



**President of the German Bishops' Conference and  
Chair of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany  
on the German Council presidency**

**“Europe is the future”**

With an urgent plea that the future of people in Europe lies in Europe and should not be left to the nation states alone, Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, chair of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and Bishop Georg Bätzing, president of the German Bishops' Conference, have encouraged an active shaping of the German presidency of the Council of the European Union. In the context of the six-month Council presidency beginning on 1 July 2020, and beyond, German politicians should shape the future of our common European home with responsibility for European cohesion.

“Only a united Europe can overcome the societal, economic and social consequences of the coronavirus pandemic,” Bishop Bedford-Strohm and Bishop Bätzing remark.

They add: “No one is helped by national attempts to go it alone, by egotism and reciprocal blaming; instead, the concern must be to tackle the great challenges in a spirit of European solidarity. As the largest and economically strongest EU Member State, Germany has an opportunity through the Council presidency to play a leading role in the spirit of *primus inter pares*.”

The two bishops explicitly underline that the course already embarked upon towards a climate-neutral society should be resolutely continued, biodiversity should be preserved and the environment protected. There is much to indicate, they note, that the coronavirus pandemic is impacting most on structurally disadvantaged countries and mainly poorer population groups.

“Consequently the Council presidency should be used as an opportunity to support the countries hardest hit, also outside the EU. A clear expression of European responsibility for the global common good would be e.g. an initiative for the social and ecological organisation of supply and value chains in harmony with human rights,” the bishops write.

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As further topics for Germany's Council presidency the churches name digitalisation, opening up prospects for the younger generation, a just and solidarity-based asylum policy, as well as guaranteeing democracy and the rule of law in pluralist societies.

Bishop Bedford-Strohm and Bishop Bätzing: "During its Council presidency, Germany can take forward-looking initiatives to shape European responses to the current European and global challenges. In these difficult times, European integration urgently needs new momentum."

Please note:

You can find the whole of the joint statement by Bishop Bedford-Strohm and Bischof Bätzing at [www.dbk.de](http://www.dbk.de) below this press release.

**The German Bishops' Conference** is an association of the Roman-Catholic bishops of all dioceses in Germany. It currently has 69 members (as per: June 2020) from the 27 German dioceses. The German Bishops' Conference was established to promote joint pastoral tasks, to advise one another, to coordinate the Church's work, to jointly adopt decisions and to maintain contact with other Bishops' Conferences. The highest body of the German Bishops' Conference is the Plenary Assembly of all bishops, at which the bishops regularly meet in spring and autumn for several days.