Now that the Finland holds the European Council presidency, we spoke to MEPs about what to expect over the next six months.

No surprises
The Finnish Presidency will reflect its people, says Nils Torvalds (RE)

Somehow the Finnish Presidency falls between two stools. There will be no major files from the European Commission, but there will be two big issues: the budget and the MFF as well as the Commission’s work programme.

At the same time, there are many issues that influence the Presidency, but where it doesn’t have a real say.

The Parliament will be busy finding suitable candidates for the Commission. Considering that the Parliament was side-lined while the Council’s candidates for the top European positions were being negotiated, this process might find some bumps on the road before the final result.

Overall, I don’t expect any major surprises. Finns are very down to earth people, as will be their Presidency.

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Investing in health
It’s time to advance the economy of wellbeing, says Miapetra Kumpula-Natri (S&D)

July saw Parliament’s new mandate finally start, EU leaders gained an understanding of the candidates for the top EU jobs and last but not least - at least for us Finns - Finland took over the presidency of the Council of the EU.

From my point of view, Finland’s presidency programme - “Sustainable Europe – Sustainable future” - stresses two important topics.

First, the newly-appointed Finnish government, led by the Social Democrats, are pushing to make EU more competitive and socially inclusive. One key issue will be the economy of wellbeing.

If we want to increase the wellbeing of European citizens in the future, it is important to recognise that the wellbeing of people is recognised as a prerequisite for economic growth and social and economic stability. Nonsense? Not quite.

The IMF and OECD have emphasised that investment in people and their wellbeing always increases economic productivity. However, the reverse is not always true.

Therefore it is important that Parliament uses the momentum created by the Finnish presidency and advances the economy of wellbeing during this mandate.

Second, I also want to highlight Finland’s aim to strengthen the EU’s position as a global leader in climate action; PM Antti Rinne even stated that solving the climate crisis could be Europe’s next heroic act.

I believe we can fight climate change and simultaneously create quality jobs for Europeans. How?

By boosting the sustainable competitiveness of European industry, focusing European research efforts and current funding so that we get the technological innovations of tomorrow to ensure that Europe has a sustainable, climate friendly, secure and cost-effective energy infrastructure.
However, change must begin today, and everybody must be included - the Parliament, the Council and the Commission. If not, we will lose tomorrow’s jobs.

**Ambitious climate action**

*Finland should lead by example on climate change efforts, says Heidi Hautala (Greens/efa), vice president of the European Parliament*

“Climate change” are the first words in the governmental programme of the new Finnish coalition government, with an ambitious commitment to carbon neutrality by 2035.

It is essential that Finland not only leads by example but also demands equally ambitious climate decisions from the Council during its presidency.

A commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050 in the EU is not enough without concrete actions. The real challenge of the Presidency will then be to raise the ambition level for emission reductions for 2030.

Finland is in the right place at the right time with its experience in circular economy. The Finnish Presidency will hopefully answer the growing demands on transparency of EU decision-making.

An important step would be to open up the documents of Council working groups and particularly the positions of the Member States within them.

Perhaps the Finnish Presidency is also well positioned to untangle the deadlock of absolute majority in the Council.

Finland has committed to easing foreign policy decision-making by selectively moving to qualified majority decisions.

The requirement of unanimity in taxation is another major obstacle, hindering the eradication of tax
avoidance and tax evasion.

It also makes new sources of own income, such as environmental taxes, virtually impossible for the EU.

**Social inclusion**

![Image of Silvia Modig](https://eu2019.fi/en/frontpage)

*Finland can lead Europe to genuine social inclusion, says Silvia Modig (GUE/NGL)*

Climate change is the greatest challenge we face and it’s a question we cannot afford not to address.

As an ENVI committee member, I am delighted with Finland’s goal of strengthening the EU’s position as a global leader in climate action.

This is extremely important and should be a priority during the Presidency. In all climate action, we must remember we have to take into consideration social justice.

There are many things that currently divide us, common values have been put into question. It is important that we build a Europe that is good and fair for all its citizens.

As a Nordic welfare state, Finland can set a path towards a socially inclusive Europe and strongly defend democracy and human rights.


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