

Press Release
Berlin, 30.06.2020

Make the EU Green Deal from a vision to a driver - The German EU Council Presidency can pave the way for the first climate-neutral continent.

As the German EU Council Presidency begins on 1 July 2020, Sabine Nallinger, Managing Director of Foundation 2° - German Businesses for Climate Protection, explains:

“The climate policy expectations many German businesses have for the German EU Council Presidency are high: The European Green Deal must become the heart of the EU stimulus programme and be transformed from a vision to a real driver of economic recovery in Europe. The EU Green Deal must be crafted as a European innovation and growth strategy aimed at overcoming the impacts of the corona crisis. The German government’s commitment to furthering Franco-German cooperation and to developing European solutions with the member states will be decisive components in the success of the German EU Council Presidency.”

Through decisive action taken in close dialogue with the private sector, the German government can send an important signal for international climate action far beyond Europe’s borders. The German government should use the German EU Council Presidency to conduct essential preparatory work towards the goal of having all states set ambitious climate targets in line with the Paris Agreement by the time of the next UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, at the latest.

In the discussion on the European Commission’s plans to strengthen the 2030 climate target of the EU, it will be essential to include the private sector as a partner for ambitious climate action. The German government should set itself the task not only of speaking about targets and figures, but also by engaging businesses in an honest and inclusive dialogue on the measures and instruments they need to exercise their central role in protecting the climate.

The German government should especially devote itself to actively advancing the construction of a European hydrogen economy. It should also strive to support the European Commission’s planned “Renovation Wave” for Europe’s building stock with a strong financing mechanism.

Despite the economic impacts of the corona crisis, the prospects for a climate policy success of the German European Council Presidency are good: Climate action remains high on the political agenda and has established itself as a priority for society and business. The German government should build on this and be ambitious in advancing the plans of the European Commission. Large shares of the business sector advocate maintaining a forward-looking climate policy course to preserve their planning security on the path to climate neutrality and to assist them in making climate protection a part of their business models.”

About Foundation 2°

Foundation 2° is an initiative of chief executives, business leaders, and family-owned companies. Its goal is to call upon the political sphere to establish effective, market-based frameworks for climate protection and to support German businesses in their ability to provide solutions to climate change. The Foundation is named for its most important goal: keeping average global warming well under 2 degrees Celsius. The supporters of the foundation are: AIDA Cruises, ALDI SÜD Dienstleistungs-GmbH & Co. oHG, DAIKIN Airconditioning Germany GmbH, Deutsche Bahn AG, DEUTSCHE ROCKWOOL, Deutsche Telekom AG, Deutsche Wohnen SE, Dirk Rossmann GmbH, EnBW Energie Baden-Württemberg AG, Gegenbauer Holding SE & Co. KG, GLS Gemeinschaftsbank eG, GOLDBECK GmbH, Interseroh/ALBA, Otto Group, OTTO FUCHS KG, PUMA SE, Salzgitter AG, Schüco International KG, Schwäbisch Hall-Stiftung bauen-wohnen-leben, thyssenkrupp AG, Union Investment and the VTG Aktiengesellschaft.

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CEO Statements on the German EU Council Presidency by supporting businesses of Foundation 2°:

"A European climate target must be set in a way that it is compatible with the Paris Climate Agreement. In addition, a political framework is needed that enables companies to play their central role in climate protection and to combine this with economic success. This will be an important task for the German EU Council Presidency."

Prof. Dr. Michael Otto, President of Foundation 2° and chairman of the supervisory board of the Otto Group

"Retail Companies rely on our resources to remain available in the future. In order to make climate protection a business model, we need unambiguous signals and a reliable policy framework."

Stefan Kopp, CEO, ALDI SÜD

"We are pleased that EU has discovered residential buildings as an important leverage factor for the energy revolution. But if we want to achieve carbon-neutral buildings, we need up to 1,000 billion euros of additional investments in Germany alone. And, we need effective policy measures that motivate homeowners to actually undertake those investments. We would appreciate an initiative by the German EU Presidency for making this happen."

Reinhard Klein, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Bausparkasse Schwäbisch Hall AG

"Even though we are experiencing a pandemic, we as DB are no less focused on prioritizing climate protection. A strong rail system is essential if Europe is to meet its climate targets. That is why we must continue to strengthen rail across the whole continent. With decisive action on the part of politicians and with great commitment from the rail industry, we will succeed in doing this together."

Dr. Richard Lutz, CEO, Deutsche Bahn AG

"The building sector plays a central role in achieving the climate targets. Around 13.4 million people per year are employed in the construction industry across Europe, in Germany almost 400,000 people are employed related to the building envelope. In order to use and expand this great potential, we need an ambitious design of the EU Renovation Wave."

Volker Christmann, Chairman of the Board of Directors, DEUTSCHE ROCKWOOL GmbH & Co. KG

"Successful climate action is a triad consisting of the state, companies and society. The building sector in particular shows how important it is, on the one hand to increase investments in stocks, and on the other hand not to overwhelm households. We have to use the EU Renovation Wave for aligning climate action and social compatibility."

Michael Zahn, CEO, Deutsche Wohnen SE

"By raising the European climate target for 2030, Germany's EU Council Presidency can point the way to a more sustainable and resilient economy after the Corona crisis. Europe has a great opportunity to be strengthened by linking the national and European economic stimulus packages most effectively and taking a strong focus on material investments in climate protection technologies and digital infrastructures."

Dr. Frank Mastiaux, CEO, EnBW AG

"In the Corona crisis, we stuck together to protect the current and older generation and realized that suddenly things were possible that seemed unthinkable months ago. In the climate crisis we need to act equally decisively and quickly - to protect future generations. A further delay of the transformation would be completely irrational, also from an economic perspective."

Thomas Jorberg, Chairman of the Board, GLS Bank

"The building sector can still contribute a lot more to climate protection. And investments in the construction of sustainable buildings and resource-saving renovation of existing properties create many new jobs. But to make best use of this great potential, an ambitious EU Green Deal is needed."

Jan-Hendrik Goldbeck, Managing Partner, GOLDBECK GmbH

"With its SALCOS® project, Salzgitter AG is a pioneer in the transformation to a climate-friendly, low-carbon steel production in Europe. The feasibility study recently agreed with several companies, the state of Lower Saxony and the city of Wilhelmshaven for the construction of a hydrogen-based direct reduction plant (DRI) at the deep-water Jade-Weser-Port shows: We are serious about this! Such steps to decarbonize the industry,

which are desired by society, require a massive restructuring of the steel making processes and are therefore not available for free. Politicians are now asked to quickly implement the necessary framework conditions that have already been announced in order to make the plans a reality.”
Prof. Dr. Heinz Joerg Fuhrmann, CEO, Salzgitter AG

“ The economy needs sustainability, whilst the environment needs financing. Even the major government aid programmes that we have witnessed are simply not enough to comprehensively finance a sustainable transformation of the economy. If we really want to mobilise private capital, then we need a reliable framework; incentives and pragmatism always achieve more than bans and bureaucracy.”
Hans Joachim Reinke, CEO, Union Investment

“ The European Commission is making 2021 the Year of Rail – a clear signal in favor of the environmentally friendly mode of transport. But this is not enough: in order to achieve the ambitious but critical climate targets, policymakers must first establish fair competitive conditions throughout Europe and reduce the number of bureaucratic obstacles, as well as expanding and digitalizing the infrastructure. Only then can a substantial modal shift to rail be achieved.”
Dr. Heiko Fischer, Chairman of the Executive Board, VTG AG