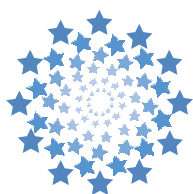


RO
2019

Platforma de sprijin

Președinția Română
a Consiliului UE

HANDBOOK OF THE 2019 ROMANIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



europuls
CENTRE OF EUROPEAN EXPERTISE

Written by Europuls - Centre of European
Expertise, with the support of its partners

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INTRODUCTION - WHY THIS HANDBOOK?

To claim that in 2019 Romania will have to face its greatest 'adulthood' test since the 1989 Revolution is certainly no exaggeration. For a period of six months between January and July, Romania will have to complete a highly complex and technical task which must be finalised beyond a national agenda or pride, under the scrutiny of its partners. It is the moment when, for the first time since joining the EU, Romania must show what it can do for Europe and keep, at least for a while, its national interests on the back burner.

The task? Holding the Rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU (referred to as 'Ro2019' hereafter).

The decisions taken by the Council of the EU have, as you will see in the following pages, a major impact on all our lives. European regulations are key to ensuring prosperity, peace and living standards across the entire European Union - and beyond. As a result, even if this institution does not get the same visibility as the European Parliament or the Council, it is by no means less important.

Understanding the full extent of the challenge posed by a rotating presidency is a difficult task even for member states which already held it. For many European citizens it is something that takes place at an abstract governmental level. Most of them hear about the Presidency only as the traffic

in their nation's capital becomes impossible due to the many state visits and events which take place throughout the six months.

Europuls and its partners believe that Romania cannot afford the luxury of ignorance. Holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU brings along a unique opportunity to redefine a country's image, its mental place on the EU map, as well as to reposition itself as a key driver of the European project.

This handbook is a coordinated effort by the volunteers of **Europuls - Centre of European Expertise**. It aims to bring an added value to the activities undertaken within the **RO2019 Support Platform**, and to help anyone wishing to learn, to understand or even get involved in the process itself. We hope this will be one of many elements put forward to ensure a successful Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The topic is a highly complex one, and our team's efforts were focused on offering to the public the opportunity to better understand the functioning of the EU institutions and the role of Ro2019. We are sure there are many other issues/aspects that could be said about the Presidency of the Council of the EU, and we remain at your disposal for comments and suggestions.



CONCEPT PAPER RO2019

http://www.ro2019.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Concept-Paper_Ro2019_English_Europuls_FDSC.pdf

PART I WHAT DOES A PRESIDENCY ENTAIL?

WHAT IS THE COUNCIL OF THE EU AND HOW DOES IT WORK?



The difference between the 3 Councils

The EU Council structure

How decisions are made

The Council of the EU is a key decision making entity within the European structure, part of the EU institutional triangle 'Parliament-Council-Commission'. **NB:** We are talking about the Council of the European Union; here we must stress a common mistake: confusing the Council of the EU with another European institution - the **European Council** - or the international organisation of the **Council of Europe**.

The **Council of Europe**, although located in Strasbourg, has no connection with the EU institutions. It brings together 47 member states and is in essence a cooperation forum for the promotion of human rights and democratic values.

The **European Council** gathers the EU heads of state/government in Brussels. The Presidency of the European Council is held by one elected official for a two-and-a-half-year term (currently Polish politician Donald Tusk). It gives the Union the needed push to define and develop its priorities and general policy directions. For example, the Romanian President can discuss and defend Romania's national interests in this setting alongside his counterparts, on issues such as Schengen, economic development, security and defence, etc.

The **Council of the European Union**, also located in Brussels, represents the forum in which Member States' Ministers gather to discuss thematic issues, adopt legislative acts and coordinate European affairs. Amongst the many responsibilities held we can note working on the EU budget, signing of external agreements, and adoption of policies in areas such as environment, transport, agriculture and many others. The Council of the European Union will be the host institution to Ro2019. For the remainder of the guide we will refer to the Council of the EU as **ConsEU** or simply **Council**.

EU legislative decisions are made by the ConsEU and the European Parliament (EP); the European Commission (EC) is the body responsible for proposing new legislation and in charge of implementation, whilst the European Council is in charge of drawing the general political lines of the Union.



https://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu/bmm_video_embed/embed_video/67740/ro



European Commission

Proposes the legislative act



Ordinary legislative procedure

EU Council

European Parliament

EU legislative process





The ConsEU Presidency is held by all Member States through a system of rotation, taking into account their diversity and the geographical balance of the EU. The system was introduced through the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, and foresees that the Presidency is to be held by 3 states (known as 'trio') for a period of 18 months. For this reason, in the European slang, we talk about the 'Rotating Presidency'.

In the first half of 2019, for the first time since becoming a member of the EU, Romania will chair the meetings of all working bodies of the ConsEU - this will be the core activity of Ro2019.

EU Council Configurations

ConsEU works through 10 configurations depending on the issue discussed (environment, competitiveness, agriculture and fisheries, etc). These configurations are tasked with the adoption of legislative acts. For example, a legislative proposal dealing with air and water quality will be discussed within the 'Environment' configuration by **all** member states' ministers overseeing environment related issues. In addition to the ministerial representatives, be it ministers or state secretaries, the Council reunions are also attended by the European Commissioners responsible for the specific policy area.



Council configurations established by the Treaties

General affairs

Foreign affairs

Economic and financial affairs

Justice and home affairs

Agriculture and fisheries

Competitiveness (internal market, industry, research, space)

Transport, telecommunications and energy

Employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs

Environment

Education, youth, culture and sport

The Council is supported by the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union (**Coreper**) and more than **150 highly specialised working parties and committees**, known as the 'Council preparatory bodies'.

The preparatory bodies can be divided into two main categories:

- **Committees set up by the Treaties, intergovernmental decisions or by Council act** - they are mostly permanent and often have an appointed or elected chairperson
- **Committees and working parties set up by Coreper** - these deal with very specific subjects and are chaired by the delegate of the country holding the rotating 6-month Presidency of the Council.

In addition, **ad hoc** committees can be created for a specific purpose and cease to exist when their task is fulfilled.

We must see the Council structure as a pyramid. Most legislative proposals reach the working parties, committees and preparatory bodies, which are formed of civil servants with specific topical expertise. All the governments of the member states have a **Permanent Representation to the EU**, a sort of embassy run by a Permanent Representative entitled to be **Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador**. For Romania, this title is currently held by **H.E. Luminița Teodora Odobescu**. Her Excellency is representing our country in the COREPER II Committee and is coordinating a group of civil servants sent by the Romanian Government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries), each of them covering a specific policy.

Within these daily reunions, issues are debated and negotiated by the representatives of all the Member States, and the first conclusions are drawn. Depending on the issue,

COREPER I

deputy permanent representatives of each member state

Role - deal with items pertaining to 6 Council configurations :

Agriculture and Fisheries
Competitiveness
Education, Youth, Culture and Sport
Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs
Environment
Transport and Telecommunications

COREPER II

permanent representatives/ambassadors of each member state

Role - deal with items pertaining to 4 Council configurations:

Economic and Financial Affairs
Foreign Affairs
General Affairs
Justice and Home Affairs

the technical expertise and the work undergone at this level, COREPER - at the level of the permanent representatives to the EU - may itself examine the proposals that pass the filter of the preparatory groups.

When COREPER concludes the discussions on a certain proposal, it is added to the Council's agenda. In this format, Member States' ministerial representatives will negotiate the file in the relevant topical thematic configuration and possibly vote and adopt it.

It seems complex, yet it is normal if one remembers that each legislative proposal tries to appease a multitude of actors - Member States, European Commission, citizens, businesses, civil society etc. In the next section we'll focus on how exactly decisions are made within the EU institutions.



photo: George Pachantouris/ Flickr

How decisions are made

Depending on the legislative act, the Council votes on it by **simple majority**, **qualified majority** or by **unanimity**. Decisions of the European Council on an urgent matter may be adopted by a written vote where all members of the European Council or COREPER having the right to vote agree to that procedure. Furthermore, on the initiative of the **Presidency** (namely Romania from January to June 2019), the Council may act by means of a simplified written procedure called 'silence procedure' (where the decisions are adopted if no Member State objects).

The ordinary legislative procedure begins with a proposal from the European Commission, which is then put forward to the European Parliament and Council. There are some areas in which the Treaties do not provide the legal basis for the use of this procedure - such as judicial cooperation in criminal matters and police cooperation.

First Reading

After receiving the European Commission legislative proposal, the European Parliament assesses it and adopts its position on the act, which is then sent to the Council. The Council debates the proposal at working group level, votes at ministerial level and adopts its own position.

Whenever the European Parliament position coincides with the one of the Council, the act is considered to be adopted. In cases in which the Parliament's position is not the one approved by the Council, the latter adopts its own position which is then sent to the Parliament alongside a document explaining its difference of opinion. The Commission will also inform the Parliament of its position, leading to the Second Reading.

Second Reading

During the second reading, the European Parliament has three options:

- If within three months following the Council's position referral the European Parliament adopts or does not take a position of the file, the act is considered to be adopted;
- If the Parliament rejects the position by absolute majority, the act is not adopted;
- If the Parliament puts forward changes to the Council position, the new version is then sent to the Council and Commission, with the latter required to adopt a new position on the proposed changes.

If within three months after having received the Parliament's proposed changes, the Council approves them by qualified majority, the act is adopted. In the cases in which only part of the Parliament's proposed amendments are adopted by the Council, the president of the Council must arrange, within six weeks and after conferring with the European Parliament president, the **Conciliation Committee**. In case of a negative

opinion from the Commission, the Council must vote in unanimity.

Conciliation

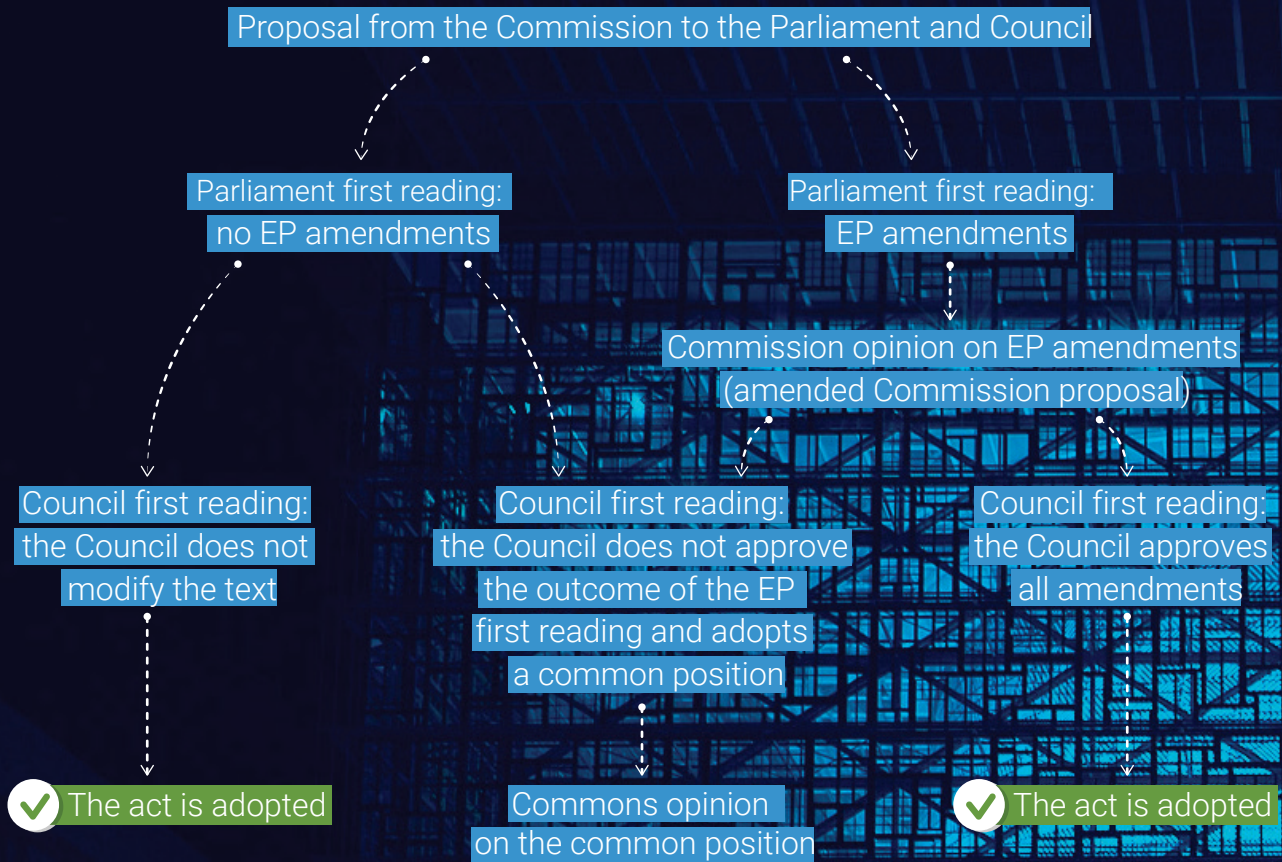
The process of **conciliation** implies direct negotiation between the two institutions adopting legal acts - the Parliament and Council. This takes place within a Conciliation Committee with representatives from the 28 member states and 28 representatives from the European Parliament. The Committee's task is to agree on a certain act by reaching qualified majority within the Council and simple majority of the Parliament's representatives, based on the second reading position of the two institutions. Every legislative act that requires conciliation will have its own separate committee, and up to six weeks to reach an agreement. If an agreement is not reached within the allotted time, the process moves to the next phase.

Third Reading

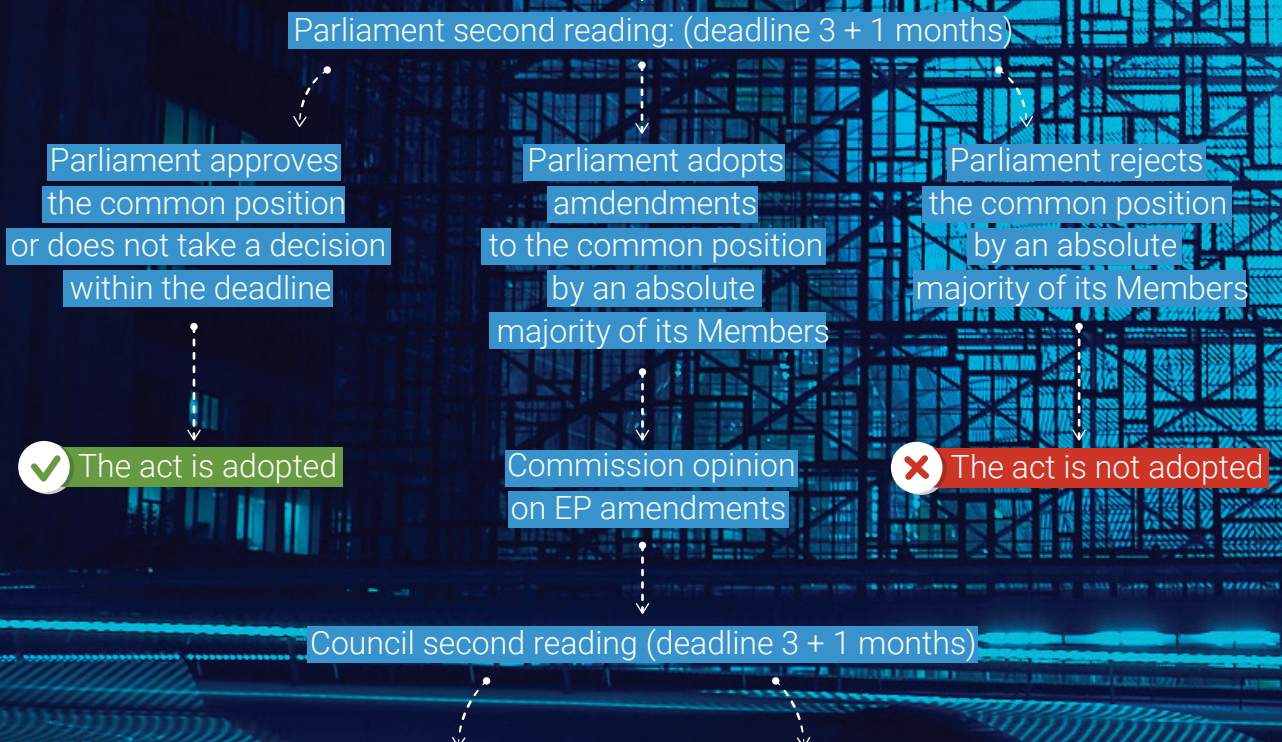
Should a common proposal be agreed upon, the Parliament and Council each have six weeks to adopt the respective act by means of a simple majority in Parliament and qualified majority in the Council. If the proposal is not approved, the act is not adopted. At this stage, no amendments are allowed on either side - the bill has to be approved or rejected in its entirety. After receiving the signatures of the Parliament and Council Presidents, the act is published in the EU Official Journal (OJ).

Throughout all this, the **Presidency is in charge of coordinating cooperation amongst Member States**. To be more precise, the relevant minister of the country holding the Presidency is the one presiding the Council meetings - the Agriculture minister chairs the Agriculture and Fisheries configuration and so on.

1st Reading



2nd Reading



3rd Reading



THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENCY



Presidency trios

The responsibilities of Ro2019

The relationship with other institutions

The Romania - Finland - Croatia Trio

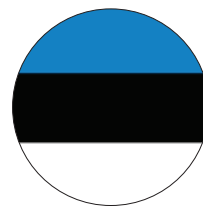
Six months is a very short period to set the priorities of the EU agenda, debate and adopt a legislative act. As a result, the countries that hold the ConsEU Presidency are working in groups of three, establishing common priorities for a period of 18 months.

For the purpose of this guide, the reference of 'trio' is that of Romania-Finland-Croatia, who will work together to establish the long-term EU objectives and prepare a common agenda. Based on this schedule, Romania will prepare its own, more detailed, agenda for its 6 months of Presidency. This is a unique opportunity to influence the EU agenda and coordinate the Council's efforts. The Ro2019 agenda will be drafted together with the Secretary-General of the Council, after consulting the European Commission.

Each Presidency is tasked with preparing the agenda of meetings and activities; this document needs to be made available to the public with at least 7 months before the start of the Presidency. It is highly recommended to avoid piling up events towards the end of the semester, overlapping meetings, scheduling more than 2 meetings on the same day all along while trying to accommodate both national and EU public holidays. The Council meetings usually take place in Brussels, except from the months of April, June and October, when they take place in Luxembourg.

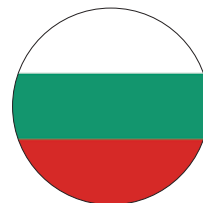
Estonia

July - December 2017



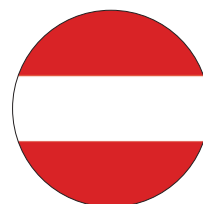
Bulgaria

January - June 2018



Austria

July - December 2018



Romania

January - June 2019



Finland

July - December 2019



Croatia

January - June 2020



Photo: © European Union



What will Romania be required to do

In order to have a clearer picture of the general expectations regarding Romania, we include an overview of the main Presidency activities below:

Chairing the different Council configurations meetings, with the exception of the Foreign Affairs Council chaired by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy;	Guiding the activity of the Committees of Permanent Representatives (COREPER I and II) and of the 160 working groups and committees that focus on specific topics;	Representing the Council in relations with other EU institutions, particularly with the Commission and European Parliament, in order to reach agreements on legislative files;	Coordinating national policies and acting as a Member States' broker/facilitator during Council meetings;	With regards to the Council itself, the Presidency is responsible for organising all the meeting and events in Romania, Brussels and other European cities. The preparations include setting the agenda, logistical details, participants etc.
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The most challenging task of the Presidency will thus be the preparation and chairing of the Council configurations and the working groups. This means that the Presidency must provide a Chair and a spokesperson in each configuration, working group and committee.

It is easy to imagine the amount of effort and work that goes into preparing these activities, from knowledge and experience, to logistics and structure. In theory, the Presidency is neutral and impartial, but in practice it still represents a political exercise in which diplomacy plays an important role, and political decisions must be taken in order to reach a compromise.

Interactions with other partners

As mentioned above, the Presidency represents the Council in its interactions with other EU institutions, especially the European Parliament and European Commission. Its main role is to find an agreement on the legislative files through trialogues, informal negotiations and Conciliation Committee meetings.

The Presidency works in close cooperation with the President of the European Council and with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. In some occasions the Presidency may be required to perform the duties of the High Representative, such as representing the Foreign Affairs Council before the European Parliament or chairing the Foreign Affairs Council when it discusses common commercial policy issues.

EU Council General Secretariat

As stated in the Lisbon treaty, the Council's activities are supported by the General Secretariat. The latter plays a key role in coordinating, organising and ensuring the coherence of the rotating Presidency's activities. The Council Secretariat

is a permanent body with a consultative role: for example, it provides advice regarding the training of personnel before the Presidency and ensures logistical support.

European Parliament

One month before the start of Ro2019, Romania is required to organise a meeting with the presidents of the **political groups** in the European Parliament, with the President of the Parliament and the chairs of the parliamentary committees to discuss its priorities (we focus more on priorities in the next chapter). The thematic priorities will also be presented and discussed by each Romanian Minister in their respective parliamentary committee.

At the start of the Presidency, Romania will also present its programme during the first Strasbourg plenary session, followed by an 'achievements report' at the end of the mandate. As Ro2019 takes place in the same period as the May 2019 **European elections**, the level of interactions with MEPs will be somewhat reduced as they will enter the campaign period around April.



Photo: ©European Union



During the Parliament **plenary sessions**, the minister or state secretary dealing with European affairs of the Member State holding the Presidency will represent the Council in the EP. This role can also be filled by another minister (for example the Foreign Affairs Minister or, when discussing a specific issue, the Minister overseeing the specific area).

EP Committees can also request an increased presence from Ministers throughout the Presidency. As such, whichever the 2019 Romanian ministers will be, they will spend a lot of time in Brussels and Strasbourg.

At the same time it is very likely that MEPs will come to Romania before the European election campaign begins, as many of the political groups and some of the committees regularly organise meetings in the country holding the Presidency.

Trialogues

In trialogues, the Council will be represented by the Romanian COREPER Chair - discussing budgetary and horizontal issues.

European Commission

Apart from the established interactions with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission as part of the day to day activities, there are no further inter-institutional obligations that fall under the Presidency. Nevertheless, in order to plan the working programme of the Presidency, it is highly possible that the Minister responsible for a certain portfolio meets with the President and the key figures of the European Commission to create the basis of the programme. Additional meetings will take place between the Presidency and the EEAS to develop the external affairs Council Working Programme.

European External Action Service

Article 18 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU states that the **High Representative** leads the common external and security policy of the Union. Even so, the experience of previous Presidencies indicates that Ro2019 can also play an active role in this area, especially when will promote high European diplomatic standards throughout the world. For reference, the 2011 **Polish Presidency** is an example of best practices between the two institutions.

During the six months, the Polish Foreign Affairs Minister took it upon himself to support the High Representative in the cooperation committees with third countries and international organisations, filling in for visits in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and was the first high European figure to visit Benghazi following the conflict in Libya. The Polish high official also filled in for the High Representative in the European Parliament plenary sessions and the Foreign Affairs Committee, and set the foundation for creating the European Fund for Democracy.

With good coordination, Romania could follow this example and become prestigious in the EU and the world, as the country holding the Presidency has the role to promote the EU as a global actor in its external relations.

The Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors

There are no formal interactions between the Presidency and the EU Court of Justice. There is however regular contact between the Court and the Council legal service with regards to the legal procedures and the nomination of judges.

The President of the European Court of Auditors presents the Court's annual report to the Economic and Finance Council, following which the Council adopts conclusions on the basis of the report recommendations.

The European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of Regions

The Presidency can send its ministers to present the working programme to the two committees (Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions). Occasionally, the ministers participate in plenary sessions of the two committees, especially when the Presidency requested the opinion of the committees on specific problems/issues.

Both committees organise plenary sessions in the country that holds the Presidency. This will also be the case for Ro2019.

National parliaments

At the beginning of the 6-month mandate, the national parliament of the country holding the Presidency hosts, organises and chairs the meetings of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC). The Presidency will present its mandate priorities either during the conference or the COSAC preparatory meetings.

RO2019 PROCESS



The ideal calendar
Working agenda
2019 events

Presenting the priorities

Each member state chooses its own structure for managing its Presidency, and the responsibilities for Romania are currently appointed to of the **Minister Delegate for European Affairs**. At the same time the Presidency becomes, once the preparations have officially begun, its own entity, gathering resources, personnel and knowledge from the entire government.

The **two years before** the start of the Presidency should aim to inform the wider population about the upcoming task and mandate, so as to better involve the civil society in consolidating the country image through all means available. Seminars and informing sessions should therefore be organised for citizens, NGOs and journalists.

In the **first half of 2018** at the latest, the Romanian administration should, together with all actors involved, begin to engage the civil society in debates on the selection of the Presidency priorities.

The **second half of 2018** should be the moment for organising the final seminars for the administration, to familiarise the selected personnel on the legal and administrative procedures.

In the **month preceding the start** of the Presidency, Romania must organise a meeting with the European Parliament's political groups presidents, as well as with the presidents of the EP and the Commission to discuss the identified priorities.

At the start of the Presidency Romania must present its working programme in the Strasbourg plenary session of the European Parliament on January 2019, as well as in the parliamentary committees.

Meeting calendar

At least one month before Ro2019, the trio must present the activities calendar for the upcoming 18 months. This overview is agreed upon together with the External Affairs President, following consultations with the Commission and the European Council President. The calendar must provide the setting for the EU long term strategic priorities.

This document will provide the basis for the creation of the Romanian working agenda (also known as the Council reunions calendar) for the next six months. Ro2019 is required to provide the meeting dates for each council configuration with **at least 7 months** before the start of the Presidency, and the final calendar must be presented **at least one week** before Ro2019. This overview must include the meeting details of all the Council configurations, as you can see in the draft Estonian Presidency calendar shown below.

It is worth mentioning that this schedule remains flexible, and that the proposed dates can be changed throughout the six months. The Presidency can also organise additional meetings (if for instance an emergency decision is needed on external issues - the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy can organise an emergency meeting in 48 hours), cancel scheduled meetings and hold informal ministerial meetings (a maximum of 5 throughout its Presidency mandate).

PRESS

Brussels, 23 October 2017

**INDICATIVE CALENDAR OF MEETINGS
(1 July - 31 December 2017)**

Month	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
JULY	1 EP Plenary (Brussels) PSC	2 EP Plenary (Brussels) PSC	3 EP Plenary (Brussels) PSC	4 EP Plenary (Brussels) PSC	5 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	6 2
7	8 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	9 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	10 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	11 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	12 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	13
14	15 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	16 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	17 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	18 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	19 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	20
21	22 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	23 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	24 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	25 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	26 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	27
28	29 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	30 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)	31 Informal (JHA) (Brussels)			
AUGUST	1 2	3 3	4 4	5 5	6 6	7 7
8 8	9 9	10 10	11 11	12 12	13 13	14 14
15 15	16 16	17 17	18 18	19 19	20 20	21 21
22 22	23 23	24 24	25 25	26 26	27 27	28 28
29 29	30 30	31 31				
SEPTEMBER	1 1	2 2	3 3	4 4	5 5	6 6
7 7	8 8	9 9	10 10	11 11	12 12	13 13
14 14	15 15	16 16	17 17	18 18	19 19	20 20
21 21	22 22	23 23	24 24	25 25	26 26	27 27
28 28	29 29	30 30	31 31			

* The Council reserves the right to postpone or cancel meetings during the third semester of 2017.
* The date of the Council's 10th meeting is subject to possible changes.

Working agenda

Each meeting included in the calendar must be based on a working agenda. The Presidency is required to send the provisional working agenda to each Council and Commission member **at least 14 days before the reunion is scheduled to take place**. The agenda should simultaneously be passed on to each Member State national parliament.

When drafting the provisional agenda, Ro2019 must be mindful of several deadlines:

- **16 days before** Council reunions - deadline for Council and Commission members to put forward items on the provisional agenda, together with reference documents;
- **8 weeks** to include an item of the agenda - to give national parliaments the chance to put forward an opinion on the issues concerned and send explanatory statements towards respecting the subsidiarity principle of the legislative act. As a result, the Council cannot adopt a legislative act through ordinary legislative procedure if Member States' parliaments did not have time to examine the text. At the same time a period of 10 days must be allowed between introducing an item on the provisional agenda and the adoption of a Council position on the item;
- **21 days before** Council reunions - the provisional agenda of the Justice and Home Affairs group must be sent to Council members.

The provisional agenda must contain two separate sections - one with the legislative issues which must be debated and adopted publicly, and one with non-legislative activities. Each section must in turn be split into two - A topics (which can be adopted without debate as they were agreed upon by COREPER) and B topics (which need to be debated by Council).

The final agenda is then to be adopted at the beginning of each meeting through simple majority. Agenda items which were included through emergency procedures or on an exceptional basis must be agreed on by unanimity.



Photo: ©European Union



The Events of 2019

2019 will conclude a chapter of the European Union and mark the beginning of a new stage in the European project. Romania will take over the Presidency when it will have to formally conclude Brexit (the UK's exit from the EU) and open a new stage in relaunching Europe. All these internal changes will also have an impact on the EU's neighbourhood, where Presidential elections in countries dominated by political instability are announced for 2019.



The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

The MFF lays down the maximum annual amounts ('ceilings') which the EU may spend in different political fields ('headings') over a period of at least 5 years. The current MFF covers 7 years, from 2014 to 2020.

The EU budget is formed in a proportion of 98% from the contributions from member states and 2% from other sources, such as fines imposed on companies for infringing competition rules or contributions from third countries for their participation to different EU programs. The member states contribute proportionally to their economic situation.

The process of determining the European budget is the result of negotiations between the three EU institutions. The Commission (which is responsible for executing the budget) makes a proposal with the policies it wishes to invest in for the coming years and presents it to the Council and the European Parliament, which are on an equal footing in negotiations, and can approve, reject or amend the budget according to political priorities of the EU, and available resources. Budgeting is of great importance on the EU agenda because each Member State is trying to negotiate and advance the policies that it considers important from a national perspective. Negotiations are generally long and difficult, with some states showing very little flexibility, especially the net contributors.

For Romania this is vital because many of the net contributors are giving signs that they want to reform the MFF in order to reduce substantial payments for the **agricultural or cohesion policies**, which are major sources of funding for Romania. The role of Austria (July-December 2018) and especially of Ro2019 will be crucial in mediating the negotiations, finding a compromise and ultimately establishing and adopting the EU budget.



Denmark legislative elections
May 2019



Elections for the European Parliament
May - June 2019



Appointment of the new European Commission
September – November 2019



Poland legislative elections
October 2019



EU neighbourhood: presidential elections in Macedonia and Turkey
November 2019



Romania presidential elections
November-December 2019



Brexit

One of the most important and complex dossiers that will be on the European agenda during the Romanian Presidency of the Council in 2019 will be that of Brexit - the departure of Great Britain from the European Union. The two-year deadline set for finalising these negotiations will expire in **March 2019**, and the progress achieved at the time this handbook is drafted leaves little room for optimism.

Negotiations so far have not made enough progress in any field. The EU27 leaders, during the meeting of the European Council in October 2017, did not approve the start of the second phase of the future relationship talks.

The most controversial issue is that of the "exit bill" which the UK must pay when leaving the EU. This is very important for the remaining EU27 because it will ensure the continuity of the projects and commitments decided under the umbrella of the EU28, including the UK, which will continue after the de facto exit of the British from the EU.

Understanding the process and the difficulty of these negotiations is very important for Romania and the Romanian authorities, given the role they will play during the rotating Presidency. Taking into account the current deadlock in the negotiations, it will most likely face **an extension** of the talks or even the signing of a **transitional agreement**. During the Presidency, Romania will have to demonstrate exemplary skills in managing this process, finding creative solutions, and playing an effective mediator role to calm spirits, ensuring continuity of the process and maintaining EU27 unity.



European Parliament Elections

Less than two years before the European Parliament elections, European Parliament President Antonio Tajani has already mentioned the importance of this event, and encouraged election campaigns to focus on **the fight against populism and Euroscepticism**. The political parties have the hard task of convincing the citizens of the European Union that it is important to go to vote, and this has so far proven to be very difficult because not even half of eligible European citizens participated in the European Parliament elections in 2014.

All European actors, including Ro2019, will have the responsibility to encourage participation and thus provide democratic support to the European Union. There are already many initiatives for filling the 73 seats in the European Parliament, which will be left empty by Brexit: from involving citizens in the negotiations of the European budget to creating transnational lists.



The EU's Neighbourhood

Romania must also carefully observe the Union's neighbourhood, which will be marked by **major events in 2019**. Presidential elections in Ukraine will be the first element of tension, followed by Presidential elections in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a country which is plagued by political instability, ethnic tensions and corruption.

The citizens of Turkey will be invited to elect both their President and members of the national parliament in 2019. This event will cause instability in the Eastern region of the Union as it will lead to protests and tensions between the two camps: pro and against the Erdogan regime. Even if these elections will take place after the end of Romania's Presidency, the first half of 2019 could be marked by conflicts related to this event and threaten to destabilize the fragile deal the EU has with Turkey over its management of refugees flooding EU borders.

Photo: ©European Union



PRIORITIES AND EXPECTATIONS



How Ro2019 should look

Main priorities

Secondary priorities

The ideal Presidency

Throughout the entire Presidency, the eyes of fellow Member States, partners and third countries will be set on Romania - for organisation, leadership and innovation, performance and preparedness in order to properly conduct this exercise. A Presidency is deemed a success if it can demonstrate a basic set of qualities, with a positive outcome at the bottom line.

Even though the country that holds it changes, the Presidency is unique and permanent. As such, **coordination and continuity** among the Member States that hold the Presidency, amongst the actors involved and the different Council groups is essential. This is key to ensure continuity and completions of EU Council files.

As a general rule, the Presidency must maintain a neutral and impartial position, as it cannot favour any particular Member State's interest above the others', nor push forward national goals to the detriment of the European ones.

The moderator is in charge of managing debates, which requires reaching compromise positions and overseeing conciliations discussions amongst the country representatives. Romania will have to decide the EU's priorities, **mediate** discussions, manage conflicts and differences of opinion, bringing forward **innovative solutions** that allow for compromises to be reached on the files on the agenda.

Last but not least, Romania will have to promote an image of stability and coherence, of a country capable of managing difficult negotiations as well as unexpected developments. As such, **flexibility** and **perseverance** are key throughout the Presidency. Romania will also have an opportunity to increase its international **visibility** which must be maximised - international events, civil society involvement, an active presence in the European Parliament and activating the Romanian communities abroad can all assist in redefining the country's image.

Possible priorities for Ro2019

As previously mentioned, each country puts forward several priorities for their six month Presidency. **Europuls** highlighted several possible options back in September 2016, but it remains to be seen which will make the final list.

The Presidency's role in negotiating and adopting the Multiannual Financial Framework

Following that of Brexit, Romania's next priority will be that of adopting the Multiannual Financial Framework. This issue will require a balancing act between our national interests and the role of impartial mediator. The gap left in the EU budget by the UK's withdrawal from the EU is difficult to estimate at this stage.

Member States will soon have to decide on the path the EU will take in the upcoming years and whether or not to increase national contributions to the Union budget (most likely the net contributors will not be very keen and there is a fear that additional national corrections will be requested on top of the existing ones), to reduce spending (net beneficiaries which take advantage of the common agricultural policy or the cohesion policy will not see this very favourably), or a combination of the two. Regardless of the scenario, negotiations for the next MFF will undoubtedly lead to tensions between the net contributors and beneficiaries, with an East-West or even North-South divide.

The European Commission is expected to put forward its post-2020 budget proposal before the 1st of January 2018. The key period for negotiations will be July 2018 - March 2019, before the Parliament's mandate ends in May 2019. If the conclusion of these negotiations will not be possible in this timeframe, they will be postponed until the new Parliament begins its mandate in May 2019 and the new Commission is appointed towards the end of 2019. The Council Presidency will have the key role of putting pressure on the other institutions to clarify the future budget before May 2019, so as to avoid delays in its adoption and the absorption of European funds.

The Presidency will have to facilitate an agreement between the Council and the Parliament, and assist Member States in agreeing on the EU's main priorities for the upcoming years. The post-2020 MFF priorities will most likely be a continuation of the current Commission priorities: job creation, development, investments, digital single market, energy, research and education. At the same time Brexit could provide an opportunity to revise the current MFF to a more appropriate form: more funds for policies dismissed by the UK, especially migration, solidarity, security and defence.

In any situation, Romania must bring forward innovative projects as flexibility, as we saw in the previous chapter, is a key element. More importantly, Romania must position itself as a pro-European actor and, in order to ensure credibility in negotiations, put forward sustainable measures for economic growth and maintain a budget deficit below 3%.

Romania - decision-maker on the Future of the Union

In September 2017, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker called on Romania and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, to organise a special Summit on the 9th of May 2019 in the Romanian city of Sibiu. The call was made in the context of Ro2019 and the day is a symbolic one as it will be the first Europe Day celebrated following the withdrawal of the UK from the EU.

In essence, Juncker signalled that there are high expectations of Romania during its rotating Presidency even if it takes over this role for the first time. With Brexit and the Presidency, Romania has the opportunity and the duty to lead the other member states towards the redesigning of the European project.

Each country is encouraged to organise a European event at home throughout the six months to mark the role of the Presidency and its significance. The summit will thus represent much more, as its conclusion will lead to important decisions concerning the future of Europe. Romania's responsibility lies further than simply demonstrating its organisational capabilities, but more in taking a Presidency role in redefining the European project and coming up with scenarios, solutions and vision for how the EU should look like post-2020. This should be the main objective for the six months.

Europuls takes the liberty of putting forward three other themes, given their importance for Romania.



Digital Agenda

As a key topic for long-term economic development, but also a possible advantage of Romania, the digital domain seems to be an automatic choice as one of the political priorities of Ro2019. The EU and Romania need a coordinated, integrated, transparent and effective strategy for digitalisation, but also to cope with the social changes brought about by the technological revolution in industry (i.e. robotisation), by offering all employees from risk sectors access to lifelong education.

The need exists also for new initiatives on IT security, regulating the Internet of Things and, in particular, for the digitalisation of the public administration and e-Governance.

The Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was the first measure adopted by the European Union and remains, to this day, the most solid and successful EU policy. The CAP needed modernisation and adaptation, and its last reform is known as the "Cioloş Reform 2013". During the assumption of the Presidency by Romania, important negotiations will be concluded on structural funds and the Common Agricultural Policy post-2020, and Romania has an interest in adopting a plan for the future of the CAP that is complete and oriented towards connecting agriculture with modern technologies.

Thus, Romania must ensure that in the AGRIFISH Council configuration, the following discussion elements will be on the agenda, and will be included in the modernisation and simplification plan of the CAP: innovation, digitalisation, community orientation, association, micro-credits, and the preparation of future generations of farmers. Informing citizens on this issue should be achieved through Citizens' Dialogues, especially in areas with a significant active population in the agricultural field.

The European Union's Security and Defence Policy

The European Union is striving to cooperate to maintain the security and defence of the European area, especially as a result of current geopolitical tensions and tense relations with the US Presidential administration. Recently, pro-EU leaders have increasingly promoted the idea of creating a European Defence Union, and this desire to invest and further develop European security capabilities should also be promoted by Romania during the Presidency.

The potential of the Romanian IT sector should be used in this respect, along with the use of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund to initiate the development of cyber defence projects. It is an area where Romania could excel, especially since all annual defence spending could be diminished through more in-depth cooperation.

Romania could also propose a high-level conference on security and defence in Bucharest, similar to the one held in Prague on 9 June 2017. Through this initiative, Romania will show its partners that it is determined to support the security of Union's citizens and will be able to collaborate with states that have already expressed this intention, such as Estonia or Poland. It will also be an opportunity to demonstrate cooperation in this area before the end of the Juncker Commission's mandate.



Poland Presidency

- 👍 Elements promoted: economy, security, open market;
- 👍 Flexibility – redefining priorities after the economic crisis;
- 👍 Efficiency – the adoption of the Six Pack;
- 🗨 Internal tensions (national elections, lack of agreement between parties on how to run the Presidency.)

Slovakia Presidency



- 🗨 Following the Netherlands => seen as untrustful;
- 👍 Lessons learnt from Slovenia and the Czech Republic;
- 👍 National reinforcement of the Government political position;
- 👍 Events with impact – Brexit, arguments regarding TTIP and CETA;
- 🗨 Did not raise a bigger national interest for European affairs.

Secondary priorities

Besides these main priorities, there are also secondary priorities, which are European topics that could be discussed in the Council configurations by the representatives of Romania and could be promoted during the Presidency through events or forums, communications, studies or reports, **even if they will not be included in the legislative agenda**. These actions can also be continued after the end of this exercise because they are not inherently linked to the role of the Presidency. You can find a list of some secondary priorities below:

- **Green, Sustainable and Secure Energy:** as a rising, peripheral country, Romania must devote itself to finalising the European Energy Market in order to ensure the EU's energy security, and to improve its climate change objectives (reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40%) for 2030.
- **Maintaining a United EU:** Romania must be at the heart of a reformed EU and must consolidate its pro-European and stable position in its region. Therefore, actions to preserve the rule of law in the EU but also to promote democratic reforms in Moldova, Ukraine and the Western Balkans (where Croatia and Slovenia could become partners) are recommended during and after the Presidency.
- **Creative and Entrepreneurial Europe:** stimulating the development of social enterprises across Europe is a priority for every EU Member State, and some countries have promoted initiatives for developing a social Europe during their Presidencies. This action can be taken over and continued by Romania.

RESOURCES NEEDED



Staff expertise and human resources

Major logistic efforts

Some numbers

For the proper preparation and for the smooth running of the Presidency, it is necessary to deploy the entire national administrative apparatus. The amount of work that both the national administration from Bucharest and the one of the Permanent Representation in Brussels will have should not be underestimated. The success of a Presidency depends on how well prepared are the employees responsible for this exercise, how clear-cut the tasks between the capital and the Permanent Representation are, and how well the administration collaborates with the General Secretariat of the Council. Also, beyond the organizational elements, the Ro2019 team has to demonstrate an exemplary level of knowledge in all fields of activity, thus using the most competent human resources available at national level.

Human resources

The Permanent Representation will play a crucial role in coordinating the national actors with the European institutions, but also in managing the logistical issues such as preparing the calendar of working groups, promoting activities in Brussels, maintaining contacts with the European press. Besides the Representation, the other important actors are: the ministries (some ministries will be busier than others, especially in the fields that will include the priorities of Romania in the six months; the Ministry of Culture also has an important role in promoting the presidency and the country); the Romanian Presidency (through the coordination between the ConsEU and the European Council) and the diplomatic missions of Romania.

As this is the first time going through this exercise, Romania can get some inspiration from the experiences of the previous presidencies as far as the human resources and budget management are concerned. Currently, the Permanent Representation has around 120 people, a number that will most likely have to be doubled during the Presidency. The recruitment of staff for Brussels and for ministries also depends on the current level of training and knowledge related to European affairs.

For example, the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg counts in around 50-60 people in normal periods in Brussels. For the exercise of the 2015 Presidency, around 130 people



Photo: ©Andrew Hardy/ Flickr

were mobilized. This number is relatively small compared to the other countries that held the Presidency before, because Luxembourg had the advantage of being one of the founding members of the EU and of previously having held the EU Presidency in 2005 (when Prime Minister of the country was the current President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker).

Another example is Poland, which has mobilized for the 2011 Presidency around 1200 people in total: in the country, in Brussels, and in its diplomatic missions. This proved to be very costly given the fact that its status as relatively recent EU Member State required much more staff training, not just EU-related knowledge but also linguistic knowledge.

The personnel that Romania will be recruiting for this exercise, **including the Ministers of the 2019 government**, must have the following qualities/capacities: knowledge about the EU (decision-making, EU legal and institutional system), negotiation, communication and public speaking skills, but especially language skills (English and French mastery, preferably some German knowledge as well).

In order to achieve this goal, study visits, exchanges of information and best-practices sharing with officials from the Permanent Representations in Brussels of the countries that already held the Presidency (the Permanent Representation of Romania will act as mediator) should be organized: internship programs (trainees in the Permanent Representation of Romania to the EU, trainees in the European Commission and in the General Secretariat of the EU Council), simulations of the EU decision-making process.

Training sessions on key themes/policies can and should be organized in collaboration with various actors such as NGOs, universities from Romania and other countries with European affairs centers, research institutes, think tanks or even with European institutions. Regarding the training of staff in the Permanent Representation (especially those detached from ministries without the experience of Brussels), they will have to be trained in media relations, lobbying, practical aspects of the Presidency, language courses, including EU jargon, French/English terminology, especially for senior officials and for interpreters.

From the available information, it seems that in Romania a large number of courses will be offered by the European Institute of Romania and by the Romanian Diplomatic Institute. It remains to be seen whether these two institutions will also be able to access the resources of non-governmental partners in their efforts.

The **collaboration** with EU institutions regarding staff training is also highly encouraged. For this exercise, Romania can also benefit from the experience of the European officials willing to work for the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council. The Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Union allows the secondment of a maximum of ten officials to the Permanent Representation or to Ministries for a maximum period of nine months. It is recommended that the staff of the diplomatic missions of Romania from countries where there are, for example, international organizations (Washington, Geneva, Warsaw, Vienna, Paris, New York) be increased by two or three people during this period.

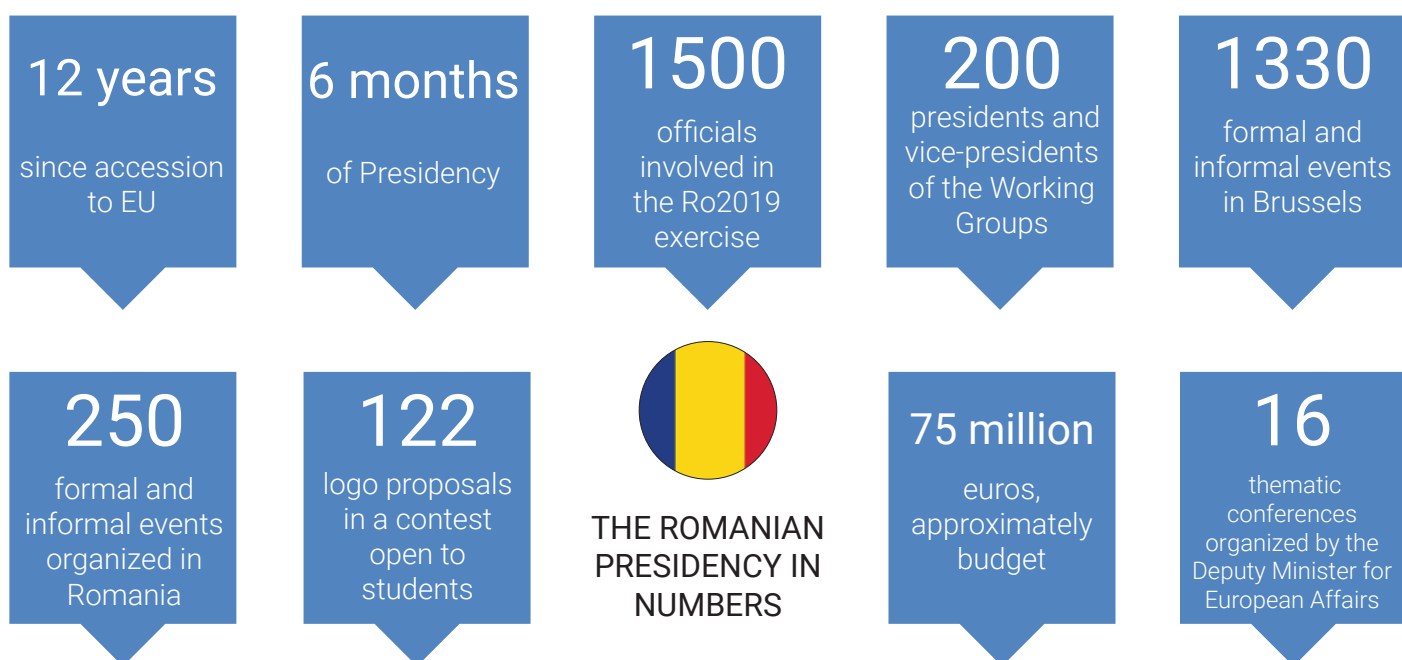


Photo: ©European Union

Ro2019 Logistics

Technical issues will play a very important role in the coming months. A series of logistics meetings will take up much of the officials working in the Permanent Representation (for example, Poland has begun its logistics meetings 30 months before the Presidency). Furthermore, venues should also be identified for organising these meetings (with infrastructure and quality transport, safety, accommodation, restaurants for official dinners, the possibility of organizing a cultural event), persons for the security team will have to be recruited; local liaison staff for each official delegation, fluent in English and French.

As far as budget management is concerned, the experiences of other countries will be useful again. For example when it had its first exercise for the Presidency, in addition to over-staffing and training, Poland has expanded its activities into four major cities and logistics costs were much higher compared to a small country such as Luxembourg or Denmark. For example, Poland had set for logistics a budget of 100 million euros, which finally reached 114 million euros. In comparison, Denmark, a country that was part of the same trio with Poland, had a budget of 35 million euros (budget not entirely used).



Information provided by the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council 2019

PART II: WHAT DOES THE PRESIDENCY MEAN FOR YOU?

If you have come this far, we hope that you already have an idea about the complexity but also about the importance of Ro2019. We understand, however, that not every citizen might be aware that they are linked to this moment. Europuls, along with all those who contributed to this guide, believes that all Romanians will feel, in one way or another, the effects of this exercise. Some will be directly involved, others will have the chance to promote their work or field of activity at the European level, yet the vast majority will be seriously affected on the long-term by the decisions taken under the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council.

For this section, we have asked for help from various partners in numerous fields. We received ideas, tips, testimonials and suggestions from organizations or individuals in Romania or abroad, and we grouped them into categories.

Photo: ©European Union

YOU ARE A JOURNALIST



Communication

The media perspective

The media contributes to a significant extent in creating and promoting the image of the Romanian Presidency in the eyes of the Romanian and foreign public and has an impact on the general evaluation of the success rate of the Romanian Presidency. For these reasons, communication with the media will play a key role during the preparation and running of the Presidency in the first half of 2019.

The communication strategy will be aimed at the members of the Romanian press (Romanian journalists in Romania and Brussels), as well as foreign media representatives accredited in Brussels and foreign correspondents in Romania. Communication activities generated by the Presidency will focus on the written media accredited in Brussels (including audio-visual and digital media) at global, European, national and regional level.

The purpose of communication during the Presidency will be to inform about the program, the progress and conclusions of each meeting between high-level representatives and ministers, working groups, and about the conferences and other events related to the Romanian Presidency.

The role of media is vital for the development of the Romanian public opinion on European themes and for presenting Romania's role in this wide-ranging exercise. The image of the country also depends on how journalists report about the discussions, decisions and events that will outline the Romanian Presidency and on the final evaluation they will make at the closing of the Presidency.

For journalists and not only, we invite you to check chapter 7 with "helpful links".

Photo: ©European Union

Lucia Virostkova, Slovak correspondent for EUobserver

The Slovak correspondent for EUobserver was asked how she sees the role of the media in the final evaluation of the Presidency, about the most effective methods for informing the general public about the importance of the Presidency, and about her recommendations for the Romanian press during the year.

The local media will hardly influence the way Romania's Presidency will be evaluated in Brussels and other European capitals. On the other hand, foreign and mainly Brussels' reporters will partly take part in that evaluation - both by quoting diplomats and their comments, and by commenting themselves on what Romania will have achieved in terms of Council dossiers and decisions, how their people managed the meetings and how efficient they communicated with the media. Naturally, these evaluations will then be reported on by local media and - I suppose - followed with a great interest by Romanians back home.

Just like any other type of news, Presidency-related news can be best reported by different channels for different audience - via newspapers and TV for adult and senior citizens and via various internet sites or social media primarily for young people. The presidency period can be good for explaining some of the procedures, institutions and EU-related topics that are otherwise far from natural interest of a general public. However, one should not overestimate that potential as most EU affairs are elite-driven and will remain so even during the presidency.

"My main recommendation to Romanian colleagues would be to be honest with their audience and to avoid the creation of too high expectations over what their country should/could achieve during the EU presidency. The best they can do is to report truthfully and objectively - just like at any other time, without factual mistakes or any sort of bias, stereotypes and prejudice."

I do believe at least the public media in Slovakia were very well prepared and devoted a huge coverage to the EU Council meetings during Slovakia's presidency. But it still did not lead to a massive rise of people following the EU and presidency-related programmes. Many (most) of the meetings in Slovakia were just informal and so there was not much in terms of concrete conclusions or topic development to report on, perhaps with an exception of Bratislava summit which was big in itself, as a type of gathering of top leaders. So, my main recommendation to Romanian colleagues would be to be honest with their audience and to avoid the creation of too high expectations over what their country should/could achieve during the EU presidency. The best they can do is to report truthfully and objectively - just like at any other time, without factual mistakes or any sort of bias, stereotypes and prejudice.

I do not think it's the job of journalists to promote the country's image. What matters, in my opinion, is that journalists provide a balanced and objective picture of the country, highlighting both the good and the bad things related to Romania.

The media always has something to say in the evaluation of a presidency. Journalists will probably judge the Romanian Presidency according to the openness they were treated with, the speed and clarity of the answers they were provided, etc. Good logistics and the clarity of information regarding the events organized in Romania are also important for journalists when assessing a presidency, as well as the accreditation formalities.

A part of the Romanian press is ready to tackle these topics, but not all of them. It is important that Romanian journalists know what each institution does, what the EU and national competences are, what the most important dossiers are that Romania will have to negotiate during the Presidency, and which are the strategic interests around them. The risks are that people do not understand exactly what is going on and why they need to be aware.

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We asked a Romanian journalist working for one of the most important European publications about the role of the media in the Ro2019 exercise and the level of preparation of the Romanian press. They provided us with some useful insights but preferred to remain anonymous.

YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY



The Ro2019 opportunities for NGOs

Types of activities

Examples of best practice

The EU Council Presidency is not only a great challenge for a Member States' administration, but also for national platforms and NGOs. The latter's role is to become active in the preparation of the Presidency's program and contribute to the transformation of national policies into European ones.

Opportunities

The NGO sector can get involved in numerous Presidency preparatory activities at both national and European level: educate the public, advocate, inform and promote the image of Romania during the presidency, co-ordinate with other civil actors from the trio. There are several benefits to becoming engaged in these preparations, such as: to increase visibility and capacity, strengthen and build international platforms and national NGOs, and strengthen relations with decision-makers.

During and prior to the EU Romanian Presidency, NGOs have the opportunity to champion a topic of major interest to them by organising events and debates in the country and Brussels, hosting informative sessions, launching and implementing projects, as well as taking positions and advocating. Issues such as the protection and housing of children will not be a priority on Romania's agenda, but with a large-scale mobilization the subject will benefit from significant exposure, especially if it is linked to one of the main Romanian priorities.

Positioning

Taking into account that, for a period of six months, Romania will be in the spotlight and will benefit from several ministerial level visits, NGOs can actively engage in positioning themselves on a certain issue and in organizing debates should they wish to influence public policies on a subject of interest. These activities can involve members of the European Parliament, the Romanian Parliament and the Ministries, so as to enjoy the highest exposure possible.

Informing

NGOs and platforms in Romania with EU affairs knowledge can become the main source of ideas within the civil society. This information could then be conveyed to the authorities and the general public. As a result, civil society actors can take up the role of drafting, promoting and informing the general public, journalists and governments on common political perspectives, initiatives, news and documents throughout the Presidency.

Strengthening and building international platforms

The role of NGOs is to work in close collaboration with international platforms, especially platforms in countries participating in the Presidency trio (Romania, Finland and Croatia), committed to promoting several chosen priorities at national and European level. This not only represents an opportunity to strengthen international platforms and national NGOs, but also to strengthen relations with decision-makers and other actors involved.

Strengthen the country image

The non-governmental environment plays a key role in promoting and strengthening the image of the country throughout the 2019 Romanian EU Council Presidency. The permanent communication within society, the role and priorities Romania takes to attract the support of its citizens for this project represent a fraction of proposed activities.

These efforts need to be conducted before and after taking up this role, as they can be undermined by a number of factors during the presidency. EU decision-making depends in particular on the will of the Member States and EU institutions. In addition, there are other elements the EU will have to face: Brexit, the refugee crisis, the financial framework, European elections. For this reason NGOs must engage early on in order to outline their sector priorities.

At the same time, when NGOs plan their involvement in the Presidency's campaigns, consultations with the government, and the establishment of new contacts, they should also consider the post-Presidency period. After six months, upon completion of the Presidency, it will be necessary to resume business as usual and get back to the daily activities. As a result it is therefore advisable, firstly, to start cooperation with organizations and embassies of the country that will take over the Presidency early on and, secondly, to think of a general strategy for the further development of activities, regardless of the European political situation, building on the experience gained during the Presidency.

Recommendations

1. **Setting-up cooperation with international platforms**, mapping the current debates on the European agenda and examining their evolution at EU level;
2. **Mapping of the institutional set-up** on the issues of interest;
3. **Consulting the national administration regarding the Presidency priorities** and the creation of a network with members of the Permanent Representation in Brussels, the EU Council Presidency and national governments;
4. **Consulting NGOs on the Presidency priorities**: Create an online platform for civic consultations, to assist in the RO2019 preparations;
5. **Preparation of the Presidency agenda and priorities**;
6. **Organization of a Future of Europe Civil Society Forum** before the 9 May 2019 Summit in Sibiu;
7. **Use of various communication tools during the Presidency**: writing a manifest, sending official letters to the national administration and preparing position papers and case studies on the issues;

Best practice



Slovenia

- Portal for online participation of the civil society;
- Priority sections managed by NGOs;
- Wording, promoting, informing the general public, the press and governments of common policy perspectives, initiatives, news, documents during the Presidency;
- Interaction with other NGOs in Slovenia and the EU, questionnaires, debates, consultations;
- Organizing two public events by NGOs through the Predsedovanje platform on intercultural dialogue and the Lisbon strategy;
- Promoting a set of priorities from the civil society: gender equality, intergenerational cooperation, youth and development cooperation.



Poland

- National Conference on the Polish Presidency of the EU Council with 150 representatives of Polish NGOs;
- Grant competition for NGOs to implement projects related to the Polish Presidency at national level (16 grants of 250,000 euros);
- Collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the largest national NGO portal www.ngo.pl;
- Co-financing by the Foreign Affairs Ministry for the Eastern Partnership Summit - attracting foreign NGOs and involving the European Regional Information Centers (Europe Direct Centers) network;
- Cultural programs

Rilli Lappalainen - Secretary General Kehys, the Finnish national platform within the European NGO confederation for relief and development CONCORD, Finland

Rilli was asked about the role of NGOs and civil society in the preparation of the Presidency, how to choose priorities and how to inform and educate the public about the Presidency.

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With the involvement of the civil society in the preparation, there is a better chance to influence and impact the system and how the government is building the whole Presidency. The key is that the civil society is awake and on time, at least one year in advance. It is extremely important that you are taking that seriously now and not just 3 months before the Presidency starts, because then everything will be fixed in stone and you can't really influence the big picture. It's really important to be there on time, be active, tell your messages, what you see that the Romanian presidency should take care of. Of course, you have to be aware of what is coming from the previous presidency and the EU agenda. Try to limit the goals. If your wishes and goals fit the government goals, you have the chance to make some kind of changes and impact the work.

One must bear in mind that the agenda will change and there is less and less space for new ideas. This is why it is the right moment for the civil society to raise awareness and put higher on the agenda an issue of their interest. My suggestions for the civil society are to build coalitions, find like minded actors, share same goals and topics and be on time. As a single actor you cannot get on the agenda, you need to form a larger coalition that is promoting the same topic. This exercise helps the civil society to focus and work with other actors, since in some countries it is difficult to jump over walls, such as work with the ministries or the media. This is the right time to do it. Therefore, the Presidency is about building coalitions and international synergies. You build new ways of working which you will definitely benefit from.

It is for sure that there will be surprises on the agenda and it is extremely difficult to get many priorities on the agenda from the national perspective, and you need to really select and prioritize. The best would be that there is a national interest for that topic, that helps to get the Parliament and your interest group on your side. If you get a new idea, it will be very difficult to put in in the agenda. You need to read the situation at the national level, the EU level and even at the global level, as the topics need to have some relevance at the global level too, right? My suggestion is to try and link the priorities to the overall frame and context. The Presidency is the time when the country is in the spotlight, so everyone basically knows what is happening, what every minister is doing. It is difficult to raise awareness among the public because, particularly in the field we are working - foreign affairs - normal citizens don't know much about it and they don't care. It is a huge job to do and that means allocating a lot of resources on that. However, I do understand the needs, the Presidency is a moment to raise awareness in every sector - agriculture, migration etc.

What are the best channels? How do you get the messages disseminated? Of course, social media should be an important channel. Talk to the young people, in schools, just before the voting age. If you can cover that category, of future voters and Europeans, they are the critical mass that can challenge the appearance of the country. Therefore, I believe that they are main target age group. If they are voting for the first time and hesitating whether to go or not, this might be the opportunity to have an impact of their decisions and get them more involved in the society.

Sigrid Solnik - Director Estonian Roundtable for development Cooperation AKÜ

Sigrid was asked about the degree of involvement of NGOs and the civil society in the preparation of the Presidency and on what are the means of informing the general public about this exercise.

I think civil society could work with the public sector on developing the priorities and identifying the opportunities of cooperation during the Presidency (in the form of co-organized events, for example). We did have some exchange of ideas with the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on our activities during the Presidency, together with explaining what's important for them and what is important for us. However, we didn't coordinate our approach to the Presidency with other Estonian NGOs.

From our experience we believe the Presidency country needs to be a facilitator and it should not try to impose its own priorities

”

Our experience also says that the Presidency country needs to be a facilitator and should not have strong opinions. It may be difficult to push some suggestions - there is a need to find other countries that would support the idea and go through them. At the same time, AKÜ feels that the Presidency has really strengthened the cooperation between us and our public sector - policy issues are more on the table for us and more contact is sought from both sides.

I think it is very important to remember that the Presidency lasts for only 6 months. I believe it makes sense to try to use this time for boosting up activities that will also continue after this time. If this is not possible, carry on as you would do without the Presidency. It's not a magical time fixing everything that was broken before or opening up possibilities that couldn't be stumbled upon before. It can be a great time for networking as many events take place in the Presidency country but it may not be the best time for advocating or organizing your own events - the market is rather overflowed with all the messages and events, competition is high.

To be very honest - I think people that are not somehow connected with policy making, they don't really care. Meaning, it is very difficult to make the Presidency interesting for the public. This doesn't mean that the public sector or those working on civic engagement and national-EU relations shouldn't figure out a good strategy and methodology on how to do this. I'm very sure that it is important to explain to people the value of EU, solidarity etc. The question is, how to do it when using the word "Presidency" - and does it need to be done through the notion of Presidency or is there maybe some better way.



Photo: ©European Union

YOU WORK IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SERVICE



The role of the public administration service

The Austrian example

The Lithuanian example

The national public administration plays the biggest role in the preparation, execution and the promotion of the Presidency. The civil servants working for the Government, for the capital public administration, for the Permanent Representative of Romania to the EU and also for the public administration of other cities that will host events (Sibiu) must show a firm commitment towards the objectives of the Presidency in order to convince the national audience and the member states of their credibility and seriousness. They will have to ensure the smooth running of the presidency, the promotion of its priorities at all levels, the maintenance of dialogue with the other actors involved and the consolidation of the country image.

Furthermore, **there is a need for a balance between this credibility of the public administration and the political commitment** of high-level leaders. Without this balance, things cannot work properly and the national image is seriously affected.

In practical terms, the preparation of the Presidency and its development require a major effort from the whole national public administration system. The size of the workload for national administration staff (not only for the Bucharest administration, but also for the Permanent Representation staff in Brussels) should not be underestimated. The success of the Presidency will highly depend on how well prepared the staff is and how clear the responsibilities between the capital and the Permanent Representation are shared.

Ro2019 will have to be well promoted both internally and at European level. To this end, the administrative apparatus plays a key role in preparing Ro2019 communication activities. As we have seen throughout this publication, Romania will represent and speak on behalf of the entire European Union during the Presidency. This means a thorough preparation for taking neutral and unitary positions, focusing on proactive and fluid communication with journalists and other target groups.

The smooth flow of information regarding the preparation and running activities of the Presidency among the various actors

of the administration (Ministries and Embassies involved, Permanent Representation to the EU, etc.) is essential for a good and effective coordination.

In addition, the administration is the one that prepares the communication objectives, ensuring that the image of the country is positive and consolidated at European level. The information will focus on the stage of preparations, the transparency of the outcomes of the meetings, and generally on the smooth running of the activities. All these are meant to bring the EU and the role of Romania in the EU closer to citizens, but also to strengthen Romania's image as a credible leader at European and international level.

Following discussions with colleagues from other Member States, we would like to give some advice from the experience of the staff of other Presidencies:

- Some information is secret or restricted, so be careful when classifying documents or to the discussions on corridors or near microphones (which can be opened by mistake).
- Take a tour of the Council building in advance of your first official meeting there so as not to be late to meetings or even to get lost.
- Try to have a clear picture of the heads of state and government and ministers in your working group before meeting with them to avoid confusing the countries they represent.
- Study until you speak fluently the working language and the language in which you want to make press statements (English/French/German)! You will thus avoid complaints from journalists about your linguistic skills and you will also make yourself better understood at any time!

The Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs

Members of the Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU involved in the preparation of the former Presidency were asked about the risks that a country should prepare for when preparing the Presidency and how can these be eliminated, but also about their recommendations for a successful Presidency.

Always expect the unexpected: it is important not to plan too rigidly. Flexibility and room for maneuver are essential. Also time management is crucial. Towards a Presidency the workload will increase quickly. Therefore, all necessary structures and procedures have to be in place well in advance. The network with EU-partners and institutions should be built as early as possible on all levels.

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Here are the 12 commandments for a professional Presidency:

1. *Eat when you can; sleep when you can; you never know when you will find the next opportunity.*
2. *The Presidency must know all dossiers better than anyone else.*
3. *The Presidency must be fair and seek a balance of interest.*
4. *The biggest problems often don't come from the 27 member states but from your capital.*
5. *A popular President can keep meetings short.*
6. *Time is of the essence. Break down from Council meetings to Committees and working groups. Rolling agenda.*
7. *Meet delegations for bilateral talks to discuss issues of national interest.*
8. *Always try to get consensus. Confidence in Presidency is stronger if you try to get smaller member states on board.*
9. *Minister should arrive the day before a Ministerial in order to prepare and meet Commission, Council Secretariat and individual member states.*
10. *Beware of the internal dynamics between and in member states.*
11. *The Presidency needs to work closely with the Council Secretariat. Meet with respective Director General (and others) before the start of the Presidency.*
12. *The cooperation with the European Parliament is crucial. Meet all relevant actors (Presidents, Head of parties, Head of Committees, rapporteurs etc.)*

In 2006, Austria was able to build on its experience from 1998. The structures that had been put into place – the inter-ministerial Steering Committee for general coordination and political guidance, the Executive Secretariat for all organizational and logistical questions – proved very useful and effective. The same structures are being and will be used again for the Presidency in 2018.

Zilvinas Ilievicius - Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU

Zilvinas was asked about the biggest risks that a country should consider when preparing the Presidency, but also to name the best lesson learned from this experience and the improvements that could be done.

The first risk is a late start of the Presidency preparation. Never underestimate the period before the Presidency, the earlier one begins the preparations, the more time you spend on details. Second, the staff selection is very important and it's very risky if not properly handled. People inappropriately placed will create more internal tensions. In particular, the chairs of the Council meetings must be very well selected, must have deep knowledge of their field, be fluent in minimum one working language and show they have a personality fit to moderate discussions.

Another risk comes from the fear of getting things out of hand: whereas it is understandable that the capital representatives wish to have full control and coordination, a greater flexibility for the Permanent Representatives from Brussels is recommended, because they need to be innovative in crisis situations, they are the people "on the field". Last but not last, one needs to know its responsibilities, here I mean individually, but also nationally. The Presidency means really work, not just going for the show.

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I learnt that what truly matters are people, the connections and the relationships one makes. A group becomes more united when it takes part daily into this process, in order to offer a national positive image and to reach a successful Presidency.

I learnt that what truly matters are people, the connections and the relationships one makes. A group becomes more united when it takes part daily into this process, in order to offer a national positive image and to reach a successful Presidency. There are moments shared and lived inside a group, and they connect people on long term.

The most important lesson learnt is that one needs to be prepared for unexpected things! Regardless of the information received and the level of knowledge, there are always new situations that require adaptability and an immediate solution.

Although the Presidency is a big challenge, it's also a step forward for your personal development and also for the country development. It represents the best way to understand the EU structures, because it offers 6 months of practice of all the Council configurations and working group proceedings, logistical and administrative tasks, handling of files, agenda setting, advanced knowledge of EU policies.

I would have liked to start the preparations earlier, because it was a new experience for many of us and I wanted to feel confident and have the least unknowns. Also, I would have liked to interact with more previous countries that held the Presidency, find out about their actions, what we must do, what we should avoid. Each experience is different and offers important and diverse lessons. I wish we could use the outcome of the 6 months Presidency, I expected the government to become more active on EU matters after this exercise, as we had the possibility to see procedures in detail, we should have used this experience.

YOU ARE POLITICALLY ACTIVE



European parties

Policies, not politics

For the vast majority of the political class of Romania, Ro2019 could go unnoticed if no electoral campaign for the European Parliament would take place. However, the increasing possibility of transnational lists and the inevitable activation of Romanian political parties in the pre-electoral period on European topics in order to increase the voters' interest can turn the Romanian political elite into real debating partners for the Ro2019 period.

The political groups of the European Parliament will be holding meetings in Romania during the Presidency and hence their attention will be turned to their Romanian counterparts. Thus, even if you are a mere sympathiser of a Romania political party or actively involved in the Romanian political life, either as a representative elected at local, regional or parliamentary level, it is highly possible that you find yourself in the situation to host or interact with colleagues from other Member States. This could not be a better opportunity to coordinate political stances between multiple states, or even to advocate our national viewpoints within European circles.

At home, an active involvement of politicians is highly desired since they can inform their constituents about the many

opportunities of the Presidency. In return, such an approach allows for an increased visibility within their respective communities and a strengthened position in their political parties. In the aftermath of the accession to the European Union, the Romanian political parties often failed to explain – in a clear, concise and coherent manner – the purpose, opportunities and responsibilities of the EU membership. RO2019 is the ideal occasion for the Romanian political class to position itself as advocates of the European Union, dedicated to correctly informing the Romanian citizens about the union – be it about a particular or general area of interest – and therefore bringing the European project closer to them.

Externally, an active participation in the preparation of the Presidency and during the Presidency itself could contribute to a higher profile both among European counterparts and at European level. Successfully addressing European priority dossiers, being engaged in assisting the team and the overall preparation of the Presidency, and actively promoting the European project will most certainly be well-received across borders. Romania will be in the limelight for the entire duration of the Presidency. For stateswomen and statesmen these six months are an excellent opportunity to come to the fore.

Political **stability**

A serious risk that the Romanian political elite might pose during the Presidency is not necessarily related to how and if it decides to get involved, but rather to potential obstructions of the workings during the Romanian presidency. Intra-party dynamics, such as internal conflicts, political leadership changes or appointments based on arguable criteria might pose a significant risk of instability during the Presidency.

Nothing else can be more detrimental to a country than a political party attempting to divert the attention from the Presidency on political or elective grounds. Both unreasonable criticism from opposition and particularly positive groundless messages on the part of the governing parties, at national and European level, can weaken its image as a stable mediator in

the European Union.

The Romanian political elite should avoid power games in 2019, as least during the key moments of the Presidency. The Romanian Government – whichever at that moment – must prove thorough its ministers a dual competency: at national and European level. Should Romania want to be seen as a trustworthy partner in the "re-founding" process of the European Union - and it ought to - it should play the part. Henceforth, its representatives will have to be able to send this message across, together with many others, in a professional and clear fashion and in accordance with the European values of ethics and integrity. And all this in fluent English (but preferably also in), French or German.

Photo: ©Twan Verrijt/ Flickr

YOU ARE WORKING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR



The business community - active role in the preparation and exercise of the Presidency

Recommendations from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania

Examples of best practices

Taking over the Presidency of the Council of the EU by Romania represents a special opportunity to promote the interests and concerns of the private sector, which is of great importance for the good development of the Romanian state, as well as of the entire European Union. In this respect, the private sector must play an active role in the preparation process, but also in the exercise per se of the Presidency of the Council of the EU.

In order to highlight the main priorities of the Presidency, the stakeholders of the business sector have the following possibilities: to set up thematic working groups for influencing decisions on political priorities, to participate in various high-level thematic conferences, and to organise consultations with the authorities responsible for Ro2019 aimed at

highlighting the challenges faced by the private sector.

These consultations should be carried out in the first half of 2018, both in Romania and in the EU Member States that are part of the trio of Presidencies (Finland and Croatia), with which Romania will establish the common agenda of the most important actions that will be addressed and promoted by the Council for an 18-month period. Coordination with business partners from other Member States is also important in order to create confederations or ad-hoc alliances for certain thematic priorities.

Since interest groups are involved in the European Union's decision-making process, it is advisable to participate in the consultations of the interest groups which are registered in the EU Transparency Register.

CCIR Recommendations

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania (CCIR), the main representative of the Romanian business sector, considers it appropriate to organise a series of activities that will support the business community both in Romania and in the European Union:

- Organising the Fifth Eastern Partnership Business Forum in Bucharest by the CCIR with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Business, Trade and Entrepreneurship.
- Organising a conference or workshop on the effects of the UK's exit from the European Union on the economy and citizens of EU Member States.
- Organising several international debates in Romania on the economic potential of the Black Sea region.
- Organising a conference or workshop on the European Union's energy policy and on the energy and climate objectives proposed for 2020.
- Organising a conference on the impact of trade agreements signed between the European Union and third countries on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and implicitly on the economy of EU Member States.

Best practice

Each EU Member State, which has held the Presidency of the EU Council, has set a limited number of priorities that have been taken up through subsequent actions. Depending on the main objectives set by the state holding the Presidency, other secondary priorities follow.

The organisation of the four **Eastern Partnership Business Forums** by Poland in 2011, Lithuania in 2013, Latvia in 2015, and Estonia in 2017 during their Presidencies of the EU Council, triggers the responsibility for Romania to organise the fifth Eastern Partnership Business Forum, as well as a Political Summit. These business forums are a great opportunity for Romania to become a true regional actor.

Another example of good practice for Romania is the workshop “EU trade policy at the crossroads” organised by Slovakia in November 2016. This action was organised by Slovakia during its Presidency, and it was aimed at meeting the social challenges across the European Union by developing the concept of social economy and by engaging social enterprises in these approaches. This example can also be reproduced by Romania.

The energy sector is another priority for the European Union, a key area that has been approached by almost every Member State holding the Presidency. In view of the pressing

circumstances of adopting a unitary energy policy across the EU, the **Latvian Presidency** (January-June 2015) laid the foundations of the European Energy Union, by promoting the strengthening of energy independence at EU level and the transition to an economy based on low-carbon emissions. The **Dutch Presidency** (January-June 2016) contributed to improving European energy policy by adopting an agreement on wind energy. Consequently, it is highly recommended that Romania also contributes to the European energy policy for better energy interconnectivity.

Another action organised by the states that held the Presidency of the EU Council and which supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is the Single Market Forum launched during the **Polish Presidency**. In 2016-2017, 16 workshops took place under the aegis of this action, which aimed at discussing the recent Single Market regulation, the challenges facing the business sector and the measures that can be taken to improve the functioning of the Single Market. The closing conference for all these actions took place in Malta and was organised in partnership with the **Maltese Presidency**. Given the relevance of these workshops for the business community, it is crucial that Romania is also involved in organising these types actions/workshops during its Presidency of the Council of the EU.



Photo: ©European Union

VARIOUS DETAILS



Protocol

Did you know that?

PROTOCOL

Just as good manners should never be forgotten, protocol should not be ignored. Even if some rules may seem absurd, ignoring certain principles can lead to embarrassing situations.

For example, the order of appearance in front of the Council building and the order of entry into the halls is made according to a clearly established rule: the representatives of the Member States appear in alphabetical order of the names of their countries (please note, names as pronounced in their native language!). Then come the states that are in the process of joining the EU, also in alphabetical order, and finally candidate countries, in the order of the date they applied for EU accession.

On the other hand, during the meetings of the European Council, the Council of the EU and the Council configurations, the alphabetical order is no longer respected, and representatives sit according to the order of the Presidency. You can see an example from the **Latvian Presidency** below:



Masa Consiliului European

Last but not least, the Member States' flags also have rules! They should be placed in alphabetical order following the names of states, from left to right. The flags of the acceding states follow, in the same order, and at the end are the flags of the candidate countries, with the order based on the year of their membership request. At all events organized by the EU's institutions, the EU flag is ahead of those of the Member States. **At an event organized by the Presidency, the flag of the member country is first, and that of the EU is last!**

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

- The territorial-administrative units fly their own flags only at the headquarters of the local public administration authorities, and at the local public institutions/ services at above the main entrance and only together with the Romanian and the EU flags.
- Slovakia's online logo is made up of signs and each sign tells a story about Slovakia.
- The Dutch population is the tallest in the world.
- Estonia promotes a cleaner living environment, secured through a green economy.
- During the EU Council Presidency, Malta has had a cultural program involving over 90 events and over 1100 artists.
- Presidency spendings for each state varies between 50 and 100 million euros.
- Bulgaria's Presidency motto is: "United, we are strong!"
- Romania has 14 votes in the EU Council.
- Estonia was the first country to adopt the one-off tax.
- The budget for the Erasmus+ student program was increased by 19% in 2017.
- Euro (€) is the official currency of 19 of the 28 EU Member States.
- In order to visit the EU Council you need to book 3 months in advance.
- In the Council's 18-month program (1 July 2017-31 December 2018), it is noted that Europe is gradually recovering from the crisis. The European economy is growing at a moderate pace, and unemployment is declining slightly.
- The European Single Market is one of the EU's greatest achievements and one of the most important sources of economic growth.
- Once the Council has received a Commission proposal, the text is being examined simultaneously by the Council and the European Parliament. Examination is known as "reading".
- Maintaining the unity of the European project and the integrity of European policies, for the benefit of European citizens, is the strategic objective around which the whole process of preparation and running of Romanian EU Council Presidency will be based.
- The Ro2019 logo was chosen through an open competition open to high school students and students.

GLOSSARY

B

BREXIT – “British Exit” - The UK’s exit from the European Union

C

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

CCIR – Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania

CoE – Council of Europe

ConsEU – Council of the European Union

CoR – European Committee of the Regions

COREPER – Committee of Permanent Representatives

COSAC – Conference of the Committees of the national Parliaments of the EU Member States

D

DG – Directorate General

E

EaP – Eastern Partnership

EC – European Commission

EEAS – European External Action Service

EESC – European Economic and Social Committee

EP – European Parliament

EU – European Union

M

MDEA – Minister Delegate for European Affairs

MEP – Member of the European Parliament

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MFF – Multiannual Financial Framework

N

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

O

OJEU – Official Journal of the European Union

R

Ro2019 – Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2019

RO2019 – Support platform for civil society for Ro2019



Photo: ©European Union

USEFUL LINKS

European Parliament - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>

Council of the European Union - <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/>

European Council - <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/>

European Commission - https://ec.europa.eu/commission/index_en

European Economic and Social Committee - <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en>

European Committee of the Regions - <http://cor.europa.eu/en/Pages/home.aspx>

European External Action Service - https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en

Permanent Representation of Romania to the European Union - <http://ue.mae.ro/en>

Court of Justice of the European Union - https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/Jo2_7024/en/

The Treaty of Lisbon - <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/publications/consolidated-versions-treaty-european-union-treaty-functioning-european-union-charter-fundamental-rights-european-union/>

The EU Budget - https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/money_en

Multiannual Financial Framework - <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/multiannual-financial-framework/>

European Court of Auditors - <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/ecadefault.aspx>

Council of Europe - <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/home>

Europuls Report - Recommendations for the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2019 - <http://www.europuls.ro/2016/09/18/policy-brief-recomandari-pentru-presedintia-romana-a-consiliului-ue-din-2019/?lang=en>

Support Platform RO2019 - <http://www.ro2019.eu>

Brussels media

POLITICO - <https://www.politico.eu>

EUobserver - <https://euobserver.com>

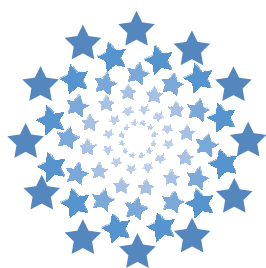
EurActiv - <http://www.euractiv.com>

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CENTRE OF EUROPEAN EXPERTISE

ABOUT EUROPULS

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

Europuls is the initiator and the main organiser of EUROSAT, the annual forum dedicated to debates on European issues. Europuls was founded on March 15, 2010 and is officially registered both in Romania and Belgium. It is completely independent of any political body.

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