

Transport Priorities of the German Presidency in second half 2020



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As of 1 July, Germany took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the next six months. Taking over from Croatia, the German Presidency signals the beginning of a new Trio Presidency consisting of EU economy following the COVID-19 crisis, the EU budget (MFF) negotiations and Brexit. Next to this, in an era of transformation, the German Presidency focusses its attention on climate change, digitalization, and the changing world of work.

The incoming German Presidency published its political calendar for the second half of 2020 and presented its work program, setting out its priorities until December 2020. This news update provides an overview of the German priorities in the field of transport for the remainder of 2020.

General support for EU transport ambitions

- Germany will ensure that the Green Deal's implementation will contribute to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe;
- The EU must approach the mobility of the future in a sustainable, innovative and interconnected manner. Environmental challenges will be addressed but at the same time the competitiveness of the European transport sector must be safeguarded;
- Lifting the crisis-related restrictions in cross border transport and for the single market in a coordinated and gradual way will create the conditions for economic recovery.

Specific ambitions

- The German Presidency welcomes 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;
- Furthermore, the Presidency wants to analyze the impact of the pandemic on transport infrastructure as well as their resilience to crises in order to strengthen the European transport sector as well as efficient logistics chains;
- Moreover, the Presidency would like to provide guidance for the EU Strategy on Sustainable and Smart Mobility announced by the European Commission. Germany will also press ahead with negotiations on legislative projects in specific transport sectors;
- Additionally, it wants to work towards concluding deliberations on the draft of a European Climate Law. Moreover, Germany wants to agree on the extent to which the European Union can increase its nationally determined contributions (NDC) for the year 2030;
- In the Council, Germany will discuss European approaches to achieving the climate and energy goals, particularly the expansion of carbon pricing covering all sectors and the introduction of a moderate minimum carbon price within the context of the European emissions trading system (EU ETS);
- Germany and the Council will work to ensure that the restrictions imposed in the Schengen area as a result of the pandemic will be gradually lifted, taking into account the epidemiological situation: returning to regular processes in a coordinated manner also with a view to the protection of our external borders and with regard to visa procedures is key;
- Simultaneously, Germany will 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.

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Broader context German Presidency

Apart from these specific sustainability priorities, the German Presidency will strongly focus on urgent issues. The beginning of their Presidency will be strongly focused on guiding the negotiations on the MFF 2021-2027 and the Next Generation EU Recovery Fund. Simultaneously, the German presidency has to deal with the formal completion of Brexit, including the final details on the provisions for the future relationship. Apart from these high-level priorities, the German Presidency will focus on the overarching ambitions on the European digital and green transitions.

The new trio Presidency:

The German Presidency signals the beginning of a new Trio Presidency consisting of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia. The trio published their broader policy priorities as well, with the main focus for the transport sector being:

- The Strategy on Sustainable and Smart Mobility will be the focus of the trio presidency;
- It will take up the revision of the alternative fuels infrastructure (AFID);
- Special emphasis will be on making rail transport more attractive, efficient and quiet. 2021 will be established as the European Year of Rail;
- Strengthening multimodal freight, in particular paying attention to the Green Cargo Package;
- For the maritime sector, the trio will aim to demonstrate that sustainability and international competitiveness are not mutually exclusive, focusing on the areas of climate change mitigation, alternative fuels and digital transformation;
- Discussion on the Single European Sky and the revision of the Passenger Rights Regulation will be brought forward;
- The revision of the TEN-T regulation will play an important role in the trio Presidency.