



PROGRAMME

*of the Romanian Presidency
of the Council of the European Union*

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COHESION, A COMMON EUROPEAN VALUE

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Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union: mission and priorities

The first Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union is to take place **against a backdrop of large-scale developments that will determine the shape of the European Union**: the reflection on the future of the Union; the United Kingdom's process of leaving the EU; the transition towards a new legislative cycle as a result of European elections, and implicitly the end of the European Commission and European Parliament's terms of office; and the negotiations on landmark policies and strategies, such as the post-2019 strategic action framework, the Economic and Monetary Union and the future Multiannual Financial Framework. At the same time, challenges on the international scene deem necessary an active role of the Union in global affairs, in accordance with its Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy.

Romania will have the opportunity to take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in a period in which Member States are making a common effort towards identifying solutions to the major challenges currently faced by the European project, and towards shaping the Union's actions for the next decade, with the aim to strengthening peace, freedom, stability, prosperity, social solidarity and cohesion that the project has been delivering ever since its inception. **In order to strengthen the European project, it is more than necessary to strengthen the bond between citizens and the Union by having citizens actively involved in European affairs and by bringing them closer to the decision-making process. Meanwhile, there is an ever-increasing need for reform and innovation in certain areas of European policies.** As part of this collective effort, Romania will be a strong supporter of furthering the European project so that the EU could respond to today's challenges and meet the expectations of European citizens in a cohesive, unitary and fair manner.

The Sibiu Summit on 9 May 2019 will represent an important moment in projecting a stronger, more united, more cohesive and more democratic Europe. This high-level event will provide an opportunity to raise awareness among European citizens of the tangible results of the decisions made at European Union level and of the reforms required in order to move forward while simultaneously strengthening the European project.

While holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Romania will act as a genuine and **honest broker in order to find solutions that enable progress of the European agenda.** It will act in coordination with Finland and Croatia, as the Trio of Presidencies, while also ensuring continuity with the previous Trio in achieving the objectives established by the Strategic Agenda.

The European Union's current legislative programme, which is in its final phase of implementation, lies at the core of the responsibilities of the Romanian Presidency. In seeking agreement within the Council of the European Union, as well as during its negotiations with the European Parliament, the Romanian Presidency of the Council will act in line with the priorities defined in the 2014 Strategic Agenda for the European Union, with the Rome and Bratislava Declarations issued by European leaders, as well as with the Joint Declaration on EU legislative priorities for 2018-2019.

The Romanian Presidency's work programme is founded on the belief that any vision for the future must be built around the key principles that have steered the evolution of the European Union so far. **In formulating the priorities of the Presidency, Romania factored in citizens both as source of inspiration and as beneficiaries of the European action.** Romania's efforts will focus mainly on the legislative and non-legislative files that have a direct and immediate impact on citizens' daily lives. **Throughout its work while holding the Presidency, Romania aims at achieving tangible results and at maximising the benefits that a strong and cohesive Union could bring to each and every citizen. The Romanian Presidency will aim for the EU policies to be permanently in line with the principle of cohesion among Member States, regions and all citizens.** We consider cohesion to be a common European value, as well as an expression of unity among the countries and regions of the European Union. The promotion of economic and social convergence is essential to the Union's harmonious, balanced and sustainable development, which can be achieved by closing the development gaps among various regions and creating genuinely equal opportunities for all citizens.

On the one hand, determining the topics of interest was a democratic, bottom-up and deliberative process, which provided public institutions and various social stakeholders with the opportunity to reflect their views on the most important topics that should be included among the priority files of the Romanian Presidency. On the other hand, the main concern when determining the priority lines of action was the extent to which the content corresponded to the principles enshrined in the Treaties.

The European project needs a creative and an enhanced perspective to overcome the challenges it is currently facing and to provide new impetus to the integration process. Decisions on the future of European policies must be supported by their proper reflection within European Union's financing priorities in order to allow for the European policies to turn into tangible results for citizens. In this context, the Romanian Presidency will contribute to defining the principles for the upcoming post-2020 multiannual financial cycle. The future multiannual budget should provide the Union with the resources it needs to achieve the objectives for the seven years that follow, maintaining a balance between continuing the growth and convergence policies and addressing the new challenges that have arisen.

The Romanian Presidency's work agenda will focus on four main pillars, which will be reflected in the specific actions of the various decisional configurations of the Council of the European Union, as well as in the events that will take place within its mandate.

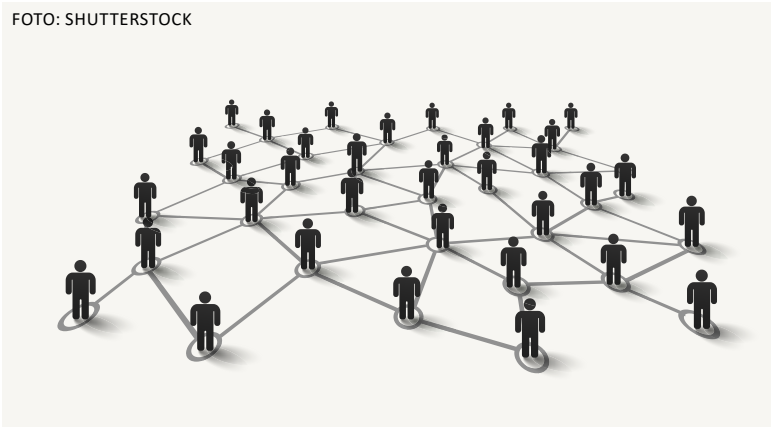
- 1. Europe of convergence:** ensuring convergence and cohesion for a sustainable and fair development for all citizens and Member States, by enhancing competitiveness and closing development gaps, social progress, promoting connectivity and digitization, stimulating entrepreneurship and strengthening industrial policy.
- 2. A safer Europe:** making Europe safer by increasing cohesion among Member States facing new security challenges that threaten citizens' safety and by supporting cooperation initiatives in this area.
- 3. Europe, a stronger global actor:** enhancing Europe's global role by continuing the work on the implementation of the Global Strategy, ensuring the availability of the resources required

at EU level, and promoting the enlargement policy, EU action in its neighbourhood and the implementation of the EU's global commitments.

4. **Europe of common values:** stimulating EU solidarity and cohesion by **promoting policies to fight discrimination, encourage equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women, and increase citizens' involvement in European debates.**

1. EUROPE OF CONVERGENCE: growth, cohesion, competitiveness, connectivity

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Sustainable development, closing development gaps, convergence, employment and social rights

A cohesive Europe relies on the availability of equal opportunities for social and economic stakeholders, for citizens and for private businesses across the European Union. These opportunities relate both to fundamental rights and

equal conditions for development, as well as to access to fairly paid jobs for employees and to development opportunities for companies within the Single Market. Maintaining a fully functional European Single Market as well as preserving the fundamental **freedoms on which this is based**, is an essential pillar for the actions taken to strengthen the European project. This objective can only be reached by ensuring fair and non-discriminatory access for all citizens to the benefits of the Single Market.

The Multiannual Financial Framework plays a major role in providing the proper means for achieving the objectives of policies founded on the Treaty, such as the Cohesion Policy or the Common Agricultural Policy and also in addressing new challenges.

Growth-enhancing policies must still aim at reducing development gaps and the differences in the living standards between the various regions of the European Union and between citizens, and to pursue social and economic cohesion, including urban development. Simultaneously, increasing the competitiveness of the European economy remains a priority, including by developing entrepreneurship and supporting SMEs. The functioning of the Economic and Monetary Union may be optimised by coordinating economic policies, entailing measures designed to enhance economic resilience and improving budget coherence.

From the perspective of a 'Europe of convergence', **the social dimension represents a key component in any effort to increase European Union's overall competitiveness.** For this purpose, Romania will support the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, promoting equal opportunities, equal access to the labour market, fair labour conditions and social inclusion, including through the increased involvement of social partners. Promoting workforce mobility remains a key factor for ensuring the effectiveness of the Single Market, as well as an adequate response to demographic

developments within the Member States. In addition, it is important to prevent workplace risks and promote safer and healthier working conditions in order to increase productivity and competitiveness, and improve living standards for citizens.

A greater capacity is required at European Union level to act in a swift, coordinated and multidimensional manner, and a permanent political commitment must be ensured for Europe's education and health sectors, which have faced significant challenges in recent years. A coordinated approach to these challenges – including the appropriate infrastructure adapted to the current requirements, designing coherent and streamlined cooperation training programmes for the labour market, and adapting the education and health systems to new technologies – will lead to sustainable solutions for the future.

Innovation and digitisation

The European Union has a huge potential in terms of developing the digital economy, artificial intelligence, block chain technology, state-of-the art computing, 5G, and enhancing cybersecurity. Romanian Presidency's aim is to contribute to capitalising as much as possible on this potential, so that Europe can become a worldwide digital leader and European companies can acquire a global dimension.

Innovation and research contribute to job creation, and help increase companies' competitiveness on global markets, improve people's quality of life and generate sustainable economic growth. Simultaneously, a significant decrease of the digital gap between Member States, regions, categories of European citizens, and industrial sectors is needed. Information technology and communications skills represent an important means of improving social and economic inclusion. Special attention must be paid to developing and implementing measures to improve digital skills and digital literacy, including by making this a long-term priority for the EU and taking a coherent approach regarding digital policies under the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework.

Connectivity, competitiveness and markets

The efficient functioning of the European Union and the achievement of its economic, social and security objectives depend on the ability to ensure an appropriate level of interconnection within the Single Market in the areas of energy, transport, telecommunications and capital market. **A real convergence at European level means facilitating connections of all types,** as this should contribute not only to maintaining the four freedoms of movement operational, but also to increasing the competitiveness of the European economy and improving the standard of living in less-developed regions. **It is important to focus on facilitating the development and creation of functional links, where needed, between East and West and between North and South in order to allow for non-discriminatory access to resources and to the benefits of EU membership, and for sustainable support for a more competitive European economy.**

Stronger mechanisms are also needed to address the specific needs of European macro-regions. Strategies for these macro-regions should take an integrated and long-term approach, and particular attention should be paid to achieving the objectives of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). The fact that the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the

first six months of 2019 coincides with Romania's holding the rotating Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region from October 2018 until October 2019 provides an opportunity to promote on the EU agenda the added value of regional cooperation and of the development of cohesion through macro-regional strategies, namely the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

With regard to competitiveness, developing the Single Market also requires enhancing EU's industrial policy. **The European industry needs a long-term policy, which should take into consideration the diversity of the current industrial base in the EU, and the impact of developments in digitalisation and artificial intelligence. Promoting the digitalisation of the industry at European level will be a priority topic for the Romanian Presidency.**

The Energy Union is a key political and economic project for the future of Europe which needs a clearly defined regulatory framework, as energy interconnections are paramount in this respect. The creation of fair conditions with regard to competition is also a priority.

2. A SAFER EUROPE



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EU internal security, management of external borders, functioning of the Schengen area and current challenges

Currently, the European Union is confronted with a wide range of risks and threats that undermine the values and prosperity of our open societies. In this context, increasing the safety of European citizens is at the centre of their needs and expectations.

Ensuring the security of the external borders is one of the most important assurances that the area of freedom, security and justice can operate efficiently. Implementing the Schengen evaluation mechanism, the EU-wide IT systems and their interoperability will create the conditions for a safer Europe, able to act in a unitary manner for preventing and managing security-related challenges. In this context, strengthening the EU agencies and structures operating in this area will be a priority.

The migration topic requires further attention, in particular as regards the need to find solutions that will allow for effective and sustainable management of the phenomenon, based on a comprehensive approach both to the action within the EU and the promotion of cooperation with countries of origin and transit. The fight against the root causes should remain a major concern for the Union, in parallel with combating human trafficking.

The fight against terrorism remains a priority that is part of efforts to strengthen EU's internal security. Special attention must be paid to preventing and combating radicalisation, including online radicalisation. The fight against human trafficking also remains a major challenge. Priority will be given to consolidating police cooperation and fighting organised crime in all its forms.

The emergencies that the Member States or the Union have dealt with in recent years have demonstrated that an immediate, effective response requires closer inter-agency cooperation and a focus on efforts to rescue victims and provide emergency medical care. For this purpose, the cooperation in the area of civil protection remains a priority in order to provide an integrated response in the event of complex emergencies with disastrous consequences.

Cybersecurity

In a world of accelerated digitalisation, the EU must work and make further progress on protecting citizens' safety in the virtual space. **The review of the EU cybersecurity strategy was a good starting point for improving cooperation at the European level; however, additional efforts are required in order to improve the Union's resilience to cyber-attacks.** Cybersecurity cannot be considered merely optional, and public policies as well as any project relating to the digital society should take cybersecurity into consideration.

By pursuing discussions at EU level on countering hybrid threats, together with EU partners and EU institutions, improvements can be made to early warning capabilities and the fight against this type of threat in Europe.

A Union of freedom, security and justice

An effective Union needs **to eliminate fragmentation by enhancing trust and by ensuring greater consistency between home affairs policies and instruments.** In order to support an enhanced security area, police cooperation must be developed and adapted to the new realities and challenges, by following a community-centred vision and applying 'community policing' principles, and by embracing an innovative concept of 'policing in a connected world'.

We support facilitating the operational implementation of the European Public Prosecutor's Office and the potential extension of the scope of its work to include terrorism-related crime in order to increase security within the EU and to ensure fair access to justice for those accused of criminal offences handled by the Prosecutor's Office.

3. EUROPE, A STRONGER GLOBAL ACTOR

Common Security and Defence Policy and the efficiency of EU external action

The global profile of the European Union will be fundamentally dependent on the pace at which the Global Strategy is implemented and on the efficiency of its various instruments. In the general security context, the EU needs to continue its efforts to strengthen resilience, to fight hybrid threats and to enhance its strategic communication capacity, based on an integrated approach.



FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

As regards the efficiency of EU external action, **it is essential to enhance the ongoing initiatives, which, *inter alia*, further develop the European Union's defence capabilities, such as the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, the European Defence Fund, and the Permanent Structured Cooperation, while promoting a stronger partnership with NATO.** Special attention will be paid to civil-military coordination and to improving civilian crisis-management capacities, which is an area of excellence for the EU.

The EU enlargement process

Special attention must continue to be paid to the Western Balkans, in order to ensure the stability, security and development of the EU's immediate neighbourhood. The European perspective for the partners in the region must be advanced, based on their own merits and on criteria specific to the process. A structured and sustained dialogue with the youth in this part of Europe will contribute in an efficient manner to achieving EU's accession objectives. Turkey is a candidate country and a key partner for the EU in many areas.

Consistency of the EU's policy in its neighbourhood

In order for the EU's policy in its neighbourhood to be consistent, the effective implementation of the Eastern Partnership requires a special focus on extending the benefits associated with the free trade agreements currently in force and on interconnectivity – in particular in the transport, energy and digital sectors – with the most advanced countries in the Eastern Partnership that have concluded such agreements. The Eastern Partnership ten-year's anniversary will occur during the Romanian Presidency, and may be the proper moment to discuss the Partnership's post-2020 future. **A special focus must be placed on strengthening the concrete EU answers to the European aspirations of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia.**

It is timely to reaffirm the importance of the Black Sea on the European Union's agenda, including from the perspective of reinvigorating the Black Sea Synergy and of moving forward projects under the Three Seas Initiative. This initiative is a mean of increasing political visibility, and of continuing EU's involvement in successful regional programmes and projects, such as research and blue economy. In addition, the EU's strategy on connectivity with Asia opens up new prospects for cooperation between the EU and Central Asia.

Implementation of EU's global commitments

The implementation of EU's commitments as a means of ensuring stability and increasing predictability on the international scene is one of the guiding principles of the European Union in support of preserving a global multilateral order based on rules.

In this respect, it is worth stressing **the paramount importance of Transatlantic relations in maintaining the global multilateral order, the importance of strengthening international law, and the role of the EU in supporting effective multilateralism on a regional and global scale.** Relations between the EU and the UN must also be enhanced given our common priorities in terms of improving global governance, fostering sustainable development and promoting peace.

Further attention must be paid to enhancing relations between the European Union and the African continent over the medium term. Possible areas of action include increased investments and trade, and enhanced cooperation on education and training.

The ‘New European Consensus on Development: our world, our dignity, our future’, adopted by the European Council, represents the framework for a common approach to development policy, through which the EU and the Member States commit themselves to a more powerful, more effective, enhanced, coordinated and accelerated action to implement the 2030 Agenda. This line of action should be continued.

International trade remains a priority. In this respect, the EU must promote an open, transparent, multilateral trade system based on the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and ensure its own ambitious involvement in the WTO reform process. Negotiations must be carried forward on a number of ambitious, comprehensive and balanced free trade agreements with important third-party partners that share the EU’s values as regards promoting the WTO trading system.

4. EUROPE OF COMMON VALUES

Solidarity, cohesion, equal opportunities and social justice

The process of strengthening the European project must be founded on a unified, inclusive and open approach for all Member States. **Promoting cohesion, as a common value of the European Union, is a key element of efforts to rebuild citizens’ trust.** At the same time, promoting the values included in the Treaties, such as cohesion, equality, freedom, democracy, human dignity, justice, and solidarity, may contribute to ensuring genuine support for the European project.

Mobility is an important pillar of the European project and of the promotion of common values, the development of skills and the integration of citizens into the labour market. There is also a need to identify measures that can contribute to closing the gaps in terms of access to educational, volunteering or vocational training opportunities, including for young people. The promotion of mobility, inclusion and excellence through the future Erasmus+ programme will contribute to promoting European values among young people.

Equal opportunities and equal treatment for women and men are also topics Romania will address while it holds the Presidency, focusing on reducing gender-based discrimination on the labour market and in the business environment, and on fighting the gender pay gap. In addition, increasing women’s representation on



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the labour market will require further discussions at European level on tackling a number of issues in support of work-life balance. Gender equality will be a second national priority topic to be promoted at European level.

Democracy, freedom and respect for human dignity

The objective of a more democratic Union can be achieved by ensuring the equal treatment that all Member States and European citizens aspire to, and by bringing the decision-making process in Brussels closer to the citizens. For this purpose, promoting a unified and efficient application of the transparency principle at the level of the EU institutions will contribute to increasing citizens' trust in the European project. At the same time, there is a need to step up and simplify communication and provide information directly to citizens about the solutions that the EU has identified for their daily concerns, and about the main challenges that the Union is facing both internally and externally. The values enshrined in the Treaties, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, together with the principles underpinning the European Pillar of Social Rights – equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair labour conditions, and social inclusion – will be continuously steering EU action. In addition, there is a need for streamlined and sustained action to protect free and democratic EU elections from external interference.

Combating racism, intolerance, xenophobia, populism and antisemitism

A strengthened and powerful Union relies on better knowledge of the cultures, mindsets and traditions of various groups co-existing in European societies, as well as on promoting better intercultural interaction and dialogue.

Raising awareness and promoting European values at the level of the whole society must be reflected in efforts to combat racism, intolerance, xenophobia, populism and antisemitism, and to discourage hate speech. In this respect, **the fight against online disinformation and fake news, including by improving education in the mass-media sector and by designing European mechanisms which promote best practices for combating disinformation, is an important aim.**

EU COUNCIL CONFIGURATIONS

GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL



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*During the Romanian Presidency, the European agenda will be marked by a number of key developments that will have deep implications for the European project: the United Kingdom leaving the EU and the end of the reflection process on the future of the EU. The informal Summit of European leaders in Sibiu, scheduled to take place on 9th of May 2019, will be an important moment for defining the strategic vision of the Union over the next five years. The Romanian vision is that **unity and cohesion** are the essential starting points for shaping the future of the Union and for **strengthening citizens' trust** in the European project.*

*Due to its specificity, the General Affairs Council plays a significant role in **ensuring horizontal political coherence and an integrated vision** as regards the elements that will shape the strategic future of the Union, and especially the means by which issues are reflected in the actual action taken at EU level. From this perspective, the Romanian Presidency aims at ensuring continuity in the role played by the General Affairs Council in preparations for the meetings of the European Council and the implementation of the leaders' decisions.*

*The Romanian Presidency will focus on the **2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework** as a foundation for further advancing the EU objectives. **The Enlargement Policy**, as an instrument capable of extending stability and prosperity across Europe, will represent another important topic, which contributes to a safer and a more prosperous future for the EU. The Romanian Presidency will also follow up on the status of and outlook for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at European Union level.*

A balanced budget for a cohesive and competitive Union

The European Union needs a strong project for the post-2020 period that could lead to its strengthening and this aim can also be achieved through a credible and balanced budget.

The Romanian Presidency will contribute to defining the main principles of the **2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework**. The future multiannual budget should provide the Union with the resources it needs to achieve the objectives for those seven years. The Romanian Presidency's commitment, expressed at political and technical level, as well as the cooperation with the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, are important for the final outcome of the negotiations.

Stimulating greater convergence across the entire Union remains a priority, as a basis for further advancements in all European policies. While moving forward in the negotiations on the **post-2020 cohesion package**, the Romanian Presidency will aim for the creation of an investment-based framework able to stimulate economic and social development for all Member States and for all European regions. From this perspective, the Romanian Presidency intends to increase the pace of negotiations within the Council of the EU on the European Commission's proposals, with a focus on the Common Provisions Regulation and the Interreg Regulation, with the purpose of ensuring continuity and a smooth transition towards the next programming period.

During its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Romania will also hold the rotating Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (October 2018 – October 2019). In this twofold position, Romania will continue to actively promote the added value of regional cooperation and the development of cohesion through **macro-regional strategies**, with a focus on the EU Strategy for the Danube Region/EUSDR. The Romanian Presidency will aim to facilitate the adoption of Council Conclusions based on the Commission's report on the implementation of macro-regional strategies. The Presidency will also be actively involved in the review process for the EUSDR Action Plan.

In order to make sure that the objectives of the 2020 Europe Strategy for a more competitive Union are achieved, the Romanian Presidency will ensure continuity in the implementation process for the **2019 European Semester**, which will end with the adoption of Country-Specific Recommendations in June 2019.

Bringing the European project closer to citizens

The European elections on 23-26 May 2019, which symbolically mark 40 years since the first direct



elections were organised for the European Parliament, will also be a special opportunity to revitalise citizens' trust in the future of the EU. The **Informal Summit in Sibiu**, which takes place two weeks before the European Parliament elections, is an opportunity to demonstrate EU's capacity to provide an agenda founded on priorities that reflect citizens' expectations, including in response to the citizens' consultations organised throughout



2018. The cross-cutting topic of **citizens' protection and empowerment will be addressed by supporting greater citizen's involvement in the European decision-making processes, and in a shared reflection on the future of the European project.** From a practical perspective, the Romanian Presidency will aim to ensure a better communication with citizens on the results of actions undertaken at EU level (***Communicating Europe***), based on the outcome of the citizens'

consultations and in view of the upcoming European elections, including through a better 'Knowledge about the European Union', as a tool of awareness and internalisation, especially among the younger generation, of the benefits of the European project and its development.

As part of its efforts to respond to citizens' expectations, the Romanian Presidency will aim at implementing **the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making** as a foundation for a high-quality law-making process that is effective, efficient, clear and simple, able to avoid over-regulation and administrative burdens. The public consultation and impact assessments of legislative initiatives are key elements in reaching this objective. The Romanian Presidency will report on developments and progress achieved.

Enlargement policy as a foundation for stability and prosperity

The Romanian Presidency will seek to further advance the enlargement policy, which is an instrument that was successful in extending stability and security across the European continent. A special attention will be paid to **candidate countries and to potential candidates** with impact on ensuring stability and security in the region. The Romanian Presidency will pay attention to the implementation of the principles, criteria and instruments of the enlargement policy, of the provisions included in the Stabilisation and Association Agreements, and of the decisions of the Council of the European Union, including the European Commission initiatives in the communication 'A credible enlargement perspective for enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans'.

During the Romanian Presidency, the Agenda adopted at the EU-Western Balkans' Summit in Sofia on 17 May 2018 will continue to be implemented, and the aim will be to adopt unitary Council Conclusions on enlargement following the publication of the *European Commission Communication on the enlargement package*, in line with the decisions adopted at the GAC meeting of 26 June 2018. The Romanian Presidency will make efforts to achieve progress and facilitate political decisions in relation to all partners involved in the enlargement process.

Brexit

As regards the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, the main objective remains maintaining the unity of the EU27 and ensuring an orderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom, as well as preparing European citizens and companies for a smooth transition towards an EU of 27

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Member States. Ensuring clarity and transparency in this process and compliance with the EU Treaties (Article 50 TEU) will also be essential. The Romanian Presidency will cooperate closely with the European institutions and with Member States in order to follow all the institutional procedures arising from such developments, including those related to the implementation of the agreement after 29 March 2019.

Moreover, the Romanian Presidency will aim at building a future relationship as close as possible between the EU and the United Kingdom, and to advance further the negotiation process in order to strengthen a comprehensive partnership that should reflect areas of common interest.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

- INCLUDING DEFENCE, DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE FORMATS -



Romania intends to take the opportunity of its Presidency of the EU Council in order to support the High Representative in fulfilling the ambitious goals set by the Global Strategy. In order to be able to cope with the full range of current threats and risks, the European Union must have adequate instruments available.

As regards the efficiency of the EU's external action, Romania will support the High Representative in strengthening ongoing CSDP initiatives, with the main goal of developing the EU defence capabilities, within a framework of complementarity and strengthened partnership with NATO. Romania will continue actions towards strengthening the resilience of the EU and its partners, combating hybrid threats and enhancing strategic communication, including by better coordinating European and national instruments in these fields. Another priority for Romania will be to continue EU efforts to combat terrorism.

Special attention will also be devoted to the Western Balkans, with a view to ensuring the stability, security and development of the EU's immediate neighbourhood. We will follow up on the progress of the European perspective of the EU's partners in the region, based on their own merits and on the process-specific criteria. There will be a special focus on involving young people from the region in this process.

Ensuring enhanced consistency of Union's action in its Eastern neighbourhood will be a priority for the EU as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the initiation of the EaP and the fifth anniversary of the first Association Agreements. Romania will cooperate with the EEAS, Member States and its partners to give this milestone the prominence it deserves. An objective of Romania's action will be to extend the benefits of the free trade agreements currently in force and of the connectivity with the EaP countries, especially in the transport, energy and digital fields. A special focus will be placed on enhancing the specific responses that the European Union can give to the aspirations of countries such as the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia to benefit from an explicit European perspective. At the same time, Romania will reaffirm the importance of the Black Sea on the European Union agenda. Bearing in mind the finalisation of the new EU Strategy for Central Asia, Romania intends to contribute to revitalising EU-Central Asia relations.

In order to ensure stability and security both near the border and at global level, it is important that the EU **honours its commitments**. Globally, Romania will support EEAS' efforts to strengthen international law and the multilateral system. To this end, there will be a focus on highlighting the crucial importance of the transatlantic relationship in maintaining the rules-based international order. As regards cooperation for development, the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council will focus on the negotiation of the new ACP Agreement, on adopting appropriate financial instruments and on the youth issues. The Romanian Presidency of the EU Council will also promote the modernisation of the WTO with a view to safeguarding and promoting the rules-based multilateral trading system and will support initiatives to enhance and advance the relations between the European Union and the African continent at a higher level.

Efficiency of the EU's external action

Common Security and Defence Policy/CSDP

Romania intends to support more mature actions in the CSDP field, as a central component of an increased EU global role, with a focus on **strengthening the existing mechanisms and ensuring the synergy of new instruments** (Coordinated Annual Review on Defence/CARD - European Defence Fund/EDF - Permanent Structured Cooperation). For Romania, it is important **to ensure the coherence of these initiatives with similar NATO instruments and processes**. Romania will support actions on **research and development** and on strengthening the progress made in **defence industrial cooperation**. Romania will actively support the implementation of the new action framework on the EU integrated approach during the entire conflict cycle and on ensuring a comprehensive and flexible response in **the CSDP civil component**.

Romania will strongly support the strengthening of the EU-NATO partnership, in the spirit of synergy and complementarity of the efforts of the two organisations in the field of security and defence. Romania will also follow up on the implementation of the cooperation agenda, mainly in the following fields: **cyber defence, combating hybrid threats, countering terrorist threats, resilience, strategic communication and military mobility**.

Instruments of the EU Global Strategy

Romania can contribute to the integrated approach on the concepts of hybrid/resilience/strategic communication in the EU's external action, both from a political perspective and in terms of European instruments. We will follow the lessons learned in the cooperation with the EU's partners, on the internal European security and resilience, in terms of the internal/external nexus.

Efficiency of instruments

In the context of the discussions on the future Multiannual Financial Framework/MFF, the Romanian Presidency will be responsible for leading the negotiation process on the external component of the MFF, and of the future external action financing instruments, with a focus on their efficiency. Besides the budget aspects, a point of interest will be the improvement of the working methods of the Foreign Affairs Council.

EU action in the relationship with Western Balkans and Turkey

The Western Balkans is an area of strategic interest for the European Union. The Romanian Presidency will pragmatically address the structural causes of the persistent risks in the region. Romania will focus mainly on youth issues and on the EU's strategic communication for South-East Europe. Romania will encourage a reflection process on the topic of the current regional cooperation framework and of the EU's liaison with the multiple cooperation initiatives and structures.

As Turkey is a candidate country and a key partner of the EU in fields such as migration management, combating terrorism and Euro-Atlantic and regional security, the Romanian Presidency will make every effort to impart a pragmatic and constructive dynamic to EU-Turkey relations.

Consistency of the EU's policy in its neighbourhood

EaP consistency as a successful EU policy in the last decade

The EU's action in the Eastern Neighbourhood will benefit from a favourable context during the first semester of 2019, when we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the launch of the Eastern Partnership/EaP. Romania will support the organisation of a **high-level Anniversary Conference** in Brussels in May 2019, with the aim of agreeing upon an anniversary outcome document to mark the momentum. In coordination with the EEAS, the European Commission, Member States and Eastern partners, Romania will be involved in the implementation of the agenda and of the communication strategy for the 10th anniversary of the EaP, in cooperation with other international actors interested in promoting the EaP's objectives, and will use various informal meetings to **foster a reflection process on the future EaP after 2020**.

The Black Sea on the EU agenda



FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

It is important, during the first semester of 2019, to reaffirm the importance of the Black Sea on the European agenda, through a new impetus given to **higher EU involvement in sectoral cooperation projects, based on a common maritime agenda for the region**.

EU-Central Asia relations

In the context of the review of the *Central Asia Strategy*, to be finalised in 2019, and of the adoption of the *EU-Asia Connectivity Strategy* in the autumn of this year, there is an opportunity to **revitalise EU-Central Asia relations. Romania will contribute in fields such as water resources management, education and connectivity**.

Implementation of EU's global commitments



FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

The Romanian Presidency will support the strengthening of EU's role in the multilateral global architecture and in safeguarding the rules-based international order. Romania will emphasise the **crucial importance of transatlantic relations**, of **strengthening international law** and of **raising the EU's profile in the multilateral system**.

Against the background of challenges to the multilateral trading system, the Romanian Presidency of the Council intends to promote the **modernisation of the multilateral trading system under the aegis of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)**. An active EU involvement as a leader in the process of identifying solutions to update the multilateral trading system defined by the WTO is of the essence in order to reach this objective.

Romania will support EU's efforts for the implementation of the sustainable development goals/SDGs. In this context, one of the tasks is to coordinate the validation process for the first *Voluntary Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the EU level and support for partner states*, with a view to presenting it during the High-level Political Forum in July 2019, in New York.

The Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU will **coordinate the negotiation process for building a common vision among the EU Member States on the new partnership with ACP countries**, as the current Cotonou Agreement expires in 2020. Romania will also support actions for the implementation of the new *European Consensus on Development*.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL



*Europe is going through a period of economic recovery, thanks to both the efforts of Member States and actions taken at European level to deepen the Economic and Monetary Union. The economic and monetary architecture of the Union is now stronger, offering **undeniable proof of European cohesion**, but additional efforts are needed if its full potential is to be realised.*

*In light of the favourable circumstances of the European economy, characterised by growth, stability and positive developments, the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council intends to take work forward in the economic, financial and fiscal fields, with a view to promoting growth and investment and supporting structural reforms and fairness, for the benefit of Member States and **European citizens**.*

*The Romanian Presidency of the EU Council is fully aware that the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union is an important component of the roadmap developed in preparation for the meeting of EU leaders in Sibiu of 9 May 2019. At the same time, better regulation in the fiscal field, within the limits of the Treaties, has the potential to ensure effective and fair taxation at European level and, not least, help combat fraud and tax evasion, for the benefit of Member States and **European citizens**.*

*Especially in a post-Brexit context, it is crucial **to maintain the EU's unity**, with the constructive and transparent involvement of all Member States in this process. With this in mind, it is extremely important to ensure close coordination between the Council of the European Union and the Eurogroup, and the Romanian Presidency intends to promote this approach throughout its term.*

Strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union and the Banking Union and further developing the Capital Markets Union

Based on the outcomes of the Austrian Presidency and of the extended Euro Summit, the Romanian Presidency intends to continue efforts aimed at **strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union** and at completing the **Banking Union** by continuing the **risk reduction process**, including for non-performing loans, and **supporting discussions on the use of the European Stability Mechanism as a backstop for the Single Resolution Fund**, and on the **European Deposit Insurance Scheme**. The initiatives will improve the resilience of the euro area, with an impact on the prosperity and stability of the European economy as a whole.

In this context, the Romanian Presidency intends to ensure an open and transparent decision-making process at European level, including with regard to countries which are not members of the Euro Area.

The process of removing barriers to the development and integration of European capital markets should continue. Consequently, the Romanian Presidency will continue to work on the proposals related to the Capital Markets Union, in order to reduce to a minimum differences in terms of jurisdiction, to optimise opportunities for investors and to ensure SMEs' access to a wider range of financial resources.

As part of the efforts to develop the Capital Markets union, the Romanian Presidency will **consider the implementation of the FinTech action plan** and sustainable finance.

Fair and effective taxation

FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



Starting from citizens' expectations regarding the EU's ability to identify viable solutions to fair taxation issues, the Romanian Presidency will continue efforts to **modernise the VAT system, especially the VAT regime for e-commerce**. Along the same lines, the Romanian Presidency is prepared to support constructive debates on the **common corporate tax base**.

Also, the Romanian Presidency will work on the proposals on the **taxation of the digital economy**, while considering the possibility of finding an internationally agreed solution. Based on the progress made during the Austrian Presidency, the Romanian Presidency intends to finalise negotiations on the Commission's new proposals on excises duties.

In order to foster tax transparency and fair fiscal competition globally, the Romanian Presidency will work on **updating the EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions** following the evaluation of the commitments made by third countries.

In response to Member States' requests to strengthen external border security, the Romanian Presidency will work on the draft Regulation on **financing border control equipment as a priority**. The Romanian Presidency also intends to advance negotiations on the **Regulation on Customs post-2020**, a programme which supports the development of the electronic systems necessary for implementing the EU Customs Code, as well as the activities of and cooperation between customs authorities.

In order to avoid double taxation and address the negative impact on competitiveness which might occur in the internal market, the Romanian Presidency intends to promote discussions on the **Regulation on Fiscalis post-2020**, a cooperation programme which enables national tax administrations to acquire and exchange information and expertise.

 ***Ensuring coordination of economic policies at European level, with a view to enhancing performance and strengthening the resilience of economies***

The Romanian Presidency will **encourage the implementation of structural reforms and investment within the EU** by preparing the debates on the European Semester and ensuring a transparent environment, so as to facilitate the adoption of conclusions on the Annual Growth Survey, the Alert Mechanism Report and the recommendations for the Euro Area and the approval of the Country-Specific Recommendations package for 2019-2020.

In order to support priority reforms in all Member States, the Romanian Presidency will help facilitate discussions **on the development of a Reform Support Programme** within the future European budget. The Romanian Presidency intends to advance negotiations on the InvestEU programme, dedicated to supporting investments at EU level in all Member States.

The Romanian Presidency will ensure that the **discharge for budget implementation for 2017, the future implementation of the 2019 budget and the preparatory work for the 2020 budget** will be managed as efficiently as possible.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS COUNCIL



FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

*The EU is currently facing a wide range of challenges, with an impact on the prosperity of our economies and on European citizens. In this context, there is a need for **joint action, eliminating fragmentation, fostering trust and cohesion of actions**, and ensuring greater coherence between the policies and instruments which define the area of freedom, security and justice.*

*In order to achieve this objective, increasing the level of safety is at the centre of the **needs and expectations of European citizens**. Measures needed to **strengthen a Union based on freedom and security** include ensuring coherent and uniform implementation of the actions included in the EU internal security strategy and promoting the implementation of new instruments which would ensure additional security and lead to the smooth operation of the area of free movement.*

*Also, **the issue of migration** remains in focus, in order to continue the substantial efforts of the European Commission, the European External Action Service and previous Presidencies, which strived to turn the concept of a comprehensive approach on migration into actions which should lead to the efficient and sustainable management of this phenomenon.*

***Improving judicial cooperation** between Member States by enhancing the efficiency of the judiciary and consolidating mutual trust between the judicial authorities of all Member States, as well as supporting the adaptation of European judiciaries to digital developments are important lines of action which can help consolidating the area of freedom, security and justice.*

An efficient pursuit of the EU objectives in the area of justice and home affairs is closely linked to ensuring a predictable and flexible framework in response to new realities and challenges, including with regard to the financing instruments of these objectives. With this in mind, the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council will continue efforts to make substantial progress on the sectoral proposals on the financing instruments in this area.

Home Affairs Dimension

Strengthening EU internal security

The internal security of the European Union is a priority issue both for Member States and for the Union as a whole.

The **fight against terrorism remains a priority**, and the Romanian Presidency intends to boost the exchange of good practice between Member States in this area, as part of the efforts to strengthen EU internal security. Special attention will be given to preventing and combating radicalisation, including online radicalisation. The Romanian Presidency will continue and attempt to finalise negotiations on the draft Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online.

The Romanian Presidency of the EU Council will highlight EU results and national good practices as regards ensuring citizens' security in fields such as strengthening the protection of public spaces, including through the use of EU funded projects. The Romanian Presidency will promote the sharing of expertise on cooperation between competent national authorities in relation to combating terrorism.

Following the same goal of ensuring proper implementation of the strategic framework defined at EU level, the Romanian Presidency intends to monitor the progress made on the **EU policy cycle for organised and serious international crime for the period 2018-2021** and to participate actively in the launch of the actions included in the 2019 operational action plans.

The Romanian Presidency intends to promote two initiatives in the field of **police cooperation**, given its importance in the context of measures meant to strengthen cooperation between Member States in the area of home affairs. The first initiative aims to promote **an innovative concept in carrying out police activities - Policing in a connected world – Novel actionable information** - focused on three dimensions: technology, mobility and intelligence analysis. The concept is to be used both for prevention strategies and for fighting crime, and adapted to current and future technological developments. Its aims are to harmonise the role of analysis units in the institutional law enforcement architecture, identify benchmarks to define the role of analysis outcomes and promote their potential, train intelligence analysis personnel and develop analysis methods.

The second initiative focuses on **adapting the police response to the multicultural particularities of emergent communities within the Member States, and on extending the initial prerogatives of the operational support officers (provided for by the 'PRŪM Decisions') towards a preventive approach, focused on closeness to the community**. The presence of the operational support officers on the territory of the Member States, for longer periods of time, will make a substantial contribution to policies of different communities, to the development of preventive measures and to combating crime and victimisation.

As regards the **EU policy on combating drug trafficking**, the Romanian Presidency will monitor the progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan 2017-2020 under the EU Drugs Strategy. **Fighting migrant trafficking/smuggling** is another topic of interest for the Romanian Presidency, in the context of broader efforts to manage migration.

Integrated management of the EU external borders/Strengthening the Schengen area

External border security is one of the most important safeguards for the efficient operation of the area without internal border controls, and each Member State must implement, at the highest level, the rules provided by European legislation.

The Romanian Presidency intends to facilitate the discussions on the **new proposal to strengthen the operational capacity of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)** with a view to promoting the efficient and coherent action of this Agency in managing migration challenges.

In 2019, **interoperability and the implementation of IT systems** developed at EU level will be very important topics on the agenda. Thus, the Romanian Presidency supports the **adoption of the interoperability package as soon as possible** and intends to grant more attention both to **updating the current EU systems (SIS, VIS and EURODAC)** and to preparing the implementation of **new EU systems (EES, ETIAS, ECRIS-TCN)**.

The Romanian Presidency will make efforts to finalise negotiations on the **proposal to strengthen the security of identity cards of EU citizens and of residence documents issued for EU citizens and their family members**, an initiative which would eliminate various gaps in the fields of identity and travel document security, improving the safety of European citizens.

Furthermore, in light of the need to adapt the current Schengen framework to constantly evolving security challenges, efforts will be made with regard to **the proposed amendments to the Schengen Border Code**, to the rules applicable to the reintroduction of controls at internal borders with the aim of preserving the free movement area. The **Schengen evaluation mechanism** will also be a key topic, to monitor the adoption of draft recommendations related to announced evaluations, as well as unannounced on-site visits, and the implementation of the Action Plans by the evaluated Member States.

Efficient and sustainable migration management

The Romanian Presidency will support efforts to ensure the implementation – or, where appropriate, the monitoring of the implementation – of European Council Conclusions on both the internal and external dimensions of migration.

The goal is a **more effective return policy** at European level and an efficient and sustainable approach, with full observance of migrant rights and taking into account the specific situations in migrants' countries of origin.

In an attempt to reduce irregular migration flows into the EU even further, the **external dimension of migration will also be a priority**. The focus will be on strengthening cooperation with countries of origin and transit, and the Romanian Presidency will support any initiative aimed at consolidating such cooperation. The Romanian Presidency will also encourage dialogue with other countries of interest, based on the existing programming documents and by capitalising on relevant regional processes.

The Romanian Presidency will take action with regard to the instruments included in the **reform package**

on the Common European Asylum System, so as to foster the identification of consensus solutions. These solutions should contribute to the objective of achieving a more efficient asylum system and, at the same time, take into account the specific capacities of the different Member States.

The visa liberalisation dialogue, carried out in parallel with the signing of readmission agreements, is an important element of the Common Policy on Visas. The Romanian Presidency will continue discussions on these topics, depending on the developments related to the relevant roadmap. The **visa reciprocity mechanism** is also an important topic on the EU agenda, in cooperation with the European Commission.

Civil protection



During the Romanian Presidency, the proposal to amend the Decision no 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism /**RescEU** will be formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. In order to translate it into action, the Romanian Presidency will focus on **stimulating synergies between the medical component and the rescue component of the EU's integrated response to complex emergencies with catastrophic consequences.**

A Union of justice and freedoms

Civil justice

The Romanian Presidency's main objective in this area is to make citizens' lives and businesses' activities easier by **improving mutual recognition and enforcement of decisions and judgments in family law and in civil and commercial matters** with cross-border implications. Improving the legal framework so as to better protect the best interest of children **via strengthening the rules on parental responsibility in cross-border cases** and on the civil aspects of international child abduction (**Brussels II bis recast**) represents a priority for the Romanian Presidency, which aims to reach a political agreement on the proposal.



Special attention will be paid to **deepening judicial cooperation in international civil procedural law** through the proposal for a Regulation on the law applicable to the third-party effects of assignments of

claims (COM(2016) 411 final), and by modernising Regulation (EU) 1393/2007 on service of documents and Regulation (EC) 1206/2001 on taking of evidence. The Romanian Presidency intends to advance negotiations on these three instruments, present progress reports or organise orientation debates, as the case may be.

The Romanian Presidency will pay particular attention to concluding the procedural stages for the adoption of the **Insolvency Directive**, aimed at ensuring that entrepreneurs and companies have access to effective preventive restructuring and second chance procedures, and, at the same time, at protecting the legitimate interests of creditors, debtors, employees and society at large.

In the field of **contract law**, the Romanian Presidency will endeavour to complete the final stage of negotiations on the draft Directive on the sale of goods and on the draft Directive on contracts for the supply of digital content.

Criminal justice

The concrete objectives on **judicial cooperation on criminal matters** are, in terms of legislation, to advance negotiations on the **e-evidence legislation package** and, in terms of non-legislative matters, to facilitate the adoption of **Council Conclusions on improving the practical application of instruments for judicial cooperation in criminal matters** and of **Council Conclusions on improving synergies between the judicial networks set up by the Council in the field of judicial cooperation on criminal matters and between them and Eurojust**.

A full operationalisation of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in November 2020, with proper human and financial resources, requires completing several stages in the first half of 2019. For this purpose, the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union will closely follow this dossier, with the objective to set up the EPPO College within the foreseen timeline. The objective is to reach an agreement between the EP and the Council on the person who will be appointed as European Chief Prosecutor and on initiating the appointment procedures for European prosecutors.

The two **draft legislative proposals on electronic evidence** will represent the main legislative priorities in the field of judicial cooperation on criminal matters during the Romanian Presidency, with the goal of reaching an agreement between the two co-legislators before the end of the European Parliament's term.

Another major priority will be to strengthen mutual trust between judicial authorities of the Member States in order to **improve the enforcement in practice of mutual recognition instruments**, in particular the Council Framework Decision 2002/584/JHA on the European arrest warrant and the surrender procedures between Member States, and Council Framework Decision 2008/909/JHA on the application of the principle of mutual recognition to judgments in criminal matters imposing custodial sentences or measures involving deprivation of liberty for the purpose of their enforcement in the European Union. The objective is to ensure the right balance between protecting fundamental rights and ensuring mutual recognition, while avoiding impunity for offenders.

One of the Presidency's complementary objectives will be **to improve synergies** between the European Judicial Network, the European Network of Contact Points in respect of persons responsible for genocide (Genocide Network), the Network of National Experts on Joint Investigation Teams and the European Judicial Cybercrime Network, and between them and Eurojust, as they are important tools for strengthening and facilitating judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

Justice in support of a competitive Europe / Justice in the digital age



After the adoption of the European e-Justice Strategy and Action Plan for 2019-2023, the Romanian Presidency aims to start concrete **actions to implement the measures set forth in the strategic documents**, thus supporting the development and advancement of European e-justice.

Special attention will be paid to **improving judicial training**.

A number of debates are foreseen on the European Commission's document evaluating the implementation of the 2011 Strategy, 'Building trust in EU-wide justice – a new dimension to European judicial training', and on the possible adoption of Council Conclusions on this topic.

Regarding the **proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of persons reporting on breaches of Union law**, the Romanian Presidency will endeavour to advance as much as possible the negotiations under the current term of the European Parliament.

The external dimension of Justice and Home Affairs

The Romanian Presidency of the EU Council intends to ensure that the **external dimension of Justice and Home Affairs policies will contribute to strengthening the EU's role as a global actor and consolidating its relationship with its strategic partners** – the USA, Eastern Partnership countries, the Western Balkans – and with other third partners.

Regarding the **EU's relationship with the USA**, the Romanian Presidency will make efforts to further the dialogue with the USA on matters of mutual interest, such as the cross-border access to electronic evidence and various aspects of judicial cooperation in criminal matters (e.g. extradition and mutual judicial assistance).

In the area of home affairs, the Romanian Presidency is interested in continuing the exchange of ideas on topics related to the interoperability of IT systems, management of EU external borders,

migration management and fighting terrorism. With regard to this last topic, exchange of best practices will be encouraged, with a focus on preventive efforts and particularly on preventing and fighting radicalisation, including hate speech.

The Romanian Presidency will also pay **special attention to the Western Balkans area**, as countries in this area are important partners in preventing and fighting violent extremism, radicalisation and terrorism. The Presidency will pay increased attention to ensuring stability in the region by promoting the adequate functioning of the judiciary. Supporting these countries' shared European aspirations, including judiciary reform, is an important step towards guaranteeing regional security and development. The Romanian Presidency will focus on technical cooperation with these states and will promote a cooperation framework based on dialogue and trust. With this in mind, the Romanian Presidency will consider an interim evaluation and the need to develop a new plan for **fighting illegal trafficking of firearms**, depending on the objectives achieved by that time.

The Romanian Presidency will aim to strengthen the **thematic dialogues with EU partners, in particular those with the USA, CELAC and Brazil** on the international component of the policies on illegal drugs. In this area, the Presidency will contribute to a more cohesive internal approach, promoting a common EU position and increasing the EU's visibility as a global actor in the field and, in particular, in its relationship with the United Nations.

At the same time, the Romanian Presidency will support the provision of **a coordinated EU contribution in the field of private international law**, such as through the Hague Conference on Private International Law, UNCITRAL and UNIDROIT.

EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS COUNCIL

FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



*The social field presents a wide range of challenges for the EU taking into account its direct impact **on European citizens**. As a cross-cutting sector with broad implications, it is also intertwined with all other fields. Moreover, the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights has seen the social field acquire new dimensions, opening up the possibility for more cohesive European action aimed at **achieving social and economic cohesion throughout the EU**.*

Labour mobility is an essential aspect as it is a tangible reflection of the fundamental principle of freedom of movement and, as such, it is inseparably linked to the functioning of the EU's single market. Against this backdrop, one of the priorities of the European Union must be to advance the mobility principle as a driver for growth, competitiveness and employment within the Single Market. In concrete terms, mobility means that the European mobile worker and his or her family should receive the same treatment – in terms of working conditions and social and economic integration – in their host Member State as the citizens in the respective Member State.

At the same time, it is essential that the European worker be afforded adequate protection. We need concrete measures to promote equal and safe employment, by improving workplace conditions and protecting workers against factors that may endanger their health and safety.

It is impossible to have a fully functional and operational labour market without promoting and securing gender equality. Ensuring equal opportunities for women and men is a priority derived from Article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union. This will be a first Romanian priority theme to be promoted at EU level. It is important that the required measures are taken to reduce the pay gap between women and men and to ensure a balance between professional and family life.

*Guaranteeing access to healthcare for all European citizens is the central pillar of the EU's health policy. Investment in healthcare is a key element in **reducing the economic and social gap**.*

*Moreover, access to innovative, safe and easily available medication is vital for **European citizens' health**. Thus, one of the Romanian Presidency's lines of action in this area is a multidimensional approach and a political commitment to finding common solutions to cross-cutting problems.*

Ensuring patients' access to medication is a topic of special interest, one that is ever present on the European agenda and key among citizens' needs. At the same time, issues such as fighting antimicrobial resistance, improving vaccination coverage, reducing medication abuse and improving the control of transmissible diseases also remain important issues.

Labour mobility and fair working conditions as drivers for growth and competitiveness on the Single Market

In the **field of employment and social affairs**, the Romanian Presidency will contribute to **promoting the labour mobility principle as a driver for competitiveness on the single market**. Free movement of workers within the EU is a way of putting into practice the fundamental freedom of movement of persons, enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). This freedom requires that the EU citizens have equal access to jobs throughout the Union and is supported by a number of factors, such as the equal treatment with regard to working conditions and access to social security.

Using actions already taken at Union level – such as the **Europe 2020 Strategy**, the **European Pillar of Social Rights** and the **European Employment Strategy** – as a starting point, the Romanian Presidency aims to consolidate mobile workers' access to the rights conferred to them by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, particularly as regards social security.

Moreover, special attention will be given to encouraging cooperation between public employment services and labour inspectorates in the Member States. The main objectives of this will be to mitigate the risk of discrimination and undeclared work, to improve the systems in place for informing – or raising awareness among – current or potential mobile workers regarding their rights and obligations, and to identify the factors that influence labour mobility, including those related to mobile workers' returning to their Member States of origin, and find hands-on solutions for facilitating their reintegration and voluntary retention on national labour markets.

Given the importance of this topic, the Romanian Presidency is considering to organise a debate on labour mobility as a key element in ensuring labour market balance. Workers' mobility will also be discussed at the informal meeting of the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the meeting of the EURES national coordinators.

In terms of legislation, the Romanian Presidency will continue negotiations on the **proposal for a Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 laying down the procedure for implementing the former**, aiming to find a solution that is fair, non-discriminatory and in line with the fundamental objective of free movement.

Regarding the **proposal for a Regulation establishing a European Labour Authority**, together with Member States, the Romanian Presidency will explore the best options for defining the roles and responsibilities of the future Authority and will aim to complete the negotiations on this file.

Preventing workplace risks and ensuring safer and healthier working conditions will also be a priority for the Romanian Presidency. Health and safety at work is a complex area of the EU's employment agenda. It is an integral part of designing and organising work processes and plays an important role in preventing potential problems and ensuring maximum efficiency at the workplace.

The Romanian Presidency plans to advance negotiations on the regulatory framework for the protection of workers and improvement of working conditions, which will have a direct impact both on workers and on productivity.

At the same time, the Romanian Presidency proposes to continue the negotiations on the proposal to amend Directive 2004/37/CE on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work. It will also work towards Council conclusions on ensuring health and safety in the context of new forms of work.

Moreover, the Plenary meeting of the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee will be dedicated to early awareness-raising on workplace health and safety among young people. A debate regarding the main occupational health and safety issues in Europe will also be organised.

Promoting gender equality and economic independence of women and men

FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



According to Article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union, promoting equality between women and men is one of the fundamental principles of the Union. Similarly, Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union requires equality between women and men to be ensured in all areas, including employment and remuneration.

Another objective of the Romanian Presidency is therefore to **provide equal opportunities for women and men on the labour market**, by reducing the pay gap between women and men and by implementing measures to help workers maintain a balance between family and professional life. The differences between the EU Member States in terms of women's role and position in society need to be reduced, by balancing women's and men's income in a manner that consolidates women's economic independence.

In terms of national public policies to ensure **equal opportunities for women and men**, including reducing the pay gap, the Romanian Presidency's goal is to encourage entrepreneurship among women and promote actions that contribute to increasing women's presence in decision-making positions in both public and private entities. In this regard, promoting gender equality is a key factor in promoting balanced and inclusive growth, as encouraging women's employment has a positive impact on labour market efficiency.

In support of these objectives, the Romanian Presidency will take over the negotiations with the European Parliament on work-life balance for parents and carers and will continue the discussions on the proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of publicly listed companies.

In this context, the Romanian Presidency will organise a series of high-level events on equal opportunities for men and women.

Guaranteeing access to healthcare for all European citizens



Promoting universal access to treatment for all those who need it, fighting antimicrobial resistance, improving vaccination coverage, reducing medication abuse and improving the control of transmissible diseases are among the objectives of the Romanian Presidency. At the same time, **patient mobility** will be a special topic of the Romanian Presidency, and among other things, an exchange of views will be held on the implementation of Directive 24/2011/

EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare.

The Romanian Presidency intends to organise debates on patient mobility and to encourage cooperation between Member States in the treatment of patients under the age of 18 who suffer from rare diseases, as well as in implementing Directive 24/2011/EU for these patients.

Continuing efforts to ensure **patients' access to medication** is one of the most important aspects that the Romanian Presidency will pursue. The Presidency aims to contribute significantly to identifying methods to **increase vaccination coverage**, in the context of threats to public health, by facilitating the exchange of best practices and expertise.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and associated infections will also be important topics for the Romanian Presidency. One of the main objectives will be to advance the discussions on the *One Health* collaborative approach to risks to the health of humans, animals and ecosystems. The Presidency will propose a set of Council conclusions on fighting AMR and hospital-acquired infections.

Moreover, the Romanian Presidency will continue the negotiations in the Council on the proposal for a Regulation on coordination in health technology assessment. Particular attention will also be paid to healthcare issues in the proposal for a Regulation on the European Social Fund (ESF+), successor to the Health Programme of the European Union.

Healthcare digitisation (e-Health) will also be a topic of interest for the Romanian Presidency, and a *meeting of ministers and the e-Health Network* will be organised.

COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL

FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



Coordinated actions in several areas are required in order to drive competitiveness and economic growth throughout the European Union.

A European priority is to ensure the full functionality of the European single market, with a focus on eliminating barriers to cross-border movement of goods, labour, services and capital, but also on combating unfair commercial practices.

At the same time, maintaining a strong industrial base is a prerequisite for the competitiveness of the European economy, job creation and for ensuring that high added-value goods account for a significant share of exports.

In a global context, the main challenge facing the single market is the need to adapt the EU's economy to the rapid technological progress. In this regard it is important to consolidate the scientific and technological base of the European industry, thus stimulating its international competitiveness and generating economic growth and jobs. The digitalisation of European industry is another priority theme that will be promoted at EU level.

*Space technologies, data and services play a key role in advancing Europe's strategic interests and **in the daily lives of the European citizens**. The European space industry is one of the most competitive. The EU's new Space Programme will help it maintain its position as a leader in the space industry and to adapt to new needs and technologies while reinforcing Europe's autonomous access to space.*

*While Europe is a world leader in science, it lags behind other highly industrialised countries when it comes to innovation. The idea of a European Council for Innovation (EIC) is part of the EU's efforts to provide innovative enterprises with more opportunities and adequate tools to become internationally successful. The Romanian Presidency aims to substantially advance the negotiations on Horizon Europe, the research and innovation framework programme which is the most important European tool dedicated to strengthening the EU's potential for innovation and economic growth. Intensified efforts at EU level are needed in order to develop an adequate framework to **effectively stimulate research and innovation throughout the European Union**, facilitate better **networking and cooperation between all Member States and reduce the gaps in this field**. **This will generate a positive impact on the overall objective to strengthen convergence and cohesion at European level.***

*Tourism is becoming increasingly important for development and economic growth. This sector should therefore be more visible on the EU agenda. Particular attention should be paid to promoting measures to better integrate this sector into a wide range of EU policies, sustainable and responsible tourism, as well as high-quality services, which may translate into competitive advantages for companies, in particular for SMEs, and, at the same time, into **tangible benefits for the European consumers**.*

Towards a more integrated, more equitable and more digitized Single Market that facilitates economic and social convergence in the European Union

The single market plays a decisive role in increasing competitiveness in the European Union, by facilitating the free movement of goods, services, persons and capital. It is vitally important that the EU **removes the remaining barriers within the single market and provides a fair and competitive framework for European consumers and companies.**

After 25 years of the single market, and considering that its success depends not only on the regulatory framework, but also on the degree of implementation and on the economic realities, the Romanian Presidency will propose the adoption of a set of Council conclusions on the single market.

The Romanian Presidency will endeavour to advance and, wherever possible, finalise the legislative initiatives on the single market. Thus, regarding the internal market for goods, the Presidency will aim to complete the legislative file on compliance and enforcement of Union harmonisation legislation on products. This file, together with the file on mutual recognition are of high importance for the single market.

Moreover, the Romanian Presidency aims to advance the negotiations on the New Deal for Consumers package and on supplementary protection certificates for medicines. The Romanian Presidency also places importance on the legislative files on explosive precursors and motor vehicles.

The proposal for a Regulation on establishing the Single Market Programme is a particularly important file within the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and has an impact on the competitiveness of the single market, SMEs and European industry. The Romanian Presidency intends to advance the negotiations on this file as much as possible.

In a global context, the main challenge facing the single market is **adapting the EU's economy to rapid technological changes.**



Promoting a smart economy and enterprise mobility by updating the European Union's company laws through the two directives on the use of digital tools and processes in company law, as well as cross-border conversions, mergers and divisions, will also be important files.

Increasing innovation and digitalisation in the SME sector, promoting *start-ups*, *scale-ups* and unicorn companies are aspects of interest to the Romanian Presidency. The Presidency will organise debates on the inclusion of these companies in the value chains, with a direct impact on the competitiveness of European industry.



The Romanian Presidency will organize debates on the opportunity of revising and updating the *Small Business Act for Europe*, in order to adapt it to the digital era. The debates will take place via the European network of SME representatives (Network of SME Envoys). The Presidency aims that aspects related to entrepreneurship and SMEs' competitiveness are discussed at ministerial level, in the context of the debates on EU's industrial policy.

The Romanian Presidency will support the promotion of fairness and transparency in online intermediation services, aiming to conclude the negotiations on the proposal for a Regulation on online platforms (*Platforms-to-Business Regulation*). The Presidency will make efforts to identify reasonable compromise solutions that will allow for increased transparency and combat unfair practices, while respecting the freedom-of-contract principle, without hindering innovation.

At the same time, the Presidency will continue reforms in the field of copyright, contributing to the modernisation of the European legal framework, adapting it to digital progress and, implicitly, driving forward the competitiveness of the EU economy. In this context, the aim will be to ensure a fair balance between the interests of consumers, who need access to high-quality online content, service providers, as contributors to the EU's economic growth and, last but not least, right holders who need adequate remuneration for their works.

Ensuring a long-term vision on the European Union's industrial policy

It is important that the EU maintains a strong industrial base in order to ensure the competitiveness of the European economy and job creation, and to ensure that high added-value products account for a significant share of exports. The European industry needs a long-term vision for the period until at least 2030, considering the diversity of the current industrial base, and taking advantage of the opportunities given by digitalisation, innovation, decarbonation and the circular economy, all of which are critical areas for the future of the industry. The digitalisation of European industry must become a priority for the Union.

The Romanian Presidency will promote Council conclusions aimed at encouraging a long-term vision for the EU's industrial policy. The Romanian Presidency will approach industry, focusing on artificial intelligence and digital transformation, and continue the existing cycle of debates on artificial intelligence. Moreover, the Presidency will organise debates on the defence industry and other industrial and creative sectors.

The Romanian Presidency will continue to promote the systematic integration of industrial competitiveness into all policy areas of the Union, an aspect of major importance in maintaining the EU's global competitiveness.

Adapting industrial systems to digitalisation is a challenge that can be turned into an opportunity to increase Europe's industrial competitiveness for the next decade.

Digital transformation and artificial intelligence are the main factors that will define 2030's industrial policies, for which we will need to develop adequate capabilities. In this context, we will encourage debates on the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence on the one hand and, on the other hand, on the development of digital skills and digital literacy, with a view to reducing digital gaps and increasing social and economic inclusion, as well as increasing investments in education and performance in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths).

Moreover, the Romanian Presidency intends to organise debates on certain aspects that might contribute to the development of an adequate ethical and legal framework for artificial intelligence, which would enable citizens and enterprises to trust the technology they interact with, understand how it works, benefit from a predictable regulatory environment and enable effective measures to be taken to protect their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Considering the dynamics of the automotive sector in the context of digitalisation and of environmental and mobility policies, the Presidency will promote an open and focused dialogue on the future of the automotive industry.

Moreover, the Presidency will organise debates on the defence industry as well as on other industrial and creative sectors. The Romanian Presidency intends to advance negotiations on the proposal for a Regulation on the European Defence Fund, which is a particularly important file within the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, for the development of the technological and industrial base of European defence.

Supporting excellence in research and innovation throughout Europe and increasing competitiveness through adequate measures and tools at European and regional levels

One of the major objectives of the Presidency in the field of research and innovation is to promote European solutions aimed at **reducing research and innovation performance gaps between EU Member States, through fair measures and adequate tools**, in order to strengthen the European Research Area.



One way to achieve this objective is to promote the expansion of participation and sharing of scientific excellence within the Horizon Europe Programme of the European Union in order to build a critical mass of researchers and ensure an adequate level of research, development and innovation activities in all Member States.

The success of the Framework Programme is not only conditional on the involvement of a high-level scientific community, but also on the existence of state-of-the-art research infrastructures and accessible, compatible and flexible funding programmes and rules, using synergies to enable the

participation of all performant private and public researchers and to strengthen networking among researchers from various countries.

While remaining true to the principle of excellence, it is important to identify those measures and tools which may help to reduce the research and innovation disparities at European level. The Romanian Presidency will endeavour to advance the negotiations on the Horizon Europe file, with the aim of facilitating a fair, accessible, transparent and efficient post-2020 framework for research and innovation in the entire European area, limiting the types of implementation instruments and simplifying access for participants in the Horizon Europe Programme. The Presidency's objective is to advance negotiations on this file and make substantial progress.

Moreover, **supporting European policies and initiatives at various stages of implementation in the field of research, innovation and space, such as missions and partnerships, the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the European Space Programme** will be among the Presidency's priorities.

In launching the new Horizon Europe Framework Programme, the EU aims to introduce a new vision into its research and innovation policies by launching missions to deal with a series of global challenges. The goal of these missions is to bring research and innovation policies closer to the citizens, an objective that is also pursued by the Romanian Presidency. Moreover, European research partnerships are undergoing a reform in order to limit the number of implementation instruments and simplify access for participants in the Horizon Europe Programme. The Romanian Presidency will support the progress in implementing the EOSC.

At the same time, the Romanian Presidency, through the EIC, will support the aim to incentivise market-creating innovation that provides added value in the EU, with a focus on expanding innovation at European and international level.

The EU's position as a leader in the space industry will also be supported by its new space programme, which will help it to adapt to new needs and technologies while reinforcing Europe's autonomous access to space. The Presidency intends to advance the negotiations on the proposal for a Regulation on the EU Space Programme as part of the package of sectoral proposals under the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework.

Another major objective for the Romanian Presidency is the **development of a European Strategic Framework for cooperation in research and innovation in the Black Sea region**. Given the strategic importance of the Black Sea for the entire European Union, a detailed understanding of the interactions between the Black Sea and the rivers which flow into it is of crucial importance for the scientific substantiation of integrated management plans. Research, innovation and education are the most important tools to maximise the potential provided by the Black Sea region for blue growth, through living resources, tourism, culture, transport renewables or hydrocarbons.

In this regard, the Presidency will aim to promote a **Strategic Agenda for research and innovation in the Black Sea region**, which will be a strategic document defining regional, national and European priorities.

TRANSPORT, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ENERGY COUNCIL



***Connectivity** is a fundamental element for the integration of European markets and in facilitating the fundamental freedoms of the European Union. Guaranteeing the efficient functioning of the European Union and achieving its economic, social and security objectives depend on ensuring an adequate level of single market interconnectivity, a priority justified by European developments, in particular in the energy, transport and telecommunications sectors. By focusing on the development of smart, sustainable and fully interconnected networks, the European Union can achieve the single market goals in a truly efficient and sustainable manner.*

Increasing mobility is supported by good connectivity that, alongside infrastructure, depends to a great extent on the modernisation and diversification of transport services or the use of innovative means of transport or traffic management systems. At the same time, the European-level measures should ultimately lead to more effective functioning of the single market, through the identification of fair and balanced solutions that take into account the particularities of all Member States.

Bearing in mind that Romania's mandate as the Presidency of the Council of the EU partially overlaps with its term exercising the Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Romania proposes as one of the priority themes to incentivise connectivity and mobility in the Danube region, by working towards convergent policies and strategic projects for transport and digitalisation. To that end, it is necessary to continue the discussions with the states of the region in order to ensure and maintain the navigability on the Danube River and its navigable tributaries.

*At the same time, in order for Europe to be stronger and more competitive worldwide, it is crucial that its economies reach a high level of digital development, competitiveness and innovation, the more so since digital technologies are transforming all aspects of economic and social life. Digitalisation is **an efficient tool in support of the cohesion objective**. Digitalisation does not only mean investments in advanced technologies, but also allowing every European citizen's access to digital skills and new technologies so as to improve their quality of life, work, professional performance, health and interaction with public authorities. To achieve their goal, more efforts are required **to reduce as much as possible the digital gap between various regions, categories of citizens or economic sectors**, so as to ensure that the benefits are spread throughout the Union, both in the use of technology and in social development.*

*At the same time, improving connectivity and energy security through infrastructure development is an essential means for consolidating Europe's energy system. The future of the Energy Union rests with a governance system that supports and implements innovative solutions, based on energy efficiency measures, with a view to transitioning to clean energy and for the **benefit of the European consumer**. We aim for a European energy market that provides more security to Member States, trust in the reliability of market signals on long-term energy needs to investors, and safe, sustainable and affordable energy to consumers. Last but not least, energy storage solutions (whether for electricity or natural gas) are the optimal method to strike a balance between economic benefits and the strategic objectives of the energy system of the future.*

Sustainable mobility as a driver for economic growth and competitiveness



One of the objectives of the Romanian Presidency is to ensure a **more competitive and safer mobility, with an impact on the functioning of the single market and to the benefit of the citizens.** To achieve the Presidency's objective of a *Europe of convergence*, Romania aims to contribute to improving the functioning of the EU single market. In

this context, an essential part is played by the development of a modern, multimodal, interoperable and efficient trans-European transport network that will further strengthen cohesion, improve accessibility and provide connectivity both within the Union and with neighbouring regions, while stimulating investments for economic growth. Achieving this objective will contribute to bridging the development gaps between regions and between Member States, to job creation in the European Union and to ensuring the transition to low emissions mobility.

The priority for the Romanian Presidency will be to continue negotiating the three mobility packages, aiming at achieving a balanced compromise for the proposals on land and maritime transport and infrastructure. At the same time, the Presidency aims to advance negotiations on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF 2.0), with the aim of funding infrastructure and related projects under CEF to support the objectives of developing the TEN-T networks.

In the land transport sector, the Romanian Presidency will continue the negotiations on Mobility Package I, aiming to identify optimal solutions to ensure a more efficient functioning of the single market, more competitive and safer mobility and an adequate balance between improving working conditions, reducing administrative burden and enforcement of regulations. Thus, the Presidency will aim to achieve a compromise on the files on access to the occupation of road transport operator and access to the road transport market, posting of drivers, social legislation and leased vehicles.

At the same time, the Romanian Presidency will make efforts to advance the negotiations on the proposal concerning railway passengers' rights.

The Presidency will pay a special attention to initiatives that improve road safety, aiming to advance the negotiations on the road infrastructure safety management file.

The revision of the Combined Transport Directive for the development of intermodal freight transport infrastructure is a good opportunity to define support measures for this type of transport. The measures

should ensure efficient use of existing freight transport infrastructure, by attracting the flow of goods from road to railway and inland waterways transport, thus generating economic growth and low environmental impact and eliminating road traffic jams. The Romanian Presidency will aim to advance the negotiations on this file, as well as the file on procurement of non-polluting vehicles.

In the maritime transport sector, the Romanian Presidency will aim at starting negotiations with the European Parliament on the legislative initiative regarding the training of sailors and the certification recognition system. With regard to the Council Recommendation on small passenger ships, the Presidency aims to restart the discussions, with a view to adopting this file.

An important objective of the Presidency is to **make real progress in achieving the objectives for completing the TEN-T network** that will ultimately contribute to increasing the European Union's cohesion and competitiveness in terms of sustainable mobility and interconnectivity.

The Romanian Presidency pays special attention to streamlining the project authorisation process and, as a result, to accelerating the implementation of TEN-T priority projects. For this reason, it will aim at advancing the negotiations on the proposal for a 'Smart TEN-T' Regulation.

In the new age of mobility and digital, where the EU aims at becoming a world leader in digitalisation, the development of a Single European Transport Area requires creating synergies between the objectives of the transport, energy and telecommunication strategies. Thus, standards and trends in the development of transport infrastructure and services in terms of multi-modality, digitalisation and innovation must be considered in the development of the EU-wide transport network. The Romanian Presidency will therefore aim at starting negotiations with the European Parliament on the legislative initiative establishing a single reporting interface at European level (*European Maritime Single Window*) and will also aim at advancing discussions on the file regarding the use of electronic information in freight transport.

In aviation, the international dimension will take priority. The Romanian Presidency will facilitate discussions on the negotiation, signing and entry into force of air transport agreements between the EU and third countries.

A borderless and continuously transforming Digital Europe

The Romanian Presidency will place a special emphasis on all matters concerning digitalisation, throughout the EU's society and in all economic sectors. Europe has a huge potential in relation to the development of the digital economy, artificial intelligence, block chain, high performance computing, the internet of things (IoT), 5G and strengthening cybersecurity.

The Presidency's objective is to contribute to maximising the use of this potential, so that Europe can become a world leader and European enterprises acquire a global dimension. Moreover, it is equally important to ensure and increase citizens' trust in the online environment, by prioritising e-skills, digital education and cybersecurity matters on the European agenda.

Thus, the Presidency will have an ambitious, creative and future-oriented approach. It will make

efforts to advance and, where feasible, complete negotiations on current legislative files, such as re-use of public sector information, Digital Europe Programme, CEF-Telecom, privacy of electronic communications (ePrivacy), creating the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre and the network of coordinated national centres.



In the continuously and rapidly changing digital ecosystem, it is essential that Europe's strategies, policies and regulatory framework be connected to the technological realities of the market. In this context, the Presidency will start discussions on strategic and economic priorities, objectives and topics from the perspective of the future of the post-2020 Digital Single Market European Strategy for Europe. These debates will be particularly important, especially considering the rapid

worldwide development of new technologies, 5G and data economics, but also against the background of the challenges related to complexity, cyber-attacks, access to and responsibility for data, lack of digital skills and digital gaps. The Romanian Presidency will support the reduction of the digital gap and the development of e-skills in order to achieve a real European digital economy and society.

Given Europe's huge potential in terms of tech experts, intelligence and innovation capabilities, another important priority for the Romanian Presidency is to promote the participation of women in the tech sector -'Women in tech – towards a cultural change'-, by promoting new professional development opportunities for girls and women.

Towards a genuine Energy Union

The Romanian Presidency will continue the EU's efforts to **implement the Energy Union initiatives**, focusing on three topics of interest, namely to continue the implementation of the Energy Union (legislative dimension), to support the development of the future European energy system (power infrastructure, storage and technologies) and to contribute to strengthening nuclear security.

From the legislative perspective, the Presidency will aim to conclude the files concerning the reform of the electricity market part of the Clean Energy package, including by formalising political agreements. Last but not least, the Presidency aims to achieve progress on the regulation on tyres' labelling file.

Constructive efforts will be made in the negotiations on the Natural Gas Directive, with a view to consolidating a comprehensive, coherent and transparent regulatory framework that equally reflects the political will of the co-legislators.

Moreover, the Romanian Presidency will aim to achieve progress in the inter-institutional negotiations on the Connecting Europe Facility, the file being dealt in close cooperation with Transport and Telecom sectors.

Outlining the **future of the European energy system**, another thematic priority of the Romanian Presidency will aim to ensure energy transition and achieve post-2020 energy and climate change goals. Considering that the Clean Energy package is deemed to be the most advanced regulatory framework for energy transition, a special attention needs to be paid to Europe's energy infrastructure, energy storage solutions and



innovative technologies that should be developed to support the transition. The Presidency will work towards Council Conclusions on the vision of a future European energy system that contributes to the achievement of energy transition and energy security objectives.

Additionally, the Romanian Presidency will take forward the policy debates on the Strategic Long-Term Vision for a Climate Neutral Economy.

Implementing the highest standards of **nuclear security for the protection of workers, public and the environment** remains one of the priorities of the Romanian Presidency.

In the constantly changing current global context, the Presidency will work towards Council Conclusions on strengthening nuclear security through enhanced physical protection.

At the same time, it is important to prepare the discussions that will take place in the 2021 meeting of the contracting parties to the Conference on Physical Protection of Nuclear Facilities of 2021.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES COUNCIL



FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

*The Common Agricultural Policy contributes and will continue to contribute to **increasing the cohesion of rural areas** and to preserving European agriculture's vitality and competitiveness. Guaranteeing **food security and safety for European citizens** at reasonable prices and higher quality are valid political objectives, present on the European agenda, but also with a real impact on the global agenda in the field.*

*Reforming this policy for the post-2020 period will intensify the process of modernisation and simplification of the agriculture acquis, taking into account the need to adapt to future social, economic and environmental requirements. The future Common Agricultural Policy should protect the European agriculture model that is based on the principles of food sovereignty, sustainability and capacity to respond to **the real needs of European citizens, be they farmers or consumers**. The European farming sector should continue to remain viable and competitive, capable of supplying the citizens with quality foods at reasonable prices. Bureaucracy should be reduced for European farmers. Also, the competitive disadvantages faced by European farmers on international markets should be removed.*

At the same time, the regulation of unfair trading practices in agri-food markets is a step towards fairness and fair competition, which aims at strengthening the farmers' position in the agri-food supply chain.

Measures to protect plants and plant products contribute to preserving farming competitiveness.

The single strategy on monitoring and protecting animal health at EU borders is a tool designed to guarantee the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, taking into account that certain serious viral animal diseases are present in the vicinity. In the current critical context of climate change and incidence of animal disease in Europe and its neighbouring areas, biosecurity should remain among the main topics on the agenda of chiefs of European veterinary agencies.

Regarding the Common Fisheries Policy, efforts should be focused towards finalising the multiannual management plans and achieving progress on the future European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the Control Regulation.

Progress in implementing the EU Forest Strategy must be identified, taking into account the need to ensure trans-sectoral synergy after 2020.

Agriculture

Managing the negotiation of the legislative package related to the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), in the context of the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, is the main priority for the Romanian Presidency in the field of agriculture. The Presidency will continue the discussion on the modernisation and simplification of the CAP, ensuring that, through the reform process, the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union are followed. Given the major role that the CAP plays in increasing the single market's cohesion and competitiveness, the modernisation and simplification will increase the efficiency of interventions under this policy, provide for a fair standard of living for the farming population in the future, guarantee food security, ensure reasonable food prices for all citizens and increase the productivity and competitiveness of European agriculture, taking into account the special nature of farming that results from the social structure of agriculture activity and the structural and natural differences between various regions.



FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Taking into account the objective of adopting an agriculture policy better adapted to future challenges and demands that adequately meets Member States' needs and specifications, continuing preparations for the next programming period is one of the major objectives of the Presidency. In full correlation and complementarity with the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, the Romanian Presidency will aim to advance discussions and facilitate consensus on the key elements of the future CAP, with a view to achieving a partial general approach on the legislative proposals comprised in the CAP reform package.

Bio-economy, innovation and agricultural research will be among the topics for debate in the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2019.

The Romanian Presidency envisages to continue discussions aimed at identifying measures to encourage the production of protein plant with the objective of ensuring EU's independence in this sector.

The proposal for a Directive on **Unfair Trading Practices** is an important step forward, intended to consolidate farmers' position in the agri-food supply chain. The Romanian Presidency will pursue the final procedural steps to adopt this proposal.

Another file of interest for the European agri-foods sector is the proposal to repeal the Regulation

on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks. The Romanian Presidency will aim at finalising the negotiations and adopt the proposal.

In the field of **plant health**, the Romanian Presidency will deploy all efforts to contribute to raising public awareness on this goal. The Presidency will promote the development of plant health infrastructure in Member States, in the context of the implementation of the new plant health regulations (plant health and official checks) and of the public information programmes on the upcoming events of 2020 (International Year of Plant Health).

The single strategy on monitoring and protecting animal health on EU borders is a priority topic for the Romanian Presidency, considering that serious viral animal diseases are present in the vicinity of the EU. Prevention is the key element that contributes to maintaining the EU's territory free of animal diseases, thus protecting the functioning and development of livestock farming, which contributes significantly to the economic growth of Member States and the European Union as a whole.

Implementing measures to control, monitor and eradicate major animal diseases have a considerable social and economic impact. For this reason, a single strategy applied uniformly by all the Member States would strengthen EU's prevention capacity. Biosecurity is the most important tool for preventing the contact of pathogens with exposed animals. The Romanian Presidency will aim to reach an agreement on the technical elements deemed essential in the EU and on harmonised biosecurity measures. The Recommendations of the Working Party of Chief Veterinary Officers may form the starting point for the future development of specific regulations in the area. Another important topic that the Presidency wants to address concerns the progress made in implementing the European Union's Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance in the field of veterinary medicine, the *'One Health Approach'*.

The transparency of the EU system for assessing food chain risks, the decision-making process, effective and consistent communication, and bringing these processes closer to citizens are topics that will be addressed with particular attention by the Romanian Presidency.

Fisheries

Regarding the Common Fisheries Policy, the Romanian Presidency will continue work on the multiannual management plans, with the purpose of making progress in debates and achieving a political agreement with the European Parliament.

The Presidency will deploy all efforts to advance the discussions on the proposal for a Regulation to amend the Control Regulation and the future Regulation on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund post-2020.

The external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy remains an important priority of the Romanian Presidency programme.

Forestry

Adapting the forestry sector to climate and society changes and stopping land degradation



The European agenda places a special emphasis on adaptation to climate changes and sustainable management of forests, in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Forest Europe process, as well as on promoting a new forestry strategy for the European Union after 2020.

The focal point of the Romanian Presidency in the field of forestry policy is the

preparation of EU's and Member States' participation in the UN Forum on forests and the review of the progress made in implementing the EU Forestry Strategy, with a view to ensuring a trans-sectoral synergy after 2020 and continuing the discussions on entering a binding agreement on forests in Europe, considering the outcomes of the Round Table of 2018. Other relevant topics include revising EU activities to stop deforestation and the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Action Plan/FLEGT.

ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



*The European Union's environmental policy has become more comprehensive and streamlined into other policies of the European Union. Reducing the gaps against the European Union average in what regards the transition to a circular economy, including in the area of investments made available under the Cohesion Policy for the waste sector, is a central aspect of **citizens' needs and expectations**.*

*The EU has become a global promoter of sustainable development, aiming at creating a **symbiosis between sustainable development principles, competitiveness and social cohesion**. The goal is to implement sustainable development principles through a global and cross-sectoral approach meant to tackle economic, social and environmental challenges in an integrated manner.*

Moreover, Member States' efforts are channelled towards consolidating EU's leadership role in achieving the long term goals of the Paris Agreement, ensuring the transition to a low-carbon economy and continuing the integration of actions to fight climate change across sectors in EU's major policies. Attention will also be given to ensuring the quality of drinking water, efficient use of water resources and prompting and promoting biodiversity.

*The environmental and climate change policies shape Europe's future and the new development trends. The transition to a circular economy and to low carbon emissions development will contribute to improving **European citizens'** quality of life.*

Implementing the Paris Agreement – a pathway to economic growth with low carbon emissions



FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

The Romanian Presidency will continue to advance the EU agenda on climate change, in order to contribute to the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Efforts will be directed towards a sustained and coherent dialogue aimed at **outlining a shared EU vision on a long-term strategy** to encourage climate change actions and a sustainable transformation of the economy.

Regarding the legislative files, the Presidency aims to finalize the negotiations on the proposal to establish **CO₂ emission standards for new heavy-duty vehicles**, a proposal meant to support Member States in reducing road transport emissions. Additionally, the Romanian Presidency will deploy the necessary efforts to advance as much as possible the negotiations on the legislative proposal on **monitoring maritime sector CO₂ emissions**.

The Presidency will coordinate the active participation of the EU and Member States in the international negotiation session in Bonn (17-27 June 2019).

Sustainable Development – implementing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and strengthening the environmental dimension of sustainable development

Sustainable development and the economic, social and environmental pillars are the new framework for global, national, regional and local development, and their promotion is an overarching objective for the EU and Member States.

The Presidency will coordinate the active participation of the EU and Member States in the **fourth meeting of UNEA that will take place in Nairobi, during 11 - 15 March 2019**, on the theme of 'Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production'.



FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

A sustainable management of **chemicals** is particularly important in order to ensure a clean and healthy environment. Alongside the other Member States, the Romanian Presidency will have the opportunity to promote EU's vision on this matter, as well as on the chemicals / waste interface at the **triple COP meeting of relevant Conventions (Basel / Rotterdam / Stockholm)** that will take place in Geneva on 29 April – 10 May 2019.

The Presidency will coordinate the EU and Member States' representation in the **17th session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CRIC)**, which will take place in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in January 2019. The Romanian Presidency will also start to prepare the EU position for its participation at the 14th Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification.

Biodiversity – post-2020 challenges and opportunities in the EU and international context

The Romanian Presidency will promote the benefits of biodiversity at European and international level.

Providing adequate funding for measures to protect biodiversity is a key element in achieving EU's targets and the relevant targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the 2030 Agenda. Considering the importance of the programmes to support biodiversity and climate change, another important item on the Presidency's agenda will be to **considerably advance the negotiations on the LIFE Programme**, in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework.

Based on the outcomes of the COP 14 meeting of CBD, the Presidency intends to organise a **debate at ministerial level on consolidating the biodiversity action plan beyond 2020**.

A conference on large carnivores will be held in Bucharest, to emphasise the importance of representative species on our territory and their conservation needs.

The Presidency will coordinate the active participation of the EU and Member States to the important international meetings that will be held in the first half of 2019, including the 18th Conference of the Parties to CITES (Sri Lanka, 23 May – 3 June 2019) and the 7th Plenary Session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (France, 29 April – 4 May 2019).

Water management

The Romanian Presidency will focus on advancing the negotiations on the legislative files concerning **the re-use of water and the quality of drinking water**. Efficiency in the re-use of water and high quality in drinking water will contribute to the European Union achieving the specific sustainable development objectives under the 2030 Agenda.



FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Implementing the Marine Environment Strategy and the measures to protect and preserve biodiversity are essential for achieving a good environmental status in Europe's marine regions by 2020. One of the most serious threats to **water and marine environment quality**, namely the pollution with plastics and micro plastics, will be a topic for debate in the informal Environment Council.

EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT COUNCIL

FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



Education, culture, youth and sport policies take a central place on the European agenda, having both a high social relevance and a significant economic dimension.

*Strengthening European policies in these areas contributes to the **EU's economic and social development**, **conveys a consistent message about European identity** and supports the objective of building a more transparent and citizen-centred Union.*

Although the areas of education culture, youth and sport are in the competences of the Member States, the progressive transformation of intergovernmental initiatives into EU actions and the success they have had over time further underline the importance of the added value of these initiatives at European level.

Education and culture are key to Europe's future, both from the individual perspective of the European citizen** who should enjoy the opportunity to study in any EU Member State and to have full access to Europe's rich cultural heritage, and from the perspective of consolidating the European project, for a **stronger and more cohesive Union, based on shared values.

***Developing the feeling of belonging to Europe** involves understanding and promoting European values in formal, non-formal, and informal education contexts. The role of education, culture and youth-centred policies is thus a determining factor in promoting shared European values and ideals, as well as in creating a European identity.*

The initiative to establish the European Education Area by 2025 – which Romania supports – is defining for the future of the European Union, and aims to identify suitable solutions for the numerous challenges confronting the EU today. By creating a pole of educational excellence and mobility, the European Education Area will support all European education and training systems, making them more competitive and attractive for students and teachers from around the world.

Education that connects



The central theme of the programme of the Romanian Presidency is 'Connecting Education', pursuing three major dimensions: mobility, inclusion and excellence.

The Romanian Presidency will aim at strengthening the European identity through education and culture, and at advancing high-quality, inclusive education, paying special attention to **key-skills learning**, acquired in a lifelong learning process.

Learning mobility is one of the most important tools that contributes to the development of professional competences and skills, as well as to increasing employment opportunities. The Presidency will continue discussions on the **proposal for a Regulation on the Erasmus+ Programme**, with a view to agreeing a programme that favours inclusion and that will contribute to increasing the mobility of pupils, student, teachers and administrative staff, as well as to promoting European values through education. A special attention will be given to establishing and developing European universities' networks and centres of excellence in vocational and technical education.

At the same time, one of the files that will be subject to debate concerns the **proposal for a Council Recommendation on high-quality early childhood education and care systems**, with the objective of its adoption, emphasising the importance of early education and care services for strengthening inclusion and cohesion, as well as the European dimension and the integration of families and children from third countries. Through this Recommendation, Member States will be supported in their efforts to improve the accessibility and quality of the early education and care systems.

Moreover, the Romanian Presidency will focus on promoting training, multilingual and cultural awareness.

Regarding the **contribution of education to the European Union's cohesion and competitiveness**, the Romanian Presidency will act to reach a consensus of the ministers of education on the **Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to language teaching and learning**. Foreign-language learning may be stimulated by the use of digital tools, aiming to increase pupils', students' and staff mobility and developing an inclusive cultural environment.

Learning foreign languages can contribute to: increasing employability, social inclusion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment. All Member States recognised the need to consolidate multilingualism and develop language skills in the Union.

Facilitating young people's access to EU Single Market opportunities

The Romanian Presidency will aim at contributing to increasing the quality of the dialogue between public authorities and the young, at all levels (local, regional, national and European), by **promoting the active participation of the young, including those from disadvantaged areas, in the European Union's actions**. This, in fact, is a significant parameter in the activity of the current Trio, with Finland and Croatia lined up to continue the debates on improving youth inclusion and the structured dialogue process. On the brink of the European elections of May 2019, **young people's involvement in community life**



is an important dimension of the Romanian Presidency to the European Union Council. Against the backdrop generated by Brexit, rising Euro-scepticism and the migration crisis, the Presidency's objective is **to bring young people closer to the European project**, by developing skills and promoting active participation and volunteering. In this context, the Romanian Presidency aims to advance as much as possible the interinstitutional negotiations on the proposal for a Regulation on the *European Solidarity Corps*.

The Romanian Presidency aims to promote, as a main topic in the field of youth, the **increase of the adaptability of young people to challenges** faced in finding a job.

Youth will also be a significant priority for the Romanian Presidency in the field of culture. In connection with the opportunities brought about by digital development, we will highlight the importance of ensuring young generations' access to culture, with a view to developing **creative, intercultural and communication skills**, which are vital for meeting the challenges of a continuously changing world. For this purpose, the Presidency aims to propose Council conclusions that will foster measures supporting creativity and entrepreneurship. In the context of social developments, marked by an extensive process of transformation and reassertion of the system of values, it is necessary to consolidate the feeling of belonging to a European cultural community. This can be achieved by promoting and supporting an increased **involvement in the community and wider access to culture and cultural heritage**. The young people play a critical role in promoting these values – intercultural dialogue, solidarity, volunteering, equal opportunities and active citizenship – and in promoting a unified message on European identity, based on their creative potential and high level of interest in new information and communication technologies.

Making the best use of European heritage and developing cultural and creative sectors

At the same time, considering that our shared cultural features give us the feeling that we belong to a common space, we will approach the theme of cultural heritage by making use of the legacy and momentum generated by the *European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018*, by organising debates and events.

Heritage plays a fundamental role in increasing a region's attractiveness, representing a shared European resource of which all European citizens should be aware.

The Romanian Presidency will emphasise the importance of preserving cultural heritage by ensuring high quality standards in conservation and interventions. In the context, it is useful to identify best practice, but also unsuccessful interventions that highlight a worrying decrease in the quality of restoration work, detrimental to authenticity.

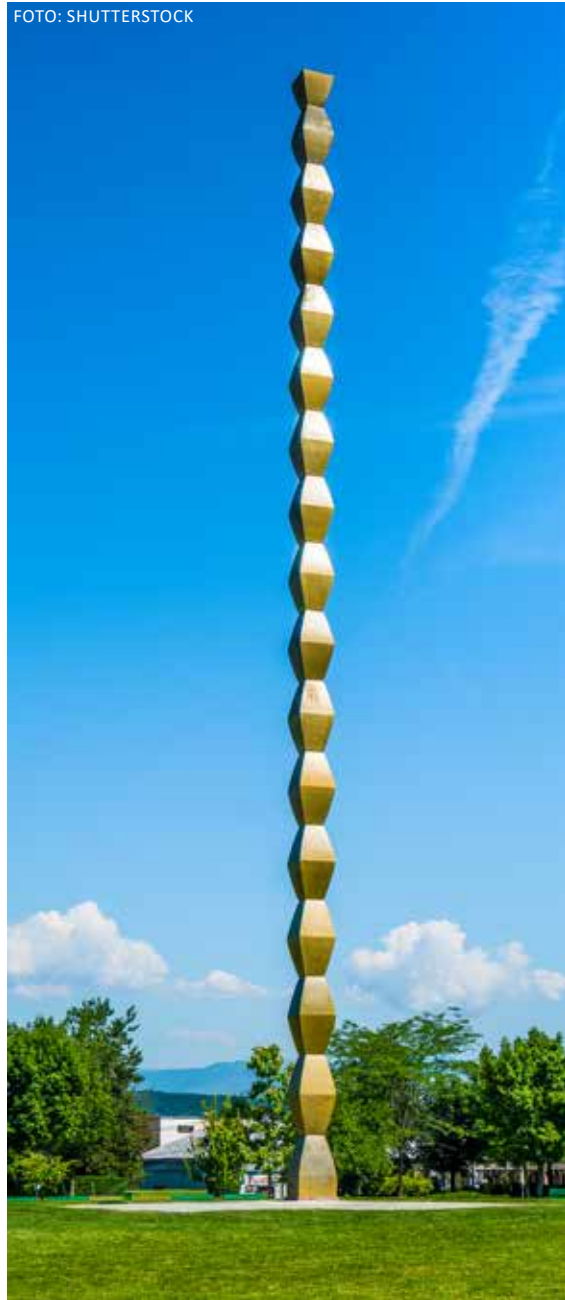
Maximizing the European cultural and creative potential for the benefit of all European citizens will be an important issue for the Presidency, which will emphasise the importance of developing the cultural and creative sectors. They contribute decisively to the social development and economic growth by, among other things, developing a highly qualified workforce.

The Romanian Presidency aims to continue the negotiations on the *proposal for a Regulation establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 – 2027)*, for the purpose of supporting the cultural and creative sectors, with the objective of facilitating

substantial progress in this dossier, to ensure the predictability and continuity of projects for the benefit of all parties involved. Aspects concerning the implementation of the programme will be discussed in the meetings of the network of *Creative Europe Desks* that will be held during the Romanian Presidency.

Moreover, in order to support the European film industry and its cultural diversity, the Romanian Presidency aims at contributing to the promotion of European film works, with a focus on co-productions, via Conclusions on *improving the cross-border circulation of audio-visual creations and co-productions*.

FOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK



The field of music will also be promoted during the Romanian Presidency, in the context of the changes generated by digital developments.

Considering the current challenges that the media and audio-visual industries are confronted with, fighting disinformation through media literacy and quality journalism is a stringent necessity. In order to reinforce trust in the digital media, the Romanian Presidency will facilitate debates on this issue, inviting Member States to share national best practices and solutions and to contribute to concrete European initiatives and actions.

Facilitating access to sport for all European citizens

The Romanian Presidency will focus on **facilitating access to organised sports for persons with fewer opportunities**, and intends to put forward Council Conclusions on access to organised sport for people with disabilities.

The Presidency will act to foster performance in sports, emphasizing the positive perspective of the sports club – a space where community members meet, interpersonal relationships are established or developed, and athletes who provide exemplary role models are trained.

In legislative terms, the Romanian Presidency is prepared to make significant progress regarding the regulation for establishing the **Erasmus programme**, including the *sports* chapter.

At the same time, debates will be organised on **sports' development in the digital age**, with the aim of increasing the awareness level of sport organizations on the economic opportunities offered by the Digital Single Market.

In order to promote a *clean sport*, the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council will facilitate the formulation of the common position of the Member States and of the European Union on the **review of the World Anti-Doping Code and International Standards that accompany it**. Also, in the anti-doping field, under the Romanian Presidency the review process of the **Council Resolution on the representation and coordination of EU Member States in WADA Foundation Board's meetings** will continue.



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