

MAKING EUROPE EMERGE FROM THE CRISIS STRONGER THROUGH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

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USPA NEWS - The German presidency of the Council held today (by video conference) an informal meeting of ministers in charge of research and innovation. Discussions focused mainly on how research and innovation can bolster European resilience and preparedness in times of crisis such as the coronavirus pandemic and play an active role in the sustainable recovery of Europe. Ministers also discussed a possible future research-driven initiative on the commercial use and large-scale production of green hydrogen. During the first informal meeting under Germany's Council Presidency, EU Research Ministers plan ambitious programme ranging from green hydrogen to pandemic recovery strategies

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At a first informal meeting under the German Council Presidency, the EU research ministers spent several hours in a video conference planning an ambitious programme and reached agreement on initial joint initiatives. Federal Research Minister Anja Karliczek explained: "I will do everything necessary to ensure that the European Union emerges stronger from this crisis. Germany will take the opportunity of the Council Presidency to consolidate all available resources. Excellent research, education and innovation are the key factors of success in achieving a sovereign, resilient and sustainable Europe.

Today's meeting with my European colleagues has shown that we agree on the goal of strengthening research cooperation and pushing the development of the European Research Area with vigour. The COVID-19 pandemic has made us all realise the importance of close cooperation and cohesion in Europe. Education, research and innovation "" more than almost any other area "" can help to turn the challenges of the crisis into opportunity. I am very pleased that we have rallied behind this belief and objective.

Our specific aim is to make Europe more resilient against future crises. We have launched a joint initiative today for this very purpose. We want to learn from the current crisis so we are better able to cope jointly with future crises. The German Council Presidency will therefore prioritise medical efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and global health. Transborder research cooperation is key to fighting the pandemic and developing a vaccine.-----

Beside coping with the acute crisis at hand, we also want to build our future. At today's meeting, we discussed a research and development initiative on green hydrogen. The overarching aim is to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Europe is to become the global innovation leader as well as lead market and supplier for green hydrogen technologies.

The Commission has already put a few ideas for a European hydrogen strategy on the table. Research and innovation play a key role in this context, which is why it is all the more important that the Commission and the member states take action on an equal footing and pull together on this supremely important issue for the future. We are working towards these goals during the Trio Presidency closely with Portugal and Slovenia, each of whom will in turn take over the baton from Germany in 2021. Making Europe stronger and keeping it strong is a test of endurance and a task which calls for team spirit.

The kick off to our cooperation already shows great promise: The "Plastic Pirates Go Europe!"^[1] campaign launched by the Trio will promote citizen science for young people in Europe. Pupils will be involved in a European research project making a major contribution to the knowledge base on plastic waste in our waters. The initiative aims to have model character. Young people will be learning what research collaboration across national borders means "" making the European Research Area come alive."^[2]

BACKGROUND : FURTHER PRIORITIES OF GERMAN'S COUNCIL PRESIDENCY:The objectives of Germany's Council Presidency include the further development of Europe's technological sovereignty. This will establish a trustworthy data space and a European network for artificial intelligence. "AI Made in Europe"^[3] is to evolve to give Europe a global competitive edge and strengthen its technological sovereignty. Another priority is digital education throughout all phases of life and in vocational education and training (VET) in particular. VET plays a key role in equipping European societies for the labour market of the future.

TRIO PRESIDENCY-----

On 1 July 2020, Germany took over the rotating six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In this role, the German delegation will chair the negotiations on EU legislative proposals and other initiatives. It is also able to set its own priority topics. The programme of the German Council Presidency is part of the expansive programme of the Trio Presidency of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia over the next 18 months. In addition to numerous expert conferences, Germany's programme features informal meetings of relevant ministers, including meetings of the ministers of research and of education. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Informal Meeting of Research Ministers originally scheduled at the Petersberg near Bonn was held as a video conference with new interactive elements. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is also hosting an Informal Meeting of Education Ministers on 16-17 September 2020 and a Ministerial Conference on the Future of the European Research Area on 20 October 2020.

Innovation Union Europe "" Germany's commitment to the European Research Area

Federal Research Minister Anja Karliczek announced the national funding programme "Innovation Union Europe "" Germany's commitment to the European Research Area"" at today's Informal Meeting of Research Ministers. Its aim is to improve access to the European Research Area for German researchers and to deepen European cooperation in research and development. A total funding volume of 40 million euro "" above and beyond its actual financial commitment to the European Research Area "" will add to Germany's contribution to the ERA. SOURCE : The German Presidency of the Council.

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