

Together for Europe's recovery

Programme for Germany's Presidency
of the Council of the European Union

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Table of contents

	Introduction Page 3
I.	Europe's response to the COVID-19 pandemic Page 4
II.	A stronger and more innovative Europe Page 8
III.	A fair Europe Page 12
IV.	A sustainable Europe Page 15
V.	A Europe of security and common values Page 18
VI.	An effective European Union for a rules-based international order anchored in partnership Page 21



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.

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.

We will place measures to overcome the social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic at the centre of our efforts.

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 inter-



national, 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.

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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 EU ERAvsCorona 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

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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.

The EU's unified economic area without internal borders is the bedrock of our prosperity, social security and cohesion.

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 tripartite 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.

Social cohesion, social security and solidarity are the cornerstones of a fair Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to major infringements on the daily lives of many Europeans and has exacerbated inequalities.

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 gen-

der 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.

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.

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 a

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.

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.

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 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 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.

The protection of our shared values, individual rights and freedoms is one of the hallmarks of the European Union.

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 on line. 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 ad-

dress 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.

Strengthening security for our citizens

We want to improve cross-border cooperation between our police authorities through a European police partnership. This should allow police officers in the European Union to have access to the necessary information from other Member States. We also want to improve cooperation between the police, customs and the judiciary.

We plan to strengthen judicial cooperation on combating cross-border crime, for example with regard to the gathering of electronic evidence across borders. The COVID-19 pandemic is posing major challenges to international cooperation on criminal matters, particularly in connection with extradition and rendition. Coordination mechanisms for times of crisis are to be used to overcome these challenges.

We intend to expand the various instruments for judicial cooperation in civil matters. Crisis-resilient judicial cooperation on civil matters in the EU is essential not only for citizens, authorities and courts, but also for business and SMEs in particular. We will continue the work that has already begun in this area.

Fighting international terrorism is still one of the major challenges in Europe. In a Europe of open borders, we need to guarantee a reliable and rapid flow of information. To further optimise this, we are pressing for a common analysis of the various national personal risk assessment systems and national threat lists. We also support the rapid adoption of the regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online.

Alongside Islamist terrorism, we are placing a particular focus on right-wing terrorism and violent right-wing extremism and to this end plan to investigate the extent of EU-wide online networking in this context.

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).

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.

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.

During its Presidency, Germany will support the High Representative, putting itself at the service of a united, responsible and powerful European external action policy.

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 Com-

mission, 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 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.

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 conti-



nue 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.

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