

Press Release

German Presidency of the EU Council

Education and Science for a strong Europe

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In the coming weeks, Germany will assume the presidency of the Council of the European Union. During the six-month presidency, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) expects the German Federal Government to set the course for strengthening Education and Science within the EU. Key themes will include Brexit negotiations, academic freedom and the Erasmus exchange programme.



Bonn, 24. June 2020

“The global coronavirus pandemic has reconfirmed the notion that, in order to thrive, all 27 EU members need to work closely together across our borders and present a united response,” says DAAD President, Prof. Dr Joybrato Mukherjee in Bonn. Mukherjee believes this is particularly true for Education and Science. “In a rapidly changing world order, we must pool the various intellectual capacities spread across the EU and focus on a few key objectives, in order to retain our internationally competitive position as a highly attractive location for teaching and research,” adds Mukherjee.

“During its presidency, the German Federal Government has the opportunity and responsibility to campaign and ensure that science and education

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within the EU comes out of the coronavirus pandemic even stronger.”

The DAAD's central points:

1. Education and Science must be made a priority in the discussions as part of the ongoing Brexit negotiations. “It is a clear win for both the EU and the UK if both sides continue to cooperate as closely as possible in research and teaching after the transition period has ended,” says the DAAD President. According to Mukherjee, it is imperative that the UK continues to participate in both the Erasmus exchange programme and the Horizon Europe research programme.

2. Academic freedom in research, teaching and transfer must be defended and strengthened in all EU countries. “Just like freedom of speech and press, academic freedom is a core element of Europe’s fundamental values. And it is important to also defend these values internally in the face of certain developments in EU member states,” says Joybrato Mukherjee. Mukherjee believes that Germany could help reinforce these core values at various points, and raise the issue at the next Bologna Ministerial Conference in Rome in November.

3. Germany’s EU presidency must work towards obtaining sufficient funding for the Erasmus programme until 2027. “We are hoping for forward-looking funding for the Erasmus programme, a programme which establishes identity among young Europeans and is unlike any other. In addition, funding for new measures such as the European university networks must be ensured, as higher education institutions in the EU will play a central role in rebuilding after the coronavirus crisis,” explains the DAAD president.

DAAD presidency events

According to a recent announcement, the German presidency plans to use the next six months to focus on crisis management and rebuilding after the corona crisis, as well as issues such as the Green Deal, digital transformation and strengthening unity within the EU. The DAAD will support these issues with various initiatives, programmes and digital events. The focus will lie on digitalisation, sustainability and strengthening cohesion in Europe.

Highlights of the DAAD programme will include two main events that will take place in a hybrid form with both physical and virtual attendance. On 1 October, DAAD alumni from all EU countries will gather in Berlin under the patronage of German

Federal Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas. The event motto will be “An idea for Europe”. From 5 October, the “Moving target digitalisation: re-thinking global exchange in higher education” conference will address the issue of how internationalisation can be re-imagined in light of the digital transformation. Together with the German Federal Education Minister, Anja Karliczek, around 300 international experts will discuss the challenges of internationalising higher education institutions, bringing issues such as policy dialogue and process innovation into focus.

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