a forward-looking EU structural policy that strengthens European regions' competitiveness and resilience to crises. Our focus is on innovative economic change, climate and environmental protection and safeguarding sustainable employment. We want, as far as possible, to conclude the triilogue negotiations on the new legislative package of the EU Structural Funds. Sustainable structural change in the regions and investments in digitalisation, artificial intelligence, innovative technologies and human capital are a major priority.

Knowledge, research and education are important drivers of European innovation and competitiveness and are also key to the successful implementation of the European Green Deal. With regard to the further development of the European Research Area, we want to launch initiatives on green hydrogen, Europe's resilience to pandemics, civic participation and enhanced international cooperation. The EU must approach the mobility of the future in a sustainable, innovative and interconnected manner. We must, in this context, address the environmental challenges of our age while safeguarding the competitiveness of the European transport sector. Furthermore, we want to analyse the impact of the pandemic on our transport infrastructures as well as their resilience to crises in order to strengthen the European transport sector as well as efficient logistics chains. Moreover, we would like in the Council to provide guidance for the EU Strategy on Sustainable and Smart Mobility announced by the European Commission. We will also press ahead with negotiations on legislative projects in specific transport sectors.

A sustainable financial market architecture, stable financial policy and fair taxation

Business activities and company structures have changed dramatically as a result of the digital transformation and the COVID-19 pandemic is posing additional challenges. Europe's tax policy must be modern and innovative in order to continue to promote Europe's economic strength and safeguard Member States' tax revenues. The tax burden must be distributed fairly and transparently to this end. The OECD is currently drafting reform proposals that are intended to address in an effective manner the tax challenges arising from the digital transformation and which comprise the introduction of a minimum global effective tax rate. Following the conclusion of negotiations, we want to press ahead with implementing the results in the EU. We are also committed to the introduction of a financial transaction tax at European level. The increasing mobility of citizens, businesses and wealth requires Member States' tax authorities to work together in order to simplify taxation. It is with this in mind that we want to revise the directive on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation. One of the aims behind this is to tackle tax evasion in an effective manner. We will also step up efforts to fight money laundering and terrorist financing. In the current crisis situation, measures to contain the pandemic as well as to restore the full functioning of Europe's societies and economies are rightly the focus of our attentions. As soon as the economic conditions permit this, the budget policy in the Member States should be geared once again to the medium-term achievement of forward-looking

budgets as this is key to the stability, resilience and growth prospects of the economic and monetary union. In reviewing the Stability and Growth Pact, the primary focus should therefore be on the viability of public finances with a view to ensuring the required room for manoeuvre in crisis situations.

We want to deepen the capital market union in order to promote capital market-based financing and to further integrate the European capital market and make it more competitive at the international level. The aim here is to improve financing of the real economy as well as strategic investments. We support the continued development of the banking union in order to increase the stability of the financial system and to strengthen the European single market.

The advancing digitalisation of the financial services sector offers opportunities for new business models, products and providers. However, this is bound up with risks and is leading to profound changes in the market, thus rendering regulatory adjustments necessary. With the creation of a digital financial market union, we want to dismantle existing barriers to cross-border digital financial services in order to remain competitive internationally. We want to support the work in the context of the digital finance strategy announced by the Commission as well as the regulatory proposals on such areas as crypto assets in order to help strengthen the sovereignty of Europe's financial market.

III. A fair Europe

Social cohesion, social security and solidarity are the cornerstones of a fair Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to major disruptions on the daily lives of many Europeans and has exacerbated inequalities. We are therefore all the more determined during our Council Presidency to tackle the social repercussions of the crisis, to preserve social cohesion and to promote young people's long-term future prospects in Europe. Promoting intergenerational solidarity is another key priority for us. This particularly applies to the protection of children and the elderly, who are especially vulnerable in times of crisis. Shaping a fair Europe is also a long-term task as the challenges facing our social security are set to increase against the backdrop of environmental, digital and demographic change. We want to shape this change for all age groups in a socially compatible and just manner. During our Council Presidency, we would also like to advance the equality of women and men, take the interests of people with disabilities into account and promote an active civil society.

Strengthening the social dimension and social cohesion

Despite stabilising countermeasures, not only the economy, but also employment and the social situation in Member States have come under pressure to varying degrees in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are therefore committed to advancing social and economic upward convergence in Europe in compliance with the division of competences. Our objective, in the context of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, is to reduce inequality within the EU, mitigate disturbances in labour markets owing to external shocks and improve social protection. In particular, we are committed to the development of an EU framework for national minimum wages that strengthens the protection of employees as well as the social partnership and its prominent role in shaping working conditions and which supports income stabilisation also in times of crisis. We want to discuss the Commission's proposal for a corresponding instrument for fair minimum wages in the

Council – building on the consultation process with the social partners – along these lines in order to achieve tangible benefits for the protection of employees.

Poverty and social exclusion remain key challenges in Europe that are continuing to worsen in times of crisis. National minimum guaranteed income benefits in the Member States play an important role with respect to enabling those in need to participate in society and the labour market. We want to develop a framework for national minimum income protection systems in the EU Member States. The proposal for a European Unemployment Reinsurance Scheme announced by the Commission, which we intend to evaluate in the Council, has already been identified in the trio presidency programme as an important step in the further implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. On the basis of the Guidance Note announced by the Commission, we will endeavour to adopt Council conclusions to improve the enforcement of labour conditions for seasonal workers on the part of the Member States. The COVID-19 pandemic has drawn further attention to existing shortcomings.

With respect to the implementation of the Commission's Skills Agenda, we want to place the focus on continuing education and training as the key labour market policy response to digital and environmental structural change and intensify the dialogue between Member States on this issue. In times of digital and environmental transformation, vocational training must prepare people for the workplaces of the future to offer young people and the long-term employed prospects and to tackle the shortage of skilled workers. During our Council Presidency, we want to deepen cross-border vocational cooperation within the framework of the Copenhagen Process and to develop excellent vocational training at university level with the adoption of the Osnabrück Declaration. As a response to the pandemic, we want to undertake particular efforts in the expansion of digital education in order to implement digital solutions compatible with the new Europass platform that qualify teachers and open up new development prospects for members of the public. We are therefore also working to ensure that, within the framework of a European Education Area, learning mobility is increased, the recognition of educational qualifications is facilitated and an umbrella for a follow-up strategy for cooperation in general and vocational education is initiated.

We will support the drafting of the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan announced by the Commission and discuss this in the Council with the objective of advancing both the prevention and treatment of cancer and also enhancing the potential of the digital transformation for improved cancer treatments. Moreover, we will lend our support to the Commission's research and innovation mission for cancer.

Equality of women and men

Ensuring the equality of women and men is a mission for us all on which the EU's ability to meet the challenges of the future will be judged. We firmly believe that ascribing heightened institutional importance to a comprehensive gender equality policy can contribute to greater cohesion in Europe. The priorities in this regard include realising the objective of equal pay for women and men for equivalent work, continuing to promote and raise awareness of the equality of women and men, and tackling gender-based violence. We welcome the Commission's new Gender Equality Strategy in which, among other issues, questions of gender-based violence and the equality between women and men in the labour market are addressed. In order to strengthen the equal participation of women in working life, we are committed across Europe to the division of gainful employment and care work between women and men and want to send a political signal of support with Council conclusions to

this end. The pandemic has underscored the importance of care work. During our Council Presidency, we will work to cushion the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, foster women's independent livelihoods and intensify the exchange of experiences between the Member States within the framework of an informal meeting of the ministers for equal opportunities. In order to promote gender equity in the cultural domain, we want, among other things, to strengthen equal opportunities and to improve the participation and networking of women in creative processes. We will support the Commission with respect to the adoption of the Gender Action Plan III and intend to adopt Council conclusions to this end.

In order to improve the protection of women against violence also in times of crisis, we will continue to work towards the ratification of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention by the EU and all Member States. During our Presidency, we will advocate the Europe-wide expansion of and access to protection and counselling.

Protecting and ensuring the participation of young people

Young people provide important impetus for the future of our continent and they are particularly vulnerable in times of crisis. We will promote the involvement of young people across Europe. We want to continue to strengthen youth work programmes and therefore support all young people in the development of their personalities with a European Youth Work Agenda. We must continue to vigorously tackle youth unemployment in order to ensure that Europe remains a continent of opportunity. Young people must, as a priority, be offered a particularly high level of support when entering the labour market. In strengthening the Youth Guarantee, our objective is to lend our active support to young people and to prepare them for the fundamental changes taking place in the world of work – especially in times of crisis.

Promoting an active civil society and social cohesion

European policy in a democratic Europe requires a European public sphere and the participation of an active civil society that also thrives on cultural and media diversity. The cultural programme of Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union is also in this vein with participatory EU-wide artwork by Ólafur Elíasson transcending national borders and generational divides.

During Germany's Council Presidency, we also want to emphasise the importance of social cohesion within Europe and to elaborate ways to promote this issue at local, regional, national and European level. We can only shape the future of the European Union together with the involvement of all European citizens. The Commission's idea for a Conference on the Future of Europe is also based on this principle. This conference offers a forum for holding a broad-based discourse on the longer-term objectives of the European Union, and also on the lessons that we can learn from the COVID-19 pandemic. We will work to ensure that the Council, Commission and the European Parliament rapidly reach agreement on the structure and mandate of the conference. In so doing, we must clarify how such a conference can take place under the changed conditions owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will do our part to ensure that the conference is brought to a successful conclusion.

IV. A sustainable Europe

Our goal is to overcome the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic sustainably and inclusively and thereby help shape the transition to a sustainable economy. Our priorities to this end are an ambitious climate, environmental and biodiversity policy, a focus on the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustainable agriculture. The German Presidency of the Council of the EU will also work to ensure that the European Union and its Member States continue to fulfil their role in the international arena as ambitious and active players in the area of climate diplomacy, sustainability and European values.

Ambitious climate and environmental policy

The economic, technological and social transformation process necessary for such an ambitious climate and environmental policy can only be successful if it is both economically balanced and socially fair, and if the whole of society is behind it. The German Council Presidency intends to do everything in its power to help shape this transformation process.

The European Commission has rightly presented the European Green Deal as a comprehensive and ambitious strategy. It combines climate, environmental and biodiversity protection with crucial stimuli for growth and includes measures in all relevant policy areas. We will provide broad-based support for the implementation of the Green Deal and to this end ensure close coordination between all Council configurations involved. We will work to ensure that the Green Deal helps overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and promotes a sustainable and competitive economy. In the Council we also intend to adopt conclusions on the Commission's new Circular Economy Action Plan and its implementation. During our Council Presidency we plan to commence negotiations on the EU's 8th Environmental Action Programme.

Furthermore, we want to launch Council conclusions on the new EU Biodiversity Strategy in order to halt the advancing loss of biodiversity and preserve the benefits of the ecosystems that are so important for human life, also in view of the relationship between biological diversity and human health. The strategy is a key element of the Green Deal to overcome the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and forms the basis for the EU to play an active role in a rescheduled 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15).

During our Council Presidency we want to work towards concluding the deliberations on the draft of a European Climate Law which will specifically write into law the goal for the European Union to become climate-neutral by 2050. Moreover, we want to agree on the extent to which the European Union can increase its nationally determined contributions (NDC) for the year 2030 – also taking our economic performance and global competitiveness into consideration. We welcome the European Commission's announcement of a proposal to increase the EU's greenhouse gas emission reductions target for 2030 to 50 to 55% compared with 1990 levels. The impact assessment conducted by the EU Commission will form the basis for further discussions, particularly with regard to the effects on the competitiveness of the European economy and on the social security system, and with a common understanding of sector-specific contributions.

In order to achieve the European Union's ambitious climate goals, we intend to continue to work towards climate-friendly, sustainable and affordable mobility in the transport sector. In the energy sector, the Commission has announced major strategies for 2020. The rapid development of offshore wind energy will play a key factor in achieving the European Union's challenging goals in the area of renewable energies and ensuring supply security. We aim to formulate Council conclusions on the European framework conditions for joint renewable energy projects by the Member States, particularly in the area of offshore wind power. Europe also has a vital interest in a secure and sustainable supply of carbon-neutral and preferably carbon-free gases, such as hydrogen derived from renewable energies, which also has the potential to drive forward decarbonisation. During our Council Presidency, we therefore wish to engage in pertinent discussions on the necessary market design with the aim of fostering the development of the relevant markets and infrastructure within the EU. In the Council we also want to discuss European approaches to achieving the climate and energy goals, particularly the expansion of carbon pricing to cover all sectors and the introduction of a moderate minimum carbon price within the context of the European emissions trading system (EU ETS).

The European Union and its Member States also need to make an international contribution to environmental and climate protection through ambitious and dedicated climate diplomacy. To overcome the COVID-19 pandemic in the long term in a way that is climate friendly and environmentally viable, we therefore intend to work in a strategic and coordinated manner towards raising the climate goals worldwide in cooperation with our international partners, as set down in the Paris Agreement. We will strive also to bring about progress on improving national climate contributions. At international level we will work to establish a level playing field in the prevention of CO₂ emissions, taking account of the principle of joint but differentiated responsibility, as well as striving as far as possible to avoid the creation of incentives for carbon leakage to third countries. In addition, we intend to flank the European Green Deal with an active external energy policy. The EU Energy Diplomacy Action Plan is to be updated, for example in order to attract new partners for green energy imports and raise awareness among fossil fuel exporters of the opportunities presented by a new energy world.

A sustainable Europe

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are guiding principles for Germany's Presidency of the Council of the EU. We are working towards the submission of the concept announced by the Commission for the comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, so that the relevant Council consultations can begin in the second half of the year. The concept should be flanked by regular progress reports from the Council on how the SDGs are being achieved in the European Union. These reports should also indicate the areas in which additional policy measures are required. In the context of our Council Presidency, we intend to highlight the cultural dimension of sustainable development by focusing on the relationship between culture, climate change and the preservation of cultural heritage, for example.

Sustainable development in agriculture and fishing and sustainable rural areas

The COVID-19 pandemic has made us more aware of the significance of regional food security. We want to do our part to implement the SDGs through a modern and sustainable agricultural and fishing industry. The opportunities presented by the spread of digital technology harbour particular potential in this area. In the negotiations on the common agricultural policy (CAP) after 2020, we are aiming for

a general approach of the Council. The European Commission's "Farm to Fork" Strategy, on which we will be striving to reach conclusions, is closely based on the common agricultural policy. In addition, we intend to present conclusions on animal welfare issues and food labelling. With regard to fishing, we will, among other things, lead the negotiations on fishing opportunities in 2021.

In the spirit of sustainable development, the common agricultural policy and other policy areas ought to make a greater contribution to safeguarding the future of rural spaces, tapping the development potential of rural areas and preserving and developing them as attractive places to live and work. In future, the Member States will have to shoulder greater responsibility in this area for elaborating support measures to strengthen rural development. In addition, we intend to drive forward sustainable and balanced spatial and urban development by adopting the 2030 Territorial Agenda in the Council and updating the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007).

Consumer protection

To overcome the COVID-19 pandemic we need consumers to have confidence in a strong European single market. We are calling for the Council to be involved from an early stage in drafting the new Consumer Agenda, which the Commission wants to present in the second half of 2020. The Agenda must help consumer protection in the European Union to adapt to the current digital and environmental challenges, protect consumers and be more effective in enforcing existing consumer rights.

V. A Europe of security and common values

We want to strengthen our European community of law and values. That requires us to work closely with our European partners to find convincing answers to key questions in the areas of security and migration. Europe must remain a place where all people, regardless of their background, convictions and world view, can feel free and safe. We are pressing for ambitious reforms in asylum and migration policy.

Strengthening fundamental values and fundamental rights

The protection of our shared values, individual rights and freedoms is one of the hallmarks of the European Union. The rule of law is the fundamental prerequisite for the protection of the other values. It is essential for the EU to function. During our Presidency, we will therefore work intensively to strengthen fundamental values and particularly to promote a common, cooperative and constructive approach to dealing with the issue of the rule of law. On the basis of the Commission's first Annual Rule of Law Report covering all Member States, we want to conduct a political rule-of-law dialogue on an equal footing in the Council with the participation of all Member States. This will take the form of two discussions: an annual one on the report as a whole and its horizontal aspects and a half-yearly one on the first country-specific chapters of the report, so that all Member States in turn will be covered. Our goal is to foster a better understanding of the situation in each Member State, identify risks at an early stage and to be in a position to offer reciprocal support.

This kind of dialogue has to be complementary to other mechanisms. Compliance with rule-of-law standards in the EU and its Member States is also a basic prerequisite for the correct use of funding

from the EU budget. We therefore support the Commission's proposal to make EU budgetary funding conditional on respect for rule-of-law standards in the Member States. For us, it is also clear that where Member States have deficits as regards the rule of law, the mechanisms envisaged in the European treaties must be resolutely employed. That applies both to proceedings in accordance with Art. 7 of the Treaty on European Union and to proceedings before the European Court of Justice.

We will continue to work towards the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights—as soon as the situation with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic allows, negotiations with the Council of Europe on accession should be urgently resumed. We intend to call for the democratisation of the internet and the strengthening of the resilience of societies in dealing with false and misleading information online. We are also placing a special focus on fighting hate crime and racism. In order to take a decisive stand against all forms of antisemitism, we are aiming for structured dialogue at European level, particularly with regard to strategies and structures for a holistic approach to combating and recording antisemitic incidents. We are determined to tackle anti-Gypsyism and further develop the EU framework for national strategies. In this context, we will work to implement Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law.

Culture and media play a central role in communicating our European identity, our history and our values. We wish to safeguard their diversity and freedom, inter alia by continuing the Creative Europe programme. We want to address how to maintain a diverse media landscape even in times of crisis within the framework of Council Conclusions. We intend to examine how we can provide even more effective support to the cultural sector, which has been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. We plan to systematically implement the EU strategic approach to international cultural relations.

We want to strengthen the capability of Europol to support the operative work of the national security forces in the fight against cross-border crime, terrorist and extremist threats and to expand Europol as the central agency for the European police so that Europol is able to perform its mandate for analysis and information exchange to the full. To further bolster security in cyberspace, we are striving to encourage closer cooperation between the Member States in the area of network and information security, particularly with regard to the protection of critical infrastructure and other enterprises in the public interest. To achieve this, we intend not least to work to ensure that all devices available on the market have a standard minimum level of IT security.

Updating European migration and asylum policy

Migration and how we deal with refugees are issues on which we in the European Union have to cooperate if we are to be able to find long-term solutions. We are guided in this task by our European values, rule-of-law and humanitarian standards. Ambitious reform of the Common European Asylum System is needed in order to create a fair, operational, efficient and crisis-proof system. Based on the Commission's proposals, we are pushing for a reform that updates the regulations on responsibilities and solidarity, complies with humanitarian standards, avoids overburdening individual Member States by ensuring the just distribution of those seeking protection according to a fair responsibility-sharing regime and effectively tackles secondary migration. We want to minimise the creation of false incentives among the Member States and for those seeking protection and ensure that the system

works in practice. The rights of those seeking and those entitled to protection must be observed and quick decisions made on who actually needs protection in an EU Member State. Among other things, we want to introduce mandatory procedures on the EU's external borders in order to be able to categorise and assess asylum applications in preliminary proceedings at an early stage and to refuse entry into the EU where it is evident that no need for protection exists. At the same time, we want to strengthen and expand the European Union's capacities for resettlement.

A functioning and crisis-proof European asylum system also requires an efficient mechanism for the effective voluntary repatriation and long-term reintegration of those persons who cannot be granted protection. Furthermore, we want to develop and implement common standards for cooperation in the area of repatriation and effective procedures for the efficient and humane repatriation of those required to leave, and in this connection, we plan above all to drive forward the negotiations on reformulating the return directive. Voluntary repatriation should be given priority here.

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting refugees and migrants, as vulnerable individuals, particularly severely. That makes the expansion of our partner-based cooperation with countries of origin, receiving and transit states even more urgent. To this end we are pursuing a comprehensive approach to mitigate the causes of displacement and irregular migration and to stabilise regions of origin and transit and receiving countries. We want to expand our capacity to analyse the European migration situation in order to create effective early-warning mechanisms. The goal of our cooperation in a spirit of partnership is to ensure that refugees worldwide are protected through a more equitable distribution of international responsibility and to facilitate lasting solutions for refugees and returnees.

We are also striving to more effectively dovetail displacement and migration policy with other policy areas (coherent approach). To tackle irregular migration and successfully combat people smuggling, we also need effective protection for our external borders. To this end rapid implementation of the new Frontex mandate is vital. The Schengen system is an indispensable pillar of European cooperation and integration. This system without internal border controls can only work if our citizens' security and controlled management of immigration are guaranteed. We will work to further improve cooperation between the security, border protection and migration authorities of the EU Member States, even beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, and to develop additional intelligent measures. Europe needs better legal migration opportunities. To tackle the shortage of skilled workers, legal migration opportunities for workers from third countries should be used and accessed more effectively – not least through partnership-based approaches.

VI. An effective European Union for a rules-based international order anchored in partnership

During its Presidency, Germany will support the High Representative, putting itself at the service of a united, responsible and powerful European external action policy. The European Union provides a central framework and is an indispensable anchor for our national foreign, security and development policy. With the Presidency we are assuming a special responsibility for effective European external

action. We are convinced that only together can we Europeans effectively address international challenges, assert our interests through cooperation and defend our values.

In the area of the EU's external action, too, overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic, successfully coping with its consequences and preventing future pandemics will be central issues. This will only be possible with close international cooperation. Within the context of the Team Europe approach, we will therefore work to promote joint engagement between the EU institutions and Member States, the strengthening of the multilateral institutions, productive cooperation with international partners and key players and global provision of the necessary resources. We want to review the effectiveness of the external crisis prevention and crisis management instruments of EU institutions and Member States and introduce measures to strengthen them further. We have a special responsibility for the countries of the Western Balkans, as well as for our southern and eastern neighbourhood and our neighbouring continent Africa. Only if the EU effectively and visibly demonstrates its capability to act and its added value in its efforts to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and comprehensively strengthen resilient crisis prevention systems across the board will it be able to perform as a credible actor on the global stage.

Our geostrategic priorities

The EU has a considerable responsibility to help shape the global order in the spirit of stronger international coordination and cooperation as well as greater sustainability and solidarity. Together with the EU High Representative we intend to foster comprehensive and active cooperation between the EU and the United States, including broad-based political dialogue and a positive transatlantic trade agenda. The United States is our closest foreign and security policy partner outside the EU. We are driven by the vision of an ambitious, comprehensive partnership between the EU and the United Kingdom which does justice to the depth and breadth of our relations. We will play an active role to ensure that the negotiations between the European Union and the United Kingdom on the basis of the jointly agreed Political Declaration and the negotiating mandate of the Commission reach a successful outcome. In this context it goes without saying that our future partnership has to find a good balance between rights and obligations as well as fair conditions for competition. This requires parallel progress in the negotiations in all areas. At the same time, full implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement remains a key objective.

The policy on China adopted by all EU institutions and Member States should be united and balanced, and shaped by long-term common EU interests and values. Together with the European External Action Service and the Commission, we want to expand cooperation with China and work to foster greater reciprocity in all policy areas. We are aiming to make concrete progress in the negotiations on a bilateral investment agreement and on the issues of climate protection, biodiversity, global health and cooperation in Africa as well as to find common solutions to problems in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We intend to arrange a top-level meeting between the EU and China as soon as possible. At the EU-AU Summit we want to adopt a European-African agenda and intensify the political cooperation partnership with Africa through concrete joint initiatives. As central joint fields of action we have identified peace and security, good governance, economic cooperation for sustainable development and employment, climate change and the energy transition, biodiversity, health and migration issues. Another important topic is joint support for the African Continental Free Trade Area

(AfCFTA). We support a successful conclusion to the negotiations on a Post-Cotonou Agreement for broad-based cooperation with the African, Caribbean and Pacific States.

Managing conflicts and promoting peace

In cooperation with the European External Action Service and the European Commission, we need to intensify our commitment to overcoming the major international conflicts: in finding a solution to the conflict in Libya, in overcoming the consequences of the Syria crisis, in resolving the nuclear issue with Iran, in the Sahel and in eastern Ukraine. Furthermore, the German Presidency of the Council of the EU will also press for the retention of the two-state solution as a chance for peace in the Middle East conflict. Germany will do what it can, also in view of the international donor conference for Afghanistan in November, to ensure that the EU continues to support Afghanistan on its path towards peace, stability and growth – conditional on ongoing reform efforts and progress with regard to the peace process.

Other key projects

We are calling for a credible prospect of EU accession for the countries of the Western Balkans. Drawing them closer to the European Union is in both the Western Balkans' interests and the EU's own strategic interest. Against this backdrop, we are actively flanking the ongoing accession negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro and preparing for the commencement of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia by drafting the negotiating framework for these two countries, taking into account the new enlargement methodology.

Germany supports the High Representative, who is committed to actively shaping EU-Russia relations on the basis of the five principles of the EU and the progress report on their implementation. This balanced European policy towards the East includes starting the effective application of the results of the Eastern Partnership Summit and ensuring further implementation of the strategy on Central Asia. We want to do what we can to upgrade EU-ASEAN relations to the level of a Strategic Partnership. Moreover, we intend to actively drive forward the EU-Asia connectivity strategy and continue to build on it as a framework for sustainable, smart and transparent energy, transport and digital networks. Germany will strive to further expand EU relations with Latin America and the Caribbean, not least with the aim of intensifying economic relations and academic cooperation.

The tools for a strong EU on the world stage

Europe's hallmark is the close dovetailing of all available policies as well as civilian and military tools for crisis prevention, stabilisation, conflict management and reconstruction, extending to long-term promotion of peace and sustainable development. We want to focus particular attention on the successful implementation of the integrated approach by all relevant stakeholders with the aim of strengthening the EU's crisis response capabilities in the long term with regard to its external action. To this end we will work on developing Political Guidelines on crisis prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding, among other things.

Finally, on the basis of the Humanitarian Call for Action, we want to work to ensure that the EU makes a substantial contribution to protecting humanitarian space and respecting humanitarian international law and principles. A more effective European foreign and security policy will only succeed if all Member States more clearly recognise the responsibility they share for a strong Europe

in the world. All too often, individual Member States block the broad consensus among the vast majority of the countries – and that undermines our Union. That is why we will appeal for more willingness to engage in cooperation and compromise and to find a balance of interests and will also continue our efforts to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the common foreign and security policy during our Council Presidency, supporting the High Representative. We are also working to expand the EU's capacities to impose and implement sanctions. A leading role for Europe in strengthening the open and rules-based international trade system is crucial to overcome the health and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end we intend both to drive forward a modernisation agenda for the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to launch ambitious bilateral, regional and plurilateral agreements, for example in the area of digital commerce. Concluding free trade and investment protection agreements is a key factor in diversifying and safeguarding supply chains and in generating the necessary growth. We are aiming for rapid progress on finalising the agreement with MERCOSUR and the modernised agreement with Mexico. We want to support the European Commission in bringing the negotiations with New Zealand and Australia to a conclusion and making progress in the talks with Chile, Indonesia and Tunisia. In trade relations with China we want to help establish a more level playing field. We are also aiming to open up procurement markets in third countries. In addition, we want to improve international investment protection regulations and drive forward efforts to create a Multilateral Investment Court. We plan to continue efforts to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals into trade policy and thereby employ trade as an effective instrument to promote this policy worldwide. To support this bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral agenda, we will simultaneously modernise and continue to review our foreign trade and investment policy tools to enable our businesses to engage in international competition with enterprises from third countries at eye level. In the area of development cooperation, too, more intensive joint European activity is required than has previously been the case. Germany therefore supports the comprehensive use of Joint Programming. In addition, Europe must be able to respond more rapidly, innovatively and flexibly than it has to date in the area of development cooperation. We are therefore working to develop a viable and coherent European development finance architecture. In the area of European development cooperation, we also want to work with our partners to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Technology is increasingly influencing the struggle for global influence and is therefore becoming a crucial factor in international relations. For this reason, we want to initiate the set-up of a European digital diplomacy by creating a Digital Diplomacy Network incorporating the foreign ministries of the Member States under the auspices of the European External Action Service. We also intend to exploit the opportunities of digital transformation even more intensively in our European development cooperation, for instance, by promoting digital skills and data-driven markets in Africa. Germany is working with the High Representative to further develop the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and to bolster its overall resilience and capability to act in civilian and military domains. To this end we want to continue to promote the coherence of all EU defence initiatives, create the necessary response structures, fully implement further development of the civilian CSDP Compact and strengthen civilian and military leadership and planning structures in Brussels for executive CSDP missions. Germany will set up a European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management (CoE) in Berlin, which will develop conceptual standards and recommendations for civilian crisis operations. We want to focus on empowering partners in all areas within the framework of the European Peace Facility through a strategic policy approach. Together with the European External Action Service, we

intend to drive forward the development of the so-called strategic compass. This security policy document is to be used to further concretise the EU's strategic goals for the security and defence sector and make the EU's activity faster, more effective and more plannable, within the framework of the 2016 Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy for the European Union and based on a joint threat analysis. This should also cover its responsiveness to pandemics.

By improving processes, we want to facilitate more coordinated, coherent and targeted capability development among the EU Member States. Last but not least, we will work to strengthen the digital competence and cyber defence capabilities of the Member States' armed forces. We intend to promote cooperation between the EU and NATO through dialogue, transparency and more regular coordination. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, this should also incorporate military support services for civilian structures and contributions to building resilience as well as improving civil and disaster protection. Maintaining and developing the existing arms control architecture is in Europe's security interests in the light of new technologies and stakeholders. We are in favour of a long-term inner-European dialogue with the goal of enabling Europe to speak with one voice in this process.

2. Priority Dossiers under the German EU Council Presidency

Introduction

Germany is a federal parliamentary republic, with federal power vested in the Bundestag (the German parliament) and the Bundesrat (the representatives of Germany's regional states, Länder). The Bundestag is the only body at the federal level directly elected by the people and is currently composed of 709 members.

The Bundestag is elected every four years by German citizens aged 18 and over. The current Bundestag is led by the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) with 33 % of representation, followed by the SPD (Social Democratic Party) with 24 % and then by the AfD (Alternative for Germany) with 11 %. These are followed by: The Free Democratic Party (FDP), the Left (Die Linke), Alliance 90/The Greens (Grüne) and the Christian Social Union (CSU).

Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has been in office since 2005, heads the executive government. The executive is elected by the Bundestag and is responsible to it. The German head of state is the federal President, currently Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The federal President has a role in the political system, particularly in the establishment of a new government and its possible dissolution.

Germany has held the Council Presidency 12 times since becoming a founding member of the European Economic Community in 1957. The country last held the Presidency in 2008. It will take the helm of the EU Council Presidency on 1 July 2020, starting the trio Presidency composed of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia. The Trio has adopted a Declaration outlining the main areas of focus for their Trio, including democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as an economically strong EU based on growth and jobs and the social dimension. Likewise, the three Member States have pledged to work on the challenges of digitalisation, climate change and energy transition. It is to be noted that the Trio is working on a revised declaration to reflect the changed situation in Europe due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 endorsed by the Member States at the European Council meeting of 20 June 2019 will remain, however, a guiding instrument. The Agenda covers the protection of citizens' freedoms; developing a strong and vibrant economic base; building a climate neutral, green, fair and social Europe; and promoting European interests and values on the global stage.

Political priorities of the German Presidency

This note looks at the legislative and political projects, which could feature predominantly during the German Presidency. The upcoming German Presidency has already been dubbed the 'German corona Presidency' with a focus on crisis management. In the words of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas, '...the Council Presidency will have to deal with very difficult framework conditions. The Covid-19 pandemic will not only influence the Council Presidency's thematic priorities, but also the way of doing politics. Priority should be given to projects that are legally binding and have to be dealt with by the end of 2020.'

I. Covid-19

One of the first tasks of the Presidency will be to regulate restrictions on free travel and to revive the internal market. The EU civil protection mechanism is another area of importance in relation to Covid-19 as well as common procurement and production of life-saving medical equipment. In the short term, the German Presidency will likely want to focus on the exit strategy from the emergency measures and the recovery of the continent. Europe will need to get back on its feet, and in order to do this, there has to be a focus on strengthening social cohesion. The north-south fight over the financial responses to the crisis will need to be addressed with the degree of commitment that would lead to economic recovery. There is also an urgent need to re-open EU borders, and to help tourism and aviation which have been hard-hit by Covid-19. On 13 May 2020, the European Commission published a communication on tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond. The Commission has already published a common rulebook for voluntary travel vouchers, and once the virus outbreak is sufficiently under control, will adopt recommendations on reimbursement options for travellers. It is clear that to achieve this first set of objectives, there will need to be coordination efforts at the EU level on Covid-19 measures taken by individual Member States.

II. 2021-2027 MFF and other key issues

There are policy areas in which decisions are imperative, notwithstanding the pandemic crisis. This includes the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and its sectoral programmes, including the establishment, as requested by the EP, of an MFF contingency plan, the adoption of the annual budget for 2021, the future relationship with the UK, fishing quotas and certain international obligations. Apart from the Covid-19 pandemic, the overarching challenges currently facing the Union are well known and include, in particular, the 2021-2027 MFF (2018/0166 APP). There should be a rethinking of the EU budget for the next seven years, in the words of Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, where massive investment is needed in research, climate protection, technological sovereignty and crisis-proof health and social systems. Another area requiring an imperative decision at EU level concerns the annual budget for 2021. This, too, will fall during the German Presidency, along with the decisions on fishing quotas and international commitments such as climate goals set in the Paris Agreement. The negotiations on the future relationship with the UK in the post-Brexit reality are particularly challenging. The UK has rejected an extension of the current transition period, which expires at the end of 2020. After four negotiation rounds up to June, there is no guarantee that a future relationship

agreement will be struck and ratified by the end of the year. The German Presidency may also take initiatives in tackling issues requiring more European integration such as climate change and minimum taxes. On the question of the environment, it is clear that much work lies ahead with the need to implement the European Green Deal. Amongst others, there are the Closed Substance Cycle and Waste Management Action Plan and the Chemicals Strategy due in summer. The European Commission has also promised the announcement of an offshore wind strategy in July 2020. Another area of importance is the protection of the EU's founding values of democracy and the rule of law. One of the consequences of the pandemic has been the restrictions introduced by some Member States on these fundamental values under the guise of fighting coronavirus. The German Presidency may well push forward the idea that Member States which undermine these fundamental values should not be able to benefit from the Union's financial assistance. The question of migration and asylum will likely feature prominently on the German Presidency agenda. Under the previous legislature, agreement on a Common European Asylum System was not reached. It is expected that the European Commission will come up with a new proposal in the next months, which it is hoped can find support among the Member States and the European Parliament. There can be no doubt, however, that the Member States remain highly divided on the questions of migration and asylum. The German Ambassador, in a recent webinar highlighting Germany's priorities, indicated that while Germany is very much committed to working on this matter, it is not considered a likelihood that a solution be found before the end of the German Presidency in December 2020.

III. Health

From the health perspective, one of the proposals is to strengthen the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, possibly through a budgetary increase to recruit more staff and increase the capacities of the Centre. Likewise, Germany is likely to look at ways to strengthen the health systems of the Member States, in order to ensure that each is well equipped to deal with the coronavirus, considering that infections could increase again in individual regions after the summer. A European Pharmaceutical Strategy is also a project in the pipeline of the European Commission that could feature prominently during the Presidency, particularly the ways to prevent supply bottlenecks for pharmaceuticals in the EU, secure supply chains and to avoid dependency in the production of active ingredients. The Commission is preparing a roadmap for this strategy, which aims to review the Orphan and Paediatric Regulation, legislation on fees for the European Medicines Agency (EMA), as well as the basic pharmaceutical legislation, which dates back to 2001.

IV. Digitalisation

The German Presidency will likely also focus on issues such as data policy, artificial intelligence and a digital single market. There is an urgent need for a strengthened research base if the EU is to play a role on the international level, particularly in the face of fierce competition from the US and China. Germany has already proposed a Code of Conduct for the use of health data. Likewise, it would like to see a European Data Governance framework in order to write common rules for data use.

V. EU-China relations

The German Presidency had announced well in advance the preparation of an EU-China summit in September 2020. This is a priority for the German Chancellor and an essential event for the future relations between the two trading partners. However, with the ongoing coronavirus situation the two

sides agreed on 3 June to postpone the summit, and it remains unclear when it will take place. On the other hand, an EU-China summit did take place on 22 June 2020 via video conference with the participation of Charles Michel, European Council President, and Ursula Von der Leyen, European Commission President.

Conclusion

A revised Commission Work Programme was adopted on 27 May, including a proposal on the Covid-19 recovery plan, which, as the Commission has explained, is based on the EU's seven-year budget and will be topped up by a recovery instrument. The EU executive has proposed borrowing from the markets in order to finance a recovery plan that will come on top of the EU budget. The revised MFF proposal is also on the table, and a number of further legislative proposals to deal with Covid-19 are expected. All this will require urgent action by the two co-legislators and under the leadership of the German Presidency. The economic hit to Europe's economy because of the pandemic is substantial. The EU institutions and Member States will be expected to work together to manage and handle the consequences and fall-out of the current crisis. On the Conference on the Future of Europe, while work was halted due to Covid-19, the German Presidency has indicated its wish to work further on this project. It is however clear that the Conference cannot start until the pandemic is considered over, and social-distancing measures are relaxed. Conducting complex negotiations is very much dependent on physical meetings.

3. German Presidency priorities discussed in parliamentary committees⁴

Ministers are outlining the priorities of the German Presidency of the Council of the EU to parliamentary committees, in a series of meetings. Germany holds the Presidency of the Council until the end of 2020. A first series of hearings took place from 3 to 16 July. A second set of hearings happened during the first week of September.

Hearings held on 1, 2 and 3 September

Constitutional Affairs

On 1 September, MEPs of the Constitutional Affairs Committee quizzed State Minister for Europe Michael Roth on the preparations for the Conference on the Future of Europe. Roth acknowledged that “the level of ambition differs from one institution to the other” but insisted that “all have to pull in the same direction” and agreed with most members that citizens should get a centre stage. The statute of the European Ombudsman, the EU Transparency Register, rule of law, the future EU-UK relationship, the EP's right of inquiry and the reform of the electoral law were also raised in the debate.

Culture and Education

On 1 September, Commissioner for Culture and Media Monika Grütters reassured Members of the Culture and Education Committee that managing the Covid-19 consequences for culture was a priority for the EU in the coming months. She expressed support for the request of the committee to

⁴ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20200706IPR82739/german-presidency-outlines-priorities-to-ep-committees>

“earmark” EU recovery funding, in order “to make it possible for 1-2% of EU expenditure to flow into culture and media measures”.

Members used the opportunity to ask the German presidency to support the EP demands to properly fund Erasmus+ within the next Multi-annual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. They also called for the Council presidency to focus on accessibility to online learning across Europe, the future of the sports sector, mobility of apprentices, cultural and language diversity, freedom of expression, the cross-European dimension of cultural and creative projects, and inequality among Member States in their support for culture and media.

Economic and Monetary Affairs

During their discussion with German finance minister Olaf Scholz on 2 September, Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee MEPs focussed largely on the EU’s recovery package and attempts at establishing new own resources to finance the EU’s recovery. Most MEPs taking the floor pressed Mr Scholz to reach concrete and good progress on establishing new own resources, notably to ensure the proper financing of the EU’s economic recovery commitments. They noted that progress to date has been far too little. A few however also raised concerns that new instruments agreed could lead to the EU becoming a transfer union. Mr Scholz assured that legislation on new own resources will be a major priority of the German Presidency. Taxation legislation, notably possible progress on tax transparency and a financial transaction tax, was also raised by some MEPs.

International Trade

Mercosur, the agreement between the EU and four Latin American countries, figured prominently in questions from Members of the International trade Committee, following Economic Affairs and Energy Minister Peter Altmaier’s presentation of Presidency’s priorities in trade policy. MEPs consider the reform of the WTO, the investment agreement with China, and EU-US trade relations as further critical issues to tackle during the presidency. Altmaier emphasised the presidency’s intention to conclude ongoing trade negotiations among EU institutions on the enforcement regulation and on dual use products.

Fisheries

On 3 September, Food and Agriculture Minister Julia Klöckner underlined that the top priority in the field of fisheries is reaching a political agreement on the future EMFF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) and that any compromise will need to be compatible with ongoing WTO negotiations on harmful subsidies. The Presidency is very optimistic that an agreement on the Eastern Baltic cod measures should be reached during the second round of negotiations at the end of September. Important decisions are also expected on the quotas and total allowable catches for 2021. Regarding Brexit, the Minister reiterated the need to defend the interests of the EU fishing and processing industries, while at the same time ensuring that stocks are managed in a sustainable way; preparations are ongoing for all scenarios, including the possibility of a no-deal before the end of the year.

Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

In the exchange of views with Members of the Civil Liberties Committee, Justice Minister Christine Lambrecht explained that the Presidency will focus on increasing the resilience of the justice systems post-COVID-19 by concentrating on its further digitalisation. Regarding the Rule of Law, the German

Presidency intends to organise discussions in the Council in the follow up to the Commission's Annual Rule of Law Report. Other issues raised included MFF, Rule of Law conditionality, hate speech, child sex abuse online, the e-evidence proposals, the use of facial recognition and the EU's accession to the European Convention of Human Rights.

Development

On 3 September, Niels Annen, Minister for State, at the German Federal Foreign Office, told the Development Committee that the presidency has two main priorities on humanitarian aid. Firstly, it will put emphasis on anticipatory humanitarian action – pre-determined, pre-financed activities that, based on a credible forecast, enable early action ahead of crises to save lives, mitigate the impact of crises, - including on climate change, and promote a common EU position. Secondly, it will promote respect for compliance with international humanitarian law and humanitarian space. In the debate, MEPs questioned, among several topics, how the Presidency was planning to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a huge impact on humanitarian crises by increasing health-related needs and worsening the economic situation of vulnerable populations.

III. Politics in Germany

1. Political System

Germany is a parliamentary and federal democracy.⁵ The German Bundestag, the constitutional body most present in the public eye, is directly elected by citizens eligible to vote every four years. The most important tasks of the Bundestag are legislation and to oversee the government's work. The Bundestag elects the Federal Chancellor for the legislative period by secret ballot. Within the Federal Government the Chancellor has the authority to lay down guidelines, in other words determines binding broad policy lines. The Federal Chancellor appoints the federal ministers, and from among them a Deputy Chancellor.

In actual fact, however, it is the parties that make up the government that decide which persons will head the ministries they were allocated in the coalition negotiations. If a coalition collapses, the Chancellor can also fall prior to the end of the electoral term, as the Federal Government has the right to vote the head of government out of office at any time. In such cases parliament must, however, name a successor at the same time in what is known as a "constructive vote of no confidence". This means that there can be no period of time without an elected government in office.

Constitutional groundwork⁶

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, known as the Grundgesetz (Basic Law), was adopted in 1949 to cement a political system based on freedom and democracy. In its preamble, the German people was called on to achieve in free self-determination the unity and freedom of Germany. This came true in 1990. Following the conclusion on 31 August 1990 of the Unification Treaty (Einigungsvertrag) setting out the modalities for the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) accession

⁵ <https://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/politics-germany/federal-state>

⁶ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/main-executive-and-legislative-bodies-31_en

to the Federal Republic, the preamble and concluding article of the Basic Law were revised. The text of the constitution now reflects the fact that, with the accession of the GDR, the Germans have regained their unity. Since 3 October 1990 the Basic Law is binding on the whole German nation. The Basic Law states that the Federal Republic of Germany is a democratic and social federal state (Art. 20). All public authority emanates from the people. It is exercised by the people through elections and referendums and by specific legislative, executive and judicial bodies. The legislature is bound by the constitutional order, the executive and the judiciary by laws and justice. This applies both to the Federation and the Länder.

The exercise of governmental powers and the discharge of governmental functions are divided by the Basic Law (Art. 30) between the Federation and the Länder. Except as otherwise provided or permitted by the Basic Law these are incumbent on the Länder. At federal level, legislative functions are essentially discharged by the German Bundestag and executive functions are essentially executed by the Federal Government. At the level of the Länder they are discharged by the Land parliaments and the Land governments respectively.

The Federal President

The Federal President (Bundespräsident) is the head of state of the Federal Republic of Germany. He is elected by the Federal Convention (Bundesversammlung) for a period of five years (Art. 54 of the Basic Law). The Federal Convention is a constitutional body which meets only to elect the Federal President. It is made up of members of the Bundestag as well as the same number of delegates elected by the parliaments of the Länder. The Federal President represents the Federal Republic of Germany in its international relations. He concludes treaties with foreign countries on behalf of the Federation, while the actual conduct of foreign policy is the prerogative of the Federal Government.

The present incumbent is Frank-Walter Steinmeier who entered office in February 2017. Being the head of state, the President is empowered, among other things, to: ⁷

- (a) propose a candidate to the Bundestag (lower House of the German Parliament) for the office of Federal Chancellor;
- (b) appoint and dismiss the Federal Chancellor, other Ministers and Federal judges;
- (c) dissolve the Bundestag upon the request from the Federal Chancellor if the Bundestag are not supportive of the Federal Chancellor's policies through the vote of confidence;
- (d) promulgate legislation that has been passed by the Legislative Branch;
- (e) represent Germany both at home and abroad, accredit and receive envoys, and conclude treaties with foreign states; and
- (f) pardon individual offenders and award honours on behalf of Germany.

The President is indirectly elected for a five-year term, renewable once, by the Federal Convention established solely for the presidential election. The Federal Convention is made up of all Members of the Bundestag and an equal number of representatives elected by the state legislatures. The President is elected by secret ballot without any prior debate. If none of the candidates receives an absolute

⁷ <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1415fsc05-political-system-of-germany-20150218-e.pdf>

majority (i.e. more than half of the votes) in the first and second rounds of voting, a third round will be held. The candidate receiving the most votes in the third round will be elected. New candidates can also be nominated for the second and third rounds. Joachim Gauck, a former Lutheran pastor, was elected the President in March 2012. The next federal election will take place in Summer 2021.

The Bundestag

The Bundestag is the parliamentary assembly representing the people of the Federal Republic of Germany. After the elections to the German Bundestag in September 2017, the assembly currently features 709 seats. The members of the Bundestag are elected by secret ballot at general, direct, free and equal elections for a term of four years (Art. 38 of the Basic Law). The main functions of the Bundestag are to adopt legislation, elect the Federal Chancellor and monitor and control the activities of the Federal Government. The Bundestag has formed committees for specific subject areas. Education and research are dealt with by the Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment. Most of the bills submitted to parliament for its consideration come from the Federal Government, while a smaller number are introduced from the floor of the Bundestag itself or by the Bundesrat, the representative body of members of the Länder governments. Election of the Bundestag is held once every four years unless it is dissolved earlier. One half of the seats are elected directly in 299 constituencies based on a majority vote, while the other half are filled through the proportional representation system using the party list. The latter arrangement aims to allocate extra seats to political parties so that the make-up of the Bundestag reflects the support for these parties across the country.

The Bundesrat

The Bundesrat, the representative body of the 16 Länder, is also involved in legislation and federal administration as well as in issues of the European Union (Art. 50 of the Basic Law). The Bundesrat is composed of members of government in the Länder. Each of the Länder has between three and six votes depending on their population, although the votes of one Land cannot be split. The smallest of the 16 Länder have three votes, those with a population over two and up to six million inhabitants have four votes, while Länder with a population over six million are entitled to cast five votes and those with a population over seven million may cast six votes of the total of 69 votes. A considerable part of all federal legislation is subject to the approval of the Bundesrat. Legislation requires such approval particularly when it refers to the finances or the administrative authority of the Länder. Of the Bundesrat's 16 committees, the Cultural Affairs Committee, the Internal Affairs Committee and the Committee for European Union Issues are the main committees responsible for science and education. For urgent cases the Bundesrat has a Europe Chamber, which can quickly take decisions on EU legislative proposals (Art. 52, Paragraph 3a of the Basic Law). The Länder rights of participation in European Union affairs are laid down in Article 23 of the Basic Law and set out in detail in the Act on Cooperation between the Federation and the Länder in European Union Affairs (*Gesetz über die Zusammenarbeit von Bund und Ländern in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union – EUZBLG*) adopted in 1993. The rights and obligations of participation of the Länder provided for in said Law are exercised through the Bundesrat. The nature and scope of such rights and duties are based on the internal assignment of responsibilities between the Federation and the Länder. When legislative powers exclusive to the Länder in school education, culture or broadcasting are primarily affected, the

exercise of the rights belonging to the Federal Republic of Germany as a member state of the European Union is delegated to a representative of the Länder designated by the Bundesrat.

The Federal Government

The Federal Government is comprised of the Federal Chancellor and the Federal Ministers. The Federal Chancellor enjoys an autonomous, eminent position within the Federal Government and with regard to the Federal Ministers. He makes proposals to the Federal President on the appointment and removal of ministers (Art. 64 of the Basic Law) and directs the affairs of the Federal Government. The strong position of the Federal Chancellor is based first and foremost on his power to determine general policy guidelines as enshrined in Article 65 of the Basic Law: The Federal Chancellor sets out general policy guidelines and is responsible for them.

The present incumbent, ANGELA MERKEL (Christian Democratic Union), has been in office as Federal Chancellor since November 2005. After the general elections in September 2017, the Bundestag elected her Federal Chancellor for a further four years in March 2018. The Federal Chancellor is the head of government. According to the Basic Law, the Federal Chancellor is empowered, among other things, to:⁸

- (a) propose ministerial candidates for appointment by the President to the Cabinet;
- (b) chair the Cabinet and reconcile the difference among Ministers;
- (c) determine the government policies; and
- (d) command the armed forces in case the country is under attack.

To be elected as the Federal Chancellor, the candidate has to obtain an absolute majority of votes in the Bundestag in order to receive the formal appointment from the President. The election is often preceded by extensive negotiations between those parties that plan to govern together, and the leader of the party or coalition of parties winning the Bundestag election usually becomes the Federal Chancellor. Angela Merkel of the Christian Democratic Union has served as the Federal Chancellor since 2005, and she was re-elected for a third term in December 2013. Within the Federal Government, it is the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung – BMBF), that is responsible for policy, coordination and legislation regarding out-of-school vocational training and continuing education, financial assistance for pupils and students, as well as for the admission to higher education institutions and the degrees they confer. Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research exercises the responsibilities of the Federation as part of the joint tasks of the Federation and the Länder (Art. 91b of the Basic Law). Other Federal ministries are also involved, as they are responsible for certain aspects of education and science. As of 2018, these ministries are:

- the Federal Foreign Office is responsible for Foreign Cultural Policy including German schools abroad
- the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community is responsible for the legislation on the status-related rights and duties of the civil servants of the Länder, which include most teachers

⁸ <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1415fsc05-political-system-of-germany-20150218-e.pdf>

- the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection is responsible for the legislation on entry to the legal profession
- the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for measures to promote employment and for occupational and labour market research
- the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is responsible for child and youth welfare
- the Federal Ministry of Health is responsible for regulations on entry to the medical and paramedical professions
- and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development is responsible for international continuing education and development

The Federal Constitutional Court

Based in Karlsruhe, the Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Basic Law. It examines legislation enacted at federal and Land level to ensure that it is compatible with the Basic Law. Any citizen of the Federal Republic has the right to file a complaint with the Federal Constitutional Court if he feels his basic rights have been violated by the state.

The Länder as constituent states within the federal state

One of the fundamental elements of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz), besides the principles of democracy and the rule of law, is the principle of federalism (Art. 20, Paragraph 1). Federalism has a long, many centuries covering tradition in Germany. The members of the Parlamentarischer Rat (Parliamentary Council) who established the constitutional order of the Basic Law in 1948/49 created a federalist order in the newly-founded Federal Republic of Germany not only in order to carry on this constitutional tradition but also in order to make a conscious break with the National Socialist centralist state (1933-1945). In doing so they returned the school system, in particular, into the hands of the Länder. The Federal order is an unassailable constitutional principle which is subject to the so-called 'Eternity Clause' of the Basic Law (Art. 79, Paragraph 3) and is therefore exempt from constitutional amendment.

The major characteristic of the federal state is that both the Federation and its constituent states, known as Länder, have the status of a state. One core element of this status is, according to the constitutional order laid down in the Basic Law, the so-called cultural sovereignty (Kulturhoheit), i.e. the predominant responsibility of the Länder for education, science and culture. This element is at the heart of their sovereignty. This means in principle that each Land bears responsibility for its educational and cultural policy, with the proviso that, in accordance with the federalist principle, they lend expression to the historical, geographical, cultural and socio-political aspects specific to their Land and thus to diversity and competition in the education system and in the field of culture. On the other hand, the constituent states of the federal state bear joint responsibility for the entire state. This overall responsibility both entitles and obliges them to cooperate with one another and to work together with the Federal Government.

Except as otherwise provided or permitted by the Basic Law, the exercise of governmental powers and the discharge of governmental functions are incumbent on the Länder (Art. 30 of the Basic Law). Each Land has its own constitution – according with the principles of a republican, democratic and social

state governed by the rule of law within the meaning of the Basic Law (Art. 28). The distribution of legislative competence between the Federation and the Länder is defined in the Basic Law, in that the Länder shall have the right to legislate insofar as this Basic Law does not confer legislative power on the Federation (Art. 70). Educational and cultural legislation is therefore primarily the responsibility of the Länder. The administration of these matters is almost entirely the responsibility of the Länder. Alongside education, science and culture there are other major fields in which the Länder enjoy exclusive powers; these include internal security/police, local government and regional structural policy.

With a view to coordinating cooperation in the areas of education and training, higher education and research, as well as cultural matters, the Länder established the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder) in 1948, which has served as a forum for cooperation ever since. Similarly, the Länder have set up conferences of the relevant ministers for the other areas of responsibility, such as the Conference of Ministers of the Interior and the Conference of Ministers of Economics.

Local self-government Länder as constituent states within the federal state

Local self-government as an expression of civil freedom has a long tradition extending as far back as the Middle Ages in Germany. The right of local authorities (Kommunen) to self-government as enshrined in the Basic Law (Art. 28) covers issues pertaining to the local community such as maintenance of roads and public facilities as well as local public transport and town planning. It also includes the construction and maintenance of further public service areas, such as day care centres for children, school buildings, theatres and museums, hospitals, sports facilities and swimming pools. The local authorities are likewise responsible for adult education and youth welfare and help promote and support cultural activities by providing the majority of public expenditure in this area. In order to meet these responsibilities, local authorities are entitled to levy their own taxes and charges (property and trade tax, consumer and expenditure taxes). The local authorities also receive a proportion of wage and income taxes, as well as of turnover tax.

2. Brief history of the parliamentary institution⁹

Thanks to its historical significance, the Reichstag building is one of the most famous landmarks in Berlin. What makes the Reichstag so well-known is not merely its architecture, nor the fact that it is the current seat of the German Parliament (the *Bundestag*). What gathers curious onlookers from around the world has more to do with the dramatic events of its past, including the role it played in the rise of the Nazi regime. From the time construction began in 1884, the Reichstag reflected the tumultuous nature of German leadership for years to come, almost as if the building itself were a bad omen. Kaiser Wilhelm I, who was the Emperor at the time, was responsible for laying its foundation stone. Yet he tried and failed twice before getting it right. The Kaiser didn't even like the building to begin with because the Reichstag's neo-baroque dome would be even greater in stature than the city castle.

Indeed, the parliamentary rule of the late 19th century was subsuming the control of the monarch, and the Reichstag became an imposing symbol of this fact. Upon its completion ten years later, Kaiser Wilhelm II, who took control after his grandfather died, wouldn't allow the customary inscription of

⁹ <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/germany/articles/berlins-most-famous-building-the-reichstag/>

the words *‘Dem Deutschen Volke’* or *‘To the German People’* to be added to the building. Of course, in hindsight the Kaisers’ disdain for the building was rather petty in comparison to the ways that the Reichstag intertwined itself with German political history in the decades to come. The building did, however, enjoy a brief interlude of political peace and prosperity when it served as the legislature of the Weimar Republic starting in 1919. Yet, less than 15 years later, the Reichstag rose up in flames under suspicious circumstances that are still contested today. An unemployed, self-proclaimed communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, took responsibility for the arson, but there is much debate about whether he was really the one who committed the crime. There is one thing that historians do know for sure: Hitler used the attack to discredit the communists, resulting in his subsequent seizure of power.

The Reichstag’s dome and chamber were damaged in the fire, and then it was further destroyed during WWII. Repairs were finally completed in 1971, this time, without the lavish dome that defined its structure in its early days. The building wasn’t used as the seat of Parliament until after German reunification in 1990. Throughout the duration of the decade, the Reichstag was subject to continual remodelling efforts. Most notably, a new glass dome was added where the old one used to be, a symbol of a modern beginning for Germany. The dome offers a spectacular 360° view of the city and allows sunlight to emanate down to the floor of the parliamentary chambers. There are even electric features, which help regulate the amount of sunlight that filters into the space.

3. Recent political context

House panel spurns Trump’s Germany troop withdrawal¹⁰

WASHINGTON — The House Armed Services Committee delivered a near-unanimous bipartisan rebuke to President Donald Trump’s plans to pull about 10,000 U.S. troops from Germany.

During its mark-up of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act Wednesday, the panel voted 49-7 to approve a measure that bars the administration from lowering troop levels below current levels. It was backed by HASC’s chairman, Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., its top Republican, Rep. Mac Thornberry, of Texas, and other lawmakers who said the move was poorly planned and undermines the NATO alliance.

“Part of what our military does is build those alliances and makes sure we don’t have to actually use the military. All of those things should be thought about before we announce we’re going to yank 10,000 troops out of Germany,” Smith said. “By the way, the president has not yet been clear on what he’s doing.”

The amendment bans the administration from lowering troop levels below current levels until 180 days after Pentagon leaders present a plan to Congress and certify it will not harm U.S. or allied interests. There are currently about 34,500 U.S. troops stationed in Germany.

Republicans who opposed the restrictions echoed Trump’s view that Germany was not pulling its weight in the NATO alliance, and they found common cause with progressive Democrats who favor a

¹⁰<https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2020/07/01/house-panel-spurns-trumps-germany-troop-withdrawal/>

restrained use of the military. “If we do reduce our troop presence, I think that we could count on our European partners to step up. I think that the way they become stronger is by having to become stronger,” said Florida Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz, a staunch ally of the president.

The amendment from Reps. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., and Don Bacon, R-Neb., came a day after Trump approved Pentagon plans to redeploy 9,500 U.S. troops from Germany. Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen. Mark Milley, who briefed Trump Monday, said the plan would improve “strategic flexibility” and benefit troops and their families, according to a statement released by the Pentagon Tuesday evening.

In the Senate, a bipartisan group of senators led by Utah Republican Sen. Mitt Romney have proposed an amendment to the Senate’s version of the NDAA that would freeze troop numbers in Germany. Trump’s national security adviser, Robert O’Brien, said in an op-ed published last week in The Wall Street Journal that the U.S. those troops “may be reassigned to other countries in Europe.”

“Thousands may expect to redeploy to the Indo-Pacific, where the U.S. maintains a military presence in Guam, Hawaii, Alaska and Japan, as well as deployments in locations like Australia,” O’Brien said. In addition, last week, the U.S. ambassador to Poland, Georgette Mosbacher, told TVN24 in Poland that the U.S. will send another 1,000 troops to Poland — over and above the 1,000 declared last year. But she said they might not necessarily be transferred from Germany.

Germany says Facebook must comply with antitrust ruling on data use¹¹

Group must offer users a choice when it collects and merges data from outside its ecosystem.

Facebook suffered a setback in Germany on Tuesday after the country’s highest civil court ruled that it must comply with an order from the German antitrust watchdog and fundamentally change the way it handles users’ data. The ruling by the federal court of justice in Karlsruhe takes aim at the way Facebook merges data from the group’s own services, such as WhatsApp and Instagram, with other data collected on third-party internet sites via its business tools. In 2019, Germany’s cartel office blocked Facebook from pooling such data without user consent. Facebook later won a suspension of that decision from a court in Düsseldorf and wanted the pause to continue until a ruling on its appeal. But on Tuesday the Karlsruhe court set aside the Düsseldorf ruling and backed the antitrust authorities, saying Facebook in future had to offer its users a choice when it collects and merges data from websites outside of its own ecosystem. If data are collected and used in an unlawful way, antitrust authorities must be able to intervene. Andreas Mundt, head of the cartel office, welcomed the decision. He said data was a decisive factor for economic power and for judging market power on the internet. “Today’s ruling gives us important clues as to how we should deal with the issues of data and competition,” he said, in comments quoted by DPA agency. “If data are collected and used in an unlawful way, antitrust authorities must be able to intervene to prevent an abuse of market power,” he added. Facebook noted that the case relates to the preliminary proceedings on the stay order. “The main proceedings. . . are ongoing and we will continue to defend our position that there is no antitrust abuse. There will be no immediate changes for people or businesses who use our products and services in Germany,” it said. Even before Tuesday’s ruling, Germany stood in the vanguard of

¹¹ <https://www.ft.com/content/a169921d-4744-4c16-8ae8-028d52bb655c>

attempts by European governments to tame the tech giants, after growing public disquiet about the potential threats they pose to competition, privacy and civil liberties. The presiding judge in Karlsruhe, Peter Meier-Beck, said there were no doubts that Facebook was market-dominant and “abuses” its market power through the “terms of use that were prohibited by the cartel office”. The court said the market abuse consisted in Facebook not giving its users a choice as to whether the platform had potentially unlimited access to all the data they generated outside Facebook, or only to the data that they themselves disclosed on the social media group’s sites. Facebook’s lawyers had argued that the use of so-called “off-Facebook data” could be advantageous for users, because they improved the quality of the Facebook product. They also emphasised the significant economic consequences for the company that would arise from implementation of the cartel office’s order. Rupprecht Podszun, head of the Institute for Competition Law at Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, described the ruling as a “spectacular success” for the cartel office, which “can now take action against Facebook and demand a change in the way it handles user data”. He said it was also an “important signal for competition on the internet”. He said the cartel office could now demand Facebook submit a plan within four months on how it intended to stop merging data into so-called “super profiles”. Peter Stauber, partner for competition law at the law firm Noerr, said the ruling set a “precedent”. It stressed that a platform such as Facebook had a responsibility to maintain competition on the market it dominated. It also treated the access to and use of data as a “parameter of competition and a means of abusive behaviour”.

Germany warns new US sanctions endanger Nord Stream 2 pipeline¹²

Berlin officials call proposed law serious interference in European sovereignty

German officials warned that proposed new US sanctions against the controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline threaten the project’s survival, calling it serious interference in German and European sovereignty. Nord Stream 2, owned by the Kremlin-controlled gas monopoly, Gazprom, has only 160km of underwater pipeline left to build to reach its receiving station in northern Germany. Prior US sanctions targeted companies laying the pipeline, but German officials at a Bundestag panel hearing on Wednesday argued the new round could hit companies facilitating the project, and potentially even German officials. “We’re talking about direct and grave interference in Germany and Europe’s sovereignty and energy policy,” said Niels Annen, minister of state in Germany’s foreign ministry, at the hearing. Swiss company Allseas halted deepwater pipe laying for the project after the US sanctions were signed into law in 2019, and Russia vowed to continue on its own.

Nord Stream 2 has also been divisive within Europe. Some criticise the project as a means of advancing German commercial interests at the expense of Ukraine, which fears losing transit pipeline fees. Eastern European and Baltic states also worry about increased dependency on Russia. Germany highlighted its role in brokering a new gas transit treaty between Moscow and Kyiv, which came into force on January 1 2020, to ensure gas continued to flow through Ukraine. Many German analysts say the sanctions seem driven by American efforts to promote its own liquefied natural gas in Europe. Washington “has pushed the purchase of US LNG”, said Kirsten Westphal, of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. At Wednesday’s panel, Michael Harms, managing director of the German Eastern Business Association, estimated new sanctions could affect 120 companies from 12

¹² <https://www.ft.com/content/81a1d823-730f-4412-a698-670e4fc4f6f1>

European states, and that many companies could feel compelled to withdraw. German chancellor Angela Merkel said the “extraterritorial sanctions” Congress was planning “are not consistent with my understanding of the law”. If passed, it would be harder to complete Nord Stream 2, but she said, “we still believe it’s right to get the project done”. The new proposed bipartisan sanctions, co-sponsored by Republican senator Ted Cruz and Democratic senator Jeanne Shaheen, are likely to be included in a defence bill winding its way through Congress. “The purpose of the bill is to ensure that the third parties that Gazprom needs to complete the pipeline do not provide services that Gazprom needs,” said a Republican congressional official. Thomas O’Donnell, a lecturer on global energy systems at the Free University in Berlin, said the aim was to bring down the project. “This hurdle is meant to be too high to get over.”

Lawmakers in the Senate and House are yet to vote on this year’s National Defense Authorization Act. Last year, the process took about six months, meaning Nord Stream 2 may yet have time to manoeuvre. Gerhard Schröder, a former German chancellor close to Russian president Vladimir Putin and currently chairman of the shareholders’ committee of Nord Stream AG, told the Bundestag hearing that €12bn would have to be written off if the project failed, and urged countersanctions. Nord Stream 2 spokesman Ulrich Lissek said: “Today’s hearing in the Bundestag indicates that Europeans are not going to take it anymore. “Berlin is pushing for a European response. The bloc’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said the European Commission was “preparing the ground” for countersanctions. Critics are sceptical the EU will reach consensus, citing its failure to act against the previous sanctions. The project has had other recent setbacks. In May, Germany’s energy regulator and an EU court declined to exempt it from unbundling rules, which require separate, independent companies to handle the transportation and distribution of energy. “If it wasn’t for Brexit, the biggest disaster of a European state would have been Nord Stream 2,” said Alan Riley, a fellow at the Atlantic Council. “It is hurting European relations and it is hurting relations with America.”

IV. Political Actors

1. Presidency of Germany¹³



First name: Frank Walter

Surname: Steinmeier

Date of birth: 5 January 1956

Place of birth: Detmold

Party: Social Democrats

President, since 2017 to present

Education

After attending grammar school in Blomberg and doing two years of military service, Frank-Walter Steinmeier began his degree in law at Justus Liebig University in Giessen in 1976. From 1980, he also studied political science. He passed the first state law examination in 1982 and then did his practical legal training in Frankfurt am Main and Giessen. He completed this training when he passed the second state law examination in 1986, after which he worked as a research fellow at the Chair of Public Law and Political Science in Justus Liebig University in Giessen. In 1991, he was awarded a doctorate in law for his thesis "Homeless citizens – the duty to provide housing and the right to a place to live. Traditions and prospects of state intervention to prevent and overcome homelessness".

Professional career

In the same year, Frank-Walter Steinmeier moved to the State Chancellery of Land Lower Saxony in Hanover, where he worked as a desk officer for media law and policy. In 1993, he became Head of Office to Gerhard Schröder, Minister-President of Land Lower Saxony. The following year, he was appointed Head of the Department for Policy Guidelines and Interministerial Coordination and Planning. Two years later, he became State Secretary and Head of the State Chancellery of Land Lower Saxony.

In 1998, he was appointed State Secretary at the Federal Chancellery and Federal Government Commissioner for the Federal Intelligence Services. He also served as Head of the Federal Chancellery from 1999. Frank-Walter Steinmeier was appointed Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs in 2005 and was also Deputy Chancellor from 2007. In 2009, he won a directly elected seat in a constituency in Land Brandenburg and became a Member of the German Bundestag. The parliamentary group of the Social Democratic Party of Germany in the German Bundestag elected him as chairperson. Four years

¹³https://www.bundespraesident.de/EN/Federal-President/Curriculum-Vitae/Curriculum-Vitae_Steinmeier.html

later, he became Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs for the second time, and served in this role until January 2017.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier has received numerous awards and prizes, including the Ignatz Bubis Prize for Understanding, the Europe Prize for Political Culture, the Bosphorus Prize for European Understanding, the Willy Brandt Prize, the Tolerance Prize of the Evangelical Academy of Tutzing and the Ecumenical Prize of the Catholic Academy in Bavaria. He has been awarded honorary doctorates by Paderborn University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the University of Piraeus and Ural Federal University of Ekaterinburg. He is also an honorary citizen of the cities of Sibiu and Reims.

2. Federal Chancellor of Germany¹⁴



First name: Angela
Surname: Merkel
Date of birth: 8 April 1970
Place of birth: Hamburg
Party: Christian Democrats

Education

She studied Physics between 1973 and 1978 and was awarded a doctorate in 1986.

Political career

1989	Member of "Demokratischer Aufbruch" (Democratic Awakening)
since 1990	Member of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU)
1990	Deputy Government Spokeswoman of the de Maizière Government in the German Democratic Republic (GDR)
since 1990	Member of the German Bundestag
1991 - 1998	Deputy Chairwoman of the CDU

¹⁴ <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/bkin-en/angela-merkel/biography>

1993 - 2000	Chairwoman of the CDU Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
1991 - 1994	Federal Minister for Women and Youth
1994 - 1998	Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
1998 - 2000	General Secretary of the CDU Germany
2000 - 2018	Chairwoman of the CDU Germany
2002 - 2005	Chairwoman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in the German Bundestag
since November 2005	Chancellor of the Federal Republic of German

3. Presidencies of Parliament

Speaker of Parliament¹⁵



First name: Wolfgang

Surname: Schäuble

Date of birth: 18 September 1942

Place of birth: Freiburg

Political party: Christian Democrats

Education

Studied law and economics at the universities of Freiburg and Hamburg, doctorate as Dr. jur.

Political career

Member of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) since 1965; Member of the German Bundestag since 1972; 1976 to 1984 Chairman of the CDU's Federal Sports Committee; 1978 to 1984 Lawyer at the Offenburg Regional Court; 1981 to 1984 Parliamentary Secretary of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group; 1984 to 1989 Federal Minister for Special Tasks and Head of the Federal Chancellery; 1989 to 1991 Federal Minister of the Interior; since 1989 Member of the Federal Executive Committee of the German CDU; 1991 to 2000 Chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group; 1998 to 2000 Chairman of the German CDU; since 2000 Member of the Executive Committee of the German CDU; 2002 to 2005 Deputy Chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group for foreign, security and European policy; 2005 to 2009 Federal Minister of the Interior; 2009 to 2017 Federal Minister of Finance.

November 1998 to April 2000 Federal Chairman of the CDU; Member of the Presidium of the CDU Germany. Member of the Bundestag since 1972; 1981 to 1984 Parliamentary Secretary of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group. 25 November 1991 to 29 February 2000 Chairman and October 2002 to November 2005 Deputy Chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group; 15 November 1984 to 21 April 1989 Federal Minister for Special Tasks and Head of the Federal Chancellery; 21 April 1989 to 26 November 1991 and 22 November 2005 to October 2009 Federal Minister of the Interior; October 2009 to October 2017 Federal Minister of Finance and since 24 October 2017 President of the German Bundestag.

¹⁵ https://www.bundestag.de/abgeordnete/biografien/S/schaeuble_wolfgang-523184

4. Cabinet of Germany (as of July 2020)

Olaf Scholz	Federal Minister of Finance
Horst Seehofer	Federal Minister of the Interior, Building and Community
Heiko Maas	Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
Peter Altmaier	Federal Minister of Economics and Energy
Christine Lambrecht	Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection
Hubertus Heil	Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs
Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer	Federal Minister of Defence
Julia Klöckner	Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture
Franziska Giffey	Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
Jens Spahn	Federal Minister of Health
Andreas Scheuer	Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure
Svenja Schulze	Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Construction and Nuclear Safety
Anja Karliczek	Federal Minister of Education and Research
Gerd Müller	Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development
Helge Braun	Federal Minister for Special Affairs Head of the Chancellery

5. Main Political Parties¹⁶



CDU/CSU - The Christian Democratic Union - (Christlich-Demokratische Union/ Christlich-Soziale Union (CDU/CSU))

CDU is a centre-right party, founded in 1945 (federal party in 1950). Supports a free-market economy and social welfare programs but is conservative on social issues. Advocates united action between Catholics and Protestants for rebuilding German life on a Christian-Democratic basis, while guaranteeing private property and the freedom of the individual. The CDU has also been a strong advocate of European integration and has cultivated close relations with the United States while in government. After experiencing a major defeat in 1998, it returned to power in 2005. CSU, founded in 1946, is the sister party of CDU and it only operates in the state of Bavaria.



SPD - The Social Democratic Party of Germany - (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)

Formed in 1863, SPD is the oldest party in Germany. It was originally a traditional socialist worker's party, but after 1959 it was transformed into more of a "catch-all" party. It advocates the modernization of the economy to meet the demands of globalization, but it also stresses the need to address the social needs of workers and society's disadvantaged. Joined a grand coalition with the CDU/CSU after the election in 2005.

Freien Demokraten

FDP

FDP - Free Democrats - (Freie Demokratische Partei)

The FDP was established in 1948 and is a centrist party that advocates individualism, capitalism, and social reform. Although it has captured only a small percentage of the votes in national elections, its support has been pivotal for much of the post-World War II period in making or breaking governments, by forming coalitions with or withdrawing support from larger parties. The FDP's support surged in 2005, when it won 10 percent of the vote and 61 seats in the Bundestag.

¹⁶ https://nsd.no/european_election_database/country/germany/parties.html

DIE LINKE.

Linke/PDS - The Left - (Die Linkspartei/ Die Linke)

Formerly (1990–2005) Party of Democratic Socialism (*Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus*, PDS). Political party that ruled East Germany as the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) and now contests elections in united Germany. At the behest of the Soviet Union, the SED was formed in April 1946 through a merger of the German Communist and Social Democratic parties. In the wake of unification in 1989, the SED sought to resurrect itself, adopting a centrist name, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). For the 2005 elections, the PDS allied with disillusioned members of the SPD and Green parties—who had established Electoral Alternative Labour and Social Justice (Die Wahlalternative Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit) in western Germany—to form the Left Party, which captured 54 seats in the Bundestag.



B90/GRÜ - Alliance '90/The Greens - (Bündnis '90/Die Grünen)

Environmentalist party formed in 1980. The Green Party traces its origins to the student protest movement of the 1960s, the environmentalist movement of the 1970s, and the peace movement of the early 1980s. It became the prototype of all European Green parties and aspired to be an alternative to the traditional parties. Die Grünen were part of the national coalition government between 1998 and October 2005. The 2005 election left the Greens at a crossroads, with the party part of no governing coalition at either the state or national levels for the first time in two decades and with Fischer, their longtime leader, retiring from public life.



AFD - Alternative für Deutschland

The far right Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland; AfD) was founded in 2013, primarily as a vehicle for Euroskeptic sentiment in the wake of the euro-zone debt crisis. It quickly won a modest measure of success in regional elections, but the party's popularity exploded when it changed its focus to opposing immigration. As the European migrant crisis intensified and Chancellor Angela Merkel remained committed to an open-door policy toward refugees, the AfD embraced an openly populist Islamophobic platform. It built a sizable base in Germany's formerly communist east, and in 2017 it entered the Bundestag for the first time. Although the AfD represented the third largest parliamentary group, behind the CDU-CSU and SPD, the mainstream parties ruled out the possibility of including the AfD in any coalition talks.

Fringe parties¹⁷

In the late 20th century the rightist Republican Party and the DVU were the most visible of Germany's fringe parties. With their tiny memberships, neither of these parties has been able to surmount the 5 percent barrier in national elections.



The **National Democratic Party of Germany (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands; NPD)**, the oldest of the country's right-wing parties, was formed in 1964 and gained little support in national elections, though it was able to enter several state parliaments in the late 1960s. In the 1980s and '90s the Republicans and the DVU won seats in several state legislatures, with the Republicans' support particularly concentrated in Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, and Berlin. The DVU, originally formed in 1971, achieved its electoral breakthrough in the 1990s, when it won representation in Schleswig-Holstein and fared particularly well in eastern Germany, where it won 13 percent in Saxony-Anhalt's state election in 1998. Although the rightist parties have distinct policies and have been unable to coalesce around a united platform, they share an antipathy toward Germany's liberal immigration policies and have generally been regarded as neofascist in orientation. The NPD and DVU attempted to merge in 2010, but a legal challenge by a group of state DVU organizations successfully blocked the move.



The Pirate Party of Germany, an outgrowth of the larger Pirate Party movement that began in Sweden in 2006, promoted a broadly populist platform that focused on copyright reform and Internet freedom. The Pirate Party used open-source software to facilitate group decision making, a process the party called "liquid democracy." In essence, the party's entire platform was subject to electronic referendum by its members. Riding a wave of antiestablishment sentiment, the Pirates scored a string of electoral successes at the state level in 2011–12, winning representation in regional legislatures in Berlin, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein, and North Rhine–Westphalia.

¹⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Germany/The-Greens>

6. OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Final Report¹⁸

ELECTIONS TO THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT (BUNDESTAG) 24 September 2017

OSCE/ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT 12-14 July 2017

Introduction

Following an invitation from the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to observe the 24 September 2017 elections to the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) to Berlin from 12 to 14 July 2017. The NAM included Alexander Shlyk, OSCE/ODIHR Head of the Elections Department, and Vladimir Misev, OSCE/ODIHR Election Adviser, and was joined by Iryna Sabashuk, Head of Administration for Election Observation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and the preparations for the elections. Based on this assessment, the NAM should recommend whether to deploy an OSCE/ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming elections, and if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from federal institutions, including the Federal Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Election Scrutiny Board, Committee on Internal Affairs as well as representatives of political parties, civil society, and the media. A full list of meetings is annexed to this report.

The OSCE/ODIHR would like to thank the Federal Foreign Office for its assistance and cooperation in organizing the NAM. The OSCE/ODIHR would also like to thank all of its interlocutors for taking the time to meet with the NAM.

Executive summary

On 23 January 2017, the Federal President called the elections to the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) to be held on 24 September. Members of the Bundestag are elected for four-year terms through a mixed electoral system combining proportional representation and a majoritarian element.

The legal framework provides a solid basis for the conduct of genuine democratic elections and following the last federal elections it remained essentially unchanged. All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the legislation governing the federal elections.

The elections are administered by a four-tiered structure, composed of the Federal Election Committee (FEC), Länder Election Committees (LECs), District Election Committees (DECs) and Election Boards (EBs). Chairpersons of the LECs, DECs and EBs are appointed by the Länder executive authorities. Parties are entitled to nominate members to election bodies and most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the work and independence of the election administration.

¹⁸ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/e/333511.pdf>

Every citizen over 18 years of age by election day with a domicile or a permanent residency for at least three months is eligible to vote. Some 61.5 million citizens are entitled to vote in the upcoming elections. Citizens permanently residing abroad are eligible to vote by postal ballot if, after reaching the age of 14, they have three months of continual residence in Germany within the last 25 years or if they can demonstrate personal and direct familiarity with the political situation and are affected by it. All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the voter registration process and accuracy of the voter lists.

Eligible voters can stand as candidates as well. Parties represented with at least five members in the Bundestag or a Länder parliament can nominate candidates and candidate lists without supporting signatures. All other parties and associations wishing to field candidates are required to formally notify the FEC of their intention to contest the elections. A total of 63 parties and political associations intended to participate in the 2017 elections. The FEC decided that 48 parties are eligible to compete, and 7 of those rejected appealed the FEC decision to the Federal Constitutional Court which upheld the FEC decision in all of the cases. Most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed general confidence in the candidate registration process.

The conduct of the election campaign is mostly governed at Länder level, while the federal legislation provides limited regulation. Most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors considered the campaign environment open and free. Nevertheless, some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concerns regarding the equality of opportunity and freedom to campaign and noted a significant number of politically motivated incidents, including physical attacks. Most political parties that the OSCE/ODIHR NAM met with indicated that they apply internal gender quotas.

The legislation does not establish limits on the amounts that political parties may raise or spend during the campaign. Parties' campaign-related income and expenditure is reported through annual financial reports submitted to the President of Bundestag, which are made public considerably long time after the elections. Most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors were satisfied with the existing party financing regulation and opined that it provides for an adequate level of transparency. However, a few OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that the transparency of party and campaign funding could benefit from lowering the limit for immediate disclosure of donations, financial reporting during campaign periods, as well as accelerated publication of financial reports.

The media landscape is pluralistic and characterized by a strong tradition of public service broadcasting and print media market. Several OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors pointed to the increasing role of the Internet as a main source of political information. There are generally no media-related regulations at the federal level and the activities of broadcast media are regulated by the Länder laws. Media are required to provide plurality of opinion, balanced coverage for all important political, ideological and social forces. Parties with a list in at least one Länder should be granted an 'appropriate amount' of broadcasting time.

The legislation states that polling shall be public. Nonetheless, the election legislation does not contain specific provisions regarding international election observation.

The OSCE/ODIHR NAM noted confidence among most of its interlocutors in the integrity of the electoral process and the professionalism and impartiality of the election administration. However, some interlocutors expressed concerns about equal campaign opportunities and campaign finance regulations. Taking into account these issues raised by OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommends deploying an Election Expert Team (EET) for the 24 September federal elections to the Bundestag to assess the campaign environment and review the current system of regulation and oversight of campaign finance. The OSCE/ODIHR stands ready to offer its assistance upon request in a post-election follow-up process.

Findings

Background

Germany is a federal republic composed of 16 states (Länder) vested with large autonomy. The federal legislative power rests in the Federal Parliament (Bundestag), with members directly elected for four-year terms. The Federal Council is the body through which the Länder participate in the legislation at the federal level with its members delegated by the respective state governments.

Executive power is vested in the Federal Cabinet led by the Federal Chancellor, who is elected by the parliamentary majority on the proposal of the Federal President. The Federal President is elected by a Federal Convention, which consists of members of the federal parliament and Länder parliaments, as well as members elected by the Länder parliaments. On 23 January 2017, the Federal President called the elections to the Bundestag to be held on 24 September.

Following the last parliamentary elections on 22 September 2013, five political parties were elected: the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) with 253 seats, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) with 193 seats, the Left with 64 seats, Alliance '90/The Greens with 63 seats, and the Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU) with 56 seats.

The OSCE/ODIHR previously deployed an Election Expert Mission (EET) for the 2013 parliamentary elections. The 2013 EET assessed the legal framework and party and campaign finance issues. The EET final report concluded that overall, the legal framework provides a solid basis to conduct genuine elections and that the party financing framework allows political parties to compete based on equal treatment before the law and by the authorities.

Legal framework and electoral system

Elections are governed by the 1994 Basic Law, the 1993 Federal Electoral Act (FEA), the 2002 Federal Electoral Regulations (FER), and the 2012 Law on the Scrutiny of Elections, as well as by relevant Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) rulings. Relevant provisions of the 1994 Political Parties Act, the 1999 Law on Election Statistics, and the 2002 Civil and 1998 Criminal Codes are also applicable for the conduct of federal elections. Following the last federal parliamentary elections, the legislation remained essentially unchanged. All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the legislative framework governing the federal elections.

Members of the Bundestag are elected through a mixed electoral system combining proportional representation and a majoritarian element. A total of 299 members are elected in single-seat electoral

districts under a first-past-the-post system. The remaining members are elected proportionally through closed party lists in one multi seat constituency.

Voters are entitled to cast two votes. The first vote is cast for a candidate in a single-seat district. The second vote is cast for a party list. The candidate obtaining the majority of votes cast in each district is elected. Parties that have passed a five per cent threshold of valid second votes at the national level or have won seats in at least three single-seat districts are eligible to participate in the allocation of proportional seats.

An independent constituency commission reviews electoral district boundaries on the basis of population changes that are subject of approval by the Bundestag. According to the legislation, the number of voters in each constituency in the Länder should not deviate from the average by more than 15 per cent and, if the deviation is greater than 25 per cent, the boundaries must be redrawn.⁶ Ahead of the upcoming elections, constituency boundaries were reviewed and boundaries were redrawn in 34 constituencies.⁷ In general, OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors did not express concerns with the electoral system and the distribution of seats in the Bundestag.

Voters can submit complaints to the election administration on issues related to voter registration, polling cards and nomination of candidate and party lists. Complaints regarding the validity of elections can be submitted to the Election Scrutiny Board (ESB). The ESB is composed of nine members appointed by the Bundestag for the duration of the newly-elected legislature and delivers decisions that are subsequently passed to the Bundestag for adoption. Eligible voters may file an appeal to the ESB within two months of the elections. Decisions by the ESB are subject to appeal with the FCC.

Election administration

The elections are administered by a four-tiered structure, composed of the Federal Election Committee (FEC), 16 Länder Election Committees (LECs), 299 single-mandate District Election Committees (DECs) and some 90,000 Election Boards (EBs).

All committees are chaired by returning officers and EBs by electoral officers. The Federal Returning Officer and Länder returning officers are appointed by the Federal Ministry of Interior and the Länder executive authorities, respectively. District returning officers and electoral officers are appointed before each election by the Länder executive authorities. The 11-member FEC includes the Federal Returning Officer as the chairperson who appoints eight members and two judges of the Federal Administrative Court. The LECs and DECs have seven members with a returning officer as a chairperson who appoints the other six members. Two judges of the Länder Higher Administrative Court are additionally appointed to each LEC. EBs have an electoral officer as the chairperson, plus a deputy, and from three to seven members appointed from among voters.

Parties are entitled to nominate members to election bodies at different levels. Although, the legislation does not contain clear criteria for selecting members from the political parties, OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors informed that parties represented in the Bundestag or Länder parliaments are represented. In addition to these nominations, local authorities request nominations from various federal and local public bodies and institutions to staff the EBs. In total, some 650,000

people will be recruited to administer the federal elections. Most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the work and independence of the election administration.

Voter registration

Every citizen over 18 years of age by election day with a domicile or a permanent residency for at least three months is eligible to vote. Voter registration is passive and voter lists are extracted from municipal civil registers based on a voter's permanent residence. From 20 to 16 days before the elections, voters may review voter lists and request corrections in cases of mistake or incomplete information.¹¹ Some 61.5 million citizens are entitled to vote in the upcoming elections.

Individuals placed in psychiatric hospitals by a court decision for committing an unlawful act in a state of insanity, persons with disabilities under full custody or convicted for specific serious crimes by a court are ineligible to vote.¹² According to OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors some 83,000 citizens are affected by these restrictions. All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the voter registration process and accuracy of the voter lists.

Citizens permanently residing abroad are eligible to vote if they have three months of continual residence in Germany within the last 25 years (after reaching the age of 14). Additionally, citizens who have never resided in Germany are eligible to vote if they can demonstrate their connection to the country and familiarity with the political situation and are affected by it. Eligible voters residing abroad vote by postal ballot. Some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that the procedure for registration and use of postal voting for citizens living abroad could be simplified.

Candidate registration

Eligible voters can stand independently or as party candidates.¹⁴ Parties represented with at least five members in the Bundestag or at Länder parliament can submit their nominations without supporting signatures. All other parties and associations wishing to field candidates are required to formally notify the FEC of their intention to contest the elections. Following initial approval by the FEC, nominations of single-seat district candidates need to be submitted to their respective district returning officers accompanied by supporting signatures of at least 200 voters. Party lists must be submitted to the respective LEC returning officer and need to be supported by signatures of 1 per 1,000 eligible voters in the Länder, but not more than 2,000 signatures. Decisions on the registration of candidates and party lists are taken by the DEC and LECs, respectively.

A total of 63 parties and political associations intended to participate in the 2017 elections. The FEC decided that 48 parties are eligible to compete and 7 of those who rejected appealed the decision to the FCC. The FCC upheld the FEC decisions in all seven cases. Most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed general confidence in the candidate and party registration process.

Election campaign

The conduct of the election campaign is mostly regulated at Länder level, and local authorities may adopt campaign-related ordinances. The federal legislation provides limited regulation, which includes provisions of the Basic Law, the 1978 Law on Assemblies and Parades regarding the organization of public events and the Political Party Act that requires authorities to treat political parties equitably.

OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors from political parties informed that campaigns are likely to include door-to-door canvassing, billboards and leaflets, meetings with voters, spots in broadcast and advertisement in print media, as well as the use of social media. In general, campaign topics include security issues, economy, social welfare, the labor market and education. Most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors considered the campaign environment open and free. However, some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concerns regarding the opportunity to campaign freely and noted a significant number of recent politically motivated incidents, including physical attacks, mostly targeting the Alternative for Germany (AfD). In general, and with regard to the complete political spectrum the Ministry of Interior, registered a rise in the number of politically motivated crimes by 6.6 per cent in 2016. The legislation does not provide for gender quotas for candidate nominations and party lists. However, most political parties that the OSCE/ODIHR NAM met with indicated that they apply their own internal quotas, up to 50 per cent for some of them.

Campaign financing

The Political Party Act provides the main legal framework for party and campaign finance. The legislation does not establish limits on the amounts that political parties may raise or spend during the campaign. Parties are mostly financed through membership fees, private contributions and public funding, which cannot be higher than the funds the party collects from private sources.

Donations from public and foreign entities are forbidden. There are no rules on third-parties, however given the absence of limits on campaign expenditures, in general parties are not inclined to rely on this type of support.

A Law on the Exclusion of Anti-constitutional Parties from Party Financing was adopted on 23 June 2017 to prohibit public funding to parties that are declared unconstitutional by the FCC.

Parties' campaign-related income and expenditure are reported through annual financial reports, audited by certified auditor or auditing firm, which all parties are required to submit to the President of Bundestag. No separate reporting during or shortly after an electoral period is required, except for donations exceeding EUR 50,000, which must be reported immediately and sources of donations totaling above EUR 10,000 within one year to be included in the annual party finance reports. In practice, the annual reports that will cover the campaign-related expenses for these elections will be made public in about one year. By law, failure to submit a financial report or an inaccurate report may cause financial or criminal sanctions, or a party can lose its legal status for six years.

Most OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors were satisfied with the existing regulation of party financing and opined that it provides for an adequate level of transparency and accountability. However, Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) reports and a few OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that the transparency of party and campaign funding could benefit from lowering the threshold for immediate disclosure of donations, requiring at least some degree of financial reporting during campaign periods, and accelerated publication of financial reports.

Media framework

The media landscape is pluralistic and characterized by a strong tradition of public service broadcasting and print media market. Several OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors pointed to the increasing role of the Internet as an important source of political information.

There are generally no media-related regulations at the federal level and the activities of broadcast media are regulated by Länder laws. The Interstate Treaty on Broadcasting and Telemedia provides a general framework stipulating requirements of plurality of opinion, balanced coverage for all

important political, ideological and social forces, and requires those parties with a list in at least one Länder be granted an 'appropriate amount' of broadcasting time. The principle of 'gradual equality' is applied in the allocation of airtime, and the relative strength of parties in the parliament is considered. In public media, election broadcasts are provided free-of-charge, while in private media electoral contestants can purchase broadcasting time on equal conditions. According to OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors from political parties, debates among parliamentary political parties and at least one debate between the two lead candidates for the post of Federal Chancellor are planned.

Oversight of media conduct in public broadcasting corporations is ensured by independent Broadcasting Councils and private broadcasters are scrutinized by supervisory bodies at the Länder level. The German Press Council, a voluntary self-monitoring body, reviews complaints and oversees the print media and journalistic coverage on the Internet, assessing journalistic practice against a Press Code. Most of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the professionalism of the media and considered the political and election coverage as fair and balanced. Nevertheless, some interlocutors from a non-parliamentary political party complained about the media coverage, qualifying it as "stigmatizing" reporting.

Election observation

The legislation states that polling shall be public and that the public shall have access to the polling station during voting, counting and announcement of results without disrupting the process. The election legislation, however, does not contain specific provisions for the presence of international election observers.

Conclusions and recommendations

The OSCE/ODIHR NAM noted confidence among most of its interlocutors in the integrity of the electoral process and the professionalism and impartiality of the election administration. However, some interlocutors expressed concerns about equal campaign opportunities and campaign finance regulations. Taking into account these issues raised by OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommends deploying an Election Expert Team (EET) for the 24 September federal elections to the Bundestag to assess the campaign environment and review the current system of regulation and oversight of campaign finance. The OSCE/ODIHR stands ready to offer its assistance upon request in a post-election follow-up process.

V. Economy in Germany

1. Commission Country Report Germany¹⁹

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Country Report Germany 2020

Accompanying the document

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK AND THE EUROGROUP

2020 European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011

Sustained structural reforms and long-term investment can ensure the sustainability and inclusiveness of Germany's growth. In its tenth year of expansion, the German economy grew significantly below potential, affected by an interplay of transformations in industry and adverse external factors. At the same time, progress on reforms has been only moderate. On the positive side, the labour market remains very strong, with wages increasing despite the economic slowdown, and measures have been taken to improve incentives to work. However, significant challenges remain, including investment in education, sustainable transport, affordable housing, energy and digital infrastructure. In addition, regulatory and other incentive structures, including taxation, do not appear sufficient to boost inclusive and sustainable growth. While Germany's income inequality is average, its wealth inequality is high. Improving equality of opportunity, by reinforcing education and training, and addressing inter- and intragenerational fairness issues also through social security systems can contribute to more inclusive growth.

Domestic demand is the sole driver of a slowing economic expansion. The German economy, with its export-oriented manufacturing base, is challenged by persistent global uncertainty, trade tensions and weaker foreign demand for German goods, and by the need to make the transport sector less environmentally harmful. After a 1.5% increase in 2018, GDP grew by 0.6% in 2019. The contribution of net exports was negative as in the year before and growth was driven by domestic demand. Despite weakness in manufacturing, unemployment fell to a record low of 3.2% in 2019. Wage growth has been so far resilient to the economic slowdown. Inflation fell from 1.9% in 2018 to 1.4% in 2019, notably due to a strong decline in energy prices.

The general government budget surplus, while still considerable, is diminishing on the back of increased investment, and the public debt continues to fall. In 2018, the general government fiscal surplus reached a record 1.9% of GDP. In 2019, the surplus lowered to 1.5% and is expected to decline further in 2020, due to increased investment and other fiscal measures. For the first time since 2002, the gross debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to have fallen below the Treaty reference value of 60% of GDP. The public debt ratio might decline further as a result of the national debt brake becoming binding also for the Länder as of 2020. This will require them to make no new structural deficits, which further reduces sustainability risks.

¹⁹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0504&from=EN>

Meeting sustainability goals and raising growth potential at the same time requires steady long-term investment efforts, in particular in network industries and in education, training, research and innovation. Stronger investment in sustainable transport and electricity infrastructure is crucial to meeting climate, energy and environmental targets. Despite the key incumbent player being largely state-controlled, Germany is still lagging behind in deploying very high capacity broadband, which could improve productivity growth and boost convergence in regional living conditions. Higher investment in research and innovation can accelerate the pace of transition to a carbon-neutral and circular economy. Higher expenditure on education and skills could make the future labour force more productive and alleviate the impact of demographic ageing.

Overall, Germany has made limited progress in addressing the 2019 country-specific recommendations.

There has been some progress in:

- achieving an upward trend in investment, including in research and innovation;
- strengthening conditions for wage growth, reducing disincentives to work more hours and reducing the high tax wedge.

Germany has made limited progress in:

- increasing expenditure in education and improving the educational outcomes and skills levels of disadvantaged groups;
- improving investment in digitalisation and very high-capacity broadband, in energy networks, sustainable transport and affordable housing;
- shifting taxes away from labour to sources of revenues the taxation of which would be more supportive to inclusive and sustainable growth, and reducing disincentives to work for second earners;
- reforming the pension system.

Germany has made no progress on:

- business services and regulated professions.

Germany continues to perform very well on the indicators of the Social Scoreboard supporting the European Pillar of Social Rights. It has one of the highest employment rates in the EU, low unemployment, including youth and long-term unemployment, and access to healthcare is good. Germany has one of the highest employment rates of women, but the gender gap in part-time employment is high. Educational outcomes differ considerably across regions.

Regarding progress in reaching the national targets under the Europe 2020 strategy, Germany is performing very well on the employment rate, on reducing poverty and on investment in R&D. In addition, Germany is close to its national target for early school leaving and share of renewable energy. However, despite the recently adopted Climate Package Germany is unlikely to reach its 2020 national energy efficiency and climate targets by 2020. Germany is not on track to reduce its emissions not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System as set in EU law.

With regard to Germany's progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals over the past 5 years, Germany shows a declining trend in reducing inequality, but has further improved its strong institutions and justice system.

The main findings of the in-depth review contained in this report and the related policy challenges are as follows:

- **The current account surplus declined from its peak in 2015.** The current account surplus declined from 8.6% of GDP in 2015 to 7.4% in 2018. In 2019, the downward adjustment paused and the overall current account surplus was 7.7% of GDP (according to preliminary data). Vis-à-vis the euro area it declined to 2.2%, from 2.7% in 2015. The domestic imbalance between savings and investment, which has been growing since 2008, reached a turning point in 2016. Since then, private sector net lending has been coming down, mainly reflecting the decline in the net lending position of non-financial corporations, but was partially offset by an increasing public surplus until 2018.
- **Private investment remains solid despite the economic slowdown, but still lags behind infrastructure and housing needs.** In 2018 and 2019, private investment increased by 3% in real terms (i.e. adjusted for inflation). Altogether, the private investment share of GDP increased from 18% in 2011-2017 to 19% in 2018-2019. The fastest growing components in recent years have been housing and investment in intellectual property. However, investment is still lagging behind infrastructure (e.g. energy and digital) and housing needs, and the need to adapt to tighter environmental requirements.
- **Public investment has continued increasing against the backdrop of a significant investment backlog.** Gross public investment increased by around 6% annually in 2015-2017, by close to 9% in 2018 and by close to 7% in 2019 in nominal terms. In real terms, the increase averaged about 4% in 2015-2019 as price inflation for construction works accelerated in recent years. This brought the public investment rate from 2.1% of GDP in 2015 to 2.5% in 2019. Since 2017, total government net investment has turned positive, but it is still negative at municipal level, where the investment backlog remains high at 4% of GDP.
- **Higher public investment would generate positive domestic and cross-border spillovers.** Substantially increasing the public investment rate can boost output and employment in both Germany and the rest of the euro area. Germany also plays an important role in advancing the single market. However, it is performing below the EU average in the transposition of single market rules. Obstacles include restrictive regulation in business services and public procurement practices.
- **Labour productivity growth in Germany shows a long-term declining trend and turned negative in 2018, due to cyclical factors as well as structural weaknesses.** The recent decline in labour productivity was mainly driven by a decline in output in manufacturing, and in the automotive sector in particular. Structural factors explaining the long-term decline in productivity include weak growth-enhancing investment, in intangible assets and among small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in particular, lack of modern digital infrastructure, demographic developments and shortages of skilled labour, a decline in business dynamism,

slow technology diffusion, weaknesses in eGovernment, and low competition in business services.

- **Improving resource productivity can be an important driver for future competitiveness, while minimising negative environmental impacts.** Despite resource efficiency gains and a relative decoupling of raw material use and economic growth, natural resource use remains at an environmentally unsustainable level. Germany will miss its target of doubling raw material productivity by 2020, and its secondary raw material use rate is below the EU average. Moving to a circular economy can generate cost savings and create jobs, while reducing the environmental footprint.
- **Despite the GDP slowdown, overall wage growth continued, as unemployment reached historically low levels.** Labour market performance remained remarkably strong, despite the marked slowdown in economic growth. This, however, hides some labour hoarding and diverging trends between services and manufacturing. While job creation in manufacturing and related services halted, hiring continued in construction and most services, particularly in public services. Despite decelerating employment growth and declining labour productivity, growth of nominal and real compensation per employee has accelerated between 2018 and 2019. However, the labour market potential of women and people with migrant background remained underused.
- **The tax system relies strongly on labour tax revenues, while taxes supporting inclusive and sustainable growth remain underused.** The share of labour tax revenues (56.9% of total tax revenue) is among the highest in the EU. Despite measures taken, disincentives to work persist, including for second and low wage earners. At the same time, revenues are low from taxes supporting sustainability and inclusiveness goals, such as environmental taxes (4.5%), recurrent taxes on immovable property (1.1%) and wealth and inheritance-related taxes (0.4%).
- **The tax system is not sufficiently addressing climate change and environmental degradation.** Germany's environmental tax revenues remain among the lowest in the EU, stemming primarily from energy-related taxes, while revenues from transport fuel taxes and taxes on resources are particularly low. Current price signals across energy carriers and users limit the potential for clean energy technology deployment and emissions reduction. As environmental taxes are typically regressive, their increased use needs to be coupled with policy measures mitigating the impact on the vulnerable population groups.
- **The energy transition requires investments in electricity networks, smart sector integration and energy efficiency, and expansion of renewable energy.** The lack of appropriate transmission and distribution grid infrastructure is causing financial losses and market distortions in Germany and other EU countries due to congestion and limited flexibility of the electric system. The need for investment in additional transmission capacity is growing. Taxes and levies limit the smart integration of electricity in the heating, transport and industry sectors. The installation of wind turbines show a declining trend.

- **Transformation of the transport sector can address air pollution, mitigate climate change and improve productivity.** The transport sector has done particularly badly at cutting emissions of both greenhouse gases and local air pollutants, which has meant that Germany has fallen behind in meeting its target under the Effort Sharing Decision setting national emission targets for EU countries between 2013 and 2020. The transformation of the transport sector can be facilitated by stronger investment in clean public transport and infrastructure, including in alternative fuels such as hydrogen and e-fuels. In addition, appropriate incentive structures are needed for clean, safe and better-performing mobility solutions, which would encourage technological competition and spur innovation.
- **The lack of affordable housing has become a major challenge.** The housing cost overburden rate is one of the highest in the EU. House prices rose by half over the last decade, suggesting overvaluation in the bigger cities and an increasing risk of a housing bubble. Policy measures mitigate rental price increases, but do not keep pace with the demand for affordable housing. The annual target for new housing agreed on by the country's governing coalition was not met.

Other key structural issues analysed in this report, which point to particular challenges for Germany's economy, are the following:

- **The banking sector suffers from low profitability.** Capitalisation ratios are satisfactory, but German banks face challenges related to their cost structure. Consolidation efforts are needed, as a fragmented market structure weighs on profits. The disruption initiated by fintech and bigtech may further squeeze revenues. There is also a need to strengthen macro-prudential tools.
- **Overall, Germany's social protection system is well-developed, but increasingly affected by demographic developments.** Demographic change is expected to challenge the sustainability and the adequacy of pensions. Furthermore, the large gap in life expectancy across socio-economic groups, combined with the relatively low pension net replacement rates for low-income earners compared to other countries, raises the issue of intra-generational fairness.. Healthcare efficiency can be improved by consolidating the hospital sector, focusing more strongly on prevention and care integration, providing the same price signal for the same treatment, and better use of eHealth.
- **Challenges in equality of opportunity persist also in the education and training system.** Germany is spending less of its resources on education than it did in the past and also at a rate below the EU average, even though the country is particularly affected by automation and immigration. Inequalities in educational attainment persist, with socio-economic and migrant backgrounds still exerting a strong influence. Teacher shortages threaten the provision of quality education.

- **The Commission’s proposal for a Just Transition Mechanism under the next multiannual financial framework for the period 2021-2027, includes a Just Transition Fund, a dedicated just transition scheme under InvestEU, and a new public sector loan facility with the EIB.** It is designed to ensure that the transition towards EU climate neutrality is fair by helping the most affected regions in Germany to address the social and economic consequences. Key priorities for support by the Just Transition Fund, set up as part of the Just Transition Mechanism, are identified in Annex D, building on the analysis of the transition challenges outlined in this report.

2. Standard Eurobarometer (Key Indicators) - Germany²⁰

A new Eurobarometer survey released today shows a strong increase in citizens' positive perception of the European Union across the board – from the economy to the state of democracy. These are the best results since the June 2014 Eurobarometer survey conducted before the Juncker Commission took office.

This latest Standard Eurobarometer survey was conducted after the European elections, between 7 June and 1 July 2019 in all 28 EU countries and five candidate countries. Amongst the main findings are a record-high support for the euro and climate change turning into the second top concern at EU level, after immigration.

1. Trust and optimism about the future at their highest since 2014

Trust in the EU is at its highest level since 2014 and remains higher than trust in national governments or parliaments. Trust in the EU has increased in 20 Member States, with the highest scores in Lithuania (72%), Denmark (68%) and Estonia (60%). In addition, over half of the respondents “tend to trust” the EU in Luxembourg (59%), Finland (58%), Portugal (57%), Malta and Sweden (both 56%), Bulgaria and Hungary (both 55%), Ireland, Poland, the Netherlands and Cyprus (all 54%), Romania and Austria (both 52%) and Latvia and Belgium (both 51%).

Since the last Standard Eurobarometer survey in autumn 2018, **the proportion of respondents who have a positive image of the EU (45%) has increased in 23 EU Member States**, most strikingly in Cyprus (47%, +11), Hungary (52%, +9) Greece (33%, +8), Romania (60%, +8) and Portugal (60%, +7). A two-percentage point increase has been registered since autumn 2018 (+10 since spring 2014), reaching its highest level ever for the past 10 years. 37% (+1, compared to autumn 2018) of respondents have a neutral image of the EU, while less than a fifth have a negative image (17%, -3) – is the lowest score in 10 years.

A majority of Europeans are optimistic about the future of the EU (61%, +3 percentage points), while only 34% (-3) are pessimistic. Optimism is highest in Ireland (85%), Denmark (79%), Lithuania (76%) and Poland (74%). At the other end of the scale, optimism is less pronounced in the United Kingdom (47% vs 46%) and in France (50% vs 45%).

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_4969

55% of Europeans say they are satisfied with the way democracy works in the EU, the highest score since autumn 2004 (+5 percentage points since autumn 2018; +11 since spring 2014) while the number of those “not satisfied” has decreased by five percentage points, to 36%.

A majority of Europeans agree that “their voice counts in the EU”. The EU-28 average reaches 56% (+7 percentage points since autumn 2018; +11 since spring 2018; +14 since spring 2014), with the highest scores being observed in Sweden (86%), Denmark (81%) and Netherlands (76%).

2. Record high support for the euro

Support for the Economic and Monetary Union and for the euro reaches a new record high, with more than three-quarters of respondents (76%, +1 percentage point; +9 since spring 2014) in the Euro area in favour of the EU's single currency. In the EU as a whole, support for the euro is stable at 62%.

Positive opinions on the situation of the national economies prevail (with 49% judging the situation as being good and 47% judging it as being bad). **The majority of respondents in 17 Member States** (16 in autumn 2018) **state that the national economic situation is good**. Luxembourg (94%), Denmark (91%) and the Netherlands (90%) are the countries with the highest scores. The lowest percentage of positive opinions is observed in Greece (7%), Croatia and Bulgaria (both 20%), Italy (22%), Spain (26%) and France (29%).

3. EU citizenship and free movement seen as main EU achievements

In all 28 Member States, more than half of respondents feel that they are citizens of the EU. Across the EU as a whole, **73% feel this way** (+2 percentage points since autumn 2018), and at a national level the scores range from 93% in Luxembourg, 88% in Germany, 87% in Spain to 57% in both Greece and Italy and 52% in Bulgaria.

A large majority of EU citizens support **“the free movement of EU citizens who can live, work, study and do business anywhere in the EU”** (81%, -2 percentage points since autumn 2018), and **in every EU Member State more than two-thirds of respondents share this view**, from Lithuania (94%) to Italy and the UK (both 68%).

4. Top concerns at EU and national level: climate change and environment on the rise

Immigration remains the main concern at EU level, with 34% of mentions, **despite a strong decrease** (-6 percentage points since autumn 2018). **Climate change**, which was ranked fifth in autumn 2018, is now **the second most important concern after a strong increase** (+6 since autumn 2018). Three concerns obtain identical scores: **the economic situation** (18%, unchanged), **the state of Member States' public finances** (18%, -1) and **terrorism** (18%, -2), followed by **the environment** – main concern for 13% of the respondents, registering a four-percentage point increase.

Unemployment, which is now in seventh position at EU level (12%), remains **the main concern at national level** (21%, -2 percentage points), together with **rising prices/inflation/cost of living** (21%, unchanged) and **health and social security** (21%, +1). **The environment, climate and energy issues** follow very closely after a strong increase (20%, +6). **Immigration**, with 17% of mentions (-4

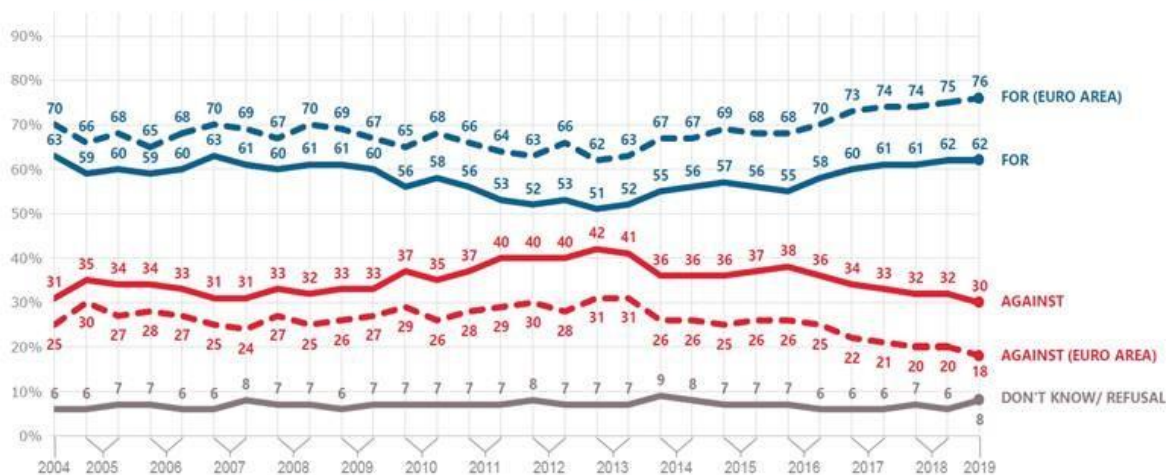
percentage points since autumn 2018, and -19 since autumn 2015), falls out of the top three concerns at national level for the first time since spring 2014. **The economic situation** is in sixth place (16%, +1).

Background

The “Spring 2019 – Standard Eurobarometer” (EB 91) was conducted through face-to-face interviews between 7 June and 1 July 2019 across the 28 EU Member States and in the candidate countries. 27,464 interviews were conducted in the EU28 Member States between 7 and 25 June 2019.

Graphs including Germany

QA16.1 What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it.
A European economic and monetary union with one single currency, the euro (% - EU)



QA1a.2 How would you judge the current situation in each of the following?
The situation of the (NATIONALITY) economy (%)

