



Parliamentary dimension of the German Presidency of the council of the EU

Work programme

Working towards a stronger post-crisis Europe

On 1 July 2020, Germany will take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for six months during a time of historically unparalleled challenges in Europe and the world. The spread of the Coronavirus and the COVID-19 pandemic are having far-reaching effects on public health as well as on social and economic development in all member states of the European Union.

The Bundestag and Bundesrat remember the victims of the pandemic. They thank the health workers and all those who are providing people with basic services during the crisis.

The pandemic and its consequences continue to require resolute and comprehensive action in the framework of the European Union as well as nationally, regionally and locally. We can only overcome the crisis together and must strengthen the resilience of Europe, promote economic and social cohesion and defend and preserve our common European values and way of life.

I. The parliamentary dimension of the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2020

In these extraordinary circumstances the Bundestag and Bundesrat will continue the established tradition of lending a parliamentary dimension to each Presidency of the Council and intends to deepen and strengthen the dialogues between national parliaments and with the European Parliament. Interparliamentary cooperation assumes even greater importance in times of crisis. The Bundestag and Bundesrat will strive vigorously to help ensure that we master the current crisis together and that we discharge our joint responsibility for sustained economic recovery and social cohesion in all member states of the Union.

Against this backdrop, the Bundestag and Bundesrat – with the aid of videoconferencing or through joint meetings in Berlin, depending on possible contact and travel restrictions – will host exchanges between the national parliaments of the EU member states and the European Parliament during the term of its presidency in the following forums:

- the Inter-parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) on 4 September 2020, organised by the Bundestag,
- the meeting of the chairpersons of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) on 14 September 2020, organised by the Bundesrat in cooperation with the Bundestag,

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- the meeting of the COSAC delegates from each national parliament and from the European Parliament (COSAC plenary meeting) – from 29 November to 1 December 2020, organised by the Bundestag in cooperation with the Bundesrat,
 - the Inter-parliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union from 11 to 13 October 2020, organised by the German Bundestag, organised by the German Bundestag,
 - the meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group for Europol on 29 September 2020, organised by the European Parliament, co-chaired by the Bundestag and Bundesrat,

In addition, the Bundestag is inviting the chairs of the competent committees of national parliaments and of the European Parliament to three conferences, devoted to the following subjects:

- Europe in the pandemic: research and innovation for a resilient health system (chairs of the committees responsible for health, research and digital affairs) on 7 September 2020, organised by the Bundestag,
- the European Green Deal and the Common Agricultural Policy: for a sustainable and climate-neutral Europe (chairs of the committees responsible for the environment, energy, transport and agriculture) from 4 to 5 October 2020, organised by the Bundestag,
- for a social and fair Europe (chairs of the committees responsible for employment, social affairs and economic cooperation and development) from 8 to 9 November 2020, organised by the Bundestag.

II. Main themes of the parliamentary dimension

In accordance with the new strategic agenda of the European Council for 2019 to 2024, the political guidelines and the updated work programme of the European Commission, the 18-month programme of the Presidency Trio of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia, the Federal Government's work programme for the German Presidency of the Council and the statement of the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Parliaments on the parliamentary dimension of their three presidencies, the Bundestag will put the following subjects at the heart of interparliamentary deliberations in the context of the parliamentary dimension of the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2020:

- In view of our **common tragic experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic**, we intend to contribute very significantly to ensuring that the member states and the European Union as a whole are better prepared for crises of this type. To this end, we shall focus on the further development of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and on measures for the avoidance of supply shortages of medicines and medical devices. In addition, we intend to deliberate on options for European strategic sovereignty in the health sector that can raise the European dimension of health care to a new level and reduce the dependence of the EU in some areas while respecting member states' responsibility for their own health and welfare systems.

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- At the same time, we intend to discuss how we can strengthen the great **research potential** in the Union by means of coordinated efforts and cross-pollination within the European scientific and research community and so considerably increase the overall capacity for innovation in the European Union.
 - Measures designed to support a **sustainable economic recovery** and to strengthen the resilience and promote the convergence, competitiveness and innovativeness of European economies will be central.
 - The next **Multiannual Financial Framework**, together with the Union's own resources and the sectoral programmes, forms the basis for a modern, fair and ambitious budgetary framework for the Union. If the crisis is to be overcome, the forthcoming budgetary framework must, in particular, include an additional and significant recovery instrument that will decisively advance the economic redynamisation of Europe. In a spirit of solidarity, it is appropriate to prioritise aid for the hardest-hit regions and sectors. In the parliamentary framework, we shall monitor the negotiations constructively. Thereafter we intend to press for the rapid implementation of the legislative act on the Multiannual Financial Framework and of the Decision on the Union's own resources.
 - **Structural and cohesion policy** remains an important pillar of the EU budget. We intend to engage in dialogue on how to refocus the essentially tried and tested assistance for member states and regions on the new priorities without causing an unnecessary break in support activity.
 - The conclusion of the deliberations on the **Common Agricultural Policy** for 2021 to 2027 is a key prerequisite for the success of the next Multiannual Financial Framework. Our aim is an interparliamentary debate on ways of improving the resilience of the agricultural sector and the vitality of rural areas in the European Union, which are of fundamental importance in ensuring territorial cohesion as well as access to safe, affordable and sustainably produced food.
 - **Democracy, human rights and the rule of law** are the foundations of our European freedom, security and prosperity. We shall press for full adherence to our common values and discuss what can be done to strengthen the rule of law effectively in the European Union. In our interparliamentary exchanges on the Multiannual Financial Framework, we shall debate the introduction of a safeguard mechanism against general deficits in adherence to the rule of law in member states.
 - Climate change and the associated challenges require our joint resolute action. For this reason, the proposal for a **European Green Deal** and the associated target of climate-neutrality by 2050, as well as the adoption of more ambitious CO₂ emission reduction targets for 2030, as a framework for future EU climate policy will be one of the main topics of our parliamentary deliberations. The treatment of this topic also encompasses discussions on measures for a socially balanced and fair transition, for the renewal of the growth and investment agenda and the achievement of competitive sustainability as well as the protection of biodiversity and of natural resources.

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- In connection with the objectives of the European Green Deal, we intend to discuss strategies for safe, sustainable and smart **mobility**, including support for alternative sustainable fuels and propulsion technology.
 - We intend to contribute to the further development of European **energy policy**, including in particular a discussion of the achievement of a European energy union through an integrated, interlinked and properly functioning European energy market focused on sustainable energy sources and climate-neutrality.
 - We shall seek a discussion on the opportunities and challenges presented by the **digital transformation** in all areas of the economy and society.
 - The COVID-19 crisis has serious socio-economic implications, which must be addressed in a spirit of solidarity. With a view to the realisation of the **social-rights pillar of the European Union**, we shall examine how we can shape a fair and social Europe that reinforces social convergence and social cohesion. This relates especially to the regulated transition to climate-neutrality and to an increasingly digitised economy but also to the challenge of demographic change and to instruments that will guarantee social security during economic slumps. We shall also share the experience of our respective parliaments regarding effective systems of basic welfare coverage.
 - In the context of globalisation, our ambition to shape a fair and social Europe also encompasses responsibility for **sustainability and fair working conditions throughout global supply chains**. In view of the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world economy, we intend to examine what contribution Europe can make to strengthening global integrated value and supply chains and how it can support efforts to combat the COVID-19 crisis in the framework of international cooperation.
 - Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission had initiated a process for assessing the effectiveness of the present **supervision framework for economic and budgetary policies** (the Stability and Growth Pact). When we have overcome the crisis together, the medium-term goal will then be to find ways of restoring budgetary consolidation and long-term solidity. To this end, we intend to follow up the European Commission's initiative and jointly discuss which mechanisms will enable us to ensure durably robust public finances and sustainable growth, avoid macroeconomic imbalances, promote convergence of economic performance among member states and guarantee closer coordination of economic policies in the euro area.
 - The actions of the European Central Bank are of fundamental importance in ensuring lasting price stability in the euro currency area. For this reason we intend to continue constructively monitoring the process for reviewing the **monetary strategy** of the European Central Bank while fully respecting its independence.

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- We intend to press for an effective framework for ensuring **fair and effective taxation** in the internal market, particularly with regard to an ever-growing digital economy. At the same time, we intend to address issues of tax evasion and tax avoidance and the fight against money laundering.
 - In **the realm of internal security**, the protection of our open society depends crucially on stepping up the prevention, detection and suppression of potentially violent extremism and terrorism, particularly right-wing terrorism, and of hate crimes, anti-Semitism and cross-border crime. In connection with the forthcoming revision of the Europol Regulation, we would like to launch a discussion on closer operational police cooperation as well as focusing on issues of criminal prosecution in the digital sphere. **Judicial cooperation** among member states through Eurojust and the start of operations in the **European Public Prosecutor's Office** at the end of the year should also be subject to parliamentary monitoring.
 - Referring to the Council Decision of 25 March 2020 on the launching of **accession negotiations** with Albania and North Macedonia and to the Zagreb Declaration of 6 May 2020, we reaffirm our broad support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans. We intend to monitor the accession negotiations constructively and support the commitment of the EU to the promotion of political, economic and social change in that region.
 - We seek an exchange of views on Europe's position in the world, in which the **EU, as a global player**, has a special responsibility to stand up for European interests and values and to foster new initiatives for the promotion of multilateralism, human rights, democracy and security.
 - The European Union's relations with the countries of the African continent and the African Union are of particular importance. We therefore intend to focus our attention on the **Africa strategy of the EU**, which provides for measures to promote sustainable growth and investment, job creation and education and the search for joint solutions to climate, migration and mobility issues.
 - The relations of the European Union and its member states with **China** are characterised by both opportunities and challenges. With a view to the EU-China summit on 14 September 2020, we intend to focus on the EU connectivity strategy for Asia and on the negotiations for an investment agreement with China.
 - Migration and asylum remain key challenges facing Europe. In the framework of a **high-level conference on migration and asylum in Europe**, the Bundestag intends to press, in an open and inclusive discussion process with the other national parliaments and the European Parliament, for robust resolution strategies. These should encompass not only fair and sustainable reform of the Common European Asylum System but also other aspects such as combating the causes of flight, protection of external borders, legal migration routes and return. The proposals from the European Commission for a New Pact on Migration and Asylum could be a basis for these discussions.

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- Having regard to the expectations set out in the Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024 concerning the role of the EU as a competent and reliable global partner in safeguarding peace and security, we seek to exchange views with national parliaments and the European Parliament on how the **Common Security and Defence Policy** can be further developed so as to enable it to respond appropriately and decisively to crises while preserving the transatlantic security partnership.
 - On 31 January 2020, the **United Kingdom** left the European Union. Our common wish to establish the closest possible relationship with the United Kingdom requires the conclusion of an agreement on a comprehensive partnership that will enter into force by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020. We shall monitor the negotiations constructively in the parliamentary framework and seek to ensure that the integrity of the internal market is preserved. After the conclusion of an agreement, we shall press for rapid implementation of the requisite legislative act. We shall also insist on adequate preparation of citizens and businesses for the post-transition period.

III. Unity in diversity

Peace, freedom and prosperity as well as the unity of 27 member states in all their diversity – these are the great achievements of European unification. It has created bonds of common interest between peoples and has helped to overcome divisions. It is based on common European values, particularly the rule of law and democracy, as well as on the fundamental rights and freedoms that are the foundations of our open societies. Our deep commitment to these principles is unwavering, particularly in these times when Europe faces huge challenges at home and abroad.

“We have united for the better”. This sentence, formulated by the Heads of State or Government on the fiftieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaties of Rome, sums up the essence of the European unification process and also guides our common actions today with which we seek to continue shaping our European Union. For this reason, the Bundestag and Bundesrat support the plans to use the Conference on the Future of Europe as a democratic forum in which citizens and political leaders at all levels can participate and engage in broad debate on reforms and priorities for the continuing development of European integration. The Bundestag and Bundesrat will engage actively in this discussion process and reaffirm that balanced participation of national parliaments in shaping and guiding the conference is a key prerequisite for its success – precisely because this conference is intended to come up with responses to the challenges facing the Union and because we intend to press for ambitious outcomes. Treaty amendments should also be considered. We need close cooperation among all member states of the Union, from the north and south, from the west and east of Europe. We need strong common institutions and a vibrant civil society, so that we can also pass on a peaceful, liberal and prosperous Europe to future generations. It is in this spirit that the Bundestag and Bundesrat will be discharging their duties under the parliamentary dimension of the German Council Presidency in the coming six months.