

Povodom završetka hrvatskog predsjedanja Vijećem EU, organizacije civilnog društva okupljene u platformu Forum 2020 čija je članica i *Documenta*, osvrću se na rad Vlade tijekom hrvatskog predsjedanja. Analiziramo politike i prioritete koji su bili definirani prije početka predsjedanja i ocjenjujemo u kojoj su mjeri realizirani.

Forum 2020, neformalna platforma više od 30 organizacija civilnog društva okupljena povodom predsjedanja Republike Hrvatske Vijećem Europske unije, kojom koordinira u okviru projekta “Towards open, fair and sustainable Europe in the world – Presidency Project 2019-2021” financiranog od strane Europske komisije, na početku hrvatskog predsjedanja objavila je svoje koje smatra ključnima za budućnost kako Hrvatske, tako i Europske unije.

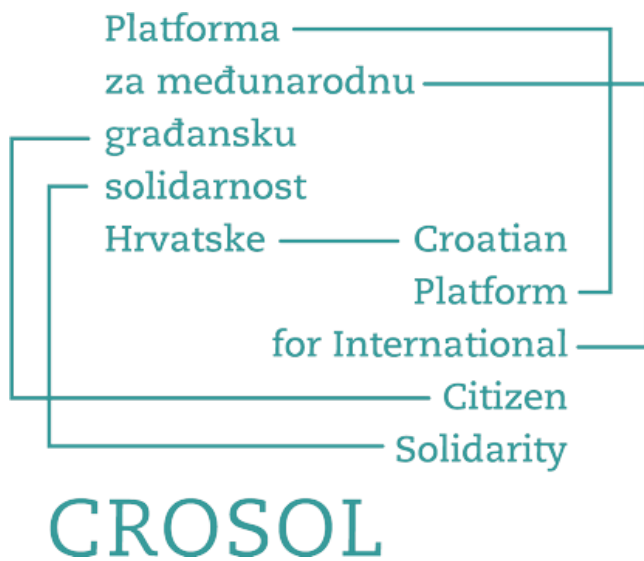
Prioriteti su usvojeni nakon procesa konzultacija s građanima na javnim tribinama i putem online savjetovanja, a neposredno prije početka predsjedanja objavili smo i u suradnji s agencijom Ipsos Puls čija je svrha bila ispitati stavove i informiranost građana o temama vezanim uz predsjedanje Hrvatske Europskom unijom, prioritetima Vlade RH i organizacija civilnog društva za predsjedanje te o funkcioniranju Europske unije i ulozi Hrvatske unutar nje.

Više informacija nalazi se u priopćenju.

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Forum 2020\*, an informal platform of more than 30 civil society organizations gathered for the occasion of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, coordinated by within the project “” funded by the European Commission, announced its at the beginning of the Croatian presidency, considered crucial for the future of both Croatia and the European Union.

The priorities were adopted after a process of consultation with citizens in public forums and through online consultations. Just before the beginning of the presidency we published a public opinion poll in cooperation with the independent polling agency Ipsos Puls, whose purpose was to examine the attitudes and knowledge of citizens on topics related to Croatia’s presidency of the EU, the priorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and civil society organizations regarding the presidency, as well as the functioning of the European Union and the role of Croatia within.

Through the process of public consultations and public opinion research, four thematic priorities have been defined:

- A democratic Europe of free and responsible people. A Europe of the rule of law and human rights. A Europe of a free, independent and critical civil society, independent institutions and independent media;
- A European Union that still has the potential to expand. A Europe that stabilizes the Western Balkans;
- A Europe committed to the goals of sustainable development within and beyond its borders;

At the end of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU, we will reflect upon the activities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia in terms of these priorities. Given the challenging context in which Croatia chaired the Council due to the global coronavirus pandemic, which significantly affected social, economic and political processes around the world, we believe that during the Croatian Presidency there was still room for stronger and more persistent work on most of these priorities.

In terms of strengthening the rule of law and the human rights situation within the EU, both of which are the Union's most burning issues, Croatia missed the opportunity to assert these topics more efficiently, and chose to abstain from making a clear statement on violations of the rule of law in Hungary and Poland. This sent a message of tacit approval of the harmful policies in force in these countries and enabled further strengthening of illiberal democracy within the EU. At the same time, Croatia has consistently pursued a policy of ignoring migrants' human rights violations at its own borders, despite evidence and reports from numerous local and foreign media and civil society organizations on inhumane police treatment. Of particular concern is the current mood within the European Union institutions, in particular the European Commission, according to which the budget for the forthcoming Rights and Values Program under the new Multiannual Financial Framework should be reduced by 20% compared to previous proposals. Croatia refrained from articulating a clear and vocal attitude about this as well.

On the topic of the enlargement of the European Union to the Western Balkans, despite the fact that the summit on the Western Balkans was not held in its regular form, a slightly better result was achieved. We welcome the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and Northern Macedonia and the adoption of the Zagreb Declaration, noting that a pivotal step in cooperation with the Western Balkans, ie intensifying negotiations and implementing reforms, especially in the area of rule of law and democratization, is yet to come.

The area of sustainable development and slowing down climate change was mostly declaratively supported by the Croatian presidency, but no concrete progress was made regarding the Strategy for Long-Term Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the EU, nor the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development. Croatia did not take advantage of the enviable starting position, secured by the Finnish presidency, which was much more vocal in advocating on the issue, and mostly left it to the countries assessed as the ones with more capacity to do so.

The fourth priority of civil society organizations on the European Union as a global peacebuilding actor went unnoticed by the Croatian Presidency, missing the opportunity to send messages of cooperation during the first celebration of the Day of Peaceful Reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region, which took place in the town of Vukovar, in eastern Croatia, on the Danube border with Serbia. Croatia and other EU members have continued to use the discourse of securitization and investment in defense and military capabilities, to the detriment of peacebuilding policies. This has further suppressed one of the European Union's most important legacies as the most successful peace project in history.

Of major concern is that during the presidency, the Government took over the Civil Society Development Council and conducted procedures for electing members of the European Economic and Social Committee from the ranks of civil society organizations, which was not in line with the principles of transparency and autonomy of civil society, principles which constitute any decent democracy.

In conclusion, it is necessary to take a definite critical stand towards the discourse of members of the Government and other officials of the Republic of Croatia, who showcase the Croatian presidency as successful, with only the number of meetings and conferences to support the claim. The success of a country's presidency of the Council of the European Union can by no means be measured by the mere fact that certain events have taken place — this is a mere minimum technical precondition for the active work on EU policies.

been successfully completed, coordinated by the mediation of the presiding state.

However, recognizing the fact that the first presidency is a big test for every member state, and having in mind the unusual situation in which the Croatian presidency occurred due to the global coronavirus pandemic, we believe that this experience will serve to strengthen Croatia's capacity for active and quality participation in the EU policy-making processes, and we hope that in future processes there will be more room for a wider participation of citizens and civil society organizations, something that was lacking on this occasion.

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