

# Programme of Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the Fields of Education, Research and Innovation

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Together for Europe's recovery

July – December 2020





# **Programme of Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the Fields of Education, Research and Innovation**

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### **I. Excellence in education, research and innovation: towards a resilient, sovereign and sustainable Europe**

**2020 is the year when Europe and the world have been faced with one of the greatest challenges of our times.** The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that it is not only our health systems that are vulnerable, but also our education systems, our economy and democratic societies in Europe and around the world. At the same time, the pandemic has shown that many actions can only be successful if we Europeans work together. In the coming weeks and months, it will be essential that we take joint steps to overcome and recover from this crisis. Excellence in education, research and innovation plays a key role in this context, both in mounting a rapid response to the pandemic and in acting as drivers for Europe to come out of this crisis as a resilient, sovereign and sustainable community.

#### **Tackling the crisis**

In the light of political, societal and economic provision for the future, it is important to build on the initiatives of the Croatian Presidency to focus our efforts on strengthening Europe's resilience and ability to act. Against this backdrop, the German Presidency will place a particular focus on the area of medical action in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and global preventive medicine (including the prevention of pandemics). Cross-border research cooperation is key to fighting the pandemic and developing a vaccine. We need to conduct an in-depth investigation of the current pandemic in order to learn our lessons and take preventive action to boost Europe's resilience to future crises.

## Emerging from the crisis

Europe can come out of this crisis stronger if we make the most of the opportunities it presents. We have already observed a push for digitalisation in many areas. We need to drive this push further to strengthen excellence in education and training as well as Europe's technological sovereignty and innovativeness. Digital learning throughout all phases of life plays a pivotal role in this context. Enhanced educational opportunities are a decisive factor in increasing social justice, fostering societal stability and thereby underpinning the foundations of our democracies. At the same time, a skilled workforce – with a mix of academic education and vocational education and training – is key to ensuring the future viability of our continent. This is why the topic of digital education across all levels of education, including vocational education and training, will be one of the key priorities of the German Presidency.

The quest for new treatments and vaccines is a fundamental prerequisite for managing pandemics and fighting diseases that are associated with urgent medical needs. Strengthening pharmaceutical research and drug development is one of the Federal Government's major objectives and a priority of the German Presidency.

The coronavirus pandemic reveals the susceptibility and vulnerability of our economy in a globalised world and is a precursor of the stiffer competition that Europe will have to face in the future. The measures currently in place to counter the crisis will have a dramatic negative impact on our economy and our society. The innovative and competitive pressure will be intensified further by the tighter economic situation in almost every country. It is against this backdrop that we need to strengthen Europe's technological sovereignty and ability to act, now more than ever, by advancing the ambitious goal of creating a more dynamic (reoriented) European Research Area (ERA). The ERA must become a driver of change in Europe by involving society, science, industry and politics as active partners in shaping, implementing and sharing knowledge. This new role of the ERA needs to be embraced by all member states and must not be perceived as an "elite project". During its Council Presidency, Germany will be committed to unlocking the full potential of cooperation and enabling the highest possible degree of seamlessness and solidarity in the exchange of knowledge between national research and innovation systems. Only in this way will Europe be able to weather the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic in the long term and emerge from this crisis stronger than before.

Climate change and the threat of losing our natural livelihoods continue to be grand challenges with dramatic consequences for our economies and societies. Especially when Europe and its member states are launching large-scale stimulus packages to enable the swift recovery of Europe's economy, we need to ensure that these measures are designed to be sustainable and forward-looking also with regard to the use of funding for research, education and innovation. This is why implementing the European Green Deal continues to be a political priority of the German Presidency.

We also need to significantly enhance interaction between the science system and the rest of society in order to increase public acceptance and the social relevance of scientific findings and identify research and innovation priorities on the basis of societal needs. The German Presidency will also launch a “Plastic Pirates” citizen science campaign to shine a spotlight on the active commitment of young people in particular to get involved in joint EU research projects. This campaign links aspects of (vocational) education with research. It also aims to spark the interest of young people across Europe in STEM subjects while simultaneously building public trust in science and research.

Cooperation with our partners in the trio presidency, Portugal and Slovenia, plays an even stronger role now in light of our efforts to find lasting solutions to overcoming the crisis. We will use the 18 months of our Presidencies to take advantage of joint and coordinated action in education, research and innovation to lead Europe out of this crisis.

## **i. Towards a resilient Europe**

### **Strengthening pharmaceutical research in Europe**

**We urgently need new drugs for novel treatments and vaccines for preventing diseases. The development of new drugs is a high-risk, time-consuming and cost-intensive process. Enhancing the transfer of technology and ideas between science and industry and developing a needs-based funding system for biomedical research (also aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises) will be crucial in this context.**

We therefore need to provide the right impetus now and to create the basis for value creation in drug development with targeted research funding in the pharmaceutical industry. New initiatives should aim to mitigate risks for pharmaceutical research and development projects, foster collaboration and enhance knowledge transfer. Strengthening pharmaceutical research and the development of new drugs is therefore a key objective of the Federal Government and will be a priority of the German Presidency in the second half of this year.

### **Pandemics research: learning from experience and strengthening resilience**

**Research and development are essential for mastering and preventing health crises. We have to learn from our experiences during the coronavirus pandemic to not only manage this current crisis, but also create the preconditions for a more rapid and efficient response from the research and science community to future health crises.**

In addition to the urgent development of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, we will also work to broaden our horizons and adopt a systematic approach by launching a public health research initiative aimed at boosting the resilience of (healthcare) systems. Interdisciplinary approaches are necessary for a profound (ex post) analysis of the current pandemic, the subsequent identification of

best practices and the development of strategies and structures for the future that foster resilient societies and healthcare systems. To achieve this we want to bring together all relevant stakeholders at the European level.

### **Education: boosting resilience through innovation**

**The coronavirus crisis has shown that we need to better equip education systems to withstand crises in the long term. This means that education needs to focus more on strengthening skills that go beyond purely cognitive knowledge. It also needs to focus on developing digital media skills and didactic and methodical strategies as well as providing alternative learning infrastructures for all. Last but not least, education for sustainable development (ESD) makes an important contribution to overall resilience.**

The German Presidency will strive to ensure that digitalisation becomes a pivotal element of the European Commission's new Skills Agenda, the Digital Education Action Plan and the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training. Using digital solutions provided by the new Europass platform will also play a prominent role. Another objective is to strive for a Call for Action of EU member states in support of ESD.

### **European network on "AI made in Europe"**

**Artificial intelligence (AI) is now a key technology driving innovation and an important motor for economic growth and productivity. Particularly in times of a dwindling economy, the use of AI can help to make industry and manufacturing more efficient, sustainable and needs-oriented, thereby protecting our climate and the environment and enabling new developments, for example in health research or pandemic disease spread modelling.**

In order to achieve this goal, we need to develop the European Union's existing capacities as one of the world's largest AI think tanks to become the world's leading decentralised AI network that supports the transfer of AI applications into practice. Well-established national and multinational structures such as the network of the German competence centres for AI research or the Franco-German AI research and innovation network should form the launch pad of such a network. The German Presidency will work to strengthen these excellent structures, mobilise existing expertise across the entire spectrum of AI and pool this expertise in a European AI network of international relevance.

With its White Paper on Artificial Intelligence, the European Commission presented its envisioned framework for excellence and trust. The German Presidency will support this process and promote the development and use of responsible and human-centric AI as a force for good in society as well as of a joint regulatory framework. In this context, it is essential to continue to promote research and development of AI, optimise the translation of research findings into applications, develop opportunities for SMEs and build a strong digital single market for data. Regulation should address opportunities and risks, build trust in AI and facilitate innovation.

## ii. Towards a sovereign and sustainable Europe

### Digital education

**The coronavirus pandemic has clearly shown the importance of digital education in Europe. This includes the self-reflexive use of digital technologies, technical skills, media literacy, and using and harnessing digital media and tools. Digital education is an important key element for achieving broader and better educational opportunities and educational equity in Europe in the long term.**

We will take advantage of Germany's Council Presidency to launch a number of initiatives focusing on the different aspects of digital education and continue to develop digital education as part of realising the European Education Area. The objective of the German Presidency is to broaden the narrow understanding of digital education as an individual skill to include the societal dimension of digital education in the context of cultural change.

Better educational opportunities play a vital role in creating more social justice and stability within our societies and thus in strengthening the foundations of our free democracy. This shows how important it is in terms of an individual's personal development to experience a culture of togetherness, renewal and openness between educational establishments and different national education systems. We want to strengthen digital and transformative elements of education systems and institutions through European cooperation and mutual exchange. The topic of digital education across all levels, including initial and continuing education and training, will therefore be a key priority of the German Presidency.

### Continuation of the Copenhagen Process to enhance vocational education and training

**Vocational education and training plays a key role in an age of digital technology, changing requirements in the world of work and demographic change. The requirements for skilled professionals have become more demanding in many areas. It is important that vocational education and training is able to open up career opportunities for young and old and prepare them for the jobs of the future by offering appropriate initial and continuing education as well as lifelong learning.**

The German Presidency will make great efforts to advance the expansion of digital education with a view to ensuring the continued high quality of educational opportunities for all. In the context of European cooperation, these efforts must go hand in hand with teacher training. National platforms for state-of-the-art digitally enabled learning and teaching should refer to the new Europass portal. Vocational education and training (VET) helps businesses to overcome the skills shortage and enables social participation. VET promotes not only the development of professional skills but also the development of learners' personality and identity. VET creates holistic educational processes that play an important role in terms of socialisation and allocation of adolescents and young adults, enabling them to fulfil job requirements and assume social, economic, ecological and individual

responsibility to help shape a sustainable world of work and society. In this way, professional and societal behaviour are closely intertwined and interdependent.

Other focus areas during Germany's Council Presidency include deepening the European Education Area, promoting the equivalence between vocational and academic education and easing the transfer between academic and vocational education. People working in positions that will disappear in a digital future must have the possibility to undergo retraining and upskilling while still in a job.

Another goal is to promote cross-border cooperation by strengthening networks and funding measures in the context of vocational education and training (mobility, Erasmus+, networking, competitions, transparency). We should work together to develop existing initiatives and instruments that foster the practical relevance of VET such as the European Alliance for Apprenticeships in order to make Europe's societies fit for the future of digital and environmental change.

The envisaged Osnabrück Declaration aims to firmly anchor these objectives and inject new vigour into the Copenhagen Process.

#### **A dynamic and powerful European Research Area (ERA)**

##### **Developing the European Research Area into a catalyst for enhancing Europe's resilience in the face of crises and a driving force behind Europe's recovery, based on the objectives of the European Green Deal.**

Research and innovation play a central role in containing and overcoming the current crisis.

We need to continue to enhance cross-border cooperation and coordination in Europe. Strengthening resilience throughout Europe is important in order to prevent future crises. Our European way of life and model of prosperity need to be protected and expanded. The European Research Area is the right tool and perfect link to achieve these two dimensions. Further strengthening the ERA is therefore a key objective of the German Presidency.

The European Commission plans to publish a Communication on the European Research Area that will prominently feature both dimensions. The German Presidency plans to adopt Council Conclusions along these lines.

The ERA needs to be strengthened substantially in several respects. For example, research funding and policy at the national and European level should become more participatory. In other words, we need to do more to enter into a direct dialogue with citizens and society. This engagement starts with the thematic orientation of funding programmes (co-design) and goes on to cover programme implementation (co-production). In addition, dynamic technological progress and the impact of digital transformation on society in particular will trigger wide-ranging processes of change and transformation that will directly affect all European citizens. Science and research based on values and academic freedom make an indispensable contribution towards increasing societal resilience, at



the same time laying the foundation for applied research and innovation and must therefore remain a central pillar of the ERA.

Furthermore, the reoriented ERA has to genuinely contribute to successfully realising the goals of the European Green Deal for building a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and sustainable economy and society.

The coronavirus crisis has highlighted the necessity of Europe's technological sovereignty in key areas. The ERA will play a fundamental role on the way towards achieving technological sovereignty.

Research can make essential contributions to European cohesion and towards solving economic and societal problems. The division of effort among member states and between them and the EU thus plays a pivotal role in realising a more dynamic ERA. Strengthening the ERA is therefore an important political priority for the German Presidency.

### **From the Coal and Steel Community to a hydrogen union: climate-neutral energy for Europe's industry, transport and energy sector**

**The European Union has its roots in the European Coal and Steel Community. The current challenge is to make Europe's industry and society sustainable and future-proof, particularly with regard to the supply of energy. The coronavirus pandemic is both the cause and the catalyst in this context. It forces us to abandon old path dependencies and find new ways to think about what had previously been taken for granted. This momentum facilitates urgently required adaptation measures – for example towards more stable and reliable value chains.**

As a versatile energy source and storage vehicle, green hydrogen plays a key role in coupling the energy, industry, heat and transport sectors, creating an integrated European "supergrid" and is also valuable in the context of energy imports. Germany and many other member states will continue to rely on energy imports in the future.

Close European cooperation is of the essence here. Aspects such as the generation of green hydrogen in windy or sunny areas and its distribution inevitably call for cross-border cooperation. This is why we will strive to advance international research cooperation in the area of green hydrogen between Europe and African countries and Australia in particular. However, we also need the European dimension in order to realise a regulatory framework that is conducive to innovation. The same applies to the considerable investments that are needed to make the internationally competitive hydrogen-based European economy a reality.

The German Presidency will be committed to making investments in research, development and demonstration of green hydrogen technologies a priority and to advancing the area of hydrogen technologies and systems under the umbrella of an important project of common European interest (IPCEI).

## **From the Coal and Steel Community to a digital union: strengthening technological sovereignty as a precondition for European sovereignty**

**Over the past decade, the global competition for technology has become fiercer and fiercer. Europe risks falling behind in the medium term in areas of technology that will be important for the future. At the same time, the coronavirus crisis has made it clear that Europe needs to strengthen its technological and data sovereignty. It must therefore be the primary aim of Europe's future research and development policies to maintain and further expand Europe's technological sovereignty in selected key areas.**

A secure communication infrastructure (e.g. quantum communication) and a trustworthy European data space (e.g. the International Data Space) both play significant roles in ensuring technological sovereignty. Excellent research and innovation services in key technologies such as trustworthy microelectronics, high-performance computing and quantum computing lay the foundations for achieving technological sovereignty. Where necessary, such technological measures should be accompanied by regulatory measures that underline the paramount importance of European values (cf. the effect of the General Data Protection Regulation as a signal for markets outside of Europe).

In addition to the excellence of research and development, there is also a focus on measures to promote the development of structures and on the application and commercialisation of research results. Existing instruments at the European level, including Horizon Europe, the Digital Europe Programme (DEP), the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and InvestEU, should be aligned even more closely to better strengthen research transfer and value creation in Europe.

Furthermore, the following European policy initiatives will be launched or continued:

- Creation of a European cloud / launch of an IPCEI on data to take GAIA-X to the European level
- Development of a European research and investment initiative in the area of electronics (IPCEI on trustworthy electronics)
- Launch of a Joint Undertaking on artificial intelligence

## **Promoting participation in science and research, strengthening scientific literacy**

**Citizen science makes research more tangible and builds trust in science. Research benefits from the knowledge of the many. In this way, citizen science becomes a driver of innovation that accelerates the uptake of new findings by society. At the same time, citizen science intensifies the exchange between the research community and society and enhances the public's scientific empowerment.**

The German Presidency will launch a Plastic Pirates citizen science campaign in cooperation with its trio partners Portugal and Slovenia. The campaign is centred around a joint research project.

Adolescents from the three countries will collect data on how rivers contribute to the leakage of plastic waste into the oceans. This data will then be used in a joint research project. The campaign will thereby link educational and research activities, stimulate the interest of young people across Europe in STEM subjects and build public trust in science and research.

Support will also be given to other initiatives such as EU Code Week, which provide new stimuli for digital education and ideas for how we can shape our future together.

### **Pooling efforts in the fight against cancer**

**There has been substantial progress in cancer research over the past years. Yet, around 2.7 million new cases of cancer are diagnosed in Europe every year while about a third of all cases could be prevented. Research is our most powerful weapon in the fight against cancer. No member state, institution, discipline or stakeholder group can achieve substantial progress in the medical treatment and prevention of cancer if they act alone.**

Germany has launched the National Cancer Plan and the National Decade against Cancer to send a strong signal in support of the fight against cancer. The main focus is on further strengthening prevention as well as on enhancing and expanding early detection and screening, mainly by pooling efforts and capacities at national and European level.

In the future, we will provide targeted funding for research and innovation in cancer research in order to accelerate the transfer of preclinical research results into novel applications and strategies in the areas of prevention, diagnosis, early detection and treatment that are both specific and effective.

The German Presidency intends to draft a joint declaration in cooperation with our partners of the trio presidency. Cancer will be a joint research priority of all three presidencies. However, it should also be highlighted that the fight against cancer will be more successful if there is more joint European research. The declaration will therefore be signed within the framework of the “Europe: Unite against Cancer” conference. Networking opportunities for young researchers and European patient representatives will be provided to overcome barriers. The aim is to prevent as many new cases of cancer as possible and achieve a better quality of life for cancer patients.

### **Bioeconomy: harnessing renewable resources and biological expertise to create a sustainable economy**

**Defined as a sustainable circular economy based on renewable resources and the enormous innovation potential of state-of-the-art life sciences, the concept of the bioeconomy is a central building block for a sustainable and climate-neutral Europe as envisioned by the current European Green Deal.**

The publication of the Federal Government’s new National Bioeconomy Strategy in January 2020, the Science Year 2020|21 – Bioeconomy and the third Global Bioeconomy Summit (GBS) in Berlin in

November 2020 lay the foundation for the successful continuation and expansion of a sustainable bio-based economy in the years to come in Germany, Europe and the world. The European Green Deal serves as a roadmap for a sustainable European economy, for recovery after the COVID-19 crisis and for strengthening resilience.

By using biogenic resources, we can achieve a sustainable, circular and bio-based economy. The varying regional availability of and need for raw materials make European and international cooperation essential to achieving our goal. We will therefore adopt a joint communiqué with political recommendations for action within as part of the Global Bioeconomy Summit. It will serve as a guideline for leveraging and growing synergies between different bioeconomy approaches in Europe and beyond.

Several activities will stimulate the interest of a broad public in the topic of bioeconomy. An open debate involving all parts of society is the prerequisite for a successful transformation processes.

The triad of globalisation, urbanisation and a growing global population requires us to make our agri-food systems more sustainable and shock-resistant. The Farm to Fork strategy under the umbrella of the European Green Deal highlights the importance of stable and reliable value chains in the agri-food sector an aspect now further emphasised by the coronavirus pandemic. On the occasion of World Food Day 2020, the German Presidency will partner with the EU, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Knowledge and Innovation Community “EIT Food” of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and other stakeholders to send a message of support for research, development and innovation. Our goal is to contribute to high-quality diets for all, ensure the provision of a new broad range of diverse renewable resources and at the same time protect the environment, resources and our climate.

### **Strengthening education for sustainable development**

**In times of global insecurity and global challenges, it is important to teach not only digital skills, but also those skills that go beyond cognitive knowledge. Learners should be taught to think and act critically, reflectively and systemically in order to allow aspects of sustainability guide their problem solving in situations of uncertainty. Education for sustainable development (ESD) is key to enabling them to do so.**

During its Presidency, Germany plans to organise an exchange among member states to share their experiences of integrating ESD in all sectors of education (focusing on digital learning formats) and launch a joint call for action to collect examples of best practice. This call for action aims to help implement ESD at the European level, which is the goal of the recently adopted UNESCO framework for Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030). It would also enable the EU to present its position at UNESCO’s global launch event in Berlin in May 2021. The member states would thereby support the EU’s position to implement sustainability and the European Green Deal with vigour and strengthen education as an important lever in this context.

## **Scientific stimulus for the Leipzig Charter for sustainable urban development**

**European cities are facing enormous challenges: climate change, demographic change and changing mobility patterns. In order to achieve sustainable forward-looking development, urban, suburban and rural regions need to be looked at collectively as they are mutually dependent. We need new urban-rural partnerships and new forms of cooperation across administrative boundaries to close the growing divide between the conflicting realities of urban and rural life.**

Around 300 experts will convene under the umbrella of the “URP 2020 – Urban-Rural Partnerships” international conference in Leipzig on 25-27 November 2020 to discuss the latest findings of urban-rural research and develop vital impetus for the Leipzig Charter. The planned Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe “Driving Urban Transitions to a Sustainable Future (DUT)” also makes an important contribution towards this goal. It provides fresh stimulus and lays the scientific foundation for implementing the new Leipzig Charter and the Territorial Agenda.

## **II. Brussels agenda and dossiers**

The German Council Presidency intends to finalise forthcoming legal instruments and European strategies as far as possible and to launch new initiatives and activities.

Which legislative projects will actually be addressed during the German Presidency depends mainly on the development of the negotiations regarding the multiannual financial framework.

### **i. Legal instruments and initiatives**

#### **Horizon Europe (2021-2027)**

The Council and the European Parliament agreed the core elements of the programme in spring 2019. Accordingly, the programme will be equipped with a budget of approximately €94 billion. The issues that have not yet been settled are budget distribution – which will be discussed after the conclusion of the multiannual financial framework negotiations – third country participation and synergy with other programmes. The German Presidency will support the continuation or, if possible, the conclusion of the negotiations.

#### **Erasmus+ (2021-2027)**

Erasmus+, the European programme to support education, training, youth and sport, is a European success story. Since 1987, almost ten million people have been able to gain experience abroad under this programme. Erasmus+ is the only programme that has the potential to reach out to all EU

citizens. One of the programme's main priorities is developing innovative educational schemes including the use of digital formats, an area currently challenging all the member states, as well as supporting political reforms. Furthermore, the new programme is expected to improve participation by socially and economically disadvantaged groups. The member states agreed a common position early on. The German Presidency will also support the speedy conclusion of relevant negotiations.

#### **Future institutionalised partnerships (based on Articles 185 and 187 TFEU)**

Negotiations regarding the further development of institutionalised research and innovation partnerships or the consolidation of existing partnering schemes (such as joint programmes or joint undertakings) have been ongoing since 2018. Partnerships are an important instrument for cooperation in the European Research Area. Future priorities and the involvement of member states and partners, e.g. from industry, will therefore be a major aspect in the debate about the reorientation of the ERA. The German Presidency will seek to achieve agreement on institutionalised partnerships subject to the conclusion of the negotiations regarding the multiannual financial framework.

#### **European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and Strategic Innovation Agenda of the EIT**

The EIT was established by the EU with the aim of promoting cooperation between its top institutes, universities and industrial research centres. The EIT's mission is to strengthen the knowledge triangle of innovation, education and research. After the Council's partial general approach to the EIT regulation and the Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) under the Finnish and Croatian Presidencies, the German Presidency will work towards concluding the negotiations.

#### **Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025)**

In June 2018, the Commission presented the proposal for a Council Regulation on the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) supplementary to Horizon Europe, the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. As with the negotiations regarding Horizon Europe, relevant negotiations could be concluded during Germany's Council Presidency.

#### **Council conclusions on the European Research Area**

The German Presidency is planning Council conclusions for the area of research and innovation (in order) to substantially strengthen the ERA. European research cooperation is a necessity which has become particularly apparent in the current crisis. Working towards greater dynamism and solidarity and a sharpened focus of the ERA is therefore a central objective of Germany's Council Presidency.

### **Bonn Declaration**

A focus of Germany's Council Presidency will be on signing the "Bonn Declaration" between the member states and further international partners. The Bonn Declaration aims to establish a political commitment to the broad initiative for strengthening Europe's resilience. This will include the development of common values and principles for effective, free and responsible research and innovation, improved management of transformation processes such as climate change and value-driven digitalisation as well as enhanced social participation.

### **Council conclusions on digital education**

The German Presidency is planning to adopt Council conclusions in the field of digital education to highlight and strengthen the importance of this topic in Europe's knowledge societies. The updated Digital Education Action Plan announced by the European Commission for the third quarter of 2020 will support this effort.

### **Council recommendation on vocational education and training**

The Council recommendation on VET will be presented as part of the updated skills agenda (set of measures to improve VET and adult education). The Council recommendation on VET will focus on promoting high-level continuing training and its equivalence with academic education as well as on strengthening work-based training and deepening the European Vocational Education and Training Area. The Council recommendation on VET will form the basis of the planned Osnabrück Declaration.

### **Osnabrück Declaration**

Another focus of the German Presidency is on signing the "Osnabrück Declaration" between the member states, EEA/EFTA countries and the social partners. The objectives of the Declaration include developing excellent VET at university level to achieve equivalence between vocational and academic education, easing the transfer between academic and vocational education and intensifying cross-border cooperation. The aim is to give fresh impetus to the Copenhagen Process.

### **Council conclusions on the European Universities Initiative**

The European Universities Initiative is based on a proposal by French President Macron. The European Universities have been funded as pilot projects under Erasmus+ (2014-2020) since autumn 2019. We are planning relevant Council conclusions together with our Portuguese and Slovenian partners of the trio presidency as well as the outgoing Croatian Presidency. The aim is to achieve better links between education and research.

## **ITER**

The International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) is a nuclear fusion reactor and an international research project with the long-term aim of using fusion energy for power generation. In June 2018, the Commission presented a proposal for a Council decision amending decision 2007/198/Euratom, which established the European Joint Undertaking for ITER and the development of fusion energy. As with the negotiations regarding Horizon Europe, relevant negotiations could be concluded during Germany's Council Presidency.

### **ii. Council meetings on education and research**

- **Competitiveness Council / Research**, 25 September
- **Competitiveness Council / Research**, 27 November
- **Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council / Education**, 30 November



### III. Events

*Whether the planned events will involve the physical presence of participants is subject to relevant guidelines regarding the Covid-19 pandemic at the time of the event. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research will organise some of the conferences and meetings as virtual or hybrid (physical-virtual) events.*

#### Informal meetings of ministers

- **Informal Meeting of Competitiveness Ministers (Research)**, 21 July
- **Informal Meeting of Education Ministers**, Osnabrück, 16-17 September
- **Ministerial Conference on the European Research Area**, Bonn, 20 October

#### Specialist conferences (selection)

- **Innovative Hochschule (Innovative University) – Third Mission Possible**, 21-22 September
- **Presidency Conference on the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)**, 29-30 September
- **European Science & Education for Sustainability Forum**, 6-7 October
- **University: Future Festival – Learning and Systems in a Digital Society**, 6-8 October
- **Europe: Unite against Cancer**, 13 October
- **The Citizen Science SDG Conference: Knowledge for Change – A decade of citizen science (2020-2030) in support of the Sustainable Development Goals**, 14-15 October
- **beyondwork2020 – European Conference on Labour Research**, 21-22 October
- **Industrial Technologies 2020 - „Transition to Sustainable Prosperity“**, 27-28 October
- **Carbon2Chem**, 27-28 October
- **European Vocational Skills Week**, 9-12 November
- **Global Bioeconomy Summit**, 19-20 November
- **Preparing for tomorrow. The future of civil security research – for people, for society, for Europe**, 25-26 November

*The calendar lists all the events of Germany's Presidency of the Council of the European Union: [eu2020.de](http://eu2020.de).*



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