

Programme of the Finnish presidency of the EU

On 1 July 2019, Finland took over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU until 31 December 2019 and released its programme (see [here](#)).

The Finnish Presidency has put forward the following main priorities:

- to strengthen common values and the rule of law;
- to make the EU more competitive and socially inclusive;
- to strengthen the EU's position as a global leader in climate action;
- to protect the security of citizens comprehensively;
- other key issues: migration and EU's Multiannual Financial Framework.

Priority 1: rule of law

Under this priority, the Presidency proposes to focus on the following aspects:

- It will strive to improve the EU's rule of law toolbox to ensure respect of the EU's common values;
- It will further fight corruption;
- The Presidency also claims that the EU needs a gender equality strategy with specific actions. It also proposed to promote equality and inclusiveness in all policy sectors.

Priority 2: Competitive and socially-inclusive EU

Under this item, the Presidency programme considers that the EU's long-term objective is to make the EU the world's most competitive and socially inclusive low-carbon economy. To achieve this goal it considers the below aspects which may be relevant for HOTREC.

Social affairs, skills:

- The EU should ensure compliance with modern employment and social standards across the EU and assess the need to update employment legislation and social protection systems to address new forms of employment;
- The Presidency aims to increase the availability of skilled labour and the mobility of workers. To do so, it proposes to encourage labour mobility within the EU and recruitment of top talents from third countries through EU actions;
- It also proposed the drafting of Council conclusions on the inclusive labour market, including the labour market status of people with partial work ability;
- The Presidency considers that an EU skills strategy is needed. It will organise an EU conference on life-long learning and vocational guidance as part of the European Vocational Skills Week. EU institutions and Member States should consider the option of promoting life-long learning by means of EU funding;
- The EU and Member States should continue actions to promote gender equality in working life, reconciliation of work and family life, and equal pay. The Presidency will also organise a high-level conference on gender equality in Helsinki from 30 September to 1 October 2019.

Digitalisation:

- The Presidency will aim to improve the single-market for services, by focus in particular on promoting digital services and eliminating the barriers to cross-border trade in services.
- The Presidency intends to boost the growth of the data economy and the utilisation of artificial intelligence as part of developing the European single market. It will organise a high-level conference on the data economy on 25 November 2019. Moreover, it proposes to discuss how to open-up data to wider use and by increasing users' and consumers' rights to access and re-use their own data.

- Moreover, the Presidency considers that the growth potential of cultural and creative industries should be better exploited.

Taxation: the Presidency will continue the ongoing discussion in the OECD on digital taxation.

CO2 emission reductions:

- The Presidency will promote ambitious emission reduction targets in all modes of transport. This will be done through a general discussion on this issue in the transport Council. Moreover, it will promote digitalisation and automation in order to achieve low-carbon transport through an event called the Digital Transport Days;
- The Presidency considers that the EU goal should set ambitious goals to reduce transport emissions and introduce measures that support the Member States in creating a sustainable transport sector.

Priority 3: Global leader in climate action

Under this item, the Presidency programme considers as a priority to reach the Paris Climate Agreement's objectives. It therefore proposes the following:

- It will build on the recent Commission communication '*A clean Planet for all – A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy*' and will facilitate the process to define key elements of the EU's long term climate strategy in the European Council by the end of 2019;
- It will propose to integrate climate policy in all sectors;
- It will propose to continue the work done so far on the circular economy (mainly on plastics, waste and stakeholder engagement) and considers that it is necessary to provide guidance on next steps, such as extending the measures into new sectors (including food and generalising it to the entire chain of production and consumption);
- It will drive forward the implementation of the Commission's updated bioeconomy strategy.

Priority 4: protect the security of citizens comprehensively

The Presidency will promote overall internal security through a strong and united EU external action, cooperation in security and defence and building resilience to hybrid and cyber threats.

Priority 5: Other key issues: migration and EU's Multiannual Financial Framework

The Finnish Presidency proposes to establish a temporary relocation mechanism for migrants rescued at sea, to give enough time to find longer term solutions through legislative packages. It will also focus on strengthening the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and proposes to make return policy effective and sustainable. The Finnish presidency also aims to reach an agreement between the Council and the European parliament on the 2020 EU budget and will seek to finalise the Council negotiations on the EU's long term budget (multiannual financial framework 2021-2027).

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