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Greens/EFA demands for the Finnish Presidency

Finland takes over EU Council Presidency from Romania which did not exactly show the highest integrity in its own politics. In this perspective Finland is the right member state to answer to 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 in them. It is long overdue that the union can act like an intergovernmental organization.

The Greens have a strong presence in the new Finnish government five party center left coalition, and so the expectations are high as Climate change are the first two words in the Governmental Programme. Its commitment to carbon neutrality by 2035 is very ambitious and has truly been noted internationally.

Climate change is then also a priority for the Presidency. Taking into account the urgency and the strong mobilization by society with Fridays for Future, nothing would be more compelling.

It is essential that Finland not only leads by example but also demands ambitious climate decisions from the Council during its presidency. We note with interest the commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050 in the EU but it is clearly not enough without frontloading the ambition and in particular concrete actions.

The real challenge of the Presidency will then be to raise the ambition level for emission reductions for 2030. The EU needs to do more to build hope for a sustainable future and take leadership in greening the economy. In fact, Finland is in the right place at the right time with its experience in circular economy.

We welcome Finland's commitment to ease foreign policy decision-making by selectively moving to qualified majority decisions in the Council. It is indeed shameful that the requirement of unanimity has e.g. prevented the EU from criticizing the severe human rights violations by China.

The requirement of unanimity in taxation is a major obstacle also in eradication of tax avoidance and tax evasion. It is unacceptable that EU member states lose billions every year. What is more, taxation provides for some of the best instruments for green economy. Environmental taxes are now rather impossible for the EU. Perhaps the Finnish Presidency is able to open this lock.

Heidi Hautala

Green MEP from Finland, previous Minister of International Development and State Ownership Steering

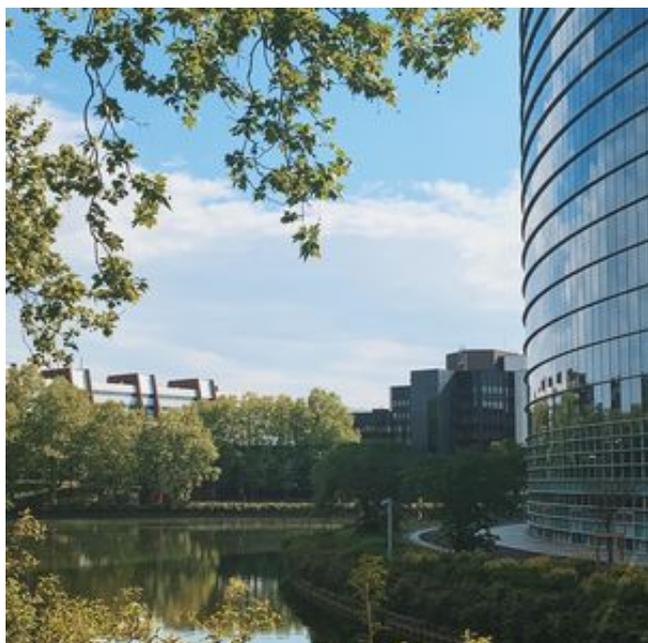
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