



EU Presidency 2019.-2020.

Opportunities and challenges for the new trio

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Why does EU presidency matter (at all)?

Council of the EU – the centrepiece of the political decision-making

Trio – continuity of political priorities over a year and a half (Romania, Finland, Croatia)

Main tasks

- Moderation of political agreement among member states and EU dialogue
- Keeping the focus and pace of political and legislative process

Graduation exam for new member states

- Demonstration of diplomatic and technical competence (administrator, mediator, agenda shaper, coordinator, ambassador)
- Deep engagement in the political process from “within”
- Political maturing through expanded focus on common interests at EU level
- Managing crisis and sensitive situations



Opportunities for the presiding member state:

- Promotion of one’s heritage, experience, political priorities and innovations
- Alliance building and collaboration
- Bringing the EU closer home

EU Presidency 2019.-2020. – what is on the horizon?

- **Continuity of crisis mode of political decision-making?**
- **Current EU issues:** illegal migration, Brexit, cyber security and disinformation, youth empowerment resources, rising inequalities, counter-terrorism, the new Multi-annual financial framework and the budget expectations, Eurozone and the European Monetary fund, the question of voter turn-out in European elections and quality of representation, Polish and Hungarian actions against the principles of the rule of law, political upsurge of radical far-wing parties, disintegration of countries in the Middle East, migrant integration, relations with the US, Russia, Turkey and China
- **Priorities of the current presidency trio - Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria :**
 - (1) jobs, growth and competitiveness, (2) empowering and protecting EU citizens, (3) a forward-looking climate policy, (4) freedom, security and justice, and (5) improving the global influence of the EU
- **Priorities of the Austrian presidency “Europe that protects”** – (1) security and illegal migration, (2) prosperity and competitiveness through digitalization, and (3) stability in the European neighbourhood concerning the Western Balkans

Hot issues before the new trio



Current hot issues

EU budget 2021-27

- **Political challenge:** what kind of budget will be adopted and when?
- **Legislative challenge:** adoption of numerous procedures, including regulation on the rule of law protection, establishment of new programmes - ESF Plus, EU Values and Justice Fund
- **Opportunities: new cycle of social investment,** climate action mainstreaming, European value protection

Post Brexit

- Transitional period March 2019 – December 2020
- Protection of EU and UK citizens' rights
- New border regime UK/Irská
- Huge workload for the Council
- Lessons learned from Brexit aftermath for future "associated membership" of the EU?



European elections 2019

- **Expected increase of populists and eurosceptics in the EP**
- Campaign risk of hate speech against immigrants and minorities
- Influence of foreign parties and interest groups – are EU's safeguards good enough?
- Arranging inter-institutional relations
- **What will the EU learn from these elections?**

Protection of EU values

- **EU budget and rule of law protection** – disciplinary mechanism (Regulation) Values, Rights and Justice Fund
- **Democracy, Fundamental rights and Rule of Law Pact** as a new institutional monitoring mechanism (EU and enlargement /external actions countries)
- **New policy package against fake news and social network desinformation**
- **Implementation of Article 7 . Poland, Hungary, new cases**
- **Protection of EU values as a new trio priority - towards a European Values Summit (?)**
- **Protection of EU values in the new Strategic Agenda of the European Council 2019-24**



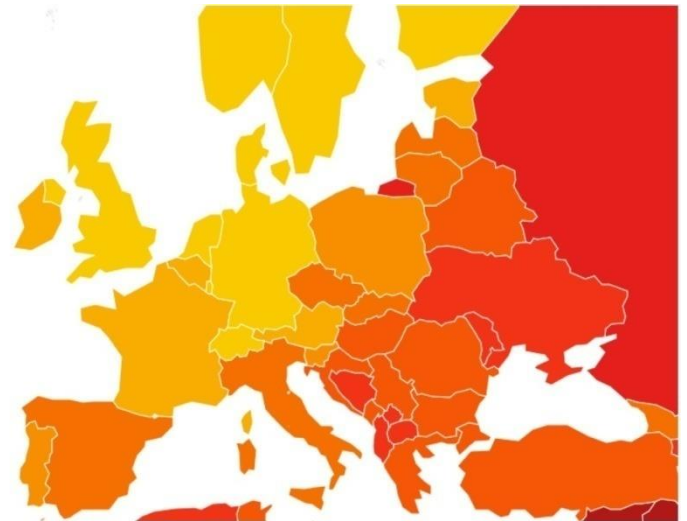
- *It high time for integrated approach to EU value protection , in line with Article 2:*

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

European democratic governance

Priority: renewal of political will to combat corruption at EU and member state level, as a part of a wider approach to protecting European values

- EU must stop its anticorruption hibernation!
 - IAA, European Public Prosecutor, EU Ombudsman
 - ~~EU Anti/corruption Report, strategic coherent anticorruption policy, GRECO~~
 - Levels of corruption in member states is increasing
- Protection of free and independent media
- E-participation & Digital democratic literacy
- Safeguarding vibrant and active civil society



Hot topic: what is EU doing today in preparation for tomorrow?

Digital Europe

- Single Digital Market
- e-copyright, e-privacy, e-commerce
- Regulating social networks
- European digital border
- Internet as a (human) right
- Artificial Intelligence



Sustainable Europe

- Contrast between declared goals and actual policies
- Europe is dependent on import of energy (Russian gas especially)
- Increased Russian influence in Europe
- Rapid climate changes
- 25% EU budget allocated for climate action



Hot strategic topic: Enlargement of the EU and the Western Balkans

Opportunities

- **Enlargement as a horizontal priority until 2025.**
- Increased levels of modernization and democratization of the Western Balkans
- Strategic Agenda 2019-24 (Sibiu)
- Continued focus of current and future trio
- Implementation of Agenda priorities (Sofia summit)
- Council support for the Berlin Plus process
- Zagreb summit 2020.
- Enlargement perspective for Albania and Macedonia in 2019 – opening of negotiations?
- Focus on fundamental topics such as **socio-economic development, connectivity** (traffic, communications, education), **democratic development, rule of law and fundamental rights** – citizens of the Western Balkans are losing trust and patience!

Risks

- **Stabilitocracy** – tolerance of autocratic tendencies, political clientelism and corruption
- **Balkan as a buffer zone for migration flows**
- Passive response to increased influence of Russia, Turkey and China in the region
- **EU losing credibility** as a promotor of rule of law
- **Exodus** of the young and the educated from the Balkans

**Which new EU presidency priorities
we need, want and expect?**

Which priorities deserve our attention and engagement?

Fill out the questionnaire & take part in public consultations on
EU presidency priorities organized by Gong and Crosol

<https://www.solidarna.hr/savjetodavna/>

Thank you for your attention!

