

PLENARY MEETING OF THE LXI COSAC

SESSION I

Achievements of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

–background note–

Romania took over the rotating Presidency of the EU Council (Romanian Presidency) in challenging times, as the United Kingdom was seeking to leave the Union, a new institutional cycle was about to begin, a new EU strategic agenda was emerging and foundations for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) were being set.

As the mandate of the current European Commission is coming this year to an end as a new EU legislature is about to begin, Romanian Presidency has been determined to act in line with the priorities defined in the [2014 Strategic Agenda](#), with the [Rome](#) and [Bratislava](#) Declarations issued by European leaders, as well as with the [Joint Declaration](#) on EU legislative priorities for 2018-2019.

Focusing essentially on citizens as beneficiaries of the European action, Romanian Presidency developed its work [Programme](#) on the core concept of *Cohesion, a common European value*. As such, priorities have been structured on four pillars seeking to promote (i) EU convergence, (ii) EU safety, (iii) EU as a global actor and (iv) EU common values.

Under the **convergence** pillar, Romanian Presidency aimed at:

- (a) reducing development gaps;
- (b) enhancing competitiveness and consolidating the Single Market;
- (c) promoting digitalisation, innovation and connectivity;
- (d) ensuring labour mobility, employment and convergence of social rights;

- (e) fighting climate change; and
- (f) promoting sustainability.

For a **safer EU**, Romanian Presidency has been determined to continue efforts towards (i) strengthening EU's internal security, (ii) combating terrorism and radicalisation, (iii) ensuring a comprehensive approach to migration, (iv) consolidating the Schengen area and (v) enhancing cybersecurity.

To consolidate the **EU's role on the global scene**, the following actions have been taken into account (i) defending EU's defence capabilities, (ii) supporting the EU enlargement in Western Balkans, (iii) reassessing the role of the Eastern Partnership and (iv) consolidating the multilateral trade system.

As cohesion is not possible without **common values**, Romanian Presidency committed (i) to defend democracy, freedom, human rights and respect for human dignity, (ii) to promote solidarity, equal opportunities, gender equality and social justice and (iii) to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and populism.

After one hundred days of mandate, Romanian Presidency submitted a stocktaking report, which emphasised that 90 legislative files had been finalised, all being confirmed by the Council and most of them by the European Parliament as well.

In the **business sector**, on 13 March 2019, the Council concluded negotiations regarding the proposal for a [directive](#) on cross-border conversions, mergers and divisions of

companies. On 18 April 2019, the [European Parliament](#) confirmed its agreement on this dossier, enabling EU companies to boost their competitiveness, while offering stronger safeguards for employees, shareholders and creditors, and taking into account the risks of potential abuses.

On 9 April 2019, the Council adopted [a new framework](#) for dealing with banks' bad loans, creating appropriate incentives to avoid the accumulation of non-performing loans. Also, the Council formally adopted the [directive on combating fraud and counterfeiting of non-cash means of payment](#), eliminating obstacles that hamper investigation and prosecution, and foreseeing actions to enhance public awareness of fraudulent techniques such as phishing or skimming.

In the **Digital Single Market** area, on 15 April 2019, the Council adopted a legislative package comprising a directive on contracts for the supply of digital content and services ([Digital content directive](#)) and a directive on contracts for the sales of goods ([Sales of goods directive](#)).

The Digital content directive introduces a high level of protection not only for consumers paying for a service, but also for those providing data in exchange for such service. The Sales of goods directive will apply to all goods, including to those with a digital element. The new rules introduce a two-year minimum guarantee period and a one-year period for the reversed burden of proof in favour of the consumer. Member States can go beyond those time periods to maintain their current level of consumers' protection.

The Council also adopted a [directive](#) that modernises the existing EU copyright law, ensuring adequate protection for authors and artists, while opening up new possibilities for accessing and sharing copyright-protected content online, throughout the whole EU.

In the area of **capital markets union**, the Council adopted, on 14 May 2019, a [regulation](#) improving the existing regulatory framework and applying to the over-the-counter derivative market. This piece of legislation amends and simplifies the [European Market Infrastructure Regulation](#), adopted in 2012, and addresses disproportionate compliance costs, transparency issues and insufficient access to clearing for certain counterparties.

In the area of **justice and home affairs**, the Council adopted two regulations establishing a framework for [interoperability between EU information systems](#); they are expected (i) to improve security in the EU, (ii) to allow for more efficient checks at external borders, (iii) to facilitate the correct identification of persons and (iv) to help prevent and combat illegal migration.

As to **Brexit**, the Council formally adopted fifteen legislative proposals for limiting the effects of a disorderly withdrawal. The aim was to protect citizens and the business sector in key-areas such as (i) road and air transport, (ii) coordination of social security systems, (iii) Erasmus+, (iv) visas and (v) the functioning of the EU budget for 2019.

Regarding **environment and climate change**, the Council adopted a [regulation](#) setting strict new carbon dioxide emissions standards for cars and light commercial vehicles, in view of achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement and to reach the EU wide 30% reduction target by 2030. Also, the Council reached an agreement with the European Parliament on new rules which set binding the CO₂ emission reduction targets for heavy-duty vehicles.

On 21 May 2019, the Council adopted a [directive](#) which introduces new restrictions on certain single-use plastic products; it is about those types of products and packaging, which are among the top ten most frequently found items that pollute the European beaches.

With respect to **employment and labour market**, the Council concluded negotiations on the [regulation](#) establishing the European Labour Authority and on the [directive](#) on transparent and predictable working conditions in the EU. The latter establishes minimum rights for workers, including the limitation of the probationary period to six months maximum and the right to receive a cost-free training, when such training is required by the European or national legislation.

As to the **Single Market**, on 6 June 2019, the Council adopted the [directive](#) on open data and the re-use of public sector information, in order to fully exploit the potential of the public sector information for the European economy and society.

Also, Romanian Presidency [concluded](#) negotiations on the draft directive on [better enforcement and modernisation of EU consumer protection rules](#), which (i) introduces the right to individual remedies for consumers harmed by unfair commercial practices, (ii) removes burdens for businesses and (iii) clarifies the rules on dual quality of products.

In addition to these legislative works, Romanian Presidency made efforts to implement and adopt conclusions on important topics, such as:

- a. the [EU Macro-Regional Strategies](#);
- b. the [Future of Energy Systems](#);
- c. the ["Space as an enabler"](#) in addressing global and societal challenges;
- d. the [Cross-border circulation of European audiovisual works](#);
- e. The [Young People and the Future of Work](#);
- f. the [EU Industrial Policy Strategy: a Vision for 2030](#); or
- g. the [Retention of Data for the Purpose of Fighting Crime](#).

Partial general approaches were also agreed on the reform of the return directive, on

sectoral home affairs funds, as well as on the European maritime and fisheries fund.