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Germany's EU Council Presidency: Europe needs strong shipping sector

VDR emphasises significance of maritime trade for Europe / support for German plans / climate, innovation: EU should intensify efforts to boost research even further

Germany is officially scheduled to take over the EU Council presidency this Wednesday, under the motto "Together for Europe's recovery". While activities will focus on overcoming the consequences of the corona crisis, other topics will include climate protection, innovation support and Europe's role in the world. "The German maritime shipping sector is ready to deliver staunch support to the federal government and its objectives," declared Alfred Hartmann, President of the German Shipowners' Association (VDR), on this occasion, adding: "To this end, shipping companies in Germany and Europe will need to be effectively supported in order to hold their own in global competition – especially in view of the pandemic."

The VDR President noted the significance of the shipping sector: "Both the economy and the people on our continent are centrally dependent on worldwide ocean-borne trade: Shipping ensures security of supply, even now in corona times. Germany should make use of its EU Council presidency to emphasise the importance of our industry for a strong and more independent Europe," said Hartmann. He pointed out that four out of every ten ships in the world (total: 23,400) are operated by European shipowners. Germany itself still has the world's fifth largest merchant navy; other countries like Greece, Norway or Denmark also belong to the biggest shipping nations across the globe. 685,000 employees in Europe, including 555,000 seafarers, ensure that Europe and the world continue to be supplied with commodities or foodstuffs. Each year, maritime shipping contributes 149 billion euros to Europe's Gross Domestic Product.

"To enable the shipping sector to **overcome the fallout of the corona pandemic**, it must be allowed to benefit from national, but also European promotion and support, such as via the European Investment Bank. Like other industries – no more, but no less either," said Hartmann: "The need to reinforce **Europe's role in the world** in future calls for an efficient, top-performing shipping sector." He indicated that Germany must therefore lend a hand to reinforce maritime shipping. He said that during its EU Council Presidency, Germany should contribute towards ensuring that supplying the continent will not become dependent on external shipping corporations under state influence. Hartmann: "After all, corona is teaching us right now not to raise the level of such dependencies any further."

"In the field of **climate protection**, we have set ambitious targets via the International Maritime Organization (IMO). We therefore need a European Union in London with strong negotiating and diplomatic skills that, in concert with other shipping locations, will contribute towards achieving the objectives of the IMO on a global scale. What we need are strong states



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that encourage weaker ones to commit themselves and convince the doubters – in the interests of worldwide climate protection and fair competition in our international industry. In this context, the EU member states should also provide assistance to allow the research and development fund conceived by the shipping sector to become a reality soon.”

In contrast, separate regional solutions, for example in the EU, should be avoided: “German maritime shipping fully accepts its responsibility *en route* to climate neutrality,” said the VDR President: “Neither shipping nor greenhouse gases can be stopped at national borders. This is why comprehensive and sustainable climate protection can only be ensured on a global scale.”

Europe should preferably focus on investing substantially in research and development of new fuels in order to support industry with its decarbonisation efforts. “When it comes to climate protection, but also in **fostering innovation**, such as in digitalisation, the EU – piloted by Germany – should become a worldwide excellence cluster,” said Hartmann. In this context, he referred in particular to the recently adopted National Hydrogen Strategy as an important step towards finding the necessary fuel of the future also for the shipping sector.

About the German Shipowners' Association

The German Shipowners' Association (*Verband Deutscher Reeder, VDR*) is responsible for representing the common business and social policy interests of German shipping companies at federal and state government level as well as in relation to European and international bodies. The VDR was established in 1907, and in 1994 it merged with the Association of German Coastal Shipowners. With a membership of around 200, the VDR represents the majority of Germany's merchant fleet. Further particulars are available at www.reederverband.de.

Press photos of Alfred Hartmann: <https://www.reederverband.de/presse/pressefotos.html>

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