



Meet & Greet the German Permanent Representation

Thursday 25th of March 2021, 16:00PM - 17:30PM

Participant's Briefing

WHO?

The German Permanent Representation

The Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union in Brussels (PermRep) represents Germany within and vis-à-vis the various institutions of the European Union. The term Permanent Representation typically designates a mission to an international or supranational organisation. *Permanent Representations* are the equivalent of *embassies*, which maintain political, economic and cultural relations with their host country.

The German Permanent Representation to the EU is the largest German mission abroad. In view of the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2020, PermRep staff was increased to about 350 members.

Responsibilities

PermRep staff comes from all German Federal Ministries and a number of German Federal Agencies. It represents the Federal Government in nearly 140 committees and working parties within the EU institutions. They contribute to Germany's EU policies, keep the Federal Government up to date on current developments, support German interests with regard to personnel employed at EU institutions and address the public by giving presentations and hosting events on current European Topics. A core task is preparing the decisions of the Council of the European Union, which is the organ of the member states and is also called the Ministerial Council. Therefore, unlike any other German mission, the PermRep is directly involved in a legislative process.

The Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union (EU), also known as the Council, represents the government ministers from each EU Member State who meet once a month to discuss, amend and adopt EU laws, and coordinate policies. Together with the European Parliament, the Council is the main decision-making body of the EU.

The Council of the EU should not be confused with:

- *The European Council*, consisting of quarterly summits, where EU leaders (heads of states) meet to set the broad direction of EU policy and priorities
- [The Council of Europe](#) which is not an EU body at all.

WHAT?

[CAP Reform](#)

The Common Agriculture Policy has been criticized widely for its devastating effects on the environment and its fostering of social injustices and poverty both within and beyond the EU. It is currently being re-negotiated and many civil society actors and scientists are calling on the EU Commission to withdraw its proposal, as they fear that the legislative proposals are going to make things even worse. Amongst the main concerns are that Europe will fail at reaching its environmental and climate targets and big corporations are going to become even more powerful at the expense of small-scale farmers and the rural areas. The following paragraphs give an overview about the CAP, its current reform process, as well as its relevance for European Community-led initiatives on climate change and sustainability.

What is the CAP?

The Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) of the European Union was established in 1962. It was originally introduced to increase agricultural productivity, ensure a fair standard of living for farmers, stabilize markets, and ensure availability of supplies and reasonable prices for consumers through a variety of regulations and subsidies for farmers and rural development. Several reforms have taken place since its establishment with the most recent reform impacting its latest funding period during the EU Multiannual Financial Framework from 2014-2020. During this period, the total amount of money that was spent on the CAP was approximately EUR 400 billion, which accounts for 38 % of the EU budget in those years. The CAP is financed through the European Agriculture Guarantee Fund (EAGF), which finances Pillar 1 and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which co-finances Pillar 2, alongside regional or national funds.

Pillar 1 finances direct payments for farmers, and accounts for 71% of the CAP budget, and Market Measures (CMO) which account for 4% of the CAP.

The European Union's rural development policy was introduced as the second pillar of the CAP. The EU's priorities on rural development are aimed at supporting economic development of rural areas while focusing especially on the support of the agriculture food and forestry sectors, realized through measures such as advisory services for farms, start-up aids, transfer of knowledge and physical investment, through subsidies for organic farming, as well as measures to enhance social inclusion and reduce poverty in rural areas, which include basic services and the revitalization of villages through broadband, cultural activities and tourist facilities. The Rural Development Regulations also includes a bottom-up local development approach pursued by local stakeholders, which typifies the LEADER approach. Within the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework of the CAP, approximately EUR 100 billion (24% of the CAP budget) was earmarked for rural development, whereas at least 30% had to be spent on for environmental and climate measures and at least 5% for LEADER.

What is the CAP Reform?

In 2017, the European Commission initiated a public consultation process, which resulted in the report “The Future of Food and Farming”. This report, served as the basis for the Commission’s legislative proposals for the post-2020 CAP, published in June 2018. Prior to this and linked to the Brexit the Commission’s Multiannual Financial Framework proposed a cut of 15% for expenses directed towards agriculture and a cut of 28% directed towards rural development.

The proposal envisages a new delivery model allowing for more flexibility for the Member States, suggests better targeting of direct measures through measuring the impact of the policies and expenses, and suggests higher ambitions for environmental and climate actions. Those are reflected in three of its nine key objectives, which are intended to foster social, ecological and economic sustainability, as well as in its new Green Architecture. Main concerns that are voiced regarding the proposed cuts are the increased subsidiarity and consequent flexibility, and the mandatory capping of funds for individual beneficiaries at EUR 100,000 per farm. In January 2020, the European Commission published its new work program, linking the CAP reform proposals to the European Green Deal, which includes a first-time comprehensive approach to governing food and agriculture - the [farm-to-fork strategy](#) and a [biodiversity strategy](#), both targeted at preserving and restoring planetary health. The negotiations around the proposals brought forward by the EU Commission are still ongoing, with trilogue negotiations having begun in November 2020; a final decision is expected in April or May 2021.

Trilogues are the last stage in the EU law making process, where the Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament come together to agree on the final version of a law. The Commission can veto the proposal by withdrawing it if it finds that the changes made do not respond or go against the initial purpose of the proposal. .

Nevertheless, some NGOs are calling for a [withdrawal](#) of the CAP. Amongst the signatories of a [letter](#) to the EU Commission to withdraw the CAP are Arc2020, Friends of the Earth Europe, Slow Food Europe, Greenpeace and the WWF. The critique brought forward against the CAP proposal revolves around issues of social justice, ecological sustainability, inclusivity and transparency. It is seen as a violation of the policies in place that are demanding higher ambitions in climate action and sustainable development, namely the Paris Agreement, the Agenda 2030 and the European Green Deal. As the social and environmental viability of the CAP following the current proposal of the EU Commission would depend much on the Member States.

Find more information about the CAP here:

<https://www.arc2020.eu/arc2020-new-report-on-cap-strategic-plans/>

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/section/196/the-common-agricultural-policy-cap->

Why does this matter to Community-led Initiatives?

[Community-led initiatives \(CLIs\) across Europe](#) are showcasing sustainable solutions within the food and agriculture sector, which are often at the core of their work. The Transition Movement encourages citizens to increase food resilience in their villages and neighborhoods, by setting up community-supported agriculture initiatives and permaculture projects, which can also be combined in practice. Many ecovillages provide themselves with

ecological and local products from their own gardens. All of these practices significantly reduce the ecological footprint of people that are involved in CLIs. The EU funded TESS Research project has measured the environmental impact of CLIs within four domains: transport, food, waste and energy. Taken together, actions in those four domains account for a reduction of nearly 60% of the beneficiaries' carbon footprint.

Similarly, based on the studies of the IPCC, the [Agriculture at Crossroads](#) report points out that 40% of all emissions depend on the way we eat and manage agriculture. A wide-scale transformation of the food system is thus essential for survival. ECOLISE, CLIs, agriculturists and citizens need to understand the barriers and potentials to this transformation, which obviously depend to a large extent on Europe's Common Agriculture Policy.

With regard to the rural development support offered through the CAP, the following can be said: Thousands of grassroots initiatives have emerged across the EU in recent years, developing bottom-up solutions to the ecological and climate emergency. These communities are playing a critical role in driving local transition processes, transforming local economies and also helping to bring about a shift in norms and behavior. Main support from the EU towards these CLIs comes through the LEADER/Community-led local development approach, which is partially funded through the CAP. It is thus also crucial for CLIs to [understand the barriers](#) that need to be overcome within this funding scheme, in order to make CLLD more accessible to grassroots initiatives.