



Special issue: Romania's first Presidency of the EU Council

**George Ciamba,
Minister Delegate
for European Affairs**



Chairing, for the first time, the work of the Council of the EU was not only a test of our ability to reach qualified majorities, in order to advance the European agenda and to materialize projects that were honestly adapted to the expectations of the EU citizens. It was also a test

of confidence both in front of the European partners and in relation to our own hopes and ambitions, that increased from one success story to another.

Beyond the figures, which reflect the quantifiable part of our success, the first Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU was, at the same time, a “story” about courage, responsibility, political commitment, and loyalty to the authentic mission of the Presidency - neutrality. All the promises we made in January 2019 and started our journey with were respected, the echoes of the last two weeks confirming the success of one of the most important country projects since the accession of Romania to the European Union.

At the end of this six-month marathon, it is almost impossible not to look retrospectively at the challenges characterising the beginning: the ever-changing European and global landscape, the Brexit conundrum that marked, after 2016, all agendas of the EU Council Presidencies, the risks and opportunities of a transition presidency finding itself between institutional and legislative cycles.

In this complex background, our efforts to act as an honest broker, leaving aside the logic of national representation, were even greater, as the negotiation dynamics were strongly influenced by the European electoral context, and, implicitly, by the tendencies of further politicization of the discussions on ...p. 2

**Luminița Odobescu,
Permanent Representative of
Romania to the European Union**



Romania's mandate to the Presidency of the EU Council will remain a reference point in our country's history after its accession in 2007, for several reasons.

Firstly, it is for the first time that Romania has this position in which, for 6 months, we had to find the right balance between the honest broker status and ensuring coherence with the national interest, whose importance is unaltered, regardless of the circumstances. During the six months that we have successfully played the role of honest broker, we understood that the European Union interest and the national interest have very much in common and that, in fact, both as a Member State and as the President of the Council, Romania has succeeded in being a consensus-maker, a genuine pro-European country, whose strength lies in the ability to learn, listen, respect the others, and be a good partner in joint projects. It has also shown that it can be particularly effective in the way it uses its resources, suggesting feasible solutions, even in difficult situations.

Secondly, the results obtained give us many reasons to be proud. If I could define this in the simplest words, I would say that “we have demonstrated that it is possible”, that

it is possible through perseverance, enormous work and strong expertise to achieve the remarkable result of closing 90 legislative files in 100 days. All this in a complicated climate marked by the European elections and implicitly by a limited window of negotiations with the European Parliament, the unpredictability of Brexit and the need to prepare the Union for any scenario, the preparations for the new European institutional cycle. Thirdly, as the Presidency of the EU Council, Romania represented the interests of all Member States in the negotiations with the European Parliament. ...p. 2

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George Ciamba, Minister Delegate for European Affairs

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certain sensitive and stagnant dossiers. The key to success was this ability to transform risks into opportunities, engaging ourselves in a delicate balance act between the interests of all camps, political and geographic ones, in order to promote an agenda of cohesion and consensus, assumed right at the beginning of our mandate.

We respected our promise to act in favour of the European project consolidation, to strengthen the internal convergence and cohesion of the EU, without which the Union's regional and global ambitions would be impossible to fulfil. We leave behind us a safer, fairer Union, with transparent and predictable rules, stronger in the fight against disinformation. Last but not least, we hand over to the Finnish Presidency a Union that is more aware of the fact that the viability, attractiveness and credibility of the European project depend essentially on the firm support for fulfilling the Western Balkans' European aspirations.

At the end of this mandate, I am convinced that Romania has strengthened its profile at EU level, becoming a stronger and a more relevant voice. Following this first mandate at the Presidency of the Council of the EU, we continue our European path with a generous reserve of credibility, which allows us, now that this exercise of impartiality ended, to promote our interests in a more pragmatic and convincing way.

H.E. Ambassador George Ciamba was appointed Minister Delegate for European Affairs in November 2018. He chaired the work of the General Affairs Council between January 1 and June 30 2019. Previously, he served as Secretary of State for bilateral and strategic affairs in the Euro-Atlantic area, as well as State Secretary for European Affairs. George Ciamba is a career diplomat and has been working in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since December 1990. He represented Romania as extraordinary and plenipotentiary ambassador to the Hellenic Republic and Republic of Turkey.

Luminița Odobescu, Permanent Representative of Romania to the European Union

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Although this is a difficult and sometimes even an impossible mission, the quality of the legislation we have negotiated has never been sacrificed by the pressure of the time factor. The 90 legislative acts bring real, concrete benefits to the European citizens. From social files, continuing with those related to boosting EU competitiveness and strengthening the Single Market, encouraging digitization, innovation, connectivity and research, ensuring the efficient functioning of the financial sector, policies that make Europe a safer place for its citizens or measures to prepare the Union for whatever the Brexit scenario would be in the future.

Fourthly, the Sibiu Summit was a milestone in defining the future EU Strategic Agenda, the programmatic reference document on the development of EU policies over the next 5 years. We have left behind an important legacy that will be remembered as the "Sibiu spirit", translated by unity, constructive, cohesive thinking and action, in the best interest of the Union.

And last, but not least, the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council represented a real diplomatic marathon during these six months, an endurance exercise that tested our limits concerning our expertise, negotiation skills, stress management and, especially, the team spirit. And the Romanian administration has successfully passed this test. The lessons learned have been assimilated and I am convinced that they will influence the work in the field of European affairs from now on.

For these reasons and not only, I feel honoured that, as the Permanent Representative of Romania to the European Union, I led the team of Romanian experts in Brussels in the first Romanian Presidency of the EU Council, a unique experience in the life of any diplomat. Our journey continues, with the same responsibility and determination in promoting Romania's interests, in a Union that is not only a common project, but also a common destiny.

H.E. Ambassador Luminița Odobescu: Permanent Representative of Romania to the European Union. Career diplomat and economist by training, specialized in trade. Before being appointed Romania's Permanent Representative to the EU in September 2015, Mrs. Odobescu was State Counsellor at the Prime Minister's Chancellery, Ambassador, Adviser to the Prime Minister on EU and Foreign Policy (2012-2015). She held various coordinating positions within the Romanian MFA on EU affairs, including Secretary of State. Between 2002 and 2007 she was part of Romania's negotiating team for EU accession within the Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union in Brussels, being responsible for several chapters of negotiation (energy, economic and monetary union, taxation, trade).

Gabriela Drăgan, Director General of the European Institute of Romania

The six months of the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council ended successfully, despite the initial worries voiced before the debut of the Presidency. In the first semester of 2019, the legislative work of the EU Council (which actually represents its main attribution) was extremely intense, focusing mainly on January - mid April (on April 18th, the eighth legislature of the European Parliament ended). The list of achievements announced by the government for the first 100 days consisted of 90 completed files adopted by the Council and 22 legislative acts signed with the European Parliament. The very good results have also been linked to the openness of the Commission and the Parliament, both at the end of their mandate, to close as many of the dossiers already on the ordinary legislative procedure.



Even in this context, the strong point of the Romanian Presidency was observed in the effectiveness displayed for reaching a consensus. This was utterly important, given that the role of the country holding the presidency of the Council is ensuring a balanced mediation of the often-divergent views expressed by representatives of member states on the proposals addressed by the European Commission. A role not very easy to comply with, as alliances between member states are made and broken according to the subject in question. In addition, this period of time was extremely complex at the European level. Brexit, the European elections, the closing mandates for the current Commission, as well as the President of the European Council, all made strikingly difficult the task of reaching a consensus.

Here are two examples of important legislative acts finalized under the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council:

The gas directive (Directive 2019/692) of 17 April 2019 is the result of an extensive negotiation process which has begun in November 2017 - when the EC made the proposal for a directive. It was followed by the view expressed by the European Parliament in April 2018, the Council's position in February 2019 and the final agreement reached in April 2019. The Directive raised many arguments because it requires EU rules to apply to all pipelines coming or going to third countries, thus having a direct impact on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and EU-Russia relations respectively.

The copyright and related rights in the Digital Single Market directive (Directive 2019/790) approved by the EP and the Council in April 2019 is the result of a legislative proposal made by the EC in September 2016. It had an extremely difficult track, with numerous debates and votes in the Parliament and the Council. The directive has provoked a living debate on how major Internet platforms and news aggregators, such as Google or YouTube, will ensure fair fees for content creators (musicians, actors, journalists, etc.) and will offer them the same advantages as in the offline environment.

For Romania, these six months represented the perfect opportunity to promote a favourable external image and to demonstrate that the state is capable of organizing, negotiating and properly communicating. If on a technical level, things went without any blockages, the formal and informal meetings scheduled being organized according to the timetable and a large number of files being closed, there were some drawbacks from a political perspective. Internal tensions were felt on an external level, the most concluding proof being the Sibiu Summit. Even under these circumstances, the teams of professionals from the Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as from the various line ministries, have completed their tasks and assured an unimpeded execution of this first successful mandate of the Romanian Presidency to the Council of the EU.

Gabriela Drăgan is Director General of the European Institute of Romania and Professor at the Faculty of International Business and Economics, Bucharest University of Economic Studies.

Iordan Bărbulescu, PhD, University professor, SNSPA

Of course, the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU was important because it was the first time we exerted such a responsibility at the EU level. All the more so since we were the last Member State among the newcomers of 2004/2007 and we could compare the performance of each other.

It was also important because, with intelligence, we could promote projects that would meet our vision of Europe - what we want to build together. I mean by that: solidarity, cohesion, unity, etc.

It was also important because in Sibiu we were about to have a European Council where we would discuss the future of the EU without UK. As UK had not "kept its promise" and is still a member of the EU, in Sibiu a document was adopted, which is rather a statement of good intentions, but even so it was a good thing that a whole world saw that we can and that we are a beautiful people and that we live in a beautiful country. Leaving the joke aside, it was good for us to have a European Council!

Finally, it was not a bad thing that so many files were closed and here we have the proof of the professionalism of hundreds

of people from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union, supplemented by hundreds of other people from our ministries who, alongside the professionals of the Commission and the Council, etc. have diligently worked for it.

Now, let's become the "devil's advocate" and see the same reality from a different perspective.

For example, many of these files were at the end of the European Parliament mandate and everyone was interested for them not to remain unresolved.

Then the Presidency of the Council is no longer what it was before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty when we did not have the Permanent President of the European Council and therefore, as a country, you also had that responsibility, we did not have a permanent President to the Foreign Relations Council, so you also had a say in this area, etc. I want to say that the role of the state is diminished compared to the pre-2009 Presidencies. In other words the "double command" of State - European institutions is much more present than before.

Finally, even if we do not like to say it, the events in the country have set as a black cloud, grey at least, over the Presidency, our legislative and political clowning around - the rule of law, values, democracy, the EU, criminal codes, etc. - leaving a "shadow" over our declared yet not assumed Europeanism, in a time when, naturally, we were supposed to be more Europeans than ever.

Unfortunately, the "warm peace" between us and others ended with the Presidency and we return to the "cold war" of the past. About the next Presidency, we do not know when it will come!

Jordan Bărbulescu: Diplomat, university professor, PhD in Political Science and Sociology, Dean of the Department of International Relations and European Integration of the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration. Since March 2012 he has been the President of the above-mentioned University Senate.



Radu Carp, PhD, University professor, University of Bucharest

The Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union cannot be assessed objectively because we do not have the appropriate tools to make comparisons between the different Presidencies of the Member States. We do not know what a "successful" Presidency means, nor what a failure means.

There are, however, two components that need to be taken into consideration in such an assessment. The first concerns the logistics side. Many presidencies had not passed this test: the Austrian one organized a disastrous Summit in Salzburg, the Slovak one was compromised by an unsuccessful trip on the Danube when the conversations of the participants were covered by the noisy engine of the ship, the Bulgarian one was under the sign of interception of the European officials' conversations at the hotel owned by a Bulgarian close to the Russian secret services.



Romania avoided such accusations through the excellent organization of an informal Summit in Sibiu.

The second component concerns the management of dossiers. Romania had an extraordinary chance due to the involvement of Mrs. Luminița Odobescu - the right person in the right place. Her team in Brussels and the exemplary involvement of the technical team in Bucharest guaranteed solving some particularly difficult files.

Romania had a great chance due to the postponement of the actual date of Brexit. Maintaining a unitary position in Brussels in this file is also the merit of Romania, which has refrained from any bilateral talks between Romania and the United Kingdom, outside the EU framework.

Consensus has been obtained with great perseverance on many sensitive files, such as Nord Stream.

The great regret of this Presidency is that it has not further advanced the start of the negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. The opposition of France and the Netherlands was very strong, yet the mention of the need to start these negotiations in the second half of 2019 in the CAGRE conclusions is the merit of Romania.

What this Presidency lacked was the coordination of the technical team with the political factor. Often, the technical team had to define Romania's lines of mandate in certain files, in the absence of the indications of the political factor, due to the lack of political awareness of important topics on the European agenda. However, there have been cases where the political factor has disrupted the technical team's objectives - moving the embassy to Jerusalem is the best example. Romania was not very active in the application of the rule of law mechanism due to internal policy considerations, but was somehow advantaged by the fact that in this area the countries concerned had no new initiatives that would justify

a stronger behaviour on the part of the other Member States.

In conclusion, the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union justifies a moderate optimism. Romania has a more prominent role in Brussels, it remains to be seen how it will succeed in capitalizing the trust obtained in the first half of this year in order to acquire a top-level portfolio within the new European Commission.

Radu Carp: *Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest, Director of the Doctoral School of Political Science. Representative of the University of Bucharest in the Project CIII-PL-0702-06-1718 - Ethics and Politics in the European Context, part of the CEEPUS III network, coordinated by the John Paul II Catholic University in Lublin, which brings together Central and Eastern- European universities (2012-present). Coordinator of the University of Bucharest team in the European scientific network Observatory on Local Autonomy, coordinated by Université de Lille (2015-). Member of the Executive Committee of E.MA - European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratization, EIUC Program, European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratization, Venice (2015-present).*

Ruxandra Popescu, Programme director, CRPE

The end of Romania's 1st Presidency of the European Union Council marks an important milestone for our country, a moment that celebrates intense work and efforts of maintaining Romania firmly committed to a more united and stronger Union.

Many have questioned whether Romania will be ready to undertake such a meaningful task to demonstrate its capacity to fulfil and maximise all the objectives and opportunities which may arise by facing the EU most pressing issues.

During the time of last-minute preparations for the mandate of the EU Council Presidency and whilst dealing with internal political conflicts, some of the Romanian institutions looked somehow unprepared to take the challenges ahead, especially as the European scene was expecting some of the most critical moments in the EU's history, with the United Kingdom due to exit at the end of March 2019 and the new upcoming European Parliament Election.

Starting from a less favourable position, Romania has managed though to achieve great results through dedicated and determined effort and has successfully concluded its mandate with 90 legislative proposals before the elections for the European Parliament, proposals that aimed at bringing tangible benefits to the lives of European citizens.

Pursuing the adoption of the EU's next long-term budget and ensuring that the objectives of the Multiannual Financial Framework are fully in line with the commitments of the EU was another high priority for the Romanian Presidency. Significant progress has been achieved by obtaining agreements for 10 sectoral proposals of the MFF, progress that has been highly appreciated and saluted by the President of the European Council Donald Tusk and the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker.

The end of the Romanian Presidency and the results achieved during the mandate prove undeniably that Romania is ready to undertake a bigger role in advancing the EU agenda and future priorities, role that can also be reinforced by the commitment of an efficient and competent government.

Ruxandra Popescu: *Programme Director, Romanian Centre for European Policies. With an extensive experience in project management in various areas, from social justice to education, active citizenship and human rights, she is currently pursuing her PhD in Economic Diplomacy within the Economics and International Affairs Doctoral School of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies.*

Europuls - Centre of European Expertise

Europuls was one of the most involved organizations of the civil society in preparing and supporting the Romanian Presidency at the Council of the EU. Back in 2016, we set the foundation of the RO2019 Support Platform of the Romanian Presidency together with our partners from CSDF because we considered that a successful Presidency can be achieved only through a constant dialogue with all the actors impacted by the decisions taken at the European level.



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The governmental institutions that were responsible for the preparing and exercising the Presidency (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Minister Delegate for European Affairs) have responded affirmatively to our call to include the

civil society in the preparation of the Presidency. Even so, they have allowed limited cooperation in the elaboration of the Presidency's priorities. We bring to memory the EU-RO Forum of public consultation for setting the priorities of the Presidency and other initiatives. Yet these initiatives did not have continuity and tangible results, and the collaboration has narrowed more and more as we approached the moment of taking over the mandate, until it disappeared almost completely during the six months of the Presidency. We consider this situation to be a missed opportunity to attract the resources, the expertise and the connections of the civil society with the citizens, so that the people could be more aware of and understand better this historic moment for the European Romania.

The Romanian Presidency at the Council of the EU should have meant for Romanians a moment of acquaintance with the EU and its institutions. The Presidency would have been the perfect occasion to stimulate on a larger scale the interest of the Romanian citizens regarding the EU, to foster a closer connection with the European values. Sadly, this did not happen, the authorities did not lead a systematic effort in this regard, although the timing was favourable also since the European elections took place during the Presidency. The government prioritized the technical side of the Presidency, without taking the opportunity to integrate the whole society in this European exercise. Even more, to our dismay, some members of the ruling coalition have launched during the Presidency into discourses that put under question the European values and became in some cases clearly anti-European. This fact made us register another lost opportunity to bring the EU closer to Romanians.

On the other hand, we acknowledge the success of the Presidency concerning the technical aspects, the impressive number of legislative dossiers closed. Although there are voices that explain this number through the fact that it was the end of the legislative cycle, which is in part true, in fact, the Presidency had half the time of the other Presidencies to see the end of the negotiations. The Romanian diplomats have mediated and reached consensus on many domains and they were appreciated by their peers from the European institutions and the other Member States for doing this. We appreciate especially the work of the Permanent Representation of Romania in Brussels that has led the burden in this technical sphere. In contrast, as we have warned at the beginning of the Presidency, the efforts of the civil servants and the diplomats were shadowed by the political confrontations at the national level, that during the Presidency have reverberated even more at the European level.

In conclusion, the Romanian Presidency at the Council of the EU had success in regard to the technical aspects of passing legislation at the EU level, but missed some opportunities to improve Romania's image, to bring the EU closer to the Romanian citizen and also to integrate the civil society in the exercise so important for Romania.

EUROPULS - the Centre of European Expertise, the initiator and main organiser of EUROSAT forum, is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2010 in Brussels by a group of Romanian experts in European affairs. Its purpose is to promote the European integration process in Romania and to help develop a European public space. Europuls aims to encourage public debates on European issues through articles and studies, and by organising seminars, workshops and conferences. European commissioners, Romanian and foreign MEPs, political leaders, civil society representatives, experts and journalists are the main participants at these events.

Mihai Sebe, Expert EIR

The rotating Presidency of the EU Council held by Romania between 1 January and 30 June 2019 also had a very active *parliamentary dimension*, completing the actions of the Romanian Government and the Presidential Administration.

The European basis of this involvement is provided by the "Guidelines for inter-parliamentary cooperation in the European Union", also known as the "Hague Guidelines" adopted in 2004 by the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments (finalized in Lisbon in 2008). It will be supplemented by the Treaty of Lisbon which has increased the importance of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency of the EU Council by emphasizing the involvement of national Parliaments in the European decision-making process.

In this respect, a strong signal was given by the Parliament of Romania, as representative of Romanian society in its entirety, and as the sole legislative authority, which issued a Declaration in December 2018 to provide added legitimacy to the national institutions involved in this process. On this occasion, the objectives of this process were reiterated.

During the first semester of 2019, the Parliament Palace hosted six interparliamentary events. The seventh event of the Romanian Parliamentary Dimension was organized in Brussels, alongside the European Parliament. All the events have approached the themes below in a variety of ways. The conferences enjoyed wide international participation, the participants' intervention, background materials and the event findings being available to all the stakeholders.

The Parliamentary Dimension agenda was set up in accordance with national priorities, but it was also based on the long-term European aspirations and themes. Starting from these premises, the Declaration has revealed elements of interest such as the need to:

- support the priorities of the European citizen-oriented working agenda and the further development of the social



dimension of the European project;

- facilitate the constructive interparliamentary debate on the next Multiannual Financial Framework, EU's resources, investments, services and public goods that the Union must provide;
- support the European Cohesion Policy, an appropriate budget and adequate criteria of access designed to meet the needs of the net beneficiary countries;
- further promote the Common Agricultural Policy and ensure a sustainable budget for it;
- facilitate the parliamentary dialogue with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in the context of the country's withdrawal from the EU, and the negotiations regarding our future bilateral and multilateral relations;
- find and implement the best solutions for the protection of the Union's external borders, EU enlargement, and the European external action, while taking into consideration the Eastern Partnership;
- promote further transparency at the European institutions' level and create a balance between the public and private spheres within the EU.

For more details, see <http://www.parl2019ro.eu/eu/dp.home?idl=2>

Mihai Sebe is an expert within the European Institute of Romania, Studies and Analyses Unit. With a PhD in political sciences amidst his research area we count political science, European affairs, the impact of new technologies on society, the history of the European idea, etc.

event

Finland will promote a climate-change based agenda during the Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Under the slogan 'Sustainable Europe - Sustainable Future', the Embassy of Finland in Bucharest organized on the 4th of July 2019 a press conference to launch the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU. Having as guests Her Excellency Mrs. Marjut Akola, Ambassador of Finland to Romania, Mr. Teodor Meleşcanu, Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister and Mrs. Angela Cristea, Head of the European Commission Representation in Romania, the event was both an excellent opportunity to discuss Finland's priorities for the current mandate and an occasion to analyse the results achieved by the Romanian Presidency.

Emphasizing the fact that the Finnish Presidency will concentrate on the issues of digitalization and sustainability, Her Excellency Mrs. Marjut Akola presented her country's priorities: consolidating common values and the rule of law, making the EU more competitive and socially inclusive, strengthening the EU's position as a global leader in climate action and in protecting the security of citizens. To achieve these goals, the Finnish Presidency has included in the schedule adopted for the July-December 2019 period a number of dossiers it wishes to advance on the European agenda. For example, one of the mentioned files during the event regards the reform of measures to protect the rule of law in the European Union.

Moreover, regarding climate change, the Finnish Presidency aims to follow up¹ on the efforts made by previous presidencies in defining the key elements of the 2050 long-term strategy on climate change, to implement the energy union, to promote emission reduction, to further advance the implementation of the Commission's Bioeconomy Strategy, to support a common agricultural policy which takes into account climate change, to expand the principles on which circular economy is based upon, to take further actions for implementing the UN Convention of Biological Diversity etc. In addition, Finland also aims to have a sustainable presidency from other points of view: reducing the number of flights thus organizing videoconferences instead and promoting the principles of circular economy (using digital tools instead of paper where possible).

Regarding logistics, there are 6 informal ministerial meetings scheduled to take place during the Finnish Presidency, which will be held in Helsinki: a meeting of ministers for competitiveness (COMPET); a meeting of ministers for environment/climate (ENVI); a meeting of ministers for justice and home affairs (JHA); a foreign affairs ministers' meeting (Gymnich), which will also include a meeting of ministers responsible for the defence portfolio; a meeting of economic and financial affairs ministers (ECOFIN), including a meeting of the Eurogroup; a meeting of ministers for agriculture and fisheries (AGRIFISH). Additionally, Finland is responsible for presiding over the formal meetings of the Council in Brussels and Luxembourg. The presidency's goal is to hold over 130 high-level meetings during its mandate.

With regard to the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, Mr. Teodor Meleşcanu, the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister, recalled² that during the first three months of the mandate, 90 legislative files were closed, double the number compared to previous presidencies. Additionally, he reminded of the approximately 1700 meetings that were organized during the 6 months mandate. Further highlighting the fact that one of the Romanian Presidency's goals was to progress with the development of the Multiannual Financial Framework, on which initial budgetary chapters were debated and agreed upon, Mr. Meleşcanu expressed his wish that the Finnish Presidency will continue the talks and aim to reach a consensus by a reasonable date.

Furthermore, he accentuated the fact that Romania is not only concerned about European issues, but about issues outside

Europe as well, this being the reason why the European pathway of the Western Balkans is of great importance. Towards this end, the EU should review the present agreements it has with these countries and consider new possible partnerships. Also, Finland is situated in a region of great importance to the Eastern Partnership and, for this reason, the Romanian Minister encouraged progress regarding this dossier.

Another aspect which the Finnish Presidency could take into account concerns the increase of resilience, combating hybrid threats and misinformation. The Minister recalled the Romanian strategy to integrate security and European defence with the Transatlantic relation.

During the questions and answers session which followed the official speeches, the topics discussed were: Brexit, the Romanian Commissioner mandate for the next five years and the cooperation and verification mechanism. The answers regarded:

- The possibility to renegotiate the political declaration; however, there is no such possibility for the Withdrawal Agreement;
- The unlikely situation that Romania will have, for the third consecutive time, an influential portfolio assigned to its Commissioner, following the ones on agriculture and regional policy;
- The cooperation and verification mechanism not having a purpose in a European Union where there is an already existing mechanism regarding the rule of law, which is applicable in the Member States.

Another important aspect is the fact the presidency trio, of which Romania and Croatia are part of, has, as its main purpose, to assure the continuity in the Council’s work, at the end of the current institutional cycle. Elections for the European Parliament were held during the Romanian Presidency (May 2019). During the Finnish Presidency the newly-elected Parliament will begin its mandate (July 2019) and the new European Commission will begin its activity (November 2019). Additionally, the challenges regarding Brexit are still available and all strategical files, amongst which those regarding migration and the security of the Union, represent a significant aspect of future debates.

Eliza Vaş
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1 More information is available here: <https://eu2019.fi>.

2 The Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Teodor Meleşcanu, attended the launch conference of the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU; press release, 4 July 2019: <http://mae.ro/node/49399>



publications

Romanian Journal of European Affairs - Summer 2019 issue

In the June issue of the Romanian Journal of European Affairs, the contributors bring to the readers’ attention topics such as: recent trends in global liberal order, the Atlantic rift and the EU position, the current threats to the global financial system, the cost of Brexit and the future of the EU, the economic convergence of Western Balkans and how border disputes in the region affect the enlargement process, and the challenges to the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement Implementation.

The paper entitled *Can Democracies Tackle Illiberal and “Inward Looking” Drives?*, by **Daniel Dăianu** (Member of the Romanian Academy and Professor at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration) asks the question of how the liberal world order, as established from the end of the Second World War, can adapt in the context of rising illiberal tendencies and nationalism. The author concludes that, while reforms are most certainly needed, liberalism still has an important support in the West.

Alina Bârgăoanu (Professor, Dean of the College of Communication and Public Relations, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration) analyses the fight over the liberal order in the context of the transatlantic divide. Starting from a conceptual



discussion regarding the term "World order", the author looks at the EU's embrace of a universalistic unhistorical liberal narrative. As a consequence, argues the author, while the global international system goes more towards multipolarity, the Atlantic rift is amplified. In turn, the EU itself has to overcome internal divisions and tensions.

The next paper provides a different approach, as **Eugen Dijmărescu** (Associate Professor at the Romanian-American University of Bucharest and associate researcher at the National Institute of Economic Research of the Romanian Academy) examines the recent threats to the global financial system. A decade after the global financial crisis, the fragile equilibrium in global finance is under threat by the current rises in multilateralism and nationalism, while lessons learned from the past should guide the present responses.

Dzenita Siljak (Assistant Professor at the International University of Sarajevo and associate research fellow at the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest) and **Sándor Gyula Nagy** (Associate Professor at Corvinus University of Budapest and senior research fellow at the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Budapest) look in their article, *Economic Convergence between the Western Balkans and the New EU Member States (EU-13)*, at how much countries from the Western Balkans are converging economically towards the EU-13. Dividing their timeframe into two sub periods, 2004-2008 and 2009-2013, they test the hypothesis that the recent financial crisis affected the development of this region. The two types of beta convergences analysed by the authors (absolute and conditional) suggest that there is an absolute convergence of the Western Balkans countries towards the EU-13 Member States in every analysed sub period, proving that the crisis did not have an impact.

The next paper, by **Hakan Cavlak** (Associate Professor at Tekirdag Namik Kemal University), examines from a neo-structuralism perspective how the Brexit process will affect the future of the EU. The author argues that, in any given scenario, the difficulties of leaving the Union, as shown in the last years, will greatly diminish the "chance" of any other countries leaving the Union.

Srdjan Orlandic (PhD candidate at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ljubljana) looks at the case of Prevlaka in order to discuss the borders' disputes and their impact on the integration process of the countries from the Western Balkans. He points out that, while in the Strategy for the Western Balkans there is a conditionality policy regarding border disputes, research has been insufficiently focused on how border disputes in the region affect the enlargement process. The author concludes that there are two main reasons for this new EU approach: prolonging the negotiation process due to internal reasons, and the negative experience with Slovenia and Croatia with their dispute over Piran.

The paper *Bringing Armenia Closer to Europe? Challenges to the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement Implementation*, by **Aram Terzyan** (visiting senior lecturer at Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences and research fellow at Eurasian Research and Analysis Institute), presents the relations between the EU and Armenia, in the context of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement. The author argues that, despite political transitions and the Velvet Revolution, political and economic constraints, the reasons explaining the arbitrary decision of Albania to join the Eurasian Economic Union, limit the country's ability to profoundly advance towards the EU.

Full articles are available at <http://rjea.ier.gov.ro>.

Our readers are also invited to access RJEAs Facebook page, at <https://www.facebook.com/romanian.journal.of.european.affairs/>

Ionuț Marcu
Studies and Analyses Unit

Towards a Citizens' Union: the status of democracy in the European Union

Since 2017, the European Institute of Romania has been involved in the 'Towards a Citizens' Union (ZCU)' project, which is co-founded through the Erasmus+ (Jean Monnet Networks - policy debate with the academic world) program. Thus, the experts of the Studies and Analyses Unit are taking part in research activities concerning the status of democracy in Romania, focusing on direct and representative democracy. The first articles have already been published in the collective volumes coordinated by CEPS Brussels (project manager) and are available for open access here and here.

Moreover, every year, a series of dissemination events and meetings with the research team is organized. The meetings include debates on the researched topics and aim to promote the project's results to the general public. Towards this end, the most recent event was organized by the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) in Warsaw at the beginning of June. The



focus was on the elections for the European Parliament and the new political landscape. Various European affairs experts were invited to discuss domestic political situations: Ernst Hillebrand (Friedrich Ebert Foundation), Jacek Kucharczyk (IPA, Poland), Christopher Gatz (Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Germany), Bjarke Møller (EUROPA Think Tank, Denmark), Eleonora Poli (Istituto Affari Internazionali, Italy). The debates were chaired by Agnieszka Łada (IPA).

The main aspect brought up during the discussion concerned the elections' results in Denmark, Germany, Poland and Italy. In Denmark, 8 in 10 citizens are in favour of the European Union. This statistic is reflected in the election results for the European Parliament, where the majority of votes cast was either for Liberals or for Social Democrats.

Additionally, in Germany, the voter turnout for the European elections was 60%, a decrease compared to the 2017 general elections, when the percentage was 75%. Regarding the choice made by voters, most of them favoured the Greens. This was a clear intended choice, not one made out of disapproval towards the traditional parties. On the other end of the spectrum, out of the people who voted for Alternative for Germany (a far-right political party) the majority did so out of frustration and disappointment in the traditional parties. This group of voters did not consider the conventional choices able to represent their interests.

In Poland, the increased turnout rate came as a surprise, since many of the citizens who did not attend the previous elections cast their vote. There was no previous survey to anticipate the success of the governing party. The results can be explained by the following aspects: the Government managed to neutralize the narrative the opposition parties promoted; the elections for the European Parliament were seen as preliminary elections to the national ones that will take place in autumn; the leading party avoided criticizing the EU during the campaign and even chose a pro-European slogan 'Poland in the heart of Europe'.

Italy was analysed from the point of view of Matteo Salvini's win. The leader of Lega Nord applied unconventional means to secure the votes. For example, one of the methods involved creating Facebook contests where the prize was a face-to-face meeting with him. This way, he was seen as an approachable and receptive political leader by citizens.

The debate was then followed by a meeting of the research team. There, all the 20 partnering think tanks were represented and the next research theme was discussed. Therefore, the European Institute of Romania's team will publish an article examining the role of modern technology in promoting direct democracy. The article will be part of a collective volume which will be discussed during the CEPS Ideas Lab 2020, in Brussels.

Eliza Vaş
Studies and Analyses Unit

The future of the EU after the European Parliament elections

On 17 June 2019, the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, in cooperation with the State Secretariat for European Union Policies and Coordination of the Prime Minister's Office organized in Budapest the event entitled *Stronger Together: The future of the EU after the EP elections: the Presidency's point of view*.

At this event took part in his capacity as speaker Dr. Mihai SEBE, Expert, European Institute of Romania, alongside Dr. Oszkár ÖKRÖS, European Director, Head of Department, State Secretariat for European Union Policies and Coordination of the Prime Minister's Office. The event was moderated by Dr. Attila KOVÁCS, Associate Research Fellow of the Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The debate tried to provide some answers to questions concerning the main challenges and results of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Also it tried to provide a working answer to the question of what kind of future we envisage for the next 5 years in light of the results of the EP elections in May.

The most important/challenging issues for the next 5 years are: post-2020 EU budget (including the Cohesion Fund and agricultural subsidies); migration; Brexit - hard or soft (will there be an agreement?); US trade war; Climate change; other unforeseen challenges.

Another topic on the agenda was on what issues EU-13 Member States can cooperate in the next European Parliament



term (European Commission term)? Also in which fields can Romania and Hungary cooperate?

Among the Romanian expert key lines we can mention the following: the European Parliament has some difficult choices to make - whom to choose and the creation of new political groups. The internal dynamics are dominated by intense negotiations. The globalisation does not benefit all of us and it affects the poor economies. We need to retrain the labour force and create a global safety net. As regards the democratic deficit the main advantage of democracies is that they can reform and adapt to new challenges, they can recover and regenerate.

The main problem in the Eastern Europe is the gap between expectations and realities. Even if the living conditions are better now than 30 years ago the expectations grow higher than ever. Today we risk to take peace as granted and focus only on the economic issues.

Another good point is that the new technology does not determine the type of political regime. On the long term, Europe's three biggest challenges are not necessarily Brexit, migration, or populism, but rather climate change, aging population, and digital revolutions.

The future cannot be predicted, yet the history can provide us more open possibilities and the ability to be free from the past. Fighting poverty and social exclusion are the best solutions to respond to these challenges.

For further information please visit: <https://kki.hu/event/the-future-of-the-eu-after-the-ep-elections-the-presidency-point-of-view/>

Mihai Sebe
Studies and Analyses Unit

Training in European Affairs

2018 was a year in which the preparations for the Romanian Presidency at the Council of the European Union influenced significantly the training activities of the European Institute in Romania (EIR). In 2019, exempted from the requirement to provide a relevant content to the Presidency, the course subjects have regained a more general addressability.

Nevertheless, the interaction with those responsible for European affairs in the administration whom EIR prepared for the Presidency showed the need for a slight change in courses orientation. This was

reinforced also by the Training needs analysis of the public institutions in Romania, conducted by the EIR Training Unit at the end of 2018 and in early 2019. Both have revealed a need for a richer content in the area of European affairs, with an emphasis on the institutional aspects of Romania's EU membership, as well as on the legal ones of the European Union itself.

Until the introduction/reconfiguration of new courses in the EIR offer, scheduled for this autumn, the Training Unit has already organized two training sessions in May. First of these, Norms and Procedures of Legislative Technique (NPTL) has reconfigured its team of trainers who interact with the participants in the two days of the course. The second one, Diplomacy and Protocol (DP) remained broadly the same in terms of both the trainer and the content.

As the schedule looks today, which may only undergo minor changes in exceptional cases not related to the Unit, in the autumn of 2019 will be organized seven training programs, distributed over 9 sessions. The two above-mentioned programs, NPTL and DP, will be organized one, respectively two times more. There will also be a session of a reconfigured course, Introduction to European Affairs (IAE), and one of the European Union Legal System (SJUE), which is a new course. The training schedule will also have two sessions of the Waste Disposal Engineering (IVD) program and a Business Information Expert (EIA) session. Finally, there will be organized the Public Procurement Expert (EAP) course, which is accredited by the National Authority for Qualifications, as well as the one dealing with the Prevention and Combating Corruption.

We therefore invite you to periodically visit EIR's website (www.ier.gov.ro) at the Training section, in order to be up to date with the latest programs for which EPIN opens the sign up.



**European
Institute
of Romania**

Dan Drăghia
Training Unit

EIR - partner of the Economic Forum, Krynica

The 29th edition of the Economic Forum will take place in Krynica (Republic of Poland), between 3 and 5 September 2019.

The Economic Forum is a major event in the region and a renowned platform of discussion on a wide array of issues such as economy, politics, international security and society. As in the previous years, the Forum will be a distinct meeting place for the government officials and policy-makers, prominent politicians, business leaders, bankers and experts from most of the EU countries and other regions. The Forum's program includes plenary sessions and over 150 panel sessions and round table discussions which will offer impartial and up-to-date information on the currently discussed political and economic issues.

Starting with 2012, the European Institute of Romania (EIR) has organized, within the Economic Forum, a panel session in cooperation with the Institute for Eastern Studies (Instytut Studiów Wschodnich - ISW) from Warsaw.

Tech Race: EU in the Crosshairs for Global Technological Supremacy is the topic proposed for debate within this edition.

In the panel moderated by Mrs. Alina Bârgăoanu, PhD Professor, President of the Administrative Board of the European Institute of Romania, there will be invited officials and experts from EU member states.

For more information about the Economic Forum, please visit the official site of the event: <http://www.forum-ekonomiczne.pl/?lang=en>

Florentina Costache
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