



# Speaking note

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President of the Bundesnetzagentur

Bonn, 29 May 2018, 11am

Anniversary event: "20 years of responsibility for networks"

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen, Members of  
Parliament, State Secretaries and Federal  
Ministers,

Bundesnetzagentur colleagues,

Today is a special day for the  
Bundesnetzagentur.

As we have just seen in the film, the  
expectation when the Regulatory Authority  
for Telecommunications and Post was set  
up in 1998 was that it would gradually make  
itself redundant.

Meanwhile, we know that this was not the  
case: this year marks our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary,  
and our tasks are steadily increasing, not  
decreasing.

The importance the Bundesnetzagentur has  
gained in these 20 years can be seen in the  
large number of guests here today, guests  
who include many colleagues from

European regulatory authorities with whom we enjoy close cooperation and to whom I would like to extend a very warm welcome.

And we are particularly pleased to see our distinguished guest speakers who have agreed to speak on this occasion.

Let me give a warm welcome to the Mayor of Bonn, **Ashok-Alexander Sridharan!**

Mayor Sridharan, with the Bundesnetzagentur being based here, arguably the most important federal infrastructure agency is located in the federal city of Bonn.

As we know, the Bundesnetzagentur is an independent authority under the scope of business of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs.

Minister **Altmaier**, it's good to see you here too – welcome!

We are both proud and delighted that the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of

Germany, **Dr. Angela Merkel**, has come to Bonn to join us today and to give a speech commemorating this occasion.

If I recall rightly, Madam Chancellor, you are here for the third time as the guest of the Bundesnetzagentur.

The Bundesnetzagentur has always been able to rely on your support – something for which I wish to extend to you my heartfelt thanks on behalf of all the staff and from me personally.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Bundesnetzagentur started out in 1998 as the Regulatory Authority for Telecommunications and Post.

Its mission then was to ensure that the two former state-owned enterprises, Telekom and Post, did not abuse their power in the newly liberalised market to the detriment of consumers and competitors.

Today, customers have a large choice of telecoms providers, and competition has led to a sharp drop in prices.

This is not down to regulation alone, but is one of our success stories of which we can be justly proud.

My two predecessors in office, founding president **Klaus-Dieter Scheurle**, and **Matthias Kurth** were instrumental in bringing this about.

I am delighted that you are celebrating "your" regulatory authority here with us today.

It was during your terms of office that the authority grew and developed into an agency whose work was so successful that the political circles decided to widen the agency's responsibilities in 2005 and 2006 to include the energy and rail sectors and in 2011 to cover the approval procedures for power lines.

These additional responsibilities have made the Bundesnetzagentur into the federal infrastructure agency.

Over the years, the Bundesnetzagentur has accumulated tremendous expertise in the technical, legal and economic fields.

This broad knowledge base helps us also to recognise new trends and developments.

At present, this is particularly true of the digital transformation.

Smart electricity grids, investments in broadband deployment, modern postal logistics, future-proof mobility chains – all these are topics relating to the digital revolution and hence topics for the Bundesnetzagentur.

This year, we are looking to create the conditions for awarding spectrum for the fifth generation of mobile applications in competitive proceedings and without delay.

This will propel us a good way along the path to the Industrial Society 4.0.

With regard to the fixed network we want to break out of the old world of copper regulation into the new world of fibre optics.

Yet our successful regulation of the copper network will not tempt us into the erroneous belief that the complex model of highly differentiated access and rates regulation can simply be transferred to fibre optics.

For new technologies we need new concepts – concepts that let us, to the greatest possible extent, turn away from the access and rates regulation used in the past in favour of commercial arrangements between companies.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are witnessing the disappearance of the boundaries between traditional telecommunications services and Internet services such as Google, Facebook and WhatsApp.

The question whether Google, Facebook, Amazon and Co should be subject to anti-competition law or to regulation is currently under debate.

In my experience, what is best for both competition and the consumer is when the Bundeskartellamt (Federal Cartel Office) and the Bundesnetzagentur work together closely in a spirit of trust.

Happily, this is the case, and so I would like at this juncture to extend a warm welcome to my colleague, the President of the Bundeskartellamt, **Andreas Mundt**.

Ladies and gentlemen, as regards the second big topic of the future – the energy transition, or *Energiewende* – the Bundesnetzagentur – metaphorically speaking – is driving the change.

Not just as the regulator, but also as the approval authority for power lines and with a



view to security of supply for electricity and gas.

We can accomplish this task only if we have support from the government.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the infrastructure rollout for the energy transition.

I am most grateful, Chancellor Merkel, that you personally, but all the federal government too – above all the Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy – are lending us great support in this.

Your support is so valuable in light of protests in the communities to which local, and sometimes regional, political circles occasionally submit all too willingly or even encourage.

What is more, this political backing means that the independence of the Bundesnetzagentur, anchored as it is in law, is protected from political influence.

Naturally, there is intensive political debate and occasionally differences of opinion.

But this cannot be otherwise with tasks that are as central to social and economic policy as digitalisation and the energy transition.

We experience this in the public debate, but also in our politically appointed advisory councils.

Let me therefore also welcome the Chair of our Rail Infrastructure Advisory Council, **Member of Parliament Gero Storjohann**, along with the other members of the Council present here today.

I extend a warm welcome and many thanks too for our discussions, which have not always been easy but which have always been conducted in a spirit of fairness.

I would also like to welcome the members of our “Specialist Group for Regulatory Issues” chaired by **Professor Bernd Holznagel**.

It is you, the representatives of the scientific community, that we have to thank for the commemorative publication now available "20 Years Responsibility for Networks".

Let me now end with a topic that is particularly close to my heart.

Ultimately, who is the Bundesnetzagentur working for?

The plain and simple answer is: for the consumer.

First, by securing competition on the infrastructures. Competition means more providers, more varied service offers and fair prices.

And second, by offering consumers specific help with their concerns.

Our radio monitoring and inspection service is able to reach anywhere in Germany within two hours to eliminate radio interference.

This can be a matter of life and death when there is interference to aeronautical radio.

Our market monitoring staff see that products that are harmful to the consumer are taken off the market – in 2016 and 2017 alone almost 1.5 million products.

We have set up a show of such products for you in the foyer, a show that includes the Cayla doll.

Cayla incorporates a prohibited transmitting device, and has gained a certain popularity through having been taken off the market by us for data protection reasons.

We also provide specific help in dealing with cold calling, switching provider or, in the postal service, with our offer of dispute resolution procedures.

In the field of telecommunications alone, we received 290,000 enquiries and complaints last year.

Ladies and gentlemen, the variety of the Bundesnetzagentur's tasks, which I cannot possibly adequately describe this morning, is reflected in the variety of people who work here.

Legal experts, economic experts, engineers, preservationists, geographers, environmental experts, planners, communication professionals – this is unprecedented and without doubt a unique feature of the Bundesnetzagentur.

It is to the credit of all the staff that the Bundesnetzagentur can celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary today, and not only that, but look forward to what will surely be a bright future.

I also wish to expressly include in my thanks the Staff Councils, whose twofold focus, the good of the staff and the good of the Bundesnetzagentur, never wavers.

Ladies and gentlemen, in a short address of welcome it is not possible to depict the full extent of the Bundesnetzagentur's work.

I could report on a whole lot more, for instance on the work of our postal experts, or of our "rail workers".

But this perhaps for the 30-year anniversary of the Bundesnetzagentur in 2028 in a country which then – thanks also to the successful work of the Bundesnetzagentur – will have electricity highways such as the energy transition demands, and a state-of-the-art fibre optic network as well.

Let us now listen to some music from our very own band – the "Regulators".

And then we look forward to your welcoming address, Mayor Sridharan, and to your commemorative speech, Chancellor Merkel.

After the speeches the "Regulators" will play for you once more and then you are all cordially invited to refreshments.

Thank you very much!