

Together in Europe Together for Europe

Work programme of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community for the German Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2020



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Together in Europe – Together for Europe

We live together in Europe. European integration shapes the daily lives of all Europeans in many ways. Particular expectations are attached to European home affairs policy, as it affects almost every area of our lives and has a crucial impact on whether people in Europe feel connected to one another and whether they can live self-determined lives in freedom and security. Threats from extremist and terrorist violence, the challenges of migration, demographic change, the rapid spread of digital technologies in our living environment, and the current coronavirus pandemic pose tremendous challenges for Europe and the world. Only together can we cope with the tasks that arise from this. Home affairs policy that thinks only as far as national borders belongs to the past. The coronavirus pandemic has been a particularly stark reminder of this.

That is why we have made it our goal, across all home affairs issues, to show that working together in Europe and for Europe is worth it – so that we can all continue to live safely and well together in Europe.

- Living together in a strong society

Europe must be strong and resilient. It must always remain a place that brings together the different interests and needs of its people, because our co-existence is strongly marked by the fact that the majority of Europeans like living in Europe and also share a commitment to European values. European home affairs policy must in turn create the conditions for overcoming crises together.

- Resolving European migration issues together

Europe must remain a place that is committed to solidarity. Managing migration and dealing with refugees are crucial issues for the future of the European Union. Europe must find convincing long-term answers in these areas. These answers must be measured by humanitarian and constitutional values, and must also take into account our citizens' security as well as the limits of what is feasible and sustainable for our society.

- Working together to provide security for all

Europe must remain a place where people live in freedom and safety – also and especially in times of crisis – and where they feel free and safe. This is true both in the “real world” and in cyberspace. All residents of Europe should be able to live in safety, free of fear, regardless of their convictions or their worldviews.

I. Living together in a strong society

1. Our foundation: Social cohesion

In the face of the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic as well as increasing social tensions, anti-democratic tendencies and growing mistrust towards the European Union, emphasising the importance of social cohesion within Europe is a priority for us. We want to highlight, among other things, the positive impact of sport and physical activity on social cohesion, which can arise from shared thinking about how to combine the areas of sport, schools, health, social affairs, urban development and transport planning strategically. Working together with the other member states, we will develop the EU Work Plan for Sport for 2021–2024 and determine the focal areas for cooperation on sport policy in the coming years.

Europe is shaped by migratory movements and migration. Integrating those who have recently arrived and strengthening social interaction on the whole are thus essential contributions to open and peaceful coexistence. To foster greater interaction among the member states on integration issues, we will organise another informal meeting of ministers responsible for integration, building on the informal meeting of ministers responsible for integration that was held in Potsdam during our last Presidency in 2007. The meeting will focus on ways to promote social cohesion and deal with growing diversity.

2. Bolstering disaster management and civil protection

We want to lead Europe out of the coronavirus pandemic together and make sure the EU is even better prepared for future crises. In keeping with the guiding principle of joint, forward-looking crisis management, we will strengthen and further develop the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. With this goal, and building on experience to date in managing the pandemic, we will intensify the negotiations in the Council and with the European Parliament on the recent proposed amendments to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. In particular, we intend to move forward with a structured review process and the development and expansion of a Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network.

3. Championing equivalent living conditions

Demographic change and regional inequalities will present major challenges to the member states of the European Union in the coming decades. Together with the other member states, we want to ensure that development takes place in a balanced way throughout Europe. Advancing resilient, sustainable and balanced spatial and urban development is an important contribution to this. It is meant, among other things, to highlight the distinguishing characteristics of European cities as a unifying cultural element of European identity. To this end, we will update the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities that was adopted under the German Presidency in 2007. In addition, we want to promote the EU-wide discourse on smart cities with the goal of ensuring that our communities are liveable and oriented to the common good, and that democratic decision-making processes are preserved, even under changed technological circumstances.

We are also striving for agreement among the ministers responsible for spatial planning on the updated common principles for spatial development policy in the EU, and will adopt these in the new key document Territorial Agenda 2030.

4. Our goals: values-based digital transformation and equitable participation

Advancing the digital transformation of European society as a whole is a firmly established part of the German Presidency. We are therefore working to ensure that the opportunities of digital technologies are used for the benefit of civil society and that their negative consequences are minimised. To this end, we want to strengthen digital social participation and place every citizen in a position to operate with self-determination in the digital environment and participate in shaping it, with awareness that our shared European values apply there, too. We want to express this by adopting a “declaration on digital society”.

5. Resolutely countering antisemitism and antigypsyism

The fight against antisemitism is a high priority for the German Presidency. We strive for structured exchange at European level to decisively oppose all forms of antisemitism together. A key point of reference here is the Council declaration of 6 December 2018 on the fight against antisemitism including the fields of action named in it. We will focus on the areas of strategy and structures to fight antisemitism comprehensively as well as on recording antisemitic incidents.

The German Presidency will also take decisive action against antigypsyism. We want to foster the European dialogue on challenges and solutions regarding Roma integration, and thereby contribute to developing the post-2020 EU framework for national Roma inclusion strategies. In doing so, we want to highlight ways that the spread of antigypsyism can be countered in various fields of action from a national perspective.

II. Resolving European migration issues together

1. Aiding vulnerable people on a basis of solidarity

The current European asylum system is no longer able to cope with today's challenges. It enables people who are unable to claim any grounds for persecution to enter Europe and, in many cases, to remain here in the long term. It allows unimpeded onward migration within Europe and leads to an imbalanced distribution of asylum applicants, creating trouble spots in countries at Europe's external borders. We therefore want to move forward with a reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) which safeguards the rights of asylum-seekers while also facilitating quick decision-making about who does and does not require protection from a member state and would be entitled to stay in the EU. Our aim is a reform that introduces new rules about responsibilities and solidarity, satisfies humanitarian standards, and avoids the overburdening of individual member states and the formation of inhumane camps. This should include ending wrong incentives for asylum seekers and among member states and ensuring that the system works in practice. Our work will be based on the proposals to be announced by the Commission in its New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

We will also work to restart resettlement procedures, taking into account the new requirements caused by the coronavirus pandemic and also the admission capabilities of member states.

2. Ensuring an effective return policy

A functioning and crisis-proof European asylum system requires an effective mechanism to return those individuals who are not entitled to protection. Frontex's strengthened mandate in the area of return represents a major opportunity for member states to receive additional support in carrying out an effective and sustainable return policy. To this end, we wish to further the discussion between member states and Frontex that was already started under the Finnish and Croatian Presidencies on how to make greater use of the agency's new mandate. This debate will focus on voluntary return and reintegration in order to improve Frontex's capacities, also in these fields

3. Promoting legal migration

Europe needs skilled immigrants to be able to compete internationally and to ensure its continued prosperity. This is why we want to bring the reform of the "Blue Card Directive" to a successful conclusion which takes all interests in the area of labour migration sufficiently into account.

4. Boosting cooperation with third countries

Migration policy can only succeed in the long term if it is based on partnership. That is why the German Presidency is in favour of greater cooperation with countries of origin and transit. Our migration cooperation will focus on the countries along the main migration routes as well as African countries and Turkey. We want to expand our capabilities to analyse the migration situation in Europe in order to set up effective early warning tools and develop common strategies for our communication vis-à-vis third countries.

We also attach great importance to pursuing a coherent approach across the different policy areas. The leverage provided by Article 25a of the Visa Code is an important element of this coherent approach. We will therefore analyse the Commission's first report on this and draw up a common assessment in particular with an eye to our cooperation with third countries concerning readmission.

5. Protecting external borders effectively

Regarding the management of the external borders and visa procedures, we wish to pursue a coordinated approach to resume the regular procedures as soon as the situation allows it. To combat illegal migration and human smuggling, we need to protect the external borders effectively. To do so, in light of Frontex's new

portfolio of tasks, its growing number of forces and increased funding, it is extremely important to put the new Frontex mandate into operation quickly and to develop it further as necessary. We are working to ensure that, when required, more political steps are taken so that member states that are under particular pressure make increased use of support from Frontex. Based on the Midterm Review, we are striving to make the 10,000 border guards fully operational ahead of schedule.

6. Preserving and strengthening the Schengen area

We are committed to Schengen. The Schengen system is a cornerstone of European cooperation and integration. To prevent the spread of the coronavirus, it was necessary to reintroduce temporary border control at many internal borders. We will work towards lifting the coronavirus-related restrictions step by step as soon as the epidemiological situation allows this. We are also committed to improving the Schengen-wide coordination of crisis-related measures and will initiate a discussion about how to do so. We want to work together with our European partners specifically to explore what appropriate security measures below the threshold of notifications announcing internal border checks could be considered – for example, refusal of entry at internal borders without border checks.

We also want to deepen operational cooperation among the EU member states' law enforcement authorities even further, especially in border areas. To this end, we want to analyse the need for more intensive cross-border police cooperation in the Schengen area and present proposals for joint cross-border operations and increased powers for our protection at the internal borders.

Effectively implementing regulations on the interoperability of central EU databases in the area of border management, migration management and security is another key building block. These databases ensure that potential false and multiple identities can be systematically recognised and cleared up. As part of the introductory process, we will pay close attention to ensuring that the bodies involved at EU and member state level are able to connect soon and that they design working processes in such a way that they can make effective use of information available in the future, and that considerations focus mainly on the needs of police end users. We are also striving for the swift conclusion of the legislative process to amend the Regulation concerning the VIS, which links the visa procedure with other EU databases in the interest of interoperability.

Moreover, we want to further develop and improve the tools of European police information exchange. In doing so, we want to pay particular attention to EU information management within the framework of Prüm, the PNR and API air passenger data systems, and the Europol information system, so that this information management can be systematically oriented to the goals of availability of information, efficiency of exchange of information, and data protection.

III. Working together to provide security for all

1. Advocating for a new European police partnership

The coronavirus pandemic has shown how important direct and digital cross-border cooperation among police forces is. We therefore want to improve cooperation among police authorities through a European Police Partnership (EuPP). This includes our initiatives for a safe and free Schengen area. We want every police officer in every member state to have access at all times to the necessary information from every member state to avert present threats in a borderless Europe. To this end, we are focusing on modern information architecture, better use of existing instruments, and strong partnership within and towards our police authorities.

To do so, we especially want to strengthen Europol's ability to support the operational work of national security authorities in fighting cross-border crime and terrorist and extremist threats. We support the expansion of Europol as central office for the European police such that Europol can make full use of its mandate for analysis, information-sharing and support, and is bolstered in its role as a central service and knowledge management platform, including in the area of cybersecurity and cyber capabilities.

We also want to introduce EuPP data days on which national police authorities make cross-border commitments to improve their data files and data quality.

2. Combating terrorism and extremism

Combating international Islamist terrorism remains one of Europe's greatest challenges. In a Europe of open borders, we must ensure that information flows reliably and quickly if dangerous people who are capable of mounting attacks travel. We want to continue to build on what has been achieved – for example, through a joint analysis of different national systems for assessing the threat level posed by individuals and the related national lists of potential terrorists.

Alongside Islamist terrorism, the German Presidency will focus particular attention on combating right-wing terrorism and violent right-wing extremism, as well as hate crimes. We want to take a stance against the abuse of social networks and chat forums as international propaganda platforms for violent right-wing extremists and antisemites to disseminate hatred and incitement. We also want to conduct an EU-wide day of action against hate crimes. Along with new means of prevention, we are also working to ensure the swift conclusion of the regulation to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content online, and we strive for continuous exchange about best practices to stop the lasting dissemination of terrorist content via the internet.

3. Promoting deradicalisation and radicalisation prevention

We want to further strengthen radicalisation prevention as part of a comprehensive strategy to combat terrorism and extremism, and we want to work even more closely with our European partners and continue to learn from each other. In doing so, we will focus on sharing experience with local actors: deradicalisation must take place tangibly in cities and towns; that is why knowledge and experience are needed there, too.

4. Combating organised crime

Effectively combating organised crime is an important concern of the German Presidency. As the coronavirus crisis has recently demonstrated, our security agencies are confronted with criminal structures that operate in international networks, constantly seek out profitable new areas of activity, and respond quickly to changing conditions. That is why we will, for example, make the EU policy cycle to tackle organised and serious international crime more effective through the greatest possible digitisation of procedures and will initiate discussions about the phenomenon of criminal clan structures.

When it comes to fighting drug-related crime, we will start negotiations on a new EU Drugs Strategy that is to give long-term answers to the troubling trends in recent years in Europe, especially concerning cocaine.

5. Improving cyber security

The German Presidency advocates further intensifying shared efforts to defend against dangers in cyberspace in order to boost the EU's resilience against cyber attacks. Such attacks have increased during the coronavirus pandemic. To defend against them, in view of the increasing ubiquity of all kinds of devices that connect to the internet, we will work to ensure that all such products available on the market meet a minimum standard of IT security. We also want to advance the negotiations on a draft regulation to establish a European centre for cybersecurity and a network of national coordination centres with the goal of reaching an agreement with the European Parliament by the end of 2020.

It is also important to us to meet the needs of security authorities and to ensure that the security authorities' telecommunications monitoring capabilities are not weakened.

6. Countering hybrid threats better

Our society faces hybrid threats, such as disinformation campaigns, cyber attacks and efforts to influence the research community and the private sector. The coronavirus crisis has once again clearly demonstrated this. That is why we want to work together with the other member states and the relevant EU institutions to identify areas where further action is needed to reinforce our defences against hybrid threats. In doing so, we want to specifically look at what vulnerabilities the coronavirus crisis gives rise to. In this context, we want to strengthen academic engagement with the issue, discuss the responsibility of social media, and introduce an exchange of experience among the member states.

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