



## **Weekly Briefing**

**Romania External Relations briefing:  
Romania's perceptions and evaluations of Sofia 16+1 Summit  
Oana Cristina Popovici**

### **China-CEE Institute**

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.

Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin

Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.

 +36 1 5858 690

 [office@china-cee.eu](mailto:office@china-cee.eu)

 [china-cee.eu](http://china-cee.eu)

## **Romania's perceptions and evaluations of Sofia 16+1 Summit**

*The seventh edition of the Summit of Heads of Government that are part of the 16+1 framework of cooperation represented an opportunity for Romania to reaffirm its support towards this project and reiterate its interest in establishing stronger collaboration relations in order to build vital projects in the area of transport, infrastructure, energy, communication and education. In the view of the Presidency of the Council of the EU that Romania will held in the first part of 2019, the summit offered the possibility to restate the assumed commitments related to enhancing the EU enlargement policy and the development of political relations with Western Balkan states. Through signing the Memorandum of cooperation in the area of transport and infrastructure with China, Romania joined the Chinese plans related to investments in large infrastructure projects for connecting the Balkans with the countries in the CEE region.*

Romania participated, at the beginning of July, at the seventh edition of the Summit of Heads of Government of the countries that are part of the 16+1 format of cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European states, which took place in Sofia, Bulgaria. The Romanian delegation was led by the Prime Minister Viorica Dancila. The Summit represented a special opportunity for Romania to carry out dialogues with the officials in the neighbouring countries, especially with those that are not yet part of the EU, in the view of the Presidency of the Council of the EU which will be assumed starting with January 2019. The delegation also had the chance to consider several business opportunities due to the presence of the 250 Chinese companies and representatives of 700 European firms. The Romanian Prime Minister visited the Huawei booth of the Business Forum, where the latest technologies and solutions in the area of telecommunication were promoted.

The interest of the Romanian delegation centred around the development of regional transport infrastructure projects, enhancing new initiatives in the fields of energy, communication and the intensification of the dialogue on education policies in framework of 16+1, which overlapped with the general objectives of the Summit for promoting an enhanced cooperation in the areas of energy, trade, infrastructure, and environment.

### **Romania's intentions for further involving in supporting the 16+1 framework**

Romania's intentions, as expressed by the Prime Minister, are oriented towards assuming a more important role in the framework of cooperation between China and the CEE region. One of these directions that are to be followed is represented by the energy area. Romania intends to increase its efforts in supporting the Centre for Dialogue and Co-operation in Energy, already established in Bucharest two years ago, and to be involved in conducting joint energy research projects, including technical exchanges. In the field of education, Romania announced its interest in hosting the 16+1 Dialogue on cooperation in the field of education, following the ministerial Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) on education which will take place in May 2019, and will unfold during the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Another possibility of cooperation where Romania could assume a greater role for enhancing the relations and connectivity between China and CEE countries are the resources and opportunities represented by the Danube and the Black Sea, in order to increase mobility and competitiveness, two objectives of the cooperation in the 16+1 format.

On the other hand, the Romanian Prime Minister also stated the need of finding methods for achieving and supporting the complementarity between the 16+1 cooperation framework with the political and economic mechanisms of the EU-China relationship and with the EU infrastructure and investment programs.

Romania could also have an important contribution in this area, since it will hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first part of 2019.

### **Actual results**

The Romanian Minister of Transportation and the Chinese president of the National Commission for Development and Reform signed a Memorandum of cooperation in the area of transport and infrastructure, which reflects the interest of both parties for deepening and diversifying bilateral cooperation in these two sectors of major importance for the economic development. The document will strengthen the framework and premises for China's involvement in projects in the two areas, as the development of these domains is a priority for the Romanian side. The memorandum marks the steps taken by the Government in Bucharest to strengthening a pragmatic cooperation with China, a distinct objective of the foreign policy component of the Governance Program for the period 2018-2020. In fact, the echoes of the Sofia 16+1 Summit in Romania were mainly related to the China's plans to invest in highways and railways in the Balkan and Eastern European countries. Through signing this Memorandum of cooperation, Romania affirmed its interest in taking part in this larger project.

Romania was also granted the support of the participants in the Summit for organising a conference on promoting the women entrepreneurship in 2019 and establishing a 16+1 Smart City Coordination Center.

### **Bilateral meetings**

Of a major importance for the Romanian delegation was the opportunity to participate in bilateral meetings with the heads of delegations participating in the Summit.

1) The meeting with the Prime Minister of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, Li Keqiang

The two officials reiterated the intention of maintaining an intensified political dialogue and consolidating the bilateral economic relations on investment and trade. The discussions focused on several areas.

In the field of trade, Romania expressed its interest in increasing the exports in China, following the high potential of exporting agro-food products. In this framework, the Prime Minister advocated for strengthening the bilateral legal framework in this area.

As regards the investments, Romania confirms that the actual level continues to be situated under the real possibilities. As a consequence, Romania expressed its openness to the involvement of Chinese companies in the materialization of different projects targeting key sectors, such as the energy and transport infrastructure, regardless the stage of their development. The representatives of the two countries expressed their interest in finalizing as soon as possible the negotiations for the construction of the reactors 3 and 4 of the Cernavoda Nuclear Power Plant and of a new energy group at the Rovinari Thermal Power Plant, as well as the construction of the Tarnita-Lăpustești pumped storage power plant.

Other opportunities for collaboration were evidenced in the financial banking field, however without naming clear projects that could be developed, and the inter-human exchanges through tourism, research and business visits, following the resumption of direct flights between Romania and China.

## 2) Meeting with the Prime Minister of Latvia, Māris Kučinskis

The meeting was an opportunity for Romania to present the investment opportunities for foreign investors, especially highlighting the new legislative framework regulating this area. In addition, the Romanian Prime Minister has expressed the interest in deepening the sectoral cooperation in areas such as agriculture and latest technologies and has shown appreciation for excellent cooperation in the defence area. The Latvian Prime Minister accepted the invitation to make an official visit to Romania this year, indicating that he

intends to be accompanied by an important delegation of businessmen to participate in a bilateral economic forum.

3) Meeting with the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama

The Romanian Prime Minister reiterated the firm support of the Romanian Government, at political and technical level, for the accession of Albania to the EU, as Albania will open the accession negotiations during the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The discussions have revealed the common aim of both countries to develop good bilateral relations with an emphasis on strengthening sectoral and economic cooperation. Several common actions were established in order to enhance collaboration in the economic, scientific, technical areas and among the business communities in the two countries.

4) Meeting with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, Zoran Zaev

At the meeting, the two prime ministers addressed topics of common interest, such as the stage of bilateral cooperation, the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Republic of Macedonia, as well as recent developments at regional level. It was an opportunity for Romania to reconfirm its strong political support for the European and Euro-Atlantic path of the Republic of Macedonia and the willingness to provide technical assistance for the processes of accession to the EU and NATO.

Some major paths Romania intends to follow in the context of next year's Presidency are exactly those of continuing the EU enlargement policy and the development of political relations with Western Balkan states.

5) Meeting with the president of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denis Zvizdić

The dialogue reaffirmed the interest of both governments in deepening the bilateral relations in the coming period and in promoting cooperation in areas of common interest, through organizing an economic forum. The Romanian side reconfirmed its support for the European objective of Bosnia and Herzegovina and showed willingness to provide help in the area of technical assistance, as

Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to implement the reform agenda. At the same time, the Prime Minister expressed the opening of the Romanian Government to pursue in sharing the best ways to support the country in stepping up its co-operation with NATO, given the importance of security and stability throughout the region.