

A strong Europe in a world of challenges



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union

1 January – 30 June 2020

PROGRAMME OF THE CROATIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



A Strong Europe
in a World
of Challenges

A Europe
that develops

A Europe
that connects

A Europe
that protects

An influential
Europe

EU2020.HR

PROGRAMME OF THE CROATIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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A strong Europe in a world of challenges



Sailing in the Adriatic is a challenge for even the most experienced sailors. Sibenik
Photo: Dubravka Pajk



Croatian Presidency of the
Council of the European Union

Foreword by the Prime Minister

From 1 January to 30 June 2020, Croatia will take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time. During this six-month period, Croatia will lead the activities of the Council as an honest broker, building cooperation and agreement among Member States in a spirit of consensus and mutual respect.



Andrej Plenković
Prime Minister of Croatia

The Croatian Presidency comes at a time of great changes for the European Union, at the beginning of a new institutional and legislative cycle following the new composition of the European institutions, as well as at a time of challenges resulting from the process of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union.

Uneven economic development, climate change, increased migration, dissemination of disinformation and growing populism are some of the challenges of today's world to which citizens are expecting answers, and with good reason. Those answers can be given only by a strong Europe. Here, our unity is our greatest strength.

In order to bring the Union and the benefits it provides even closer to its citizens, we will aim to enhance dialogue, including through the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Based on Croatian national priorities, in line with the guidelines set by the EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 and drawing on the Trio programme, Croatia has prepared a detailed six-month Presidency programme built around four pillars:

- A Europe that develops
- A Europe that connects
- A Europe that protects
- An influential Europe

*These four priorities are united in the motto '**A Strong Europe in a World of Challenges**', which encapsulates the vision of a Europe acting for the benefit of its Member States and citizens.*

In its work, the Croatian Presidency will also take into account the strategic documents that will be agreed between the EU institutions and the work programme of the new European Commission for 2020.

An ambitious, balanced and sustainable EU Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 is a prerequisite for achieving our goals. The Croatian Presidency will work towards achieving a comprehensive agreement in order to enable the timely implementation of all the Union's policies and programmes, and to further build a Europe that is as strong as possible in an ever-changing and challenging world.

Andrej Plenković

Priorities of the Croatian Presidency

■ A Europe that develops

In the era of the digital revolution, the European Union, its economy and labour market face new global challenges and demographic changes. In such circumstances, further deepening of the single market, encouraging the digitalisation agenda, investment in research and innovation, greater accessibility of high-quality and lifelong learning and developing new skills adjusted to jobs of the future are guarantees for the Union's competitiveness. Improving the quality of life of the Union's citizens requires further development of policies that will create better working and living conditions, and contribute to protection of the environment and the fight against climate change. The Croatian Presidency will therefore support a balanced, sustainable and inclusive development of the Union that takes into consideration the specificities and needs of all Member States, their regions and citizens.

■ A Europe that connects

In a world that is becoming increasingly connected, the progress of the European Union depends on it having a networked economy and making full use of its infrastructural and human potential. The existing differences within the European Union in terms of the quality of infrastructure and the availability of transport, energy, telecommunications and digital networks hamper its development and global competitiveness. In order to achieve full social, economic and territorial cohesion, transport, energy and digital infrastructure and interconnection need to be further developed. The Croatian Presidency will encourage policies which strengthen the infrastructural connectivity of the Union and bring together its citizens, primarily through education, culture and sport.

■ A Europe that protects

The European Union considers the security of its citizens to be an issue of utmost importance. Hence, the Croatian Presidency will work on strengthening internal security, providing more effective control of external borders, ensuring full interoperability of IT systems, and strengthening resilience to external threats, as well as hybrid and cyber threats. Our common goal remains to find a comprehensive solution for a sustainable and effective migration and asylum policy. The Croatian Presidency will focus on further establishing the Union as an area of freedom, security and justice, founded on common values, democracy and the rule of law.

- Multiannual Financial Framework
- Enlargement policy
- Conference on the Future of Europe
- Brexit

■ An influential Europe

Member States can best overcome the challenges of the 21st century by facing them through the framework and strength of the European Union. Further development of capacities and instruments for common action is the only way to strengthen the Union's leading role on a global scale. Promoting European values and interests, strengthening multilateralism and European security and defence cooperation, and implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals remain the main points of reference for the Union's external action. Its credibility in international relations is also reflected in its responsible approach, especially towards its own neighbourhood, from East to South, including South East Europe (Western Balkans) in its immediate surroundings. The Croatian Presidency will strive for the continuation of a credible and effective enlargement policy, as an investment in stability and security as well as further economic development and connectivity on the European continent.



Source: © European Union

PRIORITIES BY COUNCIL CONFIGURATIONS



General Affairs Council

(GAC)



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union



Source: © European Union

General Affairs Council

In a world that is becoming increasingly complex, to achieve common European Union goals a strong political and strategic coordination is needed. Owing to its horizontal competence, the General Affairs Council has a special role in that respect. The Croatian Presidency will therefore prepare meetings and assist the European Council in its work, always adhering to the principles of unity and respect for the interests and priorities of all Member States. The Presidency will focus its activities on reaching an agreement on the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021 – 2027. Special attention will be given to the enlargement policy and to achieving further progress by candidate and potential candidate countries, which will be the topic of an informal EU – Western Balkans summit, taking place in Zagreb in May 2020. Croatia will continue to work on the effective implementation of the EU Strategic Agenda and on promoting constructive cooperation between the European institutions in setting legislative priorities for the forthcoming period. The priorities of the Croatian Presidency will also include enabling an orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU and starting negotiations on future partnership.

Multiannual Financial Framework

The Croatian Presidency is dedicated to achieving an ambitious, balanced and sustainable agreement on the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in order to contribute to laying the foundations for financing EU priorities in the 2021-2027 period. In this respect, the Presidency will further build on the achievements of the previous presidencies and cooperate closely with the President of the European Council. To this end, the Croatian Presidency will strive to find a balance between continuing to finance Treaty-based policies that already provide a clear European added value, such as cohesion and common agricultural policies, and reaching an agreement on financing policies aimed at new challenges. It will work towards reaching an agreement in a spirit of partnership and for the benefit of the European project, as well as all EU Member States.

The Croatian Presidency will be guided by the

principle that long-term planning should take into account budgetary discipline, improved implementation and stability of investment, and ensure the smooth financing of EU development priorities, as well as the timely start of the implementation of new programmes as of 1 January 2021.

The Croatian Presidency will direct its efforts towards adopting both general and sectoral legislative proposals covered by the MFF that will contribute to the overall development of the European Union and all its Member States in all areas, improving the quality of life and advancing the interests of all of its citizens.

**Ambitious, balanced
and sustainable financial framework
that fulfils the ambitions
of the European Union**



Cohesion policy

The cohesion policy is crucial for reducing economic, social and territorial differences, and for strengthening the competitiveness of the EU and all its regions. Cohesion contributes to the creation of new jobs, investment and economic growth and to the smooth and efficient functioning of the single market. At the same time, it directly affects the quality of life of EU citizens and helps them face new challenges, such as demographic changes, industrial transition and climate change.

The Croatian Presidency will contribute to finalising the negotiations on the legislative package for the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027. Rules enabling effective implementation of projects will play an important role in further implementation of the cohesion policy.

The Presidency will contribute to strengthening the visibility and added value of the cohesion policy by organising a number of formal and informal events.

In order to reduce disparities between EU Member States, Croatia will also continue to work on strengthening convergence and connectivity through the Three Seas Initiative.

Balanced and sustainable development of the Union aimed at reducing economic, social and territorial differences among and within Member States

Macroregional strategies

As a Member State taking part in two EU macroregional strategies, for the Danube Region and for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, Croatia will focus on achieving their goals, as well as complementarity with the cohesion policy. Until November 2020 Croatia will preside over the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, and will in that framework work towards a more efficient use of financial instruments and various existing sources of financing.

Enlargement

A credible enlargement policy, guided by the principles of own merits and fair conditionality, effectively encourages reform processes and is a guarantee for the prosperity and stability of South East Europe. Respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, contributing to regional cooperation and development of good neighbourly relations are of utmost importance in that regard. The latter includes overcoming the legacy of the past, genuine reconciliation and resolution of open issues. The Croatian Presidency will undertake substantial efforts towards reaching appropriate political decisions that are based on the reaffirmed European perspective of candidates and potential candidates for EU membership as well as on fulfilment of the established criteria.

The Croatian Presidency will focus on achieving progress in accession processes and in the implementation of stabilisation and association agreements. Albania and North Macedonia are candidate countries and the Presidency will work towards the opening of accession negotiations with these two countries. The Presidency will also advocate possible progress by Bosnia and Herzegovina towards achieving candidate status.

General Affairs Council

Fulfilment of all measures required for further progress of Montenegro and Serbia in the accession negotiations will be encouraged. Kosovo is a potential candidate and the Presidency will pay special attention to further development of relations.

Turkey is a candidate country and a key partner of the EU in a number of areas.

The Presidency will work on timely establishment of the instrument for pre-accession assistance in line with EU priorities.

Croatia will organise an EU-Western Balkans summit in Zagreb in May 2020.

Confirmation of the European perspective of the countries of South East Europe at the EU – Western Balkans summit in Zagreb in May 2020

European Semester

The European Semester records its tenth cycle during the Croatian Presidency. The Presidency will strive to ensure continuity in the smooth and efficient implementation of the European Semester. It will support an intensive dialogue between the Union's institutions and Member States about their

economic, fiscal and social policies in order to promote appropriate inclusion of all the relevant stakeholders and to strengthen ownership of reform measures at the national level.

Europe as a community of values

The Croatian Presidency is dedicated to strengthening fundamental EU values and principles. The protection of the EU's fundamental values is necessary in strengthening its resilience to internal and external challenges, increasing citizens' trust in the Union and the long-term credibility of its policies. We will support policies that promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular those that fight against hate speech, discrimination, xenophobia and racism, and those that strive to ensure equality between women and men, and the protection of the most vulnerable groups in the society. In order to protect our democratic values and standards, special attention will be given to the fight against dissemination of fake news, intolerance and disinformation on digital platforms.

The Presidency will continue to promote the rule of law as a fundamental EU value, advocating a comprehensive and efficient approach to prevention, protection and promoting the rule of law in the Union, while strengthening dialogue and unity of Member States.

Protecting freedom and democracy and promoting the rule of law as fundamental Union values



A Europe closer to its citizens

Inclusion of citizens, dialogue with civil society organisations and transparency of the institutions of the European Union are crucial components in strengthening its democratic legitimacy. This is an important investment in strengthening citizens' trust in the Union and in shaping the policies focused on the improvement of their quality of life. All of this is important in fighting growing populism in many EU Member States.

The Presidency will promote efficient, responsible and digitalised European public administration that will be able to provide a timely and high-quality response to the challenges the Union is facing, while consistently applying principles of excellence, balanced geographical representation and equality between women and men.

Conference on the Future of Europe

As part of the efforts to bring the Union closer to its citizens, Croatia will also engage in the Conference on the Future of Europe, jointly with other institutions and Member States. The Presidency will work on defining the Council's positions on issues such as the content, scope and functioning of the Conference, and will cooperate with the European Parliament and the Commission in order to ensure institutional balance.

The Croatian Presidency's efforts will be guided by the objectives set out in the EU Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024 and by the outcome of the consultations and dialogues held with the citizens themselves, so as to ensure an even better and timelier response of the Union to the expectations of its citizens. To this end, it will be important to ensure a dialogue with a

wide circle of stakeholders, including national parliaments, in order to discuss strategic issues of the EU's future and policies focused on bettering the life of its citizens, on the efficiency of its institutions and democratic processes at EU level.

Dialogue with citizens as an investment in the future Union that responds to their expectations

Relations with Switzerland

The Croatian Presidency will work to find a solution that would contribute to the signing of an institutional framework agreement between the EU and Switzerland.

Relations with the United Kingdom

The Croatian Presidency will continue with the work on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union under Article 50 of the Treaty on the European Union. The Presidency will advocate an orderly withdrawal based on the Withdrawal Agreement, with the aim of ensuring legal certainty to the citizens and the business community both in the Union and in the United Kingdom. The Presidency will be dedicated to building a close future relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom based on partnership in areas of common interest, in line with the Political Declaration setting out the framework for the future relationship between the EU and the UK and by following the European Council guidelines, as well as other statements and declarations.

Building a future partnership between the EU and the United Kingdom



The National and University Library in Zagreb, the central venue during the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Photo: J.Duval

Source: Zagreb Tourist Board

Foreign Affairs Council

(FAC)



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union



Source: © European Union

Foreign Affairs Council

In a multipolar world, no EU Member State can cope with global challenges on its own. However, by acting together, they can project influence in world affairs and protect and promote their interests and values. To contribute to stability and security in the EU's surroundings, capacities and instruments for common action should be systematically developed, including the strengthening of European security and defence cooperation. In this process, it is important to strengthen international development policy with the aim of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

The central topics of the Croatian Presidency will include the promotion of European values and interests, the projection of peace and security and the strengthening of multilateralism. The Presidency will advocate the deepening of European security and defence cooperation through a strategic EU approach in the field of defence, developing the necessary European defence capabilities and strengthening the European defence industry. Special emphasis will be placed on continuing the close cooperation and complementarity of action between the Union and NATO. Croatia will work towards free and rule-based trade, which is a prerequisite for economic growth.

A united and strong global actor and partner

In the area of external action, the Croatian Presidency will support the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Vice-President of the European Commission and work on strengthening the EU as a united and strong global actor, partner and security provider.

The EU should be a leading international actor in promoting fundamental values and projecting peace and security, and a partner in providing a comprehensive response to global challenges. Croatia will work towards promoting multilateralism and the rules-based international order.

Emphasis will be placed on a comprehensive

approach and more efficient linking of the internal and external aspects of EU's actions, in line with the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (Global Strategy).

Strengthening the role of the Union as a leading international actor and a strong partner in the neighbourhood



Stability and security in EU's surroundings

The Presidency will work on ensuring strategic support to stability, security, building resilience, economic development and prosperity in the surrounding regions of the European Union, in particular in South East Europe and the Neighbourhood.

In line with the Global Strategy, the Presidency will support intensifying EU efforts in further strengthening the stability and security of South East Europe. This will especially apply to building its capacities to address security and other challenges, including hybrid threats, cyber security, migration and strategic communication.

The Croatian Presidency will continue to work with a view to achieving results in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership objectives and to fostering cooperation with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine by providing support to their reform processes, in particular with regard to the challenges they are facing. During the Croatian Presidency, priorities and goals for the period beyond 2020 will be discussed and an Eastern Partnership Summit will be held in this context. Efforts to find a comprehensive solution to the crisis in the Ukraine and to mitigate the consequences of the conflict will be among the priorities of the Presidency.

Together with the countries from the Southern Neighbourhood, further work is needed to strengthen cooperation in addressing common challenges. To this end, the Union's support in finding peaceful, inclusive and democratic solutions to crises and conflicts, sustainable development and humanitarian, stabilisation and reconstruction efforts is important. Emphasis should be placed on cooperation in countering terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism, as well as in responding to migration challenges.

The Presidency will work on promoting a strategic partnership and cooperation with the United States of America and Canada in the areas of security, countering terrorism, energy, stabilisation and the Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe, as well as in addressing global challenges and other issues of common interest.

Russia shares responsibility for the security and stability of the European continent, and the Presidency will continue to work on building relations between the EU and Russia based on the five guiding principles.

Croatia will work on improving political, economic and security relations of the EU with Asia. Emphasis will be placed on all aspects of connectivity. The Presidency will support further development of partnership between the Union and China.

The Presidency highlights the importance of further investments in advancing relations between the EU and Africa with the aim of deepening strategic partnership, facing joint security threats and challenges, in particularly migration, and making more efficient use of opportunities for economic cooperation, investments and sustainable growth. Emphasis should be placed on investing in and empowering youth.

The Presidency will continue to work on strengthening strategic partnership between Europe and Latin America along with intensifying political dialogue and supporting integration based on shared values. The Council is expected to focus on providing support to crisis prevention and response in the region.

The EU as a global partner and guarantor of progress and stability in South East Europe.

Security and defence

Croatia will continue to promote strategic discussions on the EU's further development in the area of security and defence. The Presidency will place emphasis on projecting stability, strengthening the response to external conflicts and crises, building our partners' capacities, as well as on the protection and security of the Union and its citizens. It will continue to work on ensuring substantial and credible European defence cooperation in full respect of the autonomy, ownership and decision-making processes of individual Member States.

The Presidency will focus on the implementation, consolidation and coherence of the defence initiatives already under way — Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), military mobility and the European Defence Fund (EDF) — and on their alignment with the defence planning processes of the Member States.

The Presidency will continue to strongly support close, fruitful and complementary EU-NATO cooperation, which is considered a key investment in European security and a contribution to transatlantic relations. There will be a special emphasis on achieving results in the areas of military mobility and hybrid threats, and on providing support to partners in building capacities and resilience, in particular in South East Europe.

The Presidency will promote the development of partnership and cooperation with other key actors, partners and third countries, which play a crucial role in maintaining and building the European security architecture.

The Presidency will support strengthening the competitiveness of the defence industry in order to reduce existing deficiencies in European defence capabilities. Emphasis will be on strengthening of

SMEs and defence research capabilities in order to achieve balanced development of the European defence industry. Croatia will aim to reach an agreement on the European Defence Fund, contributing to the achievement of these goals.

Croatia will continue to strengthen the civil dimension of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which should enable a more capable, more efficient, swifter and more integrated crisis response.

*Affirming the role
of security provider.
Projecting stability
and achieving better
response to external
conflict and crisis.*

Development cooperation and humanitarian aid

The Presidency will remain focused on maintaining the EU's leading role in the promotion and comprehensive implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), in line with the European Consensus on Development. The Presidency will promote stronger participation of all the Union's Member States in international development cooperation, taking into account the principle of 'working better together' and the exchange of know-how with partner countries.



In order to address the root causes of instability and migration, the Croatian Presidency will focus on the development of overall political and social resilience in partner countries as a long-term answer to preventing crises caused by human or natural factors. The Presidency will continue to encourage stronger connections between short-term humanitarian aid and long-term international development cooperation.

Croatia will focus on further reducing inequality through the implementation of economic measures for encouraging investments and creating sustainable jobs, in particular through strengthening cooperation with middle-income countries and least developed countries. To achieve more efficient results, special attention will be paid to youth and to women and girls as key drivers of sustainable development.

Croatia will continue to provide support to the successful finalisation of negotiations on the Partnership Agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States. As consistent and effective financing of the Union's external actions contributes to the empowerment of the EU's global role, the Croatian Presidency will be dedicated to reaching an agreement on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

Promoting international development policies for sustainable development and eradicating poverty

Trade

Global trade tensions and the rise of protectionism that we are facing cause growing market uncertainties. The European Union should continue

to promote fair and open global trade based on rules that are effective, applicable and enforceable and that provide a level playing field in international trade.

Safeguarding and strengthening the multilateral trading system and pursuing ongoing negotiations within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will be in the focus of the Presidency. The EU should retain its leading role in the WTO modernisation process for the organisation to be ready to respond to the current and future challenges of the world economy. With this aim the Presidency will actively engage in the preparations and the work of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference.

The Croatian Presidency will work towards the finalisation of the ongoing trade negotiations, while promoting European values and standards and sustainable development. It is equally important to make efforts to ensure that the concluded agreements enter into force swiftly and that they are fully implemented.

The discussions on the strengthening of transatlantic trade relations and on balanced trade and investment relations with China will continue during this Presidency.

In line with the Council conclusions of March 2019, Croatia will continue working on the regulation related to the access of goods and services from third countries to the Union internal public procurement market, and on finalising the legal framework for dual-use items.

Safeguarding and strengthening the multilateral trading system based on rules that provide a level playing field for all.



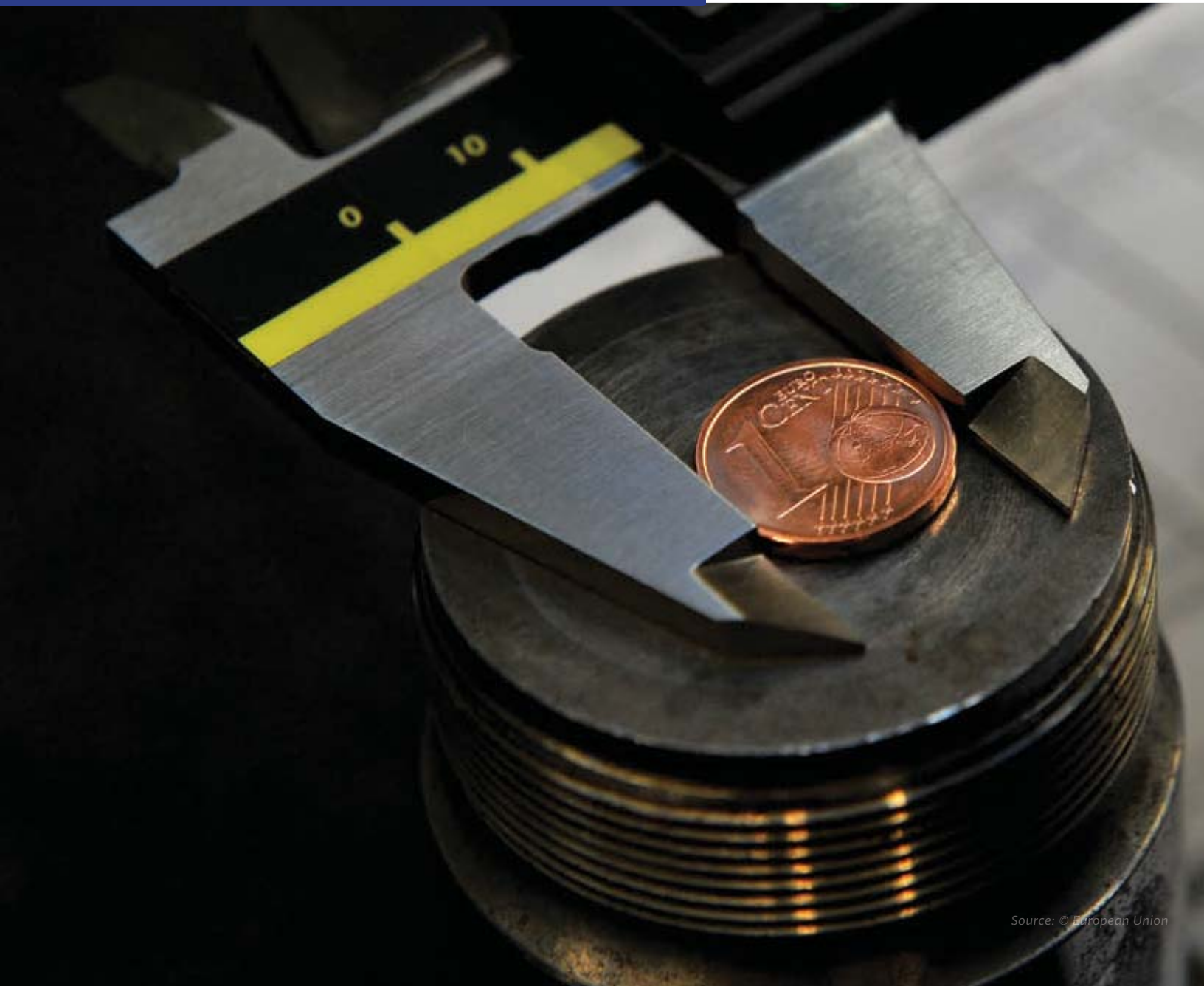
Dubrovnik, a city enlisted in the World Heritage List, known also for its contribution to the development of modern diplomacy
Photo: Luka Esenko
Source: Croatian Tourist Board

Economic and Financial Affairs Council

(ECOFIN)



Croatian
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Source: © European Union

Economic and Financial Affairs Council

The European Union economy has recorded steady growth over the past years. Nevertheless, a slowdown in economic activity and an increased level of risk to the Union's financial stability can be observed. This is the result of uncertainties that arise from both internal and external challenges. The beginning of the new institutional cycle and the adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework present an opportunity to define new strategic goals and thus enable the Union to cope more efficiently with the changing global economic environment and with internal structural differences. These circumstances require caution and a timely reaction to signs of vulnerability and risks to the stability of the EU's financial system.

Croatia will pay special attention to promoting the initiatives that encourage reform processes and convergence among Member States. The Presidency will continue to implement initiatives that support the deepening of the single market and will invest additional efforts in strengthening the EU's international economic and financial role. In that respect, emphasis will be placed on strengthening the international role of the euro. Negative demographic trends can be observed throughout the European Union and they are one of the major risks for the long-term sustainability of public finances. Croatia will promote measures and activities aimed at mitigating the negative fiscal effects of demographic trends.

Economic and Monetary Union

The Presidency intends to continue with the work aimed at strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union so that it becomes better connected and fairer, and is able to cope more effectively with economic challenges. The Croatian Presidency will focus on the further deepening of the Banking Union.

Emphasis will be placed on the processes leading to increasing the resilience and stability of the Union's banking system. This will include continuing the present discussions on the establishment of the European Deposit Insurance Scheme (EDIS). At the same time, the Croatian Presidency will continue its

efforts relating to non-performing loans in order to prevent their accumulation in the future.

The question of strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union and of further integration at the EU level is of great importance, which is why further advancement of reform processes and convergence among Member States is needed. In this respect, the Presidency will seek to reach an agreement on the draft Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness and the draft Convergence and Reform Instrument.

Strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union and the euro's international role



Capital Markets Union

In order to make the financial system of the European Union more stable, open and competitive, the Member States' capital markets should be developed, strengthened and additionally integrated. Taking into account the differences between Member States and the new opportunities arising from technological changes and digital innovations, Croatia has recognised the significant potential of the Capital Markets Union and the contribution it can make to the development of the Union's economy. New financing sources and well-designed and transparent products would contribute to making capital markets more attractive to small and medium-size enterprises and citizens. They would also encourage the growth of innovative companies and expand opportunities for long-term investments and for the participation of small investors in capital markets. The Croatian Presidency will concentrate on these goals, guided by its continuous focus on strengthening the resilience of the financial system and its infrastructure. It will also take into account the importance of maintaining financial stability and managing risks that arise from innovations in markets and from the incomplete application of rules.

The Croatian Presidency will make special efforts to carry out the remaining measures provided for in the initial and revised Action Plan on Building a Capital Markets Union. Croatia will support the definition of new priorities, which will lead to the adoption of the new Action Plan for the next institutional cycle. Bearing in mind the role of the financial sector in the transition towards a sustainable economy, the Croatian Presidency will contribute to directing the priorities for this aspect of the Capital Markets Union and thus contribute to the sustainability agenda that will mark the Union's next institutional cycle.

Budgetary matters

The Croatian Presidency will strive to finalise the EU budgetary discharge procedure for 2018 in a timely manner and focus on the smooth implementation of the Union budget for 2020. Special attention will be given to work on budgetary guidelines for 2021, while emphasising the importance of budgetary discipline and the need to ensure sufficient levels of financial resources to achieve the key objectives of the Union's policies.

The Croatian Presidency will focus its efforts on finalising negotiations in the area of own resources and fight against fraud for the period 2021-2027.

Taxation

The current international tax rules should be adapted to globalisation and digitalisation in order to ensure fair and just taxation where value is created. Additionally, the tax system should fight activities and introduce higher taxes on products whose adverse effects significantly contribute to climate change. A modern tax system should be based on transparent, efficient and sustainable taxation procedures that ensure legal certainty for all stakeholders. The Croatian Presidency will actively work towards achieving these goals, while also strengthening growth, investment and the competitiveness of the single market.

The Croatian Presidency will continue discussions on priorities and further steps to be taken in the area of direct and indirect taxation. In order to ensure the active application of rules on good and fair taxation, Croatia will actively work towards ensuring tax transparency and security, at the same time preventing unfair tax practices, tax fraud and tax evasion.

Economic and Financial Affairs Council

*Using taxation
measures to fight
activities that
contribute to
climate change*



Customs Union

In the context of improving the protection and safety of citizens, fighting fraud and protecting the financial interests of the European Union and its Member States, while also facilitating trade, Croatia will make determined efforts to strengthen the capacities of customs administration on the EU external borders.

Consequently, the Croatian Presidency will work towards reaching an agreement on the instrument for financial support for customs control equipment as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, as well as on the EU Customs Programme.

The Croatian Presidency believes it is important to initiate work on the establishment of an EU Single Window in the customs environment, which would facilitate and simplify customs formalities for entrepreneurs, facilitate trade and bring about long-term savings.

*More efficient and
better equipped
customs services on
the Union's external
border*

Justice and Home Affairs Council

(JHA)



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union



FRONTEX exercise, Lora Military Port, Split
Source: Flickr.com/Ministry of the Interior

Justice and Home Affairs Council

The European Union should remain an area with a high level of freedom, security and justice, founded on common values, fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law. The challenges that the European Union has been facing lately have shown the importance of well-designed policies and measures that will guarantee the protection of its values and the safety of European citizens. The beginning of the new institutional cycle is an opportunity to define the direction of the Union's development in the forthcoming period. In this context, our policies and measures must be aimed at continuing to build a Union of equality and justice, strengthening trust impaired by the effects of the migration crisis and security challenges, and strengthening the Union's internal security.

Croatia will remain committed to defining new strategic guidelines in the area of freedom, security and justice which will identify the main activities in the upcoming five-year period. In the area of justice, emphasis will be placed on the e-evidence legislative package, laying the necessary groundwork for initiating the work of the European Public Prosecutor's Office, the legislative package for the taking of evidence and the service of documents, as well as the regulation on the effects of the assignment of claims. In order to respond to the justified expectations of European citizens, emphasis will also be placed on the implementation of a sustainable and efficient migration policy, protection of external borders, interoperability between information systems, and a return to the normal functioning of the Schengen area. Account will also be taken of strengthening the Union's resilience to terrorist and hybrid threats and its resilience and response in the area of civil protection.

Justice

The main priority in the field of judicial cooperation in criminal matters will be to finalise trialogue negotiations on the e-evidence package, and lay the necessary groundwork for initiating the work of the European Public Prosecutor's Office. Emphasis will also be placed on the efficient implementation of the EU's existing legal instruments in the field of judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

The main priority in the field of judicial cooperation in civil matters will be the finalisation of the trialogue and the adoption of the Regulation on the taking of

evidence, the Regulation on the service of judicial and extrajudicial documents, as well as advancement in achieving a general approach with regards to the Regulation on the third-party effects of assignments of claims.

Special attention will be dedicated to the further development and promotion of e-Justice, digital platforms and modern technologies so that the work of the judicial authorities can be made more efficient, and access to justice for citizens and economic operators can be improved.



The continuous education and professional development of judicial officials and officers is a prerequisite for more efficient implementation of the *acquis* and for strengthening trust in judicial systems among Member States. The Presidency plans to continue discussions on improving the educational system for judicial officials in the EU.

The Presidency will invest efforts towards finalising the work on the adoption of the Regulation establishing the Justice programme and the Regulation establishing the Rights and Values programme.

Migration management

The Croatian Presidency will work towards comprehensive, effective and humane migration management on all migration routes. In addition to strengthening the system for the supervision of the EU's borders, Croatia will continue to work on the establishment of a sustainable and efficient framework for the Common European Asylum System.

To ensure the effective prevention of illegal migration and a more systematic implementation of the return policies, the Presidency will try to reach an agreement on the list of safe third countries and safe countries of origin. It will continue to work towards the consistent implementation of the readmission agreement and a more coherent implementation of economic, development-related, and other measures in cooperation with the countries of origin and transit of migrants.

The Presidency will also work towards the development of policies that will provide an upgraded framework for safe and legal migration.

Development of a comprehensive, effective, humane and sustainable migration policy

External borders protection and Schengen

The Presidency will work towards greater protection of the EU's external borders, which is one of the key prerequisites for realising the plan to restore the normal functioning of the Schengen area.

The Presidency believes that implementation of the expanded responsibilities of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and of the Integrated Border Management Strategy at the EU level is crucial to the security of the Schengen area and to more efficient migration management. Croatia will also work towards the conclusion of status agreements with all South East European countries and towards the effective application of these agreements.

Greater safety of citizens achieved by better protection of external borders and return to normal functioning of the Schengen area

Interoperability between information systems and internal security

The Croatian Presidency will pay special attention to ensuring more efficient use of the existing and improved information systems (SIS II, VIS and EURODAC) and their upgrade with new systems (EES, ETIAS and ECRIS-TCN), as well as to ensuring the comprehensive and effective application of the legislation on interoperability.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

In order to strengthen the EU's internal security, the Presidency will work towards full and effective application of the existing legislation and towards modernising police cooperation. Special emphasis will be placed on improving efficiency in the fight against serious and organised cross-border crime and migrant smuggler networks, and on strengthening connections between customs, police, border, migration and asylum services. The Presidency attributes special importance to the implementation of the Directive laying down rules facilitating the use of financial information for the prevention and detection of certain criminal offences, and to the adoption of the Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online.

The Presidency will continue to work on the application and impact assessment of new technologies (drones, artificial intelligence, encryption and 5G networks), in cooperation with national authorities in charge of legislative implementation and with the competent EU agencies. A comprehensive approach to internal security includes strengthening resilience to cyber-attacks, hybrid threats and the dissemination of fake news.

**Greater resilience
to hybrid threats**

Disaster prevention and response (rescEU)

The European Union is faced with an increasing number and frequency of disasters that are becoming more and more complex. The Presidency will therefore continue to develop capacities at the Union level aimed at ensuring better protection for European citizens, while also focusing on the prevention and mitigation of the related risks.

The emphasis will be placed on further implementation of all the components of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (rescEU). This primarily refers to the capacities for response to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, establishment of first aid, management of temporary rescEU capacities for fire protection, and their transition to permanent capacities. The Croatian Presidency will work towards the establishment of the EU Civil Protection Knowledge Network and a higher recognisability of the EU's role in saving the lives of its citizens.

External dimension of justice and home affairs

In the external dimension of justice and home affairs, dialogue with international partners will continue. Special emphasis will be placed on reaching an agreement with the USA on the exchange of e-evidence, on intensifying joint efforts in the fight against terrorism through the exchange of information from conflict-affected areas, and on fighting serious international organised crime, such as drug trafficking. Visa reciprocities with countries not yet included in the US Visa Waiver Programme will be considered. Strengthening the EU's global role will be continued by encouraging a coordinated approach by Member States in the area of international private law and in activities within the Hague Conference, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and other relevant international forums.

Home affairs funds

The Presidency will make efforts to finalise the negotiations on home affairs funds, namely, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Internal Security Fund (ISF) and the Integrated Border Management Fund (IBMF).

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

(EPSCO)



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union



Varaždin

Photo: Domagoj Blažević
Source: Croatian Tourist Board

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

The European Union is facing both significant changes in the labour market and a number of demographic and social challenges additionally spurred by globalisation processes. Negative demographic trends, the lack of skills required for the labour market of the future, the work-life imbalance and the underrepresentation of women in the labour market require high-quality solutions. They are the key to further strengthening of social convergence and sustainable economic growth. The Presidency will devote special attention to defining the measures to deal with demographic challenges. Emphasis will be also placed on the implementation of policies focused on strengthening access to the labour market, equal opportunities, equality between women and men, and promoting lifelong health care. The Presidency will also seek to protect the most vulnerable social groups that are at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The Croatian Presidency will focus on achieving progress in negotiations, i.e. on finalising negotiations on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund and on the Decision on enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services. It will also continue to work on other current initiatives and new proposals.

Demographic challenges and social policy

The Croatian Presidency will encourage discussion on challenges related to negative demographic trends, and on policies that improve working and living standards and ensure work-life balance. The Presidency will organise a thematic conference that will provide the basis for drawing conclusions aimed at deciding on the measures needed to cope with demographic challenges.

The Presidency will encourage discussion on employment-related development policies, ensuring high-quality and accessible jobs and social services, with the emphasis on regional balance. Special attention will be given to eradicating poverty and social exclusion of the most vulnerable social groups, in particular children, people with disabilities and marginalised Roma groups.

Croatia will organise a conference on the integrated approach to protecting children at risk of violence, childhood poverty and social exclusion.

Building a more satisfied and vital society capable of responding to negative demographic trends

Development of skills, employability and competitiveness

A dynamic labour market requires the acquisition of new skills and competencies that in turn require lifelong learning and training to increase productivity, innovativeness and competitiveness. A creative workforce is one of the driving forces behind development and requires the continuous acquisition of new skills in order to increase competitiveness and employability.

There are significant groups of people in the European labour market who are far from the labour market. These are workers who lag behind in accepting new technologies, long-term unemployed persons, socially excluded persons, women who are not present in the labour market due to family obligations, and young people who are not in education or training programmes, or do not have any work experience. Taking into account the digitalisation and automation of production processes and new forms of work, it is important to find a common response in order to increase the employability of these groups.

Croatia will organise a conference to encourage discussion on increasing access to lifelong learning and on developing and improving skills to increase the productivity of those who are employed and the employability of those who are unemployed. The Presidency will propose conclusions on the development of skills.

**Strengthening
competitiveness and skills
through lifelong learning**

Strengthening of wellbeing at work

In line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Presidency will encourage discussion on the adjustment of working conditions to new challenges and needs in the labour market, and on the preservation and creation of high-quality jobs. In addition to exchanging good practices, innovative forms of work will be explored through dialogue with social partners and other stakeholders in the labour market. The Presidency will initiate discussions that place an emphasis on flexibility of work, work-life balance and wellbeing at work.

*Implementation
of the European
Pillar of Social
Rights*

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

Equality between women and men and women's empowerment in the labour market

Equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the Union. It is therefore important to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination based on sex. The inclusion of women in the labour market is one of the key prerequisites for equal economic independence of men and women, which reduces poverty and social exclusion, and allows sustainable economic growth.

Croatia will organise a conference to analyse the existing obstacles to the full participation of women in the labour market, taking into account elements such as the lack of accessible quality care for dependent and ill family members, the lack of specific skills in the labour market, precarious and atypical forms of employment, and the risk of workplace harassment. It will propose conclusions determining the correlation between the participation of women in the labour market and the obligations of long-term care for dependent family members.

Health

Based on Croatia's own positive experiences in the area of organ donation and transplantation the Presidency will make special efforts to explore the possibilities of closer and improved cooperation among Member States.

As part of the process of achieving sustainable development goals in the field of healthcare, the Croatian Presidency will encourage discussions on lifelong healthcare. Faced with the burden of population ageing and the increased prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases, the Presidency wishes to encourage a more efficient utilisation of accessible health care solutions.

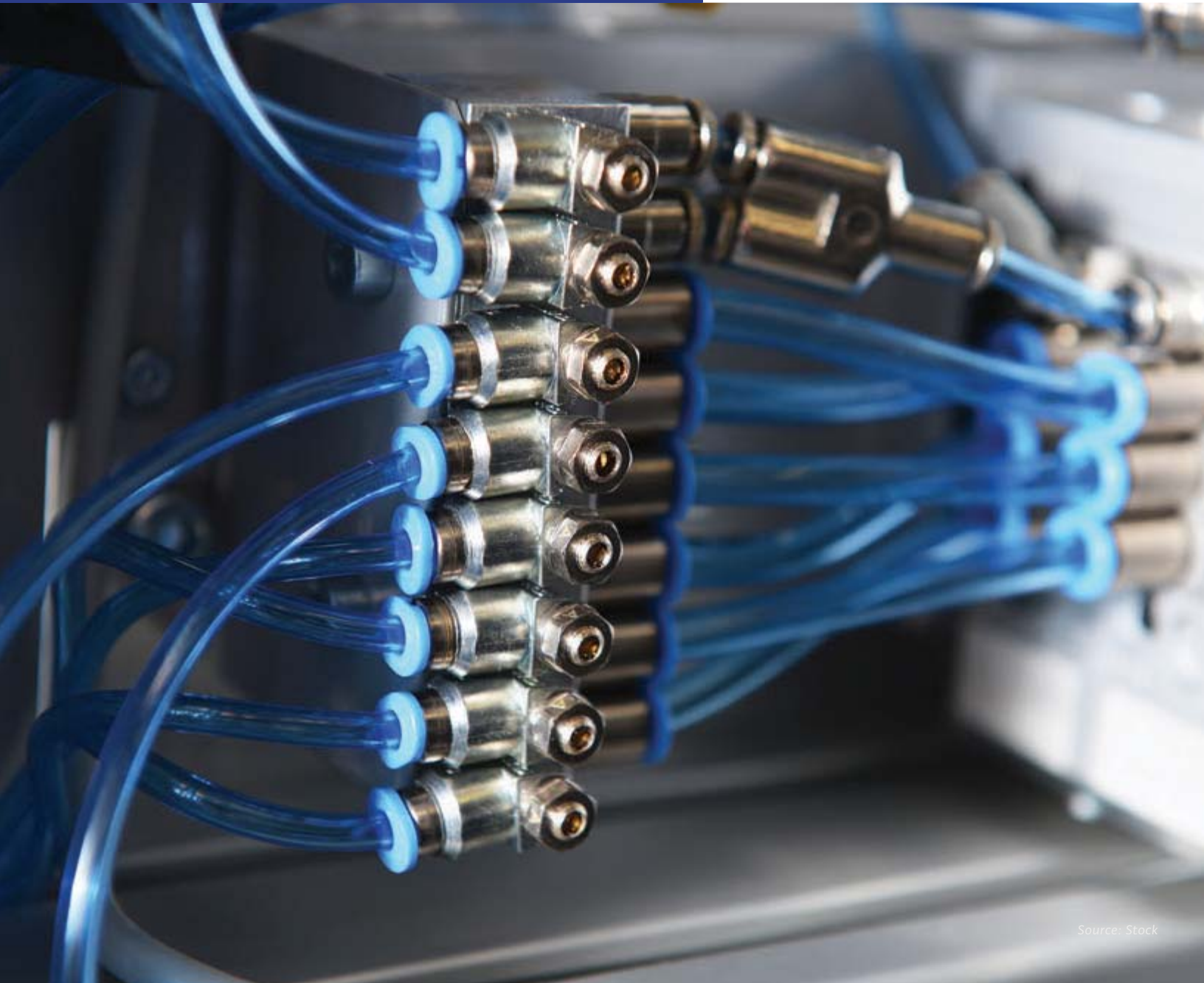
The Presidency will continue working on an agreement on a Regulation on health technology assessment, aimed at addressing the increasing need to analyse the effects of new medicinal products and health technologies at EU level.

Competitiveness Council

(COMPET)



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union



Source: Stock

Competitiveness Council

A competitive single market is the fundamental guarantee for opening up opportunities for the creative potential of European entrepreneurs and for safeguarding consumer interests. The productivity of the European economy can be increased by improving the implementation of the existing single market rules, simplifying legislation, and reducing market overregulation. Special emphasis will be placed on further deepening of the single market and on developing the EU's long-term sustainable industrial policy strategy aligned with the requirements of the digital era. The fields of research and space act as driving forces behind progress. The Croatian Presidency will highlight their contribution to increasing the competitiveness of both the economy and society. The Presidency will focus its efforts on advancing negotiations on the legal framework for EU collective investment in these areas, while additional emphasis will be placed on the role of human capital and the conditions for researchers and innovators. The European Union is the number one tourist destination in the world. Tourism is an important economic factor, contributing approximately 10 % to European GDP, while at the same time having an effect on the preservation of cultural heritage, environmental protection, the labour market and infrastructure. Since these challenges are common to all Member States, they should be addressed more systematically also at European level.

Single market and competitiveness

The Croatian Presidency will encourage discussion on a long-term action plan for better implementation and enforcement of single market rules, as well as on the expected analysis of regulatory and non-regulatory obstacles that entrepreneurs face on the single market. The remaining restrictions to the freedom of movement of goods, freedom of establishment and freedom to provide services should be eliminated, and the full implementation of the Services Directive should be enabled.

The Presidency will propose the adoption of the Council conclusions on better regulation, with

proposals for improvement of the principles and methodology for reducing regulatory costs for citizens and business entities, in order to increase competitiveness, and sustainable and inclusive development.

Croatia will support comprehensive activities aimed at increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs. Special emphasis will be placed on the development of a coherent strategic framework based on the 'Think Small First' principle, the acquisition of key entrepreneurial competences, and improved use of intellectual property systems in business. Emphasis will also be placed on the transfer of small and medium-sized businesses, insurance for high-quality support infrastructure, and facilitated access to financing.



Croatia will be encouraging activities related to the automation and digitalisation of businesses and business entities, in particular by supporting the activities and measures of the European Commission focused on the preparation of a comprehensive document on digital services.

The Croatian Presidency will place emphasis on developing and implementing competition rules, especially in the digital economy. Further initiatives related to the increasing importance of the data economy and the corresponding need for intellectual property protection will be considered.

One of the priorities of this Presidency will be to finalise the negotiations on the single market programme, which provides for the financing of measures to increase the competitiveness of business entities, in particular of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs. The work on the amendments to the Regulation on type approval of motor vehicles with respect to emissions from light passenger and commercial vehicles will be continued.

Deepening the single market and developing digitalisation

Consumer protection policy

The Presidency will continue to work on the legislation related to the protection of the collective interests of consumers (collective redress Directive).

The Presidency will organise a conference in order to encourage cooperation among bodies competent for consumer policy and those supervising the implementation of consumer legislation, as well as to prompt cooperation among all stakeholders on raising awareness on consumer rights and the means for exercising them.

Industrial policy

The Presidency will place special emphasis on the discussions on a comprehensive and long-term industrial policy strategy aligned with the EU energy and environmental policies and with the single market strategy. Special attention will be given to the synergy between industrial strategy and the European Green Deal. In order to ensure the competitiveness of European industry, it is important to continue work on strengthening the European strategic value chains and on the connections between Member States and industry in terms of major projects of Common European Interest.

Croatia will continue discussions on the digital transformation of European industry, which should contribute to the increased productivity and competitiveness of EU business entities. In the context of the European Commission's announced activities, the Presidency intends to start discussions on the ethical, legal and social aspects of the use of artificial intelligence, so that the EU can make optimal use of the potential offered by new technologies. This topic will be discussed at the 2020 Digital Assembly in Zagreb.

Croatia wishes to initiate discussions and exchange of best practice related to the strengthening of research and development and innovation potential, and the ways this potential may be connected to industry. In order to strengthen the global competitiveness of European industry, the development and commercialisation of new technological solutions and green technologies will be encouraged, and high-value-added investments will be promoted.

Promoting green and innovative technologies and high-value-added investments

Research, innovation and space

Legislative priorities will include progress in the negotiations on the Horizon Europe programme, space programme, and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. Negotiations on the Euratom Research and Training Programme and the international megaproject in the field of nuclear fusion (ITER) will be continued.

The Presidency will initiate a discussion on future jobs in order to highlight the importance of research and innovation, as well as space, in solving key societal challenges.

The Presidency will initiate a debate on 'brain circulation' as an alternative to 'brain drain', and on the positive model of mobility of scientists and researchers that contributes to expanding knowledge throughout Europe, and attracting talent from all over the world. The concept of just, balanced and efficient 'brain circulation' should be one of the pivotal points in the development of strategic documents and investment programmes in the field of research and development. During the conference to be organised on this topic, the Presidency will support the adoption of a declaration comprising guidelines for raising awareness about this important issue.

*Balanced
mobility of
scientists and
researchers*

Tourism

The Presidency will support responsible and sustainable tourism development policies, placing special emphasis on encouraging diversity of the tourism offer, in order to boost the development of areas that are underdeveloped in terms of tourism. Furthermore, its efforts will centre on achieving synergy between the local community and tourists, reducing the seasonality of tourist demand, and encouraging the application of information and communication technologies as well as digitalisation within the tourist system. As far as the integrative and cohesive dimension of tourism for the EU is concerned, Croatia believes that tourism should be better recognised in the EU's policies and institutions. Croatia will propose the establishment of a European tourism brand for joint promotion of Member States in distant markets.

Promoting sustainable forms of tourism



Transport, Telecommunication and Energy Council

(TTE)



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union



Gaženica Passenger Port, Zadar,
declared the **WORLD's** best **CRUISE** port in 2019
Source: Zadar Port Authority

Transport, Telecommunication and Energy Council

Connectivity is one of the most important prerequisites for the functioning of the EU single market, and for achieving social, economic and territorial cohesion among Member States. In order to unlock the full potential of this market and to minimise differences in the quality and availability of infrastructure, transport, digital and energy connectivity should be further improved, while taking into account the need to reduce adverse environmental impact. The Croatian Presidency will focus on continuing to develop the Single European Transport Area, sustainable maritime activities, and digitalisation and innovation in all segments of the transport sector. The Presidency's priorities include the development of a high-quality and secure data infrastructure, the creation of conditions for the full functioning and safety of 5G networks, and the establishment and implementation of the Energy Union. The Presidency will focus in particular on the potential and the role of islands as a driving force behind transition to clean energy.

Transport

The main priorities in the area of transport will include the improvement and finalisation of Trans-European Transport Network, as a prerequisite for the functioning of the EU single market and the sustainable development of maritime activities, which includes the protection of the marine environment from pollution caused by ships, and the further digitalisation of the maritime sector.

In view of the fight against climate change and the EU's leading role in the adoption of international environmental protection standards, the Croatian Presidency will highlight the importance of a sustainable shipping sector. The Presidency will start a debate on the new EU strategy for a competitive and sustainable shipping sector that should respond to the challenges at both EU and global levels. The objective of this debate is to adopt a declaration at an informal meeting of maritime affairs ministers and to propose Council conclusions.

The Presidency will continue to work with Member States within the International Maritime Organisation in order to continue with the implementation of the IMO strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ships, and to adopt the appropriate measures to reduce these emissions by 50% by 2050.

In order to upgrade and finalise the TEN-T, the Presidency will continue to work on two legislative proposals: the proposal for streamlining measures for advancing the realisation of the Trans-European Transport Network, and the proposal on the Connecting Europe Facility for the 2021-2027 financial period. The Presidency will encourage the extension and finalisation of the TEN-T and will work towards achieving better network connectivity.

In the area of land transport, priority will be given to the proposal related to rail passenger rights.



In the area of air transport, the Presidency is ready to start a debate on current and new proposals in this area. It will work on the adoption of the EU position with regard to the debate and decisions falling within the responsibility of the International Civil Aviation Organization, as well as on air transport agreements with third countries. The Presidency priorities will include topics such as air transport sustainability, and air and land transport capacities. An aviation summit in Dubrovnik will be organised on this topic.

Extension and finalisation of the Trans-European Transport Network

Telecommunications

The Presidency will work on all measures aimed at ensuring swift deployment of 5G networks, and raising awareness about the possibilities they offer, as well as the measures for ensuring cyber security in 5G networks. Consequently, the Presidency will support the measures aimed at developing the digital component of 'smart cities'.

The Presidency will continue working on the implementation of the Directive concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union,

and the Cybersecurity Act. In line with the agreement between the Member States, it will continue discussions on the establishment of the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre, and the Network of National Coordination Centres. Encouraged by the Cybersecurity Competence Community, the two centres will implement technology development projects, and thus facilitate cooperation within the research community, as well as cooperation between the research community and industry in the field of cybersecurity.

The Presidency will continue working on documents that ensure connectivity, the establishment of the functional digital single market, and a breakthrough to new areas, such as artificial intelligence, Internet of things and the related data economy. Work on legislation that is important for the reduction of the digital gap and for the development of digital skills, as well as ensuring the increased inclusion of women in the digital sector, will also play an important role in this process.

The Presidency will continue the discussion on the obstacles associated with the proposal on the ePrivacy Regulation and will seek to offer adequate solutions. Blockchain technology can lead to significant improvements for both the industry and public administration, and the Presidency will be ready to accept all initiatives in this segment and to work on their adoption. In all proposals, the Presidency will take account of the need for transition to a climate-neutral economy and the need to build a green Europe.

Ensuring a high-quality and secure data infrastructure

Transport, Telecommunication and Energy Council

Energy

In the context of transition to a low-carbon economy and efforts to achieve a climate-neutral Europe, the energy sector is focusing on the reduction of emissions.

The Presidency will continue working on the activities related to effective implementation of the five pillars of the Energy Union, as the backbone for the common European energy policy. This requires a debate on the final national energy and climate plans, based on the 'Clean Energy for all Europeans' legislative package.

The Presidency will pay particular attention to energy security, with special emphasis on diversification and development of infrastructure. As regards the modernisation of the gas market, the Presidency is open to holding initial discussions on a new decarbonisation package.

In the area of transition to clean energy, special account will be taken of fair energy transition and regional contribution to low-carbon or climate-neutral development. The Presidency will highlight the role of specific areas such as islands. Particular emphasis will be placed on the energy transition of islands, and the Presidency will work

towards the adoption of the long-term framework stipulated by the 2017 Political Declaration on Clean Energy for EU Islands (Valletta Declaration).

The Declaration has already acknowledged the fact that islands have exceptional potential to contribute to strengthening sustainable, low-carbon development in the EU. The further work to be proposed will refer to the expansion of the original initiative, and to the creation of links with the new mechanisms of financing which would ensure development of projects in the future.

The Presidency will devote special attention to regional cooperation in order to improve the security of supply in some parts of the EU. Within the Energy Union and the Central and South Eastern Europe Energy Connectivity (CESEC) initiative, the Presidency will strive to define regional needs in the transition to clean energy and offer specific solutions for individual regions.

Encouraging low-carbon transition along with strengthening integration of the energy market

Promoting the role and potential of European islands in clean energy transition

Izvor: Stock

Agriculture and Fisheries Council (AGRIFISH)



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union



Vineyards in Kneževi Vinogradi on the banks of
the Danube River

Photo: Ivo Biočina
Source: Croatian Tourist Board

Agriculture and Fisheries Council

For the Union, as the leading agricultural player in the world, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the basic policies. It is important for rural development, the production of high-quality and safe food, and the protection of natural resources, thus directly influencing the lives of all Union citizens. It is therefore of the utmost importance to maintain the competitiveness and sustainability of the CAP, and an appropriate level of its financing. One of the priorities of the Croatian Presidency will be to reach a timely agreement on the new CAP, which should have a positive effect on the sustainable development of agriculture and the quality of life in rural areas. Special emphasis will be placed on family farms and young farmers, sustainable environmental management, and the empowerment of the bioeconomy and smart villages concepts. The negotiations on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund will be intensified, with emphasis on the sustainability of small-scale coastal fisheries. The importance of forestry will also be highlighted, in particular its positive effects on climate change.

Agriculture

The priority of the Croatian Presidency will be to continue to work and reach an agreement on legislative proposals from the package of regulations for the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) after 2020. The objective is to define, in a timely manner, the rules of the new CAP, which will be aligned with the new common priorities of the European Union, including the environmental and climate goals of the Union, and which will be easier to implement by users and, at the same time, will be adjusted to the needs of Member States. In order to ensure continuity in the implementation of the EU's agricultural policy and to facilitate the transition to the new budgetary period, the Presidency will also work on the definition of the appropriate solutions through a transitional regulation.

In line with the proposed future CAP structure, which places stronger emphasis on small farms, the Presidency will organise a ministerial conference to promote policies that support family farms. Special attention will be given to the needs of vulnerable

rural communities, and to the further modernisation of agriculture and rural areas, including through the concept of so-called 'smart villages', in order to increase the competitiveness of European farms and rural holdings, have a positive effect on the quality of life of the population and attract young farmers.

In order to speed up the planned activities in the Member States and at EU level, the Presidency will organise a conference to intensify the discussions on the promotion of bioeconomy. The agricultural opportunities arising from the new Horizon Europe programme and other appropriate programmes and initiatives will be considered.

The Presidency will continue to monitor the situation in the agricultural markets, and will organise an exchange of views at Council level, if necessary.

**Modernisation
of agriculture and more
competitive rural areas**



Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary issues

The Presidency will work towards achieving an equal level of phytosanitary protection throughout the European Union, and equal conditions for European manufacturers and traders. Emphasis will be placed on promoting common EU rules related to the production, inspection, sampling, import, circulation and certification of plant material, as well as to the notification, detection and eradication of pests.

Within the field of food safety, animal health and animal wellbeing, the Presidency will continue discussions on measures for the prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases at European level. Consumer protection and food safety issues will be discussed in the context of the new European Green Deal and the new sectoral 'Farm to Fork Strategy'.

The International Year of Plant Health 2020 will be marked by a number of activities, and the central event will take place as part of the 64th seminar on plant protection in Opatija, to be attended by the leading European experts in this field.

Forestry

Over the past years, forests have been facing increasing pressures in the form of natural disasters, forest pest attacks and devastating forest fires. Forests play a central role in mitigating the consequences of climate change and in adapting to this change, and they are of crucial importance for the preservation of biodiversity. The existing EU Forest Strategy has highlighted the economic, social and environmental importance of sustainable forest management. In response to the challenges faced by forestry, the Presidency will continue discussions on the adoption of a new EU Forest Strategy for the period after 2020.

Fisheries

Fisheries are one of the key economic activities in the coastal communities of EU Member States. The priority of the Presidency will be to achieve significant progress in negotiations on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for 2021-2027. Special importance in this segment is given to measures that can contribute to the development of and investment in sustainable fisheries. Croatia will pay particular attention to the socioeconomic importance and sustainability of small-scale coastal fisheries, which is the cornerstone for the sustainability of coastal and island communities.

Efficient supervision and control in fisheries are the basic prerequisites for ensuring sustainable EU fisheries management. The Presidency will therefore make every effort to achieve progress on the proposal for a fisheries control Regulation.

The priority in the field of aquaculture will be to continue with the implementation of goals relating to the European Commission's defined points of reference for aquaculture development in the EU, as well as to revise and adapt the guidelines for the new programme cycle after 2020. Emphasis will be placed on ensuring the appropriate space for further aquaculture development, while also preserving the ecosystem, taking account of climate change, and responding to market needs.

The Croatian Presidency will ensure the coordination and drafting of positions of the European Union and its Member States for participation at the meetings of international bodies and the international agreements in the field of fisheries.

Sustainability of coastal and island communities



Pelješac, oyster farm
Photo: Ivo Biočina
Source: Croatian Tourist Board

Environment Council

(ENVI)



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union



Plitvice Lakes National Park
enlisted in the UNESCO World Heritage List
Photo: Ivo Biočina
Source: Croatian Tourist Board

Environment Council

Climate change, environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity are some of the greatest challenges of the modern world. As a global leader in environmental and climate policies, the European Union has a special responsibility to actively promote the achievement of the environmental goals of sustainable development, with our future depending on it. Despite the progress that has been made, further efforts are needed to achieve a sustainable and climate-neutral Europe, the protection of human health and conservation of natural capital.

The Croatian Presidency will therefore begin comprehensive discussions on the main initiatives of the European Green Deal. It will continue the debate on the transition to a resource-efficient, circular and low-carbon economy, with the aim of achieving sustainable use of resources and climate neutrality by 2050. The Presidency will work to strengthen resilience to climate change and conserve biodiversity. Special emphasis will be placed on air quality, sustainable water management and protecting the sea.

Environmental protection

The Croatian Presidency will place emphasis on biodiversity conservation at the EU and global level after 2020. The Presidency will encourage discussion on a framework for the full integration of biodiversity into sectoral policies, highlighting the need for radical change and setting a global example.

The Presidency will continue the preparations at EU level for the negotiations on a new global strategic framework for post-2020 biodiversity conservation, to be adopted at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2020. During this process, and supported by the UN Summit on Biodiversity, the focus will be on the urgent need for action aimed at halting biodiversity loss and ensuring a high level of ambition after 2020.

The Presidency intends to continue the debate on measures to strengthen the protection of the marine

environment from pollution in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal 14 – conservation of oceans, seas and marine resources, while taking into account transition to circular economy. This includes the implementation of the existing legislative framework on marine waste and additional ways of preventing its occurrence, as well as the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive after 2020.

The Croatian Presidency will initiate discussions on the Circular Economy Action Plan, aimed at achieving more sustainable use of resources through reduction of the use of materials, prevention of waste generation and deepening intersectoral cooperation. This should contribute to achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal. During the Presidency, discussions will be held on the evaluations of European legislation in the field of air and water quality, contributing to the debate on an



intersectoral approach to achieving zero pollution, aimed at improving the protection of health of citizens and preservation of the ecosystem. With the same objective in mind, the Presidency intends to prepare the EU's position for continuing the process of establishing a strategic framework for chemicals and waste management at a global level beyond 2020.

Development of circular economy, conservation of biodiversity, protection of the sea and coastal areas from pollution

Transition to climate neutrality by 2050 and adaptation to climate change

The Croatian Presidency will keep in mind the new ambitious direction of developing a green and sustainable Europe. To this end, it will promote activities aimed at strengthening the fight against climate change and the EU's global role as a leader in the transition towards climate neutrality by 2050. The Presidency will initiate all the actions necessary to define the first European „Climate Law“ in the context of the European Green Deal. The goal is to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and incorporate it into the European legislation.

At the same time, the Presidency will work, in accordance with its obligations under the Paris Agreement, on the preparation and submission of the EU's long-term low-carbon strategy and

nationally determined contribution to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

At the international level, work will continue on the implementation of the Paris Agreement and further elaboration of rules for its implementation, as well as the establishment of a new financing objective for developing countries.

The Presidency will strive to ensure that climate financing is properly integrated into the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. The goal is to carry out the low-carbon transition in a cost-effective and socially just manner, and to ensure the competitiveness of the economy and European industry in global markets. The Presidency will seek to stimulate a detailed debate within the European Union on how to finance the transition towards climate neutrality by 2050. The issue of developing innovative instruments for financing climate change adaptation will also be added to the discussion.

Discussion on the European Green Deal and more effective fight against climate change



Kopački rit Nature Park, at the confluence of the Drava and Danube rivers
Source: Croatian Tourist Board

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council

(EYCS)



Croatian
Presidency of
the Council
of the European
Union



Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council

Education and training play a key role in fostering economic growth and social cohesion. Only through high-quality and inclusive education can the Union maintain its global competitiveness and enable its citizens to realise their full potential. The Presidency will therefore pay particular attention to developing the knowledge, skills and competences needed for the future, and to promoting a more balanced mobility and 'brain circulation'. Cultural diversity, which contributes to sustainable social and economic development in Europe, will be the main theme of the European Capital of Culture 2020, the Croatian city of Rijeka. Croatia will address the issues of risk management in cultural heritage, media literacy in the digital environment, and the mobility of the cultural and creative sectors. In order to develop a more vital society, it is necessary to work on creating opportunities for the youth, especially in rural and remote areas.

Education

By investing in human capital, we not only strengthen resilience and develop the potential of the economy, but we also create the foundation for social cohesion and active citizenship. Education occupies an increasingly important position in the implementation of reforms within the European Semester, therefore the Presidency is planning a ministerial debate and the adoption of a resolution on educational reforms in the European Semester. The Presidency will also focus on discussing the proposal for a new strategic framework for cooperation in education and training by 2030.

Teachers at all levels of education face the challenges of modern society, conceptual changes in the approach to learning and teaching, digital transformation of schools, innovative and contemporary pedagogy and analytics of learning and teaching, and a culture of school governance and management. The Presidency will propose Council conclusions on European 'teachers and trainers for the future' and organise a conference dedicated to teachers as promoters of 'new skills' for the jobs of the future.

Mobility of scientists is a strategic goal, but also a consequence of the development of internationally relevant science and the internationalisation of

higher education, with some countries benefitting and some losing intellectual wealth and human capital. Balanced mobility and 'brain circulation' are prerequisites for the cohesion and balanced development of all parts of the European Union. Strengthening the mobility and positioning of the EU as an attractive place for study and scientific research will contribute to the creation of a European Education Area by 2025, notably the European Universities. The Presidency will continue to work on the timely adoption of the new ERASMUS+ Programme.

Balanced mobility and stronger connection between Union citizens

Youth

The Croatian Presidency will pay particular attention to the challenges faced by young people who need to be further empowered in order to be able to actively engage in community life and contribute to social change. The aftermath of the global economic crisis has affected youth the most, especially those in rural areas, including many young families and highly skilled workers. Education, employment and youth independence are a common challenge facing many Member States, going beyond the national framework and requiring a more intensive commitment from the Union.



Differences in the availability of education, employment, transport connectivity, and cultural and leisure facilities widen inequality among young people living in urban, rural or remote areas. Lack of opportunities and differences in quality of life lead to emigration, and it is necessary to determine what is needed for young people in rural and remote areas to ensure that they stay, thus preserving the vitality of these areas. The Presidency will focus on creating opportunities for young people in rural and remote areas, and will propose Council conclusions including measures to ensure a level playing field for a better standard of living. The coexistence of all generations will be fostered through greater opening up of opportunity for the active development of youth associations and associations for the youth, and the development of social entrepreneurship.

Youth work needs to be further strengthened because young people are not sufficiently informed about the work of youth associations and associations for the youth, which play an important role in advocating their interests. The Presidency will work to raise awareness of the youth sector, through information and resource reinforcement, with the specific goal of fostering quality youth work.

The Presidency will intensify the implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue, in line with the EU Youth Strategy for the period 2019-2027. Croatia will propose the adoption of a resolution on creating opportunities for young people based on the results of the 7th cycle of the Dialogue. The Presidency will continue to work on the timely adoption of the Regulation on the European Solidarity Corps.

Cultural and audio-visual policy

The Croatian Presidency will continue to work on the timely adoption of the Creative Europe Regulation. The Presidency will pay particular attention to the

protection of cultural heritage. The conference and Council conclusions will contribute to improving risk management in the field of cultural heritage. This is primarily about creating common mechanisms to reduce various types of adverse impacts, strengthening safeguards and applying best practices.

Croatia will also place emphasis on the issues of media literacy, one of the key competences in modern society. Through a proposal for Council conclusions, the Presidency will consider the role of traditional media in the development of media literacy, as well as their specific position in the digital world and the fight against disinformation.

The Presidency will organise a conference on mobility in the cultural and creative sectors.

Creating better opportunities for the youth, especially in rural areas

Sport

The Presidency will encourage discussions on the social dimension of sport. Particular attention will be paid to the need for continuing education and training of coaches and other professionals in the field of sport.

Council conclusions will be prepared on the subject of skills and competencies for coaches in order to bring sports training and recreational activities in line with quality, safety and health protection standards. Special consideration will be given to the specific needs of particular social groups, especially children and persons with disabilities.

Croatia will organise a conference on the role and influence of the media in sports to discuss ways in which the media can have a positive impact on sport, taking into account technology development and the accessibility of sport through new media.

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Advent in Zagreb, declared "Best Christmas Market in Europe" for three years in a row
Photo: J. Duval
Source: Croatian Tourist Board