

The upcoming presidency trio needs to set Europe on a sustainable path

Brussels, 19 December 2018

Romania, Finland and Croatia recently published the Trio Programme for their upcoming EU Council Presidencies. The Trio Programme sets the joint political priorities for the presidencies and does not suggest radical changes, but puts emphasis on jobs and growth meaning business as in EU politics. European NGOs would like to see human rights based policies aiming at well-being within planetary boundaries.

The joint Trio Programme will guide Romania, Finland and Croatia when they set their own priorities for the presidencies which cover an 18 month period from January 2019 to June 2020. Each country holds the Presidency for six months at a time.

The Presidency can impact EU politics mainly by setting the agenda for Council meetings according to their priorities. The three countries have agreed on joint priority areas, which are Union for jobs, growth and competitiveness, energy union, freedom and security, protecting citizens and Union as global actor.

“Even though the Programme continues the business as usual path in EU politics there are some good aspects as well. The trio Programme highlights common European values, including democracy, equality and human rights. Yet, for example, migration is approached from border control perspective, instead of respect for human rights. We are appalled to see such inconsistency in the Programme! We are happy to see that European enlargement can be put again on the table” says **Branka Juran** from Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity - Crosol.

The Programme does commit to promoting sustainable development in Europe. The EU played the role of a global frontrunner in the negotiations for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. Organisations have been worried that its growth-oriented agenda setting and policy mix is still falling short of the required path to reach the Sustainable Development Goals and to limit the global temperature rise to 1,5 degrees.

“We welcome the trio’s commitment to promote sustainable development in Europe. We expect this to appear high in the discussions in Sibiu and in the Council’s Strategic Agenda for the next five years. The trio should make sure that the current Europe 2020 strategy will be succeeded by a Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement” says **Rilli Lappalainen**, the advocacy director of Finnish Development NGOs Fingo.

Years 2019-2020 will be critical in reshaping Europe. In recent years, we have witnessed our fundamental democratic values being contested and inequality rising in Europe. Xenophobic

populist movements are gaining ground, while the space of civil society is being threatened in several countries.

In the next 18 months, civil society organisations from Finland, Romania and Croatia will work together to follow the presidencies and advocate for human rights, development policy, civil society and sustainable development in EU politics.

"The Trio fails to acknowledge the increasing pressures put on civil society in Europe and elsewhere and does not mention civil society as a partner in achieving the SDGs or other relevant global or European objectives. We hope that the efforts that civil society organizations put in collaborating and contributing to successful presidencies of the three countries will be acknowledged and appreciated" says **Stefan Cibian**, the President of FOND Romania.